

Strategy as Politics,
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Domestic Debates,
Statecraft, and Star Wars

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CHAPTER 6

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ARTHUR A. STEIN

INTRODUCTION

On March 23, 1983, in an address on the defense budget request then before Congress, President Reagan proved again that he “is at once an optimist, a radical, an innovator and a plunger” by describing his new “vision of the future which offers hope.”¹ Characterizing reliance “on the specter of retaliation” for preventing nuclear war as “a sad commentary on the human condition,” he asked if it would not “be better to save lives than to avenge them?” And he wondered, too, if free people might not be more “secure in the knowledge that their security did not rest upon the threat of instant U.S. retaliation to deter a Soviet attack, that we could intercept and destroy strategic ballistic missiles before they reached our own soil or that of our allies?”

But Reagan’s speech represented more than his vision of the future, for it was also a direct response to his administration’s immediate political past. Following his landslide reelection victory in 1980, the president found his administration’s national security policy under assault. His plans for the modernization of America’s strategic

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arsenal foundered. The requirements of deterrence and defense had become the subject of new debate. A grass-roots movement for a freeze in weapons deployments swept the country, and critics were attacking America's nuclear strategy as immoral. America's European allies, Congress, and ordinary citizens all pressed the president to change his approach to national security and arms control.

In one speech, President Reagan transformed the domestic political debate about America's strategic doctrine and national security policy. He recognized that his goal of shielding the United States from attack might "not be accomplished before the end of this century" and was not without significant political and technical problems. But he accomplished a much more immediate objective. By calling on "the scientific community . . . those who gave us nuclear weapons, to turn their great talents now to the cause of mankind and world peace, to give us the means of rendering these nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete," he changed the political agenda.²

Since March 1983, scholars, strategists, politicians, and others have argued about the wisdom of developing defensive space weapons. They have attacked or advocated the president's plan-called Star Wars by its critics and the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) by the administration-rather than continue to focus on the issues that concerned them earlier. The desirability, feasibility, viability, practicality, affordability, and optimality of Reagan's new policy have all been considered. His proposal has shifted the focus of domestic political debate and scrambled political positions and coalitions.

Indeed, Reagan's speech created a national debate. For "the Reagan of star wars and supply side is a Reagan at odds with the intellectual poobahs of defense and economics. He is, instead, a president willing to identify with fringe thinkers of both disciplines who are generally classified as rightwing."³ Indeed, critics immediately dubbed the plan Star Wars and called it crazy. The president subsequently named his proposal the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), and supporters now trumpet it as a peace shield. Given the Soviets' evident concern about SDI, critics recommend that the president use it as a bargaining chip and negotiate it away in exchange for reductions in Soviet offensive weapons. Supporters insist that this new vision, of a future without nuclear weapons, is our only hope and must not be dealt away. Negotiators, they argue, should focus on shifting the superpowers toward a world emphasizing defense, rather than continue to stress the mutual assured destruction (MAD) of a world armed almost entirely by offensive strategic nuclear weapons.

This chapter emphasizes that the debate over Star Wars is a political one. To understand and explain the Reagan administration's

advocacy of the Strategic Defense Initiative requires an understanding of the relationship between politics and strategy and, most specifically, of the political problems confronting the Reagan administration during its first two years in office. The reason for the president's address was political, and he succeeded brilliantly in shifting the national debate away from the MX and the nuclear freeze and onto the problem of the future. In doing so, he changed his image from that of an unreconstructed warmonger to that of an unreconstructed peacemaker. In addition, the debate over strategic doctrine demonstrates the absence of a consensus among defense analysts, and this implies that national policy will be made (or chosen) on political rather than technical grounds.⁴

STRATEGY AND POLITICS

Issues of national security, especially nuclear strategy, are often treated as technical problems for which appropriate technical solutions exist. Thus, strategists often consider the requisites of defense or deterrence as if these were devoid of political calculations or concerns. To develop a national security policy, however, is to reach an optimal political solution to a technical problem. In this way, national security policy is very much like economic policy: politics explains selections of appropriate ends and means more than does science.

The role of science, after all, is limited in policy making. It cannot address the question of which ends societies should pursue. Scientists may have individual opinions about appropriate societal goals, but their objectives do not derive from any scientific data or analysis.⁵ Indeed, in American society, their preferences generally carry less weight than those of television and movie stars. Scientists can, however, play a part in guiding a society's choice of the best means for achieving its chosen ends. They can assess whether particular means will achieve given ends and whether the use of those means will also entail other, unintended, consequences.⁶ But most typically, either no scientific consensus exists, or there are viable alternatives from which to choose. So, just as they are rarely responsible for the selection of societal objectives, scientists rarely choose the policies intended to ensure those goals. Thus, the choice of social ends and means falls to politicians.

Even when there is a scientific consensus, politicians may choose to ignore it. The national interest, and therefore public policy, encompasses an array of social values and concerns. Scientists, for example, may agree on the contingent truthfulness of the theory of evolution, but religious believers can still mobilize support for having public school teaching reflect their views of creation. And if the mo-

bilization is strong enough, politicians may bow to views they find scientifically laughable. Similarly, public health policy often reflects moral considerations as well as medical ones.⁷

Moreover, politicians choose policies with an eye not only to broad national objectives but also in keeping with individual and group interests. Party concerns and individual careers matter. Even bureaucrats are presumed to consider individual and agency interests in making their assessments. The particularistic interests of the military services, for example, are widely recognized as creating problems in the search for a coherent national security policy.⁸ Thus, a politician's optimal policy likely optimizes a mix of national, party, and personal objectives. Economic policies, for example, may be chosen not only in order to maximize general economic well-being but also to improve the chances for the reelection of their proponents.⁹

Moreover, policies emerge from compromise. Individual politicians must make choices when tradeoffs exist between objectives. They may be forced to choose, for example, between preventing war and preventing unfavorable changes in the international status quo, or between guns and butter. Not only can national goals conflict, but there also may be tradeoffs between national and particularistic interests. Finally, having made individual choices, politicians must often negotiate and compromise with one another. Thus, politicians rarely begin by proposing the actual policies they want instituted. They start with positions more extreme than their actual desires and establish bargaining positions. Or they attempt to institute one program in order to force positions on another. By securing the 1981 tax cut, for example, the Reagan administration positioned itself perfectly on economic policy and forced the Democrats to choose between cutting domestic spending, increasing taxes, or accepting big current deficits that would endanger future domestic spending. Finally, given all the compromises, it is not surprising that the resulting policies are odd mixtures, concatenations of inconsistent elements.¹⁰

Similarly, the provision of national defense and security are inherently political questions. Although strategists do emphasize the importance of political objectives when analyzing how war might break out, they do not discuss the political objectives inherent in the adoption or rejection of national security policies. Yet the level of military spending, of how much is enough, has been an annual focus of partisan debate. Agreement on the necessity of a national defense does not imply consensus on proper funding levels or tactical emphases. Specific weapons systems and even their technical configurations have become political issues, and Congress often extracts a political price for acceding to presidential requests for particular weapons systems. Moreover, it has only approved some systems because

enough representatives have been convinced (or have convinced themselves) that the newly approved weapons would be used as bargaining chips in negotiations with the Russians but would never really be deployed.

Moreover, the ability to meet the requisites of national defense is affected by economic and political calculation. British appeasement was dictated in part by the priority given to economic constraints on national security policy.¹¹ Similarly, the Eisenhower administration's commitment to fiscal stringency dictated a "new look" in defense policy that entailed greater reliance on nuclear weapons.¹² On the other hand, the Kennedy administration's commitment to flexible response and a concomitant defense buildup set the parameters for its domestic economic policy.¹³ It soon discovered, though, that an emphasis on flexible response and counterforce targeting made it difficult to hold back subsequent military requests for additional missiles, warheads, and bombers. Defense Secretary McNamara found that discussing the nation's contingency war plans publicly entailed costs. Thus, he shifted back to a doctrine of assured destruction as a way of capping and limiting military requests for more strategic weapons.¹⁴

In addition, because changes in the level of military expenditures can have implications for other kinds of policies, interests in those other issues can become the basis for positions taken on national security policy. Indeed, political coalitions often form around constellations of policies that address a variety of concerns, including defense. In turn-of-the-century Germany, for example, a naval buildup was one key program of a broad political and social alliance that also supported high tariffs, a nationalistic foreign policy, and an authoritarian domestic government.¹⁵

Even the basing of weapons has been politically controversial. President Reagan, although a strong proponent of rearmament and military modernization, opposed President Carter's plan to put the MX missile on an underground race track. Two of the president's strongest allies, Republican Senators Paul Laxalt of Nevada and Jake Garn of Utah, had lobbied vigorously against the race track, which would be located in the West, despite their avid support for both the weapon and an increased defense budget. Neither they nor the president wanted to alienate western voters, and so the political impossibility of the race-track option ultimately bounded the Reagan administration's search for a way to deploy the MX missile that it very much wanted.

The scope of politics in the formulation of defense policy is exacerbated when there is no consensus on the necessary means of military strategy and security. When experts disagree, the political

considerations always present in the choice of national goals spill over into discussions of means for achieving them. There may be a national consensus on deterrence as an objective of national security policy, but this will not ensure the adoption of any specific policy or policies unless there is a consensus on the means for achieving deterrence. However, such consensus has not existed in the United States.

Rather, two arguments have dominated the American debate on the requisites of deterrence. One finds that deterrence is provided by an assured ability to retaliate with such impact as to rule out the very possibility of attack before it occurs. Thus, nuclear weapons do not represent usable military power; they exist solely to deter. Advocates of assured destruction (or finite deterrence) argue, therefore, that relative numbers of weapons do not matter as long as the nation maintains an adequate ability to retaliate. In contrast, the other side of this debate is articulated by those who believe that the massive retaliation inherent in a doctrine of assured destruction cannot deter because it does not provide a credible response to an array of potential provocations and attacks. Because deterrence requires the ability to wage war and prevail at any level of nuclear escalation, nuclear weapons deter only if they are deployed as usable weapons. The proponents of this logic have thus advocated a counterforce doctrine in order to make the threatened use of nuclear weapons more credible. The implications of these two arguments for national security policy are, of course, very different. Adopting one instead of the other would have clear consequences for determining what kinds and numbers of weapons the United States needs. It is not surprising, therefore, that political considerations can dominate technical ones in the formulation of defense policy.¹⁶

Yet despite the obvious importance of politics to the formation of national security policy, the debates about the technical and strategic appropriateness of the president's Strategic Defense Initiative are being waged in a political void and do not reflect the array of concerns that underlay the administration's adoption of the program. The president's enunciation of his Strategic Defense Initiative was and is inherently political. It emerged at a politically difficult time for the administration and was intended primarily to solve a domestic political problem.

THE DOMESTIC FIRESTORM OF 1981-82

President Reagan took office in 1981 committed to restoring America's military might. He had campaigned against a Democratic administration that he pilloried for letting America's position in the

world decline—for weakness and vacillation and for allowing the United States to be eclipsed by its Soviet enemy. His own defense agenda was wide-ranging, a vast rearmament plan that called for large increases in military spending.¹⁷ Although not everyone in his administration was prepared to embrace the Republican party platform’s call for American military superiority, the president argued that rearmament was necessary because of a Soviet “margin of superiority.”¹⁸ The president, who had attacked previous arms control agreements, was in no hurry to pursue arms control before his rearmament program was well under way.¹⁹ Indeed, not even interested in a summit meeting with the Soviets, he successfully avoided one during his first term.

Moreover, the new administration’s plan included a rhetorical offensive to characterize the Soviet Union as an international brigand. At the president’s first news conference, he described the Soviets as being willing to justify as moral anything that furthered their cause. This meant, he continued, that they “reserve unto themselves the right to commit any crime, to lie, [and] to cheat.”²⁰ Three and a half months later, he declared that the West would not contain Communism but transcend it. “We will not bother to denounce it, we’ll dismiss it as a sad, bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages are even now being written.”²¹ Sustained into 1983, this verbal onslaught reached its peak when, in an address to the National Association of Evangelicals, the president characterized the Soviet Union as “the focus of evil in the modern world.”²²

During its first year and a half, the administration coupled its anti-Soviet rhetoric and defense spending increases with public comments about America’s own nuclear strategy, an articulation of a United States commitment to a nuclear war-fighting strategy and a recognition of the possibility of nuclear war. In one interview, Sovietologist Richard Pipes, a staff member of the National Security Council, put the chance of nuclear war at 40 percent.²³ Secretary of State Alexander Haig spoke publicly of a NATO plan for low-level nuclear warning explosions.²⁴ The president himself suggested more than once in late 1981 that tactical nuclear exchanges need not imply full-scale nuclear war.²⁵ And, in one of the more memorable administration comments, the Undersecretary of Defense for Strategic and Nuclear Forces, T. K. Jones, observed that the United States could fully recover from a nuclear war by emphasizing proper preparation. “If there are enough shovels to go around, everybody’s going to make it,” he said.²⁶

Ironically, the administration was only voicing publicly a long-standing element of American nuclear policy. American nuclear policy had slowly been evolving into a counterforce strategy since the 1950s.

However, these developments were not discussed outside of the defense community, and there existed a separation of targeting strategy and declaratory strategy. As McNamara had learned, one cost of publicly adopting a counterforce doctrine would be the armed services' increasing their lists of targets and demanding more weapons. Whatever the actual war plans, it made good sense to remain publicly committed to a policy of mutual assured destruction and a position that nuclear wars could not be fought. In private, however, it remained necessary to provide for an array of contingencies so that the president had flexibility in case deterrence failed.

The net political effect of the administration's rhetoric and defense policy was to reawaken peace movements on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. In 1981 and 1982, mass demonstrations overseas protested the planned NATO deployment of American Pershing missiles in Europe.²⁷ Although European political leaders had previously agreed to accept these weapons, they had also insisted that the United States attempt to negotiate arms reductions with the Soviets. Thus, in 1979, NATO decided to proceed along dual tracks: to negotiate and to begin simultaneously to deploy the Pershings. In 1981, leaders of America's allies pressed the Reagan administration to adopt a negotiating position or proposal that would allow them to withstand domestic political pressures against accepting the Pershings.²⁸

However, the administration wanted to avoid arms control negotiations until its rearmament program was in place. It feared that acceptable agreements could not be negotiated without first improving America's defenses, and that negotiations would undercut the momentum for bigger defense budgets. Nonetheless, it responded to pressure from the allies, unveiled a bargaining position, and opened talks in 1981 on intermediate nuclear forces with the Russians. On the other hand, the administration only unveiled its strategic arms control position in May 1982, and discussions with the Russians on these weapons opened the following month.

In addition, the Reagan administration beat a hasty retreat from its war-fighting rhetoric. Nonetheless, it undermined its own effort to sound more pacific. In a conscious attempt to refurbish his image, the president emphasized in the spring of 1982 that "nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought" and "no one feels more than I the need for peace."²⁹ Yet the administration defeated its own attempt to alter its public countenance and militaristic diction with its Defense Guidance, a strategic blueprint for budget requests over the next five fiscal years. This document called for developing an American arsenal that could engage in nuclear exchanges with the Soviet Union "over a protracted period." The United States would "prevail" in any nuclear war with the Soviet Union.³⁰

Overall, the administration's attempt to change its tone was not enough to quiet the domestic peace movement that its earlier rhetoric had awakened. Although American citizens had been relatively quiescent about strategic issues for years, there burgeoned in the wake of the administration's rhetoric a spontaneous nuclear freeze movement that took Washington by surprise as it gained momentum in 1981 and 1982.³¹ "There was Reagan talking about fighting and winning a limited nuclear war and handing out his laundry list of building up every conceivable nuclear weapon because he claimed we were behind the Russians. It brought out the latent anxiety."³² Even politicians who thought the freeze a bad idea supported at least a partial halt, and their catch phrase, a mutually verifiable nuclear freeze, provided them political cover.³³

The freeze movement soon dominated the political landscape. But the president opposed a halt to deployments as ingraining Soviet superiority. He lobbied against it in Congress and attacked the movement, which he described as manipulated by people who wanted to weaken America. Arguing that "foreign agents" had instigated the protests, he declared that the freeze advocates were unintentionally "carrying water" for the Soviet Union.³⁴ Despite the administration's accusations, the movement grew.

In 1982, nuclear freeze initiatives appeared on state and local ballots throughout the country. Administration officials publicly urged voters to reject the freeze.³⁵ Yet the voters in 8 of 9 states and in 27 of 29 cities and localities approved it. In all, freeze initiatives carried in 41 of 46 contests in 1982. In addition, 205 city councils, 43 county governments, and 11 state legislatures passed freeze resolutions. Movement supporters also argued that the issue had become an important factor in a number of races for office in 1982.³⁶

The success of the freeze at the polls in 1982 also affected the 1984 presidential campaign. All but one of the Democratic candidates came out in support of the freeze, and one aspirant actually hoped to parlay his exclusive emphasis on the peace issue into the nomination. Indeed, one way that former Vice-president Mondale finally bested Senator Gary Hart in the primaries was to criticize Hart's delay in backing the freeze and emphasize Hart's flip-flops on the issue.³⁷

But in 1982, the administration confronted a problem not just confined to the political left. The domestic debate over nuclear weapons that had begun in 1981 now included the bishops of the Roman Catholic church, who established an Ad Hoc Committee on War and Peace in 1981. In June 1982, the committee released the first public draft of their pastoral letter on war and peace, a document that outlined the bishops' "profound doubts about whether the use or threatened use of nuclear weapons can be truly reconciled with traditional

principles of self-defense and just war.” The administration responded, publicly and privately, by trying to change the bishops’ minds. The White House was worried about the implications of the pastoral letter not only for defense policy but also for broader political reasons. The administration and the bishops had, after all, concurred on such critical issues as tuition tax credits and abortion, and the Republicans needed ethnic blue-collar voters. Now it appeared that the nuclear rearmament plan might make it more difficult to appeal to Catholic voters.

But the administration could not confront the bishops’ challenge by vigorously attacking them as it had the freeze movement.³⁸ Its failure to sway them became clear when, in October 1982, the bishops released a second public draft of their letter in which they advocated a freeze, objected to nuclear war-fighting rhetoric, and hinted they might oppose the MX specifically in a subsequent draft. Once again, the administration attempted to convince the bishops that moral considerations indeed guided American policy, and that it was merely continuing long-standing American strategic nuclear policy.³⁹ When the bishops released their third draft in May 1983, they did, in fact, soften their stand somewhat. But then they overwhelmingly adopted a final version that restored much of the second draft’s language.⁴⁰ Over time, the bishops’ involvement served to generate a widespread debate on the morality of deterrence and American strategic doctrine. The domestic debate had widened and deepened, for the draft pastoral letters represented a frontal assault on American strategic doctrine by questioning the morality of nuclear weapons and the doctrines associated with their use.

The president thus continued to confront a major political problem. His approach to national security policy was under assault, and his image threatened. When he ran for president in 1980, he had been advised to come across as “peace-oriented.” Yet he continued to have a “warmonger” problem.⁴¹ Retreating from his nuclear war-fighting rhetoric had been insufficient; so had been his attempt to go beyond the SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks) agreements he had previously attacked while continuing to distance himself from them. By dubbing his own arms control negotiations START (Strategic Arms Reduction Talks), Reagan tried to emphasize the goal of reducing, rather than just limiting, nuclear weapons. Similarly, the president’s arms control proposal, unveiled in May 1982, also reflected the administration’s concern with its appearance. By seeking deep cuts in the number of large land-based missiles, the president could maintain that he had outdone the freeze advocates in his attempt to diminish the arsenal of nuclear weapons rather than merely hold it at current levels.⁴² But critics quickly dubbed the president’s proposals

one-sided and, therefore, nonnegotiable, because the administration demanded that the Soviets dismantle most of their land-based missiles without similar concessions.

Thus, the administration's efforts to improve the image of the president and of his party had failed. The Republican party could survive the 1982 recession, the memory of which would fade with economic recovery, but being seen as the party of the bomb could have more lasting consequences. The conjunction of anti-Soviet and nuclear war-fighting rhetoric with large military spending increases and a wary commitment to arms control had generated a major public relations problem.

Moreover, this public relations problem had concrete ramifications for policy making. Despite his general success in vastly increasing the defense budget, Reagan found it very difficult to obtain congressional approval for the MX missile, the cornerstone of his strategic modernization program. The weapon would not only provide the United States with a land-based counterforce capability, but also would strengthen what was seen as an increasingly vulnerable leg of the strategic triad. Yet the president had trouble finding a way to base the MX that neither left it vulnerable nor upset Republican westerners. At the same time, the freeze movement and other opposition to new deployments compounded his difficulties. By the winter of 1982, Congress had rejected two basing schemes proposed by the president and had eliminated funds to produce the MX.⁴³ Two years into his term, the land-based portion of the president's strategic modernization program appeared to be derailed.

The president attempted to solve this political problem by trying to duplicate his successful strategy for dealing with the Social Security crisis; he named a bipartisan Commission on Strategic Forces in January 1983. He hoped that the Scowcroft Commission, as it became known, would provide a solution to the MX-basing problem that would be politically acceptable to Congress. It became apparent even before the commission submitted its report that it would recommend deploying the MX in existing silos.⁴⁴ But because Congress had previously rejected such a plan, it was not clear that it would now accept the commission's recommendation to do what everyone recognized as nothing more than a carefully crafted justification of a political solution to a technical and political problem.

Thus, the president was trying to do two things in his March 23, 1983, address: generate the support he needed for the annual battle over the defense budget and reposition himself on the nuclear issue. His actual proposal, to explore the possibility of a defense against offensive nuclear weapons, caught most nuclear strategists and even many members of the administration by surprise. Although

the proposal had not been thoroughly thought through, it had a simple and basic appeal.⁴⁵

The president could now emphasize his passionate commitment to peace and to a world without nuclear weapons. He could out-peacemonger anybody. No one could argue with the simple appeal of relying on defensive weapons rather than offensive ones. Reagan led even his liberal critics to consider the possibility. As columnist Meg Greenfield asked, "Is no such initiative worthy? Is it unfit for contemplation? . . . I wish the status quo nuclear gang would try to improve on Reagan's thought, not merely satirize it. I wish they, too, would think radically."⁴⁶ Any who questioned the proposal risked "being labelled tired and negative thinkers."⁴⁷ The president's proposal, "an utter masterpiece,"

has the immediate effect of illuminating the political landscape. We are now beginning to see which of the advocates of American disarmament really want a nuclear-free world and which really want something else—empty moral grandstanding, the promotion of Soviet interests, the abasement of America.

Already it is remarkable how many of these intrepid moralists are not even attracted by the Reagan vision and refuse to entertain it for even a fleeting moment.⁴⁸

Reagan could pursue rearmament and new weapons deployments while he responded to criticism by pointing to his ultimate hope—a world without nuclear weapons. He could turn the Catholic bishops' arguments against his detractors, and he could argue that to reject his vision would be to continue relying on the immoral threat of mass murder.

Yet the president had done little more than elevate and highlight a research effort already underway. The 1980 Republican party platform had called for "vigorous research and development of an effective antiballistic-missile system," and various fringe elements had pressed for space-based defensive systems.⁴⁹ A White House position paper of October 1981 proposed expanding defenses in general and in space as well.⁵⁰ The Defense Guidance had already called for stepped-up space activities, including those "in support of [the U.S.] right to self-defense," and on September 1, 1982, the Air Force had established a new Space Command.⁵¹ But in March 1983, the president gave these efforts his imprimatur and elevated them to national goals. A politically savvy president took rhetoric already in the air, put it in a form that made it difficult to oppose, and tapped a variety of concerns that resonated with many people. The rest of his administration would now have to defend the president's vision publicly.⁵²

THE AFTERMATH

In the ensuing months, the president discovered that he needed to demonstrate some political flexibility to ensure congressional approval for deployment of the MX. The Scowcroft Commission admitted that its recommendation to base the MX in existing silos was a political decision rather than a military one.⁵³ Yet even this bipartisan recommendation could not ensure congressional support, and the president was pressed to modify his 1982 arms control proposal on strategic weapons in order to secure the MX.⁵⁴ And ultimately, the president's congressional victory was assured by the support of representatives who voted for a missile they thought a poor idea. The congressional approval of MX deployment was an act "of well-intentioned people acting out of a combination of their own sense of what it means to be 'responsible'; their own sense of what they needed to do to 'position' themselves politically or lay the groundwork for political advancement; and political fear."⁵⁵

This political trade of the MX for arms control flexibility represented the fashioning of a bipartisan commitment on deployments and arms control.⁵⁶ That congressional support was sustained during the 1984 presidential election year despite the collapse of arms control negotiations with the Soviets, who at the end of 1983 walked out of both the talks on intermediate nuclear forces and those on strategic weapons.⁵⁷

Armed with congressional support for his arms control proposals and his strategic modernization program, the president could sit back and wait for the Russians to return to the bargaining table. When they did offer to resume talks, in June 1984, it was SDI, and SDI alone, that they wanted to talk about. The United States insisted that any talks deal with Earth-based weapons as well. The USSR initially refused. But in November 1984, after the president's landslide reelection, the Soviets agreed to return to the bargaining table. By the fall of 1985, it had become clear that they were prepared to negotiate reductions in their land-based forces in exchange for constraints on American development of space-based defensive weapons.

The Soviets' concern with SDI only reinforced the president's position. For it became politically more difficult to attack Star Wars once it became clear that this had brought the Soviets back to the negotiating table. The president, who had not had much with which to negotiate, had moved himself into an enviable position. The challenge of a qualitative arms race concerned the Soviets in a way that a small number of MX missiles did not. Merely articulating his vision had already borne political fruit.

CONCLUSION

The president's enunciation of his vision of a space defense was based on domestic political concerns and had important international political ramifications. He refashioned the domestic political debate over strategic weapons, doctrine, and negotiations. The president did what all successful politicians do—he shifted the focus of debate. He shifted the focus from a troublesome present to a desirable future.⁵⁸ In positioning himself as a man with a vision of peace, he lit on a strategy that brought the Soviets back to the bargaining table.

The president's speech generated a national debate; it both scrambled political agendas and recast rhetorical positions. As one senator told his colleagues, "the political landscape has been changed by a speech we all know to be wrong."⁵⁹ The administration had complained about the attempt by freeze leaders to mobilize support through simplistic slogans. Since the speech, however, "freezeniks" have accused the supporters of the peace shield of trying to sell the public an appealing unicorn, and they lament that imagery seems more important than reality in a world dominated by television and permanent political campaigning.⁶⁰ Moreover, the president's critics have had to find new rationales for their opposition to his newly articulated vision. Leaders of the nuclear freeze movement, for example, have shifted their focus. Explicitly rejecting deterrence altogether, they have made complete nuclear disarmament their goal.⁶¹

Others, including members of the administration, found that they could support SDI without accepting the president's vision. Few professionals, including those who ran the Pentagon Strategic Defense Initiative Office, thought that "leakproof protection" was "possible or even necessary."⁶² As even Lieutenant General James Abrahamson, the Pentagon manager of SDI, presciently admitted, "Nothing is perfect, not even the [space] shuttle. A perfect astrodome defense is not a realistic thing."⁶³ Many initial believers eventually backpedaled.⁶⁴ Those who did not buy the whole package could still argue, however, that even if Reagan's ultimate goal proved "unattainable," a "mirage," some degree of defense would "complicate the attacker's calculations" and thus improve deterrence.⁶⁵ In other words, this alternative formulation offered grounds on which the president's proposal could be supported and marketed. The catchwords, inside and outside the administration, held that SDI would "enhance deterrence" and "strengthen stability."⁶⁶

The difficulty of opposing the president has brought an array of unlikely supporters flocking to his SDI bandwagon. Although few strategists accept the president's vision of its potential, most have

found other reasons to support it.⁶⁷ Minimally, even its critics recognize the negotiating possibility that SDI has offered; they simply urge the president to bargain it away in an agreement with the Russians. Even President Carter's Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, who opposes SDI deployment, has endorsed research on space weapons as "prudent" and admits that "no president for the last 12 years has been in a stronger position to make progress on [arms control] than is President Reagan."⁶⁸

At the same time, the inability to attack SDI directly has led its critics to find new ways to frame their opposition. For example, they emphasize the importance of maintaining the ABM (anti-ballistic missile) treaty and not engaging in any program that would violate it. On the other hand, some of SDI's supporters would be happy to violate it in order to get rid of the treaty. Thus, the Star Wars debate may test the degree to which the nation has accepted the ABM treaty, just as battles over the administration's domestic policies have tested how ingrained various Great Society and New Deal programs have become.

Debates about military strategy and national security policy can be carried on without reference to politics, but their formulation and adoption necessarily involve politics.⁶⁹ And the politics is not just international, but also domestic, including electoral and party politics. The adoption of a direction for national security policy thus involves more than a calculation of optimal defense policy. Positioning for elections and domestic bargaining, as well as for international negotiations, is also important. And public statements, like bids at an auction, are first offers—not rock-bottom positions.

Thus, proclamations about nuclear strategy and the direction of security policy are about more than just the technical means to the sole end of maintaining the territorial integrity of the state. Yet even if no other objectives for national security policy existed, the nature of an optimal nuclear strategy and doctrine would remain contested. For unlike economists discussing trade barriers, nuclear strategists have reached no consensus about the requisites of deterrence.

Rather, theorists remain divided about the requirements of deterrence in an era of mutual vulnerability. For some, deterrence requires survivable forces that can inflict unacceptable retaliatory damage. For others, such a doctrine is not credible, and deterrence requires an ability actually to wage nuclear war. Yet this debate has been largely irrelevant to the recent history of doctrine and deployments, because American policy has included counterforce options and capabilities for more than two decades. Nonetheless, there is no unanimity about the means necessary to achieve deterrence. Indeed, there is no way empirically to resolve this dispute.⁷⁰

Even consensus on both the desirability of deterrence and the means of achieving it might not end the national debate on strategic policy. Advocates of assured destruction, for example, define stabilizing actions as those that reduce the value of a first strike while increasing the value of a second strike. They agree not only on the desirability of stability but even about which weapons systems are stabilizing and which destabilizing. Yet they can still advocate different routes to stability. For anything that increases one nation's value of a second strike decreases the other's value of a first strike. That is, stability can be improved either by degrading the other side's value of a first strike or accepting the degradation of one's own potential for striking first. Some globalists are prepared to eschew a nation-centered view and accept the degradation of their own nation's forces for the sake of planetary welfare. On the other hand, it is not surprising that nationalists prefer to achieve stability by reducing the other nation's first-strike potential rather than their own, and that nations react to the reduction of their own forces' efficacy by the other with destabilizing actions. In short, the acceptance of stability does not ensure agreement on acceptable and unacceptable deployments.

Moreover, as the history of economic policy makes clear, scholarly consensus on means-ends relationships can still be ignored by politicians when they cannot square politics and economics, but where the political imperative is strong. Congress ignored the opposition of more than one thousand economists when it imposed the Smoot-Hawley tariff in the midst of the depression. Similarly, the recent Senate adoption of the Gramm-Rudman plan demonstrates the lengths to which politics can drive policy. Confronted by the need to extend the government debt ceiling above the symbolically important figure of two trillion dollars, the Senate adopted along with it a plan to reduce the deficit by 1991. Few who voted for the proposal, improvised at the last minute without any hearings, thought it a good idea. Few knew how it would work, or if it was viable or even constitutional. But driven by political maneuvering for the 1986 election and the Senators' fear of the political costs of not voting to reduce the deficit, the proposal carried. As an aide to one Senate Democrat said:

If you had a dime for every time this proposal has been called a turkey in both parties' caucuses, you'd be a rich person. It's the politics of the issue that are driving it, not the merits, and therefore people here don't care what the economists think. The Democrats are having a 'cover your backside' reaction—they feel the country would cheer a balanced budget. . . . What this is all about is a fight over control of the Senate."⁷¹

Electoral concerns, political worries, and the need to cover one's backside are evident in defense policy as well. The president and his advisers, aware of this, have exploited all three successfully since the latter part of his first term. In the belief that arms-control policy is unique in the quality of its discourse, one administration official recently lamented that "the real casualty in this area comes from discussions of things that have no bearing on reality." Citing a leakproof defense shield as one example of the intrusion of the chimerical into disputes over arms-control policy, he argued that "this wouldn't happen in any other area of public policy. It may be good for the polls, and for throwing people for a loop in a debate, but ultimately it's a disservice. It's very costly in terms of serious discussion of the subject."⁷²

In 1947, Senator Arthur Vandenburg, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, told President Truman and his advisors that to obtain support for their aid plans for Greece and Turkey, they would have to scare the hell out of the American people. By the late 1970s, this dictum no longer held true. New nuclear deployments now had to be coupled with arms control negotiations. NATO had enshrined this shift in its dual-track decision of 1979. The Reagan administration was slow to recognize the implications of this change for European and American politics. New American weapons deployments had to be coupled with the perception of an American commitment to arms control and linked to a vision of peace, not one of waging nuclear war.

Nuclear strategists are engaged in a political debate, and their arguments, like those of economists, are employed or ignored as suits political needs. National security policy in open societies is not a depoliticized issue being handled by experts without political considerations. The nature of deterrence remains essentially contested. In such a world, politics will determine policy as much as science.

Scholars engaged in a search for viable strategic doctrines must be aware of the political as well as military requisites of national security policy. Policy makers confront domestic and international political demands and must be sensitive to them. Scholars who address such policy makers must be aware of these considerations. As the war fighters discovered, scaring your own people and those of your allies is not a way to enshrine your strategic vision. Increases in defense spending, and especially the deployment of offensive nuclear systems, must be linked to some vision other than waging nuclear war. As the finite deterrence theorists discovered, the threats of mass murder and nuclear apocalypse are insufficient visions for sustaining national security policy.

NOTES

1. The characterization of the president is from an editorial, "Supply Side and Star Wars," *Baltimore Sun*, April 3, 1983, p. K4.
2. "Address to the Nation on Defense and National Security, March 23, 1983," in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983*, book 1, pp. 437-43.
3. "Supply Side and Star Wars," *Baltimore Sun*, April 3, 1983, p. K4.
4. Public opinion is also responding to SDI as a political rather than technical issue. Questions about SDI generate partisan responses, with Republicans supporting it and Democrats opposing it. In addition, the symbolic underpinnings of the debate can be seen in the ways that the polling results shift with changes in the wording of questions. See Barry Sussman, "On 'Star Wars,' It All Depends on How You Ask the Question," *Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, November 25, 1985, p. 37.
5. Politics is how a society goes about determining societal objectives. Indeed, political systems are distinguishable by the ways in which they do or do not aggregate individual preferences into social choices and by the respective weights they attach to the preferences of different individuals.
6. For a discussion of politics and science, see Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," and "Science as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 77-128, 129-56.
7. Allan M. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States Since 1880* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).
8. Indeed, SDI has not attracted wide support in the Pentagon, not even the Air Force. As one official put it, "The Air Force is concerned their budget is going to get chewed up." Money for lasers is money that could go to other projects. See Fred Kaplan, "Reagan's 'Star Wars' at key stage," *Boston Globe*, May 13, 1984, p. 1.
9. Politicians worry, for example, about the impact of economic policies on their bases of support. Some, therefore, fear unemployment; others dread inflation. Thus, presidents and congressional representatives may favor and adopt policies that serve their own interests but that are not optimal from the perspective of the performance of the economy as a whole. This is the basis for arguments about the existence of a political business cycle.
10. For one compilation of incoherence in Reagan strategic policy, see Robert Jervis, *The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984). The same kind of argument can be made about the peculiar combination of economic doctrines embedded in Reaganomics, which in 1981 welded monetarism and supply-side tax cuts.
11. Paul Kennedy, "The Tradition of Appeasement in British Foreign Policy, 1865-1939," *British Journal of International Studies* 2 (October 1976), pp. 195-215; and Paul Kennedy, "Strategy versus Finance in Twentieth-century Britain," *International History Review* 3 (1981), pp. 45-61.
12. Glenn H. Snyder, "The 'New Look' of 1953," in *Strategy, Poli-*

tics, and Defense Budgets, eds. Warner R. Schilling, Paul Y. Hammond, and Glenn H. Snyder (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), pp. 379-524.

13. Amy E. Davis, "The Dangers of an Upturn" (Department of History, Columbia University, November 1985).

14. For the evolution of strategic thought and policy, see Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981); Fred Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983); and John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

15. See, for example, Eckart Kehr, *Economic Interest, Militarism, and Foreign Policy: Essays on German History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

16. For a discussion contrasting assured destruction and flexible response, see Robert Jervis, "Why Nuclear Superiority Doesn't Matter," *Political Science Quarterly* 94 (Winter 1979-80), pp. 617-33. Still more trenchant criticisms of flexible response can be found in Jervis, *The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy*, and Robert Jervis, "Strategic Theory: What's New and What's True," in this volume. One example of a war-fighting doctrine can be found in Colin Gray, "Nuclear Strategy: The Case for a Theory of Victory," *International Security* 4 (Summer 1979), pp. 54-87.

17. The administration generated estimates suggesting that the Soviets had outspent the United States by almost half a trillion dollars over a decade. See Michael R. Gordon, "Rubles for Defense-Are the Soviets Really Outspending the Pentagon?" *National Journal* 13, no. 15 (April 11, 1981), pp. 601-604.

18. "The President's News Conference, March 31, 1982," in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1982*, book 1, p. 399.

19. Richard Halloran, "Weinberger Calls Nuclear Arms Buildup Prerequisite to Talks," *New York Times*, November 4, 1981, p. A6. For a description of the administration's tortuous discussions on whether to adhere to SALT 11, an accord that the president had labeled "fatally flawed," and the discussions underlying the administration's arms control proposals, see Strobe Talbott, *Deadly Gambits: The Reagan Administration and the Stalemate in Nuclear Arms Control* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984).

20. "The President's News Conference, January 29, 1981," in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1981*, p. 57. Later in the year, the president replied to a question about a softening in his attitude by reiterating this thought and concluded, "Now, I didn't set out to talk harshly about them. I just told the truth." See "The President's News Conference, December 17, 1981," in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1981*, p. 1167. Almost two years later, Reagan was still trying to extricate himself from these comments. See "Reagan on Lenin," *New York Times*, January 22, 1983, p. 7.

21. "Excerpts from the President's Address," *New York Times*, May 18, 1981, p. B7.

22. "Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association

of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida, March 8, 1983,” in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983*, book 1, p. 363.

23. Charles Fenyvesi, “The Man Not Worried by the Bomb,” *Washington Post*, April 11, 1982, p. B1.

24. Bernard Gwertzman, “Allied Contingency Plan Envisions a Warning Atom Blast, Haig Says,” *New York Times*, November 5, 1981, p. 1.

25. The president said, “I could see where you could have the exchange of tactical weapons against troops in the field without it bringing either one of the major powers to pushing the button.” “Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Working Luncheon with Out-of-Town Editors, October 16, 1981,” in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1981*, pp. 956-57. The President’s clarifications did not help; see “The President’s News Conference, November 10, 1981,” in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1981*, p. 1033.

26. Robert Scheer, *With Enough Shovels: Reagan, Bush and Nuclear War* (New York: Random House, 1982), p. 18. That nuclear war could not be survived was one of the ideas that supporters of war-fighting scenarios sought to dispel. For one example, see Edward Teller, “Dangerous Myths about Nuclear Arms,” *Reader’s Digest*, November 1982, pp. 139-44.

27. The European protest movement was linked in part to Reagan rhetoric. See Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *NATO Today: The Alliance in Evolution*, 97th Cong., 2d sess., April 1982, Doc. no. 97-31, p. 79.

28. See Henry Tanner, “Haig, in Europe, Is Pressed to Agree to Nuclear Arms Talks,” *New York Times*, May 3, 1981, p. 18; and John Vinocur, “Reagan Writes Letter to Brezhnev about Talks on Missiles for Europe,” *New York Times*, May 5, 1981, p. 1. Also see Talbott, *Deadly Gambits*, ch. 2.

29. “Subtle Shifts in Image for the President,” *New York Times*, April 20, 1982, p. A22. The quotations can be found in Leslie H. Gelb, “Reagan Says That Peace Depends on Support for U.S. Arms Buildup,” *New York Times*, April 18, 1982, p. 1.

30. Richard Halloran, “Pentagon Draws Up First Strategy for Fighting a Long Nuclear War,” *New York Times*, May 30, 1982, p. 1. Also see, Richard Halloran, “Weinberger Denies U.S. Plans for ‘Protracted’ War,” *New York Times*, June 21, 1982, p. 5; “U.S. Aide Discloses New Policy on Russians,” *New York Times*, June 17, 1982, p. A23; Richard Halloran, “Weinberger Defends His Plan On a Protracted Nuclear War,” *New York Times*, August 10, 1982, p. 8; Richard Halloran, “Weinberger Angered by Reports on War Strategy,” *New York Times*, August 24, 1982, p. B8; and Richard Halloran, “After Detente, the Goal Is to Prevail,” *New York Times*, September 23, 1982, p. B16. Also see Richard Halloran, “Weinberger Said to Offer Reagan Plan to Regain Atomic Superiority,” *New York Times*, August 14, 1981, p. 1.

31. Paul Boyer, “From Activism to Apathy: The American People and Nuclear Weapons, 1963-1980,” *Journal of American History* 70 (March 1984), pp. 821-44.

32. Professor Henry Kendall, quoted in Fox Butterfield, “Anatomy of the nuclear protest,” *New York Times Magazine*, July 11, 1982, p. 17.

33. Mark M. Lowenthal and Judith A. Freedman, “Congress and

the Nuclear Freeze,” in *Congress and Foreign Policy, 1982*, House Committee on Foreign Affairs (1983).

34. “Address Before a Joint Session of the Tennessee Legislature in Nashville, March 15, 1982,” in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1982*, book 1, p. 299; Bernard Gwertzman, “President Rejects A Nuclear Freeze But Calls For Cuts,” *New York Times*, April 1, 1982, p. 1; Hedrick Smith, “The Nuclear Freeze,” *New York Times*, April 1, 1982, p. A23; Steven R. Weisman, “Reagan Calls on Catholics in U.S. To Reject Nuclear Freeze Proposal,” *New York Times*, August 4, 1982, p. 1; Judith Miller, “President Lobbies Against Freeze On Eve of Vote on Nuclear Arms,” *New York Times*, August 5, 1982, p. 6; “President Says Foes of U.S. Have Duped Arms Freeze Group,” *New York Times*, October 5, 1982, p. A22; “The President’s News Conference, November 11, 1982,” in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1982*, book 2, p. 1455; Leslie Maitland, “Sources Are Cited for Charge of Soviet Tie to Arms Freeze,” *New York Times*, November 13, 1982, p. 7; Judith Miller, “President Says Freeze Proponents May Unwittingly Aid the Russians,” *New York Times*, December 11, 1982, p. 9. But see also, Judith Miller, “Soviet Role in Freeze Movement Found Minor,” *New York Times*, December 10, 1982, p. A15.

35. In addition to the president’s numerous attacks mentioned above, see Richard Halloran, “Weinberger Bids Voters Reject a Nuclear Freeze,” *New York Times*, October 29, 1982, p. 22; and Judith Miller, “The Brothers Lehman: Battling Nuclear Freeze,” *New York Times*, November 8, 1982, p. B8.

36. Material in this paragraph is drawn from William R. Anderson, “Freeze proponents send Washington a message, and Washington replies,” *National Journal* 14, no. 45 (November 6, 1982), pp. 1875, 1910. See also Neal R. Peirce and William R. Anderson, “Nuclear Freeze Proponents Mobilize on Local Referenda, House Elections,” *National Journal* 14, no. 38 (September 18, 1982), pp. 1602-1605.

37. Robert Pear, “7 Presidential Contenders Debate Arms Control,” *New York Times*, October 14, 1983, p. B5; Robert Pear, “Democratic Candidates Disagree over Adequacy of Nuclear Force,” *New York Times*, November 6, 1983, p. 26; and Elizabeth Drew, “A Political Journal,” *The New Yorker*, April 2, 1984, pp. 65-66. For the 1984 election campaign, see William A. Henry, *Visions of America: How We Saw the 1984 Election* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1985); Peter Goldman and Tony Fuller, *The Quest for the Presidency 1984* (New York: Bantam Books, 1985); and Elizabeth Drew, *Campaign Journal: The Political Events of 1983-1984* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1985).

38. Declining to criticize the bishops’ letter when it was finally approved, the president argued only that the administration, like the bishops, wanted world peace. See “Question-and-Answer Session with Reporters on Domestic and Foreign Policy Issues, May 4, 1983,” in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983*, book 1, pp. 635-36.

39. Richard Halloran, “Bishops Joining Nuclear Arms Debate,” *New York Times*, October 4, 1982, p. B6; Marjorie Hyer, “Bishops Strengthen Arms Draft,” *Washington Post*, October 26, 1982, p. 1; David Wood, “Proposed Letter by Bishops Asks Nuclear Arms Freeze,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 26, 1982,

p. 1; Richard Halloran, "U.S. Tells Bishops Morality Is Guide on Nuclear Policy," *New York Times*, November 17, 1982, p. 1; Richard Halloran, "Minuet with Catholic Bishops over Nuclear War," *New York Times*, December 16, 1982, p. B16. For an emphatic assertion of continuity, see U.S. Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger, *Annual Report to the Congress*, February 1, 1983, p. 51.

40. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the U.S. adopted a Pastoral Letter on War and Peace in May 1983 by a vote of 328 to 9. For an excellent discussion, see Bruce M. Russett, "Ethical Dilemmas of Nuclear Deterrence," *International Security* 8 (Spring 1984), pp. 36-54. Also see Kenneth A. Briggs, "Roman Catholic Bishops Toughen Stance against Nuclear Weapons," *New York Times*, May 3, 1983, p. 1; Kenneth A. Briggs, "Bishops Endorse Stand Opposed to Nuclear War," *New York Times*, May 4, 1983, p. 1; Paula Herbut, "U.S. Catholic Bishops Adopt Anti-Nuclear Pastoral Letter," *Washington Post*, May 4, 1983, p. 1.

41. Elizabeth Drew, "A Political Journal," *The New Yorker*, May 9, 1983, pp. 48, 70. Also see Elizabeth Drew, *Portrait of an Election: The 1980 Presidential Campaign* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981).

42. In one address, the president emphasized that the arms control proposals put forward by his administration went "far beyond the sterile idea of a freeze." See "Remarks at the Centennial Meeting of the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus in Hartford, Connecticut, August 3, 1982," in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1982*, book 2, p. 1013.

43. For an analysis of the administration's failure at the end of 1982, see Steven R. Weissman, "White House Setback on MX Had Diverse Roots," *New York Times*, December 17, 1982, p. 21. Also see Richard Halloran, "The Long Search For MX Base Plan," *New York Times*, May 12, 1983, p. A19; and Robert C. Gray, "Congress, Arms Control, and Weapons Modernization," in *Congress and Foreign Policy, 1983*, House Committee on Foreign Affairs (1984), pp. 86-109.

44. Hedrick Smith, "Basing of MX in Minuteman Silos Expected as Panel's Interim Plan," *New York Times*, March 23, 1983, p. 1.

45. Leslie H. Gelb, "Aides Urged Reagan to Postpone Antimissile Ideas for More Study," *New York Times*, March 25, 1983, p. 1. When asked how carefully the president's proposal had been thought through, one administration official said, "I'd put it somewhere between a cocktail napkin and a menu." See Elizabeth Drew, "A Political Journal," *The New Yorker*, May 9, 1983, p. 49.

46. Meg Greenfield, "Calling 'Buck Rogers,'" *Newsweek*, April 4, 1983, p. 88.

47. Elizabeth Drew, "A Political Journal," *The New Yorker*, May 9, 1983, p. 50.

48. Joseph Sobran, "Who Can Object to Obsolescing Nukes?" *Washington Times*, April 4, 1983, p. C-2.

49. William J. Broad, "Reagan's 'Star Wars' Bid: Many Ideas Converging," *New York Times*, March 4, 1985, p. 1. Also see Patrick E. Tyler, "How Edward Teller Learned to Love the Nuclear-pumped X-ray Laser,"

Washington Post, April 3, 1983, p. D1. In the wake of Reagan's speech, White House aides argued that the president had thought of space-based defenses much earlier, perhaps even when he was governor of California. See David Hoffman and Lou Cannon, "President Overruled Advisers on Announcing Defense Plan," *Washington Post*, March 26, 1983, p. 1, and "Rethinking the Unthinkable," *Newsweek*, April 4, 1983, pp. 16-18.

50. "Reagan for the Defense," *Time*, April 4, 1983, pp. 8-14, 19.

51. Richard Halloran, "U.S. Plans Big Spending Increase for Military Operations in Space," *New York Times*, October 17, 1982, p. 1. See the table on strategic defense research budgets in Pat Towell, "Reagan, Critics Square Off on Space Weaponry," *Congressional Quarterly*, April 14, 1984, p. 838. Also see Robert Jastrow, "The New Soviet Arms Buildup in Space," *New York Times Magazine*, October 3, 1982, p. 100; Richard Halloran, "U.S. to Increase Military Funds For Space Uses," *New York Times*, September 29, 1982, p. 1; Philip M. Boffey, "Pressures Are Increasing for Arms Race in Space," *New York Times*, October 18, 1982, p. 1; John Noble Wilford, "Military's Future in Space: A Matter of War or Peace," *New York Times*, October 19, 1982, p. 1.

52. As one skeptical official put it, "This is the President's program. We can't tell the president that he's got a nutty idea." See Fred Kaplan, "A War in the Stars?" *Boston Globe*, October 16, 1983, p. 25.

53. Steven V. Roberts, "Leader of MX Panel Says Politics Played Key Role in Decision," *New York Times*, April 19, 1983, p. 1.

54. Steven R. Roberts, "'Window of Opportunity' in Debate on MX Missile," *New York Times*, May 15, 1983, p. 4E; Francis X. Clines, "Is It Bipartisanship or Is It Symbiosis?" *New York Times*, May 16, 1983, p. A14; Leslie H. Gelb, "Target of 'Flexibility' Is Congress, Not the Kremlin," *New York Times*, June 12, 1983, sec. 4, p. 1.

55. Elizabeth Drew, "A Political Journal," *The New Yorker*, June 20, 1983, p. 39.

56. When William Clark left the position of national security adviser, he warned his colleagues not to allow the upcoming presidential campaign to jeopardize bipartisan support for the president's arms control initiative; see "Unusual and Unlikely," *New York Times*, October 14, 1983, p. A18.

57. The congressional rationale for proceeding with the MX in the spring of 1984 was the opposite of its reasoning in the spring of 1983. See Elizabeth Drew, "A Political Journal," *The New Yorker*, May 28, 1984, p. 119. Also see Robert C. Gray, "Congress, MX, and Arms Control," in *Congress and Foreign Policy, 1984*, House Committee on Foreign Affairs (1985), pp. 48-69.

58. When things are going well, as with the economy in 1984, politicians emphasize current success and avoid discussing the future. Such political strategies parallel a lawyer's rule, "When the law is against you, argue the facts. When the facts are against you, argue the law." See Paul Dickson, *The Official Rules* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1978), pp. 103-104.

59. *Congressional Record*, 99th Cong., 1st sess., vol. 131, no. 72, June 4, 1985, p. S7353.

60. "Talk of the Town," *The New Yorker*, November 18, 1985, pp. 39-40.

61. Mark Hertsgaard, "What Became of the Freeze?" *Mother Jones*, June 1985, pp. 44-7. Freeze leaders, not unlike others who no longer find themselves at the heart of national discourse, blame the media for their disappearance from the political scene.

62. Brad Knickerbocker, "The debate over strategic defense," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 17, 1984, p. 1; Brad Knickerbocker, "Writing a new and contentious script for nuclear deterrence," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 21, 1984, p. 1; R. Jeffrey Smith, "Weapons Bureaucracy Spurns Star Wars Goal," *Science* 224 (April 6, 1984): 32-4. See also Admiral James D. Watkins, "The Strategic Defense Initiative: Keeping Teeth in the Policy of Deterrence," *Defense* 85, March 1985, p. 14.

63. R. Jeffrey Smith, "Star Wars Chief Takes Aim at Critics," *Science* 225 (August 10, 1984): 600.

64. Charles Krauthammer, "Will Star Wars Kill Arms Control?" *The New Republic*, January 21, 1985, p. 12.

65. Henry A. Kissinger, "Should We Try to Defend against Russia's Missiles?" *Washington Post*, September 23, 1984, p. C-8. See also Zbigniew Brzezinski, "From Arms Control to Controlled Security," *Wall Street Journal*, July 10, 1984, p. 36; Bill King, "Brzezinski supports Reagan on 'star wars' " *Washington Times*, January 21, 1985, p. 4; Zbigniew Brzezinski, Robert Jastrow, and Max M. Kampelman, "Defense in Space Is Not 'Star Wars,' " *New York Times Magazine*, January 27, 1985, p. 28.

66. See, for example, U.S. President, *The President's Strategic Defense Initiative*, January 1985, pp. i, 3, 7, 9; see also U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, *The President's Strategic Defense Initiative*, March 1985. Critics complained that this alternative formulation was "not what the President has been talking about." See William Proxmire, "Why Jastrow, Brzezinski and Kampelman are Wrong on 'Star Wars,' " *Congressional Record*, January 29, 1985, p. S737.

67. On the Senate floor, Senator J. Bennett Johnston, Jr. (Democrat, Louisiana) asked if "anybody of any substance believe[s] that speech, believe[s] the essential gravemen [sic] of that speech? The answer . . . is absolutely not. I have not heard a serious scientist yet who has said you could put an astrodome over the United States. . . . Is there anybody here . . . who will get up on this floor and say the President was right that we have any possibility of making nuclear weapons obsolete? Of course not. Of course not." *Congressional Record*, 99th Cong., 1st sess., vol. 131, no. 72, June 4, 1985, p. 57353. For the array of reasons provided in support of SDI, see the list provided in Charles L. Glaser, "Do We Want the Missile Defenses We Can Build?" *International Security* 10 (Summer 1985), pp. 25-57. Some have even reraised the old arguments of supporting SDI to deal with small nuclear powers. See Michael D. Intriligator, "What 'Star Wars' Is Intended to Prevent," letter to the editor, *New York Times*, March 14, 1985, p. A26. The need to deal with small nuclear powers had been invoked as the cover story for McNamara's decision in the middle 1960s to deploy an ABM. See Morton H. Halperin, "The Decision to Deploy the ABM: Bureaucratic and Domestic Politics in the Johnson Administration," *World Politics* 25 (October 1972), pp. 62-95.

68. Bill Outlaw, "Vance backs 'star wars,' flays deployment," *Washington Times*, February 5, 1985, p. 6B.

69. In analyzing the sources of military doctrine, a consideration of political factors is not all that should be added to the more typically cited elements of technology and balance of power. See Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984); and Jack L. Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984).

70. In other policy domains, it is possible to experiment in order to assess different arguments. This luxury does not exist in the nuclear world. Robert Jervis argues that the inability to resolve issues empirically enlarges the role of beliefs. See *The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy*, pp. 37-40. In "Strategic Theory: What's New and What's True," however, Jervis does distinguish valid from invalid ideas and bemoans the incentives for academics to say something original even if false. He also discusses why we should expect intellectual progress to be slight and slow. Yet the academic pressures he mentions do not create dissensus in other fields, and debates about the requisites of deterrence will continue because others do not agree with his specific characterizations of valid and invalid ideas.

71. Elizabeth Drew, "A Reporter in Washington," *The New Yorker*, November 5, 1985, p. 142.

72. Elizabeth Drew, "Letter from Washington," *The New Yorker*, October 27, 1986, p. 134. In addition to a leakproof defense shield, the official's list of unreal elements in discussions of arms control also included the president's offer to share SDI technology with the Soviets and the discussion at the Reykjavik summit about the elimination of all ballistic missiles.