5

Subtraction by Addition

The Nixon Administration and the Domestic Politics of Arms Control

Henry R. Maar III

The 1968 presidential election came at one of the most tumultuous times in American history. In 1968 alone, the war in Vietnam claimed the lives of nearly 15,000 soldiers while another 30,000 young men received draft notices every month. The war highlighted the racial and financial disparities that existed in society, as a disproportionate number of poor and black individuals were both drafted and killed. In the streets of Chicago, outrage over the war sparked a police riot during the 1968 Democratic National Convention. As this and other riots sapped the already divided antiwar movement of energy, the presidential race of 1968 lurched forward.

With growing opposition to the war, both major candidates in 1968 were forced to address questions about de-escalation and exit from Vietnam. Vice president and Democratic Party presidential nominee Hubert Humphrey told antiwar crowds that the United States could begin withdrawing from Vietnam toward the end of 1968. Within twenty-four hours, however, both Secretary of State Dean Rusk and President Lyndon Johnson repudiated Humphrey's remarks. Republican nominee Richard Nixon promised an "honorable end to the war in Vietnam." The statement was deliberately vague. In reality, Nixon surreptitiously relayed a message that a better peace deal could be obtained under his administra-

tion. With the subsequent collapse of the Paris Peace Accords, the Humphrey campaign was denied the chance to end the war, and the fighting in Vietnam raged on. Although Nixon won the Electoral College vote by a wide margin, he squeaked out victory in the popular vote by less than 1 percent. Nixon would inherit the disastrous war in Vietnam, and with it, a society more divided than at any point since the Civil War a century earlier.[1]

As the incoming Nixon administration searched for both a solution to the Vietnam quagmire and a respite from the war and domestic unrest, the administration embraced détente: the lessening of tensions with the Soviet Union. At its core, détente offered a "mechanism for domestic fortification," as historian Jeremi Suri explains. Détente offered the illusion of a de-escalated Cold War and of an arms race that was under control. Arms control agreements such as the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty and the Antiballistic Missile Treaty appeared to place limits on nuclear weapons while surrounding arms control in a haze of acronyms and technical jargon.[2]

This essay demonstrates the links between arms control summitry, national security, and domestic politics during the Nixon administration from 1968 to 1974. I argue here that in spite of the pageantry of superpower summit meetings and arms control treaties, the Nixon administration was more concerned with domestic politics than with the arms race. The Nixon administration used these displays to rally public opinion around an embattled administration, suppress peace activism, and create the illusion of a de-escalating Cold War. As a result of its insincere arms control diplomacy, the Nixon administration set the foreground for the arms race of the 1980s.

Vietnam, Arms Control, and the Nixon-Kissinger Grand Design

On the campaign trail in 1968 Nixon pledged that, if elected, he would seek "meaningful arms control agreements," adding that a "dampening of the arms race would provide both resources and time" to address "pressing domestic problems" such as the "age-old problems of hunger, disease and poverty." At the top of the agenda for the Nixon administration, however, was not arms control or these "age-old problems" but extraction

from Vietnam. A quick withdrawal would have meant admitting defeat, and Nixon feared being the first president to both lose a war and preside over America's loss of prestige and credibility throughout the world. To ameliorate these concerns, he would pursue a "grand design." As part of this plan, the president rationalized that the phased withdrawal of troops from Vietnam, the end of the draft, and a renewed emphasis on arms control could undercut antiwar fervor and strengthen his political standing. Thus, to extricate the United States from the Vietnam morass, to exploit the recent split in the communist bloc between China and the Soviet Union, and to co-opt the antiwar sentiment, Nixon pursued détente.[3]

To help navigate the rapids of foreign policy, Nixon would rely on his national security adviser, Dr. Henry Kissinger. The head of Harvard's International Seminar and Defense Studies programs, Kissinger was widely regarded as a specialist in defense and European affairs and was an occasional consultant for several government agencies. Nixon and Kissinger, however, were not close allies. It was, as Suri writes, "a marriage of convenience, filled with all the suspicion, hostility, and jealousy that accompanies these dysfunctional alliances."[4]

With Kissinger, Nixon would run White House foreign policy as it pertained to the Soviet Union; all other major positions relevant to foreign policy would be filled with yes-men or those with little experience in the realm of diplomacy. For secretary of state, Nixon nominated William Rogers, the former attorney general from the Eisenhower administration. Rogers, a well-connected Republican lawyer, knew little about foreign relations, making him unlikely to interfere in Nixon and Kissinger's deliberations. Likewise, to lead the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), Nixon appointed Gerard C. Smith. Although Smith had been a special assistant for atomic affairs to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles during the Eisenhower administration, he was appointed to ACDA not because of his knowledge of nuclear weapons but because of his ability to get along with the military. Thus, as Raymond Garthoff observes, Nixon and Kissinger considered Smith "safe and malleable."[5]

When it came to arms control, neither Nixon nor Kissinger thought it was worth pursuing as an end on its own. Although China had recently developed—and tested—a nuclear weapon, and although the growth of the Soviet arsenal placed it nearly on a par with US weaponry, Nixon and Kissinger remained unconcerned about nuclear proliferation. Indeed,

while publicly championing the 1969 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, Nixon and Kissinger privately resented it and deliberately made "no efforts" to enforce it. The treaty, like détente itself, was merely a way to placate domestic critics.[6]

A Marriage Forged in Hell: ABMs and MIRVs

Despite Nixon and Kissinger's indifference to arms control, the issue was forced on them as new advances in missile technology had the potential to send the arms race spiraling upward. Multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles, or MIRVs, were the culmination of a decade of enhancements in missile technology. A MIRVed missile allowed multiple miniature warheads on a single missile, with each warhead capable of being both fired separately and aimed at different targets. This technology created several advantages for the United States, including the potential for a first strike. In the event of a nuclear exchange in which the United States launched its missiles first and targeted Soviet missile silos, a first strike could destroy much of the Soviet arsenal and thus limit or entirely negate a retaliation strike.

Proponents of MIRV argued for its necessity to counter another emerging controversial technology: the antiballistic missile (ABM) defense system. Since the *Sputnik* shock of 1957, the United States had been working simultaneously on miniaturizing warheads (culminating in MIRVs) and developing ABM systems. While the US Air Force was at the forefront of MIRV technology, the US Army took the lead on ABMs, experimenting with the Nike antiaircraft missiles in an effort to intercept and destroy incoming warheads. These experiments resulted in the Nike-Zeus ABM prototype by the early 1960s. But in early 1963 Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara canceled the Nike-Zeus ABM, concluding it would be both expensive and incapable of defending against a Soviet threat by the end of the decade.

ABM proponents, however, did not give up. One year later the Soviet Union deployed an ABM system around Moscow, and China tested its first nuclear weapon. Soon the Joint Chiefs of Staff were pressuring McNamara for a new ABM system, the Nike-X. The Nike-X would feature a new generation of advanced radars and computers to track incoming warheads. It also featured two new missiles: a large one dubbed Spartan and

a smaller one called Sprint. In theory, the Spartan missiles would be used to intercept warheads before they reentered the earth's atmosphere; any warheads not destroyed by the Spartan missiles would then be destroyed at the last minute by the Sprints. But McNamara canceled the Nike-X as well, once again citing the expense of such a system and its inability to guarantee safety from an attack.[7]

To reconcile defense pressures and the limits of ABM technology, the Johnson administration opted for a compromise: a small deployment that could theoretically prevent an attack from a smaller nuclear arsenal (like China's), with the eventual capability of stopping a larger attack. In 1967, under pressure from Congress, McNamara reluctantly announced plans to deploy the Sentinel ABM system. The Sentinel was a scaled-down ABM based on the concept of Nike-X but consisting of only fifteen to twenty nuclear missiles in ten different locations.[8]

Although ABM systems had strong support in 1967, the political climate had changed by the time Nixon and Kissinger inherited the issue. Amid antiwar fervor, growing distrust of government, and concerns over defense spending, ABMs were in the crosshairs of Congress and were tied to opposition to the Vietnam War in the public realm. Opponents consisted of a diverse coalition of scientists, arms control advocates, peace activists, religious groups, and liberal political organizations. Anti-ABM forces lobbied Congress and informed the public about the issue, which was often perceived as too technical for the common man. Scientists lobbied against ABM systems, testified against them before Congress, conducted private briefings with senators, and mobilized grassroots opposition to ABM deployment with nonprofit organizations. Many of these scientists argued that an expanded ABM program would escalate the arms race. Furthermore, from a practical standpoint, they insisted that ABM systems simply did not work and never would.[9]

As Sentinel ABM construction went forward, public apathy turned into "massive public outcry" and "fear of 'bombs in the backyard,'" as Thomas Halstead reflected in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists.* The development of a Sentinel site within a mile of downtown Seattle outraged residents. Anti-ABM forces there found an unlikely ally in Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson, a Democrat from Washington State and an advocate of ABM systems. Under pressure from constituents, and with his own reelection campaign just over the horizon, Jackson helped persuade

the army to move the Sentinel site from Fort Lawton (which the army promised the city it could use as a park) to Bainbridge Island across Puget Sound. But anti-ABM forces found another unexpected ally in hawkish Congressman Thomas Pelly (R-WA), whose district included Bainbridge Island. Pelly pressured the army to hold hearings on relocating the proposed Sentinel development site outside Washington altogether.[10]

Opposition to ABMs was also fomenting in Chicago. As the army was studying five potential Sentinel sites within the Chicago metropolitan region, five scientists from the Argonne National Laboratory formed the West Suburban Concerned Scientists to rally opposition. The scientists feared that an accident involving the system could devastate the entire region; furthermore, the Chicago metropolitan area would be a prime target in the event of a nuclear exchange. The army, however, chose to ignore public opinion and announced in December 1968 the deployment of Sentinel ABMs in the Chicago suburb of Libertyville. Within a week, local communities began to organize against the deployment of the Sentinels. A letter to the editor of the *Chicago Tribune* described the basing of a missile site in a Chicago suburb as "sickening" and asked, "Can we people of America do nothing to prevent the army from making decisions without regard for the average citizen?" In January 1969 the Northern Illinois Citizens against Anti-Ballistic Missiles filed a lawsuit in federal court seeking to block construction of the Sentinel site. Shortly thereafter, anti-ABM rallies were held, and more Chicago neighborhoods passed resolutions opposing the Sentinel.[11]

But, as historian Ernest Yanarella observes, grassroots organizing against the Sentinel was "perhaps most formidable and well organized" in Boston. In the surrounding communities of North Andover and Reading, the US Army had already started constructing Sentinel sites. The New England Citizens Committee on ABM was quickly formed to "oppose the deployment of the Sentinel system, and in particular its location in the greater Boston area." In the Reading High School auditorium, a public hearing on Sentinel construction "turned out to be less a staid public information event than an angry confrontation between fifteen hundred citizens and scientists and a handful of Army public relations specialists," writes historian Kelly Moore. For the army, the meeting was nothing short of "a public relations disaster."[12]

ABM opposition was not limited to Seattle, Chicago, and Boston; it

was front-page news in Los Angeles, Denver, Detroit, and Honolulu as well. In communities across the nation, the army faced fierce opposition from residents who challenged the construction of Sentinel sites. "In order to pull the teeth of public criticism," Kissinger reflected, Nixon asked his deputy secretary of defense, David Packard, to chair an interagency review of the ABM program. Three days later, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird ordered a halt to the Sentinel program, before completion of the review scheduled for the end of February.[13]

In the meantime, prominent Democratic senators attacked the Sentinel program. Massachusetts senator Edward Kennedy charged that the Nixon administration was only using the ABM review "to mollify critics." Former Minnesota senator Hubert Humphrey urged a halt to ABM deployment and proposed that the administration "begin as expeditiously as possible negotiation with the Soviet Union on the possible reduction of offensive and defensive strategic systems." Senator Albert Gore Sr.'s disarmament subcommittee heard testimony almost exclusively from opponents of the ABM. Congressional pressure to stop the ABM program was mounting.[14]

On March 14, 1969, Nixon announced that, after a "long study of all the options," his administration was going forward with a new ABM system: Safeguard. Unlike Sentinel, Safeguard would not be deployed near metropolitan communities; it would be located on twelve intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) sites, and the weapons would be protected with a "thick" defense that could withstand even a Soviet attack. Unannounced to the public, the Nixon administration was supporting an ABM system as a bargaining chip in the forthcoming arms control talks with the Soviets. Safeguard was also a way of co-opting anti-ABM sentiment. By moving ABMs to missile fields and away from the public, the administration could subvert the driving force behind domestic opposition to ABM construction.[15]

But the great ABM debate did not go away. With congressional opposition mounting against the Safeguard system, its proponents countered with their own lobbying organizations, the most prominent of which was the Committee to Maintain a Prudent Defense Policy. Though small, the committee had some big names from the Democratic Party establishment behind it. It was co-organized by Dean Acheson, Truman's secretary of state, and Paul Nitze, an illustrious diplomat who authored National

Security Council Report 68, which shaped America's containment strategy throughout the Cold War until the Nixon administration's embrace of détente. The committee also relied on the services of the lesser known Albert Wohlstetter, whose 1958 RAND study "The Delicate Balance of Terror" had sounded the alarm that the doctrine of mutual assured destruction was not enough to prevent nuclear war. Three of Wohlstetter's graduate students—Peter Wilson, Paul Wolfowitz, and Richard Perle—as well as Edward Luttwak, a classmate of Perle's at the London School of Economics, also worked with the committee. These men quickly became the primary advocates for Nixon's Safeguard ABM.[16]

When the Safeguard issue went to the Senate, it found its most ardent champion in Henry Jackson. Jackson had served in the Senate since 1953 and in the House of Representatives for twelve years prior to that. Although Jackson had a strong record on civil rights and labor, he was a hawk on foreign policy, earning him the nickname "the senator from Boeing." Even though Jackson had assisted anti-ABM efforts in Seattle, he still firmly believed in mutual assured destruction and viewed ABMs as a measure of security for the United States. Jackson distrusted the Soviet Union and saw the Cold War as a conflict in which the United States must prevail. Safeguard, Jackson believed, could pressure the Soviet Union into matching the United States in an arms race, leading to the bankrupting and eventual collapse of the Soviet system.[17]

The young graduate students Perle and Wolfowitz worked closely with Jackson on the ABM debate. Perle served directly on Jackson's staff, and Wolfowitz helped create charts demonstrating Soviet strength, which Jackson used to counter opposition in the Senate. Jackson had an aura surrounding him. As Wolfowitz recounted, when Jackson spoke on defense issues, it was "with such authority that . . . few members of the Senate were comfortable challenging him." Jackson understood how to apply the right amount of pressure on his colleagues and, equally important, when to apply such pressure. As a result of Jackson's efforts, Safeguard passed the Senate by one vote.[18]

In the shadow of the ABM quarrels, however, advances in MIRV technology continued apace. With the public and Congress focused on ABM systems, MIRVs quietly changed the dynamics of the entire arms race. *New York Times* journalist Robert Kleiman warned repeatedly that MIRVs were creating an arms race "far more difficult to control than the

race in missile defenses which the U.S. has been trying to head off." Following Kleiman's lead, the *New York Times* editorialized in favor of delaying MIRV tests, prognosticating a foreboding future in the "MIRV era." Editorials against MIRV tests soon appeared in the *Washington Post,* the *Wall Street Journal,* and several other major national newspapers.[19]

The MIRV tests, however, went forward, leaving the *Times* to editorialize that "future generations" would "undoubtedly . . . look back with disbelief at the way the United States again has invented, publicized and tested a deadly new weapon, which, instead of improving American security, creates an added threat to it by putting the Soviet Union under pressure to produce the same weapon and aim it at the United States." In the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists,* David Ingles lamented that MIRVs were altering the course of the arms race from one that was tapering off to one that was spiraling "madly upward."[20]

The controversy over ABM and MIRV technology would plague the first year of the Nixon administration. According to historian Gregg Herken, because President Nixon was "notoriously uninterested in the technical details of arms control and modern weaponry," decisions about MIRV technology were made by national security adviser Kissinger. Although Kissinger wrote an influential book in 1957 entitled *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy,* he knew "little about the complex technical issues of negotiating and verifying a nuclear arms ban," writes Seymour Hersh. Paul Nitze was highly critical of Kissinger's book and later said he hoped Kissinger was "listening to advisors more knowledgeable."[21]

To augment his own knowledge of nuclear weapons, Kissinger appointed a team composed of members of the President's Science Advisory Council headed by Paul Doty. A biochemist by training, Doty had carved out a second career as an expert on nuclear affairs dating back to his involvement with the Manhattan Project as a graduate student. In the Nixon administration, Doty headed what was informally called the "Doty group." Members of the group had regular meetings with Kissinger and made the implications of MIRV technology and arms control their primary concern.[22]

The development of MIRVs also faced internal opposition from ACDA and its director, Gerard Smith. As the second director in ACDA's history, Smith had inherited an agency that was "under funded, under staffed, and under represented in the Washington bureaucracy." A former

aide of Smith's told Seymour Hersh that Nixon and Kissinger "probably figured ACDA was a throw-away job," and "they thought [Smith would] be easily managed." But Smith soon began to exert his independence, urging President Nixon to drop the demands for linkage and open arms control talks with the Soviets. In a June 1969 letter to Secretary of State Rogers, Smith pressed for a ban on MIRVs, arguing, "in the long run it is not in U.S. interests to see MIRVs enter U.S. and Soviet arsenals. Certainly it will bring increased instability." Nixon quickly became very distrustful of Smith.[23]

With the announcement of the opening of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT), public opposition to MIRV technology reached its zenith. In a letter to the editor of the *New York Times,* Jay Orear, a professor of physics from Cornell, expressed the fear that unless the arms race was frozen, the world would lose its "best and perhaps last chance to halt a very dangerous and expensive arms race based on new technology." H. Stuart Hughes, chairman of the leading antinuclear organization SANE, wrote to Nixon and implored him to start negotiations with the Soviets to "reverse the arms race at a point when it threatens to multiply—perhaps beyond control—the number of deliverable warheads possessed by the United States and the Soviet Union." SANE urged both sides to agree to a bilateral moratorium "to prevent a calamitous escalation of the arms race."[24]

Political opposition was mounting, too. From the standpoint of SANE, the Senate was the "last line of defense against the Nixon Administration's plan to deploy MIRV's and expand the ABM system." SANE would find its anti-MIRV champion in Senator Edward Brooke (R-MA), the first African American popularly elected to the Senate. Brooke was a leading opponent of the Safeguard ABM system but became even more outspoken against MIRVs. He was convinced that the United States "should take the lead in proposing a halt to the arms race," for absent such a halt, "new technology would propel the arms race to new and infinite danger." In May 1969 Brooke appealed to Kissinger, warning that if MIRV tests went forward, "the genie would be out of the bottle."[25]

When the tests continued, Brooke, with bipartisan support from thirty-nine other senators, sponsored a resolution calling for a moratorium on future MIRV tests. But because some senators feared that a MIRV debate would divert attention from the ABM debate, the resolu-

tion sat in Senator Gore's subcommittee for months. Brooke pressed on. In October 1969 he called for a complete missile test ban, warning that MIRVs threatened "to erode one of the basic barriers to nuclear war"—the doctrine of mutual assured destruction—thus increasing the chances of a nuclear catastrophe.[26]

In March 1970, in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Secretary of the Air Force Robert Seamans accidentally announced that US nuclear forces would be MIRVed in June (his prepared testimony had apparently "slipped through" the Pentagon). Shortly thereafter, Brooke's resolution from the previous fall was finally picked up and adopted by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, with broadened language to "urge a mutual suspension of deployment of all strategic weapons, offensive and defensive." Brooke seemed pleased by the changes, noting that the new language "offers clear support for a concerted effort to head off deployment of MIRV and other new strategic weapons." The resolution passed the Senate in April by a wide margin.[27]

Brooke continued to seek restraints on MIRV missiles. In August 1970 he introduced two amendments to a military procurement bill. The first asked the Pentagon to develop only a single warhead for the Minuteman III and Poseidon missiles to ensure that if MIRVs were banned during the SALT negotiations, it would not result in a "de facto reduction in U.S. strategic forces." The second amendment sought to limit the accuracy of MIRV warheads and, therefore, prohibit them from becoming potential first-strike weapons. Brooke's first amendment was adopted by a voice vote, but he withdrew the second amendment after failing to garner enough support. Although the Senate did not prohibit the accuracy of future MIRV warheads, it was now formally on the record as supporting a moratorium on MIRVs and ABM systems.[28]

Internally, the Doty group too expressed considerable opposition to the rush to develop MIRV missiles. In a memo dated June 2, 1969, Doty group members Jack Ruina and George Rathjens warned Kissinger that the strategic balance was in jeopardy primarily due to "MIRV development by the United States and possible MIRV development by the Soviet Union," bringing the arms race to the "point of no return." If the testing of MIRVs continued for even a few more weeks, they warned, "the United States might develop the weapon's accuracy to such a point that the Soviet Union could see it as a first-strike weapon." If the United States were

capable of creating first-strike weapons, so was the Soviet Union, Ruina and Rathjens explained. If this happened, it would leave the United States "in the position of having its Minuteman land-based force—spread across the Western plains—under threat of an accurate Soviet MIRV attack."[29]

Despite opposition in the Senate and in the press, as well the Doty group's attempts to sway Kissinger against MIRVs, the system survived. The Nixon administration, like its predecessor, did not see MIRVs as an impediment to arms limitation talks. While the Doty group was never formally dissolved, it "simply faded out of existence," according to historian Ted Greenwood, and members believed that Kissinger had simply used them to "impart a false aura over the administration's deliberations on the ABM and MIRV." Although some officials in the State Department were eager for a showdown over MIRV, Secretary of State Rogers was not, believing that this was an issue for the Department of Defense, not State. ACDA too opposed the testing of MIRVs, although it shied away from a fight with the military. MIRV opponents were left hoping for a miracle—that the Soviets would press for a ban at the forthcoming SALT negotiations.[30]

The Illusion of Arms Control: SALT I

Negotiations finally commenced in Helsinki, Finland, in November 1969. From the outset, however, there were serious conflicts between Nixon's view of the talks and the negotiating team's view of them. Whereas the negotiating team did not want to link the talks to any outside proposals, Nixon emphatically wanted a linkage with other issues such as Vietnam. ACDA head Gerard Smith had been appointed chief negotiator, but Nixon pleaded with Paul Nitze to take a position on the SALT team and report any adverse developments directly to him. Nitze, however, agreed to join the SALT delegation only "as a member of Gerry Smith's team and not as someone reporting to someone else."[31]

With Nitze refusing to serve as Nixon's liaison on SALT, the administration had to find alternative means to maintain control over foreign policy and the arms control negotiations. Kissinger established a Verification Panel early in the SALT negotiations wherein senior diplomats representing the State Department, ACDA, Defense Department, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and attorney general met to discuss the issues surrounding treaty

verification. Under Kissinger's control, however, the panel soon turned into the only senior-level body with an understanding of the SALT negotiations outside of the White House's National Security Council.[32]

Paralleling the establishment of the Verification Panel, President Nixon initiated back-channel negotiations with Soviet prime minister Alexei Kosygin, supplemented by secret meetings between Kissinger and Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin. These secretive measures cut both Secretary of State Rogers and the SALT bargaining team out of high-level verification discussions. Instead of relying on more competent American translators, Nixon relied on Soviet translators, eliminating the possibility that an American translator's notes could be shared with the other delegates. Less precise notes of discussions were taken by Kissinger's staff, but even these were not shared outside the White House. The result of this secrecy was the absence of any precise record of these high-level conversations, and as Nitze explained, both the SALT delegation and the Nixon White House were deprived of the expertise that could "fine-comb the relevant detail[s]."[33]

The SALT I negotiations consumed most of Nixon's first term in office. The two delegations quarreled over the classification of weapons, over language, and whether an agreement would include both offensive weapons (ICBMs) and defensive weapons (ABMs). By December 1970, after what the US delegation viewed as major concessions on its part, the talks appeared to be deadlocked, with the next meeting not scheduled until March 1971. But by then, an agreement was already being hammered out in private. In January 1971 Nixon and Kissinger seized the opportunity to jump in and "rescue" SALT. In secret back-channel negotiations between Kissinger and Dobrynin, Kissinger made it clear that Nixon was willing to settle for an ABM agreement, provided the negotiating teams continue to work on offensive limitations and a weapons freeze until a formal agreement could be reached. If Dobrynin agreed to these basics, Kissinger proposed that the two sides exchange letters, leaving the negotiators in Vienna to implement the deal.[34]

Although the Soviets proposed a limited ABM deployment around both Washington, DC, and Moscow, Nixon feared an ABM-only agreement would never pass Congress. A frustrated Nixon instructed Kissinger, "Just make any kind of damn deal. You know it doesn't make a god damn bit of difference. We're going to settle it anyway. Just drive the

hardest deal you can." When Kissinger suggested that the administration might have to concede on a capital deployment, Nixon asked, "What about Scoop Jackson?" Kissinger bluntly replied, "He's only a Senator."[35]

As the negotiations resumed in Vienna, a *New York Times* editorial publicly criticized the Nixon administration, calling its strategy of seeking both an offensive weapons freeze and an ABM agreement "obstinate." Unconcerned, Nixon told Kissinger the real problem was that he doubted this "SALT thing" was "going to be that important." "I think it's basically what I'm placating the critics with," Nixon privately confessed. Far more important to Nixon than the substance of the agreement was the political theater of a summit meeting in Moscow—the first since Franklin D. Roosevelt had met with Joseph Stalin and Winston Churchill at Yalta during World War II. As Kissinger explained to Nixon, "The advantage of a summit, even if it gets a sort-of half-baked SALT agreement . . . [is] it would defuse people. They can't very well attack their President when he's getting ready for a summit meeting. . . . And that would get us a few months of . . . quiet around here."[36]

For Nixon, domestic politics was always at the forefront when it came to the SALT negotiations. In his private recordings, Nixon confided that the agreement "wasn't worth a damn" and called the negotiations "a bunch of shit." But with the pending Vietnam Veterans against the War rally producing headlines, Nixon confessed, "We could use something like this at this time."[37] American audiences would be susceptible to any agreement, he explained to Kissinger, "because the American people are so peace-loving, they think agreements solve everything." Therefore, if the administration could get an agreement for "political reasons" and carry the "peace issue" in 1972, it could "survive" the election and thereafter "lay the facts out before the American people and go all out . . . on defense."[38]

For these reasons, Nixon privately told deputy national security adviser Al Haig and presidential assistant Bob Haldeman that the SALT agreement was "the most important goddamn thing. It's more important than whether we have eternal aid to Vietnam, or combat troops, or anything else." Nixon's real worry was not the terms of the agreement but the timing. If he announced a SALT agreement at the wrong time, he would "confuse the hell" out of the American people, who viewed SALT as "not . . . directly related enough to Vietnam." But if he could secure a sum-

mit, it "would be enough," Nixon explained, because "people would think at the summit, you might talk about Vietnam." Haldeman responded, "A summit—a summit—people understand a summit. . . . People don't understand SALT." Nixon concurred, saying, "SALT is way over their heads. They haven't the slightest idea what SALT is. It's too goddamned complicated."[39]

Privately, Nixon and Kissinger worried that the Soviets would only agree to an ABM treaty, which would not pass the Senate. If the treaty failed in Congress, SALT was "dead. Absolutely dead," Nixon told Kissinger. Although the Soviets had been "tough customers," Kissinger was confident that a deal could be had, even threatening to cut off back-channel negotiations with Ambassador Dobrynin if they couldn't "settle a simple matter like a SALT exchange of letters."[40]

On May 20, 1971, President Nixon announced a "breakthrough" in the talks. Through negotiations conducted at the highest level, the two sides had reached an agreement to limit ABM systems, as well as "certain measures with respect to the limitation of offensive weapons." The announcement received near unanimous praise from both Congress and the public. Even SANE expressed cautious optimism about the pending agreement.[41] The use of private back channels to conduct negotiations led to problems, however. Lead SALT negotiator Smith and Secretary of State Rogers had been kept in the dark about the agreement until the day before the announced "breakthrough." This secrecy and lack of oversight resulted in Kissinger's agreeing to a freeze on ICBMs but not on submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). Since the United States was not in a position to create new SLBMs, the Soviets were free to continue to build them during the five-year Interim Agreement—amounting to a major unilateral concession. This concession, along with questions over how to define a "heavy" missile, had to be worked out by the bargaining teams and would delay the onset of an agreement.[42]

On May 26, 1972, Nixon signed the Interim Agreement (SALT I) and the ABM Treaty in Moscow. The ABM Treaty limited both the United States and the Soviet Union to just two ABM deployments—one around the capital and the other to protect a missile field. In effect, the ABM Treaty prohibited the expansion of ABM systems on both sides. Unlike the ABM Treaty, however, SALT I was an agreement of finite duration. The five-year Interim Agreement froze US ICBMs at 1,054 and

Soviet ICBMs at 1,618. Under the agreement, the United States would be limited to 44 nuclear submarines and 710 SLBMs, while the Soviets were limited to 62 nuclear submarines and 950 SLBMs.[43]

On the surface, SALT I appeared to give the Soviets a major advantage in the arms race, providing them a quantitative edge in terms of both ICBMs and SLBMs. But as historian Anne Cahn explains, to obtain the numbers agreed to under SALT I, the Soviets were required to "deactivate 210 old, pre-1964 ballistic missiles, and the United States 54." The SALT I agreement also permitted the United States to keep nearly three times as many long-range bombers, in addition to thousands of missiles deployed in Europe. With American advantages in MIRV technology, US warheads were also on pace to outnumber their Soviet counterparts four to one by the time SALT I expired in 1977. "What the SALT I Treaty in effect did was to give the Soviets a numerical advantage in missiles, which was offset by the American technological and numerical lead in warheads," Cahn concludes.[44]

From the outset, the Nixon administration knew it faced "a critical problem in terms of avoiding a massive right-wing revolt on the SALT agreement," as Nixon wrote to Haig. "The deal we are making is in our best interests, but for a very practical reason that the right-wing will never understand—that we simply can't get from the Congress the additional funds needed to continue the arms race with the Soviet [Union] in either offensive or defensive arms." Nixon instructed Haig to head a small team that would "pick-off Senators and very important [right-wing] opinion makers . . . to mute their criticism when it comes in from Moscow."[45]

Nixon also instructed Haig's team to "have a talk with [Vice President Spiro] Agnew to get him on board" and to persuade prominent theoretical physicist Edward Teller to lobby on behalf of the administration. Haig's team was to approach its task in a "very hard-headed way," emphasizing that "the president is not being taken in and the military totally supports what we are doing." But the "most convincing argument" Haig could make to these individuals was "that the President is determined that we must go forward at the fastest pace possible with ULEs [undersea long-range missile systems], MIRV, B-1, and any missile system not covered by the agreement." This argument would help sell the agreement to the "more sensible hawks," but only if it could be done on "an individual basis before they get the announcement from Moscow and make up their

minds and dig in against us." It was "no comfort" to Nixon that the agreement would receive praise from liberals, who would never support the administration. The hawks, Nixon concluded, were his "hard-core," and the administration "must do everything that we can to keep them from jumping ship."[46]

The most outspoken and important critic of both the ABM Treaty and SALT I was Senator Henry Jackson. Jackson attacked the ABM Treaty, claiming it would limit the United States' ability to stop a crippling Soviet first strike. Given his strong distrust of the Soviets, Jackson believed they had agreed to the treaty not out of a desire to maintain the threat of mutual assured destruction but to "constrain a program in which the United States enjoyed a technological advantage." Jackson's public criticisms of the ABM Treaty aside, he joined the majority in the Senate, which voted eighty-eight to two to approve it.[47]

On the heels of the ABM Treaty, Senator Jackson sought to amend SALT I so that all future arms control treaties with the Soviets would be based on numerical equality or "essential equivalence." Jackson's amendment was not run by either the State Department or ACDA, but it had the support of Senate Republicans. In private assurances, the Nixon administration surprisingly supported Jackson's amendment, even though, as Cahn writes, it was "a direct repudiation of the just-negotiated treaty." The Nixon administration was still indebted to Jackson for his support of the Safeguard ABM and its Vietnam policies. If conceding to Jackson's amendment would get his support for SALT I, then politically, it made good sense.[48]

But the administration soon came to regret appeasing Jackson. Kissinger later confessed that he had been so preoccupied with Vietnam that the implications of Jackson's amendment did not register with him. Attempting to downplay the significance of the amendment, Nixon's deputy press secretary Gerald Warren called it "consistent with our undertakings in Moscow." The equality amendment, however, was not the only concession the Nixon administration made to Jackson. A year later, Jackson would pressure Nixon for a purge of both ACDA and the SALT I negotiating team. Gerard Smith and 14 senior members of ACDA were ousted, and 50 of its 230 employees were let go; in addition, one-third of ACDA's budget was cut. ACDA's influence on arms control was severely diminished—by intent. Included in the SALT I purge was Raymond

Garthoff, a highly regarded State Department diplomat who was fluent in Russian. "Jackson and the hardliners knew what they were doing," Garthoff reflected in his memoirs: weakening the arms control establishment and making it not just harder but "ultimately impossible" for Henry Kissinger to "maneuver between hardline and softline alternatives."[49]

The ABM Treaty and SALT I were signed by both parties on October 3, 1972. Although Nixon called the agreements a "first step," SALT I had some serious if not fatal flaws. With no restrictions on MIRVs and Jackson's insistence on equality, the two sides could, in effect, build up their warheads. The absence of a MIRV ban was no accident. As Garthoff elaborates, the MIRV ban proposals Kissinger had given to the SALT negotiators were designed to fail, asking the Soviets for terms they would never agree to (such as on-site inspections). "It was almost as if there existed a silent conspiracy to make it look as though we were striving for a MIRV ban when in fact neither side was," Smith remembered. "Agreement on MIRVs," concludes Greenwood, "was not something that was barely missed at SALT I or that just kept eluding negotiators. Neither side really wanted such an agreement and neither side really tried to get one."[50]

Although the United States did not see an advantage in a MIRV ban, it was only a matter of time before the Soviets, with their larger ICBMs, developed the technology. Intelligence estimates pointed to Soviet MIRV acquisition by the mid-1970s, thus pushing the MIRV problem to a later date. But by mid-August 1973, Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger announced that the Soviets had successfully tested two MIRV rockets. The chances of controlling MIRV technology in the current arms limitation talks had "deteriorated sadly," Schlesinger told reporters. Although some in the State Department and ACDA opposed both MIRVing the warheads and testing them, they lacked the political power to push for a ban. Outside of ACDA circles and in the public realm, MIRV technology was never as much of a concern as ABM systems. In contrast to the "bitter fight over ABM," opposition to MIRV amounted to nothing more than "a minor skirmish."[51]

Publicly, Kissinger would express regret over not containing MIRVs. But this public regret, however sincere, was misleading, as Kissinger knew that a MIRV ban would severely affect the Pentagon and deny a national security advantage. With Soviet ICBMs having caught up and eclipsed US numbers by 1973, Kissinger viewed SALT I not as a means of control-

ling the nuclear arms race but as a way of allowing the United States to strengthen its strategic forces amidst congressional opposition and anti-war fervor.[52]

Following the conclusion of SALT I, détente appeared to be in full bloom, with President Nixon and Soviet general secretary Leonid Brezhnev holding summits and reaching agreements in what seemed to be an annual ritual. In June 1973 the two sides met for a week in Washington, DC, producing the Agreement for the Prevention of Nuclear War. They met again in July 1974 in Moscow, where they signed the Threshold Test Ban Treaty, limiting the size of underground nuclear explosives that both parties could test.

That final summit meeting, however, was marred by a political scandal that would sink the Nixon administration. Two weeks after the signing of SALT I, five men broke into Democratic Party headquarters at the Watergate office complex in Washington, DC. An FBI investigation into the break-in revealed that cash found on the burglars was linked to a slush fund for the Committee for the Re-election of the President. A congressional investigation followed and uncovered secret recordings made by Nixon. After a bitter court battle, the president was forced to turn over the tapes, which revealed that he had been complicit in the cover-up of the Watergate burglaries. Under mounting political pressure and the threat of impeachment, Nixon was forced to resign. In the wake of the largest political scandal of the twentieth century, Vice President Gerald Ford assumed the presidency, with the weight of a pending arms control treaty and US-Soviet détente resting on his shoulders.

Concluding Thoughts

Domestic politics, interest groups, and lobbying play a profound role in even the most sensitive national security issues. A close examination of the politics of arms control in the early 1970s demonstrates the illusions of détente and superpower summitry. Indeed, the decision to pursue arms control and détente for political purposes, with no concern for the consequences of MIRV technology, allowed the arms race to continue into the next decade unabated. The political battles over arms control unleashed the forces that would guide US nuclear diplomacy in the early years of the Reagan era. By the end of the 1970s, the same forces that had lob-

bied against the ABM Treaty and advocated MIRVs now claimed that the United States was suffering from a "window of vulnerability," necessitating the modernization of American nuclear forces. A new wave of nuclear fear would grip the globe, awakening the peace movement from its decade-long slumber and, subsequently, setting off a new battle in the realm of domestic politics and national security.

Notes

1. Walter LaFeber, *The Deadly Bet: LBJ, Vietnam, and the 1968 Election* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 131–33; Larry Berman, *No Peace, No Honor: Nixon, Kissinger, and Betrayal in Vietnam* (New York: Free Press, 2001), 32–35.

2. Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 213.

3. Don Irwin, "Nixon Pledges to Seek Arms Curbs, Guard Nation's Strength," *Los Angeles Times,* October 27, 1968, A1; Robert B. Semple Jr., "Nixon Vows Effort to Seek Arms Curb; Stand Seen Eased," *New York Times,* October 27, 1968, 1, 72.

4. Jeremi Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007), 202.

5. R. W. Apple Jr., "Kissinger Named a Key Nixon Aide in Defense Policy," *New York Times,* December 3, 1968, 1; Gerard C. Smith, *Disarming Diplomat: The Memoirs of Gerard C. Smith, Arms Control Negotiator* (Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1996), 148–49, 164–65; Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan,* rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1994), 161; Seymour M. Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York: Summit Books, 1983), 161.

6. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation,* 148; Francis J. Gavin, *Nuclear Statecraft: History and Strategy in America's Atomic Age* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 104–5.

7. Richard Smoke, *National Security and the Nuclear Dilemma: An Introduction to the American Experience in the Cold War,* 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), 116–17.

8. Henry A. Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), 204–5.

9. Paul H. Nitze with Ann M. Smith and Steven L. Rearden, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost: At the Center of Decision—A Memoir* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), 294; Thomas A. Halstead, "Lobbying against the ABM, 1967–1970," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 27, no. 4 (April 1971): 23–28; "A Numb Society: The Real Threat," *SANE World,* June 1969, 1.

10. Ernest J. Yanarella, *The Missile Defense Controversy: Technology in Search of a Mission,* rev. and updated ed. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2002), 147; Halstead, "Lobbying against the ABM," 26.

11. "Chicago Area Missile Site Is Protested," *Chicago Tribune,* November 25, 1968, F3; E. N. K., "Opposes ABM," *Chicago Tribune,* December 10, 1969, 12; "Citizen Groups Files Suit to Bar Missiles," *Chicago Tribune,* January 18, 1969, 12.

12. Yanarella, *Missile Defense Controversy,* 147; Kelly Moore, *Disrupting Science: Social Movements, American Scientists, and the Politics of the Military, 1945–1975* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 136; Halstead, "Lobbying against the ABM"; "Committee Is Started to Fight ABM System," *Harvard Crimson,* February 9, 1969, http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1969/2/10/committee-is-started-to-fight-abm.

13. Kissinger, *White House Years,* 206–7.

14. Ibid.

15. Robert B. Semple Jr., "Nixon for Limited Missile Plan to Protect U.S. Nuclear Forces," *New York Times,* March 15, 1969, 1, 17; Richard Nixon, *RN*: *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1978), 416.

16. Jacob Heilbrunn, *They Knew They Were Right: The Rise of the Neocons* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 121; Desmond Ball, *Politics and Force Levels: The Strategic Missile Program of the Kennedy Administration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 39–40.

17. Robert G. Kaufman, *Henry M. Jackson: A Life in Politics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 248, 253.

18. Wolfowitz quoted in ibid., 211.

19. Robert Kleiman, "MIRV and the Offensive Missile Race," *New York Times,* October 9, 1967, 46; Robert Kleiman, "MIRV's First Test and the Missile Freeze," *New York Times,* August 5, 1968, 38; "Delay the MIRV Tests," *New York Times,* August 5, 1968, 38.

20. John Noble Wilford, "A Fateful Step in the Arms Race," *New York Times,* August 18, 1968, E12; David R. Ingles, "Conservative Judgments and Missile Madness," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 24, no. 5 (May 1968): 6.

21. John W. Finney, "Missile Testing Divides U.S. Aides," *New York Times,* May 22, 1969, 11; Gregg Herken *Cardinal Choices: Presidential Science Advising from the Atomic Bomb to SDI* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 167–71; Hersh, *Price of Power,* 147; Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost,* 198.

22. Biographical information on Paul Doty obtained from his Harvard website: http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/experts/134/paul_doty.html.

23. Smith, *Disarming Diplomat,* 148–49, 164–65; Hersh, *Price of Power,* 161.

24. "Moratorium on MIRV," *New York Times,* June 12, 1969, 46; "SANE Urges Start of Missile Talks," *SANE World,* February 1969, 2; "MIRV Moratorium Urged," *SANE World,* June 1969, 1; "Senate in Showdown to Curb Arms Race," *SANE World,* April 1970, 1. SANE's call was echoed by the Central Conference of American Rabbis; see "Rabbis Urge Curb on Arms Project," *New York Times,* June 18, 1969, 54.

25. "Senate in Showdown to Curb Arms Race," *SANE World,* April 1970, 1; Edward W. Brooke, *Bridging the Divide*: *My Life* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 204–5.

26. Brooke, *Bridging the Divide,* 204–5; John Henry Cutler, *Ed Brooke*: *Biography of a Senator* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972), 354.

27. Brooke, *Bridging the Divide,* 204–5; Cutler, *Ed Brooke,* 355; Chalmers M. Roberts, "Hill Unit Asks A-Freeze by U.S., Russia," *Washington Post,* March 21, 1970, A1, A7.

28. Cutler, *Ed Brooke,* 356–57.

29. "MIRV Tests Opposed," *New York Times,* June 16, 1969, 94; Herken, *Cardinal Choices,* 171; "Memo: Jack Ruina and George Rathjens to Henry Kissinger, June 2, 1969," in Herken, *Cardinal Choices,* 247; Hersh, *Price of Power,* 151–52.

30. Herken, *Cardinal Choices,* 173–74; Ted Greenwood, *Making the MIRV: A Study of Defense Decision Making* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1975), 123.

31. Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost,* 299.

32. Hersh, *Price of Power,* 147–48

33. Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost,* 304.

34. Memorandum of conversation between Henry A. Kissinger and Anatoly F. Dobrynin, January 9, 1971, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976,* vol. 32, *SALT I,* ed. Erin R. Mahan (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2010), 385–86 (hereafter cited as *FRUS*).

35. Conversation between Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, March 12, 1971, in *The Nixon Tapes, 1971–1972,* ed. Douglas Brinkley and Luke A. Nichter (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014), 39–42.

36. Conversation between Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, March 16, 1971, ibid., 42–45.

37. Conversation among Richard Nixon, Bob Haldeman, and Henry Kissinger, April 23, 1971, ibid., 99.

38. Conversation among Richard Nixon, Bob Haldeman, and Henry Kissinger, April 17, 1971, ibid., 76.

39. Conversation among President Nixon, his deputy national security adviser (Haig), and the assistant to the president (Haldeman), May 6, 1971, in *FRUS,* 32:469, 471.

40. Conversation between Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, April 14, 1971, in *Nixon Tapes*, 67–68.

41. Max Frankel, "Compromise Set: Scope and Shape of Possible Nuclear Accord Defined," *New York Times,* May 21, 1972, 1–2; Raymond L. Garthoff, "Negotiating SALT," *Wilson Quarterly* 1, no. 5 (Autumn 1977): 80; "One and a Half Cheers for SALT!" *SANE World,* May 1972, 1.

42. Terry Terriff, *The Nixon Administration and the Making of U.S. Nuclear Strategy* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 30; Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation,* 534–41.

43. Smoke, *National Security and the Nuclear Dilemma,* 153.

44. Anne Hessing Cahn, *Killing Détente: The Right Attacks the CIA* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1998), 18–19.

45. Memorandum from the President to his deputy national security adviser (Haig), May 20, 1972, in *FRUS,* 32:833–34.

46. Ibid.

47. Kaufman, *Henry M. Jackson,* 254–55; Henry Jackson, "The Senate and the Interim SALT I Agreement," August 11, 1972, in *Henry M. Jackson and World Affairs: Selected Speeches, 1953–1983,* ed. Dorothy Fosdick (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990), 140, 143. The two opposing votes were James L. Buckley (C-NY) and James B. Allen (D-AL).

48. John W. Finney, "Senate Approves Pact with Soviets on Missiles, 88–2," *New York Times,* August 4, 1972, 1–2; Cahn, *Killing Détente,* 18; John W. Finney, "A Tango with Two Left Feet: Arms Control," *New York Times,* August 13, 1972, E3; Smoke, *National Security and the Nuclear Dilemma,* 152–54.

49. Associated Press, "Modified SALT Pact Proviso Endorsed by White House," *Chicago Tribune,* August 8, 1972, 21; Cahn, *Killing Détente,* 19–20; Raymond L. Garthoff, *A Journey through the Cold War: A Memoir of Containment and Coexistence* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, 2001), 274.

50. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation,* 155–56; Smith, *Disarming Diplomat,* 168; Greenwood, *Making the MIRV,* 135.

51. Associated Press, "Soviets May Gain Missile Edge, Defense Chief Says," *Portsmouth Times,* August 18, 1973, 1; Greenwood, *Making the MIRV,* 116, 118.

52. Smith, *Disarming Diplomat,* 164; Hersh, *Price of Power,* 167; Kissinger, *White House Years,* 210–12; Henry A. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982), 259–60.