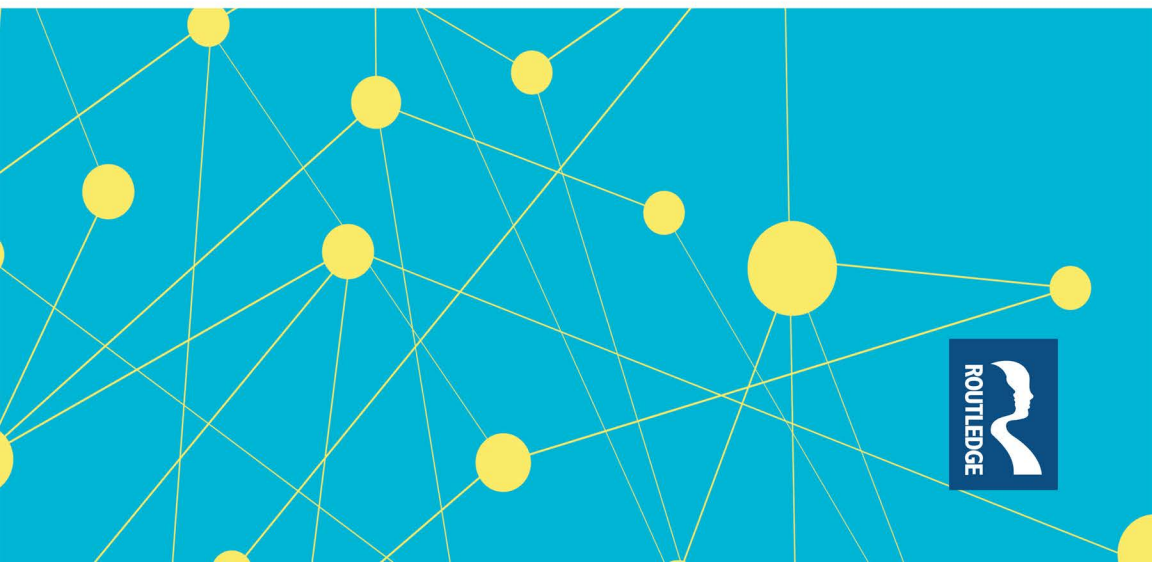
Cold War History

NATO AND THE STRATEGIC DEFENCE INITIATIVE

A TRANSATLANTIC HISTORY OF THE STAR WARS PROGRAMME

Edited by
Luc-André Brunet



ROUTLEDGE

NATO and the Strategic Defence Initiative

This book explores the largely neglected issue of responses to the US Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI, or the 'Star Wars' missile defence programme) across NATO.

The chapters here explore the reactions of different Western allies to the announcement of the SDI in 1983 and especially the 1985 invitation to participate. While existing studies have explored the origins of the American programme and the role it may have played in ending the Cold War, this volume breaks new ground by considering the impact of the SDI on transatlantic relations in the 1980s. Based on newly available archival sources, this volume re-evaluates the responses of eight NATO member-state governments, as well as the Soviet leadership, to the SDI. In addition to looking at 'top-down' governmental reactions, the volume also explores the 'bottom-up' response to the SDI of civil society and peace activists on both sides of the Atlantic. The volume examines how the American initiative – derisively named 'Star Wars' by its detractors – provoked a crisis in relations with its allies during the final decade of the Cold War and how those tensions within NATO were ultimately resolved.

This book will be of much interest to students of Cold War history, strategic studies, foreign policy, and international history.

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1 Introduction

The Strategic Defence Initiative and the Atlantic Alliance in the 1980s

Luc-André Brunet

Shortly after leaving office, Ronald Reagan claimed that the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), an anti-missile shield he first proposed in 1983 as a means of protecting the United States from nuclear attack, was 'the single most important reason, on the United States' side, for the historical breakthroughs that were to occur during the next five years in the quest for peace and a better relationship with the Soviet Union'.[1] This assessment was echoed by Margaret Thatcher after the collapse of the USSR, as she asserted that 'looking back, it is now clear to me that Ronald Reagan's original decision on SDI was the single most important of his presidency'.[2] Few would have made such claims when Reagan first adumbrated the SDI in March 1983. Indeed, Thatcher's Foreign Secretary, Geoffrey Howe, publicly derided the initiative as 'a new Maginot Line of the twenty-first century', and the term 'Star Wars' was used ubiquitously and unflatteringly to refer to the seemingly fanciful plan.[3] Such misgivings about the American project were widely shared across NATO capitals in the 1980s, but to date these international responses to the SDI have been relatively unexplored by historians. This volume uses new archival sources and innovative methodological approaches to provide a rigorous study of allied reactions to the Strategic Defence Initiative.

There is a considerable literature on the SDI, with historiographical debates tending to focus on how far the SDI contributed to the end of the Cold War.[4] Some historians have argued that the SDI constituted an insurmountable economic and technological challenge to the Soviet Union: unable to produce an SDI of their own yet equally unwilling to leave themselves undefended, the initiative forced Gorbachev to the negotiating table. In this interpretation, the SDI was pivotal in bringing about the INF Treaty of December 1987 and ultimately the end of the Cold War itself.[5] Others have advanced the more nuanced argument that while the SDI had some influence on Soviet policies, it was clearly a secondary factor in bringing about arms control breakthroughs and the end of the Cold War.[6] Indeed, the SDI proved to be an insuperable barrier that scuppered a possible arms control agreement between Reagan and Gorbachev at the 1986 Reykjavik Summit.[7] Meanwhile, one recent study of the SDI has advanced a reinterpretation of the end of the Cold War by arguing that Reagan pursued an ultimately unsuccessful grand strategy of 'cocreating' a new world order based on superpower cooperation and

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the elimination of nuclear weapons precisely by sharing SDI technology with Moscow.[8]

For all the research published on the influence of Star Wars on superpower relations, its impact on transatlantic relations within NATO has been relatively neglected. The main book-length study of Western European responses to the SDI remains an edited volume from 1987, written by political scientists without access to the relevant archives.[9] While some more recent chapter-length studies have considered the responses of NATO governments, these inevitably remain brief and are not based on the wide range of archival materials now available to researchers.[10] Histories of NATO have similarly tended to overlook the SDI.[11]

This volume breaks new ground in three important respects. The chapters in this volume are based on rigorous archival research with newly declassified documents, many consulted for the first time specifically for this volume. This allows us to re-evaluate earlier accounts which relied on published sources, memoirs, and newspapers. While restrictions in some national archives continue to pose obstacles to historical research, many of the authors have successfully used a multi-archival approach, meticulously drawing on international archives to fill in gaps left in specific national collections and thereby providing new insights.

This book also makes an important contribution in its geographical scope. Existing accounts of 'European' responses tend to limit themselves to two or three countries, namely Britain, West Germany, and France.[12] This volume not only reassesses these 'big three' of European NATO member states but examines the responses of eight NATO governments to the American initiative. By looking at a much more extensive array of allies – large and small, European and North American – as well as Soviet assessments of the SDI, this volume offers the most comprehensive evaluation to date of international responses to Star Wars.

Finally, in terms of methodology, this book goes beyond the usual top-down approach to Cold War political history, which focuses on national leaders and policymakers, by extending the analysis to the responses of civil society and peace movements on both sides of the Atlantic. Existing literature on peace and anti-nuclear activism in NATO countries tends to focus on the issue of the 'Euromissiles'. As a result, there are relatively few accounts of peace activism covering the period after the 'Hot Autumn' of 1983 and the beginning of INF deployment in Europe towards the end of that year.[13] Even Lawrence Wittner's magisterial three-volume study of the nuclear disarmament movement only mentions in passing that peace movements in some European countries opposed Star Wars.[14] By using new archival sources to analyse how anti-nuclear groups responded to the SDI, this volume highlights that they remained important actors well into the mid-1980s and opens up avenues for further research. It also offers a novel discussion of the changing discourse around the SDI and nuclear weapons in the final years of the Cold War.[15]

By adopting these innovative approaches, this volume deepens our understanding of responses to Star Wars within NATO. However, it does not purport to offer a definitive international history of the SDI. The United States invited countries outside of NATO – notably Israel, Japan, and Australia – to participate in the SDI

as well, but these remain beyond the scope of this volume.[16] Further research on Eastern European and Chinese responses to the SDI remains to be done, for example, as does the role of Star Wars in peace movements and civil society in other NATO countries. Nevertheless, this book provides the most thorough account to date of responses to the SDI across NATO and its impact on transatlantic relations, and we hope it stimulates further research into the international dimensions of the SDI.

Star Wars and Transatlantic Relations in the 1980s

Although successive American administrations in the 1960s and 1970s had explored ballistic missile defence (BMD), the SDI was unveiled rather unexpectedly by President Reagan in a televised address on 23 March 1983.[17] Crucially, he suggested that the SDI offered a means of transcending the strategy of deterrence and mutually assured destruction (MAD): 'What if free people could live secure in the knowledge . . . that we could intercept and destroy strategic ballistic missiles before they reached our own soil or that of our allies?' Acknowledging that such a defensive system 'will take years, probably decades', he called on the American scientific community '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'.[18]

Reagan's address came during a period of heightened tensions between the United States and its NATO allies, on the one hand, and the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, on the other, often referred to as the 'Second Cold War'. With the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 generally seen as marking the final nail in the coffin of détente, the election of Ronald Reagan in November 1980 added to an already febrile international environment.[19] As president, Reagan pursued a build-up of the American nuclear arsenal and frequently used strident rhetoric against the Soviet Union. Indeed, just two weeks before unveiling his plans for the SDI, Reagan infamously denounced the USSR as 'the evil empire' in a speech to the National Association of Evangelicals, prompting some journalists flippantly to refer to Reagan's 'Darth Vader speech'. With the SDI address of 23 March, American politicians and journalists immediately likened the initiative to a fantastical scheme from the Star Wars films. The morning after Reagan's speech, the *Washington Post* quoted Democratic Senator Ted Kennedy dismissing the initiative as 'misleading Red-scare tactics and reckless Star Wars schemes'. The term 'Star Wars', which implied that the Hollywood actor-turned-president was pursuing a fanciful project better suited to a sci-fi film, quickly caught on and became synonymous with the SDI, much to Reagan's exasperation.[20]

For most observers in NATO capitals, Reagan's address did not prompt much serious discussion of the proposed 'Strategic Defence Initiative', and no immediate policy response was formulated. In March 1983, the looming deployment of Cruise and Pershing II missiles in Western Europe, scheduled to begin that autumn, remained the focus of governments and anti-nuclear campaigners alike. With the first of these 'Euromissiles' successfully deployed from autumn

1983, and the formal establishment of the SDI Organisation within the Pentagon in spring 1984, it became clear that Star Wars would remain on Washington's agenda, and NATO governments began to consider the SDI more seriously. Reagan's landslide re-election in November 1984 further highlighted that the SDI would endure. Already in December 1984, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher discussed her concerns over the SDI with Reagan at Camp David, where the president agreed with a set of four points advanced by Thatcher which went some way in assuaging Britain's (and other allies') apprehensions.[21]

By early 1985, it appeared that the SDI would remain purely a research programme, and one carried out solely by the United States in American laboratories. With Reagan himself admitting that it could take decades to develop effective defensive systems under the SDI, the issue was not seen as especially pressing. This changed dramatically in March 1985 when, in the margins of a NATO Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) meeting in Luxembourg, American Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger issued his NATO counterparts an unexpected invitation to participate directly in the SDI research programme. Moreover, the surprise request came with a demand that governments respond within 60 days, which was denounced in several NATO capitals as an ultimatum. Despite the strained atmosphere at the Luxembourg NPG, the NATO defence ministers managed to paper over their differences in their communiqué, which affirmed that:

> We support the United States research programme into these technologies. . . . This research, conducted within the terms of the ABM Treaty, is in NATO's security interest and should continue. In this context, we welcome the United States invitation for Allies to consider participation in the research programme.[22]

While few NATO governments responded definitively within the 60-day timeframe – which Weinberger finally withdrew in the face of Allied criticism – it nevertheless forced NATO governments to urgently confront the question of whether and in what form to participate in the SDI. Furthermore, the March 1985 invitation placed the SDI firmly on the radar of the public across NATO, spurring public debates and prompting anti-nuclear organisations to mobilise against government participation in Star Wars.

With the qualified public support agreed by NATO allies in the Luxembourg NPG communiqué, the Reagan administration was able to conclude that 'our allies understand the military context in which the Strategic Defense Initiative was established and support the SDI research program'.[23] Yet this public show of allied solidarity belied significant reservations held by many NATO governments about the SDI, and the strain this placed on relations between the United States and its Allies during an already tense period. Neither the announcement of the SDI in March 1983 nor the invitation almost exactly two years later for NATO governments to formally join the research programme was preceded by any meaningful consultation with NATO allies. The Reagan years saw a number of important divergences and disagreements between the United States and its

NATO allies, and the SDI posed a further challenge to transatlantic relations.[24] Beyond allied annoyance at unilateral American actions – hardly unique to the Reagan administration – the SDI raised a number of specific concerns among the allies which informed their response to the US project. Indeed, having spent years facing down burgeoning peace movements and insisting upon the necessity of INF deployment to strengthen deterrence and maintain peace, many NATO governments questioned how far the SDI and Reagan's stated aim of making the Euromissiles and other nuclear weapons 'impotent and obsolete' risked undermining their position on INF deployment and exposing them to further political challenges domestically. The reactions to the SDI on both sides of the Atlantic are analysed in this volume.

This book is divided into four thematic sections. The first part consists of a pair of chapters that consider the SDI from the perspective of the superpowers. James Graham Wilson explains President Reagan's motivations for pursuing the Strategic Defence Initiative and the impact the initiative had on superpower relations and the end of the Cold War. Based on a thorough analysis of the American archives, Wilson concludes that the SDI made a positive contribution to bringing about the INF and START treaties, or at least did not impede such arms control breakthroughs. Svetlana Savranskaya provides a contrasting view based on her detailed reading of the Soviet archives. Her chapter traces the evolution of Moscow's perceptions of the SDI, from initial fears that it posed an existential threat to the Soviet Union to ultimately dismissing Star Wars as unfeasible and innocuous. She concludes that the SDI in fact slowed down the process of disarmament and delayed the end of the Cold War. These two rich chapters deepen our understanding and advance the debate over the broader importance of the SDI for superpower relations and the end of the Cold War.

Following this discussion of the superpowers, Parts 2 and 3 of the volume focus on the responses of eight different NATO governments, and the impact of the SDI on transatlantic relations in the 1980s. Part 2 deals with countries which ultimately opted to join the SDI research programme. In his study of the United Kingdom, Edoardo Andreoni traces the evolution of the Thatcher government's views on the SDI. Despite significant differences of opinion within the Cabinet, Thatcher's policy of cooperating with the United States on the SDI to try to influence its development prevailed. While Thatcher successfully shaped some aspects of the SDI at her meeting with Reagan at Camp David in December 1984, British hopes for lucrative contracts from the SDI proved to be largely elusive. Andreas Lutsch's chapter examines the response of the Federal Republic of Germany's government to the SDI. He shows how Bonn balanced the competing interests of *Westbindung* and preserving close relations with the United States, including American nuclear protection for the FRG, with the aim of maintaining East-West stability. This ultimately led Chancellor Kohl to endorse the SDI as a means of influencing its development, particularly with a view to diminishing any East-West destabilisation that the SDI might cause. In her chapter on Italy, Marilena Gala examines the Italian government's evolving position on the SDI. She highlights the extent to which Rome sought to coordinate its response with

its European partners and how the Craxi government saw participation in the SDI research programme as a means of both gaining access to high technologies and influencing the American programme. While these three chapters astutely detail the differences of opinion within these governments, and how their support for the SDI was not unconditional, they together provide a nuanced account of why these allies sought to be involved with Reagan's initiative. Taken together, these chapters underscore how certain key considerations – the hope of exerting influence on a potentially disruptive American initiative and the prospect of gaining access to sensitive high technologies and profitable contracts – informed all three positive decisions.[25]

Part 3 of the volume adopts a similar approach to evaluate the responses of NATO governments which ultimately rejected Weinberger's March 1985 invitation to join the SDI research programme. In her chapter on France, Ilaria Parisi explains how Mitterrand's refusal to join the SDI was informed by the desire to maintain French and European independence, in both strategic and technological terms. The SDI threatened the strategic stability provided by deterrence and posed specific problems for the two European Nuclear Weapons States. Whereas the UK addressed this by seeking close cooperation with Washington in the hopes of being able to influence the SDI, France instead rejected the SDI outright. Regarding technology, France again deviated from the governments discussed in Part 2, concluding that rather than participating in the SDI in order to gain access to American high technologies, France and Europe should launch their own research programme, EUREKA, to preclude enduring technological dependence on the United States.[26] While the French reaction amounted to a fundamental rejection of the SDI concept, the Canadian and Dutch governments instead responded with a 'polite no', as Luc-André Brunet and Ruud van Dijk demonstrate in their respective chapters. In Canada's case, Ottawa concluded that Canadian involvement in the SDI would bring no considerable economic or technological advantages to Canada and would likely stoke anti-Americanism at home. As such, Prime Minister Mulroney's carefully managed refusal to join the SDI programme was politically useful, as it allowed him to present himself domestically as a defender of Canadian sovereignty, which in turn enabled him to better pursue his priority in bilateral relations with Washington, namely free trade talks that would deepen economic ties with the United States. The Netherlands, for its part, similarly concluded that economic, technological, or even diplomatic advantages of joining the SDI research programme were trifling and that declining to join 'without prejudice' posed minimal strains on relations with Washington. The Hague also sought a coordinated Western European response to the SDI and concluded that to avoid a technological divide between the United States and Europe, the latter would need to develop further its own high-tech capabilities outside of the SDI. Turning to NATO's northern flank, Jakob Linnet Schmidt examines the reactions of both the Danish and Norwegian governments to the SDI. The coalition governments in both countries viewed the SDI negatively and feared it could prompt a new arms race. The election of a social democratic-led government in Oslo and the exceptional parliamentary situation in Copenhagen led to a shift away from 'low-voiced

scepticism' to both countries adding footnotes to NATO communiqués pertaining to the SDI to express their disagreement with the initiative.[27] Taken together, these chapters underline how the negative responses to the invitation to participate in the SDI research programme were the result of a wide range of assessments and motivations among different NATO allies. Opposition to joining the SDI research programme brought together not only the 'usual suspects' of member states such as Denmark and Greece, whose governments had expressed reservations to INF deployment, and France, with its independent foreign and defence policies within NATO, but also members that were generally supportive of American and NATO policies, such as the Netherlands and Canada.[28]

Having examined the high-level reactions of eight NATO governments, the final section of this volume focuses on civil society and public debates around Star Wars. Beginning with the United States, Angela Santese's chapter reveals the influence of the American Nuclear Freeze Campaign on Reagan's SDI speech and explores how the launch of Star Wars was a conscious attempt to counter the burgeoning peace movement in the United States. Turning to the United Kingdom, Jonathan Hogg analyses mass media, anti-nuclear activism, and popular culture to explore the range of reactions to the SDI in British civil society. He argues that Star Wars became a useful 'sociotechnical imaginary' which, helpfully for Britain as a nuclear power, presented the SDI as a moral and peaceful project by which technology could transcend the threat of nuclear war. Patrick Burke then analyses the anti-SDI activities of two anti-nuclear organisations: the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) in the UK and the transnational European Nuclear Disarmament (END). In addition to examining their intellectual case against the SDI, Burke explains why it proved far more challenging to mobilise public opposition to Star Wars than had been the case with protests against INF deployment. The volume concludes with Lawrence Freedman's perceptive and engaging account of the evolution of SDI debates among the 'commentariat', in which his was a prominent voice. He outlines why many proponents of INF deployment were starkly critical of the SDI, based on doubts over its feasibility and suspicions that it was surreptitiously part of a first-strike strategy.

In the context of highly controversial INF deployment in Western Europe, Reagan's March 1983 Star Wars speech and especially Weinberger's invitation two years later for allies to join its research programme added new tensions to relations between the United States and its NATO partners. Even steadfast supporters of Reagan such as Margaret Thatcher and Brian Mulroney privately fumed that Washington had been 'offensive', 'insensitive', and had 'handled its Allies clumsily' with the SDI.[29] As we have seen, the question of SDI participation also caused very public divisions among the Allies. Given the discord provoked by Star Wars, it is worth asking why such tensions did not worsen into an even deeper crisis for NATO. The Atlantic Alliance had spent the previous years almost obsessively seeking to avoid any semblance of disunity in the run-up to INF deployment. While the Euromissile Crisis was seen as serious test for the alliance, it was a test that NATO ultimately passed, with INF deployment going ahead from the autumn of 1983. The key difference between INF deployment and the SDI,

however, is that the former was fundamentally an initiative devised and undertaken by the Atlantic Alliance as a whole. Indeed, the Dual Track Decision adopted by NATO in December 1979 was prompted by European, particularly West German, demands, and went ahead with five European member states agreeing to host INF.[30] The SDI, by contrast, was unambiguously an American initiative. Only in March 1985, fully two years after the scheme was first outlined by Reagan, were allies invited to join its research programme, and despite some pressure exerted on allies to take part, a 'polite no' had no deleterious effects on relations with Washington. As such, it was never seen as a test for the Alliance the way INF deployment had been, which enabled allies to arrive at their own decisions regarding the SDI. While governments in Rome and The Hague were especially keen to arrive at a coordinated European position on the SDI through the revived WEU, such efforts came to nought, and Italy and the Netherlands ultimately arrived at opposite decisions on taking part in the SDI research programme.

One further, striking difference between INF deployment and the SDI is the contrast between the level of public opposition to the two schemes. The former rallied millions of citizens across NATO countries to protest the stationing of the Euromissiles, yet mobilisation against the SDI was on a drastically smaller scale. While Reagan remained a widely distrusted and even vilified figure among many on both sides of the Atlantic, a number of factors converged to ensure that mass opposition to the SDI was relatively subdued. As a research programme that might, after years or decades, yield systems that would then be implemented, the SDI did not seem to pose an imminent threat to European citizens. When British Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe disparaged the SDI as 'a new Maginot Line of the twenty-first century', this reflected the understanding that such systems would not be in place for years to come. This contrasted markedly with the impending deployment of new nuclear weapons in Western Europe, to which activists reacted with corresponding urgency. Furthermore, Star Wars lacked an obvious site of protest.[31] Deployment sites for INF provided opponents with specific sites for different forms of protest, such as peace camps at Greenham Common, UK or Comiso, Italy, and human chains stretching from Neu Ulm to Stuttgart. Protesting against 'space weapons', by contrast, was hobbled by the absence of a palpable location where protest could be focused. Finally, as the chapters in the final section of this volume explain, the public debates around the SDI were often more complex and nuanced than the question of INF deployment, not least as Reagan's stated objective in launching the initiative was to a make nuclear weapons 'impotent and obsolete' – to usher in a nuclear-free world. This made it more difficult for peace groups to articulate clear messages against Star Wars that resonated broadly.

Svetlana Savranskaya describes how the Soviet leadership initially feared that the SDI was an attempt by the United States to gain strategic superiority, undermining deterrence and mutual vulnerability, thereby posing an existential threat and thwarting a potential arms control breakthrough. Yet by 1987, Moscow had largely learned to live with the SDI. The chapters in this volume show that a similar trajectory, from anxiety to acquiescence, can be seen in many NATO capitals

as well. Allied governments expressed serious reservations and exasperation about Star Wars, which they feared risked undermining deterrence and the ABM Treaty, and the initiative placed new strains on allied relations during an already difficult period. Within a year of Weinberger's invitation and the hostile responses this initially provoked among many Allies, however, the SDI had largely receded as a source of discord within the Alliance. Collectively, by analysing the reactions to the Strategic Defence Initiative across NATO – from high-level policymakers to civil society and peace organisations – the chapters that follow allow us to reassess the role of the SDI on transatlantic relations during the decisive final years of the Cold War.

Notes

1 Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (New York: Threshold, 1990), 548.
2 Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London: Harper, 1993), 463.
3 'Britain Questions "Star Wars" Plan', 16 March 1985, *The New York Times*. On the use of the term 'Star Wars', see Anette Stimmer, 'Star Wars or Strategic Defence Initiative: What's in a Name?' *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 4:4 (October 2019), 430–447.
4 The best history of the SDI on the American side remains Frances FitzGerald's *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001).
5 See, for example, Peter Schweizer, *Victory: The Reagan Administration's Secret Strategy That Hastened the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1994) and Mira Duric, *The Strategic Defence Initiative: US Policy and the Soviet Union* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2003).
6 Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Raymond Garthoff, 'The US Role in Winding Down the Cold War, 1980–1990' in *The Last Decade of the Cold War: From Conflict Escalation to Conflict Transformation*, (ed) Olav Njølstad (London: Routledge, 2004). Pavel Podvig has argued that SDI's influence on Soviet policymaking in particular was limited: Podvig, 'Did Star Wars Help End the Cold War? Soviet Response to the SDI Program' *Sciences & Global Security*, 25:1 (2017), 3–27.
7 Jonathan Hunt and David Reynolds, 'Geneva, Reykjavik, Washington, and Moscow, 1985–8' in *Transcending the Cold War: Summits, Statecraft, and the Dissolution of Bipolarity in Europe, 1970–1990*, (eds) Kristina Spohr and David Reynolds (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 151–179, especially 160–165.
8 Ralph Dietl, *The Strategic Defense Initiative. Ronald Reagan, NATO Europe, and the Nuclear Space Talks, 1981–1988* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018). James Graham Wilson, by contrast, argues compellingly that 'grand strategies did not shape the end of the Cold War' in his excellent *The Triumph of Improvisation: Gorbachev's Adaptability, Reagan's Engagement, and the End of the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), 198.
9 Hans Günter Brauch (ed), *Star Wars and European Defence: Implications for Europe* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1987). Specific chapters consider reactions in the UK, France, West Germany, and the Benelux.
10 Sean Kalic, 'Reagan's SDI Announcement and the European Reaction: Diplomacy in the Last Decade of the Cold War' in *The Crisis of Détente in Europe: From Helsinki to Gorbachev, 1975–1985*, (ed) Leopoldo Nuti (London: Routledge, 2009), 99–109; Philipp Gassert, 'Did Transatlantic Drift Help European Integration? The Euromissiles Crisis, the Strategic Defense Initiative, and the Quest for Political Cooperation' in *European Integration and the Atlantic Community in the 1980s*, (eds) Kiran Klaus

Patel and Kenneth Weisbrode (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 154–176, specifically 171–175.

11 No mention of the SDI is included in histories of NATO including Lawrence Kaplan, *The Long Entanglement: NATO's First Fifty Years* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999) and Timothy Andrews Sayle's excellent, *Enduring Alliance: A History of NATO and the Postwar Global Order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019). Kaplan's *NATO Divided, NATO United: The Evolution of an Alliance* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004) includes a brief discussion of the SDI, pp. 95–96.

12 This is the case with the publications by Brauch, Kalic, and Gassert earlier. See also Edoardo Andreoni's excellent *Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative and Transatlantic Relations, 1983–1986* (Unpublished DPhil thesis: Cambridge, 2017).

13 On peace activism in Europe and INF deployment, a good starting point is Leopoldo Nuti, Frédéric Bozo, Marie-Pierre Rey and Bernd Rother (eds), *The Euromissile Crisis and the End of the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015); Eckart Conze, Martin Klimke and Jeremy Varon (eds), *Nuclear Threats, Nuclear Fear and the Cold War of the 1980s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). One recent volume that includes studies of peace groups after INF deployment, specifically their response to the 1987 INF Treaty, is Philipp Gassert, Tim Geiger and Hermann Wentker (eds), *The INF Treaty of 1987: A Reappraisal* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020).

14 Lawrence Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb. Volume Three: Toward Nuclear Abolition, 1971 to the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 336–337. Wittner does discuss opposition to the SDI within the United States itself, but not elsewhere across NATO. See Wittner, 341–346.

15 On public discourse on the SDI in the United States, see William Knoblauch, 'Selling "Star Wars" in American Mass Media' in *Media and the Cold War in the 1980s*, (eds) Henrik G. Bastiansen, Martin Klimke and Rolf Werenskjold (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2019), 19–42.

16 For a recent evaluation of Israel and the SDI, see Or Rabinowitz, '"Arrow" Mythology Revisited: The Curious Case of the Reagan Administration, Israel and SDI Cooperation' *International History Review*, published online March 2021, DOI:10.1080/07075332.2021.1883094. See also Peter J. Westwick, 'The International History of the Strategic Defense Initiative: American Influence and Economic Competition in the Late Cold War' *Centaurus*, 52:4 (November 2010), 338–351.

17 On earlier BMD projects, see James Cameron, *The Double Game: The Demise of America's First Missile Defense System and the Rise of Strategic Arms Limitation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). See also the discussion of the predecessors to the SDI in James Graham Wilson's chapter in this volume.

18 'Address to the Nation on Defense and National Security', 23 March 1983, www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/address-nation-defense-and-national-security.

19 For a recent study of how dialogue between the superpowers nevertheless continued during this tense period, see Simon Miles, *Engaging the Evil Empire: Washington, Moscow, and the Beginning of the End of the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020).

20 Kennedy was quoted in a *Washington Post* article by Lou Cannon, 'President Seeks Futuristic Defense Against Missiles', 24 March 1983. The third Star Wars film, 'Return of the Jedi', was released in cinemas that spring and became the highest grossing film of 1983. Frances FitzGerald observes that the SDI resembled a number of fictional schemes from Hollywood movies, including the 1940 film *Murder in the Air* starring none other than Ronald Reagan. See FitzGerald, *Way Out There in the Blue*, 22–23.

21 Specifically, Reagan affirmed that the United States was not seeking strategic superiority with the SDI, that the deployment of any SDI-related systems would be the subject of international negotiation, that the aim of the SDI was to enhance deterrence, and that arms control remained the aim of East-West negotiations. 'Record of a Meeting between the

Prime Minister and President Reagan at Camp David on 22 December 1984 at 1030 Hours' https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/22548-document-01-thatcher-reagan-memcon-december-10.

22 'NATO Nuclear Planning Group Final Communiqué', 27 March 1985, https://archives.nato.int/uploads/r/null/1/4/140563/PRESS_RELEASE_M_NPG_1_85_5_ENG.pdf.

23 'National Security Decision Directive Number 172', 30 May 1985, www.reaganlibrary.gov/public/archives/reference/scanned-nsdds/nsdd172.pdf.

24 See N. Piers Ludlow, 'The Unnoticed Apogee of Atlanticism? U.S.-Western European Relations during the Early Reagan Era' in Kiran Klaus Patel and Kenneth Weisbrode (eds), *European Integration and the Atlantic Community*, 17–38.

25 For a recent study on the role of technology in Britain's decision-making, see Anthony Eames, 'A "Corruption of British Sciences?": The Strategic Defense Initiative and British Technology Policy', *Technology and Culture*, 62:3 (2021), 812–838.

26 EUREKA must also be understood in the context of the *relance* of European integration of the mid-1980s, marked by the revival of the Western European Union in 1984 and the adoption of the Single European Act two years later. See Antonio Varsori, 'The Relaunching of Europe in the Mid-1980s' in Patel and Weisbrode (eds), *European Integration and the Atlantic Community*, 226–242.

27 'Footnoting' was regularly used by Denmark and Greece on the question of INF deployment in the early 1980s; while Norway refrained from 'footnoting' over INF, the new government did so in 1986 over the SDI. On 'footnoting', see Effie Pedaliu, '"Footnotes" as an Expression of Distrust? The United States and the NATO "Flanks" in the Last Two Decades of the Cold War' in *Trust, but Verify: The Politics of Uncertainty and the Transformation of the Cold War Order, 1969–1991*, (eds) Martin Klimke, Reinhild Kreis and Christian Ostermann (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 237–258.

28 On Greece and NATO during this period, including the Greek government's call to abolish the SDI, see Eirini Karamouzi and Dionysios Chourchoulis, 'Troublemaker or Peacemaker? Andreas Papandreou, the Euromissile Crisis, and the Policy of Peace, 1981–86' *Cold War History*, 19:1 (2019), 39–61. On France and NATO in the 1980s, see Frédéric Bozo, *Mitterrand, la fin de la guerre froide et l'unification allemande* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2005).

29 'Prime Minister's Meeting with the Prime Minister of Canada at 10 Downing Street on 30 April at 1130', 30 April 1985, FCO 82 1626, TNA.

30 See Leopoldo Nuti, 'The Origins of the 1979 Dual-Track Decision – A Survey' in *The Crisis of Détente in Europe. From Helsinki to Gorbachev, 1975–1985*, (ed) Leopoldo Nuti (London: Routledge, 2009), 57–71, and Kristina Spohr, 'Conflict and Cooperation in Intra-Alliance Nuclear Politics: Western Europe, the United States and the Genesis of NATO's Dual-Track Decision, 1977–1979' *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 13:2 (2011), 39–89.

31 See Susanne Schregel, *Der Atomkrieg vor der Wohnungstür. Eine Politikgeschichte der neuen Friedensbewegung in der Bundesrepublik 1970–1985* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2011).

Part 1

SDI and the Superpowers

2 Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative

James Graham Wilson[1]

Intro

When President Ronald Reagan announced the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), at the end of a televised address on the evening of March 23, 1983, his expectations were modest. "I did the bulk of the speech on why our arms buildup was necessary & then finished with a call to the Science community to join me in research starting now to develop a defensive weapon that would render nuclear missiles obsolete," Reagan wrote in his diary afterward. "I made no optimistic forecasts – said it might take 20 yrs. or more but we had to do it."[2] Yet, by the time the president left office, in January 1989, SDI had become the top-line national security project to emerge during his two administrations.

Between March 1983 and January 1989, SDI perplexed allies and adversaries alike. It sowed confusion among the president's top advisors, who could not figure out whether the president aspired actually to construct defenses in space or rather to develop a capability that U.S. negotiators could use as a bargaining chip in arms control talks with the Soviets. It generated anxiety among North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies, who regarded the prospect of a shield above the continental United States as incompatible with the concept of extended deterrence, by which the Americans were supposed to regard an attack on a European city as an attack on their own. SDI raised suspicions among Soviet leaders that the U.S. president did not subscribe to the doctrine of mutual assured destruction (MAD), by which shared vulnerability made nuclear war too costly for either side. Closer to home, it galvanized domestic critics, including a nuclear peace movement whose members – not all of whom came from the political left – were genuinely fearful about the president's arms buildup as well as his talk about getting tough with communists, infamous "We begin bombing in five minutes" remark, and occasional nonchalance in referring to biblical end times.[3] A common theme in each of these interpretations was the expectation that President Reagan intended to leverage any advantages derived from SDI to pursue policies that challenged the nuclear status quo.

He did, but not in the ways his critics predicted. "Star Wars" was the inevitable sobriquet for SDI, which conjured up images of space-based lasers straight out of the 1977 science-fiction blockbuster, yet calling it that leaves out "Initiative,"

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which was a critical element. My argument in this chapter is that Reagan's SDI was an evolving concept that had less to do with specific technologies – there never really was a set SDI platform – than with what Reagan came to believe SDI could achieve: namely, radical reductions in land-based nuclear weapons, and, potentially, the complete elimination of these and all other nuclear weapons.

The policy implications of SDI swelled as Reagan interacted with Mikhail Gorbachev; they benefited from the sustained influence of Secretary of State George Shultz, who was the lone member of the National Security Council (besides Vice President George H.W. Bush) to stay from March 1983 until January 1989, and who delegated authority on nuclear matters to Paul Nitze, the longtime Cold Warrior who came to support the president's quest for a grand bargain with the Soviets. The gist of it was that SDI could underwrite a blockbuster deal that reduced nuclear arsenals and was also verifiable by both sides – two objectives that previous accords, Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) I and SALT II, had failed to achieve. Over time, the president began stating that he was willing to share the benefits of SDI with his Soviet counterpart. This was no stratagem. Recently declassified documents confirm that he proposed the same things in meetings of the National Security Council that he did in meetings with Gorbachev.

Predecessors to SDI

Reagan's March 1983 announcement revitalized a commitment to ballistic missile defense (BMD) that his predecessors had pursued half-heartedly and then abandoned.[4] In the 1960s, the John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson administrations did not reciprocate when the Soviet Union constructed its "Galosh" system of nuclear-tipped surface-to-air missiles around Moscow. Rejecting the Nike-X system as too costly, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara advocated the logic of MAD, by which respective offensive systems upheld a balance of terror between the United State and Soviet Union. In 1967, he justified the pursuit of the Sentinel "thin" defense in the wake of the Chinese explosion of a hydrogen bomb, yet few American suburban communities wanted nuclear-tipped missiles based in their backyards. Two years later, the Richard Nixon administration received congressional approval of the Safeguard system intended to provide U.S. negotiators leverage at the forthcoming SALT negotiations in Helsinki – not to build up a defense of the American homeland. In the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, U.S. and Soviet negotiators agreed to limit their defense systems to one deployment site to protect each country's national capital and one to protect a chosen Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) deployment area far from its national capital area (NCA). A 1974 protocol limited deployments to one site, which the United States chose to be the minuteman silos at Grand Forks Air Force Base, before shutting down its Safeguard installation there in 1976.[5]

In his insurgent campaign against President Gerald Ford in the Republican primary that year, former governor of California Reagan assailed SALT I and the ABM Treaty to the point where the Ford campaign dropped "détente" and embraced "peace through strength" in public statements about the Soviet Union.

Reagan also associated himself with the views of members of the reconstituted Committee on the Present Danger, which included Paul Nitze, the author of NSC-68, who had been the Department of Defense (DOD) representative on the SALT negotiations yet had grown disillusioned with them. Reagan also subscribed to views that would be laid out in the Team B alternative national intelligence estimate, which stressed, among other things, that the Soviets continued to research BMD systems.[6] The Soviets possessed "a laser beam capable of blasting our missiles from the sky if we should ever try to use them," Reagan declared in a radio address in May 1977, and were also building "orbital bombardment vehicles and laser weapons."[7]

In 1979, Reagan traveled with his longtime associate Martin Anderson to the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) headquarters, where he was astounded to hear that Cheyenne Mountain could not withstand a direct hit by the new generation of Soviet ballistic missiles and that there were not even efforts underway to intercept them. Anderson and others sought to convince Reagan that the problem was lack of imaginative strategic thinking. "It isn't a question of technology; it isn't a question of money," Anderson later recalled telling the former governor. "The technology is already here, on the shelf, waiting to be used. And the cost is easily affordable."[8]

In his successful campaign for the 1980 Republican presidential nomination, Reagan called for sharp increases in the defense budget and getting tough with the Soviets. However, while the Republican platform called for "[v]igorous research and development of an effective anti-ballistic missile system, such as is already at hand in the Soviet Union, as well as more modern ABM technologies," Reagan did not emphasize this as a priority on the campaign trail or in early meetings of his National Security Council after his inauguration on January 21, 1981.[9] Internal deliberations that first year in office focused on a strategic modernization program that included the prospect of a point-defense of MX missile silos – not area-defense of U.S. cities. "We should also be looking at ABM defense as arms control," Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger stated in an NSC meeting on May 22. "Lets keep our options open on ABM."[10] Yet Reagan did not comment on this suggestion. And, on arms control he leaned toward an "interim restraint" on SALT agreements, a policy he would codify the following year on the eve of the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START).[11]

National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) 12, "Strategic Forces Modernization Program," which Reagan signed on October 1, consisted of five parts: "(1) Making our strategic communications and command systems more survivable, so that we can communicate over survivable networks with our nuclear forces, even after an attack"; "(2) Modernizing the strategic bomber force by the addition of two new types of bombers"; "(3) Increasing the accuracy and payload of our submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM), and addition of sea-based cruise missiles (SLCM)"; "(4) Improving strategic defenses"; and "(5) Deploying a new, larger, and more accurate land-based ballistic missile." On the fourth point, the NSDD stated that "[a] vigorous research and development program will be conducted on ballistic missile defense systems." Yet again, the context for a new

commitment to ballistic missile defense was coming up with a survivable basing system for the MX missile. And it was not as high priority as the other components that were at the fore of public debates about defense spending.[12]

As with the Jimmy Carter administration, Reagan and his top advisors saw MX as the single most important component of modernizing U.S. strategic forces. After scrapping Carter's convoluted multiple-protective shelter (MPS) plan, the Reagan national security team engaged in many of the same internal debates as Carter officials during the first few years.[13] Part of the problem was technical. MX was a next-generation missile that could carry up to ten multiple independent reentry vehicles (MIRVs), but the lack of a survivable basing system made them as vulnerable to a first strike by Soviet SS-18s as the Minuteman III, which constituted the land-based component of the U.S. nuclear triad in 1981. And the problem with vulnerable silos with land-based ICBMs inside them was that the side with exposed missiles would be tempted to "use them or lose them" upon warning of an attack. Based on recommendations by a committee led by the University of California, Los Angeles physicist Charles Townes, Reagan announced in October 1981 that the United States would deploy 40 MXs in existing Minuteman silos until a new permanent basing system could be established.

Congress balked at this plan, and the first few months of 1982 saw the MX program nearly grind to a halt just as a nuclear freeze movement took hold across the country and the Reagan administration attempted to come up with negotiation positions for START, which got underway in May 1982. In this context, Edward Teller, the father of America's hydrogen bomb who remained active at the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, led the charge to convince the Reagan administration of the feasibility of missile defense. On July 23, 1982, Teller wrote Reagan asking "for a mandate to vigorously explore and exploit the technological opportunities in defensive applications of nuclear weaponry." He warned of the troubling prospect that the Soviets might deploy their own system first. Even if the technology proved to be years away – something he did not think was actually the case – Teller hinted at an enticing political dividend for the president. "Commencing this effort may also constitute a uniquely effective reply to those advocating the dangerous inferiority implied by a 'nuclear freeze'."[14]

Intrigued, Reagan invited Teller to the White House in September 1982, after which the president noted "an exciting idea that nuclear weapons can be used in connection with Lasers to be non-destructive except as used to intercept and destroy enemy missiles far above the earth."[15] The meeting between Teller and Reagan elicited a three-part *New York Times* series on a project to build "killer lasers" that would disable Soviet ICBMs midflight. Already, the concept was dubbed "Star Wars."[16] And since the defensive system that Teller was describing relied on nuclear explosions to pump X-ray lasers, it was unlikely to dispel the concerns of the burgeoning nuclear freeze movement.

On November 22, 1982, the Reagan administration announced a new basing mode for MX known colloquially as "Dense Pack," in which missiles would be spaced close together so that incoming reentry vehicles (RVs) would commit "fratricide," prior to reaching the silos.[17] In December 1982, the House of

Representatives voted down this system and withheld funding for MX prior to an outside bipartisan evaluation.[18] Halfway through his first term, just weeks after Democrats gained 27 seats in the House of Representatives to extend their majority there, Reagan had nothing to show for the central component of his strategic modernization program.

In January 1983, Reagan announced the "President's Commission on Strategic Forces," comprised of a bipartisan group of former secretaries of defense and technical experts led by former Air Force general and national security advisor Brent Scowcroft. Issuing its report in April, the Scowcroft Commission announced a compromise by which a portion of the MX missiles would be deployed in Minuteman silos, while the United States would also pursue research on a single-warhead missile on a mobile launcher, a system that was dubbed "Midgetman."[19] While the credibility of Scowcroft and company probably saved the MX program from outright termination, the administration would continue to have to wrest from Congress the dollars for every missile (and the Department of Defense never accepted Midgetman, which was cancelled in 1992). The president rechristened MX "the Peacekeeper"; while it was set to be deployed in 1985, it would never replace the Minuteman III as the mainstay of the U.S. land-based deterrent. Moreover, it failed to empower U.S. negotiators who might have hoped to trade it off against the much-larger and more potent Soviet SS-18s.

Chief of Naval Operations James Watkins had a clear grasp of the challenges not only to MX but also to the D5 "Trident II" missile, which held out the prospect of a hard-target counterforce capability and, based in ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs), would be virtually invulnerable to Soviet attack. A committed Catholic who was concerned about the Bishops gravitating toward the nuclear freeze movement, Watkins advocated for the consideration of missile defense, especially during the period between late 1982 and early 1983.[20] On a parallel track, an outside group called High Frontier lobbied the administration to take up the same cause and relied on supporters on Capitol Hill such as Representative Newt Gingrich, an insurgent conservative.

"An almost 2 hr. lunch with Joint Chiefs of staff. Most of time spent on MX & the commission etc.," Reagan wrote in his diary on February 11, 1983.

> Out of it came a super idea. So far the only policy worldwide on nuclear weapons is to have a deterrent. What if we tell the world we want to protect our people not avenge them; that we [a]re going to embark on a program of research to come up with a defensive weapon that could make nuclear weapons obsolete? I would call upon the scientific community to volunteer in bringing such a thing about.[21]

Pledging support publicly would allow Reagan to seize the initiative in the stalled arms negotiations. And, as Edward Teller had suggested, it might also coopt the appeal of the anti-nuclear movement – even better, from the perspective of White House advisors who thought Teller came across as "Dr. Strangelove," if the technology behind shooting down missiles did not itself rely on a nuclear explosion.

In the aftermath of the meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and on subsequent occasions, then deputy national security advisor Robert "Bud" McFarlane emerged as a strong champion of pursuing missile defense as a means of turning the tide of the Cold War and reaching a verifiable agreement to reduce strategic offensive forces.

A combination of factors led President Reagan to decide in March 1983 to announce a new project that was materially different from anything in his presidential campaign or policies up to that moment. These included: (1) waning support for strategic modernization that the administration deemed vital to reversing negative trends and restoring U.S. strength, alongside growing support for groups actively opposed to it; (2) the prospect of technology on the near horizon, using both nuclear and non-nuclear methods, coupled with the analogy of the Manhattan Project, which set the objective prior to any actual proof of concept; and (3) the need for a bold program that would strengthen the hand of U.S. negotiators in Geneva, where their Soviet counterparts followed congressional votes and were astute observers of the power dynamics in Washington. The president hoped to rally the support of the American people through an announcement from the Oval Office that would draw upon the pageantry of the White House as well as Reagan's thespian talent and his sincerely abundant wonder about the promise of American ingenuity and technology. The Strategic Defense Initiative, as he called it, was intended to buttress and supplement the strategic modernization program, which consisted of offensive strategic and defensive tactical arms – yet it ought not to be categorized as part of it.

SDI Announcement and Initial Phase (March 1983–December 1984)

"We can't afford to believe that we will never be threatened," Reagan stated in a nationally televised address on March 23, 1983. "There have been two world wars in my lifetime. We didn't start them and, indeed, did everything we could to avoid being drawn into them. But we were ill-prepared for both. Had we been better prepared, peace might have been preserved."[22] While the president spent much of the speech urging Americans to tell their representatives to support his arms buildup to redress Soviet superiority, he closed by stating that strategic modernization was not enough. "What if free people could live secure in the knowledge that their security did not rest upon the threat of instant U.S. retaliation to deter a Soviet attack, that we could intercept and destroy strategic ballistic missiles before they reached our own soil or that of our allies?" the president asked. He signed off by challenging the scientific community to come up with the answer by conducting research into capability that would defend American lives rather than simply avenge them.[23]

Notwithstanding this clearly stated optimism, as evidenced by his diary entry after the speech ("I made no optimistic forecasts"), Reagan remained unsure at the time of SDI's ultimate purpose. At a press conference two days later, Reagan reiterated that he was merely instructing the scientific community to continue

research into the project and not with any particular urgency. If, "maybe 20 years down the road," he said, "somebody does come up with an answer, I think that that would then bring to the fore the problem of, all right, why not now dispose of all these weapons since we've proven that they can be rendered obsolete?"[24] On another occasion, he suggested that SDI could replace the doctrine of mutual assured destruction. For "to look down to an endless future with both of us sitting here with these horrible missiles aimed at each other and the only thing preventing a holocaust is just so long as no one pulls the trigger – this is unthinkable."[25] "Frankly I have no idea what the nature of such a defense might be," he wrote a supporter later that spring. "I simply asked our scientists to explore the possibility of developing such a defense."[26]

Yet the president also tasked his administration to harmonize the technology and policy components. NSDD 85, which Reagan signed on March 25, directed Deputy National Security Advisor McFarlane to oversee

> "the development of an intensive effort to define a long term research and development program aimed at an ultimate goal of eliminating the threat posed by nuclear ballistic missiles," while also remaining "consistent with our obligations under the ABM Treaty and recognizing the need for close consultations with our allies."[27]

NSSD 6–83, which the president signed on April 18, initiated two interagency studies: a "Future Security Strategy" and "Defense Technology Plan." A fair critique of the president was that he had reversed the logical sequence by announcing SDI and then calling for two studies to determine its feasibility. Yet it is also unlikely that interagency consensus would have emerged. Absent that, the directive was to figure out how to harness the technology and fit it into overall strategy.[28] The former was the objective of the Defense Technologies Study Team led by former National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Director James Fletcher; the latter was the objective of the Reagan national security team, whose chief advocate besides the president, during the first administration, was probably McFarlane, who took over as National Security Advisor in October 1983.

In its inchoate form, SDI surely puzzled America's allies during the strained lead-up to deployment of Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) in the fall of 1983. The president had blindsided NATO members with the announcement of SDI back in March, while also aggravating his ideological soulmate, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, one year after the British had agreed to purchase the Trident II missile.[29] Given the tense Cold War season, which intensified with the Soviet shoot-down of Korean Airliner KAL 007 on September 1, 1983, SDI was probably not the top priority. Yet it sustained the interest of the president, at a time when the Soviets walked out of the INF talks, after the U.S. deployment of Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs) in Western Europe, shortly before the first iteration of START also collapsed.

In a November 11, 1983, speech before the Japanese Diet, Reagan declared that "[a] nuclear war can never be won and must never be fought," and professed

that his dream was "to see the day when nuclear weapons will be banished from the face of the Earth."[30] On December 2, he signed NSDD 116, which contended that the studies commenced earlier in the year "confirm[ed] that an aggressive technology research program aimed at developing and demonstrating the capability for defending the nation against ballistic missile attack is feasible," and that "an effective defense against ballistic missile attack could enhance U.S. national security and our ability to deter conflict."[31] The next step was to generate support from within Congress and among U.S. allies, according to this directive. As with prior moments in the development of SDI, the sequencing of policy sometimes alienated the very constituencies the administration hoped to win over.

On January 6, 1984, Reagan signed NSDD 119, which established the Strategic Defense Initiative Office (SDIO) under the oversight of the Secretary of Defense and reiterated that strategic forces modernization and updates to nuclear weapons employment directives were necessary but not sufficient.[32] "[G]iven the uncertain long-term future of offensive deterrence, . . . an effort must also be made to identify alternative means of deterring nuclear war and protecting our national security interests," the NSDD went on to say. "In particular, the U.S. should investigate the feasibility of eventually shifting toward reliance upon a defense concept. Future deterrence should, if possible, be underwritten by a capability to defeat a hostile attack." Notably, here was an early iteration of SDI as an insurance policy, from the perspective of achieving a stable nuclear balance of forces as well as implementing a potential agreement leading to deep cuts in U.S. and Soviet arsenals.

Yet the NSDD also warned that the Soviets might beat the Americans to the punch. "Unilateral Soviet acquisition of an effective defense capability would confront the U.S. and its allies with the real threat of nuclear blackmail and political/military coercion." The best way to sustain political support to preempt that scenario was to focus on "nonnuclear kill concepts." "Statements describing the strategic defense initiative should be low key and closely coordinated to ensure that an accurate picture of the nature and scope of this R&D effort is presented to the public."[33] In other words, a key objective of such a statement, from the perspective of National Security Advisor McFarlane, who oversaw the shepherding of NSDDs through the interagency process, was to impose order and attempt to curtail the freelancing of different members of the Reagan administration. Discipline in such efforts was not one of the president's strengths.

Later that month, Reagan gave his "Ivan and Anya speech" describing a hypothetical American and Soviet couple meeting to exchange pleasantries – as opposed to threatening each other with nuclear weapons.[34] After the tensions of the fall of 1983, a message of conciliation came through the president's rhetoric toward the Soviet Union in the first half of 1984 – as he also kicked off his reelection campaign. Given this modulation in tone, Soviet leaders were even more perplexed. How exactly was SDI to enhance stability, since the side without a shield would merely sharpen its spears? "Try to look at the realities of the international situation from our end," Soviet General Secretary Konstantin Chernenko wrote Reagan on June 6, 1984. "And at once one will see distinctly that the Soviet Union is encircled by a chain of American military bases. These bases are full of

nuclear weapons. Their mission is well known – they are targeted on us." What was needed was not an agreement for the sake of an agreement, according to the Soviet leader, but for the United States to renounce any intention to press forward with SDI.[35]

Led by Secretary of State George Shultz, the Reagan administration took Chernenko's proposal for negotiations to prevent the "militarization of space" and molded it into a more comprehensive proposal to recommence nuclear arms negotiations, using the justification that ICBMs traveled through outer space. Deliberations within the administration that summer spoke to policy differences between Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, who wanted to build a system based on SDI and deploy it, and Shultz, who sought to leverage SDI to reach agreements on nuclear arms reductions.

Reagan's ambitions for SDI were much grander than those of any of his advisors. Validation came at the ballot box, on November 6, 1984. Even though critics seized on the fact that Reagan was the first president in recent memory not to meet with his Soviet counterpart, he won one of the most lopsided electoral victories in American history. Whereas Reagan's advisors had considered ballistic missile defense too risky an idea to announce in 1980, by 1984 he was trumpeting it as a way out of the nuclear arms race. Winning reelection demonstrated (at least to the president) that he had coopted the message of the nuclear freeze movement as well as the Catholic Bishops who were inclined to support his agenda but who also balked at an unrestrained arms race. And it comported with Reagan's campaign theme of "morning in America." SDI, to him, was a statement of high optimism about the potential of America to pursue a way out of the grim logic of mutual assured destruction.

SDI and the Formulation of a Grand Bargain (January 1985–October 1986)

Several days after Reagan's reelection, the president received another letter from Chernenko, this time calling for a new round of talks, with the stated goal of elimination of nuclear weapons. Meeting in Geneva in January 1985, Secretary of State Shultz and Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko sketched out what became the Nuclear and Space Arms Talks, which were slated for that spring and would feature three tracks: START, INF, and the Defense Space Talks (DST), in which U.S. negotiators would attempt to hold the line for SDI research.

The announcement came shortly after a meeting between Reagan and Thatcher in which the president committed to abide by the ABM Treaty and the prime minister found enticing the prospect of British contracts in SDI research.[36] On January 5, the Reagan administration sent out a cable to be presented to NATO allies laying out a four-sentence "strategic concept" for how SDI would fit into the president's objectives for arms control during his second administration:

> During the next ten years, the US objective is a radical reduction in the power of existing and planned offensive nuclear arms, as well as the stabilization

> of the relationship between offensive and defensive nuclear arms, whether in earth or in space. We are even now looking forward to a period of transition to a more stable world with greatly reduced levels of nuclear arms and an enhanced ability to deter war based upon the increasing contribution of non-nuclear defenses against offensive nuclear arms. This period of transition could lead to the eventual elimination of all nuclear arms, both offensive and defensive. A world free of nuclear arms, is an ultimate objective to which we, the Soviet Union, and all other nations can agree.[37]

This parsimonious statement resulted from the policy entrepreneurship of Paul Nitze, who, while serving as the INF negotiator in Geneva in the spring of 1983, had initially been skeptical of SDI. Appointed Special Advisor to the President and Secretary of State for Arms Control Matters, with the support of McFarlane and Shultz, in December 1984, Nitze grasped for a concept that would reconcile offense and defense to achieve a durable arms agreement in the twilight of his long career in the Cold War.[38] In this instance and elsewhere, he relied on the expertise of nuclear physicist James Timbie, formerly of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), who in 1983 had been appointed a special advisor to the Deputy Secretary of State (and, for the next three decades, served as the State Department's inhouse expert on all matters of arms control).

With the backing of Secretary of State Shultz, Nitze made no effort to conceal this approach or wait for the president to announce it publicly. In a speech to the Philadelphia World Affairs Council in April, Nitze described the strategic concept, elaborated upon what three potential phases might look like, and enumerated what became known as the "Nitze Criteria": effectiveness, survivability, and "cost-effectiveness at the margins" – meaning that it had to cost the Soviets more resources to build new offensive systems than it did for the U.S. to deploy defense systems.[39] During this period, Nitze also worked with Timbie to establish a draft schedule of reductions of strategic offensive forces, over the course of a decade, in what was known inside the administration as the "Monday Package."[40]

While Nitze remained committed to the transatlantic alliance, the strategic concept he championed paid little heed to the concerns of NATO allies. Nor were the allies represented at the Nuclear and Space Arms Talks (NST), which commenced in Geneva on March 12, 1985 – even though leaders of NATO countries paid a high political cost to deploy INF systems, and even though negotiations on strategic offensive arms involved the core matter of extended deterrence on the part of the United States and its allies.

The emergence of Mikhail Gorbachev as the new and dynamic secretary general of the Soviet Union forced the Reagan administration to devote more effort to harmonizing SDI, its legal obligations to the ABM Treaty, and public opinion at home and abroad. On March 26, 1985, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger sent a letter to NATO defense ministers and those of other American allies in which he affirmed that "[t]he United States will, consistent with our existing international obligations including the ABM Treaty, proceed with cooperative research with the Allies in areas of technology that could contribute to the SDI

research program."[41] Weinberger invited U.S. allies to encourage firms from their own countries to participate in contracts pertaining to SDI research, thus dangling the prospect of high-technology investment to go along with political support for President Reagan's initiative, about which allies remained skeptical.[42]

In NSDD 172, "Presenting the Strategic Defense Initiative," which Reagan signed on May 30, 1985, the president reiterated his intention to abide by the ABM Treaty.[43] A fierce debate ensued among his advisors as to what exactly that meant. In the offices of the State Department Legal Advisor, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy, the National Security Council, and the halls of Congress, policymakers clashed on relatively obscure passages such as Article V, paragraph 1, and Agreed Statement D (both of which Nitze had played a role in crafting), and the nature of technologies based on "other physical principles."[44]

With Reagan and Gorbachev set to meet for the first time in Geneva, in October 1985, the debate over whether the United States would abide by the ABM Treaty shaded much of the coverage. More so than previous occasions, Reagan's devotion to SDI was put to the test, and he responded by doubling down on it. "I won't trade our SDI off for some Soviet offer of weapons reductions," he wrote in his diary on September 11, 1985.[45] "The president stressed that he was prepared, once any of our SDI programs proved out," read the minutes of an NSC meeting on September 20, 1985, "to then announce to the world that integrating these weapons in our respective arsenals would put international relations on a more stable footing." "In fact," the president went on to say,

> this could even lead to a complete elimination of nuclear weapons. We must be prepared to tell the world that we were ready to consult and negotiate on integrating these weapons into a new defense philosophy, and to state openly that we were ready to internationalize these systems.[46]

In NSDD 192, "The ABM Treaty and the SDI Program," which Reagan signed on October 11, 1985, the president staked out a middle ground. On the advice of Secretary of State Shultz, he decided that, while the United States was justified in a "broad" interpretation of the ABM Treaty that would allow for research, testing, and deployment of some of the technologies under consideration, the administration would nevertheless continue to observe the traditional interpretation in ongoing negotiations and in the upcoming summit with Gorbachev.[47]

Meeting with Gorbachev in Geneva, Reagan insisted that only SDI could ensure that both sides disarmed. He pleaded with Gorbachev, raising the additional specter that a "madman" like Libyan leader Mu'ammar Al-Qadhafi might someday obtain nuclear weapons. "We have it in our power to start the world over again," Reagan proclaimed in his toast at the last night's dinner, quoting the American revolutionary Thomas Paine.[48] He desired a new world free of nuclear weapons, but he could convince Gorbachev neither that SDI was essential to this new world nor that he truly intended to share SDI with the Soviets. Reagan "wondered why the Soviets should object to research," as if Gorbachev meant

all research, when in fact Gorbachev was insisting on restricting testing to the laboratory.[49]

When Gorbachev followed up the Geneva Summit by announcing in January 1986 his intention to seek the elimination of nuclear weapons by the year 2000, Reagan was annoyed that the Soviet leader's proposal received more praise than his own, which was that SDI would bring about this same objective. In countering Gorbachev's message, the president spoke in ways that would have raised eyebrows among his conservative brethren. "We should remember the principle of sharing SDI at the deployment stage," he told his national security team on February 3, 1986.

> As we continue to develop SDI we need to find a way for SDI to be a protector for all – perhaps the concept of a 'common trigger' where some international group, perhaps the [United Nations], could deploy SDI against anyone who threatened use of nuclear weapons. Every state could have this guarantee.[50]

"By noting apparent Soviet agreement to our objective of substantial nuclear reductions and by elaborating our own steps forward for achieving that end," Reagan wrote the other heads of NATO countries the following day, "[W]e can challenge the Soviet leadership to see whether their proposal advances the process of achieving substantial mutual reductions and limits which are equitable, verifiable, and stabilizing."[51] But this process could move forward only with unrestricted U.S. research into SDI, Reagan insisted. At a National Security Planning Group (NSPG) meeting devoted to arms control, he reminded his team that SDI would provide insurance so that each side stuck to its agreements. If the defensive system worked, not only did Reagan still intend to sign an arms agreement, he would even share this technology with both America's allies and its adversaries. "We should point out that SDI is not for the U.S. alone – we seek a mutual shift from sole reliance on offensive weapons to an offense-defense mix," Reagan said.

"I do not understand the reasoning behind your conclusion that only a country preparing a disarming first strike would be interested in defenses against ballistic missiles," Reagan wrote Gorbachev on February 16, 1986. The United States had never borne ill toward anyone, the president insisted. After World War II, the United States had not sought to expand its territory when it had the power to do so. In every letter to Soviet leaders and in each meeting with them, Reagan repeated this example of how the United States had disarmed and acted defensively after World War II.[52] While he failed to convince the Soviet leader here or elsewhere, and while he was unable to comprehend how his counterpart might have a different reading of the history of U.S. foreign policy – which, according to the president, was purely noble – Reagan was also writing the same things to Gorbachev that he was saying to his national security team behind closed doors.

"The United States does not possess the numbers of weapons needed to carry out an effective first strike; nor do we have intention of acquiring such a capability," Reagan wrote Gorbachev in a July 25, 1986 letter that fleshed out Nitze's strategic concept and "Monday Package." The president proposed three phases,

by which the United States and Soviet Union could research and deploy strategic defenses while providing assurance against a first-strike capability. During the first five years, both sides would limit themselves to research, development, and testing of the strategic defenses to establish a proof of concept. While the United States would abide by the ABM Treaty during this first phase, Reagan was prepared to sign a treaty stipulating that the party that decided to proceed beyond research, development, and testing, in 1991, agreed to "share the benefits of such a system with the other providing there is mutual agreement to eliminate the offensive ballistic missiles of both sides."[53]

Should the two sides fail to reach a sharing arrangement within the span of two years after 1991, either side would be free to deploy ABM systems after giving six months' notice. Reagan reiterated,

> I believe you would agree that significant commitments of this type with respect to strategic defenses would make sense only if made in conjunction with the implementation of immediate actions on both sides to begin moving toward our common goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Toward this goal, I believe we also share the view that the process must begin with radical and stabilizing reductions in the offensive nuclear arsenals of both the United States and Soviet Union.[54]

Such was the offer on the table as the president prepared to meet Gorbachev in Reykjavik, Iceland, in October. It was an offer on nuclear weapons as radical as any U.S. position going back to the Acheson-Lilienthal Report and Baruch Plan in 1946. And it came at a time when the Soviet leader was also willing to embrace radical reductions in nuclear weapons. However, it was also a time when new Soviet SS-24 and SS-25 rail and road-based ICBMs missiles were coming online, even as the MX system foundered and the Department of Defense faced automatic sequesters resulting from the 1985 Gramm – Rudman – Hollings Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act.[55] As funding dwindled for the strategic modernization program, SDI provided what Reagan regarded (and Congress did not regard) as a cheaper alternative to continuing the arms race. Fully confident in his abilities to persuade, the president believed he could win Gorbachev over to his vision of SDI and a world without nuclear weapons.

Preserving SDI While Also Scaling It Back (October 1986–January 1989)

"He wanted language that would have killed SDI," the president wrote in his diary shortly after the dramatic weekend with Gorbachev in Reykjavik from October 11–12.

> The price was high but I wouldn't sell & that's how the day ended. All our people thought I'd done exactly right. I'd pledge I wouldn't give away SDI & I didn't but that meant no deal on any of the arms reductions.[56]

These were exaggerations, as Gorbachev did not intend "to kill" SDI, and breakthroughs toward deals occurred on arms reductions – especially during an all-night meeting between delegations led by Nitze and Soviet Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev. Several weeks after the emotional letdown in Iceland, Reagan signed off on NSDD-250, which commenced an interagency review of U.S. national security requirements in a world of zero ballistic missiles by the end of 1996, one of the scenarios the president had laid out in Reykjavik.[57] Ultimately, in January 1987, Gorbachev delinked the package between stipulations on SDI and an INF Treaty on which the Soviets had previously insisted. Here and elsewhere, the Soviet leader acted not because of SDI but in spite of it.

While Reagan remained devoted to SDI, he also recognized political realities in the midst of the fallout from the Iran-Contra scandal, which broke shortly after he returned from Reykjavik, and that he would need to scale back the program. The Democratic takeover of the Senate in November 1986 renewed fears among hardliners in his administration that SDI could be on the chopping block. They applauded the president for refusing to "sacrifice" missile defense at Reykjavik but feared that his fortitude would not hold indefinitely. Secretary of Defense Weinberger led the charge to save SDI. "I didn't, frankly, ever trust Gorbachev or believe that he was fully committed" to change, he later recalled.[58]

Because of the "astonishing success of the SDI program," Weinberger declared at a February 3, 1987, meeting of the NSPG, further progress required that the president immediately sign off on testing outside the laboratory. This meant embracing the "legally correct interpretation" of the ABM treaty, the "LCI" – an Orwellian-sounding neologism coined by an outside counsel for the Defense Department.[59] Successful tests of "space-based Kinetic Kill Vehicles" pointed to 1993 as a feasible starting date for phased deployment. The Joint Chiefs expressed skepticism over this rosy forecast; Weinberger did not care. "We should think of the concept of phased SDI deployments like building a house," he elaborated. "The 1st phase of deployment is like laying the foundation of the house. The 2nd phase can be like putting up the walls; the 3rd, the ceiling."[60]

NSDD 261, "Consultations on the SDI Program," which Reagan signed on February 18, 1987, reiterated the criteria of "military effectiveness, survivability, and cost effectiveness at the margin."[61] It also considered systems built on multiple layers as well as Space-Based Kinetic Kill Vehicles (SBKKVs) that could be deployed by the mid-1990s and intercept a large number of incoming ballistic missiles – as opposed to all of them – and thus disrupt the adversary's confidence in achieving its targeting objectives. "Deterrence would be enhanced because this major element of uncertainty would make it impossible for the aggressor to be sure he could execute a coherent attack," according to the NSDD, "and, thus, conduct a successful 1st strike." In other words, in the aftermath of the Reykjavik encounter and the Democratic victory in the midterm elections, the Reagan administration was lowering expectations about an impenetrable shield even as hardliners within his administration pressed for quick action on the first phase of SDI deployment and as the president himself remained wedded to the idea of using SDI to achieve the grand ambition of a world without nuclear weapons.

"Why can't we agree now that if we get to a point where we want to deploy we will simply make all the information available about each other's systems so that we can both have defenses?" the president asked his national security team on September 8, 1987. "I don't believe that we could ever do that," Secretary of Defense Weinberger responded.[62] Equally skeptical was Mikhail Gorbachev, who had quipped at Reykjavik that the United States would not even share milking equipment and remained skeptical when the two leaders met again in Washington in December 1987 to sign the INF Treaty. Reagan grew impassioned about bringing Gorbachev over to his vision of SDI. According to the notes of one of their meetings, the president wanted to make one thing clear: he "did not want to talk about links to SDI but about 50% reductions, about how the Hell the two sides were to eliminate half their nuclear weapons."[63]

Meanwhile, negotiators led by Nitze and Akhromeyev were hammering out the basic formula for a START agreement, which was laid out in the Washington Joint Summit Statement, in which the president and general secretary "noted the considerable progress which has been made toward conclusion of a treaty implementing the principle of 50 percent reductions" that now included "agreements on ceilings of no more than 1600 strategic offensive delivery systems, 6000 warheads, 1540 warheads on 154 heavy missiles."[64] The following month, the United States placed a Draft Defense and Space Treaty on the table in Geneva.[65] Enthusiastic about the possibility of at least a START agreement by the end of his presidency, Reagan instructed his team on February 9, 1988: "The bottom line is you've got to go for the gold."[66]

Reagan's aspirations met with resistance from America's NATO allies. The Red Army still loomed over Western Europe. The elimination of all medium-range nuclear weapons meant that the SS-20s no longer threatened Paris and Rome and all the great capitals of Western Europe, but the allies were potentially more vulnerable than ever to overwhelming Soviet conventional forces. And the prospect of a new agreement on ballistic missiles engendered fears that the United States might withdraw its protective nuclear umbrella. The president was undeterred. As he prepared to travel to Brussels for a NATO conference, Reagan pledged to do "all that he could to reach meaningful and useful understandings with Soviets – not for agreement's sake but for the security of the Alliance as a whole." The larger goal was to reverse the momentum that had led to more weapons. It did not particularly matter whether the two sides were talking about missiles or tanks – Reagan did not think that Gorbachev "wanted to engage in an arms race with the United States, but our task was to convince him not to try."[67]

In Moscow that May and early June, Reagan and Gorbachev signed papers ratifying the INF Treaty, which entered into force on June 1, yet they would not reach an agreement on START. Later that summer, in advance of the five-year review of the ABM Treaty, the Reagan administration debated vigorously whether to cite the Krasnoyarsk Radar as evidence that the Soviet Union was in material breach of the treaty.[68] Ultimately, the administration decided against making such a declaration, which would likely have derailed the successful completion of a START agreement based on the December 1987 Washington Joint Summit Statement that

Gorbachev and the president's successor, George H.W. Bush, would ultimately sign in the summer of 1991.

Legacy of SDI

After Reagan left office in January 1989, conservative politicians and national security practitioners invoked SDI as a symbol of the 40th president's strength and exhorted his successors to carry on with this unfinished project. While then Vice President Bush chose as his running mate Senator Dan Quayle, a strong advocate for SDI, and brought on as his Secretary of Defense another champion, Richard Cheney, neither Bush nor his National Security Advisor, Brent Scowcroft, was particularly enthralled by its prospects. Bush supported the "Brilliant Pebbles" concept of space-based interceptors, yet was more interested in persuading Gorbachev to delink a prospective START agreement from the ABM Treaty (as Gorbachev had done on INF and SDI, in January 1987), a breakthrough that Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze and Secretary of State James Baker achieved in Wyoming in the summer of 1989.[69] With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the impending cuts to the U.S. defense budget, in 1991 President Bush authorized a scaled-down "Global Protection Against Limited Strikes" (GPALS) in an unrequited attempt to bring the Russian Federation to embrace strategic defenses – this time, against rogue regimes.[70]

Under the administration of President Bill Clinton, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin pledged to take the "Wars" out of "Star Wars." The presumed end of SDI notwithstanding, the matter of adherence to the ABM Treaty remained an obstacle to U.S.-Russian arms control – in 1996, the two sides again delinked the ABM Treaty from attempts to limit and reduce strategic offensive forces, this time separating theater versus global. In a backlash against Clinton, and again citing Reagan's legacy, conservatives attempted to restore urgency to the cause of missile defense. The 1998 Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States, which was empaneled by the Republican-held Congress and led by former secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld, reemphasized the threat posed by rogue actors such as North Korea and Iran, and implied that a redoubling of efforts on strategic defenses was an obvious policy prescription. In their 1997 "Statement of Principles" and 2000 report, "Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century" the Project on the American Century called for "a Reaganite policy of military strength and moral clarity."[71]

Under the administration of President George W. Bush, the United States withdrew from the ABM Treaty in 2002 and, at that same time, rebranded the Department of Defense's legacy organization of the Strategic Defense Initiative Office (SDIO) as the Missile Defense Agency (MDA). Without the restrictions of the 1972 treaty, the George W. Bush administration pressed forward with layered defenses intended to intercept a small number of ICBMs from North Korea or Iran. Major policy differences notwithstanding, the subsequent administrations of Barack Obama and Donald Trump have not fundamentally altered this approach,

which focuses on protecting against rogue regimes, as opposed to building a shield to counter the robust nuclear powers of Russia and China.

Proponents of a more comprehensive missile defense invoke Ronald Reagan's SDI, yet they are less likely to explore the grander aspirations for sharing the benefits of futuristic systems with America's adversaries. However fantastical SDI may have appeared to many outsiders looking in, during the period 1983–1988, it was a serious proposal that hindered progress toward arms accords, on some occasions, yet also accelerated it on other occasions. While it aggravated Mikhail Gorbachev to have to respond to Reagan's familiar refrains and cloying anecdotes, SDI also fired the president's imagination and provided him cover with conservative skeptics in Congress who had hamstrung previous arms agreements with the Soviet Union.

Gorbachev was critically important to Reagan's evolving conception of SDI, in that he defied the president's expectations of what a Soviet leader could be. He was a human being, as Reagan came to understand from their encounters, and someone worthy of trust. Verification of that trust, as Reagan repeated over the course of the summits, required a track record of deeds, with respect to Soviet behavior abroad and human rights at home. SDI was the ultimate insurance policy, from Reagan's perspective, in upholding a nuclear bargain. My conclusion is that it was a net positive, when it came to formulating and securing agreements on INF and START. At the very least, it did not stop them. Given the hundreds of billions of dollars spent on strategic offensive arms throughout the Cold War, the several billion dollars spent on SDI research was modest. It did not disrupt the tenets of MAD or lead to an unrestrained nuclear arms race. At the same time, President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative could well have turned into something else entirely had it not been for the character and choices of General Secretary Gorbachev, Secretary of State Shultz, and President Reagan himself.

Notes

1 The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of State or the U.S. Government. This chapter is based on declassified and publicly available sources. Portions of it are drawn from James Graham Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation: Gorbachev's Adaptability, Reagan's Engagement, and the End of the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).

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4 On the U.S. consideration of anti-ballistic missile systems, see James Cameron, *The Double Game: The Demise of America's First Missile Defense System and the Rise of Strategic Arms Limitation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018). On the evolution of US nuclear strategy in 1960s and 1970s, see Brendan Rittenhouse Green, *The Revolution That Failed: Nuclear Competition, Arms Control, and the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020). See also Francis J. Gavin, *Nuclear Weapons and American Grand Strategy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute Press, 2020).

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6 See *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1969–1976, Volume XXXV, National Security Policy, 1973–1976, Documents 175–182, available at https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v35.
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16 "U.S. Speeds Up 'Star Wars' Laser Plan," *Pittsburgh Press*, September 29, 1982.
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19 "Report of the President's Commission on Strategic Forces," April 1983, available at http://web.mit.edu/chemistry/deutch/policy/1983-ReportPresCommStrategic.pdf.
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22 Ronald Reagan, "Address to the Nation on Defense and National Security," available at www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1983/32383d.htm.
23 Ibid.
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34 Reagan, Address to the Nation and Other Countries on United States-Soviet Relations, January 16, 1984, available at www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/11684a.
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39 Paul Nitze, "On the Road to a More Stable Peace," *Department of State Bulletin*, April 1985, pp. 27–29.
40 Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost*, p. 411.
41 Quoted from the letter addressed to the Secretary of State for Defense, United Kingdom, which was declassified in 2014 and is available through the Margaret Thatcher Foundation. See Letter From Caspar Weinberger to Michael Heseltine, March 26, 1985, available at https://ee9da88eff6f462f2d6b-873dc3788ab15d5cbb1e3fe45dbec9b4.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/850326%20Weinberger%20to%20Heseltine%20SDI%2019-1444%20f84.pdf (Accessed January 9, 2021).
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60 Ibid.
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62 Minutes of a National Security Planning Group Meeting, September 8, 1987, available at www.thereaganfiles.com/870908.pdf.
63 See *Foreign Relations*, 1981–1988, vol. VI, Soviet Union, October 1986 – January 1989, Document 110, available at https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1981-88v06/d110.
64 Joint Statement on the Soviet-United States Summit Meeting, December 10, 1987, available at www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/121087a.
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66 See *Foreign Relations*, 1981–1988, vol. VI, Soviet Union, October 1986 – January 1989, Document 120, available at https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1981-88v06/d120.
67 "Memorandum for the Record: Record of National Security Planning Group," February 26, 1988, pp. 2–3, Executive Secretariat, NSC: National Security Council Meeting Files, RRL.
68 See Michael R. Gordon, "U.S. Rejects Soviet Offer on Dispute Complex," *New York Times*, September 17, 1988, p. 4.
69 See James A. Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War & Peace, 1989–1992* (New York: Putnam and Sons, 1995), p. 151.
70 In his State of the Union Address on January 29, 1991, President George H.W. Bush stated: "Looking forward, I have directed that the SDI program be refocused on providing protection from limited ballistic missile strikes, whatever their source. Let us pursue an SDI program that can deal with any future threat to the United States, to our forces overseas, and to our friends and allies." Available at https://bush41library.tamu.edu/archives/public-papers/2656.
71 See "Statement of Principles," June 3, 1997, available at https://web.archive.org/web/20130112235337/www.newamericancentury.org/statementofprinciples.htm. See also "Rebuilding America's Defense: Strategy, Forces and Resources For a New Century," available at https://archive.org/details/RebuildingAmericasDefenses/mode/2up.

3 Soviet Response to the Strategic Defense Initiative

Svetlana Savranskaya

The response of Soviet leaders to Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative has been a subject of active debate in the literature on the end of the Cold War. The assessments vary widely – from a conclusion that SDI pushed the Gorbachev leadership to essentially recognize Soviet defeat in the Cold War in the face of the new technological challenge and a blow to the Soviet economy, to the opposite view that the SDI was not a factor in the fundamental policy changes that took place in the Soviet Union in the 1980s.[1] It might be worth reexamining this question in light of new evidence and the fact that ballistic missile defense issues have been a thorn in U.S.-Russian relations for 30 years since the end of the Cold War. How did the Soviet leadership respond to Reagan's Star Wars initiative and how did this response change with *perestroika*? What if any was the impact of SDI on Soviet foreign policy?

Among the most recent and comprehensive attempts to answer these questions on the basis of new archival materials is Pavel Podvig's 2017 article based on the Kataev Archive collection at Hoover Institution Archives.[2] Podvig reviews all the important military programs that were part of the Soviet SDI response. He comes to the conclusion that "while the package of Soviet anti-SDI programs was allegedly a massive effort, comparable in scale to its U.S. counterpart, very few of these projects were new and therefore it is unlikely that this effort produced any measurable stress on the Soviet economy." Very few projects were actually developed and tested, and gradually, the Soviet leadership came to see the Star Wars not as a strategic threat but "an impediment to the disarmament process."[3] However, some of the projects lasted into the 1990s and prepared prototypes of weapons that Russia has today.

David Hoffman in his book *The Dead Hand* vividly describes the change in the Soviet response to SDI after Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in the Soviet Union and notes the impact of progressive scientists, especially Evgeny Velikhov, on Gorbachev's views and ultimately policy regarding the Soviet response to the SDI. His analysis shows that Gorbachev did not want to respond to SDI in a symmetric way, and did not want to build up offensive capability either, but he also could not alienate his military and the military-industrial complex by rejecting their proposals outright.[4] Therefore, he ultimately chose negotiations and persuasion tactics to pursue his goals and avoid major defense commitments. In his

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analysis, SDI certainly did not bankrupt the Soviet Union and did not pressure it into arms control. Gorbachev's reform came first.

There is also extensive early U.S. literature speculating about possible Soviet responses to SDI – starting from CIA assessments to opinion pieces and scholarly articles, which generally provide quite accurate predictions of the Soviet asymmetrical response, especially those published after Gorbachev became general secretary. One surprising finding in this literature is how well U.S. authors understood the Soviet fears of the offensive potential of SDI – its features that could lead to an arms race in space. It is not clear how much impact if any these publications had on the Reagan administration.[5] Among these publications, an especially illuminating analysis of the Soviet perceptions and international action by scientists against Reagan's initiative is in the book *Unarmed Forces* by Matthew Evangelista.[6]

And still, there is more to the story. This chapter argues that the Soviet reaction to SDI started with vigorous debate within the Soviet political, military, and scientific elite, which was not visible publicly; that it was more complex than usually described and included elements of both symmetrical and asymmetrical response; and that it was ultimately scaled back as the perception of U.S. threat diminished as a result of Gorbachev-Reagan negotiations and progress in arms control. Although the Soviet leadership was genuinely concerned about Reagan's program, the latter did not lead to Gorbachev's disarmament initiatives – the changes in the Soviet foreign and domestic policy had mainly internal causes. To the contrary, SDI was an example of what Dobrynin was describing in his memoir:

> The impact of the American hard line on the internal debates of the Politburo and the attitudes of the Soviet leadership almost always turned out to be just the opposite of the one intended by Washington. Rather than retreating from the awesome military buildup that underwrote Reagan's belligerent rhetoric, the Soviet leaders began to absorb Reagan's own distinctive thesis that Soviet-American relations could remain permanently bad as a deliberate choice of policy. Only gradually did both sides begin to realize they were doomed to annihilation unless they found a way out. But it took a great deal of time and effort to turn from confrontation and mutual escalation, probably much more than if this course had never been taken in the first place.[7]

In other words, SDI interfered with and slowed down the process of disarmament and delayed the end of the Cold War.

This chapter will show that in response to SDI, the Soviet leadership developed a comprehensive program that included political, military, and scientific elements along with an active propaganda campaign, and engaged a very large number of leading scientists and military, whose opinions were far from unanimous. The official name of the program approved in the summer of 1985 was the "asymmetric response," meaning that the Soviet Union would be able to counter Reagan's SDI in a cheaper and more effective way by making modifications to its offensive

arsenal. However, careful analysis of recently available evidence shows that the response included various "symmetric" and "asymmetric" measures, some of which continued well into the 1990s. The existing literature focuses mainly on the asymmetric response and the change of policies from Andropov's years to Gorbachev's perestroika and underestimates the continuity of military programs and the difficulty in changing the course that Gorbachev faced.

Gorbachev himself went through a significant evolution of his own attitude and policy toward SDI, which was not always consistent and was highly dependent on the views and advice of his military and political advisers. Eventually, as a result of learning and of building his political coalition, Gorbachev was able to remove SDI as an obstacle to successful U.S.-Soviet arms control by untying the arms control package in 1987 and eventually signing the INF, the CFE, and the START Treaties without ever achieving an understanding on ABM.

Initial Soviet Response to the SDI Announcement: Politicians, Military, Scientists

Reagan's announcement of the Strategic Defense Initiative in March 1983 was completely unexpected for the Soviet leadership and was met with an immediate hostile response by General Secretary Yuri Andropov. He denounced it as an American attempt to achieve military superiority and start a new round of arms race in space – in other words, a step aimed at undermining strategic parity, which the Soviet Union had just achieved and that was seen as key to its security and superpower status. Russian experts described the initial Soviet reaction to Reagan's announcement as "not only negative, but quite nervous, almost hysterical," partly because it "destroyed the . . . image of the world in which a certain bipolar balance and stability had been achieved with such great effort."[8] Such an assertive response was certainly in line with the Soviet propaganda of U.S. aggressiveness, but it was founded on a deep fear that SDI was a veiled attempt to build a first-strike capability.

To understand this "almost hysterical" reaction better, one has to look at the context of 1983, arguably, a "most dangerous year," according to a recent book by Nate Jones.[9] Reagan's anti-Soviet rhetoric was heating up in such unprecedented statements as calling the Soviet Union an "evil empire," U.S. defense spending was growing, and the most important issue of 1983 was the scheduled start of deployment of the Pershing-2 and ground-launched intermediate cruise missiles in Europe in response to the Soviet deployment of its Pioneer missiles. Andropov was extremely concerned by what looked to him like a gradual sliding toward a real war situation. At the Politburo on May 31, 1983, the discussion focused on how to try to prevent the U.S. deployment in Europe, and on the grave strategic threat posed by the recent U.S. aggressiveness. This was actually the Politburo where Mikhail Gorbachev, then a rising star and Andropov's chosen successor, spoke on a foreign policy issue for the first time.

The initial assessment by the Soviet scientific community of Reagan's idea of SDI was prepared soon after the announcement of the program in March 1983.

Following a Politburo decision, a group of physicists, weapons specialists, and international relations experts led by Evgeny Velikhov was established in Moscow to analyze the American idea and to prepare a response. This group, according to Andrey Kokoshin, at the time deputy director of the U.S. and Canada Institute and a key participant of the group, was "a unique interdisciplinary community, which included physicists, mathematicians, chemists, rocket engineers, specialists on space technologies, political scientists, economists, professional military" and other scientists, many of them leading members of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. The main conceptual response was ready by the fall of 1983.[10] On the one hand, the scientists concluded that at the present time the program was not feasible and did not correspond to Reagan's idea of making nuclear weapons obsolete. On the other – that it was dangerous because it would undermine strategic balance and may potentially start an arms race in space.

It is important to note, however, that the Soviet response was far from uniform – although never reaching the level of public debate, there were substantial differences of opinion and one might say even lobbies, arguing for various interpretations and responses within the Soviet elite. Kokoshin notes that at the time, there were "many influential proponents" of a symmetrical response to SDI. Vitaly Kataev, who worked for the Military Industrial Commission under Lev Zaikov, says the defense industrialists "liked SDI" because it would mean a lot of new projects and additional funding for old designs that were stagnated or almost abandoned at the time.[11] The military and defense industrial complex were generally pushing for a symmetric response.

There was apparently even a conflict between Chairman of the General Staff Nikolai Ogarkov on one side and his deputy Sergey Akhromeyev and Defense Minister Dmitry Ustinov on the other about an appropriate response to the SDI.[12] In addition to the opportunistic potential for additional defense appropriations, there were other, more substantive factors that influenced the perception of the SDI and the formulation of response.

One important factor that was influential across the board – whether it was a career military or a liberal academic – was vividly described by Kataev: "the main thing that the Soviet analysts were afraid of – is being accused of underestimating a most serious problem," and therefore, they often just passively "retranslated" U.S. statements about new strategic capabilities afforded by the SDI program, by which they involuntarily intensified the sense of threat.[13] Soviet military experts were often somewhat confused by what SDI really meant. They also reacted negatively because they perceived the new program as a sign of U.S. duplicity, even a betrayal, because of the United States' earlier position on ballistic defenses.[14]

The USSR started ballistic defense research in the late 1960s–early 1970s and was able to deploy an ABM system around Moscow (cited by Reagan as a sign of Soviet superiority in ballistic defense). The U.S. position in early negotiations on the ABM treaty was a reversal of the Soviet traditional understanding that defense is good, offense is bad. Indeed, it was a reversal of arms control logic to say that making your population vulnerable increases your security in the end. The Soviets agreed to limit ABM systems to Moscow only and abandoned other programs that

were in design or research stage. Now the Soviet military felt the need to revive old research programs and technologies. Podvig shows in his article that some of the programs were not necessarily launched in response to SDI, they actually were the continuation of what was started in the early 1970s. Kokoshin shows that it was natural for the Soviet system to respond in a tit-for-tat fashion and that is why, although many scientists were in favor of it, an asymmetric response program took a long time to evolve.[15]

However, the Soviet response under Andropov was not limited to research and development of symmetric measures. The best way to describe it is as a comprehensive or dual-track response, which included not only missile technology, directed energy, and anti-satellite research but also a range of measures to build up offensive capability as well as building international coalitions of scientists and peace activists against the SDI, special measures, and an active propaganda campaign. The existing literature on SDI severely underestimates the scope and the significance of the Soviet response, often simplifying it as an effort at a symmetric response under Andropov and Chernenko and a radical turn to an asymmetric response under Gorbachev. In fact, Matthew Evangelista shows that the Soviet scientists developed these ideas much earlier than the "new thinking" was introduced: "In 1983 Velikhov, Sagdeev and Kokoshin were already presenting some of the key ideas to the Soviet and Western audiences – not to copy 'Star Wars,' but to pursue arms control and, if necessary, to build cheap countermeasures to SDI." Their efforts were not state-directed propaganda, because they targeted their own audience: the Soviet military and politicians, but their views were only adopted by the leadership after Gorbachev came to power.[16]

But the role of the leading scientists was more complex. They certainly were part of the Soviet system and were well aware of the danger of being seen as underestimating the threat of SDI to Soviet security. While their personal views were critical and often even dismissive of SDI's potential, they also participated in traditional military research on the symmetric response measures. Velikhov headed the overall group of anti-SDI programs that was truly enormous in scope. It came to be called "the Velikhov group." It would not be an exaggeration to say that this group brought together the best minds in the fields of nuclear physics and space research.[17] The group consisted of secret participants and programs, which oversaw military research, intelligence, special operations, and "active measures."

At the same time, there was a powerful public part of the same group that made an effort to rally the domestic and international scientific community around the idea of defeating Reagan's initiative. Already in May 1983, the Soviet scientists founded the Committee for the Defense of Peace Against Nuclear Threat. The committee consisted of 25 leading scientists from various research institutes, including such prominent figures as Deputy Chairman of the USSR Academy of Sciences Yevgeny Velikhov, Director of the Space Research Institute Roald Sagdeyev and Deputy Director of the U.S. and Canada Studies Institute Andrey Kokoshin. The Committee's main objective was "to conduct scientific research of complex, interdisciplinary problems, bearing directly on the most important task

facing mankind today: the preservation of peace and the prevention of nuclear catastrophe."

The committee worked closely with a wide network of scientists both in the USSR and abroad, including extensive contacts with U.S. scientists who were critical of missile defense. The committee published numerous reports that combined serious science with propaganda trying to persuade Western scientists, politicians, and the general public that SDI would not work. Practically every report drew a direct link between SDI research and weapons in space, which would produce a new round of the arms race and make the situation much more dangerous. In October 1985, the Committee published a report titled *Space-Strike Arms and International Security*. After reviewing components of a large-scale space-layered ABM system, measures to counter them and military and political consequences of creating such a system for global and European security, the authors of the report concluded that such a system would "be obviously incapable of rendering nuclear weapons 'impotent and obsolete'. Nor can it reliably protect the territory of the United States, let alone that of its allies in Western Europe and in other regions of the world." However, such a system would destabilize the current balance, the existing parity between the USSR and the United States, and "with the development of such a system the US ruling quarters will be even more tempted to use military force as their main foreign policy instrument."[18]

Another influential book published by the Mir Publishers in English in 1985 was *The Night After . . . Climatic and Biological Consequences of a Nuclear War. Scientists' Warning*, edited by Yevgeny Velikhov. The book presented the findings of scientific research in a popular manner for a general reader in the West. The authors concluded that "the use of even a fraction of the nuclear arsenal that exists in the world today would result in a 'nuclear night' and a 'nuclear winter', which would ultimately cause unprecedented global ecological disaster.

In February 1986, the Committee published another report titled *The Large-Scale Anti-Missile System and International Security*.[19] Following the same themes as the 1985 report, the new paper pointed out that although the highest officials of the Reagan administration agreed that nuclear war cannot be won, the military doctrines and the hawks in the United States were still relying on the idea of SDI as means to achieve military superiority and possible victory in a nuclear war. Also in 1986, the Committee produced a book titled *Weaponry in Space: The Dilemma of Security*. After a comprehensive review of the military, political, and legal aspects of SDI, the authors came to the conclusion that the proposed system of anti-ballistic defense "cannot be regarded as a purely defensive system. It is rather a novel kind of offensive weapons, which, if deployed, would trigger a new round of arms race in all areas and would increase the probability of nuclear war." The book relied on several research publications, such as the 1986 report of the USSR Space Research Institute "Space-Based Anti-Missile System: Capabilities Assessment," by Sagdeyev and S.N. Rodionov.

All in all, the early Soviet response to SDI produced a comprehensive dual-track program that was biased heavily in favor of symmetrical measures but already included practically all the ideas of the asymmetric response and a growing

preference for arms control. To move from the former to the latter, it needed the new thinking and the political will that came with Gorbachev.

How Did the U.S. Politicians and Expert Community View the Soviet Response to SDI?

The Reagan administration was certainly interested in finding out what the Soviet response to SDI would be beyond the initial shock and harsh pronouncements from Andropov. Soon after the Reagan announcement, Undersecretary of Defense for policy Fred Ikle asked for an assessment of a possible Soviet response. This first assessment, produced by the CIA in September 1983 provided a preliminary analysis, which pointed to a variety of possible responses – from building its own ballistic defense system to boosting the existing offensive capability – which was not precise but generally correct, in that it anticipated a broad search for various options on the Soviet side.[20] David Hoffman emphasizes in his review of the Reagan administration's view of the possible Soviet response that to a large extent it was built on an exaggerated assessment of Soviet capabilities at the time. Thus, the first CIA assessment included the judgment that "[t]he result of these long-standing and well-funded [military laser research] programs is that the Soviets are now on a par with, or lead, the United States in most of the directed-energy weapons technologies."[21]

U.S. intelligence agencies produced numerous analyses that looked at the Soviet response and found it both paradoxical and somewhat justified. They were also acutely aware of the propaganda campaign and the "active measures." In February 1986, the CIA prepared an interesting analysis of the Soviet response titled "Soviet Actions to Counter the US Strategic Defense Initiative."[22] This estimate basically correctly pointed out that

> the Soviets appear to believe that SDI-related technologies have inherent offensive applications. . . . they may be concerned that SDI technologies could ultimately support space-based weapons capable of attack on other space-based as well as ground-based targets, including both offensive and defensive systems as well as command, control and communications assets.

The estimate found that it was unlikely that "economic problems will lead the Soviets to abandon major strategic weapon programs or forsake force modernization goals." And in the "key judgments" portion of the estimate, the authors described the existing Soviet response quite accurately: "We anticipate Soviet programs across a broad front, including development of technologies to counter a future U.S. ballistic missile defense (BMD) systems and to improve the USSR's own offensive and defensive force capabilities." The estimate notes the new element of the Soviet response, which was not present until late 1984:

> Active measures is the term the Soviets use to refer to worldwide activities that are intended to promote Soviet foreign policy goals but that go beyond

> traditional diplomatic, propaganda and military means. . . . In November and December 1984 . . . the Soviet active measures directed against SDI began to gain momentum and to grow in intensity.

What were those "active measures"? "To date, the active measures effort has used mostly semiovert tactics such as the staging of international conferences."[23]

The Western scientific community was also aware that the Soviets' repeatedly stated concern about SDI as a first-strike and space-strike capability was not just propaganda and that SDI technologies indeed had the offensive use potential. Looking at the Soviet response at the time, some scholars pointed to the irony that SDI would lead to the outcome opposite of that intended by Reagan and essentially predicted the asymmetric response. Thus, Harvard experts Eric Stubbs and Rosy Nimrody concluded in early 1987 that

> SDI is bound to spur the arms race. Analysis of likely Soviet responses to the SDI program indicates that inferior technological capabilities, military strategy and competing demands for resources will prompt the USSR to exercise a more affordable and feasible option – the build-up of nuclear weapons at one-tenth the cost of deploying SDI.[24]

Peter Westwick reviews Western views of the Soviet response to SDI and concludes that "some American analysts at the time did recognize both the offensive possibilities of SDI and Soviet fears." He cites as examples the Latter and Martinelli report of May 1985 and the CISAC study of April 1986, which both considered SDI offensive potential and "recognized that SDI technologies could in fact be used offensively, but saw little value in it."[25] Westwick concludes in another article that "Historians of the Cold War have paid little attention to Soviet fears of "space-strike weapons" – that is possible offensive uses of President Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative.

Gorbachev Faces SDI

Why was Gorbachev afraid of SDI? He believed his military advisers that the development of missile defense technologies would lead to "weapons in space," a possible first strike in the face of which the USSR would be defenseless. He had his own personal memories of World War II and of almost losing his father. He also believed his scientists who doubted SDI's potential but were cautious about dismissing it completely. In addition, he was a new general secretary aware of his precarious position as the youngest member of the Politburo where tradition and strong institutional interests conditioned the members toward exaggerating the threat posed by the new Reagan initiative. And he was a child of his time, coming of age with the communist ideology.

Gorbachev's views on SDI as well as U.S.-Soviet relations developed to a large extent during the "most dangerous year," 1983. At the time, Gorbachev still was the Agriculture Secretary, but he was the protégé of general secretary

and former KGB chief Yuri Andropov. The years of "apprenticeship" under Andropov and the relationship between these two individuals should be especially noted when one is trying to explain Gorbachev's evolution of thinking on arms control. Andropov was grooming Gorbachev to become his successor and took time to tutor him on the ways the Soviet system worked.[26] Andropov's views on U.S.-Soviet relations were shaped by the years when the Soviet Union was trying to catch up with the nuclear superior United States and by the ideology of class struggle. The fall of 1983, when Gorbachev was given more exposure to foreign policy functions as Andropov's health deteriorated, was a most confrontational and dangerous period of U.S.-Soviet relations, which witnessed the tragic shooting down of the Korean civilian airliner, the Able Archer exercise and war scare, and the Soviet walkout of all arms control negotiations after the start of the Pershing and cruise missile deployment in Europe. Andropov's harshly negative and "almost hysterical" response to SDI influenced Gorbachev's view of it.

Gorbachev, who undoubtedly learned to fear SDI in 1983–1984, was nonetheless open to the scientists' input. Even before he became general secretary, he was known to invite scientists and leading scholars from academic institutes to brief him on various problems. He highly valued the knowledge and opinions of such leading thinkers as Alexander Yakovlev, Georgy Arbatov, Roald Sagdeev, and others. By the time Gorbachev had to face SDI as his own problem as leader of the USSR, a lot of analysis and thinking had already been done in the framework of the Velikhov group, making the advisers more confident in their assessments. According to Andrei Kokoshin of the U.S. and Canada Institute, the conclusion that the Soviet scientists arrived at by 1985 was "not much different from the views of [our] American counterparts" in the [US] National Academy of Sciences – the technology was not there for an ambitious program like that; it would not work. At the same time, they concluded that "it would be sufficient to weaken such an ABM [system] by impacting its most vulnerable elements, by making a 'breach' in this so-called defense in order to preserve the power of retaliatory strike unacceptable to the aggressor."[27]

Velikhov, Sagdeev, and Arbatov gradually succeeded in persuading Gorbachev that SDI would not work and that the Soviets should stop fearing it. The scientists now appreciated an opportunity to express their long-held views to the top leadership and lost no chances to do it. In the fall of 1985, on the eve of the Geneva summit, Sagdeev prepared a "long and well-substantiated memo containing a detailed assessment of SDI and suggestions for our counterstrategy."[28] This is not to say, however, that they simply dismissed the possible threat. Suspicions and worst-case scenarios were still present at least in their public presentations. According to General Nikolai Chervov, head of the legal and treaty department of the Defense Ministry at the time, he was surprised to hear Sagdeev in 1985 during the Geneva meeting speak specifically about the dangers of SDI when Gorbachev shared his concerns about it in a small meeting at the Soviet Embassy. It sounded to Chervov that at the end of 1985 Sagdeev was in fact trying to persuade Gorbachev that SDI presented a serious threat as weapons in space.

Although the new Soviet leader felt more comfortable with the scientific community, he still had to build his political base and walk a fine line not to alienate conservative members of the Politburo and the military. His support in the beginning was widespread among the top military brass and KGB because there was a general understanding that the Soviet Union needed change and fresh ideas. Most people expected the new leader to realize their own hopes for change, but each one envisioned this change differently. It was a tough task for Gorbachev to deliver on what turned out to be very different expectations. The Soviet military-industrial complex was hoping for a new and massive new program in response to SDI.

Podvig states in his article that the summer of 1985 "was arguably the high point of the Soviet response to the U.S. SDI program" because by that time the Soviet military prepared multiple proposals intended as a matching answer to SDI, including many symmetrical programs to develop and test elements of missile defense.[29] Andrey Grachev, Gorbachev's adviser and biographer, notes that Gorbachev had to make a decision on the grand plan of the Soviet military, who proposed 117 scientific and 86 research projects and 165 experimental programs at the cost of 50 billion rubles over ten years.[30] Podvig cites the decision of the Central Committee and the Council of Ministers of July 15, 1985, that approved several "long-term research and development programs aimed at exploring the ways to create a multi-layered defense system with ground-based and space-based elements" with the goal to "create by 1995 a technical and technological base in case the deployment of a multi-layered missile defense system would be necessary." Most of the projects were under two large "umbrella" programs, designated "D-20" and "SK-1000."[31] At the time, Gorbachev had no choice but to approve the military proposals, but he was shocked by the price tag and was already leaning toward a cheaper asymmetric response.

In 1986, the Mir publishing house brought out a new publication by Velikhov, Sagdeev and Kokoshin, titled *Weaponry in Space: The Dilemma of Security*. Kataev, in his paper on the Soviet response to SDI, makes a rather harsh judgment about the role of the authors of this book: "On the basis of the analytical report prepared by the E. P. Velikhov group, one of the biggest in the history of the USSR structures of defense measures was developed. This was the second round of [Soviet] response to SDI, and it was an almost mirror response, even though it was still called "our asymmetric response." He says the authors of the report essentially "pulled the country into a "symmetric response" to the SDI challenge.[32] But he also notes that along with counteracting the SDI and ABM defenses, the programs were designed to improve the technological state of the Soviet Union in general – from the speed of the mainframe computers to "developing principally new approaches, methods and resources of denying the opponent opportunities for active moves in battle conditions."

The next Politburo that made decisions regarding a response to the "Star Wars" took place immediately after Gorbachev returned from Reykjavik, having failed to achieve the breakthrough he was hoping for which would limit U.S. SDI research to labs and slow it down. By this time, the "asymmetric response" became an

official term; Gorbachev publicly announced it at the press conference in Reykjavik. The Politburo affirmed the asymmetric response and ordered the Defense Ministry to "prepare and introduce measures for clarifying the structure of strategic nuclear forces of the USSR in case an agreement with the USA on their reduction is achieved, as well as accelerating the works in the sphere of response measure to the possible deployment by the Americans of a multi-echelon ABM system of the country, and especially of its space component." In parallel with the military research on symmetric measures, the leadership approved measures of the asymmetric response, based on offensive weapons and new physical principles, such as land-based lasers to destroy space-based lasers and platforms, and dispersal of particles. In particular, two programs were developed called "Protivodeystviye" and "Kontseptsiya-R," which were approved by the Central Committee in the summer of 1987. The Soviet asymmetric response system would be cheaper than the American SDI and feasible technologically. However, they understood that it could mean further arms race in the future – any increase in defensive capability would lead to significant increases in offensive weapons production.[33]

Apparently, the summit in Reykjavik with its intense discussions of elements of ballistic defenses in space "forced the Soviet leadership to pay closer attention to the effect that its programs in space could have on the Soviet position in the negotiations." According to Podvig, this led to the "decision taken by the state commission to exclude everything that could resemble tests of space-based weapons systems." And yet, elements of the Soviet anti-SDI, such as "Polyus," "Skif," and "Energia" were built and tested even as late as May 1987. And in March 1987 the first flight tests of interceptors of the A-135 system were performed at Sary-Shagan. "Energia" system test launch was approved for May 1987 (before the Rust landing) but the launch, on May 15, was only partially successful – the launcher performed well but the spacecraft "Skif-DM" failed to reach orbit.[34] Most experiments in the program were cancelled by fall of 1987; this reflected a fundamental shift in priorities toward arms control.

The key turning point in the Soviet anti-SDI program occurred in May–June 1987. Sergey Sokolov, Minister of Defense, who was appointed when Ustinov suddenly died in December 1984 was a strong proponent of a symmetrical response and took seriously the worst-case scenarios of the SDI development. He was also an outspoken opponent of the INF treaty, especially so in April 1987 after the visit of George Shultz to Moscow and Gorbachev's concession on the Oka (SS-23) missile. Sokolov was one of the "old thinkers," but it was not easy for Gorbachev to remove the highly decorated Marshal, a veteran of World War II. He was actively looking for a reason to do it in 1987, just when a perfect occasion presented itself. On May 28, a German teenage amateur pilot Mathias Rust landed his plane next to the St. Basil Cathedral on the Red Square. The failure of Soviet air defenses to identify and stop him prompted Gorbachev to introduce a major purge of conservative generals who were in the way of Gorbachev's military reform and arms control agenda.

On May 19, 1987, the Politburo considered a "question of the USSR Defense Ministry" and approved suggestions presented in a memo from Sokolov memo

regarding expanding the Soviet response to SDI. Building on the Politburo decision of October 14, 1986, the memo concluded that the Reagan administration was moving away from agreements and was proceeding with implementing SDI programs by testing elements of space weapons in the nearest future. The memo judged that achieving an agreement on reduction of strategic forces was "unlikely" and, therefore, the Soviet Union should not provide the United States with information about the structure of Soviet strategic weapons and to "accelerate work in the sphere of response measures . . . and especially the space component." Specifically, the memo stated that

> in addition to the [earlier] approved programs (SK-1000), new comprehensive programs for improvement of strategic nuclear forces (SP-2000) and for creation of anti-satellite means for destruction of components of the space echelon of U.S. ABM (Kontseptsiya-R) had been developed, which will be presented for consideration of the Defense Council of the USSR.[35]

The Defense Council did approve the aforementioned programs, but by the end of July 1987, dozens of conservative generals who opposed Gorbachev's arms control agenda were sent into retirement, INF treaty looked like a real possibility, and Gorbachev was preparing to pull off a successful summit with Reagan by the end of the year. Things were moving quickly in the direction where the Soviet reformer wanted them to go, and gradually the Soviet anti-SDI programs were pushed to the backburner and abandoned in favor of arms control. Gorbachev might have supported the decisions to build these systems and perform weapon-related experiments in space in 1985 and 1986 but by mid-1987 his views had changed.

Reagan and Gorbachev: Dialog of the Deaf Leads to Mutual Learning

Interaction between Gorbachev and Reagan and the building of mutual trust was one of the most important factors in weakening Gorbachev's support for the Soviet anti-SDI program; both symmetric and asymmetric elements of it. Both leaders believed that they would be able to change the opponent's mind if only they could meet with him in person. But even before they met for the first time in Geneva in November 1985, they got a good sense of each other's positions and beliefs from extensive letters they wrote to each other. From early on in Gorbachev's tenure as General Secretary, the U.S. and Soviet leaders became active penpals. Their letters help us understand the two men, their views and how they saw each other. SDI was one of the main topics in this correspondence.

Reagan's letters repeatedly emphasized his intention to assign a purely defensive mission (to render nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete) to the proposed Strategic Defense Initiative, while Gorbachev's missives continually raised the issue of "attack space weapons." Among the very first letters was Reagan's letter to Gorbachev on April 30, 1985. The heart of the letter addresses Gorbachev's opposition to SDI. Reagan mentions that he was struck by Gorbachev's characterization

of SDI as having "an offensive purpose for an attack on the Soviet Union," in his conversation with U.S. Speaker Tip O'Neill's delegation. Reagan writes:

> I can assure you that you are profoundly mistaken on this point. The truth is precisely the opposite. We believe that it is important to explore the technical feasibility of defensive systems which might ultimately give all of us the means to protect our people more safely than do those we have at present, and to provide the means of moving to the total abolition of nuclear weapons, an objective on which we are agreed.[36]

In response, on June 10, 1985, the Soviet leader explained his position by pointing out that any development of ABM systems beyond the limits of the ABM treaty of 1972 would lead to a radical destabilization of the international situation and the militarization of space. The letter conveyed Gorbachev's genuine fear of SDI leading to deployment of "attack space weapons capable of performing purely offensive missions."[37]

When they first met in Geneva, both were well aware of how incompatible their respective positions on ballistic defense were. Trying to persuade each other, the leaders engaged in a long and passionate talk with no resolution. Gorbachev wrote in his memoirs:

> Ronald Reagan's advocacy of the Strategic Defense Initiative struck me as bizarre. Was it science fiction, a trick to make the Soviet Union more forthcoming, or merely a crude attempt to lull us in order to carry out the mad enterprise – the creation of a shield which would allow a first strike without fear of retaliation?[38]

On November 19, after the session where Reagan presented his vision of SDI, Gorbachev told him about the Soviet asymmetric response.

> This response will not be a mirror image of your program, but a simpler, more effective system. What will happen if you put in your 'seven layers' of defense in space and we put in ours? It just will destabilize the situation, generate mistrust and waste resources.

Reagan responded that Gorbachev's presentation just "illustrates the lack of trust between us," which at the moment was true, but what was also true is that the letters and especially the face-to-face meeting helped trust grow where none existed before.[39] At the end of the summit, they adopted a joint statement that nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. That in itself was a major breakthrough.

After the summit, struck by Gorbachev's emotional talk about the threat of a first strike from space and his genuine fear of SDI, Reagan sent his Soviet counterpart a handwritten letter written in a more personal tone, where once again he tried to explain his conviction that SDI will help to protect the world from nuclear war and in the end will help get rid of nuclear weapons. Gorbachev's response in

late December showed that his position remained unchanged.[40] But maybe the experience in Geneva and the handwritten letter from the American president started changing Gorbachev's mind.

When the Soviet and U.S. leaders met a year later in Reykjavik, the exchange got even more heated (in the Russian-language of his memoirs Gorbachev described the "Shakespearian passions" at the summit). In preparing for the summit, Gorbachev told his advisers he was willing to make major concessions, and that his ultimate goal was abolition of nuclear weapons. He was willing to agree to 50% cuts in strategic weapons across the board, taking the French and British nuclear weapons out of the equation, and zero in intermediate missiles in Europe, but in return he needed one important concession from Reagan: on missile defense. According to Grachev, Gorbachev needed it not because he was afraid of SDI but because of domestic political reasons.[41] Even though Gorbachev understood by now that the SDI was not just Reagan's response to the pressure of the military-industrial complex, but his own choice and conviction, Gorbachev still needed a concession on SDI to rein in the Soviet military-industrial complex.

On the last day of the summit, the leaders came close to agreeing to abolish nuclear weapons altogether – their shared dream – but Reagan would not give up SDI and Gorbachev could not make a leap of faith and agree to SDI testing outside of laboratories. In a most poignant quote of the summit, Georgy Arbatov responded to Nitze's proposal to allow development of SDI while proceeding with deep cuts in strategic weapons – "what you are offering requires an exceptional level of trust. We cannot accept your position," implying that the necessary trust was not there yet.[42] The lesson of Reykjavik was the lesson in trust. Reagan said he was willing to share the SDI, but Gorbachev was unwilling to trust him. Gorbachev's closest adviser Anatoly Chernyaev called Reykjavik "the moment of hope," when "the spark of mutual understanding emerged between the two leaders and where they 'winked' to each other for the future."[43]

To Stop Being Afraid of SDI: Untying the Arms Control Package

It is hard to say exactly when Gorbachev's views on SDI changed, subsequently leading to the change in the Soviet position on a proper response to the American program. With his advisers and in the close Politburo circle he started talking more thoughtfully about Reagan's views and positions, no longer calling him "a dinosaur." Clearly, he thought a lot about SDI in the first part of 1986. On March 20, 1986, he sounded as if he was speaking about the need for a tough response: "We can create a system to annihilate their SDI stations. We can do 2–3 nuclear explosions in the air and that'll be the end to all their SDI system. Although of course in response our system would be annihilated too." But a couple of minutes later he said:

> We have to include some concrete elements in our proposals for elimination of nuclear weapons and not allowing them into space, if they continue with

> SDI. . . . But we should be more careful with propaganda. We should not scare our own people.[44]

At March 24, 1986, Politburo session, Gorbachev said the crucial and unexpected words: "Maybe we should stop being afraid of SDI?"[45]

Even if Gorbachev himself was losing his fear of SDI, he still had to deal with the Soviet military-industrial complex. He could not just cancel the numerous military and research programs that were going on without showing significant progress on arms control. Soon after Reykjavik, the realization was growing among the top Soviet political leadership and arms control negotiators that the U.S. side was not going back to the radical positions they discussed in Iceland and that they needed a real breakthrough to move negotiations along. To get anything done with the Reagan administration, they had to start with the intermediate nuclear forces in Europe. Aiding this realization, by early 1987, there was a significant change in the perception of SDI on the part of Gorbachev and his close associates. The fear of SDI as a potential first-strike weapon from space, which Gorbachev had tried to explain to Reagan over and over at Geneva and Reykjavik, by now had faded. Part of this change was due to the influence of progressive Soviet scientists, who did not believe in the technological feasibility of the SDI concept, part of it was Gorbachev's learning to trust the American from his interactions with Reagan, and part was the sheer exasperation that nothing was being achieved as long as the Soviet side insisted on bringing in the ballistic defense issues.

In January 1987, Gorbachev pushed simultaneously on two fronts to advance *perestroika*. Domestically, the January Communist Party Plenum concentrated on political reform and democratization and scheduled a CPSU conference to address those issues for the summer of 1988. In foreign policy, to preserve and strengthen the momentum of Reykjavik, Gorbachev convened an international forum titled "For a Nuclear-Free World, for the Survival of Humanity," which focused on the threat of nuclear weapons and the need for deep reductions on the road to their complete elimination. Academician Andrei Sakharov, recently released from exile, was permitted to speak at the forum. Many participants, including Sakharov, called for swift progress on arms control even if this meant negotiating on INF separately.[46] Sakharov also privately met with two US scientists and talked about the need to untie the strategic arms control package and to stop allowing SDI to be the major stumbling block in the negotiations.[47]

Gorbachev had called on his Politburo members to "stop being afraid of SDI" as early as March 1986, but it took him almost a year to follow his own advice. Untying the arms control package was a very sensitive political issue, since it amounted to a unilateral concession, and it took a great deal of internal discussion and an impassioned memorandum from Alexander Yakovlev on February 25, 1987, for Gorbachev to make the decision.[48]

Ironically, the argument contained in the Yakovlev memorandum that persuaded Gorbachev to untie the arms control package alluded mainly to the U.S. domestic political agenda. Yakovlev argued that considering the strength of the right wing in the Republican Party and the upcoming presidential elections, if

Gorbachev was counting on signing a major strategic arms control treaty while Reagan was still in power, he had to sign a separate INF accord as soon as possible. On February 26, 1987, the Politburo made the historic decision to untie the package as a means to jumpstart negotiations, and to invite George Shultz to Moscow in April. Some scholarly accounts in the United States credit the decision to drop the Soviet insistence on SDI limits and the decision to untie the package to Sakharov's persuasive argument at the Forum.[49] Unfortunately, evidence does not support this poetic interpretation. Gorbachev now understood the failure of Reykjavik, he grew less afraid of SDI, he had a much stronger political base and he saw a politically advantageous moment to make a bold move on INF.

In the second part of 1987, the Institute of U.S. and Canada of the Soviet Academy of Sciences provided a political analysis of the SDI discourse and history of the program in the United States and came to the conclusion that the program would receive significantly less attention and funding in the next administration. Andrey Kokoshin, the author of the study, pointed to a significant opposition in Congress, noting especially the Chair of Armed Services Committee Sam Nunn's leadership, and even among the military, to the SDI and suggested that the Soviet leadership should be less worried about it.[50] Perhaps even more important, the insecurity was giving way to the new sense of trust and productive cooperation that emerged from the experience of the two previous summits, and that promised important payoffs in the future. The progressive scientists now were betting on arms control, not on new armament programs.

By the end of 1987, to the best of our knowledge, testing of Soviet anti-SDI elements had stopped. The issue practically disappeared from Politburo discussions and political discourse. During the Washington summit in December 1987, Gorbachev basically told Reagan: you can go ahead and build what you want (of SDI elements), we do not believe it will work, but we will have the capability to counter it in a less expensive manner.

Conclusion

When one studies original sources, especially the Soviet documents that have become available, it becomes very clear that SDI did not play a big role in getting Gorbachev to disarm. In fact, considering all the information about the Soviet anti-SDI programs – the symmetric response – it was destined to do just the opposite – to radically boost the Soviet military-industrial complex. And there is plenty of evidence – the best review is in Pavel Podvig's article on the military components of the Soviet response – that it was already helping to create and invigorate Soviet defensive and offensive research and development of new and already designed systems. In the end, SDI did not have this effect because Gorbachev changed his mind and then changed his policy.

Recent scholarship on the Soviet response to SDI changes the existing narrative by showing that this response was comprehensive and massive in scale, and that it contained major symmetric, tit-for-tat, components that were pursued even as late as mid-1987. SDI was taken very seriously by the Soviet political

and military leaders prompting them to support numerous proposals and requests from the defense industry and intensifying the perception of existential threat, of a first strike from space. This perception of SDI – as putting weapons in space and creating a first-strike capability – has not disappeared and is still alive in current Russian concerns about U.S. ballistic missile programs.

The change under Gorbachev was not as simple as switching from the symmetric to the asymmetric response under the influence of progressive scientists but involved a lot of learning, building trust and engaging in meaningful arms control. As Gorbachev built his political coalition and purged the military, arms control concerns and hopes took upper hand, the fear disappeared, and the testing stopped. As their perception of threat diminished, the Soviet leadership chose to reduce their armaments, rather than build them up whether in a symmetric or an asymmetric way.

Notes

1 For diametrically opposite assessments of the role of SDI, see Peter Schweizer, *Victory*, and Frances FitzGerald, *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), pp. 410–411.
2 Pavel Podvig, "Did Star Wars Help End the Cold War?" *Science and Global Security*, vol. 25 (2017), pp. 3–27.
3 Ibid., p. 18.
4 David Hoffman, *The Dead Hand: The Untold Story of the Cold War Arms Race and Its Dangerous Legacy* (New York: Anchor Books, 2009), pp. 204–221. This author is deeply grateful to David Hoffman for sharing his documents and insights. Hoffman was the first person who obtained access to Vitaly Kataev documents and was instrumental in bringing the collection to the United States.
5 See especially Peter J. Westwick, "The Strategic Offense Initiative? The Soviets and Star Wars," *Physics Today*, June 2008, pp. 43–49.
6 Matthew Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces: The Transnational Movement to End the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).
7 Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence* (New York: Crown, 1995), p. 544.
8 Oznobyschev, V.Ya. Potapov and V. V. Skokov, Kak gotovilsya "asimmetrichnyi otvet" na "strategicheskuyu oboronnuyu initsiativu" R. Reygana. Velikhov, Kokoshin I drugie, (Moscow, Institute of Strategic Assessment, Publishing House LNAND, 2008).
9 Nate Jones, *Able Archer 83: The Secret History of the NATO Exercise That Almost Triggered Nuclear War* (New York: The New Press, 2016).
10 Andrei Kokoshin, "Asimmetrichnyi otvet" vs "SOI," in *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn', 2007 no.7/8*, p. 35.
11 Vitaly Kataev, Kakoi byla reaktsiya v SSSR na zayavlenie Reygana o razvertyvanii rabot v SShA po SOI (What was the reaction in the USSR to Reagan's announcement of the SDI) – Vitaly Kataev materials, David Hoffman collection, Box 39, the National Security Archive.
12 According to Kataev, Ogarkov, who was generally against missile buildup and believed that the Soviet deterrent force of about 2,500 nuclear weapons was sufficient, was doubtful about the need to respond to SDI in kind, and kept "strangely silent" about the SDI while all others spoke about its dangers. His deputy Akhromeyev and Defense Minister Ustinov (with background in military-industrial complex) were in favor of a symmetrical response.
13 Kataev, op. cit., p. 4.

14 Peter Westwick, "'Space-Strike Weapons' and the Soviet Response to SDI," *Diplomatic History*, vol. 32, no. 5 (November 2008), p. 957.
15 Kokoshin, op. cit.
16 Evangelista, op. cit., pp. 238–239.
17 The best detailed account of the composition and history of this group is in Oznobyshev, Potapov and Skokov, op. cit.
18 "Space-Strike Arms and International Security," Report of the Committee of Soviet scientists for peace against the Nuclear Threat" (Moscow: Mir Publishers, 1985).
19 Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, Moscow 1986.
20 Central Intelligence Agency, "Possible Soviet Responses to the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative," *NIC M 83–10017*, September 12, 1983. The paper was prepared under the auspices of the National Intelligence Officer for Strategic Programs – cited in David Hoffman, "The Dangers of Mistrust and Misperception: A Case Study of Strategic Defense, the United States and Soviet Union" – unpublished paper, shared with the author. Document in David Hoffman Collection, National Security Archive, Box 39.
21 Ibid.
22 Special National Intelligence Estimate, "Soviet Actions to Counter the US Strategic Defense Initiative," February 1986, www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP09T00367R000300070001-8.pdf.
23 Ibid., p. 9.
24 Eric Stubbs and Rosy Nimroody, "The Soviet Response to Star Wars," *Challenge*, vol. 30, no. 1 (March/April 1987), p. 21.
25 Westwick, op. cit., pp. 966–969.
26 William Taubman, *Gorbachev: His Life and Times* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2017), pp. 138–144, 189–192.
27 Andrei Kokoshin, "Asimmetrichnyi otvet" vs "SOI," in *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn', 2007 no.7/8*, p. 35.
28 Sagdeev, op. cit., p. 268.
29 Podvig, op. cit. p. 8.
30 Andrey Grachev, *Gorbachev's Gamble* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998), p. 94.
31 Podvig, op. cit., p. 8.
32 Kataev, op. cit., p. 7.
33 For a very detailed account of the asymmetric response, individuals and institutions involved, and programs launched, see Oznobyschev, V.Ya. Potapov and V. V. Skokov, Kak gotovilsya "asimmetrichnyi otvet" na "strategicheskuyu oboronnuyu initsiativu" R. Reygana. Velikhov, Kokoshin I drugie (Moscow, Institute of Strategic Assessment, Publishing House LNAND, 2008).
34 Podvig, op. cit., p. 14.
35 Extract from Protocol No.66 of the CC CPSU Politburo session, May 19, 1987 – Hoover Institution Archive, Kataev Collection, box 5.
36 Summits, Doc 3, p. 72.
37 Gorbachev letter to Reagan, June 10, 1985, The Gorbachev File, https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu//dc.html?doc=2755706-Document-06.
38 Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), p. 407.
39 Savranskaya, Blanton, *The Last Superpower Summits, Reagan-Gorbachev*, Document 11.
40 Ibid.
41 Grachev, op. cit., p. 94.
42 Transcript of Talks in the Working Group on Military Issues, Reykjavik, October 11–12, 1986, www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document17.pdf.
43 Anatoly Chernyaev, *Shest' Let's Gorbachevym* (Moscow: Kultura, 2003), p. 115.
44 Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Fond 2, opis 1, Chernyaev notes from Politburo session, March 20, 1986.

45 Politburo Minutes, March 24, 1986, *V Politburo TsK KPSS*, p. 30.
46 Frances FitzGerald goes so far as to credit Sakharov's speech at the forum with "breaking the spell" of the tied package, but the internal Gorbachev documents point to other key players in the ultimate decision.
47 Record of conversation between Sakharov and Frank von Hippel, January 14, 1987.
48 Alexander Yakovlev memorandum, Document 39, Last Superpower Summits.
49 See FitzGerald, op. cit., pp. 410–411.
50 Andrey Kokoshin, "O razvitii nashei pozitsii na peregovorakh po YaKV" (About the Development of our Position at the NST negotiations), Katayev collection Hoover Institution. Box 5.

Part 2

Government Decision-Making Behind SDI Participation

4 Britain, SDI, and the United States, 1983–1986

A Guarded Relationship

Edoardo Andreoni

1983–1984: 'Yes, But . . . '

Despite the impression of a continually 'special' relationship with the United States and the ostensibly close personal bond between Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, Britain was informed but not consulted on the launch of SDI.[1] British Defence Secretary Michael Heseltine described the reaction in London as one of 'despair'.[2] The Ministry of Defence immediately questioned the technical feasibility and strategic desirability of abandoning deterrence for strategic defence, seeing SDI as an intrinsically flawed attempt 'to provide a technological diversion' from the 'essentially political problem' of living in a nuclear world.[3]

Britain's tense domestic political context in the early 1980s further complicated the government's position. The Reagan administration's belligerent approach to the Cold War had fuelled public anxieties over the arms race and the risks of a military confrontation with the Warsaw Pact, in turn contributing to the emergence of a strong opposition to nuclear weapons and, especially, against the stationing of the so-called Euromissiles on British territory.[4] Inasmuch as it was seen as an escalation of the military competition with the Soviet Union, SDI risked making it harder for the Thatcher government to maintain public support for its pro-nuclear and Atlanticist defence policy. At the same time, the initiative's long-term aim of making nuclear weapons 'impotent and obsolete' seemed to undermine the rationale for deployment of new US missiles in Europe, thus playing into the hands of the anti-nuclear campaigners. Initially and for the whole of 1983, the British government thus kept the lowest possible profile on SDI, adopting a 'cautious and non-committal' approach that sought to minimise negative domestic repercussions while avoiding any criticism that could alienate Washington.[5]

In the spring of 1984, the presentation of the first budget request for SDI to Congress and the official establishment of the SDI Organization within the Pentagon confirmed the British government's impression that the initiative 'would not go away in the near future' and was likely to play an important role in both transatlantic and East-West relations.[6] As a consequence, the Foreign Office and MOD undertook a more comprehensive assessment of SDI – a 70-page paper which confirmed the overwhelmingly negative perception emerged in the immediate aftermath of the 'Star Wars' speech.[7] In addition to disappointment at the lack of

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consultations by the Americans, the study expressed profound scepticism about the technical feasibility of a 'leak-proof' ballistic missile defence system, as well as concern over SDI's impact on East-West relations, arms control (especially the 1972 ABM Treaty),[8] and transatlantic cohesion – as Europe would remain vulnerable to the Soviet non-ballistic nuclear threat and superiority in conventional forces.[9] Perhaps most importantly for the Thatcher government, SDI posed both military and political challenges to Britain's independent nuclear deterrent. The long-term military consequences of the deployment of sophisticated anti-ballistic missile defences by both superpowers for the recently purchased Trident system were deemed containable – thanks especially to its reliance on submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM), more difficult to intercept. However, the short-term political risks inherent in SDI were considered more worrying. The initiative's explicit aim to eventually create the conditions for the elimination of nuclear weapons risked to directly undercut the rationale for modernising the British deterrent and could make it extremely difficult to maintain public support for the government's nuclear strategy.[10]

In the light of these strong reservations, key members of Thatcher's cabinet – especially Heseltine and Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe – seriously doubted the wisdom of pursuing SDI and believed that the US government should be persuaded to significantly limit its scope or even abandon it altogether. In their view, this objective could be best achieved indirectly, by encouraging the Reagan administration to resume arms control discussions with Moscow and reach an early agreement to strictly limit or ban completely military developments in outer space.[11] Both ministers also argued that a deeper discussion of SDI with key allies in Europe and the formulation of a common position on the issue would maximise Britain's ability to influence US policy in this direction.[12]

Together with some of her closest advisers, Thatcher did not fully share the FCO-MOD's deeply negative evaluation of SDI nor, especially, did she endorse their policy recommendations. Despite attempting in later years to present herself as a supporter of Reagan's initiative from the start, at the time the prime minister was sceptical that perfect defence against ballistic missiles could ever be achieved and deeply concerned by some of SDI's potential short-term effects, most importantly on the preservation of nuclear deterrence.[13] Nevertheless, in 1984 Thatcher also believed that it was too early to categorically rule out the feasibility or strategic wisdom of SDI and that a 'prudent hedge' should be maintained against the possibility of a Soviet breakthrough in similar technologies.[14] However, her overriding reservation against pressuring Washington into agreeing on arms control agreements that would prevent the development of SDI was the potential damage to the Anglo-American relationship as well as her personal rapport with Reagan.[15]

For all these reasons, Thatcher quickly became convinced that, rather than outright criticism, giving qualified support to SDI as a research programme conducted within the limits of the ABM Treaty (which allowed research but prohibited the development and deployment of strategic defences) would best serve Britain's security and diplomatic interests. The combination of public support for US policy and frank consultations in private would put Her Majesty's Government

in a strong position to influence the decision-making process within the Reagan administration. Washington remained deeply divided between hardline supporters of SDI as a military necessity and those who mainly saw the initiative as a potentially formidable diplomatic tool in relations with Moscow.[16] Thatcher agreed with the latter faction, headed by US Secretary of State George Shultz; in her view, the Soviet leadership's desire to avoid a new and costly phase of technological and military competition with the West could be exploited to obtain concessions in arms control negotiations.[17] The continuation of SDI research was therefore important in order to maintain pressure on the Soviets, encourage dialogue, and help bring about the improvement in East-West relations which, by 1984, Thatcher keenly sought.[18]

European policy was another important element which influenced the debate on SDI within the Thatcher government, in particular the conflict between the deep-rooted Atlanticist tradition in British foreign policy – to which Thatcher passionately subscribed – and the growing trend during the 1980s toward deeper European cooperation in foreign and defence policy.[19] Inasmuch as SDI was seen on the continent as an example of American disregard of European interests and an expression of the Reagan administration's worrying isolationist and unilateralist tendencies, it had served to strengthen such a trend.[20] In the months following the 'Star Wars' speech, Thatcher's conversations with other European leaders had revealed their profound disillusion in US leadership.[21] Despite differences of substance and rhetoric, both the French President François Mitterrand and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl argued for deeper political integration and defence cooperation in Europe in response to the developments in US policy.[22] In the British cabinet, Howe and Heseltine were keen to explore possibilities for greater European political and defence cooperation, and to fully engage in the growing debate about the future of Europe.[23]

On her part, Thatcher was sceptical about the drive towards more supranational integration of Europe's defence and foreign policy and remained convinced of the transatlantic orientation of British diplomacy.[24] Far from being a mere article of faith, her Atlanticism was grounded in a pragmatic assessment of the best way to protect Britain's national interests and magnify the country's international influence and standing.[25] These considerations and outlook led Thatcher to reject her ministers' calling for a common European response to SDI and contributed to her decision to give qualified support to the US research programme. This approach fitted into a well-established pattern of British diplomacy since WWII, of carefully avoiding direct confrontations with the United States – and the damage that could derive to the 'special' diplomatic, security, and intelligence relationship – while trying to influence decision-making in Washington through consultations and close association with US policies.[26]

Thatcher and Reagan first discussed SDI in person during a meeting at Camp David in December 1984. During the talks, Thatcher confirmed that she considered US research in ballistic missile defence justified and necessary in order to match Soviet efforts in the same field.[27] That said, the prime minister also expressed forcefully her doubts over the feasibility of SDI and concerns over

its implications for arms control and, especially, nuclear deterrence – which she vehemently defended as having ensured 'forty years of unprecedented peace in Europe'.[28] In exchange for Britain's public support for SDI, Reagan agreed on the content of a four-point press statement that Thatcher gave after the meeting, which reflected the British view of SDI as a research programme to be conducted within the limits of existing treaties, and as an object of discussion and compromise in US-Soviet arms control negotiations, due to resume in early 1985.[29]

By obtaining the US administration's agreement on the 'Four Points', which introduced a key distinction between SDI research and deployment and codified the 'sanitised' interpretation of the initiative preferred by Britain, Thatcher scored an important diplomatic success.[30] However, the meeting did nothing to reconcile the fundamental difference between her perspective on SDI and Reagan's own, unique conception of the initiative.[31] As the president stressed repeatedly at Camp David, he remained strongly committed to the 'moral' dimension of SDI and to his original vision of the initiative as a catalyst for the abolition of atomic weapons.[32] Despite her success in establishing a framework that allowed Britain to publicly endorse SDI, the strategy implemented by Thatcher at Camp David failed to contain the initiative's most destabilising aspect – Reagan's commitment to its nuclear abolitionist thrust. This ensured that the initiative would remain a source of transatlantic tensions in the following years.[33]

1985: Cashing In, Opting Out

In the immediate aftermath of the Camp David summit, the mood in the British government was of evident self-satisfaction, bordering on euphoria.[34] The 'Four Points' were seen not only as a success in terms of public relations and a demonstration of Britain's restored international status and influence but also as substantial concessions to British demands.[35] However, perhaps the most significant consequence of the meeting for future British policy – not only towards SDI – lies in the fact that it confirmed the validity, in the eyes of Thatcher and her close advisers, of the 'never say no' approach traditionally adopted by London in dealing with problematic US initiatives.[36] The inclusion of the 'Four Points' as the basis of the US approach on SDI for the renewed talks with the Soviets in January 1985 further reinforced Thatcher's instinct to keep following this line of action.[37]

That said, the Camp David agreement by no means resolved all British reservations, and the prime minister herself was determined to continue high-level discussion of SDI with US officials.[38] The most profound and pressing British concern remained the anti-nuclear rhetoric employed by the US administration, especially the president, in the presentation of SDI. Thatcher told Reagan in February 1985,

> We must not get into a situation where people were told that nuclear weapons were wicked, immoral and might soon be rendered unnecessary by the development of defensive systems, otherwise public support for deployment of Cruise and purchase of Trident would be eroded.

The West would need to rely upon nuclear weapons 'for many years yet', she emphasised; it was vital 'not to turn public opinion against them at a crucial moment'.[39]

In response, Reagan not only agreed on the need to maintain NATO's offensive nuclear capability but also reiterated that SDI 'was designed to render obsolete a strategy based on the nuclear destruction of populations', not to be used as a 'bargaining chip' in negotiations with the Soviets.[40] Only a few weeks after the Camp David summit, the tense discussion in Washington exposed a fundamental difference of opinion between Reagan and Thatcher over the morality and future role of nuclear weapons.[41] As a result Thatcher constantly felt the need, in her meetings and correspondence with Reagan and other US officials throughout 1985, to reiterate the vital importance of nuclear deterrence.[42] At the same time, she did not put into question the approach formalised at Camp David, continuing to believe in the need for Britain to be perceived, at least publicly, as a strong advocate of SDI research and to avoid unconstructive criticism, working behind closed doors to influence US policy.[43]

Another important reason for continuing to support SDI research was the potential opportunity for British firms to participate in the US programme. Thatcher shared the view of her ambassador to Washington, Oliver Wright, that collaborating on SDI could bring great technological and financial benefits for British industry, while also increasing London's influence on the future of the initiative. By contrast, hesitation could result in Britain 'missing the bus' and being excluded from the technological revolution that SDI was likely to ignite.[44] To avoid such a prospect, in February Thatcher expressed her interest in the participation of British firms and scientists in the US programme, both privately to Reagan and during a speech before a joint session of Congress. Inasmuch as it gave firm support to SDI research, while also arguing for the continued and vital need for nuclear weapons in order to prevent war, the speech summarised perfectly Thatcher's 'dual track' approach to the initiative in 1985.[45]

In the British cabinet, while recognising the value of the 'Four Points', Howe and Heseltine remained critical of SDI and kept arguing for coordinating with the other Europeans to pressure Washington into accepting strict limits on the initiative. Thatcher reacted to her ministers' reservations by concentrating decision-making on SDI into No. 10 – a development actively encouraged by the Americans, who knew that the prime minister was the main restraint on 'a very activist and hostile British position on SDI'.[46]

In spite of being left at the margins of the central decisions, during 1985 Howe and Heseltine attempted to moderate British policy on SDI. In March, Howe publicly criticised Reagan's initiative as an inadequate solution to the security dilemmas of the nuclear era, describing it as 'a new Maginot Line of the twenty-first century in space' – thus emphasising the ultimate failure of pursuing technological invulnerability rather than diplomatic solutions to international tensions.[47] Heseltine's scepticism was evident in his handling of the issue of participation in SDI. Opposed to British involvement from the start, he was deeply irritated by the absence of consultations before US Defense

Secretary Caspar Weinberger publicly invited allied governments to participate in the initiative in March 1985.[48] However, he also saw in the clumsiness of US policy and the widespread disappointment it provoked within NATO (particularly because of the imposition of a 60-day deadline) an opportunity to stimulate a joint European response to Washington's invitation and avoid that individual countries could be 'sucked in' into supporting SDI beyond the conditions set out in the 'Four Points'.[49]

No. 10 did not see any good industrial or scientific reason for a common European response and suspected that Heseltine's real motive was to strengthen opposition to SDI within NATO.[50] In fact, Thatcher viewed Britain as being in competition with its neighbours for the economic, technological, and diplomatic advantages of SDI participation, and remained convinced that the best way to 'cash in' the credit gained in Washington by 'giving a lead to European support for SDI' was to do so bilaterally.[51]

As a consequence, in the spring of 1985 No. 10 directed the MOD to start bilateral negotiations with the Pentagon. In the meantime, London remained ostensibly willing to discuss a coordinated European response to the broader technological and industrial challenge posed by SDI[52] and even agreed to participate in the European technological cooperation programme launched by Mitterrand in April 1985, the Eureka initiative – while making it clear that US-UK cooperation on SDI would be a priority.[53]

Contrary to Thatcher's wishes, the negotiations with Washington proceeded slowly and with difficulty; a memorandum of understanding was signed only in December 1985, making Britain the first country to officially sign up for participation in SDI.[54] Throughout the negotiations, the Americans proved less forthcoming than Thatcher expected, restricting access to the most advanced technologies and refusing to award Britain a fixed quota of SDI contracts. By 1990, the value of the contracts obtained by British companies amounted to 81.9 million dollars, a small fraction of London's initial request of 1.5 billion dollars.[55]

While economically disappointing, the agreement can be seen as a success for Thatcher's SDI policy. Arguably, the decision to participate in the initiative had never been primarily about financial or technological benefits but was essentially political, the logical continuation of the approach adopted at Camp David in 1984. In this respect, Thatcher achieved her objective of making Britain the first country to sign up for the programme, securing a 'front row' position that she hoped to exploit to influence the future development of SDI and ensure that Washington continued to abide to the 'Four Points'.[56] Once again, Thatcher had resisted the pressures within the cabinet towards a common European position, sticking instead to her preferred strategy of advancing British interests by close association with US policy. This outcome had not been achieved by building consensus in Whitehall but by centralising control over foreign policy in No. 10, at a cost of widening existing divisions within the cabinet and the Conservative party over SDI and the broader orientation of Britain's diplomacy.[57] Particularly, Thatcher's Atlanticist position on SDI participation and adamant rejection of a common European response can be seen as having helped marginalise London in

the parallel yet interconnected debate about the relaunch of European integration, leaving once again the initiative to Paris and Bonn.[58]

The debate over SDI participation also worsened personal conflict in the cabinet, particularly between Thatcher and Heseltine. Their profound difference of policy and personality become evident in the Westland Helicopters crisis of late 1985, which ultimately led to Heseltine's resignation and even threatened to bring the government down.[59] While apparently successful, Thatcher's approach to SDI in 1985 thus prepared the ground for future crises and foreshadowed some of the dynamics that would lead to the prime minister's own downfall.[60]

1986: A Guarded Relationship

Despite these underlying tensions and the less-than-satisfactory terms of the final agreement, by the end of 1985 the issue of Britain's participation in SDI was finally settled. Nevertheless, London remained uneasy about the evolution of US foreign policy – its focus shifting on the acceleration of the US-Soviet rapprochement and on SDI's implications for both arms control and nuclear deterrence. By early 1986, the initial European optimism about the new superpower détente had indeed turned into increasing concern. In London, as in other European capitals, the early enthusiasm for Mikhail Gorbachev had significantly cooled. The Soviet leader's activism, bright intellect, and charm – at first famously considered by Thatcher as the attributes of a man with whom one could 'do business'[61] –appeared now increasingly dangerous, being seen as instrumental to the same traditional Soviet interests and goals as his predecessors'.[62]

The British government was especially concerned by the Kremlin's increased ability to exploit the aspirations for peace and nuclear disarmament widespread among Western public opinion and by Gorbachev's progressively bolder arms control proposals and anti-nuclear rhetoric – epitomised by his January 1986 plan to abolish all nuclear weapons before the year 2000.[63] The preconditions attached to Gorbachev's proposal, most importantly the complete renunciation to space weapons, made it clear that its objective was to put pressure on Western governments and divide the Alliance, by offering to public opinion the 'poisonous chalice' of complete disarmament and exploiting European scepticism over SDI.[64] British concerns were greatly heightened by the positive reaction to the plan by the State Department and the White House, which was seen as a 'sea change' in the administration's attitude towards arms control.[65] London feared that by welcoming Gorbachev's abolitionist language – which echoed deliberately the anti-nuclear rhetoric frequently employed by Reagan in relation to SDI – Washington would fuel unrealistic public expectations and fatally undermine popular support for nuclear deterrence.[66]

At the same time, the British government considered a continuation of the arms control deadlock to be equally dangerous. Gorbachev's dynamism and propaganda skills increased the likelihood that the lack of progress on arms control would be blamed on the West, especially on Washington's commitment to SDI, creating grave difficulties at a domestic level and within NATO.[67] This prospect prompted

Thatcher to move beyond the position codified in the 'Four Points', advocating more actively a US-Soviet understanding on SDI.[68] In particular, Thatcher encouraged Reagan to accept some restrictions or at least provide clarifications on the future of the programme beyond its research phase, in order to demonstrate Washington's commitment to a negotiated transition towards defensive systems, eliminate Moscow's propaganda advantage, and shift the debate back to offensive disarmament.[69] This represented a substantial evolution of Britain's position and is indicative of London's growing concern about SDI's role in East-West relations during 1986.[70]

British anxieties intensified in the spring and summer, as some of Reagan's other foreign policy decisions exacerbated transatlantic friction and apprehension. Among these were the airstrikes carried out against Libya in April 1986 – in retaliation for a terrorist attack against a West Berlin nightclub frequented by US servicemen – which resulted in particularly acute domestic and diplomatic difficulties for Thatcher,[71] and Reagan's decision to cease to adhere to the unratified SALT II agreement and exceed its limits on the development and production of new strategic missiles later in the year.[72] These developments led to growing frustration in Whitehall towards Washington's unilateralism in foreign policy and to a renewed questioning in the cabinet of Thatcher's interpretation of the special relationship. Pointing to the rise in anti-American sentiments among British public opinion, in particular young voters, Howe warned that the prime minister's preferred approach of close association with Reagan and his policies might turn from an asset into a liability for the government in the upcoming general election.[73] The prospect of a breakdown of arms control negotiations, especially if due to the US president's inflexibility on SDI, was considered the gravest danger for the Tories – at a time when the Chernobyl incident[74] had 'heightened fears of all things nuclear' among the public.[75]

As on previous occasions, during the summer of 1986 Thatcher firmly resisted these internal challenges to her pro-American approach to foreign policy, reaffirming that there was 'nothing to be gained' from distancing from the Americans. 'Certainly we need to give them our candid advice', she wrote Howe,

> The more we succeed in influencing their judgments, and are seen to do so, the better. But this will be achieved by the quality of our advice, the vigour of our diplomacy and the loyalty of our support when we think they are right – *not* by consciously drawing away from them or by losing ourselves in a Euro-consensus.[76]

When a meeting between Reagan and Gorbachev was finally announced for October in Reykjavik, the British government worked intensely to ensure that its views and advice were relayed to the Americans.[77] On the key issue of SDI, Thatcher once again encouraged Reagan to reassure Moscow against a 'sudden break-out from the research stage' and to keep abiding to the limits posed by ABM treaty.[78] On most other arms control issues, the British position was more 'conservative' than the one held by the pragmatists in the US administration,

who increasingly enjoyed Reagan's support. On intermediate-range weapons, for instance, Thatcher disliked the so-called 'zero option', which consisted in their complete elimination from Europe, preferring instead the establishment of equal ceilings for both sides. On strategic weapons, Britain supported a reduction by 30% in the superpowers' arsenals, rather than Reagan's July 1986 proposal to eliminate all offensive ballistic weapons in ten years, provided that an agreement was reached on strategic defences.[79]

In the run-up to Reykjavik, these differences with the United States on arms control did not cause too much concern in London, because the prospect of an agreement seemed remote.[80] Like the Americans, the British completely failed to anticipate Gorbachev's concessions, greatly underestimating his desire to urgently make substantive progress on nuclear disarmament.[81] Both the Soviet leader's proposals in Reykjavik and the 'cosmic' heights reached by dialogue between him and Reagan came as a complete surprise and a shock to the British government.[82] US officials were deeply impressed by the concessions offered by the Soviets during the talks, including the acceptance of the 'zero option' on INF and a proposal for a 50% reduction in strategic forces. 'He was laying gifts at our feet', recalls Shultz in his memoirs.[83] The US delegation responded with even more radical counter-proposals, suggesting the elimination of all strategic ballistic missiles within ten years. The discussion spiralled and the two leaders came close to agreeing on the elimination of all nuclear weapons within the same time-frame, before their disagreement on the restrictions to be imposed on SDI research – which Gorbachev wanted limited to the laboratory – caused the talks to collapse.[84]

The radical measures Reagan had been ready to agree or had proposed, which went far beyond anything discussed bilaterally and within NATO prior to the summit, sent shockwaves across the Atlantic. 'My own reaction when I heard how far the Americans had been prepared to go was as if there had been an earthquake beneath my feet', wrote Thatcher in her memoirs.[85] In her view, the elimination of all ballistic missiles – let alone all nuclear weapons – coupled with the implementation of the 'zero option' on INF, would have had devastating effect on the cohesion of NATO and on British security, spelling the end of nuclear deterrence and leaving Western Europe vulnerable to Soviet conventional superiority. An agreement on the lines discussed in Reykjavik would also have forced the UK government to abandon its plans to purchase Trident and to look for an alternative system in order to maintain an independent nuclear deterrent – with likely unsustainable financial and political costs.[86]

Immediately after the summit, Thatcher telephoned Reagan to convey Britain's anxiety about the political and security implications of the proposals made in Reykjavik.[87] To the shock of British officials, the US president seemed unable to grasp the depth of Thatcher's concerns or to offer the reassurances she sought.[88] During the call, Reagan 'spoke dismissively of the ABM Treaty', which he seemed to consider as merely an obstacle in the transition from deterrence to defence, and appeared unconvinced that Soviet superiority in conventional weapons posed as grave a threat to Europe as Thatcher claimed, or that it made necessary the

preservation of nuclear deterrence: 'The Russians don't want war', he affirmed. As Thatcher's private secretary Charles Powell put it, the US president 'showed no sign of backing down from his concept of eliminating nuclear weapons within ten years, indeed showed considerable pride in it'.[89]

In the British government's view, Reagan's proposals in Reykjavik not only were deeply undesirable from a military standpoint but also carried grave domestic political risks – directly undermining the Conservative party's electoral strategy for 1987.[90] By proposing the elimination of all ballistic missiles in ten years, Reagan gave credibility to Labour's radical defence platform, which included unilateral nuclear disarmament and the removal of US bases from British territory, while undercutting the government's arguments in support for nuclear deterrence, the purchase of Trident, and continued commitment to NATO.[91] During their post-summit call, Thatcher made this clear to Reagan: 'giving up nuclear weapons is the sort of thing that Neil Kinnock advocates. This would be tantamount to surrender'.[92]

Addressing the public opinion and security risks resulting from Reagan's proposals in Reykjavik became the focus of Thatcher's visit to Washington in November 1986.[93] As in 1984, Thatcher resorted to her preferred tactic of combining support for elements of Reagan's policy – especially the decision to resist Soviet attempts to 'kill' SDI – with a frank expression of her concerns, in particular over the elimination of ballistic missiles in ten years' time.[94] In Washington, she bluntly warned Shultz that such a prospect would undermine the security of Western Europe and 'cause you to lose me and the British nation'.[95] At the same time, Thatcher overcame her reservations and gave full support to the 'zero option' on INF deployed in Europe; in exchange, she obtained Reagan's agreement on a five-point press statement containing key reassurances about the US administration's future arms control policy. The most important of these was that priority would be given to an agreement on INF, as well as to a ban on chemical weapons and a 50% reduction in the superpowers' strategic arsenals over five years. Crucially, the goal of eliminating the remaining offensive strategic weapons in the subsequent five-year period was not mentioned in the statement, which instead reaffirmed the need for 'effective nuclear deterrents based upon a mix of systems'. The statement also stressed that SDI research should continue, within the limits of the ABM treaty; noted the importance of eliminating conventional disparities in conjunction with nuclear disarmament; and reaffirmed the US intention to proceed with its strategic modernisation programme and to support Britain's acquisition of Trident.[96]

Thatcher was highly satisfied with the outcome of the visit, which she could convincingly present to the British public as a success echoing the one of December 1984.[97] As with the 'Four Points', Thatcher could not have achieved this objective if her concerns had not been shared by officials within the Reagan administration, in this case the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[98] In addition, domestic political developments in the United States also played in Thatcher's favour. The Democratic victory in the 1986 mid-term elections and the outbreak of the Iran-Contra scandal considerably weakened the Reagan administration, contributing

decisively to slow down the momentum towards nuclear disarmament after Reykjavik.[99]

Like the Reagan-Thatcher meeting of December 1984, the second Camp David summit and the overall British reaction to Reykjavik are paradigmatic of both the strengths and limits of the 'special relationship' during the Thatcher era. On the one hand, the two episodes reveal how, on issues on which British and US positions diverged significantly – as on SDI and nuclear disarmament – Thatcher's tactic of combining personal diplomacy and support for Reagan with a skilful exploitation of internal divisions in Washington allowed her to smooth out transatlantic differences and influence US policy in a direction more favourable to British interests.[100] On the other hand, on both occasions the prime minister's approach consisted in circumventing rather than removing the causes of transatlantic disagreement and friction, which tended to resurface as circumstances changed. Much like the 'Four Points', the November 1986 statement did not represent a triumph of British influence or Thatcher's persuasive ability, but a fragile compromise; while not mentioning the elimination of all ballistic missiles, the statement did not explicitly discard it as a goal of US policy and was adopted because it contained language ambiguous enough to satisfy both parties. 'There was neither an agreement, nor an agreement to disagree: it was more an agreement to pretend to agree', writes Moore.[101]

The American, and especially Reagan's, visionary and universalistic outlook on key issues such as nuclear disarmament and SDI was indeed never reconciled with the more pragmatic, limited British view – the first reflecting the priorities and ambitions of a superpower, the second the preoccupations and interests of a medium-sized actor in international politics, firmly anchored in the European context.[102] To Thatcher's recurrent dismay, the Atlantic Ocean appeared in fact wider than the Channel on both SDI and nuclear abolition.

After her trust in the US president was shaken at Reykjavik, Thatcher gave greater consideration to European alternatives to her pro-American foreign policy approach – appearing tempted by Mitterrand's proposal, supported by the FCO and MOD, to intensify Anglo-French defence and nuclear cooperation, and even replace Trident with an alternative French system.[103] As historian David Reynolds notes, however, this was only a 'temporary flirtation', which was abandoned after the reassurances obtained from Reagan at Camp David.[104] That said, Reykjavik left a profound mark on the British government's perception of the US administration, and of Reagan in particular. As noted by Thatcher's key advisor Percy Cradock, 'the serious unprofessionalism of the administration, the president's naive and obstinate vision of a non-nuclear world, the failure of consultation and the blatant disregard of European interests' displayed in Iceland were deeply alarming signs. Despite the 'major achievement' of Camp David, the impression remained in London during the following months that Reagan could not be entirely trusted if presented by Gorbachev with another opportunity for radical nuclear disarmament: 'we shall continue to fight to keep the Americans on the straight and narrow path' and 'strengthen the fence erected at Camp David', Cradock advised the prime minister.[105] In her memoirs, even Thatcher recognised that nuclear weapons

were 'the one issue on which I knew I could not take the Reagan administration's soundness for granted'.[106] In sum, while the events of late 1986 did not break Thatcher' commitment to the special relationship, this became an increasingly guarded one.[107]

Conclusions

The SDI controversy can be seen as a critical 'test' for the 'special relationship' and for Thatcher's confidence in Britain's ability to influence decision-making across the Atlantic by virtue of its exceptionally close ties with the United States. As shown earlier, while there was broad agreement in London that the priority in dealing with SDI should be to limit its strategic, technological, and rhetorical challenge to nuclear deterrence, sharp disagreements quickly emerged on the best way to do so. These reflected deeper divisions about the overall conduct and objectives of British foreign policy. For those who, like Howe and Heseltine, were sceptical about SDI's potential advantages – as either a military programme, a 'bargaining chip' in arms control negotiations, or the catalyst of a technological revolution – Britain needed to make common cause with its European partners and put pressure on Washington to limit or even abandon the initiative. For Thatcher and her close advisers, however, only a policy of public support for SDI, coupled with a private and nuanced expression of British views and reservations, would maximise London's ability to influence the development of SDI and contain its most dangerous aspects. In other words, the imperative of protecting Britain's fragile defence consensus and its nuclear deterrent had to be reconciled with the equally inescapable need to preserve the special connection with Washington, on which depended not only Britain's security but also much of its diplomatic clout.

Possessing a strong confidence in her ability to combine personal diplomacy, ideological clarity, and effective leadership, Thatcher adopted the traditional British approach of never saying 'no' but always 'yes, but' to unwelcome US policies in order to turn the SDI challenge into an opportunity to advance Britain's interests. In her view, to succeed in promoting a limited version of SDI such as the one outlined in the 'Four Points' would have reinforced Britain's role as a 'bridge' between Europe and America and, even more important, as an influential player in East-West relations – while also boosting her own stature as a world leader.[108]

The results of this approach appear mixed. On the one hand, at specific times the British government managed to have an important impact on US policy on SDI. On the other, these results were achieved, thanks to a ruthless centralisation of Britain's SDI policy in the hands of the prime minister, which alienated senior figures in the cabinet, deepening the divisions between Atlanticist and Europeanist. Considering that, as demonstrated at Reykjavik, Britain's strategy was unable to achieve its main objective of permanently defusing the destabilising anti-nuclear aspect of SDI, it appears that by investing so much in supporting the initiative Thatcher obtained less than she bargained for.

Notes

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3 The National Archives: Public Record Office (London) [henceforward: TNA:PRO]/ CAB 164/1664, Note, Mottram (MOD) to Thatcher, 29 March 1983.
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12 TNA:PRO/PREM 19/1188, Minute, Heseltine and Howe to Thatcher, 19 June 1984.
13 M. Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London, 1993), 463–466; C. Moore, *Margaret Thatcher. The Authorized Biography, Volume Two: Everything She Wants* (London, 2015), 107–108.
14 TNA:PRO/PREM 19/1404, Record of meeting between Heseltine and Weinberger, 28 February 1984.
15 C. Powell, in Kandiah and Staerck, *The British Response to SDI*, 32.
16 TNA:PRO/PREM 19/1188, Telegram, Wright to FCO, 18 July 1984.
17 TNA:PRO/PREM 19/1188, Record, Meeting between Thatcher, Howe and Heseltine, 16 July 1984.
18 Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, 462–471; G. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York, 1993), 264.
19 A. Varsori, 'The Relaunching of Europe in the Mid-1980s,' in K. Patel and K. Weisbrode (eds), *European Integration and the Atlantic Community in the 1980s* (Cambridge, 2013), 226–242.
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21 TNA:PRO/PREM 19/1240, Record of conversation (Thatcher and Mitterrand), 20 October 1983; TNA:PRO/PREM 19/1245, Record of conversation (Thatcher and Kohl), 28 February 1984.

22 G. W. Rees, *The Western European Union at the Crossroads: Between Trans-Atlantic Solidarity and European Integration* (Boulder, 1998), 22–37; Gassert, 'Transatlantic Drift,' 168–171.
23 TNA:PRO/PREM 19/1245, Background brief for the Anglo-German summit, 2 May 1984.
24 As she told Kohl in February 1984, the only way to strengthen Europe was by 'getting closer to the US'. Cf. TNA:PRO/PREM 19/1245, Record of conversation (Thatcher and Kohl), 28 February 1984.
25 Moore, *Margaret Thatcher, Vol. Two*, 134–135.
26 D. Reynolds, 'Rethinking Anglo-American Relations,' *International Affairs* 65:1 (Winter 1988–1989), 89–111.
27 TNA:PRO/PREM 19/1656, Record of tête-à-tête conversation at Camp David, 22 December 1984.
28 Ronald Reagan Presidential Library (Simi Valley, CA) [henceforward: RRL]/European and Soviet Affairs Directorate, NSC, box 90902, Memorandum of Conversation, Meeting with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, 22 December 1984.
29 The four points agreed at Camp David were the following: that the US and Western aim was to maintain balance, not to achieve superiority; that any SDI-related deployment, in view of treaty obligations, would be a matter for negotiation; that the overall aim was to enhance, not undercut, deterrence; that the renewed US-Soviet dialogue should aim to achieve security at a reduced level of offensive weapons on both sides. TNA:PRO/PREM 19/1502, Prime Minister's press statement on SDI, 23 December 1984.
30 Aldous, *Reagan and Thatcher*, 179–181.
31 Moore, *Margaret Thatcher, Vol. Two*, 247–248.
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33 Aldous, *Reagan and Thatcher*, 181–182.
34 I. Aitken, 'Thatcher Back Amid Camp David Euphoria,' *The Guardian*, 24 December 1984.
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36 Reynolds, 'Rethinking Anglo-American Relations,' 97–98; G. Smith, *Reagan and Thatcher* (London, 1990), 162.
37 TNA:PRO/PREM 19/1443, Letter, Reagan to Thatcher, 5 January 1985.
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40 Ibid.
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43 As Powell put it, 'Reagan is committed utterly to the concept of the SDI as the single most imaginative idea of his Presidency. Nothing is going [to] shake him. TNA:PRO/PREM 19/1443, Note, Powell to Thatcher, undated.
44 TNA:PRO/PREM 19/1443, Letter, Wright to Howe, 29 January 1985.
45 Margaret Thatcher Foundation [henceforward: MTF], 'Speech to the Joint Houses of Congress,' 20 February 1985, document ID: 105968.
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47 G. Howe, 'Defence and Security in the Nuclear Age,' *The RUSI Journal* 130:2 (June 1985), 3–8; Aldous, *Reagan and Thatcher*, 190–191.
48 TNA:PRO/PREM 19/1443, Memo, Powell to Thatcher, 31 January 1985 and RRL/Peter Sommer Files, box 4, Meeting with Heseltine, 26 March 1985.
49 TNA:PRO/PREM 19/1444, Memo, Heseltine to Howe, 27 March 1985.
50 TNA:PRO/PREM 19/1444, Memo, Powell to Thatcher, 28 March 1985.
51 'The GERMANS have got further than we have. This won't do,' complained Thatcher in May 1985; cf. TNA:PRO/PREM 19/1445, Minute, Heseltine to Thatcher, 28 May 1985.
52 TNA:PRO/PREM 19/1445, Memo, Armstrong to Thatcher, 5 June 1985.
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54 TNA:PRO/PREM 19/1445, 'Discussion on UK participation in SDI research,' undated.
55 S. Orman, *Faith in G.O.D.S.: Stability in the Nuclear Age* (London, 1991), 96.
56 TNA:PRO/PREM 19/1445, Briefing, Mallaby to Thatcher, 10 July 1985.
57 Aldous, *Reagan and Thatcher*, 202–203.
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59 Moore, *Margaret Thatcher, Vol. Two*, 449–498.
60 Aldous, *Reagan and Thatcher*, 202–203.
61 MTF, 'TV interview for the BBC,' 17 December 1984, document ID: 105592.
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64 Moore, *Margaret Thatcher, Vol. Two*, 588.
65 TNA:PRO/PREM 19/1759, Telegram, Wright to FCO, 22 January 1986; Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 700.
66 TNA:PRO/PREM 19/1693, Note, Meeting with Nitze, 5 February 1986.
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5 Germany and SDI, 1983–1986

Anchoring US Extended Nuclear Deterrence and *Westbindung* for an Offense-Defense Future

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Introduction

The approach which the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) took toward the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) in the mid-1980s emerged in the context of a tenacious consultation and bargaining process between the United States and its allies. This process was nestled in fluid transitions in East-West, transatlantic and intra-Western European relations. The world economy underwent dynamic transformation, which increasingly pointed to sweeping Western advantage. The realm of defense technology was stimulated by powerful impulses of innovation in the competitive environment of the Cold War.

Dealing with SDI within U.S.-led alliances pertained to the question of how the NATO deterrence and defense apparatus might or should be recalibrated in the medium run, that is, in the 1990s and 2000s, so as to achieve greater stability in a 'nuclear offense-defense world' at a lower level of danger to America and American allies – without weakening deterrence, the assurance of allies and the assurance of the Soviet Union of the West's non-belligerent intentions. German officials and decision-makers viewed the SDI debate, including Germany's emerging position toward SDI, through various lenses. These lenses were shaped by bureaucratic idiosyncrasies, the hyper-specialization of the discussion, and competing political agendas. The essences of the matter remained hard to comprehend. Gauging future trajectories of related developments was even harder.

One perspective remained crucial: as a non-nuclear weapons state, bound to the 'West' and the United States in the framework of NATO, Germany considered nuclear deterrence provided by the United States, including a politically acceptable nuclear brinkmanship doctrine, essential to its survival. In intra-alliance SDI consultations, German officials underlined the importance of the issue of how U.S. extended nuclear deterrence would work in the 1990s and 2000s when non-nuclear strategic Ballistic Missile Defenses (BMD) might gradually (not abruptly) become components in the military arsenals of the superpowers which presupposed a dissolution of the ABM Treaty at some point.

The chapter focuses on this perspective to examine the emerging approach which the FRG took toward the SDI between 1983 and 1986 and why Germany finally supported SDI. A comprehensive analysis would have to take other

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relevant perspectives into account and gauge their relative importance in comparison to the perspective, which is examined here, including perspectives on economic and financial aspects, the evolution of technology, technology-related transatlantic cooperation, in general, and missile defense-related cooperation projects, in particular.

As the chapter strongly suggests, the role of government security experts was crucial in the complicated process of how Germany's approach toward SDI crystallized. In comparison, the impact of decision-makers – like Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, or Minister of Defense Manfred Wörner – remains hard to understand. This also raises the profound question to what extent decision-makers like Kohl did conceive of SDI as an issue that required in-depth leadership engagement with deeper and extraordinarily sophisticated levels of the SDI debate before making decisions.

The chapter also presents new empirical insights, which originate from the first wave of declassification of German, British, and American archival materials.[2] The end of the Cold War and Germany's reunification have received considerable attention in scholarship. But historians have only begun to investigate the era of Helmut Kohl's chancellorship, including the early years prior to 1989/90 and Germany's SDI policy.[3] Scholars can also build on strategic studies analyses from the 1980s and 1990s.[4] A difficulty and opportunity is to evaluate differences between public appearance at the time and substance which becomes more directly ascertainable in declassified materials. However, empirical gaps as well as the breadth and specificity of new layers of declassified information also prompt a degree of humility regarding the ability of historians to make sense of relevant processes.

Seen from today, three policy-relevant aspects should be noted upfront. First, neither superpower attempted to throw off the limitations of the ABM Treaty during the late Cold War. Second, the paradigm of mutual deterrence through mutual vulnerability due to mutual threats with offensive nuclear systems remained basically intact in the strategic nuclear relationship between Russia and America. Third, since 2002, when the United States withdrew from the ABM Treaty, strategic BMD became an increasingly important element in the deterrence strategies of the United States and its allies in East Asia and Europe. In Europe, Germany participates in the so-called *European Phased Adaptive Approach* to BMD against limited ballistic missile attack by hosting the central command center of NATO air forces (*Allied Air Command*, Ramstein). And having served during the Cold War as a deployment country for two belts of air defense missiles in the Federal Republic's Eastern border region, the German *Luftwaffe* continues to contribute to NATO's integrated air defense by operating Patriot missiles with a tactical antiballistic missile (ABM) capability. Moreover, German, U.S., and Italian companies are developing a Patriot successor system called *Medium Extended Air Defense System* (MEADS). As this chapter suggests, Germany's current approach to BMD continues to be shaped by trends stemming from assessments and policies which the Federal Republic had developed particularly during the SDI debate in the mid-1980s.

Perplexed in the Year of the Euromissiles

There remained a fundamental difference in the policy outlook between German governments and 'confrontationalists'[5] in the Reagan government, irrespective of the change of government in the autumn of 1982, when the social-liberal coalition broke up and the Christian Democrats won over the liberals to form a more 'Atlanticist' government under Helmut Kohl, with Foreign Minister Genscher symbolizing a degree of continuity in terms of *Ostpolitik* and the CSCE process.

The Reagan administration appeared to pursue a 'strategy of high risks and costs that sought, by changing rather than containing an adversary, to make possible a world of much lower risks and costs'.[6] It challenged the Soviet Union by exploiting economic, military, and ideological trends so as to accelerate a decline in Soviet power and enhance America's position as the lead nation of the free world. In contrast, West Germany resisted framing its security policies in competitive terms and abided by preferred notions of East-West stability. Though this status-quo-fixation remained limited by the claim that the German question was still open, the years in the run-up to the revolutions of 1989 witnessed the dreary heyday of West Germany's willingness to acquiesce in, and 'normalize', the division of Germany and Europe.[7]

This fundamental difference in general policy outlook overshadowed the debate on strategic BMD, which was kick-started by Ronald Reagan's SDI speech of March 23, 1983. Presidential rhetoric in the Reagan era had already taken on a life of its own. It had stirred up debates about the illegitimacy of Communism, and prevailing in war, even nuclear war, if NATO were ever forced to defend itself against Soviet aggression. Still, the embarrassment to the Kohl-Genscher government caused by the surprise of the SDI speech was hardly more than marginal. The government had just been confirmed in the Bundestag election of March 6, 1983, about two weeks before Reagan announced the SDI. The speech fueled confusion, anti-Reaganite criticism, anti-nuclear pacifism, and anti-American resentment in the German public in this year of the euromissiles. But the timing of Reagan's speech had not aggravated the situation for Kohl, Genscher, and their parties during the crucial election campaign. Strengthened by the election results, the Kohl-Genscher government neither felt a need nor was it inclined to offer substantial comment in public on the U.S. President's SDI speech. In the face of stagnating, and finally collapsing, INF negotiations, it remained preoccupied with withstanding mounting pressures in Germany and from the Communist world against deploying American PERSHING II and GLCM in Germany (starting in late 1983). At least in Kohl's view, Germany finally stood firm in what he claimed to be "Germany's hour of destiny" (*Deutschlands Schicksalsstunde*): by carrying out INF deployments, Germany re-anchored its policy of Western integration (*Westbindung*) and thus repulsed the idea of political experimentation made out of weakness which might place the country on the slippery slope toward some sort of neutralism.[8]

The German government regarded INF deployments as crucial to establishing a modernized nuclear posture in Europe and to developing a politically acceptable

nuclear doctrine for selective initial and follow-on use options to credibly extend U.S. nuclear deterrence within the framework of 'flexible response' as the preferred strategic concept of NATO under conditions of mutual nuclear vulnerability. Nuclear doctrine was one of the most sensitive issues to the Kohl-Genscher government. Discussions about nuclear doctrine shaped the context in which the government conceptualized the discussion about SDI and how to manage deterrence in a potential future context with offense-defense mixes in ballistic missiles on either side of the Iron Curtain. At the time when U.S. Reagan gave his SDI speech, NATO's "winter exercise/civil military exercise" 1983 still took place. In German official circles, the exercise produced mixed, though in the final analysis deeply unsatisfactory, impressions.[9] The German government saw the INF deployments as a catalyzer for NATO to work out the so-called General Political Guidelines (GPGs) for the defensive use of nuclear weapons. The GPGs were adopted by NATO (except France) in 1986 and represented the outcome of an exceptionally long process that had begun in the late 1960s.[10] For the Federal Republic at least, the GPGs were of paramount importance. They could politically validate the concept that credible threats of selective nuclear weapons use to restore deterrence – that is, deterrent threats which also had to be politically acceptable to NATO allies were viewed as a necessity of survival, given the formidable Soviet threat and East-West disparities in conventional and chemical weapons. A potential problem was this: if the Soviet Union at some point succeeded in establishing a much more significant BMD capability than it already had, it might perhaps protect itself against some of NATO's Selective Nuclear Options (SEOs), to be carried out by Europe-based missile systems like PERSHING II, and even selective Non-SIOP-options (NSOs), to be carried out by U.S. strategic missile systems.[11]

Initially, and given the context of America's massive arms build-up, Reagan's SDI speech was – content-wise – not taken too seriously in German official circles. The president's rather frivolously utilized the rhetoric of hope, progress, and sentimental utopianism which "held out to American citizens the unqualified hope that they need not forever live with the nuclear threat over their heads."[12] That utopianism may also have been motivated by the idea that, if something in the field of strategic BMD was to be achieved, for example, research funding provided by the U.S. Congress, it required a "hard-sell campaign"[13] targeted primarily at domestic U.S. audiences. However, that utopianism in Reagan's speech had immediate and unsettling side effects which concerned European governments because it cast doubt on the moral legitimacy of nuclear deterrence. European governments considered nuclear deterrence vital to their survival, and they struggled to uphold it against an unprecedented level of domestic protest and Communist pressure. The implication of the speech that Soviet BMD efforts were at least in the long run beneficial appeared "perplexing"[14] since *enhanced* Soviet BMD capabilities were expected to undermine NATO's flexible response strategy. In other words, Reagan's utopian rhetoric strengthened a "depoliticized conception of security," which was politically harmful, in that it "promoted a disorienting impression that nuclear weapons are in themselves a factor of insecurity" and that, if the nuclear

threat were diminished, other factors in the East-West competition (disparities in conventional and chemical armaments, ideology, etc.) would be of minor importance, if not irrelevant, in terms of security.[15] Kohl fundamentally disagreed at least with the last-mentioned implication of Reagan's rhetoric. Kohl remained suspicious of the Soviet Union and Gorbachev's intentions. In Kohl's assessment, Gorbachev pursued the old strategy of establishing Soviet hegemony in Western Europe.[16]

After Reagan's SDI speech, it immediately became obvious to the German side in diplomatic exchanges that the apparent purpose of the envisaged U.S. research program permitted under the ABM Treaty was to re-examine the feasibility of strategic BMD options. This opened up a "very long-term perspective."[17] U.S. officials assured their German counterparts that the United States was serious about not limiting potential benefits to the United States and about not rushing ahead with development, production, or deployment decisions without prior allied consultations. The United States, it seemed, was also serious about examining the degree to which the security of U.S. allies might be enhanced by BMD systems in their respective countries. German officials recommended "salvation through consultation."[18] They signaled that, if and when SDI took shape, Germany expected the United States to engage in timely, confidential, substantially thorough, and not predetermined consultations.

The fact that the U.S. President had tied his prestige to the rigorous conduct of research into the feasibility of BMD represented merely the latest, though dramatic, signal that the U.S. government was determined to review its BMD policy. The speech was a situational surprise but hardly came unexpectedly, considering other trends and factors: technological improvements, including research by the U.S. Army and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) on non-nuclear approaches to disable missile reentry vehicles like, for example, achieving kinetic collision with interceptors and directing energy to reentry vehicles with lasers; the existence of a deployed Soviet BMD system protecting Moscow in the absence of an American BMD system since 1976; related Soviet research, development, and modernization efforts; the contested issue of vulnerability of U.S. ICBM silos to Soviet nuclear missile threats; a fierce debate in the United States since the 1970s about whether to do something about it (and, if so, what); the rhetoric of U.S. leaders and officials on nuclear strategy since 1981 which stressed 'prevailing' rather than 'countervailing'; the enduring controversy about how to interpret Soviet strategic culture, specifically Soviet views on the strategic nuclear balance and nuclear deterrence; signs in 1981 and 1982 that the U.S. government, pushed by BMD advocates in Reagan's transition team and the U.S. Senate, positioned itself to re-open the BMD debate.[19] These trends and factors had already alluded to what the Reagan speech seemed to have ignited: that the United States sought to systematically re-examine, and *perhaps* fundamentally alter, the role which modern strategic BMD systems might play in the future deterrence strategies of the United States, or even of the superpowers.

Even this shift hardly came as a surprise because the German government had played an assertive role since the mid-1970s in reassessing Soviet strategic culture.

Germany had successfully prompted NATO – particularly an initially reluctant American alliance hegemon – to adopt a 'dual-track' approach in order to push back against what leaders in Bonn believed to be a Soviet attempt to destroy European and particularly West German confidence in U.S. nuclear protection by shifting the regional nuclear balance of power to Soviet advantage. However, INF deployments, based on a rationale to make U.S. extended nuclear deterrence more credible, were deliberately *not* conceived by the German government in a war-fighting (let alone war-winning) sense. Such framework would have pointed, inter alia, to the consideration of greater numbers than the envisaged maximum of 572 warheads on INF launchers, a missile reload capability, the application of survivability as a guiding principle, and rejection of the idea that INF might be bargained away entirely in arms control negotiations.

Hence, what appeared to be an ongoing transition in U.S. strategic thinking and policy from Carter to Reagan tended to be a source of concern in German specialist circles. Standard German understandings of the rationale of the 1979 'dual-track decision' had fitted into the Carter administration's framework of the "countervailing strategy," which in itself seemed to blend in with established trends of previous U.S. nuclear policies that put the emphasis on graduated, controlled nuclear escalation options to extend deterrence more credibly in the age of strategic parity.[20] The framework of the "countervailing strategy" had not ruled out a *limited* role for strategic BMD in the future as a potential point defense to protect key military forces like ICBMs or military infrastructures. But the Reagan administration seemed to consider a fundamentally different approach to strategic BMD, namely, to exploit strategic BMD *extensively* perhaps even for the purpose of large-scale area defense within a nuclear war-fighting approach to extend U.S. nuclear protection.[21] Of course, the issue of strategic BMD deployments at best loomed on the horizon.

The preliminary German views in 1983 on the SDI 'vision' remained colored by this assessment of an apparently emerging U.S. approach. Yet in the Reagan administration, German reservations on strategy issues frequently evoked consternation and the stereotype of neurotic German behavior.[22] U.S. officials sought to assure their German counterparts that strategic BMD would only enhance U.S. extended deterrence because BMD would help to "recouple" U.S. and Western European security by making the United States less vulnerable in most plausible scenarios of limited Soviet missile strikes against military targets in America.[23] Still, German experts initially expressed great reservation in confidential settings. The head of the German delegation to the High Level Group (HLG) of the NATO Nuclear Planning Group (NPG), General Tandecki, addressed the issue in the first HLG meeting after Reagan's speech: if both superpowers exploited BMD technology so as to make strategic missiles "neutralizable," the likelihood of "tactical nuclear war against NATO-Europe" would greatly increase.[24] Still, it was not lost on German specialists in 1983 that the United States remained adamantly committed to protecting Europe, that this was a prime motivator for the nascent U.S. BMD review, and that it could not even be ruled out that, in the long run and due to American techno-economic prowess, the U.S. might regain a position

of "absolute strategic superiority"[25] even if the Soviets too built up a large-scale BMD architecture.

By late 1983, not much had happened on the SDI front, in part because the INF issue took the center stage throughout the year. SDI and the many complex questions related to it would have to be examined thoroughly if a vigorous research program would really take shape. This remained to be seen. Within the German government, preliminary views on SDI had already been framed within a profoundly skeptical mental model on the whole American idea of reevaluating BMD, though the idea was not approached in a spirit of negativism and aversion to change. In the face of powerful Communist pressure to paralyze and break Germany's determination to deploy INFs, a basic sense predominated: "the true challenges to the military security of Western Europe reside[d] not in the U.S. SDI but in the actual and potential capabilities of the Soviet Union."[26]

Reducing Uncertainty about SDI

The SDI debate entered a new phase when the SDI Organization (SDIO) of the U.S. Department of Defense was established on the basis of President Reagan's National Security Decision Directive Number 119 of January 6, 1984. The projected scope of the program left no doubt that the United States was determined to engage in a vigorous research program to examine the feasibility of strategic BMD options – at least in its initial phase within the boundaries of the ABM Treaty.

From early 1984 on, the U.S. government launched SDI-related consultations with key allies in Europe and Japan. U.S. officials led, informed, and listened. In NATO fora, a myriad of questions was considered. The German government took a keen interest in those consultations and especially in U.S. intelligence estimates of the Soviet BMD program and related Soviet intentions.[27] Officials were also eager to comprehend U.S. views on the implications of SDI for the future of deterrence. Implications for the arms control process, the political state of the NATO alliance in the 1990s and for East-West, American-Soviet, Soviet-West German, Franco-German, and intra-EC-relations were also important. Consideration of some sort of German industry participation in SDI research, as well as the issue of spinoffs for other defense-related and civilian sectors, set in only slowly in late 1984 at the end of Ronald Reagan's first tenure as U.S. President.

In parallel, NATO moved on with the modernization of its nuclear deterrence apparatus as more and more PERSHING IIs and GLCMs were put in place.[28] The economic boom in Western industrial nations, and in West Germany in particular, unfolded forcefully after years of stagflation. Western, and particularly U.S., defense expenditures peaked. The European Community's drive to complete the internal market, as agreed in the Single European Act in February 1986, was in full swing. Those developments gave rise to a greater sense of optimism throughout the capitalist world, whereas the socio-economic situation in the Soviet Union and the Soviet empire in Central and Eastern Europe ossified into an ever-gloomier state.[29]

In SDI-related consultations since early 1984, the U.S. government sought to bring across several key messages to its European allies. In April 1984, the U.S. delegation provided a first detailed briefing at the NPG meeting in Çeşme, Turkey. It was followed by various U.S. briefings, especially in the North Atlantic Council. During the April 1984 NPG meeting, U.S. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and later also the chief of the SDIO, General Abrahamson sought to convey some key arguments:

- The Soviets would engage in extensive BMD research no matter what the United States did.
- Technological progress was inevitable and both superpowers would continue ABM Treaty compliant BMD research.
- The United States would not permit the Soviet Union to prevail in that competition and sought to demonstrate the feasibility of a multi-layer non-nuclear strategic BMD system.
- Potential decisions on the development and production of feasible strategic BMD options could not be made sooner than in the late 1980s or early 1990s, and initial BMD deployments could almost certainly not take place before the early 2000s.[30]

However, the repeatedly proclaimed U.S. willingness to engage in some sort of SDI-related sharing, not just with U.S. allies but "if need be" with the Soviet Union, as Germans noted Weinberger's claim in the NPG, left behind a puzzling, if not disturbing, impression.[31] Superficially seen, it also appeared to be naïve because "Soviet hostility" to SDI meant that there was "little chance of a cooperative transition to a defense-dominated world."[32] The curiosity that an anti-communist hawk of Weinberger's caliber subscribed to that strange American proclamation within the NPG suggested that the 'offer' to Moscow might well be about something else. Was it a red herring, wrapped in the Christmas paper of an all-too cooperative appearance? Was it a "trick to drag the Soviet Union into massive and wasteful expenditure and provide an opportunity to spy on what it might have"[33]? In the NPG, there were no clear signs for the validity of the notion that the United States sought to deceive the Soviet Union in order to compete with it more effectively. But in the unsurprising absence of such clear signs and in the context of skyrocketing U.S. defense spending, could the idea of 'sharing' SDI technology with the 'evil empire' be taken seriously as a demonstration of U.S. sincerity? The absence of 'overt' signs could hardly be taken as proof of the invalidity of the deception hypothesis. Apart from this, it mattered greatly to German specialists that the U.S. government repeatedly declared that benefits of SDI research were supposed to be shared with U.S. allies despite the impression that the effort mostly seemed aimed at improving the situation of the United States of America.[34]

U.S. SDI policy remained something of a riddle and interagency tensions in Bonn added to it. In the *Auswärtiges Amt*, there was confusion about why Wörner deemed it necessary to inspire a report in the German press after the NPG meeting

in Çeşme which depicted him as taking on Weinberger during that meeting by criticizing, if not opposing, SDI, even though it remained more than unclear as to whether Wörner had done so.[35] Wörner was under pressure due to the so-called Kießling affair, one of the greatest political scandals in the history of the *Bundeswehr*.[36] Under these conditions, it may have appeared beneficial to him to appear tough vis-à-vis the alliance hegemon on a matter that remained obscure ('Star Wars') to and widely unpopular ('arms racing') with many constituencies in the German public. Contemporary analyses took the view that 'Wörner's critical perspective' as reported in the press after the NPG in Çeşme reflected the substance of the government's assessment of SDI.[37] As the new evidence indicates, this view should be treated with caution.

In fact, a constructive, though not unconditionally positive, German approach to SDI crystallized over the course of many rounds of consultations with the U.S. and in NATO throughout the year 1984. That year can hence be regarded as a formative period with regard to the basic understanding, and basic political stance of, the German government regarding SDI. Only on that basis did the government move to formal and public endorsement of SDI in early 1985: Speeches given by Kohl in early 1985 appeared as "the key expression of West German SDI policy" throughout the 1980s.[38] Germany's specific positions pertaining to SDI matured only after that formal policy endorsement. The crucial year of 1984, when German views on SDI shaped up in the context of confidential consultations, also witnessed the establishment of interdepartmental working groups of specialists from the Chancellery, the *Auswärtiges Amt* and the Ministry of Defense as well as of other groups within those offices and bilaterally with French officials.

Which key hypotheses shaped the emerging basic understanding of, and political stance within, the Kohl-Genscher government regarding SDI? The provisional analysis presented here is limited to offering concise answers concentrated on main points and new empirical insights.

First, due to an in-depth exposure to U.S. intelligence, German specialists became aware of the U.S. finding that the Soviet Union had almost certainly achieved a capacity to deploy within a rather short timeframe a large-scale BMD program in addition to the Moscow site, *if* it wanted to.[39]

Second, a Soviet breakout from the ABM Treaty was hence a possibility, the installation of a large-scale strategic BMD program in the Soviet Union would be dangerous, but a Soviet breakout was deemed unlikely because it was estimated that, if the ABM Treaty fell apart, U.S. superiority in BMD technology and deployments would be the "most likely" outcome, considering the pace and scope of SDI.[40]

Third, SDI was expected to be highly stabilizing in the short run because – as long as SDI was carried out as a research effort to examine the feasibility of potential BMD options without a pre-determined decision on development, production, and deployment – it would increase incentives for Moscow to conform to the ABM Treaty and to rejoin the Geneva strategic offensive arms reduction negotiations.[41] If the United States did not pursue an SDI research program, the Soviet

Union would feel more motivated, or even provoked, to break out of the ABM Treaty sooner rather than later in order to achieve advantages in the nuclear balance detrimental to Western security. In Bonn, this third key hypothesis remained intact throughout the mid-1980s despite an antagonistic tendency of unease which was on the rise in specialist circles in NATO Europe. Besides BMD enthusiasm on the part of the Reagan government, one root cause for this unease, which – from the perspective of German specialists was greater in Britain and France than in Germany – was the widespread judgment (often intended as deliberate criticism) "that the SDI research program went beyond what was necessary to provide a hedge against Soviet actions."[42]

The fourth hypothesis which shaped the emerging basic understanding within the German government was this: in the long run, as of the early 2000s, strategic BMD systems would likely become instruments within then-more complex deterrence strategies of both superpowers and that would certainly happen in a process of gradual transition toward an offense-defense world in the strategic ballistic missile sphere with less than fully predictable disruptive but not revolutionary effects, no matter whether one, or both, of the superpowers were to opt for a point-defense-approach or in favor of extensive area defense with strategic BMD.[43] This fourth hypothesis had specific implications:

(a) A potential transition to an offense-defense world would not bring nuclear deterrence or mutual vulnerability between the superpowers to an end.
(b) Trade-offs arising about first-strike stability during a potential transition phase would have to be considered before making decisions on BMD. But even a future situation with large-scale strategic BMD architectures on either side, that is, in the United States (perhaps also in NATO) and in the Soviet Union, it was estimated, would not represent "fundamental change." Military instruments for managing U.S. extended nuclear deterrence, based on threats with selective nuclear use options which were central to NATO's flexible response strategy, might be adapted over time. The principle of managing extended nuclear deterrence on the basis of selective nuclear threats (SEPs and NSOs) would remain intact. If and when Soviet defenses against ballistic missiles were improved, NATO strategy might have to rely more on bombers or cruise missiles, bearing in mind that the United States sought to competitively expand its bomber and cruise missile advantages in the nuclear balance.[44]
(c) The estimate that even large-scale strategic BMD architectures on either side would not represent "fundamental change" was considered to be bad news for the United Kingdom and France, given their interest in maintaining limited nuclear ballistic missile capabilities. This, it was felt, was largely why the British and the French appeared to be almost violently opposed to the perspective of an offense-defense world in the sphere of strategic ballistic missiles. This was also why they seemed to be much more concerned than German officials about negative implications of SDI. Yet, the idea of seeing France and Britain in the 'nuclear club' of the early twenty-first

century (at least), including the view that the French and British controlled nuclear forces "in trust for Europe" whatever that might mean,[45] had carried some weight in Bonn at least since the 'Ottawa Declaration' of 1974 and continued to do so in the mid- and late-1980s:[46] Within the context of a new *Relance Européenne* on the EC level, the mid-1980s witnessed Franco-German efforts to give fresh impetus to the WEU and Franco-German security relations with an eye to strengthening NATO, as well as German pressure vis-à-vis France for the purpose of wielding influence on the management of French nuclear forces.[47]

(d) It was also judged that German interests regarding potential strategic BMD options did not completely overlap with those of Japan either, though the positions of the FRG and Japan could be seen as similar in light of crucial metrics which applied cross-regionally such as economic strength, partnership with the United States, status as non-nuclear weapons states (codified by NPT membership), and a position as 'umbrella states' (benefiting from U.S. nuclear protection) with de facto potentials to produce and acquire nuclear weapons systems. In Bonn, Japan was seen to be interested in BMD, also because BMD cooperation with the United States would appear to Japan as a "chance to leap over the stage of defense with its own nuclear weapons which was withheld to it." But because Japan did not face a "threat of conventional invasion," Japan was thought to have more to gain from BMD than Germany.[48]

(e) Finally, the question of to what extent U.S. extended nuclear deterrence might be enhanced by gradually adding strategic BMD options to the Western deterrence architecture (in the 2000s, *if* at all) – despite a likely competition including Soviet steps to improve the role of strategic BMD in Soviet strategy – was too convoluted to permit anything more than premature answers under the circumstances of the mid-1980s. The available evidence suggests that most German experts did not raise the question whether U.S. strategic BMD options could enhance U.S. nuclear protection. A basic expectation was that, if thought through as long as SDI matured and if handled with care when decisions on development, production, and deployment might be considered, adding strategic BMD options to the Western deterrence architecture could well have stabilizing effects and give impetus to the arms control process to reduce quantitative levels of strategic arms. Among the various pros and cons, at least a few stood out.

One of the stabilizing effects was expected to be a strengthening of U.S. extended nuclear deterrence due to a lower U.S. vulnerability to selective nuclear attack with ballistic missiles in most plausible limited war scenarios. Another stabilizing effect might be the countering of Soviet ballistic missiles with BMD in Europe, especially of 'strategic' missiles like IR/MRBMs, so as to degrade a crucial part of the Soviet nuclear threat to Europe.[49]

However, it remained indisputable that the continental United States could more easily be made more secure with BMD than Europe.[50] Two central cons

reflected this fact. First, it remained unclear to what degree the Soviet military threat to Europe in general – in light of disparities in the conventional and chemical balance and of the threat of invasion – could be reduced, if the West opted for deploying a certain measure of strategic BMD in the United States or even in Europe. Second, strategic BMD options in the 2000s might make it more likely that wars involving the superpowers would be confined to regionally limited wars in the – then presumably less likely – event that deterrence failed.[51] Such failure of deterrence, in turn, would necessarily impose greater costs on a front-line country than on more remote allies like Portugal or Canada.

The Pull of Alliance Logic

Over the course of intense consultations on SDI from early 1984, much of the confusion that had surrounded SDI since 1983 was replaced by a sense that uncertainties had been meaningfully reduced. On that basis, a provisional consensus view emerged at least among government experts in Bonn with a certain need to know. To be sure, there still was an array of open questions, less than conclusive answers on key issues, provisional conclusions about strategic implications of SDI, and the general difficulty of making assumption-based estimates of action-reaction dynamics in a competitive East-West environment. But security experts came to see that German policy was – and should also in the future be – strongly pulled into the direction of following through on the logic of alliance politics, including the logic of preserving Germany's *Westbindung* and U.S. *nuclear* protection, while at the same time seeking to inject at least some opportune elements into the coming intra-alliance and East-West BMD discussions. For example, this included a reminder that the Soviet Union too had "legitimate security interests." West Germany's overall role – which would not be decisive in any case – might thus be that of some sort of "*Stabilisator*," a Western-integrated "stabilizer" within increasingly more complex East-West-relations.[52] Some steps to carry out this kind of concept suggested themselves:

- formal political and substantially qualified support of SDI and hence frustration of the Soviet Union's efforts to win over Germany against SDI;[53]
- sympathetic consideration of the idea of fostering German industry cooperation with the SDI program, an idea which the U.S. government had begun to hold out since late 1984;[54]
- an attempt to exercise a measure of "influence" on U.S. thinking, policy, and planning regarding SDI, which, it was assumed, would only be possible if Germany took a supportive approach.[55] By default or design, a caveat loomed in the background. Engaging with the United States to "influence" U.S. SDI policy would increase the political cost of a U.S. SDI policy that appeared unpreferable from a German perspective. "Influencing" might thus help to secure a kind of minimal quality of U.S. SDI policy – "to preclude disadvantages to Europe's security."[56] The idea of achieving more than that opened up murky prospects.

Conditional Policy Support

After the re-election of Ronald Reagan as U.S. President in late 1984 and a reassuring declaration on SDI heralded by Reagan and Prime Minister Thatcher in late 1984,[57] the Kohl-Genscher government quickly came out strongly, though not unconditionally, in favor of SDI by politically committing Germany in public.[58] Kohl, who remains associated with a meager reputation on matters relating to military strategy, especially nuclear strategy,[59] gave two central speeches in February and April 1985, one at the *Internationale Wehrkundetagung* in Munich (nowadays known as the *Munich Security Conference*) and one to the *Bundestag*. In between, namely in March 1985, the Soviets returned to the negotiation table in Geneva. This was taken in Bonn as further evidence for the stabilizing influence of SDI. And the United States spelled out an unprecedented offer, namely that allies were invited to participate in SDI research.[60]

In his *Bundestag* speech on 18 April 1985, Kohl pointed to the Soviet BMD program and potential Soviet non-compliance with the ABM Treaty. He proclaimed that SDI, a research effort in compliance with the ABM Treaty for the purpose of examining the feasibility of strategic BMD options to enhance U.S. and European security, was "justified, politically necessary, and lies in the security interest of the West as a whole." SDI also offered a "chance" for nuclear risk reduction in the long run. Kohl asserted that an "automatic sequence of research, development and deployment of strategic defense systems will and must not happen."[61] Kohl thus underlined proclamations by his government that Germany expected the United States to engage in consultations prior to any decisions, including decisions on systems development.[62] Kohl also laid out what he called "vital" requirements in regard to SDI: no "decoupling" between U.S. and European security, "no zones of different security in NATO," "unchanged validity of flexible response" in the absence of a better alternative, avoiding instabilities during a potential transition to an offense-defense world in the sphere of strategic ballistic missiles, and the centrality of arms control and arms reduction to achieve greater stability and security.[63] Finally, Kohl added "criteria and conditions" pertaining to potential research collaboration between interested German industrial companies and SDI.[64]

Considering Kohl's speech as well as speeches given by Genscher and Wörner, the political attempt was made in public to sweep the notion that Germany did not consider a 'collective' European answer to SDI a necessity under the carpet. This was another way of saying that the approaches to BMD of France and Germany in particular differed quite fundamentally[65] – despite all situational activism, rhetorical promulgation of European solidarity, invocation especially by French policymakers of an alleged need for a European demand of 'equality' vis-à-vis the U.S., French anti-SDI alarmism, and a more or less simultaneous move to the founding of EUREKA,[66] which appeared to be a much more obscure project than SDI. In Bonn, it was felt that Europeans could only in close partnership with the United States seek to prevent detrimental tendencies which might arise from the superpowers' still rather slow oscillation toward reconsidering the role of strategic BMD.[67]

After Kohl's statement of late April of 1985 on Germany's principal interest in considering to foster participation by German industrial companies in SDI research, much political energy was spent in 1985 and early 1986 to work out, and conclude, a German-American government-to-government arrangement that made research cooperation between the SDIO and German private companies possible.[68] According to Horst Teltschik, Kohl's foreign and security policy advisor, the process of reaching those agreements was to a large degree about learning about facts, opportunities, and limits of SDI research. Germany had to be informed as accurately as possible to influence American "architecture studies" about potential paths for BMD development, production, and deployment.[69]

In 1985 and 1986, initiating and managing the participation of German companies in SDI remained politically salient tasks. According to SDIO statistics of February 1987, the share of German contractors ($48 million) amounted to about 50% of the total volume of research assignments which the SDIO had assigned to foreign countries or foreign companies ($95 million). Yet, the 'German' share appeared "not even as a quantité négligeable," considering the massive SDI budget and the huge American military, industrial, and scientific capacities.[70]

Leaving the issue of spin-offs through participation in SDI research aside, which remained highly disputed in Germany at the time, when German private companies joined the SDI enterprise the Kohl-Genscher government became more assertive about bringing forward its strategic views on BMD and related matters vis-à-vis the Reagan administration. Within the German government's framework of assumptions, estimates, and policies pertaining to SDI, an additional claim was made in public especially since late 1985 by *Bundeswehr* leaders, Wörner and other senior figures in the West German defense community: no matter how SDI progressed, it was more important in the face of the Soviet military threat to also invest in Europe-based non-nuclear anti-tactical missile defense (ATM) systems, including anti-tactical ballistic missile defense (ATBM) systems.[71] That, it was argued, had to be a transatlantic effort too, which implied an expectation of U.S. leadership and U.S. investments.

In the grand scheme of things, the United States had asked for and secured Germany's policy support for the purposes of SDI and hence for a potential offense-defense mix in strategic ballistic missiles to extend U.S. nuclear deterrence more effectively in the long run. Germany, through conditional endorsement of SDI and German industry participation in SDI, sought to reshape the discussion on air defense to convince the allies, and the United States in particular, to adopt Germany's preference of recognizing "defense against attacking [tactical] missiles . . . as a central new element,"[72] which was claimed to be more important than strategic defense.

Conclusion

To examine why the Federal Republic of Germany supported SDI, this analysis focused on one perspective which remained crucial to German decision-makers and security officials during the mid-1980s: How deterrence would function in

a potential future situation when – upon dissolution of the ABM Treaty – non-nuclear strategic BMD systems might gradually become components in the superpowers' military arsenals. This is not to say that other perspectives were irrelevant or unimportant. In fact, other relevant levels of Germany's approach toward SDI remain to be systematically examined elsewhere, including economic and financial aspects, the evolution of technology, technology-related transatlantic cooperation, and missile defense-related cooperation projects. Though the issue of how strategic ballistic missile defense would impact on deterrence in the future was deemed crucial at the time, it would be premature to make a high confidence judgment at this point about the relative weight of various drivers which impacted on the evolution of Germany's approach, including strategic and military calculations, managing Germany's position within NATO, managing Germany's role within the process of European integration, considerations of how SDI might affect East-West relations, economic interests, and the desire to develop advanced technologies.

The BMD debate was shaped by at least two contextual aspects. First, in contrast to the Reagan administration, German governments resisted framing their security policies in competitive terms. Second, the search within NATO for a politically acceptable nuclear doctrine to credibly extend U.S. nuclear deterrence continued and culminated in the adoption of the GPGs of 1986. Preliminary German views in 1983 on the emerging SDI were framed within a profoundly skeptical mental model on the idea of reevaluating strategic BMD. Yet, through consultations and U.S. intelligence briefings that started in early 1984, a constructive, though not unconditionally positive, German government consensus on SDI crystallized. It rested on key hypotheses which concerned

(1) estimates of the capacity of the Soviet Union to deploy a large-scale BMD program;
(2) the judgment that a Soviet breakout from the ABM Treaty was unlikely;
(3) the judgment that SDI was stabilizing in the short run; and
(4) the estimate that, if strategic BMD were introduced in the 2000s, a gradual transition would ensue with less than fully predictable disruptive but certainly not revolutionary effects.

On this basis, a central political realization emerged: regarding BMD issues, German policy was and would be strongly pulled into the direction of preserving Germany's *Westbindung* and U.S. nuclear protection while at the same time seeking to stabilize East-West-relations.

That, in turn, called for an attempt to influence U.S. SDI policy so as to assure a minimum quality of this policy. After Ronald Reagan's re-election, the German government came out strongly, though not unconditionally, in favor of SDI. Formal political support was given by Kohl between February and April 1985. And the U.S. offer to participate in SDI research was favorably received. This opened a promising perspective on how to garner economic and technological benefits from missile defense research and development cooperation with the U.S. within

highly specialized public-private partnership arrangements. In 1985 and 1986, initiating and managing the participation of German companies in SDI also gave rise to greater German assertiveness to reshape the broader air defense discussion even in public. According to Germany's prioritization in the final years of the Cold War era, the need for moving ahead, on the basis of transatlantic and German-American cooperation, with investing in ATM systems was more pressing from a defense policy standpoint than examining the feasibility of strategic missile defense.

Notes

1 The author thanks Luc-André Brunet, Matthew Jones, the conference participants, Paul Pitman and Bastian Knautz for their helpful comments on earlier versions of the chapter.

2 As far as declassified archival materials from Germany are concerned, the chapter focuses on files from the Foreign Office (*Auswärtiges Amt*). Except for materials relating to economic aspects, technological cooperation, and missile defense-related projects of German companies, relevant files from the Chancellery (*Bundeskanzleramt*), the foreign intelligence service (*Bundesnachrichtendienst*), the Ministry of Defense (*Bundesministerium der Verteidigung*) and the Ministry for Economic Affairs (*Bundesministerium der Wirtschaft*) apparently remain classified. In addition, online available Federal Cabinet protocols (*Kabinettsprotokolle*) offer insights on SDI-related discussions within the cabinet during Kohl's Chancellery: www.bundesarchiv.de/cocoon/barch/0000/index.html.

3 For example: Ralph L. Dietl, *The Strategic Defense Initiative. Ronald Reagan, NATO Europe, and the Nuclear and Space Talks, 1981–1988* (Lanham, MD; London: Lexington Books, 2018).

4 This chapter builds on analyses from Christoph Bertram, Nanette C. Brown, Ivo H. Daalder, Karl Kaiser, Holger H. Mey, Uwe Nerlich, Lothar Rühl, Hans Rühle, James R. Schlesinger, Leon Sloss, and David S. Yost.

5 Gordon S. Barrass, *The Great Cold War: A Journey Through the Hall of Mirrors* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 264.

6 Referring to Fareed Zakaria: John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 376.

7 Andreas Wirsching, *Abschied vom Provisorium: Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1982–1990* (Stuttgart: DVA, 2006), 591–694; Hans-P. Schwarz, *Helmut Kohl: Eine politische Biographie* (München: Dt. Verl.-Anst., 2012), 608–611; Andreas Rödder, "Gleichgewicht, Westbindung, Multilateralismus: Der NATO-Doppelbeschluss und die Folgen für die deutsch-amerikanische Sicherheitspolitik der 1980er Jahre," *Historisch-Politische Mitteilungen* 21, 1 (2014), 227–242.

8 Helmut Kohl, *Erinnerungen: 1982–1990* (München: Droemer, 2005), 201.

9 Deterrence messaging during the nuclear phase of WINTEX/CIMEX was welcomed. But the geographical limitation of NATO's initial selective use (which excluded the Soviet Union), the quantum of nuclear weapons uses, and the ratio of nuclear weapons uses in the follow-on use phase between uses against targets on Soviet territory (1) and uses against targets to the West of the Soviet Union (38) was criticized: telex Wieck, 11 March 1983, and memorandum Schauer, 15 March 1983, *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* [AAPD] 1983.

10 On related processes from the establishment of the NPG in 1967 until the NATO dual track decision, see: Andreas Lutsch, *Westbindung oder Gleichgewicht? Die nukleare Sicherheitspolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland zwischen Atomwaffensperrvertrag*

und NATO-Doppelbeschluss (Munich: de Gruyter, 2020), ch. V, ch. VI. 2 and 4, ch. VII. The GPGs apparently remain classified. Nevertheless, some analysts and practitioners publicly offered comments on their content: Ivo H. Daalder, *The Nature and Practice of Flexible Response. NATO Strategy and Theater Nuclear Forces since 1967* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 90-93; Lothar Rühl, "The Nuclear Balance in the Central Region and Strategic Stability in Europe," *NATO's Sixteen Nations* (August 1987), 18–25; Holger H. Mey, *NATO Strategie vor der Wende: die Entwicklung des Verständnisses nuklearer Macht im Bündnis zwischen 1967 und 1990* (Baden Baden: Nomos, 1992), 70–71.

11 Uwe Nerlich, "Roles for Theater Ballistic Missile Defense in European Short Preparation Time Attack Scenarios," in Fred S. Hoffmann, Albert Wohlstetter and David S. Yost (eds), *Swords and Shields: NATO, the USSR, and New Choices for Long-Range Offense and Defense* (Lexington, MA; Toronto: Lexington Books, 1987), 239–260.

12 James R. Schlesinger, "Rhetoric and Realities in the Star Wars Debate," *International Security* 10, 1 (Summer 1985), 4. "There is no realistic hope that we shall ever again be able to protect American cities." Reagan's association of deterrence with "immorality" was "reckless": Ibid., 5.

13 Nanette C. Brown, *The Strategic Defense Initiative and European Security. A Conference Report, January 1986. Prepared for the Ford Foundation* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1986), 27.

14 David S. Yost, "Western Europe and the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative," *Journal of International Affairs* 41, 2 (1988), 319.

15 David S. Yost, *Soviet Ballistic Missile Defense and the Western Alliance* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1988), 298.

16 Rödder, "Gleichgewicht," 235.

17 Memorandum Pfeffer, 29 March 1983, AAPD 1983.

18 Ibid.

19 [Deleted], "Intelligence and US Missile Defense Planning," *Studies in Intelligence* 45, 2 (2001), 2 [released in 2008] reports that, while the U.S. Congress "shut down the Safeguard system [the U.S. BMD system] in early 1976, a scant few months after it had become operational," the Soviets "continued with their system," although "knowledgeable observers believe it suffers from the same limitations as Safeguard."

20 For an early explanation: Walter Slocombe, "The Countervailing Strategy," *International Security* 5, 4 (1981), 18–27.

21 [Deleted], *Intelligence*, 3 reports that, by 1987, SDI Organization (SDIO) "had developed a Phase I architecture consisting of three sensor systems (ground-based, boost-phase, and space-based), two interceptor elements (exoatmospheric reentry vehicle interceptor system and space-based interceptor), and a command and control element. . . . It was a multilayered system designed to defeat a major fraction of Soviet ICBMs launched against US cities or the ICBM fields that constituted the core of the US deterrent."

22 NSC scope paper for strategy discussions with the FRG, June 30-July 2, 1984, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Donald A. Mahley Files, Box 1, NATO Conv Force IG 1 of 3: "The almost mystical quality of 'flexible response' and 'forward defense' in German thinking largely precluded debate on strategic issues. What counted was the absolute quality of the US nuclear guarantee, and the notion that conflict if it came could somehow be kept from damaging Germany."

23 Richard Burt, quoted in Memorandum Pfeffer, 29 March 1983, AAPD 1983.

24 Memorandum Hofmann, HLG meeting, Naples, 27/28 April 1983, AAPD 1983.

25 Memorandum Schauer, 9 November 1983, AAPD 1983.

26 Yost, *Soviet Ballistic Missile Defense*, 6.

27 On intelligence support for U.S. missile defense decision-making: Robert M. Gates, "The Soviets and SDI," *American Intelligence Journal* 8, 2 (1987), 25–29; [deleted], *Intelligence*, identified three specific categories of intelligence support: identifying

missile threats, informing US missile defense policy and designers about technical specifications of enemy missile systems, and estimating international reactions about U.S. missile defense plans and policies. Closely related to these sorts of intelligence support was the difficult task to estimate the size and effectiveness of Soviet defense programs in light of the Soviet economy: [deleted], "Analyzing Soviet Defense Programs, 1951–1990," *Studies in Intelligence* 42, 3 (1998).

28 Deployments took time, however. According to the NATO dual track decision of 1979, the maximum posture would consist of 572 nuclear warheads on 572 missiles, carried by 108 PERSHING II launchers in Germany and 116 GLCM launchers with 4 missiles each. About two years after deployments had begun, 81 PERSHING IIs were deployed in Germany and a total of 24 GLCM launchers in the UK (16), Italy (4) and Belgium (4), that is 75% of the maximum PERSHING II potential as well as 20% of the maximum GLCM potential: memorandum Gould, 9 October 1985, TNA, FCO 46/4654.

29 John W. Young, "Western Europe and the End of the Cold War, 1979–1989," in Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd A. Westad (eds), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Vol. III: Endings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 308.

30 Memorandum Ehni, 5 April 1984; memorandum Adamek, 9 February 1984; telex Wieck, 5 July 1984 on NAC briefing by Gen. Abrahamson; telex Graf von Rantzau, 14 February 1985, and memorandum Pfeffer/Hartmann, 21 February 1985 on a further NAC briefing by Gen. Abrahamson. All in AAPD 1984 and 1985.

31 Memorandum Ehni, 5 April 1984, AAPD 1984.

32 Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 3rd edition (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 396.

33 Oleg Gordievsky's report to CIA director Bill Casey in September of 1985 on Gorbachev's interpretation of the U.S. SDI-sharing 'offer': Barrass, *The Great Cold War*, 320.

34 Memorandum Edler von Braunmühl, 13 June 1985, AAPD 1985.

35 Memorandum Ehni, 5 April 1984, AAPD 1984; Nach außen stark, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 7/8 April 1984. As Yost, *Western Europe*, 300, observed, Wörner's apparent view as reported in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* was taken up in various other press accounts. According to a British protocol of the NPG meeting, Wörner offered no comment on SDI: UK Record of NPG Ministerial meeting, 3/4 April 1984, The National Archives [TNA], FCO 46/4150.

36 Heiner Möllers, *Die Affäre Kießling. Der größte Skandal der Bundeswehr* (Berlin: C.H. Links, 2019). In late 1983, Wörner had pensioned off four-star general Günter Kießling based on the charge of homosexuality, which was thereafter declared to be unfounded. Wörner rehabilitated and reappointed Kießling who then retired with honor about a week before the NPG meeting in Cesme.

37 Christoph Bertram, "Strategic Defense and the Western Alliance," *Daedalus* 114, 3 (Summer 1985), 279–296; Wolfram F. Hanrieder, "Strategic Defense and the German-American Security Connection," *Journal of International Affairs* 41, 2 (Summer 1988), 247–268; Karl Kaiser, "SDI und deutsche Politik," *Europa-Archiv* 41, 1 (1986), 570; Ivo H. Daalder, *The SDI Challenge to Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1987), 22; Christoph Bluth, "SDI: The Challenge to West Germany," *International Affairs* 62 (Spring 1986), 247–264.

38 Yost, *Western Europe*, 300. See later on these speeches. Note that Kohl made his first speech (9 February 1985) before U.S. Secretary of Defense Weinberger sent a letter (26 March 1985) to NATO states, Australia, Japan, and Israel to invite them to participate in SDI research. See also Hans-Erich Au, *Die Strategische Verteidigungsinitiative (SDI). Zur politischen Diskussion in der BR Deutschland* (Frankfurt a.M. et al.: Lang, 1988); Theodor Benien, *Der SDI-Entscheidungsprozeß in der Regierung Kohl-Genscher 1983–1986. Eine Fallstudie über Einflußfaktoren sicherheitspolitischer Entscheidungsfindung unter den Bedingungen strategischer Abhängigkeit* (Munich: Tuduv, 1991).

39 See, e.g., telex Wieck, 5 July 1984; memorandum Schauer, 10 October 1984, AAPD 1984; U.S. DIA representatives briefed the NAC on 14 February 1985 in the presence of SDIO-chief Gen. Abrahamson that, after more than 20 years of research and given the existence of the continuously modernized BMD site around Moscow, the Soviet Union was able to build up, within a timeframe of two to four years, 50 to 100 additional BMD sites across the country to protect it against intermediate and long-range ballistic missile threats: memorandum Pfeffer and Hartmann, 21 February 1985, AAPD 1985. A German MoD publication of 1986 estimated that the Soviet Union could build up an "effective BMD system within about 10 to 15 years": Der Bundesminister der Verteidigung, *SDI: Fakten und Bewertungen, Fragen und Antworten. Dokumentation*, June 1986, 7. In retrospect, unanswered questions remain: considering its massive economic slowdown and imperial overstretch, was the Soviet Union economically and financially in a position in the mid-1980s that would have allowed her to invest in BMD as Western estimates suggested? Which Western estimates informed Western policies in which ways? Which estimates were regarded as the best ones? How good were the best estimates, actually? And to what extent were observers influenced by a reading that at least certain types of estimates might not be objective but 'salted' to better underpin policy preferences? [delected], *Analyzing Soviet Defense Programs*, 11 cautions: "Whether efforts to reconstruct Soviet defense spending will ever succeed is questionable."

40 Memorandum Seitz, 6 January 1984; memorandum Ruth, 10 October 1984, AAPD 1984.

41 Memorandum Ruth, 28 May 1984, AAPD 1984. A sign for why U.S. non-automaticity assurances were believed to be credible was that the United States did not re-build the one BMD site (deactivated in 1976) which it was permitted to operate under the ABM Treaty: memorandum Ruth, 10 October 1984, AAPD. The contrary might well have signaled a U.S. intention to "ditch the ABM Treaty altogether" which was what many of those European observers suspected who were skeptical of U.S. intentions: Freedman, *The Evolution*, 396.

42 Brown, *The Strategic Defense Initiative*, summary. During this conference of senior analysts, French and British participants stressed their apparently grave concern: Because the United States had – in their view: by design – "more than a hedge" in terms of SDI, the danger was to provoke the Soviets into a BMD competition which, these analysts claimed, was less likely or unlikely to ensue if the United States cut back SDI. SDIO chief Gen. Abrahamson at one point stated in the NAC that the SDIO indeed conducted "research tests" which did not erode the line between "research" and "development": telex Graf zu Rantzau, 14 February 1985, AAPD 1985. Horst Teltschik, Kohl's foreign and security policy adviser, was careful to convey similar messages like Abrahamson's: Horst Teltschik, "Deutsche Überlegungen zu SDI," in *Standpunkte zu SDI in West und Ost. Mit Beiträgen von Hans Rühle, Wjatscheslaw Daschitschew, Richard Perle, Horst Teltschik. Redaktion Thomas Enders* (Melle: Verlag Ernst Knoth, 1985), 63–80.

43 Telex Wieck, 5 July 1984, and memorandum Ruth, 10 October 1984, AAPD 1984.

44 Memorandum Seitz, 6 January 1984; memorandum Ruth, 10 October 1984, AAPD 1984; Lothar Rühl, Eine Raketenabwehr für Europa, in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 17 January 1986. U.S. officials clarified how dynamically the U.S. modernized

   (a) the bomber-leg of its strategic triad (new B-1B and B-2 bombers; completion of the equipment of the B-52 fleet with ALCMs);
   (b) the sea-based leg (new Ohio-class SSBNs for TRIDENT II-D5 SLBMs; new SLCMs, including nuclear-tipped Tomahawk land attack cruise missiles with a range of up to 2,500 km (TLAM/N)).

   See the two briefings by Franklin Miller in the NPG: UK Record NPG Ministerial Meeting, Cesme, 3/4 April 1984, and UK Record of NPG Ministerial Meeting, Stresa,

11/12 October 1984, TNA, FCO 46/4150. At the Stresa meeting, Miller said that the United States planned to introduce about 4,000 vertical launching system (VTC) cells for SLCMs on naval vessels in the 1990s; 18% (702) of them were supposed to be loaded with TLAM/N which would "provide non strategic second strike option[s]," ibid. See also: Leon Sloss, "The Strategist's Perspective," in Ashton B. Carter and David N. Schwartz (eds), *Ballistic Missiles Defense. A Study Sponsored by the Brookings Institution and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1984), 24–48; Holger H. Mey, "SDI – Rüstungskontrollpolitische und strategische Aspekte," in Ulf-G. Sanders (ed), *SDI oder „Krieg der Sterne"?* (Bonn: Bonner Friedensforum, 1986), 73–82; James A. Thomson, "Deterrence, Stability, and Strategic Defenses," in Hoffmann, Wohlstetter and Yost (eds), *Swords and Shields*, 339–356; Leon Sloss, "The Ambiguous Role of Strategic Defense in U.S. Strategy," in Andrew J. Marshall, J.J. Martin, and Henry S. Rowen (eds), *On Not Confusing Ourselves: Essay on National Security Strategy in Honor of Albert and Roberta Wohlstetter* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 54–75.

45 Memorandum Seitz, 6 January 1984, AAPD 1984 (quote: Pfeffer's annotation); Ambassador Schoeller's report of 25 March 1985 on his discussion with General Jean Saulnier (Chef d'état major), AAPD 1985; Dietl, *Strategic Defense Initiative*, 52f.

46 This perspective was at the same time qualified by an appreciation that strategic BMD may be helpful to globally promote nuclear non-proliferation: Lothar Rühl, "Deutsche Forderungen an SDI," in *Loyal* 1 (1986), 6–9.

47 Lothar Rühl, "Der Aufschwung der sicherheitspolitischen Zusammenarbeit seit 1982," in Karl Kaiser and Pierre Lellouche eds., *Deutsch-französische Sicherheitspolitik: Auf dem Wege zur Gemeinsamkeit?* (Bonn: Europa Verlag Union, 1986), 27–47; Frédéric Bozo, "The Sanctuary and the Glacis: France, the Federal Republic of Germany, and Nuclear Weapons in the 1980s (Part 1)," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 22, 3 (2020), 119–179; Frédéric Bozo, "France, the Federal Republic of Germany, and the Nuclear Factor in the 1980s (Part 2)," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 22, 4 (2020).

48 Memorandum Seitz, 6 January 1984, AAPD 1984; memorandum Edler von Braunmühl, 29 August 1985, AAPD.

49 Ibid., memorandum Schauer, 9 July 1984; memorandum Ruth, 10 October 1984; memorandum Hartmann, 3 January 1985; memorandum Pfeffer/Hartmann, 21 February 1985; memorandum Edler von Braunmühl, 13 June 1985, AAPD 1984 and 1985.

50 On the technical side of greater difficulties to deploy an effective strategic BMD system in Europe as compared to a strategic BMD system in the United States, see ibid. and François Heisbourg, "Defense against the Ballistic Missile Threat to Western Europe: From SDI to Extended Air Defense," in Hoffmann, Wohlstetter and Yost (eds), *Swords and Shields*, 225–238; Hans Rühle, Wie kam es zu SDI?, in *Standpunkte zu SDI in West und Ost* (. . .), p. 21. According to Rühle, it was a fact that there were "zones" of different qualities of security within NATO. SDI – or developments in the BMD field, more generally – would not create them. Hence, this fact *should not* be used to make a political case against SDI.

51 See, e.g., Wieck's point in the NAC during SDI-consultations, telex Wieck, 5 Jul 1984, AAPD 1984; memorandum Edler von Braunmühl, 13 June 1985, AAPD 1985. On the persistence of the concern of increased likelihood of limited war, see the interview with the General Inspector of the Bundeswehr, Wolfgang Altenburg, who expressed his "great concern": Die Risikogemeinschaft darf nicht zerstört werden. Ich habe große Sorgen wegen SDI, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 29 November 1985.

52 Memorandum Edler von Braunmühl, 13 June 1985, AAPD 1985.

53 Moscow made threatening gestures and Germany's reaction to SDI a détente "litmus test": Kaiser, *SDI*, 570.

54 Besides the argument to strengthen U.S.-German security cooperation, there was at least one other political argument for some German industry contribution. As Franklin

Miller (DoD-ISP) suggested in late 1985, German industrial cooperation might be helpful to the U.S. government to better secure SDI funding from Congress. Yet, considering that the projected scope of SDI over the course of five years was about $26 billion in total (80 billion DM) and that the West German defense budget was 26 billion DM in 1985, any contribution by German companies to SDI would necessarily be small in monetary terms: telex von Well, 19 December 1985, AAPD 1985.

55 Memorandum Edler von Braunmühl, 13 June 1985, AAPD 1985; memorandum Seitz, 6 January 1984, AAPD 1984; telex from Kastl, 21 May 1985, AAPD 1985.

56 Rühl, Deutsche Forderungen an SDI; Die Risikogemeinschaft (. . .), *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 29 November 1985.

57 Yost, *Western Europe*, 272–276. "First, the U.S. and Western aim was not to achieve superiority but maintain balance . . . Second, that SDI-related deployments would . . . have to be a matter of negotiations. Third, the overall aim is to enhance and not to undermine deterrence. And fourth, East-West negotiation should aim to achieve security, with reduced levels of offensive systems on both sides." Quoted ibid. from a *New York Times* report of 23 December 1984. The declaration was welcomed by the Federal German government: Erklärung Bundesregierung zur Strategischen Verteidigungsinitiative (SDI) des Präsidenten der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika, 27 March 1985, in *Bulletin des Presse- und Informationsamtes der Bundesregierung* (Bonn, 29 March 1985).

58 For the first time since Reagan's SDI speech, Germany's position regarding SDI was discussed within the Federal Cabinet in early 1985: see *Kabinettsprotokolle* [online] of 5 March 1985 (TOP 4) and 16 April 1985 (TOP 7).

59 Schwarz, *Kohl*, 440f.

60 On Weinberger's letter of invitation to Wörner of 26 March 1985: memorandum Loeck, 28 June 1985, AAPD 1985. Hitherto, the "normal case" was U.S. unilateral action and pressure on allies to conform to U.S. strategic preferences: Uwe Nerlich, "Folgerungen aus SDI für Strategie, Rüstungskontrolle und Politik," in *Europa-Archiv* 41, 1 (1986), 89–98, 90. It is unclear whether the Kohl-Genscher government was miffed about the tone of Weinberger's letter, which insisted that governments respond substantively within 60 days. The first government delegation arrived in the United States on 10 June 1985 to explore related issues.

61 Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages, stenographische Berichte, 10. Wahlperiode, 132. Sitzung (Bonn: 1985), 9715–9720. See also Kohl's speech at the *Wehrkundetagung* on 9 February 1985: *Bulletin des Presse- und Informationsamts der Bundesregierung* (Bonn, 14 February 1985). Kohl's speeches suggested that the German government did not view Soviet violation of, or non-compliance with, the ABM Treaty as proven. U.S. government assessments of the BMD state of affairs in the Soviet Union seemed more assertive up to the point of potential politicization to legitimize U.S. political preferences. Particularly Weinberger's sharp tone in the NPG Meeting in Luxemburg in late March 1985 seemed indicative: memorandum Schauer, 28 March 1985, AAPD. In early 1987, Kohl still pushed back. He said that "he was against a unilateral turning away [by the U.S.] from the strict interpretation of the ABM Treaty": MemCon Kohl-Nitze-Perle, 25 February 1987, AAPD 1987, doc. 53.

62 Declaration of the Federal Government, 27 March 1985, *Bulletin des Presse- und Informationsamts der Bundesregierung* (Bonn, 14 February 1985).

63 *Verhandlungen* [. . .], 9715–9720.

64 Ibid.

65 See the encounter at the WEU meeting of foreign and defense ministers on 22/23 March 1985: memorandum Pfeffer, 24, April 1985, AAPD 1985; Dietl, *Strategic Defense Initiative*, 69.

66 Heinz Riesenhuber, "EUREKA – ein neues Element der europäischen Technologiepolitik," *Europa-Archiv* 41, 7 (1986), 185–190.

67 Memorandum Edler von Braunmühl, 13 June 1985, AAPD 1985.
68 On the two agreements of 27 March 1986 and accompanying documents, see Kaiser, *SDI*, 571; *Kabinettsprotokolle* of 18 December 1985 (TOP 3) and 9 April 1986 (TOP 9).
69 Teltschik, *Deutsche Überlegungen*.
70 Memorandum Oesterhelt, 25 May 1987, AAPD 1987: The SDI-budget amounted to $3.5 billion in FY 1987 alone. The SDIO had assigned 66 contracts to eight nations with a total volume of $95,166 million

- 17 contracts with German companies amounting to $48,336 million;
- 24 contracts with the UK amounting to $29,963 million;
- 6 contracts with Israel amounting to $10,653 million;
- 4 contracts with France amounting to $3,408 million;
- 11 contracts with Italy amounting to $2,249 million;
- 2 contracts with Canada amounting to $0,42 million;
- 1 contract with Belgium amounting to $0,093 million;
- 1 contract with the Netherlands amounting to $0,043 million.

71 Bundestag speech by Wörner, 13 December 1985, in *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages, stenographische Berichte, 10. Wahlperiode, 185. Sitzung* (Bonn: 1985), 14101f.; Rühl, *Raketenabwehr*; Manfred Wörner, "A Missile Defense for NATO-Europe," *Strategic Review* 14 (Winter 1986), 13–19. The German delegation to the HLG had already made a similar point at the HLG meeting at Tampa, Florida, in early February 1984: Dietl, *Strategic Defense Initiative*, 39.
72 Wörner, *Missile Defense*, 18.

6 Italy and the SDI Project

Envisioning a Technological Breakthrough for the Whole Alliance?

Marilena Gala

The Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) became a matter of public debate when President Ronald Reagan launched the programme, on 23 March 1983. In a televised address, the US leader announced his government's plans to invest on defensive measures to counter 'the awesome Soviet missile threat.' He alluded to the possibility to intercept and destroy strategic ballistic missiles before they reached their targets on US soil, or that of US allies. He called upon 'the scientific community in our country . . . 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.'[1] The announcement astounded many in the public and among the experts, both in the United States and abroad. It was preceded by consultations with a very limited number of close advisors. The president, in fact, wanted to keep low the risk of leaks that would provide Capitol Hill with the time and opportunity to oppose the pursuit of an SDI project entailing the expansion of the defence budget.[2] Likewise, consultations excluded even the closest allies. Reagan managed to design his speech as an appeal for the mobilisation of national prowess and inventiveness to serve the cause of peace and disarmament, in spite of the military build-up his administration had carried out for the last couple of years. In Italy, the reaction was of some amazement. The supposed magnitude of investments needed for the US programme and its likely effects on strategic stability between Washington and Moscow were the aspects Italian newspapers focused on during the first days after Reagan's speech. Indeed, the US project was potentially revolutionary for NATO strategic posture and the security of its members.[3]

This chapter provides the first analysis of the Italian response to SDI as it evolved from 1983 to 1986, thanks, in particular, to the Andreotti papers available at the Istituto Luigi Sturzo in Rome. The importance of those documents is undeniable because Giulio Andreotti was one of the most powerful and prominent politicians Italy has had since the founding of the Republic in 1946. Between 1983 and 1989, he was the foreign minister of successive coalition governments, ensuring continuity in Italian foreign policy during that crucial decade. Indeed, the reconstruction of the Italian response to SDI is facilitated by such continuity that however cannot compensate for the lack of access to other important archives in Italy. This work, in fact, has benefited also from the primary sources available

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at the US, British, and French archives. Thanks to multi-archival research, it is possible to contextualise the Italian reaction to the US defence initiative and distinguish a number of interesting features of the way Italy responded. The approach Rome adopted was influenced mostly by both Italy's non-nuclear weapon status among the European nations advocating arms control and its ambition to remain a relevant NATO ally among the most industrialised and technologically developed countries of the world. In order to let the Italian response emerge in all its different aspects, the chapter begins with a brief account of the first reactions of major European countries to the US idea of space defence. Such reactions were affected by the SDI agenda the US government seemed ready to establish between 1983 and 1984 and on which the Europeans feared they had no influence, in spite of their commitment to deploy NATO intermediate nuclear forces (INF) by the end of 1983. The central section of the chapter focuses on the Italian position in order to highlight its salient features. In fact, Rome approached SDI paying attention to never neglect, first, a strong coordination with other European allies; second, an adequate demonstration of deep interest towards the reassurances and offers the US administration provided in the meantime on a bilateral basis.

A Test for the Alliance Cohesion

In the United States, since the end of 1982, a group of military and strategic experts – most of them already members of the National Security Council (NSC) – had been working on the idea of changing the US strategic posture from an offensive to a defensive one.[4] That shift looked both desirable and attainable to the US administration. It was desirable, inter alia, because of the growing influence acquired by the Freeze movement, which attempted to prod the White House to halt the arms race holding US investments in nuclear weapons at the extant level. The US administration, which rejected such approach, needed to devise possible countermeasures in order to neutralise the risk of failure for its negotiating tactics. In Geneva, in fact, the United States intended to tackle the strategic arms reduction treaty (START) talks with the Soviet Union from a position of strength, measured in numbers and destructiveness of the respective strategic systems.[5] But the 'pro-defence' shift appeared also an attainable goal to the Western superpower. According to Admiral Watkins, the US Chief of naval operations, the United States had reached encouraging advances in the field of directed-energy weapons and high-speed computers.[6] Those technologies, in particular, opened the way to the prospect of a defence system capable of striking incoming rockets armed with nuclear warheads well before they would reach their targets on US territory. Implicit in the shift propounded by the Reagan administration was a revision of – or even a withdrawal from – the anti-ballistic missile (ABM) treaty of 1972.[7]

The possibility that Washington would take such a step in the near future was enough to make European NATO partners concerned about the prospects of success of the arms control process. But among the European allies, the two nuclear powers were the first to worry about the strategic and political consequences of

the programme Reagan had launched. Both British and French small deterrents risked future irrelevance in case the two superpowers started an arms race in the outer space. According to a first, interim assessment prepared for the British Prime Minister by its Ministry of Defence, Reagan's speech provoked 'a number of questions which are likely to prove less than helpful in the context of maintaining public support for national and NATO nuclear policies.' At stake were both the credibility of the US commitment to arms control and the extension over Europe of the US deterrent. At first glance, the shift of emphasis from deterrence to defence implied the chance to confine a nuclear exchange exclusively to Europe, while both superpowers remained immune behind the shield of their improved defense capabilities.[8] The two European nuclear powers wanted to preserve the political and military role of their national deterrents and, therefore, needed to counter the US administration's rhetoric about the immorality of deterrence. France, being a member of the Alliance but not part of NATO's integrated military command structures, was bound to be the more outspoken, articulate critic of the two. In June 1984, Paris launched a set of proposals for outer space arms control at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament. The French bid included a renewable five-year ban on the development, testing, and deployment of any direct energy weapons.[9] In short, Washington and Moscow should have committed to serious negotiations aiming at containing the danger of an arms race in space.[10] The government in London concurred on this ultimate goal but tended to be more cautious in displaying its misgivings towards the SDI programme. This was an express desire of Prime Minister Thatcher, who did not want to appear to be telling the White House what to do in a field where the United States had a great deal more technical knowledge than the United Kingdom.[11] Still, according to both the Foreign and Defence ministries in London, British supreme interest was to favour arms control measures in space.[12]

During the previous couple of years, Alliance cohesion had been under strain and, in 1983, European allies felt no need to add an ulterior motive for tension with Washington.[13] When SDI was launched, no one in Europe expected the defence shield to be implemented in the near future, or in the medium term, for that matter. European allies remained sceptical about such an achievement and preferred to take 'a cautious and non-committal line in public.'[14] Italian newspapers quoted scientists like Arthur Schawlow – who won the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1981 for his work in developing the laser – to point out that the programme announced by the US president in his speech and then sketched out by other government agencies was much closer to fiction than to a realistic plan founded on scientific discoveries.[15] Italian opinion makers preferred to draw the attention of the public to the need to pursue and not jeopardise the arms control process.[16] In fact, 1983 was the year of the INF deployment in Europe, where protests against such planned military build-up had been mounting for months.[17]

In Italy, the early 1980s were marked by discontinuity in the tradition of coalition governments led by prominent members of the *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC). In 1983, after a government formed by Giovanni Spadolini – leader of the *Partito Repubblicano*, who stayed in power from June 1981 to December 1982 – new

political elections opened the way to the first government led by a socialist, the secretary of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), Bettino Craxi.[18] The DC had long guaranteed a firm pro-Atlantic orientation in Rome, despite the fact that the Italian one was the strongest Communist party of the West. After a decade – the 1970s – which had strained the capacity of resilience of the Italian system at both the socio-political and economic levels, in the early 1980s Italy was betting on an attempt to relaunch its role both in Europe and within the Atlantic community.[19] Craxi, in particular, spent his years as prime minister trying to demonstrate that the PSI was at least as much reliable as the DC to confirm Italian loyalty to NATO. At the same time, the socialist leader consistently tried to conceive and pursue foreign policy moves that would help to highlight Italian national interests though within the framework of Atlantic alignment and European Community membership, while regaining the Italians' attention to foreign policy matters.[20]

The discussions developed around the issue of the deployment of INF provided Rome with the opportunity to acquire visibility and political relevance at a decisive moment for NATO.[21] With its commitment to be a deploying country, Italy actually ensured that the implementation of the dual-track decision would meet all the crucial conditions established during the inter-allied negotiations preceding the NATO resolution of December 1979.[22] Despite the activism of the anti-nuclear movement and mounting mobilisation of the Italian public, Rome stood firm to its decision to install cruise missiles at Comiso military base.[23] Hence, with the approaching of actual deployment, any open debate about the possibility to develop a defence system in space could easily rebound on the cohesion of the domestic front. Moreover, in principle, SDI posed a serious risk to future European security and defence. Both French and German Defence ministers, who met in November 1983, concurred that SDI might easily unleash a space arms race without enhancing Western security, while the danger of reversing the Alliance strategic doctrine, with the related decoupling consequences, was bound to grow stronger.[24]

During the summer of 1984, the US administration entered into a process of intensified political consultation with key Western partners on space defence matters. The countries involved were Britain, France, West Germany, and Italy. According to the report provided by the British embassy in Washington, all European interlocutors gathered in the US capital for approaching discussions in an open-minded and deliberately non-antagonistic style. Nevertheless, they did not hide their concerns that they expected the US government would fully take into account. What emerged from that series of meetings, however, was rather puzzling for the European countries. According to the British embassy in the United States, 'they themselves [the US officials] have no settled view or answers on many of the questions raised.' In the same report, UK officials noticed that the perceived uncertainty was 'not simply a function of the fact that SDI technical feasibility studies are several years from completion.'[25]

Undoubtedly, in 1984, the deployment of a comprehensive strategic defence system seemed a chimaera to the most knowledgeable part of the US administration. Still, a research programme in the field of defence technology, like SDI,

could be useful even when it did not ensure the availability of a foolproof system in the foreseeable future. President Reagan looked for re-election in November 1984, knowing the role that renewing arms control talks with the Soviets could play in that regard.[26] Hence, in the autumn of 1984, after his re-election, President Reagan focused on the resumption of bilateral negotiations in Geneva, and the contribution of missile defence to the establishment of a strategic balance serving the security interests of the United States. Reagan's desire to render all nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete was soon replaced by a more pragmatic aspiration. As a leak-proof system against ballistic missiles was widely discounted within the administration, SDI proponents now argued that 'the chief virtue of their efforts' was to enhance 'the present strategy of deterrence.'[27] In particular, as the US president wrote to Prime Minister Thatcher in the early days of 1985, the US objective was 'the stabilization of the relationship between offensive and defensive arms, whether on earth or in space,' as well as a radical reduction of the offensive nuclear arsenals.[28]

At the beginning of January 1985, US Secretary of State, George Shultz, and his Soviet homologue, Andrei Gromyko, met in Geneva, where they discussed the steps to take next in order to re-launch bilateral negotiations for arms reductions. SDI was indeed the most controversial issue between the two superpowers. Gromyko worked hard to convince Shultz to accept the Soviet formula based on the principle of a single negotiation, though developed along three distinct channels. In other words, according to the Soviets, any regulations of strategic arsenals, INF, and defence space systems were to be pursued in parallel by different groups of negotiators. No success in arms reduction measures would be possible, unless accompanied with similar results concerning defence technologies. By so doing, Moscow clearly hoped to acquire leverage it could use to put pressure on the White House, in case Americans would remain adamant on the development of SDI.[29] The US administration was well aware of that, when it acceded to Soviet request. Meanwhile, Washington considered the appropriate initiatives for protecting its priorities from unwelcome Soviet interferences. In order to curb the potential room for manoeuvering gained by the Kremlin through the linkage established in Geneva, one of the moves available to the Reagan administration was to convince its European allies to support openly and steadily the US plans for developing space defence.[30]

By mid-1985, this mission was not yet accomplished.[31] The major obstacle to the White House goal of gaining full allied support was the French staunch opposition shared also by the governing Spanish Socialist Party in the first months of that year.[32] The British government, conversely, had become rather accommodating, especially after the bilateral meeting between Thatcher and Reagan at Camp David, in December 1984. London, however, thought it was imperative for the continuing unity of the Alliance that the US position on the issues raised by the SDI programme could 'be consistently and cogently explained and justified to European publics as well as to the American people.'[33] With this condition met, Britain was willing to issue a declaration advocating the prosecution of the programme in the prospect of its due inclusion within the framework of future

negotiations with Moscow.[34] Likewise, the German and Dutch capitals appeared 'cautiously positive' towards the opportunity to carry out SDI and voice their support in that regard. The Italian government, for its part, seemed to favour an allied general approval of the US space defence programme. As 1985 could be a turning point in Geneva, Rome did concur on the need to deny any political leverage to Moscow that might become efficacious for dividing the Alliance.[35] Additionally, Italy acknowledged that any attempt to ban the pursuit of the research needed to develop SDI was doomed to fail at that moment. In fact, any increase in the US military budget would more likely gain public support – and approval by the Congress – if it were justified as defence system necessities rather than as improvements of offensive capabilities. Moreover, the space defence programme launched in 1983 promised the achievement of important breakthroughs in several technology sectors. At the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), therefore, experts assumed that the US government would undoubtedly reassert its commitment to the development of SDI. The Reagan administration appeared determined to carry out research in the field of high-speed computers, laser beams, and any other directed energy devices, because their outcomes were expected to turn crucial for the economic and infrastructural progress of the United States, as well as for the improvements of its military capabilities.[36]

Italian Reaction to SDI: Anything Peculiar?

The US resolve to conduct research for the development of SDI went hand in hand with the diplomatic manoeuvres Washington undertook in order to get a plain approval of space defence from its allies. During the first half of 1985, multilateral meetings were scheduled among either the NATO members or in the framework of the most industrialised countries. The meeting of the seven most industrialised countries convened in Bonn in early May and the NATO Council of Lisbon in early June 1985, in particular, provided the Reagan administration with the opportunity to insist with its Western partners and offer them to participate in the US space defence programme.[37] Multilateral meetings with allies were complemented with bilateral talks the US officials held with representatives of single European governments. The United States launched a sort of courtship of its allies, whose success depended also on General Abrahamson, the Director of the Strategic Defence Initiative Organization (SDIO).[38] In the summer of 1985, he was to visit European capitals in search of the support to SDI that Washington needed for enhancing its negotiating position in Geneva. By so doing, he provided allied governments with the opportunity to discuss the aspects of the US space defence programme they considered disquieting.

In late May 1985, before his trip to Europe, Abrahamson met with the Italian ambassador to Washington, Rinaldo Petrignani. Their conversation touched upon the different political, technological, and military dimensions of the prospective US defence initiative. In his report to the Foreign minister, Petrignani explained what he understood of the future steps the United States was devising in the realm of space defence. Being an experienced diplomat, he also provided the Italian

government with his assessment of Abrahamson's responses and proposals on the issues concerning SDI, concluding his long note with clearly qualified support for the White House's brainchild. Petrignani's report highlighted first that Abrahamson himself discounted a fool-proof defence system as utopian. Despite this, the US general advocated space defence contending it would have stabilising effects. The Italian ambassador, however, was sceptical. He questioned that the supposedly enhanced deterrence between superpowers might bring about positive military and strategic effects to Europe. To the Italian ambassador, the most relevant and likely outcomes for European NATO countries were the higher risks of a war limited to the European continent, along with the need to review the Alliance strategy by increasing the role of conventional forces. With regard to European countries' participation to SDI, the Italian ambassador's report referred to different possibilities grouped into two main categories aiming at either the creation of a space defence system based in the United States or at a joint Euro-American effort in which European industry could participate directly, or through inter-governmental accords.[39]

At the Italian Foreign Ministry, in the first months of 1985, the bureau of Political Affairs seemed to give more credit to the prospects propounded by the US administration, concerning the future of strategic stability and Western security, than the Italian ambassador in Washington would in the following months. In their first reports and analyses, officials from the Political Affairs bureau did not openly raise doubts about the US declarations on the expected stabilising effects of the deployment of new defence devices in the outer space. In principle, Italian representatives did not like to dispute the assessments presented by the US counterpart, especially when Americans attributed the doubts of space defence critics to the traditional – not to say old-fashioned – strategic conceptions of allies.[40]

The Italian attitude toward SDI, however, did not depend exclusively on the openness Rome wanted to demonstrate to the strategic rationale embraced by the Reagan administration about the new generation of defence systems. Italy intended to coordinate with its European partners. The informal meeting of European Foreign ministers, scheduled for 8–9 June 1985 at Stresa, provided a good occasion for beginning discussions in a properly multilateral European framework. At the MFA in Rome, Italian experts laid the groundwork for Andreotti's participation at the Stresa meeting, highlighting the shifting logic of deterrence propounded by Washington. According to the report of the Italian Foreign Ministry, the US administration was not rejecting the tenets of nuclear deterrence; rather, the ostensible purpose of the US defence system was, 'as far as it concerned nuclear ballistic missiles, to replace deterrence by retaliation with deterrence by denial.'[41] Even in the most realistic occurrence of a new generation of defence systems deployed exclusively to protect military targets on US soil, Italian officials seemed to believe that SDI would redress significant imbalances and help the White House to gain important psychological advantages towards the Soviets. Additionally, if some specific conditions were met in the medium term, Western countries would likely achieve the result of forcing Moscow to accept remarkable reductions of its strategic capabilities. Among the conditions listed in

the Italian analysis, two in particular looked paramount, namely the US successful pursuit of SDI – especially if accompanied with comparable Soviet backwardness in space defence – and the Alliance's overall support for it.[42]

During the several meetings European governments had had in the first half of 1985, allied leaders had clearly pointed out that their support to SDI could be full and convinced if SDI was limited to research.[43] Washington, in the meantime, had finalised its own schedule and signalled the US determination to move ahead with the actual SDI research programme by the autumn of 1985. In other words, 1985 was the deadline for NATO to decide its stance about space defence. Rome, along with other European capitals, needed more insights in order to deliberate about the extent and conditions of their respective contribution to the SDI programme. Italian Defence Minister Giovanni Spadolini attempted to obtain further information from his American counterpart, Caspar Weinberger, during their meeting in Brussels in late May 1985. The head of the Pentagon, however, remained non-committal concerning the specific sectors where the United States expected meaningful Italian participation. He preferred to provide generic reassurances, while leaving Abrahamson's mission to Europe – scheduled for August – the task of discussing the still undecided details.[44]

Before General Abrahamson left for Europe, in late July, an Italian delegation went to the United States, where it arrived on 23 July. The delegation included high-ranking officials from the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Industry, University, as well as members of the National Council for Research. The rank and number of agencies involved indicate that it was a serious endeavour on the Italian part to lay out the basis of future cooperation on SDI with both the US administration and industrial lobbies operating in Washington.[45] Unfortunately, there are no documents available on that Italian mission to the United States, whereas the record of Abrahamson's trip to Italy in August does exist and shows that the visit of the director of SDIO provided the Italian government with a valuable opportunity to understand both the possible dimension and implications of its involvement in the US space defence programme. What Abrahamson highlighted during his talks with the Italian interlocutors was the importance the US administration attributed to future intergovernmental accords – even in the simplest form of agreed minutes – for regulating technology transfers, secrecy and security guarantees, intellectual property and related royalties. Interestingly – despite the advocated intergovernmental agreements – before he met with some of the Italian ministers, Abrahamson had stopped by in Turin, where he discussed SDI-related matters with Gianni Agnelli, Italy's most prominent industrialist at that time.[46]

The extent of the involvement of the Agnelli group was not soon defined, as any plans for European countries' participation in SDI research and development (R&D) was still at its embryonic stage in 1985. The most advanced negotiations with Washington on that matter had been conducted by London, while the remainder of the European NATO partners were deliberating about the advantages they might gain through their contribution to SDI.[47] In Rome, Italian participation in US space defence R&D seemed to be the only way to get a say – no matter how small – about the future programme and its promising applications in both

military and civilian domains. This was the political aspect concerning SDI that Italy found crucial to address in the discussions with its continental partners. The Italian government assumed that the chances of affecting US decisions in relation to both the future development and the strategic role of SDI would increase proportionally to the occurrence of a twofold commitment from European allies: first, their direct involvement in the US defence programme; second, their engagement in the promotion of intra-European coordination.

Italy was not alone in urging a coordinated allied response to the United States. In fact, SDI concerned aspects of the military, security, and economic life of Western European countries so crucial to prompt West European capitals to resume multilateral consultations within the framework of a continental defence organisation like the Western European Union (WEU). That process had started since the Spring of 1985. Quite soon, divergences surfaced showing that European partners were divided between those – the French – who intended to give priority to an overall (negative) political appraisal of the US defence programme and those – the other countries – which preferred to take time and subordinate their response to the test of the US actual plans for European involvement, once they would be fulfilled.[48] Among WEU members, Rome was indeed one of the countries contesting the French approach because it was bound to turn untimely and unnecessarily biased. According to the Italian government, the ultimate strategic and political meaning of the SDI programme could be appraised only after its single parts would be defined in their specific R&D purposes.[49] Hence, Rome preferred to remain cautious and refrain from voicing its definitive opinion about SDI while reasserting the importance of European countries' direct contribution to it. Only direct participation, the government in Rome continued to argue, could guarantee the Europeans some influence on the US decision-making process concerning space defence. To its WEU partners, Italy even mentioned the case of INF (namely the long NATO discussion about the deployment of theatre nuclear forces) to make its point about the most effective path Europe could choose in order to be heard in Washington.[50]

WEU was only one of the fora where the Europeans attempted to coordinate their reaction to SDI. In fact, the possibility of participating in US space defence materialised while the members of the European Community (EC) were pondering the opportunity to re-launch investments in advanced technologies, which would help Europe to keep the pace with the United States in strategically important sectors. If the 'general volume of European spending in research and development' was inadequate to preserve European future economic capabilities and international standing, then the European partners should propose possible solutions for increasing those funds and directing them towards the more promising technologies.[51] The so-called high technologies, which included inter alia information technology, had emerged as a specific negotiating issue within the EC since April 1985, when Paris launched its own idea of an R&D programme in several advanced technology fields. Eureka, the initiative promoted by France, was envisaged as an Agency aiming at reinforcing the competitiveness of European industry.[52] The sectors deemed technologically relevant for the project ranged

from the laser to high-speed computers, from robotics to artificial intelligence. Eureka received general support among the EC members. The European Council in Milan, which Italian Prime Minister, Bettino Craxi, chaired in June 1985, even called for setting up a new community to be devoted to European technological development.[53]

It was hardly surprising that the Alliance debate on SDI eventually reproduced the familiar pattern of transatlantic divisions in which the French and US proposals reflected alternative, if not opposing, visions and courses of action. In a situation in which the two projects epitomised two alternative grand strategies, the Italian government wanted to avoid taking sides. Therefore, while supporting Eureka and its possible broader by-product in the form of a European Technology Community, Rome also carried out bilateral contacts with Washington.

During 1985, one of the best opportunities to talk about some practical aspects of the SDI research programme at the highest level of the US administration was Vice President George H. W. Bush's trip to Italy. The Italian government wanted to understand how to make the future outcomes of research on SDI fully available to the Italian partners – both single companies and research institutes – that might contribute to their achievement. Rome was wondering about the provisions that would help the Italian authorities to guarantee that national industry and the defence apparatus would benefit without restrictions from the technological breakthroughs pursued together. Clearly, from the Italian perspective, direct funding of the SDI research programme could guarantee full access to both military and civilian applications for the Italian companies and institutes. Yet, Italy seemed to ponder on that possibility more for coordinating closely with the other EC partners – especially the Federal Republic of Germany – than for devising a realistic plan for large public investments, in the short term.[54] European co-financing was not a request advanced by Washington. Rather, the United States had pointed out that European countries' participation in research on SDI was not conditional on their financial contribution. Italy, however, believed that European governments needed at least to take the responsibility to negotiate with the US administration in order to concur on the legal framework regulating technology transfers, intellectual property, and any joint industrial uses of prospective scientific advances. From the Italian standpoint, this was the only way countries like Italy, or the FRG, could contain the drawbacks of the limited competitiveness characterising their national industries, if compared with the US or Japanese ones. Moreover, for Rome, those talks with the US administration could turn useful in redressing the balance of military exchanges, which was disproportionally favouring the United States.[55]

Intra-European consultations remained pivotal to the Italian government throughout the whole period of the definition of its involvement in SDI. True, Italian attitudes and decisions were especially affected by what West Germany seemed intent on doing, as Andreotti explained to Shultz in November 1985. Coordination with all WEU countries, however, continued to be a guiding principle in Rome.[56] This was a political priority that the Italian Foreign minister had well spelt out to the US Secretary of State since the preceding September, when

the two men met in New York at the margins of the opening session of the United Nations General Assembly. In fact, with the Soviet leader's visit to Paris planned in early October, and the approaching of the US-Soviet summit in Geneva scheduled for late November 1985, Shultz attempted to use his conversation with his Italian counterpart to secure a public announcement of the Italian support to SDI. Andreotti's response, however, left no doubt on the future conduct of the government in Rome: no official stance on the SDI programme would be taken without coordinating with the other WEU members.[57]

In 1986, Italy was to show full consistency with such an approach. While the Italian government negotiated the framework agreement with Washington, it remained constantly in contact with its European partners. In March, planning for the visit Secretary Shultz would pay to Italy at the end of that month, Andreotti was advised to refrain from expressing a definitive assessment of the political implications and the strategic rationale of SDI. Rome, in fact, continued to adhere to the principle that SDI could be supported and pursued, if it helped the stabilisation of the strategic balance between the two superpowers and enhanced deterrence without jeopardising the one extended over Europe.[58]

The first official discussion the Craxi government held on the participation of Italian companies and research institutes in SDI R&D occurred in mid-November 1985.[59] The further step of formalising Italy's involvement in the US defence programme would be a parliamentary debate scheduled approximately for the first half of 1986.[60] In the aftermath of the success of the Geneva summit of November 1985 between President Reagan and the new Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, Craxi knew he had an important card to play in Parliament for gaining strong support for Italian participation in SDI. In fact, such participation was now reconcilable with the Italian commitment to the arms control process. Accordingly, in early 1986, Rome was able to focus on the negotiation of a framework agreement whose main purpose was to ensure that Italian companies would get equal conditions with those guaranteed to the US firms involved in SDI R&D. The idea was to prevent Italian industry being penalised by the complex procedures the Pentagon had established in order to regulate access of foreign partners to SDI contracts. Likewise, Italian companies would be assured full access to the technology transfers Italy could use for both military purposes and economic advantages. In short, as 1986 seemed decisive for defining European participation in SDI, Italy was determined not to miss that appointment. In mid-March 1986, a delegation of Italian industrialists went to Washington with the goal of gaining a first-hand apprehension of the technological cooperation offered by the US administration.[61] Then, over the next months, the US Defence Secretary was able to announce to Minister Spadolini that at the next NATO ministerial meeting the United States would officially select the Italian SNIA-BPD as one of the European affiliates in the space defence programme.[62] The group of European partners so established was to work on the preliminary study of a defence system devised for the European theatre. It comprised three consortia: one from France, the other from the FRG, and the third from Italy. Italy was on board; the contract obtained, however, was rather small: the figure of two million dollars mentioned in the documents

is definitely low by the levels of the US investments in space defence decided in the 1980s.[63]

Conclusions

The low level of investments planned in Italy is an interesting detail, which however by itself does not epitomise the peculiarity or ordinariness, compared to other European allies, of the story of the Italian reaction to SDI. Some further remarks are needed to complete the picture of the Italian case. In the early 1980s and despite the renewed cold war tensions between Washington and Moscow, European governments were still conditioned by the political attractiveness détente exerted towards the respective national publics and electorates. In that regard, Italy was no exception. During the few years of bilateral and multilateral intra-allied negotiations on the US defence initiative, the concerns for the possible backlashes of SDI on the arms control process emerged as paramount in both Italian newspaper articles and Foreign Ministry's memos prepared for Andreotti. Italy, like other Atlantic allies in Europe, feared the development of a space shield on US territory because it entailed the risk of decoupling. Yet, even in the most optimistic prospect, this was a distant scenario, whereas the danger of a new arms race in the outer space – with the related end of the ABM treaty – appeared imminent and realistic. At the same time, especially since early 1985, the government in Rome had become aware of the determination with which the Reagan administration pursued its SDI project. The White House was the strongest supporter of the idea of a new generation of defence systems developed through the advanced technologies that the United States intended to use to reassert its own supremacy on the Soviet Union. As no ally – even Britain – was able to dissuade Washington from investing its political clout and its money in the SDI programme, for Italy the best and only choice at hand was to embrace the plans for developing SDI and accept its rationale. With equal realism, the Italian government pondered the options Italy had available for ensuring the most effective protection of national and European interests. Referring to European interests is necessary because Rome quite soon realised that no national priority could be efficaciously pursued outside of the European and Atlantic frameworks. After Reagan's re-election in November 1984 and his administration's attempt to re-launch negotiations in Geneva, Italy formulated a strategy toward SDI guided by a twofold assumption. On the one hand, Italian and other European countries' involvement in the SDI project might help them to catch up with the most advanced economies in strategically important and technologically advanced sectors. On the other, such involvement (inasmuch as coordinated among European allies) was perceived as the only instrument Italy had for exerting significant influence on the US administration's decisions on a set of issues crucial for the future of the Alliance and European security. Last but not least, Italy, as a European non-nuclear-weapon power, was well aware that by participating in SDI R&D, Rome and Bonn were offered the possibility of bypassing some of the restrictions the two countries had accepted by signing the non-proliferation treaty. Though the opportunities for research and

production did not concern nuclear weapons, the inclusion of missile technology represented the other side of the coin of a potentially more autonomous defence capability for both European partners.

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Part 3

NATO Governments' Rejection of SDI

7 France's Reaction Towards the Strategic Defence Initiative (1983–1986)

Transforming a Strategic Threat Into a Technological Opportunity

Ilaria Parisi

On 23 March 1983, Ronald Reagan gave a pivotal speech in which he announced a vast research programme, called the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI). The United States opened up the possibility of the attractive and long-awaited perspective of a world that could be free from any nuclear threat. Breakthroughs in high technology, such as informatics, communications, lasers, and micro-electronics, would finally enable the creation of a hermetic defence system against nuclear missiles: any nuclear weapon that would target American soil would be destroyed during its flight using either kinetic- or directed-energy weapons. At least, this was what Ronald Reagan believed when delivering his speech, soon renamed the 'Star Wars' speech.[1] By the end of March 1985, the American Defence Secretary, Caspar Weinberger, officially invited the European allies to participate in the American project. In so doing, he gave them the possibility to foresee fruitful and generously funded Euro-American cooperation in the area of high technology, and the merit to help the American President put an end to the nuclear threat. By 1983, the sole perspective of a world free from nuclear weapons was sufficient to impassion American public opinion. By 1985, potential European participation in the programme would show that SDI was not merely Reagan's visionary plan but a transatlantic project to overcome the nuclear threat through new technology. These two elements were intended to convince Congress to allow the initial 26 billion dollars for the investment Reagan envisaged for the military-industrial-spatial complex to enact the SDI.[2]

The enthusiastic (even if somewhat doubtful) reception of the March 1983 speech in the United States was not widely shared in France and neither was the 1985 proposal to join the SDI. Both initiatives endangered European independence and condemned the continent to depend on the United States from a strategic and a technological point of view. As fascinating as it could be, France believed that the idea of a space shield that was able to intercept and destroy nuclear missiles would dramatically change the strategic environment. Assuming that this was feasible, Reagan's plan would give the United States a strategic advantage over the Soviet Union, as Washington would ideally be shielded from a Soviet nuclear attack. This was enough reason to encourage the Soviets

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to start a new and costly arms race to keep up with the American developments. Medium and small powers would prove unable to match American investments in defence systems, and they would be totally left behind in the event of a space American-Soviet arms race. In this event, they could not but strategically depend on American protection. France, which based its security policy on the national independence paradigm, could not accept such a unilateral shift. Furthermore, besides the strategic issues, investments in high technologies associated with SDI would certainly allow the United States to achieve several breakthroughs in high technology, with important industrial and economic benefits. Again, as long as Europe could not invest heavily in this field, it had to rely on a technological dependence upon its American ally.

France's criticism of the SDI and the decision not to join the programme in 1985 came after a careful analysis of pros and cons of the American initiative. Nevertheless, this episode received little attention in the literature, with three main exceptions. In 1991, French journalists Pierre Favier and Michel Martin-Roland offered a first account of the French posture on the SDI in the second of four volumes of their history of François Mitterrand's presidency. They relied on oral history, memoirs, and private archives of French actors involved in this debate, and they provided a detailed account of the evolution of French posture towards the American initiative. A first primary sources-based work dates back to 2013, when Paul Chaput published his MA dissertation on France's reaction to the SDI and the emergence of the European technological initiative, the Eureka project. First disclosures in Mitterrand's presidential papers helped him to outline French scepticism, careful consideration of, and possible European response to the American challenge. In 2019, Frédéric Bozo slightly evoked the extent to which the SDI was a strategic challenge to France.[3] Nevertheless, there is more to Mitterrand's refusal to the Reagan's project than the mere criticisms of a visionary, if not illusionary, plan, and the strong defence of French strategic and technological interests.

Based on French archival sources from the presidential and the diplomatic archives based in Paris, this chapter will demonstrate that the French refusal to join the SDI initiative was intended to preserve both French and European independence in the strategic and technological fields. First, France expressed its will to preserve a strategic stability based on nuclear deterrence as long as a new, non-nuclear, effective security system might be created. Second, France refused to endorse the SDI project and invited the European partners to refuse the project as well, in order to prevent a Euro-American technological divide by instead stimulating a European technological effort to match the largest competitors in this field, namely the United States and Japan.[4]

Facing the Strategic Threat of the SDI

From a strategic point of view, François Mitterrand refused to join SDI as it was highly unrealistic and supposed to endorse a new strategic concept that, from a French perspective, was a threat to strategic stability, and conflicted with French

security interests. Nevertheless, France could not make the mistake of underrating the effect of a speech that promised the abolition of nuclear weapons and the shift towards a new, less dangerous security system. In 1983, with the Euromissiles crisis looming in the background and the deployment of American intermediate nuclear forces set for the end of November 1983, such a proposal was eager to gain consensus in Western public opinions. A simplified translation of the SDI speech seemed to put the debate on a binary plan: the SDI was a step towards peace, while rejecting the SDI was a clear endorsement of nuclear war. Western European governments would experience serious difficulties in explaining that the SDI could not accomplish what Reagan promised, at least for a very long time. The 1985 American proposal to associate European allies to the SDI complicated the picture even more, and France interpreted the American proposal as a test of European loyalty towards the major ally.[5] All these factors contributed to the elaboration of the French posture on the SDI, which was a balanced presentation of pros and cons of the American initiative, and suggestions of possible alternative solutions to problems addressed by the SDI, the nuclear threat and the question of the militarisation of space.

French diplomacy believed that Reagan's speech of March 1983 was a personal initiative intended to calm down the rise of the Freeze, the American anti-nuclear movement. On 29 March 1983, the French Ambassador in Washington wrote that one of the aims of Reagan's speech was to 'to overtake the evolution of the pacifist movement in the United States by suggesting an intellectually simple and a morally fascinating alternative to nuclear offensive deterrence.'[6] Even before becoming president in 1981, Ronald Reagan declared that he was astonished by the fact that there was no way to stop a nuclear retaliation and became fascinated by the possibilities offered by technological research; as a result, he allowed his entourage to work on this.[7] Nevertheless, in 1983, research could not guarantee that these technologies could effectively meet defensive needs and Reagan's speech appeared more to his allies as an expedient to mitigate claims from peace activists than as a solid project.[8] Although Reagan's domestic concerns were widely shared in the Alliance, as European states faced similar protests against the deployment of the American Pershing and Cruise missiles since 1980, Mitterrand believed that the tactics of the American president were dangerous. In fact, by luring the anti-nuclear forces with a promise of an imminent withdrawal of all nuclear missiles as a result of an efficient defence shield, Reagan risked stoking anti-nuclear sentiment, while he knew perfectly well that such a perspective was fragile and yet-to-be-confirmed.[9] The SDI then appeared more as an expedient to boost technological research (we will come back to this later), if not an expedient to obtain a huge defence budget from the Congress. On 21 November 1983, Denis Delbourg, a French technical adviser, expressed his scepticism concerning the American vice president George Bush's strong support for a hermetic ABM system based on SDI technologies. Hubert Védrine commented on this in the following terms: "1. If it is utopic, we should not fear it. 2. If it is ineluctable, we should slow it down and be prepared for it."[10]

France was well aware of the fact that research on defensive systems was not new in the United States.[11] The 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missiles (ABM) Treaty allowed the United States and the Soviet Union to conduct laboratory tests. By the end of the 1970s, new technologies made it theoretically possible to create kinetic- and directed-energy weapons that had the same strength as a nuclear attack without the consequences associated with nuclear use (fallout, etc.). It seemed possible then to exploit new technologies to respond to the Soviet Union's increased modernisation of defence systems and anti-satellite technologies (ASAT) that the United States thought would lead the enemy to soon acquire a military and strategic advantage.[12] French analyses on this were less optimistic. In May 1984, the *Centre d'analyse et de prévision* (CAP) at the Quai d'Orsay believed that Soviet research on ABM systems could effectively lead to a defence system able to reduce the capacity of penetration of American missiles, but the fact remained that these systems could not promptly react to missiles like the Cruise or to the developing Stealth technology, both being difficult to intercept with radar. Moreover, Soviets were lagging behind in informatics, which was an essential part of the American ABM programme.[13] With respect to the ASAT systems, Hubert Védrine admitted in December 1984 that the Soviets were acquiring an advantage in this area, probably with the intent of asking for a moratorium in the next years. Nevertheless, the United States were not far from developing new ASAT systems, more effective than the Soviet ones and probably operational in the second half of the 1980s; the United States would probably reject any kind of moratorium on the development of these systems.[14] Beyond its feasibility, the SDI was then eager to accelerate the already existing space race in which the Americans and the Soviets engaged since the late 1960s. A note by the CAP of March 1985 recalled that the SDI speech *per se* was much more a fact of developing new technology with possible military fallout than a fact of developing the militarisation of space. It was Reagan's emphasis on the space dimension of the SDI that, on the one hand, created a general enthusiasm among the anti-nuclear public opinion, and, on the other hand, alerted the allies to possible changes in the American deterrence posture and disarmament policies.[15]

European allies were particularly scared of possible changes in the American deterrence posture, and France was not an exception to this.[16] It is somehow hard to know the very first thoughts of François Mitterrand on the SDI, but certainly he expressed his concerns against Reagan's initiative shortly after Reagan's speech.[17] A first public demonstration of Mitterrand's thoughts on SDI should be identified in the speech the French President delivered at the UN General Assembly in September 1983. On this occasion, Mitterrand delivered one of his most accomplished and largely underrated speeches on the motivation underlying nuclear deterrence. He also briefly mentioned that Reagan's misleading anti-missiles projects were a threat to the military balance. Mitterrand was not new to this kind of public talk on security issues. Since his election in 1981, when the Euromissile Crisis was at the top of the security agenda, he publicly condemned any attempt to upset the nuclear balance. The SS-20s deployment was then designed at as a deliberate Soviet challenge to Western security and the European allies had to respond similarly, should

the USSR refuse to find a negotiated solution by the end of 1983.[18] During his famous Bundestag speech in January 1983, Mitterrand maintained that

> peace should be constructed [and] nuclear weapons, an instrument of deterrence, [should] ensure peace, whether one would like it or not (*qu'on le souhaite ou qu'on le déplore*), as long as the balance of forces exists. Only such a balance could allow good relations with Eastern countries, our neighbours and historical partners.[19]

And he continued: 'as long as this situation remains unchanged, as long as a collective defence system could not be developed, how can we renounce this means of preventing conflicts?'[20] Similar ideas were expressed during the September UNGA 1983 speech, albeit with a stronger emphasis on how to better reduce reliance on nuclear weapons without giving up security. For this, he stated that the arms control process should, first, reduce the strategic arsenals of the two superpowers, second, reduce the gap between conventional and nuclear forces and finally, stop the race to anti-missiles, anti-submarine and anti-satellite weapons. Space should not become another area of military competition among the two superpowers and he tentatively suggested amending the 1972 ABM treaty to ban any weapon in space and to favour a peaceful use of space technologies – the ABM treaty only banned nuclear weapons in space and limited the number of defence systems on land.[21]

But by the end of 1983, Mitterrand was far from having said his last words on space issues. On 7 February 1984, he even seemed to depart from his September 1983 speech, as he said that space weapons would rapidly become a reality.[22] If one ignores the motives behind this pronouncement, and the real intention of this purpose (was it provocative? was it a change of Mitterrand's mind?), one might realise that already by mid-1983, Mitterrand asked his entourage to analyse the feasibility of Reagan's project. Hubert Védrine, his diplomatic counsellor, and Jacques Attali, his special adviser, both concluded by the first half of 1984 that SDI was a utopic perspective. While Védrine suggested that France should avoid any involvement in the American initiative, Attali was a proponent of keeping an eye on the American research on high technology for civil and military use, so that Europe could follow suit and not be left behind by the United States.[23] Mitterrand's stance on SDI was then a mix of these two suggestions that resulted in a third solution to the SDI problem. From a French point of view, the SDI initiative emerged from a military problem, the Soviet's accomplishments in anti-missile and anti-satellite systems. For this, the SDI was nevertheless not a response, as there was no guarantee that this system would work and that this would permit a shift towards a new strategic stability based on defence instead of offence.

The core of Mitterrand's argument against Reagan's initiative was that the SDI speech opened a perspective of a new deterrence doctrine that would relaunch the arms race. Defence systems were supposed to ensure mutual assured survival (MAS), meaning that no missile could hit the territory that then would be shielded with the new defence system. Also, MAS would outdate the mutual assured

destruction doctrine (MAD), implying deterrence based on the threat of massive retaliation. However, the United States seemed the only nuclear power which could afford such a change in its nuclear doctrine. The Soviet Union could have followed (with large investments that were decidedly out of reach for its fragile economy), but smaller nuclear powers were condemned to strategic inferiority as they did not have the means to follow the United States in their 'negotiated transition' through defensive systems.[24] As Védrine wrote in December 1984, 'the problem was not the American SDI system, but the possibility that the Soviet Union might build a similar system', this would turn the French force de frappe into an obsolete system and France into a vulnerable power.[25] Nevertheless, a Franco-American meeting of February 1985 made it clear that the United States would not abandon nuclear deterrence completely, instead they would reinforce it by relying on both defensive and offensive systems.[26] By 1986, it became all the more clear that 'creating new weapons is possible, but any attempt to substitute a security system based on deterrence with a security system based on defence systems is, presently and for a long time, utopic.'[27] Furthermore, it was argued that deterrence 'would not be replaced, even if it would be completed and adapted.'[28] From a French point of view, although the maintaining of nuclear deterrence preserved the credibility of the force de frappe and Western security, a mixed defensive-offensive deterrence was however unsuitable as it had the unwelcome consequence of generating over-armament.[29]

The SDI was bound to become a challenge for arms control, and this was another point of concern for the Elysée. The French response to the military problem of anti-satellite and anti-missile systems resulted in the promotion of a peaceful use of space technology and the presentation of a plan to demilitarise space. By April 1984, France promoted a joint European effort to build a spy satellite and a space-manned orbiting station, so that Europe could collect its own military intelligence. Such an accomplishment would resolve the European conundrum of a continent which sought for lesser strategic dependence on the United States but had no other solution to plan a military action and would have to resort to US spy satellites as it had none of its own – the Falklands War abruptly reminded Europe of its satellite gap.[30] The Federal Republic of Germany was the first partner to receive such a French proposal for a joint effort to construct a European spy satellite and a manned space station.[31] However, the FRG, like other European partners, had already engaged in similar projects with the United States, which had put pressure on their partners as not to reduce their political and financial engagement in these common projects.[32] Thus, the European positive reception of the French initiative did not enable a strong commitment to this new project.[33] France certainly did not resign from pursuing its initiative, but it was quite evident that a European spy-satellite and space-manned orbital station was a long-term perspective.

Parallel to French efforts to promote a peaceful use of space and to give Europe a chance to have an independent space policy, Paris promoted the demilitarisation of space during the plenary session of the Conference on Disarmament held in Geneva on 12 June 1984.[34] The French representative congratulated the recent American-Soviet initiative to start the talks on space issues. Following the Soviet

withdrawal from the INF and START negotiations in December 1983, there was only a faint chance of resuming the arms control negotiations. In the first half of 1984, space issues seemed to finally bring the United States and the Soviet Union close enough to have a common interest to talk about future arms control discussions. Nevertheless, the French representative also affirmed that space affairs concerned the international community as a whole and he called upon the other members of the Conference to take action against the militarisation of space. For this, he suggested four lines of action.

First, he called the two superpowers to limit anti-satellite systems in the low atmosphere and to prohibit anti-satellite weapons in the high atmosphere. Second, he called on all states to agree to the prohibition of the deployment of kinetic-energy systems on earth, in the atmosphere and in space for five years, and to forbid any tests on them. Third, he suggested reinforcing the 1975 space convention, according to which any object sent in space had to be declared. Finally, he called the United States and the Soviet Union to extend immunity to some space objects of third countries.[35] The French plan was criticised in the United States. After the March 1983 speech on SDI, the United States discussed bilaterally with their allies their plan for an increased American presence in space. France was no exception and the United States regretted that France went public with its thoughts rather than use the bilateral channel that already existed.[36] European partners like the FRG and Great Britain fundamentally agreed with the reason underlying the French proposal and the scope of the French purpose, but they did not want to publicly harm the United States and found themselves embarrassed by the French initiative.[37] Whatever the reasons behind the hesitation of February 1984, by June, France officially rejected any attempt to militarise space and then contested any initiative that was contrary to this principle.

The French posture on the SDI was then fixed in Mitterrand's television interview of 16 December 1984 and reaffirmed in interviews French representatives released by January 1985, except for a nuance.[38] Although the French government stood firm on the rejection of the militarisation of space, it did not want to put the blame on those who fell under the charm of Reagan's project, slightly admitting the legitimacy of exploring new military possibilities in space.[39] A note by CAP of March 1985 acknowledged the evolution of the French public posture on the SDI 'on at least two points: the analysis of defensive deterrence as a destabilizing factor of deterrence is no longer the French posture on the issue; we admitted the legitimacy of research, and implicitly of tests', but in any case not the realisation of a defence shield.[40] As far as the SDI did not endanger second-retaliation capabilities, one might agree that it did not endanger nuclear deterrence either, so exploring the feasibility of the project did not represent a change in the nuclear balance. The question arises as to the reasons behind this adjustment of the French public stance towards the SDI. We can only formulate the following hypothesis and wait for a confirmation from the archives. As we previously admitted, France could not ignore the enthusiasm that Regan's March 1983 speech sparked in public opinions. France perfectly knew that the SDI would cause troubles among the European allies, which had to face a twofold pressure: they had to manage the

expectations of public opinion on the closer, illusionary end of the nuclear threat, and they had to cope with the American wish to have the support of the European allies to the concept behind the SDI. The French June 1984 plan for the demilitarisation of space received a cold welcome among European allies as it openly called into question, and criticised, the American strategy into space; although the European allies shared French suggestions on the issue, they could not risk an open confrontation with the United States on their security strategy, from which they profited. One of the explanations for the French flexibility on its public posture might then be seen as an attempt to soften the difference between French and European positions on the SDI, in a way that any future French proposal for a European move on space and technological issues would not be considered as an ultimatum to any American project.

In January 1986, it became evident that a strategic transition through defensive systems was bound to remain an American dream. In July 1983, the CAP at the Quai d'Orsay speculated on whether high technology could effectively lead to the creation of a space shield. Its conclusion was that X-ray lasers, chemical lasers, electron lasers, and meson lasers, or a defence shield based on a combination of these different systems, could only partially protect from a nuclear attack. In a note of the end of December 1984, Hubert Védrine wrote that American scientists and military envisaged the deployment of a space shield by 2000; however, both were hesitant about it being 100% hermetic. In 1986, it was evident that Reagan's impressive project would not be fully accomplished.[41] To Mitterrand, SDI was able to serve the Western strategic interests better if the United States accepted to use it as a bargaining chip in the new Nuclear and Space Talks (NST), that resumed in Geneva in 1985. As scientists became more and more critical of the perspective of an invulnerable space shield, France believed that the United States had an absolute interest in accepting the Soviet requests to limit the development of defence systems, as to obtain success on the agenda of arms control.[42] Nevertheless, as the French Ministry of the Foreign Affairs stated in March 1985:

> The most important consequence of the SDI will be the enhancement (*dopage)* of the research skills of the American economy. . . . These qualitative improvements will ensure an effective advantage to the US industrial competitiveness and risk causing a 'brain drain' phenomenon to the detriment of Europe.[43]

Once France understood that the feasibility of a defence shield based on SDI was all the more uncertain, Mitterrand engaged to face the real threat SDI posed for Europe: the risk of European technological backwardness.

Facing the SDI as a Technological Challenge

The SDI supposed a quantum leap in high technology and large American investments in this field would certainly widen the technological gap between the two sides of the Atlantic. Worse still, the March 1985 American proposal to associate European companies to SDI projects risked halting any European effort to build

a strong technological industry. This trend would create a European dependence on technological goods, freezing out the European Community from the technological and industrial competition with the leading powers, the United States and Japan.[44] According to Mitterrand, Europe should develop its own expertise in technological goods, and this led to his attempt to stimulate a joint European effort with the creation of EUREKA (European Research Coordination Agency) in April 1985.[45]

As might be expected, the French initiative appeared to the United States as a method of boycotting the American offer to associate the allies with SDI.[46] Only two weeks before the official announcement of EUREKA, the American Defence Secretary, Caspar Weinberger, sent a letter to the European partners inviting them to let the United States know within 60 days whether they would be interested in participating in some selected SDI projects. France received a copy of this letter on 28 March, when Weinberger met with the French Defence Minister Charles Hernu. However, France had already been informed of the American action at the end of February, when a delegation of the Strategic Defence Initiative Organization (SDIO) came to Paris to explore whether there was the possibility of French participation.[47] In a note written the day before Weinberger's arrival, Hubert Védrine had already foreseen the problems of the American initiative. First, any participation in the program would be considered an endorsement of the strategic concept of the SDI. Second, the 60-day delay was clearly intended to obtain the political approval of an essentially technological cooperation. Third, Euro-American cooperation on anti-missile technologies was a violation of the 1972 ABM treaty. Finally, there was no proof that Europe could use defensive technology for its own defence as short-range missiles remained very difficult to intercept and even more difficult to destroy during their flight.[48]

The European partners agreed with France that Weinberger was only seeking firm European political approval of the SDI. Still in early 1985, Europe was discussing the effectiveness of the American initiative and was all the more doubtful about the possibility of shifting from an offensive deterrence to a defensive one. Nevertheless, Europe remained fascinated by the possibility of accessing the collaboration with American research on high technologies, a field in which the United States had an advantage over Europe, if only in terms of investments.[49] From a French point of view, the American proposal for transatlantic technological cooperation was less attractive than it seemed and even opened up the path for an exploitation of European technological skills without effective industrial and economic benefits for Europe. European companies would presumably be subcontractors in the American projects and their participation would then be limited to one-time projects or even limited parts of a single project. European skills would in turn be profitable to the American research but it was unlikely that they could acquire skills to be used in return. Contrary to its partners' expectations, France believed that any European participation in the SDI would only produce a brain drain, which would rapidly increase the technological gap with the United States and which would end any European chance of becoming a technological hub.[50]

The European disagreement on SDI was then worsened with the approaching 60-day deadline. During the 22–23 April Western European Union (WEU) meeting of 1985, the European countries discussed the opportunity to send a coordinated reply to Weinberger's letter, but each country reserved for itself the right to decide individually on the essence of the offer.[51] In June 1985, they agreed to create an ad hoc group within the WEU to analyse the chance to coordinate a European response to the question of whether to be associated with the SDI. France agreed to participate in this WEU study but asked to produce a consultative report instead of sharing a proper European position on the affair, given its concerns on the profitability of a Euro-American cooperation.[52] However, with the Bonn 1985 summit of industrialised countries approaching on 2–4 May, the United States was eager to obtain a strong, public, political approval of their initiative and suggested in April that SDI should be mentioned in the political declaration of the summit.[53] Needless to say, such a declaration was intended to have a European endorsement of the strategic concept which was implicit in the SDI. France firmly refused to agree with the United States, as Mitterrand told Reagan the day before the summit and during the dinner of 3 May 1985. Prior to the summit, French diplomats had even secretly prepared an alternative version of the final declaration concerning the SDI, in case the United States insisted on submitting their text to the convenors. Ultimately, the French text was not distributed as the United States renounced their declaration.[54] In Mitterrand's view, any official statement in favour of the American project, be it the approval of a declaration on the SDI in Bonn, or an official response to Weinberger's proposal, would signify the French endorsement of the SDI and, implicitly, of his strategic implications: Mitterrand did not believe in Reagan's visionary plan to free the world from nuclear weapons, but at the same time he wanted to avoid a public clash with the American president on what was supposed to be one of his major goals for his second term.

The American pressure on Europe could only exacerbate the domestic debate European governments were facing concerning the opportunity to join the SDI. By mid-1985, it became clear that Europe was eager to cooperate with the United States on the research aspects of SDI, and even more when America decided to split the SDI projects into two categories – civil-focused and military-focused – so that partners could join research without participating in the military effort. However, France was convinced that Europe needed proper continental technological growth, to eventually compete or cooperate with US industries on the same level.[55] This was the reason behind the launch of EUREKA, and the French renewed their efforts after the Bonn summit to suggest to its European partners an alternative (but not an ultimatum) to SDI.[56]

EUREKA was intended to facilitate cooperation among European research laboratories and industries so that already excellent European technological research could improve and could easily be applied for industrial purposes, consequently enhancing their economic growth.[57] The idea of a European initiative to achieve this aim emerged in Paris in January 1985, but when France officially submitted its idea of a European platform able to boost European skills in high technology, it had not yet defined the form and the content of such an initiative.[58] Following

Germany's positive reaction to this idea in April 1985, and the European-wide interest in the initiative by June, France then gradually outlined the ins and outs of EUREKA, following a tight schedule.[59] At the Milan European Council in June 1985, France obtained the political approval from its European partners and presented four projects which were ready to start under the EUREKA label.[60] On 17 July 1985, EUREKA was officially launched, although some important practical issues still needed to be fixed. From a French perspective, EUREKA should have had a very light coordinating structure, for example, by using only a single director or a small directive committee created ad hoc for each project. However, the European partners insisted on the creation of a permanent secretary, whose mission was to evaluate, coordinate, and follow up on projects on a case-by-case basis. The secretary would certainly cooperate with the European Commission, but France made a case for EUREKA to be excluded of the Community mechanisms, the policies of which were unsuitable, geographically limited, and time-consuming for the purpose of EUREKA. After some months of intense negotiations, the Eureka Charter was finally signed at the conference held in Hanover in November 1985. Some practical issues still remained to be fixed (e.g. structure and location of the secretariat, financing methods), but the core of the French requests was satisfied.[61]

Despite Mitterrand's criticisms of SDI and his engagement in the launch of EUREKA, his attitude did not make a consensus in France. When Jacques Chirac became prime minister in March 1986, and constructed the first cohabitation of the French Fifth Republic, he tried to distance himself from the presidential outlook on a number of topics, the SDI included. He pretended that the French refusal to participate in the SDI would be a mistake and promptly displayed his divergence with the president when meeting with Helmut Kohl and Margaret Thatcher shortly after his election.[62] The prime minister believed that France could only remain competitive in high technology if it cooperated with the United States. The motivation behind Chirac's reaction is subject to discussion. He could have a political reason for this: with the presidential election of 1988 approaching, Chirac was motivated to challenge Mitterrand to win the Elysée, but he could also have had the personal belief that Europe could not become competitive in the technological field without the United States. The fact remains that Mitterrand never encouraged nor prevented French companies to apply for SDI projects (indeed, some of them did): on the one hand, it was out of the question for the president to give any political endorsement to SDI; on the other hand, it was also impossible to limit the freedom of action of private companies that were only encouraged to find a European way to realise their projects.[63]

Despite the strong French engagement into the promotion of EUREKA, this initiative did not have the enthusiastic reception the SDI had in 1983. The SDI had a greater charm, that was perhaps the result of successful marketing action.[64] EUREKA, unlike the SDI, failed to mobilise public opinion and hid behind a great and daydreaming project, not unlike SDI, as an idea of a world free of nuclear weapons.[65] By the end of 1985, European partners mostly joined SDI: the FRG allowed German companies to apply for the American tenders but refused to

officially engage financial resources for this; Great Britain made the same choice but also publicly endorsed the SDI. These choices did not affect the existence of EUREKA, which survived SDI, but symbolically certainly reduced the value of the European project, at least in 1986.

Conclusion

The French attitude towards Reagan's SDI should not be perceived as a mere rejection of the principle of an American initiative, as Mitterrand's refusal to endorse the SDI during the summit of the industrialised nations held in Bonn in May 1985 seemed to suggest. More than the SDI *per se*, the French president feared the long-term consequences of this initiative. First, the deployment of a strategic defence system would naturally lead to the disruption of the East-West strategic balance and would oblige other nuclear powers to follow the United States if it wanted to keep their deterrence attitude up to date. So, SDI implied the rise of a new nuclear arms race, in which medium powers, like France, could not compete. Second, the SDI was the final outcome of a wide plan of huge investments in new breakthrough technologies with a high economic impact. This meant that the technological gap between the United States and Europe would soon be too vast, should Europe refrain from adopting a proper technological plan or resign to rely on a vague United States promise to share the result of their technological research with the Allies.

The French SDI rejection is then embedded in France's will to preserve the strategic stability based on nuclear deterrence as far as there was no alternative security system and was deeply rooted in Mitterrand's will to give Europe a chance to become a major competitor in the emerging technological competition. Mitterrand's attitude on SDI was deeply rooted in his grand design for Europe and more specifically, for France. The president's rejection of SDI expresses Mitterrand's will to move Europe and France away from the American hegemony on Western affairs so that Europe could become an independent international actor and establish cooperation with the United States on an equal basis.

Notes

1 'Address to the Nation on Defense and National Security', 23 March 1983, Ronald Reagan Library website, www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/32383d, accessed 25 January 2020.

2 In 1986, Hubert Védrine wrote that the trauma of Hiroshima created a sense of guilt that made the American people all the more eager to explore any chance to overcome nuclear deterrence, as illusionary as it may be. This can explain the enthusiastic reaction towards SDI. Note by Hubert Védrine, April 1986, Box EG 71, Folder 2, 5AG4, AN. On the military-industrial-spatial complex, see: Note by Hubert Védrine, 24 December 1984, Box CD 257, Folder 2, 5AG4, AN. In 1983, an analyst of the *Centre d'analyse et de prévision* (thereafter CAP) of Quai d'Orsay wrote that 'One should have the American faith in the technological myth to believe that any defence system, as futuristic as it may be, could ensure a hermetic defence (countermeasures always bypass defence systems)'. Note by CAP no. C/764, 25 March 1983, Box 71, CAP 1982–1987, AD.

Similar proposals may be found in the memoirs of Hubert Védrine, Mitterrand's diplomatic counsellor at the Elysée: Hubert Védrine, *Les mondes de François Mitterrand : à l'Élysée, 1981–1995* (Paris: Fayard, 1996), 353.

3 On France and SDI, see: Pierre Favier and Michel Martin-Roland, *La décennie Mitterrand. 2, Les épreuves (1984–1988)* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1991); Paul Chaput, *La France Face à l'Initiative de Défense Stratégique de Ronald Reagan (1983–1986) : De La Guerre Des Étoiles à La Construction Européenne* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2013); Frédéric Bozo, 'François Mitterrand et Les Enjeux Stratégiques, 1984–1988', in *Mitterrand. Les Années d'alternances*, (ed) Georges Saunier (Paris: Nouveau Monde éd., 2019), 139–166. And the memoirs of: Védrine, *Les mondes de François Mitterrand*, 352–367; Jacques Attali, *Verbatim. Tome I. Chronique Des Années 1981–1986* (Paris: Fayard, 1993).

4 This paper is based upon French documents consulted at the National Archives (*Archives Nationales*, thereafter AN) and the Diplomatic Archives (*Archives diplomatiques*, thereafter AD). The author accessed most of the documents cited in this article by derogation. She specifies that a number of supplementary folders are still waiting for a decision on consultation on the part of the National Archives, since January 2019.

5 Note by CAP no. C/1034, 26 February 1985, Box 27 bis, CAP 1982–1987, AD.

6 Cable from the French Embassy in Washington no. 729, 29 March 1983, Box 5643, Europe 1981–1985, AD. Similar proposals also emerged in Franco-German meetings of 1983, for example: note by *sous-direction des Affaires Stratégiques et des Pactes* no. 129/ASP, 27 April 1983, Box CD 161/2, 5AG4, AN.

7 Chaput, *La France Face à l'Initiative de Défense Stratégique de Ronald Reagan (1983–1986)*, chap. 1.

8 This is what the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Claude Cheysson, told during a Franco-German meeting: Note by the Political Director, 28 November 1983, Box CD 161/2, 5AG4, AN.

9 Note by *sous-direction des Affaires Stratégiques et des Pactes* no. 129/ASP; and note by the Political Director, 28 November 1983.

10 Note by Denis Delbourg, 21 November 1983, Box CD 257/2, 5AG4, AN.

11 James Cameron, *The Double Game: The Demise of America's First Missile Defense System and the Rise of Strategic Arms Limitation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

12 This is what the United States told France in February 1984: note by *sous-direction des Affaires Stratégiques et des Pactes* no. 52/ASP, 16 February 1984, Box CD 257, Folder 2, 5AG4, AN.

13 Note for M. Andréani no. C/941, 28 May 1984, Box 72, CAP 1982–1987, AD.

14 Note by Hubert Védrine for the French President, 24 December 1984, Box 257/2, folder 3, 5AG4, AN.

15 Note by CAP no. C/1052, 22 March 1985, Box 72 bis, CAP 1982–1987, AD.

16 On 25 March, 1983 the *Secretariat général de la Défense nationale* (SGDN, the French General Secretariat of National Defence) called a meeting to discuss possible implications of Reagan's speech. Cable from the SGDN no. 2269, Box 5643, Europe 1981–1985, AD. In June and July 1983, the CAP edited four notes, that eloquently tried to investigate whether the United States were calling deterrence into question with the future creation of an ABM system. Note by CAP no. C/800 and C/801, 6 June 1983, Box 71, CAP 1982–1987, AD. Note by CAP no. C/802, 7 June 1983, Box 71, CAP 1982–1987, AD. Note by CAP no. C/814, 11 July 1983, Box 71, CAP 1982–1987, AD. The question even arose at the Quai d'Orsay whether the SDI was an American expedient to reduce the American nuclear engagement in Europe. As the SDI would ideally protect the American soil, the United States might be willing to reduce risks of nuclear confrontation with the Soviets by enhancing the part of conventional means in the defence of peripherical theatres, as Europe was. Note by CAP no. C/764, 25 march 1985, Box 71, CAP 1982–1987, AD. This suspicion also emerged the Franco-German

political-strategical meeting of April 1983. Note by *sous-direction des Affaires Stratégiques et des Pactes* no. 129/ASP, 27 April 1983, Box 161/2, 5AG4, AN. This idea might not be completely wrong. On September 1984, Richard Burt told the French Ambassador in Washington that time had come for Europe to enhance its conventional forces. The Ambassador warned that this move, coupled with the emphasis the United States put on the SDI, might easily be misinterpreted as an American attempt to reduce its nuclear protection to Europe, which was unacceptable. Cable from the French Embassy in Washington no. 2047, 7 September 1984, Box 5638, Europe 1981–1985, AD.

17 This is mentioned in: Cable from Washington no. 1508, 12 June 1984, Box 5638, Europe 1981–1985, AD. And Chaput, *La France Face à l'Initiative de Défense Stratégique de Ronald Reagan (1983–1986)*, 122.

18 Frédéric Bozo, 'France, the Euromissiles, and the End of the Cold War', in *The Euromissile Crisis and the End of the Cold War*, (ed) Leopoldo Nuti et al. (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2015), 196–214.

19 François Mitterrand, *La France et sa défense : paroles publiques d'un Président, 1981–1995*, (ed) Jean-Yves Le Drian and Hubert Védrine (Paris: Nouveau Monde éd., 2015), 90 and 94.

20 Ibid., 92–93.

21 Ibid., 110–111. For a view on Mitterrand's strategic thinking: Ilaria Parisi, 'La France et La Crise Des Euromissiles, 1977–1987' (PhD dissertation, History, supervised by Prof. Frédéric Bozo, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3, 2017), chap. 6.

22 Chaput, *La France Face à l'Initiative de Défense Stratégique de Ronald Reagan (1983–1986)*, 136–137.

23 Favier and Martin-Roland, *La décennie Mitterrand. 2, Les épreuves (1984–1988)*, 292–293. Findings in this chapter shows that France examined in depth SDI both at the Quai d'Orsay and at the Elysée. Nevertheless, it is sometimes hard to find evidence on how the analysis of the Quai d'Orsay fuelled the thinking at the Elysée, as in the case for Vedrine and Attali's considerations on the feasibility of the SDI.

24 The notion of 'negotiated transition' through defensive systems was a first departure from the terms of Reagan's March 1983 speech: The United States admitted that there would be a step-by-step shift from offensive to defensive deterrence. Cable from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs no. 6904, 7 January 1985, Box 5638, Europe 1981–1985, AD.

25 Note by Hubert Védrine, 24 December 1984.

26 Cable from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs no. 6903, 7 February 1985, Box 5638, Europe 1981–1985, AD.

27 Note by Hubert Védrine, April 1986.

28 Note by Hubert Védrine, 20 January 1986, Box EG 97/3, 5AG4, AN.

29 This is what Mitterrand said in an interview on 16 December 1984, reported in: Favier and Martin-Roland, *La décennie Mitterrand. 2, Les épreuves (1984–1988)*, 288.

30 Cable from the French Embassy in London no. 1409, 22 August 1984, Box 5638, Europe 1981–1985, AD.

31 The FRG was the main French security partner. The relaunch of the military clauses of the Elysée treaty in February 1982 institutionalised the Franco-German political-strategic dialogue and made the two partners even closer. It was all the more evident that as far as space was acquiring a strategic dimension, the two partners would cooperate in this field. Also, from a French point of view, cooperation on space was a way to relaunch a Franco-German security dialogue that quickly came to a standstill. In 1982–1983, Franco-German security discussions were mostly devoted to the thorny and dead-end issue of nuclear consultation in the event of a French nuclear launch. Note by CAP no. 1706, 20 December 1983, Box 162/1 1, 5AG4, AN; Note by Hubert Védrine, 6 April 1984, Box 179/3, sub-folder *Séminaire franco-allemand de Courchevel*, 5AG4, AN; Note, *44e consultations franco-allemandes au sommet*, 29 October 1984, Box 179/4, 5AG4, AN.

32 At the London 1984 and Bonn 1985 summits of the industrialised countries, the United States put pressure on their allies to sign a joint political declaration on their space projects; it was intended to solemnly reaffirm the Euro-American cooperation on space issues. See, for example: Note by the *conseiller technique*, 23 May 1984, Box EG 121, 5AG4, AN; thematic paper, 11 April 1985, Box EG 124, 5AG4, AN.
33 See, for example: Cable from the French Embassy in Bonn no. 76, 11 January 1985, Box EG 123, 5AG4, AN; note by the *conseiller technique*, 'Sommet Franco-allemand: Programme Spatial', 26 February 1985, Box EG 123, 5AG4, AN.
34 In August 1983, so five months after Reagan's March 23, 1983, speech, a note by the CAP already suggested a revision of the 1967 space treaty and the introduction of verification measures to cope with the problem of the militarization of space. Note by CAP no. C/833, 26 August 1983, Box 71, CAP 1982–1987, AD.
35 *Bordereau d'envoi* no. 96/ASD, 13 June 1984, Box 5638, Europe 1981–1985, AD.
36 Cable from the French Embassy in Washington no. 1508, 12 June 1984, Box 5638, Europe 1981–1985, AD; Cable from the French Ministry of the Foreign Affairs no. 30533, 14 June 1984, Box 5638, Europe 1981–1985, AD.
37 On the FRG's reaction: Cable from the French Embassy in Bonn no. 1109, 12 June 1984, Box 5638, Europe 1981–1985, AD. On Great Britain's reaction: Cable from the French Embassy in Great Britain no. 1126, 18 June 1984, Europe 1981–1985, AD.
38 Favier and Martin-Roland, *La décennie Mitterrand. 2, Les épreuves (1984–1988)*, 288.
39 Chaput, *La France Face à l'Initiative de Défense Stratégique de Ronald Reagan (1983–1986)*, 172–173.
40 Note by CAP no. C/1037, 5 March 1985, Box 72 bis, CAP 1982–1987, AD.
41 Note by CAP no. C/814, 11 July 1983, Box 71, CAP 1982–1987, AD; Note for the President by Védrine, 24 December 1984, Box 257/2, 5AG4, AN; Note by Védrine, 20 January 1986, Box EG 97/3, 5AG4, AN.
42 See, for example: Note for the President by Hubert Védrine, 2 July 1986, Box 258/1, folder 'START', 5AG4, AN.
43 Report by CAP, March 1985, Box EG 71/2, 5AG4, AN.
44 Japan was about to launch its programme 'Human Frontier'.
45 Mitterrand's interest in technology as a vehicle for industrial and economic growth was first shown during the 1982 Versailles summit of industrialised countries, where France presented a document titled 'Technology, growth, employment'.
46 Note by Hubert Védrine, 19 April 1985, Box EG 97/3, AN.
47 Favier and Martin-Roland, *La décennie Mitterrand. 2, Les épreuves (1984–1988)*, 289–290. And: Note by the CAP no. N/1966, 26 February 1985, Box EG 123, 5AG4, AN; Note by CAP no. C/1036, 1st March 1985, Box 72 bis, CAP 1982–1987, AD.
48 Note by Hubert Védrine, 27 March 1985, Box EG 97/3, 5AG4, AN. The idea of a European Defence Initiative, or an SDI specifically tailored on European defensive needs, emerged in 1984 as a part of the SDI project. Pierre Marie Gallois, one of the French Generals that shaped French nuclear doctrine, took part in it thank to his personal contacts with some of the Generals leading the SDIO. He was asked to explore the possibility of a 'Tactic defence initiative'. Of course, he attended the debate on a personal basis and he did not represent the French government. His experience confirmed in him the strong belief that a pure defensive strategy was not feasible, as he then explained in Pierre Marie Gallois, *La guerre de cent secondes: les États-Unis, l'Europe et la guerre des étoiles* (Paris, France: Fayard, 1985). On this, see: Chaput, *La France Face à l'Initiative de Défense Stratégique de Ronald Reagan (1983–1986)*, 139–149; Christian Malis, *Pierre Marie Gallois: géopolitique, histoire, stratégie* (Lausanne, Suisse: l'Âge d'homme, 2009), 617–625.
49 Great Britain agreed with France on the importance to keep nuclear deterrence in place, but also wanted to profit from a technological cooperation with the United States: Cable from the French Embassy in London no. 308, 15 March 1985, Box 5638, Europe 1981–1985, AD. The FRG was caught within the necessity not to hurt the United States. See,

for example: Cables from the French Embassy in Bonn nos. 734 and 735, 18 April 1985, Box 5638, Europe 1981–1985, AD.

50 Note by Hubert Védrine, 28 March 1985, Box EG 97/3, AN; Report by CAP, March 1985. At the Quai d'Orsay, the CAP dedicated several meetings to studying how Europe could contribute to the American SDI. It seemed to conclude that no matter how Europe could be in advance on or at the same level of American technology: the huge financing of SDI will let the United States to make a quantum leap in all the aspects of the project. See, for example: note by CAP no. C/1019, 24 January 1985, note by CAP no. C/1020, 25 January 1985, note by CAP C/1023, 5 February 1985, note by CAP no. C/1032, Box 72 bis, CAP 1982–1987, AD.

51 Cables from the French Embassy in London nos. 405 and 406, 1st April 1985, Box 5638, Europe 1981–1985, AD.

52 Cables from the French Embassy in London nos. 705 and 706, 14 June 1985, Box 5638, Europe 1981–1985, AD.

53 Note for the President, 24 April 1985, Box EG 124, 5AG4, AN.

54 Note for the President before his meeting with Ronald Regan, 1st May 1985, Box 4863, 5AG4, AN. Éventuel contre-texte français sur l'initiative de défense stratégique, no date, Box 4863, 5AG4, AN. And Favier and Martin-Roland, *La décennie Mitterrand. 2, Les épreuves (1984–1988)*, 301–303.

55 Note for the President before his meeting with Helmut Kohl, 30 April 1985, Box 4863, 5AG4, AN.

56 Note by Hubert Védrine, 7 May 1985, Box CD 99, 5AG4, AN.

57 Note by CAP no. C/1070, 6 May 1985, Box CD 99, 5AG4, AN.

58 Chaput, *La France Face à l'Initiative de Défense Stratégique de Ronald Reagan (1983–1986)*, 191–206.

59 Note by Pierre Morel, 16 April 1985, Box CD 99, 5AG4, AN. Note by the *direction des affaires politiques*, 24 May 1985, Box CD 99, 5AG4, AN; note by the *service de cooperation économique*, 29 May 1985, Box CD 99, 5AG4, AN. The European Commission also had a positive reaction towards the French initiative: Note by Hubert Védrine, 29 April 1985, Box EG 97/3, 5AG4, AN. A French ad hoc group on EUREKA only came into existence on 17 April 1986: Note by Jean-David Levi et Hubert Védrine, 17 April 1985, Box CD 99, 5AG4, AN.

60 Note by Hubert Védrine, 20 June 1985, Box EG 97/3, 5AG4, AN; Cable from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs no. 30473, 24 June 1985, Box CD 99, 5AG4, AN.

61 Note by *Service de cooperation économique* no. 1508/CE, 4 December 1985, Box CD 100, Folder "Cables, notes", 5AG4, AN. The text of the Chart of Eureka may be read in: Chaput, *La France Face à l'Initiative de Défense Stratégique de Ronald Reagan (1983–1986)*, 293–297.

62 Note by François Bujon de l'Estang, no date (probably 17 April 1986), Box 199000003/2, AN; Note by François Bujon de l'Estang, 16 May 1986, Box 199000003/2, AN.

63 A note of Hubert Védrine, dated April 1986, summarised the history of the SDI and outlined the evolution of the French posture on the American initiative, at some points giving the impression to address comments of the cohabitation government: Note by Hubert Védrine, April 1986, Box EG 71/2, 5AG4, AN.

64 Note by Yves Stourdzé, 12 July 1985, Box CD 100, 5AG4, AN.

65 Note by CAP no. 1042, 18 March 1985, Box CD 99, 5AG4, AN; Note by Hubert Védrine, 19 April 1985, Box EG 97/3, 5AG4, AN; note by Philip Coste, 29 April 1985, Box CD 99, 5AG4, AN.

8 Canada's 'Polite No' to SDI

A Question of Sovereignty?

Luc-André Brunet

Despite its role as a founding member of NATO, Canada is largely absent from existing international studies of the late Cold War. On the Strategic Defence Initiative, Canada's position was unique within the Atlantic Alliance, given the degree of cooperation between Canada and the United States on continental defence. Indeed, with the bilateral North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) and the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line, Canadian and American defence was closely integrated; Canada was thus the NATO member most likely to be directly implicated by the SDI announced by Reagan in March 1983. Moreover, September 1984 saw the election of Brian Mulroney, the most unabashedly pro-American Canadian Prime Minister of the Cold War era. Throughout his time in office (1984–93), Mulroney vocally pursued a policy of supporting the Reagan and Bush Administrations on defence, arms control, and East-West issues.

Given the degree of aerospace defence cooperation between the two countries, and Mulroney's pro-Reagan stance on many defence issues, it is therefore surprising that Canada refused to take part in the research programme for the SDI. In his memoirs, Mulroney explains the decision by claiming he 'found the thought of the weaponisation of space and the creation of another costly arms race extremely disconcerting' and that his relationship with Reagan permitted him to be frank about this disagreement: 'true friends must look their counterparts in the eye and feel no hesitation in offering up the unvarnished truth'.[1] The most recent monograph on Canadian foreign policy under Brian Mulroney, meanwhile, points to Canada's decision on the SDI as an 'example of Mulroney's refusal to cave in to the Americans when Canadian interests were involved'; this interpretation is similarly maintained in other studies of Mulroney and his foreign policy.[2] Canada's negative response to join Reagan's 'Star Wars' initiative is presented as a principled stand taken by Mulroney to protect Canadian interests and to prevent an arms race in outer space. Drawing on newly declassified archival materials from Canada, the United States, and the UK, this chapter challenges this depiction by revealing how the Canadian government arrived at its decision on SDI.[3] Specifically, the motivating factor was Mulroney's priority of launching free trade talks with the United States, and the SDI decision rested on the assessment of how much cooperation with the Reagan administration the Canadian electorate might tolerate.

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Canada and the 'Second Cold War'

The federal election of September 1984 saw one of the most significant political shifts in Canadian history. The left-leaning Liberal Party, in power almost continuously since 1963, was reduced to just 40 seats in the 282-seat House of Commons, while the Progressive Conservative (PC) Party secured the largest parliamentary majority ever seen in Canada, with 211 seats and over 50% of the popular vote. Aside from the dramatic change in parliamentary arithmetic, the 1984 election ushered in notable changes in Canadian policies.[4] Under the premiership of Pierre Elliott Trudeau (1968–1984), the Canadian government had often espoused Canadian nationalism and what many saw as soft anti-Americanism, evidenced by such policies as the National Energy Program (NEP) and the Foreign Investment Review Agency (FIRA), designed respectively to encourage 'oil self-sufficiency' and to restrict takeovers of Canadian companies by American ones; the Canadian foreign minister in the early 1980s later recalled that 'Trudeau's whole approach to foreign policy was a "Canada First" policy'.[5] Such protectionist measures led to strains in the relationship with the Reagan Administration, with whom Trudeau openly clashed. By contrast, Brian Mulroney, leader of the PCs since 1983, campaigned on a pledge to restore 'super relations' with the United States and to give Reagan 'the benefit of the doubt'. 1984 thus saw a general shift in Canadian policy away from a leftish stance that sometimes strained relations with Washington to a more right-wing agenda on which rapprochement with the United States featured prominently.

NATO's 1979 dual-track decision and the ensuing Euromissile Crisis were reflected in Canada.[6] As prime minister, Trudeau had supported NATO policy and the timely deployment of INF, distancing himself from proposals to delay or cancel deployment.[7] While Canada saw the rise of peace activism in the early 1980s, the controversy was not over the deployment of Cruise and Pershing II missiles in Western Europe, but rather over Trudeau's decision to allow the Americans to test air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs) in northern Canada. While the decision on Cruise testing helped improve Trudeau's stock in Washington, it had a disastrous effect on his reputation domestically, particularly as Trudeau generally cast himself as a proponent of peace and nuclear arms control. The revelation in March 1982 that Cruise missiles were to be tested in Canada sparked widespread protests across the country and provided a single issue behind which disparate local, regional, and national groups united. By 1983, major cities such as Toronto and Vancouver regularly saw marches of thousands of protesters, who argued that the Cruise tests amounted to Canada contributing to an American-led nuclear arms race.

This was the context in Canada when President Reagan announced the Strategic Defence Initiative in a televised address in March 1983. The scheme, Reagan explained, would involve placing anti-ballistic satellites in outer space to provide a shield from missiles, thereby protecting the United States and its allies from any possible nuclear attack from the Soviets. The announcement exacerbated the tensions of the 'Second Cold War' and was seized upon by opponents

of INF deployment – and indeed of Cruise testing in Canada – as a dangerous escalation of the arms race into outer space. To make matters worse, the Americans had not consulted with their allies before announcing SDI. Interestingly, Reagan's statement coincided with a visit to Ottawa by Vice-President George Bush, who was encouraging Trudeau to maintain his support for Cruise testing in Canada despite domestic opposition. Bush also had the unhappy task of explaining the SDI to Trudeau. Canada's ambassador in Washington, Allan Gotlieb, recorded that 'Trudeau seemed quite shocked' by the initiative, and particularly the implications for the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty.[8] Later that year Trudeau cautioned Reagan that in his view 'the scheme was potentially deeply de-stabilising'.[9]

In October 1983, partially in response to the pressures of the Canadian peace movement, Trudeau launched a peace initiative aimed at promoting dialogue between the superpowers and encouraging progress on arms control negotiations, while maintaining Canadian support for INF deployment. Among Trudeau's proposals was a call for an anti-satellite ban to avoid the weaponisation of space, which had clear implications for the nascent SDI. Ultimately none of Trudeau's proposals found broad support within NATO or among the nuclear weapon states, and instead managed to annoy several of Canada's allies, with Margaret Thatcher being the most hostile to the initiative. While Trudeau's peace initiative failed to have an impact internationally, it nonetheless proved remarkably popular at home. Trudeau's efforts were supported broadly across the country and the political spectrum, and even peace groups who were fighting against Cruise tests openly endorsed the initiative. It also demonstrated Canada's ability to pursue an independent foreign policy, distinct from Washington's, which contributed to its domestic popularity.[10] Consequently, in the 1984 election candidates of all parties came under pressure to commit to continue Trudeau's efforts at peace and nuclear arms control; both Mulroney and Liberal leader John Turner campaigned on promoting arms control and East-West dialogue, while affirming their support for Cruise missile testing in Canada and the implementation of NATO's dual-track decision.

Following the PC landslide, Mulroney arranged for an early trip to Washington to meet with Reagan. Meeting in the Oval Office barely two weeks after the election, Mulroney assured the president that he had campaigned on the pursuit of closer relations with the United States, particularly in the economic sphere and that his election victory 'was a massive endorsement of this position'.[11] That very day, however, Canada's new Secretary of State for External Affairs, Joe Clark, was addressing the UN General Assembly in New York. Clark, who had served briefly as prime minister in 1979–1980, had been the PC spokesperson for arms control and disarmament since 1983 and pushed for the party to remain engaged in this area. At the UN, he pledged that the new government would maintain peace and nuclear arms control as a 'constant, consistent, dominant priority' in foreign policy.[12] With the SDI, the Canadian government faced a challenge in pursuing the two foreign policy priorities of closer relations with the United States and pushing for nuclear arms control.

The Mulroney Government and the SDI, September 1984–March 1985

By the end of 1984, the Canadian Government was sceptical of the benefits of the SDI. Visiting Downing Street in mid-December, Joe Clark suggested to Margaret Thatcher that the Allies 'advise the US Administration to agree to limits on further research and development' to prevent a new arms race in outer space. Thatcher disagreed, saying 'the Americans must have the knowledge to develop a system if the need ever arose', adding that it would be impossible to verify whether a country was pursuing research and development in this area. 'The point where the crucial decision had to be taken was that of moving from research and development to production. Mr Clark suggested that it would be difficult to resist the momentum at that stage. The Prime Minister disagreed'.[13] In the event, Thatcher met with Reagan at Camp David later that month and convinced Reagan to adopt the 'four points' put to him by Thatcher, which entrenched the divide between research and implementation, which the UK supported, and implementation and deployment, which Reagan agreed would only take place after international negotiation.[14]

This clarification of the American approach to the SDI allayed some of Clark's concerns, and in January 1985 – the very day Reagan was being inaugurated for his second term – Clark made a statement in the House of Commons setting out his government's position on the SDI. He reiterated the decoupling of research and implementation agreed between Reagan and Thatcher the previous month, saying that while 'it is only prudent that the West' undertake research, 'actual development and deployment of space based ballistic missile defence systems . . . would have serious implications for arms control and would therefore warrant close and careful attention by all concerned'.[15] An hour before he addressed the House, Clark rang the American Embassy to forewarn them and to summarise the points he planned to make in his statement. He assured them that 'in his personal views (the) elements (of his address) seemed in line with [the] US position and [were] generally supportive'. The American officials privately agreed, recording that Clark was 'supporting the US Government as fully as politically possible without making an open-ended commitment of Canadian support'.[16] Reagan rang Mulroney four days later 'to express particular appreciation for recent comments by the Canadian Foreign Minister, Joe Clark, endorsing our Strategic Defence Initiative. We were very pleased, not only with Mr Clark's endorsement but with his wider acceptance of US foreign policy positions', adding that given the political situation in Canada, he appreciated that 'it took considerable political courage to take such a forthright stand'.[17]

While Clark had expressed reservations about the United States advancing with research on the SDI to Thatcher, just one month later he publicly endorsed American research in this area. The decoupling of research and implementation proved decisive in allowing the Canadian government to endorse the American project, and Clark's statement as well as the consideration shown by Clark and Mulroney by keeping the Americans fully informed contributed to Mulroney's overarching aim of improving relations with the United States. The following month,

the Canadian government further clarified its position, with Clark stating in the House of Commons 'that Canada would not be involved in SDI in any way'.[18] As the Director for Arms Control and Disarmament in the Canadian Department of External Affairs explained to the FCO, Clark had 'gone on record as saying that the Canadians would not take part in any SDI-related activities and would not join in research'.[19] For the Canadian government, this position struck the right balance between endorsing American research without getting directly involved. Clark's statements also allowed the Canadian government to present itself as a defender of arms control, insofar as they cautioned against the deployment of any missile defence system which opponents claimed would trigger a new arms race in outer space.

In an interview with a Canadian news magazine in early March, it was put to President Reagan that while the Canadian Government supports the SDI, 'there has been an uproar each time it has been suggested that defense cooperation could lead to our actual involvement in the program'. Reagan reassuringly responded that '*we have absolutely no intention of pressing any of our allies to participate in this program*. It will be entirely up to Canada to decide the extent to which, if at all, it wishes to share in the research efforts'.[20] Later that month, Reagan and Mulroney met in Québec City for their first bilateral summit. While both Canadian and American records of the Reagan-Mulroney bilateral meeting on defence and arms control issues at the summit remain classified, the available evidence suggests that Reagan reiterated the position he had expressed in his interview earlier that month, namely that he appreciated that Mulroney would endorse American efforts without committing to Canadian involvement. Accordingly, at the summit the two governments agreed on a statement that the US research effort in SDI 'is prudent and is in conformity with the ABM Treaty. In this regard, we agree that steps beyond research would, in view of the treaty, be matters for discussion and negotiation'.[21] This reaffirmed that the Canadian Government supported American research and development of the SDI, while maintaining that deployment must be preceded by negotiations. The statement, along with an agreement to renew the DEW Line (to be renamed the North Warning System) of NORAD in the Canadian Arctic, seemed to publicly confirm the close relations between the two countries on defence matters in particular. The successful summit came to be known as the 'Shamrock Summit', a reference to the two leaders' Irish background and the fact that the summit took place on St Patrick's Day. The positive rapport between the leaders was on full display at the summit dinner when they sang 'When Irish Eyes Are Smiling' together.

Unfortunately, this positive atmosphere of North American cooperation was quickly dissipated by comments made by the US Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger during the summit. In a brief television interview in Québec, Weinberger asserted 'that Canada might eventually be asked to station anti-cruise weapons on its soil', implying that such actions would be taken regardless of the position of the Canadian Government. According to *The Toronto Star*, 'to his dismay, the 67-year-old US Defense Secretary emerged as the star of the Shamrock Summit, managing in one brief television interview to overshadow President

Ronald Reagan, re-ignite the nuclear weapons controversy and create a nasty headache for the Canadian government'.[22] Weinberger's ill-advised comments overshadowed the statements made by Reagan and Mulroney and opened the latter to criticism in the Canadian press and from the opposition that he was sacrificing Canadian sovereignty in the pursuit of closer relations with the United States.

Weinberger created an even greater crisis for the Canadian Government the following week. In the margins of a Nuclear Planning Group meeting of NATO defence ministers in Luxembourg on 26 March, Weinberger handed his counterparts a brief letter inviting their governments to participate in the research programme for the SDI. To this unexpected invitation was attached the stipulation that governments must respond 'within 60 days', specifying 'the areas of your country's research excellence that you deem most promising for this program'.[23] Weinberger's letter was met with annoyance in many NATO capitals. After having the Reagan administration publicly and privately reassure the Canadian government earlier that month that they would not be pressured into participating in SDI research, the United States was now doing precisely this. Moreover, no warning was given to NATO governments before hard copies of the letter were handed out by Weinberger at the Luxembourg meeting, which ensured that every NATO leader felt she or he had been surprised by the invitation; indeed, the letter was released to the press before it was even received by all NATO governments. To add insult to injury, many leaders bristled at the 60-day deadline the Americans had imposed on the offer. Mulroney instructed his ambassador in Washington, Allan Gotlieb, to protest to US Secretary of State George Shultz, with a 'furious' response conveying that Mulroney 'feels "blindsided" or "tricked" or personally let down'. Reagan's National Security Advisor, Bud McFarlane, admitted that 'the White House view was that the handling of the SDI issues was inexcusable'.[24] Ty Cobb of the NSC similarly confessed that 'frankly speaking, our insensitive handling of some issues (SDI, potential placement of missiles in Canada . . .) have bruised Mulroney's feelings and caused him some political embarrassment'.[25] Weinberger belatedly sent follow-up letters to his NATO counterparts rescinding the 60-day deadline and explaining that his first letter was not intended to be read as an 'ultimatum', but the damage had been done.[26] At the end of April, a still-aggrieved Mulroney complained to Thatcher that:

> the United States Administration had handled its allies clumsily on the issue. Mr Weinberger's ultimatum on participation in research had been offensive. He had also been provocative on Canadian television about the possibility of deploying SDI related weapons on Canadian soil without even consulting the Canadian government.[27]

Weinberger's invitation to allies to participate in the SDI research programme placed the Mulroney government in a difficult position. From January through March 1985, the Canadian government repeatedly endorsed American research in this area, while unambiguously stating that Canada would not be taking part in the research programme. At the time, such a position was positively received by the

Reagan Administration. With the unanticipated invitation to have Canada join the project, however, Mulroney found himself having to choose between committing a politically difficult U-turn on his position of keeping Canada out of the SDI or refusing to join the programme and thereby risk straining the relationship with the United States, which he was seeking to strengthen.

Crafting a Canadian Response, March–September 1985

Upon receiving the invitation to join the SDI programme, Mulroney set up a Special Joint Committee on Canada's International Relations, led by rookie MP Tom Hockin and Senator Jacques Flynn. The committee organised hearings across the country, featuring testimony from peace groups, defence experts, and firms interested in participating in the SDI. Many saw this as a means of kicking the issue into the long grass, particularly as the committee's report was expected months after the initial 60-day deadline would have passed. To put pressure on the government, the opposition Liberal Party created their own Liberal Task Force on Peace, Security and World Disarmament, headed by shadow foreign minister Jean Chrétien. This task force of Liberal MPs organised their own hearings across the country, with peace groups heavily represented. They published an interim report in July that argued forcefully against Canadian participation in the SDI, reflecting Liberal Party policy on the question.[28] Meantime, Mulroney appointed a senior civil servant, Arthur Kroeger, to lead a separate investigation into 'the economic, strategic, and scientific implications for Canada if we participated in the program'.[29] He also sounded out MPs from different wings of the Progressive Conservative Party and Canadian diplomats abroad.

While these studies were proceeding, the Americans increased pressure on the Canadian government to reach a positive decision. In May, Clark met his opposite number, George Shultz, who had been briefed that 'Clark (and Mulroney) [were] politically embarrassed by [the] sudden Weinberger invitation to participate in SDI'. Shultz assured Clark that they 'appreciate your skillful management of SDI controversies in Canada, amid difficult circumstances' and added that they 'hope Canada eventually decides to sign on for [the] SDI research effort'.[30] Meanwhile, it was decided that letters should be sent from Reagan to several allied leaders, including Mulroney, to encourage a positive response on SDI. As Bud McFarlane explained, 'without making a direct request, th[is] letter . . . should hopefully help to spur [a] positive Canadian . . . [decision] on participation in SDI research'.[31] A letter was duly sent from Reagan to Mulroney underlining the importance of Alliance solidarity and reassuring him that 'we have made no decision to go beyond research'. Reagan also noted Mulroney's 'steadfast endorsement of the prudence of our research program and your thoughtful consideration of possible Canadian participation'.[32]

Within Cabinet, there was an enduring division over the question chiefly between Clark at External Affairs and the Minister for National Defence. The latter portfolio was initially held by Bob Coates, a long-standing ally of Mulroney who had helped dislodge Clark as PC leader in 1983. Coates was firmly

on the right of the party and took a 'hawkish view of Star Wars'; the *New York Times* described him as 'a hard-liner on military issues who admired Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger'.[33] In November 1984, however, while visiting Canadian Forces Base Lahr in West Germany as one of his first overseas trips as Minister for National Defence, Coates snuck off the base with two aides to spend the night in a strip club. The *Ottawa Citizen* broke the story the morning of 12 February 1985, and that afternoon Coates announced his resignation in the House of Commons. Weinberger, for his part, struggled to understand why his counterpart had to resign over the issue: 'in this day and age no one, he remarked, resigns for simply going into a bar with stripteasers or hookers present. He found the whole affair very mysterious'.[34] Coates was replaced with Erik Nielsen, a World War II veteran and longtime MP. The Americans reported the appointment positively noting 'Mulroney's choice of the experienced, tough-minded Nielsen signals continued, if not enhanced, commitment to increasing Canada's military contribution to the Western Alliance'.[35] Nielsen proved to be a staunch advocate of Canadian participation in the SDI, thereby continuing the clash between the ministers for National Defence and External Affairs on this issue.

On 23 August, the Special Joint Committee submitted its long-awaited report on SDI to the Cabinet but failed to provide a decision on the issue. The American Embassy in Ottawa reported that 'the committee's Tory majority refused to decide on the issue and tossed the hot potato back to the government', while the opposition committee members from the Liberal and the socialist New Democratic parties reaffirmed their opposition to Canadian participation in the SDI.[36] A week later, Clark wrote to Cabinet colleagues affirming that 'after consultation, in particular with the Minister of National Defence, it seems clear to me that no consensus has yet emerged' within Cabinet.[37]

Ahead of a Cabinet meeting on 5 September at which a decisive discussion of the SDI question was scheduled to take place, Clark circulated a memo to Cabinet setting out his recommendation on the SDI. In it, he stressed that in inviting allies to participate in the research programme, the United States was primarily 'seeking political endorsement of SDI', rather than looking to genuinely involve allies in a research collaboration. In Clark's assessment,

> the political endorsement of the SDI has in effect been satisfied for the US both in the Luxembourg Communique of March 1985 issued by NATO Defence Ministers and in the public recognition by a number of governments, including Canada, that US research is prudent in the light of Soviet research into ballistic missile defence systems.[38]

As such, Clark argued that, having already provided such support, Canadian participation in the SDI would be unnecessary on these grounds. The other consideration in favour of Canada joining the research programme was the potential of economic spin-offs and specifically job creation in Canada – a priority of the PC Government, given the difficult economic situation in Canada at the time. On this point, however, Clark emphasised that the Special Joint Committee concluded

that they had 'not received evidence that participation [in the SDI] would result in significant job creation in Canada', a conclusion 'confirmed by the Government's own confidential assessments'.[39] Indeed, Mulroney had been briefed that Canadian participation in the multi-billion-dollar research programme would result in no more than a paltry $30 million per year in contracts for Canada.[40] Moreover, Clark pointed out that 'current efforts to reduce government expenditures and limited resources available for research also suggest that, in any event, it would be difficult to make available new government funding'.[41] Some business leaders even advised that 'Ottawa should stay out of Star Wars', as they were confident that 'Canadian firms can benefit from the $40 billion SDI research budget without Ottawa committing itself to a binding formal agreement'.[42]

On the grounds that government-to-government participation would yield negligible economic benefits, and that political endorsement could be decoupled from direct participation in the initiative, Clark concluded that 'there would appear at this time to be no specific role for government involvement in the SDI'.[43] He added that such an announcement by the government 'should be accompanied by a reaffirmation of the importance the Government attaches to arms control', particularly the ABM Treaty and the US approach to the Geneva negotiations, as well as Canada's 'determination to make an effective contribution both to NATO and to the defence of North America' through NORAD.[44]

In the Cabinet meeting, the issue was decided when Mulroney came down in favour of Clark's recommendations and the latter's memo became the basis of Canadian policy on the SDI. On 7 September, Mulroney announced that the Canadian government supported American SDI research within the boundaries of the ABM Treaty and that Canadian firms and universities would be free to bid on research contracts related to the SDI, but that the Canadian Government would not be participating in the programme. The position, described by Mulroney as 'an honourable compromise', was quickly dubbed Canada's 'polite no' to Star Wars.[45]

A 'Polite No' to Star Wars . . . and an Enthusiastic 'Yes' to Free Trade

While Clark's arguments regarding the political endorsement of the SDI and the limited economic spin-offs for Canada were undeniably factors in this decision – and have been identified as such in early studies[46] – newly available archival evidence suggests that Mulroney's decision to not have Canada participate in the SDI research programme was motivated overwhelmingly by an altogether different consideration: the priority of launching free trade negotiations with the United States. Ever since Mulroney's meeting with Reagan in Washington in September 1984, the prime minister had been pushing for greater economic cooperation with the United States, which he considered the key to reviving Canada's economy. Mulroney dismantled the protectionist NEP and FIRA during his first year in office and planned to announce the opening of free trade talks with the United States in September 1985. Given this overriding policy priority, Mulroney found

that the SDI decision could be a particularly useful tool for managing domestic politics, specifically concerns about protecting Canadian sovereignty in the face of closer cooperation with the superpower.

In the spring of 1985, the British High Commissioner in Ottawa, Sir Derek Day, had noted that while 'over defence, arms control and East-West issues [Mulroney] has taken a pro-NATO, pro-US line', Day warned that the Canadian Prime Minister 'has to protect his flank against criticism for undue subservience to the US', predicting 'this will temper his response on e.g. participation on SDI research'.[47] He later observed that on the SDI, 'the Canadian [government's] desire to avoid being seen as a slavish follower of US policies looms large'.[48]

In June, the CIA similarly reported that 'the Tories have been under constant attack from the media and the opposition for making excessive concessions to the United States on such matters as foreign investment and acid rain', explaining that 'Mulroney himself is more vulnerable on all bilateral issues than was Trudeau because he lacks a reputation for being hard-nosed with Washington'. The report warned that 'with decisions approaching on SDI, the renewal of NORAD, and the possible initiation of a campaign for liberalised bilateral trade – all likely to involve even closer US-Canada ties – *we think that Mulroney probably believes that he must establish his credibility as a nationalist*'.[49] Mulroney and his foreign minister were clearly thinking along these lines. In March 1985, Clark explained to Mulroney that

> over the next few months . . . we need to find some areas where our actions can define a difference between Canada and the United States. We cannot create artificial differences, but we should not miss the opportunity to assert genuine differences of approach, particularly when that assertion involves no direct conflict with US policy.[50]

The Canadian Government's priority remained pursuing closer bilateral economic ties with the United States, which involved not only maintaining good relations with the Reagan administration – which Mulroney had successfully established in his first months in office – but also the visible demonstration of Canada's independence from the United States in order to reassure public opinion within Canada.

Such considerations were given new impetus with the eruption of another crisis in bilateral relations in July 1985. The Canadian Government was informed that the American icebreaker *Polar Sea* would be travelling through the Northwest Passage – a series of straits between Canadian islands in the Northwest Territories. The long-held Canadian position is that these are internal Canadian waters, while the Americans consider it an international waterway. Controversially, the Canadian government was informed of the *Polar Sea*'s voyage, but the Americans did not request permission to travel through what are, in the Canadian view, internal Canadian waters. First reported by the Canadian press at the end of July, the *Polar Sea* affair became yet another example of the Americans' seeming disregard for Canadian sovereignty and of taking advantage of Mulroney's policy of eagerly pursuing closer relations with the United States.[51]

The American Embassy in Ottawa reported that

> the cooperative approach taken by the Canadian Government towards the *Polar Sea* passage has unleashed a torrent of criticism from the political opposition, academics and the media charging that . . . the new supportive relationship of the Mulroney Government with the US has once again led to an erosion of Canadian interests. The issue has become politically extremely sensitive.[52]

The Canadian peace movement, for its part, was also intensifying its anti-SDI activities over the summer of 1985. In May that year, a long-standing court challenge brought by peace groups to prevent Cruise missile testing by the Canadian Government was finally rejected by the Supreme Court, a decision that effectively brought the anti-Cruise campaign in Canada to its unsuccessful conclusion. The leader of Operation Dismantle, one of Canada's largest peace groups, announced that the peace movement 'would now turn their attention elsewhere – in fact to SDI'.[53] Canada's leading peace organisations cooperated over the summer of 1985 to plan 'a Canadian campaign to stop Star Wars'.[54] As early as March 1985, the Director for Arms Control at Canada's Department of External Affairs warned that 'for Canada the SDI would be as actual now as INF was for Europe'.[55] Peace groups also informed the Liberals' interim report on the SDI, released in July, which argued strongly against Canadian participation and which added to pressure on the government to turn down the American invitation.

It was against this backdrop that a Cabinet retreat was held in Mulroney's hometown of Baie-Comeau, Québec, in August 1985 to discuss the upcoming parliamentary session. The Cabinet was briefed in particular on the challenges facing Canada-US relations:

> Concerns in Canada about national sovereignty have been stimulated by the debates on SDI and enhanced trade, as well as by the Polar Sea's Arctic crossing. Given the number of potentially high profile Canada-US issues before the Government (e.g. trade enhancement . . . SDI, NORAD, Northwest passage), it would be useful to consider the linkages between individual measures.[56]

It was also noted that

> the US Administration appears more relaxed about the timing and the formality with which allies signal their desire to participate in *SDI research*. . . . The decision on SDI will have to take into account the coherence of Canadian defence and arms control policy, as well as the broader relationship with the United States.[57]

Cabinet was also prompted to consider 'how can the crucial issues affecting the Canada-US relationship over the near term be sequenced and linked? These include: trade enhancement, SDI'.[58]

Interestingly, the Special Joint Committee on Canada's International Relations set up by Mulroney in the spring of 1985 had been charged with looking at just two specific issues: in addition to the SDI, it was asked to study bilateral trade with the United States. Aside from highlighting the centrality of bilateral relations with the United States in the PC Government's view of international relations, this also reveals that these two seemingly separate issues were linked by the Government and that the committee was responsible for considering them together. Several witnesses who testified at the committee's hearings over the summer of 1985 commented on the linkage between the two questions. As the director of United Auto Workers Canada noted, the two issues 'are not separate questions. They are linked in the most fundamental way. . . . The debate on free trade is . . . very much a debate about how much we treasure our sovereignty. The debate on Star Wars is about how we will use the sovereignty we still have'.[59]

Following the Committee's ambiguous report – which endorsed free trade negotiations with the United States but refused to offer a recommendation on the SDI – events proceeded briskly in the first week of September (a week made even more eventful with the birth of Mulroney's fourth child on 4 September). As we have seen, on 5 September Clark affirmed that Cabinet was still divided over the SDI. That day, the Macdonald Commission, headed by former Liberal finance minister Donald Macdonald, released its highly anticipated report, which advised the Canadian Government to pursue free trade negotiations with the United States. Also that very day, the Prime Minister's Office ordered Ambassador Gotlieb to immediately return to Ottawa – taking the highly unusual step of sending a plane to Washington to bring him to the Canadian capital as quickly as possible. Meeting at the prime minister's residence, Mulroney explained to Gotlieb that he had made several decisions that directly impacted Canada-US relations. 'First, he planned to propose a free-trade agreement with the United States. . . . Secondly, Mulroney decided that the government will not participate in SDI'. Mulroney explained that while he would continue to publicly endorse American research efforts in this area, 'the Opposition, the NDP, the media, all the anti-US elements in our society, would make SDI participation by Canada the endless focus of debate, hostility, and division'. Gotlieb concluded 'that the PM saw these . . . decisions as linked, political trade-offs among each other'.[60]

At the inner Cabinet meeting the following day, Mulroney 'announced that he intended formally to ask the US Government on September 17, 1985, to enter into negotiations with Canada leading to the liberalization of Canada-US trade'.[61] It was explained that

> domestically, conclusions of both the Special Joint Committee on Canada's International Relations looking into the issues of SDI and bilateral trade with the US and the MacDonald Royal Commission have created a public groundswell favourable to the opening of negotiations with the US.[62]

An extensive communications strategy was circulated, which stressed that this trade liberalisation did not constitute a weakening of Canadian sovereignty.[63]

Mulroney publicly announced the Government's decision on the SDI the next day, 7 September, having first spoken with Reagan on the telephone to explain the Canadian position.[64] He reaffirmed Canada's support for America's research efforts in the SDI and insisted that Canada is 'always the first to provide support to the United States'. While Canadian firms and universities would be free to participate in the research, Mulroney stated that 'Government-to-Government cooperation would not be in Canada's interest because the Government of Canada would not be in a position to "call the shots"', adding that the 'decision reflects Canada's sovereign status and independent foreign policy'.[65] Mulroney's decision was received positively by the opposition Liberals, the NDP, and nearly all Canadian media outlets.[66] Leaders of the Canadian peace movement also welcomed the announcement, while demurring that Mulroney was 'making the right decision for the wrong reason', namely that he 'decided to say no because otherwise he would be "walking into a political minefield" with Canadian public opinion', rather than because 'Star Wars research is dangerous to the world'.[67] In the event public opinion in Canada was fairly divided over the SDI; according to one poll published at the end of August, 42.3% opposed Canada joining the SDI research programme, with just 40.5% in favour.[68] Importantly, the Cabinet was briefed that 'opinion polls show support for SDI especially if there is the prospect of significant employment spinoffs'. On the other hand, ministers were briefed that 'recent industrial studies have shown limited economic spinoff benefit from SDI'. As such, they could expect that support for the SDI, based on the prospect of job creation, would diminish when these jobs proved illusory.[69]

In the days that followed Mulroney's SDI announcement, the prime minister made a series of statements and public appearances to squeeze every drop of political capital from the SDI decision. On the news programme *Question Period*, Mulroney explained the thinking behind his Government's decision on the SDI:

> It was my view – and the view of my colleagues – that above and beyond everything else is the independence of this country and our capacity to conduct an independent foreign policy as we determine it. . . . *Our sovereignty and our independence are the hallmark of this government*.[70]

A few days later, the PMO communicated to the Reagan administration 'that political pressures [in Canada] require that they make some announcement about the commencement of US-Canada discussions this week'.[71] Mulroney sought to take advantage of the credibility he had gained by standing up to the United States over the SDI in the name of the defence of Canadian sovereignty to quickly announce closer economic ties with the United States. This was confirmed in a telephone call between Mulroney and Reagan on 26 September, during which the SDI decision was not even mentioned; within weeks it was already water under the bridge and the 'super relations' Mulroney had strived to establish with the Reagan administration were fully intact as the leaders pursued bilateral trade liberalisation.[72] The Canada-US Free Trade Agreement was ultimately signed in January 1988, despite consistent accusations from the opposition that the

agreement compromised Canadian sovereignty and would turn the country into the 51st state.[73]

Conclusion

Canada's negative response to the American invitation to join the SDI research programme saw an ardently pro-American Canadian government reject an initiative highly valued by President Reagan. Until March 1985, Mulroney and Clark went to considerable lengths to publicly back the American initiative, while reassuring Canadians that their country would not be directly involved in the project. Weinberger's surprise invitation to join the SDI research programme upended the Canadian position and placed the Mulroney government in a difficult situation. The *Polar Sea* episode of July 1985 was another American action that left Mulroney vulnerable to accusations of failing to protect Canadian interests and sovereignty. In such circumstances, the Mulroney government considered the range of bilateral issues and chose trade-offs to ensure that its priority, liberalised trade with the United States, which was hoped would revive the Canadian economy, could proceed unhindered. Giving the Americans a 'polite no' allowed him to present himself as the champion of Canadian sovereignty in the face of American demands which were not in Canada's national interest – precisely the image he wanted to convey to Canadians as he launched controversial free trade negotiations with the United States.

Paradoxically, the 'polite no' was not an expression of strains in the bilateral relationship or even of reservations over the SDI programme. Indeed, the Canadian decision whether to join the SDI research programme had astonishingly little to do with the SDI itself. Other chapters in this volume show how the desire to influence American policy on SDI, the fear of falling behind in terms of technology, or the potential of SDI to disrupt the strategic situation determined European governments' responses to the American invitation. For the Canadian government, by contrast, the decision on SDI rested primarily on the assessment of how much cooperation with the Reagan administration the Canadian electorate could tolerate. In this, participation in SDI was seen as a pawn that could be usefully sacrificed to demonstrate Mulroney's commitment to Canadian sovereignty with limited damage to the bilateral relationship with Washington. This was seen by the Canadian government as an invaluable means of protecting its flank as it pursued the priority of closer economic relations with the United States.

Notes

1 Brian Mulroney, *Memoirs* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2007), 349–353.
2 Fen Osler Hampson, *Master of Persuasion. Brian Mulroney's Global Legacy* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2018), 224. See also Nelson Michaud and Kim R. Nossal (eds), *Diplomatic Departures: The Conservative Era in Canadian Foreign Policy, 1984–93* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001); Raymond B. Blake, *Transforming the Nation: Canada and Brian Mulroney* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 9 and 431; and Guy Gendron, *Brian Mulroney: L'homme des beaux risques* (Montréal: Québec Amérique, 2014), 184.

3 Due to the unique archival system in Canada, the vast majority of relevant papers related to the Mulroney government are inaccessible to researchers, which has contributed to the relative lack of studies on Canadian foreign policy under Mulroney. To overcome these limitations, this chapter makes extensive use of American and British archives in addition to Canadian files, which were declassified specifically for this study.
4 So significant is this political shift that the best account of Canadian foreign policy in the Cold War, for example, takes 1984 as its endpoint rather than 1989. See Robert Bothwell, *Alliance and Illusion. Canada and the World, 1945–1984* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007).
5 Mark MacGuigan, *An Inside Look at External Affairs During the Trudeau Years. The Memoirs of Mark MacGuigan* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2002), (ed) P. Whitney Lackenbauer, p. 14.
6 On the 'Canadian theatre' of the Euromissile Crisis, see Susan Colbourn, 'Cruising Toward Nuclear Danger?', *Cold War History*, 18:1 (2018), 19–36.
7 Luc-André Brunet, 'Unhelpful Fixer? Canada, the Euromissile Crisis, and Pierre Trudeau's Peace Mission, 1983–84', *International History Review*, 41:6 (2019), 1145–1167.
8 Allan Gotlieb, *The Washington Diaries, 1981–1989* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2006), 138.
9 Washington Embassy to EXTOTT, 16 December 1983, RG25 25339, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Ottawa.
10 Brunet, 'Unhelpful Fixer'.
11 Memo of Conversation, 'Meeting with Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney', 25 September 1984, 'Canada 1984' folder, RAC box 1, European and Soviet Affairs Directorate, National Security Council, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library (RRPL), Simi Valley, California.
12 Quoted in Douglas Roche, *Creative Dissent. A Politician's Struggle for Peace* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2008), 186.
13 'Prime Minister's Meeting with the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs at 10 Downing Street on Wednesday 12 December at 0900 hours', FCO 82 1479, The National Archives (TNA), Kew, London, UK.
14 Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London: Harper Collins, 1993), 463–468.
15 Statement by the Right Honourable Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs, in the House of Commons on USA-Soviet Arms Control Talks, 21 January 1985, MG32 B43 161, LAC.
16 Rouse (US Embassy in Ottawa) to Secretary of State, 21 January 1985, 'Canada 1984', RAC box 1, European and Soviet Affairs Directorate, NSC, RRPL.
17 'President's Telephone Conversation with Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney', 25 January 1985, 'Canada 1985', James A. Baker collection, RAC Box 1, RRPL.
18 Briefing note, 'Prime Minister's meeting with Canadian Prime Minister, 11:30am, Tuesday, 30 April 1985', n.d., FCO 82 1626, TNA.
19 'Summary Record of a Meeting with Mr Gary Smith (Canadian Department of External Affairs) on 7 March 1985', 15 March 1985, FCO 46 4489, TNA.
20 'Responses by the President to Questions submitted by Maclean's Magazine', 6 March 1985, 'Canada 1985' folder, Cobb files, RAC Box 1, RRPL. Emphasis added.
21 'Final SDI Language for the Defense Declaration', n.d., 'Canada 1985' folder, Cobb files, RAC Box 1, RRPL.
22 American Embassy in Ottawa to ISINFO, Washington DC, 'Media reaction – US-Canada Summit', 21 March 1985, 'Canada 1985' folder, Cobb files, RAC Box 1, RRPL.
23 Weinberger letter to Defence Ministers, 26 March 1985, PREM 19 1444, TNA.
24 Gotlieb, *Washington Diaries*, 290.
25 Memo for John Poindexter from Ty Cobb, 27 June 1985, 'Canada 1985' folder, Cobb files, RAC Box 1, RRPL.

26 Weinberger letter to Defence Ministers, 13 April 1985, PREM 19 1444.
27 'Prime Minister's Meeting with the Prime Minister of Canada at 10 Downing Street on 30 April at 1130', 30 April 1985, FCO 82 1626, TNA.
28 'Interim Report on Star Wars', July 1985, R11344 540, LAC.
29 Mulroney, *Memoirs*, 350.
30 'Briefing Memorandum for Secretary of State before his Dinner Meeting with Joe Clark, Sunday May 19', n.d., 'Canada 1985' folder, Cobb files, RAC Box 1, RRPL.
31 Memo for the President from Bud McFarlane, 'Letters to Prime Ministers Mulroney and Nakasone', n.d., 'Canada 1985' folder, Cobb files, RAC Box 1, RRPL.
32 Reagan to Mulroney, 21 June 1985, 'Canada 1985' folder, Cobb files, RAC Box 1, RRPL.
33 Mulroney, *Memoirs*, 349; 'Canadian Defense Minister Resigns in a Scandal', *New York Times*, 13 February 1985.
34 Gotlieb, *Washington Diaries*, 279.
35 Paul Robinson to George Shultz, 27 February 1985, 'Canada 1985' folder, Tyrus Cobb collection, RAC Box 1, RRPL.
36 American Embassy in Ottawa to Secretary of State, 'Prime Minister Mulroney announces Government of Canada decision on Strategic Defense Initiative', 7 September 1985, 'Canada 1985' folder, Cobb files, Box RAC 1, RRPL.
37 'Memo to Cabinet. The Strategic Defence Initiative', n.d. [circulated to Cabinet 30 August 1985], MG32 B43 190, LAC.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Mulroney, *Memoirs*, 350. It is unlikely Canada would have received even this amount; as Edoardo Andreoni explains in his chapter in this volume, the UK Government accepted the invitation expecting to receive $1.5 billion in SDI-related contracts but by 1990 had secured less than $82 million.
41 'Memo to Cabinet. The Strategic Defence Initiative'.
42 Statement by Dave Clark, President of Dynamic Systems Inc., to the Liberal Task Force, 27 May 1985, R11344 541, LAC.
43 'Memo to Cabinet. The Strategic Defence Initiative'.
44 Ibid.
45 Mulroney, *Memoirs*, 352.
46 See Maureen Appel Molot and Brian W. Tomlin (eds), *Canada Among Nations 1985: The Conservative Agenda* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1986) and David Bercuson, J.L. Granatstein and W.R. Young, *Sacred Trust? Brian Mulroney and the Conservative Party in Power* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1986).
47 Day to FCO, 'Canadian Prime Minister's visit to London', 22 April 1985, FCO 82 1625, TNA.
48 Lady Young's Visit to Ottawa: Call on Mr Clark, 29 May', Sir Derek Day to FCO, 30 May 1985, FCO 82 1623, TNA.
49 CIA Memo (for Tyrus Cobb), 'Ottawa to Step Up Pressure on Orlikow Case', 18 June 1985, 'Canada 1985' file, Cobb files, RAC Box 1, RRPL. Emphasis added.
50 Mulroney, *Memoirs*, 385.
51 American Embassy in Ottawa to USINFO, 'Media Reaction – Voyage of Polar Sea', 31 July 1985, 'Canada 1985' folder, Cobb files, RAC Box 1, RRPL.
52 American Embassy in Ottawa to Secretary of State, 'Comments to the Press about the Polar Sea Voyage', 2 August 1985, 'Canada 1985' folder, Cobb files, RAC Box 1, RRPL.
53 Richard Baker to Michael Pakenham, 'Canada: Public Attitudes to NATO, Defence and Arms Control', 31 October 1985, FCO 46 4490, TNA.
54 'A Call to Endorse and Participate in a Canadian Campaign to Stop Star Wars', n.d. [early 1985], MG28 I218 43, LAC.

55 'Summary Record of a Meeting with Mr Gary Smith (Canadian Department of External Affairs) on 7 March 1985', 15 March 1985, FCO 46 4489, TNA.
56 'Cabinet Work Program for the Coming Year: Background Information and Strategic Questions', 16 August 1985, MG32 B43 188, LAC.
57 'Cabinet Work Program for the Coming Year', 16 August 1985, MG32 B43 188, LAC.
58 Ibid.
59 Testimony before the Special Joint Committee by Robert White, Director UAW Canada, 26 July 1985, R11344 542, LAC.
60 Gotlieb, *Washington Diaries*, 318–319.
61 Memo, 'Canada-US Trade Initiative', 12 September 1985, MG32 B43 186, LAC.
62 'Canada-US Trade Initiative', 10 September 1985, MG32 B43 186, LAC.
63 'Canada-US New Bilateral Trade Initiative Communications Strategy', n.d., MG32 B43 186, LAC.
64 In his diaries, Reagan summarises his exchange with Mulroney, concluding 'All in all I think there is no problem' with the Canadian position on SDI. Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries* (New York: Harper, 2007), 351.
65 American Embassy in Ottawa to Secretary of State, 'Prime Minister Mulroney Announces Government of Canada Decision on Strategic Defense Initiative', 7 September 1985, 'Canada 1985' folder, Cobb files, Box RAC 1, RRPL.
66 'Canada Opts Out of "Star Wars" Defence Plan', *The National*, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 7 September 1985, www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/1985-canada-opts-out-of-star-wars.
67 'Peace Groups Pleased by Rejection of Star Wars', *The Globe and Mail*, 8 September 1985.
68 'Star Wars Splits Canadians', *The Ottawa Citizen*, 31 August 1985.
69 Memo to Minister from Steve Probyn, 'P&P – 05/9/85', 4 September 1985, MG32 B43 188, LAC.
70 Brian Mulroney interviewed by Pamela Wallin for *Question Period* (CTV), taped 13 September, aired 15 September 1985, 'Canada 1985' folder, Cobb files, RAC Box 1, RRPL. Emphasis added.
71 Memo for Bud McFarlane from Stephen I. Danzansky, 'Administration Support for Canada Free Trade Area – Proposed Telephone Call: Mulroney to Reagan', 17 September 1985, 'Canada 1985' folder, Cobb files, RAC Box 1, RRPL.
72 Memo, 'President's Telephone Conversation with Prime Minister Mulroney of Canada', 26 September 1985, 'Canada 1985' folder, Cobb files, RAC Box 1, RRPL.
73 The best account of the free trade negotiations to date is Derek Burney's, *Getting It Done: A Memoir* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2005); see also Hampson, *Master of Persuasion*, 10–38. The November 1988 federal election was framed as a referendum on free trade with the United States and returned another PC majority government, allowing Mulroney to ratify the agreement.

9 The Netherlands and SDI

We Have to Do the Research

Ruud van Dijk

I. Introduction

The Reagan administration's Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), announced by the president in March of 1983, played a major part in the nuclear arms race during the final decade of the Cold War. In transatlantic relations, SDI caused a good deal of uncertainty about the Reagan administration's commitment to the Western strategy to deter Soviet military adventurism. SDI's main impact may have been as a research programme, however, particularly after Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger issued an invitation to the NATO allies on 26 March 1985 to participate in SDI-related research.[1]

SDI was only the latest US initiative that both challenged and co-determined European science and technology policy during the Cold War.[2] As John Krige has pointed out, in the 1950s and 1960s, Washington deliberately employed scientific and technological leadership as an instrument of foreign policy, specifically to promote non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. With regard to the European allies, these policies also aimed to promote European collaborations on civilian applications. Together, US-European and inter-European collaboration in these fields was designed to open up opportunities for US business.[3]

The 1980s were a different time, and SDI was a different case. It was primarily (if not exclusively) the United States that was pursuing strategic missile defence. The European allies were sceptical, to say the least, and they did not need to be influenced to refrain from developing their own system. Weinberger's invitation, however, did pose a challenge, in ways both similar and different from how Europeans had felt challenged by US superiority in science and technology earlier in the Cold War. SDI, once more, reminded the allies of the superior US ability to develop and deploy new technologies, especially in the military field, with private sector involvement, often with civilian spin-off effects. If European countries wanted to remain among the innovation leaders in the industrialised world, they would have to find ways to keep up. SDI was also different in the sense that it wasn't so much strategic missile-defence technology (if it could be made to work) that the Europeans coveted as the envisioned civilian spin-off effects SDI-related research was likely to produce. Still, it has been argued that in the kind of

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response to the SDI challenge European countries eventually promoted – research and development in high-tech programmes close to the military-industrial sector – one can see how US priorities continued to set the agenda.[4] On the other hand, it was not as if no such European collaborations existed prior to 1985, or 1983. As this chapter will argue, rather than a wake-up call, SDI and Weinberger's invitation seem to have served more to reinforce a growing trend among European governments to seek greater collaboration.

This chapter focuses on official Dutch deliberations in the months following US Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger's invitation. While SDI had been debated in the Dutch parliament and press following President Reagan's announcement of the project, Weinberger's invitation called for action.[5]

Dutch government archives contain materials on SDI from various perspectives, but the main file appears to be a Ministry of Defense collection in the archive of the ministry's leadership.[6] About 90% of the papers in this file deal with the events of 1985, and from it, a fairly clear picture emerges of the Dutch response to SDI in general, and Weinberger's invitation in particular. In addition to the defence ministry materials, this paper also makes use of papers from the Council of Ministers. Foreign ministry papers for 1985 had not yet been made available to researchers at the National Archive at the time of the research for this chapter. As with some other potentially revealing sources of government information not yet open to researchers, it is an area where further research could be pursued. Finally, several key players on the Dutch side in 1985 have been kind enough to share their memories from that time with the author.[7]

II. Before Weinberger's Invitation

President Reagan's speech on 23 March 1983 came just one week after a two-day visit to Washington by Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers and Foreign Minister Hans van den Broek. This was a working visit, with meetings with the president, the vice-president, the secretary of state, other officials, and also some meetings on Capitol Hill, covering a wide range of topics, but of course no sign of what would be coming on the 23rd.

On the arms race, with a new US proposal at the Geneva Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) talks in the making, the Dutch looked for a way to achieve a breakthrough that would make deployment of the new NATO missiles – 48 cruise missiles foreseen in the 1979 Dual-Track decision – on their territory unnecessary. However, the Americans believed that only deployment would get the Soviet Union to move. The exchange was a fairly standard example of transatlantic differences on the approach to the Geneva negotiations at this time.[8]

After the 23rd, reactions to Reagan's speech in the Dutch press were sceptical at best. In an editorial on 25 March, *NRC-Handelsblad* noted that with his vision, the president seemed to be reaching for a technical, rather than a political solution to the nuclear dilemma, namely superiority in defensive weapons, which the paper believed to be just as misguided as the search for superiority in offensive weapons.[9] The *Volkskrant*, on the same day, said to hope that Congressional

resistance to Reagan's defence plans would lead to a situation where 'this kind of science fiction can be left in trusted care of the duo Lukas & Spielberg'.

In parliament, there was only a brief reference to Reagan's speech when, on 14 April, Defense Minister Job de Ruiter made a report to the Defense Committee on NATO's NPG meeting of 22 and 23 March at Vilamoura, Portugal. The issue had not been discussed at the NPG, but the minister stated that it was clear that the United States was proceeding with research, which, he added, was permitted by the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty (ABM). Christian democrat Joep de Boer, a sceptic on INF also, wondered whether it was wise to develop new systems if deployment would be against the treaty the Americans themselves claimed to want to respect.[10]

The government itself occasionally did express some general concerns about the concept of strategic missile defence in this early phase, not only that it could lead to an arms race in space but also that it raised questions about the integrity of the ABM treaty and NATO's 'flexible response' strategy, and that a system, if developed, would make an anti-satellite (ASAT) treaty harder to achieve.[11]

Of the major parties in parliament, the social democrats (Partij van de Arbeid – PvdA) tended to be the most outspoken against SDI, also opposing research into missile defence. The government generally responded by emphasising that for the foreseeable future SDI would be a research programme, that it remained an open question whether outcomes could enhance international security; that the issue had been included with arms control negotiations in Geneva; and that by the time deployable outcomes would come into view, the parties could discuss how to proceed, or not. In the meantime, it was preferable not to issue any categorical rejection of SDI research because that would deprive the country of any role in international discussions.

The INF issue was never far away. On the question of the Dual-Track decision his social democratic critics had voluntarily placed themselves on the sidelines through their unconditional opposition; did they want to isolate themselves again, Van den Broek wondered in a debate on 6 March 1985?[12]

The opposition, too, could reach for the Dual-Track narrative to make its point, as when Ria Beckers (PPR, left-radical Christian democrats) argued on 31 January 1985:

> that is the reason for my concern – that the whole story will start again. . . . Now it is about critically monitoring the military developments, the intense monitoring of the negotiations; maintain influence in the alliance; research is not our business; production is not our business. Do we still not know how that ends? We will end up with space weapons after all.[13]

Through its international secretary, Maarten van Traa, the PvdA also played an active part in several European social democratic collaborations to speak out against the idea. The leading part appears to have been played by the French, just as the Mitterrand government took the initiative to formulate a European alternative to SDI.[14]

The defence ministry SDI file begins with a letter from Jim L. Janssen van Raay – a colourful lawyer and Christian democratic politician – to Van den Broek and De Ruiter, dated 12 February 1985. In his letter, Janssen van Raay reports on some of his recent pro-SDI activities, both in Washington and in the Netherlands. Janssen van Raay sought to promote 'High Frontier Europa', the pro-missile defence equivalent of the US initiative of the same name. He was also a prominent leader of the Interchurch Committee for Mutual Disarmament (ICTO). ICTO had been organised from within the Christian democratic community in the Netherlands as a counter to the influential Interchurch Peace Council (IKV), the main driver behind the Dutch anti-nuclear movement of the time, whose slogan was 'help rid the world of nuclear weapons, let's begin in the Netherlands'.[15]

Janssen van Raay and his pro-SDI activities are not very significant in themselves, but the ICTO part once more takes us to the main national security issue of the day in the Netherlands: that of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) in Europe, specifically the political stalemate over the envisioned deployment of 48 nuclear-armed cruise missiles as part of NATO's 1979 Dual-Track decision.[16] The more general backdrop to this controversy were the various Dutch efforts to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in the defence of Western Europe (official government policy since the early 1970s), and to reverse the nuclear arms race. The country's inability to come to a decision on deployment of the new missiles on its soil made for tense relations at times with the United States. Other issues contributed to these tensions, for example US Central America policy. President Reagan was not understood well, or respected, by Dutch voters, many of whom viewed him as a danger to peace.

In his letter to the two ministers, Janssen van Raay mentioned a recent op-ed by Boudewijn van Eenennaam, Counsel at the Dutch embassy in Washington, which argued for an open mind towards SDI.[17] In previous years, Van Eenennaam had built a reputation as a regular contributor (writing in an unofficial capacity) to expert debates in the Netherlands about the INF question. The previous June, the government had made a preliminary decision to deploy the Dutch share of the missiles, and as a result INF had become less of a focal point. At the embassy meanwhile, SDI had become a rather prominent issue, with senior officials holding disparate opinions. Monitoring developments in Washington, Van Eenennaam had come to see the importance that US industry representatives attached to the scheme, and how they were finding a willing ear among congressional representatives from their respective states. Having gotten into the habit of publishing on security issues and INF having receded into the background somewhat, Van Eenennaam therefore chose SDI as his next foray into public Dutch debates on national security, and the following month *NRC-Handelsblad*, published several reactions to his op-ed.[18]

These early interventions notwithstanding, the action in the defence ministry file really only begins with Weinberger's 26 March letter. Prior to that time, there appears to have been little systematic attention to Reagan's initiative. And while systematic attention may still have been paid by a handful of specialists after the

government finalised its position in early October 1985, for almost everyone else SDI ceased to be the subject of substantial deliberations.

Throughout this process during the spring and summer of 1985, a lack of enthusiasm about SDI among Dutch officials, and their general bewilderment about US objectives, seems to have been reciprocated by various US counterparts, at least in the experience of Dutch participants and observers. If this account of what happened between the Netherlands and Washington on SDI in 1985 is correct and representative for the experience of other US allies, the old suspicion that the Reagan administration made the offer of research collaboration primarily as an alliance-management manoeuvre, meant to blunt and divert European criticism of SDI, still stands.[19]

III. The Weinberger Invitation

At NATO's NPG meeting in Luxemburg on 26 March, US Secretary of Defense, Casper Weinberger, surprised the allies by issuing his invitation to participate in SDI-related research and requesting a decision within 60 days.[20] Prior to Weinberger's letter, SDI to the Dutch had been an American initiative, controversial also in the United States, which due especially to many political and technological uncertainties remained a rather remote challenge. SDI's implications for European security, while potentially serious, were largely theoretical. In spite of doubts about the possible long-term implications of the idea – how it could lead to the militarisation of space and a new arms race there; its impact on deterrence, NATO's strategy of 'flexible response', and on security ties between the US and its West European allies – SDI, as a US programme, did not require, or allow for, an active stance. Now, however, an actual decision was called for, and rather fast. There also seemed to be a good deal at stake – from the possibility of gaining some influence on this American plan, to European collaboration on defence issues, and potentially also opportunities to make money.

Security experts, members of parliament, and government officials had plenty to say about the military-strategic implications of the programme. However, a real national debate over SDI never developed in the Netherlands in 1985 or at any other time. Peace activists did speak out against the programme, and Dutch participation, but in 1985 their attention was consumed by a national petition drive as part of a last-ditch effort to convince the government to reject deployment of the 48 cruise missiles in fulfilment of the country's NATO commitments. The real substance of official Dutch discussions on SDI focused on the scientific and technological side of things; the central question was not military-strategic, but whether in the field of cutting-edge science and technology the country and its European partners would be able to keep pace with the United States and also Japan. From the start the Lubbers government did not see SDI as a bilateral issue; instead it tried to promote shared, European action, in spite of the fact that the Americans had sent out separate invitations to all of the allies.

The Dutch response was also deliberate: there would be study and research, but there would be no categorical rejection of SDI. The government believed that

SDI research was justified because it could not be ruled out that the Soviet Union, too, would engage in missile defence research, and it was important to prevent the Soviet Union from gaining an advantage. The government also believed that the potential effects of SDI on East-West and West-West security relationships required serious monitoring and study. This is another way in which the Lubbers government insisted one had to do the research: not only would Europe have to be able to engage in the kind of scientific and technological work SDI was likely to promote, since the Reagan administration was going to work toward a deployable system, or parts of it, regardless of what the allies did, what SDI would mean for security also had to be investigated.

To coordinate the work on a Dutch response, the government could make use of the interdepartmental Working Group on Arms Control and Nuclear Armaments (SWNB), a forum established by the foreign and defence ministers in 1981 to improve the INF policy process. SDI was on the agenda for the SWNB meeting on 3 April 1985, and this is where the internal discussion on the Weinberger letter began.[21] In preparation for the meeting, a list with questions about SDI had been drawn up, and the defence ministry's planning staff (DAB) had also produced a more substantial analysis. The latter was forwarded to the defence minister on 29 March potentially also to serve as the basis for the Dutch contributions to discussions in the context of the West European Union (WEU) and NATO.

The list of questions began by questioning part of SDI's rationale: was it really true that, as Weinberger had argued, the Soviet Union had never accepted the concept of Mutual Assured Destruction; and had Moscow truly invested as much in strategic defence as the Americans argued?[22]

The DAB analysis systematically examined SDI's nature and implications from all angles: technical, military-strategic, political, and economic. Seeking to lay out its likely real-word effects, the analysis – while pointing out development challenges and an opponent's options to respond even to a flawlessly operating system – assumed SDI could be built. In its neutral tone, the DAB paper can be seen as representative of internal government deliberations over SDI in 1985. Participants spent little time speculating on, or debating, the ultimate feasibility of the idea – not necessarily because of any great confidence in its ultimate success, but more because so much of the scheme was uncertain and any concrete results were unlikely to be forthcoming in the near or middle term. Perhaps the most interesting section of the DAB analysis addressed the European angle: the paper mentioned a consensus view on both sides of the Atlantic that, due to the potential civilian spin-off applications from SDI research, participation by the allies in the research was necessary in order to prevent a technological decoupling between the United States and Europe. However, the authors questioned US motives about the sharing of knowledge; it was more likely the Americans hoped to make use of European know-how, without necessarily planning to reciprocate. There were other uncertainties connected to potential collaboration, according to the paper, not the least of which was the ultimate purpose of SDI: would it be an alternative to the current security system, or rather an enhancement to it? Until that had been clarified, participation would run into all kinds of political problems. This early

analysis still thought it might be possible to have a single European response on SDI, to be formulated perhaps already at the WEU meeting later in April. The Americans ought in any case to be encouraged to clarify their goals so that Europe could avoid 'betting on the wrong horse'.[23]

Putting one's money on the right horse took on multiple dimensions in subsequent months. Not only was it important to clarify, and maintain influence on, US strategic objectives with SDI. With France having proposed an alternative European research programme focused on civilian technologies, EUREKA, the government also felt compelled to choose where to put its scarce research and development resources. As can be seen from discussions in the council of ministers, this was not just a matter of emphasising either SDI or EUREKA. With existing European space projects (European Space Agency, ESA), the European R&D initiative for information technology (ESPRIT), and defence research collaborations such as the Independent European Programme Group (IEPG), overlap, unnecessary competition, and overall inefficiency could not be ruled out.

But the issue was somewhat urgent, a cabinet discussion on 14 June underlined. While individual European countries certainly did engage in fundamental research, the European Community lacked any joint approach, let alone a budget. SDI, with its vast investments in various kinds of cutting-edge scientific and technological work, underlined the danger for Europe of falling behind. This cabinet discussion itself served to highlight one particular handicap for European nations in the global science and technology competition – SDI or no SDI – as it was not directly obvious to the participants to what extent the Netherlands ought to place its eggs in a European basket, and where it ought to operate independently.[24]

Regarding Weinberger's invitation, informal discussions between four ministries (Defense, Foreign Affairs, Economics, Education and Science) began in early April, and officials moved so expeditiously that they had to be pulled back by the leadership at the defense ministry. According to one of the summaries, representatives of research institutions and private corporations already had participated in these early discussions. This, State Secretary for Defense Jan van Houwelingen quickly noted, was premature. The Dutch response ought to be worked out by the government, he argued; only when there was a basic decision could other parties be involved. The minister agreed.[25]

It is not clear how industry and research institution representatives had become part of these discussions so soon; whether this actually indicates an eagerness on the part of all parties to benefit from available US R&D dollars, or whether it was merely a case of government officials working efficiently and getting all envisioned stakeholders around the table. The latter may be a more likely explanation, at least as far as the government is concerned, because on other aspects of the process, officials also took important initiatives.[26]

There were the beginnings of what later in April would become an ad hoc working group on possible Dutch participation in SDI research, with representatives from the four ministries. Furthermore, as early as 9 April a message went out to the embassy in Washington to inquire about the appropriate time for a visit of a Dutch fact-finding group to discuss with various US officials how Dutch

participation might take shape. The fact that such a mission was being prepared, however, did not mean that the government preferred a bilateral approach to SDI. On the contrary, the message began by emphasising that both in terms of a general position vis-a-vis SDI and on the issue of possible participation in the research, the Hague much preferred a common European approach.[27]

A fully developed proposal for an SDI working group went to the minister on 26 April. Industry and research institutions were kept at arm's length now. They would only have representation in a technology working group, and not in a separate policy working group. The overseeing core working group, too, only would have representatives from government ministries, with the foreign and defence ministries in the lead. The only listed responsibility for the technology working group was to catalogue the research options in the country relevant for SDI.[28]

This was accomplished without delay. Representatives from key Dutch companies and research institutes were invited to a meeting at the foreign ministry on 3 May. There, they were not really part of the discussion among some 40 government officials either. Instead, they were asked to provide an overview of possibilities for SDI-related research at Dutch research institutes and companies within three weeks.[29] They delivered, submitting a 29-page inventory on 20 May. As the opening of the preamble to the document stated, '[t]he scope of this document is to indicate the interest of Netherlands industries and institutes in the Strategic Defence Initiative'. Philips/Hollandse Signaal Apparaten, Fokker, the National Aerospace Laboratory (NLR), and the National Defense Research Organisation (NDRO) had all provided information for discussions with the Americans in early June, which in the meantime had become the time set for the Dutch fact-finding mission to Washington.[30]

The inventory, and the speed with which it was prepared, suggests some industry interest in SDI-related research. However, one industry representative involved emphasises that all this was done at the explicit invitation from the government and that nothing was ever heard about it again after the inventory had been submitted.[31] The reason was that for both the government and the private sector attention quickly shifted to the EUREKA initiative, in part because the early doubts about US motives behind the Weinberger invitation were never dispelled and instead seemed to be confirmed at every step of the way.[32]

On the security side in the meantime, Foreign Minister Van den Broek had publicly reiterated the government's deliberate approach to SDI. In a speech on 9 May, he emphasised that support for SDI research did not imply support for strategic defence. And allied participation in SDI research should bring with it participation in discussions on the uses to which the results would be put, he warned. Research was one thing; implementation should be subject to a shared political process. There also ought to be reciprocity in US-allied SDI research. Finally, Van den Broek cautioned Dutch politicians against repeating the dynamic of the debate on INF and to refrain from taking the kinds of firm positions, for or against, that would have a paralysing effect on the Dutch debate and Dutch policy.[33]

In a discussion with foreign affairs and defence specialists in parliament, five days later, Van den Broek also highlighted the Dutch proposal made at the recent WEU gathering (22–23 April in Bonn) for a set of basic principles on SDI that could aid individual countries in their reaction to Weinberger's invitation, while also serving as basis for a common European approach to the security implications of the American scheme.[34]

A summary included with papers for the June fact-finding mission to the US reveals more of what the Hague hoped to achieve in the context of the WEU. First, there had to be 'genuine exchange of technology between Europe and the US', although the Dutch understood that 'it is unrealistic to expect that a relatively small European effort could lead to acquiring the whole range of US SDI-technology'. Second, there had to be 'sufficient access to the SDI programme so as to be able to make educated judgments on the whole range of projects'. Furthermore, 'European industries must be treated on an equal basis with US industries'. Finally, for the coordination of European participation, the Dutch government proposed a focus on defence against shorter-range ballistic missiles (the Soviet SS 21, 22, and 23 missiles). European vulnerability to those missiles was a major concern already, and Europeans also feared SDI would negatively affect the Euro-strategic balance. 'A European research effort in the field of defense against shorter range ballistic missiles would contribute directly to the improvement of the existing balance'.[35]

At a meeting of the WEU working group on SDI in London the following month, 19 June, it became clear that, according to the Dutch summary, 'it will not be simple to reach full agreement in the working group on the basic principles for a possible participation in SDI'. It appears Dutch efforts did drive the agenda, at least in part. Other countries had sent fact-finding missions to Washington, or were planning to do so, and for the British and the Germans the questionnaire drafted by the Dutch had been the template for their own questions for the Americans. Also, at the end of the working group meeting, all countries had pledged to respond in writing to the Dutch papers introduced in May.[36] However, in subsequent months, there would be little progress: in spite of continued Dutch efforts, agreement on a common response to SDI continued to elude WEU member states.[37] By the time of the London WEU working group meeting, the Dutch fact-finding mission to the United States had discovered that the other part of the Dutch agenda: genuine partnership with the Americans on SDI research and implementation was equally illusionary.

The Dutch fact finders were a diverse group and, depending on their role, had different schedules. Foreign and defence ministry officials travelled to Washington early for preliminary discussions on 6 and 7 June that also involved representatives from the Dutch embassy. Formal talks at the SDI Office (SDIO) took place on 10 and 11 June, and the rest of the week part of the group, accompanied by a member of the SDIO, travelled around the country, visiting various research facilities in upstate New York, Texas, and New Mexico.[38]

Where these site visits were purely informational, the formal summary of the Dutch fact finders' talks in Washington began by noting that on many specific

questions clear answers had not been forthcoming from the American side, in part because SDIO was still in the process of getting organised. The visitors were told that 'flexibility is the keyword', and few facts had been established.

How participation of Dutch companies or institutes would take shape in practice would depend on the kinds of projects, and arrangements concerning security, financing, exact contributions – all to be determined in negotiations between experts. The Americans in any case maintained their preference for bilateral constructions for collaboration and were sceptical, though generally supportive, as to whether a European collaboration on defensive systems against short-range ballistic missiles would ever get off the ground. Companies or institutes seeking to participate in SDI-related research would have to have something real to offer: only where they had a 'competitive edge' would they need to apply. The Dutch, of course, could wait one or two years before deciding on all this, but by then many of the good contracts could have been awarded to others. Also, without a formal government role, security regulations would make it more difficult for individual Dutch companies and institutes to win contracts. Participation in research would make production contracts more likely, but there were no guarantees. Furthermore, as the Dutch government already knew, the smaller a country's involvement with the research, the less likely a two-way street of technological exchange. The SDIO and their Dutch visitors did manage to draw up an inventory matching up Dutch research capabilities with specific areas of SDI research.

Finally, on the military-strategic side, there was little appetite in Washington for consultation on SDI with the NATO allies. Participation in the research certainly did not automatically give one a voice in general decision-making on SDI. The summary concluded in detached but nonetheless plain language: 'in Washington one has difficulty with the idea of general involvement by West European countries, collectively or individually, with the general decision-making on SDI'.[39]

For one senior member of the defence ministry, this official summary was not clear enough. On 4 July, Deputy Chief of the Defense Staff, Army General P. de Weerdt, sent two more reports on the mission to the minister, because 'their critical remarks on the American Strategic Defense Initiative are hardly reflected in the rather neutral language of the official report'.[40]

The first of these summaries – by Peter Tindemans, Director of Analysis and Evaluation at the education and science ministry and its representative on the fact-finding team – listed mostly drawbacks to Dutch participation in SDI-related research. Viewing SDI as a major science and technology challenge to the Netherlands, and Europe in general, his report left open the possibility of collaborations with US organisations, but it emphasised the importance of efforts in a national and European context. Perhaps participation in SDI research would preserve some influence on the further development of SDI. However, it is clear that the author believed that to be a mostly theoretical possibility.[41]

The second report was drawn up by the defence staff representative among the fact finders. He had travelled to Washington early, for the preliminary meetings on 6 and 7 June focusing on the military-strategic aspects of SDI at the National Security Council, the Pentagon, and the Congressional Research Service. (Apparently,

the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not have a contact person on SDI available.) US thinking about these aspects had not evolved very far, it appeared from the conversations. Responses to the question of whether it did not make sense first to work out SDI's military-strategic goals, so that one might have a better idea of the kinds of systems that should be developed, were ambiguous. Col. Donald Mahley of the NSC seemed the most honest to this Dutch investigator:

- for the US, other than Western Europe, ballistic missiles are the main threat;
- the president was "upset" by the anti-nuclear movements at home and abroad;
- thus: the goal is to eliminate (the threat of) ballistic missiles;
- filling the conceptual space between the "higher" (political) objective and the research into the means had not progressed very far; not least because this was a difficult problem.

Furthermore, it became clear in these meetings that there was little interest in Washington in studying all this in a NATO context because Washington did not want to be subjected to limits such a process could impose on SDI. If the official report on the fact-finding mission had not made clear to the responsible Dutch officials that Washington did not envision a genuine partnership with the European allies on SDI, these two additional reports must have left even fewer doubts.[42]

And indeed, the matter did now seem clear enough. The interdepartmental working group on SDI would not finish its draft report until the middle of August and the formal cabinet decision only came on 4 October. However, already on 12 July Defense Minister de Ruiter (in brief handwritten notes on a memo on SDI-related discussions in the WEU) recorded the outcome of a discussion with his counterpart at the foreign ministry: 'The Netherlands as such will not participate on pragmatic grounds, but individual companies can. They will get the customary assistance, but if more extensive support is necessary we can always see about that later'.[43]

That this preliminary decision had been several weeks in the making emerges from the 24 June meeting of the cabinet's sub-council on European affairs. With participation from all the important ministers, including prime-minister Lubbers, the council held a lengthy discussion on the issue of 'Technology and Eureka'. This again underlines that the context for the Dutch discussion always extended beyond SDI into the general question of how Europe would hold its own internationally in the field science and technology.

Economics Minister Gijs van Aardenne opened the discussion, pointing out this wider framework. Even if there was one single European market, he said, it would still work in a different way than in the United States or Japan; as a result, technological development in Europe would always be at a relative disadvantage. To an extent, he continued, SDI could help direct European industry to conduct new research, but given the likelihood that projects connected to SDI would be rejects that US companies could or would not do themselves, its use would be limited.

Defense Minister de Ruiter mentioned the potential overlap between existing European projects promoted by IEPG, the EUREKA initiative, and SDI. SDI, he continued, could help the Europeans, but only if through it, Europe could target its own market. This was not how the Americans wanted to do it, and so it would be better for Europe to focus its technology initiatives on its own market.

Education and Science Minister Wim Deetman added that SDI also carried with it the danger of a European brain-drain to the United States and that the prospects for a genuine exchange of know-how were dim. Also, SDI would take place on the basis of contracts, which placed the government on the sidelines. If the government would still try to encourage its research institutions to participate in SDI-related research, Deetman foresaw great difficulties, given the democratic culture at these institutions. In the rest of the meeting, SDI was not discussed any more. However, from what the ministers did say about it, it is clear that for all involved, the disadvantages far outweighed potential benefits. In this pivotal high-level discussion, there was no mention of whether other allies might or might not accept Secretary Weinberger's invitation. Once it had become clear that a common response through the WEU was not in the cards, the Dutch decision appears to have emerged entirely from a national process.[44]

Ultimately, just two Dutch organisations would participate in SDI-related research: Hollandse Signaal Apparaten, a company owned by the Philips corporation, specialising in military electronics, and the independent, semi-public TNO (Applied Natural Scientific Research) research institute, which in 1987 received American funding to set up a pulse physics laboratory.

Even where there was industry interest, finding US counterparts to talk to appears to have been difficult, as can be seen in a memorandum for De Ruiter from his planning director, L. van der Put, from 2 August 1985. The memo reports difficulties in making connections, presumably through the Dutch embassy in Washington, between US companies involved in SDI research and the Dutch companies and institutes that had expressed an interest in participation. Certainly, the written exchange of information, agreed upon in June (probably during the Dutch fact-finding mission in Washington) was not progressing well, according to this memo. The embassy's suggestion was for companies and institutes to try to explore possibilities themselves on the spot, in the United States, after the government's formal reply to Weinberger's invitation had been issued. If necessary, the embassy or the Dutch economics ministry could always try to lend a hand. This is just one piece of evidence and from a very early stage. However, from it, one is tempted to conclude that all of the doubts that various Dutch actors expressed in the spring and summer of 1985 about US interest in collaboration on SDI with the allies were confirmed as soon as collaboration began to be explored in practice, and that already prior to the publication of the formal Dutch position, the government began to pull back and leave the field to the (semi) private sector.[45]

The US embassy in the Hague, its ear usually close to the ground of Dutch decision-making, was probably aware of where things were headed.[46] It still organised a visit to the Netherlands by General James Abrahamson for 28 August, as part of the head of SDIO director's tour of allied capitals. This meant (although

the embassy may not have been aware of that) the visit would take place after the inter-departmental working group on the Dutch response to the Weinberger invitation had concluded its work.[47] For Abrahamson's appearance at the 28 August SWNB meeting, the defence ministry's planning director sent his minister a list of questions on strategic, arms-control, alliance, and technical aspects of SDI; they were questions that by now were very familiar in Dutch contacts with their American ally on SDI. The general's answers probably were too.[48]

Abrahamson's impending visit did not cause the government to reserve final judgment on possible participation in SDI or refrain from public statements that foreshadowed it. Newspapers (*Trouw*, *NRC-Handelsblad*) reported on 29 August that in a speech to an employers' group on the 28th – the day Abrahamson had his meetings in the Hague – State Secretary for Foreign Trade, Frits Bolkestein, openly expressed a preference for EUREKA over SDI when it came to national science and technology promotion. The Europeans did need to come up with clearly defined projects for EUREKA, Bolkestein noted, and these had to be of a civilian nature, otherwise there would not be the requisite political support. Bolkestein added that private sector companies and institutes might be able to do SDI-related research, but that the scope of those projects would be modest, given that the United States had only allocated $1 billion for overseas contracts. Defence Minister de Ruiter had mentioned this figure in parliament recently too. During his visit to the Netherlands, the article in *Trouw* also reported, General Abrahamson had called these conclusions premature and said that once SDI would be deployed, there could be enormous contracts in the offing.

The fact that the government was getting ready formally to decline Weinberger's invitation to become part of SDI-related research still did not mean that in general terms it did not think that this research was unnecessary or illegitimate. The memorandum accompanying the 1986 budget for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, sent to parliament in mid-September 1985, pointed out that, after all, the Soviet Union was not passive in this area either. Furthermore, there was no principal objection to trying to find alternatives for the 'current situation', by which the government probably meant Mutual Assured Destruction. Support for research did not mean that the government did not reserve the right to make a separate judgment on conceptual aspects of SDI. In the meantime, consultation between the NATO allies over SDI continued to be a priority for the Lubbers government. Finally, even though the WEU had failed to agree on a joint statement on SDI, the government thought that the American scheme continued to be a good issue with which further to promote the revitalisation of the WEU specifically, and a more coordinated European contribution to Western security in general.[49]

On 23 September, the final paper prepared by the ad hoc interdepartmental working group on SDI, and its two sub-commissions, was included with the materials for the 4 October council of ministers meeting. The six-page report systematically discussed the picture Dutch policymakers had built in the preceding months, divided into sections on political-strategic, arms control, and industry-political and technological aspects of SDI. The report's conclusions also looked familiar. At the moment, no definitive position on the political-strategic or arms

control aspects was possible; as time went on, the programme should be evaluated step by step in an alliance context; in this process, the Dutch government would lean heavily on the WEU. For practical reasons, and without prejudice, the Dutch government would decline the invitation to participate in SDI-related research. The anticipated positive effect on the Dutch technological capacity and the Dutch economy did not seem to justify the required cost and effort for the Dutch government. The government's involvement with SDI would be limited to the customary support offered to private Dutch interests in their quest for research contracts.[50]

De Ruiter's formal reply to Weinberger, dated 4 October, conveyed these conclusions, and it pointed to the 20 May prospectus for the ways in which Dutch companies and institutes could contribute to SDI-related research. The letter contained the added suggestion (not included in the 23 September report) that for the periodic allied evaluation of SDI sought by the Dutch, the NPG's High Level Group would be a good venue. Weinberger replied in November with a letter that ignored this specific recommendation but that did come with an appendix proposing further discussions on several research activities discussed in the 20 May prospectus.[51]

IV. Conclusion

SDI was an American initiative, and more than that it was Ronald Reagan's vision. It did not always make sense to Americans, and it was even harder to understand for Europeans. This was especially so because, a delegation of Dutch journalists learned on a Washington visit 8–14 September 1985, in Europe apparently people had lingered far too long around the president's 1983 address. In Washington – the visiting journalists learned from their meetings with administration officials, think-tank experts, journalists, and members of Congress and Congressional staffers – SDI had become something for the longer run. The technology was to be developed further, and in the meantime, SDI could be used to get the Soviets' attention at the Geneva arms control talks. But more than anything, SDI was an American project, originating from American debates, envisioned first and foremost to defend the United States, and to be developed by the US military-industrial complex.

All reports written by the journalists on this visit organised by the Netherlands Atlantic Commission are worthwhile for the Washington mood on SDI they convey – an admittedly imprecise notion. It was not a unified story the journalists heard. However, for, against, or somewhere in the middle, their interlocutors most definitely provided American perspectives, and on the whole, there seemed to be little room for, or understanding of, Europeans and their priorities. The account in the *Haagse Post* probably captured this fact the best.

> Both the NATO-allies and Japan and Israel are free to participate; if they don't want to, like Canada, *tant pis*. In Europe the view mistakenly seems to have taken hold as if the debate over SDI could serve as a kind of successor for the traumatic debate over the intermediate-range missiles. But SDI was

never meant to underline the cohesion of the alliance, or to involve the alliance with American nuclear-strategic questions.

On the pressure some European governments felt about Weinberger's request to respond to his invitation within 60-days: 'why would we pressure you? SDI is an American programme, and it will stay that way'. Regarding Dutch efforts to promote a joint, WEU response to SDI: '[t]his initiative has failed to make any impression in Washington'. The article contained other examples of how Dutch or European perspectives on SDI caused head-scratching in Washington.[52]

On the whole, therefore, this encounter between yet another Dutch delegation and the Washington insiders who willingly and openly shared their views corroborates the picture that emerges from the official Dutch evidence and the recollections of several key participants on the Dutch side in 1985. SDI was controversial and potentially disruptive. However, particularly because so many questions about it remained unanswered, its concrete impact on transatlantic ties was relatively minor. Perhaps even more important, in the end, was how little SDI mattered to the Dutch government and how this lack of interest was mirrored in Washington.

Notes

1 Peter J. Westwick, 'The International History of the Strategic Defense Initiative: American Influence and Economic Competition in the Late Cold War', *Centaurus* 52:4 (2010), 338–351. Philipp Gassert, 'Did Transatlantic Drift Help European Integration? The Euromissile Crisis, the Strategic Defense Initiative, and the Quest for Political Cooperation', in Kiran Klaus Patel and Kenneth Weisbrode, (eds), *European Integration and the Atlantic Community in the 1980s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 154–176.
2 Jeroen van Dongen, (ed), *Cold War Science and the Transatlantic Circulation of Knowledge* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).
3 John Krige, *Sharing Knowledge, Shaping Europe: US Technological Collaboration and Nonproliferation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016).
4 Westwick, 'The International History of the Strategic Defense Initiative', 343, 348.
5 For early overviews of Dutch responses, see Philip P. Everts, (ed), *De Droom der onkwetsbaarheid: Het Amerikaanse Strategisch Defensie Initiatief en het belang van Europa* (Kampen: Kok Agora, 1986); Robert J. Berloznik, 'Perceptions and Reactions to SDI in the Benelux Countries', in Hans Günter Brauch, (ed), *Star Wars and European Defence. Implications for Europe: Perceptions and Assessments* (New York: St. Martin's, 1987), 234–255.
6 *Dutch National Archives, The Hague*, (NL-HaNA), Defensie/Politieke Leiding, *2.13.219/1085*: Nederlandse deelneming aan het Amerikaanse Strategisch Defensie Initiatief onderzoeksprogramma betreffende de bescherming van de Verenigde Staten tegen nucleaire ballistische raketten. 1985–1988.
7 The author would like to thank Willem Deetman, Boudewijn van Eenennaam, Peter Tindemans, Ad Vialle, and Jacques de Winter for sharing their memories of the SDI issue in the Netherlands around 1985 with him. Only the author is responsible for the contents and analysis here.
8 Archive of the Dutch Foreign Ministry. *NL Ha-NA, 2.05.263/353*. See also Marilena Gala, '"The Essential Weaknesses of the December 1979 'Agreement'": The White House and the Implementing of the Dual-Track Decision', *Cold War History* 19:1 (2019), 21–38.

9 On Reagan's search for an escape from the nuclear dilemma, see Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, Third Edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), chapter 26.
10 Report discussion April 14, 1983. Kamerstuk Tweede Kamer 1982–1983 kamerstuknummer 17600 X ondernummer 37, 6 May 1983. *Staten Generaal Digitaal* (SGD).
11 Kamerstuk Tweede Kamer 1983–1984 kamerstuknummer 17306 ondernummer 12: Goedkeuring van een aantal in het kader van het Europees Ruimte-Agentschap tot stand gekomen Overeenkomsten. *SGD*. For a broader analysis of European responses to Reagan's initiative, see Gassert, 'Did Transatlantic Drift Help European Integration?'.
12 Klaas de Vries raising the issue in debate on the defense budget, 8 February 1984. *Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1983–1984*; Relus ter Beek, 5 March 1985, debate foreign ministry's budget Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1984–1985; Foreign Minister Van den Broek, 6 March 1985. Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1984–1985. *SGD*.
13 Debate NATO part, budgets of the Defense Ministry and the Foreign Ministry, 31 January 1985. Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1984–1985 31 januari 1985. *SGD*.
14 Archive Partij van de Arbeid, International Secretariat. The story can be traced in the files on Scandilux/Eurolux, Socialist International, and especially Confederation of the Socialist Parties of the European Community. *International Institute for Social History*, Amsterdam.
15 Letter of 12 February 1985. Archive Dutch Ministry of Defense. *National Archive–the Hague* (NL Ha-NA), 2.13.219/1085.
16 Ruud van Dijk, '"A Mass Psychosis": The Netherlands and NATO's Dual-Track Decision, 1978–1979', *Cold War History* 12:3, 381–405.
17 B.J. van Eenennaam, 'Is strategische verdediging het voordeel van de twijfel waard?', *NRC-Handelsblad*, 30 January 1985.
18 Personal message Boudewijn van Eenennaam to the author, 15 May 2019.
19 As he was sharing his personal memories of the debates of the time in a keynote address at a recent conference on SDI and the allies (London School of Economics, 31 May – 1 June 2019), Lawrence Freedman was asked (by the author) what in his view may have been behind Weinberger's offer. Where in dealing with other questions, the eminent scholar would take his time, here one word, and a shrug of the shoulders, sufficed: 'bribery'. Or, as Weinberger himself reportedly said: 'you can't buy friends, but you can sure lease them'. Quoted in Westwick, 'The International History of the Strategic Defense Initiative', 341.
20 Letter shared with Parliament, 10 April 1985, in response to a request for information by Klaas de Vries:

> Kamerstuk Tweede Kamer 1984–1985 kamerstuknummer 18600 X ondernummer 36, *SGD*. Excerpt, Defense Council minutes, Minister de Ruiter on Luxemburg NPG, 'where secretary Weinberger managed to surprise the allies with the letter in question'. *NL Ha-NA, 2.13.219/1085*.

21 Foreign Ministry Director of Political Affairs, March 29 letter to the SWNB members. *NL Ha-NA 2.13.219/1085*.
22 List of questions, nd, na, handwritten at the top 'new'*NL Ha-NA, 2.13.219/1085*; see also Frances Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 79–97.
23 Memorandum SDI, 29 March 1985. *NL Ha-NA, 2.13.219/1085*.
24 Archive Council of Ministers (Ministerraad). *NL Ha-NA, 2.02.05.02/4352*.
25 15 April papers for minister of defense De Ruiter in preparation for a special meeting on SDI–participation unspecified–on 17 April. *NL Ha-NA, 2.13.219/1085*; April 22 papers for the 24 April SWNB meeting, *2.13.219/1085*.
26 Peter Tindemans, director of analysis and evaluation at the education and science ministry and the ministry's point person in the SDI discussions in 1985, believes the early involvement of industry and research institutes was likely through the efforts of the economics ministry. Interview with the author, 2 September 2019.

27 9 April minute-code message Foreign Ministry to Embassy, Washington. *NL Ha-NA, 2.13.219/1085*.
28 Director DAB to minister of defense, 26 April 1985. *NL Ha-NA, 2.13.219/1085*.
29 Ad Vialle, in 1985 head of the space division at the Fokker aircraft company, interview with the author, 25 November 2019. The 3 May meeting date was retrieved from his saved calendars by education and science ministry point person, Peter Tindemans. Communication to the author, 13 September 2019.
30 Inventory date, 20 May 1985, forwarded to the minister of defense on 28 May 1985. *NL Ha-NA, 2.13.219/1085*.
31 Ad Vialle, interview with the author, 25 November 2019.
32 Peter Tindemans interview with the author, 2 September 2019. The EUREKA alternative did not get a universally enthusiastic reception from Dutch corporations either. The journal of State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Wim van Eekelen, includes a brief entry for 1 May 1985 on a meeting with business leaders where EUREKA was discussed. One of the participants, Unilever CEO Floris Maljers, is quoted as questioning the prospects, apparently in a skeptical tone: 'invent stuff together'. Archive Dr. W.F. van Eekelen. *NL Ha-NA, 2.21.423/31*. See also Van Eekelen's memoir, *Sporen trekken door strategische jaren* (Giethoorn: Ten Brink, 2000), 184–186.
33 *De Volkskrant*, 10 May 1985; *NRC-Handelsblad* 10 May 1985. See also Ivo H. Daalder, *The SDI Challenge to Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 1987), 27–28.
34 Verslag van een mondeling overleg [on 14 May 1985], Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal, 1984–1985 29 May 1985. *SGD*. For the communique from the Bonn meeting, see Arie Bloed and Ramses A. Wessel, eds., *The Changing Functions of the West European Union (WEU): Introduction and Basic Documents* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1994), 61–64.
35 Appendix III and IV: Documents introduced by the Netherlands at the 15 May 1985 WEU council meeting. *NL Ha-NA, 2.13.219/1085*.
36 DAB to defense minister, 20 June 1985. *NL Ha-NA, 2.13.219/1085*. The Dutch list of questions, in the form of a fragment from a diplomatic telegram, is part of the papers for the June fact-finding mission. Ibid.
37 Memo director DAB to defense minister, 2 August 1985. *NL Ha-NA, 2.13.219/1085*.
38 Tindemans interview with the author, 2 September 2019. Report SDI fact-finding team, 17 June 1985. *NL Ha-NA, 2.13.219/1085*.
39 Report SDI fact-finding team, 17 June 1985. *NL Ha-NA, 2.13.219/1085*. Looking back on the mission more than three decades later, the defense ministry's deputy planning director at the time, Jacques de Winter, remembered that the trip was an anti-climax and that the delegation had returned home empty-handed. Personal message Jacques de Winter to the author, 26 September 2019.
40 De Weerdt to minister of defense, 4 July 1985. *NL Ha-NA, 2.13.219/1085*.
41 Tindemans wrote his report as general background–not as a response to the mission's general report. Interview with the author, 2 September 2019.
42 Report P.A.J. Tindemans, Director Analysis & Evaluation, Ministry of Education and Science, 21 June 1985; Report Captain (navy) J.J.W. van Waning, Defense Staff, 11 June 1985. *NL Ha-NA, 2.13.219/1085*.
43 Memo and summary, WEU coordination SDI, 11 July 1985. *NL Ha-NA, 2.13.219/1085*.
44 Minutes Onderraad voor Europese Zaken, 24 June 1985. *NL Ha-NA, 2.02.05.02/4456*.
45 Memo director DAB to defense minister, 2 August 1985. *NL Ha-NA, 2.13.219/1085*.
46 See Duco Hellema and Giles Scott-Smith, (eds), *De Amerikaanse ambassade in Den Haag: een historische blik achter de betonnen schermen van de Amerikaans-Nederlandse betrekkingen* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2016).
47 On 19 August, the chair of the working group sent the group's draft report to the SWNB members, adding that for all intents and purposes the working group had completed its work and it, and its two sub-working groups, could be dissolved. *NL Ha-NA, 2.13.219/1085*.

48 Memo director DAB to defense minister, 22 August 1985. *NL Ha-NA, 2.13.219/1085*. Abrahamson's agenda in the Hague also included meetings with leaders of institutes and companies interested in doing SDI-related research, and with political commentators. See columns by Bart Tromp, *Het Parool*, 29 August; G.B.J. Hiltermann, *De Telegraaf*, 7 September. The defense ministry's SDI file does not include minutes or notes from the SWNB meeting with Abrahamson.

49 Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal, 1985–1986, Rijksbegroting voor het jaar 1986. Hoofdstuk V, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken. Memorie van Toelichting. *SGD*.

50 Minister of Defense and Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Council of Ministers, 23 September 1985. *NL Ha-NA, 2.02.05.02/4408*. 4 October 1985 Council of Ministers meeting: *NL Ha-NA, 2.02.05.02/4356*.

51 De Ruiter to Weinberger, 4 October 1985. Weinberger to De Ruiter [original copy stamped: 14 Nov 1985]. *NL Ha-NA, 2.13.219/1085*.

52 In its 5 December 1985 issue of *Atlantisch Nieuws*, the Dutch Atlantic Commission collected the reporting on the September visit. The author of the article in *Haagse Post* was Daan Dijksman.

10 Danish and Norwegian Responses to SDI

Between Low-Voiced Scepticism and Outspoken Opposition

Jakob Linnet Schmidt

Introduction

When President Ronald Reagan in March 1983 publicly announced thoughts on security that did not rest on the threat of American retaliation but which instead could destroy strategic nuclear weapons before reaching the target, the proposal was not specific plans but rather an idea and an initiative which had to be developed by scientists and engineers.[1] Reactions to the speech were that it was not politically current, just as there also was a marked scepticism about the future perspectives. The initiative was thus seen as an American matter, which did not require an official position from its allies. The issue became both actualised and a more urgent political issue by 1985. This was mainly due to the re-election of Reagan in the autumn of 1984 and the publication of a number of reports on the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), which in addition was granted a substantial budget for research.[2] But it was also due to the fact that the United States at this time began offering the NATO countries contracts for further development of the project.[3]

Compared to other topics of the Second Cold War, such as NATO's Dual-Track Decision and the negotiations on Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF), SDI has been relatively overlooked in Danish and Norwegian research. The research that has been published on the topic has followed quite similar lines. The initial research focused on the main lines of the debate among the political parties.[4] Subsequently, archive-based studies have examined the subject as a part of the national security policy disputes of the 1980s and have shed new light on the internal considerations of the political parties and the administrations.[5] However, in quantitative terms, the Danish and Norwegian responses to SDI have not been equally examined, as Danish security policy of the 1980s has been extensively researched.[6] This is to some extent because the 1980s is the most contested period in Danish Cold War history, where the interpretation of the period has been widely debated among both historians and politicians.[7] Over a period of six years, from 1982 to 1988, an alternative security policy majority in the Danish Parliament (*Folketinget*), consisting of the Social Democratic Party (*Socialdemokratiet*), the Social Liberal Party (*Det Radikale Venstre*), the Socialist People's Party (*Socialistisk Folkeparti*) and the Left Socialists (*Venstresocialisterne*), adopted resolutions

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(*dagsordener*) which forced the minority government, consisting of the Conservative People's Party (*Det Konservative Folkeparti*), the Liberal Party (*Venstre*), the Centre Democrats (*Centrum-Demokraterne*) and the Christian People's Party (*Kristeligt Folkeparti*), to follow a certain line. The resolutions often caused the government to take critical positions in NATO, which resulted in the addition of more than 20 Danish footnotes in the official communiqués. Whereas the resolutions addressed a wide range of security policy issues, but in particular issues related to nuclear weapons policy, the footnotes exclusively concerned INF and SDI. This peculiar situation was made possible as the Social Liberal Party supported the government on domestic issues but was against its security policy. Since the government chose to accept this, and as the Social Liberal Party would not vote the government out of office, this practice was allowed to continue until 1988.[8] In contrast, politicisation in Norway has been marginal. This is in some respects due to the widespread consensus among historians about the main features of both Norwegian and international developments during the Cold War, just as there is also political consensus about Norwegian security policy in the post-war period.[9]

After a period of dispute among the political parties on security policy, tensions began to decrease in Norway from 1983. This was reflected in the national security policy compromise, which was concluded by the Labour Party (*Det Norske Arbeiderparti*) and the coalition government consisting of the Conservative Party (*Høyre*), the Christian Democratic Party (*Kristelig Folkeparti*) and the Centre Party (*Centerpartiet*), which in many respects restored the national consensus on security policy. The compromise was largely based on the premises of the Labour Party.[10] There were also signs of reconciliation in Denmark. The Norwegian compromise was noticed, which caused the Social Democratic Party to express desire for 'Norwegian conditions' in Denmark, which were to be based on NATO membership and the parliamentary resolutions. Acknowledging that the resolutions were inappropriate for establishing a coherent policy, the Social Democratic Party encouraged the government to prepare a report on principles and problems within Danish security policy. The proposal was positively received by the government, which appointed a committee of officials to do the task. The report, which was handed in by the end of 1984, recommended a return to the security policy of the 1970s, namely a policy based on the premises of alliance solidarity and the promotion of dialogue and détente. The report was welcomed by the government parties but received mixed reactions from the Social Democratic Party, which expected concessions from the government if the traditional consensus was to be restored. Misunderstandings between the leading figures of the government and the Social Democratic Party made this process impossible in the short term and underlined the fragility of a possible reconciliation.[11] For both countries, SDI became a burden on efforts to re-establish national security policy consensus.

Building on existing research and making use of ministerial documents along with the official reports of the Danish and Norwegian parliamentary proceedings (*Folketingstidende* and *Stortingstidende*), this chapter reveals a widespread

negative view on SDI among politicians in both Denmark and Norway. But the political parties disagreed on how this view was best handled. The social democratic parties, along with the left-wing parties, advocated a policy of outspoken opposition, whereas the centre-right parties believed that low-voiced scepticism would be more influential. The differences were thus mainly a question about rhetoric and tactics. Due to the exceptional parliamentary situation in Denmark, the Social Democratic Party was the leading party in shaping official Danish SDI policy. In Norway, the Labour Party held office from 1986 onwards, which became crucial for the way Norwegian and Danish SDI policies were conducted in NATO. Based on archival materials from transnational social democratic fora, this chapter sheds new light on social democratic motives, arguing that the view of the parties was influenced by discussions in these fora.[12]

Initial Responses

National debates in Denmark and Norway began in earnest in early 1985. Although there was no in-depth debate in 1983 and 1984, some initial positioning took place during this period. Norway was opposed to militarisation of space; this was stated by Minister of Foreign Affairs Svenn Stray in the spring of 1983, for example.[13] But it was also illustrated in the national security policy compromise of 1984. Here the political parties agreed that the negotiations between the superpowers had to aim for a ban on deployment of weapons in space.[14]

In Denmark, too, initial responses were characterised by general statements about Danish resistance to an arms race in space, and a call for serious superpower negotiations on arms control.[15] An example is a resolution adopted by the Danish Parliament in May 1984 which contained a number of security policy issues, including one related to SDI. The resolution demanded that the government participate in efforts, within NATO and other international organisations, to introduce an international agreement prohibiting the placement of nuclear weapons in outer space. The government abstained voting but was not against the specific issue which Minister of Foreign Affairs Uffe Ellemann-Jensen characterised as unnecessary, as it was already the view of the government.[16] That SDI was not given much attention before 1985 was evident when the aforementioned committee of officials released its report on security issues. The report included a rather short section on SDI, which noted that the initiative gave rise to many difficult considerations and that the initiative could have an impact on deterrence, and thus become a destabilising factor. The basis for evaluating the initiative rested on several unknowns, and the committee therefore recommended a course that encouraged the superpowers to begin negotiations as a way of avoiding a new arms race.[17] The limited interest in SDI was underlined by the issue being completely absent in the political and popular debate about the report.[18]

Before national debates began in 1985, SDI was also the subject of discussions among social democratic parties. Research into transnational social democratic fora has shown that inter-party relations increased in the late 1970s and 1980s and that the policy of the parties was shaped by perspectives from the

Socialist International (SI) and the Palme Commission (formally the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues).[19] In SI, a study group headed by Finnish Prime Minister Kalevi Sorsa was established in 1978 to prepare a report on disarmament which was presented in 1980 and endorsed as official SI policy.[20] In a section on the most urgent tasks of disarmament efforts, the report recommended the permanent demilitarisation of outer space based on the spirit of the treaty of 1967 and that forward-looking and rapid means were put to use to prevent an arms race there.[21] Another forum was the Palme Commission, named after its chairman, former Swedish social democratic prime minister, Olof Palme. The commission was appointed by the United Nations in 1980, and although it had representatives from East, West, North, and South, including non-aligned countries, it was to a great extent a social democratic commission, and its recommendations were largely in line with the policies of the SI.[22] In the Palme Commission, a concept of 'common security' was introduced. Embedded in this concept was an assumption that attempts to achieve unilateral security resulted in increased competition and thus more tense political relations. According to the report, arms control and disarmament were the ways forward.[23] While admitting that use of space for military purposes contributed to a more stable military balance and a lower risk of war, the Palme Commission was similarly concerned about military activities in space and urged serious consideration of proposals to prevent further militarisation of space.[24] Based on this, the commission recommended that military use of space constituting a threat to international peace and security was identified and prevented by negotiated bans and limitations on specific weapon systems or entire areas of activity.[25] These perspectives were part of the base for the discussions among the social democratic parties.

The issue was discussed for the first time in Scandilux at a meeting in late 1983. Scandilux, a small, informal social democratic security policy forum consisting of the parties of NATO countries Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Norway with the parties of France, the United Kingdom and West Germany participating as active observers, was established in 1981 as a result of NATO's Dual-Track Decision. The lesson drawn from this episode was that the parties needed to discuss and coordinate their policies as a means of resisting American pressure.[26] At the December 1983 meeting, Egon Bahr of the West German Social Democratic Party characterised outer space as one of three urgent problem areas. According to Bahr, the American goal was to achieve military superiority in this field where the Soviet Union at the same time felt particularly vulnerable. The West German politician was thus pessimistic about stopping an arms race in space. Bahr argued that the parties' view should be expressed publicly, even though he was doubtful as to whether it would have any effect, as he expected the United States to continue.[27]

At another meeting in late 1984, SDI and the forthcoming superpower negotiations were the main themes. The impression among the social democratic parties was that SDI would be the last topic the superpowers could reach an agreement on.[28] Prior to the meeting, the Norwegian Labour Party had prepared

a communiqué that the parties could present after their meeting. According to the communiqué, the Scandilux parties welcomed a statement by the United States and the Soviet Union that they would begin talks with the aim of reaching a mutual acceptable agreement including space arms. The view of the social democratic parties was that the world was 'faced with an imminent danger of the nuclear arms race moving into space', and therefore urged the superpowers to abstain from any action and programme which would threaten the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972 (ABM Treaty). According to the parties, this included 'an immediate pause in the testing and deployment of space-based weapons or weapons designed to threaten objects in space. The pause should include anti-satellite weapons as well as space-based anti-ballistic missile systems'.[29]

In mid-January, the Joint Committee of the Nordic Social Democratic Labour Movement (*Arbejderbevægelsens nordiske samarbejdskommitté*, SAMAK) also issued a communiqué urging the United States and the Soviet Union to reach an agreement to prevent an arms race in space and to stop all research, testing and deployment of such systems.[30] Going further than the Scandilux communiqué, the Nordic parties were thus also opposed to research. This indicates that the scepticism of the social democratic parties of the Nordic countries was more comprehensive than the consensus in Scandilux.

National Debates

Although there was not much national knowledge of, or interest in, SDI, some of the positions that would become central when the debates began in earnest were thus brought forward during the initial responses. This included a broad Danish and Norwegian consensus that space should not be made the site of an arms race, and a call for superpower negotiations to avoid this. Since debates in Denmark and Norway had not yet begun, the national policy was, unsurprisingly, vaguely worded. The issue was also the basis of discussions among the social democratic parties. In addition to a pessimistic view in terms of whether the United States and the Soviet Union could reach an agreement, the social democratic parties also stressed that the ABM Treaty should be respected. At the same time, the Nordic parties expressed their opposition to research, testing, and deployment. National consensus, however, had not yet been tested. That changed in 1985 when SDI became a main theme in Danish and Norwegian security policy. In Denmark, the national position was established in March and updated in May, while the official Norwegian position was determined in late May.

In Norway, the debate began in late February 1985 when the Minister of Foreign Affairs presented the view of the government at the request of the Enlarged Committee on Foreign Affairs (*Stortingets utvidede utenrikskomite*).[31] Stray maintained the Norwegian resistance to military uses of space but also stated that SDI was not a violation of the ABM Treaty. Because the Soviet Union was conducting research, the government found no reason why the United States should refrain. The government's attitude was that research should not lead to military superiority.[32]

The Danish debate also began in late February. This began with a newspaper article in which the Minister of Foreign Affairs was cited for recommending that NATO participate in SDI. Subsequently, Ellemann-Jensen denied the reproduction and emphasised that a decision had not yet been taken. This happened before the issue had been the subject of debate in either the Danish Parliament or the Foreign Policy Committee (*Det Udenrigspolitiske Nævn*) and, despite the Minister of Foreign Affairs' retraction, triggered meetings in both instances.[33] In the Foreign Policy Committee, Ellemann-Jensen repeated that no position had been taken. This did not satisfy the opposition, where the Socialist People's Party and the Left Socialists initiated a parliamentary debate which was scheduled to take place in late March.[34]

While the national debate was gradually progressing, the initiative was also discussed among the social democratic parties. A Eurolux meeting, a joint meeting of Scandilux, Eurosud (a corresponding south-west European forum consisting of the social democratic parties of France, Italy, Portugal and Spain) and the social democratic parties of Greece and Iceland, showed pronounced opposition among the social democratic parties of the European NATO countries to SDI, although some southern European parties expressed more favour to the research part than the rest.[35]

In the Danish parliamentary debate, the Minister of Foreign Affairs emphasised that the content of SDI was unclear. According to Ellemann-Jensen, the point of departure should therefore be the Danish views on disarmament issues, which meant opposition to an arms race in space; compliance with the ABM Treaty to avoid development, testing and deployment of systems in space; that the United States and the Soviet Union had to agree on mutual restraint, and to impose restrictions that prevented an arms race from occurring; and finally, that the superpowers ensured that uncontrollable research did not develop in that direction. The Minister of Foreign Affairs' cautious position did not satisfy the opposition parties. The May resolution only covered nuclear weapons in space which, according to social democratic Foreign Affairs Spokesman Lasse Budtz, made a supplement necessary. He therefore proposed a resolution which stated that Denmark was opposed to placing weapons in space and to exploring and developing them. In addition, support was expressed for the ABM Treaty and a new treaty that would prevent the militarisation of space. Finally, the resolution demanded that the government work actively for these aims in all relevant organisations. During the debate, the Social Democratic Party emphasised that the resolution only included Danish participation. The agenda was adopted against the government's votes.[36]

That the government chose to vote against the resolution was surprising. It was thus a breach of the relatively conciliatory atmosphere that prevailed between the government and the Social Democratic Party but also a change in the voting behaviour of the government as it for some time had been abstaining from voting on the social democratic resolutions. The reason for this was that, in the days before the debate, the government and the Social Democratic Party had unsuccessfully tried to reach an agreement on a compromise resolution. When this failed, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs decided to present

the government's draft. Fear of the proposal being voted down caused the government to drop the idea shortly before the debate. In the view of the government, or at least the Prime Minister's Conservative People's Party, a defeated resolution would necessitate the resignation of the government.[37]

The next development in the national debates came in late March following the Ministerial Session of a NATO Nuclear Planning Group meeting. During the meeting, US Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger announced an invitation to participate in the project to his colleagues and wanted a specific reference to SDI in the communiqué, which after negotiations resulted in the initiative being defined as a research project.[38] The meeting communiqué stated:

> We support the United States research programme into these technologies, the aim of which is to enhance stability and deterrence at reduced levels of offensive nuclear forces. This research, conducted within the terms of the ABM Treaty, is in NATO's security interest and should continue. In this context, we welcome the United States invitation for Allies to consider participation in the research programme.[39]

This was perceived as far-reaching support for the initiative and triggered heated national debates. The following day, Norwegian Minister of Defence Anders C. Sjaastad had to appear before the Norwegian Parliament (*Stortinget*) and answer questions. The Socialist Left Party (*Sosialistisk Venstreparti*) and the Labour Party were pronounced in their critique and thought that the Minister of Defence had gone too far in his support for SDI. Norway could not prevent the United States from initiating research in the field, but it was something else to express support for it and to leave the issue of Norwegian participation open. According to the Labour Party's Knut Frydenlund, the government should instead have used the meeting as an opportunity to warn against the initiative in a way such that could also have been reflected in the text. By contrast, the Minister of Defence argued that he and other Allies had expressed concerns towards the American initiative which had resulted in important clarifications. Weinberger had thus assured that the United States would not unilaterally do anything that could undermine the ABM Treaty and that there was no short-term alternative to the doctrine of deterrence. At the same time, Sjaastad stressed that he personally did not find the invitation to have Norway participate in the research programme relevant.[40]

As shown earlier, the Danish Parliament had adopted a resolution the day before the NATO communiqué was issued, stating that Denmark was opposed to Danish participation in exploration and development of SDI. Despite this, Minister of Defence Hans Engell, in agreement with Prime Minister Poul Schlüter, endorsed the communiqué. At a subsequent meeting of the Foreign Policy Committee, the Minister of Defence explained that the communiqué did not entail a position on SDI but only stated that the countries declared themselves ready to consider an American invitation to participate. The government would, of course, reject an invitation in accordance with the parliamentary resolution. The prime

minister supplemented the minister of defence's statement by emphasising the importance of not losing influence in NATO. That being said, Schlüter would gladly have avoided the reference to SDI and would not complain if the project was abandoned. The opposition, on the other hand, was not pleased with Engell's acceptance of the communiqué and found no justification for expressing support for SDI research.[41]

The government's line, however, was probably also informed by the impression of the high priority SDI was given by the American administration, and by President Reagan in particular. That the United States was not lenient on opposition to SDI became evident during a late April meeting between Ellemann-Jensen and US Secretary of State George P. Shultz. According to the Minister of Foreign Affairs' talking paper for the meeting, American wishes for the content of the NATO communiqué had been 'quite far-reaching' and 'less than helpful' considering the situation of the Danish government and the complexity and uncertainties surrounding the issue.[42] If this line were maintained, the United States would risk footnotes from several countries, the Danish minister argued at the meeting. According to Ellemann-Jensen, the choice was thus between a softer line and a united Alliance, on the one hand, or the opposite, on the other hand. Shultz, by contrast, had no understanding of the Danish rejection of participation in SDI research or of the Danish position in general, which he described as 'entirely incomprehensible'. One should not expect the United States to come to the rescue of Europe for the third time if European countries pursued a policy such as Denmark's, Shultz stated. The secretary of state summarised his critique by stating: 'If all Europeans were like Denmark . . ., there would be no NATO'.[43] The last comments were probably not only based on the Danish position regarding SDI but also a result of long-term annoyance over Danish security and defence policy.[44] But SDI had special interest for President Reagan. In May, the Danish ambassador in Washington thus warned against a possible Danish SDI footnote in NATO. According to the ambassador, Reagan was probably unaware of Danish INF footnotes, which would not be the case if this happened in the context of SDI.[45]

The national debate continued in May when the Social Democratic Party requested that the prime minister answer questions regarding the NATO communiqué and the parliamentary resolution. But even before Schlüter had the opportunity to explain himself, social democratic Foreign Affairs Spokesman Budtz announced that the answers would be followed by a proposal for a resolution intended to remove any doubt about the majority of the Danish Parliament's view on SDI, which the government had to abide by. Before that happened, the prime minister made it clear that Denmark should not participate in the SDI research programme. In addition, he argued that the government in accordance with the resolution of 26 March neither found it necessary nor appropriate that Denmark as the only country reserved its position regarding SDI at the Nuclear Planning Group meeting the following day. According to Schlüter, the Minister of Defence had contributed to the communiqué text being altered on several important points, which would hardly have been the case if Engell had demanded a Danish footnote in any case. Budtz on the other hand questioned to what extent this tactic

really had influenced the communiqué and proposed the announced resolution text which resembled the March resolution, with the notable exception that it stated a general opposition to any exploration and development as opposed to Danish participation in it. The government did not have many objections to the resolution text but was concerned whether Danish interests were best handled by demonstrating its opposition in the form of footnotes. The government chose not to vote against the new resolution.[46] This was probably because one of the government parties, the Christian People's Party, had serious concerns about the project, and the government did not want to create further divisions between itself and the opposition.[47] In addition to taking into account relations with the US and the parliamentary resolutions of the opposition, the government also had to handle differences within the government.

In Norway, the national debate also continued in May. Before this happened, the government formulated its view on SDI, which was sent to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs (*Stortingets utenrikskomite*) in mid-April. The letter contained the previously highlighted position with an emphasis on the reservations the Minister of Defence had raised at the NATO meeting. The government would thus not advise the United States against SDI research and would not rule out the possibility of Norwegian participation in non-military parts of research.[48] The letter was to some extent an attempt to smooth out the domestic disputes regarding the NATO communiqué.[49] In their memoirs, Kåre Willoch, Norwegian Prime Minister at the time, and Minister of Defence Sjaastad write that the letter was the result of a compromise with the two other government parties who wanted a more critical line than the Conservative Party, which was necessary to ease political pressure within the government.[50]

Norway's official position was established in late May when the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs presented its recommendation on SDI. But the recommendation was also an expression of the dividing lines between the political parties. A unified committee supported the government's reservations. The majority of the committee, namely the government parties, thus found that the points made in the government's letter should be the Norwegian position in all international organisations. The minority of the committee, specifically the Labour Party and the Liberal Party (*Venstre*), thought on the other hand that Norway should warn against the American project instead of supporting it and therefore proposed that Norway opposed SDI research programmes and development plans in all international organisations.[51] In the subsequent debate, the Labour Party questioned whether the Minister of Defence had expressed scepticism at the NATO meeting and attempted to divide the government by referring to the opposition within the Christian Democratic Party and the Centre Party. By a margin of just one vote, the opposition parties failed to create a majority for their proposal.[52] As in Denmark, the dividing line was thus primarily a question of how the national policy should be carried forward internationally. Like the Danish government, the Norwegian government found that its viewpoints should be promoted in a low-voiced manner.[53] At the same time, the Norwegian government was also exposed to American criticism of its policy. The US Ambassador to Norway thus asked

Prime Minister Willoch whether Norway would become a 'footnote country', which made the prime minister 'slightly offended'.[54]

Footnotes and NATO Communiqués

As the national positions were thus fixed by late spring 1985, it was clear that it was only a matter of time before Denmark would reserve its position regarding SDI in NATO. This did not occur, however, until May 1986, when both Denmark and Norway inserted footnotes. As a consequence of the resolution adopted by the Danish Parliament, the Minister of Defence announced at the Ministerial Session of a meeting of NATO's Defence Planning Committee that Denmark in the future could not accept formulations in line with the communiqué of March 1985.[55] But as the United States was not fixed on further direct references to SDI at the subsequent meeting, no Danish reservations were necessary for the time being.[56]

In parallel, the social democratic parties continued their discussions on SDI. Even though Bahr of the West German Social Democratic Party informed his colleagues that Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev had confirmed to him that the Soviet Union went to Geneva because of SDI, the parties agreed that the initiative was a main obstacle at the talks. In the discussions, it was suggested that the parties should work for a ban on SDI testing.[57] After a Eurolux meeting in late November 1985, the social democratic parties of the European NATO countries issued a communiqué in which they highlighted their opposition:

> An extension of the arms race into space as raised by SDI and similar concepts must be prevented because it will only bring the illusion of more security and in fact will endanger strategic stability and create within the Alliance zones of unequal security.

Therefore, the parties called upon the leadership of the United States and the Soviet Union to 'reaffirm and strengthen their commitment to the 1972 ABM Treaty and to adhere to a restrictive interpretation of this treaty' and to 'refrain from testing and developing anti-missile and anti-satellite weapons and from preparing for an arms race in outer space'.[58] The reference to the ABM Treaty was due to uncertainty generated by the American administration; for example, National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane launched a broader interpretation of the agreement that permitted both development and testing, but not deployment. Opposition to this interpretation caused President Reagan to postpone the question and continue within the framework of the restrictive interpretation.[59]

In May 1986, the Labour Party formed a new government in Norway. Two weeks later, Norwegian Minister of Defence Johan Jørgen Holst reserved Norway's position regarding the defence and space systems to a formulation in the communiqué from the Ministerial Session of the Defence Planning Committee that affirmed 'strong support for the United States' stance concerning intermediate-range, strategic and defence and space systems'.[60] At the meeting, Holst had unsuccessfully tried to have the defence and space systems identified as an object

for negotiations.[61] In order to avoid interpretation problems, the Danish Minister of Defence chose to follow his Norwegian colleague, although similar formulations had not previously led to Danish footnotes.[62] In her memoirs, Gro Harlem Brundtland, Norwegian Prime Minister at the time, writes that the Labour Party felt that the previous government had gone too far in its support of SDI. In addition, Brundtland writes that Norwegian authorities had tried in vain to convince the United States to use the same wording as that used in the communiqués from the meetings of NATO's Ministers of Foreign Affairs. According to Brundtland, the unwillingness to compromise on the communiqué text necessitated a reservation which was a possibility as the minority government had received support from the Christian Democratic Party and the Centre Party to do so at a meeting of the Enlarged Committee on Foreign Affairs.[63]

In a subsequent statement in the Norwegian Parliament, Minister of Foreign Affairs Knut Frydenlund explained that Holst's intention had been to change the text so that it could not be interpreted as support for SDI. A rejection of this request necessitated a Norwegian reservation.[64] This can be characterised as a rather restrictive interpretation of the communiqué text – also in relation to the Social Democratic Party, which had not made a case for the Danish government's acceptance of the previous communiqués. For the Labour Party, it was a matter of expressing their dislike of SDI and making clear that they were willing to manifest their opposition if they did not get influence. Later the Minister of Defence thus explained that the goal was to reach agreement on formulations that took care of all interests and views. As this had not been possible, it was necessary to make the Norwegian point of view clear to the other members of the Alliance.[65]

The Norwegian reservation, however, had a price. US Assistant Secretary of State Rozanne Ridgway was highly critical and told the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs that the American administration was 'worried and disappointed'. In addition, she pointed out the negative impact it had on Denmark.[66] US Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle also responded harshly and recommended that acquisition support for the Norwegian purchase of Orion maritime surveillance aircraft be cancelled. In addition, the bilateral Norwegian-American study group was suspended and an American offer to finance the upgrade of Norwegian Hawk batteries was withdrawn.[67]

Despite this, there was little to suggest that the Norwegian footnote should be the only one. At a mid-August meeting between the Social Democratic Party and the social democratic Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Norway and Sweden, footnotes in NATO were also discussed. At the meeting, Budtz explained that the Social Democratic Party preferred to avoid footnotes, but this required that the communiqués did not contain formulations that the party disagreed with. Frydenlund explained further that unless the text regarding SDI was changed, the Labour Party would be forced to make reservations again.[68] At a Eurolux meeting in September, Frydenlund stated that the United States had denied a Norwegian request for another text regarding SDI, or preferably none, at the upcoming NATO meeting. According to the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, this was an expression of American dominance in NATO, and would entail a new

Norwegian reservation.[69] The Labour Party was, however, not prepared to accept the American rejection. Prior to the NATO ministerial meeting in October, Minister of Defence Holst thus made it clear that he would work actively to ensure that the communiqué text expressed support for a negotiating line, which could lead to fewer nuclear weapons and prevent an arms race in space. According to Holst, it was a question of substance, not form.[70]

In advance of the NATO meeting, the Danish Minister of Defence tried in vain to persuade his Norwegian colleague to form a common position. Instead, Holst managed to negotiate a new communiqué text.[71] The final communiqué stated: 'In this context, we fully endorsed the United States positions at Geneva on intermediate-range, strategic, and defence and space systems. We strongly support the United States' exploration of space and defence systems, as is permitted by the ABM Treaty'.[72] The scope of the text is debatable, but it allowed the Labour Party to interpret it so that it was not necessary to make reservations.[73] Being loyal to the resolution of the Danish Parliament, Engell, on the other hand, felt he was forced to insert yet another Danish footnote.[74]

At the meeting, the Labour Party thus did what the Danish and Norwegian centre-right governments had been recommending, namely to argue and negotiate a compromise instead of demanding footnotes. Most of the former government parties in Norway were therefore satisfied with the outcome.[75] The Centre Party and the Socialist Left Party were not satisfied, however, and reacted by suggesting that opposition towards research and development of weapons systems for use in space should be expressed at the next NATO meeting. To this, the majority of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs noted that the ABM Treaty did not include a ban on research and that efforts should be made to ensure that the question of weapons in space was not a burden on NATO cohesion.[76]

In Denmark, there was dissatisfaction with the Norwegian government as well. The Danish government felt that the Norwegians had acted unfairly and at Denmark's expense.[77] The Social Democratic Party was also dissatisfied. In a conversation with Holst, a few days after the NATO meeting, Budtz expressed 'disappointment, surprise and anger' about the Norwegian acceptance of the communiqué. The Norwegian Minister of Defence explained that he was also dissatisfied, but the alternative had been an even stronger text. According to Holst, there were two reasons behind the endorsement: one was the government's minority position, but the other was that the government expected to gain influence in NATO through this tactic. The view of Prime Minister Brundtland was thus that footnotes would deprive Norway of its limited influence. But Holst had also sought a compromise because the Enlarged Committee on Foreign Affairs had demanded that he do everything to avoid another reservation. Additionally, the Minister of Defence stressed that the missing footnote was causing himself, Brundtland and Frydenlund great harm and had created considerable trouble within the party. Holst nevertheless emphasised that the Labour Party still opposed SDI and had only accepted research within the ABM Treaty.[78]

In a conversation between Chairman of the Social Democratic Party Anker Jørgensen, Budtz and Frydenlund the same day, the Norwegian Minister of Foreign

Affairs reiterated that the Labour Party had only supported research within the ABM Treaty, arguing that it limited the Americans' freedom of action and that the Norwegians did not want to lose influence with regard to a possible continuation of the process from Reykjavik. Frydenlund stressed the importance of continuing efforts of coordination between the two parties but agreed with Chairman Jørgensen that the Norwegian party would be framed as a supporter of SDI. While stating his personal and the Danish party's disappointment, Jørgensen also acknowledged the different situations of the two parties – the Norwegian in government and the Danish in opposition.[79]

The Labour Party had thus changed its view about its approach at NATO meetings. Besides the argument about influence, the change was probably also because it was unpleasant to go solo in NATO and due to the sharp US reaction.[80] In continuation of the October communiqué, Denmark was likewise alone with its reservation on reiterated 'support for the United States' exploration of space and defence systems, as is permitted by the ABM Treaty' in the communiqué from a December Ministerial Sessions of a meeting of the Defence Planning Committee.[81]

Despite dissatisfaction with the Norwegian approach, the tactics of the Labour Party were noted by the Social Democratic Party which at the same time could hardly stand in opposition to the Norwegian Labour Party, especially when in government.[82] Two meetings of the Foreign Policy Committee illustrate this. In November, Budtz was thus not opposed to a statement by the Minister of Defence that the SDI resolution was outdated. According to the Foreign Affairs Spokesman, the footnote had been right, but the Social Democratic Party was open to a modernisation at the right time.[83] In December, Chairman Jørgensen likewise agreed with the Minister of Foreign Affairs that it would be appropriate to avoid footnotes in the future. The decisive factor would however be the specific context.[84]

The December reservation became the last Danish footnote. In the context of SDI, this was due to the fact that the initiative was not referred to in the communiqués. In line with this, the question also faded in the national debates which to a large extent had been stimulated by international inputs and developments. One last incident occurred in Denmark at the beginning of 1987, over the modernisation of the American radar at Thule Air Base in Greenland, which developed into a dispute between the United States and the Soviet Union over whether this was contrary to the ABM Treaty or not.[85] The question did not develop into a political dispute between the government and the Social Democratic Party, however. At a meeting of the social democratic board group, it was thus decided that the party would adhere to the fact that the government had been assured by the United States that it was not a violation of the treaty. The government was, however, concerned about the American interpretation of the ABM Treaty, and delivered a memorandum to the US Embassy in which the government highlighted its concern over the interpretation debate, and that Denmark could not in any way support SDI.[86] In a parliamentary debate on the issue, Budtz presented a proposal, which was subsequently adopted with the government parties voting in favour of the resolution. According to the resolution, the facility should not be used offensively

or in connection with an SDI or ABM system. In addition, the United States and the Soviet Union were called upon to reach agreement on the interpretation issues and to maintain a strict interpretation of the ABM Treaty. To this, the minister of foreign affairs noted that it also covered his own views.[87]

The politicisation of SDI was over. By late 1987, Norwegian Minister of Defence Holst thus explained to his social democratic colleagues that they should not focus on SDI as it would be altered after Reagan. According to Holst, focus should instead be directed at the ABM Treaty, and the social democratic parties agreed upon the importance of a strict interpretation of the treaty.[88]

Conclusion and Perspectives

Like most NATO countries, Denmark and Norway were unprepared when the Strategic Defence Initiative was presented. The initial responses were therefore characterised by general dislike of an arms race in space while awaiting a better basis for evaluating the initiative. In both countries, the national debates began in early 1985. In Denmark, the national position was established in March and updated in May when parliamentary resolutions were adopted, while Norway's official position was determined in late May when the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs presented its recommendation on SDI. The communiqué of a late March meeting in NATO, which the opposition parties considered as relatively far-reaching support for the initiative, intensified the political contradictions in Denmark and Norway. That being said, there was a widespread negative view of SDI among the political parties. Disagreement was thus primarily a question of how this view was best handed. The initiative placed the centre-right governments in a situation where they had to balance their position between considerations for the United States, critical oppositions in the national parliaments, and different views within the coalition governments. This caused the centre-right governments to pursue a policy of low-voiced scepticism which they argued would be most influential.

The social democratic parties suggested a policy of outspoken opposition. Although the social democratic parties were aware that their opposition was unlikely to have an effect on the American administration, they were keen to manifest their opposition as they saw SDI as adding a new element to the ongoing arms race between the superpowers. After the Norwegian Labour Party formed government in May 1986, it found it necessary to reserve its position in NATO regarding a formulation which in its view could be perceived as support for SDI. For the Labour Party government, this had concrete consequences from the United States, whereas the Danish government only received verbal criticism for its reservations. This was probably due to the fact that the Danish government could argue, and did, that the Danish policy was decided by parliament against the will of the government.[89] The United States thus had some understanding of the Danish government's difficult situation although it was apparently slightly declining over the years.[90] After having manifested its opposition in the form of a footnote in NATO, the Labour Party changed tactics. Though the party argued that it

expected more influence through its new approach, it was probably also caused by the unpleasant experience of going solo in NATO and by the sharp US reaction. Thus, this chapter also suggests how some positions are more difficult to practise in government than to take in opposition. The Danish Social Democratic Party recognised this difference between the two parties, and although it was anything but satisfied with the Norwegian change of attitude, the party eventually realised the inappropriateness of conducting politics through parliamentary resolutions. Ultimately, this did not become relevant as SDI faded away.

In total, Denmark inserted footnotes in NATO communiqués regarding SDI on three occasions, Norway once. In addition, Denmark made reservations 20 times regarding INF from 1982 to 1986.[91] Literature on 'footnoting' has emphasised a varying degree of international and domestic causes as well as some degree of continuity in the security policy, specifically in terms of the attitude towards nuclear weapons.[92] This chapter agrees and shows in detail how and why the Danish and Norwegian governments felt the need to 'footnote' NATO communiqués on SDI. Based on the views of the majority of the Danish parliament, Danish footnotes were expected. The actual course of action, however, is interesting as the first Danish SDI footnote was caused by a Norwegian reservation which forced the Danish Minister of Defence to follow suit although a similar text had previously been uncontroversial in a Danish context. The two subsequent footnotes, on the other hand, were clearly in accordance with the resolution of the Danish parliament.

Additionally, this chapter has shown that the policy of the Social Democratic Party and the Labour Party was consistent with the policies of social democratic institutions and other European social democratic parties. So far, influence of transnational social democratic fora has mainly been pointed out in studies of the Social Democratic Party's and the Labour Party's policy in relation to the INF negotiations.[93] Existing research has shown that consensus of Scandilux was not endorsed by all European social democratic parties. The French Socialist Party, for instance, had its own divergent INF policy and was sceptical about the trend of discussions among the north-west European parties and ultimately established a corresponding south-west European forum, Eurosud.[94] As this chapter has shown, the European social democratic differences of the early 1980s were widely overcome by the mid-1980s, resulting in joint meetings of Scandilux and Eurosud, which among other issues led to common perspectives on SDI. The influence of these discussions was less concrete compared with those relating to the INF negotiations, however.[95] This can be explained by the fact that INF was a present and urgent issue which necessitated specific social democratic initiatives, whereas SDI was less concrete in terms of content and time perspective. The influence was thus mainly manifested in confirming their common perspective, which contributed as a legitimating factor.

Notes

1 Ronald Reagan, "Address to the Nation on Defense and National Security", 23 March 1983, www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/address-nation-defense-and-national-security.

2 Svein Melby, "Norsk debatt om SDI", in *Norsk Utenrikspolitiks Årbok 1985*, (ed) Dag Petterson and Dag Krohn (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), 1986), pp. 62–63; Hans-Henrik Holm, "Danmarks stjernekrig: Den indenrigspolitiske kamp og udenrigspolitikken", in *Dansk Udenrigspolitisk Årbog 1985*, (ed) Nikolaj Petersen and Christian Thune (Copenhagen: Danish Institute of International Affairs (DUPI), 1986), pp. 42–43.
3 DIIS, *Danmark under den kolde krig. Den sikkerhedspolitiske situation 1945–1991*, vol. 3: 1979–1991 (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), 2005), pp. 134–135.
4 Holm, "Danmarks stjernekrig"; Melby, "Norsk debatt om SDI"; Svein Melby, "NATO-kommunikéer, SDI og Norge", *Internasjonal Politikk* 41, 6 (1986).
5 Jostein Nyhamar, *Nye utfordringer (1965–1990)*, Arbeiderbevegelsens Historie i Norge, vol. 6 (Oslo: Tiden Norsk Forlag, 1990), p. 481; Rolf Tamnes, *Oljealder 1965–1995*, Norsk Utenrikspolitikks Historie, vol. 6 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1997), pp. 95, 126–127; DIIS, *Danmark under den kolde krig*, pp. 133–140, 262–277; Poul Villaume, *Lavvækst og frontdannelser 1970–1985*, Gyldendal og Politikkens Danmarkshistorie, vol. 15 (Copenhagen: Gyldendal and Politiken, 2005), pp. 341, 345–348; Nikolaj Petersen, *Europæisk og globalt engagement 1973–2006*, Dansk Udenrigspolitiks Historie, vol. 6, 2nd ed. (Copenhagen: Gyldendal Leksikon, 2006), pp. 329–345; Bent Jensen, *Ulve, får og vogtere. Den Kolde Krig i Danmark 1945–1991*, vol. 2 (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2014), pp. 405–407.
6 Rasmus Mariager, "Danish Cold War Historiography", *Journal of Cold War Studies* 20, 4 (2018), p. 198.
7 Thorsten Borring Olesen, "Under the National Paradigm: Cold War Studies and Cold War Politics in Post-Cold War Norden", *Cold War History* 8, 2 (2008), p. 201. On the disputes among historians and politicians see also Thorsten Borring Olesen, "Truth on Demand: Denmark and the Cold War", in *Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook 2006*, (ed) Nanna Hvidt and Hans Mouritzen (Copenhagen: DIIS, 2006); Nikolaj Petersen, "Kampen om Den Kolde Krig i dansk politik og forskning", *Historisk Tidsskrift* 109, 1 (2009).
8 Nikolaj Petersen, "'Footnoting' as a Political Instrument: Denmark's NATO Policy in the 1980s", *Cold War History* 12, 2 (2012), pp. 296–298. For an overview of the security policy resolutions and footnotes in NATO communiqués see Rasmus Mariager, "'Ostpolitikkens anden fase'. Socialdemokratiet og sikkerhedspolitikken 1975–88", *Historisk Tidsskrift* 115, 1 (2015), pp. 88–89, 110.
9 Helge Pharo, "The Cold War in Norwegian and International History Research", *Scandinavian Journal of History* 10, 3 (1985), p. 174; Helge Pharo, Anders Jølstad and Kjetil Skogrand, "Ekspansjon i isolasjon? Studiet av internasjonal og utenrikspolitik historie i Norge", *Historisk Tidsskrift* 75, 1 (1996), p. 257; Olesen, "Under the National Paradigm", p. 199.
10 Arne Olav Brundtland, "Gjenopprettet enighet om sikkerhetspolitikken", in *Norsk Utenrikspolitiks Årbok 1984*, (ed) Marit Ytreeide and Eilert Struksnes (Oslo: NUPI, 1985), pp. 11–23; Tamnes, *Oljealder*, p. 95.
11 Petersen, *Europæisk og globalt engagement*, pp. 315–316; Niels Wium Olesen and Thorsten Borring Olesen, *Poul Schlüters tid 1982–1993*, De danske ministerier 1972–1993, vol. 2 (Copenhagen: Gads Forlag, 2018), pp. 244–247.
12 A note on the source material: No official minutes were taken of the meetings. The minutes used are thus technically private notes of the Danish Social Democratic Party and solely intended for internal use. See also Rasmus Mariager, "Fælleseuropæisk sikkerhed. Transnationale socialdemokratiske netværk, afspændingspolitikkens krise og ostpolitikkens videreførelse", *Historisk Tidsskrift* 111, 2 (2011), p. 539; Jakob Linnet Schmidt, "Socialdemokratiet, Arbeiderpartiet og INF-spørgsmålet 1979–1983", *Arbejderhistorie* 2018, 2 (2018), p. 67.
13 *Stortingstidende*, "Spørretime: Spørsmål 1", 13 April 1983, Forhandlinger i Stortinget, 1982–1983, p. 3067.

14 *Stortingstidende*, "Innstilling fra utenriks- og konstitusjoinskomitéen om sikkerhet og nedrustning og om norsk deltakelse i FN's 12. ekstraordinære Generalforsamling", 18 May 1984, Innst. S. nr. 225, Innstillinger til Stortinget, 1983–1984, p. 23.
15 Holm, "Danmarks stjernekrig", p. 43.
16 *Folketingstidende*, "Forespørgsel vedr. de europæiske mellemdistanceraketter m.v.", 2 May 1984, Forhandlinger, 1983–1984, 2. samling, column 5279, 5320; *Folketingstidende*, "Fortsættelse af forespørgsel vedr. de europæiske mellemdistanceraketter m.v.", 3 May 1984, Forhandlinger, 1983–1984, 2. samling, column 5353. As noted in Danish research, the resolution reflected a misconception of SDI and ignorance of this being prohibit by treaty since 1967. See Holm, "Danmarks stjernekrig", p. 45. In his memoir, Ellemann-Jensen writes that he argued that the government should vote against the resolution. There was however not support for this in the government as others did not want to provoke the opposition. See Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, *Fodfejl. Da Danmark svigtede under Den Kolde Krig* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2004), p. 174.
17 The Dyvig Committee, "Danmarks sikkerhedspolitiske situation i 1980'erne", 15 November 1984, in *Dyvig-rapporten. Danmarks sikkerhedspolitiske situation i 1980'erne med kommentarer og debat* (Copenhagen: Danish Commission on Security and Disarmament Affairs (SNU), 1985), pp. 105–107.
18 Holm, "Danmarks stjernekrig", p. 45.
19 E.g. Nikolaj Petersen, "The Scandilux Experiment: Towards a Transnational Social Democratic Security Perspective?", *Cooperation and Conflict* 10, 1 (1985); Rasmus Mariager, "New Security Concepts and Transnational Party Networks, 1976–1983. The Socialist International, Scandilux, and the Overcoming of the Crisis of Détente", in *The Long Détente. Changing Concepts of Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1950s–1980s*, (ed) Oliver Bange and Poul Villaume (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2017).
20 Ann-Marie Ekengren and Rasmus Mariager, "The Socialist International, Common Security, and the Palme Commission. Helping to keep European Détente Alive, 1976–1985", in *Northern Europe in the Cold War, 1965–1990. East-West Interactions of Trade, Culture, and Security*, (ed) Poul Villaume, Ann-Marie Ekengren and Rasmus Mariager (Helsinki: The Aleksanteri Institute, 2016), p. 220.
21 The Socialist International, *Nedrustningsrapport – fra Socialistisk Internationale. Godkendt ved SI's kongres i Madrid den 13.-16. november 1980* (Copenhagen: Forlaget SOC, 1981), pp. 9–10.
22 Mariager, "Ostpolitikkens anden fase", pp. 80–83.
23 The Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, *Common Security. A Programme for Disarmament* (London: Pan Books, 1982), pp. 138–139.
24 Ibid., pp. 123–124.
25 Ibid., p. 155.
26 Petersen, "The Scandilux Experiment", pp. 1–11; Mariager, "New Security Concepts", pp. 143–147.
27 Minute of Scandilux meeting 18–19 December 1983, "Referat af Scandilux-møde, London den 18.-19. december 1983", 6 January 1984, box 1116, Archive of the Danish Social Democratic Party (SA), the Danish Labour Movement's Library and Archive (ABA).
28 Minute of SAMAK meeting 16–17 December 1984, "Notat om de nordiske socialdemokratiske partiers sikkerhedspolitiske gruppes møde i Helsingfors den 16. og den 17. december 1984", 24 December 1984, box 1705, SA, ABA. The Danish Social Democratic Party had not been able to participate at the December Scandilux meeting but at a meeting later the same month, in the security policy group of SAMAK, Thorvald Stoltenberg from the Norwegian Labour Party gave his Nordic colleagues a recap of the Scandiux meeting.
29 Draft communiqué from Scandilux meeting 9–10 December 1984, undated, box 1116, SA, ABA. It is unknown whether the document was released. The Danish Social

Democratic Party was as mentioned not present at the meeting but received a draft prior to the meeting.

30 Communiqué from SAMAK meeting 16–17 January 1985, "Uttalelse om sikkerhetspolitikk og nedrustning", undated, box 1135, SA, ABA. The development in SAMAK will not be examined in this article. A review of the Danish archive material suggests that the discussions in SAMAK did not alter the perspectives of the Social Democratic Party nor the Labour Party.

31 Melby, "Norsk debatt om SDI", p. 64.

32 The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Regjeringens syn på romvåpen og antisatellittvåpen", 22 February 1985, in *Norsk Utenrikspolitisk Årbok 1985*, (ed) Dag Petterson and Dag Krohn (Oslo: NUPI, 1986), p. 254.

33 Holm, "Danmarks stjernekrig", pp. 46–48. SDI had also been subject for discussion at a late December 1984 meeting of the Foreign Policy Committee. At this meeting, the Minister of Foreign Affairs had reported on the Ministerial Session of the mid-December meeting of the North Atlantic Council where US Secretary of State George P. Shultz, to the Foreign Minister's satisfaction, had emphasised the SDI as a research project and that outer space would be one of the main topics of the upcoming US-Soviet meeting. The meeting of the Foreign Policy Committee had thus not resulted in any Danish positioning regarding SDI. See Petersen, *Europæisk og globalt engagement*, pp. 330–331.

34 DIIS, *Danmark under den kolde krig*, p. 136.

35 Minute of Eurolux meeting 20–22 March 1985, "Notat om NATO-landenes socialdemokratiske partiers møde i Portugal den 20., 21. og 22. marts 1985", undated, box 1116, SA, ABA.

36 *Folketingstidende*, "Forespørgsel om »stjernekrigsforsvar«", 26 March 1985, Forhandlinger, 1984–1985, column 7906–7914, 7919–7922, 7958, 7974.

37 Hans Henrik Bruun, *En premiere, to generalprøver og et kup. Dagsordensafstemningen i Folketinget den 5. december 1985* (Copenhagen: DIIS, 2005), pp. 30–32.

38 Tamnes, *Oljealder*, p. 126; Petersen, *Europæisk og globalt engagement*, p. 331.

39 The Nuclear Planning Group, "Final Communiqué", 27 March 1985, www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c850327a.htm.

40 *Stortingstidende*, "Foresp. fra Stein Ørnhøi om kommunikeet fra møte i NATOs kjernefysiske planleggingsgruppe", 28 March 1985, Forhandlinger i Stortinget, 1984–1985, pp. 3063–3065.

41 Petersen, *Europæisk og globalt engagement*, pp. 331–332.

42 The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Udenrigsministerens samtale med udenrigsminister Shultz på skoleskibet 'Danmark' i Washington den 19. april 1985", 15 April 1985, 5.D.32.b, Archive of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (UM), the Danish National Archives (RA).

43 The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Udenrigsministerens samtaler med udenrigsminister Shultz den 19. april 1985", 21 April 1985, 5.D.32.b, UM, RA. The motives behind the secretary of state's unusually sharp criticism are disputed, including the role of the Danish ambassador. See Petersen, *Europæisk og globalt engagement*, pp. 243–245; DIIS, *Danmark under den kolde krig*, pp. 590–591; Jensen, *Ulve, får og vogtere*, pp. 537–538. Anyway, critique of the Danish position was repeated when Prime Minister Schlüter visited Washington, DC, in the fall of 1985. At the visit, Shultz, for example, stated: 'If . . . NATO decisions are consistently footnoted, there is a danger that future generations may not be able to look back on a world that we in this room would like to see'. See the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Statsministerens officielle besøg i Washington 9–11 September 1985", 11 September 1985, 5.D.32.b, UM, RA; US Department of State, "Toast Given by the Honorable George P. Shultz, Secretary of State, at the Luncheon in Honor of Prime Minister Schlueter of Denmark", 10 September 1985, 5.D.32.b, UM, RA.

44 DIIS, *Danmark under den kolde krig*, pp. 577–600; Jakob Linnet Schmidt, "Byrdedelingsdebatter i NATO og dansk forsvarspolitik", *Internasjonal Politikk* 79, 2 (2021), pp. 143–150.

45 Petersen, *Europæisk og globalt engagement*, pp. 332–333.
46 *Folketingstidende*, "Forespørgsel vedr. stjernekrigsforsvar", 14 May 1985, Forhandlinger, 1984–1985, column 9945–9956, 9988–9992, 10006–10007, 10010.
47 Holm, "Danmarks stjernekrig", p. 53. In retrospect, Ellemann-Jensen believes that the government parties should have voted against the resolution because it was a tightening compared to the March resolution and an expression of lack of solidarity with allies. See Ellemann-Jensen, *Fodfejl*, pp. 201–202.
48 The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Regjeringens syn på våpensystemer til bruk i verdensrommet", 16 April 1985, in *Stortingstidende*, "Innstilling fra utenriks- og konstitusjonskomiteen om forslag fra stortingsrepresentant Stein Ørnhøi datert 25. februar 1985 om våpensystemer til bruk i verdensrommet", 31 May 1985, Innst. S. nr. 271, vedlegg 1, Innstillinger til Stortinget, 1984–1985, pp. 12–13. The issue of possible participation in the civilian part also became a dividing line in the Norwegian debate. This part of the debate will not be examined further in this chapter.
49 See also Melby, "Norsk debatt om SDI", pp. 67–68.
50 Kåre Willoch, *Minner og meninger*, vol. 3: Statsminister (Oslo: Chr. Schibsteds Forlag, 1990), pp. 331–333.
51 *Stortingstidende*, "Innstilling fra utenriks- og konstitusjonskomiteen om forslag fra stortingsrepresentant Stein Ørnhøi datert 25. februar 1985 om våpensystemer til bruk i verdensrommet", 31 May 1985, Innst. S. nr. 271, Innstillinger til Stortinget, 1984–1985, pp. 2–8.
52 *Stortingstidende*, "Forslag fra Stein Ørnhøi: «Norge tar avstand fra all planlegging og utvikling av våpensystemer til bruk i verdensrommet»", 4 June, Forhandlinger i Stortinget, 1984–1985, pp. 4272, 4278, 4310.
53 Melby, "Norsk debatt om SDI", p. 72; Tamnes, *Oljealder*, p. 127.
54 Tamnes, *Oljealder*, p. 127.
55 Petersen, *Europæisk og globalt engagement*, p. 333.
56 Tamnes, *Oljealder*, p. 127; Petersen, *Europæisk og globalt engagement*, p. 333; Sjaastad, *Den Kalde Krigen og Norges sikkerhet*, pp. 84–85, 88–90.
57 Minute of Scandilux meeting 31 May-1 June 1985, "Scandilux-møde i Bonn den 31. maj og den 1. juni 1985", 5 May 1985, box 1116, SA, ABA; minute of Scandilux meeting 20–21 September 1985, "Notat om Scandilux-mødet i Bruxelles den 20. og 21. september", 24 September 1985, box 1116, SA, ABA; minute of Scandilux meeting 27 November 1985 and Eurolux meeting 27–28 November 1985, "Til partiets daglige ledelse og gruppens daglige ledelse", 10 December 1985, box 1116, SA, ABA.
58 Communiqué from Eurolux meeting 27–28 November 1985, "Zweites Treffen der Socialistischen/Sozialdemokratischen Parteien der europäischen Mitgleidsländer des Atlantischen Bündnisses in Bonn vom 27. und 28. November 1985", 28 November 1985, box 1116, SA, ABA.
59 Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition. American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1994), pp. 227–230.
60 The Defence Planning Committee, "Final Communiqué", 22 May 1986, www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c860522a.htm.
61 Tamnes, *Oljealder*, p. 127.
62 Petersen, *Europæisk og globalt engagement*, p. 333. On the previous communiqués, see the Defence Planning Committee, "Final Communiqué", 22 May 1985, www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c850522a.htm; the North Atlantic Council, "Final Communiqué", 7 June 1985, www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c850607a.htm; the Nuclear Planning Group, "Final Communiqué", 30 October 1985, www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c851030a.htm; the Defence Planning Committee, "Final Communiqué", 3 December 1985, www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c851203a.htm; the North Atlantic Council, "Final Communiqué", 13 December 1985, www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c851213a.htm; the Nuclear Planning Group, "Final Communiqué", 21 March 1986, www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c860321a.htm.

63 Gro Harlem Brundtland, *Mit liv*, vol. 2: 1987–1997 (Copenhagen: Aschehoug, 1998), pp. 20–23.
64 *Stortingstidende*, "Utenriksministerens utenrikspolitiske redegjørelse", 9 June 1986, Forhandlinger i Stortinget, 1985–1986, p. 3065.
65 *Stortingstidende*, "Utenriksdebatt", 16 June 1986, Forhandlinger i Stortinget, 1985–1986, pp. 3298–3299, 3348.
66 The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Assistant Secretary of State Rozanne Ridgway's besøg i Olso den 20.-21. juli 1986", 31 July 1986, 5.D.32.a, UM, RA.
67 The proposal to cancel acquisition support for the Orion purchase was quickly withdrawn as the United States had a direct self-interest in strengthening the Norwegian surveillance capacity. The bilateral Norwegian-American study group was later resumed. See Tamnes, *Oljealder*, p. 127.
68 Note of conversation between the Social Democratic Party, the Labour Party and the Swedish Social Democratic Party, "Notat om møde mellem udenrigsminister Knut Frydenlund, Norge, og udenrigsminister Sten Andersson", 13 August 1986, box 1701, SA, ABA.
69 Minute of Scandilux meeting 12 September 1986 and Eurolux meeting 12–13 September 1986, "Notat om Scandilux-møde og møde mellem Scandilux og Euro-Südgruppen på LO-skolen udenfor Oslo 12. og 13. september 1986", 15 September 1986, box 1116, SA, ABA. At the meeting, the parties issued another communiqué in which they repeated their call for a restrictive interpretation of the ABM Treaty and to refrain from testing and developing anti-missile and anti-satellite weapons and from preparing for an arms race in outer space. See communiqué from Eurolux meeting 12–13 September 1986, "The Meeting of the European Socialist and Social Democratic Parties of the Atlantic Alliance", 13 September 1986, box 1116, SA, ABA.
70 *Stortingstidende*, "Spørretime: Spørsmål 7", 15 October 1986, Forhandlinger i Stortinget, 1986–1987, pp. 49–50.
71 Tamnes, *Oljealder*, p. 127; DIIS, *Danmark under den kolde krig*, p. 267.
72 The Nuclear Planning Group, "Final Communiqué", 22 October 1986, www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c861022a.htm.
73 Melby, "NATO-kommunikéer, SDI og Norge", pp. 14–16; Arne Olav Brundtland, "Sikkerhetspolitiske notater – år 1986", in *Norsk Utenrikspolitisk Årbok 1986*, (ed) Dag Petterson (Oslo: NUPI, 1987), pp. 42–43.
74 DIIS, *Danmark under den kolde krig*, p. 267.
75 Brundtland, "Sikkerhetspolitiske notater", p. 43.
76 *Stortingstidende*, "Innstilling frå utanriks- og konstitusjonskomiteen om forslag frå stortingsrepresentantane Hanna Kvanmo og Ragnhild Queseth Haarstad datert 23. oktober 1986 om Norges standpunkt til forskningsprogram og utviklingsplanar som tar sikte på våpensystem til bruk i verdsrommet", 28 November 1986, Innst. S. nr. 36, Innstillinger til Stortinget, 1986–1987, pp. 1–2.
77 DIIS, *Danmark under den kolde krig*, pp. 267–268.
78 Note of conversation between the Social Democratic Party and the Labour Party, "Notat om samtale med den norske forsvarsminister", 24 October 1986, box 5, Archive of Lasse Budtz, ABA.
79 Ibid.
80 At later meetings, the former was highlighted by the Norwegians to its social democratic colleagues on several occasions. See e.g. minute of Eurolux meeting 18–19 November 1988, "Notat om NATO-landenes socialdemokratiske partiers møde i Rom den 18. og 19. november 1988", 1 December 1988, box 1116, SA, ABA; minute of Scandilux meeting 17 April 1989, "Notat om Scandilux-mødet i Amsterdam den 17. april 1989 om problemet om modernisering af de taktiske atomvåben i Europa", 18 April 1989, box 1116, SA, ABA.
81 The Defence Planning Committee, "Final Communiqué", 5 December 1986, www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c861205a.htm.

82 The Social Democratic Party had thus both emphasised in public and internally that the social democratic parties had a common perspective. See e.g. *Folketingstidende*, "Forespørgsel om »stjernekrigsforsvar«", 26 March 1985, Forhandlinger, 1984–1985, column 7919; Mariager, "'Ostpolitikkens anden fase'", pp. 94–95. A similar conclusion was reached by the Assistant Secretary of State at the Danish Prime Minister's Office and forwarded to the US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs. See the Danish Prime Minister's Office, "Samtale den 16. juli 1986 i statsministeriet mellem den amerikanske viceudenrigsminister Rozanne Ridgway og kommitteret Henning Gottlieb", 18 July 1986, 105.K.1.a, UM. See also DIIS, *Danmark under den kolde krig*, pp. 278–279.

83 Petersen, *Europæisk og globalt engagement*, pp. 333–334.

84 DIIS, *Danmark under den kolde krig*, p. 278.

85 Nikolaj Petersen, "Grønland i dansk sikkerhedspolitik", in *Dansk Udenrigspolitisk Årbog 1987*, (ed) Nikolaj Petersen and Christian Thune (Copenhagen: DUPI, 1988), pp. 35–37; Nikolaj Petersen, *Grønland i global sikkerhedspolitik* (Copenhagen: SNU, 1992), pp. 36–38.

86 Petersen, *Europæisk og globalt engagement*, pp. 343–344.

87 *Folketingstidende*, "Forhandling om redegørelse vedr. Thule-radaranlægget", 5 March 1987, Forhandlinger, 1986–1987, 1. samling, column 8342, 8356, 8366. Greenland's role in Danish security policy, along with i.a. defence policy, had, however, so far not been part of the security policy dispute.

88 Minute of Scandilux meeting 13–14 November 1987, "Referat af Scandilux-mødet den 13.-14. november 1987 i Amsterdam", 17 November 1987, box 1116, SA, ABA; statement from Eurolux meeting 18–19 November 1988, "Statement from the European Social Democratic and Socialist Parties of Countries belonging to the Atlantic Alliance", 19 November 1988, box 1116, SA, ABA.

89 E.g. the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Udenrigsministerens samtale med udenrigsminister Shultz på skoleskibet 'Danmark' i Washington den 19. april 1985", 15 April 1985, UM, RA; the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Baggrund, talepunkter og stikord til statsministerens samtaler i Washington 9.-11. september 1985 om sikkerheds- og forsvarspolitik", 2 September 1985, 5.D.32.b, UM, RA; Hans Engell, *På Slotsholmen* (Copenhagen: Aschehoug, 1997), p. 174; Ellemann-Jensen, *Fodfejl*, p. 142.

90 Prime Minister Schlüter was thus in 1985 told that the US administration understood the Danish government's parliamentary situation, although it was not concealed that footnotes in NATO were a problem and that the Danish position was of great concern to the United States. Ultimate, the Danish government was responsible for the pursued policy. In 1982, in contrast, it was stated that an independent legislative assembly was one of the conditions of living in a democracy and that it better to retain the government position and postpone the clash with the opposition. See the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Statsministerens besøg i Washington: Samtalen statsministeren-præsidenten 13. december 1982", 14 December 1982, 5.D.32.b, UM, RA; the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Statsministerens besøg i Washington: Samtalen Statsministeren-forsvarsminister Weinberger", 17 December 1982, 5.D.32.b, UM, RA; the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Statsministerens officielle besøg i Washington 9.-11. september 1985", 11 September 1985, 5.D.32.b, UM, RA. See also Engell, *På Slotsholmen*, pp. 150, 156, 163; Petersen, *Europæisk og globalt engagement*, pp. 242–245.

91 France, Greece and Spain also 'footnoted' NATO communiqués in the 1980s. See Mariager, "'Ostpolitikkens anden fase'", p. 110.

92 See e.g. Hans-Henrik Holm, "A Democratic Revolt? Stability and Change in Danish Security Policy 1979–1989", *Cooperation and Conflict* 24, 3 (1989); Poul Villaume, "Denmark and NATO through 50 Years", in *Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook 1999*, (ed) Bertel Heurlin and Hans Mouritzen (Copenhagen: DUPI, 1999); Thorsten

Borring Olesen, "Noter og fodnoter. En diskussion af indenrigspolitikkens primat i efterkrigstidens danske udenrigspolitik", in *Nye fronter i Den kolde Krig*, (ed) Carsten Due-Nielsen, Rasmus Mariager and Regin Schmidt (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2010); Fredrik Doeser, "Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy Change in Small States: The Fall of the Danish 'Footnote Policy'", *Cooperation and Conflict* 46, 2 (2011); Petersen, "'Footnoting' as a Political Instrument"; Mariager, "'Ostpolitikkens anden fase'"; Effie G. H. Pedaliu, "'Footnotes' as an Expression of Distrust? The United States and the NATO 'Flanks' in the Last Two Decades of the Cold War", in *Trust, But Verify. The Politics of Uncertainty and the Transformation of the Cold War Order, 1969–1991*, (ed) Martin Klimke, Reinhild Kreis and Christian F. Ostermann (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017).

93 See Nikolaj Petersen, "Scandilux og Danmark. Scandiluxsamarbejdet og Socialdemokratiets sikkerhedspolitik", in *Man har et standpunkt . . . Socialdemokratiet og sikkerhedspolitikken i 80'erne. En debatbog*, (ed) Søren Møller Christensen (Copenhagen: Eirene, 1984); Nikolaj Petersen, "Scandilux-samarbejdet og vesteuropæisk sikkerhed", *Politica* 16, 4 (1984); Petersen, "The Scandilux Experiment"; Mariager, "Fælleseuropæisk sikkerhed"; Mariager, "'Ostpolitikkens anden fase'"; Rasmus Mariager, "Programmed for Arms Control? Northern European Social Democratic Security Policy Discussions, 1976–83", in *The 'Long 1970s': Human Rights, East-West Détente and Transnational Relations*, (ed) Poul Villaume, Rasmus Mariager and Helle Porsdam (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016); Mariager, "New Security Concepts"; Rasmus Mariager, *Den vesttyske forbindelse. Studier i det sikkerhedspolitiske opbrud i socialdemokratiet, dansk partipolitik og civilsamfund, ca. 1976–1988* (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 2017); Schmidt, "Socialdemokratiet, Arbeiderpartiet og INF-spørgsmålet". A link between a spiritual build-up in the Socialist International and Scandilux and the security policy of the Danish Social Democratic Party was pointed but not explored in 1983. See Ole Karup Pedersen, "Socialistisk Internationale, Socialdemokratiet og dansk udenrigspolitik", *Økonomi og Politik* 57, 4 (1983), pp. 306–307.

94 Petersen, "The Scandilux Experiment", pp. 7–10; Mariager, "New Security Concepts", pp. 143–144, 150; Schmidt, "Socialdemokratiet, Arbeiderpartiet og INF-spørgsmålet", p. 90.

95 See e.g. Petersen, "The Scandilux Experiment", pp. 11–17; Schmidt, "Socialdemokratiet, Arbeiderpartiet og INF-spørgsmålet", pp. 76–89.

Part 4

Civil Society and the Peace Movement

11 The SDI

A Further Challenge for the US Anti-Nuclear Movement?

Angela Santese

1. Anti-Nuclear Mobilisation in the United States

On 23 March 1983, surprising part of his own staff, President Ronald Reagan announced the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) during a National Address on Defence and National Security.[1] Reagan's announcement was made at a particularly tense moment for the Republican administration from the domestic point of view since it was facing a double challenge. On one side, the Congress was expected to vote in May on the controversial MX missile system and the result of the vote seemed to hang in the balance. On the other side, the country was in the midst of a mass anti-nuclear mobilisation that also enjoined the support of part of the same Congress.

Indeed, since the end of the 1970s, the American anti-nuclear movement experienced a renaissance, due also to the convergence between a well-established pacifist tradition and new forms of political environmentalism. This convergence laid the foundations for the mass anti-nuclear movement of the 1980s that was an unprecedented political and social phenomenon capable of bringing pressure to the various levels of the political system. With the election of Ronald Reagan, the ensuing military build-up, harsh anti-Soviet rhetoric, increasing tensions between the two superpowers, and loose talk about a limited nuclear war that followed, a nuclear scare coursed through American society. The fear of nuclear war reinforced the emerging anti-nuclear movement, which during Reagan's tenure not only grew but successfully fostered a new, national conversation on nuclear policies and disarmament issues.[2] As underlined by Paul Boyer, the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign (NWFC), the umbrella organisation through which the US anti-nuclear movement became a mass phenomenon, 'emerged as the political manifestation of [the] fear' of nuclear war and its devastating consequences on human societies and natural environments.[3]

The target of the NWFC was Reagan's nuclear build-up and his nuclear strategy that, according to anti-nuclear activists, was increasing the risk of a nuclear confrontation. The Reagan administration was initially slow in recognising the magnitude of the anti-nuclear sentiment and at least until the end of 1981 seemed more concerned with European protests against the deployment of the so-called Euromissiles. Nevertheless, from the spring of 1982 the White House was forced

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to cope with the American anti-nuclear movement; it created an *ad hoc* interdepartmental group, the Nuclear Arms Control Information Policy Group (NACIPG) in order to counter the NWFC's influence on public opinion and regain control of the nuclear arms debate.

The origin of the NWFC can be traced to the 1979 annual meeting of Mobilization for Survival, a pacifist and environmentalist organisation, where Randall Forsberg, a defence and disarmament analyst, first introduced the *Call to Halt the Nuclear Arms Race*. The *Call* demanded that

> the United States and the Soviet Union should immediately and jointly stop the nuclear arms race. Specifically, they should adopt an immediate, mutual freeze on all further testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons and of missiles and new aircrafts designed primarily to deliver nuclear weapons.[4]

The *Call* essentially proposed a bilateral and mutual halt in the testing, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons.[5] The assumptions behind that proposal were that the Soviet Union and the United States had enough nuclear warheads to potentially obliterate each other many times over and that further growth in the number of nuclear weapons and the development of counterforce capabilities would increase the chance of a nuclear exchange between the two superpowers. A bilateral freeze of nuclear arsenals at existing levels could stop the nuclear build-up and thus be the first step towards reversing the arms race and, eventually, making the elimination of all nuclear weapons possible.

Unlike other arms control schemes advanced by pacifist and anti-nuclear groups, the *Call* was a moderate proposal: it was devised in bilateral terms and according to Forsberg, Soviet compliance could be guaranteed since 'a freeze on nuclear missiles and aircrafts [could] be verified by existing national means' and 'more easily than the complex SALT I and II agreement'.[6] The *Call* was thus conceived to appeal to both peace activists and the American public because the backing of these two constituencies was needed to make the moratorium a matter of national debate. In fact, while 'the peace community could mobilize thousands and thousands of committed activists . . . for the right cause', according to Forsberg 'no major disarmament effort can succeed without the support of the majority of middle class, middle-of-the-road citizens'.[7]

Starting in 1980, a coalition of anti-nuclear, pacifist, church, and civic groups, along with labour and professional organisations, rallied around the proposal and began distributing the *Call* in order to publicise it. At the same time, many grassroots groups started circulating petitions endorsing the freeze and planning for state and local referenda on the moratorium proposal.[8]

In March 1981, the first Freeze National Conference was held in Washington, DC, officially launching the NWFC. According to the activists gathered at Georgetown University, the response of the US government to their proposal would be 'primarily dependent on the extent of public support for the freeze' and thus the priority was to develop 'widespread public support' for the moratorium.[9]

Although the origin of the Freeze campaign lay in 1980, it was only during 1981 that it started to build roots outside traditional pacifist and environmental activists. From the beginning of Reagan's tenure, his confrontational rhetoric toward the USSR, along with the arms build-up and the president's apparent unwillingness to reach an agreement on arms control with the Soviets, meant that fear of nuclear war was both increasing and spreading to a broader swath of the general public. In October 1981, the president said that a limited nuclear war was possible, apparently accepting the possibility of a nuclear exchange that was limited to European soil.[10] Moreover, Americans perceived Reagan as more inclined than his predecessor to fight a nuclear war, especially after National Security Decision Directive 13 (NSDD-13) was leaked to the press. According to some media charges, the NSDD 13 was a 'new strategic master plan', devised to ensure the nation could win a protracted nuclear war against the Soviet Union.[11] As underlined by Winkler, 'Reagan's relentless drive to bolster the defense establishment and his apparently cavalier acceptance of the possibility of nuclear war' favoured the revival of the anti-nuclear movement.[12]

Public concern about the possibility that the two superpowers would use nuclear weapons rose accordingly. Opinion surveys confirmed this trend: according to a Gallup Poll of June 1981, 47% of respondents thought that it was likely that in the next ten years the United States would get into a nuclear confrontation with the USSR. At the same time, the findings showed that 72% of Americans 'would favor an agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union not to build any more nuclear weapons in the future'.[13]

Despite the growth of the anti-nuclear movement in the United States, up to the beginning of 1982, media attention focused more on European anti-nuclear agitation, which it saw as a mass movement. This perception led 'some Western Officials to worry that [the European movement] could become a political force strong enough to erode NATO unity'.[14] In particular, the media suggested that NATO allies and the Reagan administration were concerned that the anti-nuclear campaign could jeopardise the decision to deploy the Euromissiles.[15] In contrast, the American anti-nuclear movement was portrayed as a more limited phenomenon. In fact, one of the first articles about the NWFC, entitled *Ban the Bombers Back in Business* in the *Washington Post*, underlined that, although arms control was re-emerging as a political question, the US movement, unlike the one in Europe, was not a mass phenomenon.[16] Similarly, the Reagan administration until at least the end of 1981, was more concerned with the European peace movement than its American counterpart. On 18 November 1981, in announcing the beginning of the Geneva Talks, Reagan seemed to refer to the European anti-nuclear movement when he told his audience that many young people 'question why we need weapons, particularly nuclear weapons, to deter war and to assure peaceful development. They fear that the accumulation of weapons itself may lead to conflagration. Some even propose unilateral disarmament'.[17] In the same speech, Reagan announced the so-called *zero option proposal*, which provided for the removal of all Soviet intermediate-range nuclear weapons from Europe in exchange for a US promise not to deploy the Euromissiles. The administration

was aware that this proposal was unacceptable to the Soviets, and the aim was to make them appear unwilling to reach an agreement and thus to portray Reagan as the peacemaker.[18]

This situation changed in 1982 when several factors coalesced to suggest that the NWFC was a mass movement. First, from the second half of 1981 on, support for the Freeze campaign grew. Opinion polls suggested that bilaterally freezing nuclear stockpiles before cutting the superpowers' arsenals was finding widespread public support: a Newsweek Poll of March 1982 revealed that 60% of respondents were in favour of the moratorium, while a Gallup Poll analysis of April 1982 stated that 'there [was] little question that the nuclear freeze movement has made a major political impact in the United States, and it has the potential to make an even greater one'.[19] Second, petition drives to put the freeze proposal on the ballot at local and state levels for the upcoming mid-term elections were succeeding, with grass-roots activists having gathered 500,000 signatures in 20 states. Particularly significant was the success of the Freeze movement in California: in Reagan's home state another 500,000 signatures were collected on a state-wide initiative petition.[20] Third and most important, due to the anti-nuclear mobilisation and the increasing public concern about nuclear war, several policy-makers began paying attention to disarmament issues.[21] In February 1982 Congressman Edward Markey (D-MA) introduced a resolution calling for a nuclear weapons moratorium in the House of Representatives, and on 10 March, Senators Mark Hatfield (R-OR) and Edward Kennedy (D-MA) did the same in the Senate, laying the groundwork for the discussion of the freeze proposal in Congress. The congressional joint resolution (S.J. 163-H.J. 433) stated that

1. As an immediate strategic arms control objective, the United States and the Soviet Union should: a) pursue a complete halt to the nuclear arms race; b) decide when and how to achieve a mutual and verifiable freeze on the testing, production, and further deployment of nuclear warheads, missiles and other delivery systems; . . .
2. Proceeding from this freeze, [they] should pursue major, mutual and verifiable reductions in nuclear warheads, missiles, and other delivery systems.[22]

Given these developments, it seems that in 1982 the Reagan administration became concerned with the anti-nuclear movement that was challenging the basic tenets of his foreign policy, particularly the strategy of *peace through strength*, and whose lobbying activities, directed at both the public and the Congress, could undermine his proposed military budget. Documents reveal that, by spring 1982, the administration began to perceive the growth and influence of the anti-nuclear movement as a threat and developed a grand strategy to deal with this challenge. The introduction of freeze resolutions in both houses of Congress had two main effects: it broke through the media indifference towards the NWFC and prompted the White House to articulate a coherent answer to growing public anxieties about the nuclear danger.

The Kennedy-Hatfield resolution was officially presented on 10 March 1982. The media reaction was almost immediate, with reports about the NWFC beginning to appear in the mainstream national press. The following day *The Washington Post* asserted that the Kennedy initiative showed that 'the politics of mass protest [was] being brought into play in matter of national defense' and that nuclear doctrine, 'once a well-defined dispute among specialists [was] increasingly becoming the subject of popular conflict'.[23] The *New York Times* reporter Judith Miller described 'a growing number of political, religious and civic groups throughout the country . . . coalescing into a significant movement' that had 'gained momentum and political legitimacy' with the joint freeze resolution.[24]

During the spring of 1982, the administration was prompted to explain why it could not endorse the moratorium and to clarify what kind of arms control agreements it was seeking. This first White House reaction was an answer not just to the Freeze movement and the rising media attention towards disarmament issues but also to the renewed congressional activism. Indeed after the official presentation of the Kennedy-Hatfield resolution, numerous variants as well as additional legislative plans to reduce nuclear arsenals were submitted in both chambers. The large number of arms control resolutions introduced between March and May 1982 suggested that arms control was acquiring a new political centrality.[25] Senators and representatives, probably because of the upcoming mid-term elections, seemed to be sensitive to public opinion trends that suggested widespread concerns about nuclear war, and they were anxious to show their electorate that they were working to reach an arms control agreement.

2. Reagan's Strategy Against the NWFC

From the spring of 1982 onwards, the White House began to perceive the NWFC, public backing of the freeze proposal and arms control resolutions pending in Congress as potential threats to its arms control strategy and military buildup and began developing a strategy to diminish the appeal of the NWFC.

William P. Clark, the National Security Advisor, was at the forefront of an inter-agency effort to develop a policy offensive on arms control and against the Freeze movement, through the creation of a new inter-departmental group, the Nuclear Arms Control Information Policy Group (NACIPG). Acknowledging that a nuclear scare was hitting US society, the group's goal was to convince 'Americans whose anxieties are heightened by this movement that our policy solutions best meet their desire that the United States do something to lessen the prospect of a nuclear holocaust'.[26] In recognising that public concerns about nuclear issues cut across all major groupings of society, the group intended to influence the broadest possible audience in order to prevent worried people from becoming anti-nuclear activists. According to the guidelines of the NACIPG, to avoid the further widening of anti-nuclear criticism Reagan was supposed to quickly show that he was as concerned with the peril of nuclear war as US citizens and that he was working to lessen the possibility of a nuclear exchange.

The recommendations discussed during the first meeting of NACIPG materialised with the Eureka College Speech, in which Reagan first made public the American negotiating proposal on strategic nuclear weapons. Although he presented the '"starting START" decision as a normal incident in the process of Government', it was also a step devised to regain the control of the nuclear arms debate and to start building public backing for the Administration's arms control approach.[27] In the speech given on 9 May 1982, 16 months after his inauguration, while announcing the START proposal, Reagan stated that his 'duty as President [was] to ensure that the ultimate nightmare [of nuclear war] never occurs'.[28] That public address, as revealed by NACIPG documents and underlined also by some press comments at the time, seemed to be intended to target many audiences. The first was composed of those American citizens scared by Reagan's lack of activity in arms control. Polls showed clearly that public opinion not only backed the freeze by a wide margin but that nearly half of the public thought Reagan had not done enough to decrease the risk of nuclear war. The second audience was Congress, which was then considering a number of arms control resolutions. The third was formed by NATO governments, which, under pressure from their own publics, were urging Reagan to show his willingness to reach an agreement with the Soviets, in order to make the dual-track decision more politically viable. Thus, Reagan was in some ways forced to announce his proposal before having completed the arms build-up he considered the necessary precondition to negotiating with the Soviets from a position of strength.

Making a clear negotiating proposal and putting casual talk about nuclear war aside was part of a broad strategy to minimise the NWFC's influence on public opinion. As shown by the Eureka College speech, the NACIPG worked on the propaganda side by launching a counter peace offensive. Its hope was to lessen the fear of nuclear war and erode public opinion backing for the freeze proposal, by condemning it as perilous for US national security. The administration also engaged in an aggressive battle against the freeze resolution on state and local ballots and, above all, in Congress. Reagan and his staff were particularly worried about congressional activism because they feared that Congress, under the pressure of public opinion, might not just approve arms control proposals that he overtly opposed, but might go further by cutting the proposed military budget and killing his nuclear modernisation program. The administration therefore lobbied hard to defeat the Kennedy-Hatfield resolution or at least to have the House approve only a diluted version of it.[29] As for the NWFC, Reagan also used red-baiting tactics to discredit it, attempting to represent the movement as pro-Soviet, Soviet-led or at least infiltrated by Soviet elements.

The Freeze House resolution was discussed for the first time in Congress in 1982: the non-binding resolution asking for a nuclear weapons freeze followed by reductions was approved in committee on 23 June.[30] The moratorium would next be discussed by the full House where, *Washington Post*'s William Chapman wrote, the same sponsors seemed to 'attribute the freeze resolution's popularity in the House to a national campaign of anti-nuclear groups which has made it the focal point of elections in many districts this fall'.[31] Given the political

relevance of the freeze issue for the upcoming mid-term elections, the confrontation between the administration and the NWFC together with all the associations supporting the moratorium was tense. The debate on H.J. 521 took place on 5 August.[32] The outcome was disappointing on the freeze front: after a nine-hour debate, the House voted 204–202 to reject H.J. 521.[33] Thus, the resolution backed by the NWFC and its congressional allies was defeated, albeit by just two votes, while the administration's negotiating philosophy seemed to prevail.

Although Reagan won, the victory was narrow, not just in terms of vote margin, which indicated the sharply divided opinion in the House, but also in relation to the intense lobbying effort that the administration put into rejecting the freeze resolution.

Moreover, after the House vote the NACIPG devoted its attention to states expected to vote on nuclear freeze referenda, namely Wisconsin, California, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Michigan, Arizona, North Dakota, Oregon, Montana, and the District of Columbia.[34]

Despite the Administration's efforts, on 2 November, the nuclear weapons freeze referendum passed in what the NWFC described as 'the closest equivalent to a national referendum in the history of American democracy'. Taking into account the Wisconsin vote, the proposal calling for a US-Soviet nuclear weapons freeze was approved in 9 out of 10 states, in the District of Columbia and in 34 out of 37 cities that had referenda. According to Freeze campaign data, 19,175,914 people, 25% of American electorate, cast their votes and the moratorium proposal received 11.6 million yes votes and 7.9 million no votes, passing with a 60% majority.[35]

In 1982 the NWFC had obtained positive results: despite Reagan's opposition, it could claim victory in the first nationwide referendum on the nuclear arms race while at the same time the new House, controlled by the Democrats, gave hope that the freeze legislation would be approved in 1983 by a wide margin.

3. The SDI: Countering the Anti-Nuclear Movement?

On 3 January 1983, nuclear weapons freeze bills were introduced in both the House and the Senate.[36] After approval in committee, on 16 March, the House opened the debate on the freeze bill. One week later, President Reagan, surprising some of his own advisors, announced the Strategic Defence Initiative, using a lexicon that seemed, paradoxically, to borrow themes from the anti-nuclear movement. Given the widespread anti-nuclear mobilisation and the resolution pending in Congress, the SDI speech seems to be another attempt to control and influence the public debate on the nuclear issue.[37] The president spoke not only about reducing and limiting nuclear arsenals but also about the possibility of 'freeing the world from the threat of nuclear war'.[38] In trying to convince the public that he shared the concerns of anti-nuclear activists, he presented the SDI as an alternative to nuclear war. This was a clear choice that followed the guidelines discussed within the NACIPG in 1982. Behind this strategy laid the belief that it was necessary to deconstruct the widespread perception that Reagan was a warmonger

and convince the public that the president was working to prevent the nuclear Armageddon.

Indeed, during the debate on the freeze resolution in the House, the administration began to add a new strategy to the one based on the constant denunciation of the danger inherent in the moratorium and to the efforts to defeat it in Congress: adopting a rhetoric that seemingly aimed at co-opting the anti-nuclear movement, using the same lexicon and borrowing from it some themes. This strategy followed the guidelines discussed within the Nuclear Arms Control Information Policy Group in 1982, and it was based on the belief that it was necessary to counter the widespread perception that Reagan was a warmonger: the administration aimed at convincing the public opinion that the president shared the same concern of anti-nuclear protesters about the effects of a nuclear war. Therefore, from this perspective, the SDI became also a powerful instrument against the anti-nuclear movement, basically stealing the anti-nuclear line of reasoning and challenging the NWFC with the same anti-nuclear language, in the attempt to avoid the further widening of the anti-nuclear front.

Indeed, in his Address to the Nation on Defense and National Security on 23 March, President Reagan stated that he wanted to 'share' with American citizens 'a vision of the future that offers hope'. In the president's words, the United States should have undertaken 'a program to counter the awesome Soviet missile with measures that are defensive'.

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

With these words, the former California governor announced the Strategic Defence Initiative. The SDI, immediately dubbed 'Star Wars' by the media, foresaw the launch of a vast research project for the creation of a national anti-ballistic system: an anti-nuclear shield that should not only protect the United States from Soviet missiles but 'free the world from the threat of nuclear war'.[39]

The announcement of the SDI, and the abolitionist tone used by the president, was an alarming development for the anti-nuclear movement for different reasons. First of all, it was understood as a further destabilising system in the already tense nuclear confrontation between the two superpowers, capable of forever compromising the achievement of any nuclear arms control agreement in the future. For this reason, in the following months and years it was constantly denounced by the NWFC as a threat for the stability of the international system since it increased the danger of a nuclear arms race in space and consequently the peril of a confrontation with the USSR. Second, despite the fact that the SDI constituted a danger similar to that posed by other nuclear systems, for the anti-nuclear movement it was very difficult to concretely deal with 'Star Wars'. This difficulty stemmed from the fact that, since it was only a research project, it was complex to mobilise the anti-nuclear constituency against it. Finally, immediately after the public

announcement of the SDI, the anti-nuclear movement interpreted the new system as a specific challenge from a rhetorical point of view, as the president presented it as an effective recipe to overcome the peril of nuclear annihilation.

In relation to the rhetorical dimension of the 'Star Wars' speech, and beyond the interpretations concerning the origins of the SDI, the important fact for the US anti-nuclear movement was that, in announcing this research programme, the president used rhetoric that seemed detached from his usual hard-liner tones used only two weeks before, when he publicly stated that the Soviet Union was an 'evil empire'.[40] As a matter of fact, during the SDI speech, Reagan's language and the words he choose were useful in eroding the public consensus of the anti-nuclear movement, an objective identified by the Nuclear Arms Control Information Policy Group as early as 1982.

Addressing the country's scientific community, Reagan invited 'those who gave us nuclear weapons, to turn their great talents to the cause of mankind and world peace to give us the means of rendering these nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete'. The research programme that Reagan envisioned was to help 'to achieve our ultimate goal': 'eliminating the threat posed by strategic nuclear missiles' and paving the way 'to eliminating the weapons themselves'. The president also stressed how, through this research project, which 'holds the promise of changing the course of human history', the United States 'seek neither military superiority nor political advantage', since the only single aim was a means 'to reduce the danger of a nuclear war'.[41] In an unusually conciliatory way, the president underlined that, through the SDI, the United States did not aim to obtain advantages from the military or political point of view but was pursuing the far more important goal of ridding the world of the danger posed by nuclear weapons. Moreover, Reagan suggested also that he not only believed that the SDI could make nuclear weapons harmless and useless but that it would pave the way for arms control.

As Frances Fitzgerald has pointed out, the tones used in his 'Star Wars speech' seem to suggest that the SDI, or at least the speech with which it was announced to the world, was not just a message to the Soviet Union but also a rhetorical device to address the domestic political situation. During March 1983, the anti-nuclear movement was still supported by a large part of public opinion; furthermore, Congress, which had refused the appropriation of further funds for the MX missile at the end of 1982, was expected to vote again on this issue in May 1983; finally, the House was about to vote for the freeze resolution bill while Reagan's popularity seemed to be declining. According to Fitzgerald, it was to address this political context that the Reagan administration began to think about the idea of launching the Strategic Defence Initiative, which was therefore a rhetorical tool to regain popularity, to unblock the impasse in relation to rearmament, and to co-opt, at least partially, the anti-nuclear movement.[42]

While in previous months Reagan had underlined on several occasions that he also shared the fears of that part of the public opinion worried about the consequences of a nuclear conflict, he seemed to go further with his speech of 23 March, making reference not just to arms control but also to disarmament.

At least on the declaratory level, the president seemed to adopt the movement's point of view because he not only denounced the danger of a nuclear war but affirmed that his main aim was the elimination of the threat posed by nuclear missiles. This was striking since, for the previous two years, he had argued instead for the need for a comprehensive nuclear rearmament plan to confront Moscow from a position of strength.

The hypothesis that the public intervention on the SDI was elaborated taking into account the domestic political situation seems to be confirmed not only by the rhetoric used but also by the situation in the House: there the Reagan administration was facing enormous difficulties in convincing representatives to oppose the legislative provision on the nuclear freeze that met with a broad consensus in the public opinion and whose approval would have been an implicit condemnation of the management of negotiations with Moscow. Second, the Congress was expected to vote again on the controversial MX missile system in May, and Reagan hoped that being more conciliatory on the issue of nuclear weapons reduction could increase the likelihood of a positive voting result. Finally, since the administration had failed to counter the spread of the anti-nuclear movement and discredit its ideas in the face of American public opinion, it seems plausible that with the 'Star Wars' Speech Reagan was trying to co-opt the movement and that part of the electorate which supported him, trying to convince both of them that, despite the different strategies, both the president of the United States and those who were challenging his defence policies had the same ultimate goal: the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Beside what was perceived by the movement as a rhetorical threat, anti-nuclear activists accused Reagan of wanting to add a new dimension to the nuclear arms race, namely outer space, until then considered only 'an arena for important scientific and peaceful results'.[43] Moreover, according to the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, one of the most important actors in the debate on nuclear arms control, 'Reagan's infatuation with Star Wars', coupled with mutual suspicions, American accusations of alleged Soviet violations, and the bureaucratic internal resistance of both superpowers at reaching an agreement, meant the possibilities of a positive outcome of the arms control negotiations was tenuous.[44] And it is precisely the negative impact on arms control negotiations that the activists denounced in the following years. In its publications, the NWFC presented the SDI as a serious challenge for international security. The movement indeed underlined that 'introducing Star Wars escalates the arms race and sabotages arms control' and that 'by declaring Star Wars to being not negotiable the Reagan administration is declaring arms control not negotiable'. Furthermore, activists underlined that 'Star Wars illegally violates the ABM Treaty signed in 1972' and that 'no major U.S. weapons system has ever been researched and tested without being deployed and Star Wars would be no different', increasing the peril of military confrontation with the USSR. Moreover, 'Star Wars will lead to an arms race in the space. This will increase international tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union and prevent further progress toward peace'. Finally, according to the NWFC the main problem was that 'Star Wars seeks a military solution to a problem that should be solved by political negotiations'.[45]

Beyond the constant attempts to gain the public's attention on the perils posed by the construction of the space shield envisioned by Reagan, the SDI proved to be a challenge difficult to overcome for the anti-nuclear movement. Indeed, for the NWFC it was arduous to mount a protest against what was just a research project. The leadership of the Freeze Campaign tried to integrate the protest against the SDI in its agenda: starting in March 1983, the NWFC inserted information in some fact sheets about the SDI and the dangers associated with the placement of nuclear weapons in space, but aside from this, it did not organise any specific public events on that theme. Indeed, according to the Freeze leadership, it was difficult to try to mobilise people around this issue that was perceived as something less concrete than other nuclear systems. Also for this reason, during the rest of the year all the energies of the campaign were focused on convincing the 'US Government to propose a comprehensive, bilateral freeze to the Soviet Union' and on the Euromissiles issue.[46]

In the end, the SDI didn't trigger a mobilisation like the dual-track decision or Reagan's military build-up and the community of experts and politicians primarily discussed it in its technical aspects. However, at the same time, the SDI or at least the rhetorical device and the timing used by Reagan to present it proved to be a challenge for the anti-nuclear movement. From this point of view, the SDI represented the capability of the president to create a situation that was in discontinuity with his warmonger attitude of the recent past and that was useful in defusing public fears of a nuclear confrontation. By being able to reassure public opinion, the president at least partially eroded the capability of the movement to mobilise people, not just against the SDI but more generally around the anti-nuclear issue.

From 1983 onwards, albeit slowly, the SDI entered the public debate, not in its technical aspects, but as an alternative potential tool to avoid the nuclear destruction of the nation. In this way, in fact, together with the general change in the president's negotiating posture and attitude towards the USSR, it contributed to weakening the ability of the anti-nuclear movement to act effectively in the public space.

Not by chance, the Gallup institute made its last poll on the nuclear weapons freeze in September 1984. After that date, opinion polls on arms control and the relationship between Moscow and Washington continued while opinion polls regarding the nuclear freeze proposal were replaced by those concerning SDI, 'a change that reflects how Reagan had managed to successfully redefine the issue of nuclear weapons'.[47] The president indeed partially succeeded in tempering the nation's nuclear fears by announcing the SDI with a lexicon that seemed close to that of the anti-nuclear movement. The fact that Reagan was able to lessen the fear of a nuclear confrontation and thus also to weaken the anti-nuclear movement was also confirmed by the November 1984 electoral results. The president's challenger, Walter Mondale was a supporter of the freeze proposal, which was also included in the Democratic platform. Nevertheless, the president was reconfirmed with 59% of the vote compared to the 41% obtained by Mondale, winning 49 States (Mondale only won Minnesota).[48] According to some analysts, Reagan's

landslide victory was due also to the ability of the president to manipulate 'the issue of war and peace' and reassure public opinion.[49]

As a matter of fact, the Reagan administration perceived the anti-nuclear mobilisation as a domestic threat that, intertwining with the pressure of allied governments, was putting its nuclear build-up and foreign policy strategy under siege. Moreover, under pressure from US public opinion and Congress, mobilised by the NWFC, Reagan found himself compelled to alter his warmongering image and bellicose rhetoric and prove he was willing to achieve an agreement with the Soviets. Taking into account the domestic pressure and the specific wording chosen by Reagan, the SDI speech could be considered as part of the 'peace offensive' devised by the NACIPG in order to challenge the US anti-nuclear movement. And this peace offensive was effective in reassuring domestic public opinion and in eroding, at least moderately, a part of the consensus that the anti-nuclear movement had enjoyed until then.

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12 SDI as a Contested Imaginary in British Culture and Society

'Winning in Space'

Jonathan Hogg

Introduction

1983 was a year defined by nuclear controversy. The decade began with steadily increasing nuclear mobilisation following the NATO decision to place nuclear cruise missiles on European soil, which was due to happen after the 1983 General Election. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, a staunchly pro-nuclear politician, welcomed further nuclear installations as a solidification of the deterrence posture. Consequently, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and aligned anti-nuclear groups became highly active again, with the largest mass protests since the 1960s occurring throughout Europe over the issue. Government nuclear policy was attacked head-on by the Labour Party, and its 1983 General Election manifesto contained a pledge to unilaterally ban nuclear weapons. Anti-nuclear hopes were pinned to this electoral gamble, and while polls from the time suggest that a significant number of British people favoured a demilitarised future without nuclear weapons, Labour was defeated heavily at the polls.[1]

In this context, US President Ronald Reagan's new vision of nuclear strategy laid out in his 'Star Wars' speech from March of that year was initially a minor issue for the anti-nuclear movement in Britain. The project, later named the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), was announced at a moment when British culture was defined, in part, by conflicting nuclear imaginaries. In an era marked by the popular perception of a rising nuclear threat, it was increasingly common to witness extreme – or realistic – representations of nuclear war, such as the British TV film *Threads* (1984), for instance.[2] Alongside the activities of CND, novel forms of anti-nuclear protest had already emerged in the 1980s before Reagan announced his new vision of nuclear missile defence. Most significantly, in early autumn 1981, a group of Welsh women walked over a hundred miles to RAF Greenham Common in Berkshire, England, to protest against the proposed placement of Cruise missiles there. The Greenham Common Peace Camp was created the following year, which was populated until the turn of the century.

The political and cultural milieu that enabled this alternative expression of citizenship was shaped by a set of frustrations that emerged from the economic

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decline of the 1970s and a sense of disenchantment with mainstream political choices, signalled by a lack of patience with even the increasingly radical left-leaning Labour Party led by CND founder member Michael Foot from 1980. This group of highly committed female protestors insisted that the nuclear arms race was enabled by patriarchal power structures that sustained the constant threat of nuclear annihilation. As sociologist Alison Young described in her book *Femininity in Dissent*, their efforts were consistently derided in the British tabloid press.[3] Presented as deviant, unclean, irresponsible, and politically suspect by *The Sun* and *Daily Express* newspapers especially, Greenham protesters nevertheless garnered positive publicity for their dramatic acts of protest, which included creating a human chain nine miles long around the perimeter of the military base.[4] The fundamental aim of the Greenham women was to abolish nuclear weapons and ensure a peaceful future for the younger generation.

With his Star Wars speech, Reagan promised something similar. As historian, European Nuclear Disarmament (END) and CND activist E.P. Thompson would later summarise, Reagan had 'out-homilied the Bishops, and he stole the Freeze movement's clothes while it was bathing'.[5] This chapter argues that Reagan's vision of nuclear defence ushered in a new imaginary of nuclear weapons which subtly rejected the growing moral case made by the anti-nuclear movement. While anti-nuclear responses to SDI in the era reflected the discursive force of fear and uncertainty, other voices countered these opinions by arguing for the diplomatic advantages of British support for the strategy. Although there were a rich set of opinions against SDI, ultimately, imaginaries created around SDI helped strengthen nuclear mobilisation during the decade.[6]

While scholars of British nuclear culture have pointed to the defining qualities of nuclear issues in the 1980s, little attention has been paid to the social and cultural impact of Reagan's speech and its aftermath. Standing in direct opposition to the worldview of the Greenham women and CND, Reagan, a Republican politician representing a conservatism that promoted patriotism and traditional family values, attempted to alter the parameters of nuclear discourse by suggesting a new path towards nuclear 'defence'. In this way, Reagan, and to some extent the British politicians who later fell in line behind SDI, created a new imaginary that was on one hand preposterous, and on the other offered an idealistic, optimistic, and pragmatic vision of a peaceful future. The ways in which this clash of worldviews was represented in the British press illuminates the highly contested and polarised nature of nuclear discourse in the 1980s.

This chapter explores the phases that marked the cultural and social responses to SDI by analysing journalistic discourse, activist activity, and popular culture. Through analysing the language used in relation to SDI, it argues that a sociotechnical imaginary of SDI was created, and that it served political ends by generating socially and politically acceptable knowledge of nuclear weapons. Arguing that the use of language to some extent supported policy and constructed imaginaries suggests that both language and ideas served a powerful function in British culture and society.[7]

Imaginaries and Reagan's Speech

Using 'the imagination' or 'imaginaries' as an analytical framework is an established way of conceiving the links between Cold War policy and domestic culture. Indeed, during the Cold War era scholars had already started to trace the blurred lines between fact and fiction in the nuclear arms race. In 1988, cultural historian H. Bruce Franklin published *War Stars: the Superweapon and the American Imagination*, which explored the direct links between American writers, industry, and government. Franklin, infamously fired from Stanford University in 1972 over alleged incitement to riot over the Vietnam War, argued that science fiction played a central role in the construction of particular ideas about superweapons. Of course, weapons of mass destruction, lasers in space, and futuristic military technology had been the staple of popular fiction and film throughout the twentieth century, but Franklin argued that 'the new consciousness about American superweapons is central to some of the most vital expressions of contemporary American culture'.[8] Elsewhere, historian Jon Agar argues that, in the United States, 'newspaper and popular science press coverage was also highly influential, not least because these were a main source of imagery that visually encouraged the view that SDI was feasible'[9]

Literary scholar David Seed's earlier work supports such assumptions through tracing the long history of entanglement between imagined weapons and their subsequent development.[10] This circular phenomenon on the one hand highlights the political power of representation and ideas, and on the other highlights how well-known science fiction writers such as Robert Heinlein became fierce defenders of Cold War militarism, SDI included.[11] The broader literature on the importance of mass media, propaganda, and journalism in establishing, reinforcing or resisting Cold War ideas continues to grow.[12]

These overlaps between fact and fiction are not hard to find in digitised British newspaper archives. In the 1970s, futuristic concepts such as 'atomic death rays' fuelled a particular vision of an antagonistic and tense nuclear arms race between the United States of America and the Soviet Union that might reach beyond earthly territorial limits.[13] As a set of ideas and images, SDI slotted in well with nuclear fiction that emerged in the 1980s, a decade shaped by a 'politics of vulnerability' where popular culture routinely represented the apocalyptic violence of nuclear weapons. Cordle argues that the 'fundamental instability produced by nuclear culture' impacted upon Anglo-American life in this era.[14] Alongside this influential strand of scholarship highlighting the importance of Cold War imaginaries rooted in fictional discourse, others have also acknowledged the importance of the imagination in relation to space defence, with Jon Agar arguing that 'SDI worked in, and on, the imagination'.[15]

Recent work in the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS) has explored the active social agency of 'sociotechnical imaginaries'. Sismondo argues that 'imaginative infrastructure' serves 'the possibility of shaping terrains of choices and thereby of actions', whereas Sam Robinson suggests that imaginaries 'allow states to more effectively control society and 'other' those who do not share their

same vision'.[16] Sheila Jasanoff, who first defined the concept, argued that these imaginaries are,

> collectively held, institutionally stabilized, and publicly performed visions of desirable futures, animated by shared understandings of forms of social life and social order attainable through, and supportive of, advances in science and technology.[17]

Jasanoff traces how scientific knowledge 'both embeds and is embedded in social practices, identities, norms, conventions, discourses, instruments and institutions – in short, in all the building blocks of what we term the *social*'.[18] Nuclear sociotechnical imaginaries became a feature of Cold War life, shaping how governments and populations responded to and understood technological change.[19] Emerging in British political culture from the 1950s onwards, these imaginaries served to downplay the unique danger of nuclear weapons, contain fear, encourage survivability and control, and promote both deterrence ideology and the development of military nuclear technology as national virtues.[20] Viewed through the lens of sociotechnical imaginaries, it is hard to deny Reagan's speech was one of the more notable 'publicly performed visions' of a desirable future in the Cold War era.

This vision, which quickly became an evocative and contested imaginary in British culture, both supported a particular form of social life and social order and, of course, was used to legitimise a new direction in nuclear weapons strategy, away from Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD). In his speech, Reagan offered an imaginative departure from the nuclear status quo:

> Let me share with you a vision of the future which offers hope. It is that we embark on a program to counter the awesome Soviet missile threat with measures that are defensive . . . [turning to] the very strengths in technology that spawned our great industrial base and that have given us the quality of life we enjoy today . . . I call upon the scientific community who gave us nuclear weapons to turn their great talents to the cause of mankind and world peace: to give us the means of rendering these nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete.[21]

Promising an era of nuclear defensiveness, where new technologies would be harnessed for peaceful ends, Reagan painted a seductive 'vision of the future', which was aimed at securing domestic political gain and leveraging global diplomatic advantage.[22] Reagan's speech can also be read as one that encouraged and strengthened a particular 'sociotechnical imaginary' of nuclear weapons that recast the morality and perceived danger of nuclear brinkmanship. Historian Jeff Smith, in 1989, argued that SDI was a deliberate attempt to attach the ideals of virtue and heroism to American nuclear policy, where science and technology had to be presented as virtuous and progressive fields of activity in an era where they were being increasingly challenged.[23] Nuclear weapons, with all their negative

connotations, were 'the disruption that SDI responded to', and therefore Reagan's SDI speech was 'part of a web spun from the discourses on virtue, human power, and the state' that then allowed certain concepts to function powerfully in American popular culture.[24]

Indeed, by 1988 presidential candidates presented themselves as 'heirs to the Star Wars dream': aligning themselves to this firmly embedded imaginary allowed them access to technopolitical prestige, and present a progressive worldview.[25] H. Bruce Franklin argued that SDI was 'a purely passive and restorative . . . effort to go not forward but *back*'.[26] Reagan's speech struck a nostalgic tone, activating a homely and peaceful imaginary of timeless American values and characteristics that depended on downplaying nuclear danger in the present.[27]

The speech introduced a series of techno-scientific ambitions, set out a new direction in Cold War rhetoric, attempted to justify heightened American defence spending, and offered 'a new hope for our children in the twenty-first century'. A highly masculinised sociotechnical imaginary emerged which challenged the dominant imaginary of vulnerable airspace (weapons were potentially now 'impotent and obsolete'), promised to reduce the danger of nuclear war, and constructed the idea that technology could be harnessed to defend 'free people' from nuclear attack. Presented as a research and development programme – not a project with the dual aims of technological superiority and political advantage – this particular imaginary had the benefit of extending flexibly and adaptively into the future which allowed SDI, in time, to appear resilient and legitimate in the face of criticism. Reagan's speech dovetailed with this imaginary and offered the reassurance that technology could solve the nuclear arms race, not deepen it. An imaginary of nuclear optimism and peaceful defensiveness was created that shrouded the aggressive and deadly properties that the technology promised. The 'desirable future' imagined in his speech was clear enough.

Star Wars and British Politics

In time, SDI also became a useful imaginary for British politicians that served to ultimately downplay the danger of nuclear weapons, legitimise spending on nuclear research and development, and strengthen nuclear deterrence as an idea by placing moral emphasis on defensiveness. While Reagan's announcement of SDI was followed by a concerted propaganda campaign in the United States, the UK government made little effort to actively promote SDI in public.[28] Rather, Thatcher's early dismissive comments on the initiative turned to cautious defence of American plans, and then more vocal support.[29] Jon Agar has detailed the disagreement between political and scientific communities over the viability of SDI, while suggesting that many did not agree with Thatcher's eventual acceptance of SDI.[30] He argues that Thatcher was eventually more favourable compared to some ministers and advisors, stating 'it is a feature of the SDI question that leading politicians, not least Reagan and Thatcher, were far more credulous than experts or journalists'.[31]

In the UK, one aspect of SDI that particularly 'exercised the public imagination . . . was the perception that this was an American attempt to achieve a strategic superiority which would allow it to win nuclear wars'.[32] Although political scientist Trevor Taylor argued that 'there were few early public signs of the nature of the UK response', he did suggest four stages that framed the response from the UK government.[33] After the initially slow response to SDI, limited support to the initiative was announced publicly, UK participation in SDI research was then sought and, in the end, SDI contracts were negotiated directly with America.[34]

Naturally, the press covered the diplomatic loggerheads that emerged after the introduction of SDI.[35] As Aaron Bateman argued in a recent article in *Physics Today*, 'whereas Reagan uncritically trusted technology to achieve a nuclear-free world, Thatcher was more focused on the details of the science and felt that there would be major obstacles to implementation that only years of basic research could overcome'.[36] Thatcher

> was optimistic about the economic, scientific, and defence potential of SDI research, even if the entire system did not come to fruition. Thatcher was also enthusiastic about the negative Soviet reaction to SDI: she believed that Soviet fear could be useful for getting the USSR back to the arms control negotiating table. In his published memoir, Thatcher's Chief Press Secretary Bernard Ingham placed special emphasis on the anxiety caused by SDI. Reagan had 'what Mrs Thatcher felt were over-optimistic expectations of the SDI. She never expected this defensive system would be able to neutralise every nuclear weapon.[37]

In British public discourse, this led to more questions than answers in the months after Reagan's announcement: could SDI actually be developed, and what were the consequences, if so?[38] Geoffrey Howe, speaking when secretary of state for foreign and commonwealth affairs, thought it was 'geared to a concept that might prove elusive', while political scientist Paul Sharp has argued that Thatcher believed alternatives to deterrence policy were a 'perilous pretence'.[39] Yet, despite Thatcher's concerns about SDI's feasibility, her government eventually publicly supported Reagan's plan.[40] By 1984, Thatcher considered herself 'reassured' by the American administration on the question of SDI.[41] The year after, Michael Heseltine, secretary of state for defence, was discussing publicly how British universities and other research centres could attract large SDI research contracts.[42]

The political 'left' in Britain were broadly critical of SDI throughout the 1980s. Labour leader Michael Foot was alarmed by the prospect of SDI, arguing that 'the arms race could be transferred to space at infinite cost and peril'.[43] In his diaries, Tony Benn believed that Reagan couldn't give up SDI because his reputation and political survival were at stake: the Republicans would 'eat him alive if he abandoned Star Wars before the mid-term elections'.[44] In Benn's eyes, Reagan became the obstacle to nuclear disarmament by the end of the Cold War.[45] SDI, as both real policy and a set of ideas about the future of nuclear defence, was contested within British journalistic culture. Most left-leaning publications such

as *The Guardian* and *The Daily Mirror* tended to be broadly critical of SDI, while *The Times* and *The Daily Express*, representing more right-leaning perspectives, mainly backed the initiative. While the left-leaning press often focused on issues at the core of the anti-nuclear agenda, such as the diplomatic instability SDI could cause, the right-leaning press offered more focus on the technologies involved and served as a platform for official spokespeople. It should be acknowledged that broadsheets such as *The Guardian* and *The Times* contained a proportion of articles on SDI, which may be defined as neutral in tone. In the next section, a general survey of the journalistic discourse surrounding SDI will trace how the political phases sketched earlier played out in public.

Star Wars in British Society and Culture: The Complexities of Nuclear Citizenship in the 1980s

Contested Imaginaries

Following Ronald Reagan's 'Star Wars' speech in March 1983, a political cartoon in *The Observer* morphed the ageing actor into Darth Vader brandishing a pair of futuristic ray guns. R2D2, another key character in the original *Star Wars* films, hopped around at his heels in alarm, shouting 'Hold it Mr President, we're the GOOD guys!!'. Linking together the nickname 'Star Wars' with a blunt critique of the 'defensive' claims of Reagan's strategy, this cartoon perfectly encapsulates many initial responses to Reagan's rhetoric in Britain.[46] At other moments in the Cold War era too – with *Dr Strangelove* (1964) being the most obvious example – humour was mobilised to shift attention away from the more fundamental anxieties inherent in the new application of these technologies, or to satirise nuclear diplomacy. Humour served to puncture fantasies of defence, security, and power.

To begin with, SDI became an easy object of derision in the British press. *The Guardian* reported that there was 'little hope' of SDI ever succeeding, and a generally dismissive tone dominated that newspaper, labelling SDI an unrealistic fantasy.[47] Cartoons poked fun at Reagan's initiative, quickly labelled 'Star Wars' by US Senator Ted Kennedy, and reiterated on *Time* magazine's front cover in April 1984. Of course, SDI was officially declared to be defensive in nature, which was a useful imaginary to promote. Robert Patman summed it up well in 2007 when he wrote, 'while SDI was not threatening in itself – it was a research programme – it symbolised a declaration by Reagan to achieve strategic superiority over the USSR and undermine its claim to superpower status'.[48] The realisation that SDI was a longer-term nuclear strategy led to expressions of fear and uncertainty, marking the next phase of responses to SDI. Those who pointed out the permanence of the strategy highlighted the perceived illegality of SDI, and the way it contravened the NPT and ABM treaties.[49] This led to the impression that people were uncertain what to make of the plans and unsure whether to be worried or reassured. *The Guardian* was keen to highlight the diplomatic instability SDI would cause, as the Soviet Union sought ways to maintain balance.[50]

The British press regularly reported on Moscow's response to SDI. *The Guardian* reported how the Soviet news agency TASS argued that SDI 'amounted to a new attempt at strategic superiority' and violated existing agreements.[51] It was reported that the Soviet leaders were critical of SDI as representing the beginning of an expensive new arms race, and feared American intentions.[52] In a similar vein, Labour MP Dennis Skinner slammed the plan, arguing that more missiles would be built to counteract SDI, and 'the whole thing will just escalate in a lunatic fashion'.[53] A spokesperson from MIT was quoted as saying this was a 'new cycle' in the nuclear arms race, while the editor of *Jane's All the World's Aircraft* called SDI an 'alarming' development.[54] The prospect of longer-term escalation was, ironically, discussed into the late 1980s.[55] In June 1984, an article in the *Guardian* titled 'Atomic Nightmare of the New Era' detailed the practical difficulties facing SDI, and offered a damning assessment of the impact of SDI on the prospect of disarmament.[56] The Labour Party denounced SDI in strong terms, publicly represented with headlines such as 'Labour opposition to SDI spelt out by Kinnock', "Star Wars" condemned by Kinnock at NATO', and 'SDI genie must be put back in bottle – Healey'.[57] David Owen wrote a withering public letter to Margaret Thatcher, which was published in *The Guardian* in 1984.[58] In it, he criticised the strategic and moral basis of SDI.

The notion of irresponsibility and immorality was often attached to discussions of SDI, with an arms race in space presented as reckless, risky, unpopular, and Reagan's 'fairy tale'.[59] Television presenter Terry Wogan, in conversation with scientist Carl Sagan on the chat-show *Wogan*, broadcast in 1985, described Star Wars as 'the thing that's most in the news, that most excites the imagination and indeed the anxieties'.[60] It is true that some elements of the press focused on the perceived 'fear' that SDI had created in Europe and the danger of an isolated and heavily defended the United States.[61]

There were varied responses across Britain, with the *Perthshire Advertiser* condemning the plans, for example. A local church group 'Kirk's Church and Nation Committee' made 'an all out attack on America's Star Wars programme. Most sanely it suggests that what I term President Reagan's dangerous toy is a threat to the peace of the world and the prospects of peace'.[62] The article mentioned 6,500 US scientists who were boycotting work on the project, because 'they fear for the world'. *The Sunday Times* reported that 70 key British computer scientists will refuse to cooperate with the United States 'star wars' project'.[63] Many voices contributed to the critical reception of SDI but, as with other aspects of nuclear development, resistance in print did not translate to effective direct protest. In parallel fashion, while the utopian and dystopian imaginaries attached to SDI were contested, it proved difficult to counter the optimistic sociotechnical imaginary of nuclear defensiveness.

Defending SDI: Technological Viability and the Cold War

In 1985, the reality of SDI as a large-scale research project was becoming clearer. *The Times* reported on American anti-satellite weapons tests, and echoed

claims that 'by the end of 1986 the United States will be able to demonstrate technology to show that the US could develop a weapon to shoot down the entire Soviet intercontinental ballistic missile fleet as it tried to enter space'.[64] Talks between Reagan and Gorbachev at Geneva in 1985 confirmed the diplomatic and military importance of SDI. By autumn 1986, SDI had become such an important element of American nuclear strategy that Reagan's refusal to compromise on the programme scuppered talks with the Soviet Union at Reykjavik. While many politicians and commentators were scathing about this consequence of SDI, certain sections of the press, notably the *Daily Express*, argued that SDI was a success and that America and the West were 'winning in space'. General Daniel Graham, founder of High Frontier in 1981, promoted the 'genius of American technology' and claimed that although 'Star Wars was dismissed two years ago as a comic strip fantasy [it] has suddenly dashed Soviet dreams of nuclear supremacy'. Arguing that SDI could be a reality within a few years, it is clear that American propaganda efforts had also percolated into British culture.[65] *The Daily Express* criticised Labour's position on SDI before and after the General Election. Michael Foot was criticised, because he 'not only hates nukes, but lasers too', and one headline proclaimed, 'Star Wars! U.S. Lasers a knockout!'[66]

In response to an episode of *Panorama* based on SDI, shown on the BBC in 1987, the *Daily Express* accused the programme of 'disinformation' about the initiative. *Panorama* had claimed that SDI was 'bad science, hitched to dubious political aims and false promises made to the public'.[67] The commentary from the *Daily Express* stated that, according to *Panorama*,

> SDI is a Right-wing conspiracy dreamed up by that old favourite, the military-industrial complex, in order to destroy our chances of arms control agreements. An important strategic concept really deserves serious on a [sic] national television network rather than doses of boringly-familiar Leftish claptrap.[68]

The newspaper had called the current affairs programme a 'battered flagship' earlier that month.[69]

Some broadsheets defended SDI as well, specifically in relation to the economics of defence contracts. E.P. Thompson argued that 'for some reason *The Times* of London had become the leading organ in Europe for Star Wars advocacy, and one which revealed extraordinarily close – even intimate – briefings which appeared to come directly from the White House'.[70] In *The Times*, Richard Burt from the US State Department argued that 'myth upon myth' was being offered by Star Wars critics.[71]

Yet, *The Times* was also scathing on the subject of SDI propaganda. Attempts to 'sell' Star Wars as part of a publicity machine were described as being in 'full swing' in 1985. SDI was described as 'a dangerous aberration' that in attempting to deal with 'dwindling public belief in nuclear deterrence . . . is the offspring not of some Dr Strangelove in the Pentagon who wants to scupper the Geneva arms

talks but of the fear and uncertainty of ordinary Americans'.[72] Commentary from liberal intellectuals drew attention to the extremes of both positions in the debate. For example, historian Alan Brinkley criticised E.P. Thompson in a *London Review of Books* review, arguing that discussion of SDI revealed the similarities between anti-nuclear campaigners and pro-nuclear politicians: 'both take comfort in the delusion of a total solution to the problems of nuclear weapons'[73] It is clear that there was lively public discussion of the legitimacy, morality and feasibility of SDI, with European voices also contributing to journalistic discourse[74] Those voices that supported SDI rarely confronted the morality of nuclear weapons and SDI and focused on the strategic advantage it offered the West. The sociotechnical imaginary at the heart of SDI presented a way for the West to 'win' the Cold War, while downplaying the reality of nuclear weapons. Those who criticised the initiative saw it as unviable, immoral, and an example of one more disingenuous act from reckless nuclear leaders.[75] We will now consider how these ideas contributed to British anti-nuclear activism.

Anti-Nuclear Activism

Considering the many voices criticising SDI, it might be assumed that the anti-nuclear movement would find ways to successfully resist the roll-out of SDI in Britain and influence public opinion. However, by Christmas 1985, the CND admitted that 'the central question is how do we campaign against SDI, not just in the academic journals, *The Guardian*, and talking to ourselves about this madcap venture, but how do we take our arguments on to the doorstep, the street stall, and the tabloid newspapers?'[76] Reagan's plan for space defence had proved a very difficult issue to counteract.

E.P. Thompson concluded that by shifting the emphasis to defence and security, and declaring the immorality of an aggressive deterrence posture, the new pro-nuclear vision created the illusion of occupying the moral high ground. Activists struggled to persuasively resist the new sociotechnical imaginary of defensive deterrence, and the gradual absorption of Star Wars research contracts into British institutions that it enabled.[77]

A *Guardian* opinion piece in 1986 observed that the peace movement had entered a period of hibernation after the perceived failures around missile deployment in Europe, and the 'tangible swing to the right in the political atmosphere generally in Europe'.[78] It is clear that CND did not react in a sustained and swift way to SDI and were unsure how to make a mark against government policy that was far less dramatic and visible than missile deployment. This is not to suggest that this was a uniquely British problem.[79] One CND circular from June 1985 admitted that

> so far there has been no visible popular opposition to Star Wars in Europe . . . European nations alter their position on Star Wars almost daily while they struggle to find ways to support a project which totally undermines what they perceive as the 'credible nuclear deterrent'.[80]

Naturally, the anti-nuclear movement was quick to denounce SDI. CND's *Sanity* magazine published a piece by John Cox in May 1983 that argued SDI would threaten multilateral disarmament efforts.[81] But, *Star Wars*, a polemic edited by E.P. Thompson, was only published in 1985. In it, Thompson argued that Reagan's skill as a 'populist ideologist' and expert communicator meant that the American middle-class would 'feel both patriotic and altruistic about spending billions more dollars on military adventures'.[82] Many technical aspects were criticised by anti-nuclear campaigners. For example, *The Radiator*, the magazine of the CND in the South and West, published a piece by Brian Burnell that explored in great detail the potential military advantages SDI could offer.[83] CND did organise protests against SDI in 1983. One demonstration in October focused on the likely escalation of the arms race that the strategy signalled.[84] There was a CND campaign against Star Wars, which organised various small events, lobbies, and pamphlets titled 'Weapons in space bring nuclear war closer to home' and 'Star Wars? Don't believe everything Hollywood sells you'.[85]

As well as protesting the moral and strategic case, there were significant efforts made to counteract SDI contracts being awarded in Britain, which was bound up in a broader effort to prevent military contracts in Universities. There were organised efforts to lobby parliament, to work with the Trade Unions, and to link up with other activist groups internationally. Groups such as The Campaign Against Military Research on Campus (CAMROC) were highly organised and effective in garnering both information and support from universities about how military contracts were being advertised and awarded.[86] An article in *The Economist* in 1985 makes the point that scientists were polarised on SDI, and 'opinion jumps sharply from those who, like Dr Edward Teller, are convinced that Star Wars promises deliverance from Armageddon to those who consider the whole thing a mad delusion'.[87]

Lobbying Westminster was also a tactic, although the publicity around this was not significant.[88] One pamphlet – 'No to Star Wars, Yes to Disarmament' – argued that Star Wars would provoke yet more nuclear deployments in Europe, escalate the arms race on Earth and in space, and take vital resources away from essential scientific research'[89] The likely ramifications of SDI was the subject of a report prepared for the Trade Union Conference on Star Wars in 1986. It discussed how SDI would push industry and peaceful money to military ends, and argued that Western governments were fixated on conducting military research in place of civic projects and objectives.[90] Through focusing on the moral implications of SDI, it was hoped that the anti-nuclear cause would be advanced. There was an international appeal to world leaders against the militarisation of space, and signatories included Shirley Williams, David Steel, and Salman Rushdie. There were significant international efforts to counter SDI and raise public awareness of the myriad issues involved.[91] However, it proved consistently difficult to counter the imaginary of defensiveness set up by Reagan, and endorsed by Thatcher. As defined by the British anti-nuclear movement in the 1980s, the moral case did not gain enough traction to create significant change. The sociotechnical imaginary of SDI – of superweapons being both an inevitable part of life, but also controllable and defensive – found confirmation in popular culture.

Popular Culture – Normalising SDI

Reagan's speech took on the label 'Star Wars' because of the assumption that the plans were based on science fiction. Anette Stimmer has argued that 'this science-fictionalisation soon constituted the sociopolitical context surrounding Reagan's missile defence initiative'.[92] She believes that the Star Wars label 'neutralised' the meaning of the initiative and had the potential to have 'an enabling effect in communicating policies by tapping into common knowledge and a disabling effect by inviting trivialisation and ridicule'.[93] David Seed points out that it was useful, in some ways, for SDI to have this cultural link to *Star Wars*.[94] The link popularised and domesticated the initiative and allowed SDI to dovetail with familiar science fiction tropes that had emerged decades before. Ray guns, lasers, secret satellites, and a militarised global space race were standard components of British popular culture by the 1980s, with nuclear weapons often presented as dramatic plot devices. Popular novels by American authors Tom Clancy and Dale Brown glamorised SDI technologies. Representations of American enthusiasm and preoccupation with futuristic technology in films such as *Back to the Future* (1985) and *Flight of the Navigator* (1986) proved to be very popular with British audiences. Two American films released in 1985 – *Real Genius* and *Spies Like Us* – had storylines that focused on SDI technologies, notably Val Kilmer's teen 'genius' who developed a powerful laser in *Real Genius*.[95] Like *War Games* (1983), which centred on an adolescent who almost starts nuclear war via his home computer, *Real Genius* effortlessly connected the white suburban geek with secret high technology. The playful tone of such films domesticated and created a sense of national pride in both the technologies on display and the characters that prove capable of mastering them. *Spies Like Us* offered a comedic interpretation of space-based missile interception, while helping to cement the impression of laser technology as a usable, if far-fetched, method of defence. *Superman IV: The Quest for Peace* (1987) saw Superman 'denouncing those who profit from building weapons of mass destruction and disposing of nuclear warheads by hurling them into space'.[96] Interestingly, some discussion of more realistic depictions of nuclear war, such as American TV film *The Day After* (1983), suggested that SDI would prevent such fictional nightmares of nuclear war ever becoming a reality.[97] Nuclear imaginaries were undoubtedly layered and complex 'social agents' in 1980s Britain.

Popular culture and journalistic discourse supported perceptions that real-world superweapons and science fiction fantasy were co-dependent imaginaries. As Paul Boyer noted, the development of such fictional tropes can be traced back to the start of the twentieth century, and the circular phenomenon between discourse and reality remained strong throughout the century.[98] It is tempting to view this as having a neutralising effect on how new weapons technologies were received by the public. On the one hand, the terrifying potential of military technological innovation was all too real. On the other, the more flamboyant imagined constructions were easy to dismiss as unreal, unthreatening, and fun.

Conclusion

SDI has a complex afterlife in British society and culture. In a decade retrospectively branded 'nuclear' by literary scholars and historians, the 1980s was in many ways primed for the outlandish imaginative leap that SDI represented. As an idea, it proved to be a remarkable articulation of technological and tactical intent, and a masterstroke of political rhetoric. Practically, in the British context at least, it might be viewed as a fairly unremarkable continuation of the bureaucratic web of nuclear mobilisation. It was high rhetoric in the very public global nuclear arms race and an idealistic smokescreen for the violent potential of nuclear weapons. The Thatcher government was wary of the publicity surrounding Reagan's plan, but eventually offered lukewarm acceptance of SDI. This challenged Labour and anti-nuclear dismissals of the more fanciful or dangerous aspects of SDI, gaining legitimacy in the process. SDI was slowly offered an air of respectability and legitimacy by sections of political culture and public discourse in the UK. By the time SDI was officially renamed The Ballistic Missile Defense Organisation (BMDO) in 1993 after the Clinton administration turned its attention towards shorter-range missiles, anxiety over the fragile nature of the nuclear arms race had dissipated and space laser technology existed – in public consciousness, at least – primarily in the realm of popular culture.

Compared to other issues in the nuclear 1980s, SDI was easy to dismiss as science fiction. Yet, evidence from local and national newspapers suggests that there was sustained anxiety over the issue until the end of the decade. The main themes reflected in the press revolved around the uncertainty and potential instability that the Star Wars vision represented for the future. Uncertainty was expressed as anxiety and even fear towards both the future of the arms race and the potential collapse of weapons treaties. At the heart of anti-nuclear arguments were the danger that nuclear weapons posed, and the morality of their existence. Pro-nuclear voices often placed these concerns secondary to their effectiveness in countering the Soviet threat. On the whole, debates about viability overshadowed discussions of the morality of the proposals.

In describing and evaluating public responses to SDI, this chapter argued that the concept of 'sociotechnical imaginaries' is a useful way to frame the ways in which SDI became embedded in British life. Initially publicly imagined as an impossible fantasy project, SDI became a useful sociotechnical imaginary for Britain's deterrence ideology. SDI was presented as a utopian vision of human inquisitiveness and ingenuity, and an endless, peaceful, quest for answers to fundamental techno-political questions. In the right hands, technology could solve the nuclear arms race. The discursive journey of SDI in British culture allows us to appreciate how Cold War discourse solidified and embedded ideas within institutions where, as Jasanoff suggests, 'the merely imagined is converted into the solidity of identities and the durability of routines and things'.[99]

Notes

1 Polls conducted between 1983 and 1989 included in Lindsay Brook et al. (eds), *British Social Attitudes Sourcebook* (Aldershot: Gower, 1992), suggest that one in two people

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13 British and International Peace Campaigning Against the Strategic Defence Initiative

Patrick Burke

Introduction

The Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) – 'Star Wars' – was one of the most controversial policies in the NATO alliance in the 1980s: it deepened tensions between the United States and its West European partners and threatened to undermine the already difficult arms control/arms reduction talks between the United States and the Soviet Union.[1] SDI generated widespread opposition in West European peace movements. But, at their peak when SDI was first proposed, these movements did not (with some small exceptions) make this opposition a priority. In the UK – the principal focus of this chapter – for a long time 'Star Wars' barely registered in the peace movement's strategic debates and activism. When it did, the (very small) group European Nuclear Disarmament (END) mounted a strong anti-SDI campaign, along with even smaller groups founded specifically to oppose SDI; but the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), the UK's largest peace organisation, could only find SDI a secondary place in its new, post-cruise missile deployment activism. In the principal transnational forums of the West European peace movement, British and other peace organisations were unwilling or unable to maintain a focus on 'Star Wars'. What explains these strategic responses to SDI?

No Cruise! No Trident!

On 23 March 1983, President Reagan delivered the speech that set in motion the SDI programme. By that point, CND – and the broader peace movement – had been campaigning vigorously for over three years and were at a high point of activism.

NATO's formal decision, taken on 12 December 1979, to deploy 572 Tomahawk cruise and Pershing II ballistic missiles in Western Europe – in response to, it was stated, the Soviet SS-20 – was a catalyst, perhaps the most important one, for the emergence of the new movement: a symbol for many of an arms race they felt was slipping out of control and of the United States' developing strategies that made nuclear war-fighting more likely.[2] The plan to deploy cruise missiles in the UK provided a ready-made, tangible target for a campaign,[3] and, in the form of the USA, NATO, and the Conservative government of Margaret

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Thatcher, ready-made culprits. Over the course of 1980, national CND emerged as the dominant organisation in the peace movement. CND campaigned as a 'two-tier' movement',[4] 'broad' and 'non-party' in character:[5] thousands of local groups (with tens of thousands of members), affiliated to, and loosely coordinated by, a national CND that was an organisational and resource centre for the movement.[6] The groups helped steer the campaign via elected representatives on a national council and through resolutions submitted to and voted on at an annual conference. CND's 'leadership' was, imperfectly, accountable to the membership. Until about the middle of the decade, CND pursued a mass, direct-pressure, campaign that focused on cruise missiles, Trident and civil defence; targeted the government but also tried to influence the Labour Party and the lesser opposition parties; and used tactics from a well-established 'repertoire of contention'[7] – marches and demonstrations, local, regional and national; lobbying; die-ins; petitions and more – as means with which to exert pressure.

For the roughly 20 months that followed Ronald Reagan's announcement, British peace activists paid little attention to SDI. Two explanations can be offered. On the one hand, campaigners did not regard SDI as an immediate threat: with many others outside the movements they 'disparaged' SDI 'as a Presidential "fantasy"'. Also – and by sharp contrast with the support in NATO for the 1979 dual-track decision – European governments, 'preoccupied with seeing through the deployments of Pershing II and cruise missiles',[8] were not obviously backing the idea. In the UK, the 1984 Defence White Paper of that year contained no mention of the programme, and it was not until late December 1984 that an official British statement on SDI was issued.[9]

On the other hand, most British peace activists (in parallel with their counterparts elsewhere in Western Europe) were devoting almost all their attention to weapons programmes they *knew* were a threat – cruise missiles, scheduled for deployment in 1983, and Trident, the UK's 'independent' nuclear weapons system – and to the tactics needed to stop these. CND's 1982 annual conference had backed a 'campaign against Cruise' as the 'main focus of activity in the coming year'; a proposal for the anti-Trident campaign to be 'widened [from Scotland] to the rest of Britain and given more emphasis'; and a resolution that called for 'non-violent "direct action"' [NVDA] and "civil disobedience" tactics' to be 'seriously considered with respect to Cruise missile and Trident sites'.[10] There were large actions by CND and Greenham Common women at Easter 1983, and mass demonstrations – coordinated with movements across Western Europe – that October. CND – and the broader movement – was focused on 'stopping cruise' and opposing Trident; SDI was absent from the campaign.

As it was – almost entirely – from the debates about movement strategy after the stationing of cruise missiles. In the aftermath of the re-election of a Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher in June 1983, as deployment in November loomed, and in the months that followed, activists high and low in the campaign, in and outside CND, took up a new debate: what now? For many at the 'grassroots' the priority was to continue campaigning against cruise missiles, and to use NVDA tactics to do so: many activists came together in new groupings – Action

84; Cruisewatch, Snowball, among others – that organised high-profile and often disruptive protests.[11] Elsewhere, in the pages of CND's monthly magazine, *Sanity*, in resolutions debated at the 1983 conference, in position papers submitted to the executive committee, on the national council, activists debated the relative merits of campaigning against the missiles – cruise missiles,[12] Trident – which the movement had been opposing since 1979/80; or in favour of adopting some version of a nuclear weapon 'freeze'. Two important outcomes of these debates were a demonstration in London in June 1984 against cruise missiles and in October that year in Barrow-in-Furness against Trident.[13] Activists made other demands: for CND to push harder for 'independent' or 'unilateral' nuclear disarmament, for example, or to oppose British membership of NATO.[14]

SDI played next to no role in these discussions and actions. In one of a handful of references in *Sanity* to space-based military technology, the leading CND activist, author, and former chairperson of the organisation, John Cox, reminded readers that 'laser and particle-beam space weapons' were among the 'most dangerous developments in the arms race' (but did not propose launching a campaign against them).[15] Other contributors referred only in passing to 'Star Wars' as one of NATO's 'policies',[16] or to the US and Soviet negotiators' divisions 'over space weapons'.[17]

'Waging War From Outer Space'

With the re-election of Ronald Reagan as US president in early November 1984, SDI moved to the front of the political stage: it now had 'a central role in the political strategy of the administration, at home and abroad',[18] and European governments responded.[19] In the UK, the British government – with Margaret Thatcher's *communiqué* on 22 December 1984 at Camp David – took an official public position on SDI.[20] The signals from NATO governments were that SDI should be taken seriously. CND began to pay attention.

At the CND national conference in late November 1984, the resolutions that had been guided through a complex, five-month process to end up on the final agenda still reflected immediate post-cruise missile deployment concerns: sea-launched cruise missiles, for instance, Soviet nuclear weapons, NATO's Airland Battle strategy, Trident. But, in an early sign that CND activists were beginning to perceive SDI as a serious threat, a last-minute (post-US election) 'emergency resolution' to the conference noted, 'with alarm, the return of Ronald Reagan to the White House', and stated 'that there is an increased danger that the Reagan administration will proceed with its "Star Wars" policy and thus make the arms race virtually unstoppable'.[21] At the same conference, CND chairperson Joan Ruddock, in her opening speech, and Bruce Kent, CND's General Secretary, in his report, highlighted the US Defense Department's document 'Fiscal 1984–88' that '"urges preparations . . . for waging war effectively from outer space"'.[22]

CND now began to move against SDI. How it did so was shaped by a range of interlocking factors, including the slow decline in a key resource, the number of peace movement activists willing to campaign; the gradual changes this helped

prompt in CND's overall strategy; the 'competition' from other campaigns within the movement; and the nature of SDI itself.

From 1984, the number of CND activists and passive members began to fall. National CND could still organise mass demonstrations, but fewer wanted to come to them. In October 1983, an estimated 250,000–400,000 had joined the CND rally that filled central London. This was a high-water mark for national actions: by October 1985, CND's national rally – 'Human Race not the Arms Race' – attracted (according to CND) only some 80,000 people.[23] National membership was shrinking from the 1984 highpoint of 110,000; by 1985, 'most [local] groups were down to half the size they were in 1983'.[24]

This decline in numbers helped initiate national CND's gradual strategic shift from campaigning above all as a direct-pressure mass movement to working more – though demonstrations and marches were still used – as a 'national lobbying organization'. Targeting MPs, running well-prepared information campaigns and advertising became increasingly prominent.[25]

SDI seemed to fit well into this emerging strategy. It was not, in contrast to cruise and Trident missiles, a tangible weapons system to be deployed at an identifiable base but a programme for the development of a highly complex, multilayered defence system, much of which would be deployed in space. It was the kind of issue that lent itself to tactics of education, argumentation and persuasion.

In May 1985 national CND 'carried out a sophisticated information campaign on Star Wars', and CND members lobbied members of parliament to oppose British participation in research on weapons in space.[26] At the 1985 annual CND conference – in an indication of the level of support for an anti-Star Wars campaign – activists passed a resolution that instructed CND National Council to 'launch a major campaign against the SDI and against British and European participation in SDI research';[27] this was to intended to be a campaign that, with 'appropriate educational and publicity materials', would use the tactics of lobbying and persuasion.[28]

If the tactics of the campaign were different from those that had dominated anti-cruise and Trident activism, the themes of the anti-Star Wars work continued earlier lines of argument. SDI, a 'politically provocative bid for US [military] superiority', would stimulate the Soviet Union to respond in kind – and thus escalate the arms race. At the same time, SDI would break existing arms control agreements – mainly the 1972 ABM Treaty – and damage the prospect of future agreements. Furthermore, it would bring no economic benefits for the UK.[29]

By late 1985, Star Wars had a place in the CND's campaigning repertoire. Yet a full-blown campaign against SDI did not develop. A *different* project had found more support among local groups; and the democratic decision-making processes of CND ensured that it became the centrepiece of CND's work. In the two-plus years of vigorous debate about the 'way forward', a significant number of local groups had argued that CND, with its concentration in the early 1980s on particular weapons systems, had 'let the arguments for [CND's core aim of] complete British unilateral nuclear disarmament go by default'.[30] CND needed to get 'back to basics' and aim to win a majority in the country for this

core aim. By the 1985 annual conference, this pressure for a new campaigning focus culminated in a resolution ('Basic Case Campaigning'), passed by delegates, that instructed national CND to give 'top priority' in 1986 to a 'public education campaign' centred on the 'British Bomb'. An 'Extended Public Information Campaign' (EPIC) would use advertising techniques and 'sophisticated pressure group' tactics to promote 'positive arguments for British unilateral nuclear disarmament'.[31]

SDI was not neglected. CND members lobbied Parliament about Star Wars again in July 1986; the CND Information Room continued to produce detailed and sophisticated briefings on SDI; SDI was added to the Extended Public Information Campaign. But, with 'Basic Case' work a priority, a 'major campaign' against SDI – a discrete weapons programme that could not easily be fitted under the heading 'The British Bomb' – did not materialise.[32]

The following year's conference – 1986 – passed another resolution on 'Star Wars', but this one restricted itself to recommendations about the content of CND publicity – 'CND publicity must give a high profile to the risks inherent in the Strategic Defence Initiative' – and to urging CND to support' the multi-party [sic] 'Coalition Against Star Wars'.[33] In July 1987, a regional CND – Yorkshire and Humberside – organised a march and blockade at the RAF Fylingdales base in Yorkshire in protest at the development there of an SDI-related large phased-array radar system.[34]

By the 1987 conference, SDI was slipping down the list of campaigning tasks. The conference passed a long resolution ('Strategy'), which defined as the 'major priority' the linking of the demand for 'independent nuclear disarmament by Britain' to the 'prospects for a 'nuclear-free Europe', the 'developing public debate about . . . radical changes in British foreign policy', and 'the closure of all US bases' and 'opposition to NATO membership'; in this strategy Star Wars was listed under 'secondary' focus.[35] This reflected – as the new East-West détente strengthened – the declining salience of SDI in NATO politics, and (Congress's slowing increases in funding for SDI a marker of this) the turning of the political tide against SDI in US politics.[36] The 1988 CND passed a similar resolution about strategy; SDI was still part of the 'secondary focus'. The resolutions submitted to the 1989 conference made no mention of SDI. Star Wars had slipped down, and then off, the CND agenda.

No Star Wars![37]

CND dwarfed other UK peace groups: if it did not run a major campaign against SDI, they could not fill the gap. But smaller peace organisations could, and did, run their own campaigns against Star Wars. END was one such organisation.[38]

Campaigning on a non-aligned, internationalist foundation first outlined out in the 1980 'Appeal for European Nuclear Disarmament' – which, *inter alia*, called for a European Nuclear Weapons Free Zone, an end to the Cold War, and, as an agent of these goals, a pan-European 'trans-continental movement' – END was a small national peace group with a transnational programme.[39]

END typically organised 'face-to-face' events, mostly in the UK, many of them educational: day schools, workshops, seminars, public meetings, pickets, vigils, and small demonstrations. It promoted ties and cooperation among West European (including British) peace groups and – more controversially – a dialogue between the Western movement and independent human rights and peace activists in the Soviet bloc (and to a lesser extent exchanges with official bodies). A favoured form of activism for British END was the dissemination of arguments and ideas in print: in a high-quality, normally bi-monthly, magazine, the *END Journal*; in pamphlets and books; and in mainstream newspapers and magazines.

The prominence and intellectual ability of some of its founders and supporters (Edward (E.P.) Thompson, British END's – indeed the peace movement's – best-known figure, Mary Kaldor, Dan Smith, and others) meant that the group could punch significantly above its weight. So did the fact that it could 'piggy-back' on the much larger CND, of which many END supporters were members: British END worked with local CND groups to organise national tours of European speakers, or to promote its publications. Similarly, British END activists could use transnational peace movement forums (the International Peace Coordination and Communication Centre, and the END Conventions: see below) to help give itself a stature that belied its size.

There was a sharp contrast between END and CND in the way decisions about tactics and strategy were made. If CND's procedures allowed for a degree of accountability to the membership and activist base (see above), British END, by contrast – even after membership was introduced in 1985 – had only rudimentary internal democratic procedures. While such informality can produce tension in a group,[40] it can also be a source of strength. British END – characterised, in one early formulation, by 'inspired ad-hocery' – had an agility that allowed it quickly to take up and pursue new issues. In 1985, it threw itself into anti-SDI work, both in print and 'face-to-face'.

This work – the prime initial mover behind which, and leading participant in, was Edward Thompson – was (like CND's) influenced by the resources it could draw on, by the fact that the peace movement was in gradual decline, and by the demands other campaigning placed on activists' energy. Distinguished by tactics the groups had used since its foundation – publishing, public meetings and workshops, and international collaboration – the campaign began in 1985; picked up speed in 1986 with a flurry of activities, national and transnational, some organised just by END, others collaborative; continued into 1987; and then, like CND's anti-SDI work, gradually faded.

In April 1985, E. P. Thompson and Ben Thompson wrote a pamphlet, *Star Wars: Self Destruct Incorporated*;[41] later that year it was updated and incorporated into a multi-author Penguin Special edited by Edward Thompson, *Star Wars*.[42] Mary Kaldor's editorial in the April–May issue (no. 15) of the *END Journal* began almost two years of coverage of SDI in the magazine – driven significantly by the enthusiasm of the magazine's deputy editor, Paul Anderson – up to issue 26 (February–March 1987).[43]

The writings about SDI had two main aims. One – like CND's detailed briefings for parliamentary lobbies – was to provide basic information about SDI. Detailed, informed, implicitly (sometimes explicitly) critical of SDI – and written to a standard one could have found in a quality broadsheet or current affairs magazine – END publications on SDI covered the component parts of the proposed 'full-scale anti-ballistic-missile defence' system, how this was *supposed* to work, and what technological and military measures might undermine it; the Soviet Union's ABM programme; the implications of SDI for nuclear disarmament.[44] In the *END Journal*, articles further traced the position of governments (in Western Europe, including the UK, and elsewhere) – hesitant, ambivalent, critical – and in some cases their rejection of offers of participation; provided the known details of the Memorandums of Understanding that formalised British and West German support for SDI; and described the meagre outcome of these for British research laboratories and the more generous results for West German firms. Other pieces looked at the SDI programme's impact on intra-NATO relations; the Soviet Union's perception of SDI and Soviet space research; and the significance of SDI for arms control talks and proposals.

A second strand of writing – essays by Edward Thompson, Mary Kaldor (in collaboration with others) – did not just provide the most developed political analysis of Star Wars from within the British peace movement; they proposed a political and intellectual framework, and an internationalist peace movement strategy, for opposing SDI.[45]

In its publications, British END had always paid close attention to the technical and military aspects of the nuclear arms race, as well as to arms control and disarmament. Mary Kaldor and Dan Smith were recognised authorities on defence policy and weapons technology.[46] But British END was distinctive in the peace movement above all for its advocacy of a political solution to the nuclear arms race and the Cold War: not only the nuclear arms race but the Cold War had to be ended; this would be the joint work of movements in West *and* East; and it must entail (and did, as the decade progressed) a deepening emphasis on 'dialogue' and cooperation with independent peace and human rights groups in the Soviet bloc.

This is the framework within which Thompson and Kaldor develop their analysis of SDI. Both characterise Star Wars as an unworkable technical 'fix' for underlying political problems; both propose an END strategy for peace movement opposition to SDI. Thompson ties up a characteristically wide-ranging account that takes in technology, military strategy, and NATO politics – SDI as way of making plausible for some the 'ideological fiction' of a 'first-strike' attack against the Soviet Union; the transition in official US thinking from 'Star Wars I' (the impermeable shield over the USA that would abolish deterrence) to 'Star Wars II' (the partial shield that would 'enhance' deterrence); the tensions in the NATO alliance to which SDI has given rise; and much else – with a theme that runs through all his writings on the Cold War: the ideological meaning and function of weapons. Perhaps the 'dominant . . . motivating force' of Star Wars is what, in its ideal form, it offers to the American people: absolute security – a return to an 'idealized golden sanctuary in the past' when the 'United States had the Bomb and

the Other did not' – with the knowledge that the United States can use military force without fear of attack: 'Let us once again be able to threaten a world which cannot retaliate on us!' SDI combines an assumption of the moral justness of US behaviour with an ingrained belief that problems can be 'fixed':

> [Star Wars] is as American as apple pie. It combines the citizen's faith that whatever the US of A does must be moral – and that the Bomb is God's gift to protect the 'Free World' – with the energetic and innovative American tradition of 'fixing' things, and of looking for technological solutions to political, social or even psychological problems.[47]

In Kaldor's account détente, by undermining the 'discipline' that the East-West confrontation imposed, has weakened the West's internal cohesion. SDI is the latest in a series of 'technical fixes',[48] 'mechanisms for restoring bloc cohesion and, at the same time, re-engaging in the Cold War'.[49] For Helmut Schmidt and his fellow European liberal Atlanticists, the deployment of cruise and Pershing II missiles, by 'recoupling' Western Europe and the United States, would 'overcome Atlantic differences and reassert the unity of the alliance'. Deep Strike or Follow-On Force Attack (FOFA), Emerging Technologies (ET), Airland Battle – other 'fixes' of the 1980s – have a similar, if more 'Reaganite', purpose: to make Western Europe more dependent on the United States. SDI, Kaldor asserts – in parallel with Thompson – with its aim of making the United States invulnerable to nuclear attack by the Soviet Union, is an attempt to 'recreate the circumstances of the 1950s', when the United States dominated NATO.[50]

But the advocates of SDI, in Thompson's account as in Kaldor's, mistake both the problem, and therefore its solution. The fundamental problem – as they and others in END have been urging since the start of the decade – is not Soviet weapons as such, nor the West's, but the conflict of which they are a key component, the Cold War. The 'danger to world peace', Thompson writes, 'lies, precisely, in the unnatural bi-polar division of the world, with the resultant incitement to military and ideological hostility'.[51] The strategies for addressing the Cold War are those of END (which he first indicated in the END Appeal, in *Protest and Survive*, in 'Notes on Exterminism'):[52] Europe needs to free itself from superpower domination – 'the obduracy of the United States about SDI should be the signal for a European Declaration of Independence'.[53] More than that: *Western* Europe must be a bridge, a 'mediator' between East and West, developing 'trade, cultural and second-tier diplomatic relations with East European nations', while also encouraging 'every kind of direct citizen's initiative to break through the ideological and security barriers between the blocs'. This work is already being done by the European peace movements, and above all by END.

For Kaldor, too, the East-West conflict is the fundamental problem, and the peace movement the agent of its solution. The movement strategy is not 'non-alignment', which is a standing aside from the bloc system but dealignment', a 'positive policy' for going '*beyond* the blocs', and allowing the countries and citizens of East and West to come closer together:

> The peace movement alternative is to overcome the East – West conflict through the erosion of the bloc system; to abandon the requirement for internal [bloc] cohesion and to accept diversity within and between the nations of Europe.

This 'transnational' strategy provides a unifying framework for different and disparate kinds of activism. A British campaign against Trident, or SDI, a Turkish campaign to release imprisoned members of the Turkish Peace Alliance: these might appear to be unrelated but can, if they have a 'common philosophy' – undermining the Cold War – in fact, be 'mutually supportive'.[54]

The other strand of END's anti-Star Wars work began in January 1986, with the first large-scale, public, peace movement event against SDI: 'No Star Wars!', a rally at London's 400-capacity Conway Hall, a traditional venue for meetings by left and radical movements. The list of speakers suggests that with this meeting – 'very successful and packed' – [55] END wanted to mobilise more than just peace movement opposition to SDI. Speakers came from the peace movement (Edward Thompson and Mary Kaldor), the municipal left (the left-wing activist and author Hilary Wainwright, then working at the GLC Popular Planning Unit), moderate peace opinion (Malcolm Harper of the United Nations Association), the environmental movement (Colin Hines from Greenpeace), and from the world of academic science (Dr Richard Ennals, a computing specialist who had earlier resigned from Imperial College in protest at Star Wars; and Michael Rowan Robinson, Professor of Astronomy at Queen Mary College, University of London). They were joined by the novelist Fay Weldon.

Publicity for the event emphasised criticisms of SDI from across much of the political spectrum: 'Star Wars is massively expensive, a massive drain of resources needed elsewhere. It breaches arms control treaties. It will make the world a more dangerous place', and (not a typical peace movement worry) 'SDI is 'yet another example of US riding roughshod over the wishes of its Nato allies.'[56]

A day school for activists in May 1986, targeted at activists from a narrower political spectrum, framed SDI and the opposition to it in well-established END terms: 'Star Wars and European Independence'. The day school focused on the superpowers' role in the militarisation of space; European technological, political, and military responses to SDI; British participation in SDI; and on East-West cooperation as an alternative to SDI.

At the same time, END became involved – as did CND – in two and overlapping initiatives whose founding were part of the flurry of new opposition to Star Wars. Spacewatch, set up in 1985 by the long-standing peace activist and, more recently, author on space matters, Rip Bulkeley,[57] was a 'new informal liaison network to link campaigning bodies, peace researchers, trade unions, churches, and political organisations in Britain which are involved in activities aimed at preventing the growing arms race in space.[58] The Coalition against Star Wars was founded in 1986 by the Greenpeace activist Colin Hines – who at the beginning of the year had organized a successful symposium at the Greater London Council, 'Can Star Wars Defend Europe?' – as a 'broad based, non

party-political grouping of organisations . . . formed to lobby against British involvement in SDI'.[59]

END's face-to-face style of campaigning – rallies, day schools – did not continue into 1987. The Conway Hall rally turned out to have been the highpoint. Lack of 'internal' resources may have been one cause of this: with a small activist base (which was anyway shrinking along with the rest of the peace movement) that could do practical organising work and provide finances, and with limited funding from other sources, a campaign that was sustained or large-scale, or both, was not possible. At the same time – after that successful rally – the broader movement did not show great interest in END's anti-Star Wars events. Though END organisers planning the day school rang and sent material to each of the many CND groups in London, only 'one or two' CND activists came: 'an extremely large number of the people who turned up were END members'.[60] Of course, an event that demands more time and intellectual commitment than a rally will always attract fewer people. Also at play may have been reservations in peace movement circles about END: that END was intellectually too demanding, even intimidating, and possibly also making simple matters unnecessarily complicated. (The then Reading University German lecturer and END activist John Sandford has written that British END was '[v]ariously – and perhaps not entirely fairly – apostrophized as "Egghead CND" and "PhD CND."'[61]). The 'intangible' nature of SDI may also have been a factor. But the brute fact remained: with the number of local peace groups decreasing, and their size diminishing, there was a smaller pool of CND activists able to attend meetings.

Some or all of these factors may also explain why British END had to cancel an anti-SDI initiative mooted for October–November 1986: an 'International Speaker Tour', with local CND groups around Britain hosting speakers provided by END, on the theme 'European Independence, Star Wars, and the Alternatives'. This kind of collaboration with CND groups had worked well in the past: in 1983 – the 'Five Nations' tour – when END brought activists from the five countries scheduled to receive cruise and Pershing II missiles to speak to often packed peace movement meetings around the country, and in 1984 – the 'Beyond the Blocs' tour – when the theme was movement strategies for ending the Cold War. By 1986, however, it seems that there was not enough local peace movement interest in hosting a Star Wars event.

But other campaigning priorities also occupied END activists' time and energy. In April 1986, in response to the US raids on Libya that month, END produced, in one week, a book of essays about the attacks.[62] The explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in the same month generated a public meeting and another book of essays.[63] Yet, to many British END activists, one matter was probably of greater interest than any other: the complex, and controversial, dialogue with independent peace and human rights activists in the Soviet bloc: 'détente from below', as this was often summed up. This had begun in 1980. By 1986 END campaigners were regularly visiting Central Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union to meet these activists, as were their counterparts in other West European peace groups; letters and statements were being exchanged; joint East-West documents

were written and published; and solidarity campaigns were conducted. Just as CND prioritised the Basic Case campaign over Star Wars, so, for a significant number of British END activists, the East-West 'dialogue' squeezed out other concerns.

'One Can Hardly Demonstrate in Space'[64]

The two main transnational forums of the peace movement, the International Peace Coordination and Communication Centre (IPCC), and at the European Nuclear Disarmament Conventions – in which British END and CND were active participants – are important windows into activist peace opinion in Western Europe in the 1980s. In both forums, a combination of opposition to SDI and uncertainty about how, if at all, to make anti-Star Wars campaign a priority, was evident.

The IPCC regularly brought together small numbers of leading activists in the non-aligned national peace organisations to debate and coordinate peace movement strategy. What stands out is that the IPCC was the only body to organise a transnational movement initiative against SDI: the 'International Appeal to World Leaders'. Proposed in January 1986 by the Norwegian Nei til Atomvåpen (NTA; No to Nuclear Weapons); drafted by activists in NTA, the US Freeze Movement, British END (including E. P. Thompson), and Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste and Aktiongemeinschaft Dienst für den Frieden in West Germany;[65] and launched on 15 May at coordinated press conferences in the UK, the United States, Canada, West Germany, and a handful of other West European states: the Appeal was transnational activism in action.

The aim was that – in order to demonstrate the breadth and status of opposition to SDI – the appeal should be signed by a relatively small number of prominent centrist or mainstream politicians, as well as by scientists and other public figures, in as many countries as possible. And sign they did: from, in the UK, the leading Labour politician Denis Healey and Salman Rushdie; in West Germany, Willy Brandt; and in the Netherlands the former prime minister Joop den Uyl; to, in Ireland, the Nobel Peace Laureate, Sean MacBride, and, in the United States, J.K. Galbraith and Paul Warnke, the former chief SALT negotiator; and many more from altogether 14 states. The Appeal presents objections to SDI by then common both in and outside the peace movement – space weapons will not abolish nuclear weapons; the combination of partial missile defence with offensive nuclear weapons will look to an opponent like the development of a first-strike capability; the research and development, testing, and deployment of component parts of SDI will violate various arms control treaties, including the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty and the 1972 ABM Treaty – and ends with a trademark E. P. Thompson flourish: 'Civilization is now poised at a critical point. Once these programmes have been launched there may be no way of turning back'.[66]

But what also stands out is that, apart from the Appeal, the IPCC participants were unsure of what to do about SDI. The IPPC – like CND and END – first turned to SDI in 1985 and continued to discuss it into 1987. At one meeting, in Milan in May 1985, it was a discrete agenda item: 'Star Wars: review of peace movement

plans and activities. Can we come to a common position?' At later meetings, SDI was discussed in relation to other issues: the arms control talks in Geneva, for example – what would be the impact of Star Wars on these?; the emergence of a West European defence capability; and broader East-West relations. A recurrent theme is a lack of certainty about the meaning of SDI for the peace movement: what would be the most effective arguments to deploy against it? At the May 1985 meeting, a British END representative, Barbara Einhorn reported, there 'was no real conclusion reached on the way forward'.[67] The peace movement, the Dutch activist Laurens Hogebrink stated, had 'so far failed in using the debate over Star Wars as a potential for promoting the concerns of the peace movement'. Overall, the participants in the IPCC discussions seemed unsure of how to formulate a clear strategy for a campaign against Star Wars.

The Appeal shows that IPCC member groups were well able to formulate a succinct list of reasons why SDI needed to be stopped and to organise a successful, limited action against Star Wars. But formulating a strategy for a sustained campaign was a different matter. Here, what national movements were – or were not – doing was key. The absence of national campaigns of the size, enthusiasm and political confidence as that against cruise and Pershing II missiles was reflected in the IPCC's uncertainty about how to proceed.

Something similar, though on a larger scale, was evident at the END Conventions. At the annual Conventions – once up and running, distinct from British END – activists from around Europe and beyond gathered to meet, talk, and plan.[68] Like the IPCC, the Conventions reflected activists' priorities for their national movements and for the transnational collaboration between movements.

The 4th END Convention, in Amsterdam in 1985, took place when SDI was firmly on the agenda of NATO governments. With the Convention organisers stating in advance that the 'peace movement must now decide how to create an effective resistance [to Star Wars]', and the Convention handbook analysing SDI as a new driver of the arms race, as a factor in the weakening of the NATO consensus, and in its role in undermining the Geneva arms talks,[69] there was, in the view of the Mient Jan Faber, General Secretary of the Dutch Inter-Church Peace Council and co-organiser of the Convention, a 'general expectation that . . . an action plan and analysis would be developed on Star Wars'.

But, he continued, 'this did not happen'.[70] Activists met in workshops either devoted to SDI – 'The SDI programme: triple disengagement. A workshop on Star Wars and Eureka' – or that brought Star Wars into their discussions: 'The role of scientists and the peace movement'; 'The Geneva talks: stopping the arms race or stopping public protest?'; 'Resistance to West European militarization' (this asked, 'what are the implications [of Star Wars] for US – Euro relations? Does Star Wars mean a new warfighting role for cruise and Pershing 2 in Europe?').

But though Star Wars was important, it was not a central concern of the gathering. SDI 'failed to galvanize' the Convention.[71] Hella Pick, the veteran *Guardian* foreign correspondent, noted the 'widely held view' at the Convention that 'SDI

was symbolic of technology running out of control' and that the 'logic of space weapons' would be to make Europe a battlefield in a conflict between the superpowers; and yet reported that the Convention 'largely side tracked the issue of Star Wars'. (The *Guardian* headline and subhead offered a sharper take: 'Peace movement lost in space: Hella Pick reports on how the END Convention ducked Star Wars'.[72])

One likely reason for this we have already seen at work in the British movement: the perceived practical difficulty of campaigning against a space-based weapons programme. 'One can hardly demonstrate in space', Mient Jan Faber is quoted as saying.[73] Another factor may well have been to do with the nature of the Convention itself. The Conventions were set up not as strategy planning sessions but as forums for discussion and debate. Amsterdam was no different: it was an 'amazing jamboree and market place for exchanges of ideas, literature and news'.[74] Less positively: 'the Convention handbook reads like a massive shopping list', one British END activist reported. '[E]veryone has issues they want to prioritise'.[75] Indeed, the workshops that addressed SDI were just a handful out of some 80 events over three days.[76] The purpose and structure of the Convention (all Conventions) militated against participants formulating a clear strategy of any kind.

Yet – Faber again – at a Convention, a 'few political priorities should be evident'; and one was. As with CND's prioritisation of the Basic Case, and British END's emphasis on its East-West work, a key reason why the Convention did not concentrate on SDI was that enough of the participants thought *another* matter so important that it became the dominant theme: the 'dialogue' with independent activists in the Soviet bloc and the vision of a 'bloc-free' Europe. As Faber summed up, '[u]ndeniably, 'Eastern Europe was . . . the hot issue at the Convention'. This, in turn, reflected a deeper process in the movement's *Ostpolitik*: a growing number of activists were devoting their energies to 'détente from below (eroding the blocs and increased unofficial contacts) and a political rather than a military or technical solution to Europe's problems'.[77]

In Hella Pick's assessment, these ideas were 'utopian' and contributed to what she thought was a 'sense of unreality and detachment from the real world' at the Convention.[78] For Mary Kaldor, however, the peace movement's task now was not (or not just) 'to organise big demonstrations against Star Wars or even chemical weapons', not merely to 'oppose particular pieces of hardware' but, instead, to 'get across', to sceptical publics and political parties, 'our vision of a non-aligned or dealigned Europe, based on respect for diversity and pluralism, and engaged in a constructive relationship with the Third World'.[79]

The 1985 Convention ended, as Faber wrote, with no agreement on how to proceed against SDI. At the next two Conventions, Star Wars would remain on the agenda; its role in intra-NATO and in East-West relations would be discussed and argued over.[80] But an 'action plan' did not emerge. With SDI 'losing steam in the new climate of "détente"',[81] END Conventions could, and did, focus on other concerns.

Conclusion

Writing in the summer of 1983 in the *END Journal* – in response to the speech in which President Reagan first presented his vision of a space-based shield for the United States – the leading British END and CND activist Dan Smith described 'Star Wars' as 'appealingly simple and profoundly dangerous'.[82] In CND and British END, and in the transnational forums of the West European peace movement – the IPCC and the END Convention – opinion was firmly opposed to the Strategic Defence Initiative. Yet, while British END produced – within its limited means – a vigorous anti-Star Wars campaign, in CND this opposition did not translate into a strong, sustained, campaign; and activists in the transnational fora struggled to formulate an anti-Star Wars strategy. By 1987, SDI was slipping down the list of movement priorities.

Various, mutually reinforcing, factors help explain this. From the middle of the decade at the latest, peace movements were in gradual decline: there were fewer people willing to campaign about anything, and thus fewer resources available for organisers. SDI – a plan, an idea, for a largely space-based system – was inherently difficult to campaign against. From 1987–1988, with political support in Washington for SDI declining, and US-Soviet détente deepening, SDI (and the arms race in general) appeared to be less of a threat. CND chose to prioritise the 'Basic Case' for British nuclear disarmament. For British END – and for a significant number of participants in the END Conventions – another campaign was eventually more significant: not just the deepening 'dialogue' with independent peace and human rights groups in the East, but the larger project – suggested in the 1980 END Appeal – of which this 'détente from below' was seen as an essential part: 'loosening the bloc structures of both sides'.[83]

Notes

1 See, for example, in this volume, Edoardo Andreoni, 'Britain, SDI, and the United States, 1983–6: A Guarded Relationship'.
2 See, for example, Dan Smith, 'Preparing for Nuclear War', *Sanity*, 1, February–March 1980, 8–9.
3 James Hinton, *Protests & Visions: Peace Politics in 20th Century Britain*, London, Hutchinson Radius, 1989, 182.
4 Amitabh Mattoo, 'The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament: A Study of Its Re-emergence, Growth and Decline in the 1980s', DPhil, University of Oxford, 1992, 6.
5 Hinton, *Protest and Visions*, 190.
6 There was also the separate category of 'national member'.
7 Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, 3rd ed., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011, 39ff.
8 Andrew White, 'European Perspectives on the Strategic Defense Initiative', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1986, 211.
9 Holger Nehring, 'The British Response to SDI: Introductory Paper', in Michael D. Kandiah and Gillian Staerck, (eds), *The British Response to SDI*, London, Centre for Contemporary British History, 2005, 18.
10 CND, 'Annual Conference Decisions 1982', CND Archive, London School of Political and Economic Science (LSE).

11 Mattoo, 'The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament', 202 ff.
12 With some correspondents also emphasising the threat posed by air- and sea-based cruise missiles.
13 CND, 'Annual Report to CND Annual Conference 1984', 12. CND Archive, LSE.
14 CND's Forward Planning Group highlighted in its 1984 end-of-year report the 'profusion of ideas being generated in all parts of the campaign'. 'Annual Report to CND Annual Conference 1984', 9. CND Archive, LSE.
15 John Cox, 'Which Freeze', *Sanity*, February 1984, 8.
16 Tim Dennell, 'Campaigning on NATO', *Sanity*, May 1985, 17.
17 Duncan N. Macleod, 'Geneva Arms Talks – New Approach Needed', *Sanity*, June 1985, 11.
18 White, 'European Perspectives', 211.
19 See Hans Günter Brauch, (ed), *Star Wars and European Defence. Implications for Europe: Perceptions and Assessments*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 1987.
20 Nehring, 'The British Response to SDI', 18.
21 'Emergency Resolutions', CND Annual Conference 1984. CND Archive, LSE.
22 'Opening Speech to CND's Annual Conference by Joan Ruddock, Chairperson, CND', 24 November 1984; 'Annual Report to CND Annual Conference 1984'. CND Archive, LSE. Ruddock and Kent quote the same passage.
23 Mattoo, 'The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament', 213.
24 Mattoo, 'The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament', 218.
25 Hinton, *Protests & Visions*, 194.
26 Mattoo, 'The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament', 222.
27 This a reference to the US Defense Secretary, Caspar Weinberger's, March 1985 invitation to NATO governments to participate in the SDI research programme.
28 'Resolutions Passed at Conference 1985'. CND Archive, LSE.
29 CND, 'Star Wars Briefing', Lobby of Parliament, 8 July 1986. CND Archive, LSE.
30 Hinton, *Protests & Visions*, 192.
31 'Resolutions Passed at Conference 1985'. CND Archive, LSE. Mattoo, 'The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament', 226.
32 Indeed, it seems that CND was not sure how to fit together Star Wars and EPIC: The CND General Secretary Meg Beresford later reported that, with the execution of the first EPIC campaign already leaving 'much to be desired', 'the attempt to link EPIC with Star Wars added nothing to [EPIC's] coherence as a projection of the positive effects of British nuclear disarmament'. 'CND Annual Conference 1986', 7. CND Archive, LSE.
33 'CND Annual Conference 1986', 55. CND Archive, LSE.
34 '1987 CND Annual Conference', 12. CND Archive, LSE.
35 '1987 CND Annual Conference', 48–49. CND Archive, LSE.
36 Mario Pianta, 'Catch a Falling Star Wars', *END Journal* 36, October 1988–January 1989, 10. See also Sir Michael Pakenham in Kandiah and Staerck, (eds), *The British Response to SDI*, 79–80.
37 The slogan on the leaflet advertising British END's 'public meeting' on SDI, 16 January 1986. END Archive, London School of Economic and Political Science (LSE).
38 END was one of two peace movement institutions called 'END': The other was the organisationally separate END Convention.
39 In 1985 END became a membership group. Its membership did not top 600.
40 See, for example, Jo Freeman, 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness', *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, vol. 17, 1972–73, 151–164.
41 London, Merlin Press, 1985.
42 Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1985.
43 Articles touched on SDI a few times in the following year before two long pieces returned to it in the magazine's penultimate issue, 36, published in autumn 1988.

44 See, for example, Ben Thompson, 'What is Star Wars?', John Pike, 'Assessing the Soviet ABM programme', and Rip Bulkeley, 'The Effects of SDI on Disarmament', in Thompson, (ed), *Star Wars*; Paul Anderson, 'British SDI Deal Still Shrouded in Secrecy', *END Journal*, 21, April–May 1986, 6–7.
45 See E. P. Thompson, 'Why is Star Wars?' and 'Folly's Comet', in Thompson, (ed) *Star Wars*; Mary Kaldor et al. 'Nato at the Crossroads', *END Journal* 18, October–November 1985, 14–17, and 'How to Go Beyond Nato', *END Journal* 19, December 1985–January 1986, 18–20.
46 Kaldor and Smith, for example, were co-authors of *Sense About Defence: The Report of the Labour Party Defence Study Group*, London, Quartet, 1977.
47 Thompson, 'Folly's Comet', 138.
48 Kaldor et al., 'Nato at the Crossroads', 17.
49 Kaldor et al., 'How to Go Beyond Nato', 18.
50 Kaldor et al., 'Nato at the Crossroads', 15.
51 Thompson, 'Folly's Comet', 148.
52 'Appeal for Nuclear Disarmament' and E. P. Thompson, 'Protest and Survive', in Dan Smith and E P Thompson, (eds), *Protest and Survive*, 1980, 223–5 & 9–61, respectively. E. Thompson, 'Notes on Exterminism', *New Left Review* 121, May–June 1980.
53 Thompson, 'Folly's Comet', 148.
54 Kaldor et al., 'How to Go Beyond Nato', 18.
55 Fiona Weir, 'Star Wars Meeting: Brief Report', N.d. END Archive, LSE.
56 'No Star Wars! Public Meeting', END Publicity Leaflet. END Archive, LSE.
57 For example, Rip Bulkeley and Graham Spinardi, *Space Weapons: Deterrence or Delusion?*, 1986; and his chapter in Thompson, (ed), *Star Wars*.
58 'About Space Watch', n.d. END Archive, LSE.
59 Coalition against Star Wars, press release, 26 June 1985. Author's archive.
60 Fiona Weir, 'SDI day school report May 1986'. END Archive, LSE.
61 See John Sandford, 'Mutual (Mis-)Perceptions: The GDR and the British Peace Movement in the 1980s', in Arnd Bauerkämper, (ed), *Britain and the GDR: Relations and Perceptions in a Divided World*, Berlin and Vienna, Philo, 2002, 356.
62 Mary Kaldor and Paul Anderson, (eds), *Mad Dogs: The US Raids on Libya*, London: Pluto Press, 1986.
63 Louis Mackay and Mark Thompson, (eds), *Something in the Wind: Politics After Chernobyl*, London: Pluto Press, 1988.
64 Mient Jan Faber, General Secretary of the Dutch Inter-Church Peace Council, quoted in Hella Pick, 'Peace Movement Lost in Space', *The Guardian*, 9 July 1985.
65 ASF: Action Reconciliation Service for Peace. AGDF: Action Group Service for Peace.
66 'International Appeal to World Leaders'. END Archive, LSE.
67 Barbara Einhorn, 'IPCC Meeting, May 3–5, Milan 1985'. END Archive, LSE.
68 The largest, with 3000 in attendance, took place West Berlin in May 1983.
69 'Handbook, 4th END Convention, Amsterdam'. END Archive, LSE.
70 Mient Jan Faber, 'A few Lessons from the END Convention', n.d., END Archive, LSE.
71 'Looking East', *The Economist*, 13 July 1985.
72 Hella Pick, 'Peace Movement Lost in Space', *The Guardian*, 9 July 1985.
73 Pick, 'Peace Movement Lost in Space'.
74 'A Feast of People's Politics: END's Amsterdam Convention', Owen Hardwicke (Pax Christi). END Archive, LSE.
75 Mark Salter, 'Report – Amsterdam'. END Archive, LSE.
76 Other workshops, hearings, plenaries and film covered topics ranging from 'Opposition to cruise missiles in the Netherlands', 'Political parties and the peace movement', and 'Conversion and west European arms production'; through 'Dialogue: Solidarnosc and the peace movement in Western Europe', 'Cross Cultural Communication', and 'Solidarity Campaign with Hungarian Conscientious Objectors'; to 'Militarization of

the India Ocean', 'Central America – Torn between two Superpowers', and 'Afghanistan'. Not forgetting 'Disarming the Ocean – The North Atlantic Network'.

77 Mary Kaldor, 'What Next?', Editorial, *END Journal*, 18, October–November 1985, 2.

78 John Williams, a long-standing British END activist, echoed this view: there was at Amsterdam, he wrote, a sense of 'political abstentionism relative to the political opportunities offered to the European peace movement by the increasing disarray within the Atlantic Alliance'; a 'pervasive sense' that 'such issues as Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative, the revitalised WEU and Eureka should be left to Governments and party politics'. 'Amsterdam Assessment'. END Archive.

79 Kaldor, 'What Next?'

80 At the 1986 END Convention in France, for example, British END ran a joint workshop with West German groups to discuss coordination of anti-Star Wars campaigning.

81 Pianta, 'Catch a Falling Star Wars', 10.

82 'Star Wars: The President Strikes Back', *END Journal*, 4, June–July 1983, 29.

83 Thompson, 'Folly's Comet', 148.

14 Star Wars

A View From the Commentariat

Lawrence Freedman

I have reached the age when historians research events that I lived through. My experience of living through the 'Star Wars' debate was not as a practitioner. I was not, thankfully, in government. But I was quite closely involved as a member of what can be described as the 'commentariat', writing on the issue and speaking at conferences and on occasion engaging directly with policy-makers. The closest I got to decision-making was in December 1984 when a group of academics was asked to brief Margaret Thatcher just before the historic visit of Gorbachev to London. The heavy lifting in the discussion was done by the economists, particularly Michael Kaser, and Sovietologists such as Archie Brown. I was there to talk about arms control. My contribution was to observe that 'Gorbachev will ask you to do something about SDI, because that seems to be the only thing he's bothered about'. Which was correct but it was also pretty obvious.

My aim in this contribution is to recall, which is always difficult to do accurately, how it seemed at the time. How did I frame the issue, and how did this framing develop over time? What did I think at the time to be the major possibilities lurking around the question of strategic defence? My stage of life is often referred to as one's 'anecdotage'. This is therefore going to be a bit autobiographical. Like other autobiographies, my aim will be to show how, by and large, I was quite right all along.

From 1972 to 1975, I was researching and writing my D.Phil. at Oxford. My topic was the way that US intelligence agencies had assessed the Soviet threat and the impact of these assessments on strategic arms policy. The key policy question was whether or not to deploy a ballistic missile defence. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara reluctantly announced the construction of an anti-Soviet US ABM system in 1967. In 1969, President Nixon changed that to a system designed to protect US ICBMs from a Soviet surprise attack, which was a contrived scenario but kept the system in play until it was limited by the 1972 ABM Treaty with the Soviet Union.

Then, from 1975 to 1982, I spent a year at IISS, in those days occupying a central position in all strategic debates, and then moved to Chatham House. I worked largely on British foreign policy but was known as a specialist in nuclear arms control. During this period, the ABM debate was quiet but the general nuclear debate was becoming more intense, especially after NATO's decision of December

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1979 to deploy intermediate nuclear forces in Europe. In April 1982 I moved to the Department of War Studies at King's College London in 1982, where I stayed for the next 30 years. That was where I was when President Reagan launched his Strategic Defence Initiative in March 1983.

There were two big debates on nuclear issues during the second half of the 1970s. The first was the critique of strategic arms control developed by the Committee on the Present Danger, led by Paul Nitze and other hawks that were sceptical of détente with the Soviet Union. I was on the dovish side of this argument. That essentially meant embracing the framework that McNamara had developed, even if it was one he had not always logically followed. This reflected the view that Mutually Assured Destruction was not so much a strategy but more a condition from which there was no easy escape. It described the world in which we lived – and still live. Both superpowers had the capabilities to destroy each other, even after suffering a surprise first strike. This was a good argument for caution when there was any chance of major war. It therefore, in its own grim way, contributed to stability.

The critique of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks began as the result of the Nixon administration's contrived rationale for ABMs. The problem was that once ABMs were lost to arms control, the problem of ICBM vulnerability was left without a solution. Whether or not it was an actual problem depended on the Soviets developing multiple warheads with decent accuracy for their large SS-25 ICBMs to take out US ICBMs in a surprise attack and seeing any strategic purpose in doing so. After all MAD was still operational. Submarine-launched ballistic missiles would be left, and probably also some bombers, all of which could do enormous damage. But these were classed as counter-city weapons and so represented an inappropriate response to a counter-force attack. The poor president of the United States would be at a bit of a loss as to what to do. This scenario dominated US strategic discourse until just before Reagan's March 1983 announcement. Then the Scowcroft Commission pushed to one side all this nonsense, after the United States had tangled itself in knots trying to find an engineering solution to keep the new MX ICBM relatively invulnerable, looking at every possible basing mode imaginable. Brent Scowcroft simply observed that there were still submarine-launched ballistic missiles and bombers and so this risk to one part of the triad was not such a big deal.

I was on the periphery of these debates in the late 1970s. Most of my own research was on the next steps in arms control and the future of the UK nuclear deterrent (which would not be helped if the Soviets were able to develop extensive missile defences). My approach was largely shaped by the basic MAD framework with which arms controllers worked since the mid-1960s. In the background, I was aware that new forms of ballistic missile defence were being promoted. Schemes, often involving lasers, were being promoted by retired generals such as Daniel Graham and George Keegan. Then there was the crazy Lyndon LaRouche who was pushing hard for space-based defences. (I remember getting a phone call from one of his acolytes taking credit for Reagan's announcement before I told him he should be ashamed and put the phone down.) Many of these schemes

seemed pretty ridiculous and also pointless, given the 1972 Treaty. Nonetheless, for hard-line Republicans the need for missile defence was developing into the international equivalent of anti-abortion domestically. It was about core values and grand strategy.

The most important development by far over this period was the revival of the Peace Movement. This began with the 'enhanced radiation reduced blast weapon', better known as the Neutron Bomb, the 'weapon that killed people but left buildings intact', the ultimate Capitalist Weapon. President Jimmy Carter found himself pushed to support it to reassure NATO allies about the US nuclear guarantee and then found the Europeans shuffling their feet and refusing to make the case, saying 'well, you know, it's up to you, really Mr President'. They then got terribly upset when the President said 'alright then I don't want to do it'. That was the spark that got people interested in nuclear weapons again but the main trigger was the INF decision in December 1979. This was coupled, as is often now forgotten, with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan the same month. This produced talk of a 'Second Cold War', a term popularised by Fred Halliday. After all the optimism of the early 1970s about détente, international relations had taken a turn for the worse.

This had two effects on me. First, the stuff I had been working on in a rather lonely way – there weren't very many of us working on nuclear issues in the 1970s in this country – became a topic of wide interest. As a result, there were now many experts on nuclear weapons and strategy. Second, I found myself in the rather odd position that the arguments that I'd deployed as a dove vis-à-vis in the American debate, now marked me out as a very dangerous hawk in the UK debate. I found myself debating not only the old CND, ably led by Bruce Kent, but the new European Nuclear Disarmament movement, led by Mary Kaldor and Edward Thompson, the historian. When people were reminded of nuclear weapons, at a time when there was an apparently growing risk of war, their natural response was that these weapons are wicked and awful. It was hard to disagree: nuclear weapons are wicked and awful. However, the nuclear disarmers came forward with their own strategic arguments about preparations for first strikes and so on. These struck me as being as contrived as those on ICBM vulnerability. The basic question was: Is the situation sufficiently stable to deter anyone from taking big risks with nuclear war? My assumption, during the 1970s and into the 1980s, was that it was stable and nuclear war was extremely unlikely. But with Reagan entering the White House, it could seem rather complacent. They were good, energetic debates to have, although in the end they came down more to political as much as technical judgements. I never thought it was likely that new weapons would tip the balance into instability.

This was the backdrop to Reagan's announcement of March 1983, for which I was not at all prepared. For much of the next year or so I found myself directly engaged in discussions of SDI, especially in 1984. I think the initial European official reaction was to hope it was a silly idea that would go away. Eventually, they had to realise that Reagan was deadly serious. Three moments stick in my mind. The first was a conference at Ditchley in the winter of 1983/4. One of the guests was Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger. Those were the days when

American Congressmen and senior administration figures thought it worthwhile to travel across the Atlantic, to meet in a country house to talk about great issues. In a number of conversations, I and others tried to explain to Weinberger (who was always friendly and polite) why the SDI was not getting the warm reception he thought it deserved. He was incredulous. His approach was very political. He was very aware of all the technical objections to the scheme but had not really appreciated that mainstream European supporters of NATO thought it damaging to deterrence. It was a very interesting encounter. It made me aware that the Americans were only just starting to get to grips with the alliance implications of the SDI concept.

Second, I provided a paper for the SDI session at the annual IISS conference in 1984, as did Fred Hoffman of the RAND Corporation. They were published in an Adelphi Paper the next year. Hoffman was one of Albert Wohlstetter's original team, from the basing studies in the 1950s. Wohlstetter was an incredibly formidable figure at the time. Not the easiest of men nor a great public speaker but a very clever writer and analyst. He was more responsible than anybody else for the ICBM vulnerability scenario. It reflected his general view that the United States did not worry enough about what a malevolent enemy might get up to. Keep in mind that his wife Roberta wrote the classic book on Pearl Harbor, about getting caught out by surprise attacks. So Fred Hoffman, working in this tradition, was still using SDI as a way of dealing with ICBM vulnerability. I thought that was fundamentally dishonest. It was clear, if you listened to Reagan and what his people were saying, that was not what they had in mind. There was a very clear message that this was about 'protecting rather than avenging' civilian populations. So people like Fred were trying to hijack the project and turn it into something it was never intended to be. I thought it should be judged at face value. Reagan wanted something far more ambitious than just dealing with ICBM vulnerability, especially as Scowcroft had just reported that this was no big deal.

The problem with SDI was that 'protect rather than avenge' was a false prospectus. A claim was being made that could not be backed up. I recall an opinion poll in which people were asked whether they would 'prefer to be protected or avenged'. Ninety per cent said that they would rather be protected, which made you wonder about the death wish of the other 10%. The problems lay in delivering on the promise. This brings me to the third moment, which I think was in 1985 when I debated the issue with Lord Chalfont for Radio 4 in front of a live audience. Chalfont had been Harold Wilson's disarmament minister and had previously been a distinguished journalist. He had become more hawkish once he left office and turned into quite an enthusiast for SDI. My scientific witness was Dick Garwin. His was George Keyworth, the president's scientific advisor, who had been a big advocate for the Strategic Defence Initiative. I had rehearsed my cross-examination of Keyworth in my head, and it was almost like he followed the script. It was quite wonderful. It went something like this. I first observed that 'people are saying that this is about protecting missiles, but as I understand it, it is really about protecting populations?' 'It certainly is', he replied. I continued, 'in the President's statements, he talks about how this protection will be extended to Allies?' 'It certainly will be',

Keyworth responded. 'So here we are in London, are you telling this audience that once SDI is in place they will be completely safe from nuclear attack?' Pause. And he couldn't bring himself to say it, and he started wittering, trying to find a way of saying 'well it would make things better.' As he could not substantiate the claim he lost the audience (and I won the debate). This pointed to a basic flaw. The initiative dealt specifically with long-range ballistic missiles. But there are lots of ways of delivering nuclear weapons – cruise missiles, bombers, suitcase bombs. As was noted at the time, it was like getting a roof repaired to stop the rain from getting in while leaving the doors and the windows wide open.

As it could not really protect, this led to the obvious critique of SDI: that it only made sense as part of a first-strike strategy. You may not be able to protect everybody, but if you have knocked out an awful lot of Soviet retaliatory capability with your own missile attack, you may be able to deal with whatever is then launched in your direction by way of ambitious defences. That goes right back to the start of thinking about Mutually Assured Destruction. It was exactly that concern that had led scientists such as Jerry Wiesner and Herbert York to develop the first critiques of proposals for ballistic missile defence in the mid-1960s (in *Scientific American*) as potentially destabilising. This was how the debate had been framed for some two decades. So it was not particularly fanciful to judge what Reagan was proposing in those terms.

Of course, all my old friends in European Nuclear Disarmament saw it in exactly those terms, presenting it as a very dangerous development which just showed how aggressive the United States was going to be under Reagan. Now because I was a critic of SDI, I experienced what I called the 'even Lawrence Freedman' phenomenon. Because I was taking a similar position to the END types, this showed just how right they must be, because even somebody who was a reactionary hawk like Lawrence Freedman was confirming their views. So SDI led to a sort of truce with END but left me reopening hostilities with American hawks.

Yet the interesting thing about SDI was that Reagan's thinking was not that far away from that of the disarmers. He was responding to the Freeze Movement, movies like *The Day After*, the pastoral letter from the Catholic Bishops, and so on. Jonathan Schell's book *The Fate of the Earth* was incredibly important, one of the best pieces of writing from anybody in the disarmament movement. The first pages of that book provide some of the most powerful anti-nuclear polemics you can read. Schell produced another book called *The Abolition* where he talked about the role that ballistic missile defences might play as providing a sort of insurance once all the offensive weapons had been eliminated. So those who saw the problem as simply a reflection of the recklessness and aggressiveness of the Reagan administration missed noticing how this might lead to something else. There was a logic at work here.

I'm going to quote myself, because I'm quite proud of this paragraph, which came from the 1984 IISS Conference and was published in the 1985 Adelphi Paper:

> Consider the consequences of a failure of a multi-layered defence to perform as advertised. If as a result of its deployment, the enemy increased

its offensive capabilities to deal with expected performance levels, which were in fact not reached at the critical moment, the result would be far more warheads landing on the homeland, and the system would have been utterly counter-productive.

If the President really wants to eliminate defensive nuclear weapons from the face of the Earth, why not propose just that to the Soviet Union? If it is desired to reduce the targets available to the nuclear offensive, then reduce the flexibility by cutting its numbers. If it is desired to limit the damage to the United States, should deterrence fail and reduce the risk of a nuclear winter, then at the very least propose reductions to get to small stockpiles.

That was the whole logic of Reagan's argument. If you believed he was sincere – and I think it took a while before we realised he probably was – he was appalled by the idea of nuclear war. He'd started off with the strategist's agenda, by not taking arms control that seriously, building up all capabilities, doing MX, and he could not see how any of this really improved matters. Then he'd gone for strategic defences, and I think by 1986 the difficulties were becoming apparent, though he was still sticking with it. But the logic pointed to the next step, which was to propose disarmament. We know how that worked out. This culminated with the October 1986 Reykjavik Summit, which was a fascinating moment. This failed because Reagan could not accept Gorbachev's demand that SDI be part of a disarmament package. I have my doubts as to whether even if Reagan and Gorbachev had reached agreement on that day, how long it would have taken before it would start to unravel under Congressional scrutiny. I remember a meeting at Chatham House, the day after Reykjavik, where everyone was talking about what had happened. My observation was that an unrealistic arms control project had been stymied by a ridiculous weapons project. I was still very much in the deterrence mode, and this was a shock to people who took deterrence seriously, not least to Mrs Thatcher who went scooting across the Atlantic, as she had also done in 1984 in response to SDI, to try to get Reagan to go on record with a renewed commitment to deterrence and the nuclear guarantee to NATO.

The arms control agenda soon became more focused and modest and SDI slipped away as an issue. I wrote something in early 1987, saying that 'maybe Gorbachev's realised that the only thing going for Star Wars is him'. Every time anyone says Star Wars is a waste of resources and effort the response was: 'Well, Mr Gorbachev doesn't think so. If it is so absurd why is he trying so hard to stop it?' As soon as Gorbachev showed he wasn't interested, this argument was turned on its head. 'If he's dismissing it, then why are you doing it?' So although it was true, that disconnecting made possible the INF Treaty, it also took a lot of the steam out of SDI itself. It barely lasted into the Bush administration.

The late 1980s transformed the East-West relationship but also a whole way of looking at nuclear strategy and deterrence. Discovering that the American president didn't really believe in deterrence was one thing. But quite another was Gorbachev moving the Soviet position along in his statements, leading eventually to

the December 1988 speech at the UN. Then in 1989 European politics entered a completely new stage. All the techy stuff that I'd learnt during the 1970s to be taken seriously in the arms control community – about MIRVs, throw weights, circular error probable, Functionally Relevant Observable Differences (FRODs), and so on – became less important. Oddly many of the young Soviet arms controllers were just catching up with the Western debate as that was becoming passé. I remember a trip to Moscow around 1988, and it was like listening to lots of McNamara clones talking. My response to the sort of arms control proposals that they wanted to discuss was that the political context was changing so dramatically that these issues were no longer so relevant.

All of a sudden the first-order issues were coming back. All the stuff that had kept me busy up to this point was really second and third order. Now big geopolitical questions about how states related to each other came to the fore. And of course because the Cold War suddenly came to an end, the wind was taken out of lots of sails. Not just the nuclear strategists but also the arms controllers. It was almost as if we had to rediscover international politics and shift away from technocratic analysis. Rather than assuming that stability depended on the intricacies of the balance, we were reminded that real stability depended on how states related to each other and how political leaders engaged at times of crisis and conflict.

So that is my SDI story as a member of the commentariat. My view that it offered a misleading prospectus and always lacked feasibility has not changed. Yet with hindsight, we can note that perhaps the strong framing of the issue in the 1960s, reinforced by the initial reaction to Star Wars, meant that we missed the importance of the development of defensive systems in a 'non-MAD' context, in areas where there would be minimal impact on the overall strategic balance. It took a while before the possibilities of modern defensive technologies were appreciated and then embraced, not as ways of knocking out retaliatory attacks, but as providing much more modest forms of defences against much more modest forms of attack. And it's taken a while to detach thinking about ballistic missile defences of a more modest sort from those earlier debates. SDI has left a number of technological legacies, and we discuss the extent to which it influenced this late stage of the Cold War, but it is striking that it has left such a slight legacy in strategic thought.

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