# BUILDING MORE BOMBS:

# THE DISCURSIVE EMERGENCE OF US NUCLEAR WEAPONS POLICY

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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This dissertation investigates the social construction and discursive emergence of US nuclear weapons policy against the backdrop of the nuclear taboo and its associated anti-nuclear discourse. The analysis is drawn from poststructuralism with a focus on the discourses that construct the social world and its attendant "common sense," and makes possible certain policies and courses of action while foreclosing others. This methodology helps overcome the overdetermined nature of foreign policy, or its tendency to be driven simultaneously by the international strategic environment, the domestic political environment, and powerful domestic organizations, and while being shaped and delimited by the discourses associated with the nuclear taboo. I apply this method to three different cases of presidential administration policymaking: Eisenhower, Reagan, and George W. Bush. In each, the analysis illuminates the coherent discourses that emerged, crystallized, and either became policy, or were usurped by competing discourses and their associated policies. I follow the actions of key actors as they stitched together existing discourses in new ways to create meaning for nuclear weapons and the US arsenal, as well as to limit what could and should be done with that arsenal. The case studies reveal the content of the strategic international, domestic political, organizational, and normative bases of US nuclear weapons policy. These results suggest that most challenges to the nuclear policy status quo emerge from new presidents whose own discourse is built upon personal conviction and critiques of their predecessors. Upon taking office, these sources compete with discourses emerging from organizations, especially the nuclear weapons complex, and anti-nuclear forces including: activists, the scientific community, the international public, US allied governments, and the US public. It was this political conflict and confrontation that made possible the pattern of nuclear weapons policy that characterized each administration. This work points to the strength

of the nuclear taboo, and the effort that must be expended for its associated discourses to impact presidential policymaking. This insight provides an opening for managing the nuclear threat posed by the Trump administration's new nuclear weapons policy.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Page

Chapter Page

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

In July 1939, scientists Leo Szilard and Eugene Wigner, met with Albert Einstein at his home in Long Island, New York. They had become alarmed at the possibility of weaponizing the sustainable nuclear reaction upon which they worked. Einstein at once realized the tremendous and terrifying potential of the scientific advancements taking place and worked with Szilard and Wigner on a letter to be delivered to President Franklin Roosevelt.[1] The letter would elevate the notion of a nuclear reaction from an obscure topic of scientific inquiry to one of national security, and would mark the birth of nuclear policy discourse. The interaction would, in some ways, reflect the policy confrontations that checker the history of nuclear weapons policy in the United States. Einstein, a devoted pacifist who would spend a great deal of time on peace and nuclear disarmament work before his death in 1955, had just made Roosevelt aware of the scientific possibility of the atomic bomb which would be dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of WWII.[2]

The beginning of nuclear weapons history already showed the elements that would compose its politics to this day. Einstein's later nuclear disarmament position suggests that he had intended the letter as a warning, not as a call to build—and use—the weapon first. But the call to action would carry the seeds to do just that. Roosevelt took the suggestion seriously and established, less than two years later on June 28, 1941, the

[1] Albert Einstein, "Albert Einstein to Franklin D. Roosevelt," Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (online) August 2, 1939. Accessed 7 September 2014, http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/archives/pdfs/docsworldwar.pdf.

[2] For an example of Einstein's anti-nuclear activism see, Albert Einstein, Bertrand Russell et. al. "The Einstein-Russell Manifesto," Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs (July 9, 1955).

Office of Scientific Research and Development (OSRD) Section on Uranium or S-1, the predecessor to the Manhattan Project.[3] The use of the products of the Manhattan project would lead Einstein to regret the letter, calling it "the one great mistake in my life." [4]

The interaction above is a microcosm of the broader nuclear weapons politics that would shape policy into the future. The Einstein-Roosevelt interaction foreshadowed decades of political conflict in which policymakers would be confronted with concern about the nuclear arsenals of US's adversaries side by side with moral reservations and deep anxiety about nuclear weapons. US policy has emerged out of this struggle, sometimes driven by intense fear of the nuclear stockpiles of the Soviet Union, and at other times restrained by scientists, the public, and a sense that using nuclear weapons to wage war is immoral, unethical, and unproductive. In this dissertation I explore the ways in which policy emerged against that backdrop: policymakers simultaneously interpreting and articulating the international threat environment, and finding their prescriptions regarding nuclear weapons and their use highly constrained by powerful, socially maintained norms. The research presented here seeks to answer the question: how has US nuclear weapons policy's emergence been shaped by the nuclear taboo? I also address the question of what kinds of methodology are appropriate for illuminating and understanding the policymaking process given US nuclear policy is shaped by political elites and social norms including the nuclear taboo. The former question will be taken up throughout the next four chapters, the latter question is addressed below.

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[3] For a history of the Manhattan Project see Richard Rhodes, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986).

[4] Linus Pauling, "Notes on Conversation of Linus Pauling with Albert Einstein," November 16, 1954, Special Collections & Archives Research Center, OSU Libraries, Oregon State University, E: Individual Correspondence, Box #107.1.

**The Problem: Socially-Constructed Taboo, Insular Policymakers**

The inherent complexity of the politics of nuclear weapons presents a unique tension. On the one hand, from the mid-1950's onward, the public has been an active and powerful force in shaping nuclear weapons policy. The public, through formal organizations, mass movements, popular culture, and Congress, have exerted significant pressure on policymakers of all political stripes. Policymakers that have attempted to ignore or re-shape public opinion—as Eisenhower and Dulles did early in their administration—have found themselves confronting a determined public.[5] These presidential endeavors have sometimes ironically strengthened opposition groups who viewed hawkish presidents as both a threat and an organizing opportunity.

On the other hand, nuclear weapons policy is among the least democratic, most secretive areas of foreign policy. Foreign policy itself has often been characterized as the area of policymaking most insulated from the public. Officials often have privileged access to information about the international strategic environment, as well as more complete knowledge of their own state's capabilities. In addition, the public is often uninterested and uninformed about issues in international relations, making it easier for policymakers with an opening to manipulate public opinion.[6] Nuclear weapons policy

[5] In particular, Eisenhower argued at a press conferences on March 16, 1955 that nuclear bombs should be used "just exactly as you would use a bullet or anything else." The effort backfired and instead generated a media outcry. The Quemoy-Matsu crisis that precipitated the effort ended the next month without the use of nuclear weapons. See Dwight D. Eisenhower, "The President's News Conference," March 16, 1955. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=10. See also Nina Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons since 1945* (Cambridge University Press 2007), 130.

[6] See Oli Holsti who points out, "Not only do polls repeatedly reveal that the mass public has a very thin veneer of factual knowledge about politics, economics, and geography; they also reveal that it is poorly informed about the specifics of conflicts, treaties, negotiations with other nations, characteristics of weapons systems, foreign leaders, and the like" ("Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Challenges to the Almond-Lippmann Consensus," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (December 1992), 447).

takes the secrecy of foreign policy a step further.[7] Nuclear weapons were first developed in the highly secretive Manhattan Project on an isolated plateau in Northern New Mexico.[8] The locations of many deployed weapons are a secret known to only a few, and while the science of the weapons is readily accessible on the internet, the engineering challenges associated with isolating fissile material, and then successfully building a weapon around that material are tremendous. In addition, the concept of deterrence is complex, counterintuitive, and contested.[9] Consensus among the popular press or political elite is therefore rare.[10] This gives policymakers latitude and incentive to make policy as they see fit.

The tension that entails from these two points provides the background for nuclear weapons policymaking in the US. In practice, policy has been the product of this conflictual social process since the early 1950's. The process has also evolved along with

[7] On this point see Francis Gavin who argues, "the world of nuclear policy was and remains, for understandable reasons, veiled in secrecy, and getting access to the full documentary record is difficult…figuring out the real story is particularly difficult with nuclear matters." See *History, Theory, and Statecraft in the Nuclear Age* (Cornell University Press, 2012), 17.

[8] For a detailed description of the Manhattan Project written shortly after the production after the first atomic bombs see Henry De Wolf Smyth, *Atomic Energy for Military Purposes: The Official Report on the Development of the Atomic Bomb under the Auspices of the United States Government, 1940-1945.* (Princeton University Press, 1947). For a more exhaustive and contemporary account see, Cynthia C. Kelly, *The Manhattan Project: The Birth of the Atomic Bomb in the Words of Its Creators, Eyewitnesses, and Historians* (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 2007).

[9] For a review of nuclear deterrence in theory and practice through 1979, see Robert Jervis, "Deterrence Theory Revisited," *World Politics*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (January 1979): 289-324. Other contemporary theoretical and practical challenges for deterrence are addressed by T.V. Paul, Patrick Morgan, and James Wirtz eds., *Complex Deterrence: Strategy in the Global Age* (University of Chicago Press, 2009). For a feminist critique of the "technostrategic" language used to discuss and debate nuclear weapons strategy see Carol Cohn, "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals," *Signs* 12, no. 4 (1987): 687-718. For the alternative take on the concept of deterrence favored by the George W. Bush and Trump administrations, see Keith Payne, *Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996).

[10] Gavin (2012, 17) also argues that public rhetoric and policy are often at odds.

the nuclear taboo, the public itself, and the presidents that have occupied the White House. This dissertation will examine the social processes and social movements that have affected nuclear weapons policymaking in the US. Since those processes have acted on the president and his advisors, my research considers the avenues through which certain policies gained favor with presidents, and why particular policies were enacted while others were abandoned, marginalized, or defeated. This expands upon existing work by integrating the insights of the nuclear taboo literature into a broader examination of the production of nuclear weapons policy.[11] The evidence presented here shows that functioning of the nuclear taboo even outside crises or war—nuclear weapons policy is a product not only of the threats and imperatives of the international strategic environment and the push and pull of powerful domestic groups, but also profoundly influenced by the nuclear taboo's prohibition on the use of nuclear weapons on the battle-field.

**Investigating Foreign Policy**

The problem of understanding the sources of nuclear weapons policy and the processes that support its emergence is not that there is a shortage of explanations, but that there is an abundance. This problem hails the notion of levels of analysis as a tool for sharpening claims of causation in answering questions about the formation of foreign policy. Waltz offers the most often cited version of this concept in which causation is conceptualized as originating in one of three images: the individual, the state, and the

[11] For more on the nuclear taboo see Nina Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo* (Cambridge University Press, 2007); T.V. Paul, "Taboo or Tradition? The Non-use of Nuclear Weapons in World Politics," *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 4 (2010): 853-63; Theo Ferrell, "Nuclear Non-use: Constructing a Cold War History," *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 4 (2010): 819-29; and Richard Hanania, "Tracing the Development of the Nuclear Taboo: The Eisenhower Administration and Four Crises in East Asia," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 19, no. 2 (2017): 43-83.

international system.[12] Others have broadened the individual level, which focuses on the causal role of particular individuals, and added additional levels such as the bureaucracy—a level between the individual and the domestic.[13] The question then, is if one endeavors to explain something about foreign policy, how should they choose among the various images, levels, or sources? Ikenberry and Trubowitz propose three ways of dealing with this question.[14] First, analysts may turn to the empirics of their subject to determine which sources should be privileged in their explanation. While this may at times show that one level or another is most appropriate, it may preserve the problem by showing that multiple levels provide useful and plausible explanations. Second, theories may be compared on their "logical rigor" or their regularity, reliability, validity, prediction, and parsimony. Third, theories may be compared and selected by utilizing the most useful pieces of various levels in light of the questions being asked. This can be carried out though picking and choosing explanations that work best, or by building "synthetic models" which bring together multiple levels in building explanation.

The theoretic approach proposed here addresses the overdetermined nature of foreign policy by focusing on the discourses articulated and rearticulated by the subjects themselves. This focus helps identify the concerns actors themselves considered as they built policy, and avoids the problem of scholars imposing their own theories onto policymakers of the past. In short, focusing on the discourse produced and deployed by

[12] Kenneth Waltz, *Man, The State and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).

[13] See for example, J. David Sanger, "The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations," in Klaus Knorr and Sydney Verba, eds., *The International System: Theoretical Essays* (Princeton University Press, 1961); and Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton University Press, 1976), Chapter 1.

[14] G. John Ikenberry & Peter Trubowitz, "Introduction" in Ikenberry & Trubowitz eds., *American Foreign Policy: Theoretical* Essays, 7th ed. (Oxford University Press, 2015).

powerful actors can illuminate the sources, or images, of policy. Inevitably, nuclear weapons policy is a product of the combination of individual characteristics, domestic politics, and the international system—so rather than focusing on one or another level of analysis, this work focuses on the particular mix of motives as it is constituted by discourse, and the ways in which these various forces are woven together by actors in order to forge policy. Details of this theoretical approach are below.

**The Literature**

The literature on nuclear weapons policy is vast, though little of the literature attempts to consider the formation of policy against the powerful backdrop of anti-nuclear politics, and much of it is not focused on the social emergence of policy. This dissertation builds on several strands of literature, each of which contributes to questions and analysis here. First, the research builds on historical accounts of the Eisenhower, Reagan, and George W. Bush presidencies, as well as accounts of the Cold War era, and the post-Cold War era. Historical accounts provide several benefits to this research. They provide vertical history, or the chronology of the events and actors at the center of the inquiry.[15] Part of the methodology of this dissertation is a strategy of reading material to determine the discourses being drawn upon at any particular moment. Good historical scholarship reveals important events and actors, and provide glimpses of moments when actors forged or amended discourse to build something new and meaningful that would echo into the future. Well-written and researched history should additionally provide horizontal linkages to show the context in which actors found themselves and important

[15] For a relevant discussion on the practice of history scholarship and the particular challenges of nuclear history see Francis Gavin, *Nuclear Statecraft: History and Strategy in America's Atomic Age*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012).

events took place. Context is especially important here, with discourse analysis stressing the ways in which pre-constructed discourses embedded in the social milieu provide actors with a sense of their world and the tools they may bring to bear on problems therein.

*History*

The early nuclear era (Truman and Eisenhower administrations) is a highly scrutinized period of American history with an abundance of well-researched books and articles. Much of that research is highly detailed and chronological. Bowie and Immerman use this technique to show how the Eisenhower administration amended the chaos of the Truman era with regard to foreign policy and nuclear weapons, and set the stage for the international politics of the Cold War era.[16] Likewise, Ambrose uses a chronological approach to detail the unfolding of Eisenhower's presidency.[17] While the level of detail in these works is useful for locating important interactions and pieces of discourse, the density of material and relentlessly linear chronology makes them less useful for understanding the nuclear politics of the day. Other works such as Gaddis's history of the Cold War, provide a more foreign-policy oriented history, with primary and secondary sources supporting arguments about nuclear weapons policy and a temporal focus that extends through the end of the Cold War and thus including the Reagan (and George H.W. Bush) administration. For example, Gaddis traces the emergence of Eisenhower's view that nuclear war might be unwinnable in the conventional sense, as

[16] Robert Bowie and Richard Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[17] Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983).

well as the implications for planning that emerged from this conclusion.[18] While these sources are useful for the scope of their coverage, they pay inconsistent attention to particular topics and are best utilized as a resource to locate important artifacts of the discourse that has supported US nuclear weapons policy.

*Doctrine and Foreign Policy*

Other sources utilized here explicitly focus on foreign policy and nuclear posture. Jones traces Eisenhower's attempts to undermine the nuclear taboo and provides a detailed nuclear-oriented history.[19] Chernus argues that nuclear doctrine from the Eisenhower era can be thought of as "apocalypse management."[20] The threat of nuclear war as well as the problem of managing relations with allies and the economy are conceived of as discursive projects that must be managed for the long term with apocalyptic consequences from mismanagement. Chernus's explicit focus on discourse is highly relevant here, and provides an opening for research built on identifying the sets of discourse from which policy emerges. Wirls provides a contemporary political history (of the Reagan era, and the Reagan through Obama era), as well as a theory that connects domestic institutions with the US's "irrationally" large defense budgets.[21] Vipin Narang argues that nuclear posture or strategy in the South Asian states under study is driven by: the availability of a great power sponsor; the nature of the target or adversary; the

[18] John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005).

[19] Brian Madison Jones, A*bolishing the Taboo: Dwight D. Eisenhower and American Nuclear Doctrine, 1945-1961* (Solihull, West Midlands: Helion & Company Ltd, 2011).

[20] Ira Chernus, *Apocalypse Management: Eisenhower and the Discourse of National Insecurity*, Stanford Nuclear Age Series (Stanford University Press, 2008).

[21] Daniel Wirls, *Buildup: The Politics of Defense in the Reagan Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992). See also Daniel Wirls, *Irrational Security: The Politics of Defense from Reagan to Obama* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

character of civil-military relations; and the amount of resources that can be brought to bear in support of strategy.[22] While Narang's investigation into nuclear strategies in South Asia would superficially resemble this dissertation's investigation into US nuclear weapons policy—as both try to understand the sources of nuclear strategy—the focus on South Asian states makes his theory as is, ineffective for understanding the US case. That said, he identifies the perception of conventional superiority, and the character of civil-military relations as explanations of nuclear posture, both of which are useful to consider in an effort to understand US policy.

This dissertation also builds on the research into the origins of military doctrine. Barry Posen argues that organization theory and structural realism are powerful explanations of military doctrine.[23] His research shows that in periods of peace, military organizations have leeway to make their own doctrines. During these times they will choose offensive doctrines aimed at reducing uncertainty in potential battles, increase the mission-space of the organization or the tasks for which they are formally responsible. They may also seek to increase the organization's prestige, budget, and autonomy, consistent with the predictions of organization theory.[24] In periods of crisis however, the

[22] Vipin Narang, *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era: Regional Powers and International Conflict*, Princeton Studies in International History and Politics (Princeton University Press, 2014). Nuclear posture is defined here as "a state's operational, rather than declaratory, nuclear doctrine," and is used interchangeably with "strategy."

[23] Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984).

[24] Posen builds on "organization theory," a view that explains and predicts sub-rational behavior by large organizations. Since large organizations confront inherent problems with complexity and coordination, they develop routines, standard operating procedures, and rules which may actually hamper the organization's ability to maximize efficiency in its responses. At the same time these organizations may have multiple conflicting goals, some consonant with their parent organizations or governments, and others parochial to sub-units. These goals may include increased mission-space, autonomy, budget, and prestige—all of which may run counter to broader interests, national interests, or even those of other sub-units in the organization. For an early explanation of organization theory see James G. March, "The Business Firm as a Political

civilian government is likely to successfully intervene and alter military doctrine to make it consistent with the apparent dictates of the international strategic environment. As this behavior is consistent with structural realism, Posen concludes that this theory holds sway in explaining the sources of military doctrine.

Kier uses the empirical case of France between the world wars to challenge Posen's assumption. Her work argues that the international system is indeterminate with regard to a particular state's doctrines, and that civilians intervene often and with a concern about the potential of the military to threaten domestic sovereignty.[25] This leads militaries to sometimes prefer defensive doctrines (as in the case of France during the interwar period), and suggests that culture is a key source of military doctrine and not the international system as argued by Posen. This scholarly debate is taken up by this dissertation in multiple ways. First the competitive contest between organization theory and structural realism is addressed methodologically. Far from denying that the international strategic environment matters, the methods used in this dissertation focus on the ways in which concerns about the international system are mobilized into discourse. Examining the discourse should reveal the extent to which the international system mattered, as well as illuminating the process through which it came to matter. Similarly, a focus on discourse points us toward the ways in which military leaders lobbied successfully (or not) for pieces of offensive doctrine. It may well be that powerful

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Coalition," *Journal of Politics* 24, No. 1 (February 1962): 662-78. For an application of organization theory to nuclear weapons politics, see Scott Sagan, "More Will Be Worse," Chapter 2 in Scott Sagan and Kenneth Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003).

[25] Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine between the Wars*, Princeton Studies in International History and Politics (Princeton University Press, 1997).

domestic organizations are behind US nuclear weapons policy—if so, we should see powerful actors forging the offensive minded discourse that supports policy. Kier's argument is also addressed here. If civilians and culture are behind military doctrine, this should be reflected in the dominant discourses that support official policy. Indeed the nuclear taboo literature is consistent with Kier here, arguing that powerful social forces constrain policymakers who would like to use nuclear weapons, much as Kier argues that civilian culture restrains military culture. Since both Posen and Kier provide detailed arguments and rich evidence, the current work will take all of their key insights seriously, looking for sources of nuclear weapons policy in the international strategic environment, powerful domestic organizations, and civilian and popular culture.

A foundational claim for discussing nuclear weapon in international relations is posited by Jervis, who argues that nuclear weapons led to a "revolution" in statecraft.[26] The revolution entails in a fundamental change in the way the nuclear armed states must reckon with one another. The most striking implication is that states winning in war against a nuclear armed adversary would be worse off than if it had avoided war in the first place—a stark change from the pre-atomic era. Nuclear armed states thus find themselves stuck in a condition of "mutually assured destruction" (MAD). Potential escapes from the condition of MAD carry the risk of nuclear disaster. The revolution from this perspective is Janus faced: on one hand, nuclear armed states have powerful incentives to avoid war, on the other nuclear annihilation is the consequence of failure to

[26] Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon,* Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989).

perpetuate MAD.[27] Given the potential for either peace or nuclear war, Van Evera concludes, "…the effects of the nuclear revolution are indeterminate. They hinge on perceptions and policies of governments."[28]

The impact of this insight opens space for this dissertation: if nuclear weapons revolutionized international relations, policymakers would need to actively determine what this revolution meant for policy. Even if this revolution was controversial, it would yield debates out of which policy would be constructed. The current work provides a view of some of the avenues through which the implications of the nuclear revolution were incorporated into discourse, and as a result, policy. Debate about the character of the nuclear taboo builds on Brodie and others who pointed out as early as 1946 that the atomic era would be fundamentally different and that policymakers would need to re-think international relations.[29]

*"Nuclear Weapons Policy"*

Explaining US nuclear weapons policy requires grappling with theoretical issues, but first it is necessary to precisely clarify the concepts that will be addressed.[30] This

[27] This point is made by Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 253-4.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Bernard Brodie, Frederick Sherwood Dunn, Arnold Wolfers, Percy Ellwood Corbett, and William T. R. Fox, *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World* Order, 1st ed., Yale University Institute of International Studies (New York: Harcourt, 1946).

[30] Glaser's investigation of nuclear weapons policy employs a narrower definition of the concept, focusing on strategy and force requirements. His investigation emphasizes MAD as the condition under which nuclear weapons policy is forged. This dissertation will build on his research into the strategic implications of MAD, inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), missile defense and other concepts, but will consider the non-strategic aspects of nuclear weapons policy such as anti-nuclear movements and civil-military relations. For more detail see, Charles Glaser, *Analyzing Strategic Nuclear Policy* (Princeton University Press, 1990).

project investigates the process through which nuclear weapons policy emerges against the backdrop of a socially constructed nuclear taboo. Nuclear weapons policy is composed of everything that is being done with nuclear weapons in a particular time by the state.[31] This includes which weapons make up a state's arsenal—how many, what size these weapons are in explosive yield, where they are held, where they are designed and constructed, and how the fissile material is made or procured. It includes the readiness of those weapons: whether they are mounted on solid-fueled inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) ready to launch, or whether they are partially disassembled in remote bunkers. It also includes the set of delivery systems associated with the nuclear weapons arsenal. In the United States this has included the nuclear triad: nuclear-capable bombers, nuclear-armed ICBMs, and nuclear-armed submarines carrying submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). While most nuclear-armed states use some version of these three delivery systems, one could conceive of other methods of delivery. Nuclear weapons policy also includes the set of documents, statements, bureaucratic policies, traditions, and other discourse produced by policymakers which spell out, explicitly or implicitly, the purpose and potential uses of a state's nuclear weapons arsenal. States may release formal documents that spell out these purposes in great detail, or the purposes

[31] The definition of nuclear weapons policy that I use here is broader than the notion of nuclear posture used by Narang. Narang defines nuclear posture as, "the capabilities (actual nuclear forces), employment doctrine (under what conditions they might be used), and command-and-control procedures (how they are managed, deployed, and potentially released) a state establishes to operationalize its nuclear weapons capability" (2014: 4). This may also be thought of as nuclear strategy. Nuclear weapons policy as I use it here is broader in that it subsumes Narang's definition, but also includes domestic public relations efforts to normalize nuclear weapons, civil-military relations over nuclear matters, and missile defense systems (deployed or not). My wider definition includes strategy (which is focused outward, at the world) as well as domestic policies regarding the design, construction, and testing or nuclear weapons. This definition is more appropriate as the case studies in this dissertation are focused on the US alone and its peculiar set of policies, while Narang's narrower definition was appropriate for his comparative study of postures across South Asia.

may be strongly implied by historical circumstance.[32] States may have a nuclear weapons policy even if they do not yet have a physical nuclear weapon. Having a nuclear weapons program that is advancing toward a working weapon forces other states to reckon with the potential, and forces the developer to articulate its own policy.

In the US, every president since Franklin D. Roosevelt has inherited a nuclear weapons policy when they took office.[33] While administrations have changed, the vast nuclear weapons complex that created the bomb—originally the Manhattan Project, has persisted. So when new leadership approaches the problem of nuclear weapons policy, they do not do so from scratch—instead they have had to contend with the living reality of an expansive and dynamic set of forces that together constitute nuclear weapons policy. As stated above, the insular nature of the complex provides elites some cover to take action and change policy without any immediate checks. At the same time however, the size of the complex makes enacting change difficult. Institutions and individuals benefiting from the status quo may stymie leaders seeking change. The sum of these phenomena is a stickiness to US nuclear weapons policy—a strand of continuity that persists even in the face of leaders who would have liked to dramatically overturn the policies of their predecessors.

[32] Narang is careful to note that his use of "nuclear posture" refers to operational rather than declared nuclear doctrine: "states care more about what an adversary can credibly *do* with its nuclear weapons than what it says about them" (Narang 2014: 4). The methodology employed here is adept at ferreting out important statements, documents, and other artifacts that credibly construct nuclear strategy, rather than those that repeat propaganda. However, since propaganda about nuclear weapons is policy—but not strategy—my research will sometimes, as in Eisnehower's Atoms for Peace speech, consider its source and function.

[33] For the first interaction between a president and the notion of nuclear power, see Albert Einstein (August 2, 1939).

The discussion so far provides both a theoretical and empirical opening for my research. First, foreign policy analysts have found an overabundance of theoretical approaches to their questions. Foreign policy comes from individuals and domestic institutions, but it is also the result of and a response to the international strategic environment. Efforts to isolate causation consistently runs the risk of ignoring important drivers at other levels of analysis. And second, the historical record shows that nuclear weapons policy is the result of strong presidents re-defining policy, but also of an ever-strengthening military-industrial complex driving policy in spite of presidential preferences. That is, this work recognizes that nuclear weapons policy is being driven by the international strategic environment, domestic institutions, and a handful of powerful individuals. Within the state, there also exists a struggle between presidents and other elites in the executive branch, and the institutions that physically build, maintain, oversee, and manage the weapons. Their privileged positions provide plausible avenues to check powerful executives and add meaningfully to the emerging shape of nuclear weapons policy.

The research presented here does not put an end to debate over appropriate methods for foreign policy analysis, nor does it settle the question of where nuclear weapons policy comes from once and for all. Instead, this research will build on existing theory to clarify the theoretical approaches to understanding nuclear weapons policy, and will suggest that poststructural discourse analysis has the potential to untangle the various drivers of policy and deepen our understanding of the process of nuclear weapons policymaking. As this approach requires careful consideration of empirical data, it also has the potential to clarify the complex interplay between powerful presidents, the

military-industrial complex, and the bearers of the nuclear taboo. The sample of literature presented here is foundational for this work, but is not exhaustive—each empirical chapter will incorporate the insights from the seminal works discussed above, as well as incorporating primary and secondary sources that uniquely elucidate particular cases.

**Research Hypotheses**

In particular, this research will address three hypotheses, each are taken up in turn below:

***Hypothesis 1****: Elite policymakers make nuclear weapons policy in accord with their assessment of material consequences. Moral and ethical considerations are secondary.*

Preliminary research and other literature show that it is typically new administrations that launch genuine challenges to the nuclear taboo. Eisenhower oversaw a tremendous buildup in the US nuclear arsenal and determined to use nuclear weapons over Quemoy and Matsu during his first term in early 1955; Reagan entered office with a plan to expand the US nuclear arsenal, its delivery systems, and its missile defenses; George W. Bush entered office with a plan to build a new generation of more useable nuclear weapons while doubling down on missile defense; and the Trump administration has thus far emulated the Bush administration with regard to nuclear weapons and missile defense. These cases show that challenges to the nuclear taboo—major changes to nuclear weapons policy—came from presidents themselves, who were not privy or not concerned with the prohibition of the nuclear taboo or any other norm that might limit their latitude of action. This project will explore this phenomenon in greater detail to shed light on just how presidents come to understand nuclear weapons, and the processes through which they settle on changing existing policy.

***Hypothesis 2****: Building new, and more useable nuclear weapons, as well as threatening to use nuclear weapons in battle, serves the organizational needs of the military-industrial complex.*

While major changes to the nuclear weapons policy status quo seem to take place during new president's first terms, these changes do not materialize out of the ether. Instead they likely serve the interests of another powerful entity that has access to the president: the military-industrial complex. This project will look for the avenues through which presidents sought to upend the status quo, but will additionally look for other actors that likewise, pushed presidents to adopt more aggressive nuclear weapons policies. It is clear that organizational leaders have at times seen a more aggressive US nuclear posture as a means to enhance their own agencies prestige, budget, or importance. This research will look closer at particular instances of organizational push to determine the content of their efforts, and why they did or did not succeed in influencing the president and/or their policies. Was it the presidents' individual mindsets that made them susceptible to lobbying by hawkish military leaders or eager nuclear scientists? Or were such representatives of the military-industrial complex simply able to package their argument in a manner convincing to the president and other key policymakers? Answering this question will require a close reading of the interaction between leadership and the military-industrial complex, or an appreciation of the interaction between these first two hypotheses.

***Hypothesis 3****: The public finds nuclear weapons morally unacceptable and reflexively rejects their use*.

The last of the three major hypotheses suggests the public's role in enforcing the norm against using nuclear weapons in battle, or the nuclear taboo. This piece tends to pull in the opposite direction from the previous two hypotheses. While presidents, sometimes goaded by elites in the military-industrial complex, have sought new missions for existing nuclear weapons, and new weapons altogether, one of the means through which these efforts have been checked or rolled back has been the action of the broader public. The nuclear taboo literature has documented the important role that both domestic and international public opinion has played in restraining hawkish nuclear weapons policies. Here the research will address the specific content of the public's reaction. What sorts of behavior did the public respond to in these cases? How did the public's interpretation of the international strategic environment differ from that of the executive? Also, why has the public managed to succeed in these instances? Ultimately, this work aims to show how competing conceptions of the problem of nuclear weapons and their utility, were synthesized into policy. Special attention is paid here to efforts by elites to manipulate and manage public opinion. Preliminary study suggests that in some cases these efforts had the ironic effect of galvanizing public opinion against hawkish policies proposed or implemented by elites.

The foregoing are not "testable hypotheses" insomuch as this study is designed to prove their "truth". Instead, they guide a process-focused study aimed at uncovering the complex interaction of numerous powerful actors wading their way through a strategic environment that they themselves interpreted in a variety of ways. The next section will argue that particular methodological approaches that have become popular in

international relations relatively recently offer great potential for shedding light on these complex problems.

**Poststructural Discourse Analysis**

Explaining foreign policy—and nuclear weapons policy as a subset—is difficult because of the multiplicity of sources and potential answers. In considering solutions to this problem as it relates specifically to the making of US nuclear weapons policy, it is useful to consider what foreign policy entails. Any foreign policy requires "an account, or story, of the problems and issues they are trying to address: there can be no intervention without a description of who the underdeveloped are, where they differ from the West, and how they can transform their identity."[34] From this perspective, foreign policies reflect, constitute, and potentially transform the identity of the states that are implementing them.

Language is especially important here, as it is through language that reality is constructed.[35] Material "stuff" is only meaningful to people because of the language with which it has become as becomes associated.[36] Collective understandings, articulated over and over about a particular thing endow that thing with meaning, and make it possible for it to be meaningfully related to other things. This semi-stable sets of meanings

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[34] Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War* (Routledge: New York 2006): xiv.

[35] This insight is drawn from Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (London: Peter Owen 1960).

[36] Marianne Jorgensen and Louise Phillips use the example of a flood. A flood is a material event with material consequences for those caught in rising water. However, those perceiving even may attribute the calamity to the science of meteorology, the consequences of political mismanagement, or "God's will." These varied accounts constitute the discourse through which the flood becomes part of social reality, and thus entail particular appropriate responses while vacating the possibility of others. See *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks 2002), 8-9.

collectively make up a discourse.[37] To understand policy as following from powerful or dominant discourses is to understand identity and policy as constitutive of one another. Identity does not cause policy as it were, instead policy makes and reaffirms identity and identity does the same for policy. This mutually constitutive process is captured in discourse, which is then an appropriate object of analysis for understanding the unfolding and content of the process.[38]

Approaching foreign and nuclear weapons policy in this way widens the focus from the narrow set of elites responsible for enunciating policy or putting their name on formal policy, to a broad set of actors including the media, academics, the broader public (both domestic and international), and oppositional politicians, all of whom collectively endow nuclear weapons, the international strategic environment, and the rest of the content of nuclear weapons policy with meaning, and in the process create coherent discernible discourses. In addition, addressing nuclear weapons policy as constitutive of identity addresses the material versus ideational methodological debate. Clearly, any analysis of nuclear weapons policy must account for the physical weapons themselves. However, a strictly materialist account of nuclear weapons policy would have trouble dealing with many kinds of specific questions such as: why did the US stockpile get so

[37] Language can only be said be semi-stable since there is no inherent connection between the words we use and physical reality. In addition any particular word's meaning derives from the meanings of words with which is either linked or differentiated from. As the relationship between words and physical reality can change, so too can words relations to each other rendering meanings "semi-stable" as they are part of a malleable social institution. See Jorgensen and Phillips (2002: 11).

[38] Charlotte Epstein makes this point in arguing that discourses "'do' two things of concern here. First they constitute a 'space of objects'" and they "constitute the identities of social actors, by carving out particular subject-positions, that is, sites from which social actors can speak, as the I/we of a discourse." In other words discourses make things real for people, and provide a place for them to speak and be understood. See *The Power of Words in International Relations: Birth of an Anti-Whaling Discourse* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press 2008).

large?[39] Given the obvious shortcomings of pure materialist accounts, but also the necessity of considering the impact of the material reality on prevailing ideas, an approach that considers the inseparability of ideas and material factors is necessary. The poststructural approach applied here intertwines the two by shifting focus away from ideas or material factors as causal variables and toward policy and identity as mutually constitutive. Identity here is built by social, discursive processes—it emerges through the process of articulation and rearticulation of *self* and *other*. Otherness, or creating an account of what one is not, powerfully shapes identity. In foreign policy, one only need to think of popular conceptions of "terrorist," "underdeveloped," "backward," or "communist" to see how language is deployed to underscore the threat of the other, while at the same time rearticulating and reaffirming a positive identity.

Much of what constituted the Cold War emerged from a set of documents which painted the Soviet as the US's radically threatening other. The "X" Article, NSC 68 and others are discursive artifacts from a project that loaded with meaning the words "Soviet" and "communist" and in the process shaped the post-war identity of the US. Nuclear weapons and the discourse that surrounds them has been an important part of this process of shaping US state identity through foreign policy. And since identity and policy are mutually constitutive, the nuclear weapons policy that entailed, emerged side by side with the associated identities.

[39] In 1960, the US possessed more than 18,000 nuclear weapons in its stockpile. No country that developed nuclear weapons after the US and Soviet Union ever approached such large numbers—ostensibly because no material case could be made for why such large arsenals would be needed. See Robert Norris and Hans M. Kristensen, "Global nuclear weapons inventories, 1945−2010," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (July 1, 2010).

This approach to the hypotheses proposed above suggests where one might look to shed light on the hypotheses above. Hansen suggests it leads to "an empirical research agenda that examines how foreign policy representations articulated by oppositional political forces, the media, academe, and popular culture reinforce or contest each other."[40] The research that follows applies this concept: if the identities associated with policy are social and relational, then much can be learned by studying the social production of those identities and the "knowledge" upon which they rely. Any claim of authority to make foreign policy must be built on some claim of knowledge. These claims of knowledge are linked together through references intertextually.[41] Key phrases, understandings, arguments, and examples, appear over and over in documents, speeches, testimony, and other artifacts of discourse. In this way they gain legitimacy for themselves and reinforce the legitimacy of that from which they draw. They also stabilize, if only temporarily, sets of meanings and associations that can be observed and understood as the meanings on which policy is constructed.

At the same time, oppositional or alternative discourses emerge that build upon wholly different sets of knowledge claims. These alternatives may use entirely different language, or they may interpret discursive artifacts mobilized by the hegemonic discourse in a different way. In either case, the discourses construct webs of meaning or fields of signification by linking or differentiating meanings.[42] Positive linkages connect related

[40] (2006: 7)

[41] For details on the concept of intertextuality and the related concept of interdiscursivity see Jorgensen and Phillips (2002: 73-4).

[42] The set of meanings connected through linking and differentiation that constitute language have been called webs of signification (Hansen 2006: 17)

concepts in a process that reinforces meanings that together constitute the discourse. At the same time, these meanings are juxtaposed against things that they don't mean, or are contrary to, through differentiation. This process which creates meaning and identity is unstable and never creates truly fixed or permanent meanings and identities. Instead work must be done, or performed, to continually reinforce the linkages and differentiations which are prone to shifting as meanings are contested and as rearticulations by actors vary. In this way, while meaning and identity may be stable in the short term, all that is discursively maintained is subject to "slips and instabilities."[43] If people begin to make linkages in a different way, for example associating "nuclear" with "genocide" instead of "strength," then the dominant meaning of the discourse on "nuclear" weapons might shift which might upset the consonance of identity and policy built on a particular account of the discourse and could potentially lead to a change in policy.

*Epistemology*

This dissertation investigates the discursive emergence of two competing conceptions of nuclear weapons, and their place in US foreign policy and international relations. The first is the discourses developed and propagated by elites and soon-to-be elites that became or nearly became the policy of the United States. As the discourse articulated by the president and his staff, this discourse is typically hegemonic. The alternative discourse emerged first in response to the US nuclear attack of Japan, but established itself in earnest as US nuclear testing and the tension of the Cold War ramped up during the 1950's. The analysis that follows will focus on showing how these discourse created "structures of signification," how they "produced" the world in which

[43] Ibid.: 18

they operated—particularly the "common sense" and policies of the time, and how they were practiced, or how effort or work was expended to (re)produce the discourses and their inherent conflict. These three foci are consonant with the "three analytically distinguishable bundles of theoretical claims" that characterize studies within the discourse analysis research program; these include "systems of signification," "productivity," and "play of practice."[44] Each is taken up in turn in the following sections.

*Systems of Signification*

As suggested above, the approach here conceives of meaning as produced through discourse, and made intelligible and semi-stable through the juxtaposition of one meaning to others through linking and differentiation. If these semi-stable structures of meaning built on "webs of intelligibility" produce meaning, it is possible to use texts to triangulate these meanings or "relational distinctions and hierarchies that order persons' knowledge about the things defined by discourse."[45] Essentially, this piece of the analysis establishes what the discourses look like at a point in time. Adding texts from other points in time that produce and reproduce the same discourses can show change over time, or the slippage of meaning including both gradual evolution of particular meanings, to rapid punctuated change. While a single text is insufficient to say anything about a discourse, since discourses are socially produced, the number of texts to use to establish the existence and nature of a discourse is driven by however many it takes to establish stable

[44] Jennifer Milliken, "The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods" *European Journal of International Relations* Vol. 5, No. 3 (1999): 228.

[45] Ibid.: 231

theoretical categories.[46] That is, at some point additional texts reproduce categories already established by the researcher without adding anything new. Texts should be those generated by a variety of subjects authorized to speak and act within the discourse in question.

For the current undertaking, presidents and their closest advisers are those most obviously authorized to articulate and rearticulate the dominant discourses. Their words, symbols, and metaphors create the sets of meanings upon which policy will be based. The key producers of the alternative or oppositional discourses are less obvious. However, they are also necessarily vocal and through a careful historic review as well as the investigation into the hegemonic discourse, these creators of the alterative discourse can be revealed. The analysis here will focus on the competing representations of nuclear weapons and their place in US foreign policy by these two discourses over time. Part of the driving motivation of this research is that insufficient attention has been paid to the impact of the nuclear taboo on policy. To remedy that deficiency this research will pay close attention to the construction of the concept of the nuclear taboo, but also to the ways in which those in the hegemonic discourse have both tiptoed around the taboo while also doing the work of its very constitution. The research will shed light on the ways in which the nuclear taboo has been given life through discourse, and the ways in which that discourse has interacted with the hegemonic discourses constructed by those who would oppose the taboo's very existence.

[46] Texts "embody and produce" discourses, but do not themselves constitute a discourse. Instead researchers must look to "bodies of texts" which encompass "the interrelations between texts, changes in texts, new textual forms, and new systems of distributing texts." Taken together these elements constitute a discourse over time. See Nelson Phillips and Cynthia Hardy, *Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002): 5.

*Productivity*

Consistent with discourse analysis, this research also investigates the manner through which the discourses under study produced the world by privileging certain actors to speak from inside the discourse, producing a sense of what kinds of policies would be logical and appropriate, and ultimately providing a broader "common sense" for the rest of society.[47] In particular, this research shows how the production of a "regime of truth" enabled foreign policies. For the presidential administrations at the heart of the case studies this meant a regime of truth from which a more aggressive nuclear weapons stance logically followed. Building more, or new nuclear weapons can only be justified if the discourse includes a story about the threats confronting the US, and the manner in which the proposed changes to nuclear weapons policy would address those threats and ultimately advance the security of the US. This productive activity is carried out through articulation—a process that uses the raw materials of language and culture to produce discourse.[48] This process in addition produces subject positions which calls on subjectivities to take the identities prescribed by the discourse and to then speak and reproduce that discourse.[49]

In this research, the focus will be on the related processes of producing a need for new or better nuclear weapons, as well as one which does the opposite. The case studies pay close attention to texts which construct an emerging common sense about what should be done about US nuclear weapons. Consonant with this attention, this work

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[47] For a discussion of the discursive production see Milliken (1999: 236) and Epstein (2008: 9-10).

[48] Milliken (1999: 239)

[49] Jutta Weldes, *Constructing National Interests: The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 163.

highlights the subject positions created by powerful speakers within the respective discourses. For example, the Eisenhower case study shows efforts to normalize nuclear weapons and justify continued testing, a process which produced a "common sense" that this was the only path forward in light of the discursive production of the threatening Soviet Union. This process created space for individuals to become pro-nuclear, or patriotic in support of the hegemonic discourse at the heart of the status quo. At the same time an oppositional discourse, uneasy about nuclear weapons and increasingly fearful of nuclear testing, created the subject position of the anti-nuclear activist—a new identity that persists to this day.

*Play of Practice*

Finally, following Milliken, this research uses the juxtapositional method and "subjugated knowledges" to highlight and understand the contingent nature of the discourses that are produced. These methods advocate pairing hegemonic representations with alternatives to show how the dominant "truth" is contingent, and built upon particular notions of what things are, or what things mean. By juxtaposing official or hegemonic accounts against those generated by the alternative discourse, it becomes possible to see clearly the contingent, discursive edifice upon which policy is built. These methods also shed light on the ways in which alternative discourses are constructed, and how they can be mobilized to resist the power of the hegemony.

These methods lend themselves especially well to the research undertaken in this dissertation. This research began with the assertion that the nuclear taboo is real, but that contemporary scholarship has not done enough to consider the broader ramifications of this insight. Instead most scholarship has labored to convince readers that indeed a

socially constructed taboo has a powerful effect on the prospect of nuclear weapons use. The success of scholars in making this case and at the same time highlighting the social processes that constitute the taboo raises the questions about the implications of the existence of the taboo in cases outside of those used to demonstrate the taboo's existence. From the perspective of this dissertation, much can be revealed about that question by juxtaposing the sets of knowledge and discourses that support hegemonic policy, or the policies implemented by presidents, with the emerging knowledge and discourses that powerfully opposed those policies and in the process yielded the nuclear taboo. Understanding the competing definitions of the same objects and events has the potential to clarify the political processes underlying nuclear policy construction and deepen our grasp of broader episodes of foreign policymaking.

**Case Studies**

Cases in this research were chosen with an eye toward the ways in which they illustrate the subject of inquiry. Following Phillips and Hardy, the three case studies summarized below and explored in depth in the following chapters, are "extreme" cases, or those in which the "theoretical implications are likely to be more visible".[50] While this research suggests continuity in the discourses that support the nuclear taboo, the content of these discourses is most sharply and often articulated when challenged.[51] At the same time, challenges to the nuclear taboo are moments when policymakers are most affected by the power of this norm. During periods in which presidents uphold the status quo, or

[50] (2002: 67)

[51] Epstein's discourse analysis takes "conflict rather than cooperation to be the main modality of political life". Consistent with Phillips and Hardy, this suggests the usefulness of conflict for exposing the contours of the political struggle and thus the discourses therein. Periods of cooperation only hint at the discursive struggles that had to be overcome to reach relative calm (2008: 12).

make no moves that increase the likelihood of nuclear use, the bearers of the nuclear taboo have less incentive to articulate their position, or to expend the energy to affect policy. From a research perspective this means fewer and less powerful texts to draw from to identify and understand the discourses they produce. Nevertheless, even though the case studies are focused on the presidential administrations of Eisenhower, Reagan, and Bush, the cases require research into the historical contexts that existed as each president began their tenures. That means that the administrations of Truman, Carter, and Clinton will all require scrutiny to understand the respective status quos that their successors would inherit. In addition, the chronological spread of the case studies allows for a meaningful look at the dynamics of the processes under consideration over the entire history of nuclear weapons themselves. This dissertation will conclude in part with a mini-case study considering the early nuclear weapons policy of Trump. The next sections will summarize each of the main case studies.

*Dwight D. Eisenhower*

In the early 1950's, much of what became fundamental about nuclear deterrence, prospects for nuclear war, and the nuclear taboo, had yet to be institutionalized in the thinking and policies of elites, or in the discourses of the wider public. However, the era would be marked by increasing awareness of nuclear weapons as *the* problem in foreign policy. On one hand, George Kennan and others had labored in the late 1940's to convince US policymakers that the Soviet Union could not be negotiated with, but that they would respond to force. At the time the US was rapidly expanding its nuclear capacity, testing the world's first hydrogen bomb in 1952, a project undertaken in part because of the Soviet atomic bomb test in 1949. As Eisenhower took office, officials

lamented the perceived edge the Soviets carried in conventional weapons, but thought that the US edge in nuclear weapons could be exploited to stave off war, or win it if need be. On the other hand, the use of atomic bombs on Japan had spawned the anti-nuclear movement. In 1947, John Hersey published "Hiroshima," a harrowing look at six survivors in the aftermath of the first US atomic attack.[52] The push and pull of these two forces—the belief that the Soviet Union was an irrational expansionary power, and increasing public anxiety about all things nuclear—would be the central conflict that would shape nuclear policy in this era. Eisenhower tried to escape from the emerging social prohibition on nuclear weapons through both reassurance as in the December 1953 "Atoms for Peace" speech, and through outright argumentation, as he and Dulles set out to do in March 1954 as they tried to expand their options in Quemoy and Matsu.

Efforts to condition the public to be more comfortable with nuclear power only stoked growing public anxiety. Throughout the middle and late 1950's, hundreds of nuclear tests and the nuclear fallout they generated fueled scientific and public awareness of the widespread hazards of radiation and nuclear fallout. The Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) devoted tremendous resources to beating back the emerging consensus that radiation from nuclear testing posed a danger to the US public. This case study shows the emergence of the powerful discourse at the heart of the nuclear taboo. Eisenhower's first year was marked by efforts to assuage public concerns about nuclear power, and prime the public for what the administration believed was a real possibility that nuclear weapons would be deployed in war. "Atoms for Peace" and their efforts in the late 1950's under the auspices of the AEC did the opposite: the public became even

[52] John Hersey, "Hiroshima," *The New Yorker*, August 31, 1946.

more alarmed, all the while the scientific community piled on evidence that nuclear testing posed a danger to the broader public. By the time Eisenhower left office, an entrenched and powerful anti-nuclear discourse had taken hold among the public in the US and other countries, notably the UK and Japan. When, just a few years later, the world narrowly averted nuclear war in the Cuban Missile Crisis, the foundation was already in place for a move toward arms control and away from the unconstrained arms racing that characterized the 1950's.

*Ronald W. Reagan*

In Reagan's case discourse analysis shows the intermingling and conflict between a president's own convictions—and associated discourses to which the president further lent power and legitimacy—and a widespread and powerful anti-nuclear weapons discourse. The showdown between competing conceptions of the role nuclear weapons should play in US foreign policy shaped the broader arc of nuclear weapons policy throughout the 1980's, a decade which would begin with a major defense and nuclear weapons buildup and conclude with the signing the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces and substantive progress on what would become the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, later signed by George H.W. Bush in 1991. Focusing on discourse reveals much about the turnabout that took place over the course of the Reagan presidency.

The shift in policy from buildup to treaty-building reflects the underlying clash between the Reagan discourse and the Nuclear Freeze Movement. Reagan first discussed nuclear weapons in 1945, beginning with the conviction that nuclear weapons should be abolished. As governor of California in 1967 he met with Edward Teller, father of the hydrogen bomb, at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in northern California. The

conversations there would lead to the centrality of missile defense in Reagan's conceptualization of US nuclear weapons politics. By the time he took office, he had been repeatedly persuaded not only of the viability of missile defense as part of US forces, but also that the Soviets had already deployed missile defense, and that the US deterrent had eroded.

All the while, the powerful anti-war (and anti-nuclear) sentiment that had built up during the Vietnam War would congeal into resistance to the initial Reagan defense stance. Their activity however had not been consequential—that would change due in part to the rise of Reagan, and more importantly the discursive work and activism of Randall Forsberg who founded the Nuclear Freeze Movement. From humble beginnings in 1980, the movement rapidly gained popularity culminating with a massive march in Central Park in June 1982. In addition to gathering and empowering various stripes of anti-war and anti-nuclear activists, the movement caught the attention of Reagan. Reagan tried unsuccessfully to undermine the group in various ways including claiming the movement had been founded by Soviet agents. The efforts did little to undermine the broad public support for the movement, and against the defense buildup in progress throughout the early 1980's.

Instead, Reagan's own conception of the Soviet Union as an "evil" expansionary power, and his Strategic Defense Initiative only underscored for the public the need to bring the nuclear arms race to a "freeze." Faced with overwhelming pressure, and the 1984 general election looming, Reagan's rhetoric began to shift. He said for the first time public, on March 31, 1982 that "I don't think there can be any winners" in a nuclear

war.[53] That summer nearly a million gathered in New York's Central Park in favor of the freeze movement.[54] The following year Reagan built upon his earlier rhetoric, telling the UN General Assembly that, "the elimination of these weapons-the zero option—is the best."[55] The following month he suggested to an aide that maybe he should propose eliminating all nuclear weapons. This shifting rhetoric was direct result of the power of the nuclear freeze movement. While Reagan's position on missile defense remained the same, his newfound openness to arms control tracks closely with the rise in popularity and influence of the Nuclear Freeze Movement. The renewed focus on arms control and subsequent successes cannot be understood outside of Reagan's serious confrontation with the Nuclear Freeze.

*George W. Bush*

In this case, I trace the emergence of the major challenge to the deeply entrenched nuclear taboo that took place under President George W. Bush between 2001 and 2005. Early in the Bush tenure, the administration launched a multiple-year effort to fund a new generation of low-yield nuclear weapons and nuclear-tipped earth penetrating-weapons—the so-called "bunker-busters." The discursive space for the push began almost immediately after Clinton defeated George H.W. Bush for the presidency in 1992. At that time, hawkish analysts and future members of the George W. Bush administration got to

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[53] "The President's News Conference," March 31, 1982. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42346.

[54] Paul Montgomery, "Throngs Fill Manhattan to Protest Nuclear Weapons," *New York Times*, June 13, 1982.

[55] "Address Before the 38th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, New York," September 26, 1983. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=40523.

work laying the discursive foundation of what would become a major push for a new generation of nuclear weapons. On December 31, 2001, the administration delivered the Nuclear Posture Review to Congress. The document and others that followed made the case that the emerging threats posed by rogue states and terrorism necessitated new types of nuclear weapons. In particular the administration stressed the need for low-yield nuclear weapons and nuclear-armed earth penetrating weapons (EPWs). They argued that the former would more effectively deter rogue states and terrorists, as well as providing more options to the president in case deterrence failed. EPWs were considered necessary to threaten enemy "hardened and deeply buried facilities."[56]

In the fall of 2002, the plans were introduced in Congress, and a debate which would run well into 2005 began. The conflict would reveal much about the state of the nuclear taboo and the contours of the prohibition given the particular content of the contending discourses. On the floors of the House and Senate, in the popular press, and among nuclear strategists, analysts, and scholars the debate raged. Discursively, the Bush administration sought to reconstruct and rearticulate the notion of deterrence. Dr. Keith Payne and others were enlisted to problematize "deterrence" and link the state of deterrence with their ongoing critique of the weakness of Clinton administration. They connected deterrence with terms like "inadequate," "Cold War," and "Soviet Union" in order to build the case that deterrence should be "enhanced." The Bush administration and supporters began touting "enhanced deterrence"—a concept to be differentiated from

[56] See for example Keith Payne, "Rationale and Requirements for US Nuclear Forces and Arms Control," National Institute of Public Policy (2001).

"traditional deterrence" or the practice used during the Cold War toward the Soviet Union which relied on "modest accuracy with large warhead yields."[57]

The alternative discourse, rearticulated and extended the discourse at the heart of the nuclear taboo, and in the process, eventually defeated the "Advanced Concepts Initiative" which included the "Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator" (RNEP). By contrast this discourse cast the proposed projects as undermining the practice of deterrence by refocusing the US nuclear arsenal on "warfighting" rather than deterrence. In addition, the alternative discourse succeeded at linking the new generation of nuclear weapons to the US nonproliferation efforts. From this perspective new nuclear weapons would undermine US leadership in the international nonproliferation regime, violate the spirit of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, and encourage others to ramp up their own nuclear weapons programs with larger, more sophisticated arsenals. The discursive efforts capitalized on widespread public support for nonproliferation goals, and aversion to nuclear war. Although the new weapons programs secured modest funding in FY2003 and FY2004, the alternative discourse eventually included even powerful members of the GOP. During the FY2005 budget debate it would be Republican David Hobson who played a pivotal role in the House Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee. From his position he satisfied organizational demands for funding—even if not for RNEP—while articulating the anti-nuclear discourse and effectively killing the program. Even though Hobson bucked the party line, it is telling that he confronted little pressure from Congressional colleagues or the White House. In all the episode showed the strength of the nuclear taboo discourse as its activation overwhelmed Bush

[57] Keith Payne, "The Nuclear Posture Review: Setting the Record Straight," *Washington Quarterly*, (Summer 2005): 142.

administration efforts to redefine deterrence and aggressively build up the US nuclear arsenal.

In the final chapter, I argue that the evidence compiled here shows a complex policymaking process through which organizational interests and presidents' own personal experience and biases confront the collection of forces that constitute the nuclear taboo head on. This confrontation provides an opening for dramatic results. In the 1950's, the central confrontation began. The latter part of the decade saw the emergence of a nuclear politics that would begin to include the anti-nuclear movement, much to the chagrin of the Eisenhower administration. Various strands of the movement would be part of the maintenance of the nuclear taboo from that point to the present. During the 1980's, the anti-nuclear movement and associated discourses pushed Reagan to engage in serious arms control efforts with the Soviet Union—a result that might have seemed unheard of to those who had listened to his campaign rhetoric. During the Bush years of the early 2000's, the heirs to the anti-nuclear discourse once again checked presidential ambition. Bush succeeded at dramatically increasing defense spending, but failed to secure the new generation of nuclear weapons he sought.

Finally, these conclusions will be used to make tentative observations about the Trump administration and the newest push for a new generation of nuclear weapons. Superficially, the current challenge resembles that of the George W. Bush administration. In fact, Keith Payne, lead architect of the Bush discourse on nuclear weapons and their utility also co-authored Trump's Nuclear Posture Review released in February of 2018. The final chapter will consider the emerging discourse on which the Trump challenge is

constructed, and build on the case studies to suggest the direction in which the confrontation is headed and areas on which activists, journalists, and scholars should focus as the process unfolds.

# CHAPTER II

## THE EISENHOWER ADMINISTRATION: EMERGENCE OF INTERNATIONAL NORMS ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS POLICY

In the years that followed the end of World War II in which the US first developed and used the atomic bomb, policy with regard to the new weapons and the technology from which it came, struggled to keep pace with a continually contested and dynamic reality. During those years, the Truman administration compiled a mixed legacy on atomic weapons. Truman made the infamous decision to use the atomic bomb against Japan, and it was under his watch that the US began the most massive accumulation of destructive capacity in history, a course of action that coincided with reductions in spending on conventional arms—the result of which would be a greater reliance on the still fledgling nuclear arsenal. At the same time, Truman also took steps to establish the categories of "conventional" and "weapons of mass destruction." He refused to treat atomic bombs as any other weapon, and indeed prevented military leaders from planning to use the weapons. In addition, the first Atomic Energy Commission head Thomas Murray—who emphasized the moral threat of nuclear weapons—helped shape Truman's thinking on nuclear weapons.[58]

In spite of Truman's reticence, the trajectory of nuclear weapons policy inherited by the Dwight D. Eisenhower administration was one of major growth in nuclear stockpiles, with those weapons playing a major role in defense planning. The struggle

[58] Nina Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 100.

against the Soviet Union during the Cold War was supported by nearly universal elite agreement that the Soviet Unions was expansionist and hopelessly uncooperative. With this worldview prominent among the executive agencies and military staff, Eisenhower took the helm in January 1953. This chapter reexamines primary source materials in an historical case study on the emergence of nuclear weapons policy during the Eisenhower presidency against the backdrop of a developing taboo on the use of nuclear weapons in combat. The history, and the discursive artifacts of that history, are examined through the lens of discourse analysis. As such, the research was conducted with an eye for the ways in which actors created texts, rhetorically or in letters, documents, or other communication in which they articulated and rearticulated the ensemble of beliefs and symbols that (1) shaped and reshaped the Cold War, and (2) established or restated the evolving thinking and official policy on the role of nuclear weapons in the Cold War (3) constructed and reconstructed norms on the appropriate uses of nuclear weapons especially, but not limited to, the nuclear taboo.

The primary research in this chapter is based on materials housed at the Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas. There, the research focused on three areas within the broader umbrella of nuclear weapons policy during the Eisenhower presidency: the emergence of “Atoms for Peace” as both a speech and a set of policies; discussions of nuclear weapons testing, and proposals to ban atmospheric testing; and documents related to the administration and AEC’s management of radioactive fallout from nuclear testing and its human consequences. This paper also employs secondary research focused on Eisenhower’s experience with nuclear weapons before he became president, as well as his administration’s management of the crisis in the Taiwan Strait in

late 1954 until April 1955. These episodes were chosen because they include moments in which officials extended, clarified and rearticulated the discourse on the appropriate role for nuclear weapons in US strategy.

This case was chosen because of its place as a "political moment," a time when a new social or institutional order is possible, and the future is uncertain. Edkins describes the political moment as giving rise to a situation, "in which people are forced to make decisions, to 'act', in a manner for which they can find no guarantee in the social framework. That same framework is precisely missing, suspended, because it is in the process of reinvention."[59] In the current context, the state of nuclear weapons politics of the early 1950's remained unsettled, and provided an opening for the political moment. Truman's ambivalence toward nuclear weapons, characterized both by a stated abhorrence of their destructive capacity but also a willingness to build up the US stockpile in number of weapons and destructive yield, left the door open for—and indeed obligated—the Eisenhower administration to forge a new policy. This openness was supported by a rapidly changing nuclear technology in the US, and a dawning realization of the increasingly destructive nuclear capabilities of the Soviet Union. Deep uncertainty about how the immediate future would shake out provided opening for the administration to establish a new set of policies, behaviors, and norms about nuclear weapons as well as a conceiving of a whole worldview consistent with this new discourse.

At the same time, another political moment brewed at the level of public opinion. The same forces of technological change and a lack of established thinking or hegemonic discourse presented the US public with their own political moment. Immediately after

[59] Jenny Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations: Bringing the Political Back In* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), 7.

WWII, the public overwhelmingly approved of the use of atomic bombs in Japan, with half "not at all worried" about the atomic bomb.[60] By the early 1950's, however, both of these features were poised to change. Approval of the bombings of Nagasaki and Hiroshima came with the public largely ignorant of the danger of radiation, and the notion of widespread regional and even global threats to public health. In addition, in the year Eisenhower took office, the Soviet Union detonated their first hydrogen bomb. The two superpowers now possessed weapons that could clearly cause catastrophic destruction, and for many that meant a decisive weapon now lay in the hands of the enemy. The public stood at a moment of openness in which any number of takes on the emerging technology could have become preeminent. This chapter will explore the ways in which the public experienced that openness and moved from a wide and general anxiety about nuclear weapons—but one which did not exert influence over elite policymaking—in the beginning of the decade, to a place at the end of Eisenhower's tenure, in which large organized international movements had begun to exert influence over policy at the highest levels.

**Pre-Presidency: The Eisenhower Discourse from 1945 to 1953**

Central to understanding the emergence of nuclear weapons policies out of the discursive milieu is the role played by the discourses informing a president's approach. Eisenhower played central and active role in the construction of nuclear weapons policy, and indeed in the forging of the meaning of nuclear weapons for both the US national security apparatus. These meanings, and the discourses in which they were embedded,

[60] Tannenwald (2007: 91)

were inherited from the Truman administration, military strategists, atomic scientists, as well as Eisenhower's own formative learning on nuclear strategy and politics.

The future president's first interaction with the atomic bomb took place with the first atomic explosion near Alamogordo, New Mexico in July 1945, after which he expressed "grave misgivings" to Secretary of War Stimson.[61] Those misgivings aside, there is dispute as to the degree to which Eisenhower objected to the deployment of the atomic bomb during WWII. Alperovitz claims that Eisenhower registered an objection with Stimson after the first test in New Mexico, specifically arguing that he felt Japan would be defeated, and that use of the atomic bomb would turn world opinion against the US.[62] Bernstein disputes the credibility of Alperovitz sources, as they were only the words of the president himself in an interview in 1960, and his 1963 memoir. Instead, Bernstein suggests that Eisenhower would have shared the conviction of General George Marshall who at the time insisted that atomic bombs should be used only on military targets, and also seemed to assume that war in the Pacific would continue well into the fall of 1945. Bernstein's account rests on charging Eisenhower with lying repeatedly, and inferring his own opinion from a mentor. For the purposes of the current endeavor it is sufficient to say that Eisenhower had become critical of the use of the atomic bomb in Japan specifically and also about its more general use in war by 1946, though it is also difficult to argue that he would feel the need to revise this history in memoirs written almost 20 years later. While others in the military and government would push for

[61] Gar Alperovitz, *Atomic Diplomacy, Hiroshima and Potsdam: The Use of the Atomic Bomb and the American Confrontation with Soviet Power* (Expanded and Updated ed.) (New York: Penguin, 1985), 14.

[62] Brian Madison Jones, *Abolishing the Taboo Dwight D. Eisenhower and American Nuclear Doctrine, 1945-1961*. (Solihull, England: Helion & Company, 2011), 23-4.

preventive war with the Soviets as early as 1948, Eisenhower had apparently been moved by works such as Bernard Brodie's *The Absolute Weapon*, which he distributed to his staff in his capacity as Army Chief of Staff. Among other foundational arguments Brodie argued, "Thus far the chief purpose of our military establishment has been to win wars. From now on the chief purpose must be to avert them. It can have almost no other useful purpose."[63] Whatever his particular reaction to Brodie, Eisenhower would remain opposed to preventive warfare time after time beginning in as early as 1946, when he argued to his son John, "The readiness of people to discuss war as a means of advancing peace…is a contradiction in terms."[64]

*Advent of the Cold War*

Amidst rumblings in Eastern Europe and increasing tension between the remaining superpowers, Churchill famously contended in March 1946 that "an iron curtain has descended across the continent."[65] In February 1946, George Kennan submitted his "Long Telegram" where he argued that the rivalry between the US and Soviet Union was a showdown between communism and capitalism, and one which would lead the Soviet government to expand and attempt to dominate foreign governments.[66] On September 24 of that year Clark Clifford delivered the Clifford-Elsey

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[63] Bernard Brodie, Frederick Sherwood Dunn, et. al., *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order* (New York: Harcourt, 1946), 76.

[64] Quoted by Robert Bowie and Richard Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 48.

[65] Winston Churchill, "The Sinews of Peace (Iron Curtain Speech)," March 5, 1946, Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri available through The International Churchill Society, accessed May 20, 2018, https://winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1946-1963-elder-statesman/the-sinews-of-peace/.

[66] George Kennan to Secretary of State James Byrnes, February 22, 1946, "Long Telegram," The National Security Archive, The George Washington University, nsarchive.gwu.edu/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm. The Long Telegram responded to queries from the Treasury about Soviet participation in the newly created World Bank and International Monetary Fund. The views therein were made into practical

report, a highly influential and circulated document that reiterated the threat of the Soviet Union while additionally advocating for a policy of containment.[67]

Truman's national security strategy developed against this backdrop of increasing suspicion and fear of the freshly articulated Soviet threat. The "Truman Doctrine" came in response to events in Turkey and Greece which seemed to confirm the conclusions of Kennan, Clifford, and others. In Turkey, the Soviet Union pushed for territory on the Dardanelles straits, a geo-strategically important seaway, with direct access to Greece, where the British were running low on funds to support the nationalist government against communist dissidents. According to the Clifford-Elsey report, the Soviets would use this crisis to set up a friendly government in Greece consistent with their expansionist ideology. The Truman Doctrine then built on the perception that the Soviet Union's behavior in Turkey, Greece, Iran and elsewhere was aggressive and threatened the security of the US. Truman announced the doctrine in a speech to Congress on March 12, 1946, in which he pledged US support for states threatened by authoritarian forces. The pledge broadened the circumstances in which the US would intervene on behalf of other states, and underscored the claims made by Kennan and Clifford.

policy recommendations in the Clifford-Elsey Report. See Clark Clifford & George Elsey, September 24, 1946, "American Relations with the Soviet Union", Harry Truman Library, Conway Files, Truman Papers, https://trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/pdf/4-1.pdf. Kennan published the views the following year under the pseudonym "X" in *Foreign Affairs*. See X. "The Sources of Soviet Conduct". *Foreign Affairs* 25, no. 4 (1947): 566–582.

[67] "Containment" in 1946 had little substance in terms of policy. It would work as a guiding principle for policy makers from 1947 until Eisenhower took office in January 1953 (Bowie & Immerman 1998: 12).

On November 24, 1948, Truman approved a statement of national security strategy, NSC 20/4.[68] The document captured the mood of US policy makers since 1946, painting an image of a hostile and expansionist Soviet Union, and advocating "short of war" responses aimed at undermining Soviet efforts. This entailed building alliances, employing propaganda, and using economics to disrupt Soviet designs and strengthen those of the US and its allies. Also, notably here, the document contended that while Soviet ground forces might be able to overrun Europe and the Middle East, and at least cause major damage to the UK, they would be deterred from carrying out such an action by the US monopoly on atomic bombs.

Consonant with the specific role now envisioned for atomic bombs in the US strategic plan, Truman also created the Strategic Air Command (SAC) in March 1946. SAC would blossom as the branch of the Air Force that would be responsible for the delivery of atomic bombs. In 1948, a few events led to the increased salience of SAC. First, a communist-led coup took place in Czechoslovakia in February, supporting the working assumptions of top officials. Second, the Soviets blockaded West Berlin in March preventing US, French, and British supplies from reaching the city which had been isolated and surrounded by Soviet controlled East Germany at the conclusion of WWII. These two events convinced James Forrestal and others that Truman's reticence at increasing defense budgets would need to be overcome. However, in spite of the threats apparently conveyed by the events in Europe, Truman refused to lift his previous

[68] US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the US* (*FRUS*), "Report to the President by the NSC, NSC 20/4," November 23, 1948, 1948, General, the United Nations, Vol. 1, Part 2, p 662-668. https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1948v01p2/d60

constraint on the defense budget and it remained at $14.4 billion.[69] The lower budget would mean a larger role for air defense and nuclear weapons, with a corresponding smaller role for conventional forces. The US had by this time increased the number and variety of atomic weapons significantly with total weapons going from 9 in 1946, to 50 in 1948, and 841 by 1952.[70]

As mentioned above this increase in weapons would coincide with the increased salience of SAC. In October 1948, Curtis LeMay assumed the position of commanding general of SAC. LeMay improved SAC both in its capacity to carry out the missions associated with strategic air defense, as well as its position in the national security scrum for resources and favor.[71] The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) codified this larger role being carved out for nuclear weapons in December 1949 with Offtackle, a "Joint Outline Emergency War Plan". The plan covered the US response to a Soviet attack: major atomic retaliation against both urban and industrial targets followed by extended full-scale conventional war.[72] 1949 also saw the end of the US atomic monopoly, as the Soviets tested their first atomic device in Kazakhstan in August. Although the development had been widely anticipated, it occurred sooner than many expected. In response Truman expanded nuclear production facilities in October, and in January 1950,

[69] Bowie & Immerman (1998: 14)

[70] By 1960 the US had a nuclear arsenal of over 18,600 weapons. Robert Norris and Hans Kristensen, "Global Nuclear Weapon Inventories, 1945-2013," *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* Vol. 69(5), (2013: 75-81).

[71] Bowie & Immerman (1998: 15)

[72] For a description of Offtackle see Kenneth Condit, "History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy Vol. II: 1949-1949,. Office of Joint History, and Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington DC (1996).

approved the development—and soon after production—of "the super", or hydrogen bomb.

*NSC 68*

By 1950, the prospect of an atomic-armed Soviet Union as well as a future fusion bomb led the administration to reappraise the US strategy. The result—NSC 68—would be written primarily by Paul Nitze as part of a State and Defense department working group.[73] Because many of the assumptions and arguments made by document would carry over well into the Eisenhower administration, it is worth noting the important points. First, it had already been assumed that the Soviet possessed superior ground forces—and with their first atomic bomb test it was now assumed that by 1954, the "year of maximum danger", that they would be able to launch a devastating attack on the US. The main departure of NSC 68 from the status quo strategy was urgency.[74] Even while policy makers considered the Soviets a threat from 1946 to 1950, NSC 68 upped the ante, "The issues that face us are momentous, involving the fulfillment or destruction not only of this Republic but of civilization itself".[75] The dire language came from an appreciation of the growing atomic capability of the Soviets. For policy, this implied a more positive approach—for fear that "defensive containment" would be ineffective against a maniacally expansionist and atomic armed power. Although the document left the precise meaning of this positive approach vague, it most definitely included a major military

[73] For full text of this document see "A Report to the NSC: NSC 68," April 12, 1950, Harry Truman Library, President's Secretary's File, Truman Papers, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/pdf/10-1.pdf.

[74] NSC 68 contended that by 1954 the Soviet might have 200 atomic weapons of which they would be able to hit the US with about half.

[75] US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) (1950, 1: 238)

buildup including a major buildup of US atomic weapons, continued development and eventually production of the hydrogen bomb, and a buildup of conventional arms including by NATO allies whose forces were under the command of Eisenhower. In terms of relations between the US and Soviet Union, NSC 68 warned that major agreements and cooperation would be contingent upon the buildup achieving a retraction of Soviet power, and changes in the Soviet system. SAC, which had grown in prominence under LaMay, interpreted NSC 68 to mean that their forces should be able to "destroy Soviet war-making industry, to neutralize its atomic delivery capacity, and to delay the Soviet advance into Western Europe."[76]

*The Early 1950's: No Consensus*

The final two years of the Truman administration featured consistent infighting over the appropriate budgets, the role of nuclear weapons, and the prospects for fighting conventional war in Europe. Although "Offtackle" planned on responding to a Soviet attack with a major SAC offensive, the assumption remained that the attack would not be decisive and that a major mobilization and conventional war would follow in Europe.[77] However, plans for building up the militaries of Europe ran into economic constraints, even as the US confronted its own budget difficulties. Easing tensions on the Korean Peninsula in 1951 as well as deficits projected by Bureau of the Budget increased pressure to slow military spending. All the while Nitze and others continued to argue that such levels of spending would be insufficient to achieve the strategy of NSC 68. The

[76] Bowie and Immerman (1998: 24)

[77] Condit (1996: 162-3)

result of this tension would be "stretch-out"—a compromise that capped military expending at $44 billion in FY52 and $60 billion in FY53.[78]

Two documents capture the evolving debate over strategy vis-a-via the Soviet Union at the end of the Truman presidency. Truman approved the first, NSC 135, in July 1952.[79] While affirming the primary objectives of NSC 68, NSC 135 took a more sanguine view about the potential behavior of the Soviet Union. In NSC 135, Charles Bohlen—a State Department official, and the primary author—argued that the Soviets would prioritize security of their own regime more so than had been emphasized in the past. From Bohlen's view, the Soviets were less likely to start a war if they had doubts that the regime would survive. As a result, they could be deterred with a force that could put the Soviet regime at risk with a strong US retaliation.

Along with this argument came a prescription for measured, rather than aggressive, pressure on the Soviet Union with an understanding that even many of the measures underway might not reduce the threat to the US. This view concurred with a 1952 CIA report which argued that the Soviet regime showed signs of stability.[80] Such stability would not be easily shaken through the sort of "short of war" pressure that the US had been applying. NSC 141 continued the theme, revealing that military programs had not been adjusted to seriously confront the force requirements central to the objectives of NSC 68. Nitze, as the mind behind NSC 68, criticized the revised strategy, asking if "we are really satisfied with programs which in fact have the objective of

[78] Bowie and Immerman (1998: 27)

[79] Report to the NSC by the Executive Secretary (Lay), August 15, 1952, *FRUS* (1952-1954, 2: 80-113).

[80] "Estimate of the World Situation through 1954," *FRUS* (1952-1954, 2: 187-8).

making us a sort of hedge-hog, unattractive to attack…"[81] His question implied the de facto strategy that had emerged. NSC 141 conceded that the US would not have sufficient conventional forces for up to three years even with increased spending on particular programs. If conventional forces would not be up to the moderated objectives of NSC 135, the US would be left with nuclear deterrence as its bulwark against the Soviet Union. US reliance on nuclear deterrence was unprecedented, with Nitze warning that SAC might not actually be able to mount a retaliation if the hypothetical Soviet first strike hit US forces while they were still on the ground. NATO shared this dissatisfaction with the status quo and debated among other things, the impact of nuclear weapons on strategy from 1950 through 1952. As the Truman era came to a close, no consensus existed about what should be done about the Soviet Union or with nuclear weapons, either in NATO, or even within the administration's agencies and branches.

This brief look at the politics that surrounded atomic weapons in the period leading up to Eisenhower's presidency reveal a few major discourses that would be powerfully affect the policy that would emerge throughout the 1950's. Eisenhower himself was apparently moved by what he read from Brodie, and his co-authors.[82] The discourse tapped into and powerfully rearticulated by *The Absolute Weapon* was ahead of its time in some ways. Many who saw the destruction wrought by atomic bombs were unconvinced of the military and political implications of the weapon, and their critiques of Brodie's conclusions found an audience. However, soon after Eisenhower took office the US would test the hydrogen bomb. The awesome scale of the new weapon, and near

[81] Bowie and Immerman (1998: 32)

[82] Brodie et. al. (1946)

certainty that Soviets would also have the capability to build their own in a short time, convinced many that indeed atomic weapons would be transformative with regard to warfare and international relations.[83] It would seem that Eisenhower had become aware of the danger of escalation in total war when both sides have nuclear weapons, the difficulty of defense, and the prospect that war between nuclear armed states would not be winnable without tremendous suffering well before those points would be underscored by the hydrogen bomb. In addition senior military and national security staff had conflicting views about the prospects of "rolling back" the Soviet regime per NSC 68, and building up conventional forces in order to achieve those objectives. The disagreement stemmed from a fundamental divergence over whether the Soviet Union would continue to be deterred by atomic weapons and what was widely agreed to be insufficient conventional forces. Adjudicating these competing discourses in order to form new policy would be the challenge for the new president, sworn in on January 1953.

**The Early Eisenhower Administration: Candor and Atoms for Peace**

Eisenhower entered the White House with major critiques of Truman's management of the budget and resource disputes, and with his own dynamic views about the role atomic weapons would play in the broader security policy of the new administration. These views had been shaped by Brodie, the Smyth report, and two Atomic Energy Commission briefings that had taken place shortly after the election.[84]

[83] Hydrogen bombs, or fusion-type weapons, are hundreds to thousands of times more powerful than atomic bombs, or fission-type weapons. For more on the "nuclear revolution" or the fundamental changes to international relations that took place with the dawn of the atomic age see Robert Jervis, *The Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Cornell University Press, 1989).

[84] Leslie Groves, director of the Manhattan Project, and physicist Henry Smyth wrote "The Smyth Report." Released only days after the second atomic bomb destroyed Nagasaki, the report served as an official administrative history for public consumption. As such the details included were those deemed common knowledge in scientific communities—mostly nuclear physics. Details of the engineering, metallurgical,

Upon taking office, a special panel appointed by outgoing Secretary of State Dean Acheson presented the new president with an intensive study of the role of atomic weapons in the US arsenal as well as the prospects for disarmament. Although the document was ordered by the Truman administration, it would be central to the unfolding of thinking and policy in the new administration. As with Brodie's influential book, Eisenhower distributed the report to his staff—this time the NSC, and asked they become familiar with its prescriptions.[85]

*"Armaments and American Policy"*

In the summer of 1952, Acheson appointed a panel consisting of Vannevar Bush, John Dickey, Allen Dulles, Joseph Johnson, and Robert Oppenheimer with McGeorge Bundy as secretary (the Oppenheimer panel), to produce a study on disarmament and US policy, which they completed in January 1953.[86] At that time the panel passed on the newly completed document, "Armaments and American Policy" to the incoming Eisenhower administration.[87] In the first part of the study, the panel paints a grim picture of the process and results of arms control negotiations. From their view the US had been stymied in its goal of arms control in spite of sincere effort, "The proposals of the United States were the result of the most searching study, and they were presented with genuine

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and other challenges met by Manhattan Project scientists were omitted. See Henry D. Smyth and Leslie Groves, *A General Account of Methods of Using Atomic Energy for Military Purposes under the Auspices of the United States Government, 1940-1945* Princeton University Press, 1947. On the AEC briefings that followed the 1952 election see Bowie and Immerman (1998: 223).

[85] Bowie and Immerman (1998: 223).

[86] For details on the composition of the panel, and the panel's purpose see "Memorandum for the files," May 8, 1952, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, National Security Affairs, 2(II): 924-6.

[87] Vannevar Bush, Robert Oppenheimer, et. al., "Armaments and American Policy," January 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, NSC Series, box 2.

good will with a major attempt to bring a terrifying new force under international control, even at a time when the US had a monopoly on atomic weapons. But in all the debate and discourse which has followed on Mr. Baruch's opening speech, there has never been any sign that agreement was remotely likely."[88] From the panel's view, Soviet policy and personnel were the obstacle. They argue, "The general record of the Soviets in diplomacy is one in which the meaning of words has been distorted, the privacy of discussions violated, and trust repaid by trickery."[89] In addition to Soviet intransigence, the authors point to failed efforts to limit arms during the interwar period in both Europe and the Pacific as evidence that arms control is inherently tied to larger international issues such that it is impossible to take on disarmament without considering the wider context of the contest between the West and the Soviet Union. This last argument, would be one that would become part of the larger discourse on arms control throughout the 1950's, with this being perhaps the first time that it would be made to Eisenhower himself.

Part II of "Armaments and American Policy" makes three important points which would be important for emerging nuclear weapons policy. First, advances in the science and industrial processes associated with atomic energy were leading to more efficient production and a massive accumulation of destructive capacity for the US and Soviet

[88] Bush et. al. (January 1953: I-1). This is a reference to Bernard Baruch's speech to United Nations Atomic Energy Committee on June 15, 1946. Baruch had advised several presidents on issues of national security and economics, as well as representing the US on the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission, where he pitched his famous plan. The plan built off of ideas in the Acheson-Lilienthal report, and proposed an international agency that would own all fissile material, as well as the means of producing atomic power. Consonant with this all states in possession of atomic weapons (only the US at the time), would turn over their weapons to the agency. The agency would then be able to share its resources with states interested in pursuing the peaceful applications of atomic power. The Soviet Union rejected the plan on the grounds that the inspection regime would be intrusive, and likely because they were in the process of developing their first atomic weapon. See Randy Rydell, "Going for Baruch: The Nuclear Plan That Refused to Go Away," Arms Control Association, June 1, 2006. https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2006_06/LookingbackBaruch).

[89] Ibid.: I-2

Union. Importantly however, they concede that while they can guess at Soviet production of fissile material from the three atomic tests, "From this sort of information it is not possible to make any close estimate of Soviet atomic strength." In spite of this, they note that advances in the science has multiplied the destructiveness available from the same amount of fissile material, and that there is no reason that the Soviet Union will not experience the same sorts of advances. The document argues that when stockpiles reach a certain size, and even to some degree at present, the operative variable is not destructiveness—which is not in question, but the ability to deliver these atomic weapons. They go on, "constantly expanding stockpiles cannot in and of themselves bring catastrophe. It will be necessary for those that wish to have a full use of their atomic ammunition to spend great efforts on carriers of one sort or another, and it will be possible to attempt a defense against such carriers."[90] This insight foreshadows the central role that delivery systems would end up playing in arms control for decades to come. The debate over the possibility of defense against nuclear weapons is noted by the panel who urge more study, but also make a theoretical argument that with enough weapons the Soviet Union will be able to destroy the US economy completely. The exercise in considering the implications of ever-increasing stockpiles led the panel to the possibility of stability through nuclear deterrence, "If the atomic arms race continues, therefore, we seem likely to have within a relatively few years a situation in which the two great powers will each have a clear-cut capacity to do very great damage to the other, while each will be unable to exert that capacity except at gravest risk of receiving similar terrible blows in return. And this situation is likely to be largely unaffected by the fact

[90] Bush et. al. (January 1953: II-4)

that one side may always have many more weapons than the other."[91] In such a situation they argue, stability may arise from both sides being unwilling to "flip the switch." They note however that the road to such a stability might be hazardous, with both sides being tempted to launch a pre-emptive nuclear strike.

The second point made by Part II is that nuclear weapons had functionally placed the hearts of the two societies in the front lines of any future conflict. While in the past wars between great powers often took place far away from the capitals or social bases of the respective societies, a future world war would bring the battle to the doorsteps of each society. The fact that capitals and major cities could now be completely destroyed rendered them potentially decisive targets. They do not discount the role of conventional armies or the fact that war may still be fought over territory at the margins, only that the two major powers were now "strategic neighbors," able to put each other's heartlands at risk with atomic weapons.[92]

And finally, the last point rehashes the major decisions undertaken by the US since the advent of the atomic bomb, and notes the danger of the de facto posture. The panel lists the key decisions in US policy including: the development of the atomic weapons; use of the bomb against Japan; maintaining a monopoly on control of the atomic bomb; the decision to build weapons in quantity; the incorporation of atomic bombs into military planning; and planning any major war to be characterized by a major atomic strike on the military and industrial centers of the enemy—an "overpowering strategic blow." It is this last piece that the panel found problematic. They foresaw any

[91] Bush et. al. (January 1953: II-5)

[92] Ibid.: II-6

major war effort against the Soviet Union being characterized by a major SAC offensive in which as many atomic bombs as possible would be dumped on strategic targets in the Soviet Union with great speed—a necessary component in such an attack. While such an attack could have been successful, other studies such as "Offtackle" maintained that a strike as such would not be decisive, leaving the conflict in the hands of conventional forces.[93] The Oppenheimer panel conceded that the strength of conventional capabilities possessed by the US at this time left no choice but to escalate to atomic war—even in the face of studies suggested that such an attack would not be decisive. The panel goes on to underscore what such a strike meant for the prospects for defense, "The object of the attack is to 'saturate' the defense, and the whole concept seems closely connected with a sense that defense against this kind of warfare—for us as for the enemy—is not really possible."[94] This insight brought to the fore the imbalance between concern with what to do with the US atomic bomb and what to do about the Soviet atomic bomb. This stems in part from, "the simple but unpleasant fact that the bomb works both ways."[95]

In the final section the panel makes recommendations based on their conclusions. These recommendations include: a policy of candor toward the American people with regard to the atomic age; harmonizing atomic weapon policy with the goal of building community among the "free world"; focusing on building a continental defense; disengaging from disarmament talks under the auspices of the United Nations; and improving communication with the leaders of the Soviet Union. These recommendations

[93] For a history of the deliberations and details behind Offtackle see Condit (1996: 159).

[94] Bush et. al. (January 1953: II-8)

[95] Ibid.: II-9

carried real weight with Eisenhower and the administration and would be topics that would echo through the administration's eight years. The first recommendation of candor toward the American people would be a major component of the administration's approach to atomic weapons during its first year.

*NSC 151*

Acheson had commissioned "Armaments and American Policy" in April 1952, with the final report being delivered on January 19, 1953. The report came up for discussion at a meeting of the NSC on February 18. The president and his advisors discarded the recommendation that the US disengage from disarmament talks under the UN, noting the psychological impact of doing so. However, on May 8, an interim report—NSC 151—issued by a new ad hoc committee of the NSC showed the progress of administration implementation of the policy of candor with the American people with regard to nuclear weapons.[96] The original presentation reasoned that wise governments depend on the support of the people, and that the danger of the arms race as it unfolded had not been sufficiently conveyed to either the people or even most policy makers. The rapidly increasing danger of the arms race, and the growing potential of the Soviets to also wield atomic weapons, had left the American public and its government "dangerously unaware."[97] The document goes on to recommend the adoption of a policy of candor and begins to define what that will entail. While technical information about the bomb would of course remain secret, the committee recommended that a program be

[96] "Note by the Executive Secretary to the National Security Council on Armaments and American Policy (NSC 151)", FRUS, 1952-1954, National Security Affairs, Volume II, Part 2, Document 88 (May 8, 1953: 1151-9).

[97] Bush et. al. (January 1953: III-7)

adopted where the essential facts of the arms race and its associated danger would be conveyed to the public regularly. They argued that disclosure of these dangers, "would mean that the President and his principal officers, would regularly take the people into their confidence in the conviction that in a democracy an informed public is the best safeguard against extreme public reactions, such as frightened despair on the one hand or an impulsive sentiment for preventive war on the other."[98] In addition to their concern for democracy and informed decision making on the part of the public, the government, and even allied states, NSC 151 points out the vacuum in meaning that still existed in the rapidly developing atomic age. This represented an opportunity for the US government to build a meaning that would serve its interests. Specifically they argue, "No physical phenomenon is inherently good or bad in itself. Atomic weapons must be considered part of our overall weapons system, so that the question of morality will relate only to the way in which this or any other weapon is used. This will give us greater freedoms of action with respect to all elements of our military strength."[99] The argument would likely win favor with a president characterized by a style of respect for the dignity of the office, "a need for restraint on the tremendous power of the executive office…, and a conviction that a president must not exploit his powers for any purpose beyond the scope of his constitutional duties."[100] The report and its recommendations then appealed directly to Eisenhower's convictions about the role of government vis-à-vis its people.

[98] NSC 151, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, National Security Affairs, Volume II, Part 2, Document 88 (May 8, 1953: 1153).

[99] Ibid.

[100] Jones (2011: 18)

In its discussion, NSC 151 also considered benefits of candor with the US public on relations with the Soviets as well as with allies. The Soviets, they argued, would not become privy to any new information of which they were not aware through the various programs of candor. Information that might be novel to the Soviets would only be released if such revelation provided a net advantage to the US. Further, they contend that greater and more accurate information about US capabilities would keep the Soviets aware of the danger posed by a US retaliation and could aid in deterring a first strike. Allies would benefit from having a clear picture of US policy, and of the potential efficacy of the atomic deterrent.

The report included an annex that discussed type of information to be shared with the American people. The emphasis here underscored the danger and reality of the arms race as it unfolded. Several important points were thought to be worth sharing with the public under the banner of candor. First, though the US had a lead in atomic production, that lead was temporary, and would be meaningless when the Soviet Union reached a point where they could "injure the US critically"; at that point the US would have no effective defense.[101] This was tied to the argument that after a certain point in the development of atomic science, advances in weapons production proceeded rapidly—and there was no reason to believe that Soviet development would not keep pace with that of the US. In addition, large stockpiles would shift importance to delivery systems.[102] The Soviets already had intercontinental delivery methods, with these methods improving for

[101] NSC 151, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, National Security Affairs, Volume II, Part 2, Document 88 (May 8, 1953: 1158).

[102] This point clearly echoes the conclusion reached by the Oppenheimer panel on the increasing salience of nuclear weapon delivery systems.

both sides over the next ten to fifteen years. In addition, and foreshadowing "Atoms for Peace," the document called for candor about the prospect of peaceful atomic capabilities developing which could elevate the living standards of the "free world nations."[103] And finally, the authors saw value in sharing their conviction that, "The atomic weapon varies only in degree from other weapons…Moral objections to the use of atomic weapons should be on the same basis as for other weapons capable of destroying life and inflicting damage."[104]

*Psychological Warfare*

Concurrent with discussions that led to the candor portion of Eisenhower's Atoms for peace, the administration began pursuing efforts at "psychological" warfare that aimed at improving relations between the superpowers, or at least the US's position in that contest. Eisenhower had been impressed by a report generated by a conference on psychological warfare in 1952. As president, he appointed one of the conference's leaders, CD Jackson, a magazine executive, as his assistant of psychological warfare.[105] Jackson's idea for a "psychological offensive" on Soviet satellite states coincided with calls from Charlie Wilson and Vice President Richard Nixon to make a bold peace offer to the Soviets.[106] Eisenhower concurred and tasked Secretary of State Dulles with

[103] NSC 151, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, National Security Affairs, Volume II, Part 2, Document 88 (May 8, 1953: 1159).

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ira Chernus, *Apocalypse Management: Eisenhower and the Discourse of National Insecurity*, Stanford Nuclear Age Series (Stanford University Press, 2008).

[106] This refers to "Electric" Charles Edward Wilson, the former CEO of General Electric and head of President Truman's Committee on Civil Rights, not to be confused with "Engine" Charles Erwin Wilson, the former chairman of General Motors and Eisenhower's Secretary of Defense.

overseeing an effort to include Jackson, Chip Bohlen, Emmet Hughes and Paul Nitze, to craft such a proposal. Only a couple of weeks after the decision to proceed, reports reached the US that Joseph Stalin was close to death. The leadership including Eisenhower and Jackson felt that the unexpected event should be exploited and "chaos" should be promoted in the Soviet Union.[107] Throughout March and April, the State department and the Psychological Strategy Board headed by Jackson sparred over the content of the proposal. They sought to balance the goal of undermining the Soviet position, with maintaining progress on building the European Defense Community, and per Eisenhower, "make a serious bid for peace." Emmet Hughes produced one of the later drafts of what became known as the "Chance for Peace" speech. During the debate leading up to the speech as delivered on April 16, 1953, Hughes tried unsuccessfully to untangle whether the speech should be a genuine effort toward peace, or whether it would be a piece of propaganda aimed at undermining the Soviets during a time of crisis. While Eisenhower himself reiterated the need for a genuine efforts at peace, the consensus in the NSC and State department seemed to be a speech that would effectively manage both.[108]

The actual speech, delivered to the American Society of Newspaper Editors at the Statler Hotel in Washington and broadcast on television and radio, hammered home much of the Cold War discourse that had become hegemonic among elites.[109]

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[107] Chernus (2008: 30)

[108] Ibid.: 41

[109] For full text of the speech see, Dwight D. Eisenhower: "Address "The Chance for Peace" Delivered Before the American Society of Newspaper Editors.," April 16, 1953. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9819.

Eisenhower built a dualism between the open and free societies of the West which achieve security through mutual aid and cooperation and the Soviet Union which chooses to pursue security through force. The path to peace in the speech called for the Soviet Union to broker a lasting peace in Southeast Asia, to allow Germany to be united and become a part of the European Defense Community (EDC), and even for the Marshall Plan to be extended to Soviet states in Eastern Europe. The call is actually consistent with that of "Armaments and American Policy" which had argued no disarmament negotiations would be fruitful without settling the major outstanding issues in international politics. The calls for Soviet action did not include specifics or timetables, and were ultimately seen by the Soviet elites as propaganda. On the contrary they considered Dulles's less conciliatory speech delivered two days later to capture the truer intentions of the US.[110] Soviet skepticism notwithstanding, Eisenhower believed that the speech brought the dialogue closer to the non-confrontational tone that would be necessary for disarmament negotiations to take place.

*A Chance for "Peace"*

Chernus argues that Eisenhower's rhetoric in the "A Chance for Peace" speech invokes multiple meanings of the word peace. In contrast to Truman who advocated only military buildup in order to deter Soviet attack, Eisenhower sought peace also through mutual concessions and disarmament. In terms of actual policy though, the speech gave few concrete details and per Chernus, betrayed multiple competing definitions of peace

[110] Secretary of State Dulles also spoke with the Society of Newspaper Editors, and although he echoed the themes of Eisenhower, his harsher tone, and more aggressive language with regard to ongoing EDC negotiations and armistice in Korea provided Chairman of the Soviet Council of Ministers Georgiy Maksimilianovich Malenkov with evidence to "cast doubt on (Eisenhower's) fortitude and undermine his leadership" (Bowie & Immerman 1998: 121).

that would impact national security strategy and the emergence of nuclear weapons policy going forward, and offered few concessions on the part of the US. "Peace" as used by Eisenhower in the "Chance for Peace" speech and in other discourse going forward meant one of three things: "the expansion of the American way throughout the world. A second assumed the Iron Curtain as the limit to that expansion, but it foresaw a day when communist nations still existed but no longer posed a threat. A third denied that such a day could ever come. It implied that peace meant not expanding, but perceptually defending the border of the 'free world.'"[111] The first definition might imply either the eventual demise of the Soviet system from within or with the help of US coercion. The latter two definitions of peace leave room for stability through deterrence and for the continued existence of the Soviet Union, though in the second it is not clear if the regime would be intact. For Chernus, the speech and these definitions of peace ruled out major concessions by the US in favor of a powerful rearticulation of Cold War rhetoric in which the US system inherently represents peace; thus the tension, arms buildups, and proxy wars of the Cold War were the result of Soviet intransigence. So while Eisenhower's rhetoric on the one hand took a self-righteous view of the US and condemned the Soviets for causing the Cold War, it also made a plea for peace through negotiation. This view would make any progress in the called for negotiations impossible. The Soviets saw that they had not been offered any real concessions and they would not receive an offer that would disadvantage the US. Eisenhower and Dulles were aware that their demands were unacceptable, but believed that the inevitable Soviet refusal to cooperate would make them look intransigent—and thus reinforce US portrayals. All of this amounted to the

[111] Chernus (2008: 45)

notion of the "long haul," the Soviets would remain the enemy of the US and peace would have to be pursued alongside a state of tension and insecurity.[112]

The process that culminated in the Eisenhower's "Chance for Peace" speech, and John Foster Dulles's two days later revealed a great deal of uncertainty in the administration. Although Eisenhower had entered office with some ideas about the fundamentals of nuclear weapons in US foreign policy, the dynamic international environment, the advancement of technology, and the need to make actual policy condemned his first year in office to a search for meaning. Shortly after the speeches above, on May 8, 1953, Eisenhower met with top aides to do just that. The meeting would be on the broad strokes of the rivalry between the Soviet and US and would result in "Project Solarium." The project, conceived by Eisenhower, had as its aim, the redefinition of US national security policy though a competitive appraisal of alternatives. Three teams were named, each tasked with advancing and championing a different strategy. Team A built the case for security through the strengthening of allies, and the undermining of the Soviet Union through political, economic, and psychological measures short of war. Team B advocated drawing a line around the Soviet bloc and threatening war in the case of a breach. Team C advocated rollback or systematic coercion by the US meant to weaken the Soviets and strengthen the West. Risk of major war between the two superpowers was inherent in Team B and especially Team C's recommendations. Organizers also considered a "Team D" to examine the prospect of

[112] Early in his presidency, Eisenhower emphasized that forces needed to be gradually built up and calibrated for a protracted Cold War. In this context he often used the phrasing, preparing for the "long haul" (Bowie & Immerman 1998: 178). Chernus argues, "He wanted to convince the Soviets the the United States could wage cold war indefinitely if necessary—and persuade Americans and their allies to believe that too (2008: 26).

preventive war against the Soviets. However, the notion that any atomic exchange would result in catastrophic consequences for the US would become formalized in SE-46, though Eisenhower had previously expressed doubts about any favorable outcome of an atomic exchange.[113]

The plans were submitted to Eisenhower in a long NSC meeting on July 16. Eisenhower reiterated at that time a commitment to fiscal responsibility, a reaffirmation that any plan must be supported by US allies. He also rejected any plan that posed too great a risk of general war. Bowie and Immerman note his pointed take on "winning" a global war: "only thing worse than losing a global war was winning one; …there would be no individual freedom after the next global war."[114] Eisenhower noted many similarities between the presentations, though the task forces themselves disagreed, arguing that the assumptions and recommendations made by the respective task forces were incompatible. In spite of these reservations, the task forces' recommendations would be central to the building of NSC 162/2, a new Basic National Security Strategy, with the conversations echoing through the production of nuclear weapons policy throughout the 1950's.

As work on the new strategy proceeded through the summer and fall of 1953, the role of nuclear weapons continued to be of central concern. As soon as the new JCS were set to take office in August, they were tasked by Eisenhower with providing of "fresh

[113] Intelligence officials from the State Department, the Joint Chiefs, the CIA and the branches of the military prepared SE-46, also entitled "Probable Long Term Development of the Soviet Bloc and Western Power Positions". The paper argued that neither the US or Soviet Union would be able to prevent the other from a severe retaliation following their own offensive, though it made this argument after Eisenhower had effectively nixed the idea. See "No. 61, Special Estimate," July 8, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Eastern Europe, VIII: 1196-1205. Also see Bowie & Immerman (1998: 126).

[114] 1998: 137

view" of the strategic situation, and the various roles of the service branches, as well as the role of atomic weapons. The study, led by JCS chairman Arthur Radford, concluded that the ability to retaliate with a devastating nuclear strike would remain crucial. So while they were asked to provide a "fresh look," the JCS extended and rearticulated the discourse on the uses of nuclear weapons already being favored by Eisenhower and others in his staff. In fact, rather than provide more detailed policy recommendations, the JCS simply noted that a "positive policy" should be announced about the use of atomic weapons as soon as formulated. They also recommended, that the US redeploy resources toward continental defense. This underscored their commitment to basic concept of deterrence through assured nuclear retaliation, though they added little in terms of guidance. The exercise revealed a rift in the JCS and the administration over the idea of depending on a deterrent strategy. Army Chief of Staff Ridgway and others argued that the threat of nuclear retaliation would be no substitute for conventional forces, especially in the vulnerable regions of Europe. Further, relying on deterrence would not result in a need for fewer troops, but in more—which they argued would eliminate the savings supposedly realized by a deterrent strategy.[115] The argument mirrored Eisenhower's own dilemma regarding national security that arose from his identities as both a fiscal conservative, but also a military leader. Balancing costs with security, and understanding the role in which nuclear weapons would play in the equation would be an important problem in constructing the new strategy.

[115] Ibid.: 185-6

*Candor and the Soviet Hydrogen Bomb*

As US policymakers struggled with building a new national security strategy, the Soviet Union fulfilled the warnings of "Armaments and American Policy" and others when they detonated their first thermonuclear or hydrogen bomb.[116] Eisenhower addressed the development in a news conference on September 30, 1953, where he was asked by Merriman Smith of United Press whether the Soviet thermonuclear test would play into the Eisenhower administration's defense budgeting. Eisenhower's reply betrayed the dilemma of the JCS and others working on national security policy. While being careful not to downplay the gravity of this new fact, he admitted that the reaction would be muted, "I should say that it is a fact that is probably causing each of us more earnest study—you might say almost prayerful study—than any other thing that has occurred lately."[117] He went on to add an important caveat to the notion that the problem is still being studied, "I believe we have gone far enough in this so you could say that the only possible tragedy greater than winning a war would be losing it. Just war should be out from the calculations of all of us..."[118] Consistent with the debates within his administration over the content of NCS 162, the president noted both a loss at exactly what is to do about the grave problem, but also a conviction that whatever would be done,

[116] The detonation of RDS-6 on August 12, 1953, code named Joe-4, yielded 400kt. US officials thought the explosion to be something less than a true hydrogen bomb due to the majority of its explosive power being generated by the fission reaction and not the fusion reaction. Those appraisals aside, the Soviets claimed the device could be delivered by bomber. See Atomic Heritage Foundation "Soviet Hydrogen Bomb Program," August 8, 2014, www.atomicheritage.org/history/soviet-hydrogen-bomb-program.

[117] Dwight D. Eisenhower: "The President's News Conference," September 30, 1953. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9709.

[118] Ibid.

would be in the interest of avoiding war—a clear public declaration that a nuclear war between the US and Soviet Union could not be won in any meaningful sense.

The speech also carried forward an important component of Eisenhower's broad approach to nuclear weapons policy, namely candor with the American people. He notes that after some period of study, when the administration has "straightened out" the intricacies of nuclear politics, he will "go before the United States and tell them—be very frank in telling them—the facts on which my studies have been based and the conclusions that the administration and I have reached. Just when this can be done I am not prepared to say."[119] Although he did not know when such a moment would arrive, the details of candor were being diligently considered.

"Armaments and American Policy", a product of the Truman administration, but enthusiastically considered by Eisenhower in his first days in office, made a strong argument for a program of informing the American people of the challenges, threats, and details of the US relationship with the Soviet Union and the evolving place for nuclear weapons therein. On June 9, 1953, James Lambie, Special Assistant in the White House, wrote Claude Robinson, the president of the Opinion Research Association in Princeton, New Jersey.[120] The letter, initialed by Eisenhower, lays out some of the problems and goals for the new policy of Candor. Lambie argues that among other goals the administration should establish that the danger associated with the situation vis-à-vis the Soviet Union would be a new normal in American life; to this end Lambie quotes the president, "we live not in an instant of peril, but in an age of peril." He went on to ask for

[119] Ibid.

[120] Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, White House Office, NSC Staff Papers, Disaster File, box 12.

Robinson's help in understanding the extent to which Americans already knowledgeable on the issue, in order to more effectively tailor the content of Operation Candor. In addition, Lambie contacted George Gallup who noted that the two would be able to help each other with the operation, and Gallup had on hand polls showing that most Americans did not believe Soviet policy had changed since Stalin's death.[121] By July, a program had been developed by Lambie and CD Jackson which called for a series of six television or radio broadcasts, each of which would take up a different aspect of the "Age of Peril," with topics including, The Nature of Communism, the Capabilities of the USSR, the Threat to the US, the Free World and the UN, Communism at Home, and What Good Citizens Can Do.[122] The president would introduce each broadcast, and would deliver the final broadcast, with other members of the executive including Allen and John Foster Dulles, J. Edgar Hoover, and Admiral Arthur Radford speaking to their respective areas of expertise.

The program of Candor was not without its critics. John Foster Dulles did not see disarmament as possible with the intransigent Soviets. He subscribed to the discourse on the Soviets as belligerent and unreasonable, thus averse to any agreement with the US. Lewis Strauss, head of the AEC and an important advisor to Eisenhower on all things nuclear agreed. He later argued that any program of information would have benefitted Soviet "espionage."[123] Although Eisenhower continued to insist that the public needed to

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[121] George Gallup to James Lambie. June 30, 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, White House Office, NSC Staff Papers, Disaster File, box 12.

[122] CD Jackson, "Memorandum for the National Security Council," July 23, 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, White House Office, NSC Staff Papers, Disaster File, box 5.

[123] Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 133.

understand the destructive capacity of the new weapon, he pushed CD Jackson in drafts of the planned "Candor" speech to avoid scaring "the country to death."[124] In addition, the dire warnings from Dulles and Strauss convinced Eisenhower of the need to find a means of recasting the message of the "age of peril" as a one of hope.

Though a formidable task, on September 10, 1953, Eisenhower shared a potential solution with Robert Cutler, who sent a memorandum on the discussion to Jackson and Strauss. In discussing the progress of NSC 112, Eisenhower "suggested you might consider the following proposal, which he did not think anyone had yet thought of. Suppose the United States and the Soviets were each to turn over to the United Nations, for peaceful use, X amount of fissionable material. The amount X could be fixed at a figure which we could handle from our stockpile, but which it would difficult for the Soviets to match."[125] The proposal had a clear lineage to the Acheson-Lilienthal report, and the failed Baruch Plan of 1945.[126] Each of these earlier plans had advocated international control of fissile material, though both went further in their proposals for controlling and eventually outlawing all nuclear weapons. This new proposal had several advantages from Eisenhower's perspective: it would not require inspections and thus violations of sovereignty; it would show that the tremendous effort of building nuclear weapons was not carried out only in the interest of destruction; the US could "afford" to

[124] Ibid.

[125] Dwight D. Eisenhower to Robert Cutler, September 10, 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Ann Whitman Series, Atoms for Peace, Bernard Baruch Papers, box 5.

[126] A Report on the International Control of Atomic Energy. Prepared for the Secretary of State's Committee on Atomic Energy. U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., March 16, 1946. Department of State. Publication 2498 [Reprint], www.learnworld.com/ZNW/LWText.Acheson-Lilienthal.html#source.

contribute a great deal more fissile material to the international pool and still improve its relative position; and the deal would address the looming danger of the current arms race.[127]

Strauss replied to Cutler's memo on the president's proposal consistent with his skepticism with regard to Candor. On September 17, he submitted that reply to the president declaring, "the proposal is novel and might have value for propaganda purposes. It has doubtful value as a practical move for the following reasons."[128] He first disputes the president's contention that the US would be able to contribute a greater amount of fissile material to the pool than the Soviets. He argued that US intelligence had not determined the amount of fissile material held by the Soviets, nor were their capabilities to cultivate more known. What he did know is that once the US discovered naturally occurring precursors to fissile material and the processes to enrich them (something the Soviet had clearly also done), production efficiency rapidly increased. From this he surmised that the Soviets might be increasing their production at a much greater rate than the US. He went on to argue that debates about the amount of fissile material in each state's stockpile are somewhat less important in the age of thermonuclear weapons, where fissile material is needed only for the trigger. Finally and in the same memo, Strauss weighs in on the recent Soviet hydrogen bomb test. Although by hydrogen bomb standards it was small—only 400 kilotons—he argues that it may have been only to prove the principle. As such, it made little sense to compare its destruction with similar

[127] Ambrose (1983: 134)

[128] Lewis Strauss to Dwight D. Eisenhower, September 10, 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Ann Whitman Series, Atoms for Peace, Bernard Baruch Papers, box 5.

US tests.[129] His opinion on the near future production of thermonuclear weapons by the Soviets is redacted, but the tone of the section seems to suggest he believed the Soviets to be following a similar nuclear development trajectory to the US.

On November 6, under continued pressure from Eisenhower to study the idea of an international pool of fissile material as part of a larger effort at disarmament, Strauss submitted a draft of what such a proposal might look like.[130] The draft drew on conversations with Secretary Dulles and Director of Policy Planning Staff Robert Bowie on the previous week in which they discussed regulating the mining and production of fissile material directly in addition to such material being contributed to an internationally controlled pool. The Baruch Plan had been unacceptable to many for requiring countries to submit to an invasive inspection regime that some equated with a check on sovereignty. The plan as now envisioned by Strauss and consistent with Eisenhower's September suggestion, would avoid the problem of such a regime by requiring contributions to an international pool without also exercising control over or outlawing existing nuclear weapons. Although this would address some of the problems associated with the failed Baruch Plan, the JCS still rejected the plan as arms control—something they would not abide without a comprehensive plan that addressed other problems in international affairs.[131] The controversy led to the omission of the plan from the later drafts of the speech.

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[129] In either case, the Soviets detonated the 1.6 megaton Joe 19 on November 22, 1955 demonstrating their mastery of the technology to make high yield hydrogen bombs. See "Soviet Hyrdogen Bomb Program," Atomic Heritage Foundation, www.atomicheritage.org/history/soviet-hydrogen-bomb-program.

[130] Lewis Strauss, "Draft of Atoms for Peace proposal," November 6, 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Ann Whitman Series, Atoms for Peace, Bernard Baruch Papers, box 5.

[131] Bowie and Immerman (1998: 233)

In the late fall, Candor and the Eisenhower's proposal were brought together in drafts of the speech that would become "Atoms for Peace." This famous piece of oratory brought together several of the existing discourses into a single articulation that would echo through arms control and nuclear weapons policy for years into the future. The difficulty in preparing the speech came in part from trying to balance the goals of Candor, and warning of the "age of peril" without causing a panic.[132] The speech was thus meant to be a message of hope while at the same time meeting conditions enumerated by Secretary Dulles: first that the proposals be novel and acceptable to the Soviets "if they wish coexistence; second that the conditions would be tolerable to the West if accepted; and third that rejection would place the blame for an ensuing arms race and war on the Soviets."[133] On December 8, 1953 Eisenhower delivered the speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York. The culminating oration built on nearly a year of discussion and debate, striking Eisenhower's own personal balance between many competing priorities. The president began with a note about danger, building on the work that had once gone into Operation Candor, "The atomic age has moved forward at such a pace that every citizen of the world should have some comprehension, at least in comparative terms, of the extent of this development of the utmost significance to every one of us."[134] In formally launching the policy of candor with the American public, Eisenhower notes the forty-two test explosions to date, the tremendous and continued

[132] "Memorandum of Discussion at the 146th Meeting of the NSC" May 27, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, National Security Affairs, 2(II): 1169-74.

[133] Bowie and Immerman (1998: 231)

[134] The quotes here come from the full text of Eisenhower's speech: Dwight D. Eisenhower: "Address Before the General Assembly of the United Nations on Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy, New York City." December 8, 1953. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9774.

growth in destructive capacity of the weapons, along with increasing variety in yield and thus application, and the aircraft that could now deliver this unprecedented destruction. He goes on to warn that the technology is not a secret possessed by the US, but one shared by several allies, and the Soviet Union—a state that has already tested many atomic weapons and had now matched the US with a thermonuclear test. The implications of this fact lead to a dilemma, “Even against the most powerful defense, an aggressor in possession of the effective minimum number of atomic bombs for a surprise attack could probably place a sufficient number of his bombs on the chosen targets to cause hideous damage.” This statement reveals the president’s concurrence with the discourse on defense that began with Bernard Brodie as early as 1946. Such a situation leads vulnerable states to rely on deterrence through assured retaliation to prevent a surprise attack from ever being carried out. The situation of mutual terror that obtains is exactly what the latter part of the speech sought to address. In keeping with the UNGA’s own statement regarding the desirability of nuclear states to meet and discuss prospects for ending the arms race, the president stated that the US would meet with other involved states to privately discuss the arms race. This segued into Eisenhower’s idea for an international pool to which the nuclear states would contribute fissile material for peaceful research in order to share the benefits of nuclear technology with the rest of the world. The endeavor would provide impetus to explore the potential of nuclear power, and provide a building block for cooperation between the superpowers in reducing the danger posed by the arms race. Returning to the theme he had been arguing needed to be central Eisenhower states, “Against the dark background of the atomic bomb, the United States does not wish merely to present strength, but also the desire and the hope for

peace."[135] This would be the last of eleven times that the president used the word 'hope' in some form in the speech.

Alongside the preparations for the Atoms for Peace speech, the administration also labored to produce the new basic National Security Strategy—a document completed in October 1953 and known as NSC 162/2.[136] Taken together, the new security strategy and Atoms for Peace constituted the new discursive edifice on which nuclear weapons policy would be built throughout the 1950's. The summary of Atoms for Peace above stresses Eisenhower's own insistence that the speech, and the State of the Union given a few weeks later on January 7, 1954, promote a feeling of hope. All the while, the proposals in Atoms for Peace, and the strategy set out by NSC 162/2 advanced a notion of peace that included a permanent arms buildup that itself would sow instability, and would reinforce the tension central to the Cold War. The discourse on the intransigence of the Soviet Union led to an elite discourse that discounted any possibility for real peace in favor of continued efforts to gain an upper hand in the Cold War. All the while the administration also tried to cultivate a discourse of hope among the public: one which painted US prospects as hopeful, with an end to the Cold War being prevented only by Soviet rejections of good faith US efforts for compromise. In addition, and part and

[135] On December 3, 1953, just five days before giving the "Atoms for Peace" speech, Eisenhower sent a note to Bryce Harlow, a speechwriter and member of the White House congressional liaison staff, commenting on the current draft of the 1954 State of the Union. He suggested that, "we definitely announce, right after the opening paragraphs, that I am bringing a message of hope" (Eisenhower's underlining). "Dwight D. Eisenhower to Bryce Harlow," December 3, 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, White House Office, NSC Staff Papers, Disaster File, box 12.

[136] "Note by the Executive Secretary to the National Security Council on Basic National Security Policy," October 30, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, National Security Affairs, Vol. II, Part 1, Document 101.

parcel of this effort to influence the public discourse, the administration sought to shape perception of atomic power as a potential boon to the emerging hopeful world.

Massive retaliation was the central means by which NSC 162/2 sought to deter Soviet aggression into the west, prevent WWIII, and avoid the economic pain associated with continuous buildup for conventional war. Nowhere did the document discuss plans for long-term peace—instead the primary goal was to advance the US and the West's relative position via-a-vis the Soviet Union—a goal that discounted or ignored any possibility of long-term peaceful coexistence in favor of a continued tension in which the US occupied a more advantageous position. The new strategy offered hope, but only hope for a more favorable Cold War, with peace defined as the lack of major hostilities, not the absence of tension and the looming threat of war.

Against this backdrop it become clear that the proposals of Atoms for Peace were never meant to be accepted. Instead, as Dulles had stated in his memo on September 17, 1953, the proposals might make a good piece of propaganda.[137] However, per his own conditions, they would have to be designed in such a way to be unequivocally advantageous to the US—a condition that would necessarily preclude acceptance by the Soviet Union. Robert Cutler, head of the NSC Planning Staff, noted, "The virtue of making the proposals lies not so much in the likelihood of their acceptability by the other side, but in the opportunity provided to the US—once the proposals have been made and not accepted—to put into effect a new and better (for the long run) basic policy than we have now."[138] The new policy would be one in which the US relied more heavily on

[137] Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Ann Whitman Series, Atoms for Peace, Bernard Baruch Papers, box 5.

[138] Quoted by Chernus (2008: 70)

nuclear weapons and the threat of nuclear retaliation as a means to deter the Soviets, stave off nuclear war, and save money. The administration thought the conventional buildup begun under Truman unsustainable, but apparently had no vision for peace outside of a military buildup. Evidently, Eisenhower and company had no plans to share their own vision of the future of superpower relations. Instead, Eisenhower's first year in office witnessed the rise of competing dominant discourses. For elites, nuclear weapons were rapidly coming to be understood as a deterrent to a major nuclear attack on US soil. Coupled with assumptions about Soviet behavior and the discourse dictated a protracted cold war. The public on the other hand had much less exposure to the critical discursive artifacts on which the concepts of deterrence, mutually assured destruction, and Soviet intransigence would rest. Instead the public would build a less well-defined set of discourses based on deep unease with the very notion of nuclear technology. Although the administration planned on shaping public understanding on the issue, they would find themselves as just one of many voices forging the meaning(s) of nuclear weapons and technology in the minds of the American citizens.

**1954 – 1956: From Theory to Practice**

Following the adoption of the NSC 162/2 and the delivery of "Atoms for Peace" Eisenhower and his administration confronted the challenge of implementing massive retaliation as a strategy, as well as sorting out the details of sharing "peaceful" nuclear technology with other states. While the administration had played a role in ending open conflict in Korea, new challenges arose in China. These challenges would prompt Eisenhower and company to continually reexamine and rearticulate their beliefs about the utility of nuclear weapons, as well as sharpen and extend developing norms around their

usage. This section will consider several major moments during the years of 1954 and 1955 in which events in the world prompted the reappraisal, extension, clarification, and application of the emerging nuclear weapons policy.

The rapid evolution of nuclear weapons technology, coupled with a new commitment by the US to share and elaborate upon the "peril" that the evolving situation presented, led Jawaharlal Nehru, Indian Prime Minister, to propose a "standstill agreement" on nuclear weapons test explosions in the pacific to the Indian Parliament on April 2, 1954. The administration had been aware of the idea at least since February. On February 5, 1954, Thomas Murray, Commissioner of the AEC, wrote Eisenhower arguing that a nuclear test moratorium might lessen tension in international relations, and limit the proliferation of large nuclear weapons.[139] He notes however, that the idea might be untimely given that it would be only a few weeks before the Castle Series of nuclear tests at the Pacific Proving Ground, approved by Eisenhower on January 26.

The Castle Series began on March 1, 1954 with Castle Bravo, a 15 megaton blast that far exceeded its intended yield of 4-8 megatons.[140] In addition to its surprisingly large yield, changes in the prevailing winds blew a massive radioactive plume across the Marshall Islands. The plume caused residents of the nearby atolls of Rongelap and Uskirit to suffer radiation sickness. Residents of Rongelap, located about 130 nautical miles from ground zero, included more than two dozen US servicemen at a weather station. The blast also rained radioactive fallout on a Japanese fishing vessel called the

[139] Thomas Murray to Dwight D. Eisenhower, February 5, 1954, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Ann Whitman File, Administrative Series, box 4.

[140] For reference, 15 megatons is about 1,000 times more powerful than the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. For details on the Castle test see "Operation Castle," May 17, 2006, Nuclearweaponarchive.org/USA/tests/Castle.html.

Daigo Fukuryu Maru (Lucky Dragon No. 5). One of the crew of that vessel died of complications from radiation sickness just a few months later back in Japan.

The event caused a major international uproar. In Japan, where residents were still rebuilding their society after the decimation of WWII and specifically the atomic bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the outrage manifested into a powerful movement to ban the bomb. Radioactive fallout became well known as "ashes of death", as the massive movement known as the "Suginami Appeal" gained traction.[141] By August, 1955, the time of the First World Conference Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs, the movement had gathered 32 million signatures in favor of banning the bomb. Only a month later activists formed Gensuikyo, the Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs.[142] This organization received widespread non-partisan support across Japan, and marked the beginning of decades of anti-nuclear weapon activism originating in Japan.

As Bravo would be only the first in a series of seven nuclear tests in the Castle Series, by the time the latter tests were taking place, the administration had become aware of growing public and international concern. On April 5, 1954, Strauss suggested that the president reassure the public that the remaining tests (of which there would be three) were only to prove "scientific principles," and that the US had no intention of testing increasingly large yield weapons.[143] In the same note to the president Strauss also quickly

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[141] See Lawrence Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1954-1970* (Stanford University Press, 1997), 8; and Anthony DiFilippo. *Japan's Nuclear Disarmament Policy and the US Security Umbrella* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 70.

[142] DiFilippo (2006: 71)

[143] Lewis Strauss to Dwight D. Eisenhower, April 5, 1954, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Ann Whitman File, Administrative Series, box 4.

stated the administration position (which had ostensibly been previously discussed) on the prospect of an agreement to disarm. Strauss argued that any agreement to disarm would be unenforceable, and could lead the US to unilaterally disarm resulting in national suicide with the Soviets seizing their advantage.

A few weeks later on April 23 Strauss wrote the president about a conversation he had with Bernard Baruch.[144] Baruch had contended that as knowledge about nuclear weapons diffused, fear of surprise attack would increase. While he argued that the Soviets might not fear such attack from the US at present, they might soon fear attack from the French or a rearmed Germany. Given the prospect of the ability to construct nuclear weapons rapidly spreading to other states, the Soviet Union might be convinced that the present would be the best chance for "world wide atomic disarmament." Strauss's argument built upon conclusions reached by the Oppenheimer panel and others that nuclear technology would spread, and that once states acquired some level of nuclear infrastructure the speed of their weapons production would increase rapidly. Strauss did not completely agree with Baruch's conclusion, but nonetheless felt the substance worth forwarding to the president:

> I think the premise of his argument is sound although I believe the time scale to be much longer than he thinks. For while it is true that weapons have been made "cheaper" the difference is relative and the costs of plants and processes are still astronomical in terms of the resources of small nations. The real difficulty of the proposal, assuming one could find a suitable intermediary, would be the ever-present hurdle of how to deal with the inspection and international control aspects so long as the Russians maintain the Iron Curtain policy, which I assume is essential to that kind of government.[145]

[144] Ibid.

[145] Ibid.

Strauss at once revealed the genuine interest of the administration in considering routes to disarmament, as well as the ways in which their convictions about the Soviets precluded entertaining the necessary components to any chance of disarmament. Strauss explicitly did not dispute the notion that the early 1950's would probably be the only time when disarmament required the cooperation of just two countries. He did argue though that this period would last longer than Baruch had indicated, and more importantly he agreed with many in the administration that inspection and international control were impossible. The argument essentially bought the administration time. If no other country would be acquiring nuclear weapons in the near future, the favorable period in which only two states would have to cooperate would last longer, and the US would be able to afford to discount any possibility of pushing forward with meaningful disarmament talks for the foreseeable future. Such a set of circumstances made arms control less urgent, and set the stage for the protracted tension of the ongoing Cold War. Strauss would continue to be one of the primary driver's behind the Eisenhower administration's stances into the future.[146]

Indian Prime Minister Nehru's call for a nuclear test moratorium hailed others from the administration to weigh in on disarmament, and to further clarify their interpretations of the world and beliefs about possibilities for US nuclear weapons policy. On April 30, Radford submitted the JCS's analysis of the Nehru's moratorium to the

[146] At the NSC Meeting on May 27, 1954, Eisenhower echoed Baruch's remarks on proliferation. After admonishing his staff for a lack of "imaginative" thinking on the problem of nuclear warfare he stated, "Soon, even the small countries will have stockpile of these bombs, then we will be in a mess". Strauss replied as above that there would still be "quite a long time" before smaller countries acquired nuclear weapons capabilities (*FRUS* 1952-1954, II: 1455).

Secretary of Defense.[147] The analysis recommended that the US, "not enter into any agreement providing for the limitation of atomic armaments outside of a comprehensive program for the regulation, limitation, and balanced reduction of all armed forces and all armaments, conforming in general to the principles set forth in NSC 112." On June 4, Secretary of Defense Wilson submitted an analysis on the same question.[148] The Defense Department advised against a moratorium arguing that it would be to the US's disadvantage for several reasons, foremost among them that the US would need its nuclear capability until there was an agreement for a total worldwide nuclear disarmament. In addition, the analysis contended that the Soviets would be able to spin US agreement to a moratorium as a move to stymie the Soviet nuclear program, thus eliminating any propaganda advantage. In any case he argued, the agreement would be unenforceable as there were still technical difficulties to accurate detection of foreign tests. On June 23, 1954, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles submitted an additional analysis of the effects of the moratorium.[149] At a meeting of the NSC on June 27 he argued that he had attempted to make his analysis unanimous and nearly succeeded.[150] Dulles argued that committee agreement stemmed from two shared assumptions: first that abolition of weapons must take place under a broader plan for general disarmament; and

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[147] "Arthur Radford to Secretary of Defense Charlie E. Wilson," April 30, 1954, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant of National Security Affairs, NSC Series, Briefing Notes Subseries, box 6.

[148] Secretary of Defense Charlie E. Wilson to John Foster Dulles, June 4, 1954, *FRUS* 1952-1954, II: 1457-8.

[149] John Foster Dulles to the NSC, June 23, 1954, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, White House Office, NSC Staff Papers, Disaster File, box 26.

[150] "Memorandum of Discussion at the 203rd Meeting of the NSC," June 23, 1954, *FRUS* 1952-1954 II: 1467-72.

second that a moratorium from the present until January 1956 would be advantageous to the US, but any longer would be advantageous to the Soviets.[151] Eisenhower agreed with the widely shared recommendation of his staff, but took issue with the first of the assumptions identified by Dulles. While Dulles, Radford, Strauss and others agreed that abolition of atomic weapons would have to be tied to general disarmament, Eisenhower argued that he would go along with abolition without general disarmament if anyone could come up with a method of carrying it out with certainty. Since nobody could put forth such a certain plan, the president agreed with the conclusions of the meeting, and formalized the decision to reject a test moratorium "at this time."[152]

Nehru's call for a moratorium showed the trajectory of nuclear discourse being constructed by Eisenhower and his staff by forcing the administration to clarify their interpretation of the type of threat posed by the Soviet Union. Joseph Stalin's death in March 1953, as well as Eisenhower's repeated emphasis on words like "hope" and "peace" throughout the fall and winter of 1953, left openings for a discourse of a less threatening, possibly cooperative Soviet Union. Confronting the call for a moratorium on testing forced the leadership to reveal their ongoing view of the Soviets—which they did by extending and rearticulating the essential Cold War discourse of US efforts at peace stymied by the intransigent imperialist enemy. The next section will examine another

[151] Notably, Dulles also argued that as long the US "continued to oppose special treatment for the category of atomic weapons, it would virtually be forced to avoid taking any position which would in effect set these weapons apart from other weapons as morally bad" (*FRUS* 1952-1954 II: 1468). The view of atomic weapons as just another weapon, a view espoused on multiple occasions by the administration, had the corollary of freezing the US out of meaningful negotiations toward nuclear disarmament and forcing the first assumption Dulles identified above.

[152] Eisenhower himself added "at this time," a move possibly related to his objection to Secretary Dulles's assumption that a testing moratorium could only be made as part of a larger plan for general disarmament.

serious challenge to the fledgling nuclear policy and discourse being forged by Eisenhower and his team.

*Quemoy and Matsu*

While the administration had the luxury of making nuclear weapons policy and extending nuclear discourse on a strictly theoretical and strategic basis during late 1953 and early 1954, a new crisis emerged to challenge these views yet again, this time with potential real world consequences that could extend well beyond rhetoric. In September 1954, China attacked the small island of Quemoy off the coast of China in the Taiwan Strait. [153] The territory was under the control of anti-communist Chinese nationalists. The nationalists shared the US agenda of preventing Communist China from making territorial expansion and had received $1.6 billion in aid to that end since 1949. Throughout the end of 1954 and into the spring of 1955, the crisis tested the wits and the nuclear policy of the administration forcing an extension of the discourse on what would be appropriate use of nuclear weapons, and shifting focus away from disarmament, and toward nuclear strategy. The shift from a broad debate over disarmament to one about potential use of nuclear weapons in battle would provide insights into the administration's role in constructing and challenging the nascent taboo on the use of nuclear weapons in battle, as well as extending and clarifying existing policy.

Quemoy and Matsu are two groups of islands located close China's southeastern coast. Following World War II, Chinese nationalists hostile to the communist regime had

[153] The historical narrative in this section is drawn principally from Gordon Chang, 1988, "To the Nuclear Brink: Eisenhower, Dulles, and the Quemoy-Matsu Crisis," *International Security*, Vol. 12 (4): 96-123; and Richard Hanania, "Tracing the Development of the Nuclear Taboo: The Eisenhower Administration and Four Crises in East Asia," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Spring 2017): 43-83.

retreated to Taiwan and in the process adopted the islands—which hug the mainland coast in the Taiwan Strait, as forward positions in the ongoing conflict with the mainland. The US had been backing the claims of the nationalists since 1949, providing $1.6 billion by the time of the crisis at the end of 1954.[154] In September, the communists began a significant offensive against the nationalists. The offensive forced the US to confront the choice between doing nothing—abandoning its support of the nationalists and possibly looking weak to the Sino-Soviet bloc, or launching a major military intervention, thus risking escalation to all-out war with China, and potentially global nuclear war with the Soviet Union.

Even as the crisis developed in late 1954, the administration worked on a revised basic national security strategy—NSC 5440—that would provide a strategic background as the crisis unfolded.[155] Although some of the conclusions of the new strategy would remain contentious well into 1955, several points raised in the document helped frame the situation in the Taiwan Strait. First, Soviet air power could now deliver "widespread devastation" on the US and the "free world." This devastation would not necessarily be "crippling," nor given their current capabilities—enough to provide mutual deterrence—although such a situation could be expected within a few years. With regard to China specifically, NSC 5440 stated "Communist China remains bitterly hostile to the US and ostensibly committed to the conquest of Formosa."[156] In addition the document contended that the Soviet Union would prioritize keeping China in the communist bloc.

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[154] Chang (1988: 99)

[155] "Basic National Security Policy", December 14, 1954, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant of National Security Affairs, NSC Series, Briefing Notes Subseries, box 1.

[156] "Basic National Security Policy" (December 14, 1954: 5)

Given these appraisals of the threat posed by the communist countries, the authors argued US military policy should be aimed at preventing aggression through deterrence. They feared that the US could be forced into general war, and that local conflicts could lead to total war, and thus nuclear destruction.

Even as the new national security strategy details were being hammered out by the NSC, the situation in the Taiwan Strait deteriorated. As events unfolded in the fall of 1954, Eisenhower had taken the public position that the US would defend the nationalists against communist aggression, but left vague whether that meant only the main island of Taiwan, or if defense would extend to Quemoy, Matsu, and the Dachens another nationalist-held group of islands north of the strait. In December, feeling pressure to clarify his position, Eisenhower signed a secret "mutual defense" treaty with the Nationalists promising US protection of Taiwan as well as Quemoy and Matsu, as long as the Nationalists did not attack the Chinese mainland without US permission. In January 1955, the Chinese attacked the Dachens. The attack led the administration to reconsider the secrecy of its support—evidently the Chinese were convinced that the US would not intervene. Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles decided that the US would defend Quemoy and Matsu as long as the Nationalist withdrew from the Dachens, which were further north and thus more difficult to defend. By March the situation appeared worse with Dulles reporting that war was imminent.

At the March 10, 1955 NCS meeting, consistent with this assessment, Secretary Dulles recommended that the US public be prepared both for war and the possibility that nuclear weapons would be used.[157] He argued that nuclear weapons were necessary given

[157] Memorandum of Discussion at the 240th Meeting of the NSC, March 10, 1955, *FRUS* 1955-1957, China II: 345-50. On this point also see Richard Hanania, "Tracing the Development of the Nuclear Taboo: The

the limitation of the US conventional capability. Eisenhower and Radford agreed. They realized there would be opposition from allies and world public opinion, but argued the benefits outweighed such considerations. They were also aware that the Nationalist leader Jiang had assured US officials in the Far East that his people would accept the use of nuclear weapons as "a war necessity."[158] Building on this recommendation, the administration began a process of talking about nuclear weapons to the public. According to Chang this public relations effort served both as a message to deter the Chinese as well as preparation of the US public.[159] The following week on March 15, Dulles stated in a news conference, "We believe that our most effective contribution to the defense of the entire area is by a strategic force with a high degree of striking power…US policy is not to split that power up into fragments."[160] The following day Charles von Fremd of CBS News asked Eisenhower about Dulles's remarks to which he replied, "Now, in any combat where these things can be used on strictly military targets and for strictly military purposes, I see no reason why they shouldn't be used just exactly as you would use a bullet or anything else."[161] This rhetoric built on the discourse which had come to include tactical nuclear weapons as an integrated piece of US military doctrine. Under Truman,

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Eisenhower Administration and Four Crises in East Asia," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Spring 2017): 43-83.

[158] Chang (1988: 107)

[159] Ibid.: 108

[160] Quoted in Richard K. Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1987), 59.

[161] Dwight D. Eisenhower: "The President's News Conference," March 16, 1955. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=10434. Also note that Vice President Richard Nixon argued, "tactical atomic explosives are now conventional and will be used against the targets of any aggressive force" (Hanania 2017: 64).

the US had a de facto policy of first use of nuclear weapons to counter a major conventional attack. The national security strategy adopted by NSC 162/2 in October of 1953 which argued for the conventionalization of nuclear weapons "as available for use as other munitions," in conjunction with the direct public statements of Dulles and Eisenhower as the Quemoy and Matsu crisis unfolded in the spring of 1955, made the new policy of the US a de jure policy of first use of nuclear weapons even in response to a conventional attack. Ironically, the episode would end up strengthening the fledgling taboo against the use of nuclear weapons by forcing the public, both in the US and abroad, to confront the reality of the US armed and ready to use nuclear weapons to defend islands "of questionable value for the defense of Taiwan" and per Eisenhower within "wading distance of mainland China."[162]

The crisis came to peaceful conclusion when on April 24, 1955 the Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai announced that the Chinese wanted peace with the US, and that they would negotiate for peace in the Taiwan Strait. The decision may have been due to Chinese fears of provoking general war with the US. They also may have been told by the Soviets that the islands would be considered a local conflict and no support would come from Moscow in the case of war with the US.[163] In any case, it appears that had war taken place, Eisenhower was prepared to use tactical nuclear weapons. The administration had incorporated first-use policies into nuclear doctrine, made the case to the public for the conventionalization of the nuclear weapons, and settled privately that they would respond with a nuclear weapons if the Chinese attacked the islands. Through

[162] Chang (1988: 99)

[163] Ibid: 117

the crisis, the administration exposed their willingness to use nuclear weapons, but also their respect for the keepers of the nascent nuclear taboo—the public—both international and domestic. At every step Dulles and others considered the public impact of the potential use of nuclear weapons, and while they seemed to believe that they would be able to sway public opinion to the point where a nuclear attack on China would be politically acceptable, they were also cognizant of limits on their latitude of action imposed by domestic and world public opinion—and by extension the power of the fledgling nuclear taboo.[164]

**The Nuclear Fallout Problem**

Even as the crisis with China and Taiwan unfolded, the administration had begun to cope with a new threat to their unfettered participation in an arms race: the public's gradually increasing awareness and fear of radioactive fallout from nuclear testing. This section will consider the emergence of nuclear weapons policy against the backdrop of a public, both domestic and abroad, increasingly uneasy with the potential danger posed to them by nuclear testing. While the Castle-Bravo test in March 1954 that rained fallout on Japanese sailors and Marshallese islanders was a major event inciting the public's fear, many in the government and elsewhere had been aware of potential danger of radioactive fallout since the earliest days of the atomic bomb. As early as 1945, reporters had raised questions about the hazards posed by radiation at the Trinity test site in southern New Mexico. In the aftermath of that first atomic test, General Groves set a dangerous

[164] A second crisis took place in the Taiwan Strait between August and October 1958. The crisis featured many of the same actors, however the US showed more restraint—led by Eisenhower—with regard to using nuclear weapons. While Dulles and others continued to discuss the potential use of nuclear weapons, Eisenhower seemed more cognizant of domestic and world public opinion, as well as the possibility of nuclear retaliation against Taiwan directly, and wider nuclear escalation (Hanania 2017: 73-81).

precedent, sending Patrick Stout, an army counterintelligence agent, into the Trinity blast crater, created only two months prior. Although he emerged apparently unharmed, thus "proving" Groves' point, he would die in 1967 of leukemia—a tell-tale illness often resulting from exposure to radiation. The precedent would be one of conducting experiments directly, and often without consent, on the effects of radiation on US military personnel. According to Clarfield and Wiecek, the AEC and the Defense Department established a pattern: "lay people or scientists would protest some facet of official nuclear policy; the AEC (or NRC, JCAE, DoD, etc.) dismissed the objections as unfounded and poured on a public relations rebuttal; the protests continued to mount; and eventually the AEC gave way, implicitly admitting the validity of the protester's views by lowering dosage ceilings."[165] For the present study, the phenomena identified by Clarfield and Wiecek is notable for the way in which it connects public outcry with limitations on policy by the administration. The Eisenhower administration had to contend with evolving limitations posed by the growing awareness of the public at the widespread danger posed by atmospheric testing (not to mention an unfettered nuclear arms race). These limitations shaped the possibilities for advancing the US nuclear arsenal, even while the administration itself actively sought to shape public perception of all things nuclear. Through this dialectic, the Eisenhower nuclear weapons policy, as well as international norms of behavior with regard to nuclear testing, would emerge. This section will consider the administration's discourse on radiation, and its impact on the broader construction of nuclear weapons policy during the 1950's.

[165] According to Clarfield and Wiecek, between 250,000 and 500,000 people were used experimentally during nuclear weapons tests between 1945 and 1963. See *Nuclear America: Military and Civilian Nuclear Power in the United States, 1940-1980* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1984), 205.

Although Groves, and other members of the nuclear establishment were aware of the potential danger of radiation early in the atomic age, such knowledge only slowly diffused to the public. Just about a year before the *Lucky Dragon* debacle, Herbert Clark, a professor at Renlasser Polytechnic Institute measured up to 2 roentgens of radiation in rain puddles near his laboratory in upstate New York, 2,700 miles from the Yucca Flats, Nevada test site following the "Simon" shot—a 43 kiloton atomic test on April 25, 1953.[166] From that same series of tests, Operation Upshot-Knothole, radioactive fallout rained down on St. George, Utah, only about 100 miles east of the Yucca Flats test site. The fallout killed local sheep and stoked growing public concern. Two years later, the cast and crew of the *The Conqueror*, an RKO Radio Picture movie production starring John Wayne, were exposed to radioactive fallout after filming on location near St. George, Utah. By 1980, some 91 of the 220 cast and crew and contracted some type of cancer including John Wayne.[167]

The administration saw these events not as a threat to public health and safety, but as a potential impediment to their conduct of the nuclear arms race with impunity. In response they made a public effort to downplay the danger, and to squelch research that did not agree. In their 1953 semiannual report, the AEC contended that "the radioactivity

[166] Yucca Flats was part of the Nuclear Proving Grounds, a vast expanse of desert located about seventy miles northwest of Las Vegas, Nevada. The government later renamed the area the Nevada Test Site. Per Clarfield & Wiecek the site is "the most irradiated, nuclear-blasted spot on the face of the earth" (1984: 202-6).

[167] This statistic is according to a 1980 article in *People*. The number misses the dozens or even hundreds of indigenous people involved in the film as extras, and certainly exposed along with the non-indigenous crew. John Wayne's own case may also have been caused by his heavy cigarette smoking. See James Bacon, "John Wayne: The Last Cowboy," *Us Magazine*, June 27, 1978.

released by fallout has proved not to be hazardous."[168] Although publicly downplaying the danger, they also contracted with the US Public Health Service to survey radiation near test sites. Any findings were to be considered secrets under the Atomic Energy act, a sure method to keep the danger under wraps.[169]

On February 15, 1955, the AEC released a formal public announcement on the nature and danger of radioactive fallout.[170] The report, approved by Eisenhower and delivered by Lewis Strauss, argued that although radioactive fallout posed a major danger to those in its path, the detonations at the Yucca Flat test site had yielded, "no significant fallout." In addition, per the report, the radiation off site, presumably experienced by those in St. George, Utah, had been, "less than one third of the greatest amount of radiation which atomic energy workers are permitted to receive each year under the Atomic Energy Commission's conservative safety standards."[171] In addition to addressing fears of those for whom the tests were local events, the AEC weighed in on the effects for the rest of the US from the nuclear testing, "the average amount of radiation exposure received by residents of the United States by all nuclear detonations to date has been about the same as the exposure received from one chest X-ray."[172] Given

[168] James Rice and Julie Steinkompf Rice, "Radiation is Not New to Our Lives: The U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, Continental Atmospheric Weapons Testing, and Discursive Hegemony in the Downwind Communities," *Journal of Historical Sociology* Vol. 28, No. 4 (December 2015): 505.

[169] Clarfield & Wiecek (1984: 210)

[170] "Statement by Lewis L. Strauss, Chairman, United States Atomic Energy Commission," February 15, 1955, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, White House Office, NSC Staff Papers, Disaster File, box 5.

[171] Ibid.: 5-6

[172] Ibid.: 4. Also note, the use of a diagnostic X-ray as a standard against which to measure radiation began at the urging of Henry Smyth, author the Smyth Report (an official 1945 history of the Manhattan Project). In 1956, British scientist Alice Stewart found that a single minute of radiation, like that one would receive during a routine X-ray, might lead to fetal damage in pregnant women. The study cast doubt on the popular

this comparison the AEC did not consider this worth serious concern. Evidence compiled later showed a significant spike in leukemia among children that lived in Utah between 1959 and 1967, especially among those born between 1951 and 1958.[173]

The February 15 report of the AEC also took up specifically the issue of strontium-90 (sr-90) and iodine-131, two radioactive substances present in nuclear fallout. The report acknowledged correctly that sr-90 is similar in chemical structure to calcium, and hence will tend to collect in the teeth and bones of affected individuals. In addition, it can be ingested if deposited on the surface of crops, or in water consumed by crops and later humans. With regard to the amount of danger posed by sr-90 through atmospheric testing, the AEC argued, "The amount of radiostrontium (sr-90) now present in the soil as a result of all nuclear explosions to date would have to be increased many thousand times before any effect on humans would be noticeable."[174] With regard to iodine-131, which had been ignored due to its relatively short half-life, the AEC contended, "Even though this product may be widely spread after a nuclear explosion, the possibility of serious hazard is limited by its relatively short half-life."[175] Although the report admitted that iodine-131 would tend to gather in the thyroid gland, they failed to connect such a danger to children specifically, a connection made by E.B. Lewis. Lewis worked alongside Nobel laureate Linus Pauling at Cal Tech where their work predicted

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notion that there was some safe level of radiation, below which there would be no adverse health impact—the "threshold theory" (Clarfield & Wiecek 1984: 210, 213).

[173] Clarfield & Wiecek (1984: 215)

[174] "Statement by Lewis L. Strauss, Chairman, United States Atomic Energy Commission" (February 15, 1955: 11)

[175] Ibid.

much more dire consequences than suggested by the AEC, especially in terms of increases in risk of leukemia and fetal abnormalities.[176]

As before, the administration expressly considered the public reactions of both allies and adversaries from around the world. On March 2, 1955, an NSC document considered the reaction from specific countries around the world. That document noted, "reaction to the AEC announcement was surprisingly mild. Most Free World countries accepted it soberly and without much comment. The only country that showed alarm was Japan, which is always particularly sensitive to atomic matters."[177] The authors suggested that the muted reaction might be a result of their specific effort to dispel fears rather than cause them, as well as competition from other international news such as the UK's plan to build a hydrogen bomb, and the political crisis in France. Given these reaction they conclude, "While additional US public statements specifically designed to counter unfavorable trends are not required at this time, the problem should be kept under continuous review by the Operations Coordinating Board, and a further report should be furnished to the NSC at the end of ninety days." Unfavorable trends would seem to be those similar to that they encountered in Japan where the press, "received the report with alarm headlines and maps of the potential fall-out centered on Tokyo." They also noted in particular a report in which "left-wing university professors" decried the omission of the tragedy of the Lucky Dragon and Rongelap natives devastated by the Castle Bravo test.[178]

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[176] Clarfield and Wiecek (1984: 213)

[177] "Overseas Reactions to the AEC Report on the Effects of High-Yield Nuclear Explosions", Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, White House Office, NSC Staff Papers, Disaster File, box 5.

[178] Ibid.

Interest in moderating these reactions led the administration to keep up its efforts to downplay the danger posed by testing, and emphasize its commitment to "cleaner" hydrogen bombs. In an October 24, 1956 press release, Eisenhower addressed concerns with the danger of fallout directly,

> The continuance of the present rate of H-bomb testing—by the most sober and responsible scientific judgment—does not imperil the health of humanity. On the amount of radio-active fall-out, including Strontium-90, resulting from tests, the most authoritative judgment is that of the Independent National Academy of Sciences. It reported last June, following a study by 150 scientists of the first rank, that the radiation exposure from all weapons tests to date—and from continuing at the same rate—is, and would be, only a small fraction of the exposure that individuals receive from natural sources and from medical X-rays during their lives.[179]

Only a week before this address by Eisenhower, CD Jackson had submitted a speech written for the president that was never delivered.[180] The speech argued that all efforts to reduce armaments by the US had been stymied by the Soviet Union. The situation had forced the US, out of security, to continue enlarging its own nuclear arsenal of hydrogen bombs. He argued however, that the US was pursuing "small, clean H-bombs" with little radioactive fallout. The need for cleaner hydrogen bombs is puzzling however, because as the AEC argued,

> the total amount of radiation received by residents of the United States from all nuclear detonations to date, including the Russian and British tests and all of our

[179] Dwight D. Eisenhower: "Statement by the President Reviewing the Government's Policies and Actions With Respect to the Development and Testing of Nuclear Weapons.", October 24, 1957. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=10667.

[180] Charles Jackson, "For possible use in future speech – re H-bomb tests." October 15, 1956, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Ann Whitman Series, Atoms for Peace, CD Jackson Papers, Box 21.

> own tests in the United States and the Pacific, has been about one-tenth of one roentgen…It is about the same as the exposure received from one chest x-ray.[181]

The position betrayed a policy of insisting that no fallout threat existed from current hydrogen bomb design tests, but also promising cleaner bombs with less fallout. The double move of denying that bombs were unleashing dangerous fallout, while also promising to reduce fallout, indicates that the administration understood the danger posed by radiation especially in the areas downwind from even the smaller tests taking place at Yucca Flats, not to mention the massive hydrogen bombs that had been detonated in the South Pacific as part of Operation Castle. This hypocrisy had been pointed out as early as 1952 by a layperson named Helen Dodds responding to press reports about soldiers being used in radiation experiments, "if the men running this experiment say there is no danger, then why do they build such elaborate shelters for themselves, farther away from the explosion area than the troops which have no protection?"[182]

In 1957, the British tested a series of nuclear devices that yielded their first truly successful thermonuclear blast.[183] The successful test led to major public outcry punctuated by a protest march beginning in London on Good Friday (spring) of 1958 and going through Easter.[184] Organized by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the three

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[181] United States Atomic Energy Commission, "A Report by the United States Atomic Energy Commission on the Effects of High-Yield Nuclear Explosions," February 15, 1955, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, White House Office, NSC Staff Papers, Disaster File, box 5.

[182] Clarfield & Wiecek (1984: 205)

[183] The specific date of the first British test depends upon the definition of a successful thermonuclear device test. Tests in May and June demonstrated a fusion reaction, but fell well short of their design yields. For example, the May 15, 1957 test, which Prime Minister Harold McMillan called "the first British H-Bomb", had been designed to achieve a yield of 1 megaton, but yielded only 20-30% of that. On November 8, 1957, off of Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean, northwest of Australia, the "Grapple X/Round C" test yielded 1.8 megatons, an unambiguously successful H-bomb test.

[184] Clarfield & Wiecek (1984: 223)

day march attracted up to ten thousand concerned citizens, and led to the adoption of the "peace sign" for nuclear disarmament: ☮. The symbol would become the calling card of peace movements and activists around the world to this day. At nearly the same time, the Soviet Union declared that it would observe a self-imposed moratorium on nuclear testing. The self-restriction evidently followed a disaster at Kyshtym, a region about 1,000 miles east of Moscow, just north of Kazakhstan. On September 29, 1957, a storage tank exploded at the Mayak nuclear complex leading the evacuation of multiple local villages.[185] The event presented a challenge for the US, which learned of the event vis-à-vis U-2 spy plane flyovers and CIA operatives on the ground. While it could have been used as a propaganda tool to demonstrate Soviet atomic incompetence, or buttress claims of US nuclear superiority, fears that it would instead fuel public anxiety over testing led US officials to conceal the catastrophe from the US public until the late 1970's. The disaster may have played a role in bringing about a temporary halt of Soviet testing of nuclear weapons which precipitated a corresponding testing moratorium by the UK and the US (after it concluded its planned and ongoing series of tests).

By the end of the Eisenhower administration, efforts to downplay the impact of atmospheric testing were being drowned out by voices in the public who were increasingly successful at conveying the real danger and stoking public anxiety. In 1956, Adlai Stevenson's presidential campaign championed a nuclear test ban. On April 23,

[185] The Kyshtym disaster only became public knowledge in the west in the late 1970's. Until the end of the Cold War, accounts of the disaster were limited and anecdotal. Some included reports of a nuclear explosion—either a failed weapons test or a reactor meltdown. Official reports from both the US and Soviet Union now agree that it was a chemical explosion caused by problems with cooling processes at Mayak. The explosion compounded the consequences of existing soil and water contamination and likely led to the evacuation of the local communities. For a brief contemporary account see: Steve Jones, "Windscale & Kyshtym: a double anniversary," *Journal of Environmental Radioactivity* 99 (2008: 1-6). For a technical analysis and an explanation of confusion about the event see: Diane Soran and Danny Stillman, "An Analysis of the Alleged Kyshtym Disaster," Los Alamos National Laboratory (January 1982).

1957, Albert Schweitzer, a famous and highly respected humanitarian and physician delivered "Declaration of Conscience" on Radio Oslo in Norway. The radio address pled for a halt to nuclear weapons testing, with each new explosion cast as "a catastrophe to the human race, a catastrophe that must be prevented."[186] Although the administration played some role in limiting the reach of the Schweitzer's message in the US, "Declaration of Conscience" and subsequent messages made major impacts on public opinion abroad, and added vigor to anti-nuclear movements around the world.[187] Popular culture capitalized on the public's interest and anxiety with a litany of B-movies and books with nuclear disaster and dystopian themes.[188]

The administration reacted with efforts to silence and redact a growing body of scientific literature detailing the threat posed by radiation, as well as simultaneously arguing, that whatever the risk, it would be worth it to keep ahead of the Russians. These efforts led primarily by Strauss and the AEC would be increasingly less successful as the decade wound down. The events in the South Pacific, the radiation of St. George, Utah, and an unstoppable flood of published scientific study contributed to a counter-hegemonic discourse within the public that would challenge the prevailing elite discourse. The elite discourse developed during the Eisenhower administration, namely

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[186] Lawrence Wittner, "Blacklisting Schweitzer," *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* Vol. 51, No. 3 (May/June 1995): 56.

[187] Everett Holles, director of public relations for the AEC, declined to cooperate with CBS to broadcast Schweitzer's message. Wittner's account argues that a memo sent by Holles makes plain the AEC's intervention in the free dissemination of the broadcasts (May/June 1995: 57).

[188] Throughout the 1950's Hollywood produced low budget science fiction movies rife with nuclear anxiety. Examples include such films as *Them!*, a 1954 Warner Brothers story of giant ants emerging from a desert atomic test, and *Beginning of the End*, a 1954 movie about enormous grasshoppers emerging after consuming radioactive wheat. In these and others, filmmakers responded and contributed to a growing sense of fear of radiation and the broader nuclear arms race. See Paul Brians, *Nuclear Holocausts: Atomic War in Fiction, 1895-1984* (Kent State University Press, 1987).

that the threat posed by the Soviets justified risks associated with testing—and that any risks should be downplayed to the public for their own long-term good, would finally come crashing down following the Cuban Missile Crisis which took place in October of 1962. That crisis pushed the US, UK, and Soviet Union into signing the Partial Test Ban Treaty which banned atmospheric testing, on July 31, 1963. Although the danger posed by nuclear testing would continue to plague the public even after the treaty had been signed, the 1960's saw the matter fade from the forefront of public consciousness.[189]

**Conclusion**

The Eisenhower presidency is the first in the US in which the dialectic between the public and the elite framed the emergence of nuclear weapons policy. In 1953, the administration spent considerable effort trying to conceive of a method of sharing with the public its own knowledge, while accomplishing two things: avoiding a public panic, and keeping technical secrets under wraps. With regard to the former, the administration would find throughout the decade that the notion of nuclear war had already heightened awareness and anxiety in the public, and that their efforts to shape public opinion would be undermined by scientists, popular movies, and the disastrous effects of nuclear testing on people and the environment. With regard to keeping nuclear secrets, the administration had been warned on day one that once other states worked out the foundational science and engineering, their growth in nuclear capabilities would proceed rapidly. Indeed, by 1960, both the Soviets and British had exploded thermonuclear devices, with the Chinese program close behind.

[189] France and China did not sign the Partial Test Ban Treaty and continued atmospheric testing. In addition, underground testing continued. Although generally depositing less fallout, venting accidents associated with underground tests continued to contaminate the environment near the Nevada Test Site (Clarfield and Wiecek 1984: 229).

However, before any mention can be made of much of the administration's efforts in any other realm of nuclear weapons policy, this study has underscored elite discourse about the Soviet Union as powerful and foundational. Since well before Eisenhower took office, the hegemonic discourse among elites about the Soviet Union was that it was an uncooperative and backward superpower bent on expansion and destruction of the West. Though various articulations put it differently, the central argument that no negotiation could be had with the Soviets persisted throughout the 1950's. Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" speech contained proposals known beforehand to be unacceptable to the Soviets. The president saw the speech as a chance to make people more hopeful even as he launched a nuclear arms race—because the intransigent Soviets left him no choice. The power of the discourse on the Soviets foreclosed competing discourses by normalizing the notion of Soviet intransigence into "common sense." This hegemonic discourse precluded the consideration of any alternatives including anything approaching genuine efforts at cooperation.

In the Quemoy and Matsu crisis in 1954-1955, the president revealed a refined view of the prospects of using nuclear weapons, as well as the weakness of the real but still delicate nuclear taboo. Although no nuclear weapons were used, the evidence shows that Eisenhower had committed himself to using nuclear weapons to defend the small islands. Because the administration sent mixed signals, even to US subordinates, the Chinese could have easily misunderstood US intentions and invaded the islands triggering a nuclear response. From that point forward it is not worth speculating, but it is possible that the Soviets would have become involved, and the risk for global nuclear war and its attendant consequences would have increased. Eisenhower and Dulles seemed to

ignore this possibility, instead arguing for the possibility of limited war and the utility of nuclear blackmail. Concurrent with this view they attempted to prepare the US public for the use of nuclear weapons in March 1955, a course of action that had the ironic effect of extending the taboo. This effort pitched the discourses emerging from the elite at odds with discourses in the public and among allies. Administration efforts to blur the line between nuclear and conventional weapons instead alarmed allies and frightened the American public. Anti-nuclear movements in their nascent phases built on these provocations, with more people in more countries heeding their alternative discourse.

The assortment of fledgling anti-nuclear movements as well as their anti-nuclear discourse would be strengthened throughout the decade by dozens of nuclear test explosions, many of which were coupled with radiation experiments on unwitting military personnel, others of which led to environmental contamination, sometimes at catastrophic levels. These consequences—the result of a still insufficient understanding of the radiological effects of nuclear explosions—as well as willful ignorance were justified by the dominant elite discourse on the Soviet Union. The administration accepted some risks would be posed by testing, but believed that maintaining an edge in the arms race, including nuclear superiority outweighed any other considerations. Eisenhower and other elites did not realize the scope of the contamination initially, and even as evidence came in, the AEC obfuscated and falsified. From the administration's standpoint, there were bound to be some complications and costs to staying ahead in the nuclear arms race, but to fall behind would mean annihilation. The complications and costs would continue to mount throughout the decade however, even while the AEC's attempts to downplay the danger posed by nuclear testing failed.

The administration failed in its effort to impose its own discourse on nuclear weapons testing onto the public. In part because of the opaque nature of the nuclear weapons development complex, the public mostly learned about nuclear weapons from events which could not be kept secret, namely the explosions themselves. These explosions ended up being destructive far beyond heat and blast effects, radiating communities and military personnel, alarming the greater scientific community, and sending deep waves of anxiety through the public. By the time the administration's strategy of Candor was underway, a discourse quite different had taken hold in the public. Since John Hersey published "Hiroshima" in *The New Yorker* in 1946, public opinion had been shaped by myths of the unprecedented threat posed by nuclear weapons and technology. "Candor" and "Atoms for Peace" were doomed to failure by the administration's insistence on continuing large-scale testing in Nevada and the South Pacific. These tests opened up one of the "pathways" to the nuclear taboo—societal pressure.[190] As opposition groups both in the US and abroad began to apply pressure on the administration to halt testing and ratchet down the nuclear arms race, they changed the set of incentives facing policymakers. While Eisenhower, John Foster Dulles, Radford, and many others in the administration openly argued in favor of using nuclear weapons in Korea and later to defend Quemoy and Matsu, they were also deeply concerned with repercussions from the public at home and abroad. In their most serious discussions in NSC meetings and elsewhere, the conversation about using nuclear weapons always considered the public opinion consequences. In March of 1955, the administration's efforts to normalize or "conventionalize" nuclear weapons failed on that

[190] Tannenwald (2007: 64)

account, and ironically contributed to a strengthening of the nuclear taboo in at least three ways. First, European allies expressed concern that the US would inadvertently trigger a global nuclear war in which Europe would surely be a casualty. Diplomatic pressure reiterated the potential loss of allies that using nuclear weapons could mean. Second, the efforts were another mobilizing moment for anti-nuclear movements in the US, UK, Japan and elsewhere. As these movements grew, so too did their capacity for affecting the nuclear weapons policy decisions. Third, the administration continued setting a precedent of engaging the public on nuclear weapons policy. Although one could argue that the "Chance for Peace" and "Atoms for Peace" speeches only provided token details about the realities of nuclear power and weapons, the precise content is less important for this point than the fact that the US president wanted to talk with the public about nuclear weapons. Had Eisenhower not pushed for candor with the persistence and enthusiasm with which he did, the US nuclear program and its assessments of the Soviet Union could have been shrouded in even greater secrecy. His choice to open a dialogue with the public instead invited public response, and provided an opening for a sharpening of the discourses making up the public's general nuclear anxiety in the early 1950's, providing a check on the actions and behavior of the administration.

# CHAPTER III

## FROZEN DISCOURSE: REAGAN CONFRONTS THE NUCLEAR FREEZE MOVEMENT

> Until the arms race stops, until we have a world with peace and justice, we will not go home and be quiet. We will go home and organize.
> —Randall Forsberg, June, 13, 1982

> I just have to say that I don't think there could be any winners. Everybody would be a loser if there's a nuclear war.
> —President Ronald Reagan, March 31, 1982

This chapter deploys discourse analysis to reexamine nuclear weapons policymaking during the Ronald Reagan administration, from his early encounters with the problem of nuclear weapons to his apparent turnabout in rhetoric and policy as president during the mid-1980's.[191] Nuclear weapons politics during this epoch developed against a backdrop of rapidly advancing technology and a dynamic security environment, as well as one in which social constraints on nuclear weapons policy were also in flux. Such dynamics were complicated further by competing interpretations of the level of threat from the Soviet Union, the technological capabilities—both current and future—of the US, and the prescriptions implied by this state of affairs. As president, Reagan inherited a somewhat thawed Cold War with the Soviet Union, three decades of nuclear weapons development, and an advancing space program which provided both chances to solve military problems with new technology, and opportunities for fanciful and expensive indulgences into science fiction. The possible and the impossible mixed as a political establishment with varied and evolving interpretations of the interests and

[191] For a discussion of the definition of nuclear weapons policy used here and by others, see Chapter I.

capabilities of the US and Soviet Union deployed both genuine and misleading rhetoric to advance ever-changing objectives.

**Why this case study?**

Although this period has been studied extensively by historians, political scientists, and others, several factors motivate the current undertaking. First and foremost, the process by which the Reagan administration constructed foreign policy, and specifically its policy on nuclear weapons, is not settled. For some, Reagan drove foreign policy with a clear vision. Others claim that he lent only a vision of the strong US and the threatening Soviet Union—a guide then loosely interpreted by the hawks and Committee on the Present Danger (CPD) alumni that made up the Reagan foreign policy team.[192] Also problematic for explanations of the Reagan administration's foreign policy is the abrupt turnabout in fundamental appraisals of the Soviet Union and the means that the Reagan administration brought to bear on nuclear weapons policy and foreign policy. Any attempt to explain or understand this period must address, the extent to which there was a change in policy during Reagan's second term, as well as what or whom drove the change. This chapter will argue that discourse analysis provides leverage in approaching the "Reagan Reversal."[193]

In addition, the discourse approach will provide an avenue to critique material explanations. The pieces of discourse examined here instead show that policymakers faced profound uncertainty regarding what the impact a military buildup would have on

[192] Beth A. Fischer, *The Reagan Reversal: Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 1-5.

[193] Ibid.

the Soviet Union; the nature of current and future of missile defense technology; and the political power of those oppose the new direction. These sources of uncertainty led political leaders to rely on narratives built on rhetoric, assumptions, and stories about the world and the US nuclear weapons' role therein. Economic or realist interpretations of this case would quite properly emphasize such variables as economic and industrial capacity, allies, conventional capabilities and other material sources to explain the buildup and eventual turnabout. This approach does not ignore such material realities, but contends that it is only when material realities are incorporated into discourse that it makes any difference for the social world. The contribution of this work then will be to approach a well-researched case with a new focus. With this new focus, new pieces of discourse may be brought to the fore, and novel conclusions about the forging of nuclear weapons policy in the US may emerge.

Second, this work will have the benefit of hindsight. While extensive research has uncovered many of the relationships and causal processes, cases that are relatively new are worth revisiting often. Documents related to this period have trickled out over the last twenty-five years, and many people involved in the policymaking process have only recently retired, penned telling memoirs and provided revealing interviews.[194] Such novelty means that controversies and source data remains, and stories are yet to be told. Studies such as this are meant to ensure that these novel materials may be usefully incorporated in the historical debate over the Reagan foreign policy legacy.

[194] See for example George Schultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1993); and Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York: Penguin Group, 2011).

Third, while political scientists and others have spilled a great deal of ink describing and analyzing the Reagan administration and its policies, it is worthwhile to reexamine such work as new tools of inquiry become available. When Reagan left office in 1989, the discipline of political science had only just begun to explore the possibilities afforded by constructivism, and insights drawn from the methodologies of sociology, anthropology, philosophy and others. Here I will deploy variants of discourse analysis as well as insights from various interpretive methods to investigate nuclear weapons policymaking during the Reagan era. Although these approaches have been used for decades in other disciplines, they have only recently been applied to topics in international relations.[195]

**Making sense of the two Reagans**

In this chapter I offer a novel approach to the empirical problem presented by the seemingly inconsistent and contradictory policy and rhetoric of the Reagan nuclear weapons policy. The arc of the Reagan campaign and presidency show what Joseph Cirincione has called the two Ronald Reagans.[196] In the decades before taking office and during his first term, Reagan spoke of the Soviet Union in adversarial terms, arguing that the US should remain vigilant militarily with increasing defense budgets and a larger nuclear weapons arsenal with the latest in delivery systems. Yet by his second term, the emphasis had shifted toward arms control and nonproliferation efforts. In October 1986,

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[195] See for example Jenny Edkins, *Poststructuralism & International Relations: Bringing the Political Back In*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers (1999); Charlotte Epstein, *The Power of Words in International Relations: Birth of an Anti-Whaling Discourse* (MIT Press, 2008); Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War* (New York: Routledge, 2006); and Jutta Weldes et. al. eds. *Cultures of Insecurity: States, Communities, and the Production of Danger* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

[196] *Bomb Scare: The History and Future of Nuclear Weapons* (Columbia University Press, 2008), 38-40.

Reagan and Gorbachev had a near-breakthrough that exposed the potential for arms control at the Reykjavik, Iceland summit. In 1987 the two superpowers signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. The ongoing cooperation additionally paved the way for the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), proposed by Reagan in 1982, that would finally be signed by President George H.W. Bush in 1991.

Several explanations have been posited for the turnaround or the Reagan Reversal.[197] Cirincione suggests that it could have been the triumph of Secretary of State George Schultz's influence over that of Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger.[198] Conservative analysts such as Irving Kristol argue that the Reagan defense buildup demonstrated to Soviet elites that the US had the political will and economic capacity to win the Cold War, and that they therefore folded. In other words, Reagan's turnabout is explained by his policy's success in changing Soviet foreign policy.[199] Gaddis takes a similar view, arguing that the Reagan buildup hastened the disintegration of the Soviet empire.[200] Others have argued that the buildup itself, the centerpiece of Reagan's first term, actually led to a longer Cold War. From this view, Reagan's policies emboldened members of the Soviet Politburo and other agencies who advocated a corresponding Soviet buildup. Such convictions made for staunch opposition to Gorbachev's plans for

[197] Fischer (1997)

[198] 2007: 40

[199] For Kristol's view see "It Wasn't Inevitable," *American Enterprise Institute, On the Issues* (June 2004). Also note that Margaret Thatcher famously argued at a Heritage Foundation event, "He (Reagan) won the Cold War without firing a shot" (Daniel Wirls, *Irrational Security: The Politics of Defense from Reagan to Obama*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

[200] John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005). Wirls calls the perspective that Reagan's buildup won the Cold War "triumphalism," and argues that this point of view became central to Reagan's "iconic status" in the Republican party, and remained as one of the drivers of persistently high defense spending through the Obama era (Wirls 2010: 23-6).

glasnost and perestroika and may have prolonged the existence of the Soviet Union.[201] In spite of the opposition, Gorbachev's platform, as well as steadily crumbling economic and political structures in the Soviet Union, made it possible for Reagan to pursue more cooperative policy in his second term. The approach offered here will suggest continuity rather than disruption in the Reagan foreign policy, and especially in those components of foreign policy that constitute nuclear weapons policy. Instead of the rapid reversal, there is a gradual evolution in the Reagan approach to the problem of what to do with nuclear weapons. Along the way, his interactions with discourses on missile defense and arms control affected—but did not replace—the way in which he would articulate policy as his presidency proceeded. This chapter will show the roots of the various strands of discourse which would eventually be woven together by Reagan and others to constitute policy. The next section will summarize how discourse analyses' shift of focus toward the ensembles of ideas and formulations and the actors which create and recreate them can provide a compelling account which incorporates the assumption that the world is socially constructed, and that the formulation of the policy question came under conditions of uncertainty. In contrast to other accounts which claim to ferret out causation, the approach utilized here shows an arc of nuclear weapons policy discourse in which actors juggled and manipulated multiple competing discourses in order to construct policy.

**Discourse Analysis**

Discourse analysis is well-suited for investigating nuclear weapons politics. Since the international strategic environment, tradition, and history provide few determinative

[201] Richard Ned Lebow & Janice Gross Stein, *We All Lost the Cold War*, Princeton Studies in International History and Politics (Princeton University Press, 1994).

imperatives for those constructing nuclear weapons policy, policy makers have latitude to consider a wide range of possibilities. Under these conditions policy emerges, neither out of the ether nor from some kind of international dictate, but from the prevailing sets of arguments and ideas available to the elite—discourse.[202] In Reagan's case, the president and his administration built on the work done by them and others in the 1970's of producing doubt in US capabilities, and certainty in the strength of the Soviet Union, conditions that then made certain policy choices necessary. In lodging a critique of Carter and positing their own worldview they not only prescribed policies, but redefined the interests and identity of the US and the ethical responsibility that such an identity entailed. As the critiques, policies, and means are articulated, they contribute to the forging of state identity, and provide a backdrop for continuing the discourse, or building an alternative. The continued propagation of the Reagan administration's discourses gave the discourses themselves power, but also led to the rise of alternative or competing discourses—especially one that supported and constituted the nuclear freeze movement, and by extension the nuclear taboo.

[202] Discourse can be thought of as sense-making practices (Epstein 2008: 4), or as "an interrelated set of texts, and practices of their production, dissemination, and reception, that brings an object into being" (Marianne Jørgensen & Louise Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 3). The texts to which Jorgensen and Phillips refer can be speeches, conversations, books, symbols, videos, or pictures. These artifacts become meaningful through the process of intertextuality—a concept that captures the interconnectedness of texts. Texts build and modify existing meanings and categories. Meaning produced in texts derives from both the text itself, and its spatial and temporal location in the social space. Common linguistic, conceptual, or symbolic constructions may be used repeatedly over time and in varied genres and arenas. These connections produce legitimacy for both the new and old text: the new by invoking existing meanings, and the old by being referenced or re-articulated. Consistent with Phillips and Hardy, the study of discourse deployed here is "three-dimensional"—texts build on and extend existing discourses and are situated within a particular historical and social context (2002: 4). Texts on their own are meaningless—it is only through reference to existing texts and their context that meaning emerges. The discourse that emerges not only creates historically contingent meaning, but negates other possible articulations and meanings. In the context of foreign policy, construing issues as problems for the state to address, officials construct foreign policy problems that present a challenge to the ongoing discourse constituting state identity. For more on the discursive approach in this chapter see Chapter I.

Discourse analysis applied to this case reveals a few important points about the arc of Reagan's thinking, action, and rhetoric around nuclear weapons. First, the role of missile defense as central to all of Reagan's understanding should not be diminished. Whether discussing deterrence as an abstract concept, or viewing actual nuclear weapons at military sites, Reagan took it upon himself to consider what "defense" meant in the context of nuclear weapons, and often lamented the US's lack of an effective defense. Other accounts have trouble with why missile defense played such a central role in policy. Instead it is assumed that organizations, or hawkish policy makers drove missile defense, all the while missing the pivotal role of Edward Teller's personal interactions with Reagan that began in 1967. Second, although his appraisal of the Soviet Union's capabilities and intentions were largely consistent with that of Paul Nitze, Caspar Weinberger, and other Republican hawks as they conceived of the problem in the late 1970's and early 1980's, Reagan's rhetoric often criticized the morality or goodness of the Soviet Union. This unique and pointed conception, a piece of his discourse on US foreign policy, paved the way for the massive military buildup and for the proposal of SDI, and contributed to the terms of the confrontation with opponents of his policies. In other words, the buildup, SDI, and later meeting with Gorbachev were made possible by the evolving discourse being continuously created and powerfully recreated by Reagan. Such policies did not snap into existence, rather they emerged from the discursive milieu. In spite of Reagan's ominous appraisal of the Soviet Union early in his presidency, his later cordial relations with Mikhail Gorbachev is best understood as an evolution of discourse. This is because the notion of a threatening and aggressive Soviet Union had been constructed and reinforced in social reality as a discursive creation of the members

of CPD and the hawkish Right. The actual intentions of Soviet policy makers and their military and industrial capabilities while interesting, did not drive the Reagan foreign policy. Any real insight into material realities would have been refracted by Reagan's national security apparatus, who then incorporated any insights into the discourses on which Reagan based policy. In addition to his own national security experts, this chapter will also consider the extent to which Reagan's evolving discourse incorporated and co-opted the discourse on nuclear weapons policy created and favored by the nuclear freeze movement. A focus on discourse reveals the intertextual links and connections between the freeze movement and Reagan. The movement led Reagan to reiterate his much earlier stated desire to abolish nuclear weapons, and per Schultz, led him to reconsider a place for arms control in his platform.[203]

The ways in which Reagan wove together these various elements of discourse and argumentation led directly to the major nuclear weapons policy outcomes during the Reagan administration. Tracing the various discourses on nuclear weapons policy illuminates the divergence between slowly changing material circumstances, and a rapidly evolving political landscape. For example, while workable national missile defense was nowhere near possible at the time (and remains elusive and unlikely), the concept, or discursive object of missile defense, powerfully affected the confrontation between Reagan and the nuclear freeze movement, and later between Reagan and Gorbachev. In short, the discourse mattered. It mattered in leading Reagan to accept that

[203] Reagan told George Schultz in private in the fall of 1983, "If things get hotter and arms control remains an issue, maybe I should go see Andropov and propose eliminating all nuclear weapons". He is referring to Soviet General Secretary Yuri Andropov who succeeded Leonid Brezhnev two days after Brezhnev's death on November 12, 1982. See George Schultz, *Turmoil and triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (Charles Scribner's Sons: New York, 1993), 372.

missile defense should be a significant component of the buildup, and thus denaturalizing—or removing from the "common sense"—powerful critiques of the potential of missile defense from Nixon, Richard Garwin and Hans Bethe, and others.[204] Discourse shaped the character and content of interactions between US and Soviet diplomats attempting to navigate a dynamic international security environment. It was a discursive process that took place when the nuclear freeze movement inspired responses from Reagan that made possible a move toward cooperation and arms control, and away from antagonizing the Soviet Union with rhetoric, and building up the military. And finally, the relationship between Gorbachev and Reagan which is so central to the history of the Cold War and the role of nuclear weapon in international politics can be understood more clearly if one examines the discourses from which the two leaders spoke. Here it matters because a focus on discourse rather than the material interests or strategic calculation, lends greater clarity into the two Reagans problems—namely that there were never two Reagans, instead there were always multiple and competing discourses. As a powerful actor, Reagan reshaped and recombined these discourses in novel ways, but he was also powerfully limited from ignoring the nuclear freeze movement, and from even considering a host of other strategies relative to defense by the existence and accessibility of discourse.

[204] Richard Garwin & Hans Bethe argued that the Sentinel system that was touted by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara in the late 1960's would be unworkable, easily overcome by determined adversaries, and expensive ("Anti-Ballistic-Missile Systems". *Scientific American*. Vol. 218: 3, March 1968). President Richard Nixon seemed to agree, as he scaled back the Sentinel missile defense program in 1969. See "The President's News Conference," March 14, 1969. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=1951.

*Texts that constitute the discourses*

The following table lists the key texts used in this case study. While there are many texts consistent with the discourses and effects noted here, the texts mobilized here were selected with an eye for the clarity with which they articulated major points of argumentation, as well as their impact. Milliken offers useful guidelines in selecting and analyzing texts.[205] Texts provide meaning by locating objects in space, and differentiating objects from each other—creating a self, and (possibly multiple) others, which constitutes identity. When collecting texts in order to establish the existence of some discourse, the researcher should consider the analysis sufficiently complete when additional texts continue to draw the same differentiations as those that have come before. In other words, texts bring objects into social existence and map these objects relative to each other in a social space. When the addition of new texts no longer alters the map of that social space, the analysis should be considered complete.[206] Establishing a consistently mapped social space requires starting with those texts with wide reach, and frequent prominent re-articulation and re-creation by others.[207] If enough texts are considered, the categories that emerge should be congruent with those of other non-discursive studies, and should increase the reliability of the interpretation.

[205] "The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods," *European Journal of International Relations* Vol. 5 (1999): 225-54.

[206] Ibid.: 234

[207] Lene Hansen also provides useful guidelines for selecting texts in a case such as this. They suggest that texts should be selected from the time under study, especially those which are "frequently quoted and function as nodes within the intertextual web of debate". In addition and consistent with discourse analysis historical material should also be included to establish context See Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), 73-4.

**Table 1 – Timeline of key texts mobilized to identify discourse and effects (Reagan primary material in bold)**

**Missile Defense**

1967 - September - McNamara outlines Sentinel

1967 - October - Meeting with Edward Teller at LLNL

1968 - March - Richard Garwin and Hans Bethe critique missile defense in Scientific American

1969 - March Nixon News Conference - Renames Sentinel "Safeguard"

**1976 - August - GOP Convention Remarks, Reagan frames nuclear weapons in terms of missiles**

**1979 - July 31 - Reagan asks about missile defense at NORAD**

1979- August - Anderson prepares missile defense option for Reagan's foreign policy plan

1979 - Fall - Wallop and Codevilla send Reagan "Opportunities and Imperatives of Ballistic Missile Defense"

1982 - January - Teller and "Kitchen Cabinet" meet with Reagan to push missile defense

**1983 - March 23 - SDI Speech**

**1986 - October - Reykjavik breakthrough stunted by Reagan's insistence on keeping SDI**

**Nuclear Freeze Movement**

1980 - Dr. Randall Forsberg publishes "Call to Halt the Nuclear Arms Race"

1980 - November - "Freeze resolution" appears on ballot in 62 Massachusetts towns; 59 approve

1982 - March - 180 Vermont town meetings vote on freeze; 159 vote in favor

1982 - March - Senators Kennedy and Hatfield introduce Freeze Resolution to Congress

**1982 - March - Reagan says that there can be no winner in a nuclear war; calls the freeze dangerous to US**

**1982 - June - Reagan states in an interview on French television that he is the leader of the freeze movement**

1982 - June - Nearly a million attend nuclear freeze rally in Central Park

**1982 - November - Reagan argues that the freeze had been concocted and launched by Soviet agents to weaken US**

1983 - March - FBI report contends the agency found no evidence connecting the Soviets to the freeze movement

**1983 - September - Reagan touts arms control to UN; Argues that zero-option is best solution to nuclear weapons**

**1983 - October - Reagan tells Schultz that maybe he should propose eliminating nuclear weapons to Andropov**

**1985 - November - Gorbachev and Reagan meet for first time at Geneva Summit; agree to continue meeting**

**1986 - October - Gorbachev and Reagan meet at the Reyjavik Summit; agree on need to reduce nuclear arsenals**

This chapter is part of the larger dissertation project aimed at showing how the often opposing discourses that emerge from elite policymakers and the broader public interact to make possible certain kinds of nuclear weapons policies such as modernization, and buildups, but strongly proscribes other policies such as developing more useable nuclear weapons and especially using nuclear weapons in combat—a powerful normative prohibition that has been dubbed the nuclear taboo.[208] Although the current work is not aimed at showing the emergence of the nuclear taboo, the ongoing confrontation between Reagan's administration and supporters and the nuclear freeze movement and associated peace movement groups is a chance to look closer at the operation of the nuclear taboo and its impact on broader nuclear weapons politics. By looking closely at the discourse associated with cases of political conflict over nuclear weapons, we can gain greater understanding of the processes of norm construction and maintenance, the robustness of the nuclear taboo during this era, and the various ways in which opponents challenge and alter those norms through reconfigurations of existing discourse.

The next section focuses on Reagan's early encounters with the concept of missile defense. Those encounters interacted with his formative experiences with nuclear weapons politics in which he supported the internationalization of nuclear materials and technology. The third section deals with Reagan on the campaign trail. During this time he learned more about missile defense, and drew from a variety of hawkish groups on the right who advocated a military buildup to counter a looming Soviet threat. The fourth section details Reagan's first term in which he continued the themes of Soviet threat and

[208] For the most comprehensive discussion of the nuclear taboo, see Nina Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: the United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

military buildup, as well as articulating on several occasions a critique of the state of deterrence. The fifth section focuses on the nuclear freeze movement and its confrontation with Reagan's discourse. Finally, the implications of the study are then considered in the conclusion.

**Reagan Before the Presidency: The Emergence of Missile Defense**

In 1959 the Soviet Union began developing limited missile defenses to protect Moscow in the case of a US intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) attack. Eight launch sites were planned, from which A-35 missiles would be deployed to intercept an incoming attack. The Soviets enjoyed several successful tests against single missiles as early as 1960. However, during the course of development it became clear that the system—even with missiles carrying 1-megaton yield warheads—would be ineffective in the face of multiple independent re-entry vehicles (MIRVs).[209] Nevertheless, development proceeded and they achieved preliminary operational status of "Galosh" by 1971.[210]

All the while, the development process accompanied by political debate in the Soviet Union mirrored that of the United States. Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson all funded research and development of anti-ballistic missile (ABM) systems. In 1967, Johnson yielded to pressure to deploy a system in response to the Soviet "Galosh"

[209] Such a system would have also been overwhelmed by a large attack where the numbers of incoming ICBM's would greatly exceed the available number of defensive intercept vehicles. Although the claim had been made by Brodie as early as 1946, it is not clear to what extent the Soviet Union considered the problem during the construction of Galosh. See Bernard Brodie, Frederick Sherwood Dunn, et. al., *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order* (New York: Harcourt, 1946).

[210] For a listing of Soviet and Russian missile defense systems see Sean O'Connor, "Russian/Soviet Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems," *Air Power Australia* (December 2009), http://www.ausairpower.net/APA-Rus-ABM-Systems.html#mozTocId357155.

with the US counterpart "Sentinel." Because such a move would have looked provocative given the arms race, Secretary of Defense McNamara argued in his announcement of the program that the intent would be to counter the novel Chinese nuclear threat. In doing so, he walked a fine line between a light ABM system, oriented against China, and a heavy ABM system which would be porous and vulnerable to the much larger Soviet threat.[211, 212] The Chinese-oriented variant, he argued, would be cheaper and more reliable, and would have the added benefit of being able to protect US Minuteman missiles against a Soviet attack. In addition, the light system would be clearly ineffective against the Soviet arsenal—thus not a threat to the Soviets, and not likely to exacerbate the arms race.

Nixon inherited the Sentinel program following his election in 1968. Shortly after taking office on March 14, 1969 he delivered a speech in which he argued for major changes to the Sentinel program. In particular he took issue with McNamara's characterization of Sentinel as providing an adequate defense against a Chinese nuclear attack. In a speech where he changed the name of Sentinel to "Safeguard" he argued with regard to Sentinel as laid out by McNamara:

> The program also does not do some things which should be clearly understood. It does not provide defense for our cities, and for that reason the sites have been moved away from our major cities. I have made the decision with regard to this particular point because I found that there is no way, even if we were to expand the limited Sentinel system, which was planned for some of our cities, to a so-called heavy or thick system—there is no way that we can adequately defend our

[211] Light seems to have referred to a smaller array of sites aimed at protecting military targets from a Chinese attack. Heavy ABM systems would require greater infrastructure and more sites, but would theoretically defend cities against a larger Soviet attack. See Robert Hutchinson, *Weapons of Mass Destruction: The No-Nonsense Guide to Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Weapons Today* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003).

[212] Robert McNamara's full statement in which he discusses nuclear strategy and the prospects for missile defense see: September 18, 1967 "Remarks made before United Press International Editors and Publishers in San Francisco," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* Vol. 23, No. 10 (December 1967): 26-31.

> cities without an unacceptable loss of life. The only way that I have concluded that we can save lives, which is the primary purpose of our defense system, is to prevent war; and that is why the emphasis of this system is on protecting our deterrent, which is the best preventive for war.[213]

Such a conclusion echoed that reached by members of the scientific community in the year previous. In the March 1968 issue of *Scientific American*, Nobel-laureate Hans A. Bethe and Richard Garwin argued that the Sentinel system announced and publicized by McNamara would be ineffective even in the more modest task of defending against a Chinese attack. They wrote,

> It does not seem credible to us that, even if the Chinese succumbed to the "insane and suicidal" impulse to launch a nuclear attack on the US within the next decade, they would also be foolish enough to have built complex and expensive missiles and nuclear warheads vulnerable to the light ABM system now presumably under construction (a system whose characteristics and capabilities have been well publicized).[214]

Essentially, the well-known limitations of the Sentinel system would simply lead a belligerent enemy to develop an offensive system capable of defeating Sentinel. In spite of evidently agreeing with this larger conclusion, Nixon chose not to abandon missile defense completely, but instead to shift the focus from protecting cities to protecting retaliatory forces. Ironically, Sentinel as articulated under McNamara implied a strategy for potential adversaries of targeting cities with enough warheads to overwhelm any defense. Residents of Boston, Seattle, and Chicago pushed back as word of the projects leaked from political officials and concerned scientists.[215] Nixon's statement above

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[213] Nixon, Richard: "The President's News Conference," March 14, 1969. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=1951.

[214] Garwin & Bethe (March 1968: 21)

[215] Devolpi et. al. point to Newell Mack, a physiology graduate student from the University of Washington, as well as physicists John Erskine, and Alvin Saperstein as key local leaders in the opposition to Sentinel.

concurs with the conclusions about defense against nuclear attack first forcefully championed by Bernard Brody in 1946, that, "No adequate defense against the bomb exists, and the possibilities of its existence in the future are exceedingly remote."[216]

*Reagan's First Encounters with Nuclear Weapons and Missile Defense*

While this debate raged in scientific and policy journals as well as in cities from Washington to Los Alamos to Seattle, Ronald Reagan had been developing his own unique understanding of nuclear weapons. By 1945, Reagan had become vocal in his conviction that nuclear weapons should be abolished, and nuclear power should be placed under international control. Warner Bros. studios actually prevented Reagan from leading an anti-nuclear rally in Hollywood in December of 1945. Reagan planned to read an anti-nuclear poem, but was prevented from doing so by the studio who argued it would breach his contract.[217] Although his personal political views would become more conservative as he entered formal politics, Lettow argues that his stance that nuclear weapons should be abolished remained.[218] Such an argument is certainly supported by Reagan's second term in which his focus shifted toward arms control and diplomacy. In addition, these early convictions would be the bedrock on which Reagan would build his broader understanding of nuclear weapons policy.

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See Devolpi et. al. *Nuclear Shadowboxing: Contemporary Threats from Cold War Weaponry* (Fidlar Doubleday, 2005).

[216] Bernard Brodie, et. al. eds. *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order*. 1st ed. Publications, Yale University Institute of International Studies. (New York: Harcourt, 1946), 19-21.

[217] Paul Lettow, *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Random House Incorporated, 2005), 3-5.

[218] Ibid.

*The GE Years*

During the 1950's and early 1960's Reagan continued to develop as an orator and a politician. 1954 Reagan took a job as the host of *General Electric Theatre*, an anthology show sponsored by General Electric (GE). In addition to hosting the show he also toured GE plants all over the US giving speeches and meeting employees as part of a larger effort at corporate unity. The show succeeded in part because of its charming host—the only host the show ever had—and in part due to the Hollywood stars the new host brought to the program.[219] In his capacity as traveling spokesperson for GE, he met with managers, employees, their families. While records of his speeches are sparse, anecdotal evidence suggests he often talked about his experiences with people in Hollywood or GE's product line. During this time Reagan polished his chops as an orator, and cultivated his common touch.

In addition to sharpening his rhetorical skills, the GE plant tour began Reagan's transition from Democrat to Republican. GE vice president Lemuel Boulware built the company's employee relations philosophy, called Boulwarism, as part of the same effort to keep the corporate empire unified that brought Reagan into the fold. GE disseminated Boulwarism as a set of management ideals through a school in Ossining, New York, as well as on-site classes. Reagan however, absorbed many of the core concepts of the philosophy through ferocious reading of company pamphlets, manuals, and literature in an effort to be sharp as a speaker.[220] In addition GE sponsored a book club that featured

[219] The show began as a radio show, and shortly after became a television show in early 1953, though neither had a host until Reagan took the reins in September of 1954. See General Electric Theatre, "Internet Movie Database." Accessed October 23, 2016. http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0045395/.

[220] Reagan's reading benefitted from hours spent riding in trains and cars, as he refused to fly. A tumultuous flight in 1937 convinced the future president to insist that GE include in his contract a clause that he would not be required to fly. See Thomas Evans, *The Education of Ronald Reagan: The General*

mostly conservative texts on economics and related topics. Boulware curated the book club's list which included works from Henry Hazlitt of the Wall Street Journal, Claude Robinson and others. From these texts Reagan absorbed conservative orthodoxy on the virtues of free markets, the problem of government overreach, and the need for low taxes. His chats with employees on the line gradually evolved into more formal speeches, and those led to speeches to non-employees, and more politically minded civic organizations such as the Lions, and the Kiwanis. By 1960 Reagan had realized that his role and the "sermons" he had been delivering on behalf of GE were incompatible with the voting pattern of his life to that point. In 1960, Reagan "completed the process of self-conversion," and would be a registered Republican for the rest of his life.[221]

*Governor Reagan and Edward Teller*

California elected Reagan governor in 1966. In 1967 he made an historic trip to Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) where he toured the facilities and met with director Michael May and "father of the hydrogen bomb" Edward Teller. At that meeting Teller briefed Reagan on the possibilities for missile defense from his perspective.[222] Martin Anderson, a close policy advisor to Reagan argues that an oft-cited 1979 trip to NORAD was not Reagan's introduction the idea of missile defense. He mentions both the visit with Teller at LLNL in 1967, and also that, "He was fully familiar with Nixon's '68-'69 stuff on missile defense and all the things that had been made. He

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*Electric Years and the Untold Story of His Conversion to Conservatism*. Columbia Studies in Contemporary American History. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 74-5.

[221] Evans (2006: 113)

[222] Stephen Knott & Jeffrey L. Chidester. *At Reagan's Side: Insiders' Recollections from Sacramento to the White House* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, (2009), 103.

was fully aware of it."[223] The "stuff" to which Anderson refers includes the pointed conclusion argued by Nixon's "Statement on Deployment of Antiballistic Missile System":

> Although every instinct motivates me to provide the American people with complete protection against a major nuclear attack, it is not now within our power to do so. The heaviest defense system we considered, one designed to protect our major cities, still could not prevent a catastrophic level of U.S. fatalities from a deliberate all-out Soviet attack. And it might look to an opponent like the prelude to an offensive strategy threatening the Soviet deterrent.[224]

Teller however, probably gave a much different account. During the trip to LLNL in 1967, Teller's research briefing concerned defending against nuclear attack with nuclear explosives.[225] As George Schultz writes in retrospect, "Reagan listened intently, asked many questions, but made no comments pro or con. This may have become the first gleam in Ronald Reagan's eye of what later became the Strategic Defense Initiative."[226] Teller continued to champion the idea of missile defense through the 1980's, publishing his ideas regularly and maintaining regular contact with Reagan. Reading through Teller's work, one is struck by the clear connections with the thinking and discourse of Reagan. He argues that the Soviets have strategic superiority, that there is reason to doubt the strength of the US nuclear deterrent, and that Soviet defenses have become quite effective. He additionally argues that the Soviets could take steps to

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[223] Ibid.

[224] Nixon (March 14, 1969)

[225] Lettow reports that several scientists from LLNL including Teller himself briefed Reagan on Spartan and Sprint missile systems. Per Teller, "his questions showed very little knowledge of the subject but real interest in the subject" (2005: 19).

[226] George P. Schultz (1993: 261).

manage the effects of a nuclear war by utilizing civil defense. Finally, he is confident that contemporary advances in technology will make national missile defense possible either through nuclear anti-ballistic missiles, or through laser technology (also nuclear powered).[227]

There are at least a couple of reasons why Teller's words would be especially powerful for Reagan. First, Teller is known as the "father of the hydrogen bomb." By the time of Reagan, he had established himself as one of the world's foremost nuclear scientists. The evidence and arguments he mobilizes are consistent with his technical background. Whether his assertions were true or not, the words were wrapped in a veil of scientific rigor that set his mode of argumentation apart from Reagan's other advisors who nonetheless advocated similar policy. Second, Teller's outspoken nature on missile defense came from staunch confidence that missile defense would be possible in a short timeframe. In fact, he believed that by the late 1970's the Soviets had completed a system that could stop 50% of missiles attacking Moscow, with upgrades taking that number over 90% imminently. He also touts Soviet work on laser technology as being close to being able to attack missiles during their boost phase.[228, 229]

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[227] Greg Herken, "The earthly origins of Star Wars," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (October 1987): 20-28.

[228] For a closer look at Teller's thinking which he shared with Reagan see, see Teller's publications: "Dangerous Myths About Nuclear Arms", *Reader's Digest* 121 (November 1982): 139-44; and "SDI: The Last Best Hope," *Insight (Washington Post)* (October 28, 1985). For a critique of his point of view see Frank Von Hippel, "The Myths of Edward Teller," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (March 1983): 6-12.

[229] Inter-continental missiles path from launch to explosion is described as having three phases: boost, mid-course, and terminal. During the boost phase, the missile has not yet left the atmosphere and is slow, hot, and bright and can often be seen from space or detected remotely. Shooting down missiles in the boost phase requires a super fast moving projectile, or more likely a laser. During mid-course, missiles are moving through space outside of the atmosphere and would be easy to attack, but for hundreds of decoys which may make the actual missile impossible to identify. The terminal phase or re-entry phase takes place as missiles re-enter the atmosphere heading toward the target. Since, missiles will re-enter much faster than any decoy, this phase provides a defender with the ability to identify and shoot down the actual threat. The

In July 1981, Teller began meeting with Lt. Gen. Daniel Graham of High Frontier—an organization advocating space based defense, as well as business elites Karl Bendetsen, William Wilson, and Joseph Coors—a group that made up Reagan's private brain trust, dubbed the "kitchen cabinet." Teller, Graham, and the kitchen cabinet met at Heritage Foundation offices where they discussed the threat posed to the US by the Soviet Union, missile defense, and space based weapons.[230] On January 8, 1982 the kitchen cabinet briefed Reagan on the Soviet threat, the possibilities for nuclear powered lasers and other high-tech weapons, and the prospect of "new Manhattan project" to build it all.[231] In November of 1982, Teller penned an article for *Reader's Digest* in which he argued that myths had grown up around nuclear arms—myths he intended to dispel.[232] He proposed to dispel the "myth" that "stopping US weapons research and development will help make the world safer from the destructive effects of nuclear weapons." Instead, Teller argued that research was making progress toward using nuclear explosions to shoot down incoming missiles.[233] Teller's history as a scientist in the Manhattan project, as

problem at this phase however is that the missile will be traveling at speeds of up to 4.3 miles/second or around 15,000 miles/hour making reliable interception exceedingly difficult. See Richard Garwin, "National Missile Defense: Prospects and Problems," Presentation at IEEE Aerospace Section Plenary, Big Sky, MT, March 6, 2005.

[230] The importance of the kitchen cabinet is evidenced by their occupation of and subsequent eviction from the Executive Office Building in Washington. From January until March of 1981 the group worked out of the government office, until a legal opinion issued to the White House argued that private citizens should not work out of government offices. Such meetings would subject the conversations taking place therein to Freedom of Information Act requests. Per the opinion, the White House moved the group's workspace to the offices of the Republican National Committee Building (Howell Raines, "Reagan's 'Kitchen Cabinet' is told to Vacate Office in US Building," *New York Times*, March 21, 1981).

[231] Herken (October 1987)

[232] Von Hippel (March 1983)

[233] Teller (November 1982)

well as one of the key figures in developing the hydrogen bomb, make his lobbying efforts particularly important especially when it is considered that his considerable intellectual stature was being mobilized along with the efforts of longtime friends of Reagan.[234]

*Reagan on the Campaign Trail*

In addition to interactions with Teller and the laser lobby, Reagan's exposure to other actors pushing for missile defense led to alterations in his own framing of the threat posed by Russian nuclear weapons, and to a critique of the notion of deterrence as policy. The sections below consider major discursive moments before Reagan's presidency and clarify the role that missile defense would play in Reagan's unique perspective on the immorality of deterrence as policy. In particular, Reagan is noted by several sources to have considered deterrence akin to two gunslingers facing off in an old west saloon, with guns pointed at each other permanently—a situation he rejected as immoral. According to John Sears, director of his 1980 campaign, "it was (Reagan's) instinct that we should get the edge in all places, and the idea of a missile defense appealed to him along these lines."[235] Reagan's SDI speech wouldn't come until 1983, but even before being elected, Reagan had been incorporating the pieces of the discourse behind SDI into his own rhetoric.

[234] Herken (1987: 22)

[235] Frances FitzGerald, *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 102.

*1976 GOP Convention Speech*

At the conclusion of the 1976 Republican National Convention, Reagan made some impromptu remarks which previewed the type of rhetoric that would come to characterize his approach with regard to nuclear weapons and the threat they posed vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. He recounted his thinking about what he might put in a letter to be placed in a time capsule to be opened one hundred years later in 2076. In thinking about what to include in the letter, he contemplated describing current problems to those who opened the capsule in the future:

> We live in a world in which the great powers have poised and aimed at each other horrible missiles of destruction, nuclear weapons that can in a matter of minutes arrive at each other's country and destroy, virtually, the civilized world we live in.[236]

Considering the response of those people one hundred years in the future, opening the letter that Reagan described being asked to write, Reagan suggested they might say either, "Thank God for those people in 1976 who headed off that loss of freedom, who kept up now 100 years later free, who kept our world from nuclear destruction." Or if "the challenge" was not met, they would not be permitted to read the letter at all because it referred to "individual freedom". In this moment Reagan set up the problem of Soviet missiles as a challenge with ramifications for the next century or more.

The unrehearsed remarks certainly convey a sense of urgency and fear regarding the prospect of nuclear disaster. The wording though, also betrays his specific concern with ballistic missiles. Rather than a concern with the condition of deterrence, the fragility of MAD, or even the prospect of being bombed by aircraft or a bomb snuck into

[236] "Address at the Republican National Convention in Kansas City". August 19, 1976. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project.* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=85204.

an American harbor, Reagan specifically connects the nuclear threat to the problem of ballistic missiles. In the second quote above he speaks more generally of "nuclear destruction", but in the first he constructs a specific image of nuclear-armed missiles "poised and aimed". In addition, the speech emphasizes that it is freedom that is at stake—failure to address the challenge posed by nuclear tipped missiles will lead to a loss of individual freedom, so total as to prevent future people from even reading Reagan's words. This preoccupation with missiles as the particular delivery systems that would undo US security betrays the seriousness with which Reagan had taken his discussions with Edward Teller. From the perspective of discourse analysis the 1976 speech shows intertextual links with Reagan's trip to LLNL in 1967, and is a moment when Teller's ideas were carried from a private briefing with a governor to the a prominent national stage vis-a-via an immensely important primary concession speech.[237]

*Lobbying for Lasers*

Reagan continued to be engaged with the unfolding of arguments about ballistic missiles throughout his bid for president. In 1979 he received an article called "Opportunities and Imperatives of Ballistic Missile Defense" written by Senator Malcolm Wallop of Wyoming and an aide, Angelo Codevilla—a member of the New Right, and a self-taught nuclear strategist.[238, 239] The piece argues that the concept of MAD had

[237] According to Teller, he and others briefed Governor Reagan on anti-ballistic missiles. The system described to Reagan involved waiting for incoming ballistic missiles to re-enter the atmosphere in order to discriminate between actual threats and decoys. Upon re-entry the real missiles could be identified and shot down by the defensive anti-ballistic missiles.

[238] Malcolm Wallop, "Opportunities and Imperatives of Ballistic Missile Defense," *Strategic Review* Vol. 7, no. 4 (1979): 13-21.

[239] Frances FitzGerald, *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 122.

distracted from the reality of an actual attack. From this perspective it would be irresponsible to abandon technology that would be able to mitigate or limit the damage from such a strike. The argument built on the premise that Soviet missile technology would be able to launch a disarming first strike "without necessarily targeting population centers," and that the Soviets were working even more fervently on a missile defense.[240] Additionally, the paper hailed the recent success of US scientists in the field of laser technology which, they argued could be effectively deployed on satellites to defend against any Soviet missile attack. At the time the paper was published, Wallop and Codevilla were meeting with Edward Teller and Senator Harrison Schmidt (R-NM) in a group known as the "laser lobby." Reagan reportedly read the paper and made notes before returning it to Codevilla, though he would continue to meet with laser lobby until its dissolution in 1982.[241] From this group Reagan would be exposed to Teller's optimism that laser technology, specifically given recent breakthroughs at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories, would provide a workable defense.[242] In addition, Wallop and Codevilla were able to couple this optimism for laser defenses with an appraisal of Soviet intentions and capabilities consonant with others on the Right including Reagan himself. Herken points to Teller's persistent contact with the president and particularly a meeting which took place in January 1981 and included Teller as well as members of Regan's

[240] Wallop (1979: 14)

[241] The group could not agree on the type of laser to unite behind: nuclear short wavelength or chemical long wavelength.

[242] Teller backed the development of nuclear powered lasers which would be more easily deployed, but came with the drawback of requiring a nuclear explosion (Herken 1987: 21).

"kitchen cabinet" as key event in Reagan's eventual response.[243] The pressure that began with Teller in 1967, continued with conversations between Reagan and Lt. General Daniel Graham—an advocate of space-based defense—as early as 1976, and continued pressure from the laser lobby as well as Reagan's own kitchen cabinet provided integral pieces with which Reagan would use as he championed SDI and struggled to reshape the existing nuclear weapons discourse.

*Reagan Goes to NORAD*

In 1979, Douglas Morrow, a screenwriter and friend of Reagan's suggested that he visit the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) in Colorado during the presidential campaign. The literature offers at least two interpretations of the impact the visit on Reagan. Frances FitzGerald points to a memorandum written by Martin Anderson, a senior policy advisor to Reagan, for the campaign a few days after the trip to NORAD which proposed three options for Reagan to consider in response to "the time of peril" presented by the Soviet Union. The memo took an early shot at the overarching problem of how to respond to the Soviet Union, given the future administration's dire appraisal of Soviet intentions. Notably, the third of the options was "Develop a Protective Missile System."[244] Of the details provided by Anderson with regard to such a program, FitzGerald argues that Anderson was "talking through his hat where weapons systems were concerned."[245] Notwithstanding, Anderson frames the program strictly in terms of

[243] Reagan's kitchen cabinet consisted of Karl Bendetsen, William Wilson, and Joseph Coors (of Coors Brewing Co.). They were personal friends of Reagan and advocated for missile defense given their appraisal of a Soviet threat.

[244] FitzGerald (2000: 101-2)

[245] Ibid.

defense, and argues that the "idea (of defense) is probably fundamentally more appealing to the American people than the questionable satisfaction of knowing that those who initiated an attack against were also blown away." In addition to the memo, FitzGerald makes a case for the importance of the NORAD trip for Reagan's thinking by noting that Reagan asked Anderson after reading the memo about the feasibility, timeframe, and cost of a defense system. Also, John Sears—Reagan's campaign manager—remembers Reagan suggesting the inclusion of ABM systems in his speeches. They did not include the plan at that time, but the memo and Reagan's questions are suggestive of the impact of the NORAD visit.

Anderson disagrees with the FitzGerald characterization of the importance of Reagan's encounter with arguments about missile defense at NORAD. The notion that NORAD as the moment that the idea "crystallized" for Reagan is for Anderson, "totally wrong…a misrepresentation of what happened." He argues at that point that Reagan had met with Teller in 1967, and had been familiar with Nixon's work on the issue. The NORAD trip from this perspective then, only "drove it home."[246] And while Anderson downplays the independent impact of the trip, he also recounts the manner in which Reagan conceptualized the threat posed by nuclear weapons on the return flight from that trip:

> The way he put it was, if you become president, and if there is any kind of an indication of a nuclear missile attack on the United States, the president has two choices, both of which are equally bad. One choice is, you can let the missiles land in whatever city they're aimed at and watch tens of millions of people being killed and make what happened to the World Trade Center in New York look like

[246] Knott and Chidester (2009: 102-3)

> nothing, and then complain about it. Or, you can launch your retaliatory strike and, in his words, cause Armageddon. He was serious about Armageddon.[247]

Reagan's characterization of the threat posed by nuclear missiles as being a binary choice between being destroyed, and destroying the enemy in addition to being destroyed led him to a third option—missile defense. In Reagan's own words, "The only way is missile defense. You have to stop it. Either tear down the missiles or stop them as they're coming in."[248]

In another instance during an interview in 1979 with Los Angeles Times writer Robert Scheer, Reagan lauded the capabilities of NORAD while at the same time championing missile defense. Reagan brought up NORAD as the source of his answer to a question about the number of bombers that would elude US air defense if the Soviets attacked. Interestingly, Reagan shifted the conversation from bomber attacks to missiles, then after citing the tracking technology employed by NORAD, argued, "the irony that here, with this great technology of ours, we can do all of this yet we cannot stop any of the weapons that are coming at us…I don't think there's been a time in history when there wasn't a defense against some kind of thrust…"[249]

Although missile defense is only one piece of what made up Reagan's nuclear weapons policy, the interactions through which he came to understand missile defense were closely tied to those in which he framed his understanding of nuclear weapons. These episodes show his consistent dissatisfaction with the concept and practice of

[247] Ibid.

[248] Ibid.

[249] Quoted by FitzGerald (2000: 105-6)

deterrence, a position captured by his repeated use of the analogy of nuclear deterrence as a gunslinger standoff.[250] The events provide a window into the discourses from which Reagan would draw after his election when he would begin to constructing his formal nuclear weapons policy.

**President Ronald Wilson Reagan**

Reagan's election in 1980 enabled the implementation of a whole set of policies consistent with the positions of a coalition of foreign policy and defense analysts and commentators that had been organizing throughout the 1970's around a critique of the Carter administration. Although the coalition had eclectic membership including hawkish democrats, business people, Christian groups, and others, they united around a coordinated attack on what they considered Carter's feckless foreign policy. This point of unity "would be the backbone of the Reagan campaign," and would provide popular support for Reagan's early presidential policy making.[251] Direct mailings were a key to the success of this new coalition of right leaning groups. These mailings were a tool by which elite conservatives were able to construct a discourse ripe for mass consumption that would also imply their favored policies. It is also an example of top-down discursive construction stands in contrast to what will be discussed below: the concurrent bottom-up process of discourse construction taking place in the nuclear freeze movement.

In addition to efforts to convince the broader public of the need for a more muscular foreign policy, efforts were underway within government to also convince

[250] The standoff analogy is recounted by Martin Anderson, *Revolution: The Reagan Legacy* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1990), xxxiii; FitzGerald (2000: 102); Lettow (2005: 23); and Herken (1987: 23).

[251] Daniel Wirls, *Buildup: The Politics of Defense in the Reagan Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 20-2.

elites. In 1976, CIA director George H.W. Bush assembled the "Team B," a panel of CIA outsiders with hawkish views to conduct a threat assessment alongside the CIA's regular National Intelligence Assessment (NIE). Paul Nitze, one of the organizers of CPD, headed the group which found that Soviets had spent more than the US on defense in the 1970's, and were willing to use their military superiority. In addition, they argued US ICBM's would soon be vulnerable to a first strike from Soviet nuclear forces. Such views were repeated and elaborated by an increasingly broad coalition of conservative groups representing both hawks and business leaders in groups such as the Heritage Foundation and the Hoover Institute. This coalition of forces used its resources to challenge Carter on foreign policy, notably in a debate over ratification of the Panama Canal treaty.[252] The positions taken by the coalition, consistent with the NIE as revised by Team B, were also largely consistent with rhetoric coming from Reagan during his presidential campaign.

Ultimately the public chose Reagan in a landslide over Carter in 1980. Though some have argued that foreign policy did not figure prominently in the result, Reagan and the right had campaigned unambiguously on a platform of reasserting US military strength, and checking Soviet power.[253] Reagan's economic conservatism certainly played an important role, however it is important not to discount the clarity with which

[252] Carter signed the Panama Canal treaty on September 7, 1977. While the right opposed the policy, and were not successful in preventing its implementation, the conflict helped unite various groups opposing Carter's broader foreign policy. See Wirls (1992: 25); and Adam Clymer, *Drawing the Line at the Big Ditch: The Panama Canal Treaties and the Rise of the Right* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008).

[253] Wirls notes that public opinion data on this point is incomplete. While economic issues were likely the central issue, the massive military buildup championed by Republicans surely played a role (Wirls 1992: 28-30).

his vision for foreign policy had been conveyed to the constituency that would give him the presidency.

*Early First Term Reagan Nuclear Discourse*

On January 29, 1981, the new president gave his first press conference in which Sam Donaldson asked Reagan what he believed the intentions of the Soviet Union to be. His response carried into the presidency the rhetoric and conceptualization of the Soviet Union popularized by Team B, CPD, and others in the right coalition that had coalesced during the 1970's. He declared,

> I know of no leader of the Soviet Union since the revolution, and including the present leadership, that has not more than once repeated in the various Communist congresses they hold their determination that their goal must be the promotion of world revolution and a one-world Socialist or Communist state, whichever word you want to use. Now, as long as they do that and as long as they, at the same time, have openly and publicly declared that the only morality they recognize is what will further their cause, meaning they reserve unto themselves the right to commit any crime, to lie, to cheat, in order to attain that, and that is moral, not immoral, and we operate on a different set of standards, I think when you do business with them, even at a detente, you keep that in mind.[254]

The statement doubled down on the conclusions of the 1970's by arguing that over time the Soviets themselves had pursued expansion of their ideology, and that they additionally lacked the morality that would enable détente.

Reagan continued the theme of US moral superiority in a radio address on nuclear weapons given on April 17, 1982.[255] In that speech he cited Soviet aggression in Afghanistan, Soviet intervention in labor uprisings in Poland, and Soviet arms racing as

[254] Ronald Reagan: "The President's News Conference," January 29, 1981. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=44101.

[255] Ronald Reagan: "Radio Address to the Nation on Nuclear Weapons," April 17, 1982. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42414.

evidence that the Soviet Union was not a "true peacemaker." By contrast, he portrayed the US as aiding WWII enemies in rebuilding, and "sharing trade aid and technology to help the developing peoples of the world and actively seeking to bring peace to the Middle East, the South Atlantic, and to southern Africa." Given this characterization of the Soviet Union, in addition to an upset military balance as a result of US military restraint and Soviet military buildup in the 1970's, the president could argue freely for a military buildup. In spite of the thrust of the address going toward painting the picture of an aggressive Soviet Union, he goes on to note that negotiations on what will later become the INF Treaty were underway. Finally, in a move that foreshadowed Reagan's hard move toward missile defense as a centerpiece of the buildup, he states, "perhaps one day we can achieve a relationship with the Soviet Union which doesn't depend upon nuclear deterrence to secure Soviet restraint."

Although broadly consistent with the right coalition's rhetoric that had played an important role in bringing Reagan into the White House, the radio address also reveals some elements that were uniquely Reagan; as such, they also represented transformations and reconfigurations of the conservative discourse. In the first place, clearly drawing from his own religious background in addition to discourse within the New Right, Reagan conceives of the superpower competition as moral versus immoral. Such a move clears the way for a foreign policy based on a strong military by preventing real engagement with Soviet circumstances. Instead, Reagan casts Soviet behavior as the selfish groping of an immoral society. US behavior then is untethered by concern for the well-being, or appreciation of the unique circumstances of their competitor. In addition, this marks another instance of Reagan articulating his distaste for deterrence. While the

discourse from the Republican coalition championed the policies that followed from Reagan's convictions, their prescriptions stemmed from a view of Soviet intentions and their belief in the military leverage necessary to negotiate with the Soviets. Given his repeated use of the gunslinger analogy, Reagan's distaste for deterrence seems abstract—such that his desire for a nuclear weapons buildup and intent to include missile defense as a component of overall nuclear strategy would have existed without any assumptions about Soviet aggression or the need to negotiate from strength. George Keyworth, Reagan's science adviser, said that Reagan "felt extremely uncomfortable in an ethical sense…from the view of the man who controls the button…it sent shivers up his spine."[256] In this way, Reagan extended and transformed the discourse that emerged in the late 1970's from one built off of a certain construction of the Soviet threat, to one which also included an abstract criticism of the condition of nuclear deterrence.

**Strategic Defense Initiative or Star Wars?**

On March 23, 1983, Reagan surprised close advisers with an address that outlined what became the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).[257] He began by assailing the state of the military, arguing that it had decayed even while the Soviets had built up an increasingly offensive force. He segues into the presentation of SDI by again attacking the very concept of deterrence:

> … since the advent of nuclear weapons, those steps (to address the threat posed by Soviet power) have been increasingly directed toward deterrence of aggression through the promise of retaliation. This approach to stability through offensive threat has worked. We and our allies have succeeded in preventing nuclear war

[256] Herken states that, "Keyworth remembers, Reagan's qualms about deterrence were visceral, not intellectual" (1987: 23).

[257] Ronald Reagan: "Address to the Nation on Defense and National Security," March 23, 1983. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=41093.

> for more than three decades. In recent months, however, my advisers, including in particular the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have underscored the necessity to break out of a future that relies solely on offensive retaliation for our security. Over the course of these discussions, I've become more and more deeply convinced that the human spirit must be capable of rising above dealing with other nations and human beings by threatening their existence. Feeling this way, I believe we must thoroughly examine every opportunity for reducing tensions and for introducing greater stability into the strategic calculus on both sides.[258]

Deterrence is seen as something that must be risen above—something that is below the human spirit. He goes on to add that continuing to rely on deterrence, even if arms limitations are somewhat successful, is a "sad commentary on the human condition." This critique of the way in which deterrence has been used in the past again builds on a moral argument from Reagan. He continues on arguing that such a program would be consistent with arms control talks and reductions: "our ultimate goal of eliminating the threat posed by strategic missiles…could pave the way for arms control measure to eliminate the weapons themselves." The prescription of missile defense answers both Reagan's critiques of deterrence and Reagan's existing underlying desire to see nuclear weapons wholly eliminated—a desire about which he would become more directly vocal during his second term.

**The Nuclear Freeze Movement**

A coalition of groups on the right including CPD, Team B, and others paved the way for Reagan's 1980 election with their powerful and vocal critique of Carter's foreign policy. The policy mandate that emerged from the election would lead to the massive defense and nuclear weapons buildup that has come to characterize Reagan's first term. However, such a major policy shift (a shift which actually began under Carter) simultaneously brought to the fore a cadre of opposition groups. These groups included

[258] Ibid.

Mobilization for Survival, American Friends Service Committee, Union of Concerned Scientists, the Federation of Atomic Scientists, and the Council for a Livable World.[259] While these groups generally agreed that they were opposed to the hawkish policies of the new administration, they had varying goals ranging from the total elimination of nuclear weapons, to simply ratifying the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT II). Ironically, the differences in the groups' aims may have prevented any meaningful cooperation but for the audacity of the Reagan buildup. Eventually these groups were united largely behind the efforts of Dr. Randall Forsberg who wrote the "Call to Halt the Nuclear Arms Race" in late 1979, and published it in April 1980.[260] "Call" became a widely circulated recruiting tool with limited aims and a concise message. That message resonated with millions around the world enabling the organization of countless peace-oriented groups. The nuclear freeze movement emerged in earnest by 1981. Although most argue that it lost power after Reagan's 1984 re-election, the freeze managed to make a significant mark on the overall thrust of US nuclear weapons policy.

This section will examine the emergence of the nuclear freeze as a dissenting discourse to the hegemonic understanding being implemented and propounded by the right and especially Reagan himself. While Reagan had previously constructed his understanding of nuclear weapons and the initial policies that would be implemented under his administration through conversations with Teller, Weinberger, Nitze and other hawks, the freeze movement would force him to confront a new and powerful set of

[259] Thomas Rochon and David Meyer eds., *Coalitions & Politial Movements: The Lessons of the Nuclear Freeze* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1997), 4-5.

[260] Randall Forsberg, "Call to Halt the Nuclear Arms Race," Brookline, MA: The Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies (April 1980).

arguments with sweeping popular support. While the "success" of the freeze movement itself can be debated, the timeline of freeze activities and responses by Reagan in both rhetoric and action suggest that the freeze managed to substantially impact the discourse from which policy would spring, leading to novel possibilities for arms control and for cooperation between the US and Soviet Union.[261] The following subsections will trace the emergence of the nuclear freeze out of the various peace groups operating during the late 1970's; show how elite discourses, including those of Reagan and Congress integrated, transformed, and co-opted the popular discourse being actively constructed by freeze activists; and finally consider whether and how the transformed hegemonic discourse paved the way for the arms control and cooperation that would characterize US-Soviet relations in the latter half of the 1980's.

*Forsberg Makes the "Call"*

The Vietnam War precipitated a massive anti-war, anti-militarism movement that united millions of people, influenced policy, and made a mark on a generation. This groundswell of peace activism however, abated in the mid-1970's only to be replaced by the largest anti-nuclear movement in US history. So why did the US public go from minimal and disorganized opposition to nuclear activity in the mid-1970's to the tremendous freeze movement by 1981? From the perspective of Dr. Randall Forsberg, the years following the conclusion of Vietnam were characterized by a reluctance of

[261] Some consider the nuclear freeze a failure because it did not succeed in nudging the US into a "freeze" with the Soviet Union. This chapter however, makes the claim that the Nuclear Freeze succeeded in impacting Reagan's nuclear weapons discourse and associated policy, though it did not lead to a nuclear arms freeze per se.

Americans to criticize their state and by extension their nuclear policy.[262] From this view, a lack of interest and uncritical view of nuclear weapons policy led to tepid support for SALT II, a set of talks that resulted in an agreement criticized as weak by many in the arms control community. By 1979, increased international tension, an increasingly hawkish Carter administration, and the rise of the conservative right culminating in the election of Reagan in November 1980, had motivated and mobilized a new set of activists.

Forsberg began giving talks to peace groups arguing for a nuclear freeze, a position consistent with similar calls for a unilateral moratorium on nuclear weapons production coming from several major groups in the late 1970's while a graduate student at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.[263] She had become interested in the politics of arms control while working as a typist in Stockholm, Sweden at the newly created Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. In that setting Forsberg learned about the politics of arms control and the challenges confronting scattered peace groups. In the US at the same time, anti-nuclear power groups gained traction with demonstrations at local nuclear power facilities. Their efforts were bolstered by the Three Mile Island accident in Pennsylvania in March of 1979. Mobilization for Survival, among the most prominent groups operating at this time, organized protests against the nuclear arms race and nuclear power. In 1978 they organized a protest at the United Nations that drew over

[262] "War and Peace in the Nuclear Age; Missile Experimental; Interview with Randall Forsberg, 1987," (November 9,1987), WGBH Media Library & Archives, accessed March 29, 2018, http://openvault.wgbh.org/catalog/V_F6CC542AF94B434FBC7E1DBE45F07024.

[263] Lawrence Wittner, "The Nuclear Freeze and Its Impact," Arms Control Association. (December 5, 2010), https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2010_12/LookingBack#12.

20,000 supporters.[264] In addition, they pushed for a unilateral moratorium on the US's production of nuclear weapons. Indeed, it was at their annual meeting in December of 1979 that Forsberg argued that widespread public support could be won if they would focus on a bilateral rather than unilateral moratorium. The argument generated enthusiasm among the peace groups and activists, and Forsberg began drafting a call to action. In April 1980, the Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies published "Call to Halt the Nuclear Arms Race", a document that would serve as the intellectual foundation for the nuclear freeze movement, as well as a recruiting and public relations tool.[265]

"The Call" is an important and powerful artifact of discourse. As a piece of writing, it succinctly captures the scope and danger of the arms race between the US and Soviet Union, and argues "The US and Soviet governments should announce a moratorium on all further testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapon and nuclear delivery vehicles, to be verified by national means."[266] Contrary to the prevailing discourse propounded by CPD, "The Call" suggests such a freeze was possible because of a condition of parity between the two superpowers. Additionally, the document contends that such measures are verifiable with means already utilized under SALT I and II. The last page of the four page document includes an eclectic list of prominent endorsers of the freeze including legislators, religious leaders and organizations, scientists, and others. And finally, "The Call" suggests courses of action that the reader

[264] Wirls (1992: 64)

[265] Forsberg (1980)

[266] Ibid.: 2.

can take, including sharing “The Call”, finding endorsements, canvassing, and other activities typical of grassroots movement.

A few notable characteristics of “The Call” likely contributed to its sweeping appeal. First, it is short. The entire document is a mere four pages, only three of which are devoted to the text of the message. In the section “The Case for a Nuclear-Weapon Freeze” under “Popular Appeal” Forsberg justifies the brevity, contending that agreements such as SALT II are “too technical for the average person.”[267] Instead, the aims and the proposed means of “The Call” are simple, and thus ripe for wide popular consumption. Second, and related is that “The Call” offers a complete solution. Not only does it set up the danger and suggest action, it also justifies that action, contends that verification will be possible, and suggests both of the superpowers as well as the reader can take actions immediately to make the goals a reality. Forsberg had spent more than a decade by this point observing in-fighting and disagreements among peace and anti-nuclear oriented groups. “The Call” seems to have been calibrated to assuage conflicting concerns among extant peace activists, as well as inviting a new generation of people to invest in affecting change in the nuclear arms race. Third, “The Call” contained clear instructions for the reader to reproduce, re-order, and spread the document around. It states, “Make copies of the Call and send them to three friends. Identify three leaders in your community. Send them the Call and follow up by telephone or in person.”[268] Discourses gain power through repeated articulations, and especially articulations by

[267] Ibid.: 3

[268] Ibid.: 4

powerful people.[269] The proposals outlined in this document would shortly be supported by tens of millions of people from around the world. From the perspective of discourse analysis, Forsberg became a powerful actor with her own articulation of the weaker cadre of anti-nuclear discourses that had come before. The newly articulated discourse on the nuclear arms race would present novel challenges to the Reagan administration and would set the stage for the emerging nuclear weapons policy, one which would have to deal with the power of the nuclear freeze movement.

Forsberg's articulation would not reach Reagan on its own however. From early 1980 until 1982, the message in the call would be reinterpreted and acted upon in a variety of ways. Specifically, while many were content to spread the message and share copies of "The Call," others sought to work within government institutions to begin implementing the nuclear freeze. This took place at the local level, with town and municipalities addressing the issue with meetings and referendums; it also took place at the federal level with freeze resolutions in Congress. The content of these varied applications of the principles espoused by Forsberg reveal at once the strengths and weaknesses of the movement. On one hand, the movement proceeded rapidly from meetings populated nearly exclusively by dedicated activists, to ballots and town hall meetings with the broader public. On the other hand, as with many social movements, the lack of central control led to uncoordinated efforts and left the message open to co-optation.

[269] Milliken argues that discourses are productive in that they provide a language to speak about discursive objects, and also create subject positions that people—subjects—can step into to speak from within the discourse. "The Call" invited the broader public into the debate over the arms race, and in the process created space for that public to speak from within, as well as transform, the emerging anti-nuclear discourse (1999: 227-8).

In November 1980, the freeze resolution appeared on the ballot in 62 western Massachusetts towns, 59 of which approved; in the fall of 1982 the freeze resolution would be a ballot measure in dozens of jurisdictions (including 10 states, 9 of which approved), mostly in Northern and Western states. That summer, nearly a million took to Central Park to support the nuclear freeze in the largest political rally in US history to that date.[270] At the outset of this tremendous growth phase, the initial placement of the freeze on the ballot came from the efforts of Randall Kehler, Francis Crowe and others at the Traprock Center in Deerfield, Massachusetts.[271] The space in which they met had been the Woolman Hill School which closed in 1979 and re-purposed as a space for education in non-violent demonstration methods. Kehler and others chose to use the forum to work against the nuclear arms race, which they considered "the ultimate manifestation of violence."[272] Their efforts were behind the issue being included on ballots across Western Massachusetts in 1980. This early and pivotal referendum succeeded soundly. In addition to winning 59 out of 62 contests, 59% of ballots cast were in support of the freeze, and thirty out of thirty-three towns that had supported Reagan,

[270] See Paul L. Montgomery, "Throngs Fill Manhattan to Protest Nuclear Weapons," *New York Times* (June 13, 1982); and Ted Daley, "Thirty Years Ago Today, at the Nuclear Freeze Rally in Central Park, We Saved Ourselves From Ourselves," *Huffington Post* (June 12, 2012).

[271] This information comes from Traprock Peace Center Records (MS 80). Special Collections and University Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst. http://scua.library.umass.edu/umarmot/traprock-peace-center-deerfield-mass/.

[272] Wittner contends that the ballot initiative came before freeze leader's would have hoped—the leadership then reluctantly supported the efforts in order to avoid being beaten so early (December 5, 2010). Traprock records however seem to leave out any objections or reservations that other leaders may have had. If movement leaders had been as "dismayed" by the early referendum effort as Wittner indicates, it seems strange that only four months later Kehler would be selected as the first national coordinator of the movement.

supported the freeze.[273] This early success emboldened the movement and precipitated a national meeting in March 1981 where Kehler would be selected national coordinator.

*The Freeze in Congress*

In March of 1982, the issue made its way into Washington with a freeze resolution being introduced to Congress. In the Senate, Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and Mark Hatfield (R-OR) led the effort. In the House a similar effort got underway behind Jonathan Bingham (D-NY) and Ed Markey (D-MA). While many democratic legislators were interested in taking advantage of the popularity of the freeze movement, they also had to balance their enthusiasm against a public that either feared the Soviet Union or believed that in any case the US should negotiate from strength.[274] In all, thirty-two freeze proposals came before Congress in 1982. The eventual resolution contained amendments concerning verification and other details, as well as language suggesting the freeze would not be "the overriding objective."[275] In addition to the negotiated amendments, the freeze movement-backed resolution that emerged, the Zablocki resolution, would compete with the Jackson-Warner resolution—a substitute that mirrored the Kennedy-Hatfield resolution with some important changes. Rather than a "mutual freeze on the testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons," Jackson-Warner called for "a nuclear forces freeze at equal and sharply reduced levels of

[273] Jeffrey W. Knopf. *Domestic Society and International Cooperation: The Impact of Protest on US Arms Control Policy*. Cambridge Studies in International Relations (New York: Cambridge University Press 1998), 204.

[274] Thomas Rochon & Stephen P. Wood, "Development of the Freeze Coalition. Yodeling in the Echo Chamber: Public Opinion and the Nuclear Freeze" in Rochon & Meyer (1997: 40).

[275] Wirls (1992: 103)

forces."[276] The difference effectively allowed the US to continue testing and production, as well as waiting for the conclusion of an arms control treaty in which both sides would reduce their forces to a level at which they agreed was equal. The different wording agreed with the Reagan administration's contention that the Soviet Union had nuclear superiority, and thus "equal" would have to involve the Soviets reducing more and first. As this was the position of the administration in the START proposal unveiled in May, the watered-down resolution that passed in 1982 was tantamount to an endorsement of status quo policy.

Following the 1982 midterm elections, the House with a composition more favorable to freeze advocates, once again considered a freeze resolution. Although the 1983 edition passed the House, it had again been buried under additional amendments which weakened and diluted the final version. Kehler, the first national coordinator of the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign summed up the difficulty with the proposal in Congress, "I feel like I'm on a comet, but I don't know whether I'm leading it or on its tail."[277] Although Forsberg and Kehler both testified before congressional committees, neither would be able to steer the debate. That debate often became a referendum on Reagan's policies, rather than a meaningful conversation about the merits of the Forsberg's notion of the freeze.[278] Unable to manage the negotiation that compromised the core aims of "The Call," the freeze movement would have to look for other ways to directly affect policy. However, in spite of the failure of any congressional resolution to

[276] Ibid.: 104

[277] David S Meyer, *A Winter of Discontent: The Nuclear Freeze and American Politics* (New York: Praeger, 1990), 28.

[278] Wirls (1992: 103)

accomplish in policy the freeze's stated aims, the debate had taken place alongside dozens of state and municipal referenda, which were widely successful. Two important results entailed: public popularity for the freeze continued to hover around 80% through 1982, and the Reagan administration responded.

**Public Opinion**

Among the principle reasons that the Reagan administration responded to the nuclear freeze movement with a softening of rhetoric on nuclear weapons is that the nuclear freeze movement had made a substantial impact on public opinion. From late 1981 through 1984 the overwhelming majority of those polled supported the bilateral moratorium on new nuclear weapons advocated by the freeze movement. Like the CPD had done in the 1970's, the freeze movement used direct mailings, and a vast grassroots network to spread their message and garner support. The result would be a powerful discourse that president could not ignore. This section will consider a useful approach to public opinion formation that has been applied to the nuclear freeze movement. Although the approach offers a valuable insight into the values undergirding public opinion on nuclear weapons during this era, at base both are concerned with the way in which transformed discourses penetrated public life.

Rochon and Wood draw on Zaller's "receive-accept-sample" model of public opinion formation to explain the sharp rise of support for the nuclear freeze movement in 1980 and 1981, followed by its rapid decline in popularity and influence beginning in

1984.[279, 280] The Zaller model works from the premise that opinions form as a function of the amount of information a person receives, the messages from that information that the person accepts, and the sample that the person draws from when they express an opinion. The amount of information that a person receives varies with their level of political awareness. Highly aware individuals are exposed to or aware of a greater volume of political communication and are more selective in which messages they internalize. By contrast less politically aware individuals are exposed to less political communication and are less selective in their internalization or acceptance of the messages contained therein. All groups then sample from the collection of considerations at the top of their mind, or those that are most readily accessible. The sample could be a response to a survey question, or an expressed opinion about a particular policy. The impact of considerations on opinion relies on elite discourse and the intensity of opposing messages. The model thus begins with elite discourse which tends to reach more aware individuals more readily (receive), who then pick and choose what messages to internalize (accept), and then form political attitudes from the mix of considerations at the forefront of their mind (sample).

The Zaller model posits that in judging an issue people draw from the relevant values at the forefront of their mind. Rochon and Wood argue that the values that supported attitudes toward nuclear weapons during this issue were "(1) mistrust of the

[279] By 1982 the nuclear freeze movement had the support of 79% of Americans (Chicago Council on Foreign Relations 1982). That number held steady through 1984 with Gallup measuring support at 78% at that time (Rochon & Wood 1997: 30). However, after Reagan's reelection in November 1984, interest in the freeze began to abate, and by 1987 the nuclear freeze movement had been absorbed by the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE).

[280] Forsberg referred to the dramatic rise and fall of the nuclear freeze movement the "swinging of the pendulum" (1987).

Soviet Union and (2) avoidance of nuclear war."[281] The question then becomes which of these two values are sampled at any given moment, a sample that will be a function of whether messages invoking one of the two values were received and accepted or not. The dynamics in support for the nuclear freeze during the 1980's then is not a situation in which values were changing much, but rather a function of competing elite discourses. Team B, the Center for Present Danger, and Reagan himself had been cultivating a discourse of Soviet nuclear superiority since the mid-1970's including pushing the notion of a window of vulnerability.[282] The effort, while useful for justifying a defense buildup, would also invoke the conflicting value. In other words, Reagan succeeded at building mistrust of the Soviet Union and thereby securing the presidency and his defense strategy; however, in doing so the administration reminded people of the specter of nuclear war. This would bring both values to the forefronts of peoples mind and set the stage for attitudinal change amidst a major public debate on the issue.

The Zaller model on its own explains a great deal of the changes in the political attitudes of Americans during the late 1970's and early 1980's. However there are two important things left out. First, the model does not address the impetus for a mass movement, only attitudinal change. While the ebb and flow of American reactions to survey questions is interesting and clearly in need of explanation, this study is examining the ways in which these changes led to policy change and elite discourse change. Second, the model is excessively focused on an uncritical notion of elite discourse. Certainly,

[281] Rochon & Wood (1997: 33)

[282] Robert Scheer, *With Enough Shovels: Reagan, Bush, and Nuclear War*, 1st ed. (New York: Random House, 1982), 66-82.

elites have an important role to play in driving public opinion. That said, the nuclear freeze movement came from grassroots efforts by people, especially Forsberg, who were not elites before the movement got under way. The grassroots structure of the freeze brought people into the movement by reaching out to community and religious leaders, local activists, educators, and others. Attitudinal change came from the agenda of Reagan and the right, as well as local activists whose message resonated with many and spread quickly. But the leaders behind the freeze movement, as well as those who would become leaders within and around the movement, contributed greatly to shaping the discourse to which many Americans were exposed. The work of transforming and rearticulating the discourse on nuclear weapons policy came not only from typical elites in Washington and within the national defense apparatus, but also from local community leaders and organizers. Given the argument that the discourses on which nuclear policy would be built in the mid and late 1980's reflected not just elite discourse, but also the grassroots discourse cultivated by the nuclear freeze, the next section will consider the interaction of the Reagan administration with the nuclear freeze movement.

In addition, by aiming to explain only attitudinal change as expressed on surveys, the Zaller account focus differs from that of discourse analysis in that the latter is a relational approach. Zaller's is a theory of how individual's attitudes come to change over time. While such an account is useful, here the question is what ideas and practices did actors draw from and how did they reproduce and change those ideas and practices. Rather than suggest how the outside might change the set of values in one's head, and the propensity of a person to choose one or the other among competing values in one's head,

this approach asks how those values are articulated in discourse and which actors made them so through powerful rearticulations and rearrangements of existing discourse.

**Reagan and the Nuclear Freeze Movement: Collision of Discourse**

Shortly after Senators Kennedy and Hatfield introduced the bipartisan freeze resolution to Congress, on March 31, 1982, Reagan responded to questions about the freeze movement and the prospect of nuclear war—first answering a question from James Gerstanzang of the Associated Press as to whether nuclear war would be winnable or survivable: “I just have to say that I don’t think there could be any winners. Everybody would be a loser if there’s nuclear war.”[283] Here, Reagan is in full agreement with what Wirls considers the bedrock assumption of the peace movements at this time. This moment is notable—the movement pushed Reagan to take a position in rhetoric that was contrary to the prescriptions of planning documents that would emerge only a short time later from his own administration.[284] His disagreement then stemmed from his view of the implications of such an assessment. Later in the press conference, Reagan got a chance to explain how his assessment of the Soviet Union’s capabilities and intentions led him to disagree with the policy prescriptions of the freeze movement:

> The truth of the matter is that on balance, the Soviet Union does have a definite margin of superiority, enough so that there is risk and there is what I have called, as you all know, several times, "a window of vulnerability." And I think that a freeze would not only be disadvantageous—in fact, even dangerous to us with them in that position—but I believe that it would also militate against any

[283] Ronald Reagan: "The President's News Conference," March 31, 1982. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42346.

[284] A five year defense plan leaked to the New York Times in May of 1982. The document outlined the Reagan administrations overall strategic position. Among other topics it lays out a plan for the conduct of protracted nuclear war with the Soviet Union.

> negotiations for reduction. There would be no incentive for them, then, to meet with us and reduce.[285]

The first sentence echoes closely the rhetoric produced Caspar Weinberger, Paul Nitze, and others during the run-up to Reagan's election. In criticizing the Carter foreign policy they argued repeatedly that the US had fallen behind the Soviets in military capabilities opening a window of vulnerability which the Soviets could decide to take advantage of at a moment's notice.[286] While campaigning Reagan argued that should the window open wide enough, "the Russians could just take us with a phone call".[287]

Vulnerability here betrays Reagan's disagreement with those in the peace movement. From Wirls' perspective, the peace movement's convictions about the utility of nuclear weapons "amounted to an argument for minimal deterrence."[288] The argument that both sides had irrationally sized arsenals implied that similar effects could be had with much smaller arsenals. Advocates of the "nuclear revolution" contend that the size of nuclear arsenals is irrelevant past the point where effective deterrence is accomplished.[289] Reagan's conviction on this topic however came from a conception of deterrence as "a dynamic process of balancing incentives and counterincentives…this

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[285] Reagan (March 31, 1982)

[286] Scheer provides an excellent genealogy of the "window of vulnerability" discussion. He notes that physicist Hans Bethe, as well as former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, and others disagreed with the argument that the Soviet Union had either attained or first strike capability or that the US had fallen behind. Bethe is quoted as saying, "I would like to state that there is no deficiency in armaments in the US, that we don't need to catch up to the Russians, that, if anything, the Russians have to catch up to us" (1982: 73).

[287] Scheer (1982: 66)

[288] 1992: 68

[289] Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 42-4.

implied that MAD or any notion of sufficiency was insufficient and imprudent."[290] No amount of weapons should be considered enough, as there are always events and circumstances for which plans and strategies must be made. Through this logic Reagan justified his nuclear weapons buildup and his disagreement with the policy prescriptions of the freeze movement.

As the freeze movement continued to change minds and gain support throughout 1982, Reagan's rhetoric adjusted to the greater threat the movement now posed for his policies and even his 1984 campaign. On October 4, 1982 he told a group of veterans in Columbus, Ohio:

> They were demonstrating on behalf of a movement that has swept across our country that I think is inspired by, not the sincere, honest people who want peace, but by some who want the weakening of America, and so are manipulating many honest and sincere people. It is the nuclear freeze movement and the peace movement. Well, I, too, want a nuclear freeze after we have been able to negotiate the Soviet Union into a reduction on both sides of all kinds of weapons—and then have a freeze when we're equal and not freeze them now in a superiority that would bring closer the chance of nuclear war.[291]

Here, Reagan argues plainly that a freeze on the building of new nuclear weapons would make nuclear war more likely. In addition, the freeze would weaken America's position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, reiterating the charge that the Soviets had military or nuclear superiority that they would try to exploit. Just a few weeks later he told reporters at a

[290] Wirls (1992: 33)

[291] Ronald Reagan: "Remarks in Columbus to Members of Ohio Veterans Organizations," October 4, 1982. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=43088.

press conference that the nuclear freeze movement had been concocted and launched by Soviets seeking to weaken the US and preserve their advantage.[292]

In spite of the offensive launched by the Reagan administration to discredit and undermine the efforts of the freeze movement, public opinion and the actions of Congress led Reagan to make changes in rhetoric and tactics. In September of 1983 he declared to the United Nations (UN) General Assembly that, "Nothing is more in keeping with the spirit of the UN Charter than arms control." He went on:

> I believe that to relieve the deep concern of peoples in both Europe and Asia, the time was ripe, for the first time in history, to resolve a security threat exclusively through arms control. I still believe the elimination of these weapons-the zero option—is the best, fairest, most practical solution to the problem.[293]

Just a few weeks later, he referred directly to the impact being wrought by the nuclear freeze movement when he told George Schultz in private, "If things get hotter and arms control remains an issue, maybe I should go see Andropov and propose eliminating all nuclear weapons."[294] Although media coverage of the freeze movement had diminished by late 1983, Reagan had begun to embrace arms control which "horrified" Schultz and ranking members of the administration.

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[292] For Reagan's comments see: "The President's News Conference," November 11, 1982. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=41985. An FBI report released in March 1983 found no evidence of the Soviet connection to the nuclear freeze movement. Although the FBI had made this conclusion by late 1982, Reagan contended that Leonid Brezhnev had proposed the freeze on February 21, 1981, and that the World Peace Council had started the movement. For additional details see Judith Miller, "President Says Freeze Proponents May Unwittingly Aid the Russians," *New York Times* (December 11, 1982).

[293] Ronald Reagan: "Address Before the 38th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, New York ," September 26, 1983.Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=40523.

[294] He is referring to Soviet General Secretary Yuri Andropov who succeeded Leonid Brezhnev two days after Brezhnev's death on November 12, 1982 (Schultz 1993: 372).

## Conclusion

The Reagan military buildup provides an excellent view into the prevailing discourses that shaped possibilities for foreign policy and especially nuclear weapons policy during his presidency. Reagan drew from and extended two discourses to justify the defense buildup that characterized his first term. Drawing from a variety of scientists and policymakers, most notably Edward Teller, Reagan rearticulated and powerfully extended the existing discourse on missile defense. While distinct possibilities for high tech missile defense systems were under debate, Reagan stripped away the distinction with the vague and powerful SDI. His oft-stated motivation for supporting missile defense came from his "visceral" objection to deterrence. A variety of sources have confirmed that Reagan found deterrence troubling on a moral level, and that missile defense offered a way out. Missile defense as a solution to the moral problem of deterrence is a discursive articulation that is uniquely Reagan. Second, he built upon the conclusion of CPD, Team B, and others on the political right that argued the Soviet Union had opened or would soon open a "window of vulnerability" in military capabilities for the US. Reagan's re-articulations however took these conclusions a step further, again arguing in moral terms. For Reagan, the Soviets lacked morality and were thus worthy of their "evil empire" moniker. The discussion of Soviet morality (or lack thereof), and the word "evil", were brought into the discourse by Reagan, and worked powerfully to shape the foreign policy debate and limit the possibilities for dissenting discourses.

Though powerful, Reagan's discourse brought competing conceptions of the threat, and the appropriate policy to the fore. The nuclear freeze movement quickly

forced Reagan to reintroduce his own desire for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. With a concise message that was easily conveyed to the masses, the nuclear freeze forced a change in the direction of policy by mobilizing millions and soundly winning over public opinion. Confronted with a public that overwhelmingly supported a nuclear freeze, and a reelection bid looming, Reagan's rhetoric immediately began to soften. While he may have carried the conviction that nuclear weapons should be abolished since the 1940's, he had been quiet on that point during his campaign and first term. It was only after the nuclear freeze effectively hijacked the discourse on the appropriate role for nuclear weapons that Reagan changed his tune. The freeze movement had a similar effect on Gorbachev, though the Soviet leader may have been more receptive to their ideas initially. The impact of these discursive confrontations is evident in the stark relief of Reagan's second term. The arms control successes of the late-1980's and the emerging relationship between Reagan and Gorbachev owe much of their existence to those in the nuclear freeze movement who were able to manipulate the discourse, and powerfully affect the policymaking process.

# CHAPTER IV

## THE GEORGE W. BUSH CHALLENGE: LOW-YIELD AND BUNKER-BUSTING NUCLEAR WEAPONS

> It is not now possible to predict with confidence future deterrence requirements. The future may prove to be far more dangerous than benign: nuclear deterrence may become more important for the United States and a robust nuclear capability may be essential to support deterrence objectives.
> —Keith Payne et. al., National Institute of Public Policy, January 2001

Even before the Cold War reached its official conclusion with the formal dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, officials in the US had begun to grapple with the future of US identity. They did not put it in those terms of course, but there was a consensus about the problem, if not the solution: without the USSR as a peer competitor and superpower adversary, who was the US? From the analytical perspective of this dissertation, the early 1990's were a political moment: a time with high uncertainty and open possibilities for the future.[295] The Cold War had come to a peaceful conclusion (at least relative to the popular notion that it would end in WWIII), and the future of international relations, and the role of US foreign policy lacked clarity. In 1990-91, the first Gulf War seemed to convey mixed messages for US policymakers. On one hand, the war had been won quickly and cheaply with investment and participation by US allies. On the other, the war seemed a preview of the complex world of dangerous and intense regional conflicts that would follow the Cold War. The Clinton years would be a period

[295] Edkins builds on Zizek in defining the political moment as, "a moment of openness…in which the absence of one social order had not yet been succeeded by the presence of another…It is at this point the subjectivity arises". The end of the Cold War and collapse of the Soviet Union provided this moment of openness in the US when the state's identity vis-à-vis international politics was indeterminate. Such moments are fleeting—quickly being replaced by a new order which imposes legitimacy and erases the recent uncertainty of its own creation. The new order, "retroactively produces the grounds which justify it." For details see Jenny Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations: Bringing the Political Back In* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 1999), 8.

in which conflicting interpretations of the Gulf War and other events would lead to an emerging rift over the role in which US military power—and nuclear weapons—should and would play in international politics. Political battles over appropriate force sizes and the wisdom of base-closures to realize the peace dividend foreshadowed the showdown over nuclear weapons policy that would begin in the early years of George W. Bush's presidency.

Within a year of taking office, the Bush administration had launched the first sustained challenge to the nuclear taboo by the US of the post-Cold War era. Although the challenge commenced shortly after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, those events did not cause the challenge as it were. Instead, this chapter will build the argument that the challenge to the nuclear taboo emerged with the rise of neoconservatism in the 1990's. During this era, future members of the Bush administration cultivated a new discourse that re-defined US identity with a new "self" consistent with a new threatening "other." That new discourse would serve as the basis for more than four years of pressure on Congress to fund a new generation of nuclear weapons which would include both low-yield nuclear weapons, and nuclear deep earth-penetrating weapons or bunker-busters.

This chapter investigates the emergence and content of the discourse that would challenge the nuclear taboo during Bush's first term. The anti-nuclear discourse which constitutes the nuclear taboo defeated the upstart discourse cultivated by Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and others, but not before they made a concerted effort to upend the trajectory of US nuclear weapons policy with new weapons that opponents argued would make nuclear weapons use more likely, and thus undermine the security of the US. This work will trace the Bush challenge against the backdrop of the individual

pathways of the nuclear taboo to show the taboo's activation. This approach highlights the piecemeal process by which the various forces that would rearticulate the nuclear taboo to address the emerging challenge. Activation of the taboo discourse took time, and actually seemed to follow minor policy successes by the Bush administration.

This chapter will first address the potential material explanations and argue that they are included in a discursive analysis of the case. Next, the content of the Bush challenge will be explored from the emergence of the discourse at the heart of the challenge in the early 1990's to its defeat in Congress in 2005. Then, the events will be considered through the lens of the "pathways" to the nuclear taboo—the various distinct social processes that support the international norm against nuclear weapons use.[296] In each section, individual pathways to the nuclear taboo are considered against the evidence in the Bush challenge. Finally the conclusion will sum up the evidence and consider the contribution of the discourse approach to understanding the unfolding of nuclear politics during the early Bush administration.

*The Material Case*

Although this chapter aims to make the case that the Bush challenge was defeated by the powerful discourse that constitutes the nuclear taboo, others might argue that the proposed programs failed due to material circumstances and constraints. Far from ignoring these arguments, the discourse-focused approach employed here is useful not only for understanding the ideational components of the nuclear taboo and their effects, but also the ways in which "material facts" or "knowledge" are incorporated into discourse. The following are some of the prominent material arguments that might be

[296] Nina Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 64-7.

used against the broader conclusions of this chapter—namely that the nuclear taboo discourse, which has been cultivated and rearticulated in various ways since the 1950's, defeated the Bush challenge.

One could make the material argument that the failure of RNEP came only after cost projections made during the FY05 appropriations debate showed the program would require a total of $484 million through FY09. These costs likely pushed some proponents to abandon their support in light of the benefits to deterrence the weapons were supposed to net. One could also argue that proponents only wanted new nuclear weapons to ensure funds would continue to flow to the nuclear weapons complex, preserving jobs and the parochial economic benefits of the investment. Indeed, it seems some proponents were willing to abandon support for RNEP when they secured funding for conventional programs in their home districts.[297] Finally, it could be that proponents of the program abandoned their support when research showed that the proposed weapons would be unable to accomplish the tasks for which they would have been designed. Indeed, reports from the National Academy of Sciences and the Federation of American Scientists published during the course of the debate raised serious doubts about whether RNEP would ever be able useful militarily.[298] The analysis that follows does not necessarily

[297] See for example Senator Pete Domenici (R-NM) during the FY2005 budget cycle. For example see Jonathan Medalia, "Water Power: Why Congress Zeroed 'Bunker Buster' Appropriations," *Comparative Strategy* Vol. 26, No. 3 (2007), 243; John Fleck, "Nuclear Weapons Budget Grows Despite Cuts to Bomb Modernization Plans," *Albuquerque Journal*, November 23, 2004.

[298] For analyses of the material utility of mini-nukes and bunker busters see Nelson, whose analysis showed that attacking deeply buried facilities "does not appear possible without causing massive radioactive contamination. See Robert Nelson, "Low-Yield Earth-Penetrating Nuclear Weapons," *Journal of the Federation of American Scientists*, Public Interest Report, Vol. 54, no. 1 (January/ February 2001), https://fas.org/faspir/2001/v54n1.pdf. For greater scientific detail see Robert Nelson, "Nuclear 'Bunker Busters' Would More Likely Disperse Than Destroy Buried Stockpiles of Biological and Chemical Agents," *Science and Global Security* Vol. 12 (2004): 69-89; and Charles Glaser and Steve Fetter, "Counterforce Revisited: Assessing the Nuclear Posture Review's New Missions," *International Security*,

refute each of these material explanations, but shows how they are either subordinate to, or subsumed by the larger discursive argument. Essentially, by tracing the emergence of the two conflicting discourses, we will be able to see the ways in which material concerns were integrated into discourse, and the consequences of both material and ideational factors as they were both mobilized into the discourses competing for dominance of the nuclear weapons policy process.

**The Bush Administration Challenge to the Nuclear Taboo**

President George W. Bush and his administration began laying out their nuclear weapons policy in late 2001 and continued with a series of policy-defining documents released throughout 2002. These included the modified Nuclear Posture Review, National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) 17, the new National Security Strategy, and a smattering of supporting and clarifying documents. While these documents would be the flashpoint for several years of conflict over the appropriate role for nuclear weapons in the US arsenal, they themselves had been years in the making, with their central ideas having re-emerged during the mid-1990's.[299] This section details the history of efforts by a handful of powerfully placed individuals who cultivated and championed the discourse that would become the Bush challenge to the nuclear taboo, from their early efforts building a critique of Clinton's foreign policy, to their limited legislative successes, through the defeat of the funding for the programs that made up the challenge in the fall of 2005.

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30, No. 2 (Fall 2005): 84-126. Also see Stephen Schwartz, "Nukes You Can Use," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* Vol. 58, No. 3 (May 2002): 18-9, 69.

[299] While the sources of the Bush challenge will be traced from the early 1990's, the case study ends in fall 2005. At that time, the constitutive projects of the challenge lost funding in Congress.

*The Emergence of the Bush Nuclear Weapons Politics: the 1990's*

Cooperation on arms control and a ratcheting down of tension following the peaceful conclusion of the Cold War bolstered the robustness of the nuclear taboo during the Clinton administration. The Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program addressed the frightening prospect of loose nuclear weapons in former Soviet states.[300] In the process, the program engaged both congressional leaders and presidents from both major parties as it effectively removed nuclear weapons from Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan. In addition, the program provided support for physical security of nuclear weapons and nonproliferation efforts throughout the former Soviet states. On July 3, 1993 Clinton extended the nuclear testing moratorium begun under his predecessor, remarking that his administration "has determined that the nuclear weapons in the United States arsenal are safe and reliable."[301] In September 1996 the US and seventy other states signed the CTBT, an agreement banning all nuclear test explosions.[302] While the Senate rejected its ratification in 1999 and the treaty never formally entered into force, the US continued its testing moratorium throughout the 1990's and indeed to the time of writing.

[300] See Justin Bresolin,"Fact Sheet: The Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program", The Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, (2014), https://armscontrolcenter.org/fact-sheet-the-nunn-lugar-cooperative-threat-reduction-program/.

[301] William J. Clinton: "The President's Radio Address," July 3, 1993. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=46803.

[302] Daryl Kimball and Shervin Taheran, "Nuclear Testing and Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) Timeline," *Arms Control Association* (September 2016), accessed online May 12, 2017. https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Nuclear-Testing-and-Comprehensive-Test-Ban-Treaty-CTBT-Timeline.

All the while opponents of these actions, including many who would serve in the George W. Bush administration, were hard at work conceiving of and refining the set of ideas that would form the backbone of the forthcoming challenge to the nuclear taboo. In 1992, Paul Wolfowitz penned "Defense Planning Guidance", a document that began laying out a conservative worldview and associated foreign policy prescriptions for the post-Cold War era.[303] Although a minor controversy erupted when the document leaked to the press leading to a re-write by Dick Cheney, the tone would be carried forward as conservatives began assembling their ongoing critique of the emerging Clinton foreign policy.

In 1996, William Kristol and Robert Kagan published "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy" in *Foreign Affairs* in which they argued that US foreign policy should be oriented toward maintaining its role as a benign hegemon.[304] To achieve this goal they advocated increasing military budgets, contending that as a percentage of GDP, military budgets were historically low. They also notably stressed the need for continued investment in missile defense. These ideas would go onto form the intellectual foundation of the Project for a New American Century (PNAC), a conservative think-tank founded by Kristol and Kagan in 1996. Echoing the ideas of the *Foreign Affairs* article, PNAC's founding statement of principles, published on June 3, 1997 included the signatures of Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld—a harbinger of the role this thinking would play in the George W. Bush administration. Rumsfeld, who would become Bush's Secretary of

[303] Paul Wolfowitz, "Defense Planning Guidance," The National Security Archive: The George Washington University (February 18, 1992), accessed online May 13, 2017. nsarchive.gwu.edu/nukevault/ebb245/doc03_extract_nytedit.pdf.

[304] William Kristol and Robert Kagan, "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 1996), https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1996-07-01/toward-neo-reaganite-foreign-policy.

Defense, hired Dr. Keith Payne in 1998 after working with him in a panel on missile defense.[305] In January 2001 Payne published "Rationale and Requirements for US Nuclear Forces and Arms Control" under the auspices of the National Institute of Public Policy (NIPP). There he argued that nuclear weapons could and should be used to complement conventional weapons. In such a role they could be used to attack ballistic missile sites, and "deeply buried facilities." The paper broke with decades of US nuclear weapons policy thinking, specifically the notion of nuclear weapons as a last resort rather than a complement to conventional weapons. Payne's articulation would be among the major sources for the 2001/2002 Nuclear Posture Review—one of the primary Bush administration documents at the heart of the challenge to the nuclear taboo.

In September 2000, just before the election, PNAC released a longer document providing greater detail on their specific policy recommendations.[306] With regard to nuclear weapons, they argued that the Clinton administration had, "taken repeated steps to undermine the readiness and effectiveness of US nuclear forces. In particular, it has virtually ceased development of safer and more effective nuclear weapons; brought underground testing to a complete halt; and allowed the Department of Energy's weapons complex and associated scientific expertise to atrophy for lack of support."[307] The

[305] For more on Rumsfeld and Payne's meeting, as well as Payne's nuclear outlook see Fred Kaplan, "Rumsfeld's Dr. Strangelove," *Slate: War Stories* (May 12, 2003), http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/war_stories/2003/05/rumsfelds_dr_strangelove.html.

[306] Thomas Donnelly, Donald Kagan, and Gary Schmitt. "Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century." Project for a New American Century, Washington (September 2000), www.informationclearinghouse.info/pdf/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf. Per the document, the project had been formed to address concern with Clinton plans to shrink or hold flat defense budgets. Instead, the group advocated four core missions for the US military: (1) defend the American homeland, (2) fight and win multiple, simultaneous wars, (3) shape the security environment in key regions, (4) and transform the military consonant with the "revolution in military affairs."

[307] Ibid.: 7

document additionally argues that, "there may be a need to develop a new family of nuclear weapons designed to address new sets of military requirements, such as would be required in targeting the very deep, underground bunkers that are being built by many of our potential adversaries."[308] PNAC argued essentially that the US nuclear arsenal had been designed to deter the Soviet Union, a political unit no longer in existence. From this perspective, the arsenal needed to be adjusted to deter the threats that remained: principally rogue states and non-state actors—both of which were known to hide military assets and personnel deep underground. These arguments, developed and championed by PNAC and Payne, would become the chief justification, and discursive edifice on which Bush's push for bunker-busting nuclear bombs, and his challenge to the nuclear taboo, would rest.

George W. Bush's own statements about nuclear weapons on the campaign trail and early in his presidency stressed two themes: the need to deploy missile defense, and a *reduction* in nuclear weapons. In accepting the Republican presidential nomination at the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia he remarked, "I will work to reduce nuclear weapons and nuclear tension in the world, to turn these years of influence into decades of peace. And at the earliest possible date, my administration will deploy missile defenses to guard against attack and blackmail."[309] At his address to a joint session of Congress on administration goals on February 27, 2001 he argued, "To protect our own people, our allies, and friends, we must develop and we must deploy effective missile

[308] Ibid.: 8

[309] George W. Bush: "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia," August 3, 2000. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25954.

defenses. And as we transform our military, we can discard cold war relics and reduce our own nuclear forces to reflect today's needs."[310] The president made the case for missile defense in greater detail in a speech at the National Defense University on May 1, 2001, where he argued that the US faced new threats from more countries with access to nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. This threat, from Bush's perspective, was being exacerbated by US compliance with Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM), which hamstrung the deployment of missile defense. Bush's position on missile defense echoed that of President and Director of Sandia National Laboratories C. Paul Robinson who argued in a March 22, 2001 white paper that missile defense could be valuable in "deterring conflicts and limiting escalations" and would "enhance deterrence by eliminating an aggressor's confidence in attacking the US homeland with long-range missiles, and thus make our use of nuclear weapons more credible."[311] The sentiment shows the organizational basis of support for missile defense, as well as bolstering one of the central claims in the Bush administration's challenge, that deterrence could use "enhancement."[312]

With regard to nuclear weapons specifically, Bush stressed the need for reductions, but also foreshadowed the challenge to the nuclear taboo to come when he

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[310] George W. Bush: "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on Administration Goals," February 27, 2001. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project.* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29643.

[311] C. Paul Robinson, "Pursuing a New Nuclear Weapons Policy for the 21st Century," Sandia National Laboratories White Paper (March 22, 2001).

[312] At the time, Europe vehemently opposed US deployment of missile defense. European critics argued that: the US overstated the threat from ballistic missiles; the costs, especially opportunity costs would be exorbitant; the technology might be out of reach; the plans would undermine efforts at arms control and could exacerbate tensions with Russia and China. See Philip Gordon, "Bush, Missile Defence, and the Atlantic Alliance," *Survival*, Vol. 43(1) pp. 17-36 (Spring 2001).

said, “Nuclear weapons still have a vital role to play in our security and that of our allies. We can and will change the size, composition, the character of our nuclear forces in a way that reflects the reality that the Cold War is over.”[313] The Bush administration attempted to cast the need for missile defenses as essential for the protection of Americans, remarking in December 2001, “Defending the American people is my highest priority as commander in chief, and I cannot and will not allow the United States to remain in a treaty that prevents us from developing effective defenses.”[314] The remarks notwithstanding, the 2001 NPR shifted the focus to the ways in which missile defense could protect military forces, in particular those forces that would need protecting in an offensive nuclear strike.[315] The focus on building nuclear weapons for war-fighting as opposed to deterrence would not be lost on Congress or the public, both of which would raise this objection as the debate unfolded through 2005.

From Bush himself, it would appear that he actually saw the value in reducing the overall size of nuclear arsenals—a conviction that would be affirmed when he concluded the 2002 Strategic Offensive Reduction Treaty (SORT), an agreement that bound the two superpowers to reduce their deployed nuclear weapons to a total of between 1,700 and 2,200.[316] This reduction in pure numbers though is aside from the fact that per his speech

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[313] George W. Bush: "Remarks at the National Defense University," May 1, 2001. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=45568.

[314] George W. Bush: "Remarks Announcing the United States Withdrawal From the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty," December 13, 2001. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=73491.

[315] Hans Kristensen, “The Role of US Nuclear Weapons: New Doctrine Falls Short of Bush Pledge,” *Arms Control Today* (September 1, 2005), www.armscontrol.org/act/2005_09/Kristensen.

[316] Nuclear Threat Initiative, “Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT),” October 26, 2011, accessed May 19, 2017. www.nti.org/learn/treaties-and-regimes/strategic-offensive-reductions-treaty-sort/. In spite of the apparent success, the treaty contained no mechanisms for verification, and no requirement for

on May 1, “the size, composition, and character” of the nuclear arsenal could still be adjusted. Indeed it is this caveat from which the challenge to the nuclear taboo would spring. The operative objection raised by journalists, the public, and in Congress, to Bush’s proposed change to the US nuclear weapons arsenal came from the contention that smaller weapons built with specific tasks in mind would be more useable or meant for fighting war rather than deterrence.[317] Bush and his supporters on this issue maintained that the potential usefulness would “enhance deterrence” or increase the credibility of deterrence.[318] Adversaries would be more likely to take seriously the threat of nuclear attack by the US if the US possessed nuclear weapons sized for specific missions that could be launched against an adversary.[319] In an interview in September 2001, C. Paul Robinson argued that Iraq had been deterred from using its biological and chemical weapons by a Bush Sr. letter “threatening the gravest consequences.” Given that experience he suggested that, “we need lower-yield nuclear weapons that could hold at risk only a rogue leader’s leadership and tools of aggression with some level of confidence.”[320]

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dismantlement. See Joseph Cirincione, “Twisted History: False Claims of Bush’s Success on WMD,” *Huffington Post* (February 13, 2009), accessed May 19, 2017, www.huffingtonpost.com/joe-cirincione/twisted-history-false-cla_b_157444.html.

[317] See Michael Gordon, “Nuclear Arms: For Deterrence or Fighting,” *New York Times*, March 11, 2002.

[318] For a succinct explanation of the notion of “enhancing deterrence,” see Keith Payne. "The Nuclear Posture Review: Setting the Record Straight." *Washington* Quarterly, 28, no. 3 (2005): 135-51.

[319] Robinson argued that low-yield weapons—though not sub-kiloton weapons—would be best for deterrence in the “non-Russian world.” The paper argued such weapons would be “most appropriate for deterring wider threats”. The language is consistent with the broader discourse that stressed the need to improve or enhance deterrence (Robinson, March 22, 2001).

[320] The interview reveals an internal contradiction in the organizational push for nuclear weapons. On one hand he argues that Saddam Hussein was deterred from using chemical and biological weapons by the threat of a nuclear response from the US—presumably with tactical nuclear weapons which Robinson pointed out at the time carried explosive yields of greater than 100 kilotons. On the other hand, he argues

In addition, if deterrence were to fail, the decision makers would have a wider portfolio of responses to choose from—a fact that would additionally discourage aggressive adversaries.[321] This argument built on the contention articulated by Payne and that, "There is no single 'correct' enduring nuclear force structure compatible with US strategic requirements…If the US wishes to maintain an appropriately sized nuclear arsenal, it must be able to adapt that arsenal over time to dynamic strategic and foreign policy requirements."[322] With this conception of a dynamic strategic environment requiring a dynamic nuclear arsenal to deter a more diverse set of actors, the stage was set for the challenge to the nuclear taboo that would ensue.

The Bush administration did succeed in reducing the total number of weapons in the US arsenal. However, given the intellectual foundations for the proposed nuclear weapons policy constructed by the PNAC and its alumni that would end up in the administration, the administration's nuclear politics would not be characterized by efforts at arms control. On the contrary, their efforts worked toward upheaval of the US nuclear weapons policy status quo, and effectively, a challenge to the nuclear taboo.

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that the US arsenal would not be taken seriously by a rogue regime, which would not expect a massive nuclear response ("vaporizing 11 million people") for a relatively much smaller act of aggression involving chemical and/or biological weapons. For full text see C. Paul Robinson, "Nuclear Watch Interview," Nuclear Watch New Mexico (September 12, 2001), accessed May 15, 2018, https://nukewatch.org/importantdocs/resources/ban_the_bomb_heck_no_it.html.

[321] For more on the prospect of "deterrence failure" see Donald Rumsfeld, "Nuclear Posture Review Report," Department of Defense (December 31, 2001), accessed May 15, 2018, http://archive.defense.gov/news/Jan2002/d20020109npr.pdf. Also see U.S. Department of State, "National Security Strategy of the United States of America," The White House (September 2002): 29, accessed May 15, 2018, https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf.

[322] Keith Payne, ed. "Rationale and Requirements for US Nuclear Forces and Arms Control", National Institute for Public Policy, Vol. I Executive Report (January 2001).

*Identity in the New Discourse*

Identity is central to discourse analysis. Discourses produce identity and are reinforced by them.[323] The discourse cultivated in the 1990's by future members of the Bush administration and their allies constituted a novel conception of national identity. The threat blank left by the dissolution of the Soviet Union had opened up space for a redefinition of US identity. While some struggled to mold US identity into a benign hegemon, or liberal internationalist, the Bush team constructed an identity around new radically threatening others: terrorists and rogue states. While these "others" were present in Clinton's discourse as well, PNAC and NIPP went to some lengths to specify that the new "others" could not be deterred or were irrational. In any case the tools the US used to successfully deter the Soviet Union would be insufficient for the new foes. This of course raised new ethical imperatives for their construction of US identity. If the current US arsenal could not deter terrorists and rogue states, the arsenal would have to be bolstered. Hansen argues that "foreign policy discourses always involve a construction of responsibility, even if only implicitly as applicable to toward a national citizenry."[324] Bush's new discourse recast security threats to the US. The new threats were of a character that the current nuclear arsenal would be insufficient to deter. The ethical responsibility that flowed from this conception would require a new generation of nuclear weapons—weapons ostensibly capable of meeting the new threats. The 1990's were a period of reinventing the national identity with new discourse—a discourse which

[323] This section draws on Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse and the Bosnian War* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 33-48.

[324] (2006: 44-5)

explicitly called for the US to manage the new threatening other with a new generation of nuclear weapons.

*The Challenge*

The challenge to the nuclear taboo began in earnest when Rumsfeld delivered the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) to Congress on December 31, 2001. Over the course of 2002, the Bush administration released a series of documents outlining their vision for the new nuclear weapons programs of the US. Although the Nuclear Posture Review was initially internal to Congress, the document leaked to the public in early March 2002. Other documents clarifying and expanding the Bush nuclear doctrine followed. On June 28, the administration released National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) 14, which provided planning guidance for agencies overseeing nuclear weapons. This document included changes to the Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy, a more specific set of plans for targeting and attack options in line with the new broader US nuclear weapons strategy. In September 2002, two documents from the White House clarified the administration's focus on the danger from rogue states and non-state actors acquiring weapons of mass destruction. The September 14, NSPD 17 emphasized the right to use nuclear weapons in response to the use of WMD (nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons) against the US and its allies. [325, 326] A few days later on September 17, the

[325] The precise definition of WMD has varied over time. For an excellent discussion of WMD's use in foreign policy discourse see Michelle Bentley, *Weapons of Mass Destruction and US Foreign Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

[326] Consistent with the NPR, NSPD 17 names Iran, Syria, North Korea, and Libya as the focus of this part of the new US strategy—this appeared in a classified appendix. Officials stated that nuclear weapons would be an option in contending with the challenges addressed by the new strategy. See Hans Kristensen, "US Nuclear Weapons Guidance," The Nuclear Information Project (January 3, 2008), accessed May 15, 2018, http://www.nukestrat.com/us/guidance.htm.

National Security Strategy of the United States enshrined the updated policy of pre-emption in the face of perceived hostility, which President Bush had announced publicly in his January 2002 State of the Union speech.

The challenge went from planning documents to Congress in the fall of 2002 in the debates over fiscal year 2003 Defense Authorization. In the first place, the nuclear bunker buster project or "Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator (RNEP)" received $15.5 million in funding for FY2003, the first installment of a planned 3-year feasibility study.[327] The funding came with strings attached however, as both houses of Congress took steps to retain oversight of the project. The House requested that the National Academy of Science look into the impact of the potential new weapons, while the Senate requested more study into the military necessity of the weapons and alternatives among conventional weapons.[328] The conference agreement included both provisions. All the while, the same Congress worked to kill a provision that would have allowed research and design work on low-yield nuclear weapons. While the House would have permitted this work (but not construction of the weapons), the Senate doubled-down on the 1994 Spratt-Furse provision that banned design and development of nuclear weapons with yields of less than 5 kilotons.[329] Tellingly, the conference agreement reflected the Senate's position, and the low-yield nuclear weapons were dropped for FY2003.

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[327] Center for Arms Control & Non-proliferation, "Analysis of Fiscal 2003 Defense Authorization Conference Report," (November 18, 2003), accessed May 15, 2018, http://armscontrolcenter.org/issues/securityspending/articles/fiscal03_def_report/.

[328] Christine Kucia, "Congress Approves Nuclear 'Bunker Buster' Research," *Arms Control Today* (December 2003).

[329] For details about the Spratt-Furse provisions see Ivan Oelrich, "Congress Permits Research on Smaller Nuclear Weapons," *Journal of the Federation of American Scientists* Vol. 56, No. 2 (Summer 2003).

Although the FY2003 Congressional authorization of funding for RNEP provided a path forward for the Bush administration, Congress explicitly retained power over the project. Per Rep. Tauscher (D-CA), the requirement, "restores Congress' vital oversight role over what could eventually be the development of a new nuclear weapon…since this is only the first funding installment for a three-year study, Congress will have ample opportunity to revisit this issue."[330] So while the Bush administration succeeded in launching their efforts to build nuclear weapons, these efforts hailed opponents in Congress to resist the ongoing efforts to make the plans into a reality.

Although the defense appropriations process for FY 2004 led to continued funding for RNEP, the process also came amidst mobilization by opponents in Congress. On May 21, 2003, Rep. Tauscher (D-CA) offered an amendment to the Defense Authorization bill that would have taken funds from RNEP and used it for conventional capabilities. At the time the bill would have provided $15 million for RNEP and $7.5 million for the advanced weapon concepts, or mini-nuke project.[331] Rep. Tauscher argued to the House that the plans were flawed for five reasons:

> First, it will produce massive collateral damage; second, even the most powerful nuclear weapons cannot destroy bunkers at a certain depth; third, if a bunker is filled with chemical and biological agents, it is only common sense to keep them underground rather than blow them up and spread them all over the place in a mushroom cloud; fourth, an RNEP will cause massive casualties. Detonated in an urban area, it would kill tens of thousands of civilians. Last, developing nuclear bunker busters would undermine decades of work by the United States to prevent nonnuclear states from getting nuclear weapons and encourage nuclear states to reduce their stockpiles.[332]

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[330] Ibid.

[331] RNEP and the advanced weapons concepts together constituted the Advanced Concepts Initiative.

[332] 108 Cong. Rec. H4503, 2003.

Proponents of RNEP in Congress responded consistent with the justifications made the Bush administration. Rep. Heather Wilson (R-NM) noted increasing use of deeply buried facilities by US adversaries, and the growth of Russia's nuclear arsenal. She went on, "For deterrence to work, we have to hold at risk those things which our potential enemies value and that means holding hard and deeply buried targets at risk. They are out of reach of conventional weapons. They are out of reach of current nuclear weapons."[333] While Rep. Wilson seemed to voice a concern about the character of the US nuclear deterrent, it is quite telling that her district includes a major nuclear weapons laboratory which would have received funding through the RNEP program.[334] The arguments notwithstanding, the House struck down the Tauscher amendment 199-204. On the Senate side, Senators Dorgan (D-ND) and Feinstein (D-CA) sponsored an amendment to bar funds from RNEP—an effort that was also struck down. RNEP eventually found funding though, in the FY2004 budget process. However, the efforts by Congressional opponents to kill its funding were partially successful. Congress eventually appropriated only $7.5 million of the total funding request of $22.5 million—with the condition that any efforts going past the research phase and into development and engineering would require Congressional approval.[335]

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[333] 108 Cong. Rec. H4504, 2003.

[334] Rep. Wilson represented New Mexico's first district which includes Albuquerque, home of Sandia National Laboratories. Wilson also argued that the programs should move forward to provide understanding of the potential of the new proposed weapons, "It's one of the reasons we need to research advanced concepts, so we are not caught unprepared." For the full article see James Sterngold, "US Alters Nuclear Weapons Policy: Congress Rejects 'Bunker-Busters' for More Reliable Arms," *SFGate* (November 28, 2005), accessed February 4, 2015, https://www.sfgate.com/news/article/U-S-alters-nuclear-weapons-policy-Congress-2592846.php.

[335] Jonathan Medalia, "Nuclear Weapons Initiatives: Low Yield R&D, Advanced Concepts, Earth Penetrators, Test Readiness," CRS Report for Congress, Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress (March 8, 2004): 2.

The FY2005 budget cycle would prove even more difficult for those advocating for new weapons. While the project had begun with cost projections of $45 million spread over three years (FY2003 – FY2005), NNSA projections suggested that total costs could have approached $500 million by FY2009, with $27.6 requested for FY 2005.[336] As with previous budget cycles, sustained pressure for RNEP came from organizational sources. Linton Brooks, Undersecretary of Energy/Nuclear Security and lead administrator of NNSA, took on several of the critiques of the program in remarks on August 11, 2004. He addressed concerns that RNEP would be a departure from previous US policy, "Deterrence requires we be able to hold at risk that which an adversary values. Since more and more we see potential opponents putting important military facilities underground, our efforts to determine the potential effectiveness of an earth-penetrating weapon reflect a continued emphasis on enhancing deterrence."[337] Others at the same symposium argued that new design work would be essential to maintaining top talent in the US nuclear weapons complex. Per John Harvey of the NNSA,

> Advanced concepts design work, and engineering development of selected designs, is essential to train the next generation of nuclear weapons designers and engineers. These individuals must remain at the forefront of nuclear weapons technology first of all to ensure the safe stewardship of the nuclear stockpile for as long as the United States will deploy nuclear forces; second, to provide for future national security needs as determined by the administration and Congress; and,

[336] Ibid.

[337] See Linton Brooks, "Symposium on 'Post-Cold War U.S. Nuclear Strategy: A Search for Technical and Policy Common Ground,'" The National Academy of Sciences, Committee on International Security and Arms Control (August 11, 2004), accessed May 15, 2018, http://sites.nationalacademies.org/cs/groups/pgasite/documents/webpage/pga_049750.pdf.

> third, to ensure that the United States won't be surprised by the nuclear weapons developments of any other country.[338]

In spite of these efforts, robust opposition to this bill would manifest in Congress. The following sections will argue that the FY 2005 defunding of the RNEP program can be attributed not only to Senate democrats, but to a broader set of forces aligned against nuclear weapons use that together constitute the nuclear taboo. Following the "pathways to the taboo" the next sections build the case that the defeat of RNEP in the FY2005 and FY2006 budget cycles can be understood best as part of the taboo's broader impact on nuclear weapons politics.[339]

**Societal Pressure**

The first pathway to the nuclear taboo is through the actions of the domestic public. Throughout the history of nuclear weapons, the public—both domestically and internationally—has played a major role in altering the trajectory of policy through mass movements and demonstration, and by manipulating incentives facing policymakers and bureaucrats close to nuclear weapons policy. Early in the nuclear era, the Eisenhower administration sought to manipulate public opinion by casting nuclear technology as a potential boon to the prosperity of humankind. "Atoms for Peace" was meant to both ease public anxiety over the prospect of nuclear annihilation, and to accustom the public to the "age of peril," a time when nuclear weapons might have had to be used in the course of a

[338] John R. Harvey, "Seeking a Responsive Nuclear Weapons Infrastructure and Stockpile Transformation". Presented to the National Academy of Sciences Symposium, "Post-Cold War US Nuclear Strategy: A Search for Technical and Policy Common Ground." The National Academy of Sciences, Committee on International Security and Arms Control (August 11, 2004), accessed May 15, 2018, http://sites.nationalacademies.org/cs/groups/pgasite/documents/webpage/pga_049752.pdf.

[339] The "pathways" are the five mechanisms by through which the international norm against using nuclear weapons in battle—the nuclear taboo—is constituted (Tannenwald 2007).

war with the Soviet Union. In the spring of 1955, that same administration sought to convince the public that nuclear weapons should be used "exactly as you would use a bullet or anything else."[340] Ironically, the episode aroused more public anxiety than calm, and would further constrain the administration's nuclear intentions in the Quemoy-Matsu crisis that precipitated that statement.

Similarly, the Reagan administration experienced the political power of a massive social movement in its confrontation with the Nuclear Freeze movement.[341] The wildly popular movement, while failing to achieve its stated objective of a moratorium on the construction and deployment of any new nuclear weapons, nevertheless may have been partially responsible for Reagan's apparent turnabout in his second term. The latter years of the administration saw progress on what would become the START treaty—signed by President George H.W. Bush in 1991, and the signing of the INF Treaty in 1987. In both the Reagan and Eisenhower cases, the nuclear taboo acted through the pathway or mechanisms of public pressure in response to administration steps widely perceived to make nuclear weapons *use* more likely. The Reagan case is particularly salient here as the massive movement that checked Reagan's nuclear weapons ambitions did not mobilize in response to an international crisis, but to policy initiatives coming from the White House.

To understand the role that the public played in the Bush administration's challenge to the nuclear taboo, this section will examine three vectors through which the public influenced policy. These vectors include public opinion as measured by national

[340] Dwight D. Eisenhower: "The President's News Conference," March 16, 1955. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=10434.

[341] For analysis of the Nuclear Freeze movement and its impact on defense politics see Daniel Wirls, *Buildup: The Politics of Defense in the Reagan Era* (Cornell University Press, 1992).

polling services, the popular press, and Congress; each provides a different type of interaction between the will of the broader public and the behavior of elite decision makers, and each can potentially contribute to the constitution of the nuclear taboo, and its impact on nuclear politics during the Bush administration.

*Polling Data*

The early 1980's bore witness to a tremendous groundswell of support for arms control policies among the US public. Though the veracity of the nuclear freeze movement itself declined as the Cold War came to a conclusion, the general preference for arms control as opposed to nuclear buildup remained throughout the 1990's. This preference manifested in bipartisan success in addressing the grave threat posed by "loose nukes" in former Soviet states. The Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program stands as hallmark achievement in *deproliferation* efforts.[342] At the same time, many Americans noted a lack of peer competitors for the US militarily and openly questioned the scale of US defense expenditures, and its oversized nuclear arsenal. Expectations of a "peace dividend" were never fully realized, but popular sentiment held that the US was confronting a less threatening international environment that would require less defense spending, and possibly few nuclear weapons.[343]

Although polling did not address the popularity of RNEP or mini-nukes specifically, a few other questions asked by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations in the early 2000's are revealing with regard to the feelings of the broader public and the

[342] Bresonlin (2014)

[343] The "peace dividend", entered public discourse during the George H.W. Bush administration. It suggested that there would be large budgetary savings from re-appropriating funds toward domestic projects and away from national security. See Daniel Wirls, *Irrational Security: The Politics of Defense from Reagan to Obama* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 21-2.

pending programs.[344] First, Americans continued to overwhelmingly support "preventing the spread of nuclear weapons" as a very important goal of US Foreign policy; in 2002, when these policies made their way into Congress, 85% of the public and 89% of elites supported this position. In 2004 the public and elites support dipped slightly to 73% and 87% respectively. Such robust support for preventing the spread of nuclear weapons helped put the burden on the Bush administration to explain why the US would need new nuclear weapons, and why those new nuclear weapons would not aggravate US nonproliferation efforts.

Any new weapons would likely require testing—a question taken up by the same set of surveys. Asked in 2002 and 2004 whether the US should participate in a treaty that banned nuclear test explosions, just over 80% of the public said that the US should participate—in 2004 that figure climbed to 87%.[345] Elites showed similar enthusiasm with 82% supporting US participation in such a treaty in 2002, and 85% in 2004. Again the Bush administration would face the burden of justifying a course of action that, if successful, would likely lead to a resumption in nuclear testing. The poll results suggest justifying even "a study" that might lead to a nuclear test would be difficult for proponents in Congress and the administration.

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[344] Results in this section are drawn from Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 2004, *Global Views 2004: American Public Opinion and Foreign Policy, ICPSR Version*. Menlo Park, CA: Knowledge Networks, Inc. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2004; and Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. *American Public Opinion and US Foreign Policy, 2002, ICPSR Version*. Rochester, NY: Harris Interactive, 2002. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2002.

[345] The Bush administration's hostility toward the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, bucked the prevailing public opinion. An October 1999 poll showed just 22% of those surveyed supported the Senate's decision to reject CTBT ratification, a move the new Bush administration would support. See Peter Hart and Robert Teeter, "NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll," October 23-25, accessed May 15, 2018, http://www.pollingreport.com/defense.htm.

Even closer to the heart of the matter, the survey also asked under what conditions respondents believed the US should be able to use nuclear weapons. Public opinion remained relatively stable on this question with 22% saying the US should never use nuclear weapons, and 57% (in 2004) responding that nuclear weapons should only be used in response to a nuclear attack. Among elites there was an uptick among those favoring "never use" response, from 22% in 2002 to 25% in 2004. All told, the percent of public support for never using nuclear weapons, or using them only in response to a nuclear attack came in the high 70's, with elites marginally more supportive and in the low 80's. The weapons under consideration were attacked by opponents for making use more likely, and touted by proponents as providing the president with more options in a crisis.[346] This survey question suggests that such new weapons, made to be used in a combat or at least with tactical uses in mind, would be rejected by a healthy majority of the public. This picture of public sentiment helps to explain the failure of the Bush administration to enact these programs.

*Popular Press*

The Nuclear Posture Review leaked to the press in March 2002 leading to sustained, widespread reaction. William Arkin of the *Los Angeles Times* broke the story. Although Arkin's initial coverage focused on facts about the new document rather than analysis, he did contend, "the NPR's call for development of new nuclear weapons that reduce 'collateral damage' myopically ignores the political, moral, and military

[346] Linton Brooks argued to the Senate, "I have a bias in favor of something that is the minimum destruction. That means I have a bias in favor of that which might be useable" (108 Cong. Rec. S6790, 2003).

implications—short-term and long—of crossing the nuclear threshold."[347] He closes by arguing that the document is not about "homeland defense" as the Bush administration had been stressing, but is instead "an integrated, significantly expanded planning doctrine for nuclear war." Arkin viewed the Nuclear Posture Review as a radical departure from past practice, and a direct challenge to the nuclear taboo as enshrined in the norm of not building new nuclear weapons or threatening the use of nuclear weapons in new ways. Arkin's perspective is particularly salient as it was among the first public takes on the Bush nuclear aspirations.

Other articles in the popular press immediately followed the leak and raised the question of how much the policies prescribed by the Nuclear Posture Review would impact the nuclear threshold—the point at which nuclear weapons are likely to be used.[348] A related and important question asked at this time was whether nuclear weapons' only use is to deter aggression or whether they can also be employed tactically in combat—war-fighting.[349] Still others doubted the technical feasibility of damage limitation and the possibility of development without testing, while bringing to the fore the powerful and often repeated argument that such efforts undermine nonproliferation

[347] William Arkin, "Secret Plan Outlines the Unthinkable," *Los Angeles Times*, March 10, 2002.

[348] See Rose Gottemoeller, "On Nukes, We Need to Talk," *Washington Post* (April 2, 2002); and Robert McNamara and Thomas Graham, Jr., "A Pretty Poor Posture for a Superpower," *Los Angeles Times* (March 13, 2002); Editorial, "America as Nuclear Rogue," *New York Times* (March 12, 2002).

[349] Michael Gordon, "Nuclear Arms: For Deterrence or Fighting," *New York* Times, March 11, 2002. Gordon also published an article the day previous arguing that the 2001/2002 NPR provided a "comprehensive blueprint for developing and deploying nuclear weapons". The March 10, 2002 article is particularly important because it was cited and submitted to the Senate record by Diane Feinstein on September 15, 2003 as she argued in support of her amendment to defund RNEP (108 Cong. Rec. S11440-1, 2003).

and arms control efforts.[350] Addressing the House of Representatives during the debate on Rep. Markey's amendment to prevent Congressional allocations supporting RNEP, Rep. Frank (D-MA) argued, "We have been trying to preach nuclear non-proliferation, but the town drunk is a poor advocate for temperance…We cannot threaten, as we have heard, a nuclear response to a non-nuclear attack and the still have any credibility in preaching temperance."[351] These critiques were not lost on the general public—for example, in April 2002 Boston high school students organized a letter writing "against the tactical use of nuclear weapons and the immeasurable damage it will cause."[352]

**Normative Power Politics: the International Response**

The second pathway to the nuclear taboo is through strategic social construction by international actors who are threatened by the potential and policies of a nuclear armed state. These actors strategically build on the discourse at the heart of the nuclear taboo to undermine nuclear policies that could put their own states' security at risk. This section will consider the responses from China, North Korea, and Russia—all states with a strategic interest in the potential threat posed by US nuclear policies.

Shortly after the NPR leaked in March 2002, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing told US Ambassador Clark Randt that China would not submit to "outside intimidation including nuclear blackmail" and that the US was "nuclear saber-rattling at

[350] See Benjamin Friedman, "Mini-Nukes, Bunker-Busters, and Deterrence: Framing the Debate," *Center for Defense Information*, CiaoNet (February 2002), http://www.ciaonet.org/wps/frb02/; and Henry Kelly and Michael Levi, "Nix the Mini-Nukes," *Christian Science Monitor* (March 28, 2002).

[351] Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA), (107 Cong. Rec. H7432, 2002).

[352] Johanna Massey, "Students Deluge Bush with Mail Over Nuclear Policy," *Boston Globe (*April 25, 2002).

the Chinese people."[353] The combination of a perception of more useable nuclear weapons, combined with plans for national missile defense and the possibility of theater missile defense in Taiwan inspired widespread support for an increase in China's nuclear capability to maintain minimal deterrence.[354] Also in March of 2002, the (North) Korean Central News Agency characterized the Nuclear posture Review as "an inhuman plan to spark a global nuclear arms race" and went on to add "a nuclear war to be imposed by nuclear fanatics would mean their ruin in nuclear disaster."[355] In October 2002 discussions with North Korea, Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly presented evidence of their highly-enriched uranium (HEU) program, a program to which they admitted at this time and attributed to Bush administration hostility.[356] North Korea also responded to the Bush administration's new direction with an announcement on December 12, 2002 that it would be restarting nuclear facilities and ordering international monitors out of the country. On January 10, 2003 North Korea withdrew from the NPT.[357] Overall, the Bush administration's new nuclear posture, along with its repeated

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[353] William Berry, "The Nuclear Posture Review and Northeast Asia: Theoretical and Practical Implications," in James Wirtz and Jeffrey Larsen eds. *Nuclear Transformation: The New US Nuclear Doctrine* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 28.

[354] Tompkins conducted more than 60 "not-for-attribution" interviews of Chinese elites in the summer of 2002. She concluded that the moderate, majority view suggested China should respond with an increase in total number of warheads, the pursuit of MIRV technology, and the development of other countermeasures to defeat national and theater missile defenses. For more detail see Joanne Tompkins, "How US Strategic Policy is Changing China's Nuclear Plans," Arms Control Association (January/February 2003).

[355] Berry (2005, 230-1)

[356] Ibid. The North Korean HEU program had actually existed since the Clinton administration suggesting that the Bush administration's efforts merely provided the DPRK with more justification for their ongoing nuclear weapons program.

[357] Paul Kerr, "North Korea Quit NPT, Says It Will Restart Nuclear Facilities," *Arms Control Today* (January 1, 2003)

threats of possible regime change in North Korea, exacerbated existing tension and precluded cooperation on any nonproliferation efforts.

Russia contained at least two potential targets for the proposed new nuclear weapons deep in mountains at Yamantau and Kosvinsky.[358] These locations have been associated with Russian efforts to make a decapitating US nuclear strike impossible, and to maintain the ability to respond to such a nuclear strike in kind while physically protecting the leadership. It is not clear to what extent this motivated proponents of RNEP, but the potential threat was not lost on the Russians. President Vladimir Putin himself warned, "This, to a very low bar, to a dangerous line, lowers the threshold of possible nuclear weapons use…In this case nuclear weapons from weapons of nuclear deterrence go down to the level of weapons of operational use, and, in my opinion, this is very dangerous."[359] Consistent with China and North Korea, the Russians viewed the plans as upsetting the status quo, and making the dangers posed by nuclear weapons more acute. Although it is unlikely that public objections from US rivals made a great difference in the eventual policy outcomes, their responses were consistent with the US-based discourse that argued that arms control efforts would be harmed and arms racing would be exacerbated.

**Individual Decisionmakers: Representative David Hobson**

While I argue that the nuclear taboo prevented RNEP from becoming a reality, this norm acted through a variety of mechanisms, one of which included the actions of

[358] Bruce Blair, "We Keep Building Nukes for All the Wrong Reasons," *Washington Post* (May 25, 2003).

[359] Brett Marvin, "Assessing the International Response to the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator," *Strategic Insights*, Vol. 3(6) (June 2004).

the US House of Representatives and in particular Ohio Republican Rep. David Hobson. His central role in this outcome stemmed from his personal convictions on the appropriate role of nuclear weapons in the US defense apparatus, his unique and powerful role in shaping appropriations stemming from his chairmanship of a subcommittee central to funding RNEP, and the lack of widespread support for RNEP outside of the Bush administration. Lackluster support for RNEP after Hobson zeroed funding in his subcommittee's appropriation bill is revealing of a broader lack of sustained enthusiasm for the program, especially in the face of a growing bipartisan opposition. The confluence of these forces led Congress to deny funding for RNEP for fiscal years FY2005 and FY2006.[360]

Hobson's personal convictions about the role of nuclear weapons in the US arsenal are central to the outcome, as he powerfully repeated and reiterated several of the key arguments against RNEP as the appropriations process unfolded. In August 2004, he questioned the link between holding terrorists at risk with an effective earth-penetrating nuclear weapon, and being able to kill them once they are found. He also pointed out the problematic link to nonproliferation efforts, "We cannot advocate for nuclear nonproliferation around the globe and pursue more useable nuclear weapons here at home. That inconsistency is not lost on anyone in the international community."[361] He later expressed concern that new nuclear weapons development interfered with his

[360] Jonathan Medalia, "Water Power: Why Congress Zeroed 'Bunker Buster' Appropriations," *Comparative Strategy* Vol. 26(3) (2007).

[361] David Hobson, "Remarks by Chairman David Hobson – House Appropriations Subcomittee on Energy and Water Development," presented at "Symposium on 'Post-Cold War U.S. Nuclear Strategy: A Search for Technical and Policy Common Ground,'" The National Academy of Sciences, Committee on International Security and Arms Control (August 11, 2004), accessed May 15, 2018, http://sites.nationalacademies.org/cs/groups/pgasite/documents/webpage/pga_049753.pdf.

subcommittee's priority of maintaining a safe, secure nuclear deterrent and "maintaining our nation's integrity in the international effort to halt the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction."[362] These concerns were consonant with many in the arms control community and notably counter to that of the Bush administration and many prominent Republicans in Congress.

While many people held similar convictions to Hobson, and the roles of Ellen Tauscher, Diane Feinstein and Edward Kennedy should not be diminished, it was Hobson's position that influenced the eventual policy outcomes due to the power of the chair position in the House Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee, and due to a few important details of the appropriations process that dampened his opposition. In the House in late May 2004, Representative Ellen Tauscher proposed an amendment that would have transferred funding from the RNEP program to programs aimed at conventional capabilities.[363] That amendment was struck down 214-204.[364] On the other side of Congress on June 15, 2004, Kennedy sponsored a bill with same aims, which the Senate struck down 55-42.[365] In spite of these failures, the bill that passed just a week later on June 25, 2004, did not contain funding for RNEP. Medalia offers a convincing and parsimonious account of the apparent support for RNEP with its

[362] Medalia (2007: 239)

[363] Richard Jones, "House Rejects Move to Stop Nuclear 'Bunker Buster' Weapon Research," American Institute of Physics, June 2, 2004.

[364] Eleven Republicans joined in voting for the amendment to slash RNEP funds, though interestingly, not David Hobson. For complete results of this vote see: http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2004/roll203.xml.

[365] The results of the Senate vote on the Kennedy amendment see: http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=108&session=2&vote=00113. For the position of the Senators see Ted Kennedy and Diane Feinstein, "Bush's Dangerous Nuclear Double Standard," *Los Angeles Times*, September 23, 2003.

failure to be funded.[366] He points out that when an appropriations bill contains a member's project—usually spending for their home district—there is an unwritten rule that the member should then vote for the entire bill. As a result, appropriations bills packed with projects vital to representative's districts or states gain votes as they are packed with projects. This leads to an expectation that the bill will be passed and decreases the incentive to mount a major opposition. The spending bill that killed funding for RNEP (for FY 2005) passed the house with a 370-16 vote.[367]

In addition to a position and process that allowed Hobson to pass a bill consonant with his preference on this issue, a lack of pressure from proponents of RNEP permitted such a result. The point between Hobson's withdrawing funding for RNEP in the subcommittee's version of the bill, but before it had been passed, is a telling test of the real support for this program. The amendments proposed by Kennedy and Tauscher did not require those voting to include funding to make any costly trade-offs. By contrast, once the funding had been taken out of the bill in committee, members faced a choice between keeping their own projects (or that of a colleagues), or funding for RNEP. Faced with such a trade-off, the House voted overwhelmingly in favor of Hobson's bill that zeroed RNEP and betrayed the lawmaking body's lack of support for the measure.[368]

Republican Representative Zach Wamp is a striking example of the imbalance between the investment representatives secured versus what they would get: opposition to

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[366] Medalia (2007: 240-1)

[367] For a complete record of this vote see: http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2004/roll325.xml.

[368] The subcommittee had reached the ceiling of its 302(b) allocation, or the funding over which it is responsible for appropriating. Any additional funding would have necessitated a new allocation from the Appropriations Committee or transferring funds already earmarked. Neither option is common or would have found much support (Medalia 2007: 242).

RNEP could have threatened funding for a $1.47 billion Spallation Neutron Source at Oak Ridge National Laboratory in his state of Tennessee. This example shows that even those with an interest in broader investment in the nuclear weapons complex (such as a Republican representing a district containing Oak Ridge National Laboratory), could be bought off with a vague threat of putting their secured funding at risk. It seems unlikely that Hobson would have zeroed funding for such a large project over stated objections to his zeroing of RNEP funding. However, the fact that opposition never materialized suggests that if there were supporters on the subcommittee, they were unwilling to take the chance. Hobson himself characterizes well the broad support for the eventual outcome, "When we cut funding for RNEP…critics wrongly assumed this was against the will of the majority of the House and Senate, which is simply inaccurate. The reductions in the fiscal 2005 omnibus bill were included in the House bill that was passed overwhelmingly by the subcommittee and the full committee and finally passed the House of Representatives in a 370-16 vote."[369] This evidence suggests that the Bush team failed to build a sufficiently strong discourse to overcome the status quo discourse. While they were able to recruit some allies in Congress, overall support remained tepid, and the proposed programs never made it out of the study phase.

Other arguments put forth in this debate shed some light on the inconsistent and ultimately insufficient support for RNEP. Proponents of RNEP tended to frame the program's benefits in vague terms; for example, the Republican Senator from Colorado Wayne Allard contended, "Irrational rogue nations and non-state actors have emerged as

[369] David Hobson, "Forward thinking on nuclear policy," *Washington Times*, January 20, 2005.

a greater threat to us."[370] Others stressed that the requested funds for the fiscal year in question would not be used for building weapons. Senator James M. Inhofe, Republican Senator from Oklahoma echoed similar statements from Rumsfeld when he emphasized, "This is a feasibility study; it is nothing more than that."[371] By contrast, Senators Kennedy and Feinstein used precise language to describe the destruction, radioactive fallout, and political consequences of upsetting allies and undermining nonproliferation efforts in their Los Angeles Times opinion piece published in September of 2003 in anticipation of a congressional confrontation over RNEP.[372] The divergent modes of arguing show limited, and even timid support for the RNEP program, in the face of bipartisan, and determined opposition armed with more detailed analysis.

The Bush administration would seem to be another logical place for opposition to arise. However, according to Hobson, "there has been no pressure from my leadership, there's been no pressure from the White House on me…Some people in the other body don't like my opinions, but we've been able to work that out so far."[373] As spending on RNEP would have likely taken place mostly at Los Alamos National Laboratory and Sandia National Laboratories, both weapons labs in New Mexico, Senator Pete Domenici from New Mexico was another potential source of RNEP support. As such, it would take

[370] Carl Hulse, "Senate Backs New Research on A-Bombs," *New York Times*, June 16, 2004.

[371] Ibid.

[372] In particular the senators ask, "How can we ask the North Koreans to abandon their nuclear program when we begin to design, build, and test new nuclear weapons of our own?" They go onto to worry about theft of newer smaller weapons by terrorists or others who would simply have less to carry. And finally, they conclude that they cannot support a policy that makes the use of nuclear weapons more likely. (Kennedy and Feinstein, September 23, 2003)

[373] Hobson (August 11, 2004)

a deal in which other projects were promised funding in exchange for Domenici's accepting the bill.[374] Domenici's arguments however, reveal the mixed basis of his support for RNEP, "I remain hopeful that we will only use our stockpile as a deterrent to other nuclear states. However, to be an effective deterrent, it must evolve to address the changing threats. We also must maintain a group of experts at our national labs that understand the complex science to support the engineering and physics to ensure our stockpile is a viable deterrent and is safely stored at home."[375] While the first two sentences in this quote track closely with the NPR and the arguments supporting RNEP in the appropriations debate, the latter sentence betrays Domenici's greater concern with securing funds for the two New Mexico weapons labs, which happen to be two of the largest employers in his home state. This conclusion is supported by the eventual outcome. Domenici, who was chairman of the Senate Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee (Hobson's Senate counterpart), agreed to the House version of the bill (Hobson's, which zeroed funding for RNEP), in exchange for other spending at the New Mexico weapons labs.[376] The evidence seems to show that Domenici's support for RNEP came from his interest in securing funds, rather than his genuine interest in pushing for new nuclear weapons to address any strategic security need.

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[374] John Fleck, "Bunker Buster Busted in Bigger Nuke Budget," *Albuquerque Journal*, November 23, 2004.

[375] Richard Jones, "Senate Authorizes Nuclear Weapon Research Initiatives," American Institute of Physics, July 1, 2004.

[376] Fleck (November 23, 2004) mentions two projects Domenici bargained for in this deal: $91 million for a microsystems building complex at Sandia National Laboratories, and $40 million for a plutonium lab at Los Alamos National Laboratory. It is notable that the RNEP appropriation in question totaled only about $27 million.

In Medalia's conclusion to his piece on the FY2005 appropriations debate, he points out, "RNEP played well for its opponents but not for its supporters. There was scant evidence of public pressure for RNEP and considerable pressure against."[377] The defeat of RNEP in committee resulted partially from Hobson's personal convictions, but also because his fellow lawmakers represented constituencies that were increasingly against nuclear testing, against using nuclear weapons use in the face non-nuclear threats, and also less likely to support Bush than they had been a year or two earlier.[378] Although the debate over the appropriate role for nuclear weapons in the US arsenal is larger than a single budget fight, this episode revolved around one of the central features of the Nuclear Posture Review, and demonstrates the potential impact of the moral convictions of individuals empowered by the processes that make up nuclear politics. Hobson's criticisms of the RNEP program were not original, nor did he deliver them in some exceptionally eloquent fashion. Instead, the organizational structure of the US Congress placed him in a unique position to buck the wishes of the Bush administration and its supporters in Congress. In addition, close examination reveals that key supporters of RNEP did not find it worth sacrificing projects that benefitted their home states and districts, and that even the most interested lawmakers—such as Republican Senator Pete

[377] Medalia (2007: 345)

[378] NNSA requested funds for RNEP in FY2006 even after the defeat in the year previous. Given the prior experience, they only requested $4 million. While the House appropriations committee eliminated the funds early in the process with 134 representatives signing a letter written by Ed Markey (D-MA) to the House Armed Service Committee demanding the cancellation of "nuclear bunker buster" (Markey, May 5, 2005). The Senate initially kept the funds in their version of the appropriation bill, before zeroing the funding. The Senate's move may have been in response to pressure from the House, and again from Senator Feinstein who sponsored an amendment that would have killed the project. While that amendment failed to pass, 43-53, the final bill did not have funds for RNEP, apparently because NNSA had dropped the request (Medalia 2007: 243-4).

Domenici—were more interested in securing funds with tangible benefits for their constituents than "studying" new nuclear weapons.

**Iterated Behavior**

Although difficult to say precisely, the role of obligation arising out of convention—the next pathway to the nuclear taboo—cannot be left out. The challenge began with a status quo in which the US maintained a policy of not producing nuclear weapons with small yields. Although the US has produced nuclear weapons with yields as low as 0.1 kilotons in yield, the 1993 Spratt-Furse provision effectively outlawed the production of any nuclear weapons with less than five kilotons.[379] In the FY2003 Defense Authorization highlighted tension over this rule. The arguments championed by Bush, built on the work of PNAC, Payne, and others seemed to imply the need for nuclear weapons smaller than five kilotons. The House version of the defense authorization actually permitted research and design work on weapons less than five kilotons, but the conference bill dropped the language in favor of the senate's version that reiterated the prohibition of Spratt-Furse.[380] Nevertheless, proponents intended to proceed with research into weapons complying with existing law, by modifying B-61, and B-83 warheads with hardened cases and explosive-yields around five kilotons, modifications which would ostensibly make the resulting weapons effective bunker-busters.

[379] For a discussion of the Davy Crockett W-54 warhead and tactical nuclear weapons in policy, see David Hoffman, April 1, 2010, "The Little Nukes That Got Away," *Foreign Policy*. http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/04/01/the-little-nukes-that-got-away-2/; and for an exhaustive list of US nuclear warheads through 2009 see Robert S. Norris & Hans M. Kristensen, "U.S. Nuclear Warheads, 1945-2009," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* Vol. 65:4 (2009): 72-81.

[380] Center for Arms Control & Non-proliferation, "Analysis of Fiscal 2003 Defense Authorization Conference Report," November 18, 2002.

In this and other details surrounding the Bush challenge, the Bush administration confronted an entrenched, and powerful status quo. Spratt-Furse is only one among many obstacles RNEP proponents were forced to confront as they sought "conspicuous" change. Tannenwald notes, "As each successive crisis comes and goes and nuclear weapons remain unused, expectations are created about behavior in future crises. The burden of proof shifts to those who would advocate a change from the prevailing practice."[381] As the burden shifted to proponents and entered the formal policy-making process in Congress, it became clear that the weight would be too much to bear. Members of Congress, representing a public which considered the administration's nuclear wish list with deep skepticism, piled on the burden with testimony and public statements. Rep. Hobson in particular remained unconvinced of the need for new weapons and exposed the narrow and weak support behind the challenge. This pathway essentially unleashed the weight of a recent history free of nuclear weapons, and moving toward arms control solutions. Proponents of RNEP were unable to convince the public or key individuals of the wisdom upending the status quo, and were eventually defeated.

**Institutionalization**

Opponents of Bush's plan were able to appeal to a variety of institutionalized practices and provisions in building the case against new nuclear weapons. The Spratt-Furse provision in particular carried the weight of law, providing a serious obstacle to those that would argue the US needed weapons even smaller than 5 kt.[382] In addition,

[381] Tannenwald (2007: 66)

[382] For more on Spratt-Furse, and its role in the emerging debate over new nuclear weapons see Friedman (2002).

Spratt-Furse provided a method of recalling and mobilizing into debate, a set of arguments on the danger of smaller nuclear weapons, and the value of the firebreak between conventional and nuclear. These well-articulated arguments supporting existing law, would need to be addressed and refuted by opponents who, due to the pathway of iterated behavior, would need to convince others of the obsolescence of the status quo.

In addition, opponents of RNEP pointed to existing arms control treaties, especially the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, in building their case against the Bush plan. In particular, Article VI of the NPT requires nuclear weapons armed states to pursue in good faith, measures to cease the arms race, and to achieve nuclear disarmament.[383] Critics of the Bush administrations' plan argued that nuclear modernization efforts such as RNEP undermine the spirit and possibly the letter of Article VI of the NPT, and both undermine the credibility of the US as a leader in arms control and disarmament efforts as well as the incentives of other states to comply with the NPT and with other arms control measures. Proponents of the Bush plan argued that other states value nuclear weapons regardless of the details of US capabilities. As such it does not make sense to "lead" on arms control, when rogue states and possibly terrorist groups are not going to respond in kind leaving the US less secure than before.[384]

**Conclusion**

If the nuclear taboo prevents the usage of nuclear weapons, it must be activated at the prospect of using nuclear weapons. This moment make take place during wars or

[383] For a summary and text of the NPT see Nuclear Threat Initiative, "Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)," July 25, 2017, accessed on May 15, 2018, http://www.nti.org/learn/treaties-and-regimes/treaty-on-the-non-proliferation-of-nuclear-weapons/.

[384] This argument is made in greater detail by Payne (2005: 145-6).

crises, but this chapter shows that issues of usability of nuclear weapons may activate the same set of forces that constitute the nuclear taboo outside of the context of war or acute crisis. Members of the Bush administration took part in a decade-long project of critiquing post-Cold War US foreign policy—a critique that gave birth to their efforts to field new nuclear weapons. This effort had the ironic effect of activating the set of forces that had prevented previous presidents, as well as leadership in other states, from using nuclear weapons in battle. As their efforts went from planning documents to spending bills, the opposition became increasingly effective at framing the new weapons as weapons of warfighting as opposed to deterrence. The forces that opposed the new nuclear weapons programs had fifty or so years of discourse constituting the nuclear taboo on which to build. Echoing the late 1950's, fear of the widespread environmental and human consequences of radiation made its way into Congressional debates. The NPT and the US's responsibilities under that treaty provided an institutional reference point for opponents aiming to point out the hypocrisy of the US's potential new nuclear weapons. More recent history saw the US sign the INF Treaty, the START treaty, and the CTBT, all efforts which built on anti-nuclear discourse, and in the process powerfully rearticulated and extended that discourse into the George W. Bush era. When the efforts of the NIPP and PNAC were made into policy by the Bush administration, they confronted the prevailing discourse on nuclear weapons politics—one which contended that fewer nuclear weapons are better than more, new weapons are destabilizing, and in any case the use of nuclear weapons would be morally and ethically wrong. The Bush administration's plans for new nuclear weapons struggled mightily to overcome each of these pieces of the taboo discourse. The amalgamation of power and historical

contingency placed the onus of demonstrating the need for such new weapons squarely on the administration. Keith Payne and others spent the better part of 1998-2005 trying to convince the public that the nuclear arsenal that had deterred the Soviet Union for decades would an insufficient deterrent to the smaller, weaker, and mostly not-nuclear armed rogue states and terrorists that had taken the place of the USSR as the US's adversary. The argument that deterrence needed "enhancement" and that the US arsenal could not put at risk the things adversaries "valued" fell flat in public debate. The effort did not succeed, and the prevailing discourse which includes and constitutes the nuclear taboo was rearticulated, reaffirmed, and reborn in the 21st century.

# CHAPTER V

# CONCLUSION

This dissertation has endeavored to illuminate the social emergence of nuclear weapons policy in the US against the backdrop of an always-under-construction nuclear taboo. To accomplish this, the analysis has focused on discourse: the coherent sets of arguments, interpretations, images, and other artifacts that together constitute identity.[385] The identity of the US during the time of study emerged from the articulation of these discourses which produced a positive identity—who the country is; a negative identity—who the country is not (also who the enemy is); and an ethical identity—given the positive and negative identity, the set of moral or ethical imperatives or responsibilities that entail.[386] In this way discourses naturalize claims of knowledge and produce "common sense" among adherents. In the early 1950's for example, it had become an almost taken-for-granted "fact" that the Soviet Union had a lead in conventional weapons. This notion helped legitimize a nuclear arms buildup, and a continued program of nuclear testing—the linchpins of "massive retaliation" and the "new look."

As stated in the introduction, this approach helps deal with the overdetermined nature of foreign policy. Foreign policy certainly responds to the imperatives of international strategic environment, but it is also the product of various processes within the state. This approach contends that the best way to understand competing explanations, is to ask the actors themselves—or to examine the discourses that they articulated. This

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[385] Marianne Jørgensen & Louise Phillips. *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 3.

[386] Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War* (Routledge: New York, 2006), 6.

takes seriously the fact that events and decisions in the social world are multi-causal, and ask which "causes" mattered—how did the actors see the world, and to what did they respond as they made policy and extended the discourse? Asking these questions revealed the unique mix of factors that drove policy in each administration. For example, in the Reagan administration, the military buildup could be explained as the realization of the hawkish right's politics that helped elect Reagan with their pointed critiques of Carter. Such an analysis though would fail to include the role the president's own personality or subjectivity played in shaping the substance of policy. Reagan himself thought nuclear weapons should be abolished, considered nuclear deterrence to be immoral, and thought it beneath the human race.[387] His moral considerations played an important role in bringing forth the "Reagan reversal"; however it was also the source of his fascination and investment in missile defense—a destabilizing and expensive endeavor that undermined efforts at arms control.[388] The distinctive mix of motivations which would result in both an arms buildup and, later in the 1980's, arms control, is revealed by discourse analysis.[389] Ultimately, the complexity of implementing a foreign policy is condensed by the policymakers themselves into discourse. Examining the content of these discourses can help us understand contradictions, change, and idiosyncrasy—characteristics that permeate nuclear weapons politics—in a way that other methodologies miss.

[387] See Chapter III.

[388] Beth A. Fischer, *The Reagan Reversal: Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 1-5.

[389] It is certainly conceivable that the "distinctive mix" could have been revealed by another method, but discourse analysis is well-suited to address the questions under study in this dissertation.

**Hypotheses Revisited**

In the first chapter, three hypotheses were proposed. They are not "falsifiable hypotheses" in the positivist sense, but instead conjectures about the way nuclear weapons politics works, meant to guide and focus the inquiry. Still, the broad and general nature of the hypotheses stands in stark relief compared to the complexity of the actual policy process. As such, while this dissertation has uncovered a great deal of support for the hypotheses, it has also dwelled in that complexity and will acknowledge ambiguity. Support for the hypotheses then is not universal, though in moments where actors seemed to act contrary to these hypotheses, the analysis can help understand the content of their behavior. This section will consider each hypothesis in turn, reflecting on what can be learned from the evidence in each case.

***Hypothesis 1****: Elite policymakers make nuclear weapons policy in response to their perception of material consequences. Moral and ethical concerns are secondary.*

This hypothesis came from the observation that it is often new presidents that launch challenges to the nuclear taboo, and worried publics that restrain their efforts. The analysis here revealed mixed support; the Eisenhower and Reagan cases provide evidence in favor of this claim. In both cases, the new presidents and their administrations spent a great deal of time and effort before inauguration and in their first years cultivating a discourse which constructed the Soviet Union as radical threatening other, one that posed an existential threat to the US.[390] They both argued that in material terms, the US trailed the Soviets militarily in important and dangerous ways—an argument that made an arms buildup imperative for both presidents. However, both, in concurrence with the

[390] Hansen (2006: 6)

hypothesis above, had stated moral and ethical qualms—qualified though they were—about nuclear weapons and arms racing.

For Eisenhower, while he and Dulles openly complained about the constraints of the nuclear taboo, and sought to conventionalize nuclear weapons for use in the first Taiwan Strait crisis, they had also taken seriously at least some of the insights incorporated into nuclear discourse by Bernard Brodie.[391] He was unequivocal about the notion that nuclear war could not be won. While this has been a bedrock assumption of much anti-nuclear discourse since the 1940's, it is peculiar position for a person who oversaw the largest nuclear weapons buildup in history and seemed ready to fight a limited nuclear war with China. Nevertheless, Eisenhower refused to even consider plans to launch an attack the Soviet Union with nuclear weapons.[392] Eisenhower's legacy of nuclear buildup, but restraint in confronting the Soviet Union as well as his famous farewell address warning about the military industrial complex, betray both deep concern about perceived material conditions, but also a backdrop of moral concern that may have helped the president manage the hawkish voices in his administration.

Reagan adopted a similar outlook to Eisenhower on Soviet material capabilities and intentions. As in the 1950's, the discursive work to produce the Soviets as "other" produced an American identity with an ethical component that entailed a responsibility to build up militarily. In terms of nuclear weapons this meant new delivery systems like the MX missile, and the development of national missile defense—the Strategic Defense

[391] "Memorandum of Discussion at a Special Meeting of the National Security Council," March 31, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Korea, Vol. XV, 2: 827.

[392] "No. 61, Special Estimate," July 8, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Eastern Europe, VIII: 1196-1205. Also see Bowie and Immerman (1998: 126).

Initiative. Reagan's moral concerns about superpower politics during this time was driven by a deeply held notion that deterrence itself was immoral, and that SDI provided an avenue to escape. As with Eisenhower, Reagan's nuclear weapons policies were driven first by the notion that the Soviets were materially threatening, and second by moral misgivings about the condition of deterrence—which he thought was best answered by the implementation of SDI.

In the 21st century, the George W. Bush administration built foreign policy with the focus almost exclusively on material concerns. From their perspective, the material strategic environment had changed, rendering the US nuclear deterrent insufficient and potentially ineffective against the "new" threats. This conception of the world and the American identity with which it was constituted entailed an ethical responsibility to "enhance deterrence" with new types of nuclear weapons.[393] As before, investment flowed to missile defense, though in this case no evidence suggests that Bush's concerns were based in anything other than the material needs identified by the administration's favored discourse. Moral misgivings about nuclear arms and in opposition to Bush's plans were voiced almost exclusively by those outside of the administration—especially by members of Congress and the popular press.

The evidence for the first hypothesis is mixed. In all three case studies, nuclear weapons policy followed first the material demands raised by the administration's discourse and the identity they cultivated. But only in the Eisenhower and Reagan case did moral misgivings enter the discourse from the presidents themselves. In both of those

[393] See for example C. Paul Robinson, "Pursuing a New Nuclear Weapons Policy for the 21st Century," Sandia National Laboratories White Paper (March 22, 2001).

cases the presidents checked the most hawkish voices in their administrations with their own limits on what should be done with nuclear weapons. Neither thought a war between nuclear armed adversaries could be won, though they ironically would have disagreed about deterrence: Eisenhower enshrined nuclear deterrence as policy while Reagan sought to overturn what he considered an immoral practice. Bush by contrast seemed driven exclusively by material concerns, even while his efforts to field a new generation were stymied by the torch-bearers of the nuclear taboo who cited moral qualms about the new weapons throughout the debate.

***Hypothesis 2****: Building new, and more useable nuclear weapons, as well as threatening to use nuclear weapons in battle serves the organizational needs of the military-industrial complex.*

The evidence supports this hypothesis in all three cases. In the first case, Lewis Strauss as leader of the AEC for most of Eisenhower's tenure as president orchestrated a decade-long effort to distort and downplay the emerging threat posed by atmospheric nuclear tests. The AEC, the national laboratories, and military officials all vigorously supported the continued testing of nuclear weapons, and saw efforts such as "Atoms for Peace" and later "Project Plowshare" as primarily public relations projects. While they seemed to believe that peaceful uses of nuclear power existed, the priorities of this group were occasionally revealed. For example, the report from a 1957 symposium on nuclear explosions argued that "there is some kind of public relations problem here" and that Project Plowshare could help foster "a more rational viewpoint" on the part of the public, as well as "highlight the peaceful application of nuclear explosive devices and thereby

create a climate of world opinion that is more favorable to nuclear weapons."[394] The symposium, and its attendees (largely the AEC and national weapons laboratories) were clearly more interested in protecting their latitude to continue conducting nuclear tests, than with cultivating "peaceful" uses of the atom. When the US did implement a moratorium on nuclear testing in 1958, it came from Soviet prompting, and was opposed by the AEC and the nuclear weapons laboratories.[395] As such, the US finished the Hardtack II round of nuclear tests before beginning its participation in the moratorium beginning in October 1958.

Lobbying by the military-industrial complex of Reagan began in 1967 when Governor Reagan visited Lawrence Livermore Laboratory. There he would encounter Edward Teller, who would brief an interested Reagan on missile defense.[396] The conversation piqued the future president's interests and would be one on which he relied when asking questions at NORAD in 1979 as his presidential campaign kicked off.[397] The conversations also seemed to prime Reagan for additional lobbying from retired Army Lieutenant General Daniel Graham. Graham and others in the "Kitchen Cabinet" lobbied for a variety of competing types of missile defense systems, and were rewarded for their efforts when Reagan announced SDI, a central piece of the Reagan nuclear

[394] Tannenwald (2007: 180-1)

[395] Tannenwald (2007: 184)

[396] See Stephen Knott and Jeffrey L. Chidester. *At Reagan's Side: Insiders' Recollections from Sacramento to the White House* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 103; also see Paul Lettow, *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Random House Incorporated, 2005), 19.

[397] Frances FitzGerald. *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 101-2.

weapons politics legacy.[398] Missile defense provided Reagan a plausible way around what he considered the immoral condition of nuclear deterrence between the superpowers. The persistence, optimism, and stature of those pursuing their organizational goals by lobbying Reagan helped make them successful, and left the unmistakable mark of the military-industrial complex on the nuclear weapons politics of the era.

In the George W. Bush era, members of the military-industrial complex pushed hard for a new generation of nuclear weapons. While future members of the administration built a discursive foundation for the push for new nuclear weapons in think tanks like the NIPP and PNAC during the 1990's, once the efforts were introduced in the administration, it was clear that they would have support from the military and the national laboratories. Linton Brooks, as head of the NNSA, and C. Paul Robinson as director of Sandia National Laboratories both addressed Congress on the need for new, smaller, nuclear weapons that could "enhance deterrence" and would be more "useable."[399] Tellingly, as the debate made its way through Congress, proponents of the new weapons hailed from Congressional districts that were home to facilities that would benefit from the proposed investment. Pete Domenici (R-NM), Heather Wilson (R-NM), Zach Wamp (R-TN) and others argued in favor of the new weapons and even admitted that part of the motivation stemmed from their interest in employment in their home

[398] Greg Herken, "The Earthly Origins of Star Wars." *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* Vol. 53, No. 8 (October 1987): 21.

[399] For example see Linton Brooks, "Symposium on 'Post-Cold War U.S. Nuclear Strategy: A Search for Technical and Policy Common Ground.'" The National Academy of Sciences, Committee on International Security and Arms Control (August 11, 2004). Accessed May 15, 2018. http://sites.nationalacademies.org/cs/groups/pgasite/documents/webpage/pga_049750.pdf.

districts.[400] Evidence for the organizational basis of their support—as opposed to strategic basis—emerged as all three withdrew support from the new programs when they had secured other investments in the labs in their respective districts. It seems unlikely that if Congressional supporters of nuclear bunker-busters truly believed in the new weapons they would have been so easily bought off with spending on other projects.

The dawn of the nuclear era in the United States allowed particular agencies and organizations within the national security apparatus to benefit materially from continued investment in nuclear weapons and the infrastructure to design, build, maintain, and potentially deliver the weapons. This dissertation has shown that in the 1950's the AEC led the effort to clear away the constraints imposed by a public increasingly anxious about nuclear weapons. By the 1980's the nuclear taboo had deepened, but so too had the power and breadth of the nuclear weapons complex. When Reagan took office, he had already been briefed multiple times by civilian advocates of a nuclear weapons buildup at national laboratories, and, perhaps most importantly, on the plausibility of fielding a national missile defense system. In the 21st century, the national laboratories—led by C. Paul Robinson of Sandia and Linton Brooks of the NNSA—continued their determined construction of a discourse of the inadequacy of the US nuclear deterrent, and thus the necessity of new nuclear weapons. In each of these cases, agencies argued that the international strategic environment demanded their preferred course of action: continued

[400] See John Fleck, "Bunker Buster Busted in Bigger Nuke Budget," *Albuquerque Journal*, November 23, 2004; James Sterngold, "Putin's Arms Talk Sounds the Alarm/Russia suggests it is creating new types of weapons," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 17, 2003, accessed May 16, 2018, www.sfgate.com/news/article/Putin-s-arms-talk-sounds-the-alarm-Russia-2616307.php. For more examples see Jonathan Medalia "Water Power: Why Congress Zeroed 'Bunker Buster' Appropriations," *Comparative Strategy* 26 (2007): 241.

nuclear testing, military buildup and missile defense, or bunker-busting nuclear weapons. However, while their claims about the imperatives of the international system were always sources of intense public debate—the parochial material benefits to the broader nuclear weapons complex that would flow from carrying out these policies was never in question.

***Hypothesis 3****: The public finds nuclear weapons morally unacceptable and reflexively rejects their use.*

Support for this last hypothesis can be seen developing over the course of the case studies in this dissertation. During the Eisenhower era, the nuclear taboo was only emerging as a force to be reckoned with for policymakers. Early in the administration, norms against nuclear weapons use were strong enough to occupy much of Eisenhower and Dulles' time, but weak enough that the two believed that they could undo the Truman effort that created the categories of "conventional" and WMD. The failure of the administration to convince the public of the necessity of using "tactical" nuclear weapons in the Taiwan Strait in the spring of 1955 signaled a deepening of the nuclear taboo, and the galvanizing of public and world opinion against nuclear weapons. I showed how this process emerged in part from administration efforts at "Candor."[401] While Eisenhower wanted "Atoms for Peace" to provide a hopeful message, the speech tended to pile on to the anxiety about nuclear weapons among the public.[402] The public was unmoved by administration efforts to normalize the use of nuclear weapons during the Quemoy and

[401] "Note by the Executive Secretary to the National Security Council on Armaments and American Policy (NSC 151)", FRUS, 1952-1954, National Security Affairs, Volume II, Part 2, Document 88 (May 8, 1953: 1151-9).

[402] On the message of hope see, "Dwight D. Eisenhower to Bryce Harlow", December 3, 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, White House Office, NSC Staff Papers, Disaster File, box 12.

Matsu crisis in 1955. And by the late 1950's, a flood of scientific work justified public anxiety by showing that atmospheric testing posed a greater danger than had been reported by the AEC and Eisenhower himself. By 1960, books, comics, film, public intellectuals, and scientific consensus had built the discursive foundation for the nuclear taboo as it would exist into the 21st century.[403] The case study in this dissertation clarified that the interaction between the AEC and the public with regard to radiation and the danger of radioactive fallout provided content to the discourse, helping it go from visceral and instinctive rejections of nuclear war in the early 1950's, to a more refined discourse in the late 1950's that included: rejection of nuclear testing and the fallout it produced, a rejection of nuclear weapons for warfighting, and deep suspicion of the rapidly escalating nuclear arms race.

During the 1980's the nuclear taboo and its attendant discourses were activated again. This time, Randall Forsberg and other activists tapped and extended the powerful latent anti-nuclear discourse as they built the nuclear freeze movement in response to Reagan's military buildup. Forsberg's "Call to Halt the Nuclear Arms Race" hailed millions to support the nuclear freeze and resist administration efforts to expand the arms race.[404] The content of "Call" along with the tremendous support that it received were reflected in Reagan's own rhetoric. While Reagan subscribed to appraisals by hawkish Republicans that the US had fallen behind the Soviet Union in nuclear weapons, opening a "window of vulnerability," he had also once publicly advocated for the abolition of

[403] For more details on movies with nuclear themes from the 1950's and other eras see Paul Brians, *Nuclear Holocausts: Atomic War in Fiction, 1895-1984* (Kent State University Press, 1987).

[404] Randall Forsberg, "Call to Halt the Nuclear Arms Race," Brookline, MA: The Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies (April 1980).

nuclear weapons.[405] The nuclear freeze with its message and its support challenged Reagan, and he responded: by softening his rhetoric on nuclear war—noting that he did not believe a nuclear war could be won; by attacking the nuclear freeze as Soviet agents and others out to undermine US security; and finally by privately suggesting that arms control might have become a prudent political choice. While this research doesn't "prove" that arms control activists cultivating a contemporary anti-nuclear discourse "caused" Reagan's more arms control friendly demeanor in his second term, strong intertextual links between the efforts of Forsberg and others and Reagan's own softening rhetoric suggest that he was moved. The powerful discourse against Reagan's early policy-prescriptions would become foundational for actual policies such as the INF Treaty and the developing START treaty. As with Eisenhower, Reagan faced fierce resistance as he tried to convince the public of the wisdom of his proposed nuclear weapons policy. Instead it was the nuclear freeze movement, and its millions of supporters that would come to characterize the arc of nuclear weapons discourse during the Reagan administration.

When George W. Bush took office in January 2001, he did so with a team planning for the construction of a new generation of nuclear weapons. Those plans would never come to fruition, though, in part due to the depth and breadth of the nuclear taboo that the plans confronted. Instead of massive protests as in the early 1980's, the more recent confrontation took place overwhelmingly in Congress. There, a determined, persistent bipartisan opposition defeated the proposed mini-nuke and bunker-buster programs, and in the process exposed their shallow support. While the programs were

[405] Robert Scheer, *With Enough Shovels: Reagan, Bush, and Nuclear War* (1st ed.) (New York: Random House, 1982), 73.

touted in the Nuclear Posture Review and other official documents, supporters in Congress were more interested in the projects as a means to secure investment and jobs and their own districts than to address gaps in the US nuclear deterrent. Even more tellingly, when the opposition, led by Rep. David Hobson (R-OH) sat poised and ready to kill the new programs, proponents from the White House never spoke up.[406] David Hobson, Ellen Tauscher, Edward Kennedy, Diane Feinstein and others were able to so soundly defeat the proposed plans, that its staunchest backers were unwilling to keep fighting. As before, the success was built on a foundation of public support. While the Bush administration chose not to sign the CTBT, the public supported the treaty by a wide margin.[407] The new programs would have created smaller, and according to many analysts, more useable nuclear weapons—the public became even less enthusiastic about using nuclear weapons during this time. All told, more than three-fourths of the public rejected the use of nuclear weapons either ever or for anything but as a response to an adversary's nuclear attack. The administration's effort to redefine "deterrence" to include apply to non-nuclear actors, and to additionally require "enhancement" failed.[408] The existing discourses had no place for such a change, and as such Congressional leaders

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[406] David Hobson, "Remarks by Chairman David Hobson – House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development," National Academy of Sciences Committee on International Security and Arms Control, Symposium on "Post-Cold War US Nuclear Strategy: A Search for Technical and Policy Common Ground" (August 11, 2004).

[407] For the polling data referred to in this section see: Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 2004, *Global Views 2004: American Public Opinion and Foreign Policy, ICPSR Version*. Menlo Park, CA: Knowledge Networks, Inc. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research; and Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. *American Public Opinion and US Foreign Policy, 2002, ICPSR Version*. Rochester, NY: Harris Interactive, 2002. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2004.

[408] For a complete explanation of the administration's view of "enhancing deterrence", see Keith Payne, "The Nuclear Posture Review: Setting the Record Straight," *Washington Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (2005): 135-51.

were on firm ground with their own constituencies, the majority of which saw no need for new nuclear weapons.

**Why This Matters**

In the introduction I argued that this research is important because it takes seriously the nuclear taboo as a background condition for the construction of nuclear weapons politics; and because it applies discourse analysis to the problem of nuclear weapons politics—a methodological move that has the potential to manage the overdetermined nature of foreign policy problems by refocusing on the sets of words, rhetoric, arguments, images and other artifacts—the discourse—that constitute nuclear weapons politics. The more important motivation however, is so that we can understand contemporary dilemmas in US foreign policy in order to make better policy in the future, particularly when future presidents challenge the nuclear politics status quo and particularly the nuclear taboo.

In February 2018, the office of the Secretary of Defense released a new Nuclear Posture Review.[409] As with other statements of new nuclear weapons policy contributed by new presidents examined in this dissertation, the Trump NPR seeks to upend the nuclear weapons status quo and to challenge the nuclear taboo. The new document bears more than a passing resemblance to the 2001/2002 NPR—they were both written in large part by Keith Payne. As such, the new version tries to rehash much of the content of the 2001/2002 Nuclear Posture Review, especially the notion of an increasingly threatening international security environment that requires increased investment in a range of

[409] See U.S. Department of Defense, "Nuclear Posture Review," February 2018, accessed May 16, 2018, https://fas.org/wp-content/uploads/media/2018-Nuclear-Posture-Review.pdf.

nuclear capabilities. These capabilities include missile defense, new low-yield nuclear weapons, and integration of nuclear and non-nuclear forces.[410] The US nuclear arsenal is called upon to deter, not only nuclear threats, but also non-nuclear and cyber threats. The document emphasizes two concepts with regard to the new posture: "flexibility" and "tailored."[411] Both concepts are aimed at expanding the potential usage of nuclear weapons, and where necessary filling identified gaps in capabilities with new weapons like the submarine-launched cruise missile (SLCM).

Trump's new NPT reflects the president's own statements, as well as the 2001/2002 NPR's notion, that deterrence requires more. In the Bush era, Payne and others used the phrase "enhance deterrence" to convey their perception of the need to bolster its deterrent effect and the inadequacy of the current US arsenal. Trump himself remarked in the 2018 State of the Union Address that,

> We must modernize and rebuild our nuclear arsenal, hopefully never having to use it, but making it so strong and so powerful that it will deter any acts of aggression by any other nation or anyone else. Perhaps someday in the future, there will be a magical moment when the countries of the world will get together to eliminate their nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, we are not there yet, sadly.[412]

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[410] New nuclear options include the sea-launched cruise missile (SLCM) and the low-yield sea-launched ballistic missile (SLBM). According to the NPR, the SLBM is a response to Russian intermediate-range capabilities in violation of the INF Treaty, though critics argue that Russia is unlikely to moderate their capabilities in response to the new US weapon. The SLBM has been criticized as blurring the line between conventional and nuclear capabilities, and making "limited" nuclear war tempting. For more detail on these developments see the Federation of American Scientists, "2018 Nuclear Posture Review Resource" Online, updated February 6, 2018, https://fas.org/issues/nuclear-weapons/nuclear-posture-review/#1517582676588-d330650c-fc14.

[411] The NPR "uses the world 'flexible' 29 times, 'options' 40 times, 'tailored' 30 times and 'deterrence' a whopping 191 times to soften the grim destructive strategy it proposes." See Joseph Cirincione, "Nuclear Nuts: Trump's New Policy Hypes The Threat and Brings Us Closer to War," *Defense One* (February 2, 2018), accessed on May 16, 2018, https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2018/02/trumps-new-nuclear-policy-hypes-threat-and-bring-war-nearer/145703/.

[412] Donald J. Trump: "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," January 30, 2018. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project.* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=128921.

Trump, knowingly or not, builds on the discourse cultivated before and during the Bush era that saw the US nuclear deterrent as insufficient to accomplish the tasks for which they had in mind. In the Bush era, these tasks had expanded to include deterring the use of chemical and biological weapons, and terrorism. Trump's State of the Union is not specific, but it clearly indicates that he believes that a stronger nuclear arsenal will deter a wider set of potential threats. When paired with the NPR, it is clear that the administration means to add a low-yield SLBM and a SLCM because they believe that these weapons will deter nuclear threats, as well as non-nuclear and cyber threats.

As in the Bush case, this pro-nuclear discourse is having to contend with the status-quo, which includes the anti-nuclear discourse that supports the nuclear taboo. Critical work in the popular press and academic journals has roundly criticized the plans, arguing as before that these moves undermine security, weaken the US-led nonproliferation regime, and encourage arms racing. However, in the Bush case, resistance to building new nuclear weapons and effectively making nuclear weapons more usable manifested itself in four-plus years of debates in Congress—debates in which the GOP managed to pass research funding for RNEP in FY2003 and FY2004. In addition during the Obama administration, while the executive discourse helped conclude the New START, and a 2010 NPR which limited the scope of missions for the US nuclear arsenal, that administration was forced to work with Congress to pass a massive nuclear weapons modernization plan—a plan being extended by the newest NPR.[413]

[413] For more on the $1.2 trillion dollar, 30-year nuclear modernization plan that began under President Obama see, Kingston Reif, "US Nuclear Modernization Plans," Arms Control Association (March 2018), accessed on May 16, 2018, https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/USNuclearModernization.

History suggests that resistance to Trump will manifest itself in a variety of ways because of the prevailing discourse on nuclear weapons. As before, Tannenwald's "pathways" to the nuclear taboo are useful for thinking through the nuclear taboo's impact on Trump's nuclear weapons policy. First, domestic public opinion is already a problem. As of January 23, 60% of Americans do not trust that Trump will not use nuclear weapons.[414] Under Eisenhower and Reagan, popular opinion led directly to popular resistance with the proliferation of organizations opposing nuclear weapons and administration policies. Under Trump, we have already witnessed major public demonstrations for other causes including violence against women and gun control. These concurrent public demonstrations could either blind the public to the issue of nuclear weapons use, or contribute synergistically to the broader resistance to policies of an unpopular president.[415] With regard to world public opinion, the president has shown unwillingness to cooperate with foreign governments—even US allies, and is only emboldened by the nuclear weapons modernization of US rivals. Trump is also unlikely to be moved by his own personal convictions or those of others in his administration. His advisors have overwhelmingly become those with whom he already agrees, and, so far, few in his own party have challenged his stances on nuclear weapons policy. That said, on November 14, 2017, the Senate held a hearing to discuss wresting sole nuclear launch

[414] Cirincione (February 2, 2018)

[415] As Randall Forsberg argued, "Until the arms race stops, until we have a world with peace and justice, we will not go home and be quiet. We will go home and organize". This dissertation has shown that the anti-nuclear discourse is only maintained by "work" or continued rearticulation by subjects of the discourse. As such the effects of the nuclear taboo, and its associated discourse, only follow the coordinated efforts of people willing to publically mobilize against discourses that would add new nuclear weapons, exacerbate arms racing, and undermine the nonproliferation regime. The quote is from Forsberg's address to the nuclear freeze rally in Central Park, June 12, 1982. Quoted by Dennis Hevesi, "Randall Forsberg, 64, Nuclear Freeze Advocate, Dies," *New York Times*, October 26, 2007.

authority from the president.[416] While no legislation has emerged from that meeting, it does remind us that powerful members of Congress have played key roles in checking presidential nuclear ambitions in the past, as in the case of Bush and Rep. David Hobson.

In addition to constraints on Trump's nuclear ambitions imposed by domestic and world public opinion and the personal convictions of powerful individuals, the nuclear taboo may also constrain Trump through the pathways of iterated behavior, institutionalization, and historical contingency. The sum of these pathways to the nuclear taboo make it such that the Trump administration, as we saw in the Bush's challenge, will shoulder the burden of convincing others that the US nuclear posture needs adjustment. While the Obama administration did set the nuclear arsenal on a course of costly and destabilizing modernization, it also embraced arms control and saw a limited role for nuclear weapons in foreign policy. Trump can capitalize on modernization, which is already underway, but he will face an uphill battle as he tries to do away with and work around the nonproliferation regime.[417] More specifically, plans for a ground-launch cruise missile (GLCM) may violate the 1987 INF treaty—a response to accusations that Russia have already violated the treaty.[418] Trump campaigned on jettisoning the Joint

[416] Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Corker (R-TN) presided over the meeting, ostensibly in part because he has stated that Trump's threats could be "a path World War III." See Karoun Demirjian, "Trump's Nuclear Authority Divides Senators Alarmed by his 'Volatile' Behavior," *Washington Post*, November 14, 2017.

[417] The NPR, "makes no reductions in Obama's modernization plan. Instead, the NPR calls for new nuclear SLCM and a low-yield SLBM warhead. The NPR also seems to call for retention of the 1.2 megaton B83 nuclear bomb (which had been slated for retirement once the B61-12 enters service)". Federation of American Scientists Federation of American Scientists, "2018 Nuclear Posture Review Resource," accessed on February 6, 2018, https://fas.org/issues/nuclear-weapons/nuclear-posture-review/#1517582676588-d330650c-fc14.

[418] See Kingston Reif, "Trump Sets INF Response Strategy," *Arms Control Today*, Arms Control Association (January/February 2018), https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2018-01/news/trump-sets-inf-response-strategy; and "Hill Wants Development of Banned Bombs," *Arms Control Today*, Arms Control

Comprehensive Plan of Action, or Iran Nuclear Deal. And much of the NPR flies in the face of US obligations under the NPT to work toward disarmament. While each of these institutional sources might be overcome by an administration determined to implement a new nuclear weapons policy, each will pose political risks and provide opponents with a venue to challenge the president. Ultimately, Trump presents a greater challenge to the nuclear taboo than either Reagan or Bush, because, while the latter presidents promised new weapons which might be useable, they did not overtly threaten nuclear armed adversaries like North Korea as Trump has done.[419] The combination of new weapons and nuclear bluster together constitute the Trump challenge to the nuclear taboo and the anti-nuclear discourse on which it rests.

**So What Is Next?**

Opponents of the Trump nuclear plan can look to the nuclear taboo literature to understand the best ways to check the ambitions of the president. First, as Eisenhower and Dulles recognized by 1952, public opinion—be it domestic or world—is crucially important. Trump cannot hope to succeed in his agenda if public opinion remains against nuclear weapons and he remains unpopular. Second, Congress has role to play. If it is a powerful well-placed individual's anti-nuclear convictions that check Trump, there is a good chance that that person could come from the Congress as Hobson did during the Bush case, though there may also be opportunities for charismatic activists to take

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Association (December 2017), https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2017-12/news/hill-wants-development-banned-missile.

[419] On August 8, 2017, Trump told reporters, "North Korea best not make any more threats to the United States. They will be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen." See Peter Baker and Choe Sang-Hun, "Trump Threatens 'Fire and Fury' Against North Korea if It Endangers US," *New York Times*, August 8, 2017.

leadership roles as Forsberg did during the Reagan administration. Third, opponents should work on strengthening treaties, and reaffirming the importance of US obligations under those treaties. While Trump may be able to shake off such efforts, he should not be able to do so without stark consequences. Finally, historical contingency may yet support the nuclear taboo. Trump's scandals outside of nuclear politics, including alleged collusion with Russia, obstruction of justice, and a host of personal problems, may also be the historical contingencies that deny Trump the opportunity to carry out his nuclear policy agenda.

**Contributions and Future Research**

This dissertation has endeavored to show how a discourse analysis approach to the construction of nuclear weapons policy in the US could yield deeper insight into the social processes that affirms and reaffirm identity, and in the process produce policy. Three hypotheses guided the research and focused inquiry on the potential sources of nuclear weapons policy: the international strategic environment, domestic political institutions, powerful individuals, and international norms. Certainly policy was refracted by all of these sources—this research aimed to understand which sources mattered at what times, and how the content of policy emerged against a backdrop of political conflict.

The work presented here has several important implications for both students and practitioners of nuclear politics. For those trying to understand why nuclear weapons policy has looked as it does in the US or any other country, this work has provided a template of where to look. As one might guess, the highest executive officers in a state's security apparatus have a uniquely powerful role in forging nuclear weapons policy. In

that capacity, their personalities, conception of nuclear politics, and formative experience may contribute greatly to the policy they make. But, other actors matter greatly as well. Public opinion, world and domestic, matters a great deal, but what this work highlights is that the important question is how the public is mobilized (or not) to address nuclear weapons policy. Leaders and activists all would like for the broader public to support their position, but it is constructive to consider why Eisenhower and Dulles failed to mobilize public support to use nuclear weapons in the spring of 1955, while Randall Forsberg mobilized one of the largest movements in US history in the early 1980's. The cases show that in matters of nuclear weapons: changing, manipulating, or coercing public opinion is difficult, though mobilizing or leading existing public opinion into public action may be possible as Forsberg demonstrated. For anti-nuclear weapons activists this suggests that the problem is one of messaging. Public opinion can be used to stymie hawkish nuclear weapons plans if the public is mobilized by charismatic leadership and well-constructed and simple messaging. For political leadership, this work helps delineate the constraints imposed by public opinion. While Eisenhower and Dulles were unable to convince the public of the wisdom of using tactical nuclear weapons, they were able to use the AEC to confuse the radiation and nuclear fallout problem in the public mind enough to get away with nearly a decade's worth of nuclear tests and a tremendous buildup in the US nuclear arsenal. Reagan and Bush likewise had much of their nuclear ambitions stymied by a public backlash, but like Eisenhower, were able to push through pieces of their plans. In particular, Reagan and Bush found that the public was unable to mobilize against missile defense effectively, even though such programs

are destabilizing and undermine nonproliferation efforts.[420] These arguments, though, are more difficult to make as they are not self-evident, and no public movement has been able to stop three decades of investment in missile defense.

Future research would do well to increase the depth and breadth of this work. With regard to depth, more work should be done to understand the ways in which popular culture shapes public perception and thus public (in)action on nuclear matters. For example, while this work noted the role B-movies released in the 1950's had in stoking public anxiety about all things nuclear, more in-depth work should be done to understand the link between popular media and perceptions of nuclear weapons and their uses. Such work would build on a broader definition of discourse that includes images, books, music and movies. An appraisal of the role of these various media in cultivating nuclear weapons policy discourse and ultimately affecting policy over time would bolster our understanding of the process of nuclear weapons policy construction.

In addition, more cases are needed. While the cases here were selected for the ways in which they illustrate the processes under study, limits on time and space prevented considering other interesting cases such as the Kennedy administration and the Nixon administration, and providing a full account of the Trump administration. But even more important, this work should be assessed with regard to the nuclear weapons politics of other nuclear-armed states. While the US case is certainly unique in many ways, a comparative study would be useful for understanding how these dynamics have functioned, or not, in other states.

[420] For a more complete discussion of the critiques of a US national missile defense system see Philip Gordon, "Bush, Missile Defence, and the Atlantic Alliance," *Survival* Vol. 43, No. 1 (Spring 2001): 17-36.

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