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THESIS

**AN INTRICATE INTERNAL NETWORK:
THE UNTOLD STORY OF U.S. MID-LEVEL OFFICIALS
IN U.S.-SOVIET SALT I NEGOTIATIONS**

by

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December 2023

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OF U.S. MID-LEVEL OFFICIALS IN U.S.-SOVIET SALT I NEGOTIATIONS**

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ABSTRACT

With the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China (PRC) seeking to project influence throughout the globe, fear of nuclear war is more present today than in recent years. The years preceding the historic Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) I, specifically 1969–1972, offer a historical glimpse into a unique era of cooperation and arms control between two great powers, the United States and the Soviet Union. This thesis adds to the current scholarship on arms control treaties by analyzing the role that academics and mid-level officials (that is, political scientists and State Department officers) played in shaping SALT negotiations. While not discounting the role of President Nixon and the composition of the bi-polar international system, this thesis sheds light on the untold story of the impact that academics and mid-level officials had on U.S. foreign policy during the SALT era. Utilizing primary source State Department internal memorandums as well as correspondence between U.S. and Soviet intellectuals, I argue that the network of U.S. mid-level officials played a pivotal role in influencing U.S. arms control policy during this period by creating an atmosphere conducive to constructive internal debate and relationship-building across ideological lines.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABM	Anti-Ballistic Missile
ACDA	Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CNO	Chief of Naval Operations
DOD	Department of Defense
EUR	Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigations
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
INR	Bureau of Intelligence and Research
IMEMO	Institute for World Economics and International Relations
MAD	Mutually Assured Destruction
MBFR	Mutual-Balanced Force Reduction
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDS	National Defense Strategy
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NSC	National Security Council
NSCIC	National Security Council Intelligence Committee
NSS	National Security Strategy
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PM	Bureau of Political-Military Affairs
PRC	People's Republic of China
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty
SIOP	Single Integrated Operational Plan
SRI	Stanford Research Institute
START	Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
UN	United Nations
U.S.	United States

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I. INTRODUCTION

*Man's capability for self-destruction cannot be eradicated—he knows too much! Keeping that capability under control...is the eternal challenge.*¹

*War is inevitable, for the cause of war is inherent in international politics; but particular wars can be avoided, for the occasions of war can be extinguished. It is the task of diplomacy to circumvent the occasions of war.*²

There is little debate that the United States and the Soviet Union were two great powers within a bi-polar international system from the 1960s to the 1980s. Technological advances in weaponry, beginning with the atomic bomb, made the potential for catastrophic destruction a reality. While both sides desired peace, they were also keen on preserving their own national interests. Arms control policies provided a means through which the United States and the Soviet Union could announce their respective desires for a more peaceful world. The resulting negotiations provided a platform where each nation could clearly communicate its national interests and take measures to restrain or shift certain interests based on the adversary's perspective. Thus, dialogue between these two countries centered largely on arms control during this era. Even while Khrushchev used nuclear brinksmanship during the Cuban Missile Crisis, historian Lawrence Freedman contends that the dilemma of nuclear strategy was unsolved even by the mid 1980s.³ Nuclear strategy was inherently complex. The rapid development of technology necessitated continual dialogue, and ongoing dialogue meant that relational trust had to be rebuilt repeatedly as officials retired from national service. One may argue that nuclear and arms control policy remains unsettled today.

¹ Thomas C. Shelling and Morton H. Halperin, *Strategy and Arms Control* (Mansfield Center: Martino Publishing, 2014), 5.

² Martin Wight, *International Relations and Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 160.

³ Lawrence Freedman, "The First Two Generations of Nuclear Strategist," in *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

Diverse worldviews drove divergent interests. Therefore, defining what peace meant for each of these sides is fundamental to understanding their approach to arms control. The Soviet definition of peace did “not equate to the absence of war...nor [did] it mean harmonious relations between states,” but rather “the concept of the victory of socialism.”⁴ Rather, the U.S. definition of peace tended to comprise the triumph of U.S. liberal values over all other systems, thus reflecting Dwight Eisenhower’s linguistic usage of the word peace.⁵ Both definitions reveal that self-interest and promotion of their view of the world was inherent in these great powers’ definitions of peace.

The environment surrounding U.S.–Soviet negotiations was vastly different from the American and British experience at the turn of the 20th century when those two great powers exchanged hegemon status. While arms control was not the issue, global power projection was at stake similar to how it was during the Cold War. The cultural similarities between the Americans and the British enabled a peaceful transition between great powers.⁶ The cultural differences between the Americans and the Soviets played a large role in hindering potential agreements. As Alexander Wendt notes, “identities are the basis of interests.”⁷ American and Soviet identities could not have been more different. A convergence of factors, to include trust, domestic and international pressure, and technological development would be necessary to offset the differences in identity. In other words, there is no monocausal explanation for why these two nations reached arms control agreements. Yet individual actors surely influenced the timing of this agreement.

This thesis will analyze the role that U.S. mid-level officials played in bridging this divide in the midst of a complex global environment. I define mid-level officials as intermediate officials who were heavily involved in research and analysis on policy issues.

⁴ Ronald R. Nelson and Peter Schweizer, *The Soviet Concepts of Peace, Peaceful Coexistence, and Détente* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1988), x.

⁵ Ira Chernus, “The Word ‘Peace’ as a Weapon of War,” *Peace Review* 10, no. 4 (1998), <https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659808426212>.

⁶ Charles A. Kupchan, *How Enemies Become Friends: The Sources of Stable Peace* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

⁷ Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (Spring, 1992), 398.

Many of them were State Department employees who either had a background in academia or maintained close connections to academics. These officials, due to their monotonous work behind the scenes, have often been overlooked. Yet from the relative obscurity of the bureaucratic hallways of Washington, they provided a profound depth of historical and political knowledge to higher-level officials at the forefront of policymaking.

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

While meetings and diplomatic engagements regularly took place between U.S. and Soviet diplomats during the Cold War, the number of noteworthy official treaties was modest. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, a peculiar peace existed when Soviet–American relations “were much less volatile than during the first two decades of the Cold War, when confrontations erupted almost annually.”⁸ The negotiations during this era led to the first historic agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union, a treaty known as the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty I (SALT I), which entered into force in May 1972. This period of *détente*, a time during which relations between the United States and Soviet Union were less strained, was an interlude between amplified tensions.

The study of arms control is important for multiple reasons. First, it provides a lens through which to view interactions between adversaries amid the existential threat that nuclear weapons pose. Arms control discussions, while not the panacea, lessen the threat of nuclear war through open dialogue and verification measures. This thesis will investigate the specific context surrounding mid-level officials’ role in SALT I, signed by the United States and the Soviet Union in May 1972. Further study will enable historians and policymakers to gather insights from the successes and failures of past negotiations. Second, as new leaders arise who may have less interest in preserving the existing international order, research into the factors that led to these negotiations and formal treaties provides invaluable insight for today. For example, how did a U.S. administration approach dialogue with a strong adversary whose policies were obscure to the western worldview? What lessons can be applied to today’s environment? The prospect of a world

⁸ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005), 198.

without nuclear weapons remains unlikely, but even small victories that reduce the incentives for war are worth the effort. In the next section, I will discuss the significance of the SALT I agreement and reasons for exploring the context surrounding this treaty.

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The Cold War offers a rare glimpse into an era in world history when two great powers successfully avoided direct and open war with one another. Undoubtedly there were proxy wars and times where the relationship worsened, but there were also intervals of significant cooperation. The primary aim of this thesis is to analyze instances of cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union, utilizing SALT I negotiations as a case study. Specifically, this thesis asks the question, “What role did mid-level officials have in U.S. arms control policy during the SALT era?” My reason for examining the role of mid-level officials during SALT I is two-fold.

First, it was a landmark treaty in the field of arms control. SALT I, while it did not reduce nuclear arsenals, was monumental because it was the first time two regional hegemony established a formal agreement regarding nuclear weapons.⁹ Thus, it not only set the conditions for future negotiations, but also laid the groundwork for future treaties that could transcend administrations. Consequently, this treaty implied a willingness by both the Soviet Union and the United States to continue the dialogue surrounding arms control. Furthermore, it was the first time in which two adversaries with rival ideologies formalized an agreement to place nuclear limits upon themselves. These distinct characteristics, namely a readiness to communicate and a voluntary acceptance of restrictions, call for deeper analysis.

Second, arms control proved to be a unique area of cooperation. While the United States and the Soviet Union had divergent visions of how the world, the economy, and society should be organized, limiting adversaries’ nuclear weapons was a common interest. The fact that these adversaries were able to translate this common interest into a treaty is noteworthy. Treaties demonstrate a formal commitment to peace, and are distinct from

⁹ Richard F. Staar, *Foreign Policies of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1991), 288-291.

other agreements because they are an attempt to commit to a peace that extends beyond the personal relationships of the administrations immediately involved. Building off of an official agreement, even one that is limited in scope, provides a baseline from which future administrations can build upon and strengthen the language to further solidify the bond between countries. As official cooperation between states, a treaty thus provide an excellent starting point for understanding why cordial relations were possible between great powers. Arms control specialist Raymond Garthoff notes that SALT I was a foundational agreement upon which further arms control agreements could be negotiated and signed.¹⁰ In other words, it set a precedent for institutionalizing the concept of arms control.

I propose to expand the current scholarship by analyzing the role that mid-level officials and academics played in shaping SALT negotiations during the period of 1969–1973. In doing so, my aim is to determine whether one or several of the widely accepted arguments for the cause of this treaty are satisfactory. Most authors seem to emphasize why détente crumbled following these treaties. My intent in this proposal is to focus exclusively on what caused détente rather than why it deteriorated. By limiting my scope to the 1969–1973 time period, my research enables a detailed and nuanced analysis of relevant factors. My intent is to determine what factors led to cooperation during this period. In other words, were there any discernable patterns that led to this treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union at this distinct moment?

By analyzing the context surrounding SALT I through primary sources, I discovered additional contextual information and subtleties pertaining to it. Some may argue that it was a unique set of circumstances that cannot be recreated by following similar procedures. On the contrary, I conclude that this research illuminates certain patterns that may be applicable in future policymaking. Overall, my primary source research helps to generate deeper awareness of the untold story of mid-level politicians’ influence on U.S.

¹⁰ Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1985), 289.

nuclear policy in the early 1970s, and offers fresh perspectives on how to tackle present-day challenges.

With Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the current generation is experiencing increased fears of nuclear war. Anxiety intensified following Putin's suspension of Russia's participation in New START—the only remaining U.S.–Russian, bilateral nuclear arms agreement—on February 21, 2023.¹¹ His suspension of New START as well as the impending rise of China as a regional hegemon likely portends a contentious international environment similar to conditions from 1945 to 1991 when the United States and the Soviet Union were engaged in the Cold War. Thus, not only does this research offer historical value by expanding analysis regarding the context surrounding stretches of amiable relations between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, but it can also help to inform U.S. policy toward arms agreements today. I believe that a greater understanding of previous détente in great power relationships will encourage creative thinking and enable policymakers to ask more appropriate questions as they attempt to navigate present-day security dilemmas. As historian William Inboden notes, “history's greatest value in statecraft lies in a mode of thinking rather than any trite maxims.”¹² Consequently, the goal of this thesis is not to prescribe principles that can be applied in every situation, but rather to enlarge policy makers' awareness of present challenges through a study of the past. A myopic view of the past hinders ingenuity, whereas an open-minded approach can provoke a creative response to modern crises.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

Divergent opinions exist as to why the U.S. and Soviet Union formalized an arms control agreement in 1972. Policymakers, analysts, historians, political scientists, and even nuclear strategists tell diverse stories of Cold War negotiations between the U.S. and the

¹¹ Heather Williams, “Russia Suspends New START and Increases Nuclear Risks,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, last modified February 23, 2023, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russia-suspends-new-start-and-increases-nuclear-risks>.

¹² William Inboden, Statecraft, Decision-Making, and the Varieties of Historical Experience: A Taxonomy,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies* Vol. 37, 2 (2014): 316, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2013.829402>.

Soviet Union. There were many factors at play, but it was a convergence of these factors that produced a formal treaty. In this literature review, I have merged these stories into two sections. The first section focuses on arms control from an international relations' perspective. The second section details different historical arguments for why the United States and the Soviet Union succeeded in coming to terms on SALT I. The historical section is further divided, and considers the role that parity, trust, domestic factors, and international pressure had on the realization of the agreement.

1. International Relations Theory on Arms Control

Realists such as Kenneth Waltz have argued that bipolar systems, such as U.S.–Soviet bipolarity, are inherently more stable than multipolar systems. From their perspective, states are focused on self-interest. Thus, fear of annihilation on both sides enables this type of system to endure.¹³ Looking at the Soviet Union prior to its collapse in the 1980s, political scientists Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth argue that while ideas mattered, the extent to which they mattered was dependent upon the material pressures pressing upon the Soviet Union.¹⁴

The liberal school of thought acknowledges the self-sovereignty of states but sees the establishment of institutions as a solution to an arms race. In contrast to realists, liberal scholars believe that states' desires to enhance their security will inevitably lead to a more dangerous world.¹⁵ The liberal view emphasizes the importance of non-state actors and the creation of institutions for achieving peace.¹⁶ Additionally, the concept of democratic peace theory, which argues that democracies are less likely to fight wars with one another, is prevalent within the liberal camp. Thus, during the Cold War, liberal scholars would have seen the exportation of U.S. democratic values as a legitimate path to peace.

¹³ Kenneth Waltz, *The Theory of International Politics* (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 2010).

¹⁴ Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "Power, Globalization, and the End of the Cold War: Reevaluating a Landmark Case for Ideas," *International Security* Vol. 25, 3 (Winter 2000-2001).

¹⁵ Mohamed Alolaimy, "Disarmament: Evolution or Revolution," *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues* vol. 21, 1 (Spring 2017), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48531507>.

¹⁶ Alolaimy, "Disarmament: Evolution or Revolution."

Mutual fear and institutional building are not the only lenses through which to view the conditions that led to these historic treaties. Realism and liberalism only tell a portion of the story. Rather, changing international norms, most notably the broadly accepted Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which had been signed by 93 United Nations' countries by the year 1970, had substantial effects.¹⁷ Furthermore, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was established in 1957 as a result of President Dwight Eisenhower's desire to unify the world through employing this discovery for peaceful purposes.¹⁸ The IAEA's rising prominence likely had a significant effect on both sides' calculus.¹⁹ Thus, according to the constructivist argument, the story of SALT I was about changing ideas and identities rather than state interests or institutions.

2. Historical Arguments for SALT I

While international relations scholars provide insight into arms control, historians illuminate intricacies that further explain the context surrounding particular events in the history of arms control. Academics provide different reasons for why the United States and Soviet Union eventually reached an agreement. I have chosen to focus on arguments concerning the achievement of parity, trust, domestic politics, and international pressure because these factors comprise a significant portion of the existing literature on SALT I.

a. The Achievement of Parity

The historical literature reveals an arms race between the United States and the Soviets from the 1950s to the mid 1960s. Accordingly, one argument for the signing of SALT I is that the achievement and realization of parity between these great powers brought them to the negotiating table by the late 1960s. Adherents to this view assert that since both the Soviet Union and the United States were capable of destroying each other, peace was possible; arms control agreements became the avenue through which to pursue

¹⁷ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, "Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," July 1, 1968, <https://treaties.unoda.org/t/npt>.

¹⁸ "History," International Atomic Energy Agency, <https://www.iaea.org/about/overview/history>.

¹⁹ David Fischer, *History of the International Atomic Energy Agency: The First Forty Years* (Vienna: The Agency, 1997), https://www-pub.iaea.org/MTCD/publications/PDF/Pub1032_web.pdf.

this peace.²⁰ Consequently, nuclear arms control dominated U.S.–Soviet discussions during the Cold War. U.S. military analyst Donald Brennan first coined the term *mutually assured destruction* (MAD) in the 1960s when he was defending the strategy of missile defense.²¹ The idea behind MAD is that neither side would execute a first strike with a nuclear weapon because even if it destroyed the other, it would also assure its own destruction. Historian John Gaddis observes that the SALT I accords were significant because “they legitimized the logic of Mutual Assured Destruction.”²² Speaking of the related concept of assured vulnerability, former National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger notes that vulnerability bred peace whereas strength triggered war.²³

Reaching parity with the United States enabled the Soviets to negotiate from a position of strength. The Soviet Union did not go immediately to the negotiating table in the late 1940s and 1950s, but rather sought to build up its military-industrial complex to remain competitive with the United States. By the 1960s, the Soviets had reached parity and were willing to seek compromise. The reality of the human experience is that compromise is not achievable until all sides are willing to listen to one another, and typically, the weaker side must become stronger to ensure its voice is heard before compromise is possible. As the Soviets’ strength increased, Garthoff argues that they were consequently more open to compromise.²⁴ Parity not only emboldened the Soviets, but it also forced the Americans’ hand. Once parity was realized, both sides were willing to come to the table.²⁵

²⁰ See Andrew J. Pierre in “The SALT Agreement and Europe,” *The World Today* 28, no. 7 (July 1972) for an argument that “rough strategic parity...between the United States and Soviet Union should be sufficient to maintain...political confidence.” See Paul Doty, Albert Carnesale, and Michael Nacht in “The Race to Nuclear Arms Control,” *Foreign Affairs* 55, no. 1 (October 1976) for an argument that “the preservation of parity...must be an essential aim of SALT.”

²¹ Robert Jervis, “Mutual Assured Destruction,” *Foreign Policy* no. 133 (November/December 2002), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3183553>.

²² Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History*, 200.

²³ Keith B. Payne, *Nuclear Deterrence in U.S.-Soviet Relations* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982), 48.

²⁴ Raymond L. Garthoff, “Negotiating with the Russians: Some Lessons from SALT,” *International Security* 1, no. 4 (Spring 1977), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2538619>, 24.

²⁵ Raymond L. Garthoff, *Deterrence and the Revolution in Soviet Military Doctrine* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1990), 52.

Advancements in technology enabled the Soviets to reach parity, and thus played a role in the prelude to SALT I. Following Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Soviets realized they were behind the curve. Historian David Holloway argues that the bomb revealed to the Soviets their inferiority with regard to nuclear military capability, and thus served as the impetus for their overriding desire to reach nuclear equivalence with the U.S.²⁶ An intense effort to reach this equal status was made possible by establishing the basis of a rocket program in 1946.²⁷ Initiatives such as these, coupled with the intellectual freedom given to Soviet scientists, pushed Americans to negotiate prior to SALT I. As authors James Smith and Gwendolyn Hall argue, massive Soviet build-up was one of the main reasons for mutual agreement during SALT I.²⁸ Additionally, because nuclear technology created the conditions for mass destruction on a previously unforeseen scale, it had a considerable impact on negotiations.

While the Soviets were not aiming for nuclear war, their desire to deter the United States necessitated a build-up of their nuclear arsenal. This surge was necessary to overcome a sense of inferiority that had become ingrained in the Soviet psyche over time.²⁹ Political scientist Keith Payne argues that this aura of U.S. superiority was further evidenced by an opinion that Soviet nuclear doctrine was more “primitive” than U.S. nuclear doctrine.³⁰ Because they could not trust the United States, the Soviets had to build up their military to obtain some tangible power to exercise influence at the negotiating table. Yet it seems clear that the Soviets did not desire nuclear war. As early as 1968, Garthoff notes that Soviet military doctrine emphasized the prevention of nuclear war.³¹ Thus, the Soviets did not desire nuclear war, but they required material means for

²⁶ David Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy 1939–1956* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 272.

²⁷ Holloway, 245.

²⁸ Ed. James M. Smith and Gwendolyn Hall, *Milestones in Strategic Arms Control, 1945-2000: United States Air Force Roles and Outcomes* (Maxwell AFB Base: Air University Press, 2002), 53.

²⁹ Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy 1939–1956*, 271.

³⁰ Payne, *Nuclear Deterrence in U.S.-Soviet Relations*, 138.

³¹ Raymond L. Garthoff, *Deterrence and the Revolution in Soviet Military Doctrine* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1990), 50.

deterrence to be effective. Arms control experts Thomas Shelling and Morton Halperin assert that the very notion of arms control supports this concept because it “is a recognition that nearly all serious diplomacy involves...some kind of power or force, and that a main function of military force is to influence the behavior of other countries.”³² Those who argue that parity paved the way for peace support the idea that the Americans and the Soviets viewed their nuclear arsenal as a means of deterrence against the other.

b. Trust

Another prominent argument for the signing of SALT I is that leaders of the two great powers established trust with one another. The reputation of both the United States and the Soviet Union suffered at the hands of the other for many years after World War II. Trust was not easily built or restored. Martin Wight notes that “communities...when they have suffered a long series of mutual injuries...cannot transpose themselves into an attitude of mutual trust.”³³ In other words, is it extremely difficult to build trust after years of suspicion and perceived mistreatment. It takes time to build trust that is strong enough to lead to the establishment of a formal treaty. In *Anatomy of Mistrust*, political scientist Deborah Larson argues that personal trust was a key factor in formalizing SALT I.³⁴ Not until May 1971 were inroads made toward détente; personal correspondence between Brezhnev and Nixon served as a building block for mutual trust.³⁵ That personal correspondence led to further communication and understanding, ultimately resulting in mutual agreement to SALT I.

Vladislav Zubok continues Larson’s argument that trust was paramount by contending that the individuality of Soviet leaders played a vital role in the formalization of this treaty.³⁶ For example, he notes that Brezhnev’s special relationship with Nixon was

³² Shelling and Halperin, *Strategy and Arms Control*, 143.

³³ Martin Wight, *International Relations and Political Philosophy*, 158.

³⁴ Deborah Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust: U.S.-Soviet Relations During the Cold War* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), 189.

³⁵ Larson, 189.

³⁶ Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

key to the success of SALT I.³⁷ Thus, this argument contends that personality and trust were essential to reaching a formal agreement. Open discourse was a necessary ingredient for trust. This fact underscores the importance of dialogue even when friction abounds. Engagement breeds understanding, which in turn leads to empathy and trust. Without a willingness to communicate, SALT I would never have been signed. Considering the opposing perspective, Larson notes that mistrust increased at times because of “cheap, propaganda-like proposals.”³⁸ Thus, while communication engendered trust, such communication had to be sincere.

While trust among adversarial leaders is certainly relevant, trust among internal actors also affected the timing of these treaties. Much has been written on interactions at the highest level between Nixon and Brezhnev, but other authors argue their relationships with subordinates also mattered. Larson notes that Nixon clearly had greater trust in Kissinger, the National Security Advisor, than he did in Secretary of State William Rogers, going so far as to inform the Soviet ambassador to by-pass Rogers and speak directly to Kissinger.³⁹ Given freedom by Nixon, Kissinger experienced success in helping to translate this autonomy into the SALT I agreement. Thus, interpersonal trust was clearly a major factor in U.S. foreign policy.

Stability amongst domestic leadership also seems to have been a necessary condition for the signing of SALT I. For example, Nixon and Brezhnev took four years to reach an agreement. In other words, it took the presence of stability to create the conditions for information sharing, which in turn produced trust and an eventual agreement. In the years leading up to this historic treaty, Nixon and Brezhnev enjoyed security in their positions as leaders of their respective countries. Zubok argues that they developed a relative level of confidence in each other.⁴⁰ Conversely, turnover among leaders did not bode well for securing agreements. The implication here is that “decision-makers do not

³⁷ Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev*.

³⁸ Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust: U.S.-Soviet Relations During the Cold War*, 165.

³⁹ Larson, 157.

⁴⁰ Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev*.

lack agency.”⁴¹ Trust among leaders, while not the sole cause for peace, played a role in finalizing SALT I. A deeper knowledge and understanding of the person on the other side made the actors more likely to reach an agreement. Consequently, the conditions set by leaders determined the timing of SALT I.

c. Domestic Politics

Other authors argue that domestic politics significantly influenced American foreign policy toward the Soviet Union. Even prior to the Cold War, the Soviets already understood the extent to which domestic affairs would influence American foreign policy. Maxim Litvinov, who served as People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs for the Soviet Union from 1930–1939, noted that Soviet “impact on... [U.S.] public opinion is found to have either a positive or negative influence on the nature and duration of...tensions...without public sympathy, no possible cooperation would produce the requisite results.”⁴² During the 1960s, President Johnson openly informed Anatoly Dobrynin, the Soviet Ambassador to the U.S., that domestic opinion heavily shaped U.S. foreign policy.⁴³ Having been accused of “publicly hugging a communist” for his hospitable response to Khrushchev’s calls for peace, Johnson was clearly swayed by domestic opinion.⁴⁴ American elections not only influenced, but likely further delayed talks. With this knowledge, the Soviets sought to affect U.S. domestic opinion. Former American diplomat Maynard Glitman notes that the Soviets were acutely aware that their success hinged on their ability to sway the U.S. and European populace.⁴⁵ With this in mind, the Soviets likely sought to manipulate domestic opinion in the United States as part of their strategy leading up to bilateral talks.

⁴¹ Martin Wight, *International Relations and Political Philosophy*, 19.

⁴² Vladimir O. Pechatnov, “The Big Three After World War II: New Documents on Soviet Thinking about Post War Relations with the United States and Great Britain,” Working Paper No. 13, July 1995, *The Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars*, 11-12.

⁴³ Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow’s Ambassador to America’s Six Cold War Presidents, 1962-1986* (New York: Random House, 1995), 119.

⁴⁴ Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 119.

⁴⁵ Maynard W. Glitman, *The Last Battle of the Cold War: An Inside Account of Negotiating the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 79.

Likewise, the Nixon administration was not immune to pressure from domestic interests. During the SALT I negotiations, Nixon provided Kissinger with an extraordinary amount of control over the negotiations process. Yet Smith and Hall argue that Kissinger was “still constrained by the realities of domestic politics.”⁴⁶ Larson notes that some of this pressure came from Congress.⁴⁷ Furthermore, former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Walter Slocombe corroborates this stance by sharing that Kissinger believed the American Congress was unlikely to authorize construction of a missile defense system in the U.S. capital, and thus feared acquiescing to Soviet demands for missile defense sites in each capital city.⁴⁸

Gaddis also claims that détente required the support of the domestic populace. Even though détente may have originated with elites, it “required support from below, and this proved difficult to obtain.”⁴⁹ Decades of propaganda, which the United States and the Soviet Union disseminated, had the express purpose of discrediting the adversary in the minds of citizens. For example, the Soviets employed radio propaganda against the United States beginning in the mid-1940s. In 1947, author John Whitton notes that the Americans began to counter this propaganda by expanding the “Voice of America” to include broadcasts in Russian to those living in the Soviet Union.⁵⁰ Because this propaganda never fully ceased, U.S. leaders had to project an image of maintaining a firm stance against communism in their negotiations with the Soviets. Overall, these authors suggest that domestic pressure affected the United States’ ability to compromise.

Domestic factors were a consideration not only for the United States, but also for the Soviet Union. Larsen notes that even if Brezhnev had desired peace at certain times, he

⁴⁶ Smith and Hall, *Milestones in Strategic Arms Control, 1945-2000: United States Air Force Roles and Outcomes*, 60.

⁴⁷ Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust: U.S.-Soviet Relations During the Cold War*, 164.

⁴⁸ Walter B. Slocombe, “Cold Dawn: The Story of SALT by John Newhouse,” *The Yale Law Journal* 83, no. 1 (Nov. 1973), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/795324>.

⁴⁹ Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History*, 199.

⁵⁰ John B. Whitton, “Cold War Propaganda,” *American Journal of International Law* 45, no.1 (January 1951), 151-153.

did not always have the requisite backing from the Soviet Politburo.⁵¹ Historian Stephen Kotkin contends that Gorbachev was simply a reflection of the on-going changes to Soviet domestic society that had already begun to shift after parity was reached in the 1960s.⁵² Thus, despite the fact that the Soviet Union was not a democracy, these authors maintain that Soviet domestic politics still affected treaty negotiations with the United States.

d. International Pressure

Besides the aforementioned arguments, a good portion of the literature points to the fact that the chaotic nature of the international environment influenced U.S.–Soviet negotiations. Larson argues that the convergence of these international factors with internal conditions facilitated U.S.–Soviet cooperation.⁵³ Furthermore, allies affected the great powers’ negotiating positions, and thus affected the timing of these treaties.⁵⁴ Each side’s calculus involved how potential agreements would positively or negatively affect relationships with allies. Author Richard Pipes remarks that in U.S. policymaking sessions, allies’ interests constrained U.S. foreign policy.⁵⁵ Sokov validates this argument, writing that those allies forced the hand of U.S. actions in certain circumstances.⁵⁶ Conversely, he notes that the Soviet Union was an independent actor whose policies were only marginally shaped by allies.⁵⁷

Furthermore, European domestic opinion weighed heavily on the United States, and the Soviets took advantage. Glitman reveals that in the early phases of SALT I negotiations, the Soviets aimed to use the natural geographical distance between the United States and

⁵¹ Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust: U.S.-Soviet Relations During the Cold War*, 159.

⁵² Stephen B. Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970 – 2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁵³ Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust: U.S.-Soviet Relations During the Cold War*, 155.

⁵⁴ Larson, 167.

⁵⁵ Pipes, *How Washington Makes Soviet Policy: Observations of a Visitor* (Stanford: Hoover Institution, 1990), 11.

⁵⁶ Nikolai Sokov, “IAEA Safeguards: Patterns of Interaction and Their Applicability Beyond the Cold War” in *Once and Future Partners: The United States, Russia, and Nuclear Non-Proliferation*, ed. by William C. Potter and Sarah Bidgood (Milton Park: Routledge, 2018), 180.

⁵⁷ Sokov, 180.

its allies to divide the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).⁵⁸ Thus, the Soviet Union sought to leverage disagreements between the United States and its allies for its own gain. Furthermore, due to Europe's lack of military capacity and its geographical proximity to the Soviet Union, Europeans had a keen interest in peace. Glitman is adamant that the European peace movement was instrumental in pushing NATO leaders toward an arms control agreement.⁵⁹ This idea further confirms the aforementioned arguments made by Pipes and Sokov that the United States had to listen to its allies when considering potential actions.

The fact that discussions seemed to move faster when less people were involved supports the idea that international pressures hindered negotiations. For example, former American diplomat Paul Warnke explains that exogenous factors clearly hindered negotiations because by the late 1960s, bilateral talks became very productive when protected from the public eye.⁶⁰ His analysis suggests that public discussions, subject to media reporting and external interpretation, did not help engender trust between the two great powers. Additionally, the freedom and autonomy that Nixon gave Kissinger during negotiations aided him in his ability to make substantial progress toward SALT I. Stability at the negotiating table was thus more likely to create the conditions for a successful agreement. Garthoff confirms this assessment by stating that shifting back and forth between open forums and back-channels was counter-productive.⁶¹

Stability on the international stage was likewise a key factor in compromise. World events commanded the attention of these two superpowers, and these distractions hindered cooperation during certain periods. During the Cold War, other interests arose as leaders dealt with issues around the globe.⁶² Some of these issues included American involvement

⁵⁸ Glitman, *The Last Battle of the Cold War: An Inside Account of Negotiating the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty*, 13.

⁵⁹ Glitman, 142.

⁶⁰ Paul Warnke, "Peaceful Nuclear Explosions: From the Limited Test-Ban Treaty to the Non-Proliferation Treaty in *Once and Future Partners: The United States, Russia, and Nuclear Non-Proliferation* ed. William C. Potter and Sarah Bidgood (Milton Park: Routledge, 2018), 101.

⁶¹ Garthoff, *Negotiating with the Russians: Some Lessons from SALT*, 23.

⁶² Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, 69.

in Vietnam and Soviet aggression in Czechoslovakia in 1968. However, in the Vietnam case, the U.S. sought to alleviate fear caused by its actions. For example, during SALT negotiations, though the United States still had troops in Vietnam, U.S. leaders remained engaged in deep communication with the Soviet Union regarding Vietnam, largely due to the policy of linkage to which Nixon and Kissinger adhered.

Linkage was a concept that American presidents used as a negotiating technique with the Soviet Union. For example, they could cease cooperation if the Soviets took actions deemed inappropriate by the Americans (e.g., invading Afghanistan) or attempt to obtain concessions from the Soviet by ceasing cooperation if the Soviets did not comply with certain demands.⁶³ Additionally, by 1972, U.S. troop levels had been drastically reduced to below 25,000 from a peak of over half a million in 1968.⁶⁴ Even still, Garthoff points out that the Soviets were unwilling to let disagreements over the Vietnam issue hinder their ability to cooperate with the United States.⁶⁵ Soviet anxiety over U.S. involvement in Vietnam was likely much less than it had been just a few years earlier. This stability increased the level of comfort for ensuing negotiations, setting the conditions for a formal treaty. Furthermore, by 1972, there was a desire on both sides for compromise regarding the German question.⁶⁶ The German question was the idea that both sides placed acute strategic importance on Germany; each one was convinced that control over Germany would alter the balance of power during the Cold War.⁶⁷

International pressure likewise influenced the Soviet Union. For example, Larson is clear that Sino–Soviet relations were deteriorating during the 1960s.⁶⁸ Garthoff writes that Sino–American rapprochement obliged the Soviets to move toward reconciliation with

⁶³ Garthoff, 31-33.

⁶⁴ “U.S. Troop Levels in Vietnam: 1960–1972,” Digital History, 2021, https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=11&psid=3844.

⁶⁵ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, 105.

⁶⁶ Garthoff, 105.

⁶⁷ David S. Painter, *The German Question and the Cold War* (Berlin: Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, 1988).

⁶⁸ Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust: U.S.-Soviet Relations During the Cold War*, 155.

the United States, lest they become encircled by a U.S.–China alliance.⁶⁹ Larson also notes that the Soviets were more hesitant to negotiate while Czechoslovakia was still unstable. In fact, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia led to the cancellation of SALT Talks, which had been scheduled to begin in 1968.⁷⁰ An arms control treaty between two ideologically opposed nations does not happen overnight. In the case of SALT I, it took time. Overall, an unparalleled stability on the international stage seemed to set the conditions for this treaty. These authors maintain that a sustained and stable approach more readily fostered favorable conditions for SALT I.

D. GAPS IN THE LITERATURE

I have covered the foremost explanations for the signing of SALT I in the literature review. That said, there is an area of potential exploration where the literature is lacking. For example, while relationships between heads of state are important, it seems plausible that internal relationships within governments played an equally important role. While some authors allude to internal relational dynamics, the literature in this area seems to be less robust. Thus, the inner workings of domestic relationships and their subsequent effects on foreign relations between the United States and Soviet Union leading up to SALT I are worth examining. An exploration of writings, memorandums, notes, and unpublished research of mid-level government officials could yield new insights into how internal politics affected Washington's nuclear policy in the early 1970s.

E. RESEARCH DESIGN

Even a cursory study of documents and scholarship from the SALT I era indicates that there was an overarching and consistent desire for peace on both sides. Yet there were significant hurdles to achieving that peace. I have chosen to take a historical approach in this thesis, but I have grounded my research in international relations theory. I draw support for my argument largely from primary source historical writings related to SALT I. Some of these primary sources are firsthand accounts of meetings and negotiations, while other

⁶⁹ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, 105.

⁷⁰ Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust: U.S.-Soviet Relations During the Cold War*.

sources will include analysis and memorandums related to arms control and SALT I. I have utilized primary sources from the Hoover Institute at Stanford University to conduct a deep analysis of memos and letters within the State Department concerning the extent to which relationships and differing opinions drove U.S. arms control policy during this era. My research is primarily qualitative in nature.

F. THESIS OVERVIEW AND CHAPTER OUTLINE

This thesis is separated into two main chapters. The first chapter focuses on the role of academics, to include relationships between U.S. and Soviet academics as well as the influence of academics on arms control policy. The second chapter reveals how mid-level officials balanced competing domestic visions and how they influenced arms control policy at the highest level.

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II. THE EMERGING AND ESSENTIAL ROLE OF ACADEMICS IN U.S. ARMS CONTROL POLICY

A. INTRODUCTION

In a report detailing his visit to the Soviet Academy of Sciences from April 24–May 5, 1972, Richard B. Foster recounts an experience devoid of the fear and manipulation so often associated with the Soviet Union during this time period. During his time as director of the Strategic Studies Center at Stanford Research Institute (SRI) International, Foster had developed a working relationship with Soviet colleagues, one of whom was Dr. V. M. Kulish, the Department Head of the Institute for World Economics and International Relations (IMEMO). Foster began his relationship with Kulish when the latter visited Washington, D.C., in 1970. In a confidential written summary of his 1972 visit, Foster describes that they continued their ongoing conversation regarding “global strategy, means of preventing a U.S.–Soviet nuclear war and problems in the methodology of U.S.–Soviet strategic interactions and international political relations.”⁷¹ He also notes that he “was treated with great courtesy and no attempts were made to extract obviously classified information from [him]. . .there was little resort to propaganda to persuade me of their point of view.”⁷² Foster mentions that the Soviets spoke highly of Nixon’s upcoming May 22, 1972 visit to Moscow, and they continued to express their desire for peace. In his summary, Foster indicated that during the two-week visit, he discussed a variety of issues with his Soviet counterparts, continuing to build relationships in the process. There was even discussion of a potential “joint U.S.–Soviet research institute to study the common problems of the arms race.”⁷³ Thus, in spite of differing ideological perspectives, interaction between U.S. and Soviet officials revealed commonalities that were too often overshadowed by elevated political rhetoric.

⁷¹ Richard B. Foster Papers, “Report on the Richard B. Foster (SRI) Visit to the Soviet Union as a Guest of Soviet Academy of Sciences,” May 16, 1972, 2.

⁷² Foster Papers, “Report on the Richard B. Foster (SRI) Visit to the Soviet Union as a Guest of Soviet Academy of Sciences.”

⁷³ Foster Papers, “Report on the Richard B. Foster (SRI) Visit to the Soviet Union as a Guest of Soviet Academy of Sciences.”

Intellectual exchanges such as these clearly did not exacerbate the U.S.–Soviet divide. In contrast, they provided unique opportunities for engagement without the tense formality of more official interactions. During his visit, Foster remarked that “the research institutes apparently have some leeway in discussing alternative future policies.”⁷⁴ This observation implies that ongoing interactions with the Soviets could have yielded additional insights into authentic Soviet views on potential policies to pursue concerning relations with the United States. Regardless of whether these Soviet academics were authorized to verbalize unorthodox strategies does not lessen the fact that these joint research symposiums were a golden opportunity for the United States to further engage with the Soviet Union and vice versa. Informal relationships created opportunities for academics to gain insight into each other’s perspectives, thus increasing the capacity for empathy on both sides. Furthermore, the fact that Foster briefed high-level officials from the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the State Department, and the Department of the Army meant that his interactions with Kulish may have had an impact on U.S. arms control policy.⁷⁵ This story serves as an example of the vital role that American academics played in the United States’ ability to achieve détente with the Soviet Union in the early 1970s.

Establishing and implementing effective arms control policy was an exercise in trial and error. SALT I planning began as early as 1964 when President Johnson “proposed that Moscow and Washington explore a ‘verified freeze of number and characteristics of strategic nuclear offensive and defensive vehicles.’”⁷⁶ At this time, nuclear arms had only been used twice in history at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Furthermore, effective arms control policy was not something that could be tested and studied in the same way as other types of warfare. Thus, the majority of arms control policy was (and still is) conducted in a

⁷⁴ Foster Papers, “Report on the Richard B. Foster (SRI) Visit to the Soviet Union as a Guest of Soviet Academy of Sciences.”

⁷⁵ Report of Richard B. Foster (SRI) Visit to the Soviet Union as Guest of Soviet Academy of Sciences (IMEMO), April 24–May 5, 1972, Richard B. Foster Papers, Box no. 33, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

⁷⁶ Alton Frye, “U.S. Decision Making for SALT” in *SALT: The Moscow Agreements and Beyond*, ed. Mason Willrich and John B. Rhinelanders (London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1974), 72.

controlled environment. While Nixon empowered Kissinger to lead the arms control effort, Kissinger consistently received advice from the throng of mid-level officials who staffed the State Department. His strategy helped lead to SALT I, but it was not one man's ideas. Rather, it was the outgrowth of insight gained through meetings, conversations, and memos containing advice from some of the top thinkers in the United States.

By the late 1950s, intellectuals had begun to engage in the realm of nuclear policy. While physicists played a significant role in the development of the atomic bomb during the 1940s, the 1950s was a period in which political scientists and historians began to offer nuclear policy recommendations. Since the discovery of nuclear power, academics had expressed concern over its use, as evidenced by the Acheson-Lilienthal and Baruch Plans in 1946.⁷⁷ However, concern over U.S. nuclear policy became a major point of interest as well. John Foster Dulles' nuclear strategy of massive retaliation during the Eisenhower administration served as the impetus for more involvement from the academic community. Arms control expert Lawrence Freedman notes that this "flawed strategy that arguably increased the risk of nuclear war sufficed to stimulate an interest in military matters amongst intellectuals."⁷⁸ In other words, the incredible destructive nature of these weapons provoked a desire for responsible use. Thus began the larger role of academics in arms control policy. While some continued to write from within the walls of academia, others moved into think tanks, and still others were tapped to work within governmental administrations.

This chapter will further explore the ways in which intellectuals were essential to U.S. Cold War foreign policy during SALT I negotiations. First, it will consider the connection between the U.S. government and academics. Second, it will highlight the importance of relationships across the U.S.–Soviet ideological divide. Even as prominent academics played a significant role in arms control policy, the story of their involvement has been dwarfed by an overemphasis on relationships between heads of state. Yet some

⁷⁷ U.S. State Department, Office of the Historian, "The Acheson-Lilienthal and Baruch Plans," U.S. Department of State, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/baruch-plans>.

⁷⁸ Lawrence Freedman and Jeffrey Michaels, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 120.

authors have illustrated the importance of academics.⁷⁹ My aim is to provide more evidence for the widespread nature of academic involvement through the use of primary source memos and letters between academics and mid-level officials at the State Department.

B. THE INTERNAL U.S. GOVERNMENT–ACADEMIC CONNECTION

The novel nature of the nuclear threat brought divergent communities together within the U.S. government, as the outset of the nuclear age brought with it a newfound fear, and engendered unity within a nation. U.S. mid-level government officials began to work hand-in-hand with the academic community as the presidential administrations sought new and creative insights from external sources. Mid-level officials established trust with the intellectual community through relationships with academic institutions and think tanks. Their unremitting and collaborative work sharpened U.S. foreign policy. In a book review published by *The New York Times* in 1959, Henry Kissinger wrote that Bernard Brodie “was one of the first [scholars] to recognize the strategic significance of nuclear weapons.”⁸⁰ Brodie, a former instructor at Yale and Dartmouth, had joined the RAND Corporation in 1951.⁸¹ Moreover, author Paul Boyer notes that Brodie “offered the first sketchy outline of what would come to be known as deterrence theory.”⁸² More scholars built upon the progress made by intellectual giants such as Brodie, Thomas Schelling, and Herman Khan. The multitude of voices surrounding the issue of U.S. nuclear policy forced U.S. leaders to regularly question it, producing an environment that was quick to adapt as circumstances warranted.

⁷⁹ Examples of authors who have discussed the role of academia in U.S. Cold War policies include Christopher Simpson in *Universities and Empire: Money and Politics in the Social Sciences during the Cold War* (New York: The New Press, 1999), Ron Robin in *The Making of the Cold War Enemy: Culture and Politics in the Military-Intellectual Complex* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), and David Engerman in *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America’s Soviet Experts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁸⁰ Henry A. Kissinger, “Book Review: Strategy in the Missile Age by Bernard Brodie,” *New York Times*, 1959, https://findit.library.yale.edu/images_layout/view?parentoid=11787031&increment=0.

⁸¹ Online Archive of California, “Bernard Brodie, Political Science: Los Angeles,” accessed November 16, 2023, <https://oac.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb4q2nb2px;NAAN=13030&doc.view=frames&chunk.id=div00006&toc.depth=1&toc.id=&brand=oac4>.

⁸² Paul Boyer, “American Intellectuals and Nuclear Weapons,” *Committed Thinkers and Writers in the U.S.* 29 (May 1986), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20873421>.

As a result of this ongoing engagement, both government officials and intellectuals began to exercise more influence over U.S. nuclear policy.⁸³ Kissinger, perhaps one of the most well-known academics, wrote *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* in 1957 before President Nixon appointed him to serve as the National Security Advisor.⁸⁴ Kissinger's book challenged Eisenhower's New Look Strategy of massive retaliation and outlined Kissinger's strategy for countering Soviet aggression at the local level by forcing them to consider the consequences of a limited nuclear war.⁸⁵ While even Kissinger later "professed to have lost faith" in limited nuclear options, he firmly opposed the Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP), which he considered to have the potential to lead to catastrophic nuclear war.⁸⁶ Yet his perspective led to alternative ways of thinking about how the United States could prevent nuclear war. While not all academics agreed with Kissinger on this issue, the importance of their involvement was not that they were all in harmony regarding a particular U.S. nuclear policy. Rather, it was the fact that continual academic debate influenced deliberation at the highest levels of government as these officials communicated regularly with Kissinger, whose views had considerable influence on Nixon.⁸⁷ Many more academics would play prominent roles through their writing and personal relationships with high-ranking political officials in the decades to follow.

Because a number of academics transitioned into official roles and maintained contact with academia, they had access to the latest research and analysis regarding U.S. policy options. Thus, Kissinger and his contemporaries brought historical perspective, scientific knowledge, and a unique understanding of politics to the domain of national

⁸³ Freedman and Michaels, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 213.

⁸⁴ Freedman and Michaels, 130.

⁸⁵ Angelo M. Codevilla, "Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy, by Henry Kissinger (1957)," *The Hoover Institution*, last modified March 8, 2016, <https://www.hoover.org/research/nuclear-weapons-and-foreign-policy-henry-kissinger-council-foreign-relations-1957>.

⁸⁶ William Burr, "Looking Back: The Limits of Limited Nuclear War," *Arms Control Association*, last modified August 29, 2008, <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2006-01/looking-back-limits-limited-nuclear-war>.

⁸⁷ Memorandum for Mr. Henry Kissinger, February 22, 1971, Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 16, Folder no. 1, Hoover Institution Library & Archives; Instructions for the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks at Vienna (SALT VI), November 15, 1971, Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 16, Folder no. 8, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

strategy. First, historical understanding was vital because nuclear policy did not exist in a vacuum. The novel policies formulated by both the United States and the Soviet Union were products of their unique histories. In other words, historical knowledge helped to unwrap the complexity of arms control in that one could not separate Soviet ideology from the Soviet stance on weapons of mass destruction. Author David Holloway reveals the extent to which Soviet ideology shaped Soviet foreign policy in the years leading up to the initial Soviet atomic test.⁸⁸ Once the Soviets secured the capability to use the bomb, it seems imprudent to think that their ideology would cease to influence their policy. Thus, because it was difficult to separate the two, understanding Soviet historical thought was crucial to formulating effective U.S. nuclear policy. Second, scientific knowledge was imperative because the intricacies of the nuclear issue were founded upon complex, yet precise technicalities. Scientific understanding sharpened U.S. nuclear policy because it inhibited the Soviets from taking advantage of American ignorance on the practical composition and military applications of nuclear technology. Third, owing to their relative lack of military experience, mid-level officials were largely not influenced by prevailing military approaches to the problem. Coming from different walks of life, they brought new ideas to the table. Moreover, they understood civilian politics and were better positioned to achieve Congressional buy-in for U.S. nuclear policy. Consequently, the creative thinking and broad knowledge base of academics was invaluable to sharpening U.S. nuclear policy during this era.

Even prior to SALT negotiations, the connection between academia and the U.S. government was evident. Recurring contact, by way of conferences at academic institutions as well as letters between personnel at the RAND Corporation and the Department of State, reveals close associations and working relationships.⁸⁹ These relationships set the conditions for a collaborative environment that encouraged discussion and partnership to achieve national security objectives. Research has consistently shown that collaboration

⁸⁸ Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb*, 224-272.

⁸⁹ “Fletcher School Conference on Nixon Doctrine and European Security,” April 25, 1972, Seymour Weiss Papers, Box no. 17, Folder no. 4; “Letter from RAND to Department of State (DoS),” June 7, 1971, Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 16, Folder no. 4, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

and teamwork generate successful outcomes.⁹⁰ Yet a gap remains between effective and mediocre collaboration. While these mid-level officials did not necessarily follow an Eight-Step model to effective collaboration, the methods that they naturally employed during this time period have proven to be effective. For example, they were both willing and able to collaborate because the global state of affairs required decisive action. They were also willing to engage in conversations with those whom they disagreed. For example, in writing to Frank Perez, an intelligence and research analyst in the State Department, Seymour Weiss writes, “after you have read it, and instead of writing further notes, let’s have lunch at which time you can give me your rebuttals to my rebuttals, or perhaps my memorandum will have converted you to my point of view!”⁹¹ The relational tone of this writing indicates the interpersonal connection among those working on U.S. arms control policy in the lead-up to SALT I. It was not simply organizational familiarity, but personal relationships that facilitated a coherent strategy. This cooperation speaks to the importance of informal relationships in devising U.S. arms control policy.

Internal cohesion, to include the freedom to voice alternate perspectives, translated into strength abroad. Just as the nature of Soviet society played a central role in arms control negotiations, so too did the internal strength of American society. The tendency to look outward at external factors in an attempt to solve problems is natural for human beings. Yet inward unity, generated through dialogue and relationships, allowed the United States to negotiate from a position of strength. And this strength was not simply the material strength of a vast nuclear arsenal, but rather the intangible intellectual strength and critical thinking of mid-level officials who placed a high value upon the interests of the United States.

The effect of this intellectual strength was an emphasis on novel ideas. With Soviet achievement of parity by the mid-late 1960s, the U.S. could no longer afford to look solely for military solutions regarding the nuclear issue. The Soviet Union would force the United

⁹⁰ Morten Hansen, *Collaboration: How Leaders Avoid the Traps, Create Unity, and Reap Big Results* (Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2009), 1.

⁹¹ Letter to Frank Perez, January 20, 1972, Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 17, Folder no. 1, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

States to pay too high of a cost in any nuclear war. Thus, discussions with the other side regarding arms control became necessary. Rather than worry about strict nuclear parity, the director of the U.S. Politico Military Bureau, Seymour Weiss, argued that “the continued recognition of the sufficiency of our strategic posture by both our allies and potential enemies remains the key political and psychological factor in our efforts to limit the arms race without endangering our vital objectives.”⁹² Thus, the concept of strategic sufficiency, adopted under Secretary of State Robert McNamara during the Kennedy administration, continued to prevail during Nixon’s tenure as president. Strategic sufficiency called for an adequate number of warheads to effectively deter a potential foe without overemphasizing the importance of a vast nuclear arsenal. Thus, academic influence upon U.S. nuclear policy began to focus on potential arms control measures. This shift in thinking endures to this day as the U.S. nuclear stockpile has continued to decline since its peak in the mid-late 1960s.⁹³

Consistent interaction between State Department officials and their academic counterparts produced a wide variety of potential U.S. strategic options from which the Nixon administration could gather new insights concerning its arms control policy toward the Soviet Union. Mid-level officials had deep-rooted ties with the academic community and think tanks such as the RAND Corporation. Weiss counted it “a blessing” that so “many independent and first-rate minds” were engaged in examining the political implications of an emerging balance in U.S.–Soviet strategic nuclear weapons.⁹⁴ In the early 1970s, he corresponded with then-professor Zbigniew Brzeziński, who later served as the National Security Advisor under President Jimmy Carter. At a conference on *The Prospects for and Implications of an Independent European Nuclear Force* in April 1971, State Department officials partnered with academics from Columbia, Stanford, the Brookings Institution, and the Council on Foreign Relations to analyze the possibility and

⁹² “U.S.-Soviet Nuclear Parity: Threat or Opportunity,” Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 17, Folder no. 1, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

⁹³ U.S. State Department, “U.S. Nuclear Weapons Stockpile, 1945-2020,” October 5, 2021, https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Fact-Sheet_Unclass_2021_final-v2-002.pdf.

⁹⁴ Letter to Leonard Weiss at the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, April 14, 1972, Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 17, Folder no. 4, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

consequences of establishing a European-based nuclear force.⁹⁵ These relationships and the discussion they produced thus became a driver of U.S. foreign policy. Academics and mid-level officials grew in their trust of one another; that trust acted as “a lubricant” that sharpened their thinking and improved policy.⁹⁶

These academics refined U.S. arms control policy by providing historical understanding and unique insights to those who made policy recommendations, ultimately leading to a more refined U.S. arms control policy. For example, State Department officials attended another conference with professors from the Fletcher School of International Relations at Tufts University, an institution renowned for its superior international relations program.⁹⁷ One particular observation from Dr. Robin Remington of MIT illustrates this point. A specialist in East European affairs, she observed from a March 1972 visit to Eastern Europe that the attitudes of the Poles and Yugoslavs had shifted regarding concerns about Mutual-Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR), which was a part of the SALT negotiations.⁹⁸ MBFR consisted of conventional (non-nuclear) force reductions in the European theater.⁹⁹ Insights such as these were invaluable because this particular report from the Fletcher School conference was disseminated to the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM), the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), and the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs (EUR).¹⁰⁰ This wide distribution meant that its contents were likely read by a number of officials with closer access to Nixon, Kissinger, and other high-level decision makers. While the extent to which every report influenced U.S. arms control

⁹⁵ “Conference on the Prospects for and Implications of an Independent European Nuclear Force,” April 22, 1971 (William Cargo, Ray Cline, Martin Hillenbrand, Ronald Spiers), Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 16, Folder no. 3, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

⁹⁶ Francis Fukuyama, “Social Capital” in *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*, ed. Lawrence Harrison and Samuel Huntington (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 98.

⁹⁷ “Fletcher School Conference on Nixon Doctrine and European Security,” April 25, 1972, Seymour Weiss Papers, Box no. 17, Folder no. 4, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

⁹⁸ “Fletcher School Conference on Nixon Doctrine and European Security,” April 25, 1972, Seymour Weiss Papers, Box no. 17, Folder no. 4, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

⁹⁹ Edward A. McKenney, Mutually Balanced Force Reductions: The Complex Problem, *Naval War College Review* 24, no. 10, (June 1972), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44641335>.

¹⁰⁰ “Fletcher School Conference on Nixon Doctrine and European Security,” April 25, 1972, Seymour Weiss Papers, Box no. 17, Folder no. 4, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

policy is unknown, the consistent flow of reports suggests that high level officials valued this input as it provided direction as well as leverage in future negotiations with the Soviets.

Thus, relationships between mid-level officials and intellectuals enriched the conversation around U.S. policymaking during this time period. Relational trust fostered an environment that valued creativity and encouraged debate. In one of his letters, Fred Ikle, a senior RAND analyst, included a handwritten note asking Weiss to not disseminate the information that Ikle was providing. As part of this mutual understanding, the State Department had the latitude to freely espouse those findings provided that there was no mention of RAND.¹⁰¹ While acknowledging RAND's special relationship with the U.S. government, this level of trust encouraged dialogue and generated more options. Because these officials recognized that collaboration and dialogue were necessary to produce ideas that enhanced national security, they did not seek to claim credit for individual ideas. Apprehension over nuclear warfare and its potential disastrous implications drove these officials to collaborate rather than stoke intergovernmental rivalries.

C. RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS IDEOLOGICAL DIVIDES: FORMAL AND INFORMAL

In addition to this intellectual-government collaboration on the home-front, academics also fostered relationships with Soviet counterparts in both formal and informal capacities. While internal relationships strengthened unity among mid-level actors, interactions with Soviet colleagues were likewise important. Relationships between individuals from both countries set the conditions for an environment conducive to agreement on SALT I. Finding opportunities to partner in non-political ways proved mutually beneficial for both the Americans and the Soviets. The reason for this success was the fact that both countries boasted a robust intelligence infrastructure, practically guaranteeing that these informal conversations were reported to American and Soviet mid-

¹⁰¹ Correspondence between RAND and Department of State (DoS), June 7-10, 1971, Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 16, Folder no. 4, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

level political analysts, who could then relay that information to higher level leadership.¹⁰² At the highest level, Nixon reinforced the importance of building relationships by taking the initiative to visit Moscow in May 1972. Moreover, his willingness to go to China likely opened the door for his success in achieving détente with the Soviet Union.¹⁰³ While Nixon might have served as an example, it was the relationships among mid-tier actors that further enhanced strategic stability.

Formal interactions were essential, but the relationships behind those agreements provided the underlying conditions for peace. Just one year after SALT I was signed, author John Newhouse argued that the most important event of SALT I was not the “signing of the SALT agreements themselves,” but rather “the importance of the [SALT] conference...lay in the fact that it was held at all.”¹⁰⁴ In other words, the journey was more important than the destination. The fact that two great powers with opposing ideologies came together to hold cordial discussions was a victory. Moreover, interactions fostered fresh understanding of “the other.” Mid-level officials were often the principal negotiators, and this process of negotiations was equally as important as any formal agreement. Negotiators on both sides communicated with one another through a formal process, but they also established personal relationships, enabling additional progress through informal means.

These informal means of communication were likewise significant. Negotiators conducted activities such as cross-country skiing and snowmobiling together.¹⁰⁵ Environments such as these set the conditions for relationships, which contributed to a period of détente with the Soviet Union. As a result of the Soviet Union and the United

¹⁰² Matthew Aid, “National Security Agency Releases History of Cold War Intelligence Activities,” *The National Security Archive*, last modified November 14, 2008, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB260/index.htm>; Kristie Macrakis, “Telephonic Hubris and Espionage Styles During the Cold War,” *Isis* 101, no. 2 (June 2010), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/653104>.

¹⁰³ Raymond Aron, “Richard Nixon and the Future of American Foreign Policy,” *Daedalus* 101, no. 4 (Fall 1972), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20024092>, 1-24.

¹⁰⁴ John Newhouse, *Cold Dawn: The Story of SALT* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1973), 272.

¹⁰⁵ Raymond Garthoff, “SALT Problems and Prospects,” Memorandum of Conversation, U.S. SALT Delegation, Helsinki, Finland, April 16, 1972, *NSA Archive*, George Washington University, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB60/abm33.pdf>.

States maintaining channels of communication created during SALT I, discussions concerning SALT II were underway almost immediately following the signing of the first agreement. These informal methods were vital as unofficial conversations served to further solidify relational ties. Author Gerald M. Steinberg argues that “centralized decision making and *informal* “off the record” communication of proposals and responses...facilitated agreements” (emphasis mine).¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, these casual interactions allowed additional opportunities to establish points of agreement. In a formal environment, Soviet negotiators were less apt to share information outside of the official party line.¹⁰⁷ While productive group meetings were an indispensable part of the process, the additional touchpoints that informal conversations provided during SALT I negotiations were vital.

A natural area of cooperation between the Americans and Soviets lay in scientific research. Not only did both countries have advanced nuclear programs, but they were also committed to scientific advancement in a variety of areas. Following the explosion of atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the United States created the Atomic Energy Commission in 1947, focusing its efforts on “basic research and fellowships primarily in physics.”¹⁰⁸ Likewise, the Soviet Union produced world-class scientists, with Nikolay Semenov becoming the first Soviet-born individual to win a Nobel prize in the sciences.¹⁰⁹ The area of academics was thus a fundamental avenue for U.S.–Soviet collaboration due to shared interests in scientific development during the early 1970s. Additionally, the IAEA began to exercise greater influence on nuclear programs, both civilian and military, as it had been assigned weighty responsibilities by the NPT.¹¹⁰ This development was

¹⁰⁶ Gerald M. Steinberg, “The Role of Process in Arms Control Negotiations,” *Journal of Peace Research* 22, no. 3 (September 1985), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/423625>.

¹⁰⁷ Philip E. Mosely, “Some Soviet Techniques of Negotiation” in *Negotiating with the Russians*, ed. Raymond Dennett and Joseph E. Johnson (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1951), 299.

¹⁰⁸ National Science Foundation, “The National Science Foundation: A Brief History,” last modified July 15, 1994, <https://www.nsf.gov/about/history/nsf50/nsf8816.jsp>.

¹⁰⁹ Britannica, s.v. “Nikolay N. Semyonov, Russian Chemist,” accessed November 16, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Nikolay-Semyonov>.

¹¹⁰ John A. Hall, “The International Atomic Energy Agency: Origins and Early Years,” *IAEA Bulletin* 2 (1987), <https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/publications/magazines/bulletin/bull29-2/29201284754.pdf>

important because the IAEA, whose statute was approved by 81 nations in 1956, is an international organization that promotes the employment of nuclear technology for “peace, health, and prosperity throughout the world.”¹¹¹ Thus, the IAEA’s increased involvement as a multilateral entity produced more incentives for arms control.

Researchers from both countries pursued partnership with each other. Foster cultivated relationships with Soviet scientists in the early 1970s.¹¹² The opening of this chapter details one of his visits to the Soviet Academy of Sciences as a guest of his Soviet counterparts.¹¹³ Not only did these relationships open the door for partnership in different areas of scientific development, but reports of positive interactions provided hope for further cooperation. Promising exchanges such as these likely served as avenues to reduce feelings of unease within both Washington and Moscow because academics were able to converse more freely than politicians. For example, Foster notes that “the impressions [he] received from these conversations [did] not represent an official statement of Soviet policy.”¹¹⁴ In other words, they were able to discuss a range of topics that likely varied from the token Soviet rhetoric. And the United States clearly deemed this type of interaction valuable. As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, Foster himself notes that he orally briefed high-level officials on his visit, indicating that the administration considered meetings such as these a high priority.¹¹⁵ For example, the fact that these Soviet researchers spoke almost incessantly of Nixon’s upcoming visit to the Soviet Union

¹¹¹ The International Atomic Energy Agency, “History,” <https://www.iaea.org/about/overview/history>.

¹¹² Multiple Letters Between U.S. and Soviet Intellectuals, Richard B. Foster Papers, Box no. 83, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

¹¹³ Report of Richard B. Foster (SRI) Visit to the Soviet Union as Guest of Soviet Academy of Sciences (IMEMO), April 24–May 5, 1972, Richard B. Foster Papers, Box no. 33, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

¹¹⁴ Report of Richard B. Foster (SRI) Visit to the Soviet Union as Guest of Soviet Academy of Sciences (IMEMO), May 16, 1972, Richard B. Foster Papers, Box no. 33, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

¹¹⁵ Report of Richard B. Foster (SRI) Visit to the Soviet Union as Guest of Soviet Academy of Sciences (IMEMO), April 24–May 5, 1972, Richard B. Foster Papers, Box no. 33, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

illustrates the positive effect that it had upon them.¹¹⁶ Also, during the same time period as the formal SALT negotiations, Foster developed a relationship with Georgy Arbatov, the director of the USA Academy of Sciences in Moscow.¹¹⁷ Relationships such as this one remained a priority during this tension filled year, even as the United States remained in Vietnam and the Soviet Union was supplying South Yemen in its fight against the U.S.-backed forces of North Yemen.¹¹⁸ Thus, even when geopolitical clashes around the globe threatened to upend stability, academics continued to communicate, keeping apolitical lines of communication open and enhancing the potential for higher-level cooperation.

Symposiums between the officials of these countries created the opportunity to discuss scientific and economic issues in addition to policy matters. Dr. N. Inozemtsev, Director of the IMEMO, wrote a letter to Dr. Charles Anderson, president of SRI in November 1972, describing a plan for further cooperation and meetings between them.¹¹⁹ Later, in 1974, Dr. Y. Primakov, writing to Foster, mentions his desire to keep the exchange relaxed, hoping that it would lead to more realistic and beneficial conversation. In the letter, which was translated into English, Primakov writes that they “would not like to give the discussion [at the upcoming symposium] a too rigidly schematic character,” but rather move “quickly to a lively and free exchange of opinions.”¹²⁰ The Academic Secretary of IMEMO followed up, noting that he was “looking forward to fruitful discussions in Moscow.”¹²¹ These personal interactions revealed a growing relationship between

¹¹⁶ Summary of Richard B. Foster (SRI) Visit to the Soviet Union as Guest of Soviet Academy of Sciences (IMEMO), April 24–May 5, 1972, Richard B. Foster Papers, Box no. 33, Hoover Institution Library & Archives, 2.

¹¹⁷ Letter from Georgy Arbatov, Director of the USA Academy of Sciences, Richard B. Foster Papers, Box no. 83, Folder no. 1, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

¹¹⁸ U.S. State Department, “The Two Yemens,” State Department Telegrams detailing the situation in Yemen from 1969-1972, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/documents/organization/113368.pdf>.

¹¹⁹ Letter from Nikolay Inozemtsev, Director of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) to Charles Anderson, November 24, 1972, Richard B. Foster Papers, Box no. 83, Folders 1, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

¹²⁰ Letter from Yevgeny Primakov, Assistant Director of the IMEMO, to Richard B. Foster, 1974, Richard B. Foster Papers, Box no. 83, Folders 3-5, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

¹²¹ Letter from Y. Kostko, Academic Secretary of the IMEMO, to Richard B. Foster, 1974, Richard B. Foster Papers, Box no. 83, Folders 3-5, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

American and Soviet colleagues. Moreover, they illustrate a readiness on both sides to speak freely with the mutual goal of preventing nuclear catastrophe.

These informal interactions continued alongside formal, political negotiations. Because the OSD and other organizations received briefs on informal visits, the United States had the ability to take information learned during these more relaxed visits and apply it during official negotiations. Moreover, official SALT negotiations likewise created opportunities to build relationships, and the role of academia continued as intellectual leaders such as Raymond Garthoff, who received his PhD from Yale, helped to direct U.S. negotiating efforts. Historians have often overlooked the impact of sitting down at the table to negotiate, and they have consequently overemphasized the outcome of the negotiations. Yet the process of negotiating was equally as important as the outcome of the arms control agreement. In a letter to the Ronald Spiers, the Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military affairs, Leon Sloss, director of the Nuclear Targeting Policy Review, noted that he saw “more value in the SALT I dialogue than in the agreement itself.”¹²² Maintaining channels of communication was vital because as technology progressed and circumstances changed, modifications to agreements were inevitable. Open lines of communication, which officials established while negotiating these agreements, were the medium through which alterations to initial agreements were made.

The SALT I agreement was never intended to serve as the culminating achievement of arms control, but rather as an initial foray into an unfamiliar future overshadowed by weapons of mass destruction. Likewise, the aforementioned NPT signed in 1968 by both the United States and the Soviet Union served as a precursor to the SALT I Agreement.¹²³ Authors Michael Levi and Michael O’Hanlon make an important point about personal relationships among negotiators. They write:

During the cold war, taking part in arms control negotiations...allowed top U.S. and Soviet officials to develop personal ties at a time when tensions

¹²² Letter from Leon Sloss to Ronald Spiers, January 11, 1971, Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 17, Folder no. 1, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

¹²³ Daryl Kimball and Shannon Bugos, “Timeline of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT),” *The Arms Control Association*, last modified August 2022, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/NPT-Timeline#:~:text=The%20vote%20was%2095%20to,Kingdom%2C%20and%20the%20United%20States.>

were high and finding alternative means of interacting was difficult. Both sides recognized that personal relationships could be useful for calming nerves and easing communication during crises.¹²⁴

Personal relationships were not the panacea; they could not settle ideological differences. However, human beings are naturally relational beings and humanizing the enemy is no small step. The disparity between what happened during SALT negotiations and how Nixon conducted U.S. policy toward the North Vietnamese is informative. Nixon threatened excessive nuclear force in an attempt “to lever concessions from Hanoi” and even “launched a secret global nuclear alert” rather than continue sincere negotiations.¹²⁵ In contrast, the interactions of mid-level officials throughout the SALT negotiations helped to propel discussions forward and incentivized the participants to find common ground.

D. CONCLUSION

Connections between U.S. officials and academics in addition to relationships involving officials and academics from both the United States and the Soviet Union played a vital role in the ultimate realization of the SALT I agreement. Yet it was not simply relationships that helped to secure the first major arms control treaty. Internal camaraderie was vital, but equally significant was the unique ability of these mid-level officials to balance domestic and international pressure as they brought diverse and creative recommendations to the Nixon administration. In other words, once the relationships were set, how did these officials influence Nixon’s thinking while navigating diverse public opinion? Answering this question will be the focus of the next chapter.

¹²⁴ Michael A. Levi and Michael E. O’Hanlon, *The Future of Arms Control*, (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 2.

¹²⁵ William Burr and Jeffrey P. Kimball, “Overview of Nixon’s *Nuclear Specter – The Secret Alert of 1969, Madman Diplomacy, and the Vietnam War*,” The Wilson Center, accessed November 16, 2023, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/nixons-nuclear-specter-the-secret-alert-1969-madman-diplomacy-and-the-vietnam-war>.

III. THE PIVOTAL DOMESTIC ROLE OF U.S. MID-LEVEL OFFICIALS DURING SALT I NEGOTIATIONS

A. INTRODUCTION

The story behind the 1972 SALT I agreement is much deeper than a few striking photographs depicting amiable conversation between U.S. President Richard Nixon and Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev. Several historians have promoted the view that Nixon and Brezhnev played an enormous role in the first major nuclear arms control agreement.¹²⁶ While this view holds merit, it lacks historical depth. The SALT I agreement was not simply a product of a limited, though cordial relationship between these two leaders. Nor was the unique nature of détente between the United States and the Soviet Union in the early 1970s due solely to Nixon and Brezhnev, but rather also to the tireless work of U.S. mid-tier officials. There is little doubt that both Nixon and Brezhnev's willingness to pursue détente was important, but an account focused solely on their personalities is incomplete. While historians rightly focus on particular leaders, too much emphasis is placed on their personalities rather than recognizing that their decisions were not made in a vacuum, but rather with an abundance of input from those whom history has largely forgotten.

During the course of the SALT I negotiations, these officials profoundly impacted U.S. foreign policy in two distinct ways. First, they maintained awareness of domestic and international pressure, including monitoring attitudes in Congressional and public opinion. In other words, they served as the eyes and ears for the Nixon administration. Constant maneuvering and catering to domestic opinion was a tedious, albeit necessary and beneficial aspect of SALT negotiations. Second, these officials contributed greatly to adept decision-making. They generated innovative options and made astute recommendations to the administration, enabling U.S. leaders to pursue effective foreign policy while using language that would appeal to domestic constituents. Without discounting the importance

¹²⁶ Authors Deborah W. Larsen and Vladislav M. Zubok both argue that relational trust among Richard Nixon and Leonid Brezhnev was a major factor in the ultimate decision to sign the SALT I agreements.

of top-level leadership, this chapter utilizes primary source memorandums and letters to bring to light the untold story of U.S. mid-level actors and the pivotal role they played in shaping U.S. arms control policy in the early 1970s.

Mid-level officials' technical and historical expertise, in addition to their aptitude to tailor policy talking points to a civilian audience, helped the Nixon administration to succeed in the realm of arms control. These officials set the conditions for SALT I, one of Nixon's crowning foreign policy achievements. Author John Maurer argues that the Nixon administration's purpose in arms control sought to safeguard continued American nuclear dominance. He notes that Nixon "succeeded in [the] difficult task" of "formulating an actionable arms control policy that could please both cooperators and competitors within his government, while still providing a sufficiently coherent rationale to pass congressional scrutiny."¹²⁷ Mid-level officials understood both sides of the equation and helped Nixon to articulate an effective strategy. They not only understood the technical details inherent in arms control negotiations, but they were able to express how best to proceed concerning procuring Congressional support.

Similar to how author Tsuyoshi Hasegawa argues that his fresh research into Japanese decision-making at the end of World War II reveals "a more complex scenario in which a group of second-echelon advisers played a decisive role in directing the actions of the [Japanese] peace party," mid-level officials had a pivotal impact on U.S. foreign policy in the novel realm of arms control. Their experience was invaluable for this arduous challenge, foreseen by Henry Stimson in 1947 when he wrote that "the control of this weapon [atomic bomb] will undoubtedly be a matter of the greatest difficulty and would involve such thoroughgoing rights of inspection and internal controls as we have never theretofore contemplated."¹²⁸ Mid-level officials thus faced a daunting task—conducting foreign policy in a nuclear world that had become increasingly polarized since the end of World War II.

¹²⁷ John D. Maurer, *Competitive Arms Control: Nixon, Kissinger, and SALT, 1969-1972* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2022), 4.

¹²⁸ Henry L. Stimson, "The Decision to Use the Bomb," *Harper's Magazine* (February 1947).

B. BALANCING COMPETING DOMESTIC VISIONS

Memos among mid-level officials underscored the critical role that domestic politics played in U.S. foreign policy during the SALT I negotiations. For example, just nine days before the final SALT I agreement was signed in Moscow on May 26, 1972, the National Security Council (NSC) staff was still making recommendations to Kissinger based on perceived challenges in Congress. On the question of the timing regarding continuing SALT discussions, the emphasis was on the potential negative effects that it would have on Nixon's reelection campaign. Members of the NSC Staff wrote, "we question whether we want to be involved in major substantive discussions [pertaining to SALT]...while under the pressure of the campaign [presidential reelection campaign]."¹²⁹ Though perhaps unsurprising given the political climate of the United States at the time, memos such as this one shed light on how the Nixon administration approached decision-making. While it may seem that the focus on Nixon's reelection should have been subordinate to other concerns, the issue was extremely complex. Nixon had established a unique rapport with Brezhnev. Vladislav Zubok describes theirs as a special relationship, one that was not easily duplicated.¹³⁰ Consequently, in this case, continuity was very much in support of U.S. national interest because Brezhnev exhibited a measure of trust with Nixon.

Formulating arms control policy was not simply a matter of researching and implementing the best options for strategic stability. Rather, much of the work of these officials was consumed by how to sell this policy to Congress and the American people in a fear-saturated society. Not only were people and their elected leaders simmering with frustration at how the previous administration had handled Vietnam, but they now had more access to current information through the medium of television. Thus, the preceding administration's foreign policy failure in Vietnam set the conditions for how the Nixon administration had to initially approach foreign policy. Increased access to information not

¹²⁹ U.S. State Department: Office of the Historian, "Memorandum from Philip Odeen, Helmut Sonnenfeldt, and John Lehman of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs," May 17, 1972, The U.S. State Department, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v32/d280>.

¹³⁰ Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev*.

only enflamed citizens' emotions, but it also forced Congressional leaders to be accountable to their constituents. People were not only upset, but they were terrified of a global nuclear conflict. In turn, the Nixon administration was answerable to Congress and American voters for U.S. arms control policy. Hence, not only did Nixon have to contend with Congressional pressure, but his policies had to respond to the American people, who were kept up to date on a nightly basis by Walter Cronkite. President Johnson had once lamented that if he "lost [Walter] Cronkite, [he'd] lost the country."¹³¹ Thus, Nixon, more so than previous presidents, had to maintain a delicate approach to foreign policy due to domestic political considerations, which were a constant theme of SALT debates. In particular, one major consideration during SALT negotiations was the construction of missile defense systems, which would house anti-ballistic missiles. During the signing of the SALT I agreement, Nixon and Brezhnev also signed the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, which limited the number of U.S. and Soviet missile defense sites while also restricting the number of missiles allowed at each site.¹³² While the average American was likely unaware of these distinctions, they were concerned about their security. Thus, negotiating this issue was not only complex, but also highly divisive in that it played on American fears of an imminent nuclear war.

The Nixon administration's decision to cancel the Sentinel ABM program revealed the pressure that the government faced from Congress and the general public. In this instance, scientists at the Argonne National Laboratory in Seattle, Washington argued against ABMs because of the potential to stimulate an "uncontrolled arms race."¹³³ Yet they succeeded partly due to their ability to capture the public's attention by highlighting the potential for accidental explosions in the suburbs of major cities where the Sentinel

¹³¹ Chester J Pach Jr., "The War on Television: TV News, the Johnson Administration, and Vietnam," in *A Companion to the Vietnam War*, ed. Marilyn B. Young and Robert Buzzanco (Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 462.

¹³² U.S. State Department: Office of the Historian, "Strategic Arms Limitations Talks/Treaty (SALT) I and II," The U.S. State Department, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/salt#:~:text=SALT%20I%20is%20considered%20the,to%20protect%20one%20ICBM%20field>.

¹³³ Joel Primack and Frank von Hippel, *Advice and Dissent: Scientists in the Political Arena* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), <https://sgs.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/2019-10/Advice-and-Dissent-Chapter13.pdf>, 192.

systems were to be placed. Consequently, while the Nixon administration anticipated opposition from senators whose regions were not covered by the proposed Sentinel ABM defense system, challenges actually came from those who hailed from states that would receive these systems. In the end, over forty senators voted against ABM deployment.¹³⁴ This result revealed the complexities of obtaining domestic support to implement U.S. foreign policy initiatives. The policies of the Nixon administration were dependent on Congressional votes, and those representatives were likewise subject to the whims of the people. Research on the ABM issue within Congress revealed that representatives were willing to alter their stance for three main reasons: devotion to a political party, their own ideology, and the ability to be reelected.¹³⁵ Thus, catering to different opinions was an endless task for these mid-level officials. Domestic resistance warned Nixon that his policies would have to both satiate the American public and implement plans that promoted U.S. strategic interests. The advisors working under him played a vital role in bridging this divide.

The complexities of the nuclear issue, with strong opinions on both sides, forced strategic modifications, further refining U.S. arms control policy. State Department officials had concerns over whether Congress would authorize certain proposals. For example, a member of the SALT delegation, Paul Nitze, along with others, aired uncertainty about Congress' appetite to fulfill defense proposals.¹³⁶ Additionally, American national security strategist Leon Sloss noted that the SALT I agreement had to be acceptable to at least two-thirds of the Senate.¹³⁷ There were even disagreements on timing between the White House and the State Department; the White House deemed that the State Department moved too quickly at times.¹³⁸ Furthermore, U.S. diplomat Seymour Weiss expressed concern over whether Congress might reject the tenets of the SALT I

¹³⁴ Alton Frye, "U.S. Decision Making for SALT," 81.

¹³⁵ Robert A. Bernstein and William W. Anthony, "The ABM Issue in the Senate, 1968-1970: The Importance of Ideology," *The American Political Science Review* 68, no. 3 (September 1974).

¹³⁶ Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 16, Folder no. 8, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

¹³⁷ Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 17, Folder no. 1, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

¹³⁸ Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 16, Folder no. 6, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

Agreement, again revealing the pressure under which mid-level officials operated.¹³⁹ Adapting arms control policy to incorporate both Congressional and Presidential outlooks was a formidable task, yet one that produced a measure of stability because these officials valued respectful discussion regarding the issues.

State Department officials also dealt effectively with the media. They had to involve themselves not only with congressional representatives, but also with newspapers' portrayal of those opinions. For example, an article entitled "The Jackson Freeze" in *The Evening Star* published in March 1971 argued that Washington Senator Henry Jackson's focus on immediately freezing Soviet offensive nuclear systems was the right decision.¹⁴⁰ In his report on Senator Jackson's proposal, Weiss recognized that the plan had merit but that it also had some problems.¹⁴¹ Mid-level officials had to balance the administration's priorities while also recognizing the rationale behind other proposals. The beauty of the democratic system was that these officials were able to recognize worthy options and subsequently present recommendations to the president that drew from contrasting opinions. This process allowed them to pull practical ideas from opposing parties. In this case, Weiss recommended that it would be desirable for Nixon to demonstrate his solidarity with Jackson regarding the alarm surrounding Soviet offensive forces even as the administration deemed it important to remain focused on negotiations regarding missile defense systems.¹⁴² While appeasing the public was certainly not always desirable or feasible, the focus on ensuring that U.S. policy would be palatable for politicians and the American public alike further increased the viability of arms control.

One way in which mid-level officials refined arms control policy was in their search for a nuclear doctrine that minimized human casualties. The experience of Vietnam was traumatic for those involved and did not give the American people confidence in their

¹³⁹ Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 17, Folder no. 1, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

¹⁴⁰ "The Jackson Freeze," *The Evening Star* (March 30, 1971), Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 16, Folder no. 2, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

¹⁴¹ "Senator Jackson's SALT Proposal," March 31, 1971, Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 16, Folder no. 2, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

¹⁴² "Senator Jackson's SALT Proposal," March 31, 1971, Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 16, Folder no. 2, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

government. As such, U.S. mid-level officials sought to cope with a populace that was reeling after witnessing the atrocities committed during the Tet Offensive. After the witnessing the United States as a liberator of the free peoples of the world during World War II, disastrous costs in Vietnam provoked anger and frustration over what many saw as the United States' inability to project both real and moral authority. Authors Barbara Keys, Jack Davies, and Elliott Bannan argue that "the concept of trauma and healing in America's collective conscience helps explain the decade's [1970s] dynamics...the Vietnam War undermined the nation's sense of purpose in the world and inspired a search for moral renewal that shaped political...discourse throughout the decade."¹⁴³ These officials not only had to protect U.S. national interests, but they also had to do so in a way that emphasized the morality of U.S. actions. The American people had lost trust in their government. Could they continue to depend on the government to protect their interests at home and abroad? These officials helped the administration regain trust. Diplomat Seymour Weiss recognized that the United States had to search for new strategic options:

[The United States] must find a doctrine which implies that, if it is necessary to use force to support the national interest, this force will be used discreetly, and, at least initially, in [a] limited way designed specifically to minimize rather than to maximize civilian casualties on both sides.¹⁴⁴

While officials were focused on U.S. national security, the norm of limiting human casualties in warfare undoubtedly began to exert more pressure during this time, especially after people witnessed the horror of Vietnam unfold on their television sets. Mid-level officials led the way in responding to these changing societal norms by recommending effective foreign policy options that would still cater to domestic opinion.

¹⁴³ Barbara Keys, Jack Davies, Elliott Bannan, "The Post-Traumatic Decade: New Histories of the 1970s," *Australian Journal of American Studies* 33, no. 1 (July 2014), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44706134>.

¹⁴⁴ Letter to Leonard Weiss at the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, April 14, 1972, Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 17, Folder no. 4, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

C. THE EFFECTS OF INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE ON DOMESTIC OPINION

In addition to the constraining effect of domestic opinion, the rise of international opinion in favor of disarmament influenced elected officials and created an environment conducive to the pursuit of arms control. Historian Lawrence Wittner argues that continual prodding from anti-nuclear activists such as renowned humanitarian Albert Schweitzer impacted U.S. thinking on nuclear weapons.¹⁴⁵ Hence, international opinion on nuclear weapons also played a principal role in leadership decisions. International pressure began as early as 1954 when Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru called for a ban on nuclear weapons testing.¹⁴⁶ Also, though the European movement against nuclear weapons did not reach its apogee until the early 1980s, it can trace its roots to the late 1950s when British historian E.P. Thompson served as an influential figure in the early stages of the anti-nuclear movement.¹⁴⁷ The United Nations (UN) also indicated its desire for talks to lead to concrete disarmament agreements rather than vague agreements that had the potential to “create an illusion that problems [were] being solved whereas in fact they [were] not.”¹⁴⁸ As a founding member of the UN, the United States had to take into account the increasing rhetoric on disarmament. This international opinion influenced Congressional thought, and illustrates the consistent pressure that U.S. decisionmakers felt from abroad.

Yet international pressure in favor of arms control was not the only pressure facing U.S. leaders. Latent, yet powerful pressure from European allies to effectively deter the Soviet Union as well as pressure from the U.S. citizens who feared a Soviet strike on the American homeland was likewise present. In 1970, Soviet acquisition of the requisite missile technology to initiate a strike almost instantaneously further substantiated these

¹⁴⁵ Lawrence S. Wittner, “Blacklisting Schweitzer,” *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* (May/June 1995), https://www.albany.edu/news/pdf_files/0903_Blacklisting_Schweitzer.pdf.

¹⁴⁶ Edward Ifft, “Looking Back: The Threshold Test Ban Treaty,” *Arms Control Today* (March 2009), https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2009_03/LookingBack_Ifft.

¹⁴⁷ Freedman and Michaels, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 504.

¹⁴⁸ V.G. Joshi, “Brief on Disarmament and Atomic-Free Zones for the Spring Meetings of the IPU to be held during April 1971,” The Wilson Center, Digital Archives (April 1971), <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/telegram-vg-joshi-brief-disarmament-and-atomic-free-zones-spring-meetings-ipu-be-held>.

fears.¹⁴⁹ Consequently, mid-level officials had to account for a wide variety of opinions, recognizing that buy-in from both Congress and the media was necessary to attain approval for U.S. nuclear policy. While the need to tailor to multiple decision-makers may be seen as a weakness, this collaborative (and sometimes combative) environment served to sharpen U.S. arms control policies. Furthermore, it kept nuclear issues at the forefront of public discussion, thus enhancing the desire for stability among the general populace regardless of their views on disarmament.

D. DETACHMENT FROM THE ELECTORAL PROCESS: FERTILE GROUND FOR CREATIVE THINKING

Detachment from the electoral cycle facilitated creative thinking. In other words, the fact that mid-level officials did not have to please constituents allowed them to confront issues in a more pragmatic way. Their recommendations enabled the Nixon administration to communicate U.S. arms control policy more effectively to the general public. In previous administrations, presidents had been able to exert greater control over information. For example, Eisenhower succeeded in preventing mid-level officials from reviewing national security decisions, enabling him to make decisions with reduced input.¹⁵⁰ Obviously this approach had its flaws, but it allowed a more streamlined process similar to what Eisenhower was accustomed to during his time as the Supreme Allied Commander. Yet in the era of television and the proliferation of media influence following the Vietnam War, the Nixon administration could no longer keep every detail from the public. Accordingly, mid-level bureaucrats sought to find ways to balance the Nixon administration's goals with Congressional aims in a way that sustained and implemented effective arms control policy. Not subject to the whims of democratic voters in the same way as the President, these officials were able to preserve a measure of objectivity in their sentiments. In this way, they were able to remain emotionally detached from the public, allowing them freedom to recommend viable arms control strategies rather than an approach that sought to win elections while neglecting long-term strategic implications. This detachment from both the

¹⁴⁹ Nicholas Thompson, "Nuclear War and Nuclear Fear in the 1970s and 1980s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 46, no. 1 (January 2011), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25764612?seq=7>.

¹⁵⁰ William Hitchcock, *The Age of Eisenhower* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2018), 175.

praise and ire of public opinion provided a measure of autonomy that stabilized U.S. arms control policy, keeping it grounded during this era.

E. KEEPING DIALOGUE ACTIVE

Mid-level officials, along with intellectuals, kept the discussion of nuclear weapons at the forefront of news cycle. Author Alton Frye notes that committees such as the Verification Panel “energized the work of the bureaucracy by providing constant reminders of the president’s interest in the arms limitation effort.”¹⁵¹ The Verification Panel, though initially established for intelligence purposes, “was by the fall of 1969 the forum in which all major arms control issues were deliberated.”¹⁵² Though the panel was by no means the panacea to arms control, Nixon commended the panel’s detailed work, noting that the knowledge provided the United States with more options and leverage during negotiations.¹⁵³ The constant attention to the nuclear issue increased the feasibility of arms control because the public craved a stable environment. Memorandums and letters between senior state department officials in the early to mid-1970s illustrate this point.¹⁵⁴ The constant dialogue helped to reinforce the significance of the nuclear issue. Ongoing discussion vis-à-vis nuclear weapons reduced complacency and created an environment favorable to arms control. While there is disagreement over whether these arms control agreements induced long-term stability, a desire for stability among the American public drove them to pay attention to these discussions.

Though leaders in the Nixon administration did not need to be reminded about the ever-present nuclear discussions, mid-level officials provided the depth of research that kept them fully engaged with the potential repercussions of nuclear war. These constant, detailed updates were vital in sharpening U.S. policy. Writing in his monograph on the nuclear bomb, historian Fred Kaplan supports the supposition that continued engagement with the reality of the bomb was necessary. He argues that U.S. presidents who succeeded

¹⁵¹ Alton Frye, “U.S. Decision Making for SALT,” 82.

¹⁵² Maurer, *Competitive Arms Control*, 51-52.

¹⁵³ Maurer, 88.

¹⁵⁴ Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 16 and 17, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

in not using the bomb “did so not through ignorance...but rather by...scoping out the full depths [of nuclear war] and comprehending...the need to find a way out.”¹⁵⁵ Thus, a generation of leaders that understands the gravity of using nuclear weapons is more likely to foster stability. Memos detailing specific technical considerations for ABM and other SALT-related issues were commonplace during this time. As the technical capabilities of nuclear weapons were a persistent topic of discussion, the destructive reality of these weapons forced leaders to acknowledge the need for arms control negotiations. Likewise, during these negotiations, U.S. mid-level officials engaged in dialogue and strategic conversations not only with adversaries, but also with one another.

F. COLLABORATION AND DECISION-MAKING

Relationships amongst U.S. mid-level officials were vital. Trust built through these relationships enabled the sharing of information in such a way that avoided superfluous controversy. Established trust meant that information could be freely shared at lower levels without apprehension. In an instance concerning a RAND Paper on Mutually Balanced Force Reduction, both the European Bureau and the Political-Military Bureau of the State Department recommended that care be taken in how the analysis was disseminated within government circles. They stated:

Procedurally, it would seem particularly inappropriate for the paper to be forwarded to the Department of Defense at any but the working level and on an informal basis...There are too many points in the paper which depart from our existing positions and from which it could be inferred by Deputy Secretary Rush and his staff that new State positions were being considered. If such an inference were drawn, it could deleteriously affect our current joint State-Defense efforts to develop a common position on MBFR.¹⁵⁶

Information sharing was vital for collaboration to be effective, but balancing that with the need to cater to different personalities that might take offense was likewise imperative. However, the willingness to share this information reveals the presence of a measure of

¹⁵⁵ Fred Kaplan, “Fire and Fury” in *The Bomb: Presidents, Generals, and the Secret History of Nuclear War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2020), 298.

¹⁵⁶ Fred Ikle Paper on Mutual Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR), March 20, 1972, Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 17, Folder no. 3, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

trust among these government entities. This trust enabled rich discussion without fear of retribution.

Close cooperation between the DOD and the State Department was noticeable regarding how to respond to imminent Congressional opposition. For example, Admiral Zumwalt, who served as the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) during a portion of the Nixon administration, requested input from the State Department on “anticipated Congressional problems and suggested responses” to his FY73 Posture Statement.¹⁵⁷ This approach revealed not only the priority that both DOD and State Department officials placed on Congressional opinion, but also their willingness to partner in this mission. Author Alton Frye concludes that “the military and civilian leadership of the Defense establishment joined in the opinion that the nation’s security could better be served by cooperative diplomacy than by competitive deployments.”¹⁵⁸ In other words, U.S. national security trumped interagency competition. The military recognized that the State Department was the lead entity for U.S. policy toward the Soviets while the State Department recognized that military expertise was invaluable in their ability to provide guidance that would help to refine U.S. policy.

Moreover, Congressional support was vital for a democracy seeking to implement foreign policy during a tense period of international relations with the Soviet Union. Securing Congressional support was a team effort, with mid-level officials and senior official providing substantial input. While the influence of mid-level officials is the focus of this thesis, it is important to mention that this atmosphere where a multiplicity of voices could freely disagree was also present at a higher level. Thus, it seems the culture during this time stimulated rather than dampened educated debate regarding policy issues. In other words, dialogue was encouraged. As the Secretary of Defense, Melvin Laird was a senior official in the Nixon administration. Nonetheless, his impact on SALT I was profound. Author Richard Hunt argues that Laird “made a significant contribution [to the success of

¹⁵⁷ Letter to Seymour Weiss, December 10, 1971, Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 16, Folder no. 9, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

¹⁵⁸ Alton Frye, “U.S. Decision Making for SALT,” 77.

SALT I], convincing wavering Republicans to add their approval.”¹⁵⁹ Though he differed from Nixon and Kissinger on a variety of issues, Laird’s ability to connect with a broad coalition of people was key to U.S. nuclear policy in the early 1970s. Laird “enjoyed the advantage of an independent power base that included friends in the news media and, most important of all, strong bipartisan connections on Capitol Hill...with grudging admiration, Kissinger considered Laird his most formidable and challenging bureaucratic rival.”¹⁶⁰ This analysis of Laird reveals two important points. First, it seems that his relationships with both the media and lawmakers enabled the Nixon administration to pursue its foreign policy goals by leveraging Laird’s rapport with lawmakers. Second, the fact that Kissinger and Laird disagreeing on important issues did not preclude them from respecting and learning from one another reveals the strength of U.S. policymaking in the early 1970s. This democratic environment, one that did not silence dissenting views, sharpened U.S. foreign policy during this era. Officials navigated Congressional requirements while still maintaining unity, which allowed Nixon to act in the best interest of national security.¹⁶¹

Though Congressional pushback may have nominally affected U.S. ability to project power during negotiations, it also prevented the United States from making rash decisions without regard for long-term consequences. Internal checks and the benefits of domestic opinion on American foreign policy was nothing new. For example, during the 1920s and 1930, domestic factors constrained the United States from exercising too much influence in the international sphere.¹⁶² Domestic dynamics continued to affect the counsel that mid-level officials provided to the President. Ronald Spiers recognized that Congressional pushback would be harsh against any negotiating stance perceived as

¹⁵⁹ Richard A. Hunt, “Melvin Laird and Nixon’s Quest for a Post-Vietnam Foreign Policy: 1969 - 1973,” Office of the Secretary of Defense (September 2014), https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/special_studies/SpecStudy6.pdf, 20.

¹⁶⁰ Hunt, “Melvin Laird and Nixon’s Quest for a Post-Vietnam Foreign Policy: 1969 -1973,” 26.

¹⁶¹ John D. Maurer, “The Purposes of Arms Control,” *Texas National Security Review* 2, no. 1 (November 2018), https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/73737/TNSR_Vol_2_Issue_1_Maurer.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y, 22.

¹⁶² Dominic Tierney, *FDR and the Spanish Civil War: Neutrality and Commitment in the Struggle that Divided America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

generating instability.¹⁶³ He and other mid-level officials made very specific recommendations, keeping in mind the second and third order effects of the administration's decisions on domestic opinion, which in turn impacted U.S. arms control policy.

G. CHALLENGING THE STATUS QUO AND IMPACTING DECISION MAKING

Back in Washington, these officials, many of whom came from an academic background, enhanced strategic stability because they were willing to challenge the status quo. These sophisticated thinkers did not simply acquiesce to the administration's policies or follow Nixon blindly. Instead, they brought forth new ideas that challenged existing arguments, ushering in an era of arms control that succeeded in the sense that it prevented maximum nuclear war. Some of their analysis was counterintuitive but often enlightening. One such idea was less concern with Soviet achievement of nuclear parity.

This attitude, strategic in nature, played a role in enabling the Soviets to achieve parity.¹⁶⁴ This perspective does not seek to downplay the role that the Soviet Union played in building its nuclear capacity. The Soviet Union retained high-level intellectual thought and scientific research that had been present in Russia since Peter the Great's establishment of the Academy of Sciences in 1724.¹⁶⁵ In particular, their scientific expertise and subsequent inputs into the process were substantial. Moreover, the Soviet's ability to build a strong military-industrial complex capable of achieving nuclear parity is indisputable. Nonetheless, the United States made a deliberate decision to slow down its nuclear efforts in the 1960s following a rapid build-up during the Eisenhower administration. Eisenhower's New Look Strategy, which called for massive retaliation, facilitated an increase from a few hundred in the early 1950s to over 25,000 nuclear warheads by

¹⁶³ Ronald Spiers, "SALT: Future ABM Systems – Verification Panel Meeting," August 5, 1971, The National Security Archive, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB60/abm12.pdf>.

¹⁶⁴ Alton Frye, "U.S. Decision Making for SALT," 66-67.

¹⁶⁵ James Cracraft, *The Revolution of Peter the Great* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2003), 62.

1962.¹⁶⁶ However, U.S. mid-level officials recognized that continuing to produce additional nuclear warheads would not have a corresponding strategic effect. Thus, the deceleration of U.S. warhead production coupled with a massive Soviet build-up enabled the Soviets to draw fairly level with the Americans by the late 1960s. Accordingly, arms control, coupled with a continued pursuit of new technology, was the order of the day.

Mid-level officials' recommendations stemmed from their observations and a recognition of a genuine need for collaboration and arms control. Notably, this policy research and analysis was largely conducted by officials and intellectuals without military experience.¹⁶⁷ Thus, they were not pre-conditioned to seek a military solution. The United States did not have to win a nuclear war; there were other options. Study and analysis led these experts to the conclusion that "deterrence must be mutual."¹⁶⁸ Overreactions to small changes in the Soviet posture would be detrimental to strategic stability.¹⁶⁹ While the Soviet achievement of parity did enable them to negotiate from a stronger position, the majority of U.S. mid-level officials did not believe that parity would make the Soviets more aggressive in negotiations; it was simply not a concern.¹⁷⁰ For even as the Soviet Union built up its arsenal, Soviet leaders recognized the immensity of American military might. While some officials such as Weiss believed that this strategy created a unique opening for arms control negotiations and subsequently, a more stable world order, this view was not universal. For example, General Earle Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, disagreed with the sufficiency doctrine and recommended increasing offensive nuclear

¹⁶⁶ U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Nuclear Weapons Stockpile, 1945–2020," last modified October 5, 2021, https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Fact-Sheet_Unclass_2021_final-v2-002.pdf.

¹⁶⁷ Frye, "U.S. Decision Making for SALT," 68.

¹⁶⁸ Frye, 68.

¹⁶⁹ U.S.-Soviet Nuclear Parity: Threat or Opportunity, January 28, 1971, Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 17, Folder no. 1, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

¹⁷⁰ Political Implications of Emerging U.S.-USSR Strategic Balance, March 14, 1972, Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 17, Folder no. 3, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

capabilities.¹⁷¹ Yet the argument of academics prevailed when Nixon ultimately accepted Kissinger's recommendation for strategic sufficiency.¹⁷²

These officials challenged not only outward U.S. policies such as continued massive nuclear build-up, but they also questioned the underlying doctrines. Furthermore, they supported their opinions with sound evidence that placed a high value on U.S. national security. For instance, Weiss wrote that “aside from the vulgar immorality of the Assured Destruction concept, it is, in my view, increasingly likely to become unpersuasive to a potential aggressor and as such to become a deterrent concept which may not deter.”¹⁷³ Weiss did not simply utilize a moral argument to defend his view. Rather, he employed creative and in-depth thinking about potential second and third order effects that might affect the survival of the United States. Would adversaries continue to readily believe that the United States was willing to follow through on its previous doctrine and likely sacrifice its civilization in the process? These officials' challenges to the status quo may not have led to quick solutions, but they sharpened U.S. strategic thinking by forcing leaders to think about potential consequences of American nuclear doctrine.

Due to their connections to academia, either through experience or relationships, these officials had the historical knowledge and understanding to know that other factors besides military strength were worth considering. However, these officials were not ignorant. Like George Kennan, they clearly recognized that demonstrating a proper amount of force was a necessary component to arms control. Kennan, a diplomat and foremost Russian scholar in his own right, noted early on in the nuclear age a unique characteristic of Soviet power:

[It] does not take unnecessary risks. Impervious to logic of reason...it is highly sensitive to logic of force. For this reason it can easily withdraw—and usually does—when strong resistance is encountered at any point. Thus, if the adversary has sufficient force makes clear his readiness to use it, he

¹⁷¹ Walter S. Poole, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy: 1969-1972* (Washington D.C.: Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2013), https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/History/Policy/Policy_V010.pdf, 18.

¹⁷² Poole, 18.

¹⁷³ Letter to Leonard Weiss at the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, April 14, 1972, Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 17, Folder no. 4, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

rarely has to do so. If situations are properly handled there need be no prestige engaging showdowns.¹⁷⁴

Kennan acknowledged the importance of military power. The United States had to demonstrate its power *and* its willingness to employ that power to ensure Soviet willingness to engage in talks. If U.S. foreign policy continued to allow for a potential nuclear first strike, then the Soviets were likely to come to the negotiating table. However, they also knew that the situation was much more complex than a simple theory that assumed that once the Soviets reached nuclear parity, arms control would come to fruition. Writing to Secretary of State William Rogers in April 1972 following a conference that included senior officials from the National Security Council, the Department of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and well-known Russian experts, Weiss, in a handwritten correction to the initial memorandum, notes that “the majority [of the participants] placed more importance on non-military factors, to include the degree of national cohesiveness, public confidence in the government, domestic interests, etc., than on the element of strategic parity in influencing the behavior [of the Soviets].”¹⁷⁵ A deep understanding of the nature of other non-military factors was vital in further refining U.S. foreign policy. Like Kennan, they also emphasized strength at home as an antidote to Soviet influence.

Because lack of information hindered decision-making at the highest level, another aspect of challenging the status quo was an effort to make information more accessible. Accurate intelligence would give intellectuals the opportunity to contribute to national security in a more effective manner. President Nixon provided greater opportunity for mid-level officials to access intelligence on November 5, 1971, when he established the National Security Council Intelligence Committee (NSCIC).¹⁷⁶ Subsequently, intellectuals pushed for greater access to information because they believed that a fuller

¹⁷⁴ George F. Kennan, Department of State Telegram, February 22, 1946, The Wilson Center Digital Archives, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/george-kennans-long-telegram>.

¹⁷⁵ Seymour Weiss, “Political Implications of Emerging US-USSR Strategic Balance,” March 14, 1972, Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 17, Folder no. 3, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

¹⁷⁶ National Security Council, “National Security Decision Memorandum 253” (official memorandum, Washington D.C., April 24, 1974), <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/LOC-HAK-315-5-14-1.pdf>.

picture of the situation would inevitably lead to better decision-making. Ray Cline, who held a Ph.D. from Harvard University and served as the chief intelligence analyst at the CIA during the Cuban Missile Crisis, led the INR within the State Department under President Nixon. The INR was initially established in 1945 following World War II to take the place of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) Research and Analysis Branch. The INR seeks to deliver “intelligence to empower diplomacy” in addition to continuing the “OSS legacy of [providing] deep expertise.”¹⁷⁷ Cline expressed optimism that the creation of the NSCIC would breed a greater partnership between intelligence and policy. Moreover, he noted that the Department of State should leverage the vagueness of the program as an opportunity to exercise greater influence.¹⁷⁸ While it can be argued that he was looking out for the interests of the State Department, the readiness of intellectuals such as Cline to challenge existing norms and inject scholarly input into U.S. decision-making was vital in enhancing strategic stability.

Interagency information sharing was vital to U.S. strategic decision-making. Likewise, confirming that all government entities were on the same page served to prevent weak foreign policy. Consequently, solicitation of “other agencies’ views” in addition to seeking non-governmental input was highly encouraged.¹⁷⁹ The willingness within the U.S. democratic system to question one another’s ideas at the intermediate level helped to further refine those ideas before they were brought to higher levels of the administration.

H. INFLUENCE AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL

A coalition of officials empowered to disagree and think critically about arms control policy bred more effective solutions, culminating in the SALT I agreement. Continuing in the vein of the Kennedy administration’s desire for a flexible nuclear

¹⁷⁷ Bureau of Intelligence and Research, “About Us,” The U.S. State Department, <https://www.state.gov/about-us-bureau-of-intelligence-and-research/#:~:text=Our%20History,element%20in%20the%20U.S.%20Government>.

¹⁷⁸ Ray Cline, “Implications for the Department of the President's Reorganization of the Intelligence Community,” December 1, 1971, Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 16, Folder no. 9, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

¹⁷⁹ Raymond Garthoff and John Irwin, “Lessons Learned in SALT,” March 11, 1971, Seymour Weiss papers, Box no. 16, Folder no. 2, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

response as opposed to Eisenhower's policy of massive retaliation in the 1950s, these officials brought original thinking that increased options. Nixon and Kissinger supported this culture of open discussion. For example, they "made very clear that they did not want an agreed bureaucratic recommendation."¹⁸⁰ In other words, Nixon did not mind disagreement, and in fact, he encouraged it. In a telephone conversation with Kissinger, Nixon made it clear that "having some argument about SALT is fine."¹⁸¹ He thus recognized that conflict among intelligent people would lead to better policy. Author Liane Davey notes that "conflict is uncomfortable, but it is the source of true innovation, and also a critical process in identifying and mitigating risks."¹⁸² In other words, respectful disagreement has the potential to breed better solutions.

Not only did Nixon encourage discussion and back-and-forth dialogue among officials, but he also listened to their reports. The environment among mid-level officials in the early 1970s reflects this reality. At times, these officials advised against taking action that might jeopardize SALT negotiations with the Soviet Union. For example, following his return from Europe, Gerard Smith, the leading U.S. negotiator in the 1969 SALT talks, wrote a letter to Kissinger recommending that the United States not pursue aiding France's nuclear weapon program. Doing so, he argued, would likely hinder SALT negotiations with the Soviets.¹⁸³ U.S. leadership listened, and delayed this program until 1973, when it began to secretly assist the French. Additionally, while Nixon respected Kissinger, he listened to others as well. He remarked that Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird had provided him guidance to shift his points of emphasis on SALT I.¹⁸⁴ Conflict thus helped to refine talking points as well as strategy. Disagreement was commonplace, but that

¹⁸⁰ Frye, "U.S. Decision Making for SALT," 79.

¹⁸¹ Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, Telephone Conversation, June 24, 1972, *The National Security Archive*, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/sites/default/files/documents/3474890/02-Telephone-conversation-with-President-Nixon.pdf>.

¹⁸² Amy Gallo, "Why We Should Be Disagreeing More at Work," *Harvard Business Review*, last modified January 3, 2018, <https://hbr.org/2018/01/why-we-should-be-disagreeing-more-at-work>.

¹⁸³ Gerard Smith, "Letter from Gerard C. Smith to Henry A. Kissinger," The Wilson Center Digital Archives, last modified June 30, 1973, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/89871/download>.

¹⁸⁴ Nixon and Kissinger, Telephone Conversation, June 24, 1972.ited

conflict produced novel thinking in the realm of arms control, leading to an effective, albeit ephemeral period of détente.

I. CONCLUSION

Mid-level officials' skilled decision-making and ability to balance competing views influenced the Nixon administration's decision making and contributed to the United States' ability to achieve consensus in the form of SALT I. Relational trust amongst officials and their counterparts fostered an environment that valued creativity and encouraged debate. They recognized that collaboration and dialogue were necessary to produce ideas that enhanced national security. Apprehension over potential nuclear war drove these officials to collaborate with one another to develop a clear strategy. They also worked diligently to secure Congressional approval to ensure the United States could effectively implement a unified strategy. The shadow of a looming nuclear war with the Soviet Union drove internal collaboration and positioned the United States to engage in effective arms control policy during the SALT I years.

IV. CONCLUSION

Even as the allure of détente lost its influence, the concept of arms control endured. Fifteen years after SALT I, the United States and the Soviet Union signed another arms control agreement, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. Less than five years later, the Cold War ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Today, as the United States enters another period of great power competition with the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China (PRC), the question of arms control looms large. Are arms control agreements viable in today's multi-polar environment, and if so, how can the United States set conditions for and ensure the lasting success of future arms control agreements? In light of recent developments in arms control, notably President Putin's 'suspension' of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), the last outstanding bilateral arms control treaty between the United States and Russia, policymakers would be wise to consider several lessons.

A. PRIMARY FINDINGS

As this thesis has shown, mid-level officials played a valuable role in formulating U.S. arms control policy. First, relationships among mid-level officials set the conditions for positive outcomes over a period of time. Second, debate within government administrations was not only beneficial, but rather a necessary component for effective foreign policy. Third, well-educated nuclear and arms control experts were critical as these specialists from varied disciplines came together to offer insight that shaped the direction of arms control.

These findings offer valuable lessons as Russia and the PRC seek to project power globally even as North Korea and Iran continue to develop their nuclear capabilities. Moreover, while context is critical and the blueprint for SALT I cannot be applied universally, the study of mid-level officials' roles during SALT I negotiations can provide insight into future arms control policy and prospective negotiations between great powers.

B. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN NUCLEAR POWERS

1. Relational Influence across Adversarial Lines

Maintaining working relationships at the intermediate level enabled increased dialogue between U.S. and Soviet officials. During the time period leading up to SALT I (1969-1972), neither the United States nor the Soviet Union cut off relationships between its mid-tier officials and bureaucrats in spite of considerable exogenous factors, to include U.S. involvement in Vietnam and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. While these external events could have severely frustrated potential negotiations, SALT talks were only delayed until 1969. In both of the aforementioned cases, the respective party sought to project power in an effort to counterbalance the other: the United States sought to crush communism in Vietnam while the Soviets sought to counter political liberalization in Czechoslovakia following the Prague Spring movement. Yet neither country cut off contact for an extended period of time, resulting in the initiation of SALT negotiations and continued scientific cooperation in the early 1970s.

The U.S. and Soviet response to external factors in the late 1960s stands in stark contrast to NATO's decision to suspend cooperation with Russia in 2014 or the more recent decision to begin cutting off U.S. relationships with Chinese scientists. In 2014, following Russia's initial invasion of Ukraine, NATO "suspended all practical cooperation with Russia," which included scientific cooperation.¹⁸⁵ Recently, the United States begun to sever ties in the realm of scientific cooperation with the PRC, in large part because the PRC has stolen a substantial amount of information through cyber warfare and other veiled efforts to attain data.¹⁸⁶ While there are undoubtedly risks to a collaborative approach to the PRC in terms of intellectual and scientific property, a prudent approach is still

¹⁸⁵ "NATO-Russia Relations: The Facts," NATO, last modified April 20, 2023, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_111767.htm.

¹⁸⁶ Karen Hao and Sha Hua, "The U.S. Is Turning Away From Its Biggest Scientific Partner at a Precarious Time," *The Wall Street Journal*, last modified August 16, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/world/china/the-u-s-is-turning-away-from-its-biggest-scientific-partner-at-a-precious-time-9fb9adaa>; Christopher Wray, "China Stealing Technology Secrets—From AI to Computing and Biology, 'Five Eyes' Intelligence Leaders Warn," *60 Minutes*, October 22, 2023, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/china-stealing-technology-secrets-five-eyes-intelligence-leaders-warn-60-minutes-transcript/>.

necessary. The United States should not ignore the potential consequences of avoiding risk altogether. For instance, if the United States decides that it must avoid the PRC by cutting off bilateral research, then it risks losing influence over the Chinese people.

Influence through interpersonal relationships fostered over a period of time has been shown to impact behavior. Regarding the diffusion of innovation and the adoption of new ideas, a number of studies over the last 70 years have indicated that “interpersonal contacts [are] important influences on adoption behavior.”¹⁸⁷ In other words, relationships generate transformation. Dictating terms to President Putin or President Jinping is unlikely to work, and while building relationships takes time, the reality is that agreements between ideological foes do not happen overnight. Thus, President Biden’s and President Jinping’s recent agreement to restore communication between key U.S. and Chinese military leaders is important because it creates the opportunity for mid-level officers to establish relationships.¹⁸⁸ Building trust amongst mid-level officials will transcend administrations and set the conditions for a more lasting, albeit surely ephemeral, peace.

Finally, politicians’ amplified rhetoric hinders mid-level relationships. Rather than enhancing clarity, it engenders emotional responses. In a recent interview with *The Economist* regarding the U.S. strategy concerning Taiwan, Henry Kissinger suggested lowering “the rhetoric...[there is no] need to make an announcement of it, we can just do it.”¹⁸⁹ In other words, the 2022 U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) is sufficient. Extra rhetoric is neither necessary nor helpful, and it could actually impede collaboration on meaningful work. Clear communication of objectives while also leaving the door open for dialogue will best serve U.S. national interests.

¹⁸⁷ Thomas W. Valente and Rebecca L. Davis, “Accelerating the Diffusion of Innovations Using Opinion Leaders,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 566 (November 1999), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/1048842>, 56-57.

¹⁸⁸ Yasmeen Abutaleb and John Hudson, “Biden and Xi Agree to Restore Military Ties, Helping Ease Tensions,” *The Washington Post*, last modified November 16, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2023/11/15/biden-xi-meeting/>.

¹⁸⁹ “A Conversation with Henry Kissinger,” *The Economist*, May 17, 2023, <https://www.economist.com/kissinger-transcript>.

2. Debate and Dialogue

The U.S. 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) states that the DOD “will work across the interagency system...to advance regional security goals that implement the higher-level aims of integrated deterrence.”¹⁹⁰ This language of integrated deterrence may be modern, but the concept was practiced during the SALT I years. During domestic negotiations while drawing up the terms of SALT I, the State Department worked together regularly with the DOD and non-State Department partners. In contrast to being drawn into a mentality of groupthink, as Irving Janis argued was the case during foreign policy decision-making for the Bay of Pigs invasion and escalation in Vietnam, disagreement and conflict sharpened decision-making.¹⁹¹ Thus, this research aligns with author Graham Allison’s claim that intra-national cooperation among established bureaucrats factors heavily into policymaking.¹⁹² As internal collaboration shaped arms control policy in the early 1970s, so too can this teamwork influence arms control policy today.

Consequently, U.S. leaders must make every effort to maintain dialogue with knowledgeable outsiders willing to disagree with them. This particular aspect of a democracy is a strategic advantage that the United States has over authoritarian regimes such as the PRC and Russia. While autocratic governments may boast a rapid decision-making process, dialogue that brings together people from diverse backgrounds with distinctive experiences breeds creative solutions. But dialogue alone will not suffice. Administrations must intentionally grant a voice to a diversity of actors and listen to different perspectives.

Analogous to this concept of conflictual dialogue is the idea of working in support of a higher mission. First, information sharing among key U.S. governmental entities is vital to strategic health. Yet rote repetition of useless information will not suffice. Rather,

¹⁹⁰ U.S. Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington D.C.: Department of Defense, 2022), <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Oct/27/2003103845/-1/-1/1/2022-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY-NPR-MDR.PDF>, 14.

¹⁹¹ Irving L. Janis, *Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign-Policy Decisions and Fiascos* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972).

¹⁹² Graham T. Allison and Morton H. Halperin, “Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications,” *World Politics* 24 (Spring 1972), 42.

as the State Department and the DOD partnered during the SALT era, so too must today's officials share timely and relevant information regardless of personal biases or self-interest. For example, the State Department could receive credit for a policy recommendation made possible by information provided by the DOD. Second, bipartisan experts at the mid-level who are not subject to electoral vulnerability provide a solid foundation for good strategy because they have no need to appeal for votes. Moreover, these bureaucrats, who are not subject to electoral pressure, are able to take strong stances based on convictions generated from independent research. Thus, a strong, yet flexible bureaucracy is indispensable to maintain a continued focus on national security when senior leaders may have competing concerns.

3. Investing in Nuclear Experts for Strategic Readiness

Navigating discussions, both formal and informal, requires an exceptional ability to think outside the box. Mid-level officials brought this creative thinking to the bureaucratic halls of the Nixon administration, enabling it to reach a landmark agreement with the Soviet Union. Even before President John F. Kennedy employed his team of 'Whiz Kids', academics had begun their entry into U.S. politics. Decades of study and debate over nuclear issues prepared mid-level officials for arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union. Not only did many of these mid-level officials have experience in academia, but they brought an abundance of experience on historical, technical, and cultural issues that boded well for interactions with an ideologically-disparate adversary. Today, three decades removed from exercising foreign policy in a bipolar world, the United States lacks adequate nuclear experts, individuals who not only have deep technical knowledge, but are also able to leverage their nuclear expertise for the purpose of implementing effective arms control policy.¹⁹³ Placing these nuclear experts in positions of influence and power has the potential to yield valuable results in the long term.

¹⁹³ Bryan Bender, "The Dangerous and Frightening Disappearance of the Nuclear Expert," *Politico Magazine*, last modified July 28, 2023, <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2023/07/28/nuclear-experts-russia-war-00108438>.

Addressing this deficiency should be a primary concern for the United States. Not only is there a need for technical nuclear experts who can develop relationships with other researchers, but also for historians, who can recognize similarities from the past and correctly diagnose current issues, and strategists, who can translate those historical lessons into valuable policy recommendations. Undoubtedly, the academic community must recognize its unique ability to contribute to policymaking.¹⁹⁴ However, the onus is also on the U.S. government to recognize the added value of scholarly input to the realm of policy. Investing in this approach will require a long-term strategy that includes partnering with civilian establishments capable of infusing novel ideas into the existing U.S. National Security apparatus.

4. Opportunities for Further Research and Final Thoughts

Much more can be done to understand why cooperation occurs, and additional research may consider other areas of significant collaboration between the United States and the Soviet Union. For example, since this research was limited to one era of arms control negotiations, further study should consider the role of mid-level officials in the 1980s leading to the landmark 1987 INF Treaty. Did mid-level officials play a similar role in these negotiations? If so, what was their impact on arms control policy? In addition, investigation of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty and the 1972 Agreement Concerning Cooperation in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space for Peaceful Purposes could provide important points of data that would add to the conversation regarding the role of mid-level officials in shaping U.S. foreign policy.

The United States cannot resolve every crisis, nor can it demand a different path from the one along which it is moving. Rather, U.S. leaders must resolve to face the challenges they have been given with the available resources. The resource that demands the most attention is people. People establish relationships across adversarial lines, engage in dialogue and debate, and provide wise counsel concerning arms control through study

¹⁹⁴ Stephen M. Walt, "The Relationship Between Theory and Policy in International Relations," *Annual Review of Political Science* 8 (June 2005), <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.7.012003.104904>.

and expertise. In each of these areas, time is a common factor, one that seems to be a scarce commodity in this era of acute instability. Yet taking the time to invest in people who can apply lessons from these SALT I era patterns is imperative to the realization of effective U.S. arms control policy today.

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