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Changes in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy and the securitization of Russia (2001-2021)

David Silva Ferreira

Doutoramento em Ciência Política, na especialidade em Relações Internacionais

Orientadores:

Doutor Luís Nuno Valdez Faria Rodrigues, Professor Catedrático
Iscte - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

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Universidade do Minho

Dezembro, 2024



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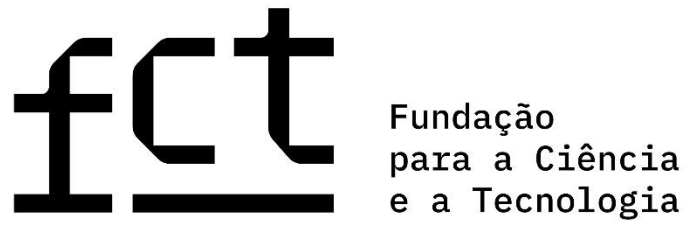
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Resumo

Durante a Guerra Fria, os Estados Unidos (EUA) percecionavam uma ameaça constante de ataque nuclear soviético. Aproximando-se o fim do conflito, as percepções de ameaça de Moscovo diminuíram consideravelmente nos EUA, e os dois países reduziram drasticamente os seus arsenais nucleares através de tratados de controlo de armamento. Contudo, em 2024, Washington e Moscovo ainda retêm arsenais que totalizam aproximadamente 88% das armas nucleares mundiais. Apesar da cooperação no âmbito do regime de não-proliferação nuclear no período pós-Guerra Fria, os EUA e Rússia mantêm uma relação de dissuasão nuclear, abandonaram ou suspenderam regimes de controlo de armamento, desenvolveram novas armas nucleares e realizaram programas de modernização nuclear. Avançando a hipótese de que as percepções de ameaça russa perduraram, esta tese questiona de que forma estas explicam mudanças na política de dissuasão nuclear americana (2001-2021). Combinando Teoria da Securitização com Análise de Discurso Político, desenvolvemos uma metodologia que entende percepções de ameaça como parte de um espectro mais alargado de razões para atuar, que informam conclusões sobre o que fazer. As percepções de ameaça não existem num vácuo, coexistindo ou competindo com outras razões para atuar que, como um todo, explicam escolhas políticas específicas. Nesta tese, argumentamos que percepções de ameaça da Rússia são razões para atuar ubíquas, prevalecendo sobre outras frequentemente, e informando decisões para atuar, não atuar, e como atuar. A securitização da Rússia nos EUA durante o período de análise influenciou profundamente decisões sobre defesa antimíssil, reduções de armas nucleares, controlo de armamento, e programas de modernização nuclear.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Estados Unidos; Rússia; Armas nucleares; Dissuasão nuclear; Espectro da Securitização; Análise de Discurso Político.

Abstract

During the Cold War, the United States (U.S.) perceived a constant threat of a Soviet nuclear attack. Threat perceptions of Moscow declined considerably in the U.S. as the end of the conflict approached, with both countries drastically reducing their nuclear arsenals through arms control agreements. However, in 2024, Washington and Moscow still retain arsenals totaling about 88% of the world's nuclear weapons. Despite cooperation in the framework of the nuclear non-proliferation regime during the post-Cold War period, the U.S. and Russia maintain a relationship of nuclear deterrence, having abandoned or suspended arms control regimes, developed new nuclear weapons, and undertaken nuclear modernization programs. Advancing the hypothesis that threat perceptions of Russia have survived, this thesis questions how they explain changes in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy (2001-2021). Combining Securitization Theory with Political Discourse Analysis, we developed a methodology that views threat perceptions as part of a broader spectrum of reasons for action that inform conclusions about what should be done. Threat perceptions do not exist in a vacuum but coexist or compete with other reasons for action that, as a whole, explain specific policy choices. In this thesis, we argue that threat perceptions from Russia are ubiquitous reasons for action, often prevailing over others, and informing decisions to act, not to act, and how to act. The securitization of Russia in the U.S. during the period under analysis profoundly influenced decisions about missile defense, nuclear arms reductions, arms control, and nuclear modernization programs.

KEYWORDS: United States; Russia; Nuclear Weapons; Nuclear Deterrence; Securitization Spectrum; Political Discourse Analysis.

List of abbreviations, initialisms and acronyms

ABM – Anti-Ballistic Missile
ACA – Arms Control Association
ALCM – Air-launched cruise missile
AOA – Analysis of Alternatives
BMD – Ballistic Missile Defense
CBO – Congressional Budget Office
CEIP – Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
CEO – Chief Executive Officer
CFE – Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe
Conf. – Conference
Cong. – Congressional
CTBT – Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
CTR – Cooperative Threat Reduction
CS – Copenhagen School
CSIS – Center for Strategic and International Studies
CRS – Congressional Research Service
D – Democrat
D.C. – District of Columbia/Washington, D.C.
DCA – Dual-capable aircraft
DOD – Department of Defense
DOE – Department of Energy
DOS – Department of State
Ed. – Edited
EPAA – European Phased Adaptive Approach
EU – European Union
FAS – Federation of American Scientists
FY – Fiscal Year
GOP – Republican Party (“Grand Old Party”)
GBI – Ground-Based Interceptor
GMD – Ground-Based Mid-Course Defense
HGV – Hypersonic Glide Vehicle
H.R. – House of Representatives
HRG. – Hearing
ICBM – Intercontinental Ballistic Missile

ICRC – International Committee of the Red Cross

IMNSAE – Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe

INF – Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces

IR – International Relations

ISIL – Islamic State

JSC – Joint Chiefs of Staff

Km – Kilometers

LRSO – Long-Range Standoff weapon

MAD – Mutual Assured Destruction

MAP – NATO Membership Action Plan

MaRV – Maneuverable Reentry Vehicles

MDA – Missile Defense Agency

MDR – Missile Defense Review

MIRV – Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicles

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NC3 – Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications

NDAA – National Defense Authorization Act

NDS – National Defense Strategy

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

No. – Number

NPR – Nuclear Posture Review

NPT – Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

NSC – National Security Council

OSD – Office of the Secretary of Defense

OSCE – Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

PAC-3 – Patriot Advance Capability-3

PSF – People, States and Fear

PT. – Part

R – Republican

Rec. – Record

Rep. – Report

RPC – Republican Policy Committee

S. – Senate

SBIRS – Space Based Infrared System

SLBM – Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile

SLCM – Submarine-Launched Cruise Missile

SNFA – Security: A New Framework for Analysis

SORT – Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty also known as Moscow Treaty
SSBN – Ship, Submersible, Ballistic, Nuclear (commonly referred to as ballistic missile submarine)
START – Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
STRATCOM – United States Strategic Command
THAAD – Terminal High Altitude Area Defense
U.K. – United Kingdom
UCS – Union of Concerned Scientists
UN – United Nations
U.S. – United States of America
U.S.S.R. – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WTO – World Trade Organization
WMD – Weapon of Mass Destruction
WWII – World War II

Two letter U.S. state name abbreviations

Alabama - AL

Alaska - AK

Arizona - AZ

Arkansas - AR

California - CA

Colorado - CO

Connecticut - CT

Delaware - DE

Florida - FL

Georgia - GA

Hawaii - HI

Idaho - ID

Illinois - IL

Indiana - IN

Iowa - IA

Kansas - KS

Kentucky - KY

Louisiana - LA

Maine - ME

Maryland - MD

Massachusetts - MA

Michigan - MI

Minnesota - MN

Mississippi - MS

Missouri - MO

Montana - MT

Nebraska - NE
Nevada - NV
New Hampshire - NH
New Jersey - NJ
New Mexico - NM
New York - NY
North Carolina - NC
North Dakota - ND
Ohio - OH
Oklahoma - OK
Oregon - OR
Pennsylvania - PA
Puerto Rico - PR
Rhode Island - RI
South Carolina - SC
South Dakota - SD
Tennessee - TN
Texas - TX
Utah - UT
Vermont - VT
Virginia - VA
Virgin Islands - VI
Washington - WA
West Virginia - WV
Wisconsin - WI
Wyoming – WY

PREMISE TYPE ABBREVIATIONS

(MAIN ELEMENTS OF PRACTICAL ARGUMENTS)

CP – Circumstantial Premise

VP – Value Premise

GP – Goal Premise

ME – Means-End Premise

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Introduction

We live at a time when the risk of nuclear weapons use is seen as having risen to heights reminiscent of the Cold War era (Guterres, 2024). After repeated failures to meaningfully improve their relationship, the United States (U.S.) and Russia, which possess approximately 88% of the world's nuclear weapons as of 2024, undergo a period of considerable hostility and rivalry. Russia has repeatedly threatened the use of nuclear weapons in the context of its 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and Washington and Moscow's spending on nuclear weapons programs threatens to spark an arms race. The two countries have been reluctant to abandon Cold War-era nuclear planning, pursued broad nuclear modernization programs, and developed new nuclear capabilities. The international political institutions dedicated to arms control, that is, to the limitation or elimination of nuclear weapons and related components via mutual agreements or commitments, currently experience major decline. Nuclear force reductions and arms control talks have stalled, and both states have undertaken actions that either weakened or destroyed existing regimes (Bugos, 2019, 2023a; Courtney & McClintock, 2020; UN, 2021; Kristensen & Arkin, 2020; Science and Security Board – Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, 2024, 2-7).

The immense yield and radiation hazard from their detonation make them fundamentally different from other weapons. Besides horrifying mass casualties, nuclear weapons can cause harmful societal impacts. Their detonation can lead to mass displacement; long-term negative effects on health and well-being; and cause enduring damage to infrastructure, the environment, social order, and socioeconomic development. Social and political disruption could be tremendous and decades-lasting (ICRC, 2020). In addition to the catastrophic consequences stemming from a nuclear explosion, other nuclear weapons-related risks warrant profound consideration. Uranium extraction, nuclear testing, and nuclear weapons production, have disrupted, hurt, or destroyed communities and ecosystems. Overall, nuclear weapons have consequences that go beyond the traditional realm of national security. They have social, political, cultural, environmental, medical, public health, and economic impacts (Borrie & Caughley, 2013: 24; ICRC, 2020; Xu & Dodt, 2023).

Despite their mutual rivalry, hostility, and suspicions during the Cold War, Washington and Moscow celebrated multiple arms control agreements – a tradition extended after the end of the conflict – to manage their nuclear deterrence relationship. Nuclear deterrence was the bedrock of their relationship during the Cold War. Deterrence, according to Mazarr (2018: 2) is “the practice of discouraging or restraining someone – in world politics, usually a nation-state – from taking unwanted actions, such as an armed attack. It involves an effort to stop or prevent an action.” Morgan (2003: 1) explains that deterrence involves threatening to harm another party to influence behavior and prevent something unwanted from occurring. In the context of nuclear deterrence, this practice involves

leveraging the potential use of nuclear weapons as a means to dissuade states from engaging in undesirable conduct through the credible threat of catastrophic consequences.

During the Cold War, as U.S.-Soviet nuclear arsenals expanded, the doctrine of mutually assured destruction (MAD) postulated that the credible threat of a massive retaliatory nuclear strike would serve as a powerful deterrent, dissuading the two nuclear superpowers from initiating a nuclear attack against one another. This strategic balance relied on the assumption that the unacceptable/catastrophic damages caused by such an exchange would render a decision to launch a nuclear first strike irrational (McNamara, 1999; Morgan, 2003: 54). The intensity of the Cold War created an obsession with deterrence in U.S. policymaking – the war was perceived as total and absolute, with the world being at stake, meaning that deterrence needed to always be in place no matter what, or a nuclear holocaust would ensue (Morgan, 2003: 8-10). The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, which led both states to the brink of nuclear war, was pivotal in encouraging both states to find ways to cooperate in pursuit of a common goal: preventing nuclear war (Allison, 2002). It has been primarily via bilateral negotiations between Washington and Moscow that progress on arms control has been achieved.

The cornerstone of the multilateral nuclear weapons regime – the NPT – faces a serious crisis (Kimball, 2020). The 2022 NPT Review Conference ended without agreement, as many states condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine and use of nuclear threats. In response, Moscow asserted that the Conference had been "taken hostage" by Kyiv "and its sponsors" and prevented the adoption of a final outcome document (UN, 2022; Mukhatzhanova; 2022). Yet, the provisions discussed throughout the Conference garnered considerable criticism over their lack of substance (Hood, 2023).

Much to the frustration of non-nuclear weapon states, the U.S., Russia, China, France, and the U.K., signatories to the treaty, appear determined to undergo full scale nuclear modernization programs, rather than fulfill their nuclear disarmament commitments. They cite the declining international security environment as justification for maintaining their reliance on nuclear weapons (Wisotzki & Kühn, 2022: 183-184; 189; Rublee & Wunderlich, 2022: 5; Mukhatzhanova, 2022). The prolonged crises in U.S.-Russian arms control have also created substantial difficulties for multilateral disarmament (Wisotzki & Kühn, 2022: 184) and the global trend of reducing nuclear stockpiles started to reverse (Kristensen et al., 2024). The NPT also faces a major challenge in its lack of universalization, with other nuclear weapon states being outside its framework, and competition from another legal instrument: the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which prohibits nuclear weapons possession, development and stationing. Some argue that the TPNW fills a legal gap, while others point to overlapping and conflicting obligations as potentially undermining the NPT (Sultan, 2019: 31-32, 37-38, 56).

As of 2024, Russia possesses approximately 5580 nuclear weapons, the U.S. 5044, China 500, France 290, and the U.K. 225. Among non-signatories to the NPT, India has approximately 172 nuclear weapons, Pakistan 170, Israel 90, and North Korea 50 (Kristensen et al., 2024). Given their extraordinary

nuclear capabilities in both quantitative and qualitative terms, the U.S. and Russia stand out as the primary offenders in exacerbating the risks of civilization-ending nuclear catastrophe, making research on how they define their nuclear weapons policies of paramount importance to find ways to hopefully prevent it. It is imperative that the two states assume a leadership role in advancing nuclear arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation.

Thus, this thesis questions how changes in nuclear weapons policies occur, taking note of the worrying trend, abovementioned, in those enacted by the U.S. and Russia, despite the end of the Cold War. In light of their former Cold War rivalry, present hostility, and approximate quantitative nuclear parity between the nuclear arsenals of Washington and Moscow, we posit that threat perceptions of Russia are the main strategic consideration when it comes to U.S. nuclear deterrence policy. We expect developments related to Russian nuclear forces to be viewed with greater concern in the U.S., compared with those associated with countries unable to inflict the same level of destruction in a nuclear exchange, or that are perceived as less adversarial.

Our main research goal is to determine how threat perceptions of Russia explain changes in American nuclear deterrence policy during the administrations of George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump. Our decision to focus on the U.S. rather than Russia was grounded on the transparency of its governments which, while not absolute, make available and easily accessible to the public comprehensive records of Congressional meetings, in addition to various strategic reports, legislation, or budget requests. Lawmakers tend to publish some of their interventions on their Congressional websites. Declassification and leaks also occur. In the absence of written sources, video broadcasts of specific Congressional meetings may be available. The U.S. media also makes relevant information readily available by publishing interviews of comments of relevant political actors.

The timeframe was selected for the following reasons. George W. Bush sought a clean break from the Cold War, making it a top priority the pursuit of improved relations with Russia and the implementation of changes in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy. The early years of his Presidency marked a pivotal moment in that regard, after President Bill Clinton passed on to his successor decisions on the future of American missile defense, the ratification of START II, and the possible amendment of another accord in the ABM Treaty. Clinton also remained unable to make reductions in deployed nuclear weapons beyond the limits of the treaty in force at the time – START I – due to a Congressional restriction which the Democrats failed to remove in his last year in office. Those issues were part of Bush's campaign and marked its early presidency as he sought to the transition of the U.S. military, including nuclear forces, toward a new strategic framework. The inclusion of the Obama administration, on the other hand, allows us to study the nuclear weapons policy of the United States under Democratic governance. Additionally, President Obama established, very early on in his tenure, the 'reset' of U.S.-Russian relations and progress toward nuclear disarmament as core U.S. foreign policy goals. Moreover, the annexation and occupation of Ukrainian territory by Russia starting in 2014 marked a fundamental shift in Washington's perceptions of Moscow. Lastly, the Trump presidency was deemed a crucial

component of our analysis because the deterioration of relations between the U.S. and Russia following the 2014 events deserved a more lengthy and detailed analysis as it pertained to potential impacts on American nuclear weapons policy. The Trump administration spearheaded several changes in U.S. nuclear policy at a time when we expected threat perceptions of Russia have become widespread in America. The Biden administration was not included in our analysis given that it was still in progress at the time of the conclusion of this thesis and further data analysis could compromise the feasibility of our research due to time and length restrictions we needed to observe.

The main research question is: “has Russia been the core determinant of change in American nuclear deterrence policies, or do other variables, such as understandings about the global balance of power, provide better explanations?” Our main research hypothesis is that changes in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy are mostly explained by Russia and, especially, by threat perceptions of the country. Changes in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy are, thus, the dependent variable while threat perceptions of Russia constitute the independent variable. Our hypothesis stems: 1) From the intense rivalry and hostility between the two countries during the Cold War, which had in mutual nuclear deterrence its defining element; 2) From the difficulties in establishing a cooperative post-Cold War relationship between the two countries (with irreconcilable differences in the realm of nuclear deterrence); and 3) The approximate quantitative nuclear parity between the U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons stockpiles, which denotes concern over the downsides of disparities on nuclear deterrence.

Nuclear deterrence is at the core of any strategic study on U.S. nuclear weapons policymaking. It is, in fact, a central part of American national security policy since the beginning of the Cold War. To make its nuclear deterrence credible, the U.S. built powerful nuclear forces able to threaten with a nuclear retaliatory strike of catastrophic consequences the homeland of any potential attacker (Krepon, 2013: 15; Pifer et al., 2010: 1; Hood & Cormier, 2024: 181). Thus, American nuclear deterrence policies are what the U.S. decides to do or not to do (Dye, 2017: 1) to stop or prevent unwanted actions from another party (Mazarr, 2018: 2), and make nuclear weapons use less likely. “All policy is policy change” (Hogwood & Peters, 1983). This understanding of deterrence as a practice less focused on the threat of nuclear attack is suited to the study of how threat perceptions of Russia explain changes in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy, given the transformations in their bilateral relations since the end of the Cold War. “Pure” nuclear deterrence situations where a nuclear attack is a grave, imminent possibility are rare and, unlike during the Cold War, we do not anticipate Washington to perceive relations with Moscow as constantly teetering on the brink of a potential nuclear war. Instead, we consider to be more accurate to look at the post-Cold War strategic relationship between the two parties as one where, rather than the threat of immediate nuclear crises, “instead there is rivalry, hostility (...), perhaps an arms race” (Morgan, 1977: 40-43). Thus, nuclear deterrence policies encompass a range of policies that include arms control agreements, missile defense, nuclear force reductions, and nuclear modernization, including the development of new capabilities.

How credibly threats are perceived to be depends on a variety of factors, including one's past reputation and previous actions and statements (Stein, 2023: 411-412). Thus, we expect current policy choices to be partly informed by decision-makers' conceptions about the past. Given the length and intensity of the U.S.-Russian Cold War rivalry, marked by nuclear tensions, we expect such events to inform post-Cold War nuclear deterrence policy between the two states. Suspicion of Moscow, even at time of warmer relationships, might still prevail.

During the Cold War, U.S. nuclear deterrence policies were tightly connected with strong threat perceptions of the U.S.S.R.. The frailty of nuclear deterrence against the backdrop of such an existential threat was in full display during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, when the U.S. discovery of Soviet nuclear weapons in Cuba incited an American naval blockade of the island, creating a political and military stand-off for 13 days. The peaceful and negotiated dissolution of the crisis paved the way for a mini-détente in 1963. To reduce tensions following the resolution of the crisis, the two countries celebrated the Limited Test-Ban Treaty, the Hotline Agreement, and the Outer Space Treaty, which prohibited nuclear detonations unless conducted underground, improved bilateral communication by creating a direct line between the leaders in Washington and Moscow, and banned nuclear weapons in space. Major precedents for future arms control accords were thus created (Garthoff, 1985: 7; History.com Editors, 2024; Jervis, 2015; Scott, 2015: 239; U.S. DOS, n.d.a; U.S. DOS, 1963a, 1963b; U.S. DOS, 1967).

Collaborative efforts between the two states to reduce the risk of nuclear war started moving the two superpowers toward the period of reduced hostilities known as détente despite U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War (starting in 1964) and the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia undermining process. Against the backdrop of the détente were various international and domestic political factors which contributed to it. They include the emergence of the idea of an East-West détente during the mid-1960's, advanced by Warsaw Pact and NATO countries; Soviet incentive to explore a relaxation of tensions with the U.S. given the stark decline in relations with China; and the political appeal of the détente in the U.S. However, the historical context of bilateral arms control cooperation, coupled with the emergence of strategic nuclear parity between the United States and Russia, facilitated bilateral agreements as well as the entire process of détente. The establishment of approximate quantitative parity in the global strategic balance (albeit the U.S.S.R. still lagged qualitatively), and shared fears, later on, about upsetting said balance, became the most central aspect of the military and strategic relationship between Washington and Moscow and their individual alliances. As the U.S. sought to constrain the arms race and the U.S.S.R. to enhance its security and attain political parity as a superpower, the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) were "[t]he most immediate and direct effect of the prospective emergence of strategic parity" (Garthoff, 1985: 5-17). They were two rounds (SALT I and SALT II) of bilateral conferences and associated treaties on arms control started in November 1969. SALT I was the détente's "crowning achievement," limiting the number of nuclear missiles in the U.S. and Soviet arsenals and resulting in the celebration of the ABM Treaty, which constrained strategic missile defenses. The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which put an end to the détente, prevented SALT II

from entering into force, despite the two countries agreeing to abide by its terms, which contemplated limitations on nuclear delivery vehicles and other restrictions on deployed nuclear forces, including Multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs) (U.S. DOS, n.d.b).

In the same year, NATO called for arms control negotiations with the U.S.S.R., which had commenced deployments of nuclear-armed SS-20 intermediate-range nuclear missiles in the European part of its territory two years prior. In the absence of an agreement, U.S. nuclear armed ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs) and Pershing II ballistic missiles would be deployed in Europe starting in December 1983. Negotiations deadlocked for years, in part due to President Ronald Reagan's 1983 announcement of his intention to deploy a missile defense system in space (the Strategic Defense Initiative program or SDI). The U.S. and the U.S.S.R. agreed to the INF Treaty, signed in 1987, which led to the elimination of all their ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles (nuclear or conventional) of short- (500-1,000km) and intermediate-range (1,000-5,500km) (FAS, n.d.; Paterson, 2015: 456). The SALT framework was renamed START. Negotiations, which started in June 1982, also stalled for years but progressed when the U.S.S.R. set aside their condition that the U.S. stop SDI research (Paterson et al., 2015: 456, 472-473). Signed in July 1991 and ratified in October 1992, the START reduced the number of U.S. and Russian deployed strategic nuclear warheads to 6,000 (Ritchie, 2008: 16, 18). Despite these successes, nuclear arms control negotiations had consistently been one of the most challenging issues for the two superpowers (U.S. DOS, n.d.c).

As the Cold War drew to a close, U.S. strategic threat perceptions shifted away from Moscow and towards rogue states armed with WMDs. The START process was accompanied by several unilateral cancelations, reductions, and withdrawals of nuclear forces in 1991 and 1992. George H. W. Bush negotiated with the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev significant, reciprocal unilateral reductions of deployed tactical nuclear weapons in Europe during those two years. The pledges were called the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives (PNI). However, wariness of Moscow's political intentions and nuclear weapons policy persisted. During the early 1990's, the U.S. administration and Congress looked at the Kremlin's nuclear modernization program with concern. The U.S. mostly preserved its Cold War nuclear policies during that period and proceeded with caution in the implementation of changes (Ritchie, 2008: 22-23; 31-32; 35; ACA, 2017). Deterrence remained "woven into many elements of foreign and national security policy." It persisted as "a political prerequisite for cooperation with adversaries or potential adversaries," and "an important tool for failed relationships and communities." It did not disappear just because the Cold War was over (Morgan, 2003: xix).

According to Staar (1999: 605), the Bill Clinton seemingly assumed control of U.S. foreign policy bearing in mind a single assumption: that "Russia was now benign, a basket case, or both, and could therefore be taken for granted." At the same time, the U.S. adopted a strategy called "leap and hedge" to nuclear weapons reductions, whereby the preservation of a large nuclear arsenal was seen as an insurance in case Moscow strayed from its democratic course (S. HRG. 107-696, PT. 4, 2002: 320-330). From 1994 onwards, the GOP obtained a majority in both chambers of Congress, and the Russia

policies of the Democrat administration “came under increasing scrutiny, especially from those members of Congress who retained a lasting mistrust of Moscow from the Cold War days.” To them, “Russia’s actions in Bosnia, Iran, Chechnya and Kosovo raised serious questions about the wisdom of the new Washington-Moscow rapprochement” (Stent, 2015: 26).

A follow-on treaty to the START – START II – was signed in January 1993 as the two countries sought to further decrease their numbers of deployed strategic nuclear weapons. The accord also contemplated a ban on MIRV-ed ICBMs, along with other limits (Ritchie, 2008: 21-22). However, with implementation of the START I uncompleted and START II yet unratified, the Pentagon considered, in 1994, that it was unsafe to reduce nuclear forces too hastily. The U.S. should wait until relations with Russia improved more substantially and there was less of a risk of a strategic confrontation down the line (Carey, 1994; U.S. DOD, 1994). START II never entered into force. In 2000, the Russian Duma attached several conditions to its ratification, including continued compliance with the ABM Treaty, which the U.S. Senate opposed, not wanting to limit research, development, and deployment of missile defenses (Ritchie, 2008: 38-39).

When George W. Bush came to power, arms control agreements, namely the START and the ABM Treaty, were considered adversarial and counterproductive to the establishment of a cooperative relationship with Moscow – as well as ever more irrelevant in the post-Cold War environment. Strategic stability no longer relied on nuclear agreements, nor on how Russia organized its nuclear forces. The logic of safety through mutual vulnerability was rejected. The Administration wanted to move toward a post-MAD relationship with Russia, in which nuclear force reductions ought to be unilateral and reciprocal, and the U.S. would deploy missile defense systems for protection against rogue state WMD-armed missiles, possibly in cooperation with Moscow (Ritchie, 2008: 92). However, U.S. rhetoric failed to convince Russian leaders, strained the START process, and created vast disagreements regarding U.S. missile defense deployments in Europe (Ritchie, 2008: 92-93). As plans for deployment progressed, Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed that his country would respond by acquiring new nuclear targets in the continent (Blomfield & Holt, 2007).

Besides missile defense, the expansion of NATO, which had occurred steadily since the end of the Cold War, having reached Russian borders in the Baltics, was another reason for major disaccord between the United States and Russia. In April 2008, at the Bucharest NATO Summit, the Allies agreed on Georgia and Ukraine becoming members of NATO at some point in the future. A diplomatic crisis between Moscow and Tbilisi ensued, escalating into war by 7 August 2008, and bringing U.S.-Russian relations to a new low (Eichler, 2021: 55, 67-68).

During Barack Obama’s first term, Russia was defined as a priority, with the two countries successfully improving “both the atmospherics and the substance of the relationship.” Expressing America’s commitment to a world without nuclear weapons early in his presidency, Obama brought back arms control agreements as an important element of U.S.-Russian relations. In April 2010, the two countries signed the New START, the most important nuclear arms pact in about two decades (U.S.

DOS, 2011; Stent, 2015: 212; 217; 222-223). The treaty limited the number of deployed strategic warheads to 1,550, a reduction from the range of 1,700 to 2,200 set by the SORT¹, and the number of deployed strategic delivery vehicles to 700 (U.S. DOS, n.d.d).

Under the Obama administration, Washington “continued to affirm deterrence, but subordinated it to the priority goal of nonproliferation, which in turn was believed to demand the continued reduction of the U.S. instruments of nuclear deterrence.” The move had no precedents (Payne, 2018). However, despite the President’s enthusiastic support for nuclear disarmament, his actual results in terms of reducing the size of the American nuclear arsenal fell below those of the previous administration (Kristensen et al., 2024). Additionally, Obama announced in 2011 that the U.S. nuclear forces and infrastructure would undergo a significant modernization program, a decision that was difficult to reconcile with disarmament (Tannenwald 2018).

Although the Obama Administration had decided not to let the “reset” be undermined by the fundamentally different interests of Washington and Moscow vis-à-vis the post-Soviet space, the November 2013 Euromaidan protests in Ukraine would further stress the already strained U.S.-Russian relationship and spark talks of a new Cold War. Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich had decided to reject an EU association agreement favored by many in the country, leading to increasingly large protests. Yanukovich’s ousting spurred Russia to annex the Ukrainian Peninsula of Crimea and to provide support for pro-Russia separatist movements in Eastern Ukraine. The U.S. responded by sanctioning Russia, sending U.S. troops to train their Ukrainian counterparts, providing defensive military aid to Kyiv, and approving NATO deployments in Poland and the Baltics (Unger, 2016: 11-12). Simply put, at that moment, Russia and the West² were adversaries (Legvold, 2014).

In 2016, the adversarial behavior between Russia and the United States was once again on display in the nuclear realm. In May, the new NATO ground-based missile defense system, in Romania, was declared operational (Emmott, 2016). In October, Russia deployed nuclear-capable Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad (Lewis, 2016). Shortly before the end of Obama’s second term, a new source of conflict arose with the discovery of Russia’s media campaigns and cyber instruments to shape public opinion in the United States during the country’s 2016 Presidential election (Špalková, 2019: 11), which prompted new U.S. sanctions against Russia (Sanger, 2016).

¹ The New START limits are not exactly comparable to those set by START (6,000 warheads and 1,600 delivery vehicles) due to different counting rules. The SORT did not limit delivery vehicles and had no counting rules (Kaminski & Squassoni, 2010; Pifer, 2010).

² The “West” is used in reference to a “Western” civilization. At first, the concept encompassed Europe’s Atlantic littoral and the U.S. It later expanded to include other European countries and their overseas settlements, Australia, New Zealand, and other nations, such as Japan, which had “assimilated” the West in some way (e.g., Western institutions or some values). The line drawn across Europe to include some countries but exclude others as part of the West lacks consistency but always excludes Russia (McNeil, 1997: 513-514). According to Gheciu (2019: 32), “NATO has always been involved in power-filled processes of constructing “the West.” At the heart of those processes lie practices of collective (re)imagining of the Western world, as well as the representation of internal tensions as feuds within a community united by liberal values.”

When President Trump took office, great power competition – with Russia and China – had dislodged terrorism as the heart of American foreign policy (Sanger & Broad, 2018), and the U.S. sought to adapt accordingly, toughening Obama’s approach (Graham 2019: 134). In February 2018, the Trump Administration made a commitment to further expand the U.S. nuclear arsenal and sought to pursue new nuclear capabilities and additional ways to use nuclear weapons (Tannenwald, 2018). With Russia also modernizing its nuclear programs and seeking new nuclear capabilities, the two states were accused of engaging in an arms race (Tannenwald, 2018)

The Trump U.S. administration also revised arms control agreements with Russia by withdrawing from the INF Treaty in February 2019 and the Treaty on Open Skies in November 2020. It also did not extend the New START, set to expire in February 2021, although the Joe Biden Administration decided to do so before the deadline (Reif & Bugos, 2021a). The Trump administration also discussed resuming nuclear testing for the first time since 1992 (Hudson & Sonne, 2020).

U.S.-Russian relations further deteriorated after Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 (Sokolshchik, 2023). In February 2023, Putin announced he was suspending its participation in the New START, now the last remaining nuclear arms control treaty between the U.S. and Russia. While Moscow claimed that it would continue to abide by the treaty’s limits on deployed nuclear weapons, the country would no longer allow for inspections of its facilities or exchange data with the United States (Gomez, 2023; Kirby, 2023). Overall, the U.S.-Russian Cold War rivalry and their difficult relationship since – the two first basis for our research hypothesis – are at the heart of why nuclear deterrence has been preserved as a pillar of U.S. foreign policy.

Third and lastly, the U.S. has preserved approximate quantitative parity in strategic nuclear forces with Russia despite the end of the Cold War, with both countries preserving very large stockpiles compared to every other nuclear power, although many of them are increasing their nuclear weapons stockpiles. While the world’s total inventory of nuclear weapons is decreasing, reductions are slowing down compared with the past three decades, and only happening in the U.S. and Russia because the two countries are still dismantling previously retired warheads. Instead of striving for nuclear disarmament, the nuclear weapon-states seemingly plan to indefinitely maintain their large nuclear arsenals and continue to hastily modernize them (Kristensen et al., 2024). The 2022 NPR, which articulates U.S. policy on the role of nuclear weapons and their use, the country declared that that major changes in its nuclear strategy toward Beijing and Moscow demanded their nuclear forces to be verifiably reduced or constrained, or Washington would incur unacceptable risks to its deterrence and assurance (U.S. DOD, 2022: 7). Concerns with the size of the U.S. nuclear arsenal and the focus on the preservation of quantitative parity with Moscow are suggestive of the existence of threat perceptions of Russia, and of their impact on U.S. nuclear deterrence policy.

Still, while such material forces shape U.S. nuclear deterrence policy, we argue that they are not its main driver. Instead, shared ideas about Moscow, among U.S. political actors, stemming from their past rivalry and current tensions, provide better explanations for why the U.S. would perceive Russia as

a threat and adapt its nuclear deterrence policy accordingly. U.S. foreign policy interests and identities are constructed by those ideas (Wendt, 1999: 1), which act as reasons for action in the realm of nuclear deterrence. Russia's nuclear weapons matter to the United States for more than simply their material existence. U.S. policymakers attach onto them social meanings which relate to the state that owns them. We posit that U.S. interactions with Russia lead the former to view the latter's nuclear weapons as a threat, with those perceptions leading to changes in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy. How threats are dealt with (e.g. via nuclear deterrence policies, but possibly others) depends on how they are perceived, which is not always dictated by their objective features. The social design of a security issue is "what conditions and legitimates the kind of means used to stop it" (Balzacq, 2011a: xiii), meaning that considerable attention is required on the subjective understandings and context that allow for U.S. policymakers to perceive Russia as a credible threat (Lupovici, 2010: 716). Threats are social constructions of "sources of potential harm to an individual or group" (Newell, 2016: 4); they are shaped and constructed via social dynamics, and their objective features are mediated through interpretation (Lupovici, 2021: 263).

Thus, based on our research question and the shared past of U.S.-Russian interactions in the nuclear deterrence realm, we grounded our research on a Constructivist ontology of IR, understanding American perceptions of Russian threats as social constructions justifying a response by means of nuclear deterrence policies. Securitization Theory, which is also grounded on a Constructivist ontology of IR, also views threats, not as objectively absent or present, but as socially constructed. They are understood as "a part of a discursive, socially constituted, intersubjective realm" (Wæver, 1995; Buzan et al., 1998: 23-31, 57).

Securitization Theory is concerned with how issues become security problems by means of being perceived to pose a threat to a referent object – a state, for instance. The existence of that perceived threat justifies the use of political measures to address it. Securitization is the process whereby a security issue becomes securitized, that is, considered to be a threat that needs to be tackled. Securitization is accomplished by securitizing actors (essentially, state representatives) who declare the presence of a threat and claim the right to take action to resolve it (i.e., issue a securitizing move) (Wæver, 1995; Buzan et al., 1998: 1, 23-24). Still, securitization cannot simply be imposed. A case must be made by securitizing actors to a certain "audience" (Floyd, 2015: 9). Meaning that certain political actors (understood broadly as those included in a process of securitization), within a given decision-making context, may have to sanction the implementation of the policies deemed required to respond to the perceived threat. According to Floyd (2015: 12, 15), in practice, securitization can occur despite the audience rejecting the policy recommended by the securitizing actors (e.g., due to rejection of the existence of a threat, or other reason). A political actor may have the power to enact certain policies (but possibly not others) in the face of audience opposition. In other cases, the audience may play a sanctioning role, with its rejection leading to a failed securitization attempt. In any case, the securitizing actors are expected to address a certain audience – the target of their move – regardless of the power

dynamics at play in a given policy area. The audience may accept or reject the existence of a threat and agree or disagree with the policies proposed by the securitizing actors.

Our research question concerns how threat perceptions of Russia – as socially constructed, subjective, collectively shared ideas – explain U.S. foreign policy decision-making by informing political actors’ conclusions that a certain action (or actions) should be pursued to tackle said threats. Thus, Securitization Theory provides use with a useful framework with which to answer our research question. We can understand change(s) in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy to occur when securitizing actors deem it(them) necessary due to a perceived threat (e.g., from Russia), leading them to seek the support of specific target audiences –specific to the particular local decision-making context and policy area. Given the system of checks and balances in the U.S., we expect Administration officials, as securitizing actors, to generally require their securitizing moves to receive some form of audience support before the policy changes they pursue can be enacted. We consider securitization to be successful when threat perceptions lead securitizing actors to convey the need to act to an audience and policy change then occurs. Securitization failure occurs when policy change does not occur, which can happen, for instance, when an audience with agency (e.g., with sanctioning powers) is able to prevent it from being enacted. Alternatively, an audience with agency might be able to move the securitization actors toward a different course of action than the one they pursued in the first place. Such a scenario would also be an example of successful securitization.

Most securitization theorists turn to discourse analysis when choosing a methodology, given that its proven track record in helping them “map the emergence and evolution of patterns of representations which are constitutive of a threat image.” Discursive practices play a role in the construction of shared ideas (Stritzel, 2012: 553) – such as Russia being a threat to the United States – and are crucial components of political decision-making (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 1). However, given our research question, we are concerned not only with the kinds of threat perceptions of Russia that exist among political actors, but also how they relate to particular choices in policy – namely, nuclear deterrence policy. We want not only to establish a link between threats and action but explain why certain forms of action – and not others – came about. We are interested in how certain threat perceptions of Russia lead to specific forms of policy being enacted. To do that, we need to rely on a form of discourse analysis that focuses on how discursive practices inform specific choices about how to act. For example, certain threat perceptions may carry more weight among certain political actors, compared with others. But we also argue that threats perceived similarly may lead different political actors to reach varying conclusions on how to act and to recommend distinct policy solutions. Particularly if other reasons for action, besides threat perceptions, are also deemed relevant (e.g., other threats, budgetary restrictions, different goals or values, negative consequences of action).

Indeed, we acknowledge that threat perceptions of Russia may not be the only – or the core explanation – behind certain nuclear deterrence policy decisions. Thus, while we hypothesize that threat perceptions of Russia are indeed the main driver of U.S. nuclear deterrence policy – that is, the main

“reason for action,” we want to be able to explain decision-making beyond them. Russia may explain the need to act, but not why certain policy options – including those outside the realm of nuclear deterrence – were rejected as the means to tackle a threat from Moscow.

We sought a more nuanced understanding of securitization processes, a gap that we identify is the overall literature of the theory. Additionally, we want to focus on the particular case of nuclear deterrence policy in the United States specifically, which is expected to have unique traits related that particular policy sphere, which occur within a broader context of how U.S. foreign policy decision are made. Contextual factors such as the temporary party majorities in Congress; the different powers of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches; and the influence of government bureaucrats, the media, lobbies, and the general public in nuclear deterrence policymaking may also be relevant, and complement discourse analysis insights.

There is no one-size-fits-all formula for securitization, and neither there is one for discourse analysis (Müller, 2010). The latter can be conducted in a variety of ways, and our approach must suit our research requirements. We want to understand “why certain moves can be expected in given national security discourse, why some of them may find a receptive audience (given the underlying security imaginary), and indeed why certain action-complexes can then follow,” within a given national context (discursive and otherwise) (Guzzini, 2011: 338). To answer our research question, we turned to Political Discourse Analysis (PDA).

PDA views politics as being, at its core, about making choices about how to act – it is about choosing policies. And those choices result from deliberations (i.e., weighing of reasons for action based on the normative priority assigned to each) about how to act, which are expressed via political discourse, which mostly consists of “practical argumentation for or against particular ways of acting, argumentation that can ground decision.” When deciding how to act, political actors consider the reasons for or against a particular course of action, as well as the reasons for or against policy alternatives; meaning, they deliberate over several lines of action (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 1, 11).

Reasons for action are premises, that is, narratives, explanations, and imaginaries in practical arguments. “They are part of the causal powers (Fairclough et al. 2004) of people as social agents (i.e. their powers to bring about change).” An argument is a set of statements (implicit or explicit), with one of them being the conclusion, while the others are the premises. The conclusion of a practical argument, in a nutshell, is a practical claim or judgement about what to do. Politics, in fact, is fundamentally about choosing policies; it is about deciding what to do (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 1, 11, 14, 36). Drawing on our research question, we see reasons for action as determinants of change, a factor in deciding outcomes. They inform conclusions about what to do and can create change.

Analysis of political discourse should, therefore, be centered “on how discourses, as ways of representing, provide [political actors] with reasons for action.” Threat perceptions can be understood as reasons for action because, according to Securitization Theory, they inform state representatives of the need to take action. However, in securitization processes, just as in other political decision-making

processes, the eventual policy outcome (including a decision not to act) should be informed by a variety of reasons for action, even when threat perceptions are assigned the highest normative priority (i.e., are the core reason for action) (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 1).

Threat perceptions alone provide an incomplete explanation for policy choice. After all, the same effects might be achieved by varying policies, both within and outside the nuclear deterrence realm, and different political actors may disagree on how to act despite sharing identical threat perceptions. Some political actors may believe that a certain policy will fail to achieve its intended goals (or seek to pursue different ones) or be concerned about the potential negative effects of a given course of action. Thus, by viewing political discourses as essentially composed of reasons for action, we can explain political phenomena. Analysis becomes a matter of identifying, within a certain political discourse, its various reasons for action (including the actions themselves as means to achieve goals) and the various relations between them (including different normative priorities).

Reasons (or premises) for action, following a process of deliberation, lead a certain political actor to a conclusion informed by them, which is what they consider should be done. In other words, whether one should act, and if so, then how. An argument can be made, as Fairclough and Fairclough (2012: 49) note, that “[t]here is always a gap between premises and conclusions, a leap.” They elaborate, explaining that “[p]eople come up with a tentative choice, a judgement, an idea, as possibly the right thing to do, and then think of its implications for various spheres of life.” Thus, there is no guaranteed logical connection between what political actors consider they know about the present, and the claims they make about what is unknown – i.e., the future they consider will be (or will not be) brought about by a specific action. Reasons for action may have different normative priorities (i.e., relative weights), with compromises (i.e., downsides, or negative consequences/effects) on some being acceptable, but not on others.

Relying on PDA, we can address a gap in the overall Securitization Theory literature, which has been overly focused on threat perceptions, by looking at additional reasons informing action. We can identify other reasons informing the need to act to better understand why certain changes in nuclear deterrence policy were deemed preferable to other ways of acting. We can obtain a better understanding of the goals of action, of the values that underlie them, how exactable is Russia viewed as a threat, and which broader understandings of the context of action envelop those threat perceptions (including the existence of additional threats).

A core principle of Securitization Theory is that securitizing actors communicate to the audience threat perceptions and propose security policies to address them (a securitizing move). In response, audience members communicate their own premises and their own conclusions on how to act. The affirmation of dissimilar premises, the assigning of distinct normative priorities to similar premises, or the establishment of different relations between premises may lead to varying conclusions on how to act between one political actor and another. Even assuming a “leap” between premises and conclusions, we argue that political actors upholding the same or most of the same premises (and assigning them similar

weights) should be likely to support the same course(s) of action. Seeing as the enactment of an action may depend on audience acceptance of the securitizing move, ascertaining its reaction is key to explaining how policy outcomes occur. If we understand securitization as a process whereby political actors convey a spectrum of reasons for action (not only threat perceptions) to persuade others to support their policy of choice, then similar spectra between securitizing actors and members of the audience is indicative of the former's ability to convince the latter, which can explain some cases of securitization success.

According to Fairclough and Fairclough (2012: 11), political discourses contain the following elements, or reasons for action: circumstantial premises (CP) (perceptions of the context of action, including threat perceptions), goal premises (GP) (the desired future state of affairs), value premises (VP) (expressing the values, desires, duties, commitments, etc. which underlie goals and shape how the context of action is perceived), and the means-end premises (ME) (which represent an action as the means to take one from the present context [CP] to the desired future [GP]). Actions may lead to consequences, i.e., to possible future compromises on goals (GP) and values (VP) that political actors may argue should not be overridden (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012: 11, 16). To ascertain whether there is visual harmony/resonance between the spectra of securitizing actors and those of the audience we can juxtapose their respective premises (CP, GP, VP, and ME) and compare them. Doing so allows us to determine how the audience reacted to the securitizing moves. As mentioned, resonance should explain securitization success. Visual disharmony/dissonance between the premises of the securitizing actors and those of the audience can also explain policy outcomes. The occurrence of such a scenario can explain securitization success and failure as well. Securitization failure can be expected when the audience reacts negatively to the securitizing moves, with the juxtaposition of premises revealing dissonance. But if securitization success occurs despite dissonance, analysts can pinpoint which premise(s), by being assigned the highest normative priority by an audience member, better explain their decision to support a certain action, despite them not seeing eye to eye with the securitizing actors on many of the reasons for action conveyed by them. The discourse analysis must account, as mentioned, for the local (American) nuclear deterrence policymaking context, which facilitates its implementation and complements its findings. Discourse analysis must consider specific social and political contexts in which discourses are produced (Ó Tuathail & Agnew, 1992; Müller, 2010). We must "[take] account (...) of how the nature and tendencies of existing social structures, institutions and relations of power bear upon [policy] outcomes (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012: 12).

The first chapter of the thesis pertains to our research context, which enables us to implement our approach. It is divided in two main sections, one dedicated to U.S. foreign policy and the other to Russian foreign policy. The first part starts with some key features of U.S. foreign policy at the inception of the state, but quickly progressing to the years of the Cold War. Throughout the conflict, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. underwent a period of intense competition but also of cooperation, as the two superpowers attempted to lower the chances of nuclear war. The Cold War is covered in considerable detail because

we anticipated references to Cold War-related ideas and events to emerge in U.S. nuclear deterrence discourse, which we needed to understand in order to adequately apply PDA. This includes the celebration of several arms control agreements still in place during our research timeframe, as well as understandings regarding nuclear deterrence and how it should be practiced. However, our focus was placed on the post-Cold War years, because we expected interpretations of more recent events to be more abundant in nuclear deterrence discourse, albeit not necessarily disconnected from Cold War-related narratives.

The other section of the chapter concerns Russian foreign policy after the end of the Cold War. The period covered is less extensive, since this study is primarily about U.S. foreign policy. Thus, we start the section after the 1991 collapse of the U.S.S.R., moving on to the brief reproachment with the West in the early years of the Bush and Putin presidencies, after which U.S.-Russian relations worsened. We then address the short-lived improvement of bilateral ties in the early days of the Obama administration, which preceded a period of progressively worse relations between the two countries, today at the lowest point since the Cold War. We expected developments in Russia to influence U.S. nuclear deterrence policy decision-making and feature in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy discourse. Adequate application of PDA required that we covered that period, as we expected political actors to interpret those events and voice their perceptions. That exploration of the strategic relevance of nuclear weapons in U.S.-Russian relations informed us about the non-discursive context in which the political discourse was produced, enhancing our ability to apply PDA and, consequently, its explaining power.

The subsequent chapter explores the theoretical framework of our analysis. We tackle first the importance of theories for social science research, before we cover Constructivism, the IR theory that underpins our thesis. We then go over the analytical framework and theoretical foundations of Securitization Theory, which is built upon Constructivist understandings of the social reality. Seeing as there are several “securitization theories” and variants of Constructivism, we specify here which are the basis for our empirical work, while covering their emergence in the field of IR. Having made an epistemological commitment to post-positivism, that is, to a “how causality”, we explain that PDA is an adequate methodology because it “shows how to conceptualize causal mechanisms in an interpretivist environment” (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012: 100-101). We argue that our theoretical-methodological framework is suitable for explaining how threat perceptions of Russia, along with other reasons for action, once voiced in political discourse, may sanction certain forms of action (e.g. nuclear deterrence policy change). Next, we research the body of literature of deterrence theory, from the Cold War to recent times, which is crucial for understanding the key concepts of nuclear deterrence. Those understandings are likely to be featured in political discourse and to be used as reasons for action.

The third chapter is dedicated to methodology. Here we present the key concepts and theoretical underpinnings of Securitization Theory that underlie our research. Securitization Theory is fluid and adaptable to analysts (Nyman, 2018: 106) and can be refined according to the goals of the researcher (Floyd, 2015: 3, 16). Thus, drawing on the contributions of several critics of the original formulation of

Securitization Theory, and the conceptual and theoretical foundations of PDA, we devised our model of analysis, which we entitled “securitization spectrum.” Our model considers that securitization of a threat is successful when policy change occurs, i.e., when action is taken to address it. This understanding is derived from PDA, which sees political discourse as fundamentally about making choices about how to act. Viewing securitization as a spectrum entails equating political discourse to a white light, which can be split by means of a prism – which is PDA in this analogy. Once split, a ray of white light is separated into a spectrum of different hues. The hues are the reasons for action of political actors, which inform their decision to act or not to act – and if so, then how.

This model is especially useful for researchers aiming to explain security policy outcomes, which is what we aim to do. In addition, we argue that the implementation of the “Securitization Spectrum” model should be grounded on extensive research pertaining to the local contexts in which securitization processes take place. The political leadership attempting to enact changes in policy will address a specific target audience with their discourse, seeking their approval. Who those actors are is context dependent and cannot be assumed a priori. Having researched how nuclear deterrence policy is enacted in the U.S., we considered the U.S. administrations in power, Congress, and the policy community as the crucial actors in securitization processes. Our approach allows us to overcome some limitations of current formulations of Securitization Theory and their methodologies, seeing as we envelop threat perceptions within a broader range of reasons informing action, we attune our model according to local realities – specifically, U.S. foreign policy decision-making – and account for their impact on securitization outcomes, and contend that policy choice is a key question that securitization theories ought to explain.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters present the findings of our empirical research, each being dedicated to a different U.S. presidency, starting with Bush, moving to Obama, and ending with Trump, respectively. Every chapter is divided into sections, each devoted to certain nuclear deterrence policy outcomes. A section may cover more than one nuclear deterrence policy. That is due to how, within a given framework, specific threat perceptions may inform more than one nuclear deterrence policy to address them. At the outset of each chapter, we specify the policies and their associated timeframes for each section, including whether the former were enacted. Then, in each section, we explain how it was possible for policy change to occur, how threat perceptions of Russia (as a reason for action) factored in that regard, and whether securitization occurred. The analyses of political discourse on which the findings of Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are grounded can be found in section 1 of Annexes A-H.

Chapter 6 is followed by the Conclusion, which gathers each of the partial conclusions of each empirical chapter. The Conclusion is devoted to revisiting our research hypothesis and question, as well as to presenting the main contributions of this thesis. The Conclusion is followed by the sources and bibliography utilized.

Section 1 of each Annex (A-H) is divided into securitizing actor discourse (1.1) and audience discourse (1.2) which we analyzed through PDA. Annexes A-H are titled after the section of Chapters

4-6 they correspond to. Annexes A and B contain the analyses of political discourse utilized for sections 4.1 and 4.2 (chapter 4), respectively. Annexes C, D and E contain the analyses of political discourse utilized for sections 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3 (chapter 5), respectively. Annexes F, G, and H contain the analyses of political discourse utilized for sections 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3 (chapter 6), respectively.

Section 2 of Annexes A-H is devoted to the juxtaposition of premises. To determine the reaction of the audience to the securitizing actors' discourses, we juxtaposed the premises of the securitizing actors with those of the audience members. As mentioned, sections 1 and 2 of the Annexes support the findings presented in the empirical chapters (4-6).

Strategic relevance of U.S. and Russian power projection: bilateral relations and the role of nuclear weapons

1.1. U.S. foreign policy, relations with Russia, and the role of nuclear weapons

1.1.1. U.S. foreign policy before the Cold War

According to Johnstone (2011: 7), scholarship on U.S. foreign relations has a long history of using the terms isolationism and internationalism, considered two incompatible styles of foreign policy. As a new republic, the United States first adopted isolationism (Dobson & March, 2006: 6), meaning that it was unwilling to engage with the world (Johnstone, 2011: 8). In the words of George Washington, the first American president, in his 1789 Farewell Address, the United States should “steer clear of permanent alliance with any portion of the foreign world”. Similarly, President Thomas Jefferson declared, in his 1801 Inaugural Address, “[p]eace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations – entangling alliances with none” (Jefferson, 1801). The reasoning behind that style of foreign policy was linked to how several European countries at the time were more powerful than the United States, and fought each other following the principles of “amoral power politics,” which elevated state interests and survival above all else (Dobson & March, 2006: 6).

U.S. isolationism was initially reinforced by the Monroe Doctrine, enunciated by President James Monroe in 1823, according to which the country vowed to not interfere with prevailing colonies or dependencies of European powers in the Americas, unless their independence had been acknowledged by the United States. In such instances, if the European states undertook any efforts to oppress or control the newly independent countries, such actions would be seen in the U.S. as ‘unfriendly’ (Dobson & Marsh (2006: 6; Slatta, n.d.).

These words voiced, according to Renahan (2007: 10), “a philosophy of the American sphere of influence in the Western Hemisphere that exists to the present day, and that has shaped the foreign policies of every president since”. However, America’s isolationist policy was reserved for Europe. In other regions, the U.S. engaged in aggressive territorial expansion, often through conflict with Indigenous peoples, Canadians, and Mexicans. A tension between isolationism and internationalism – the latter aimed at championing liberty abroad and advancing U.S. economic interests – was, therefore, evident (Dobson & Marsh, 2006: 6-7). The Monroe Doctrine has been viewed “as an early example of the American expansionist aims in the hemisphere and a forerunner of Manifest Destiny, the belief that

the U.S. had the God-given right and duty to extend its territory westward across the North American continent – and perhaps southward” (Slatta, n.d.).

From the twentieth century onwards, the pursuit of “security though a world reformed in accordance with US principles” was added to the list of internationalist goals, and US foreign policy started to oscillate increasingly towards that style of foreign policy (Dobson & Marsh, 2006: 7). In 1899, as famously depicted in J. S. Pughe’s political cartoon, Uncle Sam decided that he was “putting his foot down”, and demanded access for American trade in China, as European powers were attempting to divide the country in spheres of influence.

Five years later, the Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, articulated by President Theodore Roosevelt, proclaimed the right of the US to interfere in the affairs of other Western Hemisphere countries “to restore order and protect US economic interests.” And in 1917, the US decided to enter World War I after Germany decided to resume submarine attacks on vessels traveling in the Mediterranean and the North Atlantic (Dobson & March, 2006: 7).

In 1918, President Wilson proposed a program for peace which would be used for peace negotiations after the end of the First World War – his fourteen points. According to Dobson and Marsh (2006), this effort aimed to replace the European Old-World system of "amoral power politics," which prioritized state interests and survival, with a New-World approach focused on internationalism. This new system emphasized free trade, self-determination, freedom of movement, open diplomacy subject to democratic oversight, peace, and collective security through the League of Nations.

However, the U.S. failed to ratify the Treaty of Versailles – which had brought the First World War to an end – leading to its inability to participate in the League of Nations. Not only did the European powers remain committed to Old-World politics, even the U.S. political elite stood skeptical of the new system. Still, while Wilson’s efforts to universalize US values faltered, the country’s liberal, idealistic, democratic agenda “changed little from Wilson’s vision” throughout the 20th century (Dobson & Marsh (2006: 7). Japan’s Pearl Harbor attack in 1941 forced the U.S. to enter WWII, and upon its conclusion, Truman shunned isolationism, considering that it had contributed to the occurrence of the conflict, and determined that the US could no longer depart from the international arena (Spalding, 2006: 10).

Mead (2001: xv-xvii, 7, 10, 175) argued that scholars often assumed the U.S. was indifferent to foreign policy before WWII and ineffective in its approach. He refuted that view, which he considered to be grounded in a persisting disinterest in U.S. foreign policy prior to the Pearl Harbor attack in academia, think tanks, media and government. Mead argued that the rise of the U.S. as a world power can be explained by its focus on trade and economic success, which demonstrate the sophistication of its foreign policy system. He rejected the idea that the U.S. achieved this position by "dumb luck" and contended that, long before World War I, foreign policy issues were already shaping American elections and politics and fueling the country's economic growth. He also rejected the traditional internationalist/isolationist dichotomy, which he deemed unable to adequately capture the opposition to the dominant post-Cold War foreign policy of the United States, which revolved around building a

global system of trade and expanding democratic governance. Instead, he contended that, historically, there have been four schools of foreign policy in the United States, which he named after their leading advocates as Hamiltonian, Jeffersonian, Wilsonian and Jacksonian. He stated that those “four schools have shaped the American foreign policy debate from the eighteenth century to the twenty-first (...) [and] are as important under George W. Bush as they were under George Washington”. Hamiltonians focus on foreign trade and see the alliance between government and big business and key for domestic and foreign success. Wilsonians, on the other hand, aim to achieve peace and spread democracy abroad; Jeffersonians pursue the defense of democracy at the domestic level; and Jacksonians believe that physical security and economic prosperity should be protected at any cost, and thus emphasize military readiness and the possibility of conflict.

1.1.2. The Cold War and the strategy of containment

Morgan (2003: 39), argues that actual insight regarding “how deterrence might work” took long to create. It was only well into the 1950’s that nuclear weapons started to be seen in the U.S. and in the U.S.S.R. as “truly different” from conventional weapons, while the stability problem³ would only become fully appreciated by the 1960’s. According to Delpech (2012: 25), “a “war fighting” doctrine was kept at least up to the mid-1960s, after the Cuban missile crisis, when it was realized that nuclear weapons would inflict “unrecoverable losses.”

Under Truman, the general belief of U.S. officials was that the security of the country was guaranteed by weapons, not treaties. Truman saw the United States “as the lone sheriff with nuclear six-guns”, treated allied states as subordinates, and rejected disarmament until the Americans could be certain that no one else would attain nuclear capabilities. Once the U.S.S.R. became a nuclear power in 1949, the arms race was on, as Truman sought to expand the American arsenal, build more production facilities, and accelerate the development of a hydrogen (or thermonuclear) bomb, which made possible explosions of a greater yield (Maddock, 2010: 47; 71; 79).

The policy paper NSC-68 – issued by Truman’s NSC in 1950 – described a “vision of Kremlin-dominated world communism” (Dobson & Marsh, 2006: 34), “provided the blueprint for the militarization of the Cold War from 1950 to the collapse of the Soviet Union” (May 1993: vii). The document proposed “the continuation of the doctrine of containment originally advocated by George Kennan” (Lindsay, 2012), which recommended American containment of Soviet expansionist tendencies (“X” [George F. Kennan], 1947: 575), but which “called for more aggressive efforts to counter Soviet expansion, efforts that would be backed up by a massive increase in both conventional

³ According to Krepon (2018), nuclear “deterrence stability is within reach when a nuclear-armed state avoids arms racing and correctly presumes that it has sufficient means to deter a conventional war or a nuclear attack.” The problem of nuclear deterrence stability is that taking steps to deter can contribute to provoke the attack deterrence is supposed to prevent (Morgan, 2003: 20).

and nuclear armaments” (Lindsay, 2012). According to Delpech (2012: 4), during the Cold War, the two dominant goals of U.S. foreign policy were to avert a total war with the U.S.S.R., which had become a nuclear power in 1949, and to curb Soviet advancements – both political and territorial.

Eisenhower worried that waging containment would destroy the American economy (Dobson & Marsh, 2006: 35). Thus, considering that nuclear weapons provided “more bang for the buck” (Divine, 1981: 37), Eisenhower accepted a new strategy, whereby a robust military posture would be maintained and developed through reliance “on the capability of inflicting massive retaliatory damage by offensive [nuclear] striking power”. Additionally, “[i]n the event of hostilities, the United States [would] consider nuclear weapons to be as available for use as other munitions” (NSC, 1953: 5, 22). Force levels and defense spending were, therefore, considerably reduced (Divine, 1981: 37). The administration “adopted a policy of massive retaliation in 1954, which focused on mass destruction of enemy civilian populations”. The development of SLBMs, first deployed in 1959, “made a survivable nuclear force possible and a second-strike⁴ capability credible” (Dobson & Marsh, 2006: 27).

As the role of nuclear weapons expanded, the nuclear arms race became “by far the most ominous issue in Soviet-American relations in the mid-1950’s” (Divine, 1981: 110), and one which would intensify during the administration of Eisenhower’s successor. Kennedy believed that the Soviet launch into orbit of the first artificial Earth satellite, Sputnik 1, in 1957, indicated that Moscow was “rapidly closing the technological gap and that the nuclear relationship was heading towards stalemate” (Dobson & Marsh, 2006: 38-39).

In Kennedy’s view, Eisenhower’s passive or reactive approach to containment had created a window of vulnerability to a Soviet attack in the United States. Therefore, the president approved “an accelerated strategic missile build-up sufficient to guarantee the US an indisputable second-strike capacity”. By being making the United States “able to absorb a Soviet first strike and still be able to mount a devastating response”, it was understood that the threat of MAD would stabilize nuclear relations with the U.S.S.R. (Dobson & Marsh, 2006: 27; 39). By the second half of 1961, however, the American administration realized that the shrinking missile gap was a myth; in fact, U.S. capabilities were vastly to those of the U.S.S.R. (Horelick, 1963: v).

For the first time, U.S.-Soviet deterrence was grounded on mutual vulnerability and MAD, not American nuclear supremacy. The Kennedy administration also endeavored to develop the means for a flexible response, feeling that “Eisenhower had taken the US back to the 1940s with a choice between humiliation and nuclear war.” The logic behind the decision was that the use of nuclear weapons could not be indiscriminatory. So, unless the U.S. was prepared to resort to nuclear detonation, it could not threaten to do so, lest its credibility be questioned, and Soviet pressure invited (the “appeasement trap”).

⁴ According to Freedman (2004: 128): “*first-strike* was taken to refer to a strike that was not only the opening volley of a nuclear war but was also directed against the nuclear capability of the enemy with the intention of crippling his means of retaliation.” Conversely, “a second-strike force was one capable of ensuring effective retaliation even after absorbing an enemy first strike.”

Flexible response became the “hallmark” of both Kennedy and his successor’s administrations. The shift from nuclear supremacy towards MAD acted as an arms race catalyst, as both sides sought to acquire second-strike capabilities (Dobson & Marsh, 2006: 27; 33; 39-40).

In 1962, the American leadership discovered that the U.S.S.R. was deploying nuclear missiles in Cuba, leading to a nuclear deterrence crisis, which played an important role in leading both the United States and the U.S.S.R. to abandon “military victory in favour of regulating nuclear arms competition” (Dobson & Marsh, 2006: 28).

According to Rumer, arms control has historically followed the political trends of the Soviet-American relationship: during periods of tension, progress in arms control halted and treaties experienced strain, while relaxation of tensions made achievements in arms control easier. Arms controls talks also served as a way to diffuse tensions when Soviet-American affairs threatened to spiral out of control (Rumer, 2018: 2; 6). Thus, in 1963 the first significant step “toward the solution of multiple Cold War problems and conflicts, including proliferation” was taken, with the signing of the Limited Test-Ban Treaty (Maddock, 2010: 215), which imposed restrictions on nuclear testing (U.S. DOS, 1963a). The establishment of a direct communications link (hotline) between presidents also took place in the same year (DOS, 1963b.).

Johnson, Kennedy’s successor, stated from the first day his intentions to carry out his predecessor’s agenda (Hybel, 2014: 26-27). However, with the country experiencing relative economic decline and trapped in an unwinnable war in Vietnam, there was a shift from a doctrine of comparability (of nuclear weapons capabilities with the U.S.S.R.) to a doctrine of sufficiency (or stability) in the late 1960’s and during the 1970’s, in order to calm the arms race. According to the new doctrine, U.S. nuclear capabilities were only required to ensure second-strike capacity, which was understood to maintain nuclear stability, and prevent Soviet nuclear forces from becoming “instruments of political leverage, coercion or military advantage” (Dobson & Marsh, 2006: 17; 27; 40-41).

Throughout the next three administrations: Nixon, Ford and Carter, the U.S.-Soviet relationship was essentially cooperative (Krass, 1997: 19), as the two states enjoyed a relaxation of tensions: the period known as *détente*. Nonetheless, in spite of being satisfied with maintaining quantitative parity during the years of *détente*, the United States led two types of efforts to preserve its capacity to inflict assured destruction: 1) improvement in qualitative terms; 2) support of arms control. The qualitative improvements came in the form of superior nuclear planning; better intelligence analysis of Soviet capabilities for improved response development; and thirdly, improvement and modernization of nuclear forces (Petrelli & Pulcini, 2018: 1192, 1197). At the same time, the United States embraced arms control; the early 70’s in particular, saw the celebration of several agreements between the two countries. During the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT), the U.S.S.R. and the United States celebrated two agreements in growing recognition of the need to reduce the risk of nuclear disaster or war (U.S. DOS, 1971): the ABM Treaty and the SALT I Interim Agreement, both signed in 1972. The first essentially imposed a freeze “at existing levels the number of strategic missile launchers (...) on

each side” (DOS, 1972a), and the second limited the deployment areas of missile defense systems to two (and later, following the signing of a protocol in 1974, to only one) (DOS, 1972b, 1974).

In 1974, in Vladivostok (U.S.S.R.), the U.S. and Soviet leaders Ford and Brezhnev reached an agreement on the limitation of strategic offensive missiles during a summit which “provided a sense of continuity to the SALT process” (Dobrynin, 1997: 338-339). The process was restarted under Carter who sought a new take on the issues discussed in Vladivostok, hoping to achieve a better deal than his predecessors. He failed to do so, however, delaying negotiations for an additional two years until the SALT II compromise was reached, and then signed in 1979 (Dobrynin, 1997: 390; 393-394). Six months after, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan put an end to *détente*, leading Carter to withdraw the treaty from consideration for ratification in the Congress (Dobson & Marsh, 2007: 46), although its terms were respected by both parties until the Reagan Administration announced it would break through its weapons limits in 1986 (Wilson & Smith, 1986). Russia continued its nuclear build-up, surpassing America’s inventory in the late 1970’s, and reaching an all-time high of just above 40,000 warheads in the second half of the 1980’s (Kristensen et al., 2024).

Carter also subscribed to the principle of nuclear sufficiency, but in 1980, with the end of *détente*, he decided to complement it with a countervailing strategy, which aimed at “obviating the dilemma of massive retaliation in the face of Soviet aggression that was serious but which fell short of total war”. Essentially, the goal was to provide the nuclear forces of the United States with additional flexibility, in order to enable graduated reactions to U.S.S.R. aggressions, “and convince Moscow that any level of aggression would incur an unacceptably high price.” Without rejecting on the concept of MAD, the Carter administration considered fighting a limited nuclear war whereby the emphasis would be placed in attacks against the Soviet leadership and military assets (counterforce targets), not population centers (countervalue targets) (Dobson & Marsh, 2006: 27-28). To that effect, Carter signed on July, 1980, the Presidential Directive 59 (which leaked in August, 1980) (Blackbourn, 2016: 181).

Once Reagan came to power, there was a clearer repudiation of nuclear parity. His administration “launched a ‘prevailing’ nuclear strategy in conjunction with a massive military buildup” (Petrelli & Pulcini, 2018: 1191; 1203) – a shift from countervailing (Ritchie, 2008: 15). The new administration considered that there was a “window of vulnerability” of his country to a Soviet nuclear attack. There was a concern with “the potential in the near future of the U.S.S.R.’s taking out the [American] ICBM force with enough in reserve to cause the president to hesitate in launching the doomsday reply. To address the issue, Reagan was determined to restore the United States’ nuclear superiority⁵ (Siracusa, 1983: 316). Nonetheless, Reagan considered nuclear weapons and MAD to be abhorrent; thus, he sought

⁵ Petrelli and Pulcini (2018: 1191; 1203) reject the prevailing scholarship view “that, between 1969 and 1976, successive US administrations resigned themselves to merely manage parity and check what was perceived as a Soviet striving for nuclear superiority by embracing arms control.” According to the authors, “a perception of mounting Soviet aggressiveness, combined with domestic opposition toward SALT negotiations, had already prompted the US to reject arms control-managed nuclear parity.”

a development of a “defense shield” that could protect the United States from the U.S.S.R.’s nuclear forces (Cooper, 2016: 384). To that end, he announced in 1983 the Strategic Defense Initiative (also known as “Star Wars”), an antiballistic missile program which, according to Dobson and Marsh, was demonstrative of a strategic shift in U.S. deterrence policy as towards “invulnerability” (Dobson & Marsh, 2006: 17; 127).

In 1983, misperception and miscalculation (Blanton, 2016: ix) led to “an unacceptably high risk of nuclear war” during the staging of “Able Archer 83”, a NATO war-gaming exercise “simulating a slow escalation from a conventional military response to a chemical and limited nuclear strike and finally into full nuclear war”. As the exercise was being carried out, the U.S.S.R. feared that Able Archer 83 “could potentially be an actual planned nuclear attack” (Jones, 2016: 2; 57).

The annual exercise took place in November, “at the peak of the heightened level of tension between the Soviet Union and the West” (Downing, 2018: 222). Earlier in the year, in March, Reagan (1983) described the U.S.S.R. as an “evil empire,” leading the Soviet government to accuse, shortly after, the Reagan administration of only thinking “in terms of confrontation and bellicose, lunatic anti-Communism” (Schmemmann, 1983). In September, the U.S.S.R. shot down Korean airlines flight 007, which had strayed into Soviet airspace, and flew over a nuclear based in Kamchatka, under the belief that it was a spy plane (Shribman, 1983), and the nuclear superpowers once again traded accusations. Reagan condemned the Soviet action, describing it as a “heinous crime” and using it to push forward his agenda (nuclear weapons build-up and SDI), while Andropov put the blame on the United States, denouncing the tragic event as a “sophisticated provocation masterminded by the US special services” (Degani, 2004: 289). Andropov also dispelled any hopes of an improvement in West-East relations in light of the recent developments (Morris, 1999: 498). The same month also saw a Soviet nuclear false alarm put the world at the brink of a nuclear war (Aksenov, 2013). Finally, in November, a few days after Able Archer 83 was concluded, the first of a series of deployments of U.S. cruise and Pershing missiles were made in the U.K., as a response to failed negotiations between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., for the removal of the Soviet SS-20 medium-range missiles that the country had placed on its borders (Nordheimer, 1983). Cimbala (2000: 1) posits that the period from the end of détente, in 1979, to the 1983 war scare, may have been just as dangerous as the Cuban missile crisis, widely considered the most dangerous confrontation of the Cold War. During that period, the Soviet leadership considered to exist a “nontrivial likelihood of a US nuclear first strike in the near future”. However, in the view of Jones (2016: 58), the nuclear war scare of 1983 did serve “as the fulcrum that pivoted U.S.- Soviet relations from the worst days of the Cold War to their best cooperation since World War II.”

However, “as SDI faltered in the mid-1980’s Reagan eventually reverted to arms control to escape the nuclear dilemma” (Ritchie, 2008: 16), finding in the new Soviet leader, Gorbachev, a receptive partner in leadership who shared a matching interest in easing bilateral tensions (Dobson & Marsh, 2006: 49). The 1986 U.S.-Soviet Reykjavik Summit would prove fundamental to achieving the INF Treaty, signed in 1987, and START I, signed in 1991 (Walker & Hunt, 2011: 64). The first, signed in 1987, led

to the destruction of all land-based missiles of intermediate and short range (U.S. DOS, 1987), while the second, signed in 1991 by Reagan's successor, led to a drastic reduction on the number of deployed nuclear warheads allowed by both sides (Ritchie, 2008: 20-21). Gorbachev redefined Moscow's relationship with Washington, challenging American threat perceptions and prevailing understandings concerning the role of U.S. nuclear deterrence and nuclear forces (Mehan, et al., 1990: 153). Reagan inclusively sought to obtain with Gorbachev and agreement pertaining to the elimination of all nuclear weapons. SDI was the deal breaker: Reagan could not agree with the Soviet requirement that the U.S. missile defense system remained confined to the "laboratory" (Walker & Hunt, 2011: 69).

During the presidency of George H. W. Bush, the international system stood "at the confluence between Cold War and 'New World Order'". The approach followed by the new U.S. administration toward the U.S.S.R. was the pursuit of a "wait-and-see" or "status quo plus" strategy, which entailed slowing down the Reagan-Gorbachev dynamic until the U.S. president was certain of the seriousness of Gorbachev's pledge to implement reforms (Dobson & Marsh, 2006: 50; 53). The START I was signed in July 1991, rewarding a tactic of delaying negotiations with the expectation that the weakness of the U.S.S.R. would only increase as time passed (Dumbrell, 1997: 146), and the CTR Act was signed on December, 1991, in order to offer former Soviet states assistance in regards to dismantlement of their WMDs, as well as preventing a brain drain of Soviet nuclear scientists and illicit transfers of technology (Stent, 2015: 9-10).

1.1.3. U.S.-Russian relations and American nuclear weapons policy in the post-Cold War period

While the conclusion of the conflict led many to speculate whether deterrence was still useful, Morgan posited in the early 2000's that by then it should be apparent that deterrence was not going anywhere. In the United States, it was deemed important to retain a large reserve force of (non-deployed) nuclear weapons (a so-called hedge) as an insurance in case Moscow reverted to a more antagonistic regime (Kristensen, 2001) and to not undertake reductions of the nuclear strategic stockpile just for the sake of reductions (Ritchie, 2008: 31). Modernization of the American nuclear program was deemed necessary by many members of Congress who saw with concern the Soviet nuclear force modernization program, in order to compensate for the reductions to the U.S. nuclear forces that would result from the implementation of the START I, and further stockpile reductions were deemed conditional on deployment of BMDs. U.S. nuclear weapons policy remained committed to strategic parity with the U.S.S.R./Russia (Ritchie, 2008: 24; 27).

Due to significant congressional pressure to cut defense spending and terminate the arms race at the end of the Cold War, in 1991 and 1992, "the United States unilaterally withdrew the majority of its forward-deployed tactical nuclear weapons and canceled or curtailed a number of nuclear programs".

This series of actions was named “Presidential Nuclear Initiatives” and was reciprocated by the U.S.S.R./Russia (Ritchie, 2008: 18-19). Quantitatively, American strategic nuclear warhead inventories, which had remained mostly stable since the mid-1960s, also started to diminish in the dying days of the Cold War (Kristensen et al., 2024).

The foreign policy of Bill Clinton, successor of George H. W. Bush, followed the strategic guidance of his predecessor (Sá, 2014: 27). Some “mainly symbolic gestures of partnership” were offered, such as accession to the G8 and some economic aid, but U.S. policymakers were unsure whether to be “more afraid of Russian weakness or Russian strength”. Thus, American policy towards Russia eventually “developed into something close to one of containment”: attempts were made to build up “Ukraine as a buffer” against Russia and to “roll-back” Moscow’s influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia, and NATO membership for the Baltic states was described as an inevitability (Lieven, 1999).

There were several challenges in Russo-American relations during the Clinton Administration. To begin with, the two countries had contrasting perspectives regarding the post-Soviet space, with the U.S. rejecting Russia’s perceived right to a sphere of influence (Stent, 2015: 18). In the Balkans, in spite of obtaining Russia’s collaboration, the disintegration of Yugoslavia constituted for the U.S. the greatest crisis in its relationship with Russia under Clinton, as only with great reluctance Yeltsin supported U.S. and NATO policies in the region. In fact, the two states neared physical confrontation in 1999 when Russian troops took control of the Pristina airport. The Kremlin resented the fact that NATO was acting without a UN mandate, and outside of its usual area of operations in a region of special interest for Russia (which saw itself as the protector of Orthodox Serbs). Russia was left wondering about where else would NATO intervene, especially now that the alliance seemed determined to expand: possibly other separatist regions, such as those in Russia? (Stent, 2015: 41-44; 160). According to Fenenko (2011), prospects of NATO enlargement and U.S. policy in the Balkans led to “a psychological crisis” in U.S.-Russian relations from the mid-1994 onwards, with the two countries starting to hold “opposing positions on most international issues.”

By 1997, the START process was doomed (Ritchie, 2008: 56), as Russian START II ratification was taken as a casualty of NATO enlargement (Goldgeier & McFaul, 2003: 293). Russia ratified the START II in 2000 but made it contingent on the U.S. continuing to uphold the ABM Treaty and the U.S. Senate signing a 1997 package of agreements that the Clinton Administration had agreed to. The package included agreed-upon statements on a successor to the ABM Treaty and demarcated the constraints to be adhered to by the U.S. in the realm of theater missile defense (Ritchie, 2008: 39; Pacer, 2016: 140; ACA, 2020). START II never entered into force, seeing as the U.S. Senate never ratified the 1997 package of agreements and the U.S. withdrew from the ABM Treaty in 2001 in order to develop and deploy missile defense systems (Ritchie, 2008: 78-79). In the eyes of Moscow officials, “the ABM Treaty was a fundamental cornerstone of the U.S.-Russian nuclear relationship”, and American abrogation of the treaty constituted a threat to Russia’s ability to deter the U.S. (Stent, 2015: 30). START II never entered into force, being superseded by the 2002 SORT (also known as Moscow Treaty), despite

the former containing several provisions not addressed by the latter (ACA, 2022a). Negotiations on a START III never began (Ritchie, 2008: 40).

The Republican-controlled Congress, which strongly supported missile defense system development and deployment to counter a potential attack coming from a rogue state, prevented the White House from pursuing nuclear disarmament below START I levels until START II came into force. That restriction was codified in section 1302 of the 1998 NDAA and remained in force until it was repealed by the 2002 NDAA, at the request of the George W. Bush Administration, despite the Democrats' attempts to remove it during the Clinton Presidency. The Republican majority in the Senate also voted down, in 1999, "the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which would ban all nuclear testing, for party political as well as genuine national security reasons" (CREC, 2001: 25976-25981; S. HRG. 107-355, 2001: 239; H.R. Rep. 107-333, 2001: 707; Ritchie, 2008: 2; 55-56).

The Republicans were able "to impose their own framework and preferences on nuclear policy that was often at odds with the administration", who had "brought in a number of experts from Washington's arms control community that had a more favourable outlook on the utility of arms control and non-proliferation initiatives" (Ritchie, 2008: 33). Thus, while "in the early 1990s the prospect of rapid progress towards very low levels of nuclear armaments seemed a realistic goal (...) in the late 1990s and early 2000s a series of events made it clear that American nuclear weapons policy was in transition with no easily discernible long-term sense of direction" (Ritchie, 2008: 2). Ritchie (2008: 55) also argued that "the rate of change in nuclear weapons policy slowed considerable under Clinton", with the administration remaining committed to nuclear parity with Russia, and to several other understandings of strategic stability reminiscent of the Cold War. Among them was the preservation of a large nuclear force (to be kept on high alert), a strategic nuclear triad intended to deter a nuclear first strike from Moscow, the capability to execute a swift and massive retaliatory strike, and a nuclear hedge to lower the risks of a hostile regime reemerging in the Kremlin.

Dobson and Marsh (2006: 156) posit that even some of the most moderate voices in the U.S. claimed that Russia should not be treated as a "partner", but as a "tough rival". Russian support for Iran's nuclear program constituted another source of friction but missile defense stood out as the most divisive issue (Stent, 2015: 29-30; 34).

Ritchie (2008: 55; 130) considered that the 1994 NPR, which codified the maintenance of the status quo in U.S. nuclear weapons policy "provides a compelling example of the absence of senior-level attention and how such absence can reinforce the views of an entrenched bureaucracy." Nonetheless, the author highlighted two departures from the previous administration in the nuclear weapons policy of the Clinton administration, namely: the greater emphasis on both non-proliferation, and in guaranteeing the sustainability of the American nuclear arsenal through the nuclear weapons complex by means of the Stockpile Stewardship Program, in light of the administration's commitment to a nuclear test moratorium, "extended and made permanent by signing the CTBT in 1996" (Ritchie, 2008: 55-56).

After the 11 September terrorist attacks against the U.S., Russian President Vladimir Putin offered “moral and material support for the antiterrorist campaign” (Stent, 2015: viii). In the aftermath of the attacks, the United States declared a global war on terror, which established “the single most ambitious reordering of American foreign policy objectives since the Second World War” (Boyle, 2008: 191) and, derived from it, “one of the most aggressively unilateral U.S. postures ever taken.” In the years that followed, the US believed itself to have “the right to attack and conquer sovereign countries that pose no observable threat, and to do so without international support” (Pape, 2005: 7). Defeating terrorism was the fundamental goal of U.S. power (Boyle, 2008: 191).

Writing in the dying days of the George W. Bush leadership, Ritchie explained that there had been consistent pressure for development or modification of nuclear weapons throughout the Cold War period, a trend which “was primarily a function of the shift in threat perception to WMD-armed ‘rogue’ states and was largely based on the argument that threatening a ‘rogue’ adversary with high-yield Cold War-era nuclear weapons lacked credibility” (Ritchie, 2008: 99). In the view of the H.R. RPC of the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, “nuclear weapons and deterrence remain as relevant today as they were at the height of the Cold War” (U.S. H.R. Policy Committee, 2003: 3).

In light of the American perceived vulnerability toward rogue states in a post-911 security environment, Ritchie (2008) identified several continuities and variances in U.S. nuclear weapons policies. Firstly, Ritchie argued that there was significant continuity regarding the previous administration, since: 1) the role of nuclear weapons, albeit with a different emphasis, echoed that of the late Clinton years; 2) modernization of nuclear forces continued; 3) nuclear forces remained at relatively high levels and on high alert; 4) Russia was still the main deciding factor on the size and posture of the American nuclear force, explaining U.S. commitment to its nuclear triad, and by means of being “a major responsive hedge force” (Ritchie, 2008: 94).

According to Ritchie (2008: 92), efforts to revitalize the U.S. nuclear weapons complex and the reconceptualization of “strategic stability” defined the nuclear weapons policy of the Bush administration. Regarding the first, despite great efforts by the Bush administration to modernize and consolidate the U.S. nuclear weapons complex and nuclear arsenal, success was lackluster. The plans of the administration for the nuclear weapons complex were “criticised by powerful members of Congress who insisted that the new approach did not constitute the detailed rethink of nuclear weapons policy demanded by Congress but an expensive and contentious programme to rebuild the nuclear arsenal based on existing doctrine” (Ritchie, 2008: 80).

Seeking to transcend a MAD-based strategic relationship with Russia and focus on defending against rogue states, the United States sought to deploy missile defense systems in the states of Alaska and California (doing so in 2004) and moved forward to do the same in Central Europe, despite Russian concerns (Gordon, 2001). While nuclear conflict contingencies were downgraded, “the administration remained committed to a modernised nuclear triad, retention of a nuclear hedge, and a prompt launch on warning counter-force operational posture” (Ritchie, 2008: 92).

Ritchie (2008: 93) explained that there was a “shift in thinking on strategic deterrence from deterrence by punishment applied to major powers and peer competitors and towards tailored deterrence by denial targeted at ‘rogue’ states”, who were now the main focus of U.S. nuclear weapons policy. Essentially, tailored deterrence represented the continuation of “a shift from a one-size-fits-all notion of deterrence toward more adaptable approaches suitable for advanced military competitors, regional WMD states, as well as nonstate terrorist networks, while assuring allies and dissuading potential competitors” (Bunn, 2017: 1).

While nuclear deterrence was still the main objective of American nuclear forces, its role in safeguarding global security was expanded. As a result, the 2001 NPR defined assurance, dissuasion⁶, and defeat as additional roles for American nuclear weapons (Trachtenberg, 2012: 63). Still, the administration sought to undergo cuts in the U.S. nuclear arsenal foreseen in the 1994 NPR and announced further reductions in 2006 and 2007.

The United States notified Russia of its decision to withdraw from the ABM Treaty on 13 December 2001, an action justified with concerns over rogue state and terrorist missile attacks (Bush, 2001a). The decision took effect 6 months later. On 24 May 2002, the U.S. and Russia signed the SORT, which committed the two countries to reduce their deployed strategic nuclear forces to 1,700-2,200 warheads each (ACA, 2022b).

The treaty was a concession from Bush to Putin and received criticism for not forcing either party to destroy nuclear warheads (Goldgeier & McFaul, 2003: 323) as well as for its minimalistic nature (Stent, 2015: 74). NATO enlargement remained a divisive issue, addressed with the establishment of the NATO-Russia Council in May 2002, a NATO effort to establish, with Russia, a special relationship (Goldgeier & McFaul, 2003: 323-324) and engage with the country more productively (Stent, 2015: 76).

According to Mankoff (2009: 18-19), despite Russian acceptance of American post-9/11 initiatives to fight Islamic terrorism, there were signs of harder times to come in U.S.-Russian relations as early as 2002. Between November 2002 and March 2003, the American government tried to gather the support of major European allies for the Iraq war, finding opposition from France and Germany which “assiduously courted Russia”, and with it formed the “coalition of the unwilling”, announcing opposition to UN-mandated use of force. The U.S. made no such efforts to obtain Moscow’s support, only contributing to Russian opposition (Stent, 2015: 89-91). While the U.S. believed to be “enhancing Russia security by eliminating the terrorist cells” in Russia’s ‘backyard’ and, therefore, acting in accordance with the interests of the Kremlin, Russia expected to obtain, in return for its cooperation, acknowledgment for its vital interests, such as its perceived right to a sphere of influence, the importance of bilateral engagement on arms control, and a seat at the table of the “international entourage that decides everything”. It also hoped that the U.S. would “equate Chechen fighters with other Islamic

⁶ The concept of “dissuasion” can be used when the goal is to discourage another party from competing in capability acquisition.

terrorists (Stent, 2015: 69-71). According to Stent (2014: 82; 93-94), from Russia's point of view there was little to be gained from supporting the American war effort in Iraq. This calculation was grounded on Russia's "continuing resentment about U.S. disregard for Russia, which had begun under Yeltsin, but erupted in the wake of the Iraq war": Russia opposed the use of force to create regime change and insisted that military interventions required UN sanction.

By the fall of 2003, U.S.-Russia relations appeared to have returned to their pre-Iraq war status, the fragility of their partnership having become clear. Bilateral relations would soon face additional challenges, however. Washington's implementation of the "Freedom Agenda" – George W. Bush's pledge to strengthen democracy and promote peace worldwide – heightened tensions with Russia, as the U.S. supported democratic movements in the post-Soviet space, an action which clashed with the Kremlin's interests (The White House, n.d.a; Stent, 2015: 82-83; 96).

On missile defense, disagreement prevailed: in July 2007, the U.S. began to formally discuss with the Czech Republic and Poland the deployment of radars and interceptors, respectively, in addition to publicize agreements with Romania and Bulgaria for the establishment of military bases in their territories. According to Stent, "the political symbolism" of those deployments "undoubtedly influenced the combative Putin narrative on display at [the 2007 Security Conference of] Munich" (Stent, 2015: 154), in which he criticized U.S.' "almost uncontained hyper use of force – military force – in international relations" (Putin, 2007). Putin later issued nuclear threats at the European states harboring missile defense systems, following continuing progress on their deployment (Blomfield & Holt, 2007).

The downward trend of US-Russian ties continued in 2008 (Stent, 2015: 176). In February, Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence, and American recognition of the new state's right to self-determination, along with 22 EU member states, received much criticism from Russia. From the perspective of the Bush Administration, "Russia's obstructionist position on Kosovo was (...) part of a larger problem", since most of the White House's objectives in Europe kept getting blocked by the Kremlin (Stent, 2015: 161-162). As NATO declared that Georgia and Ukraine would become members of NATO eventually, a diplomatic crisis between Russia and Georgia ensued, spiraling into warfare between the two parties by August 7 (Stent, 2015: 169). Resolutely, Bush decided not to risk escalation of the Russo-Georgian war "into a U.S.-Russian confrontation and a new cold war" (Asmus, 2010: 190).

Barack Obama's ascension to the presidency of the United States brought "a genuinely significant shift in American grand strategy" (Kitchen, 2013: 71-72). The War on Terror as a strategic concept for the United States was abandoned; instead, the new American president vowed to make diplomacy, multilateralism, and international law central features of U.S. foreign policy (Lindsay, 2011: 772; Kitchen, 2013: 72).

Obama also reconsidered the role of the United States in the international stage, deciding that the country should not be the single provider of "security and other hegemonic global public goods", but instead transfer certain responsibilities to its partners and allies while overseeing their duties (Kitchen, 2013: 71-72). In Obama's perspective, in an era when globalization is "the key driver in international

politics (...) even a strong America (...) cannot go it alone” (Kitchen, 2013: 72). According to Unger, “it was the first rethinking of the global role the United States had assigned itself during the Cold War” (Unger, 2016: 1).

With U.S.-Russian relations reaching their lowest point since the end of the Cold War after the Russo-Georgian war, the new American president, Barack Obama, decided that the U.S. would once again take the initiative in resetting the relationship (Stent, 2015: 176; 212). With Russia becoming a priority to the Obama administration, the relationship between the two states improved (Stent, 2015: 212). According to Stent (2014: 217-218), “at the heart of the reset was prudent expectations management”, an approach that “resembled that of George H. W. Bush more than that of either Clinton or George W. Bush”, and engagement was established “on the basis of interest-based pragmatism”, particularly regarding democracy promotion and the post-Soviet states.

On April 5, 2009, Obama delivered an historic speech in Prague, in which he emphasized America’s commitment to a world without nuclear weapons. The pursuit of his Prague nuclear agenda entailed expanded cooperation with Russia and the establishment of “new partnerships to lock down these sensitive materials”, and the president announced the start of negotiations for a new arms control deal with Russian President Medvedev that very year (“Remarks by President,” 2009). In July 2009, Obama vowed to review the previous administration’s plans on missile defense (Stent, 2015: 226) and, the following September, the U.S. president announced that the program would indeed be modified. The United States would no longer seek to deploy a radar station and ground-based missile interceptors in the Czech Republic and Poland, respectively (Stent, 2015: 226; “The European phased,” 2019; “Obama abandons missile,” 2009). Effective cancelation would occur in March 2013 (“U.S. Cancels Part,” 2013).

In April 2010, once again in Prague, the two states signed the New START, “the biggest nuclear arms pact in a generation” (Stent, 2015: 223), which limited the two states to “significantly fewer strategic arms” (Lee, 2011) and was arguably the greatest achievement of the Obama reset (Stent, 2015: 223). Tied to said arms controls negotiations were efforts of the Obama administration to strengthen nuclear security, as protection and safeguard of nuclear materials were expected to prevent nuclear terrorism (Stent, 2015: 224).

Still, the issue of missile defense, that Russia failed to link to the New START (Stent, 2015: 224), remained unresolved and, in November 2011, Medvedev declared “that the yearlong negotiations on cooperative missile defense were over”, with Russia being unable “to secure written guarantees that the system would not be used against Russia.” He also threatened to deploy Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad, to withdraw his country from the New START, and to terminate cooperation on Afghanistan with the United States (Stent, 2015: 228). According to Weitz (2010: 104), Putin “saw the European deployments as but one component of a larger American effort to negate Russia’s nuclear deterrent and thereby reinforce Washington’s dominant position, based on US conventional military

superiority, in world security affairs.” By November 2012, when Vladimir Putin returned to the Russian presidency, the “reset had already run its course” (Stent, 2015: 250).

According to Stent (2014: 224-225), even though the United States was willing to consider post-New Start reductions, Russia was more hesitant to do so, due to concerns with the weakness of its conventional forces (that nuclear weapons were able to counterbalance), with China, and with American missile defense plans. Additionally, Russia valued nuclear weapons as a mark of a great power. George W. Bush’s timid efforts on arms control were replaced by a firm, successful commitment of his successor, even if the DoD’s “planning remained mired in outdated Cold War nuclear strategies that emphasized first-strike capabilities”.

On Iran’s nuclear program, a source of tensions in U.S.-Russian relations dating back to the Clinton administration (Stent, 2015: 30), Russia’s position remained ambivalent, with the country remaining reluctant to distance itself from his Middle Eastern partner (Stent, 2015: 233). Still, Russia cooperated with the remaining permanent members of the UN Security Council, Germany, and Iran, on an interim agreement imposing constraints on the latter’s nuclear program in return for sanction relief. The treaty was signed in November 2013 (“Iran seals nuclear,” 2013), with the final agreement, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (also known as the Iran nuclear deal), being signed in July, 2015, after a deadlock lasting 12 years (“Iran nuclear talks,” 2015).

In November 2013, the Russian-leaning government of Kyiv was overthrown following massive mobilization of the Ukrainian people and, in response the Crimea peninsula was annexed by Russia, which also started to support rebel movements in Eastern Ukraine (Legvold, 2014). Moreover, Russian efforts at tampering with the American 2016 elections put once again the two countries at odds, leading Washington to issue Moscow new sanctions (“Obama Strikes back,” 2016).

Thus, according to Unger (2016: 3; 6-7; 11-12), “despite Obama’s professed desire to pivot US attention and resources elsewhere, especially toward the Asia-Pacific region, for most of his eight years in office US foreign policy has been caught up in managing one Middle East crisis after another.” The United States showed to be either “unwilling or unable to shed its old ambitions of regional hegemony in every region” and, as a result, by the end of Obama’s second term, “American troops [were] again fighting in Iraq, Afghanistan, and (...) Syria, with Washington also conducting limited military operations in Libya, Yemen and perhaps elsewhere in the Middle East North Africa region.”

By the time Donald Trump succeeded Obama, political analysts were describing the strategic environment as once of great power competition. According to Payne (2018), the 2018 NPR “culminates a decades-long road to the elevation of tailoring deterrence to a fundamental principle of US policy”. As the author explains, “US flexibility to tailor deterrence and to “hedge” against uncertainty and risk is so critical for US and allied security” because, unlike during the Cold War, where “the number of deterrence variables was limited because the US focus was largely on a single threatening superpower”, in the current strategic environment, there is wider range of “potential adversaries with highly-lethal capabilities (...) considerable variation in their character; conflict scenarios range from the relatively

familiar to the largely unfamiliar; and the stakes at risk differ widely and can shift unpredictably.” Therefore, the United States must be ready to deter great powers, rogue states, terrorist groups, and future enemies which have yet to emerge.

Analysts such as Tannenwald (2018) have denounced an ongoing arms race between the United States and Russia. However, as Rumer (2018: 9) notes, the arms race that we arguably currently witness is not a pursuit of quantity, but of quality (Rumer, 2018: 9). Quantitative arms races are, to a degree, constrained by arms control agreement celebrated by the two countries, and neither side has much incentive to increase their levels of deployed strategic weapons because they maintain thousands of warheads in their reserves (Podvig, 2018: 261).

Still, qualitative edges, repeatedly pursued in the United States throughout the Cold War, continued, to some extent, after the end of the conflict. The difference between Trump and his predecessors appears to be, therefore, one of scale. According to Tannenwald (2018), “the United States is now pursuing the most belligerent arms buildup since the end of the Cold War”, with Trump having “ushered in a frightening new world of nuclear excess.”

During his annual State of the Union address in March 2018, Putin unveiled a new array of nuclear-capable strategic weapons, each “designed to strike targets in the United States and add to Russia’s strategic deterrent capabilities” (Panda, 2018). The Russian President highlighted a new ICBM; drone submarines; and hypersonic missiles, capable of flying at superfast speeds that make missile defense systems “useless” (Jamieson, 2018). A month prior, with the U.S. falling behind on hypersonics (Mehta, 2018), and with the Pentagon leadership increasingly concerned with the threat posed by the technology, the U.S. MDA requested 700 million dollars for hypersonic missile defense (Cebul, 2018). The MDA is a research, development and acquisition agency that is a unit of the DOD. It is tasked with developing, testing and deploying an integrated system of missile defense (Missile Defense Agency, n.d.).

In February 2019, the United States and Russia announced their withdrawal from the INF Treaty, following mutual accusations of treaty violations. The U.S. statement was made on 2 February, with Russia following suit the next day. The withdrawal became effective six months later, with the U.S. denouncing Russia’s deployment of the 9M729 or SSC-8 (as NATO called it) ground-launched, intermediate-range cruise missile (“Fears of new arms race,” 2019; Pompeo, 2019a).

Less than a month after leaving the treaty, the U.S. tested a modified ground-launched version of a Tomahawk cruise missile, which struck a target more than 500km away, a distance that would have been categorized as intermediate-range under the INF Treaty, and thus previously illegal. In response, Russia declared that it would reciprocate in kind (The Associated Press, 2019a).

While American alliances became feebler during the Trump presidency – with allies being perceived as mere free riders – the U.S. had to concurrently contend with “a rising China and a declining Russia frighten[ing] their neighbours”. Thus, U.S. security guarantees in Asia and Europe continue to be critical in providing ally reassurance and in maintaining “the stability that underlies [American] prosperity” (Nye, 2019: 68, 79).

With the 2018 NPR describing an uncertain environment of great power competition where the U.S. was lagging behind its adversaries, it was determined that the country's guiding principle to deterrence in Europe would be "peace through strength." The U.S. needed to challenge perceived Russian aggression head-on, including its supposed willingness to launch a limited nuclear first-strike. Thus, the Trump Administration believed that the U.S. should expand its nuclear options and enhance the flexibility and diversity of the country's nuclear forces. The role of nuclear deterrence was expanded to include vaguely defined "non-nuclear strategic attacks" as the U.S. signaled willingness to carry out limited nuclear retaliatory strikes (McCracken & Downman, 2019: 277). For that purpose, the document proposed the development of new low-yield nuclear capabilities, with the U.S. Congress approving, in December 2019, the requested funds for deploying a new submarine-launched low-yield nuclear warhead. The streak of over two decades without American deployment of new nuclear capabilities was broken (Reif, 2020a; U.S. DOD: 2018: V, XI-XII). The low-yield nuclear warhead was deployed in February 2020 (Mehta, 2020a). In the same month, the Trump administration unveiled its 2021 budget request, featuring a substantial increase in funding to sustain and upgrade the U.S. nuclear forces (Mehta, 2020b; Reif, 2020b), but reductions almost everywhere else (Korb, 2020). Congress approved the vast majority of the funds requested for such activities. There were plans to produce two new nuclear warheads, with research and development funding requested for one, which the legislature fully granted (Rodgers et al, 2020; Reif & Bugos, 2021b).

In May 2020, the Trump Administration announced that the U.S. would withdraw from the Open Skies Treaty (U.S. DOD, 2020a). The accord had "[established] a regime of unarmed aerial observation flights over the entire territory of its 25 signatories," including the U.S. and Russia. Washington and its allies used such flights to track infrastructure satellites struggled to photograph, including Russia's Novaya Zemlya nuclear test site and the country's rail lines, which could be used to move nuclear warheads (U.S. DOS, 1992). The Administration also considered resuming nuclear testing, despite Administration officials having suggested that testing was not necessary nor planned, and no funds having been provided by Congress for that endeavor (Rodgers et al, 2020; Reif & Bugos, 2021b).

With the New START nearing its 5 February 2021 expiration date, Russia offered to extend it for an additional five years, an option contemplated in the text of the accord. However, no deal was reached between the two countries during the Trump Administration (Reif & Bugos, 2021c). The Biden Administration agreed to extend the New START for an additional five years, ensuring verifiable limits on Russian (and U.S.) nuclear forces until 5 February 2026 (Blinken, 2021).

On 31 January 2023, the U.S. announced that Russia was in violation of the New START by refusing inspections, failure to provide treaty-mandated notifications (e.g., regarding the movement and status of nuclear forces), and refusal to meet within the accord's implementation body (Wong, 2023; U.S. DOS, 2023). The claim was issued against the backdrop of Russia's 24 February 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine in the context of which Moscow has made repeated nuclear threats (Wong, 2023;

Sukin, 2023). Sukin (2023) argued that such threats are aimed primarily at preventing NATO from carrying out new actions that the Kremlin would deem intolerable.

On 21 February 2023, Putin announced that Moscow would suspend its participation in the New START until the U.S. cut off its support for Ukraine amid the war that followed Russia's 2022 invasion of the country. Additionally, France and the U.K. ought to be brought into arms control negotiations (Bugos, 2023a). With the sole accord limiting Washington and Moscow's strategic nuclear forces suspended set to expire at a time of rising geopolitical tensions and an emerging hypersonic arms race, arms control – one of the few proven means to reduce the risk of nuclear use – faces an uncertain future (Tracy, 2021; Williams, 2023; Wong, 2023; Adamopoulos, 2024).

1.2. Russian foreign policy, relations with the United States, and the role of nuclear weapons

1.2.1. From turmoil to a renewed global standing

The 1990s under Boris Yeltsin marked a period of economic hardship, political instability, and perceived international humiliation for Russia (Stent, 2015: 257). Efforts to suppress Chechnya's secession in 1994 resulted in protracted conflict and growing Islamic radicalism in the region. By the time Vladimir Putin became prime minister in 1999, terrorist attacks like the apartment bombings in Russia had put terrorism at the forefront of the national agenda (Baev, 2018: 14). Putin's decisive response, including launching the second Chechen War, boosted his popularity and paved the way to his victory in the 2000 Russian presidential elections (Evangelista, 2003: 4; Borshchevskaya, 2013: 76).

Putin sought to address the failures of the Yeltsin years by strengthening Russia's economy and consolidating political power, enabling more coherent foreign and economic policies. Economic improvements reduced dependence on Western nations and enhanced Russia's strategic autonomy (Oldberg, 2010: 30; Charap, 2007: 335; 345-346). Putin initially aimed to improve relations with the U.S., supporting the 2001 war in Afghanistan and cooperating against terrorism, though Russian-U.S. relations remained marked by underlying tensions. U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty in 2002 and NATO expansion in Eastern Europe strained relations, despite cooperation on issues pertaining to the U.S. counterterrorist campaign and the signing of the Moscow Treaty (Stent, 2015: 30, 52, 64, 67-69, 73, 78; Pacer, 2016: 140).

By the early 2000s, Russia's optimism for integration with the West had waned, particularly after the 2003 Iraq War, which Moscow opposed due to its commitment to sovereignty and nonintervention, concerns over regional instability, and absence of a U.S. mandate (Stent, 2015: 84, 91; Mankoff, 2009: 19). Increasing U.S. support for democracy promotion and NATO expansion in the post-Soviet space was viewed as a direct challenge to Russian influence (Levitsky & Way, 2010: 17-18; Bush, 2010: 430).

By 2004, Putin's administration shifted from Western alignment toward creating its own Moscow-centered system of influence, responding to geopolitical challenges such as democratic movements in neighboring states (Mankoff, 2009: 19).

1.2.2. Geopolitical Struggles: Color Revolutions, the Russo-Georgian War, the Arab Spring, and a failed “reset”

The Color Revolutions in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Kyrgyzstan (2005) marked a turning point in Russia's perception of Western influence in its neighborhood. Moscow viewed these uprisings, driven by democratic ideals and supported by Western NGOs, as direct threats to its influence and potential precursors to regime change within Russia itself (Stent, 2015: 117; Saari, 2014: 50). These events, particularly in Georgia and Ukraine, heightened Russia's use of public diplomacy to counter Western narratives and bolster its soft power in post-Soviet states. However, critics argue that Russian efforts relied more on manipulation and coercion than attraction, limiting their effectiveness (Avgerinos, 2009: 118; Rawnsley, 2015: 283; Saari, 2014: 50-59, 62).

The 2008 Russo-Georgian War underscored tensions between Russia and the West, which had been exacerbated by the contentious NATO Bucharest Summit earlier that year. At the summit, NATO declared that Georgia and Ukraine would eventually become members, a statement that Russia vehemently opposed as a direct challenge to its sphere of influence. Triggered by Georgia's attack on South Ossetia, the conflict revealed Russia's willingness to use military force to assert dominance in its neighborhood and challenge NATO's expansion plans. While the war highlighted Russia's military shortcomings, it also demonstrated Moscow's capacity to thwart Western-backed initiatives in the region (Mankoff, 2009: 164; Stent, 2015: 163-168, 172; Pallin & Westerlund, 2009: 400). Following the conflict, U.S.-Russian ties were brought to a new low (Stent, 2015: viii).

The election of Barack Obama in 2008 brought a brief “reset” in U.S.-Russia relations, emphasizing strategic arms control and pragmatic cooperation (Stent, 2015: 212, 218, 221; Lo, 2019: 1-4). This led to the 2010 New START treaty, which reduced nuclear arsenals and bolstered Russia's status as a global power (Stent, 2015: 224). However, disagreements over NATO's missile defense plans in Europe and Moscow's resistance to Western military interventions in Libya and Syria revealed enduring rifts. Russia's protection of its Syrian ally, seen as a red line against Western regime-change policies, underscored its determination to maintain influence in the Middle East and resist U.S. hegemony (Aksenyonok, 2019; Dannreuther, 2015: 82-84; Pacer, 2016: 137, 142; Suslov, 2016: 554; Osborn, 2011). Vladimir Putin's return to the Russian presidency in May 2012 (following a 4-year interlude) “reinforced the challenges of achieving a more full-fledged partnership.” Despite limited successes, by the time of the November 2012 U.S. election, the reset “had already run its course” (Stent, 2015: 250-251; 259).

1.2.3. Geopolitical maneuvers: annexation, intervention, and invasion

The 2013 Ukrainian crisis marked a turning point in relations between Moscow and the West, with pro-European protests ousting President Viktor Yanukovich, followed by Russia's annexation of Crimea and its covert support for separatists in Eastern Ukraine. Western nations condemned these actions, imposing sanctions on Russia beginning in 2014. Efforts to de-escalate through the Minsk Protocols (2014–2015) achieved only temporary reductions in hostilities, as sporadic fighting continued to claim lives (Legvold, 2014; Donaldson & Nadkarni, 2019: 438–439; “Ukraine Crisis,” 2014; U.S. DOS, n.d.e). Meanwhile, Russia’s intervention in Syria began in September 2015, ostensibly targeting ISIL but largely supporting the Assad regime by striking Western-backed opposition groups. This military campaign helped Assad regain critical territory, thwarting U.S. efforts to remove him from power. Although both countries maintained a "deconfliction line" to improve communication avoid direct clashes, tensions over Russia's role in Syria further strained U.S.-Russia relations (Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2020; Security Council Report, 2015; Stubbs, 2015; Yacoubian, 2021; Yacoubian, 2021; Gambrell, 2017; Mohammed & Murphy, 2015).

The crises in Ukraine and Syria symbolized Russia's bid to reassert itself as a global power and challenge Western influence. Despite limited cooperation on the Iran nuclear deal, reached in 2015, relations deteriorated further with disagreements over NATO missile defense systems and allegations of Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, leading to an escalation of sanctions. By 2020, U.S.-Russia relations had reached their lowest point since the Cold War, with Moscow advocating for a multipolar world order that diminished U.S. dominance while leveraging military, economic and information tools to bolster its global standing (Putin, 2015; Stent, 2015: 251, 2020; Tsygankov, 2019; Stronski & Sokolsky, 2017: 1; Špalková, 2019: 11; Sanger, 2016).

In February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, prompting significant Western military, economic, and humanitarian support for Kyiv. The invasion marked a significant escalation in Moscow’s confrontation with the West, as the U.S. and NATO allies expanded sanctions on Russia and reinforced their strategic commitment to counter Russia’s geopolitical ambitions (Masters, 2023; Masters & Merrow, 2024). Despite high costs, Moscow has persisted in its efforts to reshape the global balance of power in its favor.

Theoretical framework

2.1. Theories in Social Science

According to Hook (2017: 130),

Theories are useful in identifying the causes of foreign policy behavior in order to anticipate, explain, and possibly influence government action. As we will find, theories make very different claims regarding the international system, the role of states and societies within that system, and the capacity of human beings—the vital but often “irrational” policy makers—to formulate and conduct coherent foreign policies

According to Smith (2013: 2-3), “[t]heories offer accounts of why things happened, and the fact that they offer a wide range of reasons for action reflects the fact that they have very different assumptions.” They are important because we cannot trust political actors to tell the truth when asked why and how they act, or what they think will happen in the future. Additionally, even if they were to answer truthfully, people cannot always understand exactly why they act the way they do. Therefore, “in the social world it is not enough imply to base our accounts of individuals solely on the reasons they give for their actions.” By using theories, however, we can make assumptions about the way actors behave, “and the extent to which they are either being truthful about their reasons or fully aware of the context within which they are acting.”

As Walt explains (1998: 29),

there is an inescapable link between the abstract world of theory and the real world of policy.

We need theories to make sense of the blizzard of information that bombards us daily. Even policymakers who are contemptuous of “theory” must rely on their own (often unstated) ideas about how the world works in order to decide what to do. It is hard to make good policy if one’s basic organizing principles are flawed, just as it is hard to construct good theories without knowing a lot about the real world. Everyone uses theories—whether he or she knows it or not—and disagreements about policy usually rest on more fundamental disagreements about the basic forces that shape international outcomes

Since the 1980's, the number of theories used in IR increased to a great extent and, as a result, we are now able to reflect about more features of international politics than before, as well as question the ways in which we reflect about the world (Smith, 2013: 5; 7). Walt (1998: 30) also welcomed encouraged this diversity competing ideas over a sole theoretical orthodoxy, stating that “[n]o single approach can capture all the complexity of contemporary world politics.”

According to Smith (2013: 11), “the first criterion involved in making a choice between theories has to be the issues you wish to explain.” He warns, however, that “deciding which theory is of most help in explaining international relations might in fact be a very political act, because which theory [we] see as being the most useful will depend on what [we] want to explain, and this, in turn, will depend on [our] values and beliefs about what international relations is all about.” Choosing a theory is never a neutral act, because “[t]heory is always socially located, always has an unavoidable relationship to power, and can never be defended by resort to one foundational account of what is ‘truth’” (Smith, 2003: 5; 12). Essentially, we must be aware of our own subjectivity as researchers.

Choosing a theory on the basis one's research subject entails making an ontological commitment: to consider the composition of the world and the parts of it that we want to study (what needs explaining) (Smith, 2013: 9). To study any subject domain in the social sciences, entails the adherence to certain “commitments embedded within positions on the philosophy of social science.” Thus, in addition to ontological commitments, we must also make epistemological and methodological commitments. Adopting an epistemological position entails making assumptions regarding “how (...) we come to have knowledge of the world”; essentially; to reject or accept certain knowledge claims based on what we believe counts as an explanation. Finally, methodological commitments regard the methods of study used to obtain evidence and data. In a nutshell, these assumptions “have consequences for the kind of world we come to see, for how we account for processes within it, and for how we act in that world” (Kurki & Wight, 2013: 14-15; 32-33).

Going back to our ontological commitment of studying how threat perceptions of Russia explain variances in U.S. nuclear deterrence policies, we retrieve these words by Schmidt (2012: 5): “there are so many different factors at play that it is often difficult to determine the underlying reason for a given policy.” Since there is no over-arching explanatory theory of U.S. foreign policy, the theoretical framework of any social science research on that subject is representative of an analyst's choice, who picks among “a number of competing theories that focus on different levels of analysis to account for the [foreign policy] behaviour of the United States.” As explained, since theories result from specific world-views or paradigms through which scholars and policy-makers alike approach the world, they can instruct us on what is relevant, and what can be ignored, as we attempt to provide explanations for foreign policy, based on our ontological choices (what we want to explain).

Drawing from Rosenau (1971: 108), Schmidt (2012: 6) raised five potential independent variables⁷ that help explain U.S. foreign policy, which serves as the dependent variable. The five variables are the International System, the societal environment, the personalities of individuals, the governmental structure, and the bureaucratic roles. The International System explains the foreign policy of the United States in the sense that the country responds to (some) of the events that take place around the world and to the “underlying distribution of power in the international system.” Other researchers highlight, instead, domestic explanations for foreign policy behavior (the remaining four variables). As Schmidt posited, “[t]he national character and value orientation of a country cannot be discounted as many believe that foreign policy should seek to promote the core values and ideology of the domestic political system” (Schmidt, 2012: 6). The influence of societal sources of influence in American foreign policy has been viewed as particularly powerful, as demonstrated by the U.S. liberal, democratic qualities and by its aspirations to spread them worldwide (Smith, 1995: xiii, 13; Schmidt, 2012: 6-7).

Another source of influence can be found in the American governmental structure, with the country’s Constitution, for instance, mandating the separation and division of the powers of the Executive and Legislative branches of government, which results in a wide variety of actors playing a role in formulating foreign policy. And those actors’ positions on foreign policy issues are influenced by the needs and interests of the agency for which they work, as a result of processes of socialization whereby “the characteristics of the bureaucracy [become] more important than the characteristics and personality of the individuals” (a bureaucratic source of influence). Still, we must take into account that the personal traits of the individuals composing the American political elite (e.g. their life experiences, convictions, etc.) can still greatly shape the direction of U.S. foreign policy, particularly when it comes to the President (individual source of influence). Different theories will emphasize different factors to explain U.S. foreign policy (Schmidt, 2010: 7).

In this thesis, we will focus on “the social processes that lead to foreign policy”; factors in which constructivists are especially interested (Schmidt, 2012: 13). However, while “identities and interests are *in fact* largely exogenous to interaction among states” (Wendt, 1992a: 423) and Rosenau saw societal factors as part of the domestic environment of a nation, he also claimed that his five variables could explain foreign policy in combination (Rosenau, 1971: 108-116, 300; Schmidt, 2012: 6). Additionally, Wendt (1992a: 423) noted that “state identities and interests can change as a result of systemic interaction”; something which, we argue, in light of the long history of conflict between the United States and U.S.S.R., it is likely to have happen in the former country as a result of interactions with the latter. But more importantly, because of the enduring tensions between the United States and Russia in the post-Cold War period, we argue that such systemic interactions continue today shaping U.S. identity

⁷ In identifying the various sources of U.S. foreign policy, Rosenau does not specify how they directly shape foreign policy behavior, nor their relative influence (Schmidt, 2012: 7).

and interests through American perceptions of Russia as a threat, albeit differently than during the Cold War.

Campbell (1992: 245; 251) posed the question of what “role difference, danger, and otherness play in constituting the identity of the United States as a major actor in world politics”, concluding that “the specification of difference, and the figuration of otherness, has been especially acute for America.” This observation is important to us because “othering” is “a hallmark of securitization” (Manjikian, 2013: 166): “[s]ecuritizations generally include radical forms of identity representations in terms of a threatening ‘other’. These discursive constructions constitute an antagonism between ‘us’ and ‘them’” (Köhler, 2019: 10). This view fits with constructivists’ understanding that “identity is never self-referential, but rather is always relational and emerges by differentiating oneself from others”; thus, U.S. identity “is, in part, a function of both its domestic self-image and foreign policy” (Schmidt, 2012: 13).

Having made an ontological commitment to study American nuclear deterrence, a subject matter in the realm of international security whose relevance today we have already established, we saw securitization theory as a promising approach for our research, given that securitization can be understood as a social process whose outputs are foreign (security) policies. However, As Balzacq (2010: 56) notes, while securitization is portrayed at times as “constructivist all the way down” (Buzan & Wæver, 1997: 243), Wæver (1995), for instance contends that it is “radically constructivist.” Multiple theories of securitization can be identified, each characterized by distinct ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies (Balzacq, 2014: 8). Therefore, since “constructivist approaches vary widely in their nature”, we must “think carefully about the kind of constructivism present in securitization” (Balzacq, 2010: 56). That entails, for starters, researching the different takes on Constructivism and, subsequently, articulating its insights as they relate to securitization theory. By doing that, we can ascertain which epistemological commitments better fit our research goals. Finally, having established ontological and epistemological commitments, we are able to develop a compatible methodological strategy to pursue them – our methodological commitments (the securitization theory framework and political discourse analysis).

Subsequently in this chapter, we delve into deterrence theory. We do not use deterrence theory as a theoretical approach in our thesis, but expect several of the concepts and understandings it originated to be a part of the policy discourse of deterrence, i.e., a part of the deliberative process of securitization. While deterrence theory has been thoroughly criticized⁸ for its logical flaws and contradictory and hypocritical ideas, it “continues to play a role in post-Cold War era international politics” (Payne, 2012) and continues to be “a key conceptual tool in strategic studies” (Szalai, 2014: 3). Therefore, we must attain a very good grasp of the fundamental principles of deterrence theory.

⁸ In the words of General George Lee Butler, who as commander of STRATCOM (1992-1994) was in charge of all American nuclear weapons, deterrence theory is “a slippery intellectual construct that translates very poorly into the real world of spontaneous crises, inexplicable motivations, incomplete intelligence and fragile human relationships” (Krieger, 2011).

2.2. Constructivism

Firstly, it must be noted that “there is no agreed definition of constructivism” (Zehfuss, 2004: 10). Still, Zehfuss (2004: 10) notes that the takes on Constructivism of three of its most influential authors in Alexander Wendt, Friedrich Kratochwil, and Nicholas Onuf “agree on the assumption of limited construction. That is, when their constructivist analysis starts, some reality has already been made and is taken as given.” Thus, there is an *a priori* reality. Zehfuss (2004: 252) also argues that certain scholars, when defining Constructivism, “make reference to recognizing the material world as existing independently of, but interacting with, the social world, the central role of intersubjectivity and the significance of occupying a middle-ground position.” Balzacq (2010: 58) finds another common ground between constructivists, stating that they are “united in an opposition to empiricism⁹ – meaning that experience is the final test for our knowledge claims – and behaviorism¹⁰ – meaning that the rationale that underpins actors' explanation of their behavior is of no relevance.” Fierke (2013: 188) highlights how constructivists in general “have shared a critique of the static material assumptions of traditional IR theory”, emphasizing instead “the social dimensions of international relations and the possibility of change” – even if their approaches are different. Walt (1998: 41) considers that the various strands of Constructivism have as a common theme “the capacity of discourse to shape how political actors define themselves and their interests, and thus modify their behavior.” Wendt (1999: 1) claims that students of international politics have increasingly acknowledged that Constructivism has two basic tenets: “(1) that the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and (2) that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature.”

While we cannot delineate a definitive constructivist position, we can still pinpoint it to some extent (Guzzini (2000: 147-149; Zehfuss, 2004: 4). We will examine key characteristics of Constructivism as articulated by prominent theorists, while adhering to the distinction between conventional and critical strands, as influentially outlined by Hopf¹¹ (1998: 171). This distinction reflects the differing

⁹ As Kurki and Wight (2013: 22) explain, “the empiricist approach to the acquisition of knowledge is premised on the belief that the only genuine knowledge we can have of the world is based on those ‘facts’ that can be experienced by the human senses.” The implication of this empiricist epistemology for science is that scientific knowledge is secure only when based on empirical validation. This is why positivists privilege observation, empirical data, and measurement; what cannot be an object of experience cannot be scientifically validated.”

¹⁰ According to Dunne, Kurki and Smith (2013: 351), behaviorism (or behaviorism) is “a school of thought that, drawing on empiricist theory of knowledge and positivist philosophy of science, seeks to study human behaviour in reference to observable and measurable behavioural patterns.”

¹¹ According to Balzacq (2010: 56) some theorists consider “the boundaries of constructivism as so permeable that any alternative view - realism, postmodernism or liberalism - can easily be subsumed under its fundamental precepts.” For others, Constructivism is solely reserved to describe the approach of Alexander Wendt (Zehfuss, 2004: 7). Some argue that Constructivism should encompass post-structuralist approaches (Price & Reus-Smit, 1998: 269), while others emphasize the need to distinguish the constructivist and post-structuralist camps (Adler,

epistemological commitments associated with each strand. Before determining which epistemological commitments best align with our research questions (and, as a result of that choice, our compatible methodological commitments) we first examine Hopf's divide to determine which strand informs our approach to securitization.

The first author to introduce Constructivism into the theoretical debates of IR was Nicholas Onuf through his book *World of Our Making* (1989) (Weber, 2010: 81). Following the publication of Onuf's (1989) work, the concept of Constructivism was popularized by Alexander Wendt (Wæver, 2005: 4), ushering in what Balzacq (2010: 57) described as the third wave of constructivist works in the discipline. Still, the previous two waves had already "spawned a great deal of IR theory", as Balzacq (2010: 57) stressed. Notable examples include research on images, perceptions and misperceptions, present in the works of Haas (1958), or Jervis (1970, 1976) – the first wave of constructivist works –, and later post-positivist¹² studies such as those of Ashley (1984), Walker (1987), or Der Derian & Shapiro (1989) – the second wave (Balzacq, 2010: 57). Thus, ever since Onuf first introduced the concept of Constructivism to the discipline of IR (Zehfuss, 2004: 10), not only has the approach been adopted and adapted by many scholars in ways which the author did not foresee (Onuf, 1999 as cited in Weber, 2010: 81), but even one of the most influential neorealists theorists in Walt (1998: 42-43) recognized Constructivism as an important part of the conceptual toolkit of policy-makers and academics in IR (Weber, 2010: 81). There is also an ongoing discussion on whether Constructivism is a "proper" IR theory, a method or meta-theory for empirical research, or a relevant approach at numerous levels (Zehfuss, 2004: 8). In that regard, we consider Constructivism to be an IR approach, understanding that theory development remains a challenge for constructivists who, having established the importance of social construction,

must now address when, how, and why it occurs, clearly specifying the actors and mechanisms bringing about change, the scope conditions under which they operate, and how they vary across countries. To accomplish this task, constructivists must integrate their insights and assumptions with middle-range theory. Otherwise, the empirical *ad hocism* that plagues their current work will remain" (Checkel, 1998: 325)

Thus, in this thesis, we integrate constructivists' insights and assumptions with securitization theory – our middle-range theory. For instance, one may argue that states themselves do not have interests –

1997: 320-321; Zehfuss, 2004: 7-8). Fierke (2013: 196) proposes another variant: consistent constructivism, which occupies an epistemological middle ground between conventional constructivism and critical constructivism.

¹² This wave of works was published during the postpositivist debate on IR theory that took place during the mid-1980's (Balzacq, 2010: 57) (labeled by some authors as the "third debate" and by others as the "fourth debate"). The debate "was a reaction against the dominant place of scientific method in the American context", and "[t]he 'dialogue' over constructivism was a reaction to [it]" (Fierke, 2013: 188).

but political elites do. Interests which, like identities¹³, “are learned and sustained by intersubjectively grounded practice” (Wendt, 1992b: 184). Securitization theory allows to specify actors (securitizing actors and members of an audience) working within a given context to bring about policy *change* after they create social threats (which are produced by identities). It is in defining a social threat that actors define their interests (Wendt, 1992a: 398; 405; 407).

In spite of the ongoing debate regarding what Constructivism *is exactly*, it is of note that it has acquired legitimacy in large part due to the failure of Realism and Liberalism to predict and explain the end of the Cold War. In fact, according to Walt, it even replaced Marxism to a considerable extent “as the preeminent radical perspective on international affairs.” After all, Constructivism provided some answers regarding the end of the conflict, pointing, for instance, to how “Mikhail Gorbachev revolutionized Soviet foreign policy because he embraced new ideas such as “common security” (Walt, 1998: 41).

In fact, Constructivism, as part of the IR theoretical debate, emerged as a challenge to the assumptions that underpinned the study of the discipline, taking place “against the backdrop of a historical context where political actors were challenging the assumptions of the Cold War.” Notoriously, the mid- to late 1980’s was a period marked by social movements which intended to change the nuclear status quo, calling for either an American halt on nuclear testing, development and deployment, or for nuclear disarmament altogether. Fierke (2013: 187-188) saw the two social movements as “a useful metaphor for thinking about the construction of constructivism within IR.” The end of the conflict only motivated additional questions about the changes that had occurred in the International System and about the social dimension of international relations, which the traditional theories of the discipline (Realism and Liberalism) – and their proponents – were unable to explain.

For constructivists, international relations are a social construction brought into being “through acts of human creation” – it would otherwise not exist. Once constructed, the idea of international relations “has a particular meaning and use within a context”; being social in the sense that is imbued with norms, assumptions, and values “rather than being the product of purely individual thought or meaning.” International Relations are comprised by social phenomena such as alliances and states, which “take specific historical, cultural, and political forms that are a product of human interaction in a social world” (Fierke, 2013: 188-189).

In an important point of departure from traditional theories of foreign policy, Constructivism looks to understand or explain change in how states behave in the International System, instead of frequently assuming “the sameness of states, for instance, across time and space” (Fierke, 2013: 189). However, as

¹³ For Wendt (1992a: 398), “[i]dentities are the basis of interests.” Every actor (individual or state) has many identities, and each “is an inherently social definition of the actor grounded in the theories which actors collectively hold about themselves and one another and which constitute the structure of the social world.” Moreover, “[a]ctors do not have a “portfolio” of interests that they carry around independent of social context; instead, they define their interests in the process of defining situations.”

Wendt (1999: 315-316) explained, that rationalist theories of IR do not necessarily consider interests and identities as fixed or constant, but that any identity and interest changes are understood to take place either before, or outside the interaction under analysis. Therefore, identities and interests are seen in rationalist theories as exogenously given, instead of “as being continuously in process in or sustained by interaction itself. In the analysis of interaction they are constants, not processes or outcomes, even if they change outside interaction.” Conversely, Constructivism sees the social world “as constructed, not as given.” Thus,

“[s]tates may be self-interested but they continuously (re)define what that means. Their identities may change. Norms help define situations and hence influence international practice in a significant way. In order to appreciate this influence of identities and/or norms it is necessary to explore intersubjective meaning” (Zehfuss, 2004: 4).

This approach questions “the exclusive emphasis of realist theory on material interest and power”. Since international relations is a social construction, rules, languages and norms constitute explanatory factors of state behavior at the international level. That is not to say that constructivists negate the importance of material factors, but that they combine them with ideational factors to seek more complete or improved explanations to certain issues in IR (Fierke, 2013: 189).

Another important element of Constructivism is its introduction of the “possibility of agency¹⁴”, which facilitated the understanding that individuals or states both influenced their environment and were influenced by it. Instead of focusing on “structure” like neoliberal and neorealist theories, constructivists emphasized “*processes of interaction*”; meaning that actors are understood to “make choices in the process of interaction with others and, as a result, bring historically, culturally, and politically distinct ‘realities’ into being” – even if they “are not totally free to choose their circumstances” (as a result of “structure”). According to Fierke, as essentially social beings, “individuals or states cannot be separated from a context of normative meaning which shapes who they are and the possibilities available to them.” Constructivism embraces a social ontology, rejecting the individualist ontology of rationalist theories (whose basic unit of analysis is either a person or a state) and emphasizes primarily “norms and shared understandings of legitimate behaviour” (Fierke, 2013: 189-191). As Wendt (1992a: 423-424) influentially explained, “we cannot derive a self-help structure of identity and interest from the principle of anarchy alone – (...) anarchy is what states make of it.” State behavior is mitigated by a “intersubjectively constituted structure of identities and interests”; thus, “if state identities and interests are produced as competitive”, the state will behave competitively. If, on the other hand, “state identities

¹⁴ According to Dunne, Kurki and Smith (2013: 351), “agency the capacity for purposive action, or the exercise of power. The role of ‘agents’ in social life is traditionally contrasted to the role of ‘structures’, such as institutions or norms.” Thus, “[t]he agency–structure debate refers to the debate over the priority to be accorded to agents (individuals or states) as opposed to structures in shaping social life.”

and interests are produced as cooperative”, the state will behave cooperatively. Again, “anarchy is what states make of it” (Weber, 2010: 69). According to Wendt (1992a: 401-402), we assume too much if, due to the condition of anarchy in the International System, we posit that “states in the state of nature necessarily face a “stag hunt” or “security dilemma.” After all, such a claim

[presupposes] a history of interaction in which actors have acquired ‘selfish’ identities and interests; before interaction (and still in abstraction from first- and second-image factors) they would have no experience upon which to base such definitions of self and other. To assume otherwise is to attribute to states in the state of nature qualities that they can only possess in society. Self-help is an institution, not a constitutive feature of anarchy

Constructivism in IR, Heath-Kelly (2008: 138) argued, “is based upon the argument that the identities of states are not pre-given, but instead developed through comparison and contrast with other members of the international community. Identities and the “international” are constituted through discursive performance.” Thus, relationships in international politics do not have to be characterized by egoism and enmity; actually, they evolved over time as “product of a historical process and interactions over time”:

“[t]he subjects of international politics are not uniformly and universally rational egoists but have distinct identities shaped by the cultural, social, and political—as well as material—circumstances in which they are embedded. They are not static but ever evolving as they interact with each other and their environment” (Fierke, 2013: 191).

For constructivists, interests are more directly tied to the identity of the subject than to materialism, and “[n]either identity nor interests can be detached from a world of social meaning.” A state’s identity as a liberal democracy, for instance, “cannot be detached from an interest in complying with human rights norms” (Fierke, 2013: 191). While people “think [their] own thoughts, concepts such as that of a liberal democracy are “[shared] with our fellow men” (Toulmin, 1972: 35). Political interactions, Koslowski and Kratochwil (1994: 225) argue, takes place on the grounds of “contested, but nevertheless partially shared, understandings that illuminate these interactions and help us in our analysis.” Those understandings, or intersubjective meanings, “are not merely the aggregation of individual beliefs but have some independent status as collective knowledge” (Fierke, 2013: 192). Those understandings constitute an *a priori* reality (Zehfuss, 2004: 10).

This social dimension is lacking in rationalist thinking, which “[highlights] the rationality of decisions in terms of self-interest, thereby minimizing the role of context”, which is emphasized by constructivists. For instance, as the latter see it, a state’s decision to undergo an arms build-up should not be disconnected from its social dimension and seen purely in terms of a pursuit of self-interest, as rationalists do. Identities can be created in conflicts, as was the case during the Cold War, characterized

by its ideological nature, whereby communism and capitalism were pitted against each other. Objects, such as nuclear weapons, are a product of human design and intent, have “a specific meaning and use within a context, where specific identities and interests are at stake”, and impact on the material world (Fierke, 2013: 191-192).

Thus, in a nutshell, Constructivism has three fundamental principles, starting with the view that “[p]eople act toward objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings that the objects have for them” (social knowledge); that “[t]he meanings in terms of which action is organized arise out of interaction” (social practice), and that “[i]dentities [and interests] are produced in and through ‘situated activity’” (social identities and interests) (Weber, 2010: 67; Wendt, 1992a: 396-397; 404; 407). Using these principles as a framework for our thesis, we can posit that there are no natural/inherent security threats in international affairs; they are produced by identities that are created through social interaction (and generate certain interests). States *choose* to interpret the actions of other actors as threatening, but they do not necessarily need to enhance their power to bolster their security by virtue of every other country representing a threat to them (Wendt, 1992a: 405; 407; Weber, 2010: 67-68). As Wendt (1992a: 396-397) explained, “people act toward objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings that the objects have for them.” Thus, “500 British nuclear weapons are less threatening to the United States than 5 North Korean nuclear weapons, because the British are friends of the United States and the North Koreans are not, and amity or enmity is a function of shared understandings” (Wendt, 1995: 73).

As mentioned, “constructivists have not sung from a single hymn sheet” (Fierke, 2013: 189); in fact, Constructivism encompasses several competing approaches with considerable differences among themselves but, as Balzacq (2010: 56) argued, there is no need to subscribe to a particular theoretical commitment of Constructivism, as such discussions while possibly justified on the abstract, “are often distracting at the empirical level.” Therefore, we focus on the distinctions between Constructivism strands due to varying ways of blending ontology and epistemology, because without determining what kind of “mixture” of the two better serves our research goals, we cannot make methodological commitments (Balzacq, 2010: 56). Our emphasis is, thus, empirical, and for that reason we will not delve into the key interests of the various constructivist authors (e.g. Onuf and Kratochwil concentrate on rules and share an interest in speech actor theory, while identity is key in Wendt’s approach [Zehfuss, 2004: 15, 22]). As Walt (1998: 41) explained, a common theme in the various strands of Constructivism “is the capacity of discourse to shape how political actors define themselves and their interests, and thus modify their behavior”, and it is that and assumption of Constructivism that we seek to integrate with securitization theory (Checkel, 1998: 325) in order to ascertain how, in the context of our study, “security problems emerge, evolve and dissolve” (Balzacq, 2010: 56).

According to Fierke (2013: 192-193), Constructivism “[embraces] an intersubjective ontology, emphasizing norms, social agents, and structures, and the mutual constitution of identity”. Most constructivists, as the author noted, have criticized rationalism to some extent; however, to

“conventional” constructivists, the squabble with rationalists is ontological¹⁵, not epistemological. That is because that strand of Constructivism, which inhabits a “middle ground” between the rationalism and post-structuralism, while critic of the former, does not universally reject the scientific method; in fact, epistemologically, conventional Constructivism is “indebted to positivism¹⁶, which includes hypothesis testing, causality, and explanation.” Middle-ground Constructivism emphasizes causality, “objective (intersubjective) truths”, and “the rationality of individuals, although more deeply embedded in a social context.” Methodologically and epistemologically, there are no great differences between conventional constructivism and rationalist theorists (Hopf, 1998: 116).

However, the way in which conventional Constructivism combines “a social ontology with an epistemology that rests on a separation between an external world and the internal thought processes of individuals” generates inconsistencies (Fierke, 2013: 192). Those inconsistencies pertain to the incompatibility of “a positivist epistemology (...) with an ontology that gives causal weight to cultural variables” (Farrell, 2002: 51). Even if “more deeply embedded in a social context”, “objective (intersubjective) truths” and “the rationality of individuals” (Fierke, 2013: 192) are hardly compatible with the constructivist understanding that “unobservables” have ontological status. Meaning, after all, is for constructivists “a social product, not an objective truth” (Heath-Kelly, 2008: 139). Constructivists “recognize norms as having objective existence” (Farrell, 2002: 60) and that belief is hard to reconcile with a positivist epistemology which

is founded on (1) the empiricist theory of knowledge (which argues that sensory experience provides the only legitimate source of knowledge); (2) an assumption of ‘naturalism’ (the belief in the unity of natural and social sciences); and (3) the belief in the possibility of making fact–value distinctions (separation of normative, political, and ethical beliefs from ‘factual’ statements)” (Dunne, Kurki & Smith, 2013: 356)

According to Fierke (2013: 194), “[i]f constructivism and positivism rely on differing assumptions about the nature of ‘reality’, then building a constructivist theory on a positivist epistemology is inconsistent.” Constructivism emphasizes norms, which are considered to be “not simply ideas floating around inside peoples' heads” but, instead, “shared beliefs that are “out there” in the real world, in the meaning they give to material things (e.g., the acceptability of owning nuclear weapons), and the

¹⁵ The social ontology of Constructivism contrasts with the individualist ontology of Rationalism. The individual is the basic unit of analysis (person or state) (Fierke, 2013: 190; 192), and these individuals “are not born into any system of social relationships that helps shape who they become. When we first encounter them, they are already fully constituted and poised in a problem-solving mode” (Ruggie, 1998: 866-867). For constructivists, on the other hand, [a]s fundamentally social beings, individuals or states cannot be separated from a context of normative meaning which shapes who they are and the possibilities available to them” (Fierke, 2013: 190).

¹⁶ According to Dunne, Kurki and Smith (2013: 356) positivism is “a contested term in the philosophy of science and in IR theory.”

practices they yield (e.g., the Nuclear Non- Proliferation Treaty). Social practices may be observed directly but not the shared beliefs they embody” (Farrell, 2002: 60). That raises the question of “how do we know these shared beliefs exist?” As Farrell notes, “constructivists are not interested in the beliefs actors hold so much as the beliefs actors share”, and such “[b]eliefs must be expressed, if not codified and recorded, to be shared.” Therefore, “shared beliefs often leave physical residues”¹⁷ (Farrell, 2002: 60).

Adding to the inconsistency of a positivism epistemology with a social ontology weighs the arguments that, according to Fierke, positivism is “associated with a range of philosophical traditions, many of which have been discredited in the larger scientific world” as valid scientific practice, and that “despite the acceptance of the positivist model of science by both advocates and critics alike, understandings of positivism, its meaning and its consequences for the discipline, are rudimentary.” Thus, while we do not argue that positivist principles are invalid – in fact, Fierke, an influential constructivist author that embraces a post-positivist¹⁸ epistemology even acknowledges “that scholars who might be considered to be working in the positivist tradition have made some of the most important and lasting contributions to the discipline – we consider that not all research needs to fit the positivist model and that a decision to do so “need not lead to the rejection of science (Fierke, 2013: 15; 204). According to Hansen (2006: 4), “adopting a non-causal epistemology does not imply an abandonment of theoretically rigorous frameworks, empirical analyses of ‘real world relevance,’ or systematic assessments of data and methodology.”

Scholars that embrace a postpositivist epistemology fit Hopf’s (1998: 171) “critical” strand of Constructivism. Critical Constructivism shifts the “middle-ground” of conventional Constructivism “highlighting the inseparability of a social ontology *and* social epistemology” (Fierke, 2013: 196), but both strands distinguish themselves from Poststructuralism¹⁹ by always starting with givens; they do not “[question] and [turn] on their head some of our most intuitive beliefs about reality”. Constructivists “[start] from a given reality” (which is not problematized), openly identify what it is, and provides scientific knowledge about it. Poststructuralists, on the other hand, problematize reality – “what is held to be real must be questioned” (Zehfuss, 2004: 245-246; 259). According to Zehfuss (2004: 220), for Wendt (1992a: 402-404), “[s]tate agents exist a priori. Their identities are merely refined in interaction.”

¹⁷ In a March 2020 private communication, John Duffield pointed out that “some of the sharing takes place in ways that we may never be privy to, e.g., conversations in private clubs” (Farrell, 2002: 60). Thus, as we mentioned in the limitations of our research, our approach may not be able to capture all the relevant securitizing moves; some may happen behind closed doors and there may be no record of them.

¹⁸ According to Dunne, Kurki and Smith (2013: 356), postpositivism is “an umbrella term for a number of approaches that criticize positivist approaches to knowledge generation. Postpositivists can be seen to include a heterogeneous group of theorists critical of the positivist approach to studying world politics, such as interpretive/hermeneutic theorists, poststructuralists, feminists, critical theorists, scientific/critical realists, and some, although not all, constructivists.”

¹⁹ Poststructuralism and postmodernism are often confused at some level, with the two concepts being, at times, used interchangeably, or similarly described. For practical reasons, we use the term poststructuralism, which has seemingly become the most commonly used term in recent IR literature (Casais, 2019: 43).

Poststructuralists, on the other hand, argue that there “are no settled identities; the subject never achieves the completion or wholeness toward which it strives. It remains haunted by that which has to be excluded for subjectivity to be constituted in the first place” (Edkins & Pin-Fat, 1999: 1). Drawing on Burke (2010: 359), Casais (2019: 44) explains that post-structuralism extends “beyond constructivism’s assumption of the human construction and management of knowledge and structures in the social world.” It critically examines and questions assumptions about meaning, origins, and their representations. This perspective asserts that all power-knowledge relations are intentionally created, imbued with meaning and significance, and sustained by human actions.

According to Merlingen (2013: 3), poststructuralists “are expected to de-naturalise or de-familiarise that which other theories and common sense take to be self-evidently true and morally desirable.” Poststructuralism emphasizes “the importance of reflection on the social context of knowledge generation, which is often embedded in power relations” (Dunne, Kurki, Smith, 2013: 355). Claims regarding the particularity and cultural shaping of “truth” are central to post-structuralism, which asserts that no truth is true at every point in time (Kuhn, 1962 as cited in Heath-Kelly, 2008: 142).

Poststructuralism is not suited to our research goals, as our aim is to determine how American nuclear policy has been impacted by constructions of Russia as a threat to the United States; not to criticize and question assumptions about meaning, origins, and their representations (Casais, 2019: 44; Burke, 2010: 359). We take representations of Russia as a threat as given, because what interests us is the way in which policymakers use them as “*premises in arguments for action*” – as reasons for change in nuclear deterrence policy (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 21). How those representations “are linked to the diverse interests and social positions (e.g. positions in relations of power) of particular groups of social agents” is beyond the scope of our research. That does not mean, of course, that analysis of other features of political discourse cannot provide valuable insights to research informed by different research questions and goals (e.g., grounded on critique of power relations) and to the field of Political Science more broadly (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 116, 242).

Marrying a social ontology with a social epistemology does not require a rejection of Constructivism in favor of Poststructuralism. Following the work of Fierke (2013: 196), we consider that the inconsistency that conventional Constructivism has at its core can be corrected by adoption of what the author described as “consistent Constructivism.” Adopting that strand of Constructivism allows us to avoid obscuring the role of language, as it is the case with conventional Constructivism (Fierke, 2013: 192-193; Zehfuss, 2004: 49). After all, “[h]ypothesis testing in positivist science rests on an assumption that labels will be either true or false. An approach to language as rule-based requires that we ‘look and see’ how language is put to use by social actors as they construct their world” (Fierke, 2013: 196).

According to Kratochwil (1989: 6), “the social world is intrinsically linked to language”, which “can provide us with a point of departure for our inquiry into the function of norms in social life.” In the same wave-length, Fierke (2013: 197) explains that “[l]anguage use is part of acting in the world.

Without language we could not begin to communicate with one another, attribute meaning to objects or acts in the world, think individual thoughts, or express feelings.” Language plays a role “in the creation and reproduction of social reality” (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 73) and, thus, it is through language that threat perceptions are constructed. According to Fairclough and Fairclough (2012: 95), “discourses provide agents with premises (i.e. beliefs about the circumstances of action, instrumental beliefs, values and goals) for justifying, criticizing and, on this basis, deciding on action, i.e. discourses provide reasons for action.” Thus, the use of language is a crucial part of interactions such as those that take place in a context of securitization, and who aim “is to convince or persuade an audience to see the world in a specific way and thus act as the situation commands” (Dias, 2016: 35). According to Fierke (2013: 197):

An approach to language that is consistent with the social ontology of constructivism should also occupy an epistemological middle ground. In between a view of language as either a mirror of the world [as rationalists posit] or pure interpretation [as poststructuralists argue], is an understanding of language and action as rule-based [the emphasis of consistent Constructivism]

Essentially, according to “[a] consistent constructivist approach to language (...) language use is fundamentally social. We are socialized into it and in the process we do not simply learn words but how to act in the world”. The aforementioned approach focuses on “the generation of meaning, norms, and rules, as expressed in language, by the subjects of analysis” and it is “concerned less with the intentions of individuals (...) than the intention expressed in social action” (Fierke, 2013: 197), which is “embedded in its situation, in human customs and institutions” (Wittgenstein, 1986: para. 337).

The post-positivist epistemology of consistent Constructivism also shifted the emphasis of researchers from a quest for determining the “causes” of a certain development (which we want to explain) to a pursuit of “reasons”; meaning, that the focus is placed on ascertaining how it became possible that something happened – not on why it happened. Why is this distinction important? Essentially, as researchers embracing an ontology that “gives causal weight to cultural variables” (Farrell, 2002: 51), that is, (unobservable) shared beliefs which create and reproduce social reality, in large part through language (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 73), we are aware that “truth and falsity are ultimately slippery insofar as we cannot get inside individual minds, and the competition to identify the ‘true’ cause or intention usually devolves into a battle of interpretations.” Instead of focusing on ultimate truths, we can pose “how possible” research questions (Fierke, 2013: 198).

Reasons have different logics than causes.

X may give a reason for her action to Y. In doing so, X explains her action. This may have an influence on Y, but, if so, it is less as a cause, in the sense that the impact of one stone on another may propel the latter in forward motion. It rather is part of a conversation where X is

trying to persuade Y, and thereby legitimate her own actions in terms that can be understood and accepted by the other.

To give a reason, or to engage in many other speech acts, from promising to threatening, opens a space for the other to be engaged and respond. As a two-way relationship, this interaction is not merely a question of who has the greater material power; it is dependent on some degree of common language (the other must be able to understand what is being said and what constitutes a reason, promise, or threat), which incorporates standards of legitimacy (that is, what will suffice as a good reason, as well as conditions, relating to past words and actions, which make a promise or threat credible), the normative basis of these claims and the possibility of contestation (Wiener 2008 as cited in Fierke, 2013: 198)

As Fierke (2013: 198-199) explained, the possibility of contestation “suggests the importance of a logic of arguing and bargaining as well as one of appropriateness²⁰.” Further, the author argues,

“[p]ower is a factor, since, particularly in the case of threats, material capability is one, although not the only, condition of credibility. Power may also be a factor insofar as the legitimacy of a reason may be tied to social role or position. For example, Western states may give reasons for maintaining a large nuclear arsenal, which are accepted as legitimate, while the desire for even one nuclear weapon by a Middle Eastern nation, such as Iran, may be widely viewed as illegitimate and dangerous.”

Having made an epistemological commitment to post-positivism, that is, to a “how causality”, we can now commit to a methodological strategy. Since our securitization analysis is “directed to the understanding of why certain moves can be expected in given national security discourse, why some of them may find a receptive audience (given the underlying security imaginary), and indeed why certain action-complexes can then follow” (Guzzini, 2011: 338), we selected discourse analysis as our methodological strategy. While there are many forms of conducting discourse analysis, we see Fairclough and Fairclough’s (2012) political discourse analysis as suited to a securitization analysis

²⁰ According to March and Olsen (2009: 2), “[t]he logic of appropriateness is a perspective that sees human action as driven by rules of appropriate or exemplary behavior, organized into institutions. Rules are followed because they are seen as natural, rightful, expected, and legitimate.” Indeed, “[a]ctors seek to fulfill the obligations encapsulated in a role, an identity, a membership in a political community or group, and the ethos, practices and expectations of its institutions. Embedded in a social collectivity, they do what they see as appropriate for themselves in a specific type of situation.”

grounded on consistent Constructivism. Through political discourse analysis, we can look at how securitizing actors and the audience (i.e., the decision-makers) interact in the process of “making choices about how to act in response to circumstances and events and in light of certain goals and values”. This understanding is grounded on an argument provided by Fairclough and Fairclough, which fits with our research goals, centered on how, and to what extent, threat perceptions of Russia impact on American nuclear policy: “politics is most fundamentally about (...) choosing policies, and such choices and the actions which follow from them are based upon practical argumentation”. Political discourse analysis fits that view of politics: “it views political discourse as primarily a form of argumentation, and as involving more specifically practical argumentation, argumentation for or against particular ways of acting, argumentation that can ground decision (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 1; 11).

Unlike in positivist approaches to which rationalists subscribe, “[believing] that social phenomena may be explained in the same way as the natural world and that facts and values may be clearly separated” (Zehfuss, 2004: 3), Fairclough and Fairclough’s (2012) method for political discourse analysis rejects that separation. Instead, their approach

[distinguishes] premises which describe the circumstances of action from premises expressing the goals and values of action. Goals are explicitly informed by our values or concerns: the futures we imagine are in relation to what matters to us, such as the values we are committed to. But the way we perceive the circumstances in which we act is also informed by our values and concerns. The context of action, as a problem, is of course objective, not of our own making, but it can be described or represented in various ways. These alternative ways of representing it can even support radically different claims for action. Facts, in other words, have evaluative content, and can therefore support various normative conclusions (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 15)

Additionally, “[n]ot only agents' goals but also their representations of the circumstances of action (the 'problems' they see) are informed by their concerns, by what they value, so a simple fact/value distinction makes no sense (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 240).

Constructivists scholars study a considerable variety of non-material factors, such as culture, norms, or identity. However, some of those researchers use those concepts

almost interchangeably, without much thought given to whether these concepts should be distinguished at all or how these concepts relate to each other. The resulting ambiguity makes it practically impossible to uncover exact relationship among the concepts, yet some general patterns are readily discernable (Alexandrov, 2003: 33-34)

According to Zehfuss (2004: 139), Kratochwil emphasized the importance of distinguishing between norms, rules and values, but without providing a credible differentiating criterion between them.

Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) place their focus on values as non-material factors influencing how actors perceive their context of action (e.g. whether they perceive threat perceptions to exist) and

the goals that they want to pursue (by pushing forward certain policies). Such values can be implicitly or explicitly retrieved from political discourse and be used as reasons for action. The authors drew from Blackburn's (1998) work to define values as "concerns that we are also concerned to preserve, those that we regard as constitutive of our identity. Values inform agents' desires and goals, or can enable agents to take a critical stance with respect to their desires and goals" (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 70).

Values, according to the authors, "represent our stable, fundamental concerns or dispositions to act. We would not be willing to give them up as easily as we may renounce particular desires²¹." A reconstruction of a practical argument, among other premises (for action), includes a value premise, which "may refer either to the agent's actual concerns (what he actually values) or to what the agent ought to be concerned with (what he ought to value), either in his own view or according to another arguer (the arguer and the agent may or may not be one and the same person)" (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 48; 70). Values, the authors add,

enter as premises in practical arguments either as agents' concerns (their desires, their interests) or as external reasons, as social or institutional facts. A socially recognized duty, obligation or commitment is a reason for action whether or not the agent will internalize it as a concern. But agents can also be concerned to fulfil their duties and commitments, to act morally, in which case the value or duty in question will turn into an internal motive for action (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 198)

According to Fairclough and Fairclough (2012: 176), our values (and our actual concerns to fulfil them) underlie our goals, the futures we imagine and try to bring about, and thereby the actions we undertake."

Values are sources of normativity that inform action, and an action may be informed by more than one of such sources. They shape our goals and the actions undertaken to achieve them. Values can be actual concerns of an actor, or understood "more objective sense of socially recognized moral values or other types of value commitments that individuals are bound by in virtue of being part of a moral, social and institutional order." In the same way, goals should not be merely equated with the desires of certain actors, but with what "should be seen as imagined, future states of affairs that are compatible with various sources of normativity (desires, moral values, etc.) (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 43-44, 46, 76).

In deciding what to do and how to act, people judge what is the best line of action on the basis of circumstances, considering their values and goals, and based on the normative priority they attribute to

²¹ Thus, concerns are a broader concept than values (Blackburn 1998: 67; Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012: 46, 70).

such reasons. Individuals also take into account, in deciding how to act, the consequences of their actions, which “can be understood more generally to include a possibly negative impact on goals and values that should (arguably) not be overridden.” By consequences of action on goals, we refer to actions “that undermine the stated goal of the action or other goals that the agent is or ought to be committed to.” The future states of affairs (goals) that individuals imagine, and pursue actions to accomplish, are compatible with particular sources of normativity. Thus, values restrict the goals imagined or desired by people (). By the same logic, goals and values – as well as circumstances of action – restrict the actions that actors deem as suitable. Actions need to be compatible with circumstances, goals and values (66, 76).

The authors’ approach (PDA) is particularly suited to our research since, unlike the tendency of other discourse analysis approaches, the focus is not placed on representations and discourse. In fact, inspired in Fairclough and Fairclough’s (2012: 4; 29) work, we are concerned with both the subjective aspects of securitization (how the context of action is perceived, what are the goals and values present in political discourses) and its objective aspects (how agents respond to securitizing move[s], that is, how securitizing actors and the audience members (i.e., the decision-makers) interact in a process of deliberation regarding what to do [a process “that ‘weighs’ together multiple considerations under a multiplicity of interpretative frames”], what are the policy outputs [extraordinary/ordinary measures], and how they vary).

According to Fairclough and Fairclough (2012: 240):

The value premise (...) specifies the particular normative source that underlies the goals, and the goals are to be understood as future states of affairs which agents imagine in accordance with their values (concerns) and try to bring about by means of action. Circumstances are said to include empirical aspects of the context of action but also institutional or social facts (external reasons)

Our methodological commitment to political discourse analysis fits a view of politics as “about decision-making and action in conditions of uncertainty and disagreement (...) and of the construction of social reality by means of speech acts.” Drawing on Searle (2010), Fairclough and Fairclough (2012: 72-73) argued that

the distinctive feature of social reality is that humans have the capacity to impose functions (...) on people and objects, i.e. functions that cannot be performed by these people and objects just on the basis of their physical nature. (...) Something more is needed for objects or persons to fulfil the functions that are assigned to them. The performance of status functions requires that there be a collectively recognized status that the person/object has and it is only in virtue of that collectively recognized status that the person/object can perform the function in question. So there must be collective acceptance or recognition of the object/person as having that status, i.e. collective intentionality

Searle’s social ontology

also shows how institutional reality connects with human agency by providing people with reasons for action. On the whole, it offers a very plausible explanation of the relationship between agents and structures, and of the role of language in the creation and reproduction of social reality, including power relations

Thus, Fairclough and Fairclough's (2012: 100-101) approach is compatible with our ontological commitments. Political discourse analysis is a result of their "attempt to understand and explain the capacity of discourse to have causal effects on social life, to contribute to changes in social life." Additionally, as a critical analysis, PDA also "aims to produce explanations of social life which both identify the nature and causes of what is 'wrong' in it and produce knowledge which could (in the right conditions) contribute to 'righting' or at least mitigating these 'wrongs'." In our view, PDA "shows how to conceptualize causal mechanisms in an interpretivist environment, here applied to discourse analysis." Securitization analysis, carried out by means of PDA, is, in our view, "directed to the understanding of why certain moves can be expected in given national security discourse, why some of them may find a receptive audience (given the underlying security imaginary), and indeed why certain action-complexes can then follow." Still, "such 'why' is always a 'how causality'", as our analysis does not explain in a positivistic manner (Guzzini, 2011: 338) (our epistemological commitment). Such an approach fits the research agenda of the general body of works of the second generation of securitization theory.

2.3. Securitization Theory

2.3.1. A broader concept for security: the early contributions of Barry Buzan

Securitization Theory is grounded on a constructivist view of IR, seeing as it argues that threats are determined on the basis of subjective assessments of perceived danger – not objective (Kilroy, 2022: 207). According to Stone (2009: 2), the issue of security is an old concern for scholars of IR. It seems therefore contradictory that, back in the 1980's, and in spite of extensive usage of the concept of security, Buzan (1983: 3-5) had found literature on the subject to be "very unbalanced." In his highly influential book *People, States and Fear*, Buzan noted that while empirical research "dealing with contemporary security problems and issues" was thriving, the concept of security very rarely tackled issues "other than the political interests of particular actors of groups" – a debate which had profound military tones. He identified a lack of dialogue on the concept of security and observed that it had "come to be dominated in use by the idea of national security". Accordingly, numerous scholars extended their criticism towards that "the excessively narrow, hollow and militarized interpretation of security", believing in the inadequacy of "a notion of security bound to the level of individual states".

Buzan (1983: 6-10; 12) argued that the reasons why the conceptualization of security had remained unexplored for so long were linked to the complexity of the idea and decision-makers interests in keeping its ambiguity; the perceived overlap with the concept of power; the focus of challengers of Realism on peace, interdependency, and behaviorism; and the emphasis of the IR sub-field of Strategic Studies on defense studies and military strategy. Thus, he endeavored “to map the domain of security as an essentially contested concept” to improve its understanding, looking to unlock a new viewpoint on the discipline of IR and offer some guidelines to students of Strategic Studies.

The main conclusion of Buzan’s (1983: 245) book is that “the concept of security binds together individuals, states, and the international system so closely that it demands to be treated in a holistic perspective.” Therefore, “the national security problem cannot be understood without reference to factors at all three levels of analysis²².” For instance, individuals may constitute threats to the state, and through their impact at the national level, affect the international system. The connections can also run in the opposite direction, as events taking place in the international system can affect the state in such a way that the latter threatens the security of individuals. As the author explains, “[m]ajor security phenomena like terrorism and deterrence (...) simply cannot be understood properly without a full appreciation of their sources, effects and dynamics at and among all three levels” (Buzan, 1983: 247).

Buzan (1983: 248-250) admits that his exploration of the concept of security was conducted at a “rather high level of abstraction, avoiding the harsh world of specific crises and problems”, but in spite of some constraints, he suggests that his ideas could be used to address relevant policy problems, as “a main advantage of holistic analysis is in making explicit the contradictions with which policy must deal”. Grounding security analysis on either the level of the state or the international system is a narrow approach that entails to “exclude or devalue some of the important components of the problem.” The Realist/Idealist clash perpetuates the mistaken belief that security policies must be based either on level 2 or level 3, and that a choice must be made between one of the two alternatives, as to decide which “must carry alone the whole burden of security.” Realist policies are state-centric; they emphasize the need to arm the state and conduct “power struggle analysis of the system”, while idealist policies are designed after a “harmony-of-interests model,” and based on ideas such as disarmament and cooperation at the international level.

According to Buzan (1983: 250-251), this issue pertains to deeply-rooted fallacies “in both the practice and the study of the national security problem”, that leave little room for a middle ground to establish itself due to the “appealing simplicity of either extreme” – as many arms controllers have found out. As a result, “middle ground policies like the SALT negotiations simply justify critics on both wings”. For the author, this empty space “between the power position of the Realists and the peace position of the idealists” can be filled by the broader, clearer conceptualization of security he proposes.

²² Buzan (1983: 245) appoints the level 1 to the individual, level 2 to the state, and the level 3 to the international system.

He proposes replacing “simplistic notions of security” for “more complex appreciations of how state behavior and system structure interact”, thus combining and expanding the Realist and Idealist approaches “by operating security policy on all three levels simultaneously”, looking “to find a balanced and workable blend.”

The author also contends that policymakers need to consider “the vulnerabilities of other actors, their assessments of threat, including threat from policymakers’ own state, and the security/insecurity dynamics of the system as a whole” – on all three levels. This recommendation constitutes a departure from the self-centered focus of policymakers on “vulnerabilities of, and threats to their own state”, with the acknowledgment of one’s threat to another being a particularly difficult exercise²³. This is due to the fact that they entail admission of a one’s “unpleasant facts or contradictions” and “irreconcilable differences (...) between the state perceiving a threat and the state allegedly generating it.” Arguing that his recommendation may promote “improved understanding of security dynamics in the system as a whole”, Buzan stresses the usefulness of the concept of “security complexes²⁴ as a framework for analysis”, as it could help prevent recurring tendencies to prescribe policies based on the Realist or Idealist extremes (Buzan, 1983: 251-252; 254). Stone (2009: 6-7) backs Buzan’s claim, stating that the question of regional security had not been properly tackled before, and that the author presented “several interesting and important concepts”, and provided “a good framework to discuss issues that are endemic to any one region.” Stone therefore emphasizes enmity and amity between states, concepts which can be described as relationships among states “that can represent a spectrum from friendship or alliances to those marked by fear” and are not fully explained by the balance of power²⁵. Hence, Buzan looks at matters such as historical precedents, ethnic divides, territories, and ideologies arguing that they can also influence feelings among states²⁶. Stone claims that this understanding leads to the aforementioned idea of security complex, from where policies addressing common interests or clashes in relationships between states should be derived from.

This holistic view of security also allows for issues “such as arms racing, the arms industry, international trade and investment, foreign policy-making, system dynamics and sovereignty” which are

²³ The author (Buzan, 1983: 251-252) talks here about unintended threats, whose “effect on the system (...) must be assessed in relation to the domestic costs of whatever reforms would be required to remove them”. Intended threats, on the other hand, must “be controlled in relation to the desired effect, as in deterrence policy.”

²⁴ This concept, of Buzan’s (1983: 106) creation, refers to “a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another.”

²⁵ Schweller (2016, 1) sees a balance of power system as “one in which the power held and exercised by states within the system is checked and balanced by the power of others. Thus, as a nation’s power grows to the point that it menaces other powerful states, a counter-balancing coalition emerges to restrain the rising power, such that any bid for world hegemony will be self-defeating.” It is a central understanding in Realism, unceasingly discussed, and diversely defined. This view is contested by Constructivism, which claims that “people act towards objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings that the objects have for them.” Accordingly, “states act differently toward enemies than they do toward friends because enemies are threatening and friends are not” (Wendt, 1992a: 396-397).

²⁶ This understanding backs Stone’s (2009: 3) claim that “Buzan’s analysis can be considered to be a loose melding of neorealism and constructivism, favoring constructivism.” Still, as Buzan (2016: 2) later claimed “post-structuralist and constructivist epistemologies were quite alien to my earlier ways of thinking.”

not usually studied together to be “connected into a meaningful pattern by the concept of security”. Such a perspective would allow for questions to be raised about domestic structures and vested interests, making difficult for the latter “to disguise their own objectives under the cloak of national security (Buzan, 1983: 256-257). Buzan identifies thus five sectors of security: military, political, societal, environmental and economic, which are “intricately and complexly linked” and consequently cannot properly tackle the question of security on their own, forcing one to run through each of them separately so that the way “they affect each other on the whole” can be understood (Stone, 2009: 3).

Stone (2009: 2; 4) notes that in spite of highlighting the importance of considering all three levels of analysis, the main referent is, for Buzan, the state. As McSweeney (1996: 92) noted, “in Buzan (1991)²⁷, the primacy of the state is the pivot on which the domestic dimension of the strong state and the international dimension of regional security turn.” Thus, Buzan delves to explore the nature of the state since, unlike threats to the physical security of individuals, the concept of national security is harder to understand. Accordingly, Buzan (1983: 44; 53; 62; 65) considers the components of the state to be: the idea of the state, the institutions of the state, and the physical base of the state, which open it to “threats on many levels, particular vulnerabilities depending on the unique structure and circumstances of the state concerned.” Resultantly, the author argues that while “the concept of security can be mapped in a general sense (...) it can only be given specific substance in relation to concrete cases”. State diversity thus hinders the formulation of a “useful general definition of national security”, but Buzan stresses that it is important to work both at the general and specific levels. Stone (2009: 4) emphasizes that Buzan’s ideas show that even though the state components can be studied on their own, the “examination of the linkages between them is a fruitful source of insight into the national security problematique” (Buzan, 1991: 65 as cited in Stone, 2009: 4).

As Stone explains (2009: 7-8), the difficulty in creating security policies which work on various levels brings up a long-lasting conundrum: “when do the ends justify the means?”. Arguing that the sacrifices would be too great, he argues that “absolute security will never be attained”. Such an accomplishment is further complicated by the addition of “the variant of the perceptions of the elite into the mix along with the different levels and sectors of security” which in light of being constantly evolving, make constant policy changes necessities.

Another important contribution of Buzan (1983: 66-68) were the concepts of weak and strong states. Such terminologies were not related to the status of states as powers, but to “their weakness and strength as members of the category of states”. Accordingly, if “the idea and institutions of a state are both weak, then that state is in a very real sense less of a state than one in which the idea and institutions are strong.” This distinction is important because of its implications for national security. Weak states

²⁷ The author’s reference here is the second (revised) edition of Buzan’s *PSF* (Buzan, 1991). As Wæver (1995) explains, it is in the revised edition that Buzan clarified that “that the state level is privileged even as national security cannot be comprehended at the state level alone.”

have considerable domestic concerns (possibly accompanied by heavy levels of use of force), while the main security concerns of a strong state are external. Therefore, when its idea of state and institutions are weak and “are internally contested to the point of violence, they do not offer clear referents as objects of national security because, by definition, they are not properly national in scope.”

A final point that deserves mentioning is that the unsatisfactory conclusion of Buzan’s volume, who rejects the pursuit of a consensual definition of security due to its contested nature, has attracted some criticism (e.g., Booth, 1991: 317; Baldwin, 1997: 12). In the words of Baldwin (1997: 12), “security is more appropriately described as a confused or inadequately explicated concept than as an essentially contested one.”

2.3.2. Security as a speech act – first statements on securitization

According to McSweeney (1996: 81), ever since the publication of *PSF*, Buzan’s work established itself, at least in Europe, “as the canon and indispensable reference point for students of security.” Huysman (1998: 483-485) goes as far as claiming “that the Copenhagen School is a European school of security studies” due to the fact that its work is grounded in the dynamics of European security; the empirical developments and theoretical concepts are integrated (unlike what happens in the influential Massachusetts-based journal *International Security*, for instance); and finally, association to European research on Peace Studies.

The original version and the second edition revision of Buzan’s book became the incentive behind new probes into the issue of security at the Centre for Peace and Conflict Research at the University of Copenhagen, conducted by Buzan and several collaborators. The products of their research, related in scope, would be dubbed under the designation of CS of security studies (McSweeney, 1996: 81) by McSweeney (Booth, 2007: 163), one of its main critics (Croft & Terriff, 2000: 85).

A member of the CS and Buzan’s key collaborator, Wæver (1995) eventually noted that just a few years after the mid-1980’s debate concerning how narrowly security had been defined, reflections on the concept had become exceedingly common. He stated that this new approach challenged the two basic “traditionalist” premises whereby “security [was] a reality prior to language” and that “the more security, the better.” The new security studies approach argued in favor of expanding that which security encompassed (e.g. welfare or refugees). He was discontent with the traditional approach, arguing that it could not escape history and certain connotations associated with security; still dealt with security as an uncontested concept, pushing it towards “still larger areas of social life”; and still evoked “an image of threat-defense, allocating to the state an important role in addressing it.”

Regarding the endless expansion of the realm of security, Wæver (1995) emphasized that the issue was that “as concepts, *neither individual security nor international security exist.*” On the other hand,

national security, or state security designated “an ongoing debate, a tradition, an established set of practices and, as such, the concept has a rather formalized referent”. Security is, therefore, “not a reflection of our everyday sense of the word but, rather, a specific field with traditions.” (Wæver, 1995). The author explained that the only generic concept of the meaning of security was “borrowed from the traditional view, and multiplied and extended to new fields”, thus making it sensible to accept “that “security” is influenced in important ways by dynamics at the level of individuals and the global system”, while still considering that “the *concept* of security refers to the state.” Therefore, according to the author, national security did not link, at the other levels, to “primarily individual security and international security, but dynamics and political processes of various kinds” (Wæver, 1995).

Even though security commonly stands for “being secure, safe, not threatened”, the concept has attained many “connotations, assumptions, and images” which resulted from international debate on matters of security policy and national security, among others. In that sense, security has a “*specific field of practice*”; security is historically, the arena in which “states threaten each other, challenge each other’s sovereignty, try to impose their will on each other, defend their independence and so on.” This field has been in constant transformation, although Wæver believes that sovereign and defense challenges have never ceased to be fundamental. The author argues that it is important that any attempts to redefine the concept of security take into account the total field of practice, a perspective that, at the time, went against the grain. In the process of drastically reconstructing “security”, scholars were leaving the field of practice behind, but Wæver decided instead to use the debates that had taken place before this new wave as a starting point. This represented an effort to “get at the specific dynamics of the field, and show how these old elements operate in new ways and new places”, while maintaining the concept of security “true to the classical discussion”. His point is that there is “a specific field of social interaction, with a specific set of actions and codes, known by a set of agents as the security field”, where national security is intersubjectively constructed (Wæver, 1995).

Wæver (1995) also considers that the security agenda should include non-military threats, as long as the security problems possess, in his words, “urgency; state power claiming the legitimate use of extraordinary means; a threat seen as potentially undercutting sovereignty, thereby preventing the political “we” from dealing with any other questions.” Following this logic, any sector can be, at any point, “the most important focus for concerns about threats, vulnerabilities, and defense”, by means of weakening a state’s political order. Accordingly, the author argues that “we can then strip the classical discussion of its preoccupation with military matters by applying the *same* logic to other sectors, and we can de-link the discussion from the state by applying similar moves to *society*”. Accordingly, the author endeavored to study the societal sector within then lens of securitization without a state-centric perspective (Wæver, 1995), an approach we will scrutinize momentarily.

In any case, and returning now to a state-centric focus, Wæver (1995) emphasizes that the most important threats are the ones that impact on the sovereignty and self-determination of the state, and jeopardize its survival “as a basic political unit”. According to the author, “security problems are

developments that threaten the sovereignty or independence of a state in a particular rapid or dramatic fashion, and deprive it of the capacity to manage by itself”, which requires for the threat to be “met with the mobilization of the maximum effort.” What this entails, operationally, is that the state designates a particular occurrence a security problem in order to “*claim a special right*” – which is outlined by the state and its elites.

Wæver (1995) thus defines ““security” as a *speech act*.” As he elaborates: “by saying it, something is done”. The author’s (Wæver’s, 1989: 42) understanding of the concept of speech act is based on the work of John L. Austin, according to whom all statements are speech acts. They have three dimensions, which are independent from each other. According to Austin (1962: 108) the locutionary act “is roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference,” or meaning. Unlike the other two dimensions, there is nothing “more involved than merely ‘speaking’” (Crystal, 2008: 288). Illocutionary acts, on the other hand, have “a certain *force* in saying something” (Austin, 1962: 120). Wæver (1989: 42) considers the illocutionary force to be “the pure speech act dimension”. Crystal (2008: 236; 446) clarifies it, by saying that the illocutionary force is the intention of the speaker while speaking, and offers several examples, such as “promising”, “requesting”, or “baptizing”, which are, according to Wæver (1989: 42), “executed as soon as the sentence is uttered *if* certain conditions are met.” For instance, “you shall be the one assigned to name the ship”. Raising the question of “what is the illocutionary act in relation to security”, Wæver answers that “it is to define the particular case as one belonging to a specific category (‘security’) where the state tends to use all available means to combat it. It is partly a threat but also a kind of promise since more is staked on the particular issue.”

Lastly, perlocutionary acts are “performed by making an utterance which intrinsically involves an effect on the behavior, beliefs, feelings, etc., of a listener”. Examples of such acts are “frightening” or “persuading”. They differ from illocutionary acts, as the latter “are defined without intrinsic reference to their effect on a listener”, even though, as Crystal points out, “a single utterance might involve all three kinds of act” (Crystal, 2008: 358).

Perlocutionary acts “[depend] on the final outcome,” (Wæver, 1989: 42) being for Wæver “the criterion for the success or failure of securitization,” which the author “reduces (...) to the illocutionary aspect of speech acts” (Vuori, 2008: 74; Balzacq, 2005: 177). Securitization is described by Wæver as the processes whereby “elites label issues and developments as “security problems”, while desecuritization processes aim to take securitized issues off the security agenda (Wæver, 1995). It is “taking things back into normal politics” (Wæver & Buzan, 1997: 246). Wæver also pointed out that a third scenario could occur, referring to circumstances when efforts are led to prevent non-securitized issues from becoming so (Wæver, 1995).

The concept of “utterance” is often used in works on securitization. As Wæver (1995) explains, “with the help of language theory, we can regard security as a speech act. In this usage, security is not of interest as a sign that refers to something more real; the utterance itself is the act. By saying it, something is done.” Wæver (1989) argued that the social context changes with the utterance of a speech

act, understanding “that language is performative (...) by uttering the term security the previous state of affairs changes” (Balzacq, 2011b: 11). Therefore, “the way to study securitization is to study language that takes the form of presenting something as an existential threat” (Stritzel, 2012: 552). Wæver’s understanding of the concept of speech act is based on the work of Austin (1975), according to whom all statements are speech acts (Wæver, 1989: 42), and particularly on Austin’s (1975) description of illocutionary acts as one of the dimensions of speech acts (Wæver, 1989: 42). According to Austin (1962), a speech act has three dimensions: “the locutionary act (...) which has a meaning; the illocutionary act which has a certain force in saying something; the perlocutionary act which is the achieving of certain effects by saying something.” For Wæver (1989, 1995), securitization was an illocutionary speech act, which he “a bit simplistically [called] the ‘pure speech act dimension’.” Relying on Wæver (1989: 42-44), Kurowska and Reshetnikov (2018) explained that, viewed through such lens, securitization “[did] not depend on the effect on the receiver and, hence, is a matter of force, not truth or actual outcome.”

However, the author did not elaborate much on the contributions of language theory in which he grounded that claim in his book chapter “Securitization and Desecuritization”, which informs much of what has been said before in this subsection. Highly influential, his work constituted the author’s “initial statement on securitisation” (McDonald, 2008: 566). Instead, Wæver refers us to a previous work (Wæver, 1989) where, despite elaborating on how he sees security as an illocutionary act, he uses the concept of utterance without defining it, while identifying Austin’s (1975, 2nd edition) “How to do Things with Words” as a work of reference. Stritzel (2011: 348) makes similar observations on Wæver’s limited exploration of his interpretation of speech act theory.

Haye and Larraín (2011: 41; 43; 45-46; 54) define utterance as “the unit of discourse”, describing it “as an event of becoming; as an active response; as a position-taking towards other positions”; and as an encounter with the other.” Indeed, “each utterance not only articulates different perspectives, but also multiple subjects.” It must also be mentioned that “discourse and utterance do not refer just to the use of language, or the text in action, but to language itself as the process of thinking and speaking, as language practice.” The authors also add that it not sufficient “to conceive of discourse as an event; it is necessary to think of this event as an event of social interaction”. Haye and Larraín note, however, that “the limits of an utterance so as to take it as a unit of analysis” is still “a fresh issue”. The authors are also surprised that “the concept of the utterance seems unproblematic for contemporary scholars committed to discourse theory and discourse analysis.” The question of the utterance, therefore, “appears only as a practical issue when scholars are confronted with the task of analysis concrete discourse, but this task is not accompanied by a theoretical clarification of the concept.” This seems an issue, to some extent, that we also find in securitization literature.

Wæver (1995) states that the speech act is an instrument that elites/power holders/state representatives (terms used interchangeably) use to raise “a specific challenge to a principled level, thereby implying that all necessary means would be used to block that challenge.” In addition to the

speech act, the author explains that “one must have a sufficiently repressive apparatus, ideological cohesion in the core group” that mobilizes the threat, as well as “the legitimacy to use it that avoids the escalation of public opposition.” It must also be mentioned that, as result of a threat being, in such a context, “existential and a challenge to sovereignty”, state action would have no limits. According to Wæver (1989), “the invocation of “security” is only possible because it invokes the image of what would happen if it did not work. (...) The securitizer is raising the stakes and investing some (real) risk of losing (general) sovereignty in order to fence of a specific challenge.”

The author also expresses his disagreement with the “traditional progressive” literature whereby “the more security, the better” (Wæver, 1995), furthering a different take. According to him, “security” describes a circumstance in which there is a security problem, leading to the execution of some measure as a response. Insecurity, on the other hand, signifies a context where there is no response to a security problem²⁸. If the security problem does not exist, however, it is irrelevant to talk about security. Therefore, Wæver abandons the idea “that security is, necessarily, a *positive* phenomenon” arguing that the opposite approach “eliminates other, potentially more useful ways of conceptualizing the problems being addressed.” He thus stresses that processes of securitization and desecuritization should be the main focus of the field of security studies (Wæver, 1995).

According to Wæver (1995), the “use of the security label does not merely reflect whether a problem *is* a security problem, it is also a political choice”. A decision is made to securitize an issue, and that illocutionary act is prone to generate specific responses to deal with the issue, which are “threat, defense, and often state-centered solutions”. The author also emphasizes that the concept of security is linked to “us vs. them thinking” as well as “the general tradition of viewing threats as coming from outside a state’s own borders” (Moss, 1992 as cited in Wæver, 1995).

We mentioned above that even though the discussion above has taken place in a state-centric context, it is possibly to de-link the discussion on security from the state, and apply it similarly to the societal sector (Wæver, 1995). This brings us into the sphere of societal security²⁹, whose concept the author claimed to have been the target of growing interest in the last few years, albeit more so in Europe. Society security in light of the speech act approach entails the “study of the mechanisms leading to securitization of certain issues related to identity”, looking to discern how and when society handles, in security terms, those problems. Wæver considers that “society is about *identity*, the *self-conception* of communities, and those individuals who identify themselves as *members* of a particular community,” and share amongst them certain practices or ideas (Wæver, 1995).

²⁸ For instance, “societal insecurity exists when communities of whatever kind define a development or potentiality as a threat to their survival as a community.” It can also be comprehended as “identity insecurity” (Buzan, Wæver & Wilde (1998: 119-120).

²⁹ According to Buzan, Wæver & Wilde (1998: 119-120), societal security is about large, self-sustaining identity groups; what these are empirically varies in both time and place. In contemporary Europe (...) these groups are mainly national, but in other regions religious or racial groups have more relevance. The concept could also be understood as ‘identity security’.

The author and his collaborators propose that the security field be reconceptualized “in terms of the duality of *state* security and *societal* security”. They saw state and security as the “two organizing centers for the concept of security”, standing between the individual and international levels (which influence state/societal security). The conceptual focus for state security is sovereignty – a state cannot survive as such without it. For society security, identity is the decisive factor – societies worry that once they lose their identity, they lose the ability to live as themselves as well. Therefore, the state looks to defend itself against threats to sovereignty, and the society against threats to identity. While societies “take care of *their* security in *their* own way”, Wæver explains that they might still decide “to call upon the state for defense”. In any case, the author sees the territorial state and society as rarely covering the same area and therefore grants them a differentiated status “as referent objects³⁰ of security” (Wæver, 1995).

The study of societal security through the speech act securitization approach raises a problem, however: who utters the speech act? How can a society securitize an issue if it does not speak and “is only there to be spoken about? After all, societies do not possess formal representation through institutions and thus “anyone can speak on behalf of society and claim that a security problem has appeared.” Wæver addresses this issue by stating that societies are “highly differentiated, full of hierarchies and institutions” with some actors in privileged positions “to speak on behalf of “their” societies.” While we cannot guess who will come forward as securitizer, we can still see, albeit in retrospection, how legitimized they were when striving to be the voice of society – defending “certain proclaimed identities, while the state continues to pursue the separate agenda of defending its sovereignty.” Still, there are usually “no legitimized, uncontested representatives of society: There is the state or there is nothing.” Usually, societal “voices” are “controversial and only partly accepted” and the state generally constitutes an obstacle to actors determined on assuming that role. The author states that while the society security should feel natural to Europeans, who “grant the state its own right to exist” and look at society “as a collective, as more-than-the-sum-of-the-parts”, Americans may perceive the concept as odd. The argument being that the state, in the United States, is seen as minimalist, without a reason of being, and with legitimacy “only when and if it serves – and defends – society” (Wæver, 1995).

2.3.3. Challenges to the Copenhagen school

Bill McSweeney is a harsh critic of the work of the CS, and his arguments generated a debate revolving around “different views on identity construction and on how to define the reference objects of societal

³⁰ According to Buzan, Wæver & Wilde (1998: 36; 123), the referent object is whatever larger groups carry the loyalties and devotion of subjects in a form and to a degree that can create a socially powerful argument that this ‘we’ is threatened.” In a nutshell, “they are the things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival.”

security” (Schmitt, 2009: 35). McSweeney (1996: 83) argues that the CS’ concept of society, drawn from Giddens (1984: 164-165), and defined as “a clustering of institutions combined with a feeling of common identity” (Wæver et al., 1993: 21) “loses all touch with fluidity and process, resulting in a near-positivist conception of identity (McSweeney, 1996: 83). McSweeney rejected such objectivist view of identity and society, and the latter’s treatment as a “social fact immune to process inquiry, whose values and vulnerabilities are as objective as those of the state”. The CS sees society as an independent variable; McSweeney argues that it is dependent (McSweeney, 1996: 84; 90).

The CS sees identity as “a property of society, not to be confused with human beings”, emerging as a result of the way people and institutions interact within society, “fixed and incorrigible like the computer output of a complex arithmetic.” Therefore, “society describes identity, and society is constituted by identity.” McSweeney argues, contradictory, that collective identity results from process and negotiation; “we are who we want to be, subject to the constraints of history” and “we chose from an array of possible identities”. Researchers should focus instead, he says, on “how individual choices come to cohere in a clear or vague collective image, and how disputes about identity, with security implications, are settled.” As things stand, the CS is incapable of analyzing and addressing disputes caused by sub-groups of society whose views differ from the majority, since it does not look at sub-societal levels (McSweeney, 1996: 84; 87; 89-90).

Another issue raised by McSweeney (1996: 84) was the CS’ choice of identity “from among the countless values which people are concerned about” and fall “under the umbrella of societal security.” He argues that identity should not be assumed, and that it necessary to research “which of the indeterminate values susceptible to threat (...) may be vulnerable and require security. The author also considered questionable the continuity of Wæver et al. (1993) (IMNSAE) with Buzan’s seminal work (1991) (PSF), considering that two core ideas of the latter – the concepts of security complex, and of strong and weak states – warranted only a passing reference in the former (McSweeney, 1996: 91).

McSweeney’s challenge motivated a response of the CS by the hands of Wæver and Buzan (Wæver & Buzan, 1997), to which McSweeney (1998) followed with a counter-response. Wæver and Buzan (1997: 249-250) argued that McSweeney failed to understand that there were many right ways to study security, each with advantages and disadvantages. The authors also stated that McSweeney failed to grasp “some handles of the nature of the school”, including what they believed to be the “strong constructivist approach to societal security. They also criticized McSweeney’s implication that scholars were “not allowed to develop or change their positions”, which he seems to hint at when questioning the continuity between PSF and IMNSAE.

Regarding McSweeney’s different criticisms of the CS’ takes on society and identity, the authors (Wæver & Buzan, 1997: 242-243) stated that they strived to “show how ‘societies’ defined in terms of identity could be seen as the referent object for some cases of securitization”; those in which identity, not sovereignty, faced risk of loss due to an existential threat.

According to Wæver (1995), Buzan and other scholars using the “traditional alternative approach” had established the state as the referent object when discussing the different sectors (e.g. military, political, societal, environmental, economic) that the broader conceptualizations of security could encompass. As Wæver stated, this “[led] to ‘societal security’ being understood as the security of a state vis-à-vis its constituent societies” (e.g. whether immigrants constitute, for the state, a security problem). Wæver and Buzan’s (1997: 248) expressed their unease about using the state as a referent object in some contexts. The framing of societal security as merely an extension of state security – where societal threats were viewed as potential destabilizers of state’s social cohesion and identity – “had the perverse effect that a state would feel most secure if some minority could just be put down” (Wæver et al., 1993: 24-25). For instance, Kurdish security and identity should not be ultimately judged by the Turkish state. Thus, IMNSAE contended that one “[should] work with a duality of state security and societal security, the former having sovereignty as its ultimate criterion, and the latter being held together by concerns about identity” (Wæver et al., 1993: 25). They noted “a very long list of profoundly problematic state interventions on identity issues” (Wæver and Buzan, 1997: 248).

Wæver and Buzan stressed that there was a crucial need for a new unit (“societies defined in terms of identity”) to be demarcated so that it became possible to study how things other than states “had become the referent objects for security.” They also argued that if one is to study “only the processes by which identities are formed, then identity never becomes a ‘thing’: there is never a product as such.” Consequently, without rejecting the idea that identities are constructed by way of a series of practices and processes, they suggest that once an identity is constructed and “socially sedimented”, it can become a referent object of security. The authors rejected, therefore, McSweeney’s accusations of objectivism and near-positivism in their “view of identity on society”, explaining that they take, on IMNSAE, a clear constructivist approach to society and, especially, to security. Wæver and Buzan emphasize that they never claimed “that identity is always a thing, and an immutable on at that.”³¹ As they state:

To take identity as a possible object of securitization, one has only to assume that it holds a social power that makes it efficient to invoke it, and that it has a form which makes security discourse possible (i.e., it has a claim to survival as well as a clear image of what non-survival would mean). Usually this demands that the referent has become relatively stabilized in social practice” (Wæver & Buzan, 1997: 243)

³¹ The authors make this point repeatedly as they endeavor to invalidate McSweeney’s accusations of their objectivist/near-positivist take on identity – and thus their “constructivism.” However, even rationalists, as Wendt explains (1999: 315-316), accept that identities (and interests) are not immune to change; only that change happens before the interaction is analyzed. Wæver and Buzan contend that even though identities are “often solidly sedimented” they are also “never fully stabilized.” Still, they explain that what they endeavor to do is to study securitization processes in contexts of sedimented/stabilized/established identities (Wæver & Buzan, 1997: 243-244). Thus, their explanation does evoke the rationalist approach of taking preferences as exogenously given.

McSweeney (1996: 93) argued that the societal dimension remains subordinated to the state in IMNSAE. Social groups and individuals were not the object of the study, existing a deliberate effort “not to humanize the concept of security” (McSweeney, 1996: 82-83; Wæver et al., 1993: 24), so as not to bring it to the realm of individual security and avoid methodological individualism (Buzan, 1991: 35ff as cited in McSweeney, 1996: 83). Wæver and Buzan resist McSweeney’s view that “all security is ultimately individual security and the security of the state has to be measured and discussed on the basis of how it influences the aggregate security of ‘its’ individuals.” They noted that societies possessed unique, inherent attributes (*sui generis*) that cannot be reduced to individual-level characteristics. One did not have to assume an individualist perspective in order to “open up to a world beyond the state.” They also contended that their perspective allowed for the studying of individual security, seeing as they “[were] interested in all action that [fulfilled] the criteria of being a security speech act. However, “[d]oing this in the name of individuals [was] (...) much more difficult than action in the name of limited collectivities or on behalf of general principles.” Most securitizations had limited collectivities, such as the state, nation, or principles, as reference objects. If one stepped away from the individualist/small group perspective, Wæver and Buzan argue that it was no longer problematic to single out identity “above the numerous other values” (Wæver & Buzan, 1997: 244-245).

According to Wæver and Buzan (1997: 245-246) McSweeney indicates that the reason he defends the study of identity as a process pertains to discrediting “as political manipulations at least some claimed identities” with the purpose of “correcting” the latter. The authors suggested that McSweeney’s concerns with their approach are rooted in his apprehension that identity is usually not the underlying reason of conflicts, but instead “an instrument used by (nationalist) elites” striving to “present identities as necessary or innocent”. Therefore, McSweeney wants to “expose the tainted roots of all identities”.

Wæver and Buzan (1997: 246-247) considered that by making those claims, McSweeney indulged in objectivity (exactly what he accused the CS of). Rejecting them, they argue that “security can never be based on the objective reference that something is in and of itself a security problem”. They believe that such a quality is always attributed to something by means of human communication, and hence devised an approach according to which “any securitization always rests on a political choice”. When that is the case, the chances of idealization and pursuit of security as reduces, and desecuritization is made easier. The CS scholars doubt McSweeney’s ability to identify “correct” identities and strive instead at predicting “some consequences of one or the other self-definition due to the way different identities will interact in security mode.” They also stress that they see identity not as objective, but as a choice, a point that they make by stressing that even though there are objective markers such as history, political borders, race or culture at play, it is “the choice of identification made by individuals” what defines national identity.

In a brief counter, McSweeney (1998) addressed Wæver and Buzan’s (1997) rebuttal by making three key points. Regarding his perceived objectivism of the CS’s conceptualization of identity, he maintained his position that societal identity required problematization “as a process grounded in human

practices” (McSweeney, 1998: 137). Wæver and Buzan’s (1997: 243) mere assertion that their approach was “constructivist all the way down” did not make it otherwise in the critic’s view: identity could be an act or a structure, but never a thing/social fact (McSweeney, 1998: 137). While McSweeney (1998: 138) did not defy the CS’ assertion that “the individuals who make up a collective actor can have a sense of common identity” nor that “where that occurs, the identity represents a value which can be threatened and secured.” However, he remained adamant that identity can never be grasped as an object, and thus cannot leave a “sediment”.

Subsequently, the author (McSweeney, 1998: 138) addressed what he perceived to be the misunderstandings on methodological individualism of the CS, whose scholars rejected studying security at the sub-societal or sub-state level due to their understanding that a collective concept [e.g. collective identity] entails “more than the sum of its parts” (Wæver and Buzan, 1997: 243). McSweeney (1998: 139) responded by explaining that methodological individualism can refer to two conceptions of the social order. One of them sees individuals “as atomistic units, or biological parts of the social whole”. The author admits that such a view is useless in social science research and “deprives human individuals of their intellectual property as humans.” The other perspective is subjectivism, which in spite of by no means accepting Wæver and Buzan’s (alleged) objectivism, allows for the reduction of social concepts “without loss to the consciousness and purposes of individuals.” Reiterating, McSweeney rejects the CS’s argument that a collective concept is “more than the sum of its [individual] parts” (Wæver and Buzan, 1997: 243) because it is not a social fact; it does not have an existence separate/external from the individuals that comprise it. The author stated that a collective concept should be centered “on the structural properties of action which are inherent in every instance of individual interaction”. Meaning that McSweeney’s critics are based on the “version” of holism that the CS subscribed to because it denied “the intersubjective (...) dimension of individual or subsocietal interaction” (McSweeney, 1998 :139-140).

Lastly, McSweeney (1998: 140) took on an issue scarcely acknowledged on Wæver and Buzan’s (1997) rebuttal, which concerned the continuity of Buzan’s formulation of weak and strong states in PSF in IMNSAE. Given that Buzan’s conceptualization of strong state was based “on the subordination of sub-state groups and their values, including identity, to the state”, the author once again pointed out that the state-centered thesis presented in PSF was incompatible with the societal identity arguments of the new volume of the CS.

Even though McSweeney issued what was arguably the most notable challenge to the work of the CS, many others were put forward, and Wæver and Buzan (1997: 241) even listed several “good” ones. Lene Hansen’s (2000), for instance, furthered two explanations for the omission of gender in the literature of the CS. The first blank spot was named “security as silence” and pertained to instances when “raising something as a security problem is impossible or might even aggravate the threat being

faced”, and thus there is limited possibility of speaking about it. The second was labeled “subsuming security”, emerging due to the fact that “gendered security problems often involve an intimate inter-linkage between the subject’s gendered identity and other aspects of the subject’s identity, for example national and religious.” That can pose problems to the delineation of the referent object, which is critical, because it is only if the latter is proclaimed to be existentially threatened, that the CS claims that securitization has taken place – hence why the silence of the CS in matters of gender insecurity. Hansen thus stated that the speech act required further research by the CS. In her words: “‘security’ is not only a speech act but embedded in the production of particular subjectivities which then form the basis for what can be articulated as threat and threatened” (Hansen, 2000: 287; 294; 297; 306).

2.3.4. A new framework for the speech act approach

Released in 1998, the book *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Buzan et al., 1998), went on to become one of the most influential contributions of the CS, and was responsible for moving its ideas further into the realm of constructivism (Wæver & Buzan, 1997: 241).

Its authors follow the same line of past works, contradicting one of the two existing schools of thought in security studies (the traditional, which looks to confine the field to politico-military matters), and claiming that security, in international relations, is “a particular type of politics applicable to a wide range of issues”. In this book the authors devised what they described as “a constructivist operational method for distinguishing the process of securitization from that of politicization.” For that effect, they combined the traditionalist agenda with their approach, striving to dissolve “the artificial boundary between security studies and international political economy”, the latter being where “much of the agenda that emerges from the new framework lies in”. The authors stated that they their volume constituted an effort towards ending the debate between the two schools of thought, and that they looked, in addition, to demonstrate the relevance of Buzan’s theory of regional security complex (Buzan, et al., 1998: 195; 239).

A key development of SNFA relates to the understanding that the existential threat, in the field of IR, is a concept that relates to survival, but “can only be understood in relation to the particular character of the referent object in question.” This means that the nature of the existential threat changes according to the level and sector of analysis (Buzan, et al., 1988: 21-22). Herein lies an important development in the work of the CS, and the key for Wæver and Buzan’s (1997: 241) claim that SNFA “is even more constructivist” than IMNSAE: “it goes much further (...) towards opening up many more kinds of referent objects for security”. No longer was the field of security understood in terms of a

“duality of state security and societal security” (Wæver, 1995). Instead, the authors saw now “a more complex landscape of multiple referent points for security” (Wæver & Buzan, 1997: 248).

For instance, the state and the liberal international economic order, or the “nexus of civilization and the environment” are identified in SNFA as prominent referent objects in the economic and environmental sectors, respectively. Still, one has to account for the possibility of finding “a range of referent objects at the unit, subsystem, and system levels”³². At the political and military sectors, the referent objects are usually the state, while for the societal sector, it is “large-scale collective identities that can function independent of the state, such as nations and religions”. The constituting principle defining a threat in the political sector can be state ideology, but just as for the military sector, it is usually sovereignty. Sustainability is suggested by Buzan et al. as likely to be the constitutive principle that needs to be protected in the environmental sector, and the equivalent for the economic sector might be sovereignty or welfare. In the societal sector, we look at identity, and the way it is maintained and constituted: ethnic purity, costumes, or language, for instance, “can all be cast in terms of survival” (Buzan et al., 1998: 22-23; 38; 76; 97; 102-103).

This development was justified by the authors with the argument that it was accompanied by “a way of specifying security as an extreme form of politicizing (in whatever sector) and thus of avoiding the proliferation of securitizations that has tended to accompany the wider security agenda” (Wæver & Buzan, 1997: 241). As Buzan and his collaborators explain, political issues can be non-politicized, politicized, or securitized. The first category takes place when an issue is not addressed by the state, no other decisions are made about it, and there is not a matter of public debate. Politicization, on the other hand, refers to making something “part of public policy, requiring government decision and resource allocations or, more rarely, some other form of communal governance.” Finally, securitization means that an issue is staged as an existential threat to a referent object “by a securitizing actor³³ who thereby generates endorsement of emergency measures beyond rules that would otherwise bind”. Because the underlying understanding of an existential threat is that unless the issue is dealt with, everything else is irrelevant, “actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure” are seen as justified. However, according to the authors “a discourse that takes the form of presenting something as an existential threat to a referent object does not by itself create securitization — this is a *securitizing move*, but the issue is

³² Humankind can be a referent object in the environmental sector at the system level, and also in the military sector at the system level (regarding nuclear weapons) (Buzan et al., 1998: 38).

³³ We can, accordingly, define securitizing actors as “actor who securitize issues by declaring something – a referent object – existentially threatened. Common examples are: “political leaders, bureaucracies, governments, lobbyists and pressure groups.” Typically, their claim is that “it is necessary to defend the security of the state, nation, civilization, or some other larger community, principle, or system” and “only occasionally will actors such as governments or firms be able to speak successfully of security on their own behalf.” At this point, we must also present the definition of “functional actors”, which are “actors who affect the dynamic of a sector.” They are neither the referent object nor the securitizing actor that calls for security in its behalf, but nonetheless, a functional actor “significantly influences decision in the field of security” (e.g., polluting companies can be at the center of processes of environmental securitization, even though they would never be the actors securitizing environmental matters. They are also clearly not referent objects (Buzan et al., 1998: 36; 40).

securitized only if and when the audience accepts it as such.” Endorsement is thus indispensable for securitization to occur, although the authors do not go as far as saying that the adoption of an emergency measure is a requirement, as long as there are signs of acceptance of the securitizing move. Under the right circumstances, any issue can be non-politicized, politicized, or securitized, and the latter two can be enacted by fora other than the state (Buzan, et al., 1998: 5; 23-25). Securitization might entail “only a metaphorical security reference;” as it pertained to its occurrence, explicit articulation of the word “security” was not the determining factor (Buzan et al., 1998: 27, see also Buzan & Hansen, 2009).

Buzan et al. (1998: 26) also raised the question of size/importance. After all, that are plenty of actions that can take the shape of “existential threats that legitimize breaking of rules” on a small scale. As such, the authors propose that we look at “cascading effects on other security issues”; on how the securitizing move impacts “on a wider pattern of relations”. Successful securitization therefore entails: “existential threats, emergency action, and effects on interunit relations by breaking free of rules.”

Watson (2009: 26-27) clarifies (and completes) the explanation on the last requirement. He states that it would appear that the authors refer to the relationship between “the unit responsible for the existential threat and the unit that is threatened.” Therefore, in his words:

“in case of state interaction, securitization would involve a rejection of international, multi- or bilateral rules, norms and laws that govern state-state relations, with the threatened state claiming the right to rely on its own resources (military power, economic advantage) and its own priorities (national security).”

However, Watson (2009: 27) points out that the authors seem more focused in intra-unit effects; they give examples such as levying taxes or conscription as examples of extreme measures, and one of the authors claimed in an article analyzed above that “a security problem is something that can undercut the political order within a state and thereby “alter the premises for all other questions” (Wæver, 1995). Therefore, in a nutshell, securitization generates both international and domestic political effects (Watson, 2009: 27). Therefore, the “side effects of applying a mind-set of security against the possible advantages of focus, attention, and mobilization” must be carefully considered (Buzan et al., 1998: 28).

According to Buzan et al. (1998: 27-28), “securitization can be either ad hoc or institutionalized”, the latter being typically the case in the military sector where there are “standing bureaucracies, procedures, and military establishments to deal with those threats.” The authors also pointed out that “some security practices are not legitimized in public by security discourse, as it is the case in the US with “black programs”, but they point out that even in those cases a reason needs to be given for an extraordinary measure such as removing something from the national budget. It is interesting to observe, in this sense, how even though “securitization is a further intensification of politicization”, it can also be seen as its opposite, given that “politicization means to make an issue appear to be open, a matter of choice.”

Buzan et al. (1998: 30) point out that observers, going back at least as far as Wolfers (1962: 151), have commented that there were objective and subjective approaches to the study of security, and that those two types of analyses might not line up. The first points at something and claims that it is a threat, the second talks about a perceived threat. Clearly, securitization needs to be comprehended “as an essentially intersubjective process” that is socially constructed (Buzan et al. 1998: 30). As the authors elaborate:

“Does a referent object hold general legitimacy as something that *should* survive, which entails that actors can make reference to it, point to something as a threat, *and* thereby get others to follow or at least tolerate actions not otherwise legitimate? This quality is not held in subjective and isolated minds; it is a social quality, a part of a discursive, socially constituted, intersubjective realm” (Buzan et al., 1998: 30).

Therefore, whether a state (for instance) correctly securitizes something or not, what matters for Buzan and his collaborators (Buzan et al. 1998: 30-32) is the fact that securitization “is a political fact that has consequences”, because that process makes it so actors “operate in a different mode” than they would have otherwise. The way other actors in the system estimate how reasonable a securitization is, on the other hand, may be important, because it impacts on how they respond to it. The authors stress the importance of understanding the processes and dynamics of securitization, since it allows us to ascertain “who can “do” security on what issue and under what conditions”. If we can maneuver how actors interact, controlling security dilemmas becomes possible. Building on Austin (1975), the authors posit that studying the features of the threat itself in a relevant exercise, highlighting “the conditions under which the speech act works” (facilitating conditions) (Buzan et al. 1998: 32).

Buzan et al. (1998: 32) consider that the conditions for a successful speech act are threefold: linguistic-grammatical, social and contextual. The first relates to “the demand internal to the speech act of following the grammar of security”. It pertains constructing a “plot” that includes an “existential threat, point of no return, a possible way out (...) plus the particular dialects of the different sectors”: identity, sovereignty, sustainability, etc. The social conditions concern the “position of authority” of the securitizing actor and how likely is the audience to accept his speech act. The context refers to the characteristics of the perceived threats: tanks and hackers, for instance, can both be facilitating conditions, in which case they should have different likelihoods of facilitating securitization. Both social and contextual conditions are described as external, with the linguistic-grammatical being an internal condition of the speech act³⁴.

³⁴ We would argue here that the author’s views regarding the facilitating conditions are exceedingly narrow, and don’t account for how likely an audience is to accept a securitizing move based on current events (e.g. the shift from securities concerns at the global level during the Cold War to regional and local ones after its end, in the military sector that Buzan et al. (1998: 61) note later in the volume), past history of inter-unit relations, or other context-dependent features shaping the decision-making process of the relevant audience.

As we mentioned before, the new framework for analysis developed by Buzan and his collaborators allowed for a securitization approach where “securitizing actors can attempt to construct anything as a referent object.” However, they will be more successful with some referent objects than others, and in that regard, size appears to be a fundamental variable. Individuals and small groups struggle to establish legitimacy as not many will listen, but the same problem may occur at the system level. The middle scale, the one of limited collectivities such as states, nations or civilizations, is argued by Buzan et al. to be “the most amenable to securitization as durable referent objects”, which can be explained by “self-reinforcing rivalries with other limited collectivities” that the other levels lack. The resulting interaction creates strong “we” feelings that lead to the formation of interpretative communities, that is, “social contexts in which principles of legitimacy and valuation circulate and within which the individual constructs an interpretation of events.” As Hellberg (2011: 10) explains, “accomplishment of the securitization and identification practices takes place on a basis of ‘othering’ and perception of the ‘other’ as the ‘alien’ . A state-centered position is not predetermined, but by means of being an actor that is “historically endowed with security task and most adequately structured for the purpose”, it is usually favored (Buzan et al., 1998: 36-37).

The authors (Buzan et al., 1998: 39) indicate that “one can study discourse to learn what referent objects are appealed to and can study outcomes to see which hold security legitimacy.” Most analysis of security is thus focused on “successful instances of securitization”, due to them being the “valid specific meaning of security”. Nonetheless, securitization endeavors that are not successful (or are only partially so), are posited to grant interesting insights “into the stability of social attitudes toward security legitimacy, the process by which those attitudes are maintained or changed, and the possible future direction of security politics.” Other research avenues suggested are desecuritization, and “the effects of either excessive securitization – security dilemmas – or of not securitizing – the inability to handle an issue effectively unless it is securitized.”

After “blending” security complex theory with the broader security agenda, and covering the aforementioned five sectors, the authors (Buzan et al., 1998: vii; 8; 168-169; 196) argue that even though “the use of sectors confines the scope of inquiry to more manageable proportions by reducing the number of variables in play” while still offering an enormous amount of insight, there was generally “too much overlap and interplay among the sectors to warrant treating them in isolation.” Thus, they recommend that researchers “look at all kinds of security and look unit³⁵ by unit, conflict by conflict—and thereby build the [security] complex³⁶ as the constellation of main security concerns (“main” is defined by the actors).” As explained by Huysmans (1998: 500), Buzan et al. started seeing as the goal of the researcher the discovery of “social practices structured according to this security logic – i.e. practices of securitization.”

³⁵ The authors refer here to “legitimate referent objects for security action and those that are able to securitize – the securitizing actors” (Buzan et al., 1998: 190).

³⁶ By security complex, the authors mean the “pattern of mutual references among units” (Buzan et al., 1998: 190).

2.3.5. A second generation of scholars: the philosophical and the sociological approaches

Securitization theory has since been applied to many specific security problems (e.g., migration, avian influenza, cyber-security), having inspired extensive discussion and refinement (Theiler, 2010), despite a bias toward cases of successful securitization (Balzacq et al., 2015: 501, 507), and criticism pertaining to the CS' securitization framework (Theiler, 2010: 105; Léonard & Kaunert, 2011: 64). Léonard and Kaunert considered that the concepts of securitizing actor and audience lacked clarity and precision in their use, which hampered their operationalization. They also claimed that the idea of a single, rather than several audiences, constituted an oversimplification, and that their policymaking impact continued to be unclear (Léonard & Kaunert, 2011: 64). Balzacq (2010: 68) argued that Securitization Theory's theoretical premises had received insufficient attention. There was a lack of consistency in the core assumptions of Securitization Theory, resulting in "a disconnect between the theoretical premises and the method that follows" (Léonard, 2007 as cited in Balzacq, 2011b: 19). By "[reducing] reduce security to an illocutionary act," the CS framework ignored the audience, since it failed to treat it as a "proper unit of analysis. Understanding securitization as an intersubjective process required abandoning "an illocutionary view of security" in favor of "a full-fledged model encompassing perlocution" that allowed analysis "to address the practically important question of what the proportionate weight of audience and contextual factors are in securitization theory." Either analysts viewed security as a self-referential practice and "forsake perlocution with the related acquiescence of the audience (and thereafter the idea that security is a "speech act"))" or they considered security to generate a perlocutionary effect and cast self-referentiality aside (Balzacq, 2011b: 19-20).

According to Stritzel (2012: 553), a new generation of securitization scholars "have challenged and significantly extended the ideas of the Copenhagen School", while still building upon its core ideas. Balzacq considers two models of securitization to exist: the philosophical and the sociological. The first is self-referential and based on speech act philosophy – the CS model. The sociological model talks "about securitization primarily in terms of practices, context, and power relations that characterize the construction of threat images." According to this model, many security issues "develop with little if any discursive design" although discourse is still seen as important to explain their origin. Balzacq stresses that the sociological approach does not negate the CS model (Balzacq, 2011b: 1; 18-22), which is still the reference to some securitization scholars, although Stritzel posited that Wæver's original thoughts "may not be fully reconstructable (at least not consistently)" (Stritzel, 2014: 12).

According to Balzacq (2011b: 1-2), there are three main differences between the two models. Firstly, the philosophical model "reduces securitization to a *conventional procedure*" (e.g., betting, marriage) that is successful when the facilitating conditions – the conditions of success of a speech act, also known as "felicity circumstances" – are in place. By contrast, the sociological model posits that

securitization should be understood as a process taking place “within, and as a part of, a configuration of circumstances, including the context, the psycho-cultural disposition of the audience, and the power that both speaker and listener bring to the interaction.” Secondly, the traditional, philosophical model understands the uttering of “security” as the act itself, since it does something once said – it is performative. Contrarily, for the second-generation (sociological) securitization scholars, performatives are “situated actions mediated by agent’s (...) set of dispositions that informs their behaviors and perceptions.” Balzacq (2005: 188-189) thus insists “that an illocutionary act must be complemented by perlocution” and, borrowing from Thompson (1991), that one must account for “the constitution of the political field and the relation between the field and the broader space of social positions and processes.”

In the CS model, the configuration of a particular context is changed by “the performative aspect of security”, whereas in the sociological approach, “the meaning of security (...) depends on the context of its pronouncement”. Indeed, the context impacts how a securitization move is received, “but also on the perception of those who utter them” (Balzacq et al., 2015: 504). Balzacq (2005: 183) described the philosophical model as having an internalist view on context, which diverges from the externalist view of its counterpart.

Lastly, although the concept of audience is important for both securitization approaches, the models conceive it differently. As Balzacq (2011b: 2-3) explains, “for the philosophical view, the audience is a formal – given – category, which is often poised in a receptive mode.” Its counterpart, however, does not see the audience as “a fully constituted entity”, but one that is mutually constituted with securitizing actors.” In spite of highlighting the differences between the two models, which would appear to be significant, the author emphasizes that they constitute “primarily ideal types”; most studies do not “fall neatly” under either category.

Borrowing from Buzan and Wæver (2003), Adamides (2012: 19-20) explains that “if security in the securitization theory is seen as a speech act, it means that it is the securitizing actors that define security,” which “is what [they] make of it.” Thus, the CS model is self-referential. After all, according to Buzan et al. (1998: 24), “it is in this practice that the issue becomes a security issue – not necessarily because a real existential threat exists” – but because it is presented as such. As Balzacq (2005: 177) notes, that idea contradicts Buzan et al. (1998: 30) description of their model “as an essentially intersubjective process” because it implies perlocution. As Stritzel (2007: 364) explains, the “intersubjective process of constructing a threat” cannot also be “just an utterance.” Balzacq (2005: 177) also defends the mutual exclusivity of intersubjectivity and self-referentiality in securitization studies, claiming that the CS leans towards abandoning the former for the latter.

A proponent of the sociological approach to securitization, Balzacq (2005: 175; 2009: 3) sees securitization as an intersubjective process, thus rejecting self-referentiality all together. For the author, for securitization, “the purpose is to prompt a significant response” – a perlocutionary act. Drawing from a second-generation scholar in Stritzel (2007: 363), Adamides (2012: 37) explains that “the intersubjectivity of the theory lies in the actor-audience negotiations for the representation and

recognition of security threats, whose acceptance lies with the latter. Balzacq et al. (2015: 499) notes, however, that “what exactly constitutes audience acceptance has given rise to many discussions.” The author also advocates the use of his concept of “empowering audience” in securitization studies, meaning one that has a direct relationship to the matter under discussion, and the power to address it (see also Fernandes & Correia, 2018: 106).

According to Balzacq (2011b: 3), through the lens of the sociological approach, we can understand securitization as consisting “of practices which instantiate intersubjective understandings”. Therefore, the study of securitization is compatible, not only with discourse analysis, but also other social science research. For instance, Stritzel (2014: 44) suggests that critical discourse analysis be complemented with “broader sociopolitical and genealogical/historical research”, whereby linguistic practices are conceptualized “as embedded (...) but ultimately *subordinate* to, social practices”. Such an approach allows scholars to “examine the extent and nature of the action (...) following on from the speech act” (Floyd, 2015: 12).

Balzacq et al. (2015: 504; 506-507) also states that it is currently rare for scholars delving in securitization theory to ignore the externalist context, and that the sociological/practice-oriented branch has contributed to the consolidation of that view. By doing so, researchers endeavor to ascertain “how the context promotes, fosters or limits a specific outcome”, contributing to the already considerable development of securitization theory since the early days of the CS. Scholars have also been significantly involved in the exploration of the role of the audience, on the importance of the intersubjectivity, and the effects of the balance of power between actors on securitization processes. Balzacq et al. note that scholars have been leaning towards researching practices in detriment of linguistic utterances and that one of the previously key aspects of securitization – that of extraordinary measures – is now under question. For instance, according to Floyd (2015: 6; 15), the success of securitization should not be determined by whether or not threats are existential, and if the action taken is deemed extraordinary. This is due to the fact that securitizing actors “regularly securitize issues that are not existentially threatening”, while the inexistence of extraordinary measures does not mean that practitioners do not believe that their response constituted in fact a security policy.

Salter (2008) provided important contributions to securitization theory in regard to the identification of the different audiences that comprise “the” audience, as well as their characteristics and their impact (Léonard & Kaunert, 2011: 62). The author separated the audience into four contexts: elite, popular, technocratic, and scientific, adding that “in each of these different settings, the core rules for authority/knowledge (who can speak), the social context (what can be spoken), and the degree of success (what is heard) vary” (Salter, 2008: 322). Salter’s contributions were both praised and criticized by Léonard and Kaunert, who considered the defined settings to be “rather disjointed,” and offered without justification for their choice (although Salter admitted that other settings might exist) (Léonard and Kaunert, 2011: 62-63). Therefore, hoping to address the issues they identified in Salter’s (2008) research, Léonard and Kaunert drew from Kingdon’s (1984) “three streams model,” considering that

“issue of the relationships between these different audiences and the overall impact that those various audiences have on policy-making” remained understudied (Léonard and Kaunert, 2011: 63).

In the streams model, the problem stream analyzes “how conditions become policy problems by capturing the attention of decision-makers.” The audience of this stream mostly “includes the other decision-makers [other than the securitizing actor] involved in the policy-making process [who] (...) need to be convinced that a problem is indeed a ‘problem’” (Léonard & Kaunert, 2011: 65-66).

The policy stream, on the other hand, “concerns the process of policy formation”. According to the authors, “in this stream, policy alternatives are generated in policy communities, which, in Kingdon’s view, are composed of specialists in a given policy area and government positions, some in bureaucracy, some in think tanks, academia, etc.” The audience of the policy stream is composed of specialists and technocrats, who “relate to each other mostly through their common interest in the policy area (...) often interacting with one another and know each other’s ideas, proposals and research (Léonard & Kaunert, 2011: 66-67).

The last stream is the politics stream, whose proposals “have already been discussed in the policy streams; some people may have been convinced, whereas others have not. Therefore, the decision-makers that remain to be convinced will need to be given something in return for their support” (Léonard & Kaunert, 2011: 67). The politics stream is where “the important contextual elements that impact whether a particular policy proposal is adopted, including such factors as popular opinion, interest-group campaigns, democratic transitions and election results, and overall ideological leanings within a given political institution” are described (Oberdick, 2018 24-25). The audience of the politics stream are “the decision-makers involved in the decision-making process and the general public” (Léonard & Kaunert, 2011: 68).

Drawing on Mucciaroni (1992: 460), Oberdick (2018: 25) explains that

“there are three sets of securitizing processes - agenda setting (“the problem stream”), the specification of alternative policies (“the policy stream”), and the selection of a preferred policy (“the politics stream”) - each of which is characterized by a particular set of interactions between a multiplicity of securitizing actors and securitizing audiences. The three streams framework describes the process through which a public policy problem is recognized, a solution is selected from a range of policy alternatives, and the political climate makes the time ripe for policy change.”

Following Kingdon (1984), Oberdick (2018: 25) explains that “the problem, policy, and politics streams generally proceed independently from one another. For instance, the process of framing a particular public issue as a security issue often occurs independently from the specification of policy preferences.” On the same wavelength, also relying on Kingdon (1984), Léonard and Kaunert (2011: 68) explain that

the opening time for policy windows³⁷, which is “vital for the adoption of policies”, occurs when there is “a change in the politics stream (e.g. the political mood) or in the problem stream, but not in the policy stream of alternatives.” According to Léonard and Kaunert (2011: 68), the securitizing actors “already have prepared solutions in hand for problems that still need to emerge” and, thus, wait for the opening time for policy windows “in order to attach the former to the latter.” According to Léonard and Kaunert (2011: 64, 66-68), there are three different securitization processes taking place independently, each with different audiences, and the extraordinary measures can be devised even before a threat is identified.

Between 2019 and 2020 an intense controversy surrounded securitization theory, following the publication of the article “Is securitization theory racist? Civilizationism, methodological whiteness, and antiblack thought in the Copenhagen School”, authored by Howel and Richter-Montpetit (2019) and published in the *journal* Security Dialogue. In the paper, Howel and Richter-Montpetit argue that classic securitization theory³⁸ is racist and, therefore should not be used – its problems, they posited, cannot be fixed.

Classic securitization theory, according to Howel and Richter-Montpetit (2019: 3; 8-10) “is structured not only by Eurocentrism but also by civilizationism, methodological whiteness, and antiblack racism.” Those claims are based, for the most part, on the distinction between “normal politics” and securitization, with the latter being often associated with the context of “primal anarchy”. According to the authors, classic securitization theory casts “‘normal politics’ (and the curbing of securitization) as an achievement of civilization.” They also claim that the theory’s “civilizationist idealization of ‘normal politics’” “occludes the racial violence of normal (liberal) politics.” Classic securitization theory, in the eyes of Howel and Richter-Montpetit, is civilizationist in the sense

“that it believes that there are more or less politically and morally developed civilizations. It identifies ‘normal politics’ with (European) civilization and ‘securitization’ with a return to (racialized) primal anarchy. As a result, it depicts ‘underdeveloped’ civilizations as threats to supposedly more advanced ones.”

Essentially, “[t]he idea that there has been (white) civilizational progress away from (racialized) primal anarchy (...) is fundamental to securitization theory’s opposition between politicization and securitization” (Howel & Richter-Montpetit, 2019: 11).

The authors also consider that classic securitization theory “develops a methodologically and normative white theory”, because since it “aspires to describe not just ‘what is’ but ‘what should be’”.

³⁷ Policy windows are formed when the three streams are ‘coupled’ or aligned (Léonard and Kaunert, 2011: 68). Relying on Kingdon (1984), Léonard and Kaunert (2011: 68) asserted that “the existence of policy windows mostly relies on the perceptions of participants.”

³⁸ Whether “second generation”, more empirical approaches, and the mere use of the word “securitization” were also problematic is beyond the scope of the article, as the authors disclaim (Howel & Richter-Montpetit, 2019: 16-17).

They claim that the theory “does not challenge the ways in which structures of speech acts (like law, civil hierarchy, or international treaties) are and have been central to enforcing a colonial system of global inequality”, therefore reinforcing and supplementing said structures.” For instance, classic securitization theory seeks “to use speech act theory to defend normal politics from (excessive) securitization, including by racial justice movements”, reinforcing, therefore, a white liberal state of affairs. Normal politics are understood “as reasoned, civilized dialogue”, whereas securitization is associated with “a potential regression into an uncivilized ‘state of nature’” (Howel & Richter-Montpetit, 2019: 11-13).

Lastly, Howel and Richter-Montpetit (2019: 13-16) argue that the representations of Africa of classic securitization theory engage with anti-black racism. Again, the distinction between “normal politics” and “state of nature” is key to their argument, as they claim that the latter is tendentially identified by classic securitization theory in several non-Western locations, but especially in Africa. That continent is understood by the theory to “[manifest] both a postcolonial present and a potential degeneration to a precolonial/premodern past”. In that context, the “methodological whiteness” of the CS of securitization theory, leads it to claim that backsliding into a “state of nature” following decolonization in Africa is not caused by “the ongoing extractive violence of liberal powers but [by] the failure of African people and states to ‘desecuritize’.” The past of colonial violence perpetuated by European powers is, according to the authors, omitted or exonerated, with Africa being treated as a burden or as a threat to Europe, with the former being in danger of being corrupted by Africa’s primitive anarchy”.

Howel and Richter-Montpetit’s (2019) article has led to two replies, published in later editions of *Security Dialogue*. The first was published by Lene Hansen (2020), the second by Wæver and Buzan (2020). Hansen’s article addressed the methodological limitations of classical securitization theory, namely how it is “unable to account for those potential security problems where speech itself further endangers the threatened subject” (Hansen, 2020: 381). According to Howel and Richter-Montpetit (2019: 6), Hansen (2000) constructed a racial opposition between “white Western women, who have achieved legitimacy as vocal political actors, versus ‘silent’ subaltern women”, leaving out gendered insecurity in places such as Denmark (where Hansen is from). Hansen is accused of searching for empirical evidence for its thesis in Bosnia and Pakistan, even though the title of the article “wittily [locates] the analysis in Copenhagen.”

Hansen’s (2020: 380) response rejects the claim that Hansen (2000) “elides the study of gendered security problems elsewhere, including ‘in places like Denmark’”, and argues that Howel and Richter-Montpetit’s (2019) article “[fails] to demonstrate that ‘The Little Mermaid’ reaffirms racist thought.” Hansen (2020: 381) explains that “[t]o theorize how subjects are sought silenced by others is not the same as deeming them to be silent.” Case in point, she “did not find and deem Pakistani women to be silent.” According to the author, “Pakistani women are not absent or silent or a homogeneous subject” (Hansen, 2020: 382) and, as she wrote in Hansen (2000: 293), “some women also voice support

for the hegemonic discourse”, and “differences do exist as to the exposure experienced by different groups of women”, meaning that to “construct Pakistan as a uniform, repressive entity rather than as a site of contestation would paradoxically be to write out those forces who fight these very currents within their “own” society’.”

Hansen (2020: 382-383) also notes that the account of mass rapes in Bosnia, addressed in Hansen (2000), was analyzed at greater length in Hansen (2001), and showed that “gendered insecurity is constituted also ‘in places like Denmark’.” Regarding her choice to use honor killings in Pakistan as a study case, the author points out that “[t]he possibility that other cases could have been chosen does not constitute a methodological or theoretical weakness.” Additionally, “The Little Mermaid” article has not made other scholars not study the West – on the contrary, she argues.

Wæver and Buzan’s (2020: 387-388) response asserted that Howel and Richter-Montpetit’s article would “perhaps best be used as a teaching tool for how not to make an academic argument”, in light of the “deepfake methodology it employs”, which “should have no place in academic debates and should certainly not be published in a reputable journal.” The authors argued that Howel and Richter-Montpetit’s errors came in several forms. Firstly, they consider that they’re being qualified as racists for citing, in their work, authors that Howel and Richter-Montpetit judge as racists. This, Wæver and Buzan posit, makes no sense given that Howel and Richter-Montpetit themselves have previously done so. Besides, Howel and Richter-Montpetit’s implication

that everybody should ignore in their entirety the works of key thinkers (...) who lived in times when racism was a widely accepted norm in most societies and who did not go out of their way to contest that norm (...) would eliminate most of the intellectual legacy of the humanities and social sciences

Wæver and Buzan (2020: 388-389) also point out to the existence of several errors in attribution and citation in Howel and Richter-Montpetit’s work. According to Wæver and Buzan, their critics base their arguments, for the most part, on quotations that the securitization theorists consider to be illegitimate. Howel and Richter-Montpetit are accused of citing a passage of Wæver and Buzan’s work in a misleading way, and another segment in “clear violation of standard codes of scholarly conduct.” This is, according to Wæver and Buzan, especially important to point out, given that the quotations “appear at crucial places in the article.” Additionally, Howel and Richter-Montpetit “say nothing about their own methodology or data selection and give no principles for interpretation”, instead making “somebody ‘speak’ by using splinters from them reassembled to produce meaning disconnected from the original texts.”

Wæver and Buzan (2020: 389) also accuse Howel and Richter-Montpetit of not using the appropriate sources on classical securitization theory. For instance, in IMNSAE, a work noted, yet wholly ignored otherwise in Howel and Richter-Montpetit’s article, it is argued “that the disastrous

violence of Europe's history is mobilized in a securitization of 'Europeanness' as dangerous, thus justifying European integration." This argument, Wæver and Buzan posit, defies Howel and Richter-Montpetit's accusation "that, for securitization theory, Europe is the continent of civilized desecuritization threatened by securitization from a dangerous Africa" (Wæver & Buzan, 2020: 389).

Additionally, Wæver and Buzan (2020: 389-390) denounce Howel and Richter-Montpetit's heavy usage of a chapter centered on Africa in the volume *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Buzan & Wæver, 2003), a book "not primarily about securitization theory", and wrongly described by Howel and Richter-Montpetit as revealing "foundational" aspects of classical securitization theory (Wæver & Buzan, 2020: 390). Wæver and Buzan also point out that Howel and Richter-Montpetit claim that the securitization scholars "ignore American covert and counterinsurgency action globally" (Howel & Richter-Montpetit, 2020: 9) even though the subject is addressed in the chapter pertaining to Latin American. In Wæver and Buzan's view, Howel and Richter-Montpetit are essentially saying that "[i]f you fail to display constant symbolic loyalty to a particular form of anti-racist scholarship, your work is racist", rejecting that position (Wæver & Buzan (2020: 390).

Wæver and Buzan contend that Howel and Richter-Montpetit present false arguments, since their work states "that the concepts of securitization and desecuritization are distributed in time and space so that securitization is a threatening re-regression lurking in a backward black Africa, while desecuritization is a reasoned, liberal, civilized dialogue characteristic of Europe." Yet, they "offer no reason why Africa should be seen as constitutive for the theory" and repeatedly state a false definition of "normal politics" as "reasoned, liberal, civilized dialogue" – a conceptualization that "could not work for securitization theory" (Wæver & Buzan, 2020: 390-391) since "the theory needs a clean concept of securitization as a distinct operation that is contrasted simply to the non-securitized (called 'normal politics'), not a substantial concept of 'normal politics' as holding particular teleological (e.g. liberal democratic) qualities" (Wæver, 2011, 2015 as cited in Wæver & Buzan, 2020: 391). Wæver and Buzan (2020: 391) point out that, in Buzan et al. (1998: 24–25, emphasis added), they wrote:

"[o]f course, places do exist where secrecy or violation of rights is the rule and where security arguments are not needed to legitimize such acts. The earlier illustrations were for a liberal-democratic society; in other societies there will also be 'rules,' as there are in any society, and *when a securitizing actor uses a rhetoric of existential threat and thereby takes an issue out of what under those conditions is 'normal politics,' we have a case of securitization.*"

Finally, Wæver and Buzan (2020: 390-392) note that Howel and Richter-Montpetit repeatedly make use of the expression "primal anarchy" in their article, wherein it is described as "racial discourse". The reason for that claim is based on how "most of the contemporary examples of primal/Hobbesian anarchy given (...) are from non-white countries." Wæver and Buzan explain that that primal/Hobbesian anarchy (anarchy at the levels of individuals, which is juxtaposed with anarchy at the level of political

collectivities [i.e. international]) is a staple in IR theory, and that “white” examples of primal anarchy can be found. Thus, overall, Wæver and Buzan contend that “[t]here is no basis for [Howel and Richter-Montpetit]’s overarching charge of the theory being racist other than their assertion that all Western social science is systemically racist.”

2.3.6. Our (sociological) approach: threat perceptions as reasons for action within a broader institutional context

As covered, there are two models of securitization. On one side, we have the traditional securitization approach that focuses on the “power of discourse” and, thus, “on the constitutive effects of discourse on subjectivities, usually seen as broad, historically specific structures or structurations of meaning”. On the other side stands the approach to securitization taken by scholars who have become more interested in “power *in* discourse”, meaning “the sociopolitical resources and power positions of actors, their political struggles and processes of authorization at specific moments in time to create, challenge, change or amend existing meaning structures, potentially establishing new discursive hegemonies in history” (Stritzel, 2012: 550).

According to Balzacq (2011c: 31; 39-40), “discourse is a vehicle of meaning, a meaning which is rarely self-evident but has to be charted by the analyst”; therefore, “discourse analysis helps students to map the emergence and evolution of patterns of representations which are constitutive of a threat image”. The author also claims that discourse analysis is likely to be the most popular approach in securitization research. According with Wodak (2001: 66), one of the leading contributors to critical discourse analysis, discourse should be understood as “a complex bundle of simultaneous and sequential interrelated linguistic acts, which manifest themselves within and across the social fields of action as thematically interrelated semiotic, oral and written tokens.” As Stritzel (2012: 512) elaborates, “[f]or critical discourse analysis scholars, text analysis is always the (insufficient) starting point of one’s analysis that needs to be supplemented by broader sociopolitical and genealogical/historical research.

According to Stritzel (2012: 553),

“scholars post Copenhagen often argue that the performative power of a speech act cannot only be captured in the abstract but needs to be contextually located within broader structures of meaning and power, both synchronically and diachronically. In other words, speech acts need to be related to and analysed within the context of specific social settings and textual fields, as well as broader historical sequences and continuities.”

Thus, in Stritzel’s view, we must pay attention to the social context in which discourse takes place (and of which it is a part of) and address the mutually constitutive relationship whereby context and discourse are shaped by each other.

Agreeing that “the linguistic focus of the Copenhagen School cannot account for the politics at stake in the securitizing move” (Salter, 2011: 116), our thesis distances itself from traditional securitization studies, as we embrace the sociological approach to securitization theory (post-Copenhagen). We see “linguistic practices as embedded in and thus related to but ultimately *subordinate* to social practices: discursive practices are here specific practices within a broader social realm” (Stritzel, 2012: 551-552). We understand securitization as “a contextual process/practice that involves complex socio-linguistic and sociopolitical dynamics” (Stritzel, 2011: 348),³⁹ agreeing with Stritzel’s argument whereby more attention should be paid, not only to language, but also to the sociopolitical dynamics (Stritzel, 2012: 550; 564). After all, as Salter (2011: 116) explained, “the linguistic focus of the Copenhagen School cannot account for the politics at stake in the securitizing move.” As Balzacq (2011b: 18-19) argued, the matter at hand is not whether our approach is “linguistic” or not – most of them, in fact, are – but our commitment to the assumption that securitization goes beyond Waever’s (1989) “pure speech act” – to include perlocutionary effects occurring “within a broader social realm” (Stritzel, 2012: 551-552). Securitizing moves contain calls for action, which both shape and are shaped by the specific context in which they occur and generate policy outcomes when securitization is successful. Considering its research question and goals, this thesis “focuses on features of discourse which are relevant to the purpose or function of the political process or event whose discursive dimension is being analysed” (Dijk, 1997 as cited in Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 18; Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 18). We agree that Fairclough & Fairclough’s (2012: 18) “can have a lot to offer political science and can contribute to answering genuine political questions.” It can allow us to ascertain how threat perceptions of Russia, once discursively presented as security problems, contribute to inform changes in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy. As Buzan et al. (1998: 176-177) argue, “discourse and the structures thereof are interesting in themselves” because we expect them to change policy lines (Buzan et al., 1998: 176-177). Moreover, communication, as we will delve in the following subsection, is an important component of deterrence, and there is a degree of transparency in U.S. policymaking given that several strategic documents are, at least partly, released to the public (or later declassified), and Congressional speeches and hearings are generally available to the public. Additionally, we follow the lines of Buzan et. al (1998: 177) in the sense that we consider that

“[t]he analysis should be conducted on texts that are central in the sense that if a security discourse is operative in this community, it should be expected to materialize in this text because this occasion is sufficiently important (...) The logic is that if a securitization is socially empowered in a given society (when “a” argues that A is threatened by B, this is generally accepted as valid and powerful, and “a” thereby gains acceptance for doing x), we should expect

³⁹ Influential works conforming to that tradition, according to Stritzel (2011: 348), include: Balzacq (2005, 2011d); Stritzel (2007) and Salter (2008).

“a” to use this argument whenever a debate insufficiently important. Since the security argument is a powerful instrument, it is against its nature to be hidden. Therefore, if one takes important debates, the major instances of securitization should appear on the scene to battle with each other for primacy; thus, one does not need to read everything, particularly not obscure texts

We will generally select texts of the nature described in the paragraph above for analysis. However, we note that lower-profile texts can be useful to analysts as well, seeing as they can provide them with valuable insight regarding the perspectives and priorities of political actors that might be concealed in higher-profile communications. Another relevant argument in defense of discourse analysis as a method is the resistance to change that exists in the realm of U.S. nuclear weapons policy, and which requires “[s]ustained senior political leadership (...) and a constructive relationship with Congress (...) [to] overcome bureaucratic resistance” (Ritchie, 2008: 128-129). The work of such individuals (our securitizing actors) is, we posit, more likely to “be expressed, if not codified and recorded, to be shared” and, thus, to leave traces (Farrell, 2002: 60) such as videos, audios, transcriptions, slides, and various documental sources that we can analyze. Threat perceptions of Russia must be, even if contested, a substantially shared belief to influence U.S. policy, which should require some level of dissemination and, thus, leave traces. We want “to locate a phenomenon that is defined by a characteristic discursive move” (Buzan et al., 1998: 177). We also emphasize that we intend to look at motives for policy change, not causes – as per our epistemological commitments. Those motives are reasons for action. Reasons for action are premises, that is, narratives, explanations, and imaginaries in practical arguments. “They are part of the causal powers (Fairclough et al. 2004) of people as social agents (i.e. their powers to bring about change)” (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 80). We argue that, in Securitization Theory, threat perceptions are reasons for action.

We want to ascertain how changes in nuclear deterrence policy are made possible by the existence of threat perceptions of Russia among U.S. political actors. To do so, we will identify such perceptions within the discourses of those actors. However, we argue that threat perceptions, as reasons for action, fail to sufficiently explain why securitization can lead to certain policy outcomes but not others. We contend that other reasons for action come into play, featuring in political discourse, and contribute to determine securitization outcomes by coexisting or even potentially outweighing threat perceptions in the mind of political actors as they deliberate about should be done. A gap exists in securitization studies, whereby other reasons for action are overlooked despite their role in influencing securitization outcomes. We propose an approach that looks beyond threat perceptions to account for the broader context of action in which threat perceptions emerge, the goals pursued and the values underlying them, the potential consequences of certain actions, how those premises relate to one another, and the different normative priorities assigned to them by political actors as they deliberate which course of action (including inaction) they should propose/support. Additionally, we will consider the non-

discursive context, particularly institutional, in which securitization occurs in the United States and in the specific realm of nuclear deterrence policy. This local and policy-specific context can complement our explanation of policy outcomes by giving us insight into the institutional constraints faced by political actors, considering the different and varying powers of securitizing actors and audience members in the United States.

Overall, we can understand deterrence as a potential (policy) outcome of securitization. Within a local and policy-specific institutional context, threat perceptions may emerge among certain political actors. Those threat perceptions are weighed against other reasons for action by policymakers and other relevant individuals in the decision-making process before they arrive at a policy recommendation. That recommendation could be a nuclear deterrence policy, which may have been informed by threat perceptions, but also other reasons, and whose enactment (or not) will depend on the degree of support it received among audience members, but potentially also the relative power of its supporters vis-à-vis its opponents.

2.4. Deterrence Theory

2.4.1. Deterrence as an outcome of securitization

Building upon Mazarr (2018: 2), we understand deterrence as “the practice of discouraging or restraining someone (...) from taking unwanted actions.” It is “an effort to stop or prevent an action.” This definition does not stress the idea of stopping or preventing a potential adversary from launching a nuclear attack. The reason is that, as Morgan (1977: 40-43) explained, “there are not many pure deterrence situations;” that is, where “an attack is (...) a serious, near-term possibility.” It would be more adequate to look at the post-Cold War deterrence situation between Washington and Moscow as one where “instead there is rivalry, hostility (...), perhaps an arms race.” As the author notes, outside of “pure deterrence” situations, threats may be issued not to prevent an attack, but a certain capability deployment by another party. The response to “a rather vague ‘resort to force’” where there is not much of a concern about a specific form of attack might be preparedness involving armed forces, capability modernization, changed contingency plans, and other actions. Since we do not expect the U.S.-Russian strategic relationship to be marked by pure nuclear deterrence situations, where one party believes the other to be planning a nuclear attack, but instead by more vague concerns about nuclear weapons use, rivalry, hostility and arms races, we adopted a broader conceptualization of deterrence that is more suited to a study where we do not anticipate political actors to perceive U.S.-Russian relations to be on the brink of descending into “pure deterrence” situations, as it was the case during the Cold War.

The authors we relied on above highlighted that deterrence can be viewed as a practice, but also as a situation. In addition to understanding deterrence as a state of affairs that extends beyond the

immediate context of crises, we also view it as a situation arising as result of a “complex political process” of securitization. Rather than “a confrontation between two small decision-making units,” it can involve “whole nations governed by democracy” (Delpech, 2012: 18).

Looking at deterrence through the lens of securitization theory, we can see it as a state-of-affairs occurring following successful securitization of a threat. It is the outcome of securitization, whereby a decision is made by a (deterrer) state to act, informed by perceptions of a threat. In acting, the deterrer may aim to achieve various goals, but the core purpose (to which “intermediate” goals may lead or contribute to) is preventing or stopping undesirable behavior from an adversary. Those policies are believed, by political actors, to affect the likelihood of a potential adversary using nuclear weapons. They are, thus, nuclear deterrence policies, aimed at moving one from a situation in which a threat exists to one where the threat was further mitigated or stopped. Those policies, as outcomes of securitization ultimately aim to transform a current deterrence situation – i.e., a context in which undesirable action is possible (even if highly improbable) or occurring – into a future deterrence situation – i.e., one in which undesirable action is less likely or stopped. In deciding what should be done in light of a threat, political actors may strive for a new (future) deterrence situation, which nuclear deterrence policies – the (policy) outcomes of securitization – may be anticipated to deliver.

This understanding defies the notion of deterrence as rather straightforward, even if, in the words of Morgan (2003: 1-2), deterrence is “as old as the organized practice of war”, “practiced by nearly all societies and cultures at one level or another” and rested “on a simple but profound paradoxical insight: the ability to harm can be used to prevent harm.” While that may be the case in some social contexts, we posit that, in international politics (where deterrence is also an old practice [Morgan, 2003: 1]), deterrence is the outcome of a policy process – one of securitization. Threat perceptions may lead to a decision-making process where a deterrence policy is presented and chosen as the course of action to pursue, and whose enactment is expected to produce a new state of affairs vis-à-vis the perceived threats, namely one where they are mitigated or resolved.

Deterrence is different from compellence. Whereas the former is concerned with stopping or prevent an action, the latter “is an effort to force an actor to do something.” However, this study places compellence under the umbrella of deterrence since, as explained by Morgan (2003: 2), “[t]he distinction between the two is quite abstract; in confrontations they are often present together and virtually indistinguishable.” Morgan’s view is shared by Sperandei (2006: 254, 279), who argued that “a wide range of points of contact” exist between the two concepts, identifying a “consistency between such closely connected and interdependent sequential policies as deterrence and compellence.” Thus, in this study, deterrence also encompasses the practice of forcing an actor to do something they were not previously doing or to stop doing something undesirable (Mazarr, 2018: 2; Morgan, 2003: 2).

In addition to being understood as a practice or a situation, deterrence can also be understood as a tactic; as “one policy option, sometimes useful and sometimes not and never the sole recourse” (Morgan, 2003: 11), that is, “a modest component within a larger strategy” (Morgan, 2005: 55). But

deterrence can be “elevated to a strategy” as well, in which case it can be “viewed as suitable on its own for security”. In that fashion, “[d]eterrence strategy refers to the specific military posture, threats, and ways of communicating them that a state adopts to deter” (Morgan, 2003:8-11). According to Filippidou (2020: 6-7), when elevated to strategy, deterrence aims at containing a conflict, while deterrence used as a tactic may aim at solving a prolonged conflict. Deterrence as strategy becomes “not just part of what the deterring side does, but also part of what the deterring side is” (Lupovici, 2016 as cited in Filippidou 2020: 6). Deterrence has also been described as “a critical component of security for the international system.” According to Morgan, during the Cold War, “deterrence by the superpowers and their blocs was “gradually developed further into *cooperative security management* for the global international system”. Interactions between the deterrence postures of the United States and the U.S.S.R. created a “deterrence regime” which both limited their actions and pressed them to cooperate in order to better manage said regime. This was also true for their allies (Morgan, 2003: 4; 8; 11).

Freedman (1996 as cited in Morgan, 2003: 3) hypothesized that, if it had not been for the Cold War and for nuclear weapons, deterrence would have not become more than an “occasional stratagem”. Instead, it “became a distinctive way of pursuing national security and the security of other states or peoples”: a comprehensive, elaborate strategy “that touched, shaped, and coordinated many policies and activities. It came to seem intrinsic to international politics.” Deterrence, viewed as a *national* strategy, provided the foundation for a theory of deterrence (and was the focal point of the theory). Different deterrence strategies would then “vary in how they operationalize key concepts and precepts of the theory”. Development of a deterrence theory became a necessary endeavor, as would provide governments with a framework that could assist them in their decision-making (Morgan, 2003: 4; 8). However, Morgan (2003: 39) argued that “real understanding of how deterrence might work was slow to develop”, with American and Soviet armed services treating nuclear weapons as merely more powerful conventional weapons “well into the 1950s”. This view is corroborated by Jervis (1979: 291), who posited that the ideas present in the first wave of deterrence literature did little to shape security policy at the time.

2.4.2. Origins, core concepts, theoretical criticism, and categories of deterrence

According to Freedman and Michaels (2019, pp. 1-3), nuclear strategy is a product of the study of radioactivity and of the invention of “flying machines.” The late 19th-century study of radioactivity examined emissions from unstable isotopes, revealing that atoms of the same chemical element (i.e., with the same number of protons) could vary in the number of neutrons. Those unstable variations were named isotopes. In 1939, it was discovered that bombarding uranium with neutrons caused the atom to split into two smaller, lighter parts, a process known as nuclear fission. This reaction released a massive amount of energy and free neutrons, which could trigger further fission in other uranium atoms, creating

a self-sustaining chain reaction necessary for an explosion. Plutonium was similarly fissile (Atomic Heritage Foundation, n.d.a, n.d.b).

The first nuclear test in July 1945 in New Mexico demonstrated this power, enabling the U.S. to deploy atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, effectively ending WWII. Intended initially as a countermeasure against a German nuclear program, the atomic bomb was ultimately used to force Japan's rapid surrender while minimizing American casualties. Delivered via bomber aircraft, these strikes exemplified "strategic bombardment," a doctrine emphasizing the bombardment of socio-economic targets to undermine enemy morale and production (Freedman & Michaels, 2019, pp. 4-15, 17-29). The bombings underscored a shift in warfare from direct combat to mass destruction, as theorized by Hart during WWII (Hart, 1946, cited in Freedman & Michaels, 2019, p. 32). The atomic bomb validated strategic bombardment doctrine, with theorists prioritizing offensive action and overwhelming force, primarily via piloted aircraft, then considered the most accurate means of nuclear delivery (Freedman & Michaels, 2019, pp. 35-47).

Modern deterrence theory emerged from the "human and political carnage" of World War I and matured as WWII ended, reflecting the dominance of realism in IR (Quackenbush & Zagare, 2016, pp. 1-2). The onset of the Cold War heightened interest in deterrence, because its role in international politics, particularly at the global level, promised to be critical" (Morgan, 2003, p. 1), and literature on deterrence had since expanded drastically (Lupovici, 2010, p. 706). The existential stakes of the Cold War necessitated continuous deterrence to prevent nuclear holocaust (Morgan, 2003: 8). As Jervis (1979, p. 290) noted, deterrence literature developed rapidly due to both two nuclear superpowers perceiving the other as "highly aggressive."

Morgan (1977, p. 23) considered deterrence theory a decision-making framework designed to inform strategies that shape government actions. After the advent of nuclear weapons, deterrence evolved into a central strategy, coordinating policies and activities between the United States and the U.S.S.R., becoming an intrinsic feature of international politics (Morgan, 2003, pp. xvi, 3-4).

Morgan (2003: 8-10) posited that the main elements of deterrence theory were "the assumption of a very severe conflict, the assumption of rationality, the concept of a retaliatory threat, the concept of unacceptable damage, the notion of credibility, and the notion of deterrence stability."

Morgan argued that the intensity of the Cold War is crucial to understand the development of deterrence theory – the war was "total and ultimate, with the future of the world at stake". The conflict had a great impact on deterrence theory, which was intended to help states navigate its challenges. The stakes were perceived as existential, with both sides viewing the struggle as a contest over the future of the world. War was regarded as a persistent possibility, and each adversary believed that the other would not hesitate to initiate conflict if a decisive opportunity for success emerged.

The assumption of rationality is central to deterrence theory – influenced by realist thinking – positing that actors make decisions by calculating costs and benefits to maximize utility. Rationality ensures that both the Defender and the Challenger are capable of logical decision-making, which is

essential for deterrence to function. Deterrence theory was meant to prescribe; “to help decision-makers understand what a rational actor would do.” According to Morgan rational decision-making involves gathering information, evaluating options, and selecting the course of action that offers the greatest gain or least loss (Morgan, 2003, pp. 11–12).

Retaliatory threats are another cornerstone of deterrence theory. These threats aim to dissuade potential challengers by signaling the likelihood of severe consequences should they initiate conflict. In nuclear deterrence, the retaliatory threat often involves the promise of massive destruction, ensuring that any attack would be met with overwhelming force. The credibility of these threats is crucial; they must be perceived as both feasible and rational to carry out. The concept of unacceptable damage is closely tied to retaliatory threats and gave rise to the question of how much harm would suffice to deter a rational adversary. Rationality suggested that deterrence required threatening harm significant enough to outweigh the benefits of aggression. Nuclear weapons simplified this calculation by promising catastrophic destruction presumed unacceptable to any rational government. In a nuclear context, unacceptable damage typically refers to the complete destruction of the adversary’s society or military capabilities. This level of destruction serves as a powerful deterrent, as even the possibility of such an outcome is sufficient to dissuade rational actors from initiating hostilities. However, lower levels of response presented challenges in determining what constituted unacceptable harm. This ambiguity underscored the difficulty of operationalizing the concept effectively (Morgan, 2003, pp. 13-15).

Credibility is another core element of deterrence. For threats to deter effectively, adversaries must believe that they will be carried out if provoked. Credibility depends on a state’s demonstrated capabilities and its perceived willingness to follow through on its commitments to carry out the threat. As Morgan notes, the perception of credibility is often shaped by past behavior and the clarity of a state’s strategic communication. However, achieving credibility can be challenging, as overreliance on threats may lead to unintended escalation or provoke adversaries to test resolve (Kaufman, 1954 as cited in Morgan, 2003, pp. 4; Morgan, 2003, pp. 15–16).

Lastly, stability in deterrence refers to the conditions under which neither side feels compelled to act preemptively out of fear of being attacked first. Stability is particularly relevant in mutual deterrence scenarios, where both parties possess second-strike capabilities. Ensuring stability involves minimizing incentives for preemptive attacks and avoiding misunderstandings or miscalculations that could lead to accidental escalation. Arms control agreements and communication mechanisms have been instrumental in promoting stability by addressing vulnerabilities and reducing risks of unintended conflict (Morgan, 2003, pp. 20–22).

Despite its prominence, the explanatory value of deterrence theory remained debated. Classical deterrence theory, a leading framework in the study of interstate conflict, assumes that credible and capable threats can prevent conflict initiation and escalation (Zagare & Kilgour, 1998, p. 59). Developed in the bipolar post-WWII international system, classical deterrence theory has dominated deterrence

literature for decades, though its assumptions vary significantly among theorists (Zagare, 1996, p. 366; Quackenbush, 2011, pp. 743–744).

The "game of Chicken" is a central model in classical deterrence theory (Jervis, 1979, p. 291; Zagare & Kilgour, 2000, pp. 17–18). A Challenger seeks to alter the status quo (i.e., to defect), and the Defender must decide whether to concede or resist. This dynamic reveals a paradox: if concession is preferable to conflict, the Challenger may always attack, leading to deterrence failure. Classical deterrence theory suggests ways to solve the paradox. For instance, a Defender can "make an irrevocable commitment to a hard-line strategy", that is, burning bridges in order to eradicate "the ability to back down even though that would be the preferred alternative" and then communicate that resolve to the Challenger. However, this option requires the defender to make an irrational choice or at least to "feign irrationality". The second solution advanced by classical deterrence theorists is to make "threats that leave something to chance", which allow the "Defender to circumvent the problem of irrational action" (Quackenbush, 2011: 744-745; 749). This is done means of a threat to act in such a way "that raises the risk that the situation will go out of control and escalate to a catastrophic nuclear exchange", a plan that is grounded on "the risk of accidental or inadvertent escalation to nuclear war" (Powell, 2003: 89-90).

Critiques of classical deterrence theory are extensive. Jervis (1979, pp. 296–299) criticized its ethnocentric assumptions, which project Western strategic thinking onto all states. Lebow and Stein (1989, pp. 208–210) challenged the theory's predictive validity and strategic utility, asserting that its assumptions about rationality and risk-proneness are often empirically unfounded. They noted that deterrence theories presume defenders can manipulate challengers' cost-benefit calculations through threats, but empirical evidence suggests threats may fail or even incentivize challenges among risk-prone actors. Lebow and Stein also highlighted the theory's inability to account for cases where challengers proceed despite high expected costs and low probabilities of success, as in Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. They argued that deterrence theory omits critical factors such as economic and political pressures that influence decision-making. The theory's focus on manipulating costs and probabilities neglects these broader variables, leading to limited scope and applicability. Classical deterrence theory assumes that the actors involved are rational, and thus fails to address how leaders form preferences and identify options during crises. The assumption that leaders are risk-prone gain maximizers overlooks the political factors and psychological pressures influencing decision-making (Lebow & Stein, 1989, pp. 208–218). As Falk (1989, p. 64) noted, credibility involves convincing adversaries that a state is willing and able to act, even under conditions of mutual vulnerability. However, reliance on perceptions complicates the practical application of deterrence strategies (Morgan, 2003, pp. 16–17). That was especially problematic in the US, where opponents were seen as "rather primitive, imperfect, or irrational in assessing the will and intent of the US and the West". Thus, doubts on whether threats would be taken as credible persisted, inciting overcompensation and an all-encompassing reinforcement of credibility through defense budget increases, restatement of commitments, increase in the scale of destruction and others (Morgan, 1985 apud Morgan 2003: 16).

Additionally, the distinction between Challenger and Defender is rarely clear in practice. Challengers often act out of perceived vulnerabilities rather than opportunities, contradicting the theory's assumptions about their motivations. Rational deterrence theories also idealize decision-making environments, assuming perfect information and politically neutral contexts that do not exist. While less-than-rational behavior complicates its application, the theory serves as a heuristic tool to predict and compare outcomes in deterrence scenarios (Lebow & Stein, 1989, p. 221-224; Lupovici, 2010: 707). Morgan suggested that rationality might emerge over time as actors learn from experience or institutionalize rational responses through training. Yet, he also acknowledged challenges in applying deterrence theory consistently, particularly in understanding the behavior of adversaries in complex, real-world contexts (Morgan, 2003, pp. 69–75).

Stephan Quackenbush critiques classical deterrence theory and advocates for perfect deterrence theory, developed by Zagare and Quackenbush (2000), as a superior and logically consistent alternative for theoretical development, empirical testing, and policy application (Quackenbush, 2011, p. 741). While classical deterrence theory, along with concepts like brinkmanship and MAD, represents the "conventional wisdom" (Quackenbush, 2011, p. 746), perfect deterrence theory addresses credibility by asserting that threats are credible only when rational to carry out (Zagare & Kilgour, 2000 cited in Quackenbush, 2011, p. 746). It rejects the classical assumption that conflict is always the worst possible outcome, arguing instead that such an outlook undermines deterrence success (Quackenbush, 2011, p. 751).

Perfect deterrence theory incorporates a framework of perfect information where actors' preferences are known. If the Defender prefers concession over conflict following a Challenger's attack, its deterrence lacks credibility, as the Challenger would perceive no significant risk in defecting. Conversely, if the Defender prefers conflict over concession and demonstrates a willingness to retaliate, the Challenger will calculate that defection leads to unacceptable consequences and thus choose to cooperate instead, preserving the status quo. In this scenario, deterrence stability is achieved through credible threats supported by the Defender's demonstrated capability and resolve to carry them out (Quackenbush, 2011, p. 746). Quackenbush (2011, p. 747) emphasizes that credibility varies based on a state's preference between conflict and backing down, marking a fundamental departure from classical deterrence. Although both theories share the assumption of rationality, Quackenbush underscores the distinctiveness of perfect deterrence theory in resolving the paradox of mutual deterrence.

Quackenbush (2006, pp. 533–534) also highlighted the limited research on missile defense systems through the lens of deterrence theory, with most studies grounded in classical deterrence theory, which he critiques. Classical theorists argue that missile defense undermines deterrence by jeopardizing second-strike capabilities, while perfect deterrence theory posits that such systems enhance deterrence stability. A great part of the discussion has been centered on technical and economic aspects of missile defense viability, but also regarding the impact of such a system for international security and politics. Quackenbush (2006), but more so Denoon (1995) and Lawrence (1987) provide state-of-the-art analysis

on the topic, but most of the literature endeavored to determine what were the best missile defense policies for the United States, with a focus on the ABM Treaty and Reagan's SDI (Quackenbush, 2006: 533-534).

Classical deterrence theorists argue that missile defense systems undermine deterrence by jeopardizing second-strike capabilities, which are central to the concept of mutual deterrence. Second-strike capability refers to a state's assured ability to respond to a nuclear attack with a devastating retaliatory strike, even after suffering an initial blow. This capability creates a balance of terror, where neither side has an incentive to strike first, as both would face unacceptable destruction. Missile defense systems disrupt this balance by potentially neutralizing or diminishing the effectiveness of an adversary's retaliatory strike (Quackenbush, 2006: 534, 540). Brams and Kilgour (1988, cited in Quackenbush, 2006, p. 534) and Powell (2003, pp. 112–113) suggest that even a robust national missile defense (NMD) system would not fully eliminate the threat posed by small nuclear states, and might paradoxically increase the likelihood of a U.S. nuclear attack. However, Quackenbush (2006, pp. 534–537), using game theory models and perfect deterrence theory, argues that as NMD effectiveness increases, it reduces the costs of conflict for the Defender, enhancing credibility and reducing the likelihood of challenges, thereby strengthening general deterrence.

Quackenbush (2006, p. 537) also acknowledges critiques that effective NMD systems might destabilize deterrence by provoking dissatisfaction among other states. He concludes that deterrence depends primarily on the Defender's credibility: a "Hard Defender," willing to retaliate, ensures deterrence success, whereas a "Soft Defender," likely to concede, fails to deter challengers effectively. While a risk-neutral Challenger might respond predictably to credible threats, risk-prone adversaries, such as rogue states, complicate deterrence. However, even with risk-prone challengers, Quackenbush (2006, p. 540) asserts that NMD systems generally stabilize deterrence, particularly if dissatisfaction among nuclear-capable states is mitigated. Lastly, Quackenbush (2006, p. 540) suggests that missile defense systems could contribute to halting or reversing nuclear proliferation, further bolstering international security. However, he emphasizes the need for additional research on the broader implications of NMD systems for deterrence stability and international politics.

According to Quackenbush (2011, pp. 749–754), deterrence can be categorized as unilateral or mutual, nuclear or conventional, and general or immediate. Mazarr (1991: 3) highlights another categorization of deterrence: extended deterrence; that is, "the pledge of nuclear use to deter other events, such as nuclear or conventional attacks on [one's] allies."

Unilateral deterrence occurs when only one state seeks to change the status quo, making it more stable than mutual deterrence, where both states aim to alter existing conditions (Zagare & Kilgour, 2000, pp. 133–134). In such cases, the credibility of retaliatory threats plays a pivotal role in maintaining stability.

In the debate over nuclear and conventional deterrence, nuclear weapons were recognized in the 1950s as fundamentally different due to their immense destructive power and the stability issues they

introduced (Morgan, 2003, p. 39). While some theorists argue nuclear weapons are more effective deterrents, Quackenbush (2011, pp. 751–752) counters that both nuclear and conventional weapons can achieve deterrence, depending on credible threats and the ability to deny or defeat adversaries. Historical examples, such as the Korean and Vietnam Wars, highlight that nuclear deterrence did not always prevent conflict between nuclear or non-nuclear powers (Morgan, 2003, p. 40).

Morgan (2003, pp. 25–26) identifies three deterrence strategies: deterrence by escalation, denial, and defeat. NATO's Cold War posture combined conventional resistance with potential nuclear escalation, while the U.S. used denial in Vietnam by deploying military forces to prevent aggression. In the Cuban Missile Crisis, the U.S. employed deterrence by the threat of outright defeat, compelling the removal of Soviet missiles from the island.

Deterrence theory also distinguishes between general and immediate deterrence (Morgan, 2003, p. 9). General deterrence involves maintaining a military posture to dissuade hypothetical attacks, while immediate deterrence addresses specific, imminent threats. Immediate deterrence relies heavily on explicit threats and rapid responses, while general deterrence encompasses broader strategies, including alliances and arms control agreements, to promote stability. Morgan (2003, p. 81) highlights the Cold War's militarized security environment, where general deterrence was elevated to strategy, focusing on preventing potential crises between the two nuclear superpowers.

General deterrence, though less visible, plays a crucial role in long-term stability. It often fails subtly, as challengers probe defenders to test resolve, exploiting gaps between broad deterrence postures and specific threats. Success depends on factors such as credibility, restraint, and systemic deterrence, wherein collective security efforts enhance stability. However, Morgan warns that certain deterrence measures can inadvertently increase tensions, underscoring the importance of balancing deterrence with cooperative conflict management strategies such as diplomacy and peacekeeping, but also arms control agreements, with the aim of maintaining deterrence stability and preventing arms races and proliferation (Morgan, 2003, p. 83-86).

Morgan (2003, p. 22) describes arms control as a branch of deterrence theory that focuses on preventing deterrence failure due to preemptive attacks or loss of control. Unlike disarmament, arms control seeks stability through military force management, reflecting a preoccupation with avoiding instability. Jervis (1991, pp. 167–169, 173) highlights that arms control became viable as U.S. and Soviet leaders recognized mutual interests in avoiding nuclear war, despite conflicting priorities. This realization facilitated cooperation, being grounded in Brodie's (1946a: 62) prescient assertion: "[T]hus far the chief purpose of our military establishment has been to win wars. From now on its chief purpose must be to avert them." Arms control theorists viewed war as stemming from states' failure to capitalize on shared interests, particularly the common goal of avoiding nuclear holocaust, emphasizing that stability provided more utility than conflict (Jervis, 1991, pp. 169–170).

Jervis (1991, p. 178) critiques the focus on vulnerabilities and first-strike capabilities, arguing wars are driven by political objectives, not mere perceptions of weakness. Arms control's emphasis on

military causes of war neglected political tensions, which often fueled U.S.-Soviet hostilities. The American perception of Soviet risk-aversion and expansionism led arms control scholars to avoid examining whether U.S. policies exacerbated Soviet insecurity, undermining the potential for improved relations (Jervis, 1991, pp. 177–178).

Krepon (2003, p. 261) argues that offsetting nuclear capabilities and secure second-strike options foster caution, serving as a foundation for war prevention and escalation control. However, such deterrence may redirect states toward less direct means of conflict, such as “proxy wars and a succession of crises” as substitutes for direct confrontation. Similarly, Morgan (2003: 98) highlights the stability–instability paradox, where general deterrence can make smaller wars seem safer and more feasible. During the Cold War, extended deterrence through alliances often provided superpower clients with resources to escalate or sustain local conflicts rather than resolve them. Despite fears that nuclear deterrence might encourage conventional warfare, Morgan contends that those concerns ultimately proved unfounded.

Despite its theoretical appeal, deterrence faced implementation challenges during the Cold War. Morgan noted that decision-makers often lacked the necessary information for cost-benefit calculations, leading to inconsistent application. Furthermore, while nuclear deterrence helped prevent direct superpower conflict, it also sustained the adversarial relationship and prolonged the Cold War (Morgan, 2003, pp. 32, 35–37). In his words:

The history of the theory and practice of deterrence makes a strong case for concluding that while certain abstract elements of deterrence have something of a universal character, the degree and nature of its challenges and implementation are so uneven and varied, the operational conceptions of deterrence and the specifics of both challenge and response are so elaborate, that it is inevitably lodged in the varying national and political character of conflicts, shaped by the social and cultural details of the motivations, perceptions, and analyses that drive challenges and responses. That’s a long way off saying that deterrence, in crucial ways, is not sufficiently consistent to be fully captured by our theoretical apparatus and empirical studies (Morgan, 2003: 285-286)

In the next section, we cover the history of the theory, which some authors, most prominently Jervis (1979), have divided into “waves.”

2.4.3. The waves of deterrence theory

In “Review: Deterrence Theory Revisited,” Jervis (1979) described deterrence theory as “probably the most influential school of thought in the American study of international relations.” He attributed this influence to the theory’s intellectual rigor, its alignment with dominant Political Science perspectives, and its close association with Realism, a framework appealing to many U.S. scholars. Jervis categorized deterrence literature into three waves, a typology later expanded upon by Lupovici (2010, p. 710) and

Knopf (2008, p. 1; 2010, p. 1), who identified a fourth wave emerging after the Cold War. More recently, a fifth wave has been outlined by some authors (e.g., Monaghan, 2022; Prior, 2018; Sweijs & Osinga, 2021).

Nuclear deterrence scholarship is vast, with numerous reviews offering thematic and chronological analyses (Lupovici, 2010, p. 706) upon which this section draws and builds on (e.g., Jervis, 1979; Trachtenberg, 1989; Lupovici, 2010; Freedman & Michaels, 2019). Jervis' categorizations, while blurred, provide a valuable structure for understanding shifts within this extensive body of literature that has been utilized in several review works. According to Sweijs and Osinga (2021: 526), the first wave (1940's) questioned the effect of the atomic bomb on stability. The second (1950's-1960's) how to defend national security, achieve limited political goals and control the horrors of a nuclear war. The third (1970's-1980's) mainly asked how to achieve an appropriate balance between conventional and nuclear forces. The fourth (1990s-2000s) was concerned with deterring non-state actors and rogue leaders. The fifth (2010s onwards) asks "[w]hat does the deterrence of composite challenges look like."

The first wave of deterrence theory emerged with the end of WWII, as scholars sought to address the strategic implications of nuclear weapons. This wave, marked by informal theorizing, aimed to understand how the unprecedented destructive power of atomic bombs reshaped security and politics (Knopf, 2008: 1; Knopf, 2010: 1). Bernard Brodie's (ed.) *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order* became a seminal work, anticipating the importance of second-strike capabilities, and highlighting that ensuring the possibility of retaliation was vital for security (Brodie, 1946a: 62).

First-wave scholarship, primarily a response to real-world developments, lacked systematization and focused more on strategy than theory (Jervis, 1979: 291; Knopf, 2008: 1). Early contributors like Brodie, Arnold Wolfers, and Jacob Viner emphasized the revolutionary impact of nuclear weapons on warfare and international relations (Jervis, 1979: 291), later conceptualized as the "nuclear revolution" (Walt, 2010). Brodie argued that a small number of atomic bombs could decisively end conflicts, while Viner posited that the potential for mutual destruction might deter states from pursuing war altogether (Brodie, 1946b: 41; Viner, 1946: 55).

The period also witnessed debates about the feasibility and morality of nuclear strategies. Some, like Patrick Blackett, questioned the transformative nature of nuclear weapons, arguing that they were merely a more powerful addition to existing arsenals and that resilience to such attacks could mitigate their impact (Blackett, 1949: 15-16). Others, like William Borden (1946) advocated for preparations to fight and win nuclear wars, introducing the concept of counterforce targeting (directing nuclear weapons at military assets rather than civilian populations to neutralize an adversary's ability to wage war) (Herken, 1986: 18-19).

Despite its contributions, the first wave struggled to influence policy, as its insights were often speculative and disconnected from pressing international concerns (Jervis, 1979: 291). Scholars lacked access to critical information due to the secrecy surrounding nuclear capabilities, which hindered their

ability to delve into such issues (Brodie, 1954: 219). Moreover, civilian strategists frequently criticized the military for being too conservative and focusing narrowly on tactics rather than broader strategic considerations (Trachtenberg, 1989: 307-308).

The second wave of deterrence theory, popular during the 1950s and 1960s, built on concepts from game theory, particularly the game of Chicken, to address nuclear strategy (Jervis, 1979: 292; Knopf, 2010: 1). This wave emerged as scholars revisited earlier works to develop strategies for managing the dangers of a nuclearized world (Trachtenberg, 1989: 308-309). Bernard Brodie, Thomas Schelling, Glenn Snyder, and Albert Wohlstetter were prominent contributors, emphasizing strategies to stabilize deterrence and prevent escalation (Jervis, 1979: 292).

Brodie argued against preventive nuclear war, which he deemed unacceptable to American values, advocating instead for deterrence through measures such as dispersing and hardening retaliatory forces to reduce the incentives for a first strike (Brodie, 1959: 394-396). Wohlstetter highlighted the fragility of deterrence, warning that vulnerabilities to surprise attacks increased the likelihood of preemptive strikes and stressing the need for robust second-strike capabilities to ensure stability (Wohlstetter, 1959: 8-13).

Thomas Schelling introduced the concept of "the threat that leaves something to chance," where controlled risk could compel adversaries to back down. His work demonstrated how nuclear threats could be leveraged for political purposes, even if actual use seemed irrational (Schelling, 2008: 94-121). Snyder explored the balance between deterrence and defense, emphasizing that deterrence aimed to prevent aggression, while defense mitigated the consequences of deterrence failure (Snyder, 1961: 3-4).

Despite its contributions, second-wave deterrence theory faced criticism for overemphasizing hostile scenarios and neglecting pathways to peace or long-term conflict resolution. Its reliance on rational actor models also underestimated the complexities of human behavior under crisis conditions (Jervis, 1979: 292-296). By the late 1960s, the decline of massive retaliation strategies and shifting geopolitical contexts diminished the wave's influence, leading to a search for more nuanced approaches to nuclear strategy.

The third wave of deterrence literature, according to Jervis (1979, p. 289), began in the 1970s, while Knopf (2010, p. 1) suggests it originated in the 1960s but gained momentum in the following decade. This wave marked increased emphasis on verification, focusing on the need to corroborate theoretical claims with empirical evidence and historical analysis, as third-wave studies began to emerge (Jervis, 1979, p. 289). This emphasis stemmed from the recognition that prior waves of deterrence theory often relied on abstract models and assumptions, which lacked sufficient grounding in real-world scenarios. Verification efforts sought to validate theoretical predictions by integrating case studies and statistical analyses to ensure their applicability to actual policy decisions and outcomes. Knopf (2009, p. 47) identifies George and Smoke's *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (1974) as a foundational text, offering historical case studies such as the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Korean War. The authors critiqued classical deterrence theory as overly prescriptive and insufficiently

grounded in historical data, advocating for a more nuanced, inductive approach (Clayton, 1976, p. 1002; Bloomfield, 1976, p. 155).

Third-wave research shifted focus to empirical testing of deterrence theory through case studies and statistical analysis, particularly in conventional warfare. This wave challenged the rational actor model prevalent in the second wave and emphasized the challenger's decision-making process (Knopf, 2010, p. 1). Unlike earlier studies that prioritized credibility and the deterrer's actions, third-wave scholars recognized the importance of concessions, as total defeat for an aggressor is rarely feasible (Jervis, 1979, pp. 304-305). Scholars advocated for strategies incorporating positive incentives and diplomatic initiatives to address underlying tensions (Knopf, 2009, p. 48).

Jervis highlighted contributions in areas such as risk-taking, the influence of domestic politics, probabilities, and systemic errors. For example, American leaders were found to be conservative and risk-averse, particularly in confrontations with the U.S.S.R. Misunderstandings of values, goals, and perceptions were common causes of deterrence failure, exacerbated by faulty communication and divergent self-images (Jervis, 1979, pp. 302-307).

Jervis (1979, pp. 310-320) also explored the limitations of deterrence theory, noting decision-makers' cognitive biases, incomplete probability assessments, and bureaucratic constraints. Domestic and bureaucratic politics often impeded the implementation of theoretically sound policies, leading to unintended messages and failures. The exaggerated emphasis on commitment to maintaining credibility and demonstrating resolve in second-wave literature was critiqued, as scholars argued that this focus oversimplified the complexity of deterrence dynamics. Third-wave researchers emphasized the need for context-specific evaluations of strategic and intrinsic interests, recognizing that these interests often vary significantly depending on the political, historical, and cultural circumstances of a given situation. Jervis (1979, pp. 322-323) argued that understanding adversaries' decision-making processes was more crucial than merely comparing military capabilities – an insight underscoring the need for a more nuanced, context-aware approach to deterrence.

Morgan (2003, pp. 26-30) revisited long-standing assumptions, arguing that the adversarial U.S.-Soviet relationship, rather than nuclear arsenals, drove Cold War tensions. He contended that nuclear weapons were not definitive markers of superpower status and critiqued the obsession with preemptive capabilities. Instead, he highlighted the importance of understanding political motivations and constraints.

Regarding the central debates in deterrence theory literature during the Cold War, Morgan (2003: 22-25) considered that there were four schools of thought: the rejection school, the minimum deterrence school, the massive destruction school, and the war-fighting school. The first included all of those who "vociferously opposed to seeking security via deterrence in the nuclear age" and emphasized the limitations of deterrence. The second, on the other hand, focused on the idea that only a few nuclear weapons were sufficient to attain security, as their destructive capabilities would be enough to dissuade from attacking "any government that was deterrable". The massive destruction school saw the threat of

“complete destruction of a challenger (...) and, if necessary, its allies” as necessary for effective and stable nuclear deterrence, to be supported by a vast nuclear arsenal. Finally, according to the fourth school, “what deterred was not the threat of physical destruction so much as lowering enemy chances for military success and political survival”, thus it encompassed plans and equipment “to fight and win at every level”. This entailed prioritization of “preemptive strike capabilities, strong counterforce⁴⁰ targeting, missile and bomber defenses, and a wide range of theater and lesser nuclear capabilities”. The author also emphasized “that each school found the others irresponsible and dangerous”, and in spite of sharing “a general conception of what deterrence was all about”, there was no consensus between them regarding what constituted unacceptable damage, how to measure and maintain credible deterrence, “the nature of the stability problem, and the role of rationality”.

Despite significant contributions, deterrence theory continued to grapple with fundamental questions about its effectiveness and the mechanisms by which deterrence strategies influence state behavior and decision-making processes. These mechanisms include the communication of threats, the calculation of risks and rewards by adversaries, and the implementation of policies designed to enforce or signal deterrence. There were unresolved theoretical, methodological, and empirical challenges, including difficulties in identifying causal links between deterrence strategies and conflict prevention (Lupovici, 2010, pp. 708-709).

Lupovici (2010: 708-709), also explained that formal mathematical models research showed that the way adversaries interact with each other is significantly more complexed than predicted by classical deterrence theorists, and previous insights on actor’s preferences towards the status quo became contested. In fact, addressing actor preference formation was another difficulty in the existing literature, as their interests were, from the perspective of a constructivist such as Wendt (1999: 36) taken as “given”. As Lupovici (2010: 709) stated:

“Thus, the difficulty in identifying the effects of “national interests” on the practices of deterrence stems not only from the facts that they can be understood as social constructions and that they are closely related to actors’ identities (Weldes 1999:3–16, 118–119; Tannenwald 2007:18), but from the fact that even positivist scholars do not agree on how national interests are translated into specific foreign policy.”

The fourth wave of deterrence theory arose in response to new threats, the collapse of the U.S.S.R., and advances in interpretative research (Lupovici, 2010, pp. 710-712). While early deterrence studies emphasized rational, mathematical models, the fourth wave integrated interpretative approaches, exploring the role of language, social constructions, and identity. Interpretative scholars focused on the intersubjective contexts shaping actors’ understanding of deterrence (Lupovici, 2010, p. 710). Realists

⁴⁰ That is, of enemy nuclear forces, to limit damage against oneself in a nuclear exchange (Buchan et al., 2003:41).

extended deterrence frameworks to address terrorism and rogue states (Jervis, 2009), whereas constructivists explored the Russo-American nuclear deterrence dynamic (Johnston, 1995).

Cohn (1987) analyzed the technostrategic language of nuclear discourse, revealing how euphemisms and abstract terminology enabled experts to discuss catastrophic scenarios without addressing moral or human consequences. This specialized language shaped thought boundaries, prioritizing militarized solutions and limiting alternative strategies. Defense intellectuals often used this discourse to legitimize decisions and sustain narratives of control and rationality in nuclear strategy, sidelining political and social considerations (Cohn, 1987, pp. 687-716). Falk (1989) corroborated these claims, identifying nuclear discourse's ideological nature, which systematically excluded alternative solutions and reinforced militarism and hierarchical international relations.

Interpretative research highlighted the influence of discourse on actors' identities and strategies. For instance, deterrence was shown to be socially constructed through learning, socialization, and intersubjective understandings. These processes shaped actors' perceptions of threats, rationality, and security, embedding deterrence practices within broader political and cultural contexts (Lupovici, 2010, pp. 717-725). Deterrence also became a tool for identity validation, as states reinforced their roles as security providers through strategic practices. Such dynamics were evident in the U.S. response to the 9/11 attacks, which were framed as threats to both national security and identity (Lupovici, 2010, p. 718).

Fourth-wave studies broadened the concept of deterrence, incorporating non-military retaliation, such as delegitimization and counter-narratives, which fit into the broader concept of deterrence by targeting the ideological and informational foundations of adversaries. By undermining the legitimacy of groups like terrorist organizations or rogue states and promoting alternative narratives, these strategies aim to erode support for adversarial actions and discourage hostile behavior without direct military engagement. Knopf emphasized the use of discourse to undermine terrorist support bases, marking a shift from nuclear retaliation to diverse deterrence strategies. Deterrence by denial also gained prominence, particularly against terrorism (i.e., through use of missile defense, which could be used to deny the success of attacks), but deterrence by punishment remained relevant, nonetheless. Despite these innovations, fourth-wave research faced criticism for its underdeveloped theoretical foundations and lack of empirical testing (Knopf, 2010, pp. 2-25).

Empirical studies focused on new threats, including rogue states, terrorism, and ethnic conflicts. While research on rogue states and terrorism overlapped, it predominantly aimed to inform U.S. policy (Lupovici, 2010, pp. 718-719). Deterrence in ethnic conflicts, still in its infancy, primarily addressed violence escalation rather than prevention. Existing empirical approaches – quantitative analyses and case studies – remained disconnected, limiting the integration of theoretical insights (Quackenbush, 2011, pp. 754-761).

The fifth wave of deterrence theory, still nascent, has focused on resilience as a complementary paradigm to traditional approaches of deterrence (Monaghan, 2022: 24; Prior, 2018: 63; Sweijts &

Osinga, 2021: 520, 525). Prior (2018) emphasizes that resilience introduces a dynamic ability for socio-technical systems to anticipate and proactively adapt to complex threats, effectively managing “predictable unpredictability” (EU, 2016; Prior, 2018: 64). This wave is characterized by its response to an increasingly complex deterrence environment involving state and non-state actors, cyber threats, and hybrid warfare. It incorporates concepts like cross-domain deterrence, which integrates military and non-military domains such as economic pressures and disinformation campaigns to address emerging strategic challenges (Stoltenberg, 2015; Monaghan, 2022: 13, 20-21, 25). Moreover, the fifth wave underscores the necessity of flexible, distributed, and reactive policy frameworks to bolster deterrence credibility while managing diverse threat landscapes effectively (Prior, 2018: 72, 77-78). “Diversifying the playbook,” Monaghan argues, “enhances the credibility of deterrence” (Monaghan, 2022: 20). In the words of Prior (2018: 77): “the increasing resilience of society, critical infrastructure, and organizations – the product of a decade of resilience promotion in security policies – and the concomitant reductions in vulnerability will deter asymmetric threats by denying threatening actors suitable targets for their attacks.” Sweijjs and Frans Osinga (2021: 525-527) identify several limitations in the fifth wave of deterrence literature. They note enduring struggles to identify deterred and deterring agents and in ascertaining whether a deterrence relationship is in place; the existence of a lack of conceptual clarity about what is being analyzed (e.g., whether compellence included in understandings of deterrence); and gap between those who conceptualize deterrence and technological subject area experts. Still, they believe that “the deterrence research programme in its current incarnation seems to be a blossoming field that continues to expand and grow.”

Methodological Framework

3.1. Securitization success as policy change and the concept of “audience”

There is a lively debate among securitization scholars concerning when securitization occurs. Some argue that it takes place when there is audience acceptance of securitizing moves, others that securitization happens when there is policy change, which is the course of action⁴¹ adopted to deal with the perceived threat (Floyd, 2019: 50). According to Floyd (2015: 3), securitization is successful when:

“(1) the identification of a threat that justifies a response (securitizing move) is followed by (2) a change of behaviour (action) by a relevant agent (that is, the securitizing actor or someone instructed by the same), and also (3) the action taken is justified by the securitizing actor with reference to the threat they identified and declared in the securitizing move.”

Considering that our main research goal is to determine how threat perceptions of Russia explain changes in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy, we consider securitization to have occurred when there is policy change, given our emphasis on decision-making outcomes. Drawing from Floyd (2015: 9), we consider that successful securitization to be “the implementation of security policy into practice.” We link policy change to securitization processes primarily by analyzing discourse containing securitizing moves, and discourse containing the reactions the audience to those securitizing moves.

In a nutshell, we want to unpack the intersubjective processes⁴² whereby a group of actors seeking to influence American foreign policy (i.e., securitizing actors and the audience), “construct” threats and discuss how they should be tackled. That interaction has been described as some sort of negotiation (Léonard & Kaunert, 2011: 60). As abovementioned, we conceptualize U.S. nuclear deterrence policies are what the country decides to do or not to do (Dye, 2017: 1) to deter a potential adversary, that is to prevent or stop undesirable behavior from it. Those policies are expected to have effects on the likelihood of a potential adversary – or the state implementing them – using nuclear weapons. Thus, policy change occurs when a decision is made to implement a new course of action; that is, to do something that was not being done prior to the decision, or that was not being done in the same way. The moment when a policy change occurs is not always clear. Focusing on the decision itself in

⁴¹ Saying that “policy change is the measure adopted to deal with a threat” (Floyd, 2019: 50) means, in our view, to do something that was not being done before, or to add something new to ongoing policy. It requires a decision to act being made, informed by a threat.

⁴² Securitization is an intersubjective process in the sense that it describes “a set of interrelated practices, and the processes of their production, diffusion, and reception/translation that bring threats into being” (Balzacq, 2011a: xiii; Robinson, 2017: 507).

detriment of the implementation of the course of action is advantageous when it is not clear when full implementation was completed. On the other hand, a decision can be reversed before its implementation is completed. Overall, we decided to focus on the date when the decision becomes official; for instance, when a law authorizing or funding a policy change enters into force, or when a treaty goes into effect or is abandoned. However, if there are attempts to reverse the decision after it was made, but before the implementation was completed, the policy change will be understood to have occurred when the final decision was made. In any case, the most relevant for our research is not, precisely when the policy change occurred, but that it indeed took place within an approximate timeframe. The concepts of policy change, policy, course of action, call for action, and action are used interchangeably throughout the thesis.

Guzzini (2011: 336, 339) argued that “if a country’s foreign policy discourse has features that cause certain events to recall earlier threats, those events mobilize a shift in political debate towards a security logic.” He explained that in Western political discourse, a political debate shift toward a security logic entails to make “war as the main organizing principle for thinking foreign policy” (Guzzini, 2011: 339). Given their past Cold War rivalry which encompassed fears of Soviet nuclear weapons use, it might be the case that American decision-makers will refer back to those times when making judgements about how to act and opt for policy changes in the military realm.

The CS has left the concept of audience vague, very undertheorized, and has not provided precise criteria or practical examples to identify it (Léonard & Kaunert, 2011: 59). It has been defined as “those the securitizing act attempts to convince to accept exceptional procedures because of the specific security nature of some issues” (Buzan *et al.*, 1998: 41). Floyd (2015: 10), who discards the concepts of exceptional measure and existential threat as requirements of securitization, defines the audience as the “the addressee of the speech act.”

According to Vuori (2008: 72), whoever constitutes the audience in securitization theory depends “on the function that the securitizing act is supposed to serve,” as well as on the particular socio-historical situation. As Balzacq (2011c: 35) explains, accurately identifying the relevant audience is difficult because “different political regimes tolerate and value different kinds of audiences.” The difficulty in identifying the audience is also compounded by how, in the realm of security practices, the “differences between securitizing actors and audiences are blurred” (Balzacq, 2011c: 55). The audience encompasses different audience groups within in (Léonard & Kaunert, 2011: 58). We plan to address the abovementioned issues by selecting the audience members – crucial for securitization success (Côté, 2016 apud Floyd, 2019: 52) – based on the particularities of U.S. nuclear deterrence policy-making and general principles of American foreign-policy making (see subsections 3.4-3.6).

Léonard and Kaunert (2011: 58) contend that the concepts of “securitizing actor” and “audience” require further operationalization. Fundamentally, securitizing actors are those “who securitize issues by declaring something – a referent object – existentially threatened” (Balzacq, 2011c: 35). They are those who speak “security” (Balzacq, 2011b: 20). Securitizing actors are in positions of

authority (Balzacq, 2011b: 25; Léonard and Kaunert, 2011: 68), a concept that, in Political Science, is traditionally understood as the “legitimate power” of political entities (Bevir, 2007: 159). Some examples of securitizing actors which have been presented include governments, lobbyists, bureaucracies, political leaders, and pressure groups. The identification of the securitizing actors entails a level-of-analysis problem (e.g., individual, bureaucracy, state). The designation of securitizing actor is somewhat arbitrary, because “a speech act is often not self-defining in terms of who or what speaks.” Meaning that while individuals can always be identified as securitizing actors “if they are locked into strong roles, it is usually more relevant to see as the “speaker” the collectivities for which individuals are designated authoritative representatives” – such as parties or states (Buzan *et al.*, 1998: 40-41).

The foreign policy of the United States is influenced by many stakeholders (which comprise our securitizing actors and the audience) who can make or break a policy. Ideally, securitizing actors want “to convince as broad an audience as possible because they need to maintain a social relationship with the target individual group” (Kasper 1990 apud Balzacq, 2011b: 9). While not all audiences hold equal “power over” a particular securitizing actor⁴³ (Balzacq, 2011b: 9), securitizing actors follow how securitizing moves are received by those that comprise the audience, such as the general public, whose opinion “feeds into [the securitizing actors’] own understanding of the ‘problem’” (Léonard & Kaunert, 2011: 66). Therefore, we account for the possibility of securitizing actors changing how they understand an issue, following interaction with certain audiences, which may lead to a variation in how securitizing moves are articulated in the future. And securitizing moves that result from new understandings of an issue may, in turn, lead to new audience reactions. Essentially, we posit that the discourse of the securitizing actors and the audience is susceptible to evolve.

Cavelty (2008: 26) notes that “it remains largely unclear which audience has to accept what argument, to what degree, and for how long.” Therefore, we seek to unpack the “politics of consent,” that is, “the actual politics of the [audience] acceptance” (Salter, 2008: 324) in the realm of American nuclear deterrence policy. To do so means to understand why some securitizing moves find a receptive audience, and what policy change can follow when that happens. We also want to know why some securitizing moves encompassing nuclear deterrence discourse can be expected; or, in other words, what events and circumstances trigger them. Fundamentally, we want to know why and how successful securitization of Russia, resulting in nuclear deterrence policy change, becomes possible (Guzzini, 2011: 336). This will be accomplished, as we explain below, by applying the Securitization Spectrum to our analysis of securitizing actor and audience discourse.

However, as Floyd (2015: 15-16) warns, “there simply is no conclusive relationship between audience acceptance and the ‘success’ of securitization.” Essentially, “the idea of a sanctioning audience (...) does not adequately capture how securitization actually plays out.” The author argued that

⁴³ For instance, a government may be able to initiate a military action without the support of the U.N. Security Council, but usually need the support of the legislative branch (Balzacq, 2011b: 9).

“[s]ometimes the audience’s response to the securitizing move matters; sometimes it does not.” Therefore, “a sanctioning audience *cannot* and thus *ought not* play a decisive role in the ‘existence’ and consequently the ‘success’ of securitization, and any corresponding securitization theory.” Still, “the audience is not always irrelevant and scholars can still examine whether or not an audience influenced securitization in a particular case.” Successful securitization might stem from an intersubjective process whose outcome is decided between the securitizing actors and the audience, but it may be the former are able to act, under certain circumstances, even without the consent of the latter. Given the U.S. Constitution’s system of checks and balances, we anticipate the existence of a sanctioning audience in U.S. foreign policy decision-making. Still, given that the U.S. President enjoys considerable power in the formulation of its foreign policy, he may be able to act, in specific situations, with a considerable degree of freedom, even in the face of meaningful audience opposition (see below; subsections 3.4-3.6). Despite the possibility of the audience playing, at times, a limited or inexistent role in sanctioning the policy change, we strived to find the most impactful audience in our policy area, and in the U.S. since, as Floyd explained, the audience is not always irrelevant. Furthermore, there is a reason why the securitizing actors speak to “addressees.” We argue that even when able to act without audience consent, securitizing actors pursue their support nonetheless. For instance, to receive feedback, to lower the political costs of unilateral action, or as a result of established practices.

Traditionally, security has been defined as “survival in the face of existential threats” (Buzan et al., 1998: 27). A critical approach to security presented a discursive definition of security as a speech act; that is, “whatever counts as security is the product of a discourse process” (Ciută, 2009: 306), whereby “threats become represented and recognized” (Williams, 2003: 513). The utterance itself, as Wæver explains, is the act, and therefore security, because “[b]y saying the words, something is done.” Insecurity, on the other hand, “is a situation with a security problem and *no* response.” According to Wæver, “[b]y uttering “security” a state-representative moves a particular development into a specific area, and thereby claims a special right to use whatever means are necessary to block it” (Wæver, 1995). This understanding of security became known as the philosophical approach to securitization. Securitization Theory scholars perceived there to be benefits in thinking about security broadly; viewing “the concept and the practice of security [as] the product of a more or less loosely defined process of construction” (Ciută, 2009: 305).

A sociological strand of securitization theory would later emerge to criticize the philosophical approach, claiming that “the idea that the audience has to sanction the speech act throws doubt onto the performative power of language.” Moreover, “the performativity of language is limited insofar as it does not, by itself, contain a material dimension” (Floyd, 2015: 9). Balzacq (2011b: 1-2, 20, 24) argued that either one “[forsaked] perlocution with the related acquiescence of the audience” or one agreed that “using the concept of security also produces a perlocutionary effect.” He situated the philosophical approach within the first camp, while placing himself within the second. The author claimed that “if we

want to consider what is done *in* saying (illocutionary act), we need to give credit to the effects of that specific action – perlocutionary effects (what is done *by* saying).”

The sociological approach argued, according to Balzacq (2011b: 1-2), “that securitization is better understood as a strategic (pragmatic) process that occurs within, and as part of, a configuration of circumstances, including the context, the psycho-cultural disposition of the audience, and the power that both speaker and listener bring to the interaction.” We place our research within the second camp as well, wanting to focus on the perlocutionary effects produced by the concept “security,” whereby something happens when “threats become represented and recognized,” and viewing securitization as a process.

In our research, the representation and recognition of threats are viewed as reasons for action. They “enter as premises⁴⁴ in [practical] arguments” (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 86). As Fairclough and Fairclough explained (2012: 4),

“[a]lthough ‘imposing’ or winning acceptance of particular representations (descriptions, narratives, explanations) and thereby shaping perceptions are concerns in politics, we would argue that they subserve a greater concern of political agents and agencies to make their proposed lines of action, their strategies and policies, prevail over others. In this sense, actions have primacy over representations, and representations are subsumed within action.”

3.2. Revisiting Securitization Theory staples: “extraordinary” measure and “existential threat”

If “all policy is policy change” (Hogwood & Peters, 1983), then a government decision to act by means of an extraordinary measure is sure to represent a paradigmatic departure from the policy it replaces, as it pertains to the breaking of rules (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde, 1998 as cited in Floyd, 2015: 3), while a political choice to carry out an “ordinary” measure can be associated with incremental deviation from previous policy (as it “is tantamount to the ‘normal way’” [Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde, 1998 as cited in Floyd, 2015: 3]).

However, literature on policy change has found that, “depending on which period is taken into consideration, (...) over a longer period of time, additive incremental changes can lead to paradigmatic changes” (Coleman, Skogstad, & Atkinson, 1996 as cited in Brutschin, 2013: 81). Moreover, Floyd (2015: 7, 13) argued that actors may disagree in their understandings of what makes an action

⁴⁴ In our thesis, we use the terms “reasons for action” and “premises” interchangeably.

extraordinary, and their views “can also change over time within the same social setting.” The author adds that “empirical evidence suggests that security policy sometimes takes non-exceptional forms.”

The U.S. and Russia have a relationship of mutual nuclear deterrence, seeing as each state offers up its own population as hostage of a nuclear attack while simultaneously threatening the lives of millions of people living in the other country. One might describe such a context as one outside the realm of “normal politics,” given the stakes at play. However, in practice, nuclear deterrence has been maintained for over 70 years between the United States and Russia. The two countries have a long history in that regard, with treaties have been celebrated between them since the 1963 Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. Changes in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy that affect the country’s relationship with Russia may not necessary be perceived as “extraordinary” measures. Moreover, we consider the notion of paradigmatic departure from previous policy to possess a level of ambiguity that is not relevant to the achievement of our research goals. Besides, regardless of the dimension of the threat, we argue that decision-makers might opt for a policy change in the realm of normal politics, deeming it the best way to resolve a situation. Non-extraordinary measures may entail downsides of action as well – just like extraordinary measures. Wæver’s claim that a foundational idea in Securitization Theory was how securitization has consequences; that there is a price to pay (OpenLearn from the Open University, 2014), could apply, we argue, to all kinds of measures. How grave those consequences are – we also point out – is subjective as well.

The most important contributions that Securitization Theory brings to our research are the ideas of threat perceptions being reasons for action that lead securitizing actors to call for changes in policy. And that policy change ensues if the audience, sharing those threat perceptions, agrees to act in the way the securitizing actors proposed. This is the Securitization Theory apparatus that we apply to our specific case. Securitization Theory’s analytic framework, capable of practical application, have made it a useful tool for conducting empirical research. That has been described as one of its greatest appeals and reason for its success (Balzacq et al., 2014: 1).

Whether such change is extraordinary does not concern our research goals and may not apply to all instances of change in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy. Thus, we do not seek to qualify just how “extraordinary” or “normal” a nuclear deterrence policy is. What is important is that a need to act is perceived to exist based on a threat, which leads to a certain type of change and not a different kind of change – regardless of how it is qualified or perceived. We agree with Floyd’s claim, whereby “a change to how security policy plays out empirically is well within the [securitization] theory’s realm of adaptability” (Floyd, 2015: 14). According to Bourbeau (2014: 187-188), the CS relies on a logic of exception, whereby existential threats are combated with extraordinary measures. The logic of routine, on the other hand, “views securitisation as a collection of routinised and patterned practices, typically carried out by bureaucrats and security professionals, in which technology comes to hold a prominent place.” Our thesis is placed within the second camp, endorsing the logic of routine, which conforms with the more recent trend of Securitization Theory. Indeed, “the theory has progressively moved

towards an investigation of practices in order to complement or sometimes transcend the initial emphasis on linguistic utterances. This focus on practices has also established that emergency measures do not always characterize security situations” (Balzacq et al., 2015: 506-507; Buzan & Hanson, 2009: 216).

We also question the concept of existential threat and its usefulness in our research. Securitization Theory views threats as the outcomes “of intersubjective processes of social construction” between the securitizing actors and the audience (Krishnan, 2024; Balzacq et al., 2014: 3-4). The mainstream IR approaches view threat perceptions “as the observation of sources of potential harm to an individual or group” (Newell, 2016: 4). They seek “to explain insecurity by identifying an objective situation [considered] threatening to an objective entity.” Securitization students, on the other hand, stress that “threats are not separable from the intersubjective representations in which communities come to know them.” That is, “insecurity partakes of a distinctive type of shared knowledge” (Balzacq, 2011b: 4). Our understanding of threat is grounded on a Constructivist approach to security, and particularly Securitization Theory. Threats are social constructions of “sources of potential harm to an individual or group” (Newell, 2016: 4). When we say that threats are social constructions, we mean that they “are not simply given” but “constructed and shaped through social dynamics,” even though that does not mean that their objective elements are irrelevant. In fact, those “elements are mediated through interpretation and carry effects through discourse that identify the threat and justify the response.” Whether intentionally or unintentionally, as Lupovici explains, individuals create social structures⁴⁵ that in turn produce threats (Lupovici, 2021: 263). How threats are dealt with “[depends] upon how they are perceived which is not always commanded by the objective features of what is called a “menace”. Instead, the social design of a security problem conditions and legitimates the kind of means used to stop it” (Balzacq, 2011b: 4).

Thus, we view threats as intersubjective and socially constructed of sources of harm (or menaces), whose perception can motive action. Said action, however, is not necessarily driven by the objective features of the threat, but by its social design. As Buzan et al. (1998: 30) noted, security experts had long observed that security could be approached objectively, with the understanding that there was a real threat, or subjectively, with the understanding that there was a perceived threat (Wolfers, 1962: 151). Given our understanding of the concept of threat, any threat is a perceived threat, given that is embedded of both objective and subjective features. One may feel threatened regardless of whether a threat is genuine or not (Buzan et al. 1998 as cited in Krishnan, 2024). Stein (2023: 392) explained that certain actions may be perceived as threatening by others, despite that not being the main purpose or

⁴⁵ According to Wendt (1995: 71, 73-74), “the fundamental structures of international politics are social rather than strictly material.” Those structures have three elements. They “are defined, in part, by shared understandings, expectations, or knowledge.” Secondly, they also include material resources, which “only acquire meaning for human action through the structure of shared knowledge in which they are embedded.” Lastly, social structures exist, not in actors' heads nor in material capabilities, but [only] in practices.” He explained the third element by stating that “[t]he Cold War was a structure of shared knowledge that governed great power relations for forty years, but once they stopped acting on this basis, it was ‘over’.”

even the intention at all. She lists as examples the accumulation of military, technological, or military power.

Perceptions of a Russian threat to the United States are, therefore, understood to be grounded on both objective and subjective features which portray and construct Russia as a source of harm. Those perceptions are reasons for action which will inform how the United States will choose to act. The country may opt to act by pursuing a nuclear deterrence policy. What is done to respond to the threat is a security policy, whose implementation into practice constitutes successful securitization (Floyd, 2015: 9).

At first glance, when dealing with nuclear weapons, we might be tempted to assume that the threat that they pose will necessarily be existential. However, as Constructivism and Securitization Theory inform us, whether a state's nuclear weapons are perceived as a threat requiring action or not, is a political choice and a subjective assessment. In the same vein, how serious that threat is a subjective matter perceived differently over time. While we view nuclear weapons as an existential threat indeed, it might be the case that decision-makers will perceive the risk of nuclear weapons use differently at a certain point in time. Some might consider nuclear deterrence to be, in a given period, weaker than they wish it would be, and recommend some form of action, while still deeming the likelihood of nuclear weapons used to be extremely low despite the stakes involved. Moreover, we posit that it might not be always clear whether a threat requiring nuclear deterrence policy change is perceived with the degree of urgency that Securitization Theory views as a driver of change, even when it comes to nuclear weapons.

In any case, how serious a threat is, we argue, is not relevant to our research goal. What truly matters is that threat perceptions are reasons for change in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy. Floyd (2015: 1, 3) also rejects the insistence on existential threats as a criterion for securitization success. She argued that securitization is successful as long as a threat is identified, leading to an action justified with reference to the threat.

We reject the CS' insistence that threats ought to be cast through an existential lens, so as not to stipulate, *a priori*, what security means. As Floyd explains, securitizing actors often securitize matters that are not existentially threatening. She points out that the United States securitizes issues that do not threaten its survival, but its interests or its welfare (Floyd, 2015: 15). For instance, it may be that Russia is perceived as a threat to the United States, not because it threatens the homeland's survival, but American regional interests (in Europe, specifically). Thus, what matters for securitization success is that practitioners consider a certain danger or harm to be a security threat – however defined – that ought to inform action, which is then carried out.

Desecuritization is defined on the basis of the understanding that Securitization does not require existential threats or extraordinary measures. Desecuritization is not a process whereby a formally securitized issue returns to normal politics, where it “is dealt with by ordinary measures once more” (Floyd, 2011: 436). Desecuritization is, instead, “essentially the unmaking of securitisation” (Floyd,

2021) according to our parameters; it is a process whereby a formerly perceived threat is no longer viewed as such.

3.3. The securitization spectrum

Securitization theory lacks a coherent methodology, even though its theoretical and conceptual frameworks have been extensively debated (Färber, 2018). Most researchers using the framework of securitization theory conduct discourse analysis, of which there are many types. Discourse analysis has the aim of “[establishing] the meaning of texts shaped by distinct contexts,” and can “[help] students to map the emergence and evolution of patterns of representations which are constitutive of a threat image” (Balzacq, 2011c: 31, 39-40). Since our research goal is to determine how threat perceptions explain policy change, our approach to discourse analysis is based on the work of Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) because they developed a framework grounded on the understanding that “analysis should focus on how discourses, as ways of representing, provide [political actors] with reasons for action.” In the view of the authors, analysis of political discourse “should focus upon the generic features of whole texts rather than isolated features of the text, and primarily on action, not on representations” (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 1).

The framework provided by Fairclough and Fairclough for analysis of political arguments is useful to us in the sense that it provides us with “an account of the character and structure of practical argumentation” (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 10). According to the authors, “[p]ractical argumentation is argumentation about what to do in response to practical problems” (e.g., a perceived existential threat), whose conclusion “is a practical claim or judgement about what we should do” (i.e., to implement policy change[s] or do nothing) (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 11). Just like politics in general, we argue that securitization processes can be understood to be “most fundamentally about making choices about how to act in response to circumstances and events and in light of certain goals and values” (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 11). Thus, in our view, Securitization Theory and Fairclough and Fairclough’s (2012) political discourse analysis are compatible, because we can understand a securitizing move as being composed of a series of reasons, among which threat perceptions, for action (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 45).

According to Fairclough and Fairclough (2012: 11), the conclusion of a political practical argument (e.g., that a certain action/policy change is needed) is informed by four types of premises (i.e., reasons for action):

a *circumstantial premise*, which represents the existing state of affairs and the problems it poses;

a *goal premise*, which describes (and ‘imagines’) the future state of affairs [that securitizing

actors] want to bring about or think ought to be brought about; a *value premise*, expressing the values and concerns which underlie the [securitizing actors'] goals (but also affects how they represent the context of action⁴⁶); and a *means-end premise*, which represents the proposed line of action as a (hypothetical) means that will presumably take [the securitizing actors] from the current state of affairs to the future state of affairs that is their goal. Analysis is a matter of identifying within an argument its premises and its conclusion and the relations between them (emphasis added)

Therefore, in the view of the authors,

“[w]hat people do in reasoning practically is make judgements about what the best thing to do is in the circumstances, given their goals and values, and based on how they weigh together a variety of considerations, i.e. based on the normative priority that they assign to various reasons. In deciding what to do, it is rational to assess the probable consequences of one's action, where consequences⁴⁷ can be understood more generally to include a possibly negative impact on goals and values that should (arguably) not be overridden” (emphasis added).

We posit that securitization processes can be less clear-cut than one might anticipate. For instance, a particular issue might be framed as a security issue without the specification of policy preferences to address it (Kingdon, 1984; Oberdick, 2018: 25). We do not expect it to be uncommon for political discourses not to have all the premises that Fairclough and Fairclough identified. We also consider it possible for threat perceptions to be rejected by the audience only for the policy change that the securitizing actors recommended to be accepted due to its suitability for a different policy problem (another goal). On the other hand, threat perceptions may be accepted by a broad audience, even though the policies advocated by the securitizing actors are rejected. Another possible scenario would be one in which securitizing actors convince an audience that a threat exists and that their course of action should be implemented, although some or all of their other premises for action receive contestation. Decision-makers (securitizing actors and audience members) may weigh reasons for action differently (some focus on the context of action, while others emphasize the downsides of action, etc.), reaching the same or different conclusions. Premises for action can be accepted, rejected, challenged, or simply

⁴⁶ That is because a “socially recognized obligation to act in accordance with (...) values,” or promises and commitments that securitizing actors are bound by “are part of a social contract between citizens, and between citizens and the state”, and “part of the normative fabric of society.” It is in that sense that, once acknowledged, values become part of the context of action (or circumstantial premise) (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 177).

⁴⁷ We use the terms consequences, negative effects, compromises, and downsides (of action on goals/values) interchangeably.

ignored. In addition, as securitizing actors and audiences interact, they may influence each other's understanding of a given issue. Failed securitizing moves might be revived *verbatim* once the composition of an audience changes, and lead to securitization success that time around. Indeed, we see securitization as a complex intersubjective process with threat perceptions being a key, but not exclusive component of why policy change succeeds or fails.

Having combined PDA with the Securitization Theory apparatus, we determined that securitization can be understood as a spectrum. This understanding is based on the following analogy: political discourses as series of white lights. Those white lights, once split, leave us with a spectrum of hues. By utilizing PDA, we can split those white lights (discourses) and identify, within them, different hues. The hues are the reasons for action of the decision-makers that inform their conclusion that one should (and how?) or should not act.

To apply the Securitization Spectrum entails to identification and categorization of the elements, within a political discourse, which inform the conclusion of the decision-maker regarding what how to act. The premises/reasons for action are associated with different questions, whose answer allows them to be placed into categories and for the relations that the premises form with one another to be understood. The categories are circumstantial premises, value premises, goal premises, and means-end premises. Premises form relations with each other, might be weighed differently against one another, and can be accepted, contested, or ignored by the various participants of a securitization process.

The retrieval of the premises for action is associated with a theoretical framework that guides our analysis and help us understand how policy change was possible. At its core, applying the Securitization Spectrum entails to understand political discourse as fundamentally about choosing policies, and containing reasons for action that inform a conclusion regarding what policy to choose. A securitizing move occurs when securitizing actors articulate policy preferences grounded on reasons for action. The audience will react to those reasons, as well as the conclusion (i.e., the action) that the securitizing actors arrived at based on them. The audience reaction can be determined by juxtaposing the reasons for action of the securitizing actors with those of the audience. This juxtaposition will explain why policy change succeeded or failed, given that audience assent is necessary for successful securitization to occur. Successful securitization is explained by the general acceptance of the securitizing actors' premises (including the means-end premise) by the audience; by the general acceptance of the securitizing actors' premises by a particular group of members of the audience; or by a group of members of the audience accepting the policy change due to the potential downsides of not doing so.

On Table 1, we identified the questions employed to retrieve and categorize the hues of the Securitization Spectrum, that is, the reasons for action of a political discourse (questions 1-4). The questions in the group 6 are applied to explain the success or failure of the securitization process. Question 7 relates to our thesis' research question. We want to ascertain how Russia, as a reason for action, explained changes in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy. Russia, including threat perceptions Russia,

might be understood by decision-makers as a reason that should inform a certain action – being, in that case, a determinant of policy change. But Russia might, instead, not emerge as a reason for action in political discourse. Or it might be the case that the country, despite emerging as a reason for action, ended up being outweighed by other (more important) reasons for action – meaning that it was not a core reason for that policy change.

Securitization Spectrum			
Dimension	Decision-makers	Hues/Reasons for Action	Research Question
Securitizing Moves/Practical Arguments (PDA)	Securitizing Actors	1. Circumstantial premise	1. What is the current state-of-affairs (including perceived threats)?
		2. Goal premise	2.1. What is the desired future situation? 2.2. Does the course of action entail accepting downsides that pertain to other goals?
		3. Value premise	3.1. What are the value-based concerns that underlie the goal premise? 3.2. Are there value-based downsides of action?
		4. Means-end premise	4. Will the proposed course of action deliver the desired goal of action and is it the best way to do so?
Audience Reaction (PDA)	Audience	5. Audience reaction (to the discourse of the securitizing actors or the other audience members)	5. Apply questions 1-4.
Policy change		6. Audience acceptance/rejection	6.1.1. How did the audience react to the various hues/premises for action of the securitizing actors (hues 2-5)? (i.e., what did the

	Securitizing actors and Audience	(i.e., juxtaposition [6.1.] and weighing [6.2.] of premises)	audience agree/disagree with?). 6.1.2. What premises did the audience utilize that the securitizing actors did not? 6.2 If securitization occurred, what explains the policy change? (i.e., how did the audience weigh the hues/premises for action against one another?)
		7. CASE STUDY: RUSSIA	7. Was Russia securitized or influenced the decision- making process? (i.e., was Russia a hue/premise for action that outweighed or was outweighed by others?)

Table 1: The securitization spectrum (constructed by the author, based on the contributions of Fairclough & Fairclough [2012] and the framework of Securitization Theory).

Studying the entire securitization spectrum is important, we posit, because we see securitization as having more elements than threat perceptions and the policies to address them, which is where the focus of most securitization literature lies. We want to get to the bottom of the role of the audience in policy change. We argue, for instance, that agreement on threat perceptions does not mean agreement on policies, and agreement on policies does not necessarily entail agreement on the existence of a threat. Thus, despite the usefulness of the Securitization Theory apparatus in the study of policy change in the presence of threat perceptions, we believe that further attention must go into other elements that comprise the intersubjective processes. There are goals and values to be uncovered, the context of action has more elements than just threat perceptions, and the decision to pursue a course of action and not another is arrived at on the basis of a variety of premises which are connected to one another and can be weighed differently. Our approach allows for a richer understanding of securitization processes develop and how policy change occurs.

We start by expanding the context of action beyond the existence of threat perceptions. The “circumstantial premise” (CP) captures the “the existing state of affairs and the problems it poses”

(Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 11). The problem can be the perceived existence of a threat. However, there might be more other reasons, within the context of action, that inform a decision to act. A decision-maker may reference, for instance, the existence of budgetary constraints, which may inform a decision to pursue a course of action and not another. The decision-maker may also perceive warmer relations with another state, which may allow the implementation of a course of action which might have been rejected under a colder climate.

Next, we have the goal premise (GP), which Fairclough and Fairclough (2012: 24) defined as the “future *state of affairs* to be achieved by means of action.” A decision-maker seeks to act in a way that will transform the current reality (CP) into the future state-of-affairs he describes (GP). The GP also captures the downsides of action on other goals. A decision-maker may oppose a certain course of action on the grounds of its perceived downsides on goals, but it may also accept it despite perceiving downsides of action. For instance, the pursuit of a course of action may be perceived as costly, thus affecting the state’s ability to pursue goals in other policy realms. A decision-maker may believe that a course of action undermines national security (instead of enhancing it). In all, the downsides of action on goals are reasons for action that decision-makers believe will jeopardize (or risk jeopardizing) other futures that they imagine and believe ought to be desired (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 24). The GP also captures hidden or covert goals of action, which are goals that decision-maker perceive other decision-makers to have, despite not admitting them. Those covert goals are denounced by decision-makers as informing the decision, by other decision-makers, to recommend a certain course of action, even though it should not inform it. For instance, a decision-maker might support a course of action, because he believes that doing so would make another course of action more palatable. Another decision-maker might identify such a covert goal and claim that it should not inform his conclusion to pursue the first course of action. The authors also argue “that the goal premise should be detached from any intrinsic connection with what agents want, and should be viewed instead as a (possible, future) state of affairs which the agent may or may not desire” (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 198). Goal premises can be chained together; that is, a certain goal might need to be achieved first before another goal can be achieved (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 43).

We now move on to the value premises (VP), which “[express] the values and concerns which underlie the [decision-makers’] goals (...) but also affects how they represent the context of action.” They are what matters to us, what we value. We understand value premises broadly, including interests, desires, moral values, duties, laws, norms, and commitments. They inform why a certain policy change should be pursued instead of others, with a given goal in sight. Goal premises are informed by value premises. As Fairclough and Fairclough explain, “the futures we imagine are in relation to what matters to us, such as the values we are committed to.” Goals are imagined in relations to values. Since value premises inform the goal, they also inform the action. In fact, values “restrict the set of actions that are compatible with the goals, seen as desirable or normatively appropriate states of affairs, by excluding all those which are not compatible with the value in question.” Additionally, value premises also inform

perceptions of the context of action, seeing as it can be represented or described in many ways. After all, “we ‘see’ problems around us in relation to our values.” Values inform a decision-maker’s “conception of what the circumstances are and what the goals should be” (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 11, 15-16, 40, 42, 44, 46, 48, 76, 149, 177). Like goal premises, there might be covert value premises informing action, such as covert ideological values or self-interest. The VP also captures the downsides of action on values. A decision-maker may oppose a certain course of action on the grounds of its perceived downsides on values but may also accept it despite it. For instance, the pursuit of a course of action may be perceived to jeopardize (or risk jeopardizing) peace, freedom, or justice – values which relate to how a decision-maker perceives reality, his goals, and how to achieve them⁴⁸.

Finally, the means-end premise (ME) “represents the proposed line of action as a (hypothetical) means that will presumably take agents from the current state of affairs to the future state of affairs that is their goal.”

Securitizing actors

combine knowledge of their circumstances and of their goals with a presumptive means–end relation that might take them from the circumstances they are in to the future state of affairs which is their goal. [Securitizing actors] choose certain actions over others not just in view of the goal, but also because they find themselves in particular circumstances and not others. The context of action restricts the range of actions that can be thought of and the choices that can be made. The action that emerges as (presumably) the right action, is supposed to transform the present set of circumstances so that they match the [securitizing actor’s] goal, which is itself

⁴⁸ Fairclough and Fairclough (2012: 177-178, 182, 198) argue that a concern with acting in accordance with some value is a part of the value premise of a discourse. For instance, the government may actually be concerned with acting fairly, and that reason for action (value premise) might explain why it seeks to act in a certain way but not other. At the same time, the authors argue that “the socially recognized obligation to act in accordance with such values” is part of the circumstantial premise. It is a part of a modern social contract that informs action. Therefore, for the authors, some reasons for action appear in two ways in practical arguments: “in the circumstantial premise – as they are socially constructed, epistemically objective facts – and in the value premise, as actual concerns that the agent [i.e., decision-maker] has or is motivated by. For instance, in their research, the reason for action “common good” is categorized twice: once as a value that people should be concerned with (internal reason), and as a part of the context of action as “a socially recognized value;” that is, a social or institutional fact (external reason). We opted to categorize reasons for action such as interests, desires, moral values, duties, laws, norms, and commitments as value premises. We do so for the sake of simplicity and because it is not relevant to our research goals whether a reason for action is desire-dependent or desire-independent. Internalized or not, we posit that the most important is the reason for action itself. It is not as important whether a decision-maker is concerned with their fulfillment, or merely believes that he ought to be concerned with their fulfillment because of an implicit social contract. If a “safer world” – as a reason for action – is internalized or not by a decision-maker is not as important as whether it is, or is not, a reason informing his preferred policy. Both internal and external reasons inform action, regardless of whether a decision-maker actually values and cares about something or believes he ought to value and care about it. Indeed, “a safer world” is an example of a reason for action that should feature in political discourse and inform “positive” policy changes in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy.

informed by the [securitizing actor's] values (either his actual values or the values that he – or some other arguer – thinks he ought to have) (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 11, 44)

Thus, the hypothetical action “will have to be compatible with both goals and circumstances, as well as with the values that inform the agent’s conception of what the circumstances are and what the goals should be” (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 76).

A decision-maker will assess whether a course of action being recommended should be supported. He may challenge one or several premises supporting it, arguing that they are not true or that they should be rejected. He may question whether the course of action being recommended is the best option available (is it “necessary”?), “[challenging] the inference from the premises to the conclusion⁴⁹.” He may have reservations about whether the action will deliver the goals by itself (is it “sufficient”?). A course of action being recommended may also be challenged due to the perceived downsides (on goals and/or values) that it entails (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 65-66).

A proposed course of action might be sufficient to achieve the goal without being necessary. But a course of action can also be necessary without being sufficient (if it is proposed along with one or more complementary policies – which combined are expected to deliver the goal). A course of action may receive support despite being perceived unnecessary and/or sufficient⁵⁰.

The proposed courses of actions, including complementary policies, and deliberations regarding whether they should be pursued are categorized as means-end premises⁵¹. Decision-makers may also draw on the assessments of sources of authority (e.g., experts, political figures) to strengthen their case for a given action. Complementary policies can also be proposed to minimize the expected downsides of action. Policy change occurs when audience assent is obtained for a given ME. The ME stands for the proposed means (action) to achieve an end (goal[s]).

Fairclough and Fairclough (2012: 11-12, 36, 52, 62-68, 90, 94-95, 111, 129-133, 153-175, 207, 236, 240-241) follow their analysis of political discourse with an evaluation of its practical arguments, to determine whether a political decision was grounded on sufficient critical examination of reasons both in favor and against a proposed course of action. The evaluation concerns the “critical questioning of the acceptability of these premises and the relations between them and the claim, as well as critical

⁴⁹ A critic may have reservations about the compatibility between the various stated premises and the stated claim (about what to do) of another decision-maker. He may consider that the conclusion of another decision-maker that a certain action should be implemented does not follow from the premises he utilizes (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 167).

⁵⁰ Indeed, just because an audience member does not see a course of action as the best option to address a problem (i.e. as necessary), that does not mean that he will not support it. At the same time, just because an audience member does not see a course of action as enough to resolve a problem (i.e., sufficient), that does not mean that he will not support it. As Fairclough and Fairclough (2012: 64) explained, if I want to learn Italian, enrolling in an Italian course may not be sufficient to achieve my goal, and may also not be the best course of action available either. But that does not make it a bad decision in light of my goal of learning Italian.

⁵¹ As mentioned, a course of action may be questioned due to being based on premises that were contested. In that case, we identify in our analysis the premises he challenges according to their category. If a course of action is challenged due to its perceived downsides of action, we will identify the respective goal premises and/or value premises.

examination of the claim itself.” By posing critical questions, one can indicate a variety of problems with a practical argument. The evaluation component is intended to provide a “basis for normative and explanatory social critique.” The evaluation entails questioning the acceptability or truth of the premises being used to inform action. In other words, are there good reasons to believe that a certain premise is rationally acceptable (likely true albeit by no means certain)? For instance, “is it grounded in evidence, supported by reliable testimony, or authority or by cogent argumentation”? We can question the way the circumstances being described; whether information is being omitted, possibly with the intent to deceive; if there is an actual problem to be solved; to what extent is a value actually informing action (in terms of the relation between premises, does a voiced value truly support the goal and the action being expressed?); whether other values should have a higher normative priority; or if have other goals been considered as more important. A second way of evaluation means challenging the inference from the premises to the conclusion by questioning whether other actions have been considered (can an alternative action also fulfill the goal?); are the premises rationally acceptable, relevant to the claim, and do they, together, provide enough support (or proper grounds) for the claim (or is the conclusion hastily arrived at on the basis of scarce information?) Is an action actually necessary? Is it grounded on empirical evidence?. Lastly, has the claim stood up to criticism, considering potential consequences of action? Should the action be pursued regardless? Or should it not be pursued due to its impact on goals and values, deemed unacceptable? Has the proposed action “emerged from a process of deliberation in which it was subjected to rigorous and systematic criticism”? Where did support emerge and among which circles (e.g., “everyday contexts, highly specialized professional contexts)? Who had the chance to engage in sufficient debate? Did a decision on how to act “emerge from sufficient critical examination of reasons, from considering and balancing reasons in favour but also, essentially, from considering reasons against a proposed course of action, i.e. from at least a minimal process of deliberation”?⁵² By asking critical questions such as those, the evaluation of practical arguments allows analyst to criticized powerful arguments that are difficult to challenge and “that draw on dominant discourses and ideologies at the expense of an impartial consideration of other interests and perspectives, as being unreasonable, or as being grounded in unreasonable and rationally indefensible values and goals.” Our thesis does not carry out this evaluation of practical arguments, as normative critique exceeds the scope of our research, considering our main goals and research questions. We aim to explain U.S. nuclear deterrence policies and how Russia is a determinant of change in that regard. That is our research goal, which can be reached through political discourse analysis alone. That is not to say that we are not interested in ascertaining how audience members reacted to certain premises in terms of their rational acceptability or truth, on the various inferential links between premises and claims (and whether they were accepted or rejected by audience members), on whether some audience members believed that a certain action should be

⁵² If the question to the latter question is yes, the authors consider the decision to have been “reasonable.” They believe that “the goal of practical reasoning is arriving at a reasonable practical judgement that can ground reasonable decision-making and reasonable action” (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012: 11).

rejected on account of its potential downsides, or that we will not make note of debates that failed to gather a high-profile among certain audience members. But we will not engage in critical examination, focusing on the intersubjective process of securitization and on how it explains policy change without engaging in critique of the process itself.

Lastly, we argue that our model of analysis can be applied to the study of political processes for foreign policy decision-making in non-securitization contexts. In fact, it is only after we applied our methodology that we can ascertain if we are dealing with policy change as an outcome of securitization or not. PDA is not dependent on the existence of threat perceptions as core reasons for policy change. It looks at a broader range of reasons for actions – not just threat perceptions – helping us to identify them, ascertain the relations among them, and determine their relative weight in comparison with one another. PDA then helps us understand how those reasons inform a conclusion on how to act. PDA presents a view of political discourse as essentially practical argumentation, that is, “argumentation for or against particular ways of acting, argumentation that can ground decision”. According to Fairclough and to Fairclough, in considering what to do, the “agents” consider the various reasons for action (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 1). Those agents, in our study, are the participants of the U.S. decision-making processes in nuclear deterrence policy, which are integrated within a system of checks and balances and have different powers (formal, informal, public opinion, etc.) when it comes to the enactment of policy change. The administration – as a “securitizing” actor or not – is expected to address a given audience and seek its support even outside of securitization contexts.

Thus, we posit that some of the fundamental concepts of Securitization Theory – securitizing actors, audience, audience acceptance, policy change – are still useful and can still be applied outside of securitization contexts. Securitization Theory can still be employed in the absence of threat perceptions, as a framework for the study of political decision-making, if combined with PDA. The combination of the two – the securitization spectrum – allows us to study, in depth, political processes, even if we do not know beforehand if threat perceptions are present, and whether successful securitization occurred. That is because we look at “how discourses, as ways of representing” (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 1) present agents with a broader range of reasons for action.

3.4. U.S. government, political system, and national security decision-making

Drawing from Kingdon (1984), Léonard and Kaunert (2011: 63-68) argued that policy change is explained by three major process streams. According to the authors, even before policymakers have their attention captured by policy problems (problem stream), solutions for those problems were already

being concocted by policy communities (policy stream). Policy change occurs when there are shifts in the political mood (politics stream) (e.g., caused by changes in public opinion, or by broad social movements) or of important participants (e.g., due to a new administration, or changes in the legislative bodies). In the problem stream, securitizing actors mainly seek to capture the attention of other decision-makers that engage in the policy-making process, who “need to be convinced that a problem is indeed a ‘problem’.” The policy stream is about policy formation, with policy alternatives being generated by experts in policy communities. Those experts can work in government positions, think tanks, academia, and others, relating to each other through their dedication to a policy area and often interacting with each other. The politics stream concerns bargaining activities, as decision-makers attempt to build winning coalitions by granting concessions to the policymakers who remain unconvinced. Changes in the public mood (e.g., caused by changes in public opinion, or by broad social movements) and shifts of important participants (e.g., due to a new administration, or changes in the legislative bodies) are the main enablers of policy changes, according to the authors. They consider that the audience in this stream is comprised of two different groups: the general public and those involved in the decision-making process (Léonard and Kaunert, 2011: 65-68).

We posit that who the securitizing actors are and who integrates the audience depends on the decision-making context in a specific policy area, in a given place and time. In our case, they must be identified within the context of U.S. nuclear deterrence policy decision-making within our research timeframe. To determine who the securitizing actors and the audience are, we will utilize the insights provided by the policy change streams and apply it to the abovementioned context.

The government of the United States is an example of a representative democracy since the control over governmental decisions is spread among many people, with the general public having an indirect say over policy by means of their direct participation on the selection of their representatives. They can also participate in other forms of politics such as lobbying, protesting, running for office, or working in a campaign. However, voting is the primary way most citizens participate in politics. Through elections, they have the chance to pick the representatives who will endorse their interests when governing decisions are made. The U.S. government is also a constitutional government, seeing that it is bound by a constitution that limits what the government is allowed to do, and how it goes about doing it (Lowi *et al.*, 2019: 6-8). Still, the “framers,” a group of delegates appointed by the original states (except RI) who attended the Constitutional Convention session (National archives, n.d.a) feared that the government would become overly powerful. Therefore, they divided government power among three branches of government that are required to cooperate in decision-making – separation of powers – and between a central, national government, and regional, state governments – federalism. The framers also embraced the principles of bicameralism, dividing Congress into two chambers, and of checks and balances, bestowing upon each of the three branches of government (legislative, judicial, and executive) some degree of power over the others (Lowi *et al.*, 2019: 22, 33, G4, G9).

The two legislative chambers of Congress are the H.R. and the Senate, whose powers “include the authority to collect taxes, to borrow money, to regulate commerce, to declare war, and to maintain an army and navy.” To overcome stalemates brought in by bicameralism, the framers granted the president, the leader of the executive branch, a degree of independence from the other two branches of government as well as the people. Within the judicial branch, the Constitution afforded the Supreme Court of the United States “the power to resolve any conflicts (...) between federal and state laws and to determine which level of government – national, state, or both – could exercise a particular power” (Lowi *et al.*, 2019: 33-34, 38).

The members of both chambers of Congress are directly elected by the people: two senators are elected from each of the 50 states (a total of 100 senators), while House representatives are elected from districts apportioned, according to the population, among the states (a total of 435 representatives). The members of the H.R. are expected to timely reflect public opinion and to be more in tune with local interests and their specific legislative agendas. Senators, on the other hand, are more attuned to state or nation-wide interest groups, and their longer terms (6 years versus 2 years for House members) allow them to take into account new ideas and to seek new coalitions of interests (Lowi *et al.*, 2019: 127-128).

Political parties – primarily the Democratic Party and the GOP today – are a significant aspect of congressional life, which encourages compromise as well as cooperation, and the formation of coalitions to pass legislation and monitor its implementation. Members of Congress are assigned to several committees of their chamber, which constitute a second organizational structure within which labor is divided and specialized. Their jurisdictions typically run parallel to the major executive departments and agencies, and members with a particular interest in a given subject are likely to seek membership on the committee covering it. When deliberating on a piece of legislation, committees usually refer the bill to one of its subcommittees, where hearings may be held, experts consulted, and the proposed legislation amended before it is referred for consideration to the full committee (Lowi *et al.*, 2019: 134-136).

The “power of the purse,” whereby the administration cannot spend money unless Congress authorizes it, is the most important power granted to Congress by the U.S. Constitution (Ritchie, 2008: 10). Legislative committees “are responsible for authorizing legislation related to the agencies and programs under their jurisdiction.” That legislation “provides guidance regarding the appropriate amount of funds to carry out the authorized activities of an agency” (Heniff Jr., 2012: 1). For instance, the NDAA, which is under the jurisdiction of the House and the Senate Committees on Armed Services, “establishes or continues defense programs, policies, projects, or activities at DOD and other federal agencies, and provides guidance on how the appropriated funds are to be used in carrying out those authorized activities” (Heitshusen & McGarry, 2021: 1). Both armed services committees are further divided into subcommittees, each of them dedicated to different issues (e.g., strategic forces, military personnel). Each subcommittee works on a legislative proposal that recommends funding for the defense issues under the subcommittee responsibility, vote on it, and submit it to the full committee, which will then vote on it as well. Once the proposed legislation is out of Committee, the NDAA is scheduled for

floor consideration. This process takes place both in the Senate and the House, meaning that each chamber has its own NDAA, so a conference committee is arranged to resolve differences between the two houses since they both need to approve the same bill before it is presented to the President. However, budget authority for government activities is found in the defense appropriations bill (Heitshusen & McGarry, 2021: 1-2), which provides funding for various activities, in line “with policies and priorities established through legislation such as the National Defense Authorization Act” (McGarry, 2020: 1). At that point, based on the NDAA produced in the House and Senate Armed Services committees, the House and Senate appropriations committees agree on a single defense appropriations bill through a similar process, all the way until it reaches the president’s desk, making it possible for funds to be allocated to defense activities.

National security affairs, as Meese *et al.* (2018: 247) explain, “influence and are influenced by both the domestic and international worlds, for national security involves the application of resources at home and abroad in an attempt to make the domestic society more secure.” Huntington saw the world of international politics as “the world of balance of power, wars and alliances, the subtle and brutal uses of force and diplomacy to influence the behavior of other states”, whereas domestic world was “the world of interest groups, political parties, social classes with their conflicting interests and goals” (Huntington, 1961 apud Meese *et al.*, 2018: 247). Since U.S. foreign policy depends on both domestic and international pressures, how American decision-makers respond to international developments “depends on the outcome of a complex deliberation process that engages powerful figures in civil society, multiple federal agencies, and individual decision makers who draw upon their own belief systems and personal experiences” (Hook, 2016: 170).

In the context of the United States, national security is a concept which includes both the country’s foreign relations and national defense, with the aim of obtaining either: “military or defense advantage over any foreign nation or group of nations,” “[a] favorable foreign relations position,” or “[a] defense posture capable of successfully resisting hostile or destructive action from within or without, overt or covert.” Homeland security, on the other hand, is a concerted national endeavor “to prevent terrorist attacks within the United States; reduce America’s vulnerability to terrorism, major disasters, and other emergencies; and minimize the damage and recover from attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies that occur” (DOD Dictionary, 2021: 97, 150).

As we delve into the foreign policy decision-making process in the United States, we can identify two different groups of actors. The first is composed by government actors that engage in the formulation, as well as conduct, of American foreign policy. The second is comprised of “outside-in forces” that look to influence the foreign policy process in the United States, and which includes public opinion, social movements, the news media, and interest groups (Hook, 2016: 326).

The process of national security decision-making in the United States

is a system of formal and informal coordination within the executive branch to ensure that senior leaders identify national interests and objectives clearly; that issues requiring presidential attention are identified and raised in a timely manner; and that viable options, costs, benefits, and risks are thoroughly considered (Meese *et al.*, 2018: 247).

The formal foreign policy decision-making process belongs to the president, helping him perform his responsibilities in the realm of national security, and “is geared toward consensus.” The process is administered by the NSC, cooperatively with other offices within the Executive Office of the President⁵³, and encompasses all national security decisions. The NSC is the main forum of the president “for considering national security and foreign policy matters with his or her senior advisors and cabinet officials” (National Security Council, n.d.). The national security decision-making process is also, at times, coordinated with Congress (Meese *et al.*, 2018: 246-248, 261).

Nonetheless, as Walt (2018) explains,

top government officials make foreign policy, but they do not make it entirely as they please.

They draw upon expertise from the think tank⁵⁴ world and from academia, and they are often constrained by bureaucratic opposition, public skepticism, media scrutiny, and the interplay of interest groups within society. *Even presidents do not operate with complete freedom*, as the decisions they make are constrained by the broad consensus within the foreign policy community and by the choices presented to them by their subordinates

Sarkesian *et al.* (2008: 183) argue that “effective national security policy depends on congressional support and public acceptance,” explaining that the representative role of Congress and its power to decide how money can be spent means that “no successful president can afford to disregard Congress, isolate himself from the legislative process, or distance himself from the leadership in Congress.”

According to Hook (2016: 55-56), “[t]he institutional reality of divided powers leads to chronic friction between Congress and the White House over the ends and means of foreign policy.” In the realm of U.S. foreign policy “there is a zone of twilight in which [the President] and Congress may have concurrent authority, or in which its distribution is uncertain” (*Youngstown Sheet & Tube Co. v. Sawyer*, 343 U.S. 579 (1952)). Thus, we posit that both the President and Congress can act, in theory, as securitizing powers in the realm of U.S. foreign policy, and possibly in the nuclear weapons domain.

⁵³ The Executive office of the President is a group of “federal agencies immediately assisting the President,” including many of the leaders’ closest advisors (Relyea, 2008: 1).

⁵⁴ Think tanks are “organizations that generate policy-oriented research, analysis, and advice on domestic and international issues that enable policy-makers and the public to make informed decisions about public policy issues” (McGann, 2002 as cited in McGann, 2016).

However, as Hook (2016: 195) notes, the commander-in-chief “uniquely equipped to set the nation’s foreign policy agenda.” He alone can make the most paramount decisions regarding “the tactics of foreign policy derived from this chosen grand strategy.” While the president may not immediately gather audience consensus on how to tackle a foreign policy problem, he can leverage his “unrivaled stature to influence what problems will receive the greatest attention in the press and public opinion.” Congress, by contrast, has shown to assume a reactionary role vis-à-vis the president’s agenda, not exerting leadership despite having a voice in what to do about a particular foreign policy problem.

Overall, it is clear that the U.S. president fits into our conceptualization of a securitizing actor to a tee. However, given the already identified level-of-analysis problem, we will see the commander-in-chief as the designated authoritative representative of the executive which, as a whole, is considered our default securitizing actor. In the next section, we will seek to identify, within the executive branch (or the presidential administration) the remaining key securitizing actors in U.S foreign policy so that we have a larger pool of discourses to analyze.

Given the separation of powers in the U.S. government, we acknowledge the possibility of Congress acting as a securitizing actor, but its reactionary role in U.S. foreign policy makes it more likely that it acts as a member of the audience. In fact, by holding the power of the purse, the legislative branch assumes a leading role within the audience. Without its assent, the president cannot obtain the funding he will likely need for policy change implementation. Thus, we expect securitizing actors to seek the approval of members of Congress for their policy proposals in the problem stream and in the politics stream. In the former, the administration will attempt to convince Congress of the existence of a threat (and of the need to act). In the latter, the administration, probably with the help of the already convinced members of Congress, will seek the support of the unconvinced to pass legislation allowing for the policy change pursued.

Despite the separation of powers into three branches, the judiciary is excluded from our analysis, both as a securitizing actor and as part of the audience. The judicial branch has avoided getting involved in foreign policy squabbles between the White House and Congress and has been inclined to favor the executive in its sporadic rulings (Hook, 2016: 182, 210, 216).

In the following two sections, we will delve deeper into the U.S. foreign policy decision-making processes, and nuclear deterrence policymaking, in particular. We will explore which components of the executive and legislative branches, specifically, should be regarded as securitizing actors and members of the audience, specifically. And we will consider the inclusion, in our analysis, of discourses from “outside-in forces” – namely, public opinion, social movements, interest groups, and the news media – by exploring their influence in U.S. foreign policy. We will start by exploring the role of the general public in that regard (when it comes to public opinion and social movements), and then move on to the interest groups and the news media, which we view as components of the U.S. foreign policy establishment (Walt, 2018).

3.5. Securitizing actors in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy

The President of the United States is the country's head of state and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. The power of the executive branch is vested in the President, meaning that the leader "is responsible for implementing and enforcing the laws written by Congress and, to that end, appoints the heads of the federal agencies, including the Cabinet." The Cabinet and the independent federal agencies oversee "the day-to-day enforcement and administration of federal laws [i.e., of the national government]" (The Executive Branch, s.a.).

The President enjoys several formal powers in the realm of foreign policy, such as leading the conduct of warfare, negotiating and signing international treaties, appointing ambassadors and cabinet secretaries, and conducting diplomacy. Hook also highlights six advantages of the presidency over the U.S. Congress that have allowed presidents to consolidate and hold on to the foreign policy decision-making process, namely: the fact that the presidents speak for all Americans; have unmatched access to the general public; can typically rely, as party leaders, on the support of their party members; can answer to foreign policy issues with expediency; can expect the support of federal employees for general foreign policy principles and goals; and control the flux of information (others may be "out of the loop") (Hook, 2016: 183, 191). In the latter case, it is of note that presidents can present selective intelligence that supports their policy preferences (Richelson, 2008 apud Hook, 2016: 191-192).

By taking the initiative, presidents can dominate the foreign policy process, dictating who is a friend and who is a foe, and what policy solutions should be implemented to reach their goals. At all times, U.S. presidents have to handle tensions with adversarial states. Occasionally, they ease tensions using diplomacy; other times, they resort to military action, escalating situations through shows of military strength to force concessions from opponents (Hook, 2016: 198). Ever since WWII, the president of the United States has enjoyed unprecedented powers in the realm of foreign policy, with Congress typically deferring decision-making to the White House⁵⁵ (Hook, 2016: 216). The president is uniquely equipped to define the foreign policy agenda of the United States as the only figure who can endorse and voice the country's grand strategy in international politics and make the most crucial tactical choices that follow said strategy. Presidents "can use their unrivaled stature to influence what problems will receive the greatest attention in the press and public opinion," although the courses of action they recommend may not achieve consensus, at least in the beginning (Hook, 2016: 195). Congress, as Rutledge and Larsen-Price (2014, 460 apud Hook, 2016: 195) explain, "does not exert leadership on the president's agenda. The evidence points to a reactive Congress." In the foreign policy realm, presidents

⁵⁵ The "White House" is a common way of referencing the president and the president's advisors, that is, the Executive Office of the President of the United States, which encompasses the agencies and offices that support the work of the president. Among them is the NSC.

have been able to act without express congressional approval far more often than in the domestic realm (Meese *et al.*, 2018: 248).

The president is, regarding nuclear weapons, “the ultimate decision-maker” (Miall, 1987 apud Ritchie, 2008: 6). In the United States, as Gronlund, Wright, and Fetter (2018) explain, “the president has sole authority to order the use of nuclear weapons, for any reason and at any time.” General guidance for nuclear weapons targeting policy and strategy is periodically issued from the White House through presidential directives (e.g., National Security Decision Directives) to the Secretary of Defense (Ritchie, 2008: 8). In practice, however, presidents only rarely deal with matters related to nuclear weapons (Miall, 1987 apud Ritchie, 2008: 6).

The commander-in-chief also organizes the chain of command, which includes the top foreign policymakers in the cabinet, which are appointed by him with the legislature’s consent. The NSA has more direct and daily influence over the president, but the Secretary of State is the chief American diplomatic, while the Secretary of Defense stands atop America’s immense military complex. Their relative influence will vary from one administration to another, with the DOS and the DOD ferociously competing with one another at times. The president enjoys considerable flexibility in deciding the roles played by the different government institutions, such as the DOS, the DOD, and the NSC, in the formulation and conduction of U.S. policy. Not only does the president coordinate those institutions and arbitrates disputes between them, but also decides which of them will exert the strongest influence over particular policy choices (Hook, 2016: 197).

The President is the chairman of the NSC, with the vice president, and the Secretaries of Treasury, State, Defense, and Energy integrating the forum’s ranks as statutory members. The NSC’s statutory advisors are the chairman of the JCS – the military advisor – and the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) – the intelligence advisor. Other actors, such as the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (also known as the National Security Advisor or NSA), the Attorney General, or the White House Chief of Staff are regular attendees, and other participants may be called to integrate all or some of the meetings (National Security Council, n.d.). The NSC assumes a policy analysis role and coordination and receives limited congressional oversight and legislative control. Although in the executive branch the ultimate authority in decision-making belongs to the president, the NSC staff has become a key factor in the formulation (and occasionally in the implementation) of national security policy (Best Jr., 2011: ii, 26-27). Said staff, whose most important member is the NSA, counsels the president, coordinates policy development within the executive branch, and monitors implementation of policy, decisions, or guidance coming from the president. For instance, according to Jordan *et al.* (1999 apud Ritchie, 2008: 6), “[t]he NSC staff may examine issues affecting nuclear weapons policy initiated by an agency or department, the president or the NSC itself.”

The NSC is at the top of a formal decision-making process that “is geared toward consensus.” Even the president strives to obtain the support of the other “principals”⁵⁶, including, at times, through smaller informal meetings. In those gatherings, principals may bargain with one another, breaking the log jams produced by the formal process” (Meese *et al.*, 2018: 261, 263). Pfaltzgraff & Ra’anan (1984 apud Meese *et al.*, 2018: 263) argue that such consultations potentially “allow the president to draw on input from others without yielding any power in the process.” Still, the NSC is not a decision-making body, as its role is to advise and help the president – the “decider” – making decisions (Hadley, 2016: 7-8). According to Hook (2016: 178), with the steady growth of presidential powers since WWII, foreign policymaking has become centralized in the White House, with the NSC having “effectively replaced the State Department as the primary source of foreign policy advice to the president.”

The description of the NSC decision-making process fits the problem stream identified by (Léonard and Kaunert, 2011), despite not including all decision-makers, particularly those in the audience. The fact that this decision-making process is intended to result in a consensus supports our decision to look at the executive branch, as a whole, as securitizing actor, despite the usefulness of identifying its smaller units. These top government officials make foreign policy and the process results in the executive speaking as one voice.

Overall, presidents hold the position of highest authority in foreign policymaking, and the associated decision-making process is meant to aid them in the fulfillment of their responsibilities. The formal coordination, within the executive branch, of the national security decision-making process is administered by the NSC staff (i.e., the National Security Advisor and his assistants), cooperatively with the president’s immediate staff, and belongs to the president (Meese *et al.*, 2018: 247-248). According to Ritchie (2008: 6), the White House stands at the center of the nuclear weapons policy-making process, especially the Office of the President⁵⁷ and the NSC. While there is a general structural pattern that has been followed since the George W. H. Bush administration, how the NSC is organized, as well as the degree of influence held by it, have varied in response to the preferences and ways of a given president or administration (CRS, 2017: 1, 13), the competences of its members, and the challenges in the foreign policy agenda (Meese *et al.*, 2018: 254). According to Hook (2016: 289), “the secretive nature of the NSC raises concerns about potential abuses from the concentration of power in the presidency.”

According to Meese *et al.* (2018: 247, 252, 254), “[t]he backbone of the formal process is a constant churn of interagency meetings, commonly referred to as the *NSC system*” that, at the top of the hierarchy, include the president and his senior advisors, in addition to the heads of agencies and departments. Below that level, presidents are assisted by an assembly of working groups and subordinate

⁵⁶ The principals are the president, the heads of departments and agencies, and the president’s senior advisors (Meese *et al.*, 2018: 247).

⁵⁷ The Office of the President is composed by his immediate staff, along with entities such as the Office of the United States Trade Representative and the Office of Management and Budget. The Office of the President provides the leader with the support he needs to govern, and its responsibilities include the promotion of trade interests and communicating to the American people the messages of the President (The White House, n.d.b, n.d.c).

councils. The NSC staff has shown a tendency to expand, doubling its numbers since 1992 to 400 people in 2016, at the end of the Obama Administration. Said staff, whose most important member is the NSA, counsels the president, coordinates policy development within the executive branch, and monitors implementation of policy, decisions, or guidance coming from the president. For instance, according to Jordan et al. (1999 apud Ritchie, 2008: 6), “[t]he NSC staff may examine issues affecting nuclear weapons policy initiated by an agency or department, the president or the NSC itself.” However, “the president does not need a formal meeting to confer with his national security team. Decisions can be made any time the president gathers the right people or the right advice” (Meese *et al.*, 2018: 254).

Being the most important member of the NSC staff, we select the NSA as a securitizing actor. Despite not being a member of the NSC, “[l]aw and custom dictate that the Cabinet officers involved in foreign policy issues almost always include the secretary of state, the secretary of defense, and the national security adviser (Halperin & Clapp, 2006: 16).

The NSA evolved considerably from the position of the executive secretary established as part of the 1947 National Security Act, becoming “one of the most important White House offices in its impact on policy.” In fact, in some administrations, the “impact [was] so strong that foreign and national security policy making [was] essentially centralized in the hands of the NSC advisor with minimal input from cabinet-level departments such as State or Defense” (Burke, 2008: 1, 6). The NSA “[spends] more time with the President than any other member of the President’s national security team” (Hadley, 2016: 2), which is frequently the determining requisite for power in the executive branch (Meese et al., 2018: 262). The appointment of the national security advisor allows the President to circumvent congressional checks on presidential power since the position does not need Senate confirmation. Among other tasks, the NSA expresses the views of the president, guarantees that all options are developed and contemplated, certifies that the agency heads (i.e., the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Energy, among others) have had the chance to present their views, and conveys decisions.

NSAs play the role of “honest brokers”, ensuring a transparent, fair, and inclusive process for presenting issues to the President; fostering trust among national security colleagues; maintaining a discreet public presence by operating behind the scenes; and providing private counsel to the President (Hadley, 2016: 5-6, 9-10). In addition to honest brokers, NSAs are also policy advocates (Meese *et al.*, 2018: 262). They frequently have meetings with the president for assessment and interpretation of the latest foreign policy events and, in doing so, convey the leader their advice. By articulating to the president their points of view of certain issues, in addition to coordinating the input of other advisors, NSAs risk alienating heads of department and agencies, but doing so can be a way to move policy forward (Meese *et al.*, 2018: 262-263; Hook, 2016: 288; 639).

A regular attendee of NSC meetings (Meese *et al.*, 2018: 255), the NSA has assumed a major, and often very public, policy-making role (CRS, 2017: 1), with the actor and the NSC rivaling the DOS as the main presidential advisors on foreign policy issues (Hook, 2016: 178). NSAs also spend more time on policy substance than any other NSC member (Hadley, 2016: 2).

Even though the NSA lacks the legal status that places the statutory members of the NSC at the top of the decision-making architecture in foreign policy of the United States, the position evolved to a degree that can hinder the influence of those actors. The NSA often has more access to the president than statutory members of the NSC and can play the role of a policy advocate. Still, as mentioned, members of the NSC will have varied influence in U.S. foreign policymaking across administrations. There are also informal meetings being conducted with the president to consider outside of the NSC process, and the NSC members bargain with one another as well. Therefore, we consider additional securitizing actors within the NSC in order to account for their individual influence over the president, and thus the foreign policy of a given administration. We will consider the eligibility as securitizing actors of the statutory members and statutory advisors of the NSC, since their attendance in NSC meetings is mandated by law and are expected to be important pieces of the decision-making process. Still, we do not expect all NSC members to have the same overall influence on U.S. foreign policy, or within the specific policy area of nuclear deterrence policy.

We start our search for other securitizing actors within the NSC with the vice president, who is someone with “a foot in the executive branch as well as in the legislative” (Cheney, 2011 as cited in Brownell, 2015: 367). On the one hand, they have an office in the West Wing of the White House and their NSC membership places them among “a small group of high-level executive officers with special advisory influence over the President” – a “strong evidence of executive branch membership.” On the other hand, per the Constitution, vice presidents have legislative responsibilities, sitting as Presidents of the Senate and casting tie-breaking votes in the Senate (Garvey, 2008: 580-581; Cheney, 2011 as cited in Brownell, 2015: 367).

Even though their NSC membership constitutes a modern statutory assignment granting the vice president executive duties in the realm of foreign policy, other such responsibilities “exist only by virtue of the President's delegation of authority, an authority inherent within the executive power.” In other words, “the Vice President's executive power lies only in his continuing relationship with the President” (Garvey, 2008: 584). This view is shared by Bill Clinton's policy advisor Bruce Reed: “[t]he Vice-president's real power derives from his relationship with the president, and the leash is only as long as the president chooses to make it.” Access and information are the keys to a vice president's power. However, a President and his vice president have had, historically, a relationship forged in fire, and the vice president can help to share some of the President's burden on difficult decision-making decisions (Brower, 2018).

Vice presidents have become powerful foreign policy actors in recent years (Hook, 2016: 206). Such a development stands in stark contrast with the historically low-profile role of the vice president, who was not granted any foreign policy responsibilities by the Constitution (Hook, 2016: 206). Today, vice presidents operate as something close to a super advisor or assistant president, with the position becoming a true power center in the White House (Masters, 2024). Vice presidents are also the only ones in the President's team that cannot easily be fired and are typically one of the last people left

standing as an administration reaches its end. Still, in almost all modern administrations, “the relationship between the president and his vice president has deteriorated over time (Brower, 2018). Case by case considerations will be made regarding the eligibility of vice presidents as securitizing actors, given that their influence in the realm of foreign policy is based on their relationship with the President.

Dick Cheney and Joe Biden were powerful vice presidents who “had an agreement with the presidents they served that they would see every piece of paper that came across the president’s desk.” (Brower, 2018). Cheney, vice president during the George W. Bush administration, was described as “the most empowered vice president in history” (Witkover, 2014 apud Hook, 2016: 206) and played a crucial role in the United States’ “War on Terror.” George W. Bush relied on Cheney in making important decisions, and the closer relationship of the two men with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld effectively hindered the role of Secretary of State Colin Powell (Hook, 2016: 129, 164, 206). Cheney saw himself as the President’s most influential advisor and considered that vice presidents should be involved in all national security issues, if for no other motive than to assure their preparedness in case of a presidential emergency. However, according to Brower, during George W. Bush’s second turn, Cheney’s influence diminished, as NSA Condoleezza Rice took his place as the President’s closest advisor (Brower, 2018).

Joe Biden had been an important figure of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and, thus, the vice president brought to the White House significant expertise and contacts (Hook, 2016: 206). Although, like his predecessor Cheney, Biden saw himself as the President’s closest advisor, he never established, in his own words, a co-dependent relationship with Barack Obama (Brower, 2018). Nonetheless, as Obama came to terms with his own inexperience, he admitted that “Biden’s deep experience on foreign policy and national security issues and his relationships with world leaders and with members of Congress would augment Obama’s own strengths and would fill in some of his gaps.” Unlike Cheney, Biden did not create his own “shadow” NSC, but had total access to the NSC, with complete approval from Obama’s NSA. At the President’s request, Biden would spend 4-7 hours a day with the President and was present in every major meeting; in fact, the vice president told Obama that he wanted to literally “be the last person in the room on every major decision,” to which the latter agreed (Brower, 2018).

Therefore, although Presidents are granted “enormous flexibility in utilizing the “second in command” (Hook, 2016: 206), it is clear, in our view, that Cheney and Biden constituted prime examples of the “empowered vice presidency” (Hook, 2016: 206). By means of being involved in every major national security debate, and through their proximity to the President, we consider that these two vice presidents must be deemed securitizing actors.

The Trump-Pence relationship was characterized by a “domination-subordination” dynamic, with the latter being “loyal to a fault,” a willing accomplice to his boss’ behavior, and careful about not upstaging him- According to Brower, Pence viewed his role in the administration as being, in part,

Trump's translator. A senior Trump official explained that usually after about an hour of debate, the vice president would interject and state "Mr. President, this is how I see where the group thinks we ought to go." The vice president had the "President's ear," and was brought into the inner circle; however, as Pence's chief of staff put it: "the question is there are several inner circles," and the vice president was not always in the loop (Brower, 2018).

According to Masters, Mike Pence has been "one of the most powerful and knowledgeable members of the [Trump] administration, particularly on foreign policy issues." Pence was the "point man in delivering high-profile rebukes of U.S. adversaries," such as China and Venezuela, and played a key role in ally reassurance (Masters, 2024). For example, in his very first trip abroad as vice president, Pence attended the Munich Security Conference with the goal of reassuring concerned NATO allies that the U.S. had no plans of leaving the transatlantic alliance. The vice president's schedule was frequently packed with foreign travel (Brower, 2018).

Ashford explained that Pence did not have a substantial foreign policy background. She remarked that he paid "lip service" to the President on those matters but hypothesized that that was merely performative (Ashford & Kroenig, 2020). Bandow (2019) also argued that Pence's record and discourse indicated that he did not share Trump's foreign policy vision. Still, according to Swan (2019), the vice president "[had] done more than arguably any other senior administration official to propel President Trump's most hawkish foreign policy positions," having done it "consistently in private and, increasingly, in public." Keating (2020) noted that because Trump never found people who shared his foreign policy views, the foreign policy of his administration frequently appeared incoherent. Thus, there were two foreign policies in Trump's administration: one was the president's, another was led by the vice president and the Secretary of State Pompeo.

Thus, we are faced with the question: did Pence continue the tradition of the "empowered" vice president, particularly in the realm of foreign policy, and should, therefore, be considered a securitizing actor? In our view, it would seem that Pence demonstrated some level of foreign policy influence and certainly had a close working relationship with the President, including in terms of shaping Trump's understanding of the information conveyed to him. While the Trump administration operated in a "chaotic space," the vice president seemed to know his role, and while Pence and his team "[were] not viewed as a competing power center" in terms of getting information to the President, maybe they should have been regarded as such (Brower, 2018). Therefore, we regard Pence as a securitizing actor.

We now move on to the department heads that integrate the NSC as statutory members. They are the designated authoritative representatives of the following executive branch departments of the U.S. federal government: Department of Treasury (DOT), the DOE, the DOS, and the DOD. We will include or exclude those departments as securitizing actors. As Hook (2016: 274, 603) explains, while the White House and Congress formulate foreign policy, that is, "they determine the nation's primary goals and provide the means to achieve them," the main units of the executive branch of the U.S. federal government (i.e., the Departments of State, Labor, Defense, Agriculture, etc.) are responsible for their

implementation. Nonetheless, there is a “diffusion of policymaking authority across a widening array of federal agencies,” sometimes at the cost of hindering the governments’ priorities and principles.

The DOT gives council to the White House on economic policy, being responsible, in the realm of foreign policy, for the imposition of sanctions on foreign governments that threaten American interests (Hook, 2016: 315). We exclude the DOT as a securitizing actor, given that the DOT’s duties are centered on the economic domain of foreign policy, not focusing on the military sphere associated with nuclear deterrence policy.

The DOE and the DOD are, along with the White House, the armed services, and Congress, the primary policy-making centers of nuclear weapons policy (Ritchie, 2008: 6). The Secretary of Energy is the head of a department assigned “with maintaining a safe, secure and effective nuclear deterrent and reducing the threat of nuclear proliferation, overseeing the United States’ energy supply, carrying out the environmental clean-up from the Cold War nuclear mission, and the 17 National Laboratories⁵⁸” (U.S. DOE, n.d.a). The DOE “is responsible for administering the nuclear weapons laboratories and the manufacture of nuclear warheads as well as the production of nuclear materials required for the weapons program” (Ritchie, 2008: 6).

The nuclear weapons production complex⁵⁹ was in a poor state and worsening in the early days of the Clinton administration. Therefore, a classified Presidential Directive and the 1994 National Defense Authorization gave the DOE the order (Ritchie, 2008: 47) “to establish a stewardship program to ensure the preservation of the core intellectual and technical competence of the U.S. in nuclear weapons” (Presidential Decision Directives, 1993) – the Stockpile Stewardship Program. As result, the nuclear weapons complex was sustained through the 1990s through “a major warhead life extension program and the continued modernization of strategic nuclear forces” (Ritchie, 2008: 49). This decision of the Clinton presidency sought to guarantee that, under the CTBT, the nuclear stockpile would remain safe and reliably, as well as address opposition to the treaty (Paine, 2004 apud Ritchie, 2008: 49).

Within the DOE, there is a semi-autonomous agency named the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), which is “responsible for enhancing national security through the military application of nuclear science” (U.S. DOE, n.d.b). The agency was created to address the “enduring concern about the lack of focus and attention in DOE on the nuclear mission since the end of the Cold War,” as well as other problems with the American nuclear weapons complex (Ritchie, 2008: 54). Nonetheless, all of the DOE’s other missions are exclusively civilian. Fossil fuels, artificial intelligence, solar panels, and electric utility rates, to name a few, figure among the department’s varied priorities while, in stark contrast, the mission of the DOD is “relatively single-focused on national defense.” DOE and DOD have a joint senior-level body – the Nuclear Weapons Council, which is tasked “with

⁵⁸ Not all of them are related to the nuclear mission.

⁵⁹ The nuclear weapons complex or Nuclear Security Enterprise are “the major facilities (...) that are used to meet the requirements for maintaining the nuclear weapons stockpile.” The complex “consists of nine government-owned, contractor-operated sites in seven states, and a Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) nuclear reactor used to produce tritium for nuclear weapons” (Woolf & Werner, 2021: 1).

developing stockpile weapons options and overseeing management of the nuclear stockpile to ensure its safety and reliability” (Geller, 2020).

Despite being responsible for a key element of American national security (the nuclear arsenal), it was only in 2007, with the Energy Independence and Security Act (U.S. Congress, 2017) that the Secretary of Energy became a statutory member of the NSC. The presence of the Secretary of Energy in the meetings of the principals committee⁶⁰ of the NSC has also been intermittent, with the head of the DOE being excluded during the George W. Bush Administration and, initially, during the Trump administration as well (CRS, 2017: 10, 13). Additionally, since the DOE was established in 1977, James Schlesinger, who served as Secretary of Energy under President Jimmy Carter, “was perhaps the first and last hired with any actual nuclear weapons experience.” As result, “[m]ost Secretaries are hired because they’re energy experts (...) [and] most ignore the nuclear weapons mission” (Morrison & Miller, 2020). Given that the focus of the DOE is placed on civilian, and not military missions, we will exclude the DOE as a securitizing actor. Still, we will consider, on a case-by-case basis, the inclusion of DOE speeches in our analysis, as a securitizing actor, because the nuclear mission does provide the department with a relevant role in nuclear deterrence policy.

Regarding the DOS and the DOD, their influence on particular policy choices varied across administrations, since the president has a great deal of flexibility in deciding what their role in designing and managing foreign policy should be⁶¹. Competition between the two rival agencies can be brutal, (Hook, 2016: 197) and motivated by bureaucratic self-interest, which become drivers of American foreign policy in detriment of national interest (Hook, 2016: 152; Allison & Zelikow, 1999 apud Hook, 2016: 152). According to Wheeler (2008 apud Hook, 2016: 291-292), internal “turf battles” have prevented the development of security strategies oriented toward the United States’ present and future security threats.

The Secretary of State is the United States’ chief diplomat, overseeing the country’s diplomatic complex (Hook, 2016: 280-281). In reality, however, there are two foreign ministries in the United States – the DOS and the NSC (Rockman, 1981 apud Hook, 2016: 280) – and, as result, authority over foreign policy becomes blurred, “[creating] problems over jurisdiction and access to the president.” In fact, the NSC “is less of a forum for deliberations among high-level cabinet officials than a shadow DOS with a large staff and immediate access to the Oval Office” (Hook, 2016: 280, 318).

The department headed by the State Secretary is responsible for advising the president, directly negotiates with foreign governments, collects and distributes information about developments in foreign states, and researches solutions for transnational issues. However, the department’s *modus operandi* is characterized by exceeding caution, as State officials refrain from initiatives that are unpopular in

⁶⁰ A principals committee meeting is a meeting of the NSC that takes place without the president (Meese *et al.*, 2018: 256).

⁶¹ For instance, the closer relationship of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld with President George W. Bush granted him more influence over American foreign policy than Secretary of State Colin Powell (Hook, 2016: 129).

Congress and seek to maintain friendly and dependable diplomatic relations with other foreign governments (Hook, 2016: 280-281, 285).

Presidential advisor Ted Sorensen (1987: 245-246) argued that, in the realm of foreign policy, no recommendation coming from a presidential aid, and no White House action, should be kept from the Secretary of State. All recommendations from Secretaries of State must reach the ears of the President, and the former should receive advance notice if their advice is rejected on an important issue. Sorensen adds that it is the role of DOS Secretaries to question the key views of the President and the NSA if they consider those interpretations to be wrong, and to remain close by even when overruled.

On nuclear weapons policy, the DOS is the key negotiator of arms control and disarmament treaties (Ritchie, 2008: 9). Until 1999, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) formulated and implemented disarmament and arms control policies (U.S. DOS, n.d.f), but upon its abolishment, its functions were transferred to the State Secretary, and the ACDA director was replaced by the Senior Advisor to the President and the Secretary of State for Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament, and by the Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Affairs (National archives, n.d.b). Since the DOS is the primary responsible institution for the negotiation of nuclear weapons treaties, it can exert influence on U.S. nuclear deterrence policy and must be deemed a securitizing actor. Moreover, Secretaries of State are key foreign policy presidential advisors, and we expect them to typically be involved in major national security issues. Finally, as Mike Pompeo's comment regarding the "China threat" (Secretary Pompeo [@SecPompeo], 2021) demonstrates, a Secretary of State might not be above constructing national security threats.

According to Hook, the foreign policy bureaucracy of the United States "has exhibited path dependency, a pattern by which past structural choices, informed by their architects' values and goals, push future policies in particular directions." It follows from that argument that "the sheer size and capacity of the Defense Department relative to the State Department may lead foreign policy makers toward military rather than diplomatic solutions." Indeed, the DOD is easily the most expensive and largest agency of the U.S. government. It is the country's single largest employer and the department's economic impact is intensified by the millions of other workers employed by the U.S. military-industrial complex, which provides goods and services to the Pentagon (Hook, 2016: 275, 291). Such a state of affairs has created situations whereby Congress members vocally oppose the inefficiency and wastefulness of the DOD, while "[fighting] tooth and nail to prevent any reduction in defense activities in their home state or district no matter how inefficient or wasteful" (Gates, 2014 apud Hook, 2016: 277).

The mission of the DOD is to provide the necessary military forces to deter war and safeguard U.S. nation's security (GPS, n.d.). The Secretary of Defense, with the help of a deputy secretary, oversees the U.S. Army, Navy, and Air Force (AF) (i.e., the armed services). The secretary is also the key actor in the executive branch in terms of evaluating defense programs, recommending to the President and Congress which should be canceled, cut back, or expanded, and proposing their respective budgets

(McCarty, 2020). Every four years, the DOD summarizes the national security priorities and military objectives of the United States in the Quadrennial Defense Review (Hook, 2016: 487) a document that has been replaced since 2018 by the NDS. Nuclear deterrence is the number one priority of the DOD (Lopez, 2021), and it is from its budget that most of the funds for modernizing and sustaining the U.S. nuclear arsenal originate (CBO, 2023).

The department itself keeps military facilities and alliances throughout the world. Based on broad guidance provided by the White House to the DOD Secretary on nuclear weapons targeting policy and planning, the OSD⁶², along with the JCS and STRATCOM “develop the targeting requirements and plans which underpin nuclear deterrence policy” (Miller, 1997 apud Ritchie, 2008: 8). Within the DOD, we also find the MDA, whose mission is the development and deployment of a layered missile defense system to defend the country, its allies, friends, and forces overseas from missile attacks. It is a DOD agency dedicated to research, development, and acquisition of missile defense technology that works closely with the combatant commands⁶³ (MDA, n.d.a, n.d.b).

Each administration drafts its NPR. This document presents the administration’s “choices about nuclear deterrence and translate them into nuclear strategy and force structure” (Weiner, 2022). However, NPR consistently fail to represent the views of the president, because the Pentagon, which has “the biggest stake in maintaining and expanding current nuclear programs,” holds the pen, with other departments and agencies not contributing meaningfully. According to Cirincione (2022), American nuclear policy “is crafted by networks housed in the U.S. Strategic Command [STRATCOM] and the Pentagon and running through the Congress and associated nuclear contractors and corporations.” That nuclear priesthood, the author adds, “benefits personally and professionally from the production of nuclear weapons — and it usually prevails.” Those who attempt to change the existing state of affairs “are bullied, isolated, and pushed aside” (Cirincione, 2022). The priesthood tends to offer the president limited choices for nuclear policy reform, allowing for only small changes, by “presenting everything as an interlocking set of military requirements instead of multiple options for meeting deterrence goals” (Weiner, 2022). This nuclear-planning community works in excessive secrecy, “[keeping] its plans in the dark and beyond public scrutiny.” Some of its “members” have access to information that is off limits to most U.S. officials responsible for defense and security programs. Some are civil leaders in the DOD, others are affiliated with think tanks such as the RAND Corporation (which receive both private and public funding), others are part of the JCS staff or STRATCOM (H.A.S.C. No. 116-9, 2019: 73; U.S. STRATCOM, 2018; RAND Corporation, 2023).

STRATCOM is a DOD combatant command whose mission “is to deter strategic attack and employ forces, as directed, to guarantee the security of [the United States] and [its] Allies.” Among its

⁶² That is, the headquarters-level staff of the DOD.

⁶³ The DOD has eleven combatant commands (including STRATCOM), with each having “a geographic or functional mission that provides command and control of military forces in peace and war” (Combatant Commands, s.a.).

appointed responsibilities are “strategic deterrence; nuclear operations; space operations; joint electronic spectrum operations; global strike; missile defense; and analysis and targeting” (About, s.a.). Established in 1992, STRATCOM “brought the nuclear planning of the individual armed services under one command for the first time and provided a single point of authority for strategic forces (Arkin & Norris, 1991 apud Ritchie, 2008: 24). In 2002 and 2003 STRATCOM underwent several changes, which diluted “the role of nuclear weapons in STRATCOM planning and military planning in general,” given that its mission became to “provide a global warfighting capability (...) to deter and defeat those who desire to attack the United States and its allies” using both nuclear and conventional capabilities (Ellis, 2002, apud Ritchie, 2008: 64, 66). STRATCOM, as one of the bodies of the armed services, is “centrally involved in advising civilian policymakers on nuclear weapons issues” (Ritchie, 2008: 7).

The JCS, STRATCOM, and the OSD are responsible “for policy development, budgetary and programming decisions and implementing policy through detailed nuclear employment, deployment and sustainment plans” (Ritchie, 2008: 7). Still, it is the Secretary of Defense, as principal defense advisor and policymaker (U.S. DOD, n.d.b), who holds ultimate responsibility on nuclear weapons planning and policy (Jordan, Mazarr & Taylor, 1999 apud Ritchie, 2008: 8). In the post-Cold War period, “[n]uclear weapons policy has (...) been affected by a marked reduction in senior-level executive, military and congressional interest and attention,” which has resulted in “a marked institutional de-emphasis of nuclear weapons in DOD and STRATCOM and considerable difficulty in ensuring effective DOE/NNSA management of the nuclear mission” (Ritchie, 2008: 147-148).

Given that the DOD is responsible for deterring war, includes the military departments of Navy, Air Force, the JCS, among others (Federal Register, n.d.), and holds dominant influence on U.S. nuclear weapons policy, we consider that the DOD is not only a securitizing actor, but likely the most important one.

The statutory advisors in the NSC are the chairman of the JCS – the military advisor – and the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) – the intelligence advisor. The JCS is a body within the DOD, comprised of senior armed services leaders who advise the Secretary of Defense on military matters (Hook, 2016: 291). Its chairman, whose authority was expanded as a result of the Goldwater-Nichols DOD Reorganization Act of 1986 (Lowery, 2016: 34), is the main figure in providing military guidance to the president, the Secretary of Defense, and the NSC, as “the senior ranking member of the Armed Forces.” Before presenting his advice, the JCS chairman may consult with other JCS members, as well as commanders of the unified commands (Joint Chiefs of Staff, n.d.). The responsibilities of the JCS chairman go beyond the strategic realm and include readiness evaluations and budget assessments (Sarkesian *et al.*, 2005: 140).

The chairman of the JCS is the “spokesman for the commanders of the combatant commands” (Sarkesian *et al.*, 2005: 140); however, as an advisory body, the JCS “have no executive authority to command combatant forces,” as the chain of command “runs from the President to the Secretary of Defense; and from the Secretary of Defense to the commander of the combatant command” (The Joint

Staff, s.a.). The JCS chairman “acts as an intermediary, transmitting orders between the Secretary of Defense and the Commanders of Combatant Commands” (CRS, 2024a: 1). We consider the JCS as a securitizing actor in light of the body’s role as the main military advisor to other securitizing actors. The unified commands, including STRATCOM, are overseen by the DOD. Since the department is a securitizing actor, the same is true for the commands. However, given their position in the chain of command, our discourse analysis will be centered on DOD officials closer to the Secretary of Defense. Still, on a case-by-case basis, we will consider analyzing discourses from the leadership of the unified commands. We believe that doing so will enrich our analysis with a perspective from the military in situations where we find that JCS discourses are lacking in number or detail.

The DNI is the other statutory advisor of the NSC. According to Ritchie (2008: 9-10), “[t]he intelligence community also has a strong role to play in its assessments of the nuclear capabilities of potential adversaries and other strategic targets against which nuclear weapons could be employed.” The intelligence community is composed of eighteen agencies, including the Office of the DNI, which attempts to integrate all of the units’ findings (Hook, 2016: 301; Office of the DNI, n.d.). However, the DNI lacks authority over the components of the intelligence community, struggles to exert influence, has a limited budget, and needs to leverage personal connections to mobilize toward any goal (Liu, 2019; Forum for American Leadership, 2023). Of those eighteen units, nine are managed by the DOD, while other departments, namely State, Energy, Treasury and Homeland Security, manage their own intelligence agencies (Homeland Security manages two). The remaining agencies are the Central Intelligence Unit, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Drug Enforcement Agency. All non-DOD agencies are considered civilian agencies (Hook, 2016: 301-302; Office of the DNI, n.d.). Given the limited powers of the DNI, the fact that several intelligence units are managed by the DOD and seeing as the civilian agencies are not expected to focus on nuclear weapons issues, we exclude the intelligence community from our securitizing actors. Having selected the actors that constitute securitizing actors in our research, we now must identify which specific actors comprise the audience.

3.6. The audience in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy

Foreign policy decision-making in the United States is marked by constitutional checks to presidential power, with Congress empowerment “directly [curbing] the president’s power to plunge the country into foreign “entanglements” without popular consent” (Hook, 2016: 182). Since Congress holds the power of the purse, every year, congressional committees carefully analyze all of the defense-related spending requests of the administration (the budget requests), including, naturally, those concerning nuclear weapons. The legislature “can (...) request policy statements and full-scale reviews on broad national security and specific nuclear weapons issues that can push DOD or DOE in one direction or another and hold administration decisions to account” (Ritchie, 2008: 10). The constitutional

division of powers between the executive branch and the legislative branch on national security has created tensions among the two sides, given that Congress has become progressively more activist (Jordan et al., 1999 apud Ritchie, 2008: 10). This dynamic, in the post-Cold War period, can be observed regarding nuclear-weapons policy and has led Congress to often play a significant role (Ritchie, 2008: 10).

Still, according to Ritchie, the U.S. Congress “must be regarded as a junior partner in nuclear weapons policy-making,” since its impact is typically limited. Additionally, there are not many members of Congress possessing interest or expertise in the field. Nuclear weapons policy is dominated by the administration, which “[sets] the agenda through its control over information and expertise” (Ritchie, 2008: 10). In general, the role of Congress on nuclear weapons policy has been mostly reactive, and the body “tends to only deal with nuclear weapons policy issues when there are significant fiscal, policy or management concerns” (Jordan et al., 1999 apud Ritchie, 2008: 11).

According to Hartung and Anderson (2012: 13), while dozens of Congress members play key roles in funding nuclear weapons-related projects, “some have far more influence than others.” The authors identify the House and the Senate Appropriations Committees (specifically their Energy and Water Subcommittees), as well as the House and Senate Armed Services Committees (precisely their Strategic Forces Subcommittees) as particularly influential. Ritchie also identifies the same Committees as key, while also singling out “the Senate and House committees on energy that also cover DOE’s nuclear weapons activities and budgets.” The author also mentions that the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs “has the power to approve, vote down or amend treaties affecting nuclear weapons policy.”

Ultimately, we draw on Lindsay’s (1991 apud Ritchie, 2008: 10) understanding that “[t]he main influence of Congress is negative by denying funding for particular programmes as opposed to taking a positive lead on policy development.” The authorizations committees (the committees on Armed Services) and the appropriations committees “can remove funding for a programme or increase funding if a programme becomes a Congressional priority” (Ritchie, 2008: 10). According to Ritchie (2008: 10-11), Republicans and Democrats only rarely agree on nuclear weapons policy issues, and it is only through the budget process that agreement on national security priorities can be achieved (Jordan et al., 1999 apud Ritchie, 2008: 11). Still, in practice, congressional powers on scrutinizing spending requests have limitations: Congress cannot “assess and evaluate alternatives for all of the programmes in DOD’s massive budget,” and it carries the burden of “[demonstrating] that a DOD programme should *not* be funded.” Furthermore, if a program is denied the necessary spending, the DOD can bring it back to Congress the following year, time after time, and strive to increase support for the program (Ritchie, 2008: 11). Overall, our exploration of the role of Congress in nuclear weapons policy reinforces our conclusion that the administration, and not Congress, must be deemed the primary securitizing actor in our analysis.

Every FY, a Budget Resolution is passed by the Senate and House Budget Committees⁶⁴, determining the overall spending ceiling for the DOD and other agencies. Based on those established spending ceilings, the President submits an annual budget request to Congress, which contains the DOD's budget proposal. Upon receiving the DOD budget proposal, the Senate and House Armed Services Committees and their subcommittees debate, amend, and rewrite it (Ritchie, 2008: 12). Hearings are conducted, whereby government and non-government witness are called and questioned by the congress members about the substance of the Administration budget proposal on a variety of issues (Johnson, 2005 apud Ritchie, 2008: 12). Frequently, administration policies, strategies and initiatives are challenged during those hearings. Based on the President's proposal and the various discussions, the House and Senate Armed Services Committees prepare the NDAA, which establishes spending ceilings for individual programs of the DOD – including nuclear weapons programs (Ritchie, 2008: 12).

The process of funding allocation for policies has many veto points (Hanson, 2020: 147, 150). The inclusion of funding for a given defense policy, once under consideration in a specialized subcommittee of an authorizing committee (e.g., the Strategic Forces Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee) must pass voting procedures in that subcommittee, then in the House Armed Services Committee, and then in the full H.R., as the chamber votes on an NDAA. Amendments can be offered and voted on at every one of those stages to remove or add a provision. Subsequently, acceptance of funding for the defense policy must survive the development of a joint NDAA by the House and Senate and the voting procedures on the floor of each chamber once again. Lastly, the bill is placed on the president's desk, who can sign it or veto it⁶⁵. If the president signs an NDAA containing that defense policy, then funding for it is authorized (CRS, 2024a: 1-2).

As Saturno *et al.* (2016: 1) explain, “[t]he House and Senate Committees on Appropriations have jurisdiction over the annual appropriations measures. Each committee is organized into subcommittees, with each subcommittee having responsibility for developing one regular annual appropriations bill to provide funding for departments and activities within its jurisdiction.” Indeed, just because funding is authorized in the also annual authorizations measures, that does not mean that it will ultimately be appropriated for its intended purposes. For that to happen, the relevant appropriations subcommittee will have to approve the appropriation of funding for that defense policy in the relevant appropriations bill of that chamber.

⁶⁴ We excluded the Budget Committees from consideration in our work because they provide “a broad blueprint for federal spending”, setting the spending levels before the appropriations committees can divide the funds among the various programs (Federal Budget Frequently [...], s.a.), such as those relating nuclear weapons. Therefore, funding for specific nuclear deterrence practices (if required) is in the sphere of competence of the appropriations committees and, later, of Congress as a whole.

⁶⁵ The president can veto legislation, which is then returned to Congress. Then, Congress has two choices: to accept the veto, or override it. To successfully challenge the veto, it is required that two-thirds of both chambers vote to override it (Constitution annotated, n.d.).

Assuming approval, the funding will have to survive further rounds of voting to feature in the final appropriations bill of the chamber: first in the full relevant committee, and then in the full chamber. Amendments can be offered and voted at the subcommittee, committee, or full chamber level to remove or add provisions. Afterwards, a joint appropriations bill is developed between the Senate and the House, which then the bill needs to pass both in the House and the Senate, before being signed by the president, who can still veto it (CRS, 2023a, pp. 2-7; Saturno et al., 2016: 5-9). Only after all those steps can funding be available for policy implementation. This process is exhaustive⁶⁶ and is described in broad strokes so that we can identify the crucial moments and audience members when it comes to U.S. nuclear deterrence policy change.

Authorizations can be understood “as any statutory provisions that define the authority of the federal government to act. They can establish or continue a federal agency, program, policy, project, or activity.” An authorization can also “may establish policies and restrictions or deal with organizational and administrative matters.” Authorizations are not budgetary legislation despite being often thought of as “the first step in the authorization and appropriations process.” That is because the authorizations do not provide funding for the activities of the U.S. government, and the legislators do not have to grant appropriations for all authorized programs. The appropriations process may also provide appropriations in the absence of an authorization. Thus, an NDAA may establish or modify a DOD program or activity but funding thereto would only be available if provided by an appropriations bill. However, there is a generally established “presumption that appropriations measures provide new budget authority only for programs, activities, or agencies previously authorized by law.” A similar presumption regards the prohibition of inclusion of general legislative language in the appropriations bills, which ought to be included in the authorization bills instead (CRS, 2023a: 10). That said, Congress can and does legislate in appropriations acts (CRS, 2023b: 9)

Overall, the enactment of policy change is likely to require funding, which is granted by congress via the appropriations processes, typically with authorizations thereto being provided. If a policy change is funded, that indicates that it received the necessary support from the legislature, as the audience, for its enactment. The most prominent audience members in Congress on nuclear deterrence policy are, therefore, the members of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees, and of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees (specially those in the Defense and Water and Energy Development subcommittees, given the broad range of policy areas under the jurisdiction of the Appropriations Committees). The chairman and the ranking member, as leaders of the majority and minority, respectively, in the committees and subcommittees, are particularly relevant audience members by being the party leaders in that context.

⁶⁶ At each voting moment, a majority is necessary, albeit 60 votes may be needed in the Senate floor to shut down a filibuster, which is “[a]tactic in which members of the Senate prevent action on legislation they oppose by continuously holding the floor and speaking until the majority abandons the legislation.” In the Senate floor, senators can speak for an unlimited amount of time, and 3/5 of the Senate must vote favorably to end a filibuster (Lowi *et al.*, 2019: 140, 155).

However, while we consider the aforementioned committee members key audience members within the legislature, we will also consider the inclusion, on a case-by-case basis of other legislators, seeing as they also have a voice and voting rights outside of the relevant committees. Moreover, despite not being members of those committees, certain legislators may be able to yield considerable influence due to their seniority, expertise on nuclear issues or foreign policy, position in a legislative body (e.g. majority/minority leader, whip) or other factors. In matters regarding nuclear arms control treaties, the members of the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs are the key audience members, particularly the chairman and the ranking member. The Committee plays a crucial role in treaty ratification processes by “[proposing] a resolution of ratification (possibly with conditions) when reporting a treaty to the Senate” (U.S. Senate, n.d.).

Next, we must identify which decision-makers that integrate the “outside-in” forces with influence on the U.S. foreign policy process should be included in our research. Léonard and Kaunert (2011: 67-68) identified changes in public opinion and broad social movements as key enablers of policy change in the politics stream. Thus, we will start with the general public, which the authors placed within the audience in that stream.

Most U.S. citizens are not well informed about foreign policy issues, and they are not very interested in them either because they have little direct impact on their lives. Thus, the foreign policy elites direct the majority of their efforts at the attentive public, which comprises about 15% of the population, and who have considerable knowledge of world affairs, such as journalists, scholars, activists, political analysts and government bureaucrats (Hook, 2016: 329-330). Still, this group lacks the opportunity or access to participate (Rosenau 1961: 33 apud Hook, 2016: 329). Moreover, a prominent study has “[indicated] that that economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have substantial independent impacts on U.S. government policy.” On the other hand, the average citizen had little or no independent impact on policy. As the authors explained, “[w]hen a majority of citizens disagrees with economic elites or with organized interests, they generally lose. Moreover, because of the strong status quo bias built into the U.S. political system, even when fairly large majorities of Americans favor policy change, they generally do not get it” (Gilens & Page, 2014: 564, 576).

As for social movements, in 1982, over a million people gathered in Central Park, New York city, urging an end to the arms race and the dismantling of nuclear arsenals (History.com Editors, n.d.). However, as of late, in the words of Representative for Tennessee Jim Cooper, during a March 2014 hearing of the House Subcommittee on Strategic Forces on nuclear issues, “the public has not tuned in to these issues as it should.” As he explained, it was “probably one of the few hearings in which, actually, the attendance of the subcommittee compares, very favorably, with the attendance in the audience” (H.A.S.C. No. 113–94, 2014: 9-10). A 2023 survey revealed that “relatively few Americans are interested in flexing their agency or getting more involved in making US nuclear policy” (Smeltz &

Weiner, 2023). Given the lack of interest in nuclear weapons issues on the part of the American public, we exclude the general public as an audience member in our research.

Other “outside-in” forces with influence on the U.S. foreign policy process are the news media and interest groups. Interest groups can be described as “intermediaries linking people to government, and lobbyists work for them. These groups make demands on government and try to influence public policies in their favor. Their most important difference from political parties is that they do not seek elective office” (American Government and Politics in the Information Age, 2011: 321). As we mentioned above, the news media and interest groups can be viewed as members of the U.S. foreign policy establishment.

Brands, Feaver, and Inboden (2020) explain that the U.S. foreign policy establishment or the “blob” is comprised of government officials (who know what is practical and how government institutions and actors work), outside experts (who think independently), and people who go back-and-forth between the two (who bridge the gaps). In the view of the authors, since the foreign policy community of the United States is so permeable, large, and diverse, it encourages dynamic debates on foreign policy issues that are envied by other countries, and which explain why the American nuclear policy debate is more nuanced and informed than that of other nuclear-weapon states.

Regarding establishment experts working outside of government, Walt (2018) explains that there are numerous interest groups and lobbies on almost all issues in foreign affairs, with “each trying to shape mass and elite opinion and persuade government officials to follow its preferred course of action.” As Schattschneider (1960 apud Hook, 2016: 329) observed in the mid-20th century, Americans are semi-sovereign, given the powerful hold of powerful interest groups and corporations in U.S. domestic and foreign policies. The little salience of foreign policy issues among citizens “[opens] the door for elites and special interests to determine policies,” with public action taking place “within narrow interest groups whose members have direct stakes in the outcomes of U.S. foreign policy choices and present their demands daily to the federal government” (Hook, 2016: 329, 419).

Walt (2018) sees the establishment more broadly and, borderline cases notwithstanding, his definition incorporates “formal government organizations and the many groups and individuals that deal with foreign policy as part of their normal activities, seeking either to shape public perceptions of international issues or to influence government policy directly.” Walt includes as part of the establishment, in addition to the formal figures of government; membership organizations (e.g., Greenpeace, Oxfam); think tanks; interest groups and lobbies; the media; academia; and sources of support (private groups and individuals that fund foreign policy initiatives).

The author describes the establishment of today, as “a dysfunctional caste of privileged insiders who are frequently disdainful of alternative perspectives and insulated both professionally and personally from the consequences of the policies they promote.” Their disagreements aside, they overall remain committed to liberal internationalism, and consider that “U.S. primacy and active global leadership [is] good for America and good for the world.” It was only once Trump was elected and

exposed the fact that the establishment “had created a world order that was overly reliant on the United States and thus potentially vulnerable to the vagaries of U.S. domestic politics” that the consensus on America’s pursuit of liberal hegemony was challenged (Walt, 2018).

According to Hartung and Freeman (2020), “[t]hrough their droves of lobbyists, the revolving door between the Pentagon, contractors, and Congress, and the promise of providing jobs to every Congressional district, Pentagon contractors have kept the defense budget artificially inflated for years.” Still, by the early 1990s, nuclear weapons had been “progressively drowned out in terms of money and the volume of debate compared to the massive lobbies and interest groups around other key defence capabilities”, with the JCS being reluctant to spend money on nuclear weapons at a time of intense resource competition within the DOD (Arms Control Association Panel [...], 2002 apud Ritchie, 2008: 132-133). Citing several sources, Ritchie (2008: 133) explained that in the late 1990s and early 2000s, there were no nuclear weapons advocates in the military (since nuclear weapons were not considered a priority), and few incentives to pursue a nuclear career, (considered to be out of the mainstream) leading to a lack of interest and expertise in the field that was accompanied by a lack of attention on nuclear matters by senior leaders in the DOD.

Be that as it may, a report by Hartung and Anderson (2012) brought attention to the activities of the nuclear weapons lobby to influence government decision-makers, especially among members of Congress. The nuclear weapons lobby is, according to the authors, not a “monolithic entity”, but instead “a network of overlapping organizations that include members of Congress, retired military personnel, and weapons producing corporations in various combinations.” Any attempt to reduce the nuclear force of the United States will probably be faced with strong opposition from those who benefit from the nuclear status quo, namely companies that build and design nuclear delivery vehicles, or operate facilities linked to nuclear warheads, and members of Congress who have, in their districts or state, facilities or deployment in some way related to nuclear weapons (Hartung & Anderson, 2012: 4, 10).

Influence is bought by the nuclear lobby by means of two different techniques: the use of the revolving door, and campaign donations. The revolving door, according to Hartung and Anderson, “refers to the process through which public officials leave government service to work for companies they had been in charge of funding and/or regulating.” In their study, which covered fourteen nuclear weapons contractors, “[t]he majority of relevant revolving door hires now working as lobbyists for key nuclear weapons contractors came from Congress.” Hartung and Anderson’s study also found that during the 2012 election cycle, key members of Congress with decision power over nuclear weapon spending – particularly those in the subcommittees of the Armed Services and the Appropriations Committees (House and Senate) – received a total of 2.9 million dollars from the top 14 nuclear weapons contractors (with members of the aforementioned committees receiving more than half of the contributions) (Hartung & Anderson, 2012: 2, 18-19). Indeed, Hartung and Anderson’s report strengthens the claim that, in nuclear weapons policy, there are “iron triangles,” consisting of “administrative agencies, members of congressional committees, and organised interest groups or

contractors,” which “identify policy issues, shape policy alternatives, advocate changes and are involved in policy implementation (Ogden, 1988; Shuman, 1988 apud Ritchie, 2008: 126-127).

Cirincione has argued that American global primacy, domestic politics and profits are the drivers of U.S. nuclear weapons policy. The Pentagon, which is poised to gain the most by preserving and expanding nuclear programs, is also the one writing nuclear policy. Private defense firms, who seek to protect and win nuclear weapons contracts, lobby members of Congress and fund their electoral campaigns; move individuals between public office and contractor jobs (revolving door); and fund think tanks, so they convey their views. The recommendations of the arms control community are not very influent in Washington. Moreover, many legislators are fearful of looking weak if they show opposition to a nuclear weapon, and some seek to secure the economic benefits that nuclear weapons bring to their states⁶⁷. Overall, by all appearances, this domestic environment is seemingly hostile to some of the recommendations we will make, even assuming a strategic environment less threateningly perceived (Cirincione, 2021, 2022).

In addition to trying to persuade government officials to support their preferred courses of action, lobbies and interest groups also seek to shape American foreign policy through think tanks which. According to Walt (2018), think tanks are important adjuncts to the lobbies and interest groups, going as far as describing them as “advocacy organizations masquerading as independent research bodies.” For instance, the Center for American Progress works on behalf of the Democratic Party, whereas the Heritage Foundation, for instance, serves the interests of the GOP. According to the author, think tanks “exist to provide intellectual ammunition for partisan political warfare and are understandably sensitive to the interests of major donors and the political leaders whose agendas they seek to promote.”

Walt further stresses that, while “certain think tanks and research organizations are explicitly nonpartisan and aspire to high standards of scholarship, the line between research and policy advocacy is increasingly blurred.” Some think tanks are heavily dependent on contributions from defense contractors and major corporations with a clear interest in foreign (as well as national) security policy and, increasingly, on foreign government donations as well. This raises questions regarding the objectivity of such research organizations. Private individuals also make donations to think tanks, political action committees, lobbies, and universities, to advance personal foreign policy goals. Indeed, even universities rely on donor support, some of which is undoubtedly driven by the foreign policy interests of the donors. Moreover, as Walt notes, some members of the American foreign policy community “wear several hats at once: teaching at a university, serving as a nonresident fellow at an inside-the-Beltway think tank, and doing private consulting for government agencies, individual

⁶⁷ Such reasons do not always emerge in the discourse, and it is difficult to find evidence for decisionmakers’ insincerity (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012: 167). Still, they showed up in our analysis in the form of hidden premises or rejected premises raised by other actors, which leads them to question a conclusion to pursue a certain action.

officials, or for-profit corporations.” The think tank community based in Washington D.C. provides an arena for debate on foreign policy issues, with “some parts of it [operating] almost as a “shadow government” preparing people and policies for future administrations.” This latter description strongly matches what Léonard and Kaunert (2011: 66-68) described as the policy stream of policy change, in which the policy community – a part of the U.S. foreign policy establishment – is designated as the audience. According to the authors, policy communities prepare solutions for policy problems even before the latter are constructed. Thus, once a problem is recognized, “a solution has [already] been developed and is available in the policy community.” However, the policy community, as well as Congress, is influenced by interest groups and lobbies.

Judis argued that “the individuals who exercise influence over foreign policy today represent the same conflicting set of private interests that affect domestic policy” (Judis, 1991: 43). The foreign policy establishment can shape the foreign policy narrative to a degree that can frustrate and rankle the White House as it attempts to deal with its criticisms. That happened with President Obama and his national security team (Drezner, 2017: 4). His deputy NSA stated that “[t]he discourse in Washington just becomes like a self-licking ice cream cone of maximalist foreign policy (...) That’s what gets you on television. That’s what gets your think-tank paper read” (Draper, 2015).

In the nuclear realm, this policy community of government experts, outside specialists, and those which bridge the gaps between the two is the nuclear priesthood. As Ritchie (2008: 8) explains, within the armed services and the DOD, nuclear weapons policy has been guided by the so-called nuclear weapons community, which is comprised by “civilian and military officials within the Pentagon bureaucracy responsible for nuclear policy, planning and targeting strategy in the policy office of the OSD, STRATCOM and the Joint Staff.” However, the priesthood also includes scholars based in think-tanks with ties to the government, as well as members of Congress. These specialists relate to each other, for the most part, “through their common interest in the policy area” (Léonard & Kaunert, 2011: 67). The nuclear priesthood is an example of a cadre of professionals that can belong to a government agency or department, making “vast amounts of technocratic knowledge and institutional memory available to policymakers,” or who can be a part of “an even larger and more diverse network of experts in the many hundreds of think tanks and contract research institutions that surround the government,” and which complement the knowledge generated by public officials (Brands, Feaver & Inboden, 2020).

The contributions above indicate that several members of the nuclear priesthood already occupy positions in government, and specifically in institutions that we already considered securitizing actors (the DOD) or part of the audience (Congress). However, the nuclear priesthood can also be found in think tanks and in academia, where, as part of the “blob,” they integrate the outside-in forces seeking to shape foreign policy, being exposed to the influence of interest groups and their lobbyists. We consider that the policy community should be considered an audience in our research because, “[a]s a rule no major foreign policy initiative can be sustained unless it enjoys a critical base of support within the broad foreign policy community” (Haass, 2002). Léonard and Kaunert (2011: 66-67) claim that the

audience to be persuaded in the policy stream are specialists and technocrats, which match the nuclear priesthood. The policy alternatives that tend to survive are those that are technically feasible, have value acceptability in the eyes of the policy community, and successfully anticipate future constraints (such as budgetary) (Kingdon 1984: 122-51 apud Léonard and Kaunert, 2011: 66). We consider that the outside-in forces should not be deemed securitizing actors, however. U.S. foreign policy is made by the top government officials – outside-in efforts notwithstanding. The securitizing actors are those who pick the policy alternative among the many which the policy community generates, and then seek to create a critical base of support within it.

We decided to focus on think tanks in our analysis as representatives of the policy community, due to how they truly capture the uniquely American “revolving door.” American think tanks play the role of “governments in waiting,” in the sense that they “[give] those out of power an opportunity to remain active in the policy community while the rival political party controls the White House or Congress.” There is a circular career track between government and think tanks, whose “politics of expertise” are paramount in U.S. foreign policy, which is marked by both its complexity and the American public’s lack of concern (McGann, 2016; Hook, 2016: 446; Rich, 2004 apud Hook, 2016: 446; Haass, 2002). We selected three think tanks as audience members in our research: the CSIS, the RAND Corporation, and the ACA. They have a tradition of publishing important works on nuclear weapons issues and were found to have hosted events headlining speeches of some of our securitizing actors. The CSIS and RAND are top U.S. think tanks in defense and national security policy as well nationwide (McGann, 2020: 85, 113). The ACA was also included because it specializes in nuclear weapons while having rejected funds from the nuclear weapons industry. In that regard, it stands in contrast with all major think tanks working on nuclear weapons policy – they all receive funding from nuclear weapons contractors (Snyder & Sanders-Zakre, 2021). By including the ACA, we can enrich our analysis with the less biased perspective from the arms control community. On a case-by-case basis, we will consider the inclusion of other think tanks in our analysis, in case a report, article, event, or other discursive source is revealed to be influential in a given securitization process.

Interest groups, particularly the defense industry, seek to shape U.S. foreign policy in no small measure through their connections in the Pentagon bureaucracy and their donations to Congress. Additionally, given that interest groups and corporations also seek to promote their interests through think tank research, we expect that to happen in our policy area as well, with outside-in experts of the nuclear priesthood furthering the points of view of defense contractors. We do not single out those interest groups as members of the audience because we expect their views to be reflected in the discourse of other members of the audience – the legislature and think tanks CSIS and RAND. As for the Pentagon, while institutions such as the DOD are the ones who speak “security” by being at the top of the government’s foreign policy hierarchy, those interest groups certainly “whisper” it to them. If policymakers constitute “the most important audience for think tanks” (Pongratz, 2023) then the same can be said about the interest groups that fund them, and which have demonstrated to play a highly

influential role in the American foreign policy process. Overall, we expect the defense industry to be a pervasive influence in the overall American securitizing actor and audience discourse when it comes to nuclear weapons policy.

Another element of the U.S. foreign policy establishment to consider is the news media, which can report on the debates being held on a given policy issue, impacting on them, and possibly amplifying its security dimension (Léonard and Kaunert, 2011: 73). According to Hook, “[a] free press stands as a pillar of democratic governance, providing civil society with a crucial check on government authority.” Therefore, “public opinion and the news media impose external pressure on the U.S. foreign policy process” since, “[a]s expressions of the nation’s civil society, both shed light on public preferences and are watched closely by reelection-minded political leaders (Hook, 2016: 182, 377, 427).

News media scholarship indicates that news coverage of a given political problem (either domestic or foreign) boosts its importance among politicians and the public. The media conveys policy messages, spreads government propaganda, and leaks confidential information, while also overseeing the work of government officials. To the public, the media serves as a source of political information and analysis, in addition to providing voice opportunities (e.g., op-eds, letters to the editor, etc.) (Hook, 2016: 377-379).

However, according to Hook (2016: 374-375, 419), in the United States, the media focuses predominantly on domestic issues, which are the main concern of the mass public, “alternately ignoring foreign news and providing saturation coverage of crises overseas.” Detailed coverage on international politics is, therefore, rarely offered by internet sources and TV networks. Concerns with profitability and the increasing concentration of media ownership make news outlets wary of funding investigations that risk offending certain audiences, and of alienating government officials (who provide tax relief concessions). Consequently, as Dimaggio explains (2009 apud Hook, 2016: 419), “[j]ournalists and editors not only sympathetically report on the activities of political elites, but are, for all intents and purposes, a part of the elite themselves.” News and social media are also manipulated by the U.S. government, which “[spins] foreign policies in a favorable direction,” taking advantage of the general public’s focus on domestic issues. This allows policymakers to maintain public support for actions abroad, which is important given that some well-organized groups of civil society still watch American foreign policy closely (Hook, 2016: 327). Thus, in light of the emphasis of news outlets on domestic issues, and their disinterest in criticizing the role of the political elites, we decided not to include the news media in our research as part of the audience. Our efforts to break open the “black box” of the audience by studying how the various audiences within it can influence the American nuclear deterrence policy-making process, not to mention identifying them precisely, put us in unexplored territory already.

We consider the various audiences identified to be those most likely to have agency in the context of the U.S. nuclear deterrence policy-making process – meaning that they are expected to get involved and try to steer decisions toward their preferences. Their influence may shape the way securitizing actors concoct securitizing moves and even influence other audiences. They are, as we call

them, *agents of securitization*. They are audience members who can exert decision-making influence to shape how policy change occurs. That said, just because the agents have a say on decisions about nuclear deterrence, it does not mean that they will always seek to have an active role, nor that they will always be able to. Depending on a variety of factors, such as the ability of the securitizing actor to gather the support of other agents or to act unilaterally, or the substance of the policy itself, agents may be unable or unwilling to influence policy change in accordance with their interests. Agents may also act more passively when the policy change advocated matches their interests and there is no need to intervene in the process. Still, under the right circumstances – whatever they may be – we consider that their agency takes place and can be identified by securitization researchers.

Regarding the defense industry, we considered it a pervasive influence in U.S. foreign policymaking, and discourse, as a result. We expected it to speak through the securitizing actors and the audience, not considering it as either. On the one hand, they do not speak “security” directly. On the other, their assent or rejection of threat perceptions and policy recommendations is expected to be reflected, to an extent, in expert and lawmaker discourse. In that sense, they are an agent of securitization, contributing to the creation of the policy alternatives that securitizing actors may select to solve perceived problems, and likely pressuring those actors to select them. At the same time, the approval of a critical base of members of the policy community, funded by the defense industry, is required for any form of major foreign policy initiative. And defense contractors also pressure Congress to support their preferred policy options, which can be very impactful given the central role of the legislative branch in enabling or blocking policy change by use of the power of the purse.

Many securitization scholars consider audiences “rather active entities that decide securitization” (Williams, 2004 apud Floyd, 2020: 5). Floyd (2020: 5) notes that frequently “audiences have become quasi-formal veto powers” and, following a review of securitization scholarship, Côté (2016: 8) came to find that the audience to be “the individual(s) or group(s) that has the capability to authorize the view of the issue presented by the securitizing actor and legitimize the treatment of the issue through security practice” (emphasis removed). According to Côté, the audience “must be theorized as an active agent, capable of having a meaningful effect on the intersubjective construction of security values.” Thus, the audience is important to the production of security meaning by means of actively engaging in securitization processes. Since deeper examination on how securitizing actors and audiences interact is needed, we adopt the concept of agent of securitization to highlight “the audience as fundamental to the intersubjective nature of securitization” without “marginalizing the role of the audience in the construction of shared security meaning” and in the process of policy selection (Côté, 2016: 1, 12, 14-15). We also argue that the concept of agent of securitization is useful to describe those who act behind the scenes, such as interest groups, and whose influence has a pervasive effect on securitizing moves and audience reactions.

Overall, by viewing audience members as agents of securitization, we question the role of the audience in the outcome of securitization processes. For instance, the audience may succeed in changing

perceptions of a threat, or in nudging the administration towards another policy alternative. We will be on the lookout for such possibilities, as well as others, which “influence the substance of security speech and action” (Côté, 2016: 12).

A breakdown of the securitizing actors and agents is presented below (Table 2).

	Securitizing Actor	Audience
President	X	
Vice president ⁶⁸	X	
NSA	X	
DOD (including the JCS and STRATCOM)	X	
DOS	X	
Congress (in terms of Congressional Committees, we place our focus on the Senate Armed Services Committee, the House Armed Services Committee, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, the Senate Appropriations Committee, and the House Appropriations Committee)		X
Think tanks (CSIS, RAND, and ACA)		X

Fig. 2 – Breakdown of the securitizing actors and agents in our research.

In our study, the securitizing actor is the U.S. Administration and its agencies. Our focus, in that regard, is placed on the White House (President, vice president, and the NSA) and the DOD (several components, including the JCS). We will conduct discourse analysis of the discourses and key strategic documents of the U.S. administration (such as the NPRs) to identify the key securitizing moves. We consider that our decision to center our analysis of discourse on a small number of documents containing securitizing moves fits Buzan et al.’s (1998: 177) view that the “analysis should be conducted on texts that are central.” After all, “[s]ince the security argument is a powerful instrument, it is against its nature to be hidden (...) thus, one does not need to read everything, particularly not obscure texts.” Nonetheless, as a complement to that endeavor, and to enrich our analysis, we will read through speeches of the aforementioned securitizing actors discussing nuclear weapons but will only conduct discourse analysis on speeches which add something to previous securitizing moves. This line of action also allows us to avoid redundancies, as we expect securitizing moves to utilize several of the same premises for action. Once we realize that additional readings are not providing us with new premises to identify, that is an indication that we have a sufficient pool of discourses for analysis.

⁶⁸ Dick Cheney, Joe Biden, and Mike Pence are the vice presidents included in our research.

Regarding the audience's reaction to the securitizing moves, we expect our analysis to encompass for discourses. We anticipate securitizing actor discourse to be more homogenous because the administration's foreign policy decision-making process is geared toward consensus. When it comes to the audience, however, we have two main parties in Congress who are not expected to agree very often and are likely not experts on nuclear weapons policy. We also have a different group of audience members who are significantly more knowledgeable on the subject matter, one of which is less likely to be influenced by defense contractors. We project greater diversity of premises for action to be present in the audience, compared with the securitizing actors.

We also argue that the conclusions obtained via our model of analysis can be complemented by insights about the local context in which political discourse is produced. For instance, it can prove fruitful to factor in the local context in cases where the varying power of political actors and the institutional circumstances that surround them, appear relevant to better explain policy outcomes. A case in point would be when policy change occurred despite considerable dissonance between the premises of the Administration and those of certain audience members⁶⁹. Seat changes in parliament or in committee assignments, for instance, may affect policy outcomes. And precedents may empower securitizing actors to pursue certain policies despite considerable audience contestation. Such insights may assist in explaining policy outcomes and be obtained via documental sources not intended for discourse analysis, such as the Congressional Directory, media reports, and U.S. government websites (containing legislation, records of floor proceedings, budget proposals, etc.). Those sources can also help us identify the moment when the policy change took place and by means of what measure(s).

Such documental resources can advance our research goals by helping us close gaps in knowledge caused by the fact that political discourse is not all-encompassing or always publicly available. For example, while all members of Congress may ask for the floor of their chamber to express their views on a given topic, they may decide not to do so, depriving us of political discourse containing their reasons for action and policies of choice. They may also choose not to express their views by other means (e.g. social media accounts, press interviews). Despite that, they may vote on the passing of bills dealing with issues in whose debate they did not partake. In such cases, data on roll call votes informs us about the view of the particular legislator by telling us how he voted in the context of committee assignments or sessions of the full chamber. Roll call data also gives us insight on how consensual a party position is. Media reports can inform us of events lacking meaningful discussion in Congress or in the policy community.

In all, we argue that exploring the local context can complement the conclusions obtained through discourse analysis, particularly in cases when more nuance is needed. Information about the local context in which discourse is produced may come to integrate discourse itself. After all, discourse

⁶⁹ Still, the juxtaposition of reasons for action, by highlighting the different relative weights of certain reasons for action, can shed a light on how audience acceptance of a securitizing move can be sufficiently received despite considerable dissonance between the premises of the securitizing actors, and those of certain audience groups.

and the reality which embeds form a mutually constitutive relation. However, some political discourses with relevant information for discourse analysis may have been missed or be unattainable. Thus, while our methodology is centered on political discourse, we will complement the findings gathered by applying our model of analysis with other forms of data when available and relevant.

Securitization of Russia in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy?

The George W. Bush Administration

During the Bush Administration, there were several changes in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy. This chapter covers, in the first section, the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, the acceleration of the country's missile defense program, and the repeal of a Congressional restriction which allowed the Administration to carry out nuclear reductions on a unilateral basis. The second section covers the celebration of the Moscow Treaty between the U.S. and Russia. In each section we explain how those policy changes occurred, how Russia (as a reason for action) informed those changes, and whether securitization occurred. The findings presented in each section are grounded in the conduction of PDA of securitizing actor and audience discourses, which can be found in Annex A (for section 4.1) and Annex B (for section 4.2). Additional sources were used to account for the local, policy-specific institutional context in which those discourses occurred.

Applying our model of analysis – the Securitization Spectrum – required identifying and categorizing the reasons for action (premises of practical argumentation) communicated by the securitizing actors and the audience. The reasons for action identified in the political discourses were categorized as circumstantial premises (CP), value premises (VP), goal premises (GP), and means-end premises (GP). As part of our analysis, we also identified the relations between premises, how they were weighed against each other, and the claim (i.e., the conclusion about what should be done). Then, we juxtaposed the reasons for action voiced by the securitizing actors with those voiced by the audience members to ascertain how the audience, overall, reacted to the securitizing moves. As a result, we were able to determine what the political actors agreed with (i.e., where there was “resonance”), and what they disagreed with (i.e., where there was “dissonance”). The audience members often respond to the securitizing moves by supporting or criticizing the reasons for action they contained (including their relations and normative priority) as well as the policy recommendations they informed. In the process, the audience members communicate their own premises, providing us with many spectra of securitization to juxtapose.

Depending on the policy in question and the relative power of the political actors in relation to it at a given point in time, the securitizing actors may require varying levels of audience acquiescence to the policy they recommend. The audience's overall choice to accept or reject policy changes is informed by the reasons for action its members uphold. Thus, the juxtaposition of premises enlightens us on why acquiescence/sanctioning was received or refused – the audience member's reasons for action will clarify the reasons informing their decision, including those which carried greater weight in doing so. The “resonance” or “dissonance” between the premises of the securitizing actors and those of the

audience helps explain the audience's decision to agree, or not, with the policy choice of the Administration. Thus, the juxtaposition of premises contributed to explain how policy change occurred, and the role played by Russia – and particularly threat perceptions of Russia – in that regard.

As mentioned, this chapter covers four instances of policy change. Regarding the ABM Treaty, policy change occurred with Washington's official withdrawal from the accord on 13 June 2002 (with prior notice being given six months earlier on 13 December 2001). The withdrawal was by far the preferred policy of the Administration, notwithstanding a limited willingness to explore alternative courses of action with Russia, such as amending the ABM Treaty. The policy change was also enabled by the lack of any provisions, in the 2002 NDAA, limiting the President's authority to withdraw from the accord, and conduct missile defense testing that would violate its terms without Congressional approval. The 2002 NDAA was adopted on 28 December 2001, becoming Public Law No: 107-107.

There was a 11 June 2002 lawsuit aimed at preventing the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty. The suit was filed by 31 House Representatives – 30 Democrats and 1 Independent – who claimed that the President's decision was unconstitutional give the lack of Congressional approval. Senator Russ Feingold (D-WI) attempted to join the suit, but the Senate's Ethics Committee denied him permission to do so. The suit's dismissal on 31 December 2002 by a federal judge confirmed the policy change. The lawmakers decided not to appeal the decision. The legislator's attorney shed light on their deciding against appealing the case, stating that the federal judge "[did] not foreclose Congress from asserting its constitutional role in the treaty termination process." In that regard, he argued, "the space is there" (Boese, 2002a; ACA, 2003a, 2003b; The Associated Press, 2002; Nichols, 2002; Kucinich v. Bush, 2002).

While the termination of the ABM Treaty freed the U.S. from the legal constraints that impeded some forms of missile defense testing, as well as deployment, the White House still required Congress to authorize and appropriate funds for missile defense activities. In that regard, the 2002 NDAA authorized a significant increase in funds directed to missile defense activities (\$8,3 billion, a 56% increase from the previous year⁷⁰). The amount fully funded the President's budget request for missile defense activities – a signal of Congressional support for the executive's missile defense plans. Another indication of the audience's consent to missile defense deployment was the absence, in the 2002 NDAA, of a Senate provision that would have required the Administration to obtain Congressional authorization prior to the expenditure of funds in missile defense testing activities that would breach the ABM Treaty. Via the 2002 NDAA, Congress mandated the DOD Secretary to ensure "continued testing of ballistic

⁷⁰ In the end, missile defense programs received approximately \$7,8 billion in funding, as the DOD appropriations bill for FY 2002 entered into force. The difference in terms of the funds recommended for appropriations in the NDAA (\$8,3 billion), and the amounts effectively approved for appropriation in the DOD appropriations bill (\$7,8 billion), as it concerned missile defense activities, was justified by a decision, on the part of the Administration, to terminate two missile defense programs, which took place as the two chambers were negotiating the final bill in conference committee. As result of those terminations, \$700 million in savings were realigned to other programs, within and outside the scope of missile defense. In all, a combined total of \$8,2 billion were provided for BMD and increased counter/terrorism activities (CRECB, 2001: 27692, Report 107-350: 385).

missile defense systems after deployment” (Report 107-333, 2001: 29-30). The statement denotes the expectation of missile defense deployment being on the horizon. While the adoption of the 2002 NDAA did not immediately prompt missile defense deployment, it did lead to the acceleration of the U.S. missile defense program. Considering that we understand policies as what governments decide to do or not to do, we consider policy change to occur when a decision is made to act in a certain way. Thus, the change in U.S. missile defense policy occurred with the adoption of the 2002 NDAA on 28 December 2001.

On 16 December 2002, the White House issued National Security Presidential Directive 23, announcing U.S. plans to begin deployment of an initial limited homeland missile defense capability by 2004 (The White House, 2002). Congress approved \$7.4 billion dollars in missile defense funding for 2003 trimming \$400 million in funds from the Presidential budget request. However, the requests for construction of the Fort Greely missile interceptor base (Alaska), and for work on the ground-based midcourse missile defense system, were fully funded. The 2003 NDAA also mandated the DOD to notify Congress yearly on “the performance goals and development baselines (...) for those ballistic missile defense systems under development (...) that could be fielded” (Boese, 2002b; Report 107-772, 2002: 28-29).

In the following FY, Congress granted the DOD almost all of its missile defense funding requests, decreasing appropriations solely by \$5 million dollars from the original \$9,1 billion proposal of the executive. While some programs had their funding reduced, others had theirs increased. Notably, the ground-based midcourse missile defense system, scheduled for initial deployment in 2004, received an extra \$181 million. The 2004 NDAA contained a provision allowing the Pentagon “to use research, development, test and evaluation funding to develop and field an initial set of ballistic missile defense capabilities” (Boese, 2003; Report 108-354: 29-30, 613).

On 22 July 2004, the first GBI of the ground-based midcourse missile defense (GMD) system was installed in a silo at Fort Greely. Later that year, Lt. Gen. Henry Obering III, director of the MDA, declared that the GMD system had reached “limited defensive operations” with 5 GBIs deployed at Fort Greely, an upgraded radar at Fylingdales in the U.K., and an upgraded Cobra Dane Radar at Eareckson Air Station in Shemya, Alaska (UCS, 2019; Missile Defense Project, 2021), confirming the occurrence of policy change. The years that followed saw the U.S. missile defense program continued to make strides in acquiring, testing, and fielding BMD capabilities. Such progress indicates that the necessary appropriations continued to be provided throughout the remainder of the Bush Administration, denoting continued Congressional support. For instance, the Aegis Weapon System (AWS), a naval air defense system, became the foundation for the Aegis BMD Weapon System – the main component of the sea-based element of America’s BMD system (Lockheed Martin, 2013:2). The U.S. tested and deployed the Standard Missile 3 (SM-3), a midcourse interceptor intended to counter short- to intermediate-range ballistic missiles, as part of the Aegis BMD Weapon System (U.S. DOD, 2008: 20; Boese, 2006).

Several intercept and tracking tests were also conducted during that period, involving the GMD, the Aegis BMD, the THAAD and several radars (UCS, 2019; ACA, 2019; Missile Defense Agency, 2010).

According to a January 2009 Pentagon report on missile defense system assessment, by the end of George W. Bush's tenure, progress had been steady with regards to the Aegis BMD, (THAAD), and Command, Control, Battle Management, and Communications (C2BMC). On the other hand, progress with the GMD had been slower, with the system "[having] demonstrated a limited capability to defend against simple, long-range ballistic missile threats launched from North Korea toward the United States" ("Director, Operational," 2008: i, 53).

The adoption of the 2002 NDAA ensured another change in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy. The law removed a provision enshrined in the 1998 NDAA which restricted the President's ability to make nuclear force reductions beyond START I levels.

On 10 December 2001, three days before the House and the Senate passed the reconciled 2002 NDAA, Colin Powell announced that the U.S. and Russia were working on the formalization of mutual reductions in strategic nuclear weapons (ACA, 2002). By that date, however, the House and the Senate NDAAs already contained provisions to amend or repeal, respectively, section 1302 of the 1998 NDAA, "which [prohibited] the obligation or expenditure of funds to retire or prepare to retire certain strategic nuclear delivery systems until the START II Treaty enters into force" (S. 1419, 2001: 363; H.R. 2586: 303; Report 107-333, 2001: 707). Prior to the 10 December 2001 announcement, the ACA reported that the Senate language repealing the provision was expected to be the one included in the final NDAA (Bleek, 2001a: 19, 24). It is apparent that audience acceptance resulted from prior Congressional acceptance of the Administration's proposal to conduct unilateral reductions of America's strategic nuclear forces. The adoption of the 2002 NDAA repealed the Congressional limitation imposed by the 1998 NDAA on reductions of strategic nuclear forces (Report 107-333. To accompany S. 1438, 2001: 707). The Administration had asked for relief from that Congressional restriction for all weapons systems, not just the Peacekeeper ICBM force (C-SPAN, 2001).

As part of those reductions, the Administration's proposed retiring the Peacekeeper ICBM force (comprised of 50 missiles), removing 4 Trident SSBNs from the nuclear mission (2 would be dismantled and 2 would be converted into non-strategic submarines) and reducing the fleet of B-1B Lancer bombers from 93 to 60⁷¹ (a recommendation already being implemented) (O'Rourke, 2008: 2; S. HRG. 107-355 p.597, Bleek, 2001b). According to the Administration, "with Peacekeeper, Trident, and B-1 reductions, [the U.S.] will be reducing START-countable warheads by well over a thousand" (S. HRG. 107-355, 2001: 442).

In response, the 2002 defense appropriations bill provided funding for the conversion of 4 Trident SSBNs instead of two, with the Administration then deciding to pursue the recommended four-

⁷¹ The B-1B Lancer is nuclear capable despite carrying conventional weapons (Bleek, 2001b). The bomber was removed from nuclear planning in 1997, but could be re-nuclearized, if needed, in a relatively short period (Kristensen, 2000).

boat conversion program. The bill also provided funds for the retirement of the 50 missiles which comprised the Peacekeeper ICBM force (Report 107-350, 2001: 282, 284; O'Rourke, 2008: 2; Report 107-62, 2001: 7-8, 106).

As for the B-1B fleet, the 2002 NDAA contained a provision (section 1032) prohibiting the use of funds to retire or dismantle any of the 93 B-1B Lancer bombers in service (as of the date of 1 June 2001) until some reporting requirements were produced and delivered to Congress. However, the Conference Report stressed that the provision "[was] not intended in any way to prevent the initiation of planning activities for the execution of this plan" (Report 107-333, 2001: 206, 707). Conversion of all 4 Trident SSBNs was completed in December 2007 (O'Rourke, 2001: 4). Retirement of the Peacemaker ICBM fleet was finalized in September 2005 (Boese, 2005). The conversion of the B-1B fleet, which removed the requirement for the bomber to maintain a nuclear capability, was initiated in November 2001, under START I, but completed solely in March 2011, already under the framework of the New START Treaty, signed by President Barack Obama on 8 April 2010 (U.S. Air Force, 2016). Thus, in addition to removing the legal restriction on conducting reductions in strategic nuclear forces, Congress also green-lit the Administration's early proposals for reducing the size of America's strategic nuclear forces.

Lastly, the entering into force of the Moscow Treaty on 1 June 2003 constituted another instance of policy change. The accord was ratified by the U.S. Senate on 6 March 2003 on a 95-0 vote (ACA, 2022b). It was reported on 9 February 2009 that the U.S. had completed the reductions in deployed strategic nuclear warheads contemplated in the accord – three and a half years ahead of schedule. At that time, "a total of 2,200 strategic warheads [were] deployed on ballistic missiles and at long-range bomber bases." The U.S. had made reductions to the maximum number allowed under the SORT (Kristensen, 2009). The accord imposed no limits on the number of strategic nuclear warheads that the two states could maintain in storage or in the reserve, and there were no obligations of warhead or delivery vehicle destruction. The treaty also did not include provisions for verification of compliance, with the two parties continuing to rely on the START I verification regime instead.

On a 1 June 2004 classified report, the Bush Administration informed Congress that the U.S. would cut its nuclear stockpile by nearly half from the 2001 level (about 10,500 warheads) by 2012 (Wald, 2004; Kristensen, 2007).

On 18 December 2007, the White House announced a further "significant reduction" which would further reduce the U.S. nuclear stockpile an additional 15% from the levels announced in June 2004. As result, the U.S. stockpile would be less than one-quarter of its size when the Cold War came to an end. The country looked to achieve "the lowest level consistent with America's national security and U.S. commitments to its allies and friends. The reduction was a part of an overall strategy to "transform the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile and its supporting infrastructure to better meet the security needs of the 21st century." That comprehensive effort aimed to reduce the country's reliance on nuclear weapons and encompassed efforts to "streamline and modernize [America's] nuclear infrastructure" (The White

House, 2007; Kristensen, 2007). The 2004 stockpile reductions would be carried out in 2007, rather than in 2012. The implementation of the reductions by 2007 did not mean that the warheads that the Administration had decided to “cut” would be dismantled by then. Those reductions were a form of “nuclear bookkeeping,” whereby the ownership of the “cut” warheads would be transferred from the DOD to the DOE (Kristensen, 2007). According to the DOS, from 2001 through 2008 the U.S. nuclear stockpile was reduced by 5304 warheads (Kristensen, 2017, U.S. DOS, 2021).

4.1. Missile defense, the ABM Treaty, and unilateral nuclear arms reductions: A new strategic framework

The Bush Administration perceived rogue states and terrorist groups to pose a threat to the United States (CP). The context of action was marked by WMD and missile proliferation (CP) – which many “irresponsible” nations harboring terrorists possessed (CP). The White House feared the use of missiles as delivery systems for WMD (CP). U.S. enemies (CP) could use such technologies to threaten the American homeland, U.S. troops deployed abroad, allies, and friends (referent objects) (CP). They could blackmail the country by threatening to use WMD-armed missiles to prevent it from intervening abroad (CP).

The executive branch attempted to securitize those perceived threats by presenting them as reasons for action. Based on those understandings about the current context of action, the Administration realized that the country needed a new strategic framework (GP) – one which was more suitable for tackling the threats (GP) of today’s world (CP). The new framework should encompass a missile defense system (ME). Once fielded, the system would be able to protect against limited missile attacks (i.e., a “handful” of missiles) (GP), the referent objects perceived to be under threat (CP). It could also intercept accidental launches of a small number of unauthorized or accidental launches of strategic weapons (GP), with Russia being a security concern in that regard (CP). However, unauthorized or accidental missile launches were not the primary concern of the Administration (CP); the rogue state missile threat was (CP) (differently weighed premises).

The so-called “Cold War nuclear deterrence,” that is, deterrence by threat of nuclear retaliation in case of an attack (ME), might not deter the new threats of the current environment (GP) and preserve stability (GP). The conclusion that the action delivered those goals in an insufficient manner stemmed from the Administration’s belief that the leaders of rogue nations were unlikely to be preoccupied with the lives of their people; therefore, they would not be deterred from attacking (CP). Non-proliferation efforts, while crucial, were likewise insufficient (ME) to prevent determined states from acquiring WMD and missiles (GP) (the action is not sufficient). Thus, the U.S. needed to combine its offensive nuclear capabilities (ME) with missile defenses (ME) to strengthen its nuclear deterrence (GP) against the new threats of the post-Cold War strategic environment (CP).

Furthermore, the deployment of a missile defense system (ME) would dissuade development, proliferation, and acquisition of missile technology and WMD (GP). Their value would be reduced in a world where the U.S. had the ability to intercept missile launches (GP). Missile defenses (ME) would also enable U.S. military intervention in strategic areas around the globe (GP) by enhancing deterrence by denial (GP) and mitigating the downsides of deterrence failure (GP). The executive branch had the duty and the obligation (VP) to defend the American people and its troops (GP). It had also made commitments (VP) to protect its allies and friends (GP). As the President of America and the leader of NATO, George W. Bush had the obligation to “try and meet [those] threats” (VP). Missile defense would benefit all of mankind, promoting a more peaceful and safer world (VP). The 1999 MDA had established that it was U.S. policy to deploy a limited missile defense system (VP).

To field a missile defense system (ME), the U.S. needed to move beyond the ABM Treaty (GP). The accord prevented the acceleration of the U.S. missile defense program by imposing constraints (VP) on missile defense testing and deployment (ME), which the country needed to be free of (GP). Comprehensive missile defense development, testing, and evaluation programs were required (ME), and the activities they encompassed would eventually conflict with the treaty (VP), seeing as they had not been planned with it in mind (ME) (VP failed to inform plans to accelerate the missile defense program). The Administration treated the ABM Treaty as being in effect without commenting on its legal status (VP), claiming that its terms would not be infringed (VP). However, it remarked that the accord contained a provision allowing for its parties to withdraw from it (VP). However, rather than moving beyond the ABM Treaty (GP) unilaterally (ME) (i.e., via withdraw), the Administration would rather others, particularly U.S. allies and Russia, joined the U.S. (GP) in the transition to the new framework (GP). Seeking their support (GP), the U.S. pursued consultations with the interested parties (ME).

The securitizing actors repeatedly claimed that Moscow was not an enemy (CP). The Cold War was over, and the U.S.S.R. no longer existed (CP). The U.S. had a good, stable relationship with Russia (CP), although the Administration wanted to deepen bilateral ties further (GP). The strategic environment had changed substantially since 1972, when the treaty was celebrated, with the abovementioned threats having since emerged (CP). As a result, the accord was outdated (ME) – it did not accurately reflect U.S.-Russian relations (CP) and was useless (ME) against the new threats America now faced (CP).

The securitizing actors claimed not to be presenting other states with an already made decision. The U.S. leadership was open to consider various possible courses of action (ME) with which to move to the new framework (GP), including as it pertained to moving beyond the ABM Treaty (GP). However, the far preferable option would be to set the accord “aside”⁷² (ME). The treaty constrained missile defense testing (GP) and was the wrong foundation on which to build a new relationship with Moscow

⁷² The Russian President stated that the U.S. had repeatedly proposed a joint withdrawal by the two states (Putin, 2001).

(GP) (downsides). The accord was based on the threat of MAD, which the U.S. wanted to leave behind (GP) for a clean break from the relationship Moscow and Washington had experienced during the Cold War (GP). The ABM Treaty perpetuated (ME) a relationship based on mutual vulnerability (CP) (GP) and distrust (CP) (GP) (the current state of affairs is a downside of inaction). The new relationship between the U.S. and Russia (GP) should instead be anchored on mutual confidence (VP) and openness (VP) and enable opportunities for cooperation (ME), including in the realm of missile defense (ME). It was also convinced that U.S. allies, which had shown some apprehension (CP) about America's plans vis-à-vis missile defense and the ABM Treaty, would eventually endorse the policy changes (CP).

The securitizing actors expected an agreement with Russia (of an unspecified form) (ME) on how to move on from the treaty (GP) to be reached long before its missile defense activities conflicted with it (VP). If it was believed that scheduled activities would "bump" against the accord's constraints (VP), the U.S. was willing to delay them for a short time (ME). However, the Administration wanted to reach an agreement (GP) "sooner rather than later" (ME) (rejection of deferring action for an extended period). If no agreement was reached, then the U.S. would have no option but to withdraw from it (ME) so that it could accelerate its missile defense program (ME). The President claimed to feel very "strongly and passionately" (VP) (personal reasons) about maintaining the peace in the new century (GP) (VP), reasons which outweighed having Russia join America in the new security framework (GP). In any case, consultations with Moscow would continue as the U.S. would continue to make its case, hoping that Russia joined the U.S. in a new strategic relationship (GP).

The Administration downplayed the potential negative consequences of moving beyond the ABM Treaty to accelerate its missile defense program. It claimed that missile defense systems were not overly costly (GP) and would not divert resources (GP) or attention from other defense requirements (GP) (downsides). The concerns of European allies were also understated by Administration officials (GP) (downside), who pointed out that some degree of support had been received (CP) and that other states would eventually extend their support (CP).

Potential downsides vis-à-vis Russia or China, such as a potential arms race, which could spiral into an international arms competition, were rejected, downplayed, or deemed unlikely (GP). The Administration explained that the U.S. missile defense system would be unable to intercept a large-scale ICBM attack from either country (GP) (rejected goal of action). Moscow and Beijing would eventually understand that the capability posed no threat to their deterrents (GP). China was already expanding its nuclear forces (CP), a decision unlikely to be changed by U.S. missile defense plans (GP). The expansion would mitigate any impact that U.S. missile defenses could have on Beijing's deterrent forces (GP). By contrast, Moscow's deterrent forces would not be meaningfully affected (GP) (downplayed downsides). The round of consultations that President Bush had proposed (ME) would preclude a negative response from Moscow (GP) (downside). As mentioned, the U.S. was optimistic (CP) that it would be able to reach an agreement with the country vis-à-vis the new framework it had devised (GP). The U.S. had a good relationship with Moscow (CP) and sought to improve it even further (GP) via cooperative efforts

at several levels (ME). In any case, an arms race with Russia was unlikely given that the state faced economic difficulties (CP), and its nuclear forces were likely declining (CP). Both Russia and China would see that the U.S. was already in the process of reducing its nuclear forces (ME) and decide not to engage in an arms competition (GP) (downside). In fact, various U.S. actions (ME), including nuclear reductions (ME), were expected to preclude negative downsides vis-à-vis Russia (GP) (downside). For instance, besides consultations, the U.S. had proposed to cooperate with Moscow on missile defense (ME).

On the other hand, the more effective a U.S. missile defense system was in minimizing the two country's retaliatory capability, the greater Moscow and Beijing's incentive to build up their nuclear forces (GP) (downside). The U.S. was "properly concerned" about the risks of deploying a missile defense system as it pertained to the attitudes of Russia, China, U.S. allies, and other countries (GP). However, it was believed that negative responses from Moscow would be unlikely to take place (GP) (downside) and that the risks of not deploying a missile defense system (ME) outweighed those associated with fielding it (GP). The Administration should prevent the creation of incentives for other states to oppose (GP) U.S. and allied interests (VP) (downsides). The executive sought the least provocative (GP), least expensive (GP) and more effective way (ME) to develop a missile defense system (ME). The U.S. should develop non-confrontational relations with Moscow and Beijing (GP), and persuade Russia, U.S. allies and other countries (GP) that America's missile defense system served (GP) their interests as well (VP).

Implementing reductions in American strategic nuclear forces (ME) was another course of action pursued by the Administration for the purpose of transitioning into a new strategic framework (GP). The country had an obligation to lead by example (VP) on nuclear reductions (ME) and secure a credible deterrent (GP) at the lowest-possible level of nuclear weapons (GP), while accounting for U.S. national security requirements (GP) and obligations toward its allies (VP). Reducing its nuclear force levels (GP) would be in the best interest of the country (VP) as well as the world (VP). The reductions would allow the country to put 20th century threats behind (GP) and be more prepared to tackle those of the 21st century (GP). Current levels were unnecessary (ME); American nuclear force levels were excessive (CP). The warmer climate of U.S.-Russian relations (CP) allowed Washington to implement those reductions (ME). The U.S. had now to design a nuclear posture (ME) that was appropriate for an environment in which Moscow was not an enemy (CP). The current state of the U.S.-Russia relationship (CP) enabled the U.S. to implement nuclear reductions (ME) but also fostered more collaborative relations between the two nations (GP). Reductions would be pursued in a manner that increased strategic stability (GP), preserved deterrence (GP) and maximized operational flexibility (GP).

American offensive nuclear forces (ME) ought to provide "a guaranteed retaliatory capability against larger attacks" (GP) whose result "[remained] totally unacceptable to any aggressor" (GP). However, the size of Russia's nuclear stockpile and its policies (CP) would not be the only reasons informing U.S. force structure requirements (ME). Nuclear reductions (ME) would be informed by

decisions regarding missile defense (ME) and the ABM Treaty (ME), measures pertaining to tactical nuclear weapons (ME) and the evolution of Moscow's unilateral strategic force posture (CP). Russia's total number of deployed nuclear warheads (CP) were a greater concern than whether the country was MIRV-ing (CP) when it came to U.S. nuclear force reductions (ME). Any reductions (ME) ought to allow the U.S. to hedge against an uncertain future environment (GP).

Still, for the Administration, given that Washington and Moscow were no longer adversaries (CP), it would be preferable to pursue parallel (GP), yet unilateral reductions of offensive nuclear weapons (ME). Unlike unilateral reductions (ME), arms control negotiations (ME) would negatively affect improvements in U.S.-Russian relations (GP) and of strategic stability (GP). A Cold War approach to arms control (ME) was suited for adversaries (CP), which Washington and Moscow were not (CP). Unilateral reductions (ME) would also grant the President more flexibility in shaping America's strategic nuclear force (GP) than an arms control treaty (ME). Furthermore, arms control agreements (ME), entailed a lengthy negotiating process (GP) (downside). The Presidential Nuclear Initiatives were viewed as a successful precedent for unilateral (ME) mutual (GP) reductions of thousands of tactical nuclear weapons (GP). The world had been made considerably safer (GP) (VP) more rapidly than it would have been possible via arms control negotiations (ME).

Thus, the DOD requested that Congress repealed section 1302 of the 1998 NDAA (ME). In connection with the request, the Pentagon communicated the Administration's intentions to remove the Peacekeeper ICBM fleet, 4 SSBNs, and around 30 B-1B bombers from the nuclear mission (ME). The Congressional restriction barred the Administration from reducing U.S. nuclear forces below START I levels until START II came into force (GP). The provision curtailed the President's flexibility to implement his deterrent strategy (GP), potentially delaying the process (GP) (downsides). If the law were repealed (ME), the President would be able to implement the necessary changes and modifications in the force structure of U.S. nuclear forces (GP). The U.S. ought to ensure that its strategic nuclear forces were properly sized and configured (ME) to deter (GP) the threats of the post-Cold War era (CP) and enable the transition into a new strategic framework (GP). The U.S. required a long-term nuclear posture (ME) for an era in which Moscow was not a strategic adversary (CP). The reductions were also expected to play a role in fostering a more cooperative relationship with Russia (GP). There were also cost-related benefits to consider (GP) and concerns over the deterioration of safety and reliability of U.S. and Russian warheads (CP) informing the decision.

Consultations with Russia about missile defense and the ABM Treaty (ME) were conducted jointly with discussions on nuclear reductions (ME). As for the linkage between missile defense and the ABM Treaty, on the one hand, and nuclear reductions, on the other, the Administration articulated some openness to integrate the former (ME) within the framework of discussions on the latter (ME). It was unclear what form an agreement, understanding, or arrangement with Moscow would take (ME).

At the same time, it was discernable an attempt, by the securitizing actors, to de-emphasize the relation between the two frameworks of discussions. Wolfowitz stressed that the U.S. budget for

FY2002 already contemplated reductions (ME), independently of any negotiation with Moscow (ME), and without assessments of how U.S. nuclear forces compared with Russia's (GP) (strict parity is rejected as a goal informing those reductions). Rumsfeld described the connection between missile defense (ME) and offensive weapons reductions as modest, with the former having limited impact on a U.S. decision regarding the latter (ME). Bolton underscored that the joint discussions on the two questions – the one pertaining to offensive systems [ME], and the other about providing a defense [ME] – did not mean that they “[had] to be linked together (...) in some kind of negotiation” (ME). Progress on missile defense talks (ME) would not depend on the pace of the negotiations with Russia on nuclear reductions (ME). The Administration repeatedly stated that nuclear reductions would be implemented (ME) regardless of what Moscow decided to do (GP) (downside) – and even if the Russian nuclear lobby opposed reductions (GP) (downside). He also minimized the influence of the U.S. nuclear lobby in informing a U.S. decision on strategic force reductions (GP/VP) (denies covert reasons for action).

While the nuclear reductions were not explicitly depicted as informed by the goal of reducing or preventing a negative response from other states as a result of U.S. intentions to deploy a missile defense system, some securitizing actors acknowledged the importance of not creating incentives for other states to oppose U.S. missile defense plans, including Russia and China (GP). Washington should pursue the least expensive, least provocative and most effective way to deploy the system (GP). It is possible, therefore, that nuclear reductions were also informed by those two goals, despite that not being overtly communicated. For instance, the goal of not incentivizing opposition was associated with the pursuit of non-confrontational relations with Moscow and Beijing (GP), and nuclear reductions (ME) were indeed expected to contribute to the improvement of U.S.-Russian relations. Furthermore, the Administration acknowledged that the reductions were expected to contribute to preventing an arms race (GP), despite the goal being depicted as an offshoot; that is, an advantageous byproduct of an action informed by other reasons. Furthermore, the force reductions met the criteria of being inexpensive (since they would save money), of making missile defense appear less provocative (by reducing the threat to Russia and China's deterrents) and of being effective in enabling the U.S. to deploy such a system (since the action was expected to result in the two countries believing America's stated reasons for action).

The reasons for action underlining the executive's securitizing moves about the ABM Treaty and missile defense strongly resonated with the Republican legislators, overall. They agreed that rogue nations and terrorist groups could use WMD-armed missiles against America, its troops, and its allies (CP). The threat had been made possible by WMD and missile proliferation (CP). In Republican discourse about the ABM Treaty and missile defense, Russia was generally described through use of similar narratives to those of the Administration: the Cold War was over (CP) and the relationship had changed – the countries were no longer enemies (CP). The threat of an accidental missile launch from Russia was a low-profile issue (CP). The GOP legislators wanted the U.S. to be able to protect the referent objects (GP) and preserve U.S. freedom of intervention abroad (GP) by acquiring the ability to intercept missile launches from the perceived threats (GP).

In line with the securitizing actors, the GOP doubted that the perceived threats (CP) would be deterred (GP) by America's strategic nuclear arsenal (ME). Thus, the ABM Treaty was outdated (ME) and unable to deliver the goals of action (GP) in the present environment (CP). The U.S. could not rely on Cold War nuclear deterrence – it needed to move on from the accord (GP) to deploy missile defenses (ME). The vulnerability to attack (GP) (downside) which the ABM Treaty perpetuated (ME), needed to be ended (GP).

Like the Administration, the Republicans reiterated that the President had responsibilities and obligations toward its country and its people (VP) which, like the national interest (VP) underpinned GOP's goals of action. The Republicans underscored the legal obligations of the 1999 Missile Defense Act (VP). The ABM Treaty was either outweighed by said value premise or downright disregarded as a reason for action. The accord, according to some, was no longer in effect (VP). Furthermore, the U.S. could trigger one of its articles to unilaterally withdraw from it (VP). Congress should not undermine the President's authority to conduct foreign policy and take such a step if decided to take it (VP). Thus, the GOP legislators opposed including a provision in the 2002 NDAA requiring Congressional authorization for missile defense activities that could conflict with the ABM Treaty (VP). Additionally, upon hearing recent stories that the President was planning to leave the ABM Treaty intact, nine Republican lawmakers penned him a letter to denote their opposition (ME). They argued that the accord was too constraining on missile defense testing (VP), that it lacked a provision allowing for its infringement with the consent of the other party (VP) and that the Administration had made a commitment not to violate it (VP). Senator Helms warned that any deal with Russia on the ABM Treaty would fail to receive a favorable vote in Congress (VP).

Russia should not be given the power to veto America's decision on missile defense (VP). Still, the U.S. should consult with Russia (ME) to reach an understanding (GP) on how to move on from the ABM Treaty (GP) to deploy such a system (ME). The U.S. should improve its relationship with the country (GP) so they could leave the Cold War behind (GP). If Russia did not agree with the new strategic framework (GP), then the U.S. should act unilaterally (ME), regardless of whether the country (or China) would respond negatively (GP) (downside), for instance, via a nuclear arms build-up (GP). The potential downsides were outweighed by the goals of action. For the same reasons as the Administration, the Republican legislators did not expect the downsides to happen, even if it was possible to discern less confidence in that regard (GP). Despite some acknowledgment of the existence of technological constraints vis-à-vis missile defense (ME), the GOP lawmakers were optimistic (CP) about the system's ability to deliver its intended goals (GP). Cost-related concerns were disregarded (GP), being outweighed by the goals of action as well (GP).

The Republicans strongly endorsed the goal of leaving the ABM Treaty behind (GP). The goal would ideally be reached by making a deal with Russia (ME), but a unilateral withdraw was acceptable (ME). Given the severity of the threats (CP), deferring action was not an option (ME). America could not afford to wait – it needed to move towards the deployment of a missile defense system (ME).

By contrast, the reasons for action underpinning the executive's pursuit of unilateral strategic nuclear reductions resonated less strongly with the GOP. The action was not commonly mentioned in Republican discourse compared with the immensely discussed policy changes regarding the ABM Treaty and missile defense – which were clearly the focus of GOP narratives.

Resonance was found on a few premises. Firstly, the legislators indirectly endorsed the nuclear reductions when voicing their support for the Administration's pursuit of a new strategic framework (GP). While support for the goal was surely centered on the executive's intentions to move beyond the ABM Treaty (GP), the securitizing actors repeatedly and clearly stated that the new framework was not solely about missile defenses (ME), encompassing nuclear reductions as well (ME). This understanding of the new framework was not contested. The same was true about the understanding that U.S.-Russian relations had fundamentally changed since the Cold War (CP), as mentioned.

Warner considered the decision to conduct reductions to be timely (ME), a view also shared by STRATCOM Commander Mies. Cochran established a connection between nuclear reductions (ME) and the prevention of downsides vis-à-vis Russia similar to that of the Administration (GP). The action would lead to the goal without being informed by it. Since the U.S. was reducing its strategic forces (ME), Russia would not respond by building up its nuclear forces (GP) because it would realize that it had no one to be in an arms race with (CP). Warner established a more direct connection between the action (ME) and the achievement of goals vis-à-vis Russia (GP). He claimed that before announcing the withdrawal from the ABM Treaty (ME), the Administration had laid the groundwork for doing so. The communication had been preceded by Washington and Moscow's commitments (VP) to implement (ME) the most drastic strategic force reductions in arms control history (GP). Therefore, he alludes at the nuclear reductions (ME) having been proposed to soften Moscow's displeasure vis-à-vis the U.S. withdrawal (ME). The Administration did not establish such a connection. Despite being reluctantly open to include the reductions in the framework of ABM Treaty negotiations, such a deal was never concluded. However, like the Administration, Warner seemed unconcerned with a potential negative Russian response (CP). His discourse indicates the understanding that the "groundwork" (i.e., the reductions) (ME) had been laid as an effort to further improve the "close relationship" between the two states (GP) – a goal shared by the Administration in undertaking the action. For the Senator, the idea of an arms race made "no sense" (GP) (downside): both countries accepted and recognized that their close bond (CP) would further deepen (GP). The ABM Treaty (ME) had completed its mission of preventing arms races between Washington and Moscow (GP) (outdated action and rejected goal).

Helms echoed the executive's sentiment that arms control negotiations (ME) compromised the goal of building a new relationship with Moscow (GP). He deemed unilateral reductions appropriate (ME) in the current environment (CP). The reductions, coupled with the missile defense system that the country pursued (ME) granted the White House with flexibility (GP) in crafting a smaller (GP) modernized nuclear force (GP). By contrast, the Administration believed that the missile defenses would have little impact (ME) on considerations regarding the levels of reductions that the U.S. would pursue

(ME). Like Warner, Helms was open to link nuclear reductions (ME) and the U.S. missile defense program (ME). He believed that a positive Russian response to the latter (ME), could lead to a unique opportunity for mutual (GP) considerable reductions (ME). Representative Weldon and Senator Lugar, on the other hand, supported arms control efforts with Russia (ME). Representative Simmons supported converting two nuclear-capable Trident submarines into conventional cruise missile-carrying submarines (ME). The action was cost-effective (GP) and provided the country with a substantial strategic capability (GP). Several Wyoming lawmakers opposed the elimination of the Peacekeeper fleet, which was deployed in their state. Senator Thomas deemed the decision imprudent (GP) (downside) and unnecessary (ME).

The Administration's call for nuclear reductions generated criticism and concern among some Republicans, however. Thurmond saw the benefits of eliminating the Peacekeeper ICBM fleet (ME) from an economic standpoint (GP), which Rumsfeld had raised. However, the lawmaker was concerned that, by reducing its forces unilaterally, the U.S. would be hampering its ability to negotiate additional reductions in Russia's nuclear forces (GP) (downside). His Republican colleague in the Senate, Domenici, articulated a stronger disapproval of the action. Domenici agreed with the transformation of the military that the Administration pursued (ME). He equated nuclear weapons to Cold War relics (ME) (outdated) and supported the reduction of U.S. nuclear force levels (GP) in accordance with present needs (CP). However, he disagreed with unilateral reductions of the U.S. nuclear arsenal (ME) without some form of assurance (GP) of Russia's adherence to its arms control commitments pertaining to the country's ability to restore or expand its nuclear forces (GP) (downside).

The Administration's proposal of reducing the B-1B bomber force received considerable contestation by legislators of both parties from both chambers – particularly from those who represented states where the aircraft were deployed. Resonance between the premises voiced by the Republican and Democratic lawmakers of the affected states was strong. However, the reasons for action they raised in hoping of maintaining the entire fleet in the air seldom related to its nuclear mission. While its capabilities for nuclear delivery had been deactivated and the aircraft only carried conventional weapons, it could still function as a nuclear bomber if required. Senator Cleveland indeed argued against the reduction on the basis of the aircraft being America's sole dual-capable supersonic bomber (ME). Overall, the critics in the legislature highlighted the aircraft's (ME) contributions to the conventional mission, including in the fight against terrorism (GP), as well as on the downsides of downsizing the fleet to their states (GP/VP) (downsides). They also raised the possibility of the reduction generating negative national security consequences (GP) and denounced the lack of Congressional consultation (VP). The cost-saving potential of the reduction was also questioned (GP). Thus, via the authorization bill, the legislature prohibited the retirement of the fleet until certain reporting requirements were completed. McCain strongly criticized the legislators opposing the reduction, which he denounced as having been informed by "pork barrel" considerations (VP), and as illustrative of congressional micro-management (VP) (downside) and wasteful spending (GP) (downside).

The reasons for action voiced by the securitizing actors vis-à-vis the ABM Treaty and missile defense were not as well received by the Democrats. On the one hand, there was agreement that the United States faced threats posed by rogue states and terrorist groups (CP). On the other, some lawmakers whether rogue nations and terrorists would be able to target America with WMD-armed missiles. They noted that military considered such an attack to be the most remote threat that the country faced (CP). Among America's potential adversaries, only Russia and China were certain to possess the required capabilities to launch such an attack, whereas North Korea was currently developing them (CP). However, the Cold War was over (CP), China possessed a small nuclear arsenal (CP), and North Korea had paused long-range missile flight test program (CP). By contrast, a longer list states – like Iran, Iraq, China, Libya, Syria, and North Korea possessed WMD-capable theater ballistic missiles (CP), posing a real and increasingly grave threat (CP). The threat of WMD proliferation was acknowledged, with Russia emerging as the greatest threat in that regard, due to its financial difficulties (CP) and the associated deterioration of its nuclear weapons complex (CP). America was much more likely to be the target of an attack with a proliferated WMD that was delivered by means other than a missile, as precedents had shown (CP). The risk of an accidental nuclear weapons launch, including from Russia, was raised as a threat, but it was a low-prolife concern not often mentioned compared with the other threats (CP). Overall, the understanding among Democrats was that Russia was no longer an enemy of the United States (CP) and that the country should indeed seek to further improve bilateral relations (GP).

In light of the questions raised about the seriousness of a WMD-armed missile threat to the homeland, several lawmakers focused on addressing the more prominent threats posed by rogue nations and terrorism. Several Democrats deemed it preferable to prioritize non-proliferation activities (ME) to prevent proliferation at its source (especially Russia) (GP) rather than deploying missile defenses (ME) to intercept WMD-armed missiles after their launch (GP) (former goal outweighs the latter). Especially since no missile defense would be 100% effective (ME).

The Democrats had additional concerns regarding the acceleration of the U.S. missile defense program to deploy a system as soon as possible. They contested the Administration's intentions to move on from the ABM Treaty (GP) by setting it aside (ME) on several grounds. Unlike the securitizing actors, the Democrats saw value in the accord: the ABM Treaty (ME) had kept America safe for decades (GP) and preserved the peace (GP). It had contributed to a stable relationship with Russia (GP) and led to resources being used rationally (GP). Withdrawing from the treaty at that time was premature (ME). The Administration's scheduled missile defense testing did not conflict with the treaty (VP), meaning that the activities could be performed within the parameters of the ABM Treaty. Thus, the accord was not currently constraining the missile defense program (GP) (downside). In addition, the U.S. not yet had a working system (ME). There was no need to withdraw from (ME) or amend the accord (ME).

While the Administration and the Republicans had questioned the capacity of U.S. nuclear forces (ME) to deter rogue state missile launches (GP), the Democrats did not write it off. They believed

that America's strategic weapons (ME) and the threat of deterrence by punishment could still deter such attacks from such sources (GP). After all, missile attacks had a "return address;" they could be traced back to the attacker (CP). A country like North Korea, for instance, would be instantly destroyed in the event of a missile attack against America (GP)

The lawmakers were concerned with a series of potential downsides of action that could arise if the U.S. left the ABM Treaty unilaterally (ME) to deploy missile defenses (ME). The accord embodied a legal commitment made by the United States (VP) and rushing toward deployment would likely be counterproductive – it could in fact delay program development, as the Welch report had found (GP). The Democrats opposed the deployment of a minimal operational missile defense capability, which the Administration was pursuing (ME), with the intention of improving it over time (ME). The lawmakers claimed that if deployment were to occur, the system needed to provide an effective defense (GP). A DOD report and the military had issued warnings in that respect: there had been multiple failures (CP) and even if deployment were to take place in 2005 – a year after the President's envisioned deadline – it would be a "high risk" decision (GP) (downside).

The legislators were also concerned over the high costs that would be incurred in the development, testing and deployment of missile defense capabilities (GP) (downside). Resources were scarce (CP), and missile defense was diverting resources and attention from other priorities (GP) (downsides), such as non-proliferation activities (ME). The downside was aggravated once the U.S. launched the global war on terrorism, after September 11 (CP), given the need to support American troops (GP). The Senate Democrats opposed funding several missile defense activities in the President's budget for those cost-related concerns, but also because the Administration lacked a plan, intending to learn as it moved onwards – not the way to run the DOD (ME).

While the Administration and the GOP lawmakers emphasized that, under the 1999 MDA, it was U.S. policy to develop and field a missile defense system once technologically feasible, in the Democratic Party a different article of the law was mentioned. According to the Act, it was U.S. policy to continuously negotiate with Russia reductions of its nuclear arsenal (GP). Given Moscow's threats to add more nuclear warheads to its arsenal (GP) and to cease compliance with its arms control treaty obligations (GP) in case of a U.S. abrogation (ME) or withdrawal from the ABM Treaty (ME), such actions would conflict with the MDA (VP) (compromise on values).

One of the most central concerns of the Democrats over the Administration's plans pertained to the reactions of other countries to them. The legislators were particularly concerned with how Russia and China would respond to U.S. actions (GP) (downsides). The Democrats considered it possible that, in leaving the ABM Treaty and deploying missile defenses, the U.S. would spark an international arms race (GP). Russia and China could respond with a nuclear build-up (GP), which in turn might lead other states to do the same. The result could be an arms race in Asia (GP). Other potential downsides included Russia deciding to MIRV (GP), or to preserve nuclear warheads which would otherwise be dismantled, putting them at risk of being stolen (GP). Beijing and Moscow would also develop, field and likely sell

decoys and missile defense countermeasures to U.S. missile defense systems, exacerbating the arms competition (GP).

The U.S. also risked hampering relations with Russia (GP), including in the realm of arms control (GP), and generating further concerns among American allies (GP). The Democrats were less optimistic than the securitizing actors and the Republicans over the ability of the Administration to win them over (GP). In leaving the ABM Treaty unilaterally (ME), the U.S. risked jeopardizing American war efforts in Afghanistan, which required ally and Russian cooperation (GP). The U.S. should delay a decision to withdraw from the accord (ME) so that, via consultations (ME) downsides could be prevented or at least mitigated (GP). Nor Russia nor other states should not be given a veto on U.S. defense policies (VP). However, the security implications of their responses to U.S. actions should be taken into account and weighed (GP) (downside). The Democrats believed that leaving the ABM Treaty would leave America less safe (GP).

While the White House and the GOP preferred to be done with the accord altogether (ME), there was considerable support in the Democratic Party for amending the ABM Treaty (ME) or replacing it (ME) with a new framework with Russia that both parties agreed to (GP). Both actions (ME) would enable the U.S. to conduct missile defense testing activities (ME) without concerns over breaches of U.S. legal obligations (VP). The U.S. would be able to deploy a limited missile defense system (ME) and prevent or mitigate downsides of action vis-à-vis Moscow (GP), including negative effects on strategic stability (GP). Russia was expected to agree (CP) to amend the treaty (ME). Kerry believed that Moscow might be amenable to ratify the 1997 ABM Treaty Demarcation agreements to differentiate theater missile defense systems (ME) from defenses against large-scale strategic attacks (ME). The Senator posited that if Russia opposed that proposal, the U.S. could still withdraw from the treaty (ME). But having done so with transparency (GP), provocation would be minimized (GP). The Democrats believed the President to have broken its pledge (VP) to amend the accord (ME), despite the Administration claiming to be open to the possibility (ME).

While the Democrats preferred to keep the ABM Treaty in place and preferred that the Administration focused on different forms of WMD threats, they expressed interest in the development of theater missile defenses (ME), wanting to intercept missile launches (GP) originated from a number of potential states (but not Russia) (CP). Furthermore, Democratic support for an aggressive research, development and testing national missile defense program (ME) was unanimous in the Senate Armed Services Committee. The Democratic members believed North Korea to potentially pose an ICBM threat to America in the long-term (CP). They considered that some criteria should apply before such a defense was deployed, which concerned the seriousness of the threat (CP), the effectiveness of the system (GP), other key defense needs (GP) (downsides), and the potential response of other countries – despite potential responses of other states (GP), the U.S. should be deemed safer (GP) by fielding a national defense (ME).

Despite establishing criteria, the party seemed willing to defer the final decision on deployment to the President, who had shared his intent of deploying a national defense system by 2004. On September 24, while supporting a Senate NDAA fully authorizing the DOD's missile defense funding request, chairman of the Strategic Subcommittee Jack Reed merely "hoped" that the Administration took "to heart" the warnings of the Welch report specialists of early deployment.

It is noteworthy that the House and Senate NDAA's were approved shortly after the September 11 terrorist attacks (CP) at a time when some Democrats believed the President to be more reluctant (CP) to withdrawing from the ABM Treaty (ME) or "highly unlikely" to do so (CP). They believed Bush to be considering adjusting course because the downsides of hampering relations with U.S. allies (GP) and Russia had increased significantly (GP) (heightened premise weight) at a time when the U.S. needed their assist (CP) to achieve its goals in the war in Afghanistan (GP) – the latter premise was of the outmost importance and should not be compromised. The weighing those reasons informed the Senate Democrats decision not to reduce missile defense funds in the chamber's NDAA, even though the Senate Armed Services version of the bill had done so. Still, the final NDAA, voted hours after Bush announced the U.S. unilateral withdraw from the ABM Treaty, again fully funded the Administration's budget request for the missile defense program. The DOD Appropriations bill, voted a week later, codified a similar amount.

Besides leading the Democrats to incorrectly estimate the President's deliberative process vis-à-vis the ABM Treaty, the September 11 terrorist attacks facilitated the approval of the Administration's full missile defense budget in additional ways. Spratt and Skelton, two Democratic members of the House Armed Services Committee, were working on an amendment to remove almost a billion dollars from the House NDAA's missile defense budget (ME). The amount was to be transferred to other more urgent policy areas, such as counterproliferation (ME) and family housing (ME). In the end, they reached an agreement with the Republicans to reduce missile defense funding to a smaller extent (\$265 million) (ME) and to allocate those funds to anti-terrorism-related activities (ME). The action would prevent a surge of programs which would be unsustainable in future budgets from being initiated (GP). At the same time, nothing would be lost; the capabilities whose funding would be reduced were still unproven (GP) (downside).

A similar occurrence took place during the Senate's defense authorizations process. The NDAA put up for a vote in the full chamber restored \$1,3 billion dollars in missile defense funding that the Armed Services' Committee markup had reduced from the Administration's \$8,3 billion dollar request. The Senate bill authorized the restored funds to be expended in missile defense (ME) or anti-terrorism activities (ME). While the Democratic chairman of the committee hoped that it would be used for the latter, the President was given free rein to make the call. The change received full support from all committee members.

Another provision was dropped from the Armed Services' markup in similar fashion, again with full committee support. Considering the Administration's claims that missile defense testing would

eventually conflict with the ABM Treaty (VP) (downside), the Democrats of the Senate Armed Services Committee insisted that Congress exerted oversight over those activities (VP). The legislature held the “power of the purse” (VP); thus, it should know if appropriated funds would be used for tests in violation of the accord (VP). Therefore, the Committee markup included a provision requiring Congressional authorization (VP) before the Administration could expend funds for activities that would infringe the ABM Treaty (VP). The Committee Democrats agreed that the President had the power to withdraw from the accord since a Supreme Court ruling that had determined the question to be a non-judicial political matter (VP). The provision on Congressional oversight had expressed that understanding. In fact, there was not enough support in the Senate Armed Services Committee for including, in the NDAA, language constraining the President’s ability to make such a decision if he so decided (VP). In the end, the Committee markup’s language on Congressional oversight was removed, and placed on a separate bill, which the majority leader could call up to the floor for debate on a later occasion for debate. However, the Senate majority leader never called up the legislation to the floor. Prior to the consideration and passing of that separate legislation (VP), as Senator Reed explained, the President would retain the right to withdraw from the ABM Treaty (VP).

The House and Senate Democrats provided similar reasons for their respective concessions on missile defense, which would extend to the reconciled bill. The Representatives explained that they had realized that after September 11, it would not be feasible to pass a bill that reduced missile defense funding to the extent they had endeavored (ME). It was in the spirit of bipartisan (VP) following the recent tragedy (CP), that an agreement was reached on a smaller reduction (ME). The Democratic Senators explained the removal of the provisions on missile defense activities and missile defense funding by stressing that those were extraordinary times (CP). The Senate needed to pass the bill with great urgency (ME) in order to meet the needs of the U.S. military (GP), and ought to do so “with great unity and with one voice” (VP), which the circumstances called for (CP). The NDAA was exceptionally important to the security and defense of America (GP). The bill conveyed a message to American citizens and to the world (GP): that the U.S. would make any necessary efforts to protect the homeland and its troops (GP), to cooperate and protect its allies (GP), and to tackle “the full spectrum of threats” facing, not only America (GP), but “the entire Western World, and, indeed, all of civilization” (VP). The differences that the two parties could not bridge, chief among them the two removed provisions, were set aside for another occasion (ME), lest attempts to resolve them at that time generated dissent (GP) (downside) when unity was so greatly needed (VP) in order to win the difficult war in Afghanistan (GP).

Furthermore, as Levin, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee argued, President had stated, even before September 11, that he would veto the NDAA (VP) if it contained the provision on Congressional oversight over missile defense testing activities. Thus, the language was not going to be included in the bill even if it survived the Senate (VP) (Presidential veto power). In fact, the chairman Committee believed that there was not enough support in the Senate for the provision, despite the

Democratic majority (CP). He also expected the argument that one should not tie the hands of the Commander in Chief to carry “less of an emotional impact” (VP) if the oversight debate were to occur at a later date, after its linkage with the September 11 events had weakened (CP). Levin argued that the VP was did not come close to outweigh the central reasons behind the provision: he feared that Russia and China would build up their forces more quickly (GP), that they would engage in MIRV-ing (GP), and that Moscow cease to cooperate with the U.S. in dismantling their nuclear forces (GP), exacerbating the proliferation threat it posed (GP). He did not want to cause a divide in America’s strategic relationship with Russia (GP), seeing that it had created considerable stability (GP) (downsides).

Overall, the Democrats contested several of the Administration’s reasons for action concerning the ABM Treaty and missile defenses and voiced their own. Despite eventually giving their consent to the Administration’s actions, the resonance between the premises of the securitizing actors and those of the Democrats was weak. Since their premises mostly differed, different courses of action were preferred by each side, even if both shared the goal of the U.S. achieving the capacity to intercept missile launches (GP).

On the other hand, the resonance between the securitizing actors and the Democrats, on the reasons underpinning the pursuit of strategic nuclear reductions was moderate. The Democratic legislators responded to the Administration request to repeal a Congressional restriction preventing strategic reductions below START I levels by introducing the bicameral 2001 Strategic Arms Flexibility Act. No Republican cosponsored the bill. A DOD report agreed with the purposes of the Strategic Arms Flexibility Act, an indication of the aforementioned resonance.

The Democrats wanted to provide the White House with the flexibility (GP) to set strategic nuclear weapons levels (ME) at the lowest possible level (GP), in line with national security goals (GP) – including the preservation of deterrence credibility (GP) – and obligations toward allies (VP). The U.S. had nuclear forces in excess (CP), such as the Peacekeeper fleet (CP). Those offensive weapons were unnecessary (ME) to meet U.S. strategic requirements (GP) in the post-Cold War era (CP). They greatly surpassed (ME) what the U.S. could possibly need to fight and win a war (GP). Considerable costs (GP) would be incurred if the Administration was not granted the flexibility (GP) to make reductions (ME).

Nuclear weapons posed an immense but underestimated threat (CP). The U.S. should lead by example (VP) in reducing nuclear forces (GP), a goal which would serve U.S. interests (VP), as well as global peace interests (VP). Unilateral reductions (ME) would decrease nuclear dangers (GP) and make (GP) the world safer (VP). Nuclear weapons were a threat (CP) to all humanity (VP); the fate of the world was at stake (VP).

Forces could be reduced to levels below those contemplated by the START II, as the President had proposed (GP), without compromising America’s ability to deter any actor (GP). Preserving a large stockpile (ME) posed national security risks (GP) – a terrorist incident (GP) or an accidental catastrophe (GP) (downsides) – that unilateral reductions (ME) would minimize (GP). Retaining a large nuclear

force (ME) would encourage others to preserve or expand theirs (GP), increasing the chance of those downsides taking place (GP) (downside) by means of scenarios such as mechanical issues, misjudgment, rogue factions, proliferation, or sale of technology (CP) – all of which were possible in Russia's case (CP). By taking the first step (ME), the U.S. would allow Russia to “save face” (GP) and reduce its nuclear arsenal (GP). Moscow wanted to carry out deep reductions for economic reasons (CP) But was unlikely (CP) to do so (GP) without America taking the initiative (ME). Lower nuclear force levels (ME) would also discourage other nations from expanding theirs (GP). Still, that unilateral action (ME) did not sufficiently decrease nuclear dangers (GP). The U.S. needed to encourage others to implement reductions too (GP). Touching on that, Senator Kerry believed that reductions could be implemented, for instance, as a precursor to a START III agreement with Russia (ME).

He believed that the nuclear arsenals of the two countries could be reduced substantially by the formalization (ME) of mutual (GP), similar (GP), verifiable (GP), transparent (GP) and irreversible reductions (GP). In conjunction with nuclear reductions, Senator Corzine recommended that the U.S. provided Russia with economic aid (ME) and weapons dismantlement assistance (ME), aiming to reduce the threats posed by nuclear weapons (GP) and the proliferation of nuclear-related technology (GP) He also called for Washington to continuously negotiate non-proliferation and nuclear weapons reduction agreements with Moscow (ME) but also with other states (ME). Unlike Kerry, Corzine did not strive for similar reductions with Russia, dismissing the importance of nuclear parity instead (GP). He considered that direct assurances that other nations would reduce in kind (GP) were informed by “flawed Cold War thinking” (CP). He argued that few goals outweighed reducing the risks that nuclear weapons entailed (GP). Thus, the Congressional restriction preventing the President from implementing unilateral reductions (ME) should be repealed in its entirety (ME).

In the Senate, the repeal of section 1302 of the 1998 NDAA was included in the chamber's NDAA. In the House, however, an amendment to the NDAA that would have lifted the same restriction was voted down on grounds that the 2001 NPR had yet to be concluded. The amendment was rejected mostly on a party-line basis. Representative Tauscher, for instance, expressed concern about conducting unilateral reductions (ME) unless the U.S. pursued them with the intent of facilitating an agreement with Russia (ME) on parallel reductions (GP). Representative Allen blamed the committee decision on residual hostility toward the previous Administration (VP), which had also sought to have the restriction lifted.

A subsequent, narrower amendment – also Democratic led – was approved, however. The agreed-upon language, which allowed solely for the retirement of the Peacekeeper fleet (ME), was welcomed by the Democrat ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee as a “bold step” in U.S.-Russian relations (GP) and towards formally starting to move away from the Cold War (GP). Other committee Democrats, however, accepted the new amendment with a more critical tone. They viewed the decision of the majority of the Committee to retain a large nuclear stockpile as an outdated Cold War policy (ME). The narrow amendment (ME) hindered the President's ability to negotiate

deeper reductions with Russia (GP), potentially within the framework a major strategic treaty (ME). It also defied the request of U.S. leadership in the President, the DOD Secretary, and the JCS (ME). By staying in place, the Congressional restriction on unilateral reductions (ME) hindered the President's ability (GP) (downside) to take off high-alert status, or de-alert, U.S. nuclear weapons – a policy he supported (ME). Washington and Moscow were targeting each other with over 4,000 nuclear weapons, which were ready to be launched in minutes (CP). Multiple nations perceived as a threat in the U.S. could negatively respond (GP) (downsides) to the House bill's policies on missile defense (ME) and nuclear reductions (ME).

In expressing support for nuclear reductions (ME), Senator Biden claimed that he would be amenable to amending the ABM Treaty (ME), which Russia would agree to (CP), if the JCS agreed to substantial cuts to the U.S. nuclear forces (GP) – assuming downsides vis-à-vis China could be averted (GP). Kerry believed that the President's vague nuclear reductions bid (ME) had been made with a covert goal in mind: rallying up support for leaving the ABM Treaty (ME) and deploying missile defenses (ME) – two unpopular policies among the American public (CP). Despite strong support for unilateral reductions overall, the Democratic lawmakers from the states affected by the Administration's to reduce the B-1B fleet opposed the decision in tandem with the Republicans in the same situation. The Democratic chairman of the Strategic Committee explained the chamber's decision to preserve the whole fleet until the production of certain report requirements (ME) on the basis of its capacity to support antiterrorism operations (GP) and America's increasing reliance on the aircraft (GP).

The expert community had mixed reactions to the securitizing moves pertaining to the ABM Treaty and missile defense. We can divide the policy community in two camps: those who generally supported missile defense deployment, and those who were more critical about that course of action.

In the first camp – the missile defense supporters – there was a hopeful outlook regarding the prospect of consultations (ME) succeeding in persuading U.S. allies (GP) and Russia (GP) to accept America's missile defense plans (GP). Nonetheless, their concerns were noted (CP) and downsides of action related to them were possible (GP). Putin understood (CP) that the U.S. missiles defense systems would not threaten Russia and China (GP), while Beijing would probably increase its missile threat to America regardless (GP).

To different degrees, support for missile defense was informed by general acceptance of the rogue state and terrorist missile threats (CP), despite questions on how certain it was being raised (CP). Russia, on the other hand, was not a military threat to the U.S. (CP). It was claimed that missile defenses were feasible (ME), desirable (ME), and affordable (GP), that they would dissuade missile attacks (GP) and contribute to the preservation of American freedom of action abroad (GP). They would strengthen deterrence (GP) and the non-proliferation regime (GP), and protect the U.S. homeland, as well as American and allied troops (GP). Maintaining the ABM Treaty in its original form was not necessary (ME) because the concerns that had led to its celebration were no longer in place (CP). The U.S. should pursue a new framework (GP), seeing as nuclear deterrence no longer sufficed (ME) and needed to be

coupled with missile defense capabilities (ME). Such premises often featured in securitizing actor discourse.

However, support for missile defense was also grounded on, or in spite of, premises absent or downplayed in the securitizing moves. For instance, it was observed that U.S.-Russian relations were poor in the early days of the Bush Administration (CP), and the Sino-Russian Treaty of Friendship was viewed with concern (CP). Moscow and Beijing could respond to a U.S. missile defense system by increasing the proliferation threat to America (GP). Additionally, Russia might engage in MIRV-ing (GP), by building new offensive systems (GP), by changing targeting and alerting procedures (GP), by not retiring forces planned to be eliminated (GP) or by undermining arms control (GP). U.S.-Russian relations (GP), along with the nuclear balance, might deteriorate (GP) and Moscow and Beijing might become closer (GP). To mitigate the downsides, complementary courses of action that the Administration did not propose were recommended, such as imposing constraints on America's missile defense system (ME) in exchange for limits in Russia's nuclear arsenal (GP) or carrying out negotiated (ME) nuclear reductions (GP). Indeed, Gompert and Arnhold established a strong linkage between two actions that the Administration sought not to strongly relate: nuclear reductions (ME) and missile defense deployment (ME). According to the two experts, if the U.S. clearly conveyed that its missile defenses were not aimed at Russia or China (GP), and realized deep offensive force reductions (GP), it could not only prevent negative responses from the two states (GP) but also improve American relations with them (GP).

Missile defense critics in the policy community perceived more serious threats than WMD-armed missiles, given existing alternative means of delivery for such weapons (CP) and other forms of non-state terrorist attack, as demonstrated on September 11 (CP). Missile defenses would not be able to address such threats (GP), and it was unclear whether they would work against the threats they were meant to tackle. They were described as ineffective (GP) (insufficiently delivered goals).

It was also argued by this group of experts that the perceived WMD threats (CP) that missile defense (ME) was meant to address via interception of missile launches (GP) should be instead resolved before an attack was launched (GP). Non-proliferation activities would deliver that goal (ME). In any case, the U.S. was unable to intercept WMD-armed missiles (GP) since it did not have a working missile defense system yet (ME). Missile defense pursuits may have been informed by a longing for the simpler times of the Cold War (VP), a conflict that was ubiquitous in U.S. popular culture (CP). They were likely informed by also prevalent present of the U.S. military-industrial complex in the country's political and social life (CP). The U.S. and Russia had an history of adversarial relations (CP) and the latter had just celebrated a treaty with China (CP). Cold War strategic thinking persisted in both states (CP). Moscow might align itself more closely with Beijing (CP), given its major policy disagreements with Washington on a variety of issues (CP). In fact, Russia viewed America as a threat (CP).

Experts in this camp also warned about the possible negative consequences that the U.S. could be causing by withdrawing from the ABM Treaty (ME) to move toward the deployment of a missile

defense system (ME). Some U.S. allies were concerned about those policy changes, and the country risked alarming them (GP), which could weaken their relationship with the U.S. and erode the country's authority among them (GP) (downsides). The downsides of action vis-à-vis non-allied states were viewed with concern as well. For instance, Russia might be disincentivized from reducing its nuclear arsenal and preserve a larger nuclear stockpile (GP). It could establish closer ties with China (GP) and withdraw from START or the INF Treaty (GP). Washington's relationship with Moscow (GP) might deteriorate (GP). Even if a Beijing nuclear buildup was inevitable it might accelerate due to American actions (GP). The U.S. could be jeopardizing an opportunity to end North Korea's missile program (GP) through use of diplomacy (ME) and sparking an international arms race (GP). Hopf was skeptical of the Administration's value-based premises, denouncing its "pretensions to universalist values" (VP) and explaining that other state's interests (VP) were viewed as a very low priority (GP) given the U.S. unipolar status (CP). The U.S. would implement unilateral actions (ME) in pursuit of absolute security (GP) which would only be achieved when the world had been remade (GP) after America's own image (VP).

The executive's claim that downsides toward allies and other interested parties such as Russia would be prevented via consultations was questioned (ME). They were described as counterproductive (GP) (downsides) because the Administration's message was that it would act regardless of their views (ME), seeking merely a blank check to do so (GP) (covert goal). Consultations with Russia (ME), simply aimed to persuade it that America's missile defense system was not a threat to the country (GP) and were frustrating Russian officials (CP). Despite the securitizing actors' assurances to the contrary, some experts believed that the high costs incurred by missile defenses would have resource draining effects which would compromise America's ability to tackle the aforementioned graver threats (GP) (downsides). Revising (ME), in lieu of withdrawing on from the ABM Treaty (ME), was proposed as a policy alternative (ME). However, taking action vis-à-vis the accord would be premature (ME), because the U.S. missile defense testing (ME) did not need to infringe the accord for years (VP). In sum, the experts in this second camp either questioned or rejected several of the Administration's premises. As a result, they either rejected or voiced considerable concerns over the securitizing actors' proposed policy changes.

This group of specialists shared some of the Administration's premises, as well. Still, some premises were weighed differently or formed relations with different premises. For instance, the destruction of Russian ICBMs was a common goal (GP), but the Administration was willing to compromise it to deploy missile defenses (ME). In the policy community, it was argued that the U.S. should refrain from taking steps toward the action at that time (ME), lest the goal was compromised (GP). National security was another shared goal (GP), but some experts warned that the downsides (GP) would outweigh the goals (GP) delivered by missile defense (ME), making America less safe as a result (GP) (downside). Even if such a system might be advantageous in case of unauthorized or irrational use missile attack (GP), as the Administration claimed. The potential threats were not necessarily discarded,

but their likelihood was questioned (CP). The positive atmosphere conveyed by Bush and Putin's interactions was acknowledged (CP), despite the concerning aspects of the bilateral relation. Some experts in this camp demonstrated openness regarding missile defense research and development activities (ME) or to view such a system more favorably if the potential costs were minimized (GP). For instance, reaching a deal with Moscow on missile defense or nuclear reductions (GP) might shift its orientation from China and toward the West (GP).

However, the limited resonance found between the premises of this camp of experts and those of the securitizing actors' failed convince the former to sanction U.S. plans on missile defense and the ABM Treaty. The premises that dissonated with the securitizing moves outweighed those that resonated with these specialists, which resulted in opposition or hesitation vis-à-vis endorsing the Administration's policy proposals.

Both camps contained experts who voiced common premises in defiance of securitizing moves regarding how certain the missile threat was (CP), the understanding the U.S. did not need to rush toward deployment of a system (ME), and the belief that revising the ABM Treaty (ME) would be preferable to a unilateral withdrawal (ME). Additionally, widespread dissonance between the specialists (in both camps) and the securitizing actors was found regarding the potential downsides of action vis-à-vis allies (GP), Russia (GP), and China (GP). Despite weighing them differently as a whole, those premises generally carried more relative weight in expert deliberation than in securitizing actor deliberation. In some cases, they carried sufficient weight to inform opposition to the Administration's plans, while other experts sanctioned them anyway. Experts in both camps proposed complementary policies to lower the costs of acting as the Administration intended, with agreements with Moscow on missile defense (ME) and nuclear reductions (ME) to obtain its acquiescence of U.S. plans (GP) being a shared proposal. Perceptions of Russia did not contest the Administration's view that the country was not an enemy, but both groups of experts viewed U.S.-Russian relations less optimistically and viewed the celebration of the Sino-Russian treaty with apprehension (CP).

In sum, both resonance and dissonance, to varying degrees, was found among the general group of experts vis-à-vis the reasons for action of the Administration and the courses of action it proposed. In the first camp – the policy community's missile defense supporters – the premises utilized moderately resonated with the Administration's, overall. The premises of the securitizing actors resonated more strongly with the Republicans than with the proponents of the missile defense in the policy community, where dissonance was more easily found. In the second camp of experts – those who were more critical – several premises informing the conclusion that the U.S. should preserve the ABM Treaty, and abstain or delay a decision to deploy a missile defense system, overlapped with those of Democratic lawmakers. Resonance with the Administration's premises was, therefore, weak. The Administration's reasons for action and conclusions on how to act were not bereft of specialist backing, which embedded them with a degree of legitimacy that may have facilitated the success of the securitizing actors in securing sufficient consent for action. Even if the securitizing moves intended to garner consent for action vis-à-

vis the ABM Treaty and missile defense failed to obtain strong acceptance across the policy community, same as in Congress. Overall, it was not common for experts – regardless of their camp – to claim that the potential rogue state and terrorist missiles threats (CP) justified the urgent, early deployment of a missile defense system (ME).

Moving on to the nuclear reductions debate, the goal of reducing the size of America's strategic nuclear arsenal (GP) was viewed favorably in the policy community. The experts identified some advantages in scaling down America's strategic nuclear arsenal (GP) through unilateral steps (ME) despite arms control being the preferred course of action (ME). Unilateral action could be productive (GP) and the removal of the Congressional restriction on reductions (ME) might restart the arms control dialogue (GP). However, arms control negotiations should immediately follow so that unilateral action could be formalized in an agreement (ME). It would make sense to carry out nuclear reductions immediately and informally (ME) if the President aimed to jump-start START negotiations (GP). Kimball considered that not to be the White House's intention, however.

Gompert and Arnhold believed that substantial reductions in the U.S. strategic nuclear arsenal (GP) – ideally via arms control (ME) – would contribute to improved relations with Russia (GP) and China (GP) and the prevention of nuclear threats (GP) and arms races (GP). Achieving the goal could also contribute to curb proliferation activities (GP) and decrease the importance of nuclear weapons in the world (GP). Sokov noted, however, that U.S.-Russian relations required arms control treaties (ME) to be transparent (GP). Kimball was skeptical that the reductions that Bush had announced (ME) would succeed in easing Russian concerns about the U.S. missile defense system (GP), given that the U.S. was not actually eliminating warheads, but moving them from deployed to non-deployed status (GP). Said reductions would fail to move U.S. and Russian nuclear postures beyond their current Cold War orientation (GP).

Sharing the President's aim of moving beyond the concept of MAD (GP), Kimball proposed actions to take steps toward the goal, as well as to eliminate the mutual suspicion (GP) (downside of preserving a large nuclear arsenal) that the two states' extensive nuclear forces (ME) were causing (CP). The President, he recommended, should abandon U.S. nuclear capabilities (ME) intended to provide the leadership with options for a disarming first-strike (GP) and for large-scale attack in the event of a nuclear war (GP). Subsequently, mutual (GP) reductions of a level equal to or lower than 1,500 strategic nuclear warheads in total (GP) could be rapidly achieved with Russia via an agreement (ME).

Indeed, the reductions proposed by Bush (to 1700-2000 deployed warheads) (GP) fell short of the aims of the experts (GP). Kimball's count included nondeployed nuclear warheads, while Gompert and Arnhold proposed a total of 1,000 accountable strategic offensive nuclear warheads. The ACA expert called for an arms control agreement (ME) that codified irreversible reductions (GP), a goal that the Administration undermined, seeing as it sought to implement reductions by merely transferring deployed warheads to the nondeployed "hedge" stockpile (ME) – an action that would fail to reduce the total number of nuclear warheads that the U.S. possessed (GP). The "hedge" stockpile (ME) had been

intended to allow for rapid downloading of previously reduced nuclear warheads to U.S. delivery vehicles in case of a Russian nuclear build-up (GP). Currently (CP), however, preserving the hedge reduced Russia's incentive to carry out the reductions it sought to implement (GP) (downside), especially if no constraints to the U.S. missile defense system were in place (ME).

Gompert and Arnhold, who supported missile defense deployment, supported constraining the break-out potential of such a system (GP). That goal could be pursued, along with reductions below 1000 deployed nuclear weapons (GP) in START negotiations (ME). In return, the U.S. ought to request from Moscow comparable limits (GP) and a revision of the ABM Treaty (ME) allowing for a limited missile defense system (ME). The reductions (GP) should be pursued even in the absence of an agreement with Russia (ME), seeing as they would enable the U.S. to withdraw from the ABM Treaty (ME) and deploy a national missile shield (ME) having lowered potential downsides vis-à-vis the country. Moscow would be less likely to respond (GP), since the unilateral reductions (ME) would demonstrate that Washington did not strive to dominate Russia in the nuclear realm (GP), rebuilding the latter's confidence in part (GP). A total of 1,000 deployed nuclear weapons was more than enough (ME) to ensure the devastation of every country in the world, including Russia and China (GP). The U.S. might be able to reduce its forces even below that figure (ME), since Russia was presently unable to afford more than that (GP). The reductions were also viewed as a counter to the negative reactions over U.S. missile defense plans (GP).

The policy community stressed that only arms control (ME) would lead to binding (GP) (VP) and verifiable reductions (GP), which would foster transparency (GP) and predictability (GP). Verifiability (GP) would safeguard the U.S. against changes in the strategic balance that a rapid breakout could cause (GP), promoting, in turn, stability (GP). On the other hand, the absence of a formal agreement (ME) promoted mutual suspicion (GP), misunderstanding (GP) and conflict (GP) (downsides). The U.S. should negotiate a bilateral agreement (ME) that resulted, not only in reductions of deployed strategic nuclear weapons (GP), but also of nondeployed warheads (GP). Limits below 1500 deployed and nondeployed strategic weapons were proposed (GP), which would foster persistent confidence and stability between America and Russia (GP).

The Administration's claims whereby unilateral reductions (ME) were more cost-effective (GP) and faster (GP) than arms control agreements were questioned. The latter were not overly lengthy; much of the time required to celebrate such an agreement was spent on the decision to begin negotiations and on political debates (ME). The President could leverage his relationship with Senator Helms (ME) (feasibility), chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, to ratify START II (ME) and start talks with Russia on a START III immediately (ME). Furthermore, the executive's concern with engaging in lengthy (GP) (downside) arms control negotiations was undermined by the lengthy implementation period (GP) (downside) with which the unilateral reductions proposed by the President in November would be carried out (ME). If time was in fact not a concern (GP), then an arms control agreement should be pursued instead (ME).

Additionally, unilateral action (ME) would be less cost-effective (GP) than a formal agreement (ME) since the flexibility granted to the U.S. by the former action (GP) would mean that Russia would likewise be free from cumbersome treaty restrictions (GP). The preference for unilateral reductions could be explained at time by a rejected premise: avoiding domestic challenges (VP) (i.e., personal desires/political reasons) associated with formal arms control (ME).

It was claimed that relations between Washington and Moscow could not be transparent (GP) without treaties (ME). Besides, it was not guaranteed that Russia would reduce its nuclear arsenal (GP) in the absence of an arms control agreement (ME). The U.S. could accomplish a deal with Moscow on nuclear arms reductions and missile defense (ME) if it were willing to accept some compromises (GP/VP), which did not appear likely (CP). Reaching such a deal could prevent Russia from gravitating toward China (GP), weakening their ties (GP) and preventing the Sino-Russian Treaty from being further institutionalized (GP), moving Moscow toward the West (GP). A deal on NATO expansion (ME) or economic aid (ME) could also contribute toward those goals (GP).

Keeny perceived Bush's "vague promises of unilateral reductions" (ME) to be informed by the covert goal of preserving as much flexibility as possible in structuring nuclear forces without constraints regarding future deployments (GP). The expert believed that goal to outweigh the elimination of Russian ICBMs (GP) in the President's mind, a prioritization of goals that he rejected. Many people close to the President viewed arms control (ME) as a hindrance to the national interest (VP) due to the constraints (GP) that they imposed on weapons development and deployment (ME). The expert rejected the relational aspect concerning these premises which, coupled with confidence about U.S. military superiority (CP) had minimized the importance of limiting the forces of potential adversaries (GP). As a result, the Administration was unconcerned with Russia abandoning the START process (GP) (downside) due to the demise of the ABM Treaty.

Overall, the securitizing moves of the Administration on arms control resonated weakly among experts. In spite of that, the specialists supported the securitizing actors' policy proposal, wanting the U.S. to reduce the size of its nuclear arsenal (GP). Additionally, unilateral reductions (ME) did not necessarily preclude a subsequent formal agreement with Russia (ME) and could be productive in restarting the arms control process with the country (GP). However, the unilateral reductions (ME) that the President had proposed fell short of the recommended levels (GP) and failed to deliver other important goals such as verifiability (GP) and irreversibility (GP). The U.S. should pursue an arms control agreement with Russia to deliver those goals, which would in turn contribute to transparency (GP), predictability (GP), and stability (GP). The Administration's claims that arms control negotiations would not be cost-effective (GP) or sufficiently fast (GP) were questioned. Mutual reductions carried more weight among experts (GP) than in the executive branch.

On the one hand, achieving lower level of strategic offensive forces (ME) could allay Russian fears of America's first strike potential (GP) at a time when it was pursuing a missile defense system (ME). On the other, Moscow's concerns might not be sufficiently abated (GP) if the U.S. maintained a

large nuclear reserve (ME) despite reducing the number of deployed warheads (ME). U.S.-Russian relations were regarded with less optimism in the policy community (CP) than within the Administration, contributing to inform the conclusion that arms control (ME) was the preferred policy. Still, unilateral reductions (ME) would deliver some goals, and the action was supported as a precursor to a formal agreement (ME). There were not many downsides to it, even if Gompert and Arnhold believed it could hamper negotiations (GP) (downside) with Russia on a revision of the ABM Treaty (ME). Criticism was not centered on the negative consequences of the action, but on what the action either did not deliver or was not guaranteed to deliver (GP). Dissonance between the goals of the Administration and those of the specialists was, thus, strong.

Goal premises informing the Administration's preference for unilateral reductions, such as the understanding that they were faster (GP) and more cost-effective (GP) were contested as well. If the Administration believed that arms control (ME) would be the wrong course of action to take by hindering U.S.-Russian relations (GP) – given the good relationship between the two countries (CP) and the aim of further improving it (GP) – the policy community considered, instead, that it was the formalization of nuclear reductions what would benefit bilateral ties (GP). The lack of a formal agreement (ME) fostered mutual suspicion (GP), increased the odds of misunderstandings (GP), conflict (GP) and political and military crises (GP) (downsides), and could lead to Russian mistrust (GP), misperception (GP) and missteps (GP). Unlike the securitizing actors who were open to (ME), but resistant to arms control (ME) – a course of action suited for adversaries, which the U.S. and Russia no longer were (CP) – the specialists remarked on existing concerns in the bilateral relation despite improvements (CP). They reported on the two countries' adversarial history (CP), the prevalence of Cold War thinking on strategic issues (CP), their major policy disagreements (CP) and Russia's increased proximity to China (CP).

Having unveiled the reasons for action of the securitizing actors and those of the audience, we can explain how the policy changes occurred. The Administration conveyed a sense of urgency to act. The U.S. needed to move beyond the ABM Treaty (GP) and deploy missile defenses (ME) because rogue states and terrorist groups were perceived as threats (CP). They were believed to possess or expected to acquire or develop the capacity to launch WMD-armed missiles (CP).

The U.S. needed to change its nuclear deterrence policy, ideally by setting the ABM Treaty aside in conjunction with Russia (ME), but possibly unilaterally (ME) if no agreement with the country was reached on how to jointly transition to the new framework (GP). Either course of action would allow the U.S. to accelerate its missile defense program (ME) to deploy a missile defense system as soon as possible (ME). There were other reasons besides the threats informing the executive's conclusion on how to act – such as the goal of intercepting unauthorized or accidental missile launches (GP) – but the rogue state and terrorist missile threats were the primary drivers for action (CP). Indeed, most other premises were either related to the latter threats or outweighed by them.

The audience's reaction, while mixed, included overwhelming Republican support, not merely as it pertained to the threats, but also regarding the various other reasons for action. Some GOP legislators argued that the ABM Treaty should be treated as if it were not in effect (VP) (a position not shared by the Administration) and agreed with the decision to unilaterally withdraw from it (ME). They also supported the substantial increase in missile defense funding requested by the Administration (a 56% increase) (ME) and rejected any form of Congressional oversight (VP) or ABM Treaty-related constraints on missile defense testing (VP). As the GOP controlled the House, their support was as crucial as it was resounding. The strong resonance between the reasons for action of the Administration and those of the GOP partly explain the two policy changes. However, that is an incomplete explanation. As mentioned, our analysis revealed that the resonance between the premises of the securitizing actors and those of the Democratic legislators was weak. Yet, the Administration managed to secure sufficient support for its policy changes from the opposition party as well.

We argue that the consent was given by the Democrats because resonance, while weak, was present in a few core premises for action, chief among them the belief that the President possessed the right to withdraw from treaties (VP) and the aim of intercepting incoming missile threats (GP). Starting with the VP, we note that, as Senator Levin explained, there was not enough support in the Armed Services Committee for including in the Senate NDAA language preventing or limiting the President's power to withdraw from the ABM Treaty. That support was bipartisan and voiced by several Democrats, including Byrd and Levin (CRECB, 2001: 25975; Dao, 2001).

A June 2002 lawsuit attempting to block the President's ability to withdraw from the ABM provides further evidence of that belief on Presidential power. The lawsuit argued that the President's action was unconstitutional because the White House had not sought Congressional approval. The lawsuit was dismissed on 30 December 2002 by a federal judge who declared that the 32 Democratic House lawmakers who had filed it "[had] not been authorized, implicitly or explicitly, to bring this lawsuit on behalf of the House, a committee of the House, or Congress as a whole." Individual lawmakers could not represent the interests of the House or Congress as a whole. The court also noted that neither the House nor Congress had attempted, in any way, "to register disapproval as a body, or to insist on a role in the termination of the Treaty." It claimed that the President's foreign policy authority was a political question, not a justiciable one (The Associated Press, 2002; Liang, 2002; Kucinich v. Bush, 2002).

As claimed by the court, neither the House, the Senate, or the legislative branch had expressed their disapproval about the U.S. withdrawal from the treaty nor insisted on a Congressional role in the decision. On 6 June 2002 Representative Kucinich offered a resolution in the House whereby the President should respect Congress's Constitutional role and seek the body's approval for the U.S. withdrawal from the accord. However, a motion to table the appeal⁷³ received a favorable 254-169 vote

⁷³ In other words, the chamber decided that it did not wish to consider the question any further (Senate RPC, n.d.).

(Roll Call 214). Thirty-eight Democrats joined every voting Republican in supporting the decision. On 10 June 2002, Senator Russel Feingold (D-WI) sought permission, via unanimous consent, for the Senate to consider and approve, without further delay or debate, a resolution (S. RES. 282) stating that the chamber did not approve the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty. The resolution also stated that it was "the sense of the Senate that approval of the United States Senate [was] required to terminate any treaty between the United States and another nation." However, Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT) objected to Senator Feingold's unanimous consent request, and the resolution was never considered by the chamber. The failed House and Senate challenges to the U.S. withdrawal factored in the Federal District Court's decision to deny the plaintiffs' motion. (CREC, 2002: S5277-S5278; S5288; Kucinich v. Bush, 2002; Clerk U.S. H.R., 2002; CREC, 2002: H3232-H3238).

The ABM Treaty lawsuit had an unsuccessful precedent, also cited by the federal court as a factor in its ruling. In 1978, Republican Senator Barry Goldwater and 24 other lawmakers (8 other Senators and 16 Representatives) filed a suit against President Jimmy Carter unilaterally ending the Mutual Defense Treaty with Taiwan. The legislators claimed that a law, passed by legislature and signed by the President earlier that year, expressed the sense of Congress that any policy changes affecting the Mutual Defense Treaty required congressional consultation – which did not occur. Carter's decision was eventually upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. ("Goldwater v Carter," 1979, Tucker, 2002).

In the end, the President succeeded in obtaining enough audience support for his unilateral withdrawal from the ABM Treaty. Congressional opposition did not suffice to make challenging the President's decision via the judicial branch a viable option. The 1978 legal precedent also enabled the dismissal of the 2002 lawsuit. In the U.S., when the President seeks to withdraw from a treaty, his Constitutional power allows him significant leeway to do so. In other words, he does not require significant audience acceptance to enact policy change. While Congress may pass legislation limiting his powers pertaining to treaties by gathering a simple majority in each chamber, the President retains the power to veto it. To override such a decision, two-thirds of the legislators in the House and the Senate must agree to do so. The Judiciary has upheld the right of the President to do terminate treaties, although the matter in question has not yet been resolved conclusively. In any case, the court case corroborates Levin's claim that there was not enough support among Democrats to limit the President's power to withdraw from treaties.

Thus, George W. Bush's decision to change U.S. nuclear deterrence policy by abandoning the ABM Treaty was facilitated by the fact that enough members of Congress, including in the Democratic Party, believed that the President had the power to do so (VP). Additionally, several democrats supported the deployment of a limited missile defense system (ME) to intercept missile threats (GP), which meant ending current ABM Treaty restrictions (GP). However, it is unclear whether the latter goal enabled the ABM Treaty withdrawal, given that the Democrats did not see eye-to-eye with the Administration on how to deliver it. The Democrats argued that the ABM Treaty did not interfere with the currently scheduled missile defense testing plans (GP) (rejected downside), meaning that there was no need to

rush to withdraw from it (ME). Additionally, the accord still had benefits (GP) (e.g., on strategic stability [GP]) and it could be revised (ME) to allow for expanded testing and limited deployment (ME), thus preventing downsides of action regarding Russia (GP) (e.g., an arms race [GP]).

Despite sharing, with the Administration, the goal of the U.S. acquiring the ability to intercept missile threats (GP), the Democrats disagreed on how to achieve it. Despite supporting the deployment of a limited missile defense system (ME), the Democrats resisted the Administration's missile defense plans. For one, they disagreed with the executive's rush to field a missile defense system (ME) since the U.S. did not yet have a working system (CP), and early deployment would be counterproductive (GP). Deployment should take place only when the system was effective (GP). Furthermore, they were concerned with the downsides of action concerning allies, Russia, and China. America needed time to consult with them (ME) to mitigate potential negative effects arising from its planned missile defense activities (GP). Some Democrats questioned the gravity of the missile threat portrayed by the executive branch (CP), arguing that the risks posed by WMDs delivered by other means were more significant (CP). Representative Allen believed the Administration to be resorting to "vague, uncertain [CP] scare tactics" (GP/VP) (implication of covert reasons).

The Democratic Party claimed that WMD threats should be addressed at their source (GP) via non-proliferation activities (ME), rather than intercepted after launch (GP) with missile defenses (ME) which would never be 100% accurate (GP). The Administration's missile defense budget request was excessive (ME) given current technology (CP) and the fact that some of that funding should be allocated to other priorities (GP). The Senate Armed Services NDAA contained a provision whereby missile defense testing activities (ME) potentially conflicting with the ABM Treaty (VP) required Congressional approval (VP).

The premises in the paragraph above informed the Democrats' initial opposition to the acceleration of the U.S. missile defense program envisioned by the Administration, attempting to rein it in. Still, the legislators supported the missile defense program, and endorsed funding some of its activities, particularly in the theater realm. In fact, despite the initial cuts made by the Democrats to the Administration's missile defense budget request, the amount authorized still represented an increased over FY2001 funding. As such, we argued that resonance found between the securitizing actors and the Democratic legislators on the goal of intercepting incoming missile threats partly explains why, eventually, the Administration's missile defense budget request was fully authorized after September 11.

While we argue that the limited resonance between the reasons for action of the Democrats and those of the Administration – i.e., on the President's right to withdraw from treaties (VP) and on the goal of intercepting incoming missiles (GP) – contributed to policy change, it is uncertain whether the acceleration of the missile defense program would have occurred if not for the changes in the context of action following the terrorist attacks of September 11. After all, the Democrats held control of the Senate, and the chamber's NDAA, despite not limiting the President's ability to leave the ABM Treaty,

did not deliver the level of missile defense funding that the White House had requested. The Senate Armed Services NDAA generated strong contestation from Republican legislators on those grounds, who all voted against it in the Committee, but were unable to prevent its passing due to the consensual support from the Democratic majority.

The 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks changed perceptions of the context of action, including among Democrats, who stated that those were not ordinary times (CP). America was now fighting a difficult war in Afghanistan (CP). Under the new circumstances, the preservation of Senate unity (VP) underlay what was now a priority goal: winning the war in Afghanistan (GP). It was believed that President Bush would maintain U.S. participation in the ABM Treaty (CP), given that the new context of action (CP) required collective action against terrorism (GP), a goal that a withdrawal from the accord (ME) could undermine (GP). The President was expected to veto a NDAA that imposed upon the Administration ABM Treaty-related constraints on missile defense testing (VP), thus potentially hindering the envisioned acceleration of the missile defense program (ME). Passing the 2002 NDAA under the current circumstances (CP) was urgent (ME). Not only was the bill critical for the defense and security of the United States (GP), but its passage would also demonstrate the country's willingness to take all actions to protect its troops and the homeland (GP). Those reasons for action outweighed those which had previously informed, among Democrats, the conclusion that the Administration's missile defense plans should be reined in (ME). Two value premises were also outweighed, namely, that Congress should exert oversight over U.S. missile defense testing (VP), given that it could potentially conflict with the ABM Treaty (VP). In the end, the Democrats fully met the Administration's missile defense budget request and dropped the Senate provision on Congressional oversight during the authorizations process. The Democrats essentially deferred to the Administration on missile defense matters. While a substantial part of the funding authorized by Congress could be used either for missile defense or anti-terrorism activities, the legislators allowed the President to make the call. Additionally, they also allowed the Administration to conduct missile defense testing activities potentially conflicting with the ABM Treaty without exerting oversight. And finally, the Democratic Party merely "hoped" that the Administration would not deploy a minimal operational missile defense capability, despite plans of the executive to do so as soon as 2004.

The GOP, by refusing to accept the Democrats' cuts to the missile defense budget request, and well as the imposition of restrictions on missile defense testing, facilitated the acceleration of the missile defense program – even if the Administration's withdrawal from the ABM Treaty would have removed the possibility of Congressional oversight on testing activities. The Republicans argued that in failing to meet the President's justified budget request (ME), the U.S. would be delaying development and deployment of defenses (ME), hindering the country's ability to protect itself (GP). The provision on Congressional oversight undermined the President's power to conduct foreign policy (VP) and its negotiations with Russia on the ABM Treaty and the new strategic framework (GP) (downsides). The ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee stated that after 911 (CP) both sides

understood the importance of addressing the spectrum of threats that America faced, including missile attacks (GP).

The policy community's reaction to the Administration's securitizing moves could be split between two camps: one which supported missile defense and another which did not. However, neither camp expressed the same level of support as the GOP for withdrawing from the ABM Treaty and for accelerating the missile defense program. In other words, the resonance between the premises voiced by experts and those voiced by the Administration was moderate.

On the one hand, the policy community lent some legitimacy to the Administration's call for a missile defense system, seeing as at least some experts expressed support for the development of such a system (ME) considering the perceived missile threats (CP). On the other hand, even among missile defense supporters, the policy preference was to modify the ABM Treaty (ME) rather than withdraw from it (ME). They agreed, however, that the President had the right to make that decision (VP). Additionally, while even some critics voiced some level of support for missile defense (ME), the general view in both camps was that urgent deployment of a missile defense system was not justified (ME) on the basis of the perceived rogue state and terrorist missile threat (CP). The experts believed that the Administration was in a position to take additional time before taking action (ME). Doing so could allow it to prevent, mitigate or reduce potential downsides of action (GP). There were concerns in both camps over the downsides of withdrawing from the ABM Treaty (ME) and of deploying a missile defense system (ME), which were associated with the reactions of U.S. allies (GP), Russia (GP), and China to those courses of action (GP). The Administration failed, therefore, to gather strong expert support for withdrawing from the ABM Treaty and to fast-track missile defense deployment, even among those who recommended that the U.S. pursued such a system.

In sum, the withdrawal from the ABM Treaty took place despite experts and Democrats preferring to keep it in place and revise it (ME) rather than discard it altogether (ME). The Administration also ignored their calls not to rush to withdraw from it (ME), given the potential downsides vis-à-vis other states (GP). The premise that better explains why the audience's reaction enabled the U.S. to withdraw from the accord is the belief shared by most Democrats and experts that the President held the Constitutional right to take such an action (VP). The withdrawal was not formally opposed by either chamber, despite Democratic control of the Senate, with only a few House Representatives and one Senator attempting to contest the decision in court. Following the September 11 terrorist attacks (CP), the importance of Congressional unity (VP) and winning the war in Afghanistan (GP), coupled with the belief that the President would remain in the ABM Treaty (CP), led the Democratic-led Senate to abdicate oversight over missile defense testing activities potentially conflicting with the accord (VP). The GOP, as mentioned, fully agreed with the reasons for action of the Administration and fought to prevent the imposition of Congressional oversight over missile defense testing (VP).

As for the acceleration of the missile defense program, the successful policy change is explained by the strong GOP backing and for some support among Democrats and experts. The securitizing actors and much of the audience supported the goal of intercepting incoming missile threats (GP). However, Democratic and expert critics denoted concerns over the costs of such a system (GP) (downside), with the legislators attempting to fund the missile defense program at lower levels than the Administration (and the Republicans) intended. Still, even those lower levels constituted an uptick over FY2001, which points to support for accelerating the program in question. The Democrats and several experts did not perceive the missile threat to be as grave as the securitizing actors and the GOP described it (CP), and believed the downsides of action (GP) could outweigh any gains to U.S. national security (GP) provided by addressing the aforementioned threat (GP). They believed that the U.S. did not need to rush to deploy such a system (ME). However, the September 11 terrorist attacks (CP) led to the emergence of new premises for action (see paragraph above), which led the Democrats to fulfill, in the authorization process, the Administration's budget request for missile defense (ME). Furthermore, according to the ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, after 9/11 both parties agreed that the U.S. ought to address all threats facing the country, regardless of different perceptions regarding how grave they were (GP). Passing the NDAA was deemed paramount to give U.S. troops the resources they need (GP) and demonstrate to a domestic and international audience (GP) that the country would spare no efforts to protect the homeland and its troops (GP). We also note that the President's power to veto an NDAA which did not sufficiently fund the missile defense program and hindered his ability to withdraw from the ABM Treaty (VP) factored in the Democrats calculations. The powers of the President of the United States to conduct foreign policy compared to those of the legislature were in full display when it came to the withdrawal from the ABM Treaty and the acceleration of the missile defense program.

The third and last policy change covered in this chapter related to nuclear reductions, which were enabled by the repeal of a Congressional restriction. The policy change was successful because the reaction of the audience was, overall, favorable, despite some dissonance between the premises of the securitizing actors and those of the Administration. The audience members also voiced different premises among them.

Democratic support was grounded in moderate resonance with the Administration's premises. This is shown by the fact that the purposes of the bicameral, Democratic-led Strategic Arms Flexibility Act were supported by the DOD. The White House should be provided the flexibility to set U.S. levels of strategic nuclear weapons (GP) seeing as the country possessed too many of them (CP). America should lead by example (VP) and make the world a safer place (VP) by reducing nuclear dangers (GP). While the Administration downplayed the importance of mutual reductions (GP) despite them being desirable, the Democratic Party saw unilateral reductions as crucial in encouraging Russia to do the same (GP). Achieving that goal was important to prevent downsides such as misjudgment and proliferation of sensitive technology (GP), which the Administration overlooked, focusing instead of the transition to the new strategic framework (GP) and enhancing stability (GP).

While the executive was reluctant to agree to formal arms control negotiations (ME), associating it to several downsides (GP/VP), the Democrats, like the policy community at large, considered that unilateral reductions (ME) should be a precursor to them (ME). As the experts pointed out, unilateral action (ME) could be productive (GP), reenergize the dialogue on arms control between Washington and Moscow (GP), and mitigate potential downsides of missile defense deployment (GP). However, unlike arms control (ME), unilateral reductions (ME) would not guarantee mutual reductions (GP), transparency (GP), predictability (GP), verifiability (GP) or stability (GP) between the U.S. and Russia. Despite some dissonance being present, the Democrats and the expert community supported the nuclear reductions, wanting to reduce America's nuclear force levels (GP) and being informed by other reasons for action, some of which were shared by the Administration.

The Republicans were more reluctant to repeal the Congressional restriction (ME), with House Representatives preferring to amend it (ME), and denoting some concerns over the potential downsides of unilateral reductions (GP). However, we note that the policy preference of the House GOP, while at odds with that of several DOD figures, including Secretary Rumsfeld, who requested the repeal of the restriction, resonated with the personal view of STRATCOM Commander Myers, who considered that reductions could be conducted with the restriction in place. In general, the reductions were not a high-profile matter in the GOP except as it pertained to the bipartisan opposition to reductions in the B-1B fleet among legislators of the affected states. The few premises voiced by Republican legislators rarely overlapped as well, although they tended to resonate with those voiced by the Administration. Despite concerns over unilateral action (ME) hindering future negotiated reductions of Russian nuclear forces (GP) and the possibility of Moscow deciding to restore or expand its nuclear forces (GP), there was support for the policy change. Some Republicans believed the action to be timely (CP), enabling a smaller more modern nuclear force (CP) and contributing to prevent an arms race with Russia (GP). Additionally, there was broad support for moving towards a new strategic framework (GP), which the reductions were a part of (ME).

There was some bipartisan and expert support for linking nuclear reductions (ME) to the Administration's intentions to move beyond the ABM Treaty (GP) to deploy missile defenses (ME). Warner believed the unilateral reductions to have been announced to lay the groundwork (ME) for a U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty (ME), whereas the experts and the Democrats believed that the reductions (ME) could be used as a bargaining chip to negotiate a revision of the ABM Treaty (ME) or to mitigate possible downsides of missile defense deployment (ME) in case efforts to amend the accord failed. However, the Administration was reluctant in connecting the reductions (ME) with the ABM Treaty (ME) and its missile defense plans (ME), despite some inconsistencies observed in the discourse. Still, the executive acknowledged that by pursuing nuclear reductions (ME) the U.S. would signal Russia that it did not intend to partake in an arms race (GP), even if the action was explained as being motivated by other reasons, and necessary regardless of what Moscow decided to do (CP). Overall, there was

sufficient support in the audience to enable the policy change intended by the Administration, with a moderate level of resonance being observed.

Having explained how the three policy changes were possible based on the reasons for action communicated by the political actors, and the U.S. foreign policy decision-making context, we make the case that securitization occurred on all cases. The securitizing actors perceived rogue states and terrorist groups as threats to the United States, making urgent action necessary, seeing as several of them were either developing or attempting to acquire WMDs and ballistic missiles, technologies being actively proliferated. The U.S. could not wait long to address those threats, and the Bush Administration presented them to the audience as reasons for action. It proposed setting the ABM Treaty aside in order to accelerate the U.S. missile defense program and deploy a system as soon as possible. Seeing as policy change occurred, with the U.S. withdrawing from the accord, accelerating its missile defense activities, and deploying a system in 2004, securitization was successful.

It is questionable whether the audience acted as a “sanctioning audience” when it came to the ABM Treaty withdrawal. Overall, the audience perceived those threats to exist. Still, questions regarding their certainty, or whether it was urgent to act, emerged among a few Democrats and experts. Thus, while the Administration’s representation of the threats strongly resonated with the Republicans, it failed to receive consensus in the audience. However, our criteria for securitization to occur does not rely on audience sanctioning of policy change, nor on its acceptance of policy change based on agreement over the existence of a threat. Securitization hinges on policy change justified on the existence of a threat, although we also seek to ascertain what role (if any) the audience played in the enactment of policy change to better explain it. Given how foreign policymaking takes place in America, we expect experts and legislators to not only play a key role, but to also reflect, to a degree, how the U.S. elites reacted to the policy change more broadly.

According to our analysis, even among the Democrats and experts who agreed the rogue state and terrorist missile threats ought to inform action, the preferred course of action was to negotiate with Moscow amendments to the ABM Treaty, with a unilateral withdrawal being deemed both unnecessary and potentially harmful: the Administration would risk several downsides, including a future Russian threat. However, the President decided to unilaterally leave the accord despite the opposition from a considerable portion of the audience.

Assuming that President Bush was indeed contemplating preserving the ABM Treaty in lieu of withdrawing from it after the September 11 terrorist attacks, then Republican support for the withdrawal may have forced his hand. Senator Helms warned that a deal with Russia on the accord would be “dead on arrival” in the legislature, and several other Republican Senators joined him in urging the President not to pursue such action. The GOP may have played an important role in the policy change by blocking an alternative path that the President could have been contemplating. The Democratic legislators played a role in sanctioning the President’s eventual decision to withdraw from the ABM Treaty by holding the belief – shared by some experts – that the President had a Constitutional right to withdraw from treaties.

As such, neither chamber passed (or attempted to pass) legislation to limit the President's power to withdrawal from the treaty nor formally communicated its disapproval over the policy change enacted. Despite some legislators believing that the President needed to consult with Congress before announcing his decision, their lawsuit was dropped by the judiciary due to their failure, in both chambers, to pass resolutions opposing the accord's termination. The small role played by the audience in sanctioning the ABM Treaty withdrawal highlights the strong Presidential powers in foreign policy matters, particularly regarding treaties. Especially since he could veto legislation attempting to constrain his powers in that regard, making a super majority in both chambers necessary to overthrow his decision. Similarly, the judiciary played a limited role in sanctioning the policy change since, as anticipated (see subsections 3.5-3.7), it tends to side with the executive in foreign policy matters.

The legislature played a critical role in sanctioning the acceleration of the missile defense program, however, given that it held the "power of the purse." The legislators' conclusions may have been influenced, somewhat, by the policy community, which supported the program. If that was the case, they chose to overlook the several downsides of action – including regarding Russia – that the experts associated with the action, and which the Democrats shared. Neither the Democrats nor the experts recommended that the Administration rushed to deploy the system. It is possible, as claimed by specialists, that the President faced internal pressures to leave the accord, given that he had surrounded himself with people who opposed arms control. That being the case, the policy stream, that is, the process of policy formation, might be traced back to his campaign or White House advisors rather than to the policy community.

While the Democrats, reluctantly, fulfilled the President's missile defense budget request, they also merely "hoped" that not all the funds authorized would be used for missile defense activities, and that the Administration would choose not to deploy a minimal operational capability. Thus, Congress not only sanctioned the President's missile defense plans by fully funding them, but also signaled that the Administration was being given leeway to use them as it intended. Again, the power of the executive branch on foreign policy matters is apparent, despite Congress' role as a sanctioning audience being more clear. As for the expert community, same as the Democratic Party, their policy recommendations were overlooked in favor of those that the Administration chose, and which enjoyed strong Republican backing. The 2002 NDAA and the 2002 DOD Appropriations Bill (ME), were adopted with overwhelming Democratic (and bipartisan) support⁷⁴, making the acceleration of the missile defense program possible.

⁷⁴ During the voting on the 2002 NDAA Conference Report, there were 34 dissenting votes from House Democrats and 1 from a Senate Democrat – a clear minority. In a strong display of bipartisanship, the 2002 NDAA passed with decisive votes of 382 in favor and 40 against in the House, while garnering 92 votes in support in the Senate versus only 2 in opposition (Clerk U.S. H.R., 2001a; U.S. Senate, 2001a). The 2002 DOD Appropriations Bill also passed with commanding tallies in both chambers: 408 votes in favor and 6 against (4 Democrats) in the House and 96 yeas versus only 2 nays in the Senate (1 Democrat) (Clerk U.S. H.R., 2001b; U.S. Senate, 2001b).

The nuclear reductions were an action linked to the ABM Treaty and missile defense debate, with the Administration viewing them as part of a broader “package” of actions meant to allow for the transition to a new strategic framework. This new strategic framework was a goal associated with the requirements of a post-Cold War environment marked primarily by the threat posed by rogue states and terrorist groups and WMD proliferation. The Cold War was over, and Moscow was not perceived as a threat, which meant that America needed a new nuclear deterrence strategy, one more suited to the new threats. The new deterrence requirements meant that U.S. nuclear forces needed to be configured accordingly, which informed the need for nuclear reductions. The new challenges related to WMD and ballistic missile proliferation required the U.S. to adopt a new deterrence concept, which combined, among other actions, missile defenses and a smaller offensive nuclear force.

The reductions were informed by various reasons, among them the uncertain, complex, unpredictable, and changing security environment. The U.S. needed to properly size and configure its strategic nuclear forces to tackle the post-Cold War deterrence requirements. Given the future uncertainty, the U.S. needed a flexible deterrence posture to address a spectrum of contingencies and adversaries, often asymmetric. To attain said flexibility, the country would modernize and adapt its forces while reducing them, which would in turn ensure a more efficient and reliable fulfillment of nuclear deterrence goals. While nuclear planning would not be country-specific, several of the countries identified as contingencies to be addressed by U.S. operationally deployed nuclear forces were perceived as being “rogue states.” Thus, the U.S. sought “a credible deterrence at the lowest level of nuclear weapons consistent with U.S. and allied security.”

Despite some resistance among Republicans, especially in the House, the audience sanctioned the policy change by repealing a Congressional restriction on nuclear reductions when passing the 2002 NDAA. The expert community supported the action although, like the Democrats, it was deemed as insufficient in light of their goals and requiring the Administration to pursue arms control negotiations with Russia. The audience considered the unilateral reductions as timely, with current U.S. nuclear force levels being viewed as excessive considering present nuclear deterrence requirements. Other than on the case of the B1-1 fleet, for apparent “pork-barrel” reasons, the audience granted the Administration flexibility in determining the size and new configuration of U.S. nuclear forces.

As such, the securitization of rogue state and terrorist groups, considered a threat to the U.S. in a context of action marked by missile and WMD proliferation, as well as future uncertainty, was successfully achieved by the Bush Administration, which withdrew from the ABM Treaty to deploy a missile defense system, and pursued nuclear reductions. The actions were intended to enable a transition to a new strategic framework, given the new nuclear deterrence requirements. The audience acted as a clear “sanctioning audience” regarding the acceleration of the missile defense program and the unilateral nuclear reductions, although its role in the ABM Treaty withdrawal was considerably smaller. In all cases, the executive was granted great flexibility on policy implementation: the President could decide whether to infringe the ABM Treaty or simply withdraw from it, when to deploy a missile defense

system, and what would be the size and configuration of American nuclear forces under the new strategic framework. The actions of the legislature corroborated claims that the U.S. President enjoys considerable power in dictating the country's foreign policy.

Having confirmed that the three policy changes were outcomes of the securitization, in the U.S., of rogue state and terrorist groups, we ask, considering our research question, whether threat perceptions of Russia informed the actions as well. Were the policy changes also outcomes of a securitization of Russia? To answer that question, we refer back to our analysis, which showed that Russia was often voiced as a reason for action on all three policy change cases. According to the Bush Administration often claimed that Moscow was not a threat. Russia was not the U.S.S.R. – rivalry between the two countries, same as the Cold War, had ended, and the two states had a good relationship, which would be further improved. Moscow faced economic hardships, which had led it to reduce its nuclear arsenal, efforts that were expected to continue. Moscow could not afford to engage in an arms race, and, in any case, the U.S. was already reducing its nuclear forces. STRATCOM was unconcerned with the possibility of Russia MIRV-ing. U.S. missile defenses were not a threat to Russia, not being intended to be used against it, and thus not an incentive for MIRV-ing or a nuclear arms buildup. After all, despite U.S. defenses, the country would remain vulnerable to a large-scale Russian nuclear attack. Concerns over a future threat from Moscow stemming from U.S. missile defense plans were denounced as informed by “Cold War” thinking. Those reasons for action contributed to inform the Administration's conclusion that it could withdraw from the ABM Treaty and deploy missile defenses without incurring downsides of action. Similar premises and conclusions were voiced by the Republicans.

We argue that the Administration and the GOP's representations of Russia are indicative of a desecuritization attempt. They presented Russia, a formerly perceived threat, as a state no longer viewed as such. By attempting to shape perceptions and expectations of present and future relations with Russia, respectively, those political actors strived to convince the remaining audience to support the policy changes. After all, concerns over how Moscow would respond to a U.S. withdrawal from the ABM to deploy a defense shield were among the core reasons for Democratic and expert reluctance – or downright opposition – to support the Administration's plans. Furthermore, Rumsfeld acknowledged that suspicions of Russia persisted in the United States after five decades of hostility. De-securitization failed, because the country did not cease to be considered a threat by the securitizing actors or the audience. Securitization was not “unmade;” the U.S. continued to deter Russia, and some Administration officials acknowledged that it would not be possible to transcend the logic of MAD. However, limited de-securitization, while still a failed attempt to de-securitize a threat, can suffice to inform policy change. The U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty and its missile defense program were pursued and receive audience assent precisely because the Russian threat was not strong enough to lead American political actors to the conclusion that the two actions should not be pursued. Nuclear reductions were possible because Russia was not an enemy, but in pursuing them, the country's nuclear forces were taken into

account by U.S. political actors regardless, and the proposed cuts were also expected to minimize the chances of Moscow responding to Washington's missile defense plans.

Thus, we pose the following question. Was Russia indeed no longer perceived as a threat by the Administration and the GOP, or merely outweighed by those which were posed by rogue states and terrorist groups? Was the desecuritization attempt of the Administration genuine? And if Russia was perceived as a threat, what kind of threat did it pose? While Moscow was clearly perceived as a (future) threat among Democrats and experts – one which could be sparked by U.S. missile defense plans – were there indications of shorter-term or other long-term concerns among them and other political actors more broadly? Once again, we refer back to our analysis.

While threat perceptions of Russia failed to prevent the U.S. from withdrawing from the ABM Treaty and accelerate its missile defense program, they were indeed present among the securitizing actors and the audience, although weighed differently as reasons for action. We do not refer to the threat posed by nuclear proliferation, for which Moscow contributed, nor to the threat of an accidental or unauthorized missile launch, which Russia was vulnerable to causing. We refer to threats associated with America's perceived ability to deter Russia from attacking or threatening to attack it with nuclear weapons; to their mutual nuclear deterrence relationship. As far as the ABM Treaty and missile defense were concerned, the threat posed by rogue states and terrorist groups outweighed Russia's; the Administration rather deal with a potential future threat from the latter, than with the certainty of the former. The Republicans agreed with the Administration, while several Democrats and some experts, as mentioned, placed greater weight on the Russian threat.

Firstly, we note that higher-profile speeches of the Administration, that is, voiced by the President or by other officials in press briefing, had a strong propensity to contain positive narratives about Russia and about the prospects for bilateral relations. In the context of Congressional hearings, when speaking directly to Committee legislators or answering their questions in writing, the securitizing actors continued to emphasize positive narratives of Russia as well, which fit the general tendency of using them as reasons for action. However, Administration officials were found to voice threat perceptions of Russia in those hearings, especially when pressured or prompted in some way by the lawmakers. Certain statements about Russia became less absolute in those settings and some contradictions become more evident.

The Administration claimed that the U.S. sought a move away from the logic of MAD, which represented hostility and distrust. A clean break from the shared past of the Cold War was needed. The goal of transcending MAD, believed to be codified by the ABM Treaty, carried the implication that the U.S. still had such a relationship with Russia. However, the messaging of the securitizing actors about the principle of MAD was inconsistent. The President and the NPR, for instance, aimed to move beyond MAD, whereas officials such as Rice and Feith claimed that the U.S. and Russia no longer had such a relationship. Rumsfeld and Powel admitted that America would not be able to abandon the logic of MAD entirely, but Wolfowitz stated that the U.S. wanted to dialogue with Russia as if it were an ally –

which one can interpret as meaning that the two states would no longer deter one another. If the Administration, despite contradictory statements, associated the idea of MAD with hostility and distrust while conceding, at the same time, that the U.S. could not fully move beyond such a relationship with Russia, then threat perceptions of Moscow not only remained, but were expected to stay in place for the foreseeable future. The President Bush claimed that the U.S. and Russia were transforming their relationship from one which was based on suspicion and hostility to one of cooperation and trust, indicating that the process had not yet been complete.

The Administration also claimed to have concerns about how Russia would react to U.S. missile defense plans and assumed the importance of finding the least provocative way of pursuing them. A Committee Republican raised a potential scenario whereby Moscow and Beijing's unease about America's sole super power status led them to join other states to check U.S. influence globally, leading to a new Cold War. The legislator's concern was deemed an important one by Feith, who emphasized the importance of America avoiding creating incentives that would lead to materialization of such a scenario, including by developing non-confrontational relations with Russia and China, which the Administration intended to do (implying that current relations were not "non-confrontational"). The securitizing actors claimed to be aware of the risks, concerning Moscow and Beijing, of deploying a missile defense system. However, the possibility was considered unlikely, especially given the President's efforts to prevent them, chief among them the consultations between the U.S. and Russia. Furthermore, the risks of not deploying a missile defense system were deemed higher. The executive branch also admitted that the greater the effectiveness of such a system in diminishing the retaliatory capability of Russian and Chinese strategic nuclear forces, the stronger would be their incentive for a nuclear build-up, even if Moscow's deterrent would not be significantly affected.

Rumsfeld admitted that suspicions of Russia and persisted in the United States and vice-versa, with a group of people working within a "Cold War construct" in both countries. Casting aside the baggage of the Cold War would be difficult after five decades of hostility, and time was needed to establish a new relationship, but steps ought to be taken to demystify and reduce existing suspicions, which may not be justified. Bolton was questioned about Moscow and Beijing's opposition to U.S. missile defense plans, their strategic forces modernization programs, and their transfer of WMD technology to rogue nations. He admitted that the U.S. continue to monitor Russia closely and that the country, like China wanted to prevent the expansion of their technological gap vis-à-vis the United States. To mitigate Russian concerns, the Administration was engaged in high-level talks with Moscow, whose foundation was the development of a new strategic framework, which included substantial reductions in offensive nuclear forces and other forms of cooperation and efforts to build transparency and confidence. According to Feith, the U.S. should seek non-confrontational relations with Russia and China, given their concerns, and the NPR presented the nuclear reductions that the Administration pursued as a step toward more cooperative relations with the former.

Despite claiming that a nuclear war with Moscow had become unthinkable, the Administration admitted that Russian nuclear forces and programs were still a concern, and the same was true about its total number of deployed nuclear warheads. Russia's future was deemed uncertain. A nuclear contingency with Moscow was plausible despite unexpected and would inform the sizing of the U.S. nuclear arsenal. The NPR left open the possibility of changes in U.S. nuclear force levels and posture in case of a potential future downturn in relations with Russia. The nuclear forces operationally deployed by the U.S. aimed to address, according to the NPR, unexpected contingencies, meaning that they would target Russia. Indeed, as of the year 2000, Russia continued to dominate the SIOP with over a thousand nuclear targets. Since the future was uncertain, and rapidly and unpredictably changing, U.S. nuclear forces needed to be able to weather the worst threats it could reasonably postulate. Since the U.S. could not predict threats, it needed to be able to adapt to changes in the strategic environment. Crouch left open the possibility of Moscow using its missiles against the United States when a legislator mentioned the possibility.

U.S. strategic nuclear forces were associated with the goal of deterring large-scale attacks, even if Russia was not directly mentioned in association with it. While the Administration did not see parallel reductions of Russia's nuclear arsenal as required – despite desirable – and deemphasized the importance of nuclear parity with the country, the large number of deployed nuclear warheads, plus the large responsive force that the U.S. would preserve, would only be relevant to deter a large-scale attack from Moscow. Besides the “evolving and uncertain future,” according to which any threat was possible, only Russia justified such levels. After all, for Washington, deterrence and stability relied on its ability to not only strike first, but to always strike second. The U.S. needed to preserve a survivable, guaranteed, responsive retaliatory capability against larger attacks from any adversary/aggressor, whose result would be deemed completely unacceptable to them. While Russia was not directly mentioned, the country may have informed the conclusion that the three legs of the U.S. nuclear triad ought to be preserved and modernized. STRATCOM Commander Mies stressed the role of the ICBM leg's dispersal in deterring a disarming first-strike, which might be tempting without it. Mies also emphasized the survivability of the bomber and SSBN legs, as well as the latter's ability to respond to any adversary. His successor Ellis also stressed the importance of avoiding the elimination of nuclear delivery platforms for maximization of operational flexibility. Because only Russia would be able to launch a disarming first strike upon the U.S., Washington's concerns geographical dispersal, survivability, assured retaliation, which informed the importance of preserving existing nuclear delivery platforms and modernizing the nuclear triad were only relevant when it came to Moscow.

In fact, for STRATCOM Commander Mies, very deep reductions were tyrannical, inhibiting flexibility and creating instability. The burden of proof laid with those arguing that reductions would enhance national security, given the risks involved with the action and the elusive benefits. While the Commander admitted that reductions would aim at increasing stability and decreasing the risks of war, other actions might be more effective at delivering those goals. Flexibility ought to be preserved,

meaning that the responsive force would allow the U.S. to maintain the capability to increase its number of deployed warheads as a hedge against any “unwelcome political or strategic developments” that could emerge in the uncertain strategic environment. A downturn in relations with Moscow was presented as an example of such a potential future scenario. A stable and solid strategic environment relied on responsible management of U.S. relations with Russia and was a requirement for nuclear reductions. However, the requirements of U.S. force structure would not be solely determined by Russia’s politics, the size of its nuclear arsenal, or the evolution of its unilateral strategic force posture, but also by other considerations such as the uncertain post-Cold War strategic landscape.

The various premises we retrieved above entail threat perceptions of Russia. Some of which refer to a present threat in the strategic environment (CP), others to a potential future threat arising – either sparked by U.S. action (GP – a downside) or unrelated to one. Potential future threats – as downsides of action or not – are informed by current understandings, even if they are not – as often was the case – articulated. The three policy changes covered in this section, which were often part of the same securitizing move, are representative of the limits of the Administration’s ability to desecuritize Russia. On the one hand, Moscow was essentially voiced by the executive branch as a reason to reject inaction: bilateral relations were good and would improve, allowing the U.S. to pursue its missile defense agenda. The policy change was successful, but the Democrats and the experts remained unconvinced. The desecuritization of Russia failed among those two audience groups, with some of their concerns being reluctantly admitted as possible by the Administration in Congressional hearings. Russia did not cease to be perceived as a threat, it was simply outweighed by the factors we covered when explaining how the ABM Treaty withdrawal and the acceleration of the missile defense program had been possible. Kerry managed to get Administration officials to admit that transcending MAD would not be possible and stressed that, unlike the President, he could not make decisions on nuclear planning by looking someone in the eyes and saying he trusted them. Biden was bewildered by the DOD’s confidence about Moscow’s intentions seeing as military planners always accounted for the worst-case scenario and looked at capabilities rather than intentions when making decisions. He found the Administration’s “romance” with Russia and its certainty about its intentions “fascinating,” implying he questioned such premises despite welcoming the improvements in bilateral relations.

In general, the Democrats remained convinced that the Administration’s missile defense plans risked acting as a trigger for the creation of a future Russian threat. The country could decide to pursue a nuclear build-up, engage in MIRV-ing, and opt to preserve nuclear warheads that it would otherwise dismantle, increasing nuclear dangers. Strategic stability might be negatively affected, and Moscow might also enhance cooperation with Beijing. Such threat perceptions were shared by various experts. Still, the ABM Treaty withdrawal and the acceleration of the missile defense program were not informed by Russian threats, but consented by the Democrats in spite of them, being outweighed by other reasons for action. Some experts agreed that the U.S. should deploy a missile defense system despite the

possibility of the action sparking a threat from Moscow, while other specialists deemed them reasons to delay the action and to not withdraw from the ABM Treaty if possible.

As for unilateral nuclear reductions, the Democrats believe that the pursuit would contribute to reduce nuclear dangers associated with Russia's nuclear arsenal, including by providing the country with an incentive to reciprocate. However, such efforts would not sufficiently mitigate the threat and should be supplemented by arms control efforts. The goal of mutual reductions with Russia carried greater weight among Democrats than among the securitizing actors, being another reason why arms control was a recommended action. Besides, a formal agreement would also guarantee that reductions would be irreversible, transparent and irreversible. Those views were shared by the expert community, whose support for unilateral reductions hinged on how it could be a precursor to arms control. The absence of the latter risked creating misunderstandings, mutual suspicions, and conflict. Concerns over Russian missteps, misperceptions and mistrust were justified, and the country's concerns might not be meaningfully assuaged if the U.S., in its pursuit of flexibility, preserved a large responsive stockpile. Arms control agreements fostered stability and predictability.

The Democrats and the experts also voiced threat perceptions of Russia outside the realm of the three policy changes analyzed. For instance, Democratic Representative Traflicant suspected Russia's intentions given that it was spying on America and urged to U.S. to stop sending aid to the country. Lantos, his Democratic colleague in the House, opposed doing so, noting the importance of promoting democracy in Russia so that the country could cease to be a potential security threat to America. Spratt, House Democrat, wanted to monitor seismic activity to assure that Moscow was not engaging in nuclear testing. Democratic Representative McDermott urged the U.S. not to withdraw from the ABM Treaty to deploy missile defenses, because doing so would bring the Russia and China closer together. A compendium of papers submitted to the bicameral Joint Economic Committee by the CRS noted that successful reforms of the Russian economy might turn it into a formidable global market competitor. Such a development could lead the country to strengthen its military and to threaten to U.S. national security interests.

Threat perceptions of Russia were also present in GOP discourse, even though the legislators considered that they should not inform a U.S. decision not to withdraw from the ABM Treaty or deploy missile defenses. While acknowledged, the downsides of such actions were downplayed by Republican lawmakers. Still, the legislators hinted or voiced threat perceptions of Russia on several occasions, including in association with the three policy changes we covered. Republican legislators Inhofe, Thompson, and McInnis believed that America could face a missile threat from Russia, with the latter claiming that the premise contributed to inform his support for a U.S. missile defense system. Senator Enzi questioned Bolton about Russian opposition to U.S. missile defense plans and its strategic force modernization. Senator Thurmond feared that U.S. unilateral nuclear cuts might hinder negotiations concerning the reduction of Moscow's nuclear arsenal. He questioned Feith over the possibility, raised by experts, of Russia joining other nations to undermine U.S. global influence, ushering in, as a result,

a new Cold War. Dominici opposed unilateral reductions of U.S. strategic nuclear forces without assurances that Moscow would not restore or expand its nuclear forces. Helms submitted an expert piece to the Congressional record on the Sino-Russian Treaty of Friendship, which stated that the two states aim to counter the U.S. at a global level, and posited that the U.S. might have to accelerate U.S. missile defense efforts and pursue other actions targeting Russia. Indeed, the closer Sino-Russian relationship alerted other Republicans, as well as Democrats, and experts.

Threat perceptions of Moscow were also identified among GOP legislators outside the scope of the three policy changes analyzed (meaning that the perceptions did not inform them). Just before President's Bush inauguration, a few House Republicans expressed their concern over reports that Russia had transferred nuclear weapons to Kaliningrad. GOP Representative Bartlett was alarmed by the publication of a Russian EMP attack on America on a journal article and by Moscow's investment in a project, clouded in secrecy, concerning the construction infrastructure intended to survive a nuclear conflict. He recommended that the U.S. did not antagonize Russia or fuel its paranoia by expanding NATO. Thurmond suspected the current Russia's society to be reminiscent of that of the U.S.S.R. GOP Representative Craig described Russia as a potential rival but believed that the U.S. should focus on domestic defense against terrorist attacks rather than on global policy, despite the importance of the latter.

Overall, threat perceptions of Russia were generalized, even if often outshined by more positive narratives of the country, among the securitizing actors and the audience. The Administration's efforts to desecuritize Moscow had limited success, despite their resonance in the GOP. The securitizing actors failed to convince the Democrats and several experts that no downsides vis-à-vis Russia would occur, but the Democrats accepted their potential future occurrence due to other reasons for action – mainly those ushered in after September 11, 2001, coupled with their general belief that the President had the right to withdraw from treaties. We also argue that, based on the threat perceptions of Russia that we identified among Republicans, it is possible that they were more concerned with the potential downsides of U.S. missile defense plans than they let on. The possible downsides of a Russian response may have been assigned a weight, as a premise informing action, that did not reflect the GOP's true perceptions of the country.

The Democrats and some experts feared that a U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, and the acceleration of the U.S. missile defense program could spark a response from Moscow, creating threats such as arms competitions or further Russian MIRV-ing. There were also concerns over Moscow's improved relations with Beijing in the audience overall. Despite acknowledging the possibility of a Russian response – which was viewed with concern – the Administration did not assign a high normative priority to the scenario. In fact, several securitizing actors attempted to desecuritize Moscow, even though some statements betrayed the perceived existence of a Russian threat under the surface. Among political actors in general, Russia was not perceived as an enemy, and that future possibility, while plausible, was not expected, and generally understood as preventable. The withdrawal from the ABM

Treaty and the acceleration of the missile defense program, as outcomes of the successful securitization of the rogue state and terrorist missile threat, occurred, not because of Russia, but in spite of it, having hinged on other reasons for action. While present, threat perceptions of Moscow were outweighed as reasons for action by others, and especially the threats that were securitized.

However, we argue that the unilateral nuclear reductions pursued by the Administration, which were enabled by the removal of a Congressional restriction on such activities, were not only an outcome of a broader process of securitization of rogue state and terrorist missile threats, but of Russia as well. This case of successful securitization is paradoxical. On the one hand, the action was explained as enabled by the improvement of U.S.-Russian relations, without which the reductions would have not occurred. On the other, some securitizing actor statements suggest that the action was also informed by a concern with mitigating or preventing a Russian response to U.S. missile defense plans, including by contributing to more cooperative relations. Additionally, “how” the Administration decided to pursue those reductions betrayed the persistence of threat perceptions of Russia as reasons informing U.S. nuclear planning. The large number of nuclear weapons that would remain deployed or would integrate the U.S. responsive force; the emphasis on preserving delivery platforms; the commitment to the modernization and preservation of the nuclear triad, and the concern with securing a guaranteed, survivable, retaliatory capability against larger strategic attacks that would deter a disarming first strike (that only Moscow might be able to carry out) support our argument. Thus, despite claims that “the U.S. [would] no longer plan, size or sustain its forces as though Russia presented merely a smaller version of the threat posed by the former Soviet Union,” threat perceptions of Moscow continued to inform such actions. We argue that threat perceptions of Russia, while present and informing action, were not the core reason for policy change. The goal of transitioning to a new strategic framework (GP) and the improved U.S.-Russian relationship (CP) emerged as the main reasons for action.

Thus, perceptions of Russia informed the Administration’s pursuit of nuclear reductions in three different ways. Firstly, the improved bilateral relationship enabled the U.S. to leave the Cold War behind and implement reductions. Secondly, the action could mitigate or prevent downsides of action vis-à-vis Moscow, given its opposition to U.S. missile defense plans. Despite the Administration commonly implying that the action had not been informed by the goal of downside prevention despite contributing to it, we argue that unilateral reductions were indeed pursued, partly, to mitigate or preclude potential negative consequences related to Russia. It was explained that, to address Russian concerns, the Administration was engaged in high-level talks with the country, which were based on the development of a new strategic framework that included nuclear reductions in addition to other actions. America was to pursue non-confrontation relations with Moscow due to its concerns over the future U.S. missile defense system, and the NPR presented the unilateral nuclear reductions as a step toward more cooperative bilateral relations. Thirdly, perceptions of a Russian threat informed how the reductions would be carried out, with the U.S. Administration hedging against an uncertain and changing future strategic environment where the two states might be involved in a nuclear contingency, which made

ensuring operational flexibility important. The Administration wanted to ensure that there would be no constraints on potential future deployments. The unilateral reductions were also informed by the goal of enhancing strategic stability vis-à-vis Russia, which is indicative of some level of concern over nuclear contingencies with the country. A series of DOD slides pertaining to the NPR state that America's operationally deployed nuclear force was intended for immediate and unexpected contingencies, that the responsive force was for plausible contingencies, and that the preservation of capabilities was a priority for plausible and unexpected threat contingencies. As abovementioned, Russia was a plausible, yet unexpected contingency, indicating that, while the U.S. had now a spectrum of adversaries to account for, its pursuit of nuclear reductions continued to be informed by the large size of Moscow's nuclear arsenal, despite its threat having been downgraded from its former "immediate contingency" status. While other threats associated with the perceived uncertainty of the future strategic environment informed U.S. nuclear planning, Russia continued to inform the preservation and modernization of such a large number of nuclear warheads and variety of systems. U.S. nuclear planning had to account for Moscow's uncertain future, with Washington reserving itself the option of revising its nuclear force levels and posture – a recourse enabled by the large size of the responsive force – in case bilateral ties deteriorated considerably. After all, the responsive force allowed the U.S. to meet plausible contingencies by increasing U.S. levels of operationally deployed nuclear forces (see our analysis of the 16 May 2002 hearing of the Foreign Relations Committee on Annex B, where various experts highlight Moscow's continued influence in U.S. nuclear planning, backing our argument). The 2001 NPR remains heavily classified and certain statements voiced by Administration officials in Congressional hearings were redacted in the transcriptions. Additional sessions may have been conducted on a classified basis.

Overall, we perceived an attempt by the Administration not to mention Russia by name or to conceal U.S. perceptions of the country in U.S. nuclear planning discussions. The same was true in discourse centered on the ABM Treaty and missile defense. As such, we had to analyze a sizeable number of securitizing actor discourses to ascertain whether the premises present in higher profile statements remained consistent in other settings. By doing so, we were able to uncover various premises, some of which reluctantly admitted, vague, or merely implicit, that challenged, to an extent, understandings that Russia and the U.S. were, as Rice put it, "allies with a small 'a'" and that the logic of MAD either no longer applied or could be transcended. The discourses of the STRATCOM Commanders denoted less support for nuclear reductions than that which President Bush voiced, which seem to corroborate audience statements about the pressures he faced from nuclear planners not to fundamentally change U.S. nuclear doctrine. Biden had also commented on the JCS having to be convinced to accept considerable reductions of the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

Some press reports give credence to our claim. A news piece quoting a senior congressional expert on defense stated that Commander Mies and others at STRATCOM were resisting the Administration's plan to carry out deep reductions, and that Secretary Rumsfeld could not move forward

without them. Expert Cirincione also stated that Mies was challenging the Administration on that matter. Mies took exception to many of the conclusions of the news report (Pincus, 2001a; Mies, 2001).

On 1 August 2001, the President met with top military leaders and senior defense aids in preparation for decisions on the reduction of U.S. nuclear weapons. According to U.S. official the meeting provided an opportunity to explain the President the relationship between force makeup and U.S. targeting requirements and various complexities associated with U.S. nuclear forces. As abovementioned, according to a recent SIOP the U.S. continue to target over 1,000 sites in Russia, and several goals of U.S. force structure appear to refer to Russia (Burns, 2001; U.S. DOD, 2001).

Threat perceptions of Russia, present in the audience, contributed for its sanctioning role in the policy change. In the Democratic Party and the expert community, Russia's nuclear weapons were seen as a threat and the goal of mutual reductions carried greater weight among than compared with the Administration. Achievement of the latter, in addition to other aims that evidence threat perceptions of Russia, such as verifiability, transparency and irreversibility, informed their support for formal arms control mechanisms, which unilateral reductions could act as a precursor to. The expert community was clearly concern with the emergence of issues in the management of the U.S.-Russian strategic relationship unless reductions were formally codified. Still, there was some apprehension over unilateral reduction efforts in the Democratic Party, with some Armed Services Committee members in the House joining the Republicans in preventing the repeal of a prohibition that would allow have enabled them. Democratic Representative Tauscher, like most of the committee, preferred to wait for the release of the NPR. She supported the repeal of the prohibition but only to facilitate parallel reductions with Russia.

The reductions were a divisive issue among Republicans as well. In the House, the preservation of the prohibition on reductions was secured by Republicans' common ground on the matter and the belief that it was important to wait for the finalization of the NPR. In the Senate, Republican lawmakers denoted concern over unilateral reductions as well, seeing as the U.S. might lose its leverage to reduce Russia nuclear arsenal, and the country might decide to restore or expand its nuclear forces. Still, some GOP lawmakers deemed the reductions appropriate and timely. Lawmakers such as Weldon and Lugar expressed support for arms control, with the latter echoing expert and Democratic discourse on the importance of such negotiations to enhance security, stability and enable verification. On the other hand, Helms, an influential figure in Congress on nuclear weapons issues, opposed such efforts on the basis of the same premises that had also informed the Administration reticence vis-à-vis the formalization of nuclear reductions. Still, some Republicans joined Democrats and experts in denoting openness or preference for some form of agreement with Russia that linked the ABM Treaty and missile defense on the one hand, with the reduction of the U.S. nuclear arsenal, on the other. This linkage, which was believed by the audience to possibly mitigate or prevent the downsides of a Russian response, was not rejected by the securitizing actors. While we cannot dismiss the possibility of the Administration changing its position over the course of the negotiations, there was an attempt not to establish too strong a link between reductions – explained as already taking place – and its plans regarding missile defense.

However, Warner perceived the nuclear reductions to have contributed to laying the groundwork for the unilateral withdrawal that eventually occurred.

Overall, threat perceptions of Russia facilitated the audience's sanctioning of the policy change via the repeal of a 1997 congressional prohibition. The nuclear reductions were believed to prevent downsides of action vis-à-vis the country. The Democrats and the experts considered that they could enable a revision of the ABM Treaty, thus preventing said downsides, whereas the Republicans, who did not want the treaty preserved, established a direct link between the nuclear cuts and the prevention of an arms race with the country. We identified legislators in the two parties expressing concerns over unilateral reductions, wanting them to be reciprocated by Russia, which informed the need for arms control. Several of the goals that were present in the Democratic and GOP, as well as the audience community, denote the implicit existence of threat perceptions of Russia, which could become more significant in the absence of verifiability of compliance. Other goal premises voiced concerned the perceived importance of predictability, stability, or transparency in making reductions. Despite Senator Helms rejection of arms control, threat perceptions of Russia were present in various discourses of the lawmaker who, moreover, complained about Bush and Putin been "too cozy" with one another, according to the press (McQuillan, 2001).

Despite the Republican opposition to repealing the 1997 prohibition for the last three years, there were now several GOP legislators who came out in support of either unilateral nuclear reductions or arms control. The Republican White House may have played a role in shaping the positions of some in the GOP. For instance, Republican Senator Jon Kyl (R-AZ), along with other conservative senators who legislated the 1997 restriction on unilateral nuclear reductions, claimed they would be happy to remove it for George W. Bush because they placed more trust in his leadership (Cirincione, 2000). The preservation of the prohibition in the last year of the Clinton Administration reinforces that claim. Senator Warner objected, on 6 June 2000, to lifting the restriction, arguing that Congress should wait for the conclusion of the ensuing NPR. According to the lawmaker, the last review on the minimal deterrent level necessary dated back to 1997, having become outdated. He stated that one of the main motivations for the U.S. to go to a lower level concerned Russia's lack of financial resources to preserve its existing arsenal, with implications in terms of readiness and safety. However, that assessment, being three years old, was unacceptable for the Senator as a reason for action, making a new in-depth study of the strategic system necessary until he could commit to any numbers. Senator Allard recognized that the times were changing, but stressed the importance of the decision, given its implications on the balance of power between the U.S. and the rest of the world, particularly Russia. He agreed with Warner that an NPR was necessary. Senator Jon Kyl noted that START II had not yet been legally ratified by Moscow and argued that the decision should be made only once the QDR and the NPR had been finalized. Then, if need be, the President could carry out reductions. Notably, all three of the aforementioned Republican Senators claimed to base their decision to oppose unilateral nuclear reductions at that time on the declarations of the then Presidential candidate Governor George W. Bush, who recommended said line

of action (CREC, 2000: S4544-4553). The 2000 debate also evidenced the importance of Russia in determining the size of the U.S. nuclear force structure. Despite acknowledgment of a changed environment, such a decision required the latest assessments, given that Moscow had not ratified the START II Treaty. At the same time there was openness to carry out reductions. The trust placed by the Republicans in George W. Bush is demonstrated by the fact that both chambers of Congress ended up lifting the Congressional restriction to unilateral reductions before the 2001 NPR was even released and the lawmakers could read the strategic report. We note, however, that the NPR production process was almost finished by the time that the reductions were authorized, with President Bush announcing, on 13 November 2001, that the country “[would] reduce [its] operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads to a level between 1,700 and 2,200 over the next decade, a level fully consistent with American security” (ACA, 2022b).

Essentially, a process of desecuritization of Russia played an important role in informing the conduction of unilateral reductions, with the securitizing actors and the audience broadly agreeing that Moscow and Washington were no longer enemies and that the former’s intentions to reduce its nuclear forces enabled the U.S. to do the same. On the other hand, the process of desecuritization of Russia was plagued by inconsistencies, in that the Administration attempted to reject or downplay persisting threat perceptions of the country, while acknowledging their presence. Moscow continued to be perceived as a threat both by the Administration and the audience, and the unilateral reductions were informed both by the improvement of bilateral relations, and by the understanding that Russia might response to a U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty and to the deployment of a missile defense system. Furthermore, the Administration sought to hedge against Moscow’s uncertain future by preserving a large responsive force and maintaining and modernizing the nuclear triad, while the audience pushed for the rekindling of the arms control process to prevent what could amount to a future Russia threat, since unilateral reductions failed to deliver goals such as transparency, predictability, stability, verifiability, and parallel reductions.

On December 10, Colin Powel expressed his belief that the September 11 events (CP) had accelerated the improvement of relations with Russia (GP). The Administration was very pleased with the current state of bilateral relations (CP), and with U.S.-Russian cooperation in Afghanistan (CP). The U.S. concurred to codify (ME) mutual (GP) strategic nuclear reductions (ME) despite having not yet agreed on the force levels they would be reducing to (GP). This improvement in U.S.-Russian relations (CP) may have enabled the pursuit of a different course of action – a formal agreement – with which to pursue reductions (ME), something that the Administration had claimed to be open to (ME), given the importance of formal and detailed negotiations to the Russian leadership (CP). Reacting to the 13 December ABM Treaty announcement that very same day, Russia regretted the decision and called for “putting a legal seal on the achieved agreements on further radical, irreversible and verifiable cuts of strategic offensive weapons (...) to the level of 1,500-2,200 nuclear warheads for each side” (Putin, 2001). In response, Washington welcomed Moscow’s commitment to deep strategic nuclear reductions,

stating that the two countries would work “to formalize [the] arrangement on offensive forces [ME], including appropriate verification [GP] and transparency measures” (GP) (U.S. DOS, 2001). These events would culminate with the signing, in the Russian capital, of the 2002 Moscow Treaty on 24 May. On 13 June 2002, the U.S. withdrawal became official. The following day, Russia declared that it would no longer abide by the terms of the unratified START II. Although START II had been superseded by the Moscow Treaty, the 2002 accord would require ratification by the U.S. and Russian legislatures to take effect. Section 4.2 covers the debate on the ratification of the Moscow Treaty in the United States.

4.2. The Moscow Treaty: a vehicle for a capabilities-based approach to U.S. nuclear force requirements

The negotiation, signing, and ratification of the Moscow Treaty represent a continuation of the securitization processes (and associated policy changes) which we covered in section 4.1. The Administration, which had previously pursued unilateral reductions (ME) of U.S. strategic deployed nuclear weapons (GP), and invited Russia to unilaterally reciprocate (GP), decided to pursue those goals by means of a treaty instead (ME). The action was intended to contribute to the U.S. transition to a new strategic framework (GP) informed by a changing and unpredictable future strategic environment (CP) marked by rogue states and terrorist groups (CP) and the proliferation of WMDs and missile technology (CP). While the Administration claimed that it would move toward the new strategic framework unilaterally, if need be, it sought to do so in tandem with Russia (GP), and by means of a “piece of paper,” if need be (ME).

After the U.S. announcement, on 13 November 2001, that the country would reduce its strategic operationally deployed nuclear weapons to a level between 1,700 and 2,200 (GP), Russia insisted, on 13 December 2001, that both countries pursued reductions by means of a treaty (ME). Washington accepted Moscow’s proposal because the celebration of an arms control agreement was a priority for the latter (CP) and the U.S. wanted to transition toward a new strategic framework in tandem with Russia (GP).

However, “Cold War-style” arms control was, for Washington, out of the question (ME). The latter would not allow the U.S. to move toward a new strategic framework with Russia (GP) by perpetuating their adversarial Cold War relationship (GP) and delay the implementation of reductions (GP) (downsides). Under the Cold War paradigm, arms control agreements (ME) required verification (GP) due to mutual distrust, suspicion, and perceptions of the other as a strategic threat (CP). By contrast, Washington and Moscow had today a cooperative relationship (CP), and since neither party should have the incentive to violate the terms of the accord (GP) (rejected downside), there was no need for an agreement (ME) that allowed for the verification (GP) of the implemented reductions (GP). Furthermore, the START verification regime (ME) remained in force (GP), thus providing a foundation

for transparency (GP), confidence (GP) and predictability (GP). The SORT also established a Bilateral Implementation Commission (ME) where issues related to the accord's implementation could be discussed (GP) (downplayed downside). Other measures might also be agreed in the future (ME).

Thus, America pursued, instead, a simple agreement – the SORT (ME) – which enabled reductions (GP) while transitioning the two countries from a strategic rivalry to a true partnership (GP) based on predictability (GP), mutual security (GP), trust (GP), predictability (GP), openness (GP) and cooperation (GP). Wanting to advance the relationship with Russia (GP), develop with it a strong partnership (GP), and establish a broader strategic framework (GP) involving, not only the SORT (ME), but also cooperative efforts in the economic, political and security spheres (ME) – including in Afghanistan – President Bush opted for an agreement (ME) in lieu of unilateral action (ME). The treaty (ME), and the VPs that underlay it (VP), helped define (GP) their “normal relationship” and their partnership (CP). The Moscow Treaty (ME) also had the benefit of ensuring that reductions would be binding (GP) (VP), mutual (GP) and outlast the Bush and Putin presidencies (GP). The SORT also ensured that the U.S. would have the required flexibility (GP) to hedge (GP) against an uncertain future environment (CP) by allowing the country to maintain the nuclear warheads removed from deployment (ME). By not mandating irreversible reductions – a goal viewed as unachievable (GP), the SORT allowed the U.S. to restore its pre-treaty levels of deployed warheads (GP) to meet unforeseen future contingencies (GP) and potential technical issues with its stockpile (GP). A responsive force was necessary (ME) to achieve those goals because the U.S. lacked the ability to produce new nuclear weapons (CP).

Thus, while Washinton agreed to celebrate a binding (VP) arms control agreement with Moscow (ME) following its insistence (CP) – a premise reinforced by U.S. acknowledgment that the action would deliver goals (underlain by important VPs) that unilateral action would not – the country did so on its own terms. It rejected Russia's call for irreversibility (GP) in favor of flexibility (GP), resisted the country's push for new verification provisions (GP), and refused to negotiate the warhead levels it would reduce to (GP).

Influential U.S. Senators – Democratic and Republican – insisted that any binding (VP) agreement reached with Russia on arms control (ME) ought to receive the advice and consent of the Senate (VP), a duty underpinned by well-established precedent (ME). Their appeal may have also played a role in the Administration's decision to pursue an arms control treaty rather than a different form of agreement with Russia. President Bush's “You owe me one” quip to Senator Biden suggests that the Senate may have been able to yield influence on the White House's decision on how to act. According to Under Secretary Feith, an executive agreement, for instance, was also on the table (ME). Putin had also insisted that the two countries celebrated a treaty that their respective legislatures could ratify, in order for the decision to involve the two governments rather than simple the two Presidents (VP). Thus, Putin's request may have also played a role in persuading the Bush Administration to select a treaty as the vehicle (ME) for its agreement with Russia on reductions (GP). We also note that a declaration in

the resolution of ratification, urging reductions ahead of schedule, may have contributed to the Bush Administration's decision to do just that, with announcements having been made in 2004 and 2007.

The audience conveyed considerable support for the Moscow Treaty despite some dissonance between their premises, compared with those of the securitizing actors. Biden, ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee and several members of the policy community highlighted the importance of verifiability (GP), a goal which the SORT did not deliver, wanting to promote transparency (GP) and predictability (GP). Those goals were associated with the perception that there was potential (CP) for mistrust and misunderstandings to emerge in U.S.-Russian relations (GP) (downside) in the absence of an agreement without verification provisions (GP).

On the one hand, Feith conveyed the Administration's willingness to consider an agreement with Russia which ensured verifiability (GP), thus fostering transparency (GP) and predictability (GP), as long as U.S. flexibility was preserved (GP). On the other, following the celebration of the accord, the executive branch deemed that the current U.S.-Russian partnership (CP) had made unnecessary the inclusion of verification provisions (GP) in the SORT (ME). In any case, the three goals would be delivered by the START (ME) and a Bilateral Implementation Commission (ME). Despite the inconsistency of the Administration's position before and after the signing of the treaty, we note that its intention to carry out unilateral reductions suggests that those goals never really carried much weight within the executive branch. The Republican Senator Lugar, who played with Biden a leading role in the production of the resolution of ratification, saw eye to eye with the Administration on verification (GP), stressing the important role that the Nunn-Lugar Program could play vis-à-vis that goal (ME). Biden conceded that the aforementioned actions (ME) could potentially make up for the absence of verification provisions (GP) in the SORT (ME). The three previous premises express the ranking member's decision not to object to the treaty on the grounds of the GP it failed to achieve, partly explaining why the treaty was ratified. Podvig posited that verification might be unnecessary (GP) and that progress could be made by programs such as the Nunn-Lugar (ME), but most experts called for verifiability (GP) within the SORT (ME), despite supporting the treaty, nonetheless. The accord's failure to deliver the goal was not a reason to reject it among experts either.

Other premises are also relevant in explaining the policy change. Despite the Democrats and several experts calling for irreversible reductions (GP), the Republicans and the Administration opposed the pursuit of the goal on account of America's inability to produce new nuclear weapons (CP) and the perceived uncertainty of the future strategic environment (CP). For those reasons, they highlighted the importance of flexibility (GP) in lieu of irreversibility, a goal delivered by a responsive force comprised of downloaded (but not destroyed) nuclear warheads (ME). The Democrats and several experts wondered why the U.S. would preserve such a large responsive force (ME), questioning whether future uncertainty (CP) justified such a weighing of goals. They stressed the higher priority of irreversible destructions (GP) over flexibility (GP), given that Russia might feel compelled to mirror U.S. actions and preserve a more sizeable stockpile, increasing proliferation risks (GP). The Republican chairman of

the House Subcommittee on Energy and Water also questioned whether the U.S. need to preserve up to 10,000 nuclear warheads until the end of 2012, expecting an increase in the number of inactive warheads (ME).

The Administration explained that Russia continuously destroyed and produced new warheads, which had a short shelf life that forced the country to preserve such a capability (CP) – one that the U.S. lacked (CP). Thus, the size of the U.S. responsive force would not lead Russia to preserve warheads it would have otherwise destroyed (GP) (rejected downside). The Administration's premises concerning the responsive force resonated with the Republicans, overall, but not with the Democrats or the policy community in general. However, the Administration revealed that, despite the lack of such a mandate in the SORT, or wording to the effect in the NPR, the U.S. would indeed destroy an undisclosed number of warheads (GP). The Administration's commitment (VP) to the GP was accepted by Biden, partly informing his support for the SORT. As for the Republicans, chairman Lugar pointed out that the treaty provided both nations with a framework for the destruction of Russia warheads (GP) and that both states had asserted that they would pursue that goal to some extent (VP) (commitment), some of his colleagues were more concerned about going too far. Senators Allard and Sessions worried about the reductions potentially encouraging other states to build-up their nuclear arsenals to achieve parity with the U.S. (GP) (downside). They were concerned with the U.S. tying itself down by celebrating an agreement with Russia that other states were not a party of, and thus would not be constrained by (GP) (downside). Senator Thurmond, on the other hand, implied that he would prefer an agreement (ME) so that Russia (and its reductions) were included in a form of legal framework (VP).

Another example of dissonance between the securitizing actors and some Democrats pertained to the fact that the SORT contained provisions allowing both parties to withdraw from it or extended. Biden believed that the executive and legislative branches shared equal responsibility on treaty matters – meaning that any extension or withdrawal from the treaty ought to require Senate confirmation (VP). However, he accepted the compromise on values on account of the issue being an open constitutional question (VP), insufficient support for a constitutional fight in the Senate (CP), and the fact that the Administration would have veto any amendment granting the chamber a role of a potential extension or withdrawal of the treaty (VP). He did not want to jeopardize the treaty (ME) because doing so would lead to more harm (GP) (downside) than any possible good that could arise from making that “legal point” (VP) on that treaty (ME). The ranking member believed that not passing the SORT (ME) would be dangerous (GP) (downside). It would communicate an attempt to deceive Russia (GP) and undermine relations with the country (GP).

Because the accord lacked substance (GP) (goals achieved are insufficient), the VP did not carry much weight, being outweighed by the potential downsides of a failed ratification. The Administration did not want the agreement (CP), and the Senator feared that passing an amendment on that constitutional question (VP) would lead the executive to walk away from the SORT (ME) (compromising the VP is preferable to losing the treaty). Lugar, on the other hand, noted that the

resolution of ratification urged the President to consult with the Senate before withdrawing from the treaty (VP) and that the Administration had made such a commitment (VP). Besides, there was a lack of established practice regarding a role of the Senate on treaty withdrawals (VP) and Russia had no incentives to withdraw from the accord (GP) (rejected downside).

While the U.S. Administration downplayed the importance of Russian MIRV-ing (GP) (downside), claiming that it would carry out reductions regardless (ME) (potential downside did not inform action) and that such a decision from Moscow would not negatively affect strategic stability (GP) (rejected downside) because neither state had the incentive to attack the other (CP). Biden, on the other hand, considered MIRV-ing to be destabilizing (CP) and refused to dismiss the possibility of either the U.S. or Russia launching a first strike against the other (CP). Thus, he lamented the SORT's inability to prohibit MIRV-ing (GP) (unachieved goal). The expert community (see section 4.1) considered Russian MIRV-ing (see section 4.1) as a downside, although Cordesman believed that it could be allowed nevertheless, in a limited capacity (GP) (outweighed downside), to facilitate Moscow's agreement to a revision of the the ABM Treaty (ME) or to a U.S. missile defense deployment (ME). While the Administration, lawmakers of both parties and some experts denoted concern about Russia's tactical nuclear weapons (CP) they also understood that an agreement between Washinton and Moscow on their reduction was not likely (ME) (feasibility is questioned).

Overall, the SORT received audience support, both from the lawmakers and the experts, despite the goals that it did not deliver and the compromises (GP/VP) that it entailed, in view of the Democrats and most experts. While the premises of the securitizing actors strongly resonated with the Republicans, there was considerable dissonance in the remainder of the audience. Support was given by those who highlighted the flaws of the treaty on the basis of their preference for the SORT, given the value it provided, compared with the unilateral reductions which the Administration had claimed to be ready to pursue.

Policy change is explained, on the one hand, by the support of the GOP lawmakers. The Democratic position, on the other hand, was more aligned with that of most specialists whose work we analyzed. Among the Democrats, it was believed that not ratifying the resolution of ratification undermine relations with Russia (GP) (downside) and the national interest (VP). The Administration did not want the treaty (CP) and the approval of amendments (ME), including for the observation of a Congressional role on a potential treaty U.S. withdrawal or extension (VP), might cause it to be abandoned (GP) (downside). The reductions were better than nothing (GP), some warhead destruction would occur (VP) (GP), and the treaty possessed value (ME). It would address the threat (GP) (downside) – recognized by the Administration, lawmakers of both parties, and experts – of leaving Washington and Moscow leaving nuclear warheads “where they were” – deployed and ready for launch (CP). The SORT (ME) could enhance U.S.-Russian ties (GP) and generate momentum (GP) for mutual (GP) reductions (ME). Other actions (ME) could achieve some of the goals that the Moscow Treaty could not deliver (GP), enabling audience acceptance. Among the Democrats and the vast majority of

experts, the dangers that Moscow's nuclear weapons posed, in the context of a potential nuclear exchange between Russia and the U.S. (CP), would be addressed by reducing them (GP), which required the U.S. to do the same (GP). Parallel reductions (GP) contributed to stave off nuclear proliferation (GP), and Washington and Moscow's cooperation in the Nunn-Lugar program contributed toward that goal. For some Republicans and an expert (Thompson), however, it would be the flexibility (GP) provided by America's large stockpile of nuclear weapons (and other capabilities, including missile defense [ME]) what would ensure that the country would be able to face any threat (GP). That was the Administration's position.

Similarly to what we observed in section 4.1, an attempt to desecuritize Russia was carried out by the Administration but failed. The Administration emphasized its good relations with Russia when drumming up support for the SORT, but its efforts were only successful at surface level. The audience was convinced that Moscow was not Washington's enemy, and supported the treaty partly because, like the securitizing actors, it wanted to improve relations with the country. However, Russia was never "unmade" as a threat to the United States, even if improved bilateral relations – a "limited" desecuritization – sufficed to inform the general understanding, among political actors, that reductions were possible. For instance, some Democrats and experts expressed or implied concern over Russian MIRV-ing as a potential downside (GP) of the SORT effectively ending START II (ME). The securitizing actors' premises whereby the political relationship (CP), rather than arms control (ME), delivered strategic stability (GP) did not resonate with those audience members either. The same was true as it pertained to the Administration's claim that verification (GP) within the SORT (ME) was not needed because neither party would have the incentive to cheat (CP), and that a nuclear exchange would never happen between the two countries (CP).

Furthermore, the Administration and the GOP joined the Democrats and the experts in expressing, or implying concern over potential Russian threats, which were used to inform conclusions on how to pursue reductions. For instance, the decision to integrate nuclear warheads removed from deployed status into the responsive force (ME) was informed by the difference in U.S. capacity to produce new nuclear weapons compared with other states', with Russia being the example given in that regard. Unlike the U.S., Russia could and in fact did produce new nuclear warheads continuously (CP). The Administration's decision to hedge (GP) had been based on a long-standing precedent in U.S. policy (ME); yet, the Clinton Presidency had adopted that approach precisely to deal with a possible resurgence of Russia (GP), a possibility acknowledged by the 2001 NPR. The Administration insisted on the importance of flexibility (GP) to address the uncertainty of that era (CP), a goal delivered by the storing of previously deployed warheads and systems (ME).

The Administration claimed that it would make capability-based (CP), rather than threat-based assessments (CP), to ascertain the capability requirements (ME) to deal with uncertainty in a changing future environment (CP). It explained that the U.S. would no longer focus on one threat in particular, as it had during the Cold War, because it could not make definitive projections about who would pose

which threats (CP). The U.S. would look at potential threats without certainty (CP), including those yet to be envisioned and those which did not exist at the time (CP), and look at the capabilities it could have to face (CP) to determine what it could need (ME). There were specific threats whose emergence one could postulate (CP). There could be changes in Russia (CP), in China (CP), and there were states currently seeking WMDs and missiles (CP), for instance. Feith also conceded that Russia's nuclear inventory (CP), capabilities (CP) and relationship with the United States (CP) did not cease to be relevant in informing U.S. nuclear force posture and sizing (ME).

The case of the Moscow Treaty reinforces our conclusions regarding the unilateral nuclear reductions pursued by the Bush Administration in section 4.1. Perceiving Russia not to be an enemy of the United States (CP) and the threat of a nuclear attack by Moscow to be basically unthinkable (CP), the executive branch aims to reduce its levels of deployed nuclear weapons (GP). The Administration attempted to desecuritize Russia, seeking audience support to act in pursuit of the goal, and succeeding in that regard. Those CPs resonated with the audience and facilitated the repeal of a Congressional restriction (see section 4.1) and, later on, the ratification of the SORT. However, several audience members remained concerned with the possibility of a future Russian threat being sparked, or even being in place at the moment. Those perceptions indicate the limits of the Administration's ability to desecuritize Russia, which amount to failure in "unmaking" the country as a threat, but to success in securing policy change. The threat posed by Russia did not carry enough weight, as a reason for action, to inform a decision not to unilaterally reduce U.S. levels of strategic deployed nuclear weapons. But threat perceptions of Russia were still carried enough weight to inform how the reductions would be pursued (via a treaty ensuring they would be mutual) and how they would be implemented (with limited warhead destruction).

Threat perceptions of Russian, within the Administration, were uncovered, for the most part, in the interactions of securitizing actors with lawmakers. Threat perceptions were clearly stronger in the audience, given the concern of several of its members over Russian threats that the Administration either rejected or acknowledged despite (mostly) dismissing.

The threat perceptions of Russia within the Administration were more impactful than those within the audience in determining how the reductions would be implemented, although the Senate's insistence on a treaty maybe have influenced the executive's decision to rely on an arms control treaty as a vehicle for them. Threat perceptions of Moscow in the audience encouraged the Democrats and the experts to urge for the celebration of a treaty – which indeed occurred – but they failed to achieve, with the action, the key goals they deemed important: verifiability – to foster transparency and predictability – and irreversibility – to assure that Russia would indeed destroy its warheads, a threat to the United States. They feared that unless the U.S. celebrated a treaty that ensured the first three goals, there was potential for misunderstanding and mistrust to arise, and spark a future Russian threat. They also questioned the need to hedge against uncertainty and stockpile reliability issues with so many nuclear weapons, which could encourage Russia to maintain a larger nuclear stockpile than it would have

otherwise. Furthermore, the SORT enabled Russia to preserve its MIRV-ed ICBMs, which entailed downsides on strategic stability by encouraging nuclear first strikes.

The Administration and the Republicans, on the other hand, were concerned with the fact that Moscow was able to produce nuclear weapons, and with the potential downsides vis-à-vis other states if the U.S. destroyed too many warheads, which it could not replace. They wanted America to maintain the capability to re-upload its reduced weapons, if necessary, even if such an action would only make sense in the face of a Russian threat, as explained by several experts. With Russia remaining a plausible yet unexpected nuclear contingency whose future the Administration could not chart with certainty and considering Moscow's still large nuclear weapons arsenal and ability to produce new warheads, the Bush Administration agreed to a treaty informed by those threat perceptions. While the focus of the Administration was placed on flexibility rather than verifiability, we note that the goal had in fact been mentioned several times (see also section 4.1) prior to the treaty's celebration. The absence of verification provisions in the SORT suggests, again, that Russian threat perceptions carried less weight among securitizing actors than among Democrats and experts, with the Administration being more optimistic about the bilateral relations. However, the START I was still in place at the time, and would continue to be throughout the Bush Administration, ensuring U.S. verification until 5 December 2009. Other measures were expected to contribute to transparency and predictability as well. Thus, those goals may have been considered to have been delivered sufficiently, especially if provisions to ensure a different level of achievement of those premises would amount to the pursuit of a "Cold War-style" nuclear arms agreement, which the Administration opposed for various reasons (see also section 4.1).

The successful securitization of Russia led to the celebration of the SORT, an accord that enabled goals unmet by unilateral action – binding mutual reductions that would outlast the Bush Presidency – while fostering improved relations and a stronger partnership with Moscow. At the same time, the treaty did not compromise America's flexibility to make changes in its nuclear force structure and sizing in case changes in Russia demanded them – a scenario envisioned by Washington as possible. The Moscow Treaty was also informed by a broader threat: a changing future strategic environment which the Administration struggled to predict. While changes in Russia were among the threats that the securitizing actors envisioned as potentially materializing – which, under the capabilities-based approach, meant that the U.S. required a large responsive force to address – other nuclear contingencies were considered as well. The so-called "rogue states" and China, for instance, also informed the securitizing actors' conclusion that the country should pursue reductions to transition to a new strategic framework, while refraining from deep cuts that could encourage nuclear build-ups. Our conclusions highlight the relevance of looking at securitization as a spectrum, given that a broad range of reasons for action are considered by political actors when making decisions about security policy. Those reasons certainly include threat perceptions, possibly various, but also other understandings about the context of action, such as, in this case, America's nuclear weapon production capacity. Other reasons, such as relative importance of goals and values (including downsides), and the perceived ability of certain

actions to account for them while remaining in tune with the priorities presented by the context of action, provide a more complex explanation as to why securitization succeeds or fails, and why certain outcomes occur (including inaction) in lieu of others. Overall, we argue that threat perceptions of Russia, despite being present and having informed action, were not the core determinant of policy change, that is, not the core reason for action. Instead, the Administration's aim of improving cooperation with the country (GP), along with its desire to transition to a new strategic framework with Moscow (GP), provide better explanations for the celebration of the SORT.

Securitization of Russia in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy?

The Barack Obama Administration

U.S. nuclear deterrence policy experienced significant shifts during the Obama Administration. Several of which are covered in this chapter's first section, which followed the process of ratification of the New START. Signed on 8 April 2010, the accord entered into force on 5 February 2011. The treaty's resolution of ratification was approved by the U.S. Senate on 22 December 2010 with a favorable 71-26 vote (The New York Times, 2010). In accordance with the terms of the accord, the U.S. and Russia agreed to mutually and verifiably reduce its levels of deployed strategic nuclear weapons to a maximum of 1,550 each. The accord also limited the number of ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers of both countries to 700, with a further total limit of 800 for delivery vehicles of all types, including those not deployed. The treaty had a duration of 10 years (4 February 2021) and could be extended for an additional 5 years (4 February 2026). To secure the ratification of the treaty, the President made a commitment to the modernization of the U.S. nuclear weapons complex, increasing the FY2011 budget request to the effect, and announcing plans to invest \$80 billion dollars over the next decade. There was an additional commitment to the continued development and deployment of the country's missile defense system, which continued throughout the Obama Administration. President Obama also certified its intentions to modernize or replace the nuclear triad, a requirement of the New START resolution of ratification. The political discourse analysis (as well as the premise juxtaposition) upon which the findings of section 5.1 are based can be found in Annex C.

Section 5.2 covers the aftermath of the U.S. announcement of Russia's violation of the INF Treaty from the release of the July 2014 compliance report which disclosed it to the end of the Obama Presidency on 20 January 2017. During that timeframe, the Administration claimed to be considering "a comprehensive strategy of diplomatic, economic, and military responses" to respond to perceived Russian violations of the INF Treaty. Diplomatic efforts were already being implemented before the violation was announced, but economic sanctions were never put in place.

Congress, by means of the 2016 NDAA, mandated the Secretary of Defense to produce a plan pertaining to the development of the following military capabilities: active defenses, counterforce capabilities, and countervailing capabilities. The report produced by the DOD conveyed the Administration's conclusion that it needed to act and communicate a made decision to pursue a multi-pronged approach. The Pentagon made a commitment to a number of investments which, in combination, would address the broad Russian threat. However, information "related to specific military response efforts," such as budget information and descriptions of plans was classified. The DOD claimed

to be investing in a wide range of capabilities to counter Russia's INF-range system, but specific information was also classified.

The 2016 DOD report mentioned various actions outside of the realm of nuclear deterrence since the overriding goal was to address the Russia's overall aggressive behavior. Examples include U.S. presence in the Baltics and Poland to reassert a credible conventional deterrent. Other actions fell within the scope of nuclear deterrence, such as efforts to turn the F-35A into a DCA, and the B61-12 Warhead Life Extension Program. However, those actions were planned several years prior to Russia's violation of the INF Treaty ("NNSA reaches important," 2016; Marrow, 2024, NPR, 2009: 35) even if the new threats posed by Moscow became newly added reasons for their enactment.

The military capabilities proposed by the Administration – active defenses, counterforce capabilities, and countervailing strike capabilities – were still being considered, having been merely identified and depicted as "potential." The same was true for non-military options. The Administration concluded that it needed to act and decided on a multi-pronged approach. The DOD claimed to be committing to a number of investments intended to tackle the Russian threat more broadly, and informed that it was already investing in a wide range of capabilities aimed at countering Moscow's intermediate-range systems. However, not much is known about those investments, or about specific military response options in the realm of nuclear deterrence that were initiated as a result of Russia's perceived INF Treaty violation. Congress needs to authorize the appropriation of funds and then appropriate them to the DOD in order for them to become available for the development of specific military capabilities. However, the legislature did not approve of the 2016 DOD report, which did not convey a made decision on the military response options that the Administration had initially claimed to be considering back in 2014, and whose development received broad support from the legislative branch. Without the Administration committing to the military capabilities that Congress approved, and with the legislature disapproving the latest plan of the Administration for the development of military capabilities to counter and defend against INF-range missiles, we consider that policy change cannot be said to have occurred. Additionally, the DOD did "not identify the need for deployment locations in East Asia and Eastern Europe for any of the capabilities described in [that] plan." The military capabilities that Congress wanted the Administration to pursue would be later embraced by the Trump Administration early in its term, meaning that its development was not completed during the Obama years.

Following a 27 April 2015 announcement by Secretary of State John Kerry, the Obama Administration sought to accelerate the dismantlement of retired nuclear warheads by 20%. It failed to do so, however, as Congress passed a law to impose a ceiling on nuclear warhead dismantlement appropriations that would only be lifted during the Trump Administration.

The years that followed the ratification of the New START witnessed the emergence of perceptions of a broad pattern of Russian aggression, including as it related to its INF Treaty violation. As a result, the new threat perceptions emerged as a reason for the pursuit of nuclear modernization, including as it related to specific capabilities of the nuclear triad and the U.S. nuclear stockpile. The

Administration started tying the New START reductions to nuclear modernization, a connection it had previously rejected. We consider that policy change, as it related to nuclear modernization, to have had already occurred prior to the advent of the new threat perceptions of Russia, considering its acceleration and expansion as a result of the New START ratification. However, the newly perceived aggressive behavior by Moscow became an added reason for the pursuit of certain efforts in the realm of nuclear modernization. The decision-making processes concerning potential military responses to Russia's violation of the INF Treaty, the acceleration of nuclear warhead dismantlement, and the new premises informing U.S. nuclear modernization efforts are addressed in section 5.2. The analysis supporting the findings of that section is presented in Annex D.

Lastly, Congress played the role of a securitizing actor in the context of a change in U.S. missile defense policy during 2016. Early in the year, Congress started conducting hearings related to the 2017 NDAA, with the bill's passing in both chambers codifying the repeal of section 2 of the 1999 Missile Defense Act. The scope of U.S. missile defense policy was expanded to potentially contemplate the use of such systems to defend against Russian attacks, including at the homeland level. The 2017 NDAA was signed by the President on 23 December 2016 resulting in a change in U.S. missile defense policy. This policy change is covered in section 5.3. The political discourse analysis (as well as the premise juxtaposition) upon which the findings of that section are based can be found in Annex E.

5.1. The New START Treaty, nuclear modernization, and a renewed commitment to missile defense

Threat perceptions of Russia, as reasons for action, were at the forefront of the celebration and ratification of the New START, despite Moscow not being considered an enemy (CP) given improved bilateral relations and ongoing cooperation with Washington (CP). Relations between Washington and Moscow had undergone fundamental changes since the Cold War (CP), with chances of confrontation having lowered substantially (CP). Still, while a Russian ICBM attack targeting the American homeland was very unlikely (CP), a judgement extended to China (CP), chances of miscalculation and misunderstanding between Washington and Moscow remained (CP). Russia and China deemed U.S. missile defense systems destabilizing (CP). The two countries were conducting nuclear and other military modernization programs (CP), compounding, in the years ahead, the difficulties in preserving strategic stability (GP) at reduced levels (GP). Russia had announced the development and deployment of new ICBMs, SLBMs, and strategic nuclear warheads (CP), as well as design work on a new heavy bomber (CP). Those technological developments were of concern to the DOD (CP), requiring the U.S. to ensure that its nuclear forces would be able to accomplish their missions regardless (GP). The Administration also acknowledged the existence of political differences between the U.S. and Russia

(CP) and noted that U.S. allies were concerned about Russia's tactical nuclear weapons arsenal (CP). Russia possessed a nuclear warhead production capability (CP), while the U.S. did not (CP), forcing it to preserve a large stockpile of non-deployed strategic nuclear weapons (ME) to hedge against geopolitical and technical surprises (GP).

Moscow nuclear forces were a "significant factor" (CP) in informing how much the U.S. would reduce its own (GP) and how fast (ME). Nuclear reductions (ME) that created force level disparities (GP) would create concerns on both ends (GP) and among U.S. allies and partners (GP) (downsides of fast and deep reductions), and could preclude a stable, long-term relationship with Russia (GP) (undelivered goal). Washington's reductions (ME) needed to be reciprocated by Moscow (GP), with a certain level of parity being deemed necessary (GP).

The Administration stressed that it was important to act now to ratify the New START (ME) (delayed action is rejected). The START I verification framework was no longer in place (CP), and the U.S. needed to have people on the ground inspecting Russia's nuclear activities (GP). The treaty (ME) was extremely important to U.S. national security (GP). It would allow for reductions in the number of U.S. and Russian deployed strategic nuclear weapons (GP) in a verified manner by allowing for the monitorization of Moscow's strategic nuclear weapons arsenal (GP). Achievement of the latter goal strengthened transparency (GP), confidence (GP), trust (GP), openness (GP), predictability (GP), and stability with Russia (GP). Verification of compliance would provide the U.S. with timely warning in case Moscow was preparing to "break out" of the constraints the treaty imposed (GP).

The accord would also align both parties' strategic postures (GP) with the present reality of their relationship (CP), which made current levels of deployed nuclear weapons unnecessary (ME). The treaty would further improve bilateral relations (GP) and enable the acceleration of nuclear warhead dismantlement activities (GP) and reduce the nuclear weapons threat (GP). The New START (ME) allowed the U.S. to hold other country, such as Iran and North Korea, accountable for the fulfillment of their international responsibilities (GP) by demonstrating U.S. commitment (VP) to move toward nuclear disarmament (GP) under the auspices of the NPT (VP). The accord contributed to lower the risk of nuclear use (GP), to discourage U.S. allies from acquiring nuclear weapons (GP), and progress in the realms of counterterrorism, nuclear security, and non-proliferation (GP). Failure to ratify the accord, on the other hand, could lead to an arms race with Moscow (GP) and hinder bilateral relations and cooperation (GP), including in the Nunn-Lugar Program (GP), which would compromise non-proliferation goals (GP). Overall, the treaty marked a critical juncture in arms control and disarmament (GP), had been done correctly (ME), had was supported by the President, the Secretary of Defense, JCS, and STRATCOM (ME).

According to the Administration, terrorism and nuclear proliferation had created a security environment marked by ballistic missile threats (CP), which U.S. missile defenses (ME) could counter (GP) for the time being (CP). It was uncertain how and when the threat of an ICBM being launched by a regional actor (e.g., Iran or North Korea) against the U.S. homeland would mature (CP). At the regional

level, threats were certain and increasing swiftly (CP). Strides made in the realm of missile defense (ME) enabled the U.S. to protect U.S. forces and allies against such threats (GP), but demand for such capabilities exceeded supply (CP). Overall, accelerating the homeland missile defense program was unnecessary (ME), even though America should sustain and improve it (ME) to hedge against uncertainties (GP) and defend U.S. territory against limited ICBM threats (GP). At the regional level, on the other hand, the U.S. ought to accelerate the deployment of proven technologies (ME) to improve deterrence in key regions (GP).

The securitizing actors explained that the U.S. nuclear weapons complex was underdeveloped, aging, and insufficiently funded (CP). Increasing investments in its modernization (ME) – including the Stockpile Stewardship Program (ME) – would contribute to ensure that the U.S. nuclear weapons arsenal remained secure, safe, and effective (GP); to decrease the large number of nuclear warheads maintained as a hedge (GP); to sustain deterrence and facilitate reductions (GP); to ramp up warhead dismantlement (GP); to assure allies and partners that the U.S. stockpile remained reliable (GP); and to increase nuclear security (GP).

In a way, there is a similarity between the Obama and Bush Administration in how Russia is described as a friend, yet premises denoting threat perceptions of the country are present in discourse, regardless. However, we do not consider the Obama Administration to have attempted to desecuritize Moscow, because the possibility of Russia becoming a threat to the United States was openly communicated rather than rejected or strongly downplayed as a possibility. The Obama Administration embraced deterrence as a central component of the relationship (GP), while its antecedent aimed to overcome the principle of MAD or stated that the concept no longer applied. Threat perceptions of Russia, during the Bush years, tended to emerge in Congressional hearings following questioning, being at times reluctantly admitted, with the President's premises about the country being very positive.

The Obama Administration also perceived a relationship that was fundamentally different from the one Moscow and Washington maintained during the Cold War (CP). However, America was still in the process of attempting to reset relations with Russia (CP) and strived to avoid a dangerous nuclear competition with the country (GP). As mentioned, in connection with the New START, the securitizing actors stressed the importance of goals such as verifiability (GP) and the prevention of Russian “break out” (GP), with the latter premise being voiced by the President himself. Non-mutual reductions were now rejected (GP), given concerns with the creation of disparities between nuclear forces (GP). The U.S. now admitted the perceived impact of missile defense on strategic stability on Russia's part, despite disagreeing with it (CP).

Thus, despite the contradiction implicit in the preservation of a stable deterrence relationship with a “friendly” state, we argue that the Obama Administration did not seek to desecuritize Russia, but to portray the country with both optimism about cooperation and improved ties, and wariness about sparking threats from the country – possibilities voiced overtly and frequently. The discourse of the securitizing actors during the Obama years also highlights the failure of the Bush Administration to

move away from “Cold War thinking” (CP), given that the premise continued to be perceived to inform U.S. decision-making. The 2001 NPR had claimed that the Cold War practices related to U.S. strategic force planning had been put behind, but the Obama Administration did not consider that to have been the case about a decade later.

In late 2010, the Senate was comprised of 56 Democrats and 2 Independents who caucused with the Democratic Party. This strong Democratic majority in the Senate, where strong support for the treaty was found – all 58 lawmakers would vote to pass the resolution of ratification of the New START, meant that the Administration did not require much Republican support to obtain a 2/3 majority that would enable the ratification of the accord. Thus, the Democrats sought a vote during the lame duck session, since they had lost three Senate seats in the 2010 elections. If the voting occurred after the new Congress had been gavelled into session, passing the resolution of ratification might prove more difficult.

Overall, policy change occurred, in part, because of the strong resonance between the premises voiced by the Administration, and those upheld by the Democratic chairman and the Republican ranking member of the Committee of Foreign Relations – Senators Kerry and Lugar. In addition, the treaty enjoyed strong support in the policy community, and the Administration succeeded in shoring up enough Republican support, with the assistance of the two senior Senators in the Committee. During the debate on the resolution of ratification, Kerry and Lugar prevented amendments to the text of the treaty – which could have derailed its entering into force – but accepted some amendments to the text of the resolution of ratification to ensure a favorable vote. Lugar’s leadership failed to garner strong support in the chamber among members of his party, with Senator Kyl assuming a leading role among detractors in criticizing the treaty on several accounts. Still, with 13 Republican Senators, including two Committee members, backing the New START, its ratification was possible.

The treaty supporters, including in the policy community, voiced perceptions of Russia that echoed those of the Administration, in the sense that acknowledgement of improved bilateral relations (CP) and that the country was not an enemy was intertwined with premises that indicated that Moscow was, to some extent, a threat. For instance, while Kerry and Lugar were optimistic about the reset (CP), the former questioned whether Russia could be trusted to adhere to the treaty (CP), while the latter acknowledged U.S. relations with the country were a mix of wariness and hope (CP). Nuclear weapons remained a lingering threat to the United States (CP). Lugar highlighted the chance of miscalculation, accident, or other scenarios (CP). Kerry explained that both sides continued to threaten each other with their nuclear capabilities, noting that Russia’s ICBMs could target the American homeland and cause devastating damage (CP). Both Kerry and Lugar expressed concern about the expiration of the START. Kerry warned that knowledge about Russia’s nuclear arsenal – the only one capable of destroying the United States – was limited and had been degrading since the START expired (CP). Not acting was irresponsible and there was no time to lose (ME). Lugar held the same view about the lack of information on Russia’s activities (CP). The expiration of the START (CP) meant that the U.S. needed to act now and ratify the New START (ME). In the expert community, improved bilateral relations were also

acknowledged (CP), but there were concerns over Russia's perception of the U.S. and NATO as threats (CP), and with Moscow's provocative military exercises (CP). The expiration of the START (CP) and the loss of its verification regime was also acknowledged by experts (CP). Kimball urged the ratification of the New START (ME), warning against a delay in resuming inspections of nuclear weapons activities (GP) (downside), whose importance to U.S. national security Kuchins stressed (GP). For Kramer, however, the expiration of the START was not a "fatal deadline" (CP).

Those perceptions of Russia contributed to inform the goals deemed important by the treaty supporters in the audience, where resonance with the Administration was also found. There was also general agreement that the New START would contribute to those goals. For instance, for Kerry and Lugar, the accord would mitigate the threat perpetuated by Russia's nuclear weapons (GP), allow for the verification of Moscow's reductions (GP), increase U.S. knowledge of Russia's nuclear arsenal (GP), decrease the chance of surprise if advancements or deployments occurred in the Russian side (GP), and enhance communication and relations between the two states (GP). The conclusion that those goals would be delivered by the New START was found, collectively, in the policy community as well. In general, the specialists' premises either resonated, or did not clash with those articulated by the main supporters of the treaty in the legislature. Lugar and Kerry, along with an arms control expert (Kimball) considered, like the Administration, that the New START would lead to a more secure world (VP). Corker, Kerry and several experts also agreed with the Administration's belief that the ratification of the treaty was in the national interest of the United States (VP).

As mentioned, there was an effort, on the part of the securitizing actors and supporters of the treaty in the audience, to shore up support among some Republican critics, necessary for its ratification. There was a difference in how Russia was perceived as a threat by the treaty's supporters, on the one hand, and its detractors, on the other. Among the treaty's critics, we found that Kyl, for one, dismissed the importance of immediacy in ratifying the treaty. He claimed not to be concerned about Russia in the near-term (i.e., over the next months) (CP), but in the long-term (CP). He viewed the "reset" as fake (CP), denounced Russia's "war gaming" against NATO members (CP), argued that its reliance on nuclear weapons was increasing (CP), and posited that Moscow's tactical nuclear arsenal could be producing negative effects on strategic stability (CP). Russian officials had boasted about their new Topol-M ICBMs' capacity to MIRV (CP), and the country had completed design work on rail-mobile ICBMs (CP) and was developing SLCMs (CP) at a time America was retiring its own (CP). Moscow was also conducting extensive modernization programs for its strategic and tactical nuclear forces (CP).

Because Russia was not (then) an enemy of the United States (CP) and the lawmaker was not concerned with a nuclear attack from Moscow (CP), he concluded that the treaty was addressing a problem that was non-existent (ME). His concerns lied with the possibility of Russia cheating on the accord (CP) and "breaking out" (CP), which required enhanced verification provisions (GP) (insufficiently delivered goal). He wanted to impose limits on SLCMs (GP), which negatively affected strategic stability (CP), and prevent Russia from deploying a rail-based system (GP); and address

Russia's superiority in the realm of tactical nuclear weapons (GP). The latter could negatively impact on strategic stability, particularly as the U.S. reduced its forces (GP) (downside). Given that those goals were not delivered (or, in the case of verification, insufficiently so), the Senator opposed the ratification of the New START in its current form, seeking to amend its text (ME), while arguing that voting on the resolution of ratification could be delayed (ME). The U.S. could also negotiate a new treaty (ME) or amend the current one (ME). Extending the START would have also been preferable to the New START (ME).

In addition, Kyl perceived the New START to encourage Russia to MIRV (GP) (downside) and argued that the downsides of not ratifying the accord should be dismissed as reasons for action, believing that the accord (ME) should stand solely on its own merits (GP) (VP). He also perceived reductions to 700 delivery vehicles as excessive (GP), wanting to raise the limits to 720 (GP).

Another detractor, McCain, considered that the New START did not provide sufficient verifiability (GP), thus leading to reduced transparency (GP). He also believed that Russia could not be trusted to adhere to treaty (CP), given the corrupt officials who ruled it (CP), its human rights record (CP), authoritarianism (GP), and violation of Georgia's borders (CP) and ethnic cleansing within them (CP). Thus, he opposed ratification, considering that the New START would not be able to deliver the goals it was intended to (ME). Additionally, McCain was more concerned with the missile threats posed by rogue states and terrorist groups (CP) than with Russia's offensive nuclear weapons (CP). He also believed that there were greater legislative priorities at the moment which were not being given sufficient attention (GP) (downside), that the new Senate should be the one deciding the treaty's faith (ME) (delayed action), and that the Democrats were forcing a vote for political advantage (GP/VP) (covert premises).

The premises informing Kyl and McCain's rejection of the treaty were dismissed by Lugar or Kerry, being outweighed or replaced by others in informing their decision not to amend the treaty as the treaty detractors proposed. In response to the latter, rail-mobile systems were explained as inherently verifiable (GP) and falling under the scope (VP) of the New START (GP) (rejected downside). Russia had no plans to develop a SLCM (CP) and its MIRV-ing was explained by financial difficulties (CP). Moreover, the treaty (ME) allowed the U.S. to preserve its "break out" capacity (i.e., "hedge" stockpile was preserved) and the advantageous position of its strategic posture (GP) (downplayed Russian MIRV-ing as a downside). Limiting Moscow's tactical nuclear arsenal was a desirable goal (GP), but also one that would have made negotiations undesirably longer (GP) (downside) and that might require the New START to enter into force first in order to be feasible (ME). Russia's non-strategic nuclear weapons did not threaten the U.S.-Russian nuclear balance (GP) (rejects Kyl's downside), making strategic weapons reductions a higher-priority goal according to the military (GP) (non-strategic weapons reductions are rejected as a goal to be pursued by the treaty). The treaty's limits for nuclear delivery systems (GP) satisfied the military (ME) (goal of increased limits is rejected). While verification under the New START was less costly and complicated, it was also more effective in monitoring Russian compliance

(GP) and deemed sufficient by the DOD and the U.S. military (ME) (goal of increased verifiability was rejected). Kerry and Lugar also rejected amending the text of the treaty because they believed that doing so would effectively doom it because it would result in its renegotiation with Russia, generating the abovementioned downsides of a failed ratification (GP). The rogue state and terrorist missile threats were also acknowledged by Kerry, Lugar (CP) who, like the Administration, believed that the ratification of the treaty would contribute to address them (ME).

Kyl's claims that extending the START would have been preferable were also rejected by Kerry and Lugar. Its constraints hindered the flexibility of America's nuclear force structure (GP) (downside), and the verification under the new agreement were superior (GP). Moreover, Russia was not interested in preserving the old agreement (ME). Kyl and McCain's conclusion that a vote on the resolution of ratification should be delayed, clashed with the one arrived at by the treaty supporters, who stressed that the U.S. needed to act urgently (ME), given that the START had expired (CP) and led to a knowledge gap produced by the lack of visibility into Russian nuclear forces (CP). Lugar emphasized the treaty's importance to national security (GP) given the hostile security environment (CP) (delayed action would perpetuate undesirable CP, whereas ratification was important to achieve GP). Kerry accused the Republicans of stalling a vote on the treaty and on the legislation that McCain believed not to be receiving the required attention (GP/VP) (covert premises), countering the Republican's accusation that the Democrats were seeking to obtain political advantage (GP/VP) (covert premises). Kerry argued that the current Senate had worked on the treaty for a long time (CP) and rejected the view that it was being rushed in comparison with past arms control agreements (ME) (sufficient deliberation). Thus, the chairman and ranking member of the Committee on Foreign Relations objected to delaying a vote on the resolution of ratification (ME). Their understanding was shared by a super majority of Senators. On 21 December, Kerry submitted to a vote a motion to invoke cloture on the New START, which passed with 67 yeas and 28 nays, that is, above the three-fifths threshold of affirmative votes. As result, the debate on the treaty could not continue past the 30 hours mark after cloture was invoked, with the chamber then proceeding to a vote (CRECB, 2010: 23189).

Still, wanting to reach a "common ground" with his Republican colleagues (VP), Kerry accepted amendments to the resolution of ratification, rather than to the text of the treaty, seeing as those would not require its renegotiation (GP) (prevented downsides). As a result, and despite remaining unconvinced that the treaty should be ratified, McCain and Kyl succeeded in achieving support for several amendments to the resolution of ratification (ME). The amendments in question (ME) touched on several issues, including two of the most central issues of the New START debate: missile defense and nuclear modernization. They attempted to ease concerns of some of the treaty's critics (GP), who feared that the New START imposed constraints on America's missile defense program (GP) and who stressed that its implementation needed to be accompanied by a strong nuclear modernization program (ME).

The Administration and Kerry did not link the New START to nuclear modernization. Said program (ME) aimed to keep the U.S. nuclear arsenal viable (GP), and was important on its own, treaty or no treaty (ME). Kyl rejected that view, believing a direct link between modernization (ME) and nuclear reductions (GP) to exist; that is, the action was necessary if the U.S. was going to pursue the goal (ME). He argued that the only ways for U.S. nuclear deterrence to remain credible (GP) at lower levels of deployed nuclear weapons (GP) were to conduct nuclear tests (ME) or carrying out a nuclear modernization program (ME). The Senator stressed that even other nuclear power was modernizing its forces (CP) and possessed nuclear warhead production capabilities (CP), and that Russia and China were modernizing their delivery vehicles (CP). The U.S., on the other hand, still utilized Manhattan Project-era buildings (CP).

Kyl noted that a letter sent to President Obama on 15 December 2009 and signed by all 40 republicans – including Lugar and Corker, plus independent Senator Lieberman– had made that very point. The letter stated that the treaty, would not, otherwise (ME), enhance national security (GP). The document indicates that Lugar and Corker, as well as 11 other Republicans and Lieberman, might not have supported the treaty in the absence of the administration's efforts to ensure increased funding for nuclear modernization (ME). Kerry acknowledged that the original modernization funding levels were insufficient (ME), and the Administration responded to republican pressure by correcting the perceived inadequacies (ME). However, Kyl maintained that the budget requests remained insufficient (ME). His view contrasted with that of his republican colleague Bob Corker, who had already voted in favor of the treaty within the Committee. He lauded the fact that without the New START (ME) the Senate would not have obtained the administration's commitment to (VP) and incredible investments in nuclear modernization (ME). Thus, resonance between the Republicans and the Administration on the importance of the nuclear modernization program enabled the ratification of the New START by securing the support of some legislators who might have otherwise opposed it.

Additionally, Kerry gave its support to a Republican amendment to the resolution of ratification mandating the President to “to certify a way forward to fund the two large facilities that are part of the nuclear weapons complex” (GP). The President ratified the resolution despite the amendment, indicating that nuclear modernization enjoyed bipartisan, as well as executive branch support (ME). Kimball, the Executive Director of the ACA, criticized the “absurd” claims whereby it would be imprudent to carry out reductions (GP) before the modernization of the U.S. nuclear weapons complex (ME). It was unprecedented and unnecessary to make New START ratification (ME) conditional on a commitment (VP) to nuclear modernization (ME). Kyl and other Republicans, according to Kimball, were stalling to obtain even more funding (GP) (covert premise) for an already well-funded nuclear weapons complex (CP).

As for the second issue - missile defense – Kyl denounced a unilateral statement that Russia had included in the preamble of the treaty, which claimed that the treaty's viability was linked to U.S. refrain in missile defense deployment (GP) (downside). The Senator believed that the U.S. was granting Russia

an opportunity for blackmail, whereby it could leverage threats to withdraw from the treaty to hinder or delay U.S. missile defense advancements (GP) (downside). He believed in such a possibility, which Kerry and Lugar rejected, noting that the preamble was non-binding (VP) and that the President had expressed a commitment (VP) to continue to develop and deploy missile defense systems (ME). In the policy community, Kramer believed that the inclusion of language on the linkage between missile defenses (ME) and arms control (ME) to have been a mistake. He argued that the U.S. should have kept the accord (ME) and missile defense as separate issues (ME), given the negative reactions of Central and Eastern European allies to the new missile defense plans (GP), which he disapproved of, favoring those of the Bush Administration (ME). He contended that the Obama Administration should have taken advantage of its leverage to pursue a better treaty (ME). Kimball, on the other hand, shared Kerry and Lugar's premises on the matter.

Despite rejecting Kyl's proposal to amend the preamble of the treaty – which would have forced its renegotiation – Kerry recommended the acceptance of a GOP amendment (ME) to the resolution of ratification. The language mandated a Presidential certification and communication to Moscow (ME) that the U.S. could continue to develop and deploy missile defense systems (ME). Such actions did not threaten the strategic balance (GP) (rejected downside), meaning that they did not constitute grounds (VP) for a Russian decision to withdraw from the accord (GP) (rejected downside).

The missile defense amendment and the President's commitment, insufficient to convince Kyl and McCain, satisfied their Republican colleague Senator Corker, who joined Kerry and Lugar in arguing that the U.S. missile defense program would continue its advancements (GP) (rejected downside). Moreover, as Corker noted, without the New START (ME) the U.S. would not have presented Russia with several statements (ME) emphasizing American intentions to continue to improve his missile defenses (GP).

Kerry extended his support to two additional amendments to the resolution of ratification: one on tactical nuclear weapons, and the other on the nuclear triad. The former required the President to pursue negotiations with Russia (ME) to reduce in a secure (GP) and verifiable manner (GP) its tactical nuclear weapons arsenals (GP). As mentioned, both the chairman and the ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee supported those reductions. The other amendment stemmed from Senator Kyl's belief that the U.S. nuclear triad (ME) was essential in ensuring that the New START (ME) could strengthen strategic stability (GP), making investments to maintain and modernize delivery systems required (ME). Kerry rejected the premises, believing that they should not inform a decision to reject the New START, given that the service lives of U.S. delivery systems exceeded its duration (CP). A decision to maintain and modernize the nuclear triad should thus be delayed (ME). Kyl noted that development and deployment of such systems was prolonged, meaning that the decision should be made now (ME). Lugar supported the nuclear triad (ME), which ensured a credible (GP) and effective deterrence (GP), having obtained assurances from the Secretary of Defense (VP) that its three legs would

be maintained throughout the duration of the treaty (ME). The terms of the amendments were accepted by the President.

Generally speaking, the treaty detractors did not find much backing in the policy community, which endorsed the treaty. Kramer believed that the U.S. should not have forfeited its leverage and pursued a better agreement (ME), with both him and Conley perceiving that the “reset” and changes in U.S. missile defenses plans to have been perceived negatively by European allies (GP) (downside). Still, the specialists considered that the downside could be resolved through complementary actions (ME). The specialists were the main supporters of the administration’s goal of a world without nuclear weapons (GP) and believed that the treaty did not go far enough when it came to contributing to that future state of affairs (ME). The ACA was particularly vocal in shutting down some of the concerns raised by Kyl, rejecting several of the consequences of the treaty raised by the senator (GP) (rejected downsides). Another prominent aspect of the New START debate concerned the fact that many covert reasons for action (GP/VP/CP) were identified by the members of the audience. They were used to discredit the premises for action of those on the other side of the debate (see section 2 of annex C).

Overall, the securitizing actors secured substantial support for the policy change in the audience. In addition to wide acceptance among Democrats and experts, the Administration secured enough support among Republican Senators to allow the resolution of ratification of the New START to pass in the chamber. Since the Democrats held the majority in the Senate, their absolute support for the treaty, aided by some Republican backing, allowed for cloture to take place, a procedure which ended the debate and forced a (successful) vote on the New START. The support was likely shored up by Richard Lugar, reinforced by other Republicans, the military, the DOD and the JCS, and possibly enabled by the strong backing of the expert community.

Lugar and Corker’s positioning vis-à-vis the treaty explains to us what made ratification possible. Both Republican Senators supported the treaty for the goals it achieved, while striking down some of the alleged downsides of action raised by critics such as McCain and Kyl. For Corker, the President’s commitments to missile defense (VP) and nuclear modernization (VP) were key, while for Lugar, the preservation of the Nunn-Lugar program was one of the crucial reasons (GP). Both agreed that the New START was important for purposes of obtaining verification (GP), enabling stability (GP), enhancing national security (GP), maintaining force structure flexibility (GP) and fighting nuclear proliferation (GP). While Corker’s support was not as strong as Lugar’s, seeing as the lawmaker did not mind postponing the debate given the busy Senate agenda (CP), the antics of the democrats (CP), and was willing to renegotiate the accord (ME), Corker admitted that the Administration had “bent over backwards to try to solve every problem that has come up” (GP) (no downsides). He gave his support for the treaty, stating that the resolution of ratification had received “tremendous Republican input” (VP) (bipartisanship). Within the audience, there was a strong, albeit not complete, alignment between the premises for action of the treaty supporters – democrats, republicans, and experts. As for the lead Republican debater – Senator Kyl – he considered the New START flawed to the core. He shared a few

goals, value premises, and perceptions of the context of action with some of the treaty supporters. However, he doubted the ability of the treaty to achieve some of those goals (GP) (e.g., strategic stability, sufficient verifiability), and, like McCain, believed that the Administration was not focusing on the main threats (GP) – Iran and North Korea (CP). There were also various goals that the New START (ME) should deliver, but did not (GP), and Kyl anticipated a series of negative consequences, including in future relations with Russia (GP), if the New START was ratified (ME). Delaying a decision on ratification (ME), renegotiating the treaty (ME) or amending its text (ME) were superior policy alternatives for the Senator. He also deemed the nuclear modernization budget insufficient (ME) and stressed that the U.S. should have gotten more concessions out of Russia (ME). His objections assured increased funding for the modernization program (ME) and led to statements being delivered to Russia about U.S. missile defense plans (ME). With Kerry seeking to achieve a common ground with his republican colleagues (GP), Kyl and McCain also succeeded in adding four amendments to the resolution of ratification (ME). However, their position was not shared by enough Republican Senators to prevent the ratification of the New START.

As Kyl himself explained on 8 July 2010: “If (...) our nuclear posture is going to be strong [GP] and properly resourced [ME], most senators will likely view the treaty as relatively benign [GP] [downplayed downsides]. But right now many are wary of ratifying it because the Obama administration is sending mixed signals on this serious issue” (GP) (downsides). The senator considered that the NPR had taken “some sensible positions” on the importance of nuclear deterrence (GP), including extended deterrence (GP) (VP) (security commitment), and of preserving the nuclear triad (ME). However, the goals that the Administration’s claimed to be pursuing with its nuclear deterrence (ME), nonproliferation (ME), and modernization (ME) were at odds with the ideas embraced by the President about the unrealistic, dangerous, and impractical goal of a world without nuclear weapons (GP) (Kyl, 2010).

Kyl’s discourse indicates that the Administration’s commitments to nuclear modernization and to the nuclear triad, which the resolution of ratification required the President to certify, along with the increased nuclear modernization budget request and the 10-year nuclear modernization plan, may have dispelled or assuaged concerns among some Senators, who considered the treaty “relatively benign,” that the Administration would take strong steps toward nuclear disarmament. The Democratic Appropriators had also made a commitment to fund nuclear modernization activities. Republican Senator Bob Corker lauded what he described as the “Missile Defense and Nuclear Modernization Act of 2010.” Republican Senator Mike Johanns (R-NE) cosponsored Kyl’s agreed to amendment (amendment 4892) on the modernization of nuclear facilities and voted for the treaty as well.

Johanns joined Republican Senators Alexander Lamar (R-TN), Scott Brown (R-MA), and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Lugar, as well as Independent Senator Lieberman in cosponsoring Corker’s agreed to amendment (amendment 4908) on missile defense, with all of them voting in favor of the accord. They were joined by Democrats Levin, Mark Begich (D-AK), and Even Bayh (D-IN). Cosponsors Kyl and McCain voted in opposition to the treaty, nonetheless.

The New START was the outcome of the successful securitization of Russia as a threat to the United States. The Administration perceived a Russian threat to have had been activated by the expiration of the START. The U.S. had no one on the ground to inspect Russia nuclear activities and had lost the ability to track the country's strategic nuclear arsenal. Negative impacts were, thus, already being generated, having been triggered by America's loss of a core arms control treaty with Russia, whose reductions could no longer be verified. As result, it was urgent to act, with failure to ratify the accord being viewed as a compromise to U.S. national security.

While the Administration did not view Moscow as an enemy and deemed that a Russian nuclear attack against the U.S. homeland was very unlikely, various threat perceptions of the country emerged among securitizing actors. Those threat perceptions, along with others that may have remained unuttered or unanalyzed, informed a series of goals that the U.S. pursued with the new START, and which denoted, not only that Moscow was viewed as a threat, but also concern in either preventing future threats from emerging, or preserving U.S. ability to address them in case they did.

The case of the New START treaty evidenced how threats can be perceived to entail serious national security implications that need to be addressed with immediacy even in the absence of hostile relations between countries. The catastrophic implications of nuclear use created a threat that needed to be addressed with urgency, given absence of a treaty in place to ensure that goals such as verifiability, transparency, and predictability were being met, even though the perceived chances a nuclear exchange were perceived to be very unlikely. While the Bush Administration declared its willingness to make unilateral reductions, we point out that the START was in force at the time, and that goals such as the aforementioned were also considered important.

The perceived threat triggered by the expiration of the START was accompanied by others which likely exacerbated it, particularly Russia's nuclear weapons programs, which were considered to be having negative effects on strategic stability, and which the U.S. had no way of monitoring. In addressing the threat created by the expiration of the START, the Obama Administration emphasized the importance of mutual reductions and of preserving the nuclear triad, also to preserve strategic stability. The executive branch celebrated a treaty allowing for the preservation of a large "hedge" warhead, in part because Russia possessed nuclear warhead production capabilities, which the U.S. lacked. Threat perceptions of Moscow informed the need for the accord and its terms, dictating the goals to pursue by means of the accord. In addition, other premises, relating to the perceived missile threat from rogue states (particularly Iran and North Korea), terrorist groups, and China, for instance, were reasons for action which underlined the importance of ratifying the New START according to the Administration. Still, Russia's strategic nuclear forces and the lack of U.S. visibility onto them, were the key determinant in the pursuit of the accord.

In the audience, threat perceptions of Russia also explained why the New START received audience support. Perceiving the improvement of bilateral relations to coexist with wariness and lack of trust, the Democratic and Republican leaders of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee – Kerry and

Lugar – agreed that the expiration of the START should be addressed swiftly. They supported the New START and worked to shore up support for the accord in the Senate, sharing many of the Administrations goals. For instance, by means of the New START, they sought to reduce the threat posed by Moscow’s nuclear weapons, close the verification gap, increase strategic stability, and prevent their country from being caught off guard in the face of developments in Russia. They managed to secure complete support from the Senate Democrats and worked with the Administration to secure sufficient Republican and Independent support. Another reason for the support received for the treaty was the perceived downsides of failing its ratification, which could act as a trigger for a Russian threat, for instance, in the form of an arms competition. The New START received expert backing overall, with the policy community supporting the treaty and conveying many of the same premises as the Administration.

The treaty’s critics also perceived Russia as a threat overall, albeit differently, which threatened to throw a wrench in the works of the securitizing actors. Despite expressing several threat perceptions of Russia, Senator Kyl acknowledged the uncertainty created due to the lack of nuclear inspections but claimed that he was not concerned about a short-term threat from Russia, seeing as the country was not an enemy. While the two claims are somewhat paradoxical, his main point was that there was no reason to act with urgency, despite the START’s expiration, as the two countries had agreed to abide by the spirit of the latter’s term, meaning that there was no problem to currently address. Kyl was mostly concerned about a future Russian threat which could materialize in the longer-term. He deemed the treaty limited in its ability to prevent future Russian threats from developing (given insufficient verification), and denounced its inability to deliver several goals that he deemed important (e.g., limiting capabilities Moscow might develop). Additionally, the treaty could act as a trigger for the emergence of a further Russian threat, seeing as it encouraged Moscow to MIRV its ICBMs further and set the stage for potential future confrontation and misunderstandings. According to McCain, rather than Russia’s offensive nuclear weaponry, other threats, such as those posed by rogue states, should be the focus of the Administration’s concern. McCain and Kyl argued that ratification should be delayed until the beginning of the next Congressional session, which would decrease the Democratic majority in the chamber.

Domestic considerations aside, the opposition of some Senate Republicans to the ABM Treaty demonstrates that even when securitizing actors and audience members agree that a certain state is a threat to a referent object, “how” is the state a threat matters considerably. Because Kyl was less concerned over a near-term threat from Russia occurring due to the START’s expiration, than he was about the occurrence of a longer-term threat from Moscow that could be triggered by the New START, he opposed the treaty. Senator Kyl’s threat perceptions of Russia were, therefore, an obstacle to the policy change. By contrast, the Administration and the treaty’s supporters in the audience assigned the near-term threat caused by the expiration of the START a greater normative priority, considering that it ought to be addressed with urgency. They believed that the New START would not lead to several of

the downsides that Kyl mentioned, while other threat perceptions voiced by him were rejected by the treaty supporters because they simply did not believe they would occur (e.g., Russia's development of a rail-based ICBM).

Russia's modernization of its nuclear forces and delivery vehicles, coupled with its nuclear warhead production capability – which the U.S. lacked – were also utilized by Senator Kyl for extracting concessions from the Administration in the form of increased funding for nuclear modernization and a commitment to continue such activities. However, the Administration refused to link nuclear modernization to the reductions contemplated by the New START, stating that the action would have been necessary regardless. Perceptions of rogue state and terrorist missile threats continued to outweigh Russian and Chinese concerns over the impact of U.S. missile defenses on strategic stability, with the legislature securing the President's commitment to continue to develop and deploy such systems.

The transitory nature of threat perceptions, that is, when something is a threat, and when it is not, was also evident in this case of securitization, when compared with the ones we analyzed in sections 4.1 and 4.2. For example, the Democrats were concerned about Russian MIRV-ing during the Bush Administration (see sections 4.1 and 4.2); yet downplayed its significance in the context of the New START debate. The GOP was unconcerned about a potential Russian nuclear build-up during the Bush years; yet Senator Kyl partly based its opposition to the New START on systems that Moscow did not have but could possibly develop. This might be explained by the fact that, unlike the New START, missile defenses were expected to antagonize Russia, whereas the GOP was overall less optimistic about this “reset” compared with the one attempted by President Bush. A President's political affiliation may also play a role in how potential Russian actions are perceived by the legislature, based on how the Administration itself perceives them (and communicated them).

5.2. The INF Treaty: military measures, limitations on warhead dismantlement, and new reasons for modernization

We consider that securitization of Russia did not occur, as it pertained to a decision to implement changes in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy as part of a broad comprehensive strategy of diplomatic, economic, and military responses to Moscow's violation of the INF Treaty. U.S. agencies enjoyed a certain degree of flexibility to deviate from their budget estimates and shift money between appropriations or within appropriations. However, that authority may be limited by or require approval from Congress. The legislature holds the power of the purse, that is, the power to appropriate and regulate how public money is spent. As such, Congress assumes a sanctioning role within the audience on matters related to the development of military capabilities, having the power to appropriate or deny appropriation of funds to military programs and to authorize or limit certain shifting of appropriated

funds. The General Accounting Office, an audit institution, aids Congress exert oversight (GAO, 2016: 2-13, 2-38 - 2-47, 2-61).

While some actions, including as it pertained to military capability development, may have been initiated on a classified basis (per the 2016 DOD report), Congress expressed his dissatisfaction over the plan (the 2016 DOD report) submitted by the Administration, which had been intended to focus on the development of active defenses (ME), counterforce capabilities (ME) and countervailing strike capabilities (ME).

The 2016 DOD plan had been mandated by a 2016 NDAA provision requiring the Administration to submit to Congress a plan for the development of the abovementioned three military response options, as well as other response options, if Russian remained non-compliant with the INF Treaty. The DOD was to develop those capabilities using the funds that the bill authorized to be appropriated. Moreover, the House version of the 2016 NDAA contained a provision authorizing an additional \$25 million dollars for the development of said capabilities, which the chamber's Armed Services Committee overwhelmingly supported.

In drafting the 2017 NDAA, Congress considered that the plan submitted to Congress by the administration pursuant to the 2016 NDAA "was insufficient and failed to address adequately the military response options." Thus, the 2017 NDAA withheld funding for the DOD to provide support services to the Executive Office of the President "until the Secretary of Defense [completed] the meaningful development of the military capabilities" (Report 114-840, 2016: 493; 1192-1193).

We do not question that Russia was securitized on account of its violation of the INF Treaty, by the United States, seeing as the Administration decided to pursue actions informed by threat perceptions of the country. We have established that securitization is successful when then securitizing actors decide to pursue action(s) to address threat perceptions, seeing as the audience does not always assume a sanctioning role.

However, in the realm of nuclear deterrence, outside of the unnamed investments on a broad range of capabilities intended to address Russia's perceive infringement of the INF Treaty – which are classified, and we cannot confirm – the Administration's plan does not present any finalized decisions on how to act. And even assuming that certain decisions were indeed made in the classified sections of the report, and relevant for nuclear deterrence, Congress was not satisfied with the plan of the Administration, despite having showed openness to alternative military options (i.e., besides active defenses and counterforce and countervailing strike capabilities) prior to the 2016 DOD report. The lack of the legislature's support precludes, in this instance, securitization success, because development of military capabilities hinges on Congress agreeing to make the necessary funds available. Instead, the legislature countered by withholding funds from the Executive Office of the President until the DOD completed the "meaningful development" of the military capabilities that Congress urged the executive branch to pursue: active defenses, counterforce capabilities, and countervailing strike capabilities, without mention of alternative military measures. We also posit that the failure of securitization in the

realm of nuclear deterrence policy is corroborated by the assertion that no need that been identified for the deployment of any of the capabilities described in the 2016 DOD plan.

The DOD claimed to be taking steps “to build United States and NATO capabilities and develop plans to deter Russia’s destabilizing influence, coercion, and aggressive actions, all while the United States maintains diplomatic pressure on Russia to return to compliance with the INF Treaty.” But it is not clear, in the realm of nuclear deterrence, what those steps were – besides the F-35A and the B61-12, whose plans preceded Russia’s INF Treaty violation by several years – and, as mentioned, the reaction of Congress to the plan was negative, being unclear what came of them given the classified nature of such matters. Already during the Trump Administration, on 8 March 2017, Representative Rogers asked General Paul Selva, Vice-chairman of the JCS, what actions had been taken in each of the three capabilities – active defenses, counterforce capabilities, and countervailing capabilities – to implement them. Selva answered that the issue would have to be talked about in a classified environment (H.A.S.C. No. 115–11, 2017: 18).

In any case, the case of the military responses to Russia’s violation of the INF Treaty during the Obama Administration evidences both the powers and the limitations of the U.S. Congress in foreign policy decision-making. The legislators showcased the agency that audience members possess, and can decide to yield, in order to ensure the enactment of their preferred policies. Using the power of the purse, Congress funded the military responses it supported, mandated the production of a DOD report outlining the plans for their development, and withheld funds from the Administration until said development had been meaningfully realized. At the same time, the Administration was able to resist the pressure exerted by the legislature and claimed to be taking steps to pursue other actions, while continuing to describe the military capabilities as possibilities still under consideration.

Congressional support for the abovementioned three military response options rivaled and certainly exceeded the Administration’s. The audience support is explained by the strong resonance between the premises articulated by the securitizing actors and the audience. The securitizing actors’ representation of the context of action, the communication of the goals to pursue and the values that underlined them, the recommendations pursuant to the achievement of those goals, and the perceived downsides of action/inaction found strong acceptance in the audience. Both the securitizing actors and the audience perceived Russia as a threat (CP), with only some of the latter expressing, to some extent, doubt about whether the country’s actions technically gave rise to a violation of the INF Treaty (CP). Indeed, most of the audience accepted that Moscow was non-compliant with the accord (CP). There were concerns in the administration and in the audience over Russia’s overall behavior (CP). The securitizing actors and Congress were concerned with the national interest of the U.S. and allies (VP). Overall, the administration and the audience wanted to pursue the development of military measures (ME), albeit without going as far as conducting testing and deployment (ME), which would violate the agreement (VP). Securitizing actors and audience wanted to maintain U.S. allies involved through consultations (ME).

The administration and the audience agreed that inaction was not the best policy option (ME), given the expected downsides of action (VP/GP). They also agreed that the INF Treaty ought to be preserved, seeing as it still served (ME) U.S. and ally security interests (VP/GP). Withdrawing from the agreement (ME) would deny America the benefits that it could provide (GP) and give Russia a “bye” (GP) (downside). Thus, it was rejected as the best course of action (ME).

All agreed that Russia needed to be brought to compliance (GP), and dialogue was not rejected as a course of action (ME). However, some legislators criticized the lack of results (ME). The military measures that were outlined by the administration (ME) were meant to bring Russia to compliance (GP) by inflicting costs upon the country (GP). The expectation was that Moscow would realize the benefits of staying in the treaty (GP). In case the goal was not achieved, then the military measures (ME) would deny the Russia any significant advantage from violating the accord (GP) and prepare the U.S. for a post-INF world (GP). All those premises for action raised by the securitizing actors were present in audience discourse and were often repeated.

Despite the considerable overlap between the reasons for action of the securitizing actors and those of the audience, overall, the administration merely stated that it was considering measures beyond diplomacy – not that it would implement them if it received audience support. Ultimately, congressional pressure was not enough to lead the administration to implement the military (nor the economic) measures it had proposed. Securitization failure occurred despite widespread threat perceptions of Russia within the audience and among securitizing actors, and agreement of the former vis-à-vis the pursuit of military capabilities. The premises of the securitizing actors resonated with those of the legislature and of the policy community. Overall, the audience conveyed support for the pursuit of military measures, seeing eye to eye with the Administration on the goals it aimed to achieve, and perceiving Russia as a threat. There were also shared concerns with the national interest of the United States and its allies, and on maintaining compliance with the agreement.

Despite communicating many of the same premises, several audience members were able to make the “leap” between the premises, on the one hand, and the conclusion that specific military measures – mentioned as possibilities by the Administration – should be pursued. There is always a gap between the premises and the conclusion, seeing as the changes brought about by action are never truly known. The Administration concluded that action was necessary to bring about a certain future state of affairs, given what it valued and the circumstances it was experiencing. However, the executive branch seemingly never made the leap from those premises toward the conclusion that the military capabilities it was considering – and which most of the audience backed – were what should be done to move from the present circumstances toward that future. Other non-military options remained under consideration as well, with sanctions, for instance, never having been implemented.

Moving on to another course of action, the administration attempted to accelerate the dismantlement of nuclear warheads, informed by the threat of nuclear non-proliferation. However, no outcome ensued because threat perceptions of Russia within the audience informed its conclusion that

the U.S. should not pursue the course of action. Thus, the perceived threat posed by nuclear proliferation was not successfully securitized. That threat, upheld by the Administration as a reason to accelerate nuclear warhead dismantlement, failed lead to a change in policy because another threat – Russia – outweighed it, informing inaction as the preferable policy alternative within the audience. However, since the securitizing actors did not consider threat perceptions of Moscow a reason informing their conclusion to accelerate nuclear warhead dismantlement, the country was not securitized either. While some audience members deemed threat perceptions of Russia a reason for action – i.e., a relevant premise that should be taken into account within the context of that dismantlement debate – the country was not viewed as a reason for action by the securitizing actors in relation to their proposed policy.

The administration's call for action was accepted in 2015, when the appropriations process overruled the limitations imposed by the authorizations process. However, in 2016, a five year-long ceiling was imposed on expenditures related to nuclear warhead dismantlement and disposition activities. This time, the NDAA provisions were observed in the Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for FY 2017.

The subject matter was not heavily debated in Congress, but a split was evident between two positions, with supporters for each side utilizing many of the same premises. Overall, the premises utilized by the democrat legislators were similar to those of the administration. There was agreement vis-à-vis America's commitment to nuclear disarmament (VP), the goal of reducing the U.S. stockpile (GP), and the course of action in question: accelerating the dismantling of retired nuclear warheads (ME). The democrats reinforced the administration's call for action by arguing that not acting had downsides (GP), and by negating any negative consequences from retiring needless warheads (GP). There was no reason not to act (GP/VP) (denies downsides). Increasing funding for warhead dismantlement was a justified and appropriate decision (ME).

In 2015, despite the republican majority in both chambers, the democrats succeeded in obtaining congressional approval for the administrations' call for action during the appropriations process. This was accomplished despite the stark contrast of their premises with those voiced by the republicans.

Feinstein prevented a debate on the Senate floor on whether to block the administration's course of action during the chamber's discussions concerning the NDAA. Later, the final 2016 appropriations bill observed the increased funding levels for warhead dismantlement activities that had been recommended in the Senate version of the act (contrary to the House appropriations bill, which had followed the lead of authorizations).

Indeed, the GOP legislators made a direct link between Russia's actions, including its violation of the INF Treaty (CP), and the decision not to "unilaterally disarm" (ME). They claimed that the U.S. would gain nothing by doing so (ME), and the action would send the wrong message (GP) (downsides). The republicans wanted the country to focus on nuclear modernization instead (ME). In 2016, the administration's efforts to accelerate nuclear warhead dismantlement were blocked for five years via the 2017 NDAA, with the House and Senate versions proposing similar funding levels. Contrary to the year

prior, the NDAA position was observed during the appropriations processes, with funding for FY2017 being considerably below the requested by the administration. Thus, eventually, the administration's call for action was blocked in Congress.

But the question remains: if the GOP controlled both chambers, and given that republican legislators, among which the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, openly opposed the administration's course of action (deemed "unilateral disarmament"), why the 2015 respite? Why was the authorization process overruled by appropriations in 2015, seeing as the republicans voiced a clear rejecting of the administration's (and the democrat's) premises for action?

We believe that the House and Senate Appropriations Committee versions of the Appropriations bill shed some light on the matter. Both versions expressed support for accelerating nuclear warhead dismantlement (ME) on the basis of its benefits when it came to reductions of retired warheads (GP), but also when it came to increasing the workforce involved in the maintenance of the nuclear stockpile (GP) and in preparing future stockpile production activities (GP). The republican-led committee supported lowering the levels of retired warheads – a goal held by the administration and the democrats but absent in republican communications. Moreover, they believed that the course of action would achieve additional goals. Those ME and GP, we posit, help explain the 2015 respite. They demonstrate at least some republican support for the administration's course of action, seeing as they held the majority of the members in both appropriations committees. In fact, the members of the 2017 House Appropriations Committee described the chairman of the Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies, Michael Simpson, as a strong supporter of dismantlement activities (CP).

The premises also suggest that the republicans in the Armed Services Committees are more interested in blocking the administration's course of action than those in the Appropriations Committees. After all, in both years (2015 and 2016) the former committee sought to impose limitations on warhead dismantlement activities that the latter seemed less interested in codifying. Moreover, while Michael Simpson strongly supports warhead dismantlement, his counterpart in the House Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, chairman Mike Rogers, opposes it. The same is true for the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee Mac Thornberry, for reasons already covered. Thus, despite the lack of republican consensus and democrat opposition, Congress was ultimately able to prevent the administration from accelerating its nuclear warhead disarmament activities.

Political actors increasingly cited perceptions of a wider pattern of Russian aggression as a justification for pursuing nuclear modernization. Plans to replace or modernize the nuclear triad preceded those perceptions, however.

The 2010 NPR disclosed the Administration's intentions to replace the Ohio-class nuclear submarines – the sea leg of the triad (ME). In December 2012, the U.S. Navy awarded a contract which included design work for the Ohio Replacement Program to the defense firm General Dynamics Electric

Boat (Jean, 2016). The Administration also expressed plans to maintain a “smaller” nuclear triad when the Senate was considering the ratification of the New START (ME).

Senator Kerry had initially made the argument that it was too soon to decide what to do vis-à-vis the land and air legs of the triad. After all, the New START would expire before the service life of the two legs came to an end (ME). This point had been rejected by Senator Kyl, who pointed out that developing and deploying such capabilities took a long time (ME). Eventually, the resolution of ratification of the New START required the president to commit (VP) to the replacement or modernization of the triad (ME), which President Obama did on 2 February 2011. It became the policy of the United States to sustain, operate and modernize or replace the triad of strategic nuclear delivery systems consisting of heavy bombers with gravity bombs and ALCMs; land-based ICBMs; and SSBNs (ME). The U.S. would also sustain, operate and modernize or replace a capability to forward deploy heavy-bombers and dual-capable fighter aircrafts (ME) (2015 NDAA, 2014: 371). In the following years, it became apparent that Obama’s commitment to “replace or modernize” was moving toward the former. Still, given that the replacement of nuclear delivery vehicles had been integrated in the Obama Administration's nuclear modernization plans, we will categorize those replacement efforts within the broader framework of nuclear modernization (Section 1251 Report, 2010).

A contract to build the new nuclear bomber was awarded to Northrop Grumman in October 2015 (Seligman, 2015). In July 2016 the U.S. Air Force requested defense companies to make bids to design and build the new ICBMs and a new cruise missile. The new Long Range Standoff Weapon (LRSO) was a replacement to the subsonic ALCM (Weisgerber, 2016). Contracts for the new ICBM and LRSO would be awarded in July 2017, during the Trump administration, to Boeing and Northrop Grumman and Lockheed Martin and Raytheon, respectively (Weisgerber, 2017; Insinna, 2017).

As explained in the previous section (5.1), the administration did not tie the New START (ME) to the modernization of the nuclear stockpile and of the nuclear infrastructure (ME). Nuclear modernization efforts were necessary to keep the U.S. nuclear arsenal viable (GP). Modernizing the infrastructure of the U.S. nuclear weapons complex (ME) would allow the U.S. to reduce the backlog of nuclear warheads awaiting dismantlement (GP) (NPR, 2010: 38). However, modernization was necessary on its own (ME), treaty or no treaty (ME). Still, as 41 Senators (the 40 republicans plus Independent Senator Lieberman) had told President Obama in December 2009, there was a direct link between nuclear force reductions (GP) and nuclear modernization (ME). Pursuing the goal made the action a requirement. Kyl had claimed that most arms control treaties (ME) aimed at achieving strategic stability (GP) based on nuclear stability (GP). However, the safety (GP), security (GP) and reliability (GP) or the nuclear stockpile were underlying factors upon which stability was based (GP). Given the long service life of the nuclear stockpile (CP) and current poor conditions of the U.S. nuclear weapons complex charged with sustaining them (CP), they should be modernized (ME) to achieve the abovementioned goals. America’s aging nuclear delivery systems (CP) needed to be modernized as well to ensure strategic stability (GP). The U.S. needed to modernize, because every other nuclear power was

modernizing its forces (CP), and Moscow and Beijing were modernizing their delivery vehicles (CP). Russia possessed nuclear warhead production capabilities (CP) meaning that the U.S. needed to acquire them as well (GP).

The 2010 NPR had already linked a decision to preserve the U.S. nuclear triad to threat perceptions of Russia and China. According to the document, in order to preserve strategic stability at the best cost (GP), U.S. nuclear reductions (GP) under the New START (ME) would be paired with the preservation of the strategic nuclear triad (ME). The NPR also stressed the importance of maintaining strategic stability with all nuclear powers, but especially Russia (GP) and China (GP), the former being the only peer in the realm of nuclear capabilities (CP). Those goals that were considered “enduring and evolving challenge[s] in the years ahead” that was being compounded by the two countries’ nuclear and other modernization programs (CP). An arms control expert, Cirincione, upon testifying on the 2001 NPR on 16 May 2002, had already made the claim that Moscow was the reason why the U.S. had decided to preserve the nuclear triad at the time.

By September 2014, the Administration had seemingly adopted the view that had been articulated by Kyl. On that date, Deputy Secretary of Energy Poneman stated that “[t]he whole design of modernization [ME] [enabled] [the U.S.] to do reductions” (GP), thus establishing the previously denied connection. The course of action (modernization) (ME) was tied to nuclear reductions (GP).

However, as new threat perceptions of Russia emerged, integrated within a broad pattern of aggression, the Administration made a clear association between specific nuclear triad capabilities and the modernization of the nuclear arsenal, on the one hand, and Moscow’s bellicose behavior, on the other. Several members of the audience also established a connection between Russia’s actions, and the importance of U.S. nuclear modernization.

As our analysis showed, in connection with nuclear modernization, the DOD, the legislators, and the experts identified a Russian threat and highlighted several of its actions, such as its nuclear saber-rattling, violation of the INF Treaty, aggressive nuclear modernization program, ICBM tests and military exercises, and actions in Ukraine. However, other threats were identified across the world, with China, North Korea, and Iran as the most mentioned after Russia. A change in the strategic threat environment was perceived, and nuclear weapons were an important component. Proponents of modernization noted that some elements of the nuclear triad were approaching or beyond their expected service life. Others, such as Blumenauer, Whitfield, or the ACA highlighted that the country would struggle to simultaneously modernize all the legs of the nuclear triad.

The securitizing actors and some members of the audience highlighted the Administration’s commitment to nuclear modernization. The pursuit of nuclear modernization was regarded by the political actors as integral to protect the national interest of the U.S. and its allies.

Maintaining a safe, secure and effective nuclear deterrent remained one of the goals of the Administration, as it had been during the New START debate. However, at that time, the goal had been associated with America’s aging nuclear stockpile and infrastructure (CP) and deemed unrelated to New

START reductions (GP) and threat perceptions of Russia (CP). The preservation of the nuclear triad (ME), on the other hand, had already been informed by the need to guarantee an assured second-strike capability (GP) and the need to maintain strategic stability (GP) especially vis-à-vis Russia (CP) and China (CP).

From 2015 onwards, however, a safe, secure and effective nuclear deterrent became a goal associated with a changing threat environment (CP), including threat perceptions of Russia (CP), and, as before, with America's aging nuclear forces (CP). Thus, while the goal of preserving deterrence remained constant, it became all the more important as the threat environment changed and was associated with another goal (reductions). This change points to how premises can acquire a higher normative priority as the other premises they are associated with change or increase. As the nuclear threats became more common (CP) a strong deterrent became more important to U.S. national security. The DOD goal of strengthening the U.S. deterrent was reiterated by Thornberry and Rogers, and Karako took it even further: besides modern, the nuclear deterrent ought to be adaptable and flexible, given present and future deterrence challenges (CP). Thus, modernization of the U.S. nuclear stockpile and triad were among the steps taken to respond to Russian actions.

The greatest supporters of modernizing the U.S. nuclear triad in the audience deemed current plans necessary for defending the U.S., its allies, and friends, as well as deterring threats. Those goals would be jeopardized if modernization funds were cut. On the other hand, those who aimed to reduce nuclear modernization funding held a different view. They believed that the U.S. could be kept safe and deter threats with reduced funding and, in Whitfield's case, solely with a dyad. As Blumenauer put it, the nuclear force that the U.S. was building far exceeded nuclear deterrence requirements. That was also the ACA's understanding, which warned against perpetuating excessive and costly force levels for decades, opposing the administration's "all of the above" plan to replace and upgrade all the legs of the nuclear triad (including the LRSO), which had been codified in the FY2017 DOD budget request.

Quigley made the point that it would be by investing in other priorities that the U.S. would be kept safe. Case in point, Blumenauer argued that excessive investments in the nuclear triad would divert funds from conventional capabilities. For Colby, however, nuclear capabilities were irreplaceable: conventional deterrence was not as good; it was difficult to apply under certain scenarios (including some involving Russia); and the U.S. might eventually lose its conventional superiority, making nuclear capabilities more important. Blumenauer and the ACA also argued that nuclear weapons were irrelevant to the resolution of Russia's aggression. Their position flew in the face of the DOD's position, as well as that of representatives Thornberry and Nunes, who identified responding to Russia's behavior as a goal of U.S. nuclear modernization efforts. Moreover, the Pentagon, along with experts such as Karako, Mendelson and Harvey, Colby, and Congress as a whole, deemed the course of action important for purposes of ally assurance. For Mendelson and Harvey, that was their main concern, seeing as they believed that the U.S. could deter Russia. The ACA warned that accelerating America's nuclear modernization, along with adopting other military measures, such as DCA deployments in Russia's

border, would hasten Moscow's modernization plans and lead to an arms race and increase risks for both countries.

Both Quigley and Blumenauer, in proposing that the U.S. spent less on its nuclear forces, wanted the country to be more financially responsible and take its debt and deficit into account. For supporters of nuclear modernization, however, its expenditures were not very significant either in terms of the overall DOD budget or in comparison with the sheer importance of the deterrence mission. Contrarily, Blumenauer aimed to reduce costs. The representative, along with expert Whitfield, deemed it preferable to scale back modernization now since the U.S. would not be able to afford it going forward. Their actions equated to what Frelinghuysen and Rogers described as "unilateral disarmament." Whitfield proposed that the U.S. adopted a dyad, including, possibly, one without ICBMs. That view was rejected by democrat Senator Reed, who deemed the capability important to counter Russia's ICBM fleet.

Quigley believed the LRSO to be redundant, and posited that it did not need to be rushed in light of its expected service life. Hamre opposed that stance, claimed that the capability would be important to leverage Russia in future arms control negotiations. Moreover, he, along with Dunford, Frelinghuysen and Karako deemed the cruise missile importance for deterrence. The ACA called for talks with Russia, wanting to limit and later phase cruise missiles instead. Thus, the U.S. should halt the LRSO plans.

JCS chairman Dunford, along with Mendelson and Harvey, considered that under current circumstances, U.S. nuclear weapons should remain in Europe. They did not propose, however, unlike Rogers and Turner, that DCAs be deployed in new countries. The ACA rejected that policy recommendation, perceiving a negative impact on international security and strategic stability. As for other policy recommendations, there were calls to get allies more involved in extended deterrence and to pursue dialogue and arms control negotiations with Russia.

Overall, our analysis in this subsection established new connections between threat perceptions of Russia and nuclear modernization plans. The latter were upgraded as result of the emergence of new threat perceptions of Moscow. Threat perceptions of the country, in the form of concerns over maintaining strategic stability at a time when Russia was undergoing nuclear modernization programs, had already informed the need to sustain the nuclear triad back when the 2010 NPR was released. However, the new threat perceptions informed the need for specific capabilities within the nuclear triad that were deemed most relevant to Moscow's provocations. The modernization of the nuclear stockpile also became associated with threat perceptions of Russia.

When it comes to nuclear modernization, we consider that the pivotal moment of policy change occurred in February 2011, with the conclusion of the New START ratification process. To ensure the treaty's ratification, President Obama made commitments to nuclear modernization, including the nuclear triad, which were certified as part of the ratification process, in addition to increasing the budget request for nuclear modernization activities for FY2011. The Administration also produced a 10-year nuclear modernization plan. Once political actors ceased to portray Russia as a non-adversarial entity, and a broader pattern of aggressiveness and belligerency was recognized, the normative priority of threat

perceptions of the country, as reasons for nuclear modernization, become higher than they were during the New START debate. Good bilateral relations were no longer voiced as a reason for action. New threat perceptions of the country emerged and were clearly expressed as reasons for keeping the course on nuclear modernization. That was the case both for securitizing actors and the audience. There was concern over Russia's nuclear saber-rattling, its nuclear exercises, belligerent actions in Ukraine, aggressive rebuilding of its conventional and nuclear forces, and its violation of the INF Treaty. The country was now regarded as an adversary and a strategic threat. Threat perceptions of Russia changed, compared with what they had been during the Bush Administration and the first Obama term. As threat perceptions changed, new premises were spawned.

The emergence of new threat perceptions of Russia, along with an overall understanding of a more hostile international security environment, led to the concerns about the defense of the U.S. and its allies; with reassuring the latter; and with ensuring a strong nuclear deterrence vis-à-vis other actors, including Russia. Hamre posited that the LRSO would provide the U.S. with leverage during arms control negotiations. Modernizing or replacing the nuclear triad was deemed as a means to contribute to those aforementioned goals. On the other hand, those who pursued reduce spending with nuclear weapons argued that such an investment would not deter Russian aggression. They made the argument that a full recapitalization of U.S. nuclear forces exceeded deterrence requirements.

It would appear that they held a minority position, however. For a variety of reasons, including some which related to Russia, many experts supported preserving the nuclear triad and keeping the course on modernization. As for Congress, the SANE Act never entered into force, and the 2017 NDAA indicates that most legislators supported replacing or modernizing the nuclear triad to as a response to the more dangerous threat environment, with Russia as a core concern. Importantly, the leading democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, ranking member Jack Reed, supported the triad's modernization considering Russia's belligerent actions – the same stance assumed by many influential republican lawmakers.

Congress had already included in the New START's resolution of ratification a provision requiring the president to commit to replace or modernize the triad. Senator Kerry had argued that it was premature to make a decision at the time, given the durations of the New START and of the service life of current delivery vehicles. The insistence on the President's commitment was the result of a Republican-led effort, acquiesced by Kerry. Thus, Russian actions after the New START's ratification may have contributed to build a stronger support for the modernization of America's nuclear triad in the legislative branch. In fact, the Administration's premises that concerned Russia and informed the importance of modernizing the nuclear triad resonated with several experts and legislators of both parties.

5.3. The U.S. missile defense system: an end to limitations?

The change in U.S. missile defense policy is explained by overall audience acceptance, achieved due to strong Republican support within an institutional context of GOP control of both chambers of Congress. While the president showed reservations regarding the 2017 NDAA – despite having signed it – he made no mention of the new missile defense policy in a statement in which he conveyed several of his concerns regarding the bill. Thus, the new missile defense policy was not a first-order priority compared to others (Obama, 2016b).

In the House, representative Franks led the efforts to change U.S. missile defense policy, by offering an amendment that, if adopted, would replace the language of the 1999 Missile Defense Act. After his amendment was offered in the House Committee on Armed Services, Representative Rogers, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, extended his support. However, the debate ended after Rogers' communication, with no other representatives – republican or democrat – speaking in favor or against the amendment. A voice vote followed, unrecorded. Several “nos” were heard during the voice vote, albeit not enough to outnumber the “ayes.” Thus, the Franks amendment was adopted (U.S. House Armed Services Committee, 2016a). Franks later denoted his surprise regarding the fact that the matter did not get much profile (Willman, 2016).

The lead democrat in the Strategic Forces Subcommittee, Jim Cooper, spared only a few words of opposition for proposed change in missile defense policy, about a month later. He expressed his opposition to the provision and indicated his intent on fighting it in conference (i.e., during bipartisan and bicameral negotiations to reach a final NDAA) (CRECB, 2016: 6198). However, he later voted in favor of the House NDAA (Clerk U.S. H.R., 2016a) and did the same for the final NDAA, despite it codifying the repeal of section 2 of the 1999 Act, with Cooper voting to pass it (Clerk U.S. H.R., 2016b).

Given the lack of profile of the change in missile defense policy, and the republican majority in both chambers, it is unsurprising that the inclusion of a provision repealing the section 2 of the 1999 Act was not enough to ensure the democrat's opposition to both the House and the final NDAA. The provision was seemingly not crucial for the remaining House democrats. After all, while the House NDAA gathered considerable democrat opposition (40-142) (Clerk, 2016a), the final NDAA, managed to gather overwhelming democrat support (145-30) (Clerk, 2016b), even though the Missile Defense Act provision remained mostly unchanged (Report 114-840, 2016: 1256).

In the Senate, Markey was alone in voicing opposition to the similar version of the Franks provision that had been included in the Senate NDAA. He stressed the lack of debate on the missile defense policy, a point also made by some of the press (e.g., Willman, 2016; Hanly, 2016).

The relevant Senate subcommittee and committee meetings were closed (U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, 2016a, 2016b). However, a roll call vote on a motion to strike the word “limited” from the 1999 Missile Defense Act passed on a 16-10 vote, with democrat senators Joe Manchin III (D-WV) and Tim Kaine (D-VA) voting in favor (Report 114-255, 2016: 625). Therefore,

there was some democrat support for changing U.S. missile defense policy within the Senate Armed Services Committee, on top of the absolute support of the republican majority. Vote for the Senate NDAA demonstrated strong democrat support. Only 7 democratic senators opposed the bill (U.S. Senate, 2016).

In committee, while the provisions of both chambers were similar, the Senate receded to the House on that matter (Report 114-840. To accompany S. 2943, 2016: 1256). However, the conferees noted that the provision did not “[require] or [direct] the development of missile defenses against any country or its strategic nuclear forces.” This appears to be an attempt to minimize a potential downside of the policy change raised by its opposers; that is, a response by Russia and China. The final NDAA received strong support in the Senate, passing with a 92-7 vote (only 4 democrats and the independent Bernie Sanders [I-VT], who caucuses with the democrats, voted against the bill). Senator Markey, who voiced his opposition to changing U.S. missile defense policy and complained about the lack of debate on the matter, voted against both the Senate and the final NDAA. Overall, most democrats were either disinterested or not strongly opposed to the change in missile defense policy. Despite the republican majority in both chambers, the democrats who opposed the new missile defense policy could have attempted to negotiate a final NDAA with a different provision, although it is unclear how much leverage they had over the opposing party, being a minority. Maybe the democrats could have leveraged their vote on other provisions that did not gather full republican support in return for GOP concessions on missile defense policy. In any case, despite Cooper’s promising to fight the new policy in conference, efforts to change the missile defense provision failed.

The lack of debate on the policy extended to the think tanks we covered, although some positions were retrieved. An ACA expert opposed the policy change, while a missile defense expert of the CSIS supported it. A report of the Hudson Institute who strongly supported a new missile defense policy, was analyzed in light of its influence in the discourse of representative Franks. This was shown by his quoting of the then unreleased report to provide reasons for changing the language of the 1999 Missile Defense Act, but also on two other occasions, in defending an NDAA amendment concerning SBIs (U.S. House Armed Services Committee, 2016a, 2016b). The small sample suggests that the influence of think tanks in shaping the decision-making process was not significant outside of the Hudson Institute report.

The analysis of political discourse conducted revealed a different securitization dynamic, whereby members of Congress acted as securitizing actors. The republican legislators led the charge towards changing the existing policy, with some support being found among some of the democrats. The administration, along with the expert community, were the audience of the securitizing move of the legislative branch. Still, while the administration expressed his opposition to the change in missile defense policy, in the end, its dissatisfaction was not strong enough to motivate a presidential veto of the 2017 NDAA. Thus, the bill codified a new U.S. missile defense policy.

Given the lack of democrat and expert input, the republican discourses, the 2017 NDAA, and reports relating to the bill, provide the best explanations for why the change in missile defense policy

was possible. The republican discourses were also not numerous, which might be explained by a perceived lack of need to provide more reasons for action to a practically silent opposition, at least in an open forum. Threat perceptions of Russia did indeed play a role in the policy change, at least partially. Among the reasons for action identified by Franks, was the fact that Russia was developing complex missile technology to exploit U.S. weaknesses (CP). He stated that U.S. adversaries were doing so by means of capabilities such as hypersonic boost-glide vehicles and maneuvering ballistic missiles (CP). While the representative did not attribute those capabilities specifically to Russia, the Hudson Institute report, from which he drew in his statement, noted that the country was flight-testing a new HGV with a highly maneuverable missile, the Yu-71 (later named Avangard).

Rogers stated that Russia was no longer a peaceful partner (CP) and that the country was developing missile defenses to counter U.S. offensive capabilities (CP). As a missile defense expert, Karako highlighted Russia's improvement of its theater and strategic nuclear arsenals (CP); the modernization of all legs of its triad (CP); its suite of short-range ballistic missiles and cruise missiles, which he deemed low-tier threats to NATO (CP); and Moscow's violation of the INF Treaty (CP). The Hudson Institute report described Russia as a near-peer adversary (CP) which could hold at risk the U.S. territory and key target areas (CP). Moscow was investing in complex missile systems (CP), executing a massive nuclear modernization program (CP), and developing technologies for its delivery systems with the precise intent of allowing them to evade U.S. missile defenses (CP). Russia was also MIRV-ing its ICBMs (CP), doubling its nuclear warhead output (CP), and flight-testing a highly maneuverable hypersonic glide-vehicle (CP). Its capabilities denoted the intent of increasing first strike capacity to achieve strategic advantage for motives of coercion and escalation control (CP). The country was centering its defense strategy around its nuclear arsenal (CP), demonstrate willingness to use nuclear weapons to de-escalate conventional threats (CP), and conducted an unprecedented number of nuclear exercises (CP), while issuing nuclear threats (CP). Russia had, along with other states, taken advantage of America's neglected technological advantage to challenge the country's military superiority (CP).

Still, one must note that Russia is seen as a part of a more complex ballistic missile threat, as the 2017 NDAA, Franks, and the Hudson Institute put it. The perceived complex missile threat encompassed two rogue states (Iran and North Korea) and two near-peer adversaries (Russia and China). We deem that securitization has taken place, with a threat requiring response being identified and followed by a change in policy. However, we consider it more accurate to understand the securitization process as having been grounded on a broader understanding of a missile threat as a reason for action. Russia is perceived as an important, but not exclusive, component of that broad missile threat. It is also unclear which component is the greatest concern of the securitizing actors and audience members who supported the change in missile defense policy. In any case, threat perceptions of Russia were a driver of policy change, even if they were absent in the discourse of the administration, the democrat legislators, and the ACA.

In addition to the aforementioned threat perceptions, policy change occurred because the securitizing actors sought different goals and courses of action in comparison to the administration and what was a long-lasting U.S. policy. The legislators, as a whole, no longer wanted to rely on limited missile defenses (ME) to counter rogue states' attacks (GP) and on the nuclear triad (ME) to deter major nuclear powers (GP), respectively. Without establishing deterrence as a goal, they aimed to defend the homeland, U.S. deployed forces, capabilities, and allies (GP) by "[maintaining] and [improving] an effective, robust layered missile defense system" (ME). Rogers specifically wanted to defend U.S. territory against Russian ballistic missiles (GP). Despite the ACA expert's rejection of the goal of configuring U.S. missile defenses against Russia and China (GP), Karako and the Hudson Institute were on board (GP).

The republicans deemed the current policy outdated (ME) and no longer suited to the current state-of-affairs (ME). They ignored warnings concerning potential responses from Russia and China to the new policy in their speeches (GP), despite concerns from Markey and the administration (GP). Still, the final NDAA seemingly attempted to minimize that possibility by claiming that the new policy did not require the development or deployment of capabilities against any state (GP).

The opponents to the proposed change in policy also expressed concerns over the cost of a system that could cope with a Russian or Chinese attack (GP), but republican speeches made no mention of such a downside (GP). All in all, facing insufficient opposition from the democrats as a whole, a decision from the administration to not veto the overall authorizations bill, and enjoying some expert support, the republican legislators succeeded in securitizing a complex ballistic missile threat to change the existing U.S. missile defense policy. As such, once the president signed the 2017 NDAA, section 2 of the 1999 Missile Defense Act was repealed. Policy change was enacted by changing what had previously been the "law of the land."

Lastly, we note that while no direct calls for the policy change enacted were observed in the administration, threat perceptions concerning an increasingly complex missile threat were voiced by several members of the military (see Annex E). Ballistic and cruise missiles were becoming increasingly accurate, numerous, and achieving longer-ranges (CP). Countermeasures such as hypersonics and MaRVs were being gradually incorporated (CP). Calls were made for several courses of action. A holistic approach integrating several different capabilities (ME) was recommended to defeat air and missile threats (GP). The U.S. should field sensors (ME) to improve early warning (GP), tracking (GP), and assessment of missile threats (GP). Enhancements of homeland and regional missile defense systems were required (ME). Those premises found resonance among the experts whose discourse we analyzed. Thus, the legislature's successful securitizing move did not occur in a vacuum. Policy change took place through expansion of the scope of U.S. missile defense policy, by virtue of threat perceptions of a complex missile threat which had also been voiced by the military and experts alike. The administration opposed the policy change, and the members of the military which comprised it did not

ask for it. But the military's threat perceptions may have played a role in informing the legislature's conclusion that the policy change that would, eventually, be enacted was necessary.

Securitization of Russia in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy?

The Donald Trump Administration

The Trump Administration oversaw notable changes in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy. The first section of this chapter discusses the U.S. withdrawal from the INF Treaty. Seeing as the issue of Russia's violation of the accord had been inherited from the Obama Administration, our timeframe starts when the Trump Administration came to power on 20 January 2017 and ends with the official U.S. withdrawal from the accord on 2 August 2019, six months after the decision was officially announced. Additionally, on 18 August 2019, the U.S. launched, as part of a missile test, a conventional, non-intercontinental land-based ballistic missile to a range that exceeded 500 km for the first time in at least 32 years (Panda, 2023: 47). Prior to U.S. announcement that it was suspending the implementation of the accord, such a test would have been illegal. The political discourse analysis, along with the premise juxtaposition underpinning the findings in Section 6.1, is provided in Annex F.

Notable shifts in missile defense policy, covered in section 6.2, also occurred during this Administration. In that regard, the timeframe of analysis encompassed the Trump presidency, although the focus is placed on the period following the release of the MDR. The missile defense language of the 2017 NDAA (see section 5.3) was reverted by the 2019 MDR, and then codified by Congress in the 2020 NDAA, which entered into force on 20 December 2019. According with the new policy, the U.S. would rely on nuclear deterrence against Russia and China's ICBMs. Still, the country pursued the development of a space-based sensing architecture to defeat Russian and Chinese cruise and hypersonic missiles. Some progress was made when it came to the use of regional missile defense systems for homeland purposes. At the regional level, the goals of U.S. missile defenses were expanded to include Russia. The findings of this section are supported by the political discourse analysis and premise juxtaposition conducted in Annex G.

In line with a policy recommendation of the 2018 NPR, the DOD confirmed, on 4 February 2020, that the U.S. Navy had deployed the W76-2 low-yield SLBM (Rood, 2020). The policy change was enabled by the entering into force of the 2020 NDAA on 20 December 2019. The House version of the bill contained a provision which would have prohibited the deployment of the capability. However, the House democrats failed to include said language in the final 2020 NDAA. Unlike the SLBM, the low-yield nuclear SLCM also contemplated by the 2018 NPR was not expected to be deployed in the near-term. The 2020 NDAA authorized funds – per the administration's request – for an SLCM AOA⁷⁵

⁷⁵ A senior defense official explained that the absence of funds for the SLCM in the 2021 budget was because they were still using the funds provided in the year prior for carrying out the AOA (Mehta, 2020).

(Report 116-333, 2019: 1619). While the Biden Administration had made it clear that it does not want to pursue the SLCM, Congress has continued to appropriate funds for the capability (Bugos, 2023b, 2024). The timeframe of analysis started during President Obama's second term, when two expert reports, published in May 2015 and December 2016, recommended that the U.S. considered developing new low-yield nuclear capabilities. The timeframe extends throughout the Trump Administration, given that the development of the SLCM carried on but was not completed during its term (CRS, 2024c). Annex H provides the political discourse analysis and the premise juxtaposition that serve as the foundation for the findings of this section (6.3).

6.1. The INF Treaty: from an integrated strategy to a withdrawal

Overall, we do not see a considerable resonance between the audience and the securitizing actors regarding the downsides of leaving the accord. That was because even the supporters of the decision in the audience acknowledged a few, while the administration was mostly muted on the matter. On 7 September 2017, the administration saw allied concerns as a negative consequence from suspending (wholly or in part), the INF Treaty, an action it opposed, despite the congressional support conveyed by the 2018 NDAA. However, after Trump's withdrawal announcement, Bolton downplayed the downsides of the decision by turning the spotlight on Russia's violation instead, which was deemed the real problem – not the fact that the U.S. was leaving the accord. Thus, for the supporters of the withdrawal in the audience, other reasons for action outweighed the downsides of leaving the accord, including the goals of action to be achieved by the new course of action. For those who opposed the withdraw, which included a large group of democrats and several experts, there was a considerably long list of downsides to consider. For the administration, there appeared to be no significant downsides stemming from the decision to take into account.

We do find, however, some premise alignment when it comes to the goals that the administration wanted to achieve with the withdrawal, and the goals voiced by the supporters of the policy in the audience. Same as the audience, the administration sought the return of Russia to compliance or to deny it military advantages from the violation. However, unlike the audience, Trump and Bolton included China's compliance with the INF Treaty as an additional condition for the U.S. to remain in the accord – which the NSA saw as not remotely possible. Trump's official announcement of the U.S. withdrawal on 1 February 2019 removed China as a condition, however. In any case, goals related to China featured in both securitizing actor and audience discourse among withdrawal supporters, including some experts. Among those who opposed the treaty, Warren, Menendez, Reed, and the ACA's executive director Kimball questioned the military benefits of the decisions. The senators stated that the administration had yet to explain the rationale behind the decision. Kimball also noted that the president's decision would be pointless for returning Russia to compliance, something which NSA Bolton concurred with. Finally,

it is the 2018 NDAA mentioned the possibility of a withdrawal at a time when the administration appeared to oppose the course of action. Still the bill did not connect the policy course to any premises for action besides a VP stating that the U.S. had the right to do so. In any case, the bill makes apparent that some legislators were at least considering the policy option at the time, which suggests some premature support for the withdrawal, even if not vocalized, in the legislative branch.

As abovementioned, the Administration succeeded in withdrawing the U.S. from the INF Treaty and in testing a previously banned ground-launch cruise missile of intermediate range. While the 2018 NDAA authorized \$58 million in funding for the development of active defenses, counterforce capabilities, and countervailing strike capabilities, subsequent NDAAs would not. Policy change was possible, with the U.S. abandoning the INF Treaty, due the securitization of Russia's violation of the INF Treaty (CP), although, to a lesser extent, a Chinese INF-range land-based missile threat was also securitized (CP), with the withdrawal being offered as a course of action meant to tackle both threats by the Trump administration (ME).

The existence of both threats, with Russia being easily the primary concern overall, was accepted by the audience, including the experts. Initially, there was also strong support for the goal of bringing the country back to compliance with the INF Treaty (GP), with the republican-led "INF Treaty Preservation Act" informing much of the text of the 2018 NDAA concerning the accord. In the same wavelength, experts sought Russia's return to compliance with the INF Treaty. Indeed, before 20 October 2018, the audience and the securitizing actors were in agreement that preserving the accord was desirable (ME) because arms control contributed to strategic stability (GP), transparency (GP) and trust (GP), making it important to restore confidence in that realm (GP).

There was also resonance between the securitizing actors and the audience when it came to the understanding that the U.S. should not violate the INF Treaty (VP), although Congress considered that the country had the right to suspend it (VP) if Russia was determined to be in material breach of the accord – which the legislative branch considered to be the case (CP). The administration made no such determination that Russia was in material breach of the INF Treaty (CP), nor that the U.S. had the right to suspend its implementation of the accord (VP). And indeed, that option was not taken by the administration (ME).

Instead, through the "INF Treaty Integrated Strategy," the Trump administration established, as the recommended courses of action, the pursuit of diplomatic (ME), economic (ME), and military measures (ME). Those measures were not contested by the audience until President Trump announced the U.S. withdrawal on 20 October 2018. As such, up until that date, while the administration continued to pursue diplomatic measures, Congress authorized funding for military measures, and mandated the administration to produce a report on further Russia sanctioning. However, disagreements emerged regarding the authorization of funding, in the 2018 NDAA, for a road-mobile ground-based intermediate-range missile (ME), which would violate the INF Treaty if tested or deployed (VP). The

proponents of the course of action in Congress supported the course of action, wanting to pressure Russia to return to compliance (GP).

The administration rejected the course of action because it did not want to be tied to a specific system because it would limit potential response options at the military level (GP) (downside). Warren, who also opposed the system, rejected the capability on the same grounds. Moreover, Warren and her republican colleague Lee, believed that developing the capability would lead to downsides on values because that was not how one worked “in good faith in the international community” (VP). Warren added that the U.S. would be violating the accord “in spirit and intent” because it had vowed never to test or deploy such a system (VP). For the two senators, the U.S. should not violate the accord just because Russia was (ME). The ACA’s Kimball also believed that the U.S. was setting the state for a violation at some point (VP). In the end, despite the administration’s proposal of a “broad authorization of research and development on missile systems [ME], including those prohibited by the treaty” (VP), in lieu of the specific system proposed by Congress, Trump’s would go on to sign the 2018 NDAA. Thus, the administration ended up accepting the downsides it perceived to stem from developing the system (GP). The premises raised for those opposing the system were insufficient to convince the majority of the legislators that the new system should not be pursued.

Overall, there was considerable premise alignment between the administration and the audience before the president announced the U.S. withdrawal from the agreement. This was shown by congressional willingness to approve the administration’s strategy (ME) to bring Russia to compliance (GP). Moreover, the legislative branch even authorized funding for an additional military measure (the conventional ground-based INF-range missile system) (ME) that the administration did not want (ME), which can be explained by Congress’ description of Russia’s violation as more serious than articulated by the administration (CP). For the same reason (CP), Congress considered that the U.S. could suspend the INF Treaty (VP), an understanding not voiced by the securitizing actors either.

With President Trump’s 20 October 2018 announcement, resonance between the premises of the securitizing actors, and those of the administration, weakened. Up until then, no direct calls for withdrawal were observed – not from the securitizing actors, nor the audience – although a provision in the 2018 NDAA did indicate that the U.S. had the right (VP) to withdraw (ME) if its supreme interests were jeopardized (VP). There were supporters of the president’s decision in the GOP and among experts. On the other hand, there was considerable bipartisan opposition as well, and most experts contested the course of action as well.

The supporters of the withdrawal mostly repeated premises used by the administration. Both sought to achieve, with the action (ME), Russia’s return to compliance (GP) or deny it military advantages from the violation (GP). Additionally, the administration and some members of the audience wanted to address the China threat (GP). The administration complained that the U.S. was facing weapons development constraints, while Russia and China were not (GP) (downside).

Despite this alignment being far from consensual, with divisions among GOP legislators, experts and strong democrat opposition, the sharing of goals between the administration and supporters of the withdrawal in Congress point to a degree of audience assent. Moreover, already in 2017, the 2018 NDAA had identified constraints stemming from the preservation of the INF Treaty, which were later used by the administration as a reason for the withdrawal. Some experts also supported the decision, perceiving it to contribute to desired goals such as strengthening the U.S. and ally defense (GP) and advantages vis-à-vis China (GP). Still, both the supporters of the policy in Congress and in the expert community perceived downsides from this decision (GP), with complementary actions (ME) deemed necessary to address them, particularly when it came to Russia's anticipated disinformation campaigns about the treaty's downfall (GP) and the preservation of NATO unity (VP). Those potential downsides were, thus, accepted by the supporters of the withdrawal in the audience, being outweighed by the goals that the administration wanted to pursue. Moreover, like Fischer and CSIS specialist Williams pointed out, the ongoing courses of action had failed to deliver those goals so far (ME). In supporting the withdrawal, senators Inhofe, Fischer and Risch, along with the specialist Williams deemed a situation in which only one party complied with a treaty to be unsustainable (CP). That premise had been previously utilized by the DOD to defend the need to pursue action, but not a withdrawal specifically. Those audience members and the administration agreed that the U.S. should not face constraints (GP) due to the accord (ME) while other states were not bound by it (CP), meaning that America should leave the accord (ME).

Of those goals shared by the administration and the supporters of the withdrawal – i.e., achieving Moscow's return to compliance; denying Russia military advantages; and breaking free from the treaty's constraints – the latter two were contested by previous securitizing actor statements. Selva claimed that the U.S. could deploy other missile systems (ME) to hold at risk targets in Chinese territory (GP), and that the Treaty was not constraining any U.S. military requirement (GP) (negates downside). Mattis had also previously stated that Russia's violation did not grant it any significant military advantage (GP) (negates downside). A statement by Admiral Harris contradicted both Mattis and Selva's assessment, stating that the accord hindered U.S. ability to counter the land-based missiles of China and other countries (GP) (identifies downsides), indicating different views on the matter among securitizing actors. Experts Karako, Ellehuus, Beutin and Lopinot, and Kimball acknowledged that U.S. sea- and land-based systems (ME) could indeed be used to hold at risk targets in China and/or Russia (GP). The 2018 NDAA quoted Admiral Harris, revealing that several members of Congress saw indeed believed INF Treaty entailed downsides, even if at the time the legislative branch considered that achieving the goal of Russia's return to compliance (GP) would outweigh those downsides (GP). Thus, largely, the congressional audience seemed to side with Harris on that account, even if Russian compliance was still pursued at the time (GP). We note, however, that the GOP held the majority in both legislative

chambers when the bill was drafted, and thus possessed more power to dictate the language it contained⁷⁶.

The 2018 and 2019 NDAA's deemed that the U.S. had the right (VP) to suspend implementation, in part or wholly, of the INF Treaty (ME), if Russia remained in material breach of the accord, which the bill believed to be the case (CP). The 2018 NDAA also said that the U.S. had the right (VP) to leave the accord (ME) if its supreme interests were in jeopardy (VP). Given that notice of withdrawal from the INF Treaty entails a provisory suspension of U.S. obligations under the accord, we believe that the two bills constitute a form of consent for a U.S. withdrawal which preceded Trump's 20 October 2018 announcement.

The House version of the 2018 NDAA mandated the administration to produce a report which would free the U.S. from the prohibitions of the article VI of the INF Treaty, if it concluded that Russia was in material breach of the accord – which the bill claimed to be the case (CP). However, that provision was dropped in the final 2018 NDAA. Still, the House bill evidences greater motivation to leave the accord in that chamber than in the Senate, whose bill contained no such language.

Trump's unofficial (20 October 2018) and official (1 February 2019) withdrawal announcements are contradictory in that the first mentioned Russian and Chinese return for compliance (GP) as a requirement for the U.S. to stay in the agreement (ME), but the second did not (GP). Moreover, Bolton reacted to the president's October announcement by expressing his belief that there was no chance that Moscow and Beijing would agree to dismantle all their INF-range ground-based equipment (GP) (unachievable goal), meaning that he also did not believe in the possibility of the U.S. remaining in the accord (ME) (not a realistic course of action). This inconsistency leads us to question the U.S. leadership's true goals with the withdrawal, although Fischer claimed that the decision was not grounded on contempt for arms control on the part of the government (VP) (denies covert concern as a reason for action). Menendez had the opposite view, stating that the decision on the president's lack of appreciation for arms control (VP) (covert reason for action). Menendez and Paul discredited Trump and Bolton, respectively, as credible expert sources, thus questioning their ability to understand the importance of the INF Treaty (ME). Indeed, senator Paul and the ACA perceived Bolton (CP) to be behind the president's decision to withdraw from the accord (ME).

The opposers of the withdrawal deemed it, as Menendez put it, misguided on process as well as substance. Regarding substance, senators Reed, Menendez, and Warren claimed that the president was compromising the Senate's constitutionally granted role on jurisdiction and responsibility over treaties in leaving the treaty (VP). They claimed that the administration had provided any warning of the decision (CP), failed to obtain the chamber's "advice and consent" (VP), and that allies opposed the

⁷⁶ As for the general support for the final 2018 NDAA, the bill easily passed in the House with 356 ayes and 70 noes (there were 63 democratic nays, with 4 representatives not voting, and 7 republican nays, with 3 representatives not voting). However, there are no voting record for the Senate, given that a voice vote was held instead. The Senate version of the bill passed with a favorable 89-8 vote, but it did not contain Harris' language (Clerk U.S. H.R., 2017; CRS, 2021; S. 1519, 2017).

decision as well (CP). Bolton countered by saying that the president had the right to act as he saw fit on the INF Treaty (VP) and by stating that other allies besides the U.S. would come around (CP). Instead of focusing on the subject of ally support, Mattis and Pompeo mentioned instead that talks had been and would continue to be held (CP). The democrat caucus associated the withdrawal with downsides on ally joint resolve (VP) and Senate bipartisanship (VP), seeing as the treaty had received overwhelming support at the time of ratification. The experts were particularly concerned with the downsides of withdrawing on ally unity. The democrat caucus and republican senator called appealed to Reagan's legacy (VP) in an attempt to save the accord.

Our discourse analysis also showed strong support for the use of diplomacy (ME) to bring Russia to compliance (GP), among both experts and legislators of both parties, in lieu of a U.S. withdrawal.

NSA John Bolton would later claim his surprise at the president's withdrawal announcement, claiming that it did not occur in the timeline that "Mattis, Pompeo, and [he] had agreed on" (Bolton, 2020). This might explain why Mattis' discourse changed so drastically within the same month, and why he went from pursuing diplomatic measures to saying that all such efforts had been exhausted, within a very short timeframe. This puts under question whether the administration indeed believed that there was not a diplomatic path to saving the accord. Many the audience vehemently disagreed with the administration on that account, with several diplomatic options being offered (ME) and described as not energetically explored (CP). Still, while the timeline of events may have been changed, it is possible that the reasons for action utilized would have been the same on either scenario, seeing as we expect the issue to have been thoroughly discussed before Trump's 20 October 2018 announcement.

Overall, despite the contradictions and the identified inconsistency in securitizing actor discourse; the critics' attempts to link the president's decision to John Bolton and to discredit both figures; and the perceived downsides of abandoning the INF Treaty – some of which acknowledged even by supporters of the decision in the audience – the administration was able to shore up some audience assent for the withdrawal. The supporters of the course of action – some GOP legislators and experts – wanted to pursue the goals identified by the administration and agreed to do so via the U.S. abandonment of the INF Treaty. The presence for support for a potential withdrawal from the accord in Congress is evidenced by the 2018 NDAA and, especially, the House version of the bill. The two documents considered that Russia's material breach entitled the U.S. from suspending, partly or in whole, the implementation of the INF Treaty.

The supporters of the withdrawal also perceived the existence of downsides from remaining in the accord, which hindered U.S. national security and, thus, informed their backing of the president's decision. The administration did not acknowledge downsides from the withdrawal and, believing that the decisions regarding the accord lied with the president, ignored the calls from the democrats to observe the Senate's right to advice and consent to treaties. Other premises raised by critics, such as the bipartisan support for the treaty when it was ratified, the lack of ally support, appeals to the legacy of

Ronald Reagan, the negative effects on NATO unity, and the promise still held by diplomacy in bringing Russia to compliance, were either outweighed, or disregarded by the administration. Thus, the critics of the withdrawal – senators of both parties, but mostly democrats, along with several experts – failed to keep the U.S. in the INF Treaty. However, if, as experts Courtney and Thielmann perceived, the administration came out unscathed from the political risk it took by not consulting with Congress about the withdrawal, one could argue that the legislative body had greater priorities than trying to prevent it. We also base that observation on the fact that there was not much debate in the Senate or the House floor on the subject of the U.S. withdrawal of the INF Treaty after the president made his 20 October 2018 announcement. Finally, seeing as the clause of the INF Treaty allowed the U.S. to abandon the accord if its supreme interests were in jeopardy, we can assume that to be the case in the view of the administration.

While the U.S. withdrawal would eventually materialize on 2 August 2019, the U.S. continued to pursue, and later test, a previously banned land-based INF-class missile system. Seeing as Russia's compliance was no longer possible, with the country announcing it would leave the accord on 2 February 2019, we associate the continuation of that policy with other goals of action, and mainly with the denial of Moscow's military advantage due to its now-surely-legal SSC-8 system. The nuclear SLCM, which the administration continued to want to pursue, is debated in section 6.3..

6.2. U.S. Missile Defense: mixed messages, continuity, and change

The decision to revert the language of the 2017 NDAA was justified by the House as a step taken to have U.S. missile defense policy reflect the language of the 2019 MDR. Thus, congressional acceptance of the securitizing move that was issued by the administration in that report was clear. It is also notable that, much like during the Obama administration, the change took place without much protest. Similar to when the democrats were mostly silent about the repeal of section 2 of the 1999 Missile Defense Act, the republicans did not appear to be concerned over the fact that, with the adoption of the 2020 NDAA, it was once again clear that America relied on nuclear deterrence (ME) – not missile defense – to handle (GP) Russia and China's more numerous and sophisticated missile threats to the homeland (CP). Thus, the course action, goal, and circumstantial premises articulated by the MDR received audience acceptance, often in the form of tacit support when it came to the U.S. lawmakers.

Trump's statement which contradicted the MDR by saying that the U.S. would ensure the detection and destruction of any missiles headed to the homeland was perceived by experts in different ways. Karako supported the goal expressed by the president, while Reif opposed it, and Bunn posited that the administration might be pursuing the covert goal of undermining Moscow's "escalate-to-deescalate" strategy, with ambiguity regarding the true U.S. missile defense policy being intentional. In

any case, the legislators decided that the language of the 2019 report ought to be the guiding principle of U.S. missile defense policy.

Overall, there was a policy change in homeland missile defense policy against Russia and China. Instead of seeking the enhancement of homeland missile defenses to counter the ICBM threat posed by the two countries, the U.S. would rely on nuclear deterrence (ME) to address them (GP). This change was expressed in the 2019 MDR and codified in the 2020 NDAA without much audience contestation, other than experts Karako and Rumbaugh, who supported instead Trump's statement in contradiction of the report. Bunn questioned why the U.S. would aim to defend its territory against HGV and cruise missile threats (GP) with missile defenses (ME) but not Moscow and Beijing's ICBMs (GP). We posit that policy change took place due to lack of sufficient opposition to it, and to agreement on the existence of sophisticated and numerous ICBM threats posed by Russia and China (CP).

Thus, in negotiating the 2020 NDAA in Conference, the democrat-majority House was able to convince the republican-majority Senate, which presented no similar provision, to accept the revision of U.S. missile defense policy that had been set in the 2017 NDAA. Reactions to the 2020 NDAA on the part of the democrats and the republicans did not express opposition to the MDR's recommendation that the U.S. relied on nuclear deterrence – not missile defense – against Russia and China's ICBMs. And as Bunn, Reif, and Markey argued, missile defenses (ME) would not defend the U.S. against every missile threat (GP).

The final 2020 NDAA received a comfortably favorable vote in both chambers: 86-8 in the Senate (U.S. Senate, 2019) and 377-48 in the House (Clerk U.S. H.R., 2019a). With the passing of the bill, the Administration received congressional assent for the change of policy as expressed by the 2019 MDR. In doing so, the legislators contradicted the president on the role of U.S. homeland missile defenses. The U.S. would continue to rely on nuclear deterrence (ME) against the larger and more sophisticated near-peer intercontinental missile threats to the homeland (GP) (Report 116-333, 2019: 587).

However, despite U.S. assurances that U.S. homeland missile defenses were not intended to counter Russian and Chinese ICBMs, some democrats (Markey, Smith, and Moulton) and experts (Reif and Grego) warned that of the actions taken to address the rogue state missile threat to U.S. territory might lead to downsides. Russia and China might, as a result of those actions, respond in ways that negatively impacted U.S. goals. Among such actions were the pursuit of space-based interceptors (ME), the construction of 20 additional interceptors (ME), the production of a next-generation interceptor (ME), the reinforcement of homeland defenses with regional defenses (ME) – including by testing the SM-3 Block IIA system against ICBMs (ME) – and boost-phase intercept programs (ME). The critics feared that Moscow and Beijing would perceive their nuclear deterrence to be under threat (GP), which could hinder arms control efforts (GP) and stability (GP). There were also complaints regarding the feasibility (ME) and the costs (GP) of space-based interceptors and boost-phase intercept programs. Overall, some critics posited that the downsides of improving U.S. homeland missile defenses (ME) vis-

à-vis Russia and China (GP) should outweigh the goal of outpacing the threat (GP) posed by rogue hand states to U.S. territory (CP). On the other hand, the administration counted with the support of several influential republicans – senators Inhofe and Reed, along with representatives Turner and Thornberry – for the development of new technologies and overall improvement of U.S. missile defenses (ME) to outpace (GP) the rogue state threat (CP). That goal, along with protecting the American people (GP) and maintain deterrence (GP) outweighed the possibility of downsides related to a Russian and/or Chinese reaction. Experts Karako and Bunn also supported some of the abovementioned capabilities (ME) for intercepting missile threats to the homeland (GP).

In sum, the rogue state missile threat was not questioned in the audience, but there was a lack of consensus on how to address it, and whether the sought-after goals should outweigh the downsides of action. In any case, as a whole – as the 2018, 2019, and 2020 NDAA demonstrated, there was congressional will to deploy directed-energy or kinetic boost-phase capabilities (ME), interceptors in space (ME), and regional missile defenses for a layered homeland missile defense system (ME). In fact, the 2019 NDAA Conference Report directed the development of boost-phase missile defense capabilities and space-based interceptors regardless of the decision of the upcoming MDR. Still, as the 2019, 2020, and 2021 NDAA revealed, Congress was indeed concerned with the potential downsides of deploying regional missile defenses for a layered homeland missile defense system on strategic stability (GP) and the potential responses from rogue states and near-peer adversaries (GP). The 2021 NDAA raised doubts over the feasibility (ME) and costs (GP) of the next-generation interceptor (ME). The 2020 NDAA repealed a provision of the 2018 NDAA directing the establishment of “a space test bed to conduct research on a space-based missile intercept layer” (ME). Still, the 2020 bill did not alter the 2018’s law requirement that a test bed for space-based missile defense interceptors be developed (Reif, 2020a). The interest of the audience in space-based interceptors preceded, and appeared to exceed, that of the administration, given that the 2019 MDR did not arrive at a decision on the capability, and merely sought to examine concepts and technologies thereto. After all, the 2017 NDAA Conference Report, released during the Obama administration, had already urged the DOD to examine the feasibility of defeating ballistic missile threats to the U.S. homeland and to critical and military space assets with space-based interceptors (Report 114-840, 2016: 1256-1257).

In late 2019, the defense appropriations bill zeroed out the DOD’s request to begin development of a space-based directed-energy weapon for intercepting ICBMs during their boost and midcourse phases. The law also significantly cut \$10 million dollars in funding for studying the development of space-based interceptors from the \$30 million dollars requested by the administration (Reif, 2020a). The adaptation of regional defenses to provide an added layer of defense against limited ICBM attacks continued, even though, in 2020, Congress authorized considerably less funding than what the administration had requested. Funding was also provided for development of the next-generation interceptors (Reif & Bugos, 2021).

The Administration itself took the initiative to terminate certain programs. In the words of Karako and Rumbaugh, by March 2020, there was uncertainty regarding the future shape of the missile defense enterprise. In August 2019, the administration informed that technical design problems led to the cancellation of the RKV, terminating plans to field additional GBIs (Reif, 2019c, Karako & Rumbaugh, 2020). The 2021 budget request cancelled the directed-energy program, terminating the DOD's investment in boost-phase missile defense (Karako & Rumbaugh, 2020; Reif, 2020b). The Pacific Radar was delayed indefinitely (Statement of Administration Policy, 2020). The Homeland Defense Radar-Hawaii was cancelled on 8 November 2023 (Federal Register, 2023).

Overall, the interest of the legislature and the administration in pursuing courses of action to improve homeland missile defense is clear. However, some concerns emerged in Congress and among experts regarding the downsides of doing so when it came to potential responses from rogue states and near-peer competitors (GP). There were also some concerns over feasibility (ME) and costs (GP) in the audience. We observed some progress on certain courses of action while others were stalled or cancelled, which might indicate that the premises identified above may have played a role in stymying some actions in the realm of homeland missile defense. It is not immediately evident why some programs – such as the next-generation interceptors – received more support than others.

In sum, the perceived rogue state missile threat to the homeland (CP) might have been outweighed by the perceived downsides of the courses of action intended to tackle it, or reservations regarding the courses of action itself (e.g., regarding feasibility, or the existence of superior options). Thus, unhurried progress (ME) took place over more ambitious steps (ME) to the pursuit of the administration's goals, which received, nonetheless, some audience support, particularly among republicans and some experts.

The Administration itself made the decision to terminate some of the programs it had previously recommended. Still, the securitizing actors did not raise any potential downsides related to the potential responses of other states, and the MDR stated that the U.S. would accept no limitations on missile defense development (GP). Thus, it would appear more likely the cancelling was not related to rogue state, Russia, or China-related downsides of action (GP), but reservations regarding the best way to act (ME) or other downsides (e.g., regarding costs) (GP). Thus, for the administration, rogue state missile threat perceptions (CP) explain its preferred courses of action, in the realm of homeland missile defense, better than concerns over a potential Russian (or Chinese) response (GP), and negative impacts on bilateral relations (GP) and stability (GP) – downsides which some members of the audience raised.

Still in the realm of American homeland missile defense policy, the 2019 MDR proposed the development and deployment of a space-based sensing architecture (ME) to address (GP) more advanced missile threats, such as HGVs (CP). It also sought to improve existing terrestrial and space-based sensors (ME) for improved early warning (GP). The report also aimed at improving detection, tracking, and discrimination of cruise and hypersonic missile threats (GP). The hypersonic and cruise missile capabilities were solely associated with Russia and China (CP).

The means-end, goal, and circumstantial premises received considerable support in the legislature, as successive NDAA Conference Reports (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021) demonstrate. In fact, the 2019 Conference Report called for the development of a persistent space-based sensing architecture regardless of the decision of the upcoming MDR. Karako and Rumbaugh voiced premises which resonated with those of the administration as well, and Reif acknowledged the importance of improving U.S. detection and tracking capabilities, albeit without mentioning the sensors. Bunn believed that overhead sensors couple with the preemptive attack approach proposed by the MDR could lead Russia and China to respond (GP). However, as a whole, the alignment of premises between the securitizing actors and the audience explains why funding continued to be provided for a space sensor layer until the end of the Trump presidency (Karako & Rumbaugh, 2019).

The MDR did not state that the deployment of a space-based sensor layer was meant to eventually deliver the goal of intercepting Russian and Chinese cruise and hypersonic missiles launched at the U.S. homeland (GP). The report merely expressed the aim of improving early warning in that regard (GP). Still, an expert – Bunn – posited that interception of cruise and hypersonic missiles might in fact be a goal of action of the administration. And in presenting the review, Trump indeed stated that it was U.S. missile defense policy to detect and intercept all missiles headed to the U.S. homeland. A later statement by the Director of the MDA seemingly clarified the administration's goals by linking space-based sensors to the goals of giving appropriate warning, but also defeating the threat to the homeland posed by hypersonic and cruise missiles. General O'Shaughnessy voiced the same goal of cruise and hypersonic missile defense.

Thus, there was clear support in the legislature to pursue the goal of defending U.S. territory against cruise and hypersonic missiles. Said support from the legislature preceded the 2019 MDR. The 2016 NDAA wanted the MDA to begin work on a “concept definition of a space-based ballistic missile intercept layer to the ballistic missile defense system” for additional defensive options against HGVs and maneuvering reentry vehicles. The 2017 NDAA assigned the MDA as the Executive Agent when it came to the development of a capability to counter HGV capabilities and conventional prompt strike capabilities that might be employed against the U.S., its deployed forces, and allies. The MDA was directed to develop architectures for a hypersonic defense capability, from detection to interception of such threats. The JCS was also ordered to submit a report on the homeland and regional threat posed by HGVs and maneuvering ballistic missiles (section 1687). The document also directed the administration to produce a report concerning the efficacy of the Aegis missile defense system for the defense of the continental U.S. against ballistic and cruise missiles. It also mandated that a Defense Agency or military department with acquisition authority be designated when it came to the capability for homeland cruise missile defense (section 1684). The Director of National Intelligence was directed to produce a report regarding the ballistic and cruise missile threat to the U.S., deployed forces, allies, and friends stemming “from short-, medium-, intermediate-, and long-range nuclear and non-nuclear ballistic and cruise missile threats” (see Annex E). Several experts also perceived a cruise, hypersonic, and HGV threat

during the Obama administration. They supported the goal of defense against such missiles and recommended several steps to address those threats (see Annex E).

Pursuant to section 1687 of the 2017 NDAA, the MDA was assigned “the responsibility of Executive Agent for the development of capabilities to counter HGV and conventional prompt strike threat.” In 2017 the MDA established a Hypersonic Defense Program, in the context of which 21 white papers were commissioned, in September 2018, to explore hypersonic missile defense options (CRS, 2024b). By 2020, the MDA was “developing a Cruise Missile Defense of Homeland system architecture (...) [, having] established a CMD-H architecture organization within the Chief Architect's Office of MDA” (Sherman, 2020). On 18 May 2022, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Space Policy John Plumb claimed that the DOD and the JCS chairman were working on implementing section 1684 of the 2017 NDAA (“Hearing to receive testimony,” 2022: 38). On 28 July 2022, the Air Force was designated as the acquisition authority with regard to the capabilities to defend the American homeland from cruise missile threats (Sherman, 2022).

The 2019 NDAA Conference Report directed the MDA to accelerate the hypersonic missile defense program. It directed the MDA to deploy that program (ME) in conjunction with a space-based sensor (ME) to meet (GP) hypersonic threats (CP). The Senate version of the 2020 NDAA supported the development and deployment of the space-based sensing architecture (ME) for enhanced effectiveness of U.S. missile defenses against ballistic, hypersonic and cruise missiles (GP). The 2021 NDAA directed the production of a report on homeland cruise missile defense (GP), seeking to mitigate cruise missile threats to the continental U.S. (GP). It also mandated the submission of a report on the defense of Guam from ballistic, cruise, and hypersonic missiles (GP).

The explanatory statement for the 2021 DOD Appropriations Bill also evidences the legislature’s strong support for the development of a space-based sensor architecture for tracking ballistic missiles and hypersonic threats. In the document, Congress shares its concern over the disconnect between the 2019 MDR and the administration’s missile defense budget request for FY 2021, because the latter contained no funds for the development of a Hypersonic and Ballistic Tracking Space Sensor program (ME), required to track and detect ballistic and hypersonic missiles (GP), the legislators recommended the appropriation of \$140 million dollars for such efforts⁷⁷. The lawmakers also noted that the MDA had identified the program as a top priority as recently as the year before, which evidences the existence of support from the administration for developing the capability. The explanatory statement also expressed support for the development of an interceptor (ME) against hypersonic weapons (GP), which the Administration had also identified as a top priority a year before, but had not adequately funded in the 2021 budget request (“Explanatory Statement,” 2020: 5-7).

⁷⁷ Similarly, Congress had funded to the tune of \$108 million dollars the Hypersonic and Ballistic Tracking Space Sensor program despite a lack of funding request in the president’s budget request for FY 2020. The administration had included the program in its list of unfunded priorities for that year (Strout, 2020, Bartels, 2020).

Thus, it is evident that threat perceptions of a threat to the U.S. homeland posed by Russian and Chinese hypersonic (including HGVs) and cruise missile threats, along with the alignment of other premises informing action between the securitizing actors and the audience, contributed to continued efforts to deploy a space-based sensing architecture. In addition, there was interest, especially in the audience, in achieving the goal of homeland missile defense against hypersonic and cruise missiles.

Finally, we address regional missile defense. In contrast, with the 2010 MDR, the 2019 report established as a new goal of regional missile defense (ME) the defense of U.S. forces, allies, and partners against the full scope of regional missile threats (GP). The threats perceived emanated not only from North Korea and Iran, but also from Russia and China (CP). In the case of Russia, the report highlighted the development of a new generation of cruise and ballistic missiles, including the SSC-8 system, which violated the INF Treaty (CP). While the 2010 report claimed that U.S. regional missile defenses would be used to counter rogue state and Chinese missile threats, the inclusion of Russia among the goals of such systems constitutes a proposed change of U.S. policy.

The premises articulated by the securitizing actors received, for the most part, audience acceptance, which explains why policy change occurred. Even before the release of the 2019 MDR, the House version of the 2018 NDAA expressed the chamber's aim of defending U.S. deployed forces and allies – that is, at the regional level – from hypersonic and ballistic missiles (GP). The language is relevant, given that while no direct mention of Russia or China is made, the two countries were the only U.S. competitors which possessed hypersonic missiles. The 2019 NDAA, which also preceded Trump's MDR sought the deployment of an interim capability (ME) for cruise missile defense in Europe and Asia (GP) until the IFPC, which the 2019 MDR claimed that the Army was developing, was operational (ME). The 2020 Senate NDAA identified a ballistic, hypersonic, and cruise missile threat from Russia and China to U.S. forces, allies, and partners (CP), which ought to be defended (GP). The final version of the bill established as U.S. policy to maintain and improve a regional missile defense system (ME) to achieve that goal (GP). The Senate document also wanted to outpace the offensive missile threats (GP). Among experts, Karako supported the new goal of addressing Russian and Chinese regional threats (GP), although he deemed the MDR's recommended actions insufficient (ME). Bunn noted that Russia and China were already reacting negatively to U.S. missile defense deployments. Reif also highlighted concerns over the reactions of Russia and China to the goal of using regional missile defense systems against them (GP). However, Congress was seemingly less concerned with such downsides, which did not feature in the discourse analyzed. Also of note is the fact that some missile threat perceptions are expressed without its referent object – the U.S. homeland or regional targets – being clearly identified.

Overall, the audience mostly accepted the changes proposed by the securitizing actors to regional missile defense policy. At the forefront of the changes, we find that regional missile defenses explicitly obtained new goals in the interception of a broader range of missile categories – not just ballistic – and of Russian missiles. The interception of other missiles besides ballistic was a departure from the missile defense language of the 2017 NDAA, which focused on that category. However, we

see that even before the release of the 2019 MDR there was interest in Congress in defending against hypersonic missiles – not just ballistic.

Moreover, we dispute the view that the interception of Russian regional missile threats was truly a new goal of action, given that, as we showed in chapter 6, Moscow's violation of the INF Treaty had already led the administration and the audience to call for the use of active defenses against the new, allegedly illegal, SSC-8 missile system. Therefore, we question whether the 2019 MDR, and the subsequent 2020 NDAA provision on which it was based, truly represents a watershed moment in U.S. missile defense policy toward Russia at the regional level. Instead, we posit that the 2019 MDR's emphasis on Russia as a regional missile threat to be countered by U.S. missile defenses, can be understood, in part, as a continuation of a securitization process that began during the Obama administration policy.

Overall, the missile defense debate during the Trump administration encompassed various threat perceptions posed by different categories of missiles potentially being launched from various sources. Russia's cruise and hypersonic missiles were perceived to pose a threat to America at the homeland and regional level. While the administration and most of the audience agreed that the U.S. ought to rely on nuclear deterrence against Russia and China's ICBMs, it sought to develop a space-based sensing architecture to defeat the two country's cruise and hypersonic missiles. Audience acceptance led to successful securitization of the threat, resulting in strides towards the development of said capabilities. Still at the homeland level, the securitizing actors sought to strengthen U.S. missile defense capabilities by testing and deploying regional systems. Despite concerns among experts and the legislature that such steps might lead to downsides regarding Russia and China, some progress was made in that regard, even if there were some constraints and delays regarding several efforts (e.g. deployment of additional interceptors and the development of directed-energy capabilities and space-based interceptors). At the regional level, while the administration more clearly expanded the goals of U.S. missile defenses to include Russia, we consider that the securitization process had been initiated during the Obama administration, as a result of Moscow's violation of the INF Treaty. Then, the legislature not only accepted that active defenses ought to be used to counter Russia's SSC-8 missile system, but also pressured the administration to achieve that goal. There was also some expert support in that regard (see chapter 6). In all, policy change during the Trump administration in the realm of missile defense is explained by the considerable resonance between the premises of the securitizing actors and those of the audience, including when it came to threat perceptions of Russia, as well as China and rogue states.

6.3. Supplementing the Nuclear Modernization Program: The Pursuit for Additional Low-Yield Nuclear Weapons

It is noteworthy that there was a considerable overlap between the premises voiced by the democrats, and those articulated by the experts who agreed that the low-yield nuclear weapons should not be developed and deployed. Likewise, the republicans and the experts who accepted the administration's call for action utilized many of the same premises. Thus, legislators of both parties could claim that their conclusion – that is, that the U.S. should/should not develop additional low-yield nuclear weapons – received significant expert support. The overall divide in the expert community in regard to those systems was undeniably stark. Expert support for the low-yield nuclear weapons, raised still during the Obama administration, may have contributed to the decision, by the securitizing actors, to propose the development of the capabilities in the 2019 NPR.

That was made possible, above all, due to the successful securitization Russia's purported "escalate-to-deescalate" nuclear doctrine (CP). They feared that Moscow might resort to limited nuclear use to gain a strategic advantage over the United States (CP). Russia was perceived to believe that, in such a scenario, America would have to choose between surrender or suicide (CP). The administration highlighted the disparity between Russian and U.S. non-strategic nuclear weapons arsenals, which easily favored the former (CP). Moscow was expanding and modernizing its nuclear forces (CP) and was violating the INF Treaty (CP). Those premises found considerable resonance in the audience, particularly among republican legislators, but also among several experts, who saw them as reasons to pursue low-yield nuclear weapons. Audience acceptance was not total, however. Some of the opponents of the weapons, including Smith and a number of specialists, questioned whether Russia indeed have such a strategy (CP). Those critics also voiced some threat perceptions of Russia but did not consider that they made additional low-yield nuclear weapons necessary. In sum, despite the lack of audience consensus, threat perceptions of Russia were identified as a prominent reason for action.

Other threat perceptions were identified and used as reasons for the U.S. to develop the low-yield systems. The securitizing actors highlighted China's nuclear modernization program (CP) and its efforts to develop new nuclear capabilities (CP). Those claims were fully accepted by the republicans and obtained the agreement of a number of experts. The securitizing actors also identified North Korea and Iran as nuclear threats, premises that were also present in the GOP as well as among a group of experts. These premises were not denied by the democrats and the remaining experts. But they countered with different premises: they praised U.S. nuclear and conventional capabilities and stressed that America already possessed low-yield nuclear weapons (CP). Thus, new systems were unnecessary.

Overall, we consider that threat perceptions – particularly of Russia – played a crucial role in the policy change observed, given that they were accepted and prominently featured in the discourse of republican legislators and some experts. The critics of the proposed capabilities attempted to raise doubts regarding Moscow's nuclear doctrine and by arguing that present nuclear threats did not justify the development of the new systems, particularly in light of existing U.S. capabilities. However, the critics failed to convince the securitizing actors and the remaining audience.

Few value premises informed the securitizing actors conclusion that low-yield capabilities ought to be pursued. Still, they assured that the proposed systems were compliant with all treaties and agreements (VP), that U.S. had consulted with allies (VP), and that the country remained committed (VP) to nuclear security (GP) and nuclear non-proliferation (GP), and to pursue nuclear reductions (GP) through arms control agreements (ME).

These value premises did not resonate strongly in the audience, with critics claiming that the U.S. was, in fact, breaking its long-standing commitment to nuclear disarmament (VP) in developing the low-yield systems. The democrats and the ACA also stressed the danger to the world which nuclear weapons posed (VP). The administration's value premises did not resonate with the republican lawmakers – who voiced different ones – while the specialists in general rarely voiced value premises as reasons for action. Thus, it would appear that policy change was not grounded on the securitizing actors' value-based reasons for action.

However, the value premises of the democrats convincingly explain how policy change was made possible, despite the strong opposition to the low-yield SLBM found among House democrats. Indeed, many value premises were voiced by the democratic leadership of the House Armed Services Committee as reasons for supporting a final 2020 NDAA which did not include many of the democrats' priorities. Among those priorities was blocking the deployment of the new SLBM system. Smith explained his support for the bill by arguing that the democrats were constrained by the institutional reality of a republican-led Senate and a republican president. The House NDAA was rejected by the Senate and would be vetoed by the president anyway (VP). There were limits to what could be achieved in a democracy where one had to listen to all voices (VP), and issues ought to be solved in a bipartisan way (VP). Smith argued that the "compromise bill" would provide for the families of the troops (VP), promote a more diverse military (VP), protect public health (VP) and benefit real American lives (VP). The bill reflected "the best of [this] country and the best of this body" (VP). It was the most progressive NDAA in years (VP) and reflected American values (VP). Showing that the American democracy worked (VP) as essential to peace (VP), stability (VP), and freedom in the world (VP). Those values outweighed others that the bill, in Smith's view, compromised, namely congressional authorization on matters of war (VP) and peace in the Middle East (VP).

The value premises listed in the previous paragraph are fundamental in explaining why the final NDAA was deemed acceptable by the democrats, with the law paving the way for the deployment of the low-yield nuclear SLBM. Those value premises outweighed the downsides on values perceived by the capability – the dangers to the world posed by nuclear weapons (VP) and the U.S. commitment to reduce its nuclear stockpiles (VP). The value premises of the previous paragraph also outweighed the decision to block the deployment of the sea-launched nuclear capability (ME).

On the republican side, Inhofe agreed that the final NDAA provided for the troops and their families (VP) in addition to implementing congressional oversight over military acquisition programs (VP). The senator and representative Turner accused the democrats of jeopardizing bipartisanship with

the “partisan policies” of the House NDAA (VP). The democrats, Inhofe reprimanded, were also jeopardizing the duties and responsibilities of Congress (VP) by delaying the passing of the NDAA (ME). Both parties agreed to proceed in a bipartisan way to arrive at a final bill, which explains why some democratic provisions were dropped. But the GOP showed interest in providing for the servicemembers and their families, same as the democrats, which explains why some of the democratic priorities associated with that premise were achieved. Inhofe filled a skinny NDAA (ME), deemed it preferable to an NDAA (ME) with the democrats’ partisan provisions (VP). That policy alternative was rejected by Smith, because it risked a government shutdown (VP) and it would let the troops down (VP).

Finally, we arrive at the goal premises and means-end premises and attempt to ascertain how they explain the successful securitization of nuclear threats leading to policy change. The securitizing actors viewed the low-yield capabilities as “the” recommended course of action to implement, in tandem with nuclear modernization, to achieve several goals. Low-yield capabilities (ME) would strengthen the credibility of America’s deterrence (GP) by assuring adversaries that the country had options besides suicide or surrender (GP). They would provide the U.S. with the ability to respond in kind (GP). The systems were intended to correct Russia’s, as well as other states’ mistaken belief that limited nuclear escalation or strategic attacks would provide them with a strategic advantage against the U.S. and its allies (GP). They were more survivable (GP) than the air-launched low-yield nuclear weapons (ME). The proposed capabilities would increase the flexibility of U.S. nuclear forces (GP) and strengthened the country’s ability to tailor nuclear deterrence (GP). The country would be able to hold at risk target which were well-defended against air-launched weapons (GP). The SLCM, specifically (ME) was intended as a bargain chip to return Moscow to compliance with the INF Treaty (GP) or to provide the U.S. with options in case violations continued (GP). It would also provide a needed non-strategic regional presence, including in Asia (GP). The combination of existing nuclear systems and conventional capabilities did not suffice considering the abovementioned goals (ME). The administration rejected downsides of deploying a low-yield nuclear SLBM. The use of the system would not lead to a nuclear war with Russia (GP), which would realize that the attack did not pose an existential threat to it (CP), and the submarine had minimal susceptibility to an attack (GP) (rejected downsides).

The premises of the administration found strong resonance among republican legislators and some experts, helping explain the successful policy change. As a whole, the GOP lawmakers and the experts who supported developing low-yield nuclear capabilities articulated all of the securitizing actors’ premises listed in the paragraph above. By comparison, the democratic legislators, along with a considerable number of experts – who criticized the low-yield systems – voiced different goal premises and means-end premises. In the instances where the goals of the critics matched those of the supporters, the recommended actions to achieve those goals differed.

The critics claimed that current systems (ME) already allowed the U.S. to carry out a decisive response to any attack (GP). The country had sufficient firepower, including low-yield nuclear weapons, to credibly deter Russia (GP). Existing delivery systems were being upgraded and modernized (ME) to

ensure that the U.S. nuclear deterrent was flexible (GP) and able to hit any target, including within Russia's complex anti-access/anti-denial environment (GP). Those supporting the low-yield capabilities viewed their development as a necessary course of action (ME) to be carried out along with nuclear modernization programs (ME). Those who opposed the systems, on the other hand, perceived those nuclear modernization programs (ME) as making the new nuclear weapons unnecessary (ME). That point of view was also shared by a securitizing actor – Hyten – who later changed his position and declared ongoing nuclear modernization efforts to be insufficient (ME) and low-yield nuclear weapons necessary (ME). General audience support, or at least assent, for nuclear modernization, was apparent (ME).

On 8 March 2017, Hyten believed that such disparity was not reason to develop low-yield nuclear weapons (ME), as long as nuclear modernization efforts (ME) continued, while also highlighting America's variety of response options and advancements in conventional capabilities. He would change his mind from March 2018 onwards, however, declaring his support for developing low-yield nuclear weapons (ME), perceiving ongoing modernization efforts to be insufficient (ME) in light of the threat posed by Russia, China, and North Korea.

The new low-yield weapons were a redundant requirement (ME) without historical precedents (ME) – despite their supporter's efforts to establish them (ME). The U.S. should thus focus on a different set of goals, such as reducing the risk of mistaken, accidental, or unauthorized nuclear launches (GP), and preserving U.S. conventional superiority (GP).

The critics raised several downsides on U.S. goals stemming from the development of the capabilities. They rejected the assessment that there was no discrimination problem with the low-yield nuclear SLBM warhead (GP) and that its use would not put at risk the location of the submarine carrying it (GP). They believed that the low-yield systems would lower the nuclear threshold (GP), fuel an arms race (GP), and increase the odds of all-out nuclear war (GP). Despite the administration's assurance to the contrary, these audience members believed that the capabilities encouraged nuclear warfighting (GP). The low-yield capabilities were deemed destabilizing (GP), despite the Republicans' assessment to the contrary (GP). The new systems were diverting funds from actual needs of the military (GP) and calling into question U.S. military superiority and the sufficiency of existing capabilities (GP).

Despite the divided audience, the administration managed to gather the support of a considerable share of the audience. However, the House-majority continued to oppose the low-yield capabilities, and their eventual deployment required the assent of the democratic leadership. As we saw above, there were many value-based premises related to the passing of the 2020 NDAA that made the policy change possible. Those value premises outweighed all the premises raised by Democrats as reasons not to support the low-yield systems. However, the passing of the 2020 NDAA is also associated with a number of goal premises and means-end premises, which also outweighed all of the premises invoked by the Democrats to explain their opposition to those capabilities. This means that the Democrats, first and foremost, failed to change the conclusions drawn by the GOP and the administration regarding the low-

yield weapons. And secondly, the democrats agreed that the premises informing their decision not to support the development of the new systems should be outweighed by other premises, that is, the reasons why the 2020 NDAA should be adopted.

The democratic leader of the House Armed Services Committee – Adam Smith – supported the 2020 NDAA, despite it failing to block the deployment of the low-yield nuclear SLBM. The following premises explain why. Smith stated that the democrats had achieved more than anyway had expected from the GOP (ME), making the final bill an extraordinary achievement (ME). The NDAA, he believed, advanced U.S. national security (GP). He regretted that the law did not achieve the goal of diminishing U.S. influence in the war in Yemen (GP), lacking a provision to the effect (ME). As abovementioned, he also lamented the absence of a provision, which also had featured in the House NDAA (ME), that would have assured that the U.S. could not go to war with Iran without congressional assent. The fact that those were the “failed” provisions that the representative chose to highlight might suggest that blocking the deployment of the nuclear SLBM was not at the top of the list of democratic priorities included in the House NDAA. However, Garamendi, viewed the failure to delay the deployment of the new nuclear SLBM warhead of the greatest flaws of the bill (ME), along with the downsides to military programs (GP) caused by the redirection of funding for the border wall (ME). While it may not be cleared how the democrats’ priorities were weighed within the party, the new nuclear systems remained a crucial issue, albeit one among several others.

Smith and Garamendi also highlighted that the NDAA included some of the key democratic priorities, namely policies which concerned the troops, including “widow tax” relief (ME) and parental leave (ME). But also, others on per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (ME) and climate change (ME). The premises listed in this paragraph outweighed those which informed the democrats’ decision to block the deployment of the nuclear low-yield SLBM. Other downsides of the bill altogether (i.e., regarding the border wall) were also outweighed by these premises. However, one needs to keep in mind that the decision, by some democrats, to support the bill, was also informed by premises related to other courses of action outside the scope of this thesis, including those which did not feature in the discourse.

As for his Senate counterpart, Inhofe accused the democrats of trying to make a political point during the negotiations (GP), a covert goal which Smith rejected (GP). The republican leadership supported the full-year NDAA (ME) agreed with the democrats because failure to do so would lead to downsides. Military programs would be delayed (GP) and operations suspended (GP), and taxpayer funds would be wasted (GP). The U.S. military would fall even further behind (GP), and Washington would send a dreadful message to the world (GP) (list several downsides). The premises listed in this paragraph, along with the abovementioned value premises, explain the republican acceptance of the compromise NDAA, which would result in the low-yield nuclear SLBM entering into service.

Still, the senator filled a skinny NDAA (ME) – deemed preferable to a full-year NDAA (ME) with partisan provisions (VP) or a full-year continuing resolution (ME) – which would maintain essential national security programs (GP). That option was rejected by Smith because it would not

achieve anything (ME), would not restrict funding for the border wall (GP), would not include any of the democrats' priorities (GP), and would hinder national security (GP) (downside).

Arms control agreements were viewed by the securitizing actors, legislators of both parties and experts positively when it came to the goal of limiting Russia's non-strategic nuclear weapons. However, questions were raised among republicans and in the expert community regarding the feasibility of the course of action.

As our analysis showed, Russia was a core reason behind the policy change. In arguing for the need to develop additional low-yield nuclear weapons, the securitizing actors, as well as the republican lawmakers and some experts, articulated a great deal of threat perceptions of Russia. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the country would feature so prominently among the goal premises as well, with the capabilities being perceived as a means toward those ends. Other threats, associated with China, North Korea, Iran, and global terrorism, were perceived as well, albeit not featuring as prominently as Russia's. They were associated with the goals of "a flexible, tailored approach to deterring one or more potential adversaries."

Lastly, the Trump administration claimed that the U.S. could hedge either by having a robust nuclear weapon production infrastructure (ME), or by retaining a significant inventory of non-deployed weapons (ME). Given the current state of the U.S. infrastructure (CP), America would opt for the latter option. The size of U.S. nuclear forces would be informed by the ability of U.S. hedging strategies (ME) to reduce the likelihood of various challenges emerging (GP) and to decrease their harm if they occurred, nonetheless. Among those challenges, there were those of a geopolitical nature, resulting from a security environment marked by nuclear threats from Moscow, Beijing, and Pyongyang (CP). The U.S. would posture its nuclear capabilities (ME) to hedge against potential risks and threats (GP). Hedging strategies (ME) would also be tailored (GP) its hedging strategies (ME) across a range of potential adversaries (CP). Reductions in deployed nuclear warheads (GP) did not take place given Russia's refusal (CP) to negotiate a follow-up agreement to the New START (ME).

We now present some final observations based on several primary sources (U.S. legislation) which corroborate, reinforce, and enrich the findings we obtained through discourse analysis. Firstly, the (at the time) ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee, Adam Smith, attempted to strike the authorizing language and funding for the low-yield SLBM warhead from the House version of the 2019 NDAA. He failed to do so, his amendment gathering the support of all the committee's democrats, but none of the republicans⁷⁸. Given the Republican control of the House, Smith's efforts

⁷⁸ As mentioned before, on 10 July 2019 Turner complained to the full H.R. about the fact that the "Strategic Forces portion" of the House 2020 NDAA had passed in the Strategic Forces Subcommittee and in the full Armed Services Committee, despite receiving no republican votes, which he justified with the fact that the bill prohibited funding for the low-yield nuclear SLBM. Thus, he accused the democrats of jeopardizing bipartisanship (VP). However, as evidenced, the same partisan divide was apparent the year before as well, during the negotiations for the House 2019 NDAA, when the republicans controlled the House. Smith's amendment to strike the authorizing language and funding

were unsuccessful, and the bill authorized \$65 million dollars for the W76–2 Warhead modification program, the same amount requested by the administration (Report 115-676 on H.R. 5515, 2018: 481, 528).

In the full House Appropriations Committee, on 16 May 2018, representative Barbara Lee (D-CA) offered and then withdrew an amendment which would have struck the \$65,000,000 for the new low-yield nuclear warhead that was included in the House 2019 Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bill, and instead transfer the funds to nuclear non-proliferation accounts (House Appropriations Committee, 2018). On 7 June 2018, Lee re-offered the amendment, this time to the full H.R. (CREC, 2018: H4941). The amendment was, this time around, put up for a vote. The House opposed her amendment with an unfavorable 177-241 vote. Fifteen democrats opposed her amendment, while 5 republicans supported it (Clerk U.S. H.R., 2018). Thus, the House bill appropriated the \$65 million.

In passing its 2019 NDAA, the republican-controlled Senate authorized \$65 million dollars. A motion⁷⁹ was considered in the Senate Armed Services Committee which would have prevented the obligation or expenditure of funds associated with the deployment of a low-yield nuclear SLBM warhead pending the submission of reports from the DOD concerning the cost, schedule, and program implications of the capability. It failed to pass by roll call vote⁸⁰, with all republicans opposing the motion. However, two democratic senators – Bill Nelson (D-FL) and Claire McCaskill (D-MO) – voted against the motion as well, showing that not all democrats opposed the low-yield nuclear SLBM (Report 115-262, 2018: 605, 617). The final 2019 NDAA authorized the \$65 million included in both the House and Senate versions (Report 115-874, 2018: 786), despite the democrats’ attempt to prevent it.

In the Senate Appropriations Committee, Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) proposed an amendment that would have redirected funding for the W76-2 low-yield nuclear warhead to the National Nuclear Security Association’s infrastructure and operations account. His amendment was co-sponsored by Diane Feinstein (D-CA). After a roll call vote, the amendment was rejected on a 19-12 vote. Three democratic senators – Jon Tester (D-MT), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Joe Manchin (D-WV) voted against the amendment (U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations, 2018). Senators Feinstein and Reed submitted an amendment to the full Senate prohibiting the obligation or expenditure of funds on the low-yield nuclear SLBM. Senator Merkley submitted an amendment limiting to 50% the obligation or expenditure of funds on the low-yield nuclear SLBM until the DOE and the DOD submitted a report

for the low-yield SLBM warhead from the House version of the 2019 NDAA received no republican backing, despite enjoying full democratic support in the Armed Services Committee. In accusing the democrats of compromising bipartisanship in 2019, Turner omitted the fact that the republicans had acted the very same way the year before.

⁷⁹ In the Senate, a motion “brings a measure (e.g., bill) or matter (e.g., nomination) before the chamber for consideration” if those present and voting agree to it (Glossary of Legislative Terms, n.d.).

⁸⁰ A roll call vote is one “that records the individual position of each Member who voted” (Glossary of Legislative Terms, n.d.).

addressing several questions of the senator regarding the capability. However, neither the Feinstein-Reed nor the Merkley amendments were proposed⁸¹ (CREC, 2018: S4050-S4051). In the end, the Senate Energy and Water Appropriations bill, as well as the final Energy and Water Appropriations bill, agreed that the DOE should receive \$65 million dollars in funding to develop the sea-launched low-yield system, initiating the process of policy change that ended with its eventual deployment (Report 115-697, 2018: 138; Report 115-258, 2018: 125; Report 115-929, 2018: 178).

The following year, the House 2020 NDAA, as abovementioned, prohibited funds for the deployment of the low-yield nuclear SLBM. The House NDAA authorized none of the \$10 million dollars requested by the administration for the W76-2 warhead modification program, seeking to terminate the effort. The bill also did not authorize funds for the deployment of said warhead, despite the administration requesting \$19,6 million to do so. The House NDAA also authorized none of the \$5,607 million requested by the administration for an AOA regarding the low-yield nuclear SLCM, labeling it an “[u]njustified study requirement.” Representative Liz Cheney (R-WY) attempted to restore the funding for low-yield nuclear weapons by proposing an amendment to the full Armed Services Committee. She failed, however. Her amendment received the support of all republicans, but none of the democrats’ (Report 116-120. On H.R. 2500, 2019: 304, 375, 516, 556). On 18 June 2019, Michael Gallagher (D-WI) submitted a House NDAA amendment to the full H.R., which would have restored the \$19,6 million dollars for the Trident II modifications related to the W76-2 nuclear warheads (CREC, 2019: H4725-H4726). The amendment failed, receiving 236 noes and 192 ayes (3 voting democrats and all of the voting republicans voted aye) (H.Amdt.373 to H.R.2740 – Actions, 2019; Clerk U.S. H.R., 2019b). On 11 July 2019 Turner offered an amendment to the full H.R. to strike the section of the House 2020 NDAA which would prohibit funds for deploying the low-yield warhead (W76-2), “[replacing] it with a determination by the Secretary of Defense as to a certification of need” (CREC, 2019: H5713). However, the amendment was rejected by a vote of 221 noes and 201 ayes (all 190 republicans, an independent, and 10 democrats voted in support of Turner’s amendment) (H.Amdt.553 to H.R.2500 – Actions, 2019, Clerk U.S. H.R., 2019c). Thus, the House NDAA for FY 2020 authorized no funds for low-yield nuclear weapons.

The House Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bill for FY 2020, like the House 2020 NDAA, did not make appropriations of funds for the W76-2 modification program (the administration requested \$10 million dollars) nor for the nuclear SLCM study (the administration requested \$5,607 million dollars) (Report 116-83, 2019: 147). The House Defense Appropriations Bill denied funding for Trident II modifications related to the W76-2 warhead (i.e., the requested \$19,6 million dollars) (Report 116-84, 2019: 164). No amendments were offered to change those denials of

⁸¹ In the Senate, an amendment is considered “proposed or offered when a Senator has been recognized by the presiding officer, sends his/her amendment to the desk (or identifies an amendment already at the desk), and the amendment is read by the clerk” (Glossary of Legislative Terms, n.d.).

funding (House Appropriations Committee, 2019). Thus, the democratic-controlled House authorization and appropriation processes demonstrated opposition to both the low-yield nuclear SLBM and SLCM.

In the republican-controlled Senate authorization and appropriation processes, on the other hand, support for the capabilities prevailed. The Senate NDAA authorized the \$10 million dollars requested by the administration for the W76-2 warhead modification program. It did not prohibit funds for the deployment of the low-yield nuclear SLBM as the House NDAA had done. In fact, it authorized the \$19,6 million requested by administration to field the warhead. The Senate NDAA – unlike the House version – authorized the appropriations of the \$5,607 million requested by the administration for an AOA regarding the low-yield nuclear SLCM. However, the Senate bill took it one step further: it passed a motion what would increase the funding available for an AOA for a nuclear SLCM (to the tune of \$5 million dollars) and require the DOD to create a program of record for that program. The motion for increasing the SLCM funding passed in the Senate Armed Services Committee with all republicans voting in favor, being also joined by two democrats: Manchin and Doug Jones (D-AL) (Report 116-48, 2019: 65, 427, 490, 593, 607). Warren submitted an amendment to the full Senate for herself and senators Edward Markey (D-MA), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), and Jeff Merkley (D-OR) to the Senate 2020 NDAA. The amendment stated that “none of the funds authorized to be appropriated by this Act or otherwise made available for the DOD may be obligated or expended to arm Trident II D5 SLBM fielded on Ohio class ballistic missile sub-marines with the W76–2 low-yield warhead” (CREC, 2019: S3707-S3708). However, the amendment was not proposed (“All Information,” 2019). In the end, the final 2020 NDAA authorized the requested \$10 million dollars for the W76-2 warhead modification program, as well as the requested \$19,6 million dollars for the Trident II modifications related to the W76-2. It also provided the \$5,607 million dollars requested by the administration for the SLCM AOA. However, the provision of the Senate NDAA which would have increased the amount authorized for the nuclear SLCM AOA (to the tune of \$5 million) and would have established a program of record for that system, was not included in the final bill. The provision of the House NDAA which would have forbid the use of any authorized funds for FY 2020 for the deployment of the W76-2 was also absent in the final NDAA (Report 116-333, 2019: 924, 1170, 1463, 1562, 1619, 1728).

The Senate Defense Appropriations Bill granted all funding for Trident II modifications (Report 116-103, 2019: 109). The Senate Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bill for FY 2020 appropriated the requested \$10 million dollars for the W76-2 modification program and the requested \$5,607 million dollars for the nuclear SLCM AOA (Report 116-102, 2019: 146). No amendments regarding low-yield nuclear weapons were offered during the Full Appropriations Committee Markup⁸²

⁸² A markup is a “[m]eeting by a committee or subcommittee during which committee members offer, debate, and vote on amendments to a measure” (Glossary of Legislative Terms, n.d.). At the end of the meeting, the Defense Appropriations Bill and the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bill were reported to the (whole) Senate and placed on its legislative calendar for debate and a final vote on each bill.

of the 2020 Defense and Energy and Water Development bills (U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations, 2019). The final Energy and Water Appropriations Bill and the final Defense Appropriations Bill codified the positions of the Senate versions of those bills, in detriment of the House's. The bills appropriated the funding requested by the administration for the nuclear SLCM AOA (\$ 5,607 million dollars) (Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2020, 2019: 58c; Report 116-84, 2019: 164), for the W76-2 warhead modification program (\$10 million dollars), and for the Trident II modifications related to that warhead (\$19,6 million dollars) (House Committee on Appropriations, 2019: 48, 404, 405).

Overall, the democrats undertook several efforts to prevent the low-yield nuclear SLBM from being developed but were unable to gather any but the slightest amount of republican support. All amendments to the effect in 2018 failed, when the republicans controlled both chambers of Congress. In 2019, the democrats won back the House, being able to pass an authorization and two appropriations bill which evidenced their opposition to both low-yield systems. However, the House democrats, faced with republican opposition to their efforts to block the SLBM deployment and the SLCM AOA – as well to a myriad of other actions – caved to the GOP. The democrats' decision to do so was already explained by our discourse analysis. They accepted the policy change in the nuclear realm despite being unconceived by the premises for action voiced by the securitizing actors, and despite their concerns over many potential downsides of attaining the low-yield systems. The democrats' views were also backed by several experts, even though certainly not all.

Still, the analysis of the 2018 and 2019 authorizations and appropriations processes allowed us to conclude that the democratic opposition to the low-yield capabilities was stronger in the House than in the Senate. Roll calls in the Armed Services and Appropriations Committees evidenced several democrats who supported developing low-yield nuclear weapons, particularly in the higher chamber, even if it remained a minority position within the party. Two democratic senators even wanted to authorize more funding for the SLCM than the administration had requested. Thus, even if the democrats controlled both chambers of Congress, it is not certain that they would, in fact, block the development of the capability, assuming they held a thin majority. The various roll calls we covered evidence that the republicans were more united in their support of low-yield nuclear weapons than the democrats were in opposition to them. This fact may have contributed to other policies taking precedence over the nuclear weapons in the 2020 NDAA negotiations. However, while it is conceivable that other items of "priorities" of the House democrats (such as the "widow tax" relief) took precedence over preventing the U.S. acquisition of low-yield nuclear weapons, we cannot discard the possibility that the republicans simply refused to put that option on the table. If the latter is the case, however, then representative Smith failed to mention it, making it less likely to be the case. While the democratic chairman chose to highlight other provisions (i.e., regarding Iran and Yemen) not included in the 2020 NDAA as the ones whose absence he regretted the most, his colleague Garamendi indeed made the bill's failure to delay the SLBM warhead deployment a standout issue. In any case, the democrats allowed the policy change

to occur, despite not considering it the best way to act (ME) and deeming their acquisition unjustifiable by the various premises raised by the administration (CP, VP, GP), including threat perceptions of Russia (CP). They simply were unwilling to “kill” the 2020 NDAA (ME) to prevent the nuclear SLBM’s deployment (ME) or the nuclear SLCM study (ME), given the downsides of doing so (GP) and the goals that the bill achieved (GP). The republican control of both chambers of Congress in 2018, and control of the Senate in 2019 (VP), were also instrumental in the administration’s successful securitization of nuclear threats – particularly Russia – to acquire the low-yield SLBM and make headway on the SLCM. Notably, the president also threatened to veto (VP) the final 2020 NDAA over several issues, including the low-yield nuclear weapons. But we again reiterate that there was some degree of democratic support for the capabilities in the Senate that may have help facilitate the policy change by making it a bipartisan issue in the higher chamber. Democratic support in the Senate for low-yield nuclear weapons may have influenced the hierarchy of democratic priorities of the House democrats. This was not immediately evident, however. But we note that both in 2018 and 2019, the Senate versions of the NDAA passed with very strong bipartisan support, both out of the Armed Services Committee (with favorable votes of 25-2 in both years) and in the full Senate (with an 85-10 vote in 2018 and an 86-8 vote in 2019). Thus, either the development and deployment of low-yield nuclear weapons failed to gather a strong enough opposition in the Senate, or the issue was not relevant enough to merit jeopardizing the passing of the entire bill (Report 115-262, 2018: 2; Report 116-48, 2018: 2; U.S. Senate, 2018; U.S. Senate, 2019b). In any case, the republicans seemingly did not face a strong challenge from the opposition in the Senate when it came to pursuing the development and deployment of the capability.

Policy change may have also been facilitated by the fact that the administration’s call for action did gather expert support, even if far from absolute. Another final point to be made concerns the fact that Congress decided to go forward with the nuclear SLCM even though the INF Treaty, by then, was no longer in force. This shows that even though the premises for action related to the agreement no longer applied, the remaining premises were still deemed sufficiently strong, together, to support the decision to acquire the nuclear weapon. In particular, the capability was linked to the goal premise of giving the U.S. options in case Russia did not return to compliance with the agreement.

Conclusion

This thesis is rooted in the recognition of nuclear weapons as existential threats. That understanding, combined with U.S. and Russia's possession of most of the world's nuclear weapons, at a time when their adversarial relations unfold without a strong architecture in place to prevent nuclear war, underscore the importance of studying nuclear deterrence policies.

Uranium mining, nuclear testing, nuclear weapons production, and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, are but a few examples of how nuclear weapons have disrupted, damaged, or destroyed communities and ecosystems. There are also serious opportunity costs to consider – between 2023 and 2032, the U.S. projects its nuclear forces to cost a total of \$756 billion dollars – funds which could have been used instead to address critical social issues facing communities throughout the country. Nuclear weapons are not just an existential threat to Humanity but also an obstacle to societal progress, making it pivotal to understand how their policies are formulated, particularly in the U.S. and Russia, given their prominent standings as nuclear powers.

Nuclear deterrence, the bedrock of the strategic relationship between Washington and Moscow during the Cold War, retains that status today. The U.S. and Russia only find a peer in the other's nuclear capabilities, and they have a long history of adversarial relations through which they filter perceptions regarding the other's nuclear forces. Thus, attempts to improve their relationship, as well as efforts to navigate through crises, are shaped by threat perceptions related to their mutual ability to threaten each other's existence. So long as that ability persists or, in other words, as long as they maintain large nuclear arsenals that make transcending the logic of MAD an unattainable goal, their relationship should be incredibly vulnerable to breakdown, even in the warmest of climates. Military planners on both sides will continue to fall back on worst-case scenarios, which inevitably lead to concerns over potential cheating, quantitative disparities, or capability gaps. Thus, rather than making headway toward nuclear disarmament, both countries have pursued actions with negative impacts on strategic stability, and which increase the risk of nuclear contingencies.

The centrality of nuclear weapons in U.S.-Russian relations is clear. During warmer climates in bilateral relations in the post-Cold War period, arms control treaties and nuclear arms reductions were perceived by Washington to create opportunities for improved relations and cooperation with Moscow. During periods of tension, concerns over American strategic disadvantage, as perceived by the U.S. or by Russia, take center stage. In any case, as U.S. military planners contend, nuclear weapons reductions should not be made just for the sake of it, but to improve strategic stability. The burden of proof, as argued by a STRATCOM Commander, should be on those seeking reductions to demonstrate how they would enhance U.S. national security, given the elusive benefits and the clear risks of the course of action. As resistance to nuclear reductions persists on each side, it inevitably hinders the other party's progress, perpetuating threat perceptions that contribute to crises, not only hindering further progress on

disarmament, but also sparking arms races that undo past achievements aimed at lowering the risks of nuclear war. This vicious cycle is now continuing unabated at a time of heightened tensions and nuclear arms competitions. Moreover, the New START is suspended and expiring soon (in 2026), without any indication that it will be followed by a new treaty. As such, the preservation of large nuclear stockpiles to ensure deterrence credibility and strategic stability, as well as the associated struggles to meaningfully improve U.S.-Russian ties, not only go hand in hand, but should be expected to remain a core feature of their bilateral relationship for the foreseeable future.

This thesis determined that threat perceptions of Russia explain changes in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy by being regarded as reasons for action by American decision-makers. Threat perceptions of Moscow were the core determinant of change in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy across our timeframe of analysis, compared with other variables that also emerged as premises. As reasons for action, they were ubiquitous across all securitizing processes, commonly used, and carried a high normative priority, usually outweighing other premises. Threat perceptions of Russia were shown to have informed decisions to act, not to act, and how to act.

Our research was grounded in Constructivism, which understands the world, including International Relations, as socially constructed and changeable rather than merely determined by material elements such as military capabilities. This ontology suited our research goal considering that Washington and Moscow's long history of interactions in the nuclear realm, including in the context of arms control discussions, suggests that threat perceptions of one another should not be solely determined by the physical aspects of the other's nuclear arsenals, but also by those shared experiences.

Securitization Theory can conform with those understandings, with threat perceptions been seen as social constructions, discursively and intersubjectively created between securitizing actors and the audience. The securitizing actors communicate to the audience the existence of a perceived threat and recommend a course of action to address it, seeking the support of the audience. We consider securitization to be successful when policy change takes place, having been informed by threat perceptions of the securitizing actors. Considering our research goal of determining how threat perceptions of Russia explain changes in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy, we set out to identify the political actors who, as securitizing actors or audience members, took part in the process of socially constructing Russia as a threat while also deliberating on what should be done to address it. Accounting for the particularities of U.S. nuclear deterrence policymaking, we established as the main securitizing actors the President, the vice president, the DOD (including STRATCOM and the JCS), the DOS, and the NSA. The audience included the members of the legislative branch, particularly the lawmakers of the relevant committees (Armed Services, Foreign Relations, Appropriations), as well as experts from three prominent think tanks which cover nuclear weapons issues (CSIS, RAND, and the ACA). On one occasion (section 5.3), Congress acted as a securitizing actor, attempting to compel the Administration – which, along with the policy community, comprised the audience – to act by passing legislation to the effect.

Our thesis attempted to address several gaps in Securitization Theory. For starters, the discourses of the securitizing actors and of the audience members almost always contain more elements than simply threat perceptions and the recommended course(s) of action – which Securitization Theory does not provide analytical categories for. If we overlook those elements when analyzing securitizing processes, we limit ourselves to the establishment of a form of causality between the threat perceptions of the political actors and the response that might be enacted. By the same logic, we are also limiting ourselves when it comes to ascertaining the audience's reaction to the securitizing moves. If we do not analyze more of the elements featured in political discourse, we cannot determine why securitizing actors propose specific policies in lieu of others, nor why audiences decide to support certain actions but not others, even if they agree on the existence of a threat and on the need to act.

Focusing on threat perceptions of Russia does not mean that other reasons for action should be excluded from our analysis. Rather, accounting for the latter helps us better understand how threat perceptions can explain change. For instance, we may be able to compare the normative priority of certain threat perceptions in relation to other premises, understanding, as a result, which reason for action was the core determinant of policy change. Additionally, we may be able to identify relations between threat perceptions and other reasons for action. For example, political actors who perceive a given threat similarly may pursue different goals due to upholding different values and recommend different forms of action as result. Overall, while threat perceptions can act as a catalyst for change, leading to calls for action and generating intersubjective processes that can culminate in policy change, they are limited in their explaining power. Threat perceptions cannot, on their own, explain why certain policies are selected to the detriment of others.

To address this limitation, we combined Securitizing Theory with Political Discourse Analysis, which considers politics to be, above all, about making decisions about how to act, a conclusion which is informed by reasons for action, including, but not limited to, threat perceptions. Political discourse can be understood as comprised of a spectrum of reasons for action. Understanding Securitization as a Spectrum entails drawing a parallel between securitization discourse, that is, the political communications of the securitizing actors and the audience, and a series of white lights. The discourses, like white lights, can be split, leaving us with a spectrum of hues. The various hues are the reasons for action of the securitizing actors and the audience members. To retrieve the hues of the securitization spectrum, we employed a series of questions which allowed us to place the reasons for action utilized by the participants of the securitization process into several analytical categories – circumstantial premises (CP), value premises (VP), goal premises (GP), and means-end premises (ME).

As elements of securitization discourse, premises form, as mentioned, relations with each other, and may have different normative priorities assigned to them. The presence of threat perceptions in the context of action (along with other circumstantial premises) leads political actors to imagine future states of affairs where they are resolved or mitigated (goal premise[s]) in accordance with some source of

normativity (value premise[s]). They will then propose a line of action as the hypothetical means to take one from the current situation to the imagined future (means-end premise). Actions may also entail negative consequences – as downsides on goals and values – that arguably should not be overridden. This framework guides our analysis, helping us understand how policy change can occur based on how political actors deliberate. Analysis is about identifying, within securitization discourse, its premises (or reasons for action) and the relations between them. In deciding how to act, political actors assign normative priorities to various reasons, that is, they weigh reasons for, and against, particular courses of action, arriving at a decision on balance. Political actors may question the acceptability of the premises of others, the conclusion of others on how to act, or argue that the downsides of action should preclude certain forms of action. By juxtaposing the premises of securitizing actors with those of audience members, we can ascertain if the reasons for action of the former were accepted, contested, or ignored by the latter. In other words, we can determine how the audience reacted to securitizing moves in a way that allows us to explain why it accepted or rejected a specific course of action, given our focus on various reasons for action and on how they relate (and matter in comparison) to one another.

Regarding the reactions of the audience to securitizing moves, there are four possible scenarios. One: the juxtaposition reveals that there is complete (or almost) audience agreement across the various premises raised by the securitizing actors aiming to mobilize support for action. The strong resonance between the premises of the securitizing actors and those of the audience demonstrates audience support, which should enable (and explain) the policy change. Two: the opposite scenario occurs, with juxtaposition revealing dissonance between the securitizing actors and the audience, which can prevent (and explain the absence of) policy change. Three: the audience is split, meaning that formal voting mechanisms may come into play, and their study may be required to complement the findings garnered through PDA. And four: certain political actors end up voicing support for policies they initially disagreed with. This scenario may occur because new premises for action emerged, or because political actors decided, on balance, in favor of the least objectionable course of action in the absence of alternatives. Certain reasons will rise above others in explaining the change of mind, as the premises that could not be overridden. In all cases, our approach allows us to pinpoint specific reasons why audience assent or rejection to policy proposals occurred. The Securitization Spectrum enables us to obtain detailed explanations as to why policy change occurred in the presence of threat perceptions.

Another contribution made by this thesis to Securitization Theory pertained to how our model was attuned to the particularities of U.S. foreign policy decision-making. Rather than assuming similarities between securitization processes taking place across different contexts, we accounted for the role of institutions and how they operate, as well as the varying powers of political actors within the U.S. system of checks and balances. This information was not solely used to hand-pick the securitizing actors and members of the audience, but also to complement insights garnered through PDA. Party majorities in Congress, the unique powers of the branches of government, parliamentary procedures, and the federal budget process (which includes the authorization and appropriations processes) are but

a few elements of the local (American) decision-making context in which discourse is produced that help us explain how certain political outcomes were possible. For instance, the case of the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty demonstrated how securitization can occur despite considerable opposition from legislature – a check to the power of the executive branch – due to a legal precedent in that grants the U.S. President considerable flexibility in matters related to treaties. The varying powers of political actors mean that thresholds of audience assent for policy change can vary considerably, maybe even to the point of being almost irrelevant. Powers also vary within the audience. The Senate, for instance, yields more power in foreign policy decision-making than the House, while the expert community has no formal or informal powers in the foreign policy realm, being limited to indirect ways of influencing it, most notably, by voicing its public opinion. The expert community in the U.S. is a conduit for the agendas of powerful interest groups, who can also directly influence politicians by contributing to their campaigns.

Overall, our “specialized” approach to securitization, which accounts for the local, mainly institutional context, both before the discourse analysis (when selecting the relevant political actors) and after it (when integrating the findings of our analysis within that broader decision-making context in which discourse is produced), constitute, we believe, a novelty brought on by our research. Another contribution of our thesis to securitization studies concerns the concept of: “agent of securitization.” Our research highlighted how audience members acted as agents of securitization by exerting their influence on the decision-making process and shaping the occurrence of policy change, identifying several such cases. Some highlighted the influence of the outside-in members of the policy community in securitizing processes, while others involved the application of the legislative branch’s Constitutional powers to influence policy-outcomes.

Our focus on explaining not simply policy change but policy choice enabled the application of the concept of “agent of securitization.” Our approach highlighted that audience agreement on the need to act based on shared threat perceptions does not always translate to support for the policies advocated by securitizing actors. Other premises, beyond threat perceptions, play a critical role in shaping policy outcomes. Additionally, the specific (American) decision-making context – where discourse is produced, and actors hold varying degrees of power – further explains how influence is exerted.

In sum, we relied on an approach which not only considered threat perceptions of Russia, but their relation and relative weight compared to other reasons for action, within a specific local context. We will now detail how the country was perceived as a threat in the U.S., within our timeframe, and when and how it informed which changes.

The U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty (ME) and the acceleration of its missile defense program (ME) occurred in spite of threat perceptions of Russia among securitizing actors and the audience. The Administration and the GOP considered that, despite some concerns about how Russia would respond to those two actions (GP) (downsides), the consequences of not deploying a missile defense system (ME) were greater, given the rogue state and terrorist missile threat (CP). Some experts

shared that view. The Democrats were joined by some experts as well in challenging that assignment of normative priorities. They posited that a Russian response (GP) might outweighed any benefits of a missile defense system (ME).

The securitizing actors attempted to desecuritize Russia while securitizing other missile threats. The limits of the securitizing actors' ability to desecuritize Russia became clear when Administration officials begrudgingly acknowledged some concerns over Moscow. However, there was broad audience agreement that Russia was not an enemy (CP). In the end, most Democrats decided not to challenge the President's power to withdraw from the ABM Treaty, believing the decision to be his prerogative (VP). They also endorsed the Administration's proposed acceleration of the U.S. missile defense program, considering the new post-September 11 context of action (CP), the importance of preserving Congressional unity after the terrorist attacks (VP), and the achievement of U.S. goals in the war on terror (GP). Additionally, there was support for missile defense (ME) among Democrats, even if they disapproved with the President's intention to rush toward deployment (ME). The rogue state and terrorist missile threat was successfully securitized.

The Bush Administration's decision to carry out unilateral nuclear reductions (ME) was informed by the improvement of U.S.-Russian relations (CP), which made current levels excessive (ME), and Moscow's interest in reducing its own stockpile (CP). The unilateral reductions would contribute toward the Administration's goal of transitioning toward a new strategic framework (GP) and foster strategic stability with Russia (GP). The U.S. wanted to leave behind the policy framework based on the balance of terror (GP) and put behind the threats of the 20th century (GP). The U.S. should attain a credible deterrent at the lowest-possible level of nuclear weapons (GP) consistent with national security (GP) and ally obligations (VP). The securitizing actors wished for Russia to reciprocate U.S. reductions (GP). However, Washington would implement the action no matter what Moscow did (ME).

If relations with Moscow worsened (CP), the U.S. would remain able to revise its nuclear force levels and posture (GP). By maintaining a large responsive force of non-deployed nuclear warheads (ME) Washington would reserve itself the option of uploading them back onto delivery vehicles (GP). The Administration perceived an uncertain, changing, future strategic environment (CP) comprised of various potential nuclear contingencies (CP). Russia was considered a plausible, but unexpected one (CP). Its future could not be predicted with certainty (CP). U.S. unilateral reductions were expected to prevent Moscow from responding negatively to U.S. missile defense plans (GP).

The Democrats and the experts supported the unilateral reductions, wanting to reduce (GP) the threat posed by Russia's nuclear weapons (CP) and create momentum (GP) for arms control negotiations (ME). The GOP was divided, with some legislator viewing the reductions as timely (CP) and expecting them to prevent an arms race with Russia (GP). Others denoted some concern about the size of Russia's nuclear forces and potential nuclear activities (CP). In the end, Congress repealed a 1997 law that prevented unilateral reductions, enabling a change in policy. Securitization occurred, with threat perceptions of Russia informing the securitizing actors' decision to carry out nuclear reductions. In

doing so, the U.S. ensured that it could hedge against a future Russian threat (GP). However, threat perceptions of Moscow were not the main driver for reductions. Improved U.S.-Russian relations (CP), Moscow's disarmament goals (CP), the pursuit of a new strategic framework (GP) and America's nuclear warhead surplus (CP) had a higher normative priority.

Many of the premises above carried over to the Moscow Treaty (ME) debate, which would reduce U.S. and Russian levels of deployed nuclear forces (GP). The Administration agreed to the accord due to Russia's insistence (CP), seeking a closer partnership with the country (GP) and acknowledging the benefits of binding (VP) and mutual reductions (GP). The Democrats called for irreversible reductions (GP) due to concerns that Moscow would mirror the U.S. in warehousing warheads rather than destroying them (GP) (downside). The Administration explained that Russia could produce new nuclear weapons (CP), unlike the U.S. (CP). Thus, Moscow was unlikely to preserve extra warheads (GP) (rejected downside) while Washington needed to (ME). The Republicans denoted concern over Russia's production capability (CP), agreeing that the U.S. should not destroy formerly deployed warheads (GP). Despite the lack of verification provisions in the Moscow Treaty (GP), the Democrats supported the accord overall, a conclusion shared by most experts. Some warheads would be destroyed regardless (GP), and verification could be ensured through other means (GP). The GOP stood firmly behind the Administration on the accord.

The successful securitization of Russia resulted in the ratification of the Moscow Treaty despite threat perceptions not being a core determinant, that is, the main reason for action – the Administration was willing to do without the accord. Threat perceptions of Russia weighed heavier in the audience than in the Administration, with the latter's continued efforts to de-securitize Russia continuing to fail in “unmaking” the threat. There were suspicions in the Democratic Party and in the policy community that Moscow was the reason why the Administration was wary of destroying warheads.

During the Obama Administration, threat perceptions of Russia were the main reason for the treaty's ratification. The expiration of the START (CP) meant that the U.S. had no inspectors on the ground tracking Russia's strategic nuclear arsenal, verifying its reductions, and inspecting its nuclear activities (CP). It was important to act rapidly (ME) to restore verifiability (GP) to enhance transparency (GP), predictability (GP), and stability with Russia (GP).

A nuclear contingency involving Russia was upgraded during the Obama Administration, with Russian nuclear forces now described as a “significant factor” (CP) in determining the speed and the extent of U.S. reductions (ME), which now had to be matched by Russia (GP). The New START (ME) would reduce the deployed strategic nuclear forces of the two countries (GP), reducing the nuclear threat (GP). Flexibility (GP) remained valuable, while the triad would be retained (ME) to ensure strategic stability with Russia (GP). Threat perceptions of Russia continued to co-exist with non-adversarial premises. Despite the “reset” in bilateral relations (CP), several Russian nuclear weapons programs were of concern (CP), exacerbating the challenge of preserving strategic stability (GP).

The premises of the Administration resonated with the leaders of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Democratic Senator Kerry and Republican Senator Lugar), as well as most experts. The Senators also believed that a failed ratification would have a negative impact on nuclear non-proliferation (GP) and potentially lead to an arms race with Russia (GP). The leading Republican opposition to the treaty rejected its ratification, believing the long-term Russian threat that the New START would either create or fail to prevent (GP) to outweigh any near-term benefits (GP). The treaty could not contribute to strategic stability (GP) unless the U.S. nuclear infrastructure, stockpile, and triad were modernized (ME). There were concerns among Republicans that the treaty would undermine the U.S. missile defense program (GP) (downside). Seeking a common ground with his colleagues (VP), Kerry supported amendments to the resolution of ratification (ME), which mandated the President to certify his commitment (VP) to nuclear modernization (including the triad) (ME) and missile defense (ME). As result, enough support was generated to allow the Senate to approve the accord.

The year of 2014 constituted a watershed moment in U.S.-Russian relations. From 2001 to early 2014, threat perceptions of Moscow among securitizing actors and audience members related to ensuring predictability and transparency through verification, promoting strategic stability, hedging against possible changes in Russia, and reducing the threat posed by its nuclear arsenal given chances of miscalculation and other scenarios creating nuclear contingencies. There was a lack of trust and wariness of Russia, whose nuclear forces and modernization programs were viewed with concern. Threat perceptions of Moscow were more frequent among audience members, and during the Obama years (2009-2014) overall.

However, during the Bush and Obama Administrations, threat perceptions coexisted with non-adversarial narratives and aims of deepened relations and cooperation – at times leading audience members to point out the contradiction. By contrast, from 2014 onwards, new threat perceptions of Moscow emerged, becoming widespread, more overt, and more commonly voiced by the Administration, Congress, and experts alike. A broad context of Russian aggression and bellicose behavior was perceived (CP). Moscow was violating the INF Treaty, having developed and tested an intermediate-range land missile, which posed a threat to the U.S. and its allies (CP). Also denounced were Russia's actions in Ukraine (CP), , higher number of deployed strategic nuclear delivery systems (CP), increased reliance on nuclear weapons (CP), nuclear saber-rattling (CP), ICBM tests (CP), and military exercises (CP).

Despite those threat perceptions, the Obama Administration did not respond to Russia's violation of the INF Treaty, which the DOS reported in July 2014, other than by continuing to pursue diplomatic efforts. The Administration claimed to be considering military options, which were active defenses (ME), counterforce capabilities (ME) and countervailing strike capabilities (ME). Their goals were to bring Russia to compliance with the INF Treaty (GP), prevent it from gaining any strategic advantage (GP), and hedge against the demise of the accord (GP). The premises of the securitizing actors strongly resonated with those of the legislators and experts overall, who backed the three military

options. Despite Congressional pressure, exerted by funding the response options, mandating the production of a report, and withholding funds of the Executive Office of the President, the Administration continued to delay a decision on whether to pursue them. At the heart of the securitization failure lay the Administration's inability to "leap" from the premises, on the one hand, to the conclusion that it should pursue active defenses and counterforce and countervailing strike capabilities, on the other.

The securitizing actors arrived at a decision to act, and to do so via a multi-pronged approach, but appear to have never made a definite decision to move forward with the military response options they proposed in the first place. Threat perceptions of Russia did not lead to the changes in nuclear deterrence policy under analysis, evidencing both the agency of Congress in U.S. foreign policymaking and their limitations in spurring the executive branch into action.

On the other hand, threat perceptions of Russia (CP) incited Congress to successfully prevent the Administration from accelerating the dismantlement of retired warheads by 20% (ME) by imposing a ceiling on the appropriation, to the DOE, of funds for such activities. The Administration claimed that the country had a backlog of retired nuclear warheads (CP), claiming that inaction would undermine non-proliferation goals (GP), and national security (GP) (downsides), as well as the U.S. commitment, under the NPT (VP), to move toward nuclear disarmament (GP). Nuclear proliferation was a threat (CP) to peace (VP), security (VP), and the ideals of the UN (VP). Accelerating nuclear warhead dismantlement (ME) would free up money (GP) for nuclear modernization (ME) and help the U.S. position regarding Russia (GP).

The Administration's action was rejected on the basis that the U.S. should not rush toward disarmament at a time (ME) when Russia was violating the INF Treaty (CP). Washington had yet to decide how to respond, and those nuclear warheads might be needed (GP) (downside). The action would send the wrong message to Moscow and other U.S. adversaries and allies (GP). It would also hinder the nuclear stockpile modernization (GP), with negative effects on the reliability and safety on the U.S. nuclear stockpile (GP) and deterrence (GP) (downsides). By outweighing the non-proliferation threat (CP), at least to the extent that it would be exacerbated (GP) by the U.S. not accelerating nuclear warhead dismantlement (ME), threat perceptions of Russia (CP) informed a decision not to act (ME). Additionally, concerns about exacerbating or creating new threats from Moscow – in the form of potential negative consequences of action – explain why policy change did not occur as well.

Nuclear modernization activities also acquired new premises informing their continuation in the form of the new threat perceptions of Russia. The country's aggressive and provocative behavior (CP) became a reason informing U.S. nuclear stockpile modernization (ME), and the designs for a new long-range stand-off cruise missile (ME) and for a new long-range bomber (ME). According to the Administration, nuclear modernization activities (ME) would enable the U.S. to carry out the reductions (GP) contemplated under the New START (ME). The relationship between the latter three premises had been rejected by the Administration during New START discussions. The certification of the F-35A to

carry nuclear bombs (ME) and the W61-12 Life Extension Program also became associated with the new threat perceptions of Russia.

Near the end of the second term of the Obama Administration, a change in U.S. missile defense policy took place with the adoption of the 2017 NDAA. The change was informed by threat perceptions of Russia, albeit as a part of a broader, complex missile threat to the United States, its allies, deployed forces, and capabilities. Moscow (CP) and Beijing were developing complex missile technology to exploit U.S. weaknesses (CP). Russia was developing delivery systems designed to evade U.S. missile defenses (CP), flight-testing an HGV (CP) and enhancing its first strike capability (CP). Critics of the policy change, including the Administration, did not contest the threats (CP), but believed that the U.S. should rely on deterrence against Russia and China instead (GP), rather than suggesting it aimed to negate their strategic deterrents (GP), and risking arms competitions (GP) (downsides). The successful securitization of Russia within a broader complex missile threat established as U.S. missile defense policy (ME) to defend the U.S. homeland, deployed forces, allies, and capabilities (GP) against a ballistic missile threat described as developing and increasingly complex (CP).

Threat perceptions of Russia remained widespread during the Trump Administration. Russia had had now deployed intermediate-range ground-launched cruise missiles (CP), which threatened NATO, U.S. forces, allies and infrastructure (CP). Iskander missile had been deployed in Kaliningrad (CP), and the country had adopted an escalate-to-deescalate nuclear doctrine (CP). Other threats included the coercion of U.S. allies (CP), military exercises (CP), territorial aspirations (CP), new exotic nuclear delivery systems (CP), increasing militarism (CP), and attempts to undermine the present security framework (CP). The existence of a broad Russian threat was ubiquitous and unquestioned.

The Trump administration initially adopted similar goals to those of the previous presidency, pursuing an integrated strategy to achieve them. The strategy encompassed diplomatic (ME), economic (ME) and military measures (ME). The latter included active defenses (ME), counterforce capabilities (ME), and countervailing strike capabilities (ME). Broadly speaking, those premises received the support of the audience. In addition, the Administration called for research and development activities – without testing or deployment – of a new ground-launched intermediate-range cruise missile system (ME). The action received some bipartisan contestation, due to a perceived violation of the “spirit and intent” of the agreement (VP), and concerns that the U.S. was setting the stage for a future violation of the treaty (VP) (downsides). Still, the R&D activities received considerable support in the legislature, overall.

Abandoning the integrated strategy, the Administration announced that the U.S. would abandon the INF Treaty (ME). The announcement aimed to pressure Moscow to return to compliance (GP) or otherwise free the U.S. from the constraints it imposed on weapons development (GP). By preserving the INF Treaty (ME), Washington was conceding military advantage (GP) (downside) to states that were not bound by the agreement, including Beijing (CP).

The Administration's decision generated strong criticism among Democrats, some Republicans, and most experts. The withdrawal did not achieve any goals (ME), and there was no credible alternative to the accord in place (GP). The decision worsened U.S.-Russian tensions (GP) and European security (GP) and would negatively affect arms control (GP) and non-proliferation efforts (GP). Russia had been given a free pass on its legal obligations (GP) and might now increase its violation (GP) (downsides). Support for the withdrawal was also voiced by Republicans and some experts, who reiterated the Administration's premises while acknowledging several of its downsides (GP).

Overall, while the premises informing the Administration's integrated strategy resonated with the audience, the withdrawal decision, and the reasons for action on which it was based, were not as well received. Still, the 2018 NDAA claimed that it was within the right of the U.S. (VP) to leave the accord (ME) if it concluded that its supreme interests were under jeopardy (VP). Thus, for Congress as a whole, the action was acceptable under certain circumstances, even if they may have not been met.

Russia was successfully securitized as a threat, with the U.S. withdrawing from the INF Treaty. To a lesser extent, other threats, and particularly China, also weighed on the decision-making process, and we consider them to have been securitized as well. Some inconsistencies in the administration's messaging regarding the decision to leave the treaty might be explained by the fact that, allegedly, Trump's first announcement of the decision caught other members of the administration by surprise.

Threat perceptions of Russia also motivated changes in U.S. missile defense policy during the Trump administration. Russia and China were revisionist powers posing a threat to the U.S. homeland (CP). Moscow often simulated nuclear attacks against America (CP). If it were to attack U.S. territory, it would likely use cruise missiles, bombers, or hypersonic missiles (CP). Regionally, Russia's fielded increasingly more advanced and diverse nuclear missiles and was developing a new generation of ballistic and cruise missiles (CP). Russia (CP) and China could attack U.S. defense and civilian infrastructure during a conflict (CP) and held America at risk with nuclear and conventional weapons (CP). Teheran (CP) and Pyongyang's regionally focused missiles were increasingly advanced (CP). The U.S. homeland, deployed forces, allies, and partners were threatened not just by ballistic missiles, but also hypersonic and cruise missiles, which were harder to defend against and track (CP). There was a perceived American capability gap regarding the last two missile categories (CP). Audience members also perceived a ballistic, cruise, and hypersonic threat from those states to the U.S. homeland, as well as regionally.

With audience support, the securitizing actors sought to develop and deploy a homeland space-based sensing architecture (ME) to improve detection, tracking, and discrimination (GP) of cruise and hypersonic missile threats (CP), which Russia and China possessed (CP). It initiated the Hypersonic and Ballistic Tracking Space Sensor program and established an organization for the development of a system architecture for homeland cruise missile defense and, a hypersonic defense program.

The Administration also explored other courses of action to outpace (GP) and protect the homeland (GP) from rogue state ICBM threats (CP). The use of regional systems for homeland defense

was tested throughout the Administration, generating criticism from Democrats and experts, who were concerned that Moscow and Beijing might fear their nuclear deterrence being threatened (GP), which could have a negative impact on arms control (GP) and stability (GP). The Administration dismissed concerns (GP) and rejected constraints on the U.S. missile defense program (GP).

The Trump Administration expressed ambiguity on U.S. missile defense policy, declaring that ensuring the detection and destruction of any missile launched against the U.S. homeland was a goal of action. By contrast, the 2018 NPR changed the 2017 NDAA language, clarifying that the U.S. would rely on nuclear deterrence (ME) to tackle the larger and more sophisticated Russian (GP) and Chinese ICBM capabilities (GP). At the regional level, on the other hand, U.S. missile defenses would defend deployed forces, allies, and partners from regional missile threats of all sources (GP). The legislature and some experts supported the goal and the continued improvement of U.S. regional missile defenses (ME) in the face of increasingly more advanced missile threats, including cruise and hypersonic missiles (CP).

Our thesis has shown that the scope of U.S. missile defenses has been progressively expanded to encompass more and more threats. The securitization of Russia in the United States as a ballistic, cruise and hypersonic missile threat, at both the homeland and regional levels, informed investments in and the establishment of missile defense programs which received the support of the legislature and of some experts. However, threat perceptions of Russia occur against the backdrop of a broader securitization process, which includes often assigned Beijing the same normative priority as Moscow. Thus, it would be more accurate to explain the missile defense investments as outcomes of the successful securitization of a near-peer missile threat

Lastly, the U.S. perceived Russia to mistakenly believe that its higher number and greater variety of non-strategic nuclear weapons (CP) would enable the successful enactment of an “escalate-to-deescalate” strategy (CP). Moscow was under the impression that limited nuclear use would force the U.S. to surrender during a conventional crises or conflict, because its only other alternative would be the use of a high-yield nuclear weapon, which risked an all-out nuclear war (CP). Moscow had lowered its nuclear threshold (CP) at a time when it was displaying a broad pattern of aggressive, destabilizing statements and actions (CP). All U.S. low-yield nuclear weapons were delivered by air (CP); yet modern air defense systems were increasingly advanced and difficult to overcome (CP). Current U.S. modernization plans predated those threat developments (CP) and needed to be supplemented with low-yield capabilities: a SLBM (ME) and a SLCM (ME). The capabilities (ME) would correct any mistaken belief that the U.S. had no options besides suicide or surrender when faced with nuclear use (GP).

Despite broad acceptance of the overall threat posed by Russia, the existence of such the “escalate-to-deescalate” doctrine was questioned by some Democrats and experts (CP). They also claimed that existing systems (ME) already ensured the credibility of U.S. deterrence (GP) and that the capabilities would increase the risk of nuclear use (GP), to an exacerbated arms race (GP), and compromise U.S. commitments to nuclear disarmament (VP) (downsides). The securitizing actors,

whose premises resonated with the Republicans', dismissed the occurrence of downsides. The expert community was divided, with some echoing the premises of the Democrats, while others shared the other camp's view. Amid a context of divided government in 2019, and issues of higher normative priority, the Democratic majority in the House accepted the continued development and deployment of the capabilities (ME), claiming to have extracted concessions from the Republicans elsewhere in the 2020 NDAA (ME). Reaching a bipartisan agreement was important (VP) and, as a whole, the bill reflected American values (VP), furthered national security (GP), and included many of the priorities of the House Democrats (ME), despite also entailing some downsides (GP/VP). The securitization of Russia occurred, informed by perceptions of the country's mistaken belief in the weakness of U.S. regional nuclear deterrence credibility.

The policy changes analyzed revealed several cases where the audience members succeeded and failed to act as "agents of securitization" During the Bush Administration, several Democratic legislators failed to overturn the ABM Treaty withdrawal by resorting to the Judiciary. On a bipartisan basis, senior Senators strived to prod the President Bush into involving the chamber in the arms control process by celebrating a treaty requiring the Senate's "advise and consent." During the Obama Administration, Republican Senators leveraged the same power during the New START ratification process, clinching several commitments from the Administration, a 10-year nuclear modernization plan, and a budget adjustment. Using the power of the purse, Congress failed to pressure the Administration into developing military response options to Moscow's INF Treaty violation. The same power succeeded in preventing the acceleration of U.S. nuclear warhead dismantlement. External advisors – the Hudson Institute and the Defense Science Board – were involved in successful securitization processes: the 2016 missile defense policy change, and the development of low-yield nuclear weapons, with the former also highlighting the influence of the "revolving door" phenomenon. The audience's role as an agent of securitization hinged on the diverse and varying power of the participants in U.S. foreign policymaking, including shifting power dynamics resulting from changes in party majorities. Those changes create power disparities within the audience but can also change the relative power of the President by increasing or reducing his ability to enact changes in policy.

In addition to confirming our research hypothesis, our understanding of securitization as a spectrum evidenced the influence of reasons for action besides threat perceptions of Russia in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy, as well as the relative importance of the latter compared to the former. We argue that concerns over potential Russian responses to U.S. missile defense programs and deployments struggled to inform a decision not to pursue them. Support for missile defense has grown in Congress since the Bush years, and while trepidations over Moscow's reactions persisted, they were outweighed by other premises, mainly rogue state missile threats. Concerns over China's potential responses were also present, despite their generally lower (but growing) normative priority. As a broader and more complex missile threat environment was perceived, Russia and China were at times jointly mentioned under the umbrella of "near-peer" adversaries. U.S.-Russian arms control agreements evidenced U.S.

concerns about other nuclear powers despite Moscow's centrality as a reason for action. Some political actors believed that excessive U.S. nuclear force reductions might encourage others to expand their own. A similar argument was made about China and other states regarding the INF Treaty, given their lack of legal constraints. While overshadowed by Russia, other nuclear powers also informed the importance of nuclear modernization and of retaining a large nuclear stockpile. They were all conducting such programs and could produce new warheads. Lastly, it was claimed that the low-yield weapons could achieve goals in "Asia," despite the Russia's much higher normative priority.

By describing and explaining the occurrence of changes in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy, we provided insights on how the country has, in different occasions, steered toward or away from nuclear disarmament. In emphasizing the extent to which threat perceptions of Russia matter in U.S. nuclear deterrence policymaking, we also showed how much they have contributed to the latter scenario, amplifying the existential threat posed by nuclear weapons. However, even at times of improved relations with Russia, such as during the Bush Administration, nuclear weapons reductions were resisted. Reductions in the levels of deployed nuclear weapons – admittedly a step in the right direction – needed to be offset by the preservation of a large stockpile of non-deployed nuclear weapons, so that the first decision could be reversed, if needed. Clearly, threat perceptions of Russia played a key role, as a core reason for action, in U.S. decisions to not only resist nuclear warhead destructions, but also to modernize nuclear infrastructure and capabilities, to expand the scope of missile defense goals, pursue new nuclear capabilities, and abandon arms control.

However, discourse does not exist in a vacuum; it is influenced by historical, cultural, institutional, and social contexts. U.S. nuclear deterrence policy exists within a broader context of American foreign policy, and it is influenced by its main themes. Our thesis focused on Russia, and on how threat perceptions of the country interacted with other reasons for action to inform policies within the U.S. institutional context for national security decision-making. However, our discourse analysis evidenced the existence of a pattern in how securitizing moves and/or reactions to them were often presented: in relation to American military power. Either the U.S. enjoyed military superiority (CP) and the condition had to be preserved (GP), or a shortcoming in U.S. military power was perceived (CP) and needed to be rectified (GP). It was common for political actors to believe that security threats should be addressed through U.S. military power.

Regarding U.S. superiority, Senator Biden perceived the SORT (ME) to have been informed by military power since it did not contemplate nuclear warhead destruction (GP) – a goal Senator Warner believed the U.S. should not pursue to maintain "a clear superiority that deters war" (GP). The New START would force the U.S. into the first "one-sided reductions in military power" (GP) (downside) since WWII, according to Senator Kyl, a critic of the accord. The securitizing actors claimed that the ABM and the INF Treaties (ME) imposed constraints on U.S. military capability development that non-signatories did not face (GP) (downsides). A group of Democrats contended that rather than investing in

low-yield nuclear capabilities, the U.S. should use those funds to maintain U.S. conventional superiority (GP).

As per U.S. shortcomings, rogue state and terrorist missile threats (CP) impeded U.S. freedom of intervention abroad (GP) and created vulnerabilities at home (GP) (downsides), according to the Bush Administration. The Obama Administration was concerned with the verification gap created by the expiration of the START (CP) while its successor took steps to prevent a potential Russian military advantage from its violation of the INF Treaty (GP). A Hudson Institute report perceived a missile defense capability gap being exploited by near-peer and rogue states (CP). The 2019 MDR claimed that rising offensive cruise and hypersonic missile threats needed to be outpaced (GP). The DOD perceived Moscow to mistakenly believe that limited nuclear use would provide it with a strategic advantage over Washington (CP).

If threat perceptions of Russia are perceived, in the United States, against the backdrop of either the preservation of military superiority or the closing of every security gap, then American political actors might still pursue military power-related goals in the absence of threat perceptions of Moscow. In a scenario where a threat from Russia is not perceived, securitizing actors might turn their attentions to a different actor or group of actors in the International System which, as a reason for action, might inform actions similar as the ones we covered in this thesis. The policy implication being that there is no guarantee that the removal of threat perceptions of Russia from the deliberative process of U.S. political actors (e.g., due to the resolution of political differences and establishment of friendly relations) would lead Washington to pursue steps to reduce the existential threat posed by nuclear weapons. American political actors might instead securitize other perceived threats. Securitization is, after all, a political choice, and our exploration of U.S. missile defense policy already revealed that the increased normative priority of China means that simply resolving perceptions of a complex Russian missile threat are unlikely to lead the U.S. to shut down its hypersonic and cruise missile defense programs.

As we observed during the Bush Administration, at a time of exceptional American military superiority, even future uncertainty can be securitized as a threat requiring action. Assuming threat perceptions serve overarching military power-related goals, then the U.S. might incur in unnecessary spending; retain, modernize or develop politically attractive yet unjustified capabilities; or create a self-fulfilling prophecy through the creation of security dilemmas: as U.S. security policies are perceived by others as threatening, they might respond by acting in ways perceived as threatening by Washington, creating a vicious cycle.

Nuclear weapons are the great equalizer; U.S. steps to achieve security through power might produce effects that are contrary to what was intended, as other nations might become more, rather than less, interested in acquiring, preserving or modernizing the very capabilities Washington fears will be used against it. On several occasions, U.S. political actors perceived such phenomena to be occurring. For instance, U.S. military superiority was believed to have led Russia to increase its reliance on nuclear weapons, whereas Washington's efforts to close a vulnerability to ballistic missiles had motivated the

development of new Russian capabilities. Still, the general tendency in the U.S. was to bolster nuclear capabilities, missile defense systems, and the infrastructure of the nuclear complex regardless. The U.S. decision to develop low-yield nuclear weapons showed that even if the U.S. believes that there is no strategic advantage to be exploited, an adversary's perception to the contrary can constitute a reason for action as well.

The obstacles to taking steps toward nuclear disarmament were apparent and felt even by the Presidents themselves. At a time when President Bush had voiced ambitious (albeit vague) goals on nuclear reductions, STRATCOM Commander Mies spoke to the Senate Armed Services Committee to denounce the "tyranny" of very deep cuts, arguing that the benefits of the action were elusive and the risks were clear, and claiming that the burden of proof should be on those seeking reductions to demonstrate the national security gains incurred. It was mentioned in the policy community that Bush faced pressured from within the Administration not to fundamentally change U.S. nuclear deterrence policy. In another example, President Obama's vision of a world against nuclear weapons was weaponized against him, as Republican Senators questioned his commitment to nuclear modernization, including to the triad, given the leader's "dangerous" and "unrealistic" goal. Thus, to ratify the New START, the President had to commit to considerable nuclear modernization investments and to the continued development and deployment of missile defense systems.

However, more research would be necessary to ascertain if, and under which conditions, U.S. military power is up for negotiation. Our conclusion stands: Russia was the core reason for action in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy across our framework of analysis, overall. Several of the policy changes observed were informed by a variety of premises where specific perceptions of Russian behavior informed particular goals and policies. Military power might be an overarching goal of action but does not sufficiently explain why the U.S. enacts the policies it does. The U.S. does not mindlessly develop capabilities to ensure its superiority while covering all shortcomings; it acts in response to a spectrum of reasons for action. At times, even constraints on U.S. military power were shown to be acceptable to a certain degree. This is why understanding securitization as a spectrum is important: foreign policy is a complicated matter; meaning that explaining political phenomena is a complex endeavor as well. Oversimplification should be avoided given how many reasons for action political actors weigh together in order to arrive at a conclusion on how to act.

The current outlook of U.S.-Russian relations, and of great power competition more broadly, should be expected to discourage what is already a relatively unpopular goal among American political actors overall in nuclear disarmament. Still, will make some policy recommendations, bearing in mind the negative societal impacts of nuclear weapons and the importance of addressing them, which served as the starting point of our thesis.

While arms control cannot be accomplished by the U.S. alone, efforts to restore New START inspections, to pursue a new agreement with Russia, and possibly engage with China and other nuclear powers within that realm would be welcomed developments. Even small achievements could be positive

in the current environment. Questions of feasibility are warranted, which is why the U.S. could seek creative approaches to arms control. A tentative suggestion some experts have proposed would involve an arms control formula whereby hypersonic weapons and missile defense interceptors would be counted against any nuclear warhead ceiling negotiated in the future. Such an approach could be appropriate to negotiations with China, given the discrepancy between the size of its stockpile and those of the U.S. and Russia. Hypersonic capabilities are still emerging, making it crucial to address them now before they fully mature and large numbers of units are produced.

The U.S. President could also adopt a “no first use” policy, whereby the country would not be the first to use nuclear weapons in a conflict or crisis. It could put into effect a “sole purpose” policy, making it the explicit purpose of the U.S. nuclear arsenal to deter nuclear attacks against the U.S. and its allies. The sole authority of the U.S. President to use nuclear weapons should be terminated to require further approval. The influence of the nuclear priesthood in U.S. nuclear defense planning means that fundamental challenges to long-standing nuclear deterrence policy will be resisted unless a U.S. President becomes more involved in the process and creates space for participants from other Departments – such as the DOS and the DOE – to dilute the responsibilities currently residing with the Pentagon. Outside experts could be brought in to advise in the drafting of the next NPR, particularly from the arms control community.

The Doomsday Clock, a marker of scientific concern about the risks of a human-induced global disaster, is at 90 seconds to midnight. This is the closest Humanity has ever been to apocalypse (midnight). But it is still not too late to act. The world’s nuclear powers remain overly unconcerned about the risks they are subjecting Humanity to and refuse to take concrete steps toward disarmament. They are unlikely to change course without pressure. On 12 June 1982, 1 million people marched from Central Park, New York, to the UN Headquarters to call for an end to nuclear weapons. As of recently, however, the public has not been paying enough attention to nuclear issues. That needs to change. We should all seek greater involvement in such matters as change is sorely needed. It is crucial to expand on the successes and high visibility of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and the Nihon Hidankyō group, Nobel Peace Prize winners in 2017 and 2024, respectively, for their efforts to promote global nuclear disarmament, raise awareness about the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons, and advocate for comprehensive treaties that ensure a safer world free from nuclear threats.

On 25 September 2015, the UN member states adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Nuclear weapons threaten their achievement. As noted by the ICAN, nuclear weapons use would put at risk our ability to end hunger; to ensure good health and promote well-being; to achieve gender equality; to guarantee clean water and sanitation; to reduce inequalities; to secure sustainable cities and communities; to take urgent action on climate change; conserve the oceans; protect terrestrial ecosystems; and finally the promotion of peaceful, inclusive, and just societies. While the threat of nuclear weapons looms large, activism, global cooperation and advocacy for nuclear disarmament can

pave the way for a safer future. Governments must be held accountable. Only through persistent efforts and solidarity can we hope to dismantle the barriers to universal peace in larger freedom that nuclear weapons represent.

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Missile defense, the ABM Treaty and unilateral nuclear arms reductions: A new strategic framework (Discourses of section 4.1 of Chapter 4)

1. Political Discourse Analysis

1.1. Securitizing actor discourse

During his nomination hearing on 11 January 2001, the soon-to-be Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld stated that the U.S. ought to deploy a missile defense system⁸³. Rumsfeld described a “different world” from that of the days of the Cold War: one with “a more diverse and less predictable set of potential adversaries” whose regional influence aspirations and willingness to use force were challenging to the United States (CP). In this new world, the proliferation of WMDs and their delivery systems were increasingly a fact of life (CP) that needed to be acknowledged and managed (GP).

The United States needed to protect the American people, and its forces deployed abroad (GP), as well as friends and allies against such threats (GP). Moreover, the country should “continue to play its truly vital role” in contributing to peace and stability in the world (VP). The incoming secretary also stated that the United States should “[aim] at devaluing investment in WMDs and their delivery systems by potential adversaries” (GP), making deterrence more credible (GP), and maintaining U.S. freedom to act in a crisis (GP). He wanted to deny U.S. adversaries the advantages that came from the threat and use of WMDs (GP). The U.S. needed to be “capable of deterring and defending against new threats” (GP).

For Rumsfeld, the old Cold War deterrence, that is, deterrence by threat of punishment, “[was] imperfect for dissuading the threats of the new century and for maintaining stability in [America’s] new national security environment.” Striving to slow proliferation, while essential, was also insufficient: a determined state might still be able to acquire WMDs and missiles (ME). Therefore, policy alternatives needed to be considered. Rumsfeld believed that a missile defense system combined with offensive nuclear capabilities would achieve the proposed goals (ME).

⁸³ We chose to immediately identify, at the start of the analysis of every discourse, the conclusion that the securitizing actor arrives at regarding how to act. That way, the reader can immediately understand the purpose of the discourse, from the securitizing actor’s point of view. That conclusion is categorized as ME during the actual analysis in the subsequent paragraphs.

The nominee stated that Russian nuclear systems were very likely decreasing in number - apart from agreements or negotiations - (CP) due to their economic situation (CP). Russia was not the only state that America ought to be attentive to (CP). China's nuclear capability was presently very modest, but its budget had expanded considerably, and the country strived "to be a factor" in the realm of strategic nuclear weapons (CP). Rumsfeld did not know whether the U.S. could reduce or how much until the completion of the NPR, since the country needed to be able to maintain the target list deemed appropriate by nuclear planners (GP) (Russia and China are nuclear targets). But he believed that some reductions could be made without compromising that goal (ME) (S. HRG. 107-749, 2001: 13-20, 63).

During Colin Powell's nomination hearing 17 January 2001, the future Secretary of State claimed that the United States should deploy an effective theatre BMD system (ME) and persuade Moscow (GP) of the importance of moving beyond the ABM Treaty (GP) and of carrying out mutual nuclear stockpile reductions (ME).

Powell explained that U.S. troops were vulnerable, not only to conventional weapons, but also to the WMDs that some nations were developing (CP). He was not confident that some of those nations had the ability to behave rationally (CP). The general also observed that Russia and the United States had an excessive number of nuclear weapons (CP). Relations with Russia (GP) should not be dictated by any fear, for instance, regarding NATO enlargement (CP) (rejected premise).

The general wanted to enhance deterrence (GP) and defend and deter opponents from threatening America or its friends with missiles or WMDs (GP). He also sought to lower the value and number of offensive weapons, including nuclear weapons (GP). The goal was extended to American and Russian nuclear weapons (GP). Missile defense was not directed at Russia or China (not a goal of action) (GP). America should help Russia solidify its democracy, strengthen its economy, join "the wider world", achieve lower levels of nuclear weapons, improve its stability, and maintain permanent peace in the region (GP).

Powell wanted a safer world with less nuclear weapons (VP). He also believed that the U.S. had an obligation to itself, to its troops, and its allies and friends to move forward with missile defense (VP). It would benefit all of mankind (VP), making the world a safer place by initiating the process of diminishing the value of offensive weapons (GP).

According to Powell, the ABM Treaty was most likely not relevant within the strategic framework that the administration wanted to pursue (ME). The new framework (GP) included offensive nuclear weapons (ME), missile defense (ME), arms control (ME), and nuclear non-proliferation efforts (ME), and would leave the U.S. would be "much better off in [its] relations with both friend and foe" (GP). Deployment missile defenses would contribute to the goals of action of the Secretary of State-Designate (ME). To deploy missile defense systems (ME), the U.S. needed "to see the ABM Treaty modified [ME] or eliminated [ME] or changed in some rather fundamental way from the manner in which it has been implemented since it was signed in 1972" (ME).

Nuclear reductions (ME) were among the actions through which the Administration would establish the new framework (GP) and make the world a safer place (VP). The U.S. would also assist Russia in dismantling their own offensive nuclear weapons – as many as possible, as quickly as possible (ME). There were too many nuclear weapons in the U.S. and Russian nuclear stockpiles (CP); they were not necessary (ME).

The U.S. would consult with his allies and friends (i.e., complementary course of action) (ME) and consider the diplomatic ramifications of acting (possible downsides on goals and/or values) (VP/GP). America would also consult with Moscow and Beijing about the new strategic framework it was designing (ME) as the parties “[continued] to operate on the arms control front” (ME). Concerns with an arms race with Russia were somewhat overstated. He argued that if the ABM Treaty was discovered to be null and void today, neither Moscow nor Beijing would start planning an arms competition tomorrow (GP) (downplays possible downsides). The transparency of the American society (CP) would outweigh the two nations’ biggest fears (CP) in informing their decision not to pursue an offensive weapons buildup (GP) (not an expected downside) (S. HRG. 107–14, 2001: 14-37).

On 1 May 2001, President Bush stated that the United States should adopt “new concepts of deterrence that [relied] on both offensive and defensive forces.” The country needed a new framework that would allow it to build missile defenses and move beyond the constraints of the outdated ABM Treaty.” The world of today “[required] a new policy, a broad strategy of active nonproliferation, counterproliferation and defenses.”

The Cold War was now behind, and Russia was no longer an enemy (CP). Yet, the world was still dangerous, less certain, and less predictable because many nations had WMDs and the missile technology to deliver them. Among them, were “some of the world’s least responsible states (...) for whom terror and blackmail [were] a way of life” (CP). They hated the U.S., its allies, and its values (CP).

Bush wanted to move past a relationship with Russia based on the concept of MAD (GP), which the ABM Treaty codified (CP). He sought a clean break from the Cold War past (GP) and a new relationship with Russia (GP). This new relationship (GP) should be based on “openness, mutual confidence [VP] and real opportunities for cooperation,” (ME) instead of distrust (CP) and mutual vulnerability (CP) (the goal of a new relationship was underpinned by the values of openness and confidence and enabled cooperative action. The goal was a future state of affairs whereby the two countries no longer faced a problem of the present context of action: a relationship based on distrust and mutual vulnerability).

Bush wanted to “deny weapons of terror,” especially in their boost phase (GP), and “deter anyone who would contemplate their use” (GP). The President aimed to protect Americans, allies, and friends (GP), to enable military interventions in strategic parts of the globe (GP) and prevent terror and intimidation (GP). Defenses (ME) would increase deterrence (GP) by reducing the incentive for proliferation (GP). The U.S. should lead by example on nuclear arms reductions (VP), moving quickly

to realize “[America’s] interests [VP] and the interests for peace in the world” (VP). The U.S. would “[achieve] a credible deterrent with the lowest-possible number of nuclear weapons” (GP), having an obligation to provide its allies with a credible deterrent (VP) and to work together with them (VP).

Bush denied that his proposed policies would create negative consequences on other U.S. goals in relations with allies, friends, and interested states such as Russia and China (GP), because America would consult with them (ME). In fact, cooperating with Russia would contribute to U.S. goals, because it would allow the United States and Russia “to share information so that each nation can improve its early warning capability, and its capability to defend its people and territory (GP). America was “not presenting [its] friends and allies with unilateral decisions already made,” but “[looking] forward to hearing their views, (...) and to take them into account” (VP). The U.S. also sought the input of other interested states such as Russia and China (ME).

Staying within the framework of the treaty was not an option, because it would force the U.S. to continue to rely on Cold War deterrence, which was “no longer enough” in light of the President’s goals (ME). Moving beyond the constraints (GP) of the outdated treaty (ME) was necessary in order for the U.S. to deploy missile defenses (ME) and achieve the abovementioned goals of action. Still, missile defense was not meant to be sufficient on its own, but instead combined with deterrence to provide “limited, but effective, defenses” (ME). The speaker further strengthened its conclusion by claiming that missile defenses were made possible by technological breakthroughs, and that, despite the technological challenges they still posed, America would be able to build on past successes (ME). On nuclear arms reductions, however, few details were provided, and no alternative policies considered. However, Bush declared that such reductions would not have negative consequences on America’s national security (GP) and ally obligations (VP) (Bush, 2001b).

In the context of his June 5 nomination hearing before the Senate Committee on Armed Services and a 24 July 2001 Hearing of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Douglas J. Feith, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy of the DOD voiced several views on U.S. nuclear deterrence policies.

He perceived a threat posed by rogue state and terrorist WMD-armed ballistic missiles (CP). The threat was not fictional, remote, or limited and would not disappear (CP). North Korea threatened South Korea and Japan (CP), and Iran might soon be able to strike Israel and NATO allies (CP). Teheran would also inevitably develop nuclear weapons (CP). Missile defenses (ME) would deter those wishing to threaten the U.S. with a ballistic missile attack (GP) and dissuade development of such capabilities (GP). They would never be 100% effective in their regard (ME) (not sufficient) but would make a significant contribution to deterrence nonetheless (GP). While defense against rogue state ballistic missile threats was the primary goal (GP) of the U.S. missile defense system (ME), such a shield would also contribute to protecting the country from unauthorized or accidental missile launches (GP) – a very low, but extremely grave possibility (CP). Being asked by Senator Thurmond whether Russia and Beijing could join others to check American influence globally, and the possibility of a new Cold War, Feith considered that “[t]he concern reflected in the question [CP] [was] an important one” (CP). Feith

believed that as the U.S. took steps to influence the international security environment (GP), it should be cautious not to create incentives for other states to align (GP) in opposition to U.S. and allied interests (VP) (downsides). The U.S. should develop non-confrontational relations with Moscow (GP) and Beijing (GP).

Feith stressed that the legislature should not give Moscow the mistaken impression that its objection (CP) (rejected premise) would inform a U.S. decision not to develop missile defenses (ME). If Congress were to do so, the U.S. would have to unilaterally withdraw from the ABM Treaty (ME) in lieu of the preferable cooperative solution (ME). The existing planned missile defense testing program did not account for the constraints imposed by the ABM Treaty (VP), even if it had not been devised for the explicit purpose of infringing them either (VP). U.S. missile defense activities (ME) “[would] inevitably bump up against treaty restrictions and limitations” (VP) (the U.S. was en route to violate the treaty).

U.S. missile defenses were not a threat to Russia or anyone (GP) (rejected downside). They were intended to defend against limited attacks (GP), not the thousands of missiles that Moscow possessed (GP) (not a goal of action). Russia was no longer an ideological antagonist (CP). It was not an enemy (CP) and the U.S. did not fear that the country would target Americans with a massive nuclear first-strike (CP). Still, the ABM Treaty (ME) codified an outdated and irrelevant Cold War relationship between the two nations (GP) (downside of inaction). Feith supported the Administration’s approach of treating the ABM Treaty as being in effect without articulating a stance on its legal status (VP).

Feith assured that the U.S. missile defense program would not undermine arms control (GP) or trigger an arms race (GP). Russia would not be incentivized to spend its scarce resources to defeat U.S. missile defenses because they “[would] have virtually no effect on [the country’s] capabilities (GP) (rejected downsides). With or without U.S. missile defenses, China would continue to rapidly modernize its missile capabilities (CP). Moscow and Beijing would see that the U.S. was reducing its offensive nuclear forces considerably (ME) and be dissuaded from building up theirs (GP) (no downside). America planned to reduce its nuclear forces (GP), no matter what Russia decided to do (GP) (dismissed downside) (GP) (mutual reductions are not a core goal of action). Effective missile defenses (ME) would remove incentives for development and proliferation of ballistic missiles (GP) by reducing their value (GP). The defensive systems would not cost hundreds of billions of dollars (minimized downside) nor divert resources and attention from more pressing threats (GP) (rejected downside). Missile defense testing and development should be fast-tracked (ME) despite expectation of failures and setbacks (ME). America’s most successful weapons development processes had been marred by test failures (CP) (precedent). To develop and deploy effective missile defenses as soon as possible, the U.S. needed to push the envelope and take sufficient risks (ME) (rejects delaying action)

Feith acknowledged concerns with how the advancement of U.S. missile defense plans (ME) would affect Russia (GP), and whether the country would respond with massive nuclear arms build-ups (GP) or destabilizing actions (GP). He claimed that those were “proper” concerns which the

Administration shared (GP) (downsides are possible). However, he pointed to a divergence of opinion on the likelihood of Russia “[responding] in a negative hostile unconstructive fashion to what [the U.S.] [was] doing” (GP) (downside) (attributes low weight to the premise). The President’s actions had taken some steps (ME) that had instilled optimism that the dialogue with Russia could be managed (ME) (President’s actions should prevent the downside from occurring), enabling the U.S. to move forward with its missile defense system (ME) (S. HRG. 107–749, 2001: 777, 791, 797; S. HRG. 107-110, 2001: 17-23, 59).

On 15 June 2001, in the context of a presidential trip to several European countries, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice stressed the importance of pursuing a limited missile defense system, carrying out reductions of nuclear forces, and of moving on from the ABM Treaty.

Rice explained that the Cold War was over (CP), that much had changed since the ABM was signed (in 1972). Russia had an open invitation “to take a rightful place in Europe;” it should think of itself as a European power (CP). Nowadays, America had a stable relationship with Russia (CP); it was no longer “in a relationship of being mutual hostages,” based on the threat of MAD (CP). A nuclear war between Russia and the United States was now unthinkable (CP). The NSA had observed strong support from NATO allies for the president’s intentions to build a new security framework (CP). European institutions should continue to expand, and Russia had nothing to fear (CP). Rice also remarked on the ubiquity of missile technology in the world, and the threat posed by the fact that anyone could acquire it (CP).

The NSA pointed out America’s commitment to Europe, to their partnership, and to the opportunity they had to do “extraordinary things in the world” together (VP). U.S. allies, Russia and other nations, and the American people and their representatives would be included in the discussions about the new strategic framework (VP). The President had an obligation to try and meet the new threats that the U.S. and NATO faced (VP). The U.S. should move on from the hostile Cold War relationship it had with Russia when arms control substituted a true political relationship (GP). The U.S. sought to broaden and normalize its relationship with Russia across several areas, including in the realm of economics, energy, civil society, and others (GP). The Administration would seek talks with Russia (ME) to determine how to build such a relationship (GP).

Rice believed that limited defenses would achieve the goal (ME) of strengthening U.S. deterrence (GP). The administration was not concerned with thinking about which actions, in the realm of missile defense, would constitute a violation of the ABM Treaty (CP) (i.e., legal commitment to the treaty should not be a VP informing action). Remaining in the ABM Treaty was not the best policy alternative because it was an outdated agreement that was no longer the cornerstone of strategic stability (ME). Moving on from the treaty was a necessary step toward exploring all possibilities of missile defense technology since the ABM only allowed the country to do “minimal” things (ME). The interception of missiles from different threats (GP) required robust development, testing, and evaluation programs, as well as exploring all possibilities. Thus, the ABM Treaty stood in the way of delivering

that goal (ME). Missile defense was not supposed to be sufficient to replace deterrence on its own, however (ME).

Remaining in the treaty compromised the goal of building a new relationship with Russia, because, as Rice explained, “you cannot build a normal, broad relationship on the foundations of the abnormal relationship that [America] had with the Soviet Union” (GP). For Rice, there was no reason not to try a new strategic framework (GP/VP) (no downsides). Nonetheless, the U.S. was open to discuss (ME) with Russia, its allies, and, to a degree, other interested countries, the form that the new strategic framework would take (GP). Rice fell short of assuring that a working missile defense system was possible, explaining that more comprehensive testing and evaluation programs (still banned) were necessary (ME). While the U.S. was opened to the possibility of sharing missile defense capabilities with Russia (ME), it would have to be certain that such technologies would not be proliferated (GP) (potential downside) (Rice, 2001a).

On 15 June 2001, NSA Rice emphasized the obligations of George W. Bush, as the U.S. President and as the leader of the Alliance (VP) “to try and meet the threats that we face” (GP). The U.S. was open to discuss with allies, Russia, other states, Congress – especially the Senate, since it ratified the ABM Treaty – and the American people how (ME) (several possible actions) to move to a new strategic framework (GP). However, the Administration considered that setting the ABM Treaty aside “would be far preferable” (ME). She expressed optimism regarding the discussions that had been had with allies (GP) and believed that “in Congress and in other places, no one will want to appear not to want to address these new threats” (GP) (no internal or external downsides) (Rice, 2001b).

Secretary Powell and NSA Rive gave a joint press briefing on June 16, 2001, where they covered the pursuit of missile defense, moving on from the ABM Treaty, and carrying out nuclear arms reductions.

Powell argued that there was every opportunity for cooperation between NATO and Moscow (CP), and no reason for the U.S. and Russia not to become friends. Rice said that Russia and the U.S. were allies “with a small ‘a’” (CP). Rice also noted a Russian desire in exploring with the United States new and common threats (CP), and perceived likeminded views between Washington and Moscow on nuclear reductions. Russia felt strongly that that would be in its best interest (CP), and President Bush had openly expressed his desired to get to a level of nuclear forces consistent with U.S. deterrence needs (GP). Thus, there was not “anything there to bridge” (CP). Rice wanted the United States to address the new threats, strengthen deterrence, and prevent WMD proliferation (GP).

For the Secretary, the ABM Treaty was not the cornerstone of the entire arms control structure, or the whole strategic framework between Russia and the United States. Powell cast doubt on the view that maintaining the treaty was the best course of action (ME), suggesting alternative policies (ME). There was no reason not to do so (discards potential consequences of action) (GP/VP), especially considering the consultations with Russia that would ensue (ME). The NSA agreed that it was time to

move on from the ABM Treaty, which was seen as a necessary step toward the establishment of new strategic framework which would deliver the desired goals (ME) (Powell & Rice, 2001).

During a 11 July 2001 hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Admiral Richard Mies, STRATCOM's Commander in Chief, described the post-Cold War as chaotic (CP). America's deterrence strategy during the Cold War proved to be suited for its bipolar framework (ME) but could fail (GP) (deterrence as a potentially undelivered goal) in the present "multipolar world of unpredictable asymmetric threats" (CP) (mismatch between action and context; the latter ought to inform a different action). The U.S. needed to deter a wide array of threats (GP). Due to the end of the Cold War, the U.S. had underinvested in its strategic nuclear forces (CP), and the Admiral urged that they received further investment: they were America's "ultimate insurance policy" (GP).

America's current deterrence strategy (ME) ought to be less adversarial (GP) and reduce the country's reliance on nuclear weapons (GP) and nuclear warhead levels (GP). The country sought "a credible deterrent [GP] with the lowest possible numbers of nuclear weapons [GP] consistent with our national security needs [GP] including our obligations to our allies" (VP). The debate on reductions was timely (ME).

Ensuring U.S. ability to adapt (GP) to an uncertain and changing future strategic environment (CP) was more important than being able to prepare for an unpredictable future (GP). Missile defenses (ME) were devised to protect the U.S. against attacks that were relatively small in scope (GP). Thus, they would not replace U.S. strategic forces (ME), which were intended to deter large-scale attacks (GP). While missile defenses (ME) were a complement to the mission of U.S. strategic nuclear forces (GP), their effectiveness (GP) (i.e., ability to deliver goals) would not meaningfully inform the planned reductions in U.S. strategic forces (ME). According to the Admiral: "we are not looking at the effectiveness of the defenses [GP] as much as we are trying to make reductions [ME] because we have excess force capacity [CP] that we do not require [ME] to meet the objectives of our deterrent strategy" (GP). Other considerations were also at play. For instance, the Admiral claimed that transition from an 18-SSBN force to a modernized 14-boat force with a common missile (Trident II) (ME) made "great cost-effective, economic sense" (GP). The Peacekeeper ICBM fleet was not in a good situation, given the lack of multi-year funding since 1996 to sustain or retain it or inactivate it (CP).

Mies urged the preservation of all three legs of the strategic triad: ICBMs (ME) for prompt response (GP); SSBNs (ME) for survivability (GP) and bombers (ME) for flexibility (GP). The variety of U.S. strategic nuclear forces, coupled with the synergy derived from the unique attributes of each leg (ME) (all three legs are necessary) aimed to "complicate any adversary's offensive and defensive planning calculations [GP] while simultaneously providing protection against the failure of a single leg of the triad" (GP). The ICBM leg was geographically dispersed (ME), which an adversary would have to take into account if it was considering a disarming first strike. Thus, it contributed to stability (GP). The bombers could also disperse (ME), enabling survivability (GP) and aircraft recall (GP), whereas the SSBN (ME) assured response capability against any adversary (GP). The nuclear triad's (ME) "force

structures [played] better in war-gaming and in dynamic analysis than (...) a dyad or a monad” (ME) (rejected policy alternative). It was preferable to preserve platforms and reduce their warhead loading (ME) than the other way around (ME). Putting “too many eggs in one basket” (ME) (the latter alternative) led to “an operational loss of flexibility and other considerations” (GP) (downsides). Those downsides informed the decision to carry out reductions (ME) while preserving the nuclear triad (ME) and reduce the warhead loading of its components (ME).

Many positive developments had occurred in the Moscow and Washington’s strategic postures (CP). Russia was not a strategic adversary (CP), and in the “new, constructive relationship” between the two countries (CP), stability was a central consideration (GP). Strategic reductions (ME) were timely (CP) and aimed at increasing stability (GP) and decreasing the risks of war (GP). Further reductions would be especially informed by stability (GP) (premise is given greater weight). Given the present situation in Russia (CP) (presumably the proliferation risks it presented) and the two previously mentioned goals (GP), enhancing the safety and security of its weapons (ME) and reinforcing the integrity of its command in control system (ME) were likely preferable courses of action than radical cuts in both country’s nuclear arsenals (ME). Still, he acknowledged that eliminating of the MIRV’d Peacekeeper ICBM fleet (ME), deemed the most destabilizing of the existing nuclear forces, would enhance stability on both sides (GP).

Despite reductions (ME), the U.S. strategic forces (ME) needed to ensure that the country could, not only strike first (GP) but always strike second (GP) in order to deter (GP) and promote stability (GP). The Commander denied that action toward reducing nuclear force levels (GP), or nuclear parity, (GP) inevitably meant lower nuclear dangers (GP). At lower numbers of nuclear weapons, reducing nuclear dangers (GP) and stability (GP) would be goals more meaningfully achieved if other goals had been achieved as well, namely: irreversibility (GP), verifiability (GP), transparency (GP), survivability (GP), reliability (GP), and assurance of command and control (GP). Aggregate warhead inventories (CP) (i.e., the total stockpile, including warheads in the reserve or retired) and one’s ability to produce nuclear weapons (CP) were also related to lower nuclear dangers (GP) and, thus, stability (GP). In his words, “there is a tyranny in very deep numerical reductions [ME] that inhibits flexibility [GP] and induces instability in certain situations” (GP) (downsides). In implementing nuclear reductions (ME), the U.S. ought to preserve the ability to adapt its deterrent forces to a rapidly evolving and uncertain future (GP). He added that “[g]iven the clear risks [GP] [potential downsides] and the elusive benefits [GP] inherent in additional deep cuts, the burden of proof should be on those who advocate such reductions to demonstrate exactly how and why such cuts would serve to enhance U.S. security” (GP) (downsides of reductions expected to generally outweigh the national security goals delivered by the action).

The Admiral emphasized that the U.S. should emphasize the effects of capabilities (ME) on stability (GP) and security (GP), rather than numbers (ME). The latter were based on START accountability rules, excluding non-strategic nuclear weapons and focusing on delivery systems and the

specific number of warheads they would carry (CP) (rejects focus on numbers as a premise informing action). Focusing only on numbers would be naïve” (CP) (action should be mostly informed by capabilities and their effects on stability [GP] and security [GP]). Rejecting nuclear parity, the U.S. should seek to “preserve sufficient deterrent capability to respond to future challenges [GP], to provide a cushion against imperfect intelligence and technological surprises [GP], and to preserve a reconstitution capability as a hedge against unwelcome political or strategic developments” (GP). The U.S. needed to maintain its ability to adapt its deterrent forces (GP) because America’s strategic future was uncertain, changing rapidly and unpredictably (CP). In other words, if the U.S. could not predict the future, it needed to be able to adapt to it (GP). U.S. nuclear forces needed to be able to handle the worst threats one could reasonably postulate. It was wise to plan (ME), not for “benign environments, but for the worst” (GP).

Being asked if he supported the repeal of the Congressional restriction on strategic force reductions (ME), the Commander believed that it was possible to conduct the planned force reductions (GP) within the parameters of the legal provision (ME) (repeal is not necessary to achieve goal) by seeking Congressional approval for them (ME) (alternative action). Nonetheless, he supported the repeal of the language (ME) seeing as its preservation cultivated a climate of distrust (VP) and was not conducive to a healthy relationship and communication between the Administration and the legislature (VP) (S. HRG. 107–355, 2001: 238-243, 246-247, 250-255).

On 23 July 2001, Rice explained that there would be consultations with Russia (ME) to discuss the new strategic framework pursued by the President (GP). The new framework was to encompass missile defenses (ME), reducing the levels of offensive nuclear forces (ME), non-proliferation efforts (ME), and possibly other forms of cooperation, such as nuclear safety (ME). However, the strategic framework was not just about nuclear issues, but also about establishing a different relationship with Russia – one based on cooperation at various levels, including non-military issues (GP). She reiterated that the consultations would not be “arms control negotiations [ME], but consultations and discussions at the ministerial level” (ME). While the U.S. was open to how the new framework (GP) would get enshrined (ME) (various actions are possible), the U.S. did not believe that a treaty regime would be necessary (ME), since such a course of action “reflected a highly abnormal relationship between two adversaries” (GP) (downside). The U.S. favored something more akin to defense planning talks (ME) (Rice, 2001c).

On 23 July 2001, George W. Bush reiterated a commitment he had made as a presidential candidate (VP) to consult with friends and allies (ME) and work with Russia (ME). However, he wanted to reach an agreement with Russia (GP) “sooner rather than later” (ME) (rejects delaying policy change). In moving beyond the ABM Treaty (GP), he would prefer that others joined America (GP). However, he “[felt] so strongly and passionately [VP] [personal desires as overt reasons informing action] on the subject about how to keep the peace in the 21st century [GP] [VP], that we’ll move beyond, if need be”

(ME) (i.e., ABM Treaty withdrawal) (goal of delivering the VPs outweighed goal of Russia joining American in moving beyond the treaty) (Bush, 2001d).

On 24 July 2001, Bolton acknowledged that Moscow's perceptions about the U.S. missile defense program were very important (CP). However, the program (ME) aimed to protect against a handful of missiles launched accidentally or by a rogue state (GP). If Moscow's perceptions were inaccurate vis-à-vis that U.S. goal (CP) (inaccurate perception as a potential element of the context of action), then America ought "to disabuse [Russia] of their misperception" (GP), rather than base its defense policy (ME) (missile defense) "on the acceptance of somebody else's misperception of the facts" (CP) (unacceptable context of action to be changed [GP] rather than used to inform action) (S. HRG. 107-110, 2001: 56).

On 24 June 2001, Secretary Powell dismissed Putin's warning that Russia would eventually upgrade, with multiple warheads, its strategic nuclear arsenal, as a response to U.S. missile defense plans (CP). The general did not believe that Moscow would take that course of action due to due to its associated costs (CP). Putin would also realize (CP) that the missile defense system proposed by the Bush Administration was not a threat to Russia (GP) (not a goal of action). Thus, the missile defense plans were not expected to compromise U.S. goals (GP).

Powell also claimed that ally reservations regarding American missile defense plans were unsurprising since they were a major doctrinal change (CP). He believed that the U.S. allies had since become more open to the change, due to consultations with Bush (CP). He also explained that America was as attached to NATO and Europe as it had ever been (VP) (The Associated Press, 2001).

On 22 August 2001, John Bolton clarified that in mentioning that there was a link between offensive weapons (ME) and a limited national defense against ballistic missiles (ME), the U.S. was referring to the balance between offense and defense (ME) – a 10,000-year-old debate (CP). He explained that "[t]hat doesn't necessarily mean (...) that that has to be linked together offensive and defensive in some kind of negotiation⁸⁴" (ME). A deal with Russia (ME) that enabled the U.S. to move beyond the ABM Treaty (GP) and encompassed an agreement with Russia on parallel (GP) nuclear reductions (ME) – unilateral or otherwise (ME) was not ruled out (ME). However, the U.S. was "not going to time the progress of the work on BMD [ME] dependent on the pace of the negotiations" with Russia on reductions of offensive weapons (ME). Bolton stressed that progress on the two questions proceeded independently (ME). Given the circumstances of the post-Cold War world (CP) where Washington and Moscow no longer perceived each other as military adversaries (CP), unilateral parallel (GP) offensive nuclear weapons reductions were preferred (ME) due to the flexibility which they permitted (GP). Arms control negotiations were not necessary (ME) to move beyond the ABM Treaty (GP) or to reduce offensive nuclear weapons (GP) (Bolton, 2001).

⁸⁴ On 23 July 2001, Rice described the U.S.-Russian talks on the new strategic framework as consultations, and not arms control negotiations (Rice, 2001d). This was confirmed on 10 August 2001 by a senior Defense Official (Defense Official, 2001).

On 13 September 2001, the nomination hearing of General Richard Myers before the Senate Armed Services Committee took place. The future chairman of the JCS claimed that the U.S. needed to deploy a missile defense system and expressed his support for a reduction of U.S. nuclear forces.

The general explained that U.S. troops faced a threat stemming from shorter-range missiles, having suffered over 20 casualties in the 1990-91 Gulf War (CP). Since then, missile technology proliferated to several countries (CP). A longer-range threat had also been acknowledged (CP). The general downplayed Russian MIRV-ing as a potential downside (GP) of the U.S. withdrawing from the ABM Treaty (ME). He emphasized two other premises informing actions instead. The first was America's strategic relationship with Russia, which differed significantly from what it had been during the Cold War (CP). The second was that "it would be the overall levels of warheads that would be of concern" (CP). In other words, in reducing U.S. nuclear forces (ME) to the lowest level (GP) consistent with U.S. national security (GP), the general "[was] more concerned with the total number of warheads that [were] on [Russia's] delivery vehicles" (CP) than with whether Moscow was MIRV-ing (CP). MIRV-ed or not, Russia would maintain the ability to overwhelm U.S. defenses (CP), and America would probably never have a defense against large attacks (GP) (not a goal of action). Myers also did not advocate for any form of U.S. MIRV-ing (ME) as a response to Russian MIRV-ing. While he did not perceive notable military advantages (GP) to the U.S. elimination of MIRVed ICBMs (ME), the country was retiring all Peacekeeper MIRV-ed ICBMs (ME) and de-MIRV-ing one of its three wings of MIRVed Minuteman III ICBMs (ME). Such actions had been informed by the understanding that they were no longer a national security requirement (GP).

The general wanted to protect U.S. citizens, overseas troops, friends, and allies from limited ballistic missile attacks (GP), a goal that he believed was supported by all involved (CP). Defense against a large attack was not a goal of action (GP). He wanted the U.S. to be able to intercept missiles of any range at every stage of flight (i.e., boost, mid-course, and terminal) (GP).

Missile defense would increase U.S. security (ME), being an essential component (ME) for deterring the emerging threat of ballistic missiles (GP). It was not meant to be sufficient on its own but coupled with non-proliferation and counter-proliferation (ME).

For the general, the Patriot-3 system, meant to counter short-range missiles, was cost-effective and affordable (ME). He was unsure if he could say the same about the capabilities meant to counter longer-range missile threats, but his instincts told him yes (ME). As for THAAD, the airborne laser, and the prospective Navy systems, it was too early to tell, despite some positive signs (ME).

Myers was questioned on whether missile defense would lead to a more complicated world due to a potential Chinese reaction (i.e., potential downsides of action) (GP). Myers replied that the U.S. system was not a threat to China (CP). Moreover, the ability to defend U.S. citizens and troops was "one of the fundamental things we have to do" (VP)" and that "whatever steps we can take to handle that threat, to defeat that threat are appropriate" (ME). Myers also stated that missile defense may have the

added benefit (ME) of preventing the United States from having to retaliate against the launch of a missile that it was able to intercept (GP).

On the matter of nuclear force reductions, which the general supported, he was unsure about whether achieving levels below 2000-2500 warheads was recommended (ME) given U.S. national security requirements (GP) and ally commitments (VP). Also, until the U.S. had restored its ability to manufacture new weapons, old components were used in the design and assembly of new warheads (GP) (i.e., the U.S. should prevent such compromises on goals). Thus, enough warheads (ME) should “be retained as a hedge against weapons failures and emergency weapons re-manufacturing requirements” (GP). The U.S. needed to maintain an effective deterrent against any possible aggressor (GP) (S. HRG. 107-749, 2001: 778, 1398-1440, 1426).

In a 16 September 2001 interview, vice president Dick Cheney claimed that the United States needed a missile defense system. He perceived a context of action in which the country currently faced a threat on the terrorist front, conventional threats, and ballistic missile threats (CP). He explained that a WMD-equipped missile, such as a nuclear weapon, would be far more devastating than the attack suffered just a few days ago, on September 11. Such a missile could hit an American city or a major base overseas where U.S. forces were deployed, leading to an even higher list of casualties (CP). Cheney wanted to defend America from the abovementioned threats (GP), including diminishing the ballistic missile threat down the road (GP). To the vice president, the country had no alternative other than fighting both a war on terrorism (ME) and deploying a missile defense system (ME), and it should not concern itself with costs (GP) (accepted downside). As he put it, “I don't see (...) how anybody can argue that we cannot afford to defend America” (GP) (goal outweighs downside). Missile defense was, thus, a necessary course of action. Ignoring the missile threat just because America had been hit with a terrorist assault of a different nature was irresponsible, and thus should be disregarded (ME) (The Vice President appears on Meet the Press, 2001).

On 25 September 2001, the forthcoming STRATCOM Commander Admiral James Ellis stated that Russia was ever-more reliant on its strategic nuclear weapons to preserve its great power standing and for protection from possible military hostilities on a global scale (CP). Despite this increased reliance, the Russian leadership pursued stockpile reductions (CP). U.S. force structure requirements (ME) would not be solely determined by Russian politics (CP) and the size of the country's nuclear stockpile (CP). Other determinants had to be factored in, including the more uncertain strategic landscape of the post-Cold War world (CP), the emergence of novel and promising capabilities – offensive and defensive (CP), as well as other considerations. The answer to the question pertaining to the challenge Russia's launch doctrine posed for STRATCOM was redacted.

The Admiral only supported and would ensure that strategic force reductions (ME) would be managed in a manner that maximized U.S. operational flexibility (GP), enhanced strategic stability (GP), maintained a viable and credible deterrent (GP), and made fiscal sense (GP). As a hedge (GP) against the uncertainty of the future strategic environment (CP), all but one nuclear warhead designs should be

maintained (ME). A nuclear fleet comprised of 14 submarines remained necessary (ME) at levels of deployed warheads ranging between 2,500 and 2,000 (GP) “to ensure a survivable [GP], responsive retaliatory force [GP] capable of dissuading any potential adversary” (GP). A smaller fleet (ME) may be possible at lower levels (GP), but a sufficient number of submarines was needed (ME) to maximize combat capability (GP) and maximize operational flexibility (GP). In general, Russia and China would be more incentivized to expand their nuclear forces to preserve their deterrence (GP) (downsides) as U.S. missile defenses (ME) grew more of capable of hindering the two states’ ability to retaliate. While Russia’s deterrent would not be significantly diminished (GP) (rejected downside), China’s current deterrent might be affected (GP) although their expected nuclear build-up would mitigate such a downside (GP). Responsible management of the U.S. relationship with Russia (GP) would contribute to help the STRATCOM Commander address some of the main challenges associated with his position, including as it pertained to establishing a stable and solid strategic environment (GP) that could enable arms reductions (GP) and bolster non-proliferation (GP). Modernization and sustainment of the three legs of the triad ought to occur so that a credible deterrence would be maintained through the 21st century. Missile defenses (ME) should be combined “with a timely [CP] offensive response posture [ME] that provides defense against small attacks from ballistic missiles [GP] and a guaranteed retaliatory capability against larger attacks [GP], the result of and combination of which remains totally unacceptable to any aggressor” (GP). Reductions (ME) should allow a hedging capability (ME), which would be achieved by avoiding eliminating platforms (ME), while maintaining nuclear infrastructure and technical skills (ME). Maintaining sufficient platforms (ME) would enable the maximization of operational flexibility (GP) (S. HRG. 107–749, 2001: 1512-1516, 1521).

On 30 September 2001, the Quadrennial Defense Review Report (QDR) was released. The document called for the development of a layered missile defense system. The proliferation of WMDs and ballistic missiles was a direct challenge to the United States, its allies, and friends (CP). The threat was growing faster than anticipated and unpredictably (CP). Future adversaries were certain to acquire a range of other new means to threaten the United States (CP). They could render ineffective American military power projection overseas, denying or delaying U.S. access to bases, ports, and airfields located abroad, especially if their ballistic missile systems were mobile (CP). Future adversaries looking to avoid American strengths would attacking its vulnerabilities through asymmetric approaches like information operations, terrorism, and ballistic and cruise missiles (CP). That was a permanent feature of the international system, demonstrated by the 911 terrorist attacks (CP).

The U.S. was under the threat of states that were unable “to govern their societies, safeguard their military armaments, and prevent their territories from serving as sanctuary to terrorists and criminal organizations” (CP). In the Middle East, several countries had acquired, or strived to acquire, WMDs (CP). They were also developing ballistic missile capabilities, supported terrorist organizations, and sought to coerce friendly states and deny American forces access to the region (CP). Despite Russia’s pursuit of goals that were clashed with American interests (CP), it did not pose a large-scale

conventional military threat to NATO (CP), and there was opportunity for cooperation (CP). The U.S. and Russia shared security concerns, like ballistic missile attacks from regional aggressors (CP), unauthorized or accidental launches of strategic weapons (CP), and international terrorism (CP).

The document explained that the development, deployment and use of U.S. forces and capabilities, in general, was guided around the dissuasion of adversaries from undertaking operations and programs potentially threatening to U.S. and ally interests (GP), deterring coercion and aggression (GP), acting decisively to defeat any adversary in case of a failure of deterrence (GP), and reassuring allies and friends (GP) of U.S. security commitments toward them (VP). The DOD wanted to safeguard America's freedom of action (GP), mitigate the effects of acting in case of deterrence failure (GP), protect key areas of access in area-denial and anti-access environment (GP), and enhance deterrence by denial (GP). While missile defense was not sufficient to achieve those goals on its own, its integration with other defensive and offensive means would contribute to them (ME). Furthermore, the DOD wanted to protect American citizens and forward-deployed forces from missile attacks, friends, and allies, from missile attacks, including in the near-term (GP), and this goal would be achieved by missile defenses, since they would be able to intercept, in different phases of flight, missiles of various ranges (ME).

In contingencies involving adversaries in possession of WMDs and the artillery or ballistic missiles to deliver them, increasing force structure was not a viable alternative to missile defense (ME). No matter the size of the force amassed, those capabilities would impose high risks for American and allied forces (CP). Missile defense was, therefore, necessary (ME).

The DOD had to guarantee that U.S. forces would be able to respond (GP) to the challenges they would face in the 21st century strategic environment (CP). Thus, America was to invest and transform its capabilities and forces (ME). The document outlined several transformation initiatives, aimed at achieving different goals. Among those initiatives, the DOD would accelerate the conversion of four Trident SSBNs to guided missile submarines (ME) to “[d]eny enemies sanctuary by providing persistent surveillance, tracking, and rapid engagement” (QDR, 2001: 4-7, 40-42, 44, 30-31, 61-62).

On 11 October 2001, President Bush claimed that after September 11 (CP), it was clearer than ever that the ABM Treaty outmoded (ME), antiquated and outdated (ME), embodying a totally different period in history – the Cold War (CP). The treaty was useless (ME) against the new threats America faced (GP)⁸⁵. He shared his vision of “a world in which a terrorist thug and/or a host nation might have the ability to develop [and] deliver a weapon of mass destruction via a [...] rocket” (CP). America ought to be able to shoot down such missiles (GP), but the ABM Treaty (ME) restricted the achievement of that goal (GP) (downside of inaction). Bush wanted to talk to “[his] friend” Vladimir Putin (ME) to

⁸⁵ Bush perceived a mismatch between two premises: the CP [post-911] and ME [preserving the accord]. He rejected any relation between them. The ME had been informed by another CP – a different time when staying in the accord might have been the right course of action. However, the ABM Treaty could not deliver the President's goals of action today. It could not transport the U.S. toward a future state of affairs (GP) where the new threats perceived in the CP had been mitigated or resolved.

make his case to him (GP) and have Russia join the U.S. in a new strategic relationship (GP) (Bush, 2001e).

On 1 November 2001, Rice explained that the President believed that U.S. nuclear force levels were excessive (ME) for deterrence (GP) in a post-Cold War environment (CP). As such, “the restructuring of American nuclear forces and numbers [ME] that are consistent with the deterrent mission [GP] [was] a matter of military planning; (...) not a matter of negotiation [with the Russians] (ME) (restructuring of U.S. nuclear forces and numbers is not linked to U.S. talks with Russia; it would happen regardless) (Rice, 2001e).

On 5 and 9 December 2001, Powell stated that Russia was not an adversary (CP) since the Cold War was over (CP). The two countries would build a new, broader, strategic framework for cooperation (GP), which would encompass moving beyond the ABM Treaty (GP) and making mutual (GP) reductions of operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads (ME). America wanted to preserve some of the START and START II provisions (ME), particularly the verification procedures (GP), which provide confidence (GP) and transparency (GP) as the pledged reductions were carried out (ME). The U.S. was open to formalize the features of the new framework, including those which the START process codified, “on a piece of paper” (ME) (Powell, 2001a, 2001b).

On 13 November 2001, President Bush announced, in a joint press conference with President Putin, that the U.S. would reduce its operationally deployed strategic nuclear weapons across the next decade to a level between 1700 and 2200.

The President explained that the U.S. and Russia were in the process of transforming (GP) their relationship from one of hostility and suspicion (CP) to one based on cooperation and trust” (VP) (delivering the VP is a goal of action), which would yield progress and peace for their citizens and the entire world (VP).

In reducing deployed warheads, the president sought to put 20th century threats behind, once and for all (GP). Doing so would not compromise national security goals (GP). Spending “endless hours” on arms control negotiations was not necessary (ME), because the new U.S.-Russian relationship would be based on trust and cooperation (VP). Still, in Bush’s words “if we need to write it down on a piece of paper, I’ll be glad to do that” (ME) (VP) (makes a commitment) (Bush, 2001c).

On 10 December 2001, Powell claimed that the September 11 terrorist attacks (CP) had fast-tracked the improvement of U.S. relations with Russia (GP), with was improving on a daily basis (CP). The Bush Administration was very satisfied with the status of their relationship (CP) and with the cooperation between the two states vis-a-vis the situation in Afghanistan (CP). The U.S. acknowledged the need to formalize (ME) the mutual levels (GP) of strategic nuclear reductions with Russia (ME). No agreement had not yet been reached on the levels of offensive weapons that the two states would be reducing to (GP) (Powell, 2001c).

On 13 December 2001, President Bush discussed missile defense and the ABM Treaty in the Rose Garden, in Washington D.C. He announced that the United States were moving beyond the ABM

Treaty (GP), having given formal notice to Russia of America's withdrawal from the agreement (ME). The speaker also "[sought] a formal way to express a new strategic relationship that [would] last long beyond [Bush and Putin's] individual administrations" (GP). Bush also reiterated his pledge to reduce (ME) to the number of U.S. operationally deployed strategic nuclear weapons (to between 1700 and 2200) (GP).

Bush explained that the U.S.S.R. no longer existed, and neither did the hostility between Washington and Moscow (CP). Currently, the most serious threats that Russia and America faced were not from other big powers, but from terrorists and rogue states – as the events of September 11 had showed (CP). The two countries had built a more constructive and hopeful relationship and were seeking ways to replace the principle of MAD with cooperation (GP). Russia was transitioning to a free market economy (CP), and the American and Russian presidents had "developed common ground from a new strategic relationship" (CP). Putin had advised, and contributed to, America's war in Afghanistan (CP), and expressed a commitment to cut his country's offensive nuclear weapons arsenal (CP). Presently, NATO wanted "to identify and pursue opportunities for joint action" with Russia (GP), and the American president wanted to establish new bonds between Russia and the U.S. (GP).

Bush wanted to "have the freedom and the flexibility to develop effective defenses against [missile] attacks" from terrorists and those who supported them (GP). He also sought to "[provide] a foundation for peace for the years to come" (VP). Underlying his goals was a concern with defending the American people, which was his utmost priority as Commander in Chief (VP). He also anticipated "greater prosperity and peace for Russians, for Americans and for the entire world" (VP).

Regarding America's withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, Bush explained that maintaining the agreement was not the best policy. For one, the agreement did not help America face the current threats; it was put in place "at a much different time, in a vastly different world" to address a Soviet threat that no longer existed. The treaty could not, therefore, deliver the president's goals (ME). However, maintaining the agreement was not only pointless considering the goals; it also compromised America's capacity to achieve them through other courses of action. Indeed, the ABM Treaty hindered the ability of the United States government "to develop ways to protect [its] people from future terrorist or rogue state missile attacks" (GP) (compromise on goals). Thus, withdrawing from the ABM Treaty was a necessary step toward bringing forth a context of action that allowed the United States to deploy missile defenses (ME). Bush also claimed that Putin had assured him (CP) that America's withdrawal from the treaty would not undermine the new, "fundamentally different" strategic relationship between the two countries, or Russia's security, for that matter (GP) (no downsides) (Bush, 2001a).

Over the course of 2001, Rumsfeld addressed the policy changes proposed by the President on various occasions. The Secretary was not worried about an arms race with Russia (GP) (rejected downside) taking place due to America's missile defense deployments (ME). After all, Moscow was reducing their nuclear weapons levels (CP) given the weakened state of their economy (CP) and the U.S. was in the process of doing the same (ME). Those who forecasted that event were "trapped in a Cold

War mentality” whereby there was still hostility between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. (CP). He claimed that the U.S.S.R. was gone, that Russia was not a threat to America (CP), and that Washington was not worried about a strategic nuclear attack from Moscow whatsoever (CP), nor about a land invasion of Europe (CP). U.S.-Russian relations were not an issue from a security standpoint (CP).

The U.S. was “properly concerned” about the risks of deploying a missile defense (ME) system vis-à-vis U.S. allies (GP) and Russia (GP) and China (GP) (downsides). But the risks of not deploying such a system outweighed the previous downsides (GP).

Still, he acknowledged the difficulties in shedding the Cold War “baggage” (CP), given the existence of a whole group of people in the two states who had spent decades “functioning within (...) a Cold War construct” (CP). After 50 years of hostility, the two countries could not “just suddenly accommodate to a new set of relationships;” time was needed (CP). Insofar as “suspicion, even misplaced, [persisted]” (CP), it should be demystified and reduced (GP). To achieve that goal, as well as reduce Russian suspicions (GP), the U.S. ought to do “whatever it takes” (ME). The Secretary suggested consultations (ME), verification (GP), monitoring (ME), transparency (GP), interchanges (ME) and possibly other actions (ME). Rumsfeld claimed that the proposed nuclear reductions (ME), along with expanded economic, military and political cooperation (ME), could become the foundation of a strategic relationship between Washington and Moscow (GP). The U.S. did not need the current levels (ME) (rejects inaction) of thousands upon thousands of nuclear weapons (CP). The U.S. “[did not] have much of a lobby for nuclear weapons” (CP) and neither the military nor Congress had ever been too interested in them (CP). Seeing as nuclear weapons were something of an “orphan” in the U.S. defense establishment (CP), the Secretary did not anticipate much of a fight against the President’s intentions to destroy them (ME) (action is feasible). The U.S. would carry out nuclear reductions (ME) regardless of what Moscow decided to do (GP) (dismissed downside), and even if Russia’s nuclear lobby opposed its country reducing nuclear force levels (GP) (goal is outweighed by goals delivered by nuclear reductions) (GP). An approach to nuclear reductions ought to account for a number of interrelated factors, such as “decisions on the ABM Treaty [ME] and National Missile Defense [ME], as well as measures relating to tactical nuclear weapons [ME], [and] the evolution in Russia’s unilateral strategic force posture [CP].

The Secretary understated the importance of Russia deciding to MIRV as a response to a U.S. unilateral decision to leave the ABM Treaty or to breach it (GP) (downside). He noted that both states were reducing their offensive nuclear weapons levels (CP), with the U.S. having announced that it would retire the Peacekeeper missile (CP) and convert some nuclear-armed submarines to cruise missile submarines with conventional warheads (CP). He admitted that Moscow’s MIRV-ing plans “[sounded] bad,” but explained that what really mattered was the total number of nuclear weapons, and not whether a country MIRV-ed (GP) (downplayed downside). As explained, that number was going to be reduced (CP). He believed that such an action on Russia’s part would be driven by considerations related to money-saving and cost-effective management of their force structure (CP).

The U.S. needed missile defense capabilities (ME) to live in the contemporary world (GP), where WMDs were being proliferated (CP). The U.S. needed the ability to defend itself, its deployed forces, allies, and friends against incoming missiles with WMDs, including nuclear weapons (GP), from states such as Iraq, North Korea, and Iran (CP). America was not going to violate the ABM Treaty in any way (VP), but the accord had a provision allowing for a withdrawal (VP). If a new relationship with Moscow – one which transcended the ABM Treaty – could not be established (GP), the U.S. would need to announce that it would withdraw from the accord (ME) (withdrawal can occur regardless of whether the new relationship is established – ME outweighs GP).

The Secretary of Defense requested that Congress repealed section 1302 of the 1998 NDAA (ME), which prohibited the reduction of U.S. strategic nuclear force levels below START I levels (GP). The Congressional restriction hindered the President's flexibility (GP) and might delay the implementation of his overall deterrent strategy (GP) (downside). The repeal of the provision (ME) would authorize the White House to execute the necessary changes and modifications in America's strategic nuclear force structure (GP). The President wanted to reduce U.S. nuclear weapons (ME) to the lowest possible level (GP) and would do so regardless of what Russia did (GP) (dismissed downside) (GP) (mutual reductions are not a core goal). An arms race was not likely (GP) (downplayed downside) because both sides had indicated their intentions to reduce their nuclear force levels (CP: Russia) (ME: U.S.). Thus, he did not know where the race would be (GP) (rejected downside). The U.S. was not concerned, whatsoever, with a Russia strategic nuclear attack (CP), there was no hostility between Moscow and the West (CP) and Washington no longer "[needed] to do things to make a more stable world" (GP) (rejected goal). He also noted that nuclear weapons could become unsafe and unreliable over time, a problem both the U.S. and Russia faced (CP).

Rumsfeld attempted to assuage Senator Thurmond's (R-SC) concerns that retiring the Peacemaker ICBM force (ME) would compromise America's capacity to negotiate deeper reductions of Moscow's nuclear forces (GP) (potential downside). The Secretary explained the decision as part of an ongoing attempt "to properly size and configure [U.S.] strategic nuclear forces [ME] to deal with the deterrent tasks of a post-Cold War world" (GP) and as part of America's "move toward a new post-Cold War framework" (GP). He added that pursuing arms control negotiations was not the best course of action (ME) with which to reduce strategic force levels (GP). The Secretary identified "an inherent contradiction in attempting to improve U.S.-Russian political relations [GP] and enhance strategic stability [GP] by remaining committed to the Cold War approach to arms control, a fundamentally adversarial approach" (ME). In other words, by pursuing arms control negotiations with Russia (ME), the U.S. was undermining those two goals (GP) (downsides). Cold War-style arms control was slow (ME) and outmoded (ME), being out of tune with the current post-Cold War environment (CP). Russia was not a threat to the U.S. (CP).

There was a successful precedent established by George H. W. Bush (ME) for mutual (GP) yet unilateral nuclear reductions, which the U.S. should imitate (ME). In 1991, the former President invited

the U.S.S.R. to join the U.S. in removing, from deployment, thousands of tactical nuclear weapons (ME). The achievement of those reductions (GP) made the world significantly safer (VP), with goal being delivered more quickly than it would have been possible with Cold War-era arms control (ME). Retiring the Peacekeeper (ME) was in the best interest of America (VP) and the world (VP).

The maintenance costs of the B-1B bomber fleet kept rising (GP) (downside of inaction) and a time when the U.S. was short on modernization funds (CP). Thus, reducing the size of the fleet was a prudent decision (ME), since the resulting savings (GP) could fund the modernization of the remaining B-1B aircraft (ME). The aircraft was not stealthy (ME), was not considerably contributing to the deterrent (GP) or warfighting capability (GP) and required modernization (GP). The decision was “sensible, logical [ME] and cost-effective” (GP).

The Peacekeeper ICBM fleet was not needed (CP) and no money had been appropriated in the previous year to preserve it or retire it (CP). Thus, a decision was made to deactivate it (ME). The retirement of the fleet would save costs (GP), and its warheads would be made compatible with the Minuteman III ICBM fleet (GP). The Administration sought to turn waste into weapons to save taxpayer money (GP) and needed the freedom to do it (ME) (i.e., relief from a Congressional restriction to do so). The Peacekeeper decision would make minimal difference to the total number of U.S. offensive nuclear weapons (7,500) (GP) (no downside) – a figure that was also excessive (ME).

The U.S. was open to discuss and consult with allies, Russia, and others (ME) on how the new strategic framework would look like and what would be its nature (GP). Missile defense (ME) was only a part of that framework (GP), which also included nuclear force reductions (ME), diplomacy (ME) and counterproliferation (ME). The absence of Cold War hostilities (CP) made arms control agreements unnecessary (ME). Asked to comment on Putin’s insistence on formal and detailed negotiations on offensive nuclear weapons reductions (CP), Rumsfeld described the matter as an open question (ME) (CP could inform a U.S. decision to pursue formal and detailed negotiations).

The Secretary described the linkage between missile defenses (ME) and offensive weapons discussions as modest (ME) (premises are not strongly related). While the U.S. and Russia had agreed to discuss the two questions together (CP), the reductions of offensive weapons (ME) would be in the several hundred (GP), whereas the defensive systems would be in the “handfuls” (ME). The defensive capability that the U.S. strived for (ME) affected that equation only modestly (ME) (the missile defense question should not meaningfully inform quantitative decisions made by the U.S. on nuclear reductions). When asked whether the U.S. would work out a deal with Russia whereby in return for nuclear arms reductions (ME) the U.S. “might have an increase in missile defense” (ME), Rumsfeld stated that “it [was] unclear what might comprise an arrangement or an agreement or an understanding with Russia” (ME). He added that the most likely scenario would be that the U.S. would have to withdraw from the ABM Treaty (ME) and then continue to work on establishing a new relationship with Russia (GP) (withdrawal can occur regardless of whether the goal is achieved or not). Once the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty was announced (ME), the Secretary stressed that the decision had put to bed concerns

over a potential Russian response (GP) (rejected downsides). The two parties declared “the end of an arms race [GP] and dramatic reductions in strategic nuclear weapons” (GP). Instead of causing problems (GP) (rejected downside), the U.S. decision (ME) had made it possible for both nations to “look forward (...) into the 21st century [GP], instead of backwards into the Cold War” (GP) (downside of preserving the treaty) (S. HRG. 107–749, 2001: 45, 150; Public Statements of Donald H. Rumsfeld – Volumes I–IV, 2001: 717, 720–721, 1081, 1174–1175, 1182, 1189, 1277, 1284, 1286, 1291, 1293, 1296, 1309, 1311, 1315, 1320–1322, 1426–1427, 3048–3049; S. HRG. 107–355, 2001: 246, 249–251).

Throughout 2001, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz (who had previously been a member of George W. Bush’s campaign advisory unit) often discussed the nuclear deterrence policy changes being proposed by the Administration. He explained that the new relations enjoyed with Russia (CP) enabled America to carry out further reductions of strategic nuclear weapons (ME) and build a relationship with Moscow without strategic nuclear weapons as its centerpiece (GP). Russia was no longer an enemy (CP), which allowed certain fundamental changes in the American approach to deterrence (ME). Still, the country endured the increasingly concerning new challenges posed by WMD and ballistic missile proliferation (CP), which required a new deterrence concept (GP). This new concept combined deployed defenses (ME), offensive forces (ME), arms control (ME), and non-proliferation policy (ME). The U.S. was not worried about a large-scale threat to the United States posed by thousands Soviet warheads (CP); the U.S.S.R. no longer existed (CP). Washington was, instead, concerned with much more limited threats (CP). Unfriendly regimes such as North Korea, Iran, Syria, and Libya would soon possess the ability to launch missiles armed with nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons toward urban centers in America or allied states (CP). Some among them were within five years of having such a capability – or may already have acquired it (CP). The prospect of a U.S. retaliatory nuclear strike (ME) might not deter the leaders of such countries, such as Saddam Hussein, from using WMDs in a crisis (GP). The latter was unlikely to be sufficiently concerned with the lives of their people to refrain from attacking (CP), and the U.S. did not want the destruction of Baghdad and its people (VP) to be its only option (ME). Thus, the U.S. should abandon its policy of intentional vulnerability (ME), inadequate to address (GP) 21st century dangers (CP), and instead develop missile defenses (ME). Missile defense had not been “increased (...) at the expense of everything else” (downplays downside) (GP).

The acceleration of theater missile defense and longer-range missile defense (ME), a steppingstone toward the realization of the President’s plans to deploy a missile defense system (ME) to defend America (GP) were also what the 1999 MDA had called for (VP). Still, accelerating America’s missile defense program (ME) meant that certain of its elements “[would] eventually bump up against (...) restrictions and limitations” of the ABM Treaty (VP). The anticipation was that such issues would be identified 6 months in advance (CP). By then, either the U.S. would allow the accord (ME), obsolete as it was (ME), to prevent the defense of the country (GP) (downside of inaction), or America would exert its right (VP) to leave the treaty (ME). Since reaching an understanding with Russia on the new deterrence framework (GP) was in the best interest of both countries (VP), and the Cold War was over

(CP), the Administration expected to achieve the goal well before any issues arose as it pertained to violations of the treaty (VP) (no downside on values). The ABM Treaty was not only preventing the U.S. (GP) (downside of inaction) from acquiring missile defenses (ME) to deter (GP) and defend against new threats (GP); it was also perpetuating an adversarial relationship with Moscow (GP) (downside). The Administration wanted to “find the most effective [GP], least expensive [GP], and least provocative [GP] way” of developing a missile defense system” (ME). He hoped that the Administration would be able to persuade Russia (GP), U.S. allies (GP) and many others (GP) that such a system served not only U.S. interests (VP) but also their own (GP). It would not be a “scarecrow” defense (ME); the intention was to progressively improve the systems’ effectiveness over time (GP) (defense would be increasingly able to deliver the goals of action as time progressed).

The U.S. missile defense system (ME) would not adversely affect existing arms control frameworks (GP) or lead to an arms race (GP) (rejected downsides). In fact, effective missile defenses (ME) would instead make ballistic missiles less valuable (GP) and reduce interest in their acquisition (GP). Additionally, Russia would not spend its limited resources (CP) to overcome a system that did not pose a threat to it (GP) (not a goal of action of the United States). China’s rapid modernization was already underway (CP) and would continue regardless of U.S. plans (GP) (rejected downside). Lastly, Moscow and Beijing would see (CP) that Washington was executing deep cuts in its offensive nuclear forces (ME) and conclude that there was no reason to expand theirs (GP) (rejected downside). The B-1 (ME), Peacekeeper (ME) and Trident reductions (ME) would account for over a decrease of over 1000 START-countable warheads (GP). The Administration’s FY2002 budget proposal alone solicited Congress to fund reductions of well beyond a thousand in the number of America’s START-countable warheads (GP). The executive sought to achieve that goal by retiring the Peacekeeper ICBM force (ME) and conducting reductions in the B-1 bomber (ME) and Trident SSBN fleets (ME). The U.S. would reduce its strategic nuclear force levels (GP) no matter what Russia did (GP) (dismissed downside) but believed that Moscow (CP) would reciprocate (GP) (low weight of goal of mutual reductions) (S. HRG. 107–749, 2001: 251; S. HRG. 107–355, 2001: 441-442, 444-448, 474, 653, 1283; Wolfowitz, 2001a, 2001b).

On 31 December 2001, the Bush administration’s NPR was submitted to Congress. Despite it being classified, portions of the document were leaked. The NPR stated that nuclear planning had experienced only moderate revisions since the end of the Cold War (CP), despite the new relationship between Russia and the U.S. (CP), with few changes made to the composition or size of America’s strategic nuclear forces beyond those mandated by START (CP). Rogue states and terrorists armed with WMD were likely to test U.S. security commitments (CP).

The U.S. pursued a more cooperative relationship with Russia (GP) and to transcend the “balance-of-terror policy framework” (GP). It would adjust its nuclear force requirements (ME) as a recognition of that new relation (CP). In fact, the action was viewed as a crucial move away from the policy of mutual vulnerability of the Cold War (ME) and toward more cooperative bilateral ties (GP).

If such relations worsen considerable (CP) (potential for a future downturn in U.S.-Russian relations), U.S. nuclear force levels and posture might be revised (ME) (potential future course of action).

North Korea, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Libya could be involved in a future contingency, due to their hostility toward the U.S. (CP). They all harbored and sponsored terrorism and had WMD and missile programs (CP). China was modernizing its nuclear and non-nuclear forces and could be involved in a future contingency as well (CP). Russia had formidable nuclear forces and substantial conventional capabilities, but there were no ideological sources of conflict (CP). Russian nuclear forces and programs were still a concern (CP). A nuclear strike contingency was, “while plausible, (...) not expected,” a statement found on the subject of the sizing of the U.S. nuclear force (ME). The country’s periphery presented it with many strategic problems, and Russia’s future course was uncertain (CP). America sought a more cooperative relationship with Moscow and a move away from the framework of MAD [GP] – an expression of mutual hostility and distrust by definition (CP). Since the end of the Cold War, America’s “defense infrastructure [had] contracted and [its] nuclear infrastructure [had] atrophied (CP). The current U.S. nuclear arsenal was characterized by its “moderate delivery accuracy, limited earth penetrator capability, high-yield warheads, silo and sea-based ballistic missiles with multiple independent reentry vehicles, and limited retargeting capability” (CP).

The NPR called for a New Triad, consisting of offensive strike systems (nuclear and non-nuclear) (ME), active and passive defenses (ME) and a revitalized defense infrastructure (ME). It also called for the development of new capabilities⁸⁶. The proposed New Triad contributed toward four goals (ME): assure (U.S. security partners), dissuade (adversaries from starting arms races), deter attacks, and defeat opponents (with nuclear and non-nuclear attacks, under missile defense protection) Furthermore, the New Triad could (ME) reduce America’s dependence on nuclear weapons (GP) and strengthen deterrence (GP) in the face of new threats (CP). The added defenses would reduce (ME) the U.S. dependence on offensive strike forces for deterrence (GP). A strategic posture relying solely on offensive capabilities was inadequate to deter potential adversaries (ME) (rejects alternative course of action). A broader array of capabilities was needed (ME) to dissuade threats⁸⁷ to the U.S. and its allies (GP), and to offer the president a range of options to defeat any adversary (GP). Despite not being perfect (ME), defenses would succeed (ME) in denying or reducing the effectiveness of limited attacks (GP). In doing so, the defenses would also (ME) discourage attacks (GP), allow for better crisis management (GP), and deliver a form of insurance against traditional deterrence failure (GP). The defenses would preserve America’s freedom of action (GP) and enhance U.S. the credibility of U.S. NATO commitments (GP). Defensive systems were now capable (ME) of making interceptions of short to mid-

⁸⁶ It is not clear in the leaked version of the NPR whether the capabilities would be exclusively nuclear. Seemingly, the document calls for research to determine if an entirely new nuclear capability is necessary, or if the modification of an existing one would be the best course of action.

⁸⁷ Meaning to discourage an adversary from pursuing threatening capabilities (NPR, 2001).

range missiles (GP) and “may reduce the need for nuclear weapons to hold at risk an adversary's missile launchers” (GP).

The NPR established as goals “[defeating] emerging threats such as hard and deeply buried targets [GP] (...), to find and attack mobile and relocatable targets [GP], to defeat chemical or biological agents [GP], and to improve accuracy and limit collateral damage” (GP). Delivering those goals required the development of new capabilities, deemed “imperative to make the New Triad a reality” (ME).

The addition of non-nuclear forces (such as information operations and conventional strike) would lower (ME) the U.S. reliance on nuclear weapons specifically (GP) and strengthen U.S. offensive deterrence credibility (GP). The proposed “‘new mix’ of nuclear, non-nuclear, and defensive capabilities” was necessary to address the diversity of adversaries and threats (ME). Relying solely on nuclear strikes was not the best course of action: a range of options was necessary (ME) to pose a credible deterrent (GP) to adversaries whose values and calculations may greatly differ from those of past adversaries (CP). Nuclear weapons possessed unique properties (CP) and were still necessary (ME) “to hold at risk classes of targets [that are] important to achieve strategic and political objectives” (GP). However, the number of nuclear weapons required to achieve that goal had declined (ME) (it is not necessary to keep the same number of nuclear weapons). The 1700-2200 range would preserve (ME) “a degree of flexibility necessary to accommodate changes in the security environment” (GP). Revitalizing the defense infrastructure would deliver the goal (ME) of providing new capabilities (GP) and dissuade adversaries from starting nuclear armaments competitions (GP). It would mitigate the potential consequences of a lower operationally deployed nuclear arsenal (GP). After the initial phase of reductions was completed (GP), further reductions would be achieved (GP) by removing (“downloading”) warheads from missiles and bombers (ME). The delivery systems from which the warheads were removed would not be retired (ME) and the downloaded warheads would integrate a “responsive force”⁸⁸ (ME).

The new approach would succeed (ME) in providing “a credible deterrence at the lowest level of nuclear weapons consistent with U.S. and allied security” (GP). The U.S. pursued a shift in “planning for America's strategic forces from the threat-based approach (CP) (i.e., using threats as reasons for action) of the Cold War to a capabilities-based approach” (CP) (i.e., centered on assessments of adversary capabilities [CP], which would inform the range of options the U.S. would require [ME] to meet various potential security problems [GP]). America “[would] no longer plan, size or sustain its forces as though Russia presented merely a smaller version of the threat posed by the former Soviet Union” (GP). The combination of new capabilities that comprised the New Triad reduce risks to the nation (GP) that could have otherwise been caused by the reduction in U.S. deployed strategic nuclear forces (ME).

⁸⁸ Russia objected to the NPR's call to retain the downloaded warheads, stressing that reductions should be deep, verifiable, and irreversible – and not occur simply “on paper” (Bleek, 2002: Arms Control Today, Vol. 32, No. 1 (January/February 2002), pp. 28-29).

The U.S. was seeking a more cooperative relationship with Russia (GP), and to “move away from the balance-of-terror policy framework” (GP). The adjustments to U.S. immediate nuclear force requirements (ME) were a recognition of the new relationship with Russia (CP). Indeed, those adjustments were perceived as “a critical step away from the Cold War policy of mutual vulnerability [ME] and toward more cooperative relations” (GP). U.S. nuclear force levels and posture could be revised (CP) (potential for a future downturn in U.S.-Russian relations) if relations with Russia were to considerably worsen (ME) (potential future course of action). In pursuing nuclear reductions (ME), force structure would be preserved (ME) (NPR, 2001).

Under the Freedom of Information Act, some parts of the 2001 NPR have since been declassified, even if the document remains highly redacted. As part of its capabilities-based approach (CP), the U.S. was reducing its operationally deployed nuclear forces (ME) to a level between 1700-2200 warheads (GP). The size and composition of U.S. nuclear forces (ME) would “take into account an increasingly complex security environment in which surprise [was] a dominant strategic consideration.” America could not confidently predict “what nation, combination of nations or non-state actor might pose a threat [CP] to its vital interests or those of its friends and allies [VP] decades [after that moment].” However, the U.S. could predict which capabilities an adversary might utilize “to coerce its neighbors or to deter or directly attack the United States of its deployed forces” (CP). This capabilities-based approach (CP) required “a modern and diverse portfolio of military capabilities” (ME).

U.S. nuclear force requirements would reflect “a time when a major nuclear power [was] neither a traditional ally nor an implacable enemy” (CP). According to the document, “[m]ultiple, varied, and unanticipated contingencies [were] likely and the respective stakes involved for the United States and its adversaries will be variable and often asymmetric” (CP). America faced “a spectrum of potential adversaries and possible combinations of hostile powers,” none of which were peers (CP).

After reductions (ME), the New Triad would be comprised of a third of the current levels of operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads (GP). The New Triad (ME) would play a key role in deterring WMD threats (GP), holding at risk adversary assets and capabilities (GP), assure allies (GP), and dissuade potential adversaries from developing large-scale nuclear and conventional threats (GP). The operationally deployed nuclear forces (ME) would address (GP) immediate (CP) and unexpected contingencies (CP). The responsive force (ME) (i.e., the hedge stockpile) would address potential contingencies (CP) by “[reinforcing] in a timely and efficient manner the operationally deployed force with warheads” (GP). As a result, the responsive force would contribute to deterring challenges (GP) and dissuading arms competitions (GP). U.S. nuclear planning (ME) was no longer country-specific (CP) or intended to address a small number of contingencies (GP). Nuclear planning (ME) ought to strive for flexibility (GP) and aim to respond (GP) to an unpredictable and fluid security environment (CP). The responsive force (ME) was also necessary to hedge against the detection of problems with a large number of active warheads (GP), as well as to replace warheads consumed for purposes of quality

assurance and reliability testing (GP). This hedging was made necessary (ME) by the fact that the U.S. had lacked the capacity to produce certain warhead components for about a decade (CP).

The NPR stressed that Russia was not the U.S.S.R. (CP), which made reductions (ME) and the development of a new strategic framework with the country, possible (GP). The New Triad (ME) would support that process (GP). The Cold War style of arms control negotiations (ME) was incompatible with the flexibility U.S. nuclear forces and planning required (GP). A smaller nuclear force (ME) needed to be flexible (GP) and reliable (GP). To have a flexible deterrence posture (GP), the country needed to be able to adapt its forces (ME) to a changing strategic environment (CP). Specifically, modernization and adaptation of forces (ME) would enable the U.S. “to continue to achieve deterrence objectives [GP], but more efficiently [GP] as [it] [moved] to significantly lower levels of nuclear weapons” (ME).

In addition to refurbishing the stockpile (ME), the U.S. might need to modify, replace or upgrade portions of the nuclear force (ME), or develop concepts for follow-on nuclear systems (ME). It was unlikely that a reduced version of the Cold War nuclear arsenal (ME) would meet U.S. deterrence requirements from 2012 onwards (GP). To ensure the viability of the U.S. nuclear infrastructure (GP), the country ought to revitalize it (ME), sustain current systems (ME), and modernize its forces (ME).

Beyond FY2007, the U.S. planned to reduce the number of operationally deployed warheads on ballistic missiles by downloading them (ME). As for bombers, reductions would be made by decreasing the number of those available for loading in military bases (ME) (FOIA NPR, 2001).

In a series of slides pertaining to findings of the NPR, the DOD stated the required capabilities (ME) for the new threats and contingencies of the changing environment (CP) would not be country-specific (CP). Force sizing would not be informed (ME) by an immediate contingency involving Russia (CP). The operationally deployed nuclear force of the United States (ME) was intended for both immediate and unexpected contingencies (CP). The responsive force (ME) would be for potential (i.e., plausible) contingencies (CP), whereas preplanning (ME) would be for potential and immediate contingencies (CP). Maintaining capabilities would be a priority (ME) for potential and unexpected threat contingencies (CP). Downloaded warheads and force structure would be preserved for the responsive force (GP) as reductions were implemented (ME) (U.S. DOD, 2002).

During a 9 January 2002 briefing on the NPR, Jack Dyer Crouch II, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy announced initial decisions to eliminate the Peacekeeper ICBM fleet (ME), remove four Trident submarines from the nuclear mission (ME), and exempt the B-1 from the requirement that its capacity to return to a nuclear role be retained (ME). Additional decisions had been made which would lead to further warhead reductions (GP) (Crouch, 2002).

1.2. Audience discourse

Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS), of the Committee on Appropriations, reacted to the administration's three proposed policies on 14 February 2001 and 1 August 2001. Cochran perceived a new threat for which the United States was incapable to defend itself against (CP). It was broadly recognized that states or groups could easily obtain warheads and missile technology, making the current security environment dangerous (CP). The risks of substantial surprise and further proliferation were increasing, making the United States more vulnerable (CP), especially considering the present neglect of the missile defense program (CP). By August, the senator claimed that the program was making "substantial technical progress" (CP). Regarding the ABM Treaty, the world was now in a different era (CP). The legislator also noted several recent successes achieved by the U.S. missile defense program (CP).

The congressman acknowledged the importance of ally consultation (VP), as well as the lack of support on the part of states such as France, Russia, and China for America's missile defense system (CP). However, many were starting to view the system favorably due to the president's efforts – including Russia (CP). Still, the defense of America "[could not] be contingent on someone else's permission;" it was America's decision (VP). According to the 1999 National Missile Defense Act, the policy of the United States was to deploy a missile defense system as soon as technologically feasible (VP). Achieving the best defense possible for our Nation in the shortest period of time" (GP) should outweigh concerns with not conflicting with the ABM Treaty (CP) (i.e., the accord is not considered a VP that should inform action). Moreover, the government had a constitutional duty to end America's vulnerability (VP), and it was not responsible for the president to leave the American people undefended against a known threat (VP). Cochran wanted to defend America and its allies from long-range ballistic missile attacks (GP) and end their vulnerability from missiles (GP). He also wanted for the United States to remain free to intervene in key strategic areas (GP).

The legislator rejected preserving the ABM Treaty as a policy alternative. It was a strategy based on pledges on MAD with Russia, even though the U.S. was not at war with it (CP). It did not suit (ME) the strategic environment (CP). The treaty also limited the U.S. to a single strategy, which was based on civilized life's extinction (ME). The ABM framework impeded development of missile defenses and prohibited its deployment. Thus, moving on from the treaty was a necessary step toward the thorough development of America's missile defense system (ME). Not doing so prevented the United States from achieving the goal that missile defense would deliver (ME): the defense of America citizens from missile attacks (GP).

Cochran was optimistic that missile defense would allow America to reach the goals of action. He stressed that the Patriot PAC-3 system had proven effective against short-range ballistic missiles (ME), whereas the longer range THAAD system had repeated just that year another successful intercept (ME). According to the Director of the BMD Program, the ground-based missile defense system did not need "that anything be invented, only that it be correctly engineered" (ME).

The lawmaker rejected the view that the United States should abstain from deploying missile defenses to avoid threatening China; that is, to prevent consequences on other U.S. goals (GP). He rejected such criticism on several grounds. For one, in his view, missile defenses were not provocative (CP). Secondly, Cochran considered the argument that missile defense would threaten China was grounded on a premise that he rejected: that Beijing “[had] some sort of right to threaten [America] with its missiles.” No nation, the legislator argued, had the right to threaten America, and the country had no obligation to assure any other nation’s right to do so (VP).

The Senator also rebuffed claims that missile defense deployment should not be pursued because it would generate an arms race with Russia and China (GP) (rejects compromise on goals). China was already modernizing and expanding its nuclear forces (CP), making it unlikely that its interests would be affected by America’s missile defense system (GP). Moscow did not have reasons (CP) or resources to engage in a strategic offensive arms buildup (CP). Furthermore, President Bush had announced that America would dramatically reduce its nuclear forces and had taken a first step in doing so by announcing the deactivation of multiple-warhead Peacekeeper missiles (ME). Thus, if Russia decided to engage in a strategic offensive arms buildup, it would have no one to race with (GP) (no downside). The Senator believed that Moscow subscribed to that logic (CP). He wanted the U.S. to work out a deal with Russia (ME) “to leave the Cold War and its trappings behind” (GP).

Cochran rejected the idea that diplomacy could be a replacement for missile defense (ME). It had not worked with North Korea, and it was doubtful it would work in Iran (ME). Moreover, the missile technology proliferation threat was larger than the two countries (CP). Inaction was out of the question; America could not allow itself to remain vulnerable to an entire class of weapons (ME). Postponing missile defense too: the failure to do enough in the past was what had led to today’s urgency to act (ME). If the United States was to have a mature system, it should not slow down and move forward as fast as possible with the existing missile defense technology (ME).

The argument that the country should not move forward with missile defense because the system would be easily defeated by U.S. adversaries through simple countermeasures was also unconvincing. As the lawmaker explained, critics were simultaneously claiming that missile defense was too complicated a task for America, whereas defeating it would be easy for those that had just recently acquired long-range missile capabilities (ME). It made no sense to say that missile defense was too complicated a task for America, but countermeasures to it would be easy for those that had just recently acquired long-range missile capabilities (ME). Cochran also noted that missile defense deployment would bring added net gains on ally security (GP). Feeling more secure, the U.S. would more easily assert itself in areas of concern for its allies (ME) (CRECB, 2001: 1921-1922; 15343-15345).

Representative Curt Weldon spoke in favor of abandoning the ABM and deploying missile defenses on several occasions (between 27 February and 19 June 2001). More than 70 nations possessed missiles that threaten U.S. troops, people, and allies (CP). The threat had been growing and many countries had recently conducted tests (CP). Russia was not an enemy, and like the U.S. faced a rogue

state threat (CP). Weldon highlighted the threat of an accidental nuclear launch from Russia because of “severe internal problems and stability problems within the Russian military.” He did not believe that Russia or China would attack the United States and that many in Congress, as well as President Bush, held that view (CP). Moscow and Washington wanted to establish a new relationship (CP). Weldon wanted his country to be able to protect Americans, Europeans, and other allies, but also Russia (GP). Weldon denied dominating or wiping out Russia as a goal of U.S. action (GP). Weldon wanted a future state-of-affairs where America would no longer be vulnerable to rogue states and terrorists (GP). He accused his colleagues in Congress and the administration of using missile defense as a “political totem” (i.e., a hidden value premise informing decision-making) (VP). Weldon shared, on a personal note, his desire that the U.S. no longer based its relationship with Russia on the logic of MAD (VP).

He rejected the view that the missile defense system would strengthen Russia and China’s relationship and their opposition to the United States (GP) and lead to arms races (GP). Weldon did not believe in such downsides because the Russians possessed systems like those that the United States was building (CP). Furthermore, President Bush’s missile defense proposal was one of limited capability, which Russia knew (CP) they could overcome easily by launching hundreds of missiles (GP) (threatening Russia is not a goal of action). In addition, missile defense was meant to be pursued jointly with Moscow (CP). The underlying problem with Russia was not America’s plan to deploy missile defenses, but Moscow’s loss of confidence in the United States (CP), something that America ought to rebuild (GP).

The congressman also addressed complaints that missile defense would be too costly by noting that it represented only about 1% of the defense budget (ME). Furthermore, not having a missile defense system could lead to far more negative costs in case of an attack on a major city (consequences of inaction) (GP). He noted that while critics might believe that other WMD threats were more realistic, that did not invalidate the missile threat (CP).

Regarding whether or not missile defense would work, the legislator drew on the expert testimony of the head of the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization (BMDO): the technology posed an engineering challenge but had been worked out (ME). To those who stated that missile defense could be defeated by decoys, Weldon highlighted that, on the one hand, decoys were complex technology that the United States had struggled itself to acquire (CP). Those who claimed that U.S. adversaries could develop decoys (CP) were the same who stated that missile defense was too complex for the U.S. (CP). Both premises could not support, simultaneously, the conclusion that the U.S. should not proceed with the development of a missile defense system (ME).

Weldon rejected maintaining the ABM Treaty as opposed to abrogating the agreement, because the current framework forced America to continue to rely solely on deterrence, which was not enough to deliver the goals (ME). Instead, the United States should continue to rely on deterrence (ME), and consult with allies, friends, and countries like Russia (ME), but also deploy missile defenses (ME). The planned deployments were described as limited, short-term capabilities that were proven and tested and

would provide long-needed assistance (ME). Achieving the goal of moving beyond the constraints of the ABM Treaty (GP) would allow the U.S. to deploy missile defenses (ME). The representative supported « arms control efforts with Russia (ME) (CRECB, 2001: 2342-2343, 2419-2425, 6588-6589, 6855-6862, 11068-11073).

Senator Pete Domenici (R-NM), chairman of the Energy and Water Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee requested that a prepared statement and a news release be submitted for the record during a 28 March 2001 meeting of the Committee on Foreign Relations. The lawmaker agreed with the President's statement whereby, as the U.S. transformed its military (ME) it "[could] discard Cold War relics" (ME) and reduce nuclear force levels (GP) according to present needs (CP). However, he disagreed with the President's proposed course of action to achieve the aforementioned goal. Domenici believed that America "[could not] unilaterally downsize [its] own nuclear arsenal [ME] without some assurance [GP] that Russia's rebuild capacity is in line with their arms control commitments" (GP) (potential downside) (achievement of the former GP should precede unilateral reductions [ME], lest the latter GP becomes a downside of action). He highlighted U.S. efforts in the Nunn-Lugar Program (ME), which mitigated (GP) the proliferation threat posed by Russia's "fissile materials and destitute weapons experts" (CP), perceived to be "the most urgent unmet [U.S.] national security threat" (CP).

Thus, the senator rejected linkage between American involvement in the program (ME) and U.S. "disagreements with Russia at a different level;" that is, "other concerns about Russia's activities that we might have at any given time" (CP) (goal delivered by Nunn-Lugar activities outweighs this CP). Discontent with Moscow in other arenas (CP) should not inform a decision to risk U.S. non-proliferation efforts in Russia (ME). The termination of such efforts (ME) would be a "lose-lose" situation (ME): Moscow would continue to act in the pursuit of its national interest (GP) (rejects changing Russian behavior as an attainable goal; downside cannot be prevented via the action), and the U.S. would lose the security benefits delivered by its non-proliferation activities (GP) (downside) (S. HRG. 107-43, 2001: 11-13).

On 30 April and 8 May 2001, Senator Byron Dorgan (D-NPL-ND), member of the Appropriations Subcommittees on Defense, and Energy and Water Development shared his views regarding the administration's proposed courses of action.

He acknowledged that the United States faced threats from rogue nations and terrorists (CP) but considered that a missile threat was less likely than other terrorist threats, such as a suitcase-size nuclear bomb in the trunk of a car in a major American city (CP). He believed that the United States still had far too many nuclear weapons (CP), and that many of his colleagues who wanted to deploy a missile defense system were under the impression that it would be able to protect America from a nuclear attack from Russia and China, when in fact it could not (CP). He also noted that the last missile defense test had failed (CP). The senator considered that the context of action required action, and he aimed to "deal with that range of threats" (GP).

The Senator was concerned with the detrimental effects of the administration's claims for action on other goals and value premises he deemed important. According to the congressman, American aspirations to deploy a missile defense system were encountering vigorous opposition from allies (CP). The senator was concerned with that fact (VP), as well as with a potential violation of the ABM Treaty (VP). Getting rid of the agreement to pursue missile defenses would jeopardize arms control efforts with Russia (GP) and spark an arms race with Moscow and Beijing (GP) (consequences on goals). The U.S. should not ignore nuclear arms treaties (ME) and deploy missile defenses (ME), disregarding the potential responses of others (GP) (downside). Russia, China, or others could decide to amass more weapons and delivery vehicles, resulting in larger buildups (GP). If that were to happen, he asked "will we be safer [GP], and will the world be safer [VP] [GP] with a national missile defense system to protect us against a Russian threat [GP], or against a Chinese threat?" (GP). He then added, "[t]he answer is clearly no" (GP) (undelivered goals).

In addition, Dorgan did not believe that missile defense could deliver the goal of dealing with the rogue state missile threats either (GP). After all, America did not have a system that worked (ME). Therefore, Dorgan proposed a policy alternative: the United States should focus on doing missile defense research and development until it developed a workable system (ME), while continuing to lower the levels of nuclear weapons through the CTR program (ME) and arms control agreements with Russia (ME). He opposed the nomination of John Bolton to the position of Under Secretary of State for Arms Control because the latter "[did] not believe in arms control" (VP) (personal opinions that should not inform action). Bolton "[did] not believe in doing [that] on the basis of reaching out with others to try to reduce the number of nuclear weapons [GP] with treaties and arms control agreements (ME). Such an approach would undermine American world leadership (VP) in regard to stopping the proliferation of nuclear weapons (GP) and reducing the number of nuclear weapons (GP) (CRECB, 2001: 6506-6507, CREC, 2001: S4449-S4451).

On 1 May 2001 Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC), of the Committee on Foreign Relations, supported protecting the American people from ballistic missile attacks (GP) and conducting consultations (ME), which he expected would be well received by allies (CP). The Cold War was over (CP), and it was time to scrap the ABM Treaty (ME) and end U.S. vulnerability to missile attacks (GP). Furthermore, significant nuclear reductions were now appropriate (ME). The U.S. deterrent required modernization (ME), including new weapons designs (ME) to meet evolving threats and challenges (GP), such as those posed by deeply buried targets (CP) and biological plagues (CP). Since countries like China were expanding their arsenals, the U.S. ought to "be exceedingly careful to preserve a significant reserve stockpile [ME] as a hedge against uncertainty" (GP) (Disarmament Diplomacy, 2001a).

Reacting to President Bush's 1 May speech, Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN) expressed his support for new concepts of deterrence that integrated offensive and defensive forces (ME) to keep the American people safe and secure (GP) in case non-proliferation efforts (ME) and diplomacy (ME) proved imperfect. While missile defenses alone (ME) would not adequately protect the U.S. and its allies

(GP) from ballistic missile and WMD proliferation either (CP), the U.S. could no longer rely solely on the threat of retaliation with nuclear weapons (ME). Missile defenses (ME) would contribute to give added credibility to U.S. deterrence (GP). America should pursue agreements with Russia on missile defense and on continued offensive arms reductions (ME). However, he warned that “agreements and unilateral declarations on reductions of offensive arms [ME] are only successful if they are fully implemented by both sides and can be verified [GP]. Only then will security [GP] and stability be enhanced” (GP) (Disarmament Diplomacy, 2001b).

On May 2, 2001, Senator John Kerry (D-MA), of the Foreign Relations Committee, reacted to President Bush’s 1 May speech at the National Defense University. He perceived a security environment that was a lot different from the one in place when the ABM was signed (CP). Still, the U.S. military placed “a rogue missile attack at the very bottom of threats the United States might face” (CP). Other types of terrorist acts occurring in U.S. soil were more likely (CP). The senator also brought up accidental missile launches as potential threats, despite having reservations about the likelihood of them happening (CP). He also noted that the United States had not yet had enough successful missile defense tests (CP).

If a rogue state missile attack or an accidental launch were realistic possibilities, then “responsible leadership” dictated that they be addressed (VP). The congressman wanted to protect American cities from rogue missiles or accidental launches, including in their boost phase (GP). He also strived to find new ways to protect the U.S. and allies against nuclear blackmail or terrorism (GP). He tied his reference to blackmail to Bush’s May 1 speech, where blackmail is said to potentially keep America from intervening in strategic parts of the world, in defense of allies and friends. Thus, we can infer that Kerry likely wanted to preserve U.S. freedom to intervene abroad (GP). The lawmaker rejected undermining Moscow and Beijing’s nuclear deterrent as a goal (GP). Kerry wanted to reduce nuclear dangers (GP) and make the world safer (VP). Same as Bush, the senator considered that America should pay close attention to allies’ concerns (VP). Kerry claimed that the expectation was that the president would be able to convince U.S. allies to accept America’s missile defense system (CP). Still, the U.S. ought to take into account the concerns of its allies about Russia (CP) and consult with the country (ME). America’s allies “[were] keenly aware that a fearful, insecure Russia is a dangerous Russia.” Still, consultations (ME) to reach a common understanding with Russia (GP) did not entail giving Russia a veto (VP) (national sovereignty) over the U.S. decision on missile defense (ME). In other words, America’s policy (ME) should not be informed by Russian opposition (CP), lest the previous value be compromised. Nonetheless, the U.S. had an obligation (VP) to avoid unilateral action (ME) that would deteriorate (GP) (downside) what were already tenuous relations with Moscow (CP). Just as the President, the Senator believed that the United States should continue to be a leader regarding “international efforts to reduce and contain the danger from nuclear weapons” (VP). The senator stated that America should not place “political ideology [VP] ahead of commitments” (VP) (i.e., the ABM Treaty). The missile defense proposal lacked detail (ME) (unclear what action is being proposed) and

intentions vis-à-vis the ABM Treaty were vague (GP) (uncertain goals). Kerry suspected that the president's proposal of carrying out unilateral arms reductions (ME) was informed by the covert⁸⁹ goal of rallying support for missile defense and leaving the ABM (GP). He stated that the two policies were unpopular among the American people (CP), since the accord (ME) had kept them safe (GP), and missile defense (ME) was expensive (GP) (downside). Thus, to sweeten the bad news, he had proposed nuclear reductions (ME), a proposal lacking any detail (ME).

The Senator identified negative consequences of implementing missile defense and abrogating the ABM Treaty. He considered that the long missile defense discussions were "creating (...) notions of false threat" (CP) and diverting attention from greater threats (GP), thus hindering the national interest (VP). Kerry also showed concern over the cost of a missile defense system, arguing that the money might be better spent in other areas (education, renewables, non-proliferation, or health), where the national security impact would be greater (ME) (considers alternative action).

Kerry also warned that pursuing missile defense unilaterally with abrogation of the ABM treaty would lead to several negative consequences on U.S. goals. It would lead to arms races with Russia and China (GP), jeopardize stability in Europe and in the Asia-Pacific (GP), and worsen currently tenuous relations with Moscow (GP). The action would also signal "paranoid hardliners in other countries that the United States once again [wished] to have technological superiority" (GP).

Pursing protection against larger attacks would invite arms races, with America "spending trillions of dollars on something that takes us to a place that (...) is more dangerous than the place we are in today" (GP). Meaning that the downsides of deploying a missile defense system that was not limited in nature would outweigh the benefits (ME).

Given the new strategic environment, maintaining the ABM Treaty in its current form was not necessary (ME). The Senator proposed that the United States pursued missile defenses without abrogating the ABM Treaty. He suggested that instead of moving beyond the constraints of the ABM Treaty (GP), the United States should seek to amend the 1997 ABM Demarcation Treaty⁹⁰ (ME) to "establish the line between theater missile defense systems that are not limited by the treaty and the strategic defenses that the treaty prescribes" (GP). Kerry posited that Russia might not be pleased by the proposition but would still prefer that option over watching the United States develop a system that scrapped the ABM completely (CP). In his words: "[t]he ABM Treaty can be amended (...) [b]ut to abandon it all-together is to welcome an arms race that will make us more vulnerable, not less," and undermine what America "could possibly gain in terms of [its] security by deploying missile defenses" (ME).

⁸⁹ In other words, the senator implied that "the premises that are invoked in support of the claim are not the real premises," and that "the real reasons are not the overt reasons" (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 167, 184, 219).

⁹⁰ The 1997 ABM Demarcation Treaty was a package of agreements meant to enhance the prospects of Russian ratification of the START II, but which never entered into force (Kimball, 2020).

If no agreement on an amendment was reached, then, the senator posited, at least America would at least be able to deploy missile defenses in a transparent (GP) way that minimized provocation; thus, lowering the negative effects of pursuing missile defense (GP). Under such circumstances, it is implied that Kerry believed that the benefits of abrogating the agreement and deploying missile defense could outweigh the (lowered) costs of action (ME). Still, presently, he rejected abrogating the ABM Treaty, considering the downsides he raised, without exhausting what he considered to be a better, potentially feasible policy alternative: amending the agreement (ME). After all, Kerry stressed that the ABM Treaty had kept America safe for decades (ME).

Despite his interest in missile defense, the senator remained unsure if deploying such a system was the best course of action among the options available, since the current approach – deterrence – could still be used against rogue states. In his words, “[e]ven the most unreasonable, most demonized of leaders still calculates risk and still calculates the repercussions of his actions” (ME). Missile defense, on its own, would never be a sufficient course of action considering the goals of the administration: it would never be 100% effective, particularly when considering that enemies could use countermeasures, such as decoys, to successfully carry out attacks. Thus, the United States could not move away from MAD (ME).

Kerry doubted that missile defense would deliver his goals since it was ineffective (ME). He also questioned the need to rapidly deploy missile defenses and abrogate the ABM Treaty (ME) given the lack of enough successful missile defense tests, architecture, or a budget (CP). Still, he admitted that “it would be, in fact, a step forward for the United States to be able to at least know that [it] have that capacity.” Thus, he supported research and development of a limited missile defense system (ME) that could achieve the goal of intercepting one or two missiles (GP).

In Kerry’s words, if the United States, its allies, Russia, China deployed together “a clearly verifiable [GP], highly transparent system [GP], mutually [GP] arrived at in protocol (...) with a clear understanding of the reductions we are seeking [ME], that could be salutary in its extraordinarily limited way” (ME).

Kerry also supported, unconditionally, moving forward with unilateral nuclear arms reductions. He described the claim for action as “an important and overdue first step [ME] toward reducing (GP) the nuclear danger” (CP). However, unilateral reductions were not sufficient (ME). The U.S. ought to move forward immediately with talks with Russia on a START III agreement while reductions were underway (ME). Codifying similar (GP), mutual (GP), transparent (GP), verifiable (GP), irreversible reductions (GP), arrived at in protocol (ME) would bring the nuclear arsenals of the two states below 2000 warheads (GP)⁹¹ (CRECB, 2001: 6693-6696).

⁹¹ Kerry noted that the Senate Democrats had been trying to remove a 1998 NDAA provision forbidding “the reduction of strategic nuclear delivery systems to levels below (...) START I” for three years. Their efforts had been hampered by the Republican leadership, who “[believed] that the U.S. should not move to START II arms levels (...) before Russia [had] done so,” even though the agreement had been ratified by the Senate in 1996. The Senator feared that the president was moving away from arms control (CRECB, 2001: 6694-6695).

On 9 May 2001, Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), of the Armed Services Committee, also reacted to Bush's 1 May speech. The lawmaker shared Bush's understanding that the world was much different from what it used to be during the Cold War (CP). However, Bingaman believed that Moscow was a greater security threat to the U.S. and its allies than the so-called "nations of concern" – those interested in using WMDs against the U.S. and its allies (CP). The senator was concerned about the internal mechanisms of governance in Moscow and the fragility of Russian democracy (CP). The country faced economic troubles, its unemployment rate was high, and the future prospects of the Russian people appeared bleak. He was certain that many lawmakers "[had been] alarmed at the recent mutual recriminations and dismissals of dozens of Americans and Russians in an exchange that hearkened back to Cold War days" (CP). Washington's relations with Moscow were increasingly confrontational (CP). Russia possessed the world's most advanced missile technology after the United States and was currently in a weakened state. This "cash-strapped, antagonistic Russia" was the most likely source of the tools (CP) underpinning the WMD threat (CP). Russia's sensitive materials were poorly guarded and prone to be stolen or sold to terrorists or hostile nations (CP). At the same time, American funding to address Russia's proliferation risk was being cut (ME). The senator also noted that hostile nations would more likely utilize methods more affordable, unanticipated, and effective than ICBMs (CP).

Bingaman considered the president's goal of "[counteracting] intercontinental missiles carrying weapons of mass destruction from targeting [America]," and contended that a different goal should be pursued instead. The U.S. ought to cut off WMDs at their source (Russia) before they were obtained by potential enemies (GP) to ensure the security of America, allies, and friends, and at the global level (GP). Bingaman applauded Bush's desire to build cooperative relations that were "reassuring, rather than threatening (...), premised on openness, mutual confidence and real opportunities for cooperation, including the area of missile defense" (VP).

Bingaman noted the downsides of deploying a missile defense system. The system's high cost was draining funding for non-proliferation programs. In his words, "[i]nvesting tens of billions of dollars in a missile defense program as an alternative approach virtually ensures the acceleration of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction if the nation reduces funding for nonproliferation programs as a result" (GP). If billions of dollars were being spent on missile defense (GP) (downside), the American taxpayer and its military deserved a system that worked, nothing less (VP). Additionally, by devoting "attention, resources, and expertise to solve the potential intercontinental missile threat," the United States was leaving unaddressed the more likely and less expensive threat brought on by low tech applications of WMDs. This was, he believed, a "very grave error" (GP).

The senator lauded the President's goal of establishing a "reassuring, rather than threatening" relationship with Russia (GP). He believed that U.S. non-proliferation programs in Russia (ME), along with other confidence-building programs (e.g., on early warning of missile attacks, and the Russo-American Observation Satellite program) (ME) would contribute toward that goal. However, such

programs were at risk (CP) due to the worsening climate of bilateral relations (CP), and abrogation of the ABM Treaty – “either in word or in deed” – (ME) would put them in further jeopardy (GP). Such an occurrence would leave America (GP) in a less secure world (VP) as result of its own actions (downsides). Bingaman also mentioned that abrogating the ABM Treaty represented a compromise on values that should inform U.S. goals: the country had legal obligations under the agreement (VP).

The legislator questioned whether a missile defense system could achieve the administration’s goals (ME), since America was “a long, long way” from having a working missile defense system (CP). The Senator suggested that he might be willing to support backing out from the treaty once the United States had the means to defend itself. Meaning that if the system worked, the benefits could potentially outweigh the negatives consequences (ME). Currently, however, a “more effective and higher priority approach” to the terrorist and rogue nation missile threat that he identified would be “[redoubling] efforts to support non-proliferation programs with Russia” (ME). His policy proposal had a proven track record, having “[yield] major dividends in preventing the loss of weapons and materials of mass destruction to those who would be [America’s] enemies” (CP). Thus, his policy alternative would achieve the goal that the senator believed the administration should be prioritizing destroying the WMD threat at its source (ME). Furthermore, the legislator’s course of action had cooperation and reassurance as important byproducts which contributed to other goals (ME); namely, to improve U.S. relations with Russia (GP). Therefore, Bingaman rejected missile defense deployment as the right course of action to take – at least until a “successfully tested [system] in realistic operational conditions” was available (ME). The same applied to abrogating the ABM Treaty (ME) (CRECB, 2001: 7572-7573).

On 25 May and 31 July 2001, the Strategic Arms Flexibility Act of 2001 was introduced in the House and in the Senate by Representative Tom Allen (D-ME) (with 23 cosponsors, all of them democrats) and Senator Jon Corzine (D-NJ), respectively. The act called for the repeal of section 1302 of the 1998 NDAA (ME) to give the President the flexibility (GP) to determine the levels of U.S. strategic nuclear delivery systems (ME) in accordance with national security goals (GP). Lowering strategic nuclear weapons levels (GP) served the U.S. national security interest (VP). Under START I, the U.S. and Russia are committed to a limit of 6,000 strategic nuclear weapons each (VP). Maintaining such nuclear force levels was not necessary (ME); U.S. strategic requirements could be met (GP) at the START II limits of 3,000–3,500 strategic nuclear weapons (ME). Without added flexibility (GP), the DOD would spend over \$700,000,000 through 2007 (GP) (downside) to retain a superfluous Peacekeeper ICBM force (ME) (rejected action). The President should lower, as he had proposed, the U.S. strategic arsenal below START II levels (GP) (H.R. 1013, 2001; S. 1285; 2001).

In introducing the bicameral act in the Senate, Corzine explained that U.S. nuclear forces far exceeded (ME) what the country would ever require to fight and win a war (GP). Their accuracy and effectiveness compared favorably with the weapons of U.S. adversaries (CP), which was among the reasons why nuclear parity was unnecessary (GP). The U.S. did not need direct assurances that other nations would reciprocate American reductions (GP) (rejected goal). Such a goal was informed by

“flawed Cold War thinking” (CP) (the Cold War experience is a rejected premise). Reductions (ME) could be made without compromises to America’s nuclear deterrent (GP) or national security (GP) – the U.S. would still be able to deter any actor (GP). A large nuclear arsenal (ME) posed national security risks (GP) by increasing the chance of a terrorist incident (GP) or a devastating accident happening (GP) (downsides). However, those downsides would be minimized by the bill introduced (GP).

The Senator argued that the higher the number of nuclear weapons (ME), the greater the chance of a mechanical issue or misjudgment would lead to a nuclear detonation (GP) (downside). There had been many scenarios where the latter downside could have occurred (CP). Unauthorized use or threat of use of nuclear weapons by a rogue faction that gained access to a state’s nuclear weapons – was another downside (GP) of preserving excessive numbers of nuclear weapons (ME). Other states would feel encouraged to retain large stockpiles (GP) (downside) if the U.S. decided to do the same (ME). That would not only increase the chance of unauthorized use scenarios materializing (GP) (downside), but also the likelihood of proliferation occurring (GP). Additionally, given the costs associated with maintaining a vast nuclear arsenal (CP), a cash-strapped state might feel encouraged to sell weapons technologies to finance their nuclear weapons complex (GP). All those scenarios were possible in Russia (CP), and since the country wanted to drastically reduce its nuclear force levels to below 1,000 (CP), the U.S. should encourage it to do so (GP). America could achieve that goal if it lowered its own levels (GP), which would also discourage other states from increasing the size of their own stockpiles (GP). Russia was unlikely to implement those deep reductions (CP) without corresponding U.S. cuts (ME). By taking the first step to implement them (ME) the U.S. “would provide Russia with a face-saving way [GP] to do the same” (GP). While START II would deliver the goal as well (ME), there were no short-term expectations (CP) of its ratification (ME) (no short-term feasibility).

Not only would unilateral cuts (ME) enhance national security (GP), but they also entailed major cost savings as well (GP). The Administration wanted to retire the Peacekeeper fleet (ME) and might propose additional reductions as well (ME). However, section 1302 of the 1998 NDAA was preventing the implementation of such actions (ME) despite the capabilities not being needed (ME). Hence, via the act, the Senator urge that the restriction be lifted (ME).

Nonetheless, unilateral reductions (ME) did not sufficiently reduce the nuclear threat (GP) and the proliferation of nuclear-related technology (GP). Complementary actions were needed to more effectively lower (GP) what was truly a threat (CP) to all of humanity (VP). The U.S. needed to encourage and help other states to reduce their stockpiles as well (GP). To achieve those goals, the U.S. needed to provide Russia economic aid (ME) and assist it with weapons dismantlement (ME). America needed to continue to negotiate non-proliferation and nuclear arms reduction agreements with the country (ME) as well as others (ME). The U.S. needed to do everything in its power (ME) to reduce the risks posed by nuclear weapons (GP) – an enormous, yet underestimated threat (CP). Few issues (GP) were more important than that goal; the fate of the world was at stake (GP). The bill Corzine introduced

(ME) would reduce the nuclear threat (GP) without the controversy (GP) associated with missile defenses (ME) (CREC, 2001: S8481-S8482).

In June 2001, Senator Craig Thomas (R-WY) argued that it was imprudent (GP) (downside) to deactivate one of America's most trusted weapons, the Peacekeeper, before it was necessary (ME). Press reports claimed that similar views were expressed by Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY) and Representative Barbara Cubin (R-WY) ("Pentagon Plans to Scrap," 2001).

During a June 5, 2001, hearing of the Armed Services Committee, Senator Jim Inhofe (R-OK) voiced his concerns about America being the target of an attack delivered by means of indigenous or traded missile technology (CP). While he had heard many times that "China [was] not going to do anything, Russia [was] not going to do anything, North Korea [was] not going to do anything" (CP), the Senator "[was] not ready to assume that" (CP). But even if that were the case, those countries were trading such technology (CP). In commenting on the Senator's remarks, Jack Dyer Crouch II, nominee for the position of Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy, agreed that while "it may well be that Russia and China, or even North Korea, do not use their missiles" (CP) their technology might "[fall] into the hands of others who will" (CP). He believed that missile defense (ME) could help play a role in that regard (GP), as part of America's counterproliferation strategy (ME) (S. HRG. 107-749, 2001: 757).

On 28 June 2001, Senator Warner perceived America to be at a pivotal point in its military history where, despite being the world's sole superpower and assuming a unique leadership role in international security matters, the country was more vulnerable than ever (CP). The proliferation of WMDs and their means of delivery had enabled the disenfranchised of the new world order to threaten the United States (CP). Such adversaries might act without regard for conventional norms of conduct or ambiguous threats of retaliation or prosecution (CP). As such, new capabilities and concepts (ME) were required to enhance American deterrence (GP) and security (GP), to protect the homeland (GP), and to deter and defeat future threats: both expected and unexpected (GP). To address such circumstances, the U.S. needed a new strategic framework, which the President had properly called for (GP). The U.S. ought to act in accordance with the 1999 Missile Defense Act (VP) to deploy missile defenses as quickly as technological developments allowed (ME). The only constraints limiting America were technological; there were no restrictions under the auspices of treaty obligations (VP) (ABM Treaty rejected as a premise). The Administration's budget request for missile defense (\$8.3 billion dollars) put America on the right track to deploy such a defensive system (ME). The understanding that the expenditure was necessary and prudent (ME) enjoyed increasing consensus in Congress, the Administration, and the American people thanks to the efforts of the JCS (CP) (S. HRG. 107-355, 2001: 176-177).

On 28 June 2001, during a hearing of the Armed Services Committee, Senator Strom Thurmond (R-SC) expressed his concern about how the Administration's decision to retire the Peacekeeper ICBM force (ME). While he understood why the decision made sense from a cost-saving perspective (GP), he

was preoccupied that the action (ME) would affect America's ability to negotiate further nuclear arms reductions in Russia's nuclear arsenal (GP) (potential downside that might outweigh the previous goal premise) (S. HRG. 107-355, 2001: 246).

During the same hearing, Senator Charles "Pat" Roberts (R-KS) expressed discouragement, frustration, anger, and disappointment (VP) (personal feelings as reasons informing action), over the Administration's intentions of reducing the B-1 bomber fleet and moving the remaining aircraft left in Georgia, Idaho, and Kansas to deploy them in Texas and South Dakota (ME). He questioned whether there were covert reasons informing the decision to keep the remaining B-1 in the home states of the U.S. President (Texas) and of the Senate Majority Leader (Tom Daschle, D-SD) (VP/GP). While he supported efforts to transform the U.S. military (see analysis of the 2001 QDR) (ME), he believed that the decision pertaining to the B-1 fleet's reduction and transportation (ME) should not have occurred without engagement and consultations with Congress (VP), the DOD's cost-saving intentions notwithstanding (GP) (VP outweighs GP). In fact, he presented statistics about the Kansas B-1 aircraft to argue for the cost-benefit merits of their performance (ME) (course of action will not achieve the goal of saving costs). He also defended the value of the B-1 as a "long-range performer" based on General Accounting Office and CRS reports (ME). He considered the B-1 to be the backbone of the bomber fleet and rejected the view that it was an "aging" capability (CP) (rejected premise), arguing that it compared positively in comparison with other aircrafts (CP). The legislator also questioned the decision from a strategic standpoint, since the DOD had rightly claimed the global environment would probably be characterized by limit access to overseas bases (CP), forcing the U.S. to rely on long-range precision strikes (GP). Roberts pointed out that the mission of the B-1 bomber (ME) was precisely that one (capability capable of delivering the goal), and furthermore, the aircraft was undergoing upgrades (GP).

Roberts claimed that he would "make every effort" to prevent any moment of the B-1 aircraft (ME) he was sure that the action suited U.S. national defense strategy (GP) and that the decision of the Administration had been adequately reviewed (ME) (questions whether action is the best policy). The senator conveyed the discouragement and frustration of the experienced service members in Wichita, Kansas, at McConnell Air Force Base (VP) (personal feelings of Kansas constituents). The Administration's decision affected his state (GP/VP) and he "[did] not know what kind of a new mission they [were] going to find in Wichita" (VP) (potential downsides to his constituents) (S. HRG. 107-355, 2001: 206-208).

Senator Joseph "Max" Cleland (D-GA) followed the intervention of his Republican colleague, reiterating many of the same premises. He stated that the B-1 still served as America's only supersonic bomber (ME) capable of both conventional and nuclear missions (GP). He wanted to assure that any decisions regarding the B-1 fleet would strengthen America's security – not weaken it (GP) (S. HRG. 107-355, 2001: 209-210). On 10 July, as Roberts had also done, Cleland appealed to the Administration to keep in mind the great service of the Air Guard in the bases where the B-1Bs were still deployed (VP)

(potential downsides to his constituents) when making considerations about U.S. strategy and the future military (GP) (S. HRG. 107–355, 2001: 347).

During a hearing of the Armed Services Committee on June 28, 2001, Representative Rob Simmons (R-CT) expressed his support for the Administration’s initiative to convert two nuclear-capable Trident submarines to conventional cruise missile-carrying submarines, removing them from the nuclear mission (ME). He believed the action to be cost-effective (GP), and able to provide America with a considerable strategic capability (GP) (Public Statements of Donald H. Rumsfeld – Volume II, 2001: 1089).

The presence of a provision, in the FY2002 Senate NDAA, which delayed the B-1B force restructuring or downsizing, merited criticism from Senator John McCain (R-AZ) of the Armed Services Committee on 2 October 2001. The language prohibited the transfer, reassignment, retiring or dismantling of the aircraft until the production of a series of reports (ME). The lawmaker deemed the provision “discouraging, given its pork barrel nature”⁹² (VP) (rejects self-interest as a reason informing action). He claimed never before to have “witnessed a more absurd illustration of congressional micro-management” (VP) (Congressional overstep; excessive interference in the operations of executive agencies). The prohibition (ME) came at the “great cost” of \$165 million dollars, an “example of wasteful spending” (GP) (downside) (CREC, 2001: S10049).

On 28 June 2001, Tom Allen (D-ME) perceived the DOD budget request to intentionally seek to infringe the ABM Treaty (VP). The Administration was pushing for a missile defense test against an ICBM (ME) – a non-compliant activity (VP) – even though the treaty did not apply to theatre missile defenses (VP) which would address (GP) the more urgent threat (CP). The Administration truthfully claimed that the number of ballistic missiles was growing, but most of them were short-range missiles (CP). He contended that policy should be informed by realistic threat assessments, not “vague, uncertain [CP] scare tactics” (GP/VP) (implies covert reasons) (H.A.S.C. No. 107-2, 2001: 274-275).

On 11 July, Representative Ellen Tauscher (D-CA) expressed her concern over the retirement of the Peacekeeper ICBM fleet that the Administration had recommended (ME). She believed the action to be premature seeing as the NPR had yet to be completed (ME). While she supported the repeal of the 1997 congressional prohibition on nuclear reductions (ME), the congresswomen did not want unilateral reductions unless they were carried out “in a leadership role.” Believing that bilateral reductions (i.e., with Russia) (GP) would be a good short- and mid-term decision (GP), she considered that unilateral action (ME) should be intended to facilitate an agreement with Russia (ME). The U.S. should reduce its nuclear warheads and delivery systems to the lowest possible level (GP) consistent with U.S. national security (GP) through bilateral accords (ME), which would provide for transparency (GP), predictability (GP), and verifiability (GP). The President should carry out diplomatic efforts with Russia (ME) aimed

⁹² Pork barrel can be defined as the “misallocation of public money for political gain, and it is usually associated with geographically concentrated benefits financed by citizens at large” (Corruption & Pork Barrel Politics, 2006).

at parallel or commensurate reductions (GP) and pursue confidence-building measures (ME) to assure predictable (GP) and stable relations (GP). The warheads removed from delivery systems should be eventually destroyed (GP) and accounted for (GP) (H.R. 2351, 2001; H.A.S.C. No. 107-2, 2001: 373).

On 17 July 2001, Representative Scott McInnis (R-CO) (of the Resources and Ways and Means Committees) claimed that the odds were that America would be the target of a missile attack (CP). The lawmaker called upon his colleagues to “[t]ake a look at how many rogue countries now have missiles” (CP). He then insisted that they “[took] a look at how many of these rogue countries have nuclear warheads on those missiles” (CP). Patting those countries on the back (ME) (diplomacy) (rejected action) would not convince them to disarm or destroy their missiles (GP). They did not care about what America told them (CP), cherishing their ability to confront it (CP). Considering the past actions undertaken by “Third World rogue nation[s]”, one of such actors might decide to launch a missile toward the United States without justification (CP).

McInnis highlighted the enormous success of a recent missile defense test (CP). He dismissed past failures of such tests as a reason for action (CP). He considered failure as expected and a precursor to technological progress, as many prior scientific breakthroughs had shown (CP). A working missile defense system was technologically feasible (ME). It would be expensive (GP) (dismissed downside), but technology entailed costs, and those were worth it, like the airplane, the moon landing, and sending a ship to Mars had been (CP).

He claimed that most Americans believed America to already missile defense capabilities (CP). Congress had the responsibility to protect U.S. citizens (VP). Lawmakers owed it to their constituents (VP) to protect them against missile attacks targeting America (GP). Each legislator had “obligations to the people, the safety, and the welfare of [the] country” (VP). Providing missile defense (ME) was a responsibility for America’s leaders: not just for the benefits of the current and the future generations (VP) but for hundreds of millions of people around the world (VP).

The legislator wanted to prevent an incoming missile from hitting a major American city (GP). Missile defense would achieve that goal (ME) and, as a result, prevent a world war from occurring (GP). Those goals could be achieved via missile defense (ME). Rejecting the pursuit of defense against an inbound missile attack made no sense (GP) (contests rejection of the goal). The best approach for preventing war (GP) and maintain peace (VP) was to disarm one’s neighbor – especially if he were hostile (GP). In daily life (CP), defenses were used everywhere and delivered good results (ME). It would be “foolish” to forego fielding a defense (ME) to protect a state (GP) room deemed “special” by all in that chamber (VP).

For McInnis, the possibility of China (GP) and Russia (GP) being offended over America’s missile defense system should not be deemed a reason for action. The same applied to U.S. allies being upset over Moscow and Beijing being offended (GP) (downsides). He explained his rejection by asking the floor: “[w]ho do you think is likely to use a missile against the United States? Not only those rogue countries [CP], but do not discount China and do not discount Russia” [CP]. Nevertheless, he hoped that

the U.S. could become allies with them (GP), in which case the U.S. might not need to use its system against them (GP). America could “just have it in place (...) never [having] to engage it” (ME). However, he was sure that, in the future, “a difference of opinion, a professional difference” would arise with Russia and China (CP).

With a missile defense system in place (ME), America might even succeed in disarming Russia (GP) and China (GP). He believed that the technological prowess display during America’s recent missile defense test had impressed not only its European allies (CP), but also the Russian (CP) and Chinese leaderships (CP). The two countries might decide against investing in offensive missile systems (GP) because America, the country with which they were concerned about (CP), was able to intercept them (GP). In his words: “we may disarm Russia [GP] and China [GP] simply by coming up with a defensive mechanism” (ME). Drawing on the premises he voiced about Russia and China, as well as the relationship between them, McInnis presented a wider viewpoint. He claimed that the way to stop missile growth worldwide (GP) was to render the capability ineffective (GP). Those two goals could only be achieved via some form of a missile defense shield (ME). The U.S. could share such a system with its allies (ME) and the more it shared it (ME), the least likely missile attacks would be (GP), seeing as missile technology was too expensive and advanced to be so impotent as tools of aggression (CP). The legislator rejected concerns over starting an arms race (GP) or a war (GP) (rejects downside). However, even if they could occur, the goal of defending American citizen outweighed those premises (GP) (H4108-H4109).

On 12 July 2001, during a hearing of the Armed Services committee, Senator Warner stated that the President’s intention to reduce America’s inventory of nuclear weapons (GP) had come “at an appropriate time (CP). He asked Deputy Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz whether achievement of the goal (GP) would “be an integral part of the negotiations with Russia in the ABM [Treaty] framework of negotiations” [ME] or an independent decision that the President could make independently (ME) (raises alternative courses of action without indication of preference or rejection).

In response, Wolfowitz claimed that the U.S. was “still in discovery mode” (ME) (openness to various courses of action). He mentioned that the President’s budget already contemplated three significant reductions (i.e., pertaining to the Peacekeeper ICBM, Trident SSBN, and B-1B fleets) (ME) “without relation to any requirement to negotiate with the Russians” (ME) (previous ME decided independently of last ME) or to any assessments regarding how U.S. forces compared with Russia’s (GP) (rejected goal) (premise has no relation to nuclear reductions already decided). The Secretary hoped that, in meeting with Putin, Bush explained that the U.S. “[was] already doing this kind of thing” (ME) (denotes preference for unilateral action in lieu of a framework of negotiations on nuclear reductions). Still, Wolfowitz conjectured that reductions in nuclear force levels (GP) would integrate the framework of discussions with Russia: “[s]ome will be formal negotiations [ME], some will be other kinds of things” [ME]. The U.S. did not aim to threaten Russia (GP) (rejected goal) and encouraged it to save costs by reducing its own nuclear forces as well (GP). Maintaining (ME) (rejected action)

unnecessary nuclear weapons made no sense (ME). The U.S. truly required a long-term nuclear posture (ME) for an era in which Russia was not an enemy anymore (CP). While ties with Russia had not yet reached a comparable status to that of NATO allies (CP), Washington and Moscow shared crucial common interests (CP). The U.S. aimed to dialogue with Moscow as an ally (GP) and with the same level of transparency (GP) (VP) (delivering the VP is a goal of action), which in turn would make arms control treaties unnecessary (ME) (S. HRG. 107–355, 2001: 574). On 12 July 2001, Senator Mark Dayton (DFL-MN), of the Armed Services Committee, expressed the importance of partnership between Congress and the Administration (VP). He claimed that the VP had been compromised due to the Administration's common use of words "more intended to evade and even to mislead than to inform" with the executive having already decided what to do and merely seeking concurrence (VP). He believed that partnership (VP) entailed "an honest debate and even disagreement about how best to achieve those conditions" (ME) (questions policy choices of the securitizing actors), even if both branches of government, including former Administrations, all wanted to make America safer and more secure (GP) and reduce the chance of nuclear war (GP) "anywhere and everywhere in this world" (VP). At the end of the 12 July session, however, he declared his satisfaction with the amount of information received (VP) (compromise on values minimized).

Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz denied, to the extent of his knowledge, an effort to conceal (VP) (disagrees with the Senator's perception of a downside) and acknowledged the importance of informing Congress (VP).

Dayton believed that the U.S. was straying away considerably from long-standing U.S. military theory and strategy (ME) (questions the Administration's recommended line of action). While Wolfowitz had depicted a stark contrast between Russia and the U.S.S.R., whereby the former was a different, completely new state from the latter and would never pose the same level of threat (CP), the present world was constantly changing (CP) (former CP is questioned). Thus, he wondered whether a multi-layered defense system (ME) would not spark a global trend of pursuing offensive capabilities designed for enhanced evasiveness and destruction (GP) (possible downside).

In turn, Wolfowitz dismissed such concerns as a "Cold War vestige" (CP). Russia was lacking in resources (CP) and the limited system (ME) that America pursued did not target it (GP) (denied goal), being intended to intercept accidental launches (GP) or a ballistic missile from North Korea or Iran (GP) (no downsides). In fact, he believed that Moscow would ask America (CP) for relief vis-à-vis certain expensive arms control restrictions (GP) (no downsides). As for other states, their investments in conventional and non-conventional ballistic missile capabilities, conventional and non-conventional stemmed from America's vulnerability to them (CP). Addressing that "Achille's heel" (GP) through missile defense capabilities (ME) should dissuade other countries, possibly even North Korea and Iran, from pursuing offensive systems (GP). U.S. Naval supremacy led very few countries to invest in big navies due to their inability to challenge America (CP) and the same logic applied to the missile defense (ME) (S. HRG. 107–355, 2001: 559-562, 564).

Another exchange between the two political actors occurred during a 17 July follow-up session.

Dayton noted the Administration's timetables regarding missile defense testing and the construction of a missile defense test bed (ME), activities which could violate the ABM Treaty (VP). He added that the Administration had declared that it would leave the treaty (ME) if it determined that certain forthcoming activities would violate it (VP). Thus, the senator questioned the Administration's ability to setting a new agreement with Russia on the new strategic framework (GP), including moving beyond the ABM Treaty (GP), within a timeframe that would preclude a treaty withdrawal (ME). In the history of arms control negotiations and agreement, there was no precedent for reaching a deal so rapidly (ME) (feasibility is questioned).

In response, Wolfowitz dismissed the lack of precedent (ME), since the history of arms control was one of prolonged negotiations between hostile adversaries (CP). The current guiding premise was that Russia was not the U.S.S.R. (CP). It was not a potential adversary, but a potential friend or even ally (CP), with which the U.S. wanted to establish a closer partnership (GP). Cold War-type negotiations would preclude an early agreement (ME) (rejected course of action) but a cooperative outcome would force a fast-paced agenda (ME). Furthermore, lengthened arms control negotiations (ME) would result in the U.S. facing the constraints to the ABM Treaty in the meantime (GP) (downside). The Administration would be giving Russia a veto (GP) (downside – undue foreign influence over American policy), a premise it rejected, over America's missile defense plans (ME), if it opted for such a protracted course of action (ME). Still, he believed that, as it pertained to a particular series of missile defense tests planned to begin in February 2002, the U.S. would not proceed and force the issue (ME) if there were concerns over infringing the ABM Treaty at that point in time (VP).

The Senator agreed with not giving Russia a veto (GP) (rejected downside) but feared downsides on global stability (GP) if the country decided to “[respond] adversarially, rather than cooperatively,” which would have negative military implications (GP) (downsides). The Deputy Secretary asserted that America was doing more than striving to reach an agreement with Russia (ME). Numerous U.S. actions, that the Russians could observe, would discourage “any kind of precipitous or dangerous reaction” (ME) – chief among them, nuclear reductions (ME). In less than a week of negotiations with Moscow, America removed 50 MIRV'd Peacekeeper ICBMs (ME) and four Trident submarines from its nuclear forces (ME). Relying solely on the FY2002 budget, over 1,000 nuclear warheads would be removed from the U.S. nuclear force (ME). He drew a parallel with the 1991 George H. W. Bush nuclear initiatives, which had led to more reductions than those that had been achieved in 20 years of negotiations with the U.S.S.R. (ME). Wolfowitz finalized by expressing his belief that “it really is a different era, and we have a different view of Russia. I hope they realize that we have a different view of them, and I hope they have a different view of the United States” (CP). In response, Dayton concurred, remarking: “That is a very good point, sir, and I wish you success with that undertaking” (ME) (implicit acceptance of the policy changes and of the premises which inform them) (S. HRG. 107–355, 2001: 605-608).

In the context of a 17 July 2001 hearing of the Armed Services Committee, Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA) (Armed Services and Appropriations Committee) submitted a prepared statement. She believed the threat of a missile attack from a rogue nation to be widely known as credible (CP), despite none of them currently possessing such the capacity to execute it (CP). However, several states were either developing or looking to acquire ballistic missile technology (CP), which was currently being proliferated (CP). While America would be forced to acquire a missile defense system in the future (ME), she believed that the country should not rush toward deployment (ME) so that it had time to negotiate with Russia (ME) and consult with allies (ME). Furthermore, America needed time to develop, test and evaluate such a system (ME) to prevent deploying a shield made of paper (ME) (rejected action), which would be worse than having none, because it would provide false confidence (GP) (downside). Furthermore, resources were limited (CP), and it would be unwise to invest most of them on missile defense (ME), given that the military faced additional threats (CP), and thus had other needs (ME) (S. HRG. 107-355, 2001: 628).

On 24 July 2001, Helms agreed with Rice's claim that consultations with Russia (ME) on the new strategic framework (GP) need not result in the establishment of a treaty regime (ME) (rejected action) since the arms control agreements of the Cold War were a reflection of the "highly abnormal relationship" between the two rivals (CP). Such an approach (ME) was at odds with the President's attempt to forge a new relationship with Moscow (GP) (downside). If Moscow were amenable (GP) to America's missile defense deployment (ME), an unprecedented chance for mutual (GP), meaningful reductions in both state's nuclear arsenals could arise (ME). He also believed that "adding missile defenses to the strategic equation [ME] [would] enable the Bush administration to achieve substantial flexibility [GP] in shaping a smaller, more modern nuclear force" (GP).

The relationship between Washington and Moscow was fundamentally different from the one they had during the Cold War (CP), despite Russia being undemocratic, autocratic, and waging an abominable war on the Chechen people (CP). The Russian generals who worried that America's missile defenses would undermine the credibility of their country's offensive nuclear deterrent were "relics of a bygone era" (CP) (outdated view) (GP) (dismisses undermining Russia's nuclear deterrent as a U.S. goal). He added, however that "[i]n addition to the threat from Russia and China, the United States may very well soon face a hostile tyrant wielding an inter-continental range missile" (in North Korea, Iran, or Iraq) (CP).

Furthermore, Bush had offered to cooperate with it on a missile defense system with global coverage (ME) as well as pre-launch and post-launch notification regimes (ME), early warning information (ME) and a joint satellite program (ME). Moscow was also offered close consultations regarding all facets of this matter (ME), which would not be arms control negotiations (ME) (rejected action), but instead talks between states striving to improve bilateral relations (GP). Those actions demonstrated America's genuine interest in cooperating with Russia (GP) and that the country should

not fear “being left behind” (GP) (actions aimed at demonstrating that missile defense would not threaten Russia) (S. HRG. 107–355, 2001: 8-11, 28).

During a 24 July 2001 hearing of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Senator Biden deemed that several of the Administration’s goals, which were intended to be delivered by missile defense, to be worthwhile. The goals were the defense of U.S. territory (GP) and of allies and American forces, from rogue state missile attacks (GP) and to defend America from the accidental launch of a state-of-the-art Russian ICBM (GP). However, he questioned whether the benefits outweighed the costs (ME). The lawmaker was concerned with the financial costs of such a system, with estimates varying considerably (GP) (downside; relative weight of premise is uncertain). Given the opposition of U.S. allies (CP), their support might also come at a cost (GP). He wondered what made missile defense worth (ME) (questions weight of premise) potentially triggering a new, large-scale arms race (GP) (downside) due to the U.S. abandoning the ABM Treaty (ME), which had preserved the peace for 30 years (GP). He wanted to make sure that the country would not be left less secure (GP) due to the actions being proposed by the Administration (ME). Biden was glad that, despite the President’s statements to the contrary, Under Secretary Bolton had admitted that missile defense (ME) would not move the U.S. beyond the logic of MAD (GP).

The Administration had failed to inform or had claimed to have no knowledge, about the answers to important questions concerning their policy proposals (CP). Congress and the American people had the right to know those answers (VP). He questioned whether the Administration’s \$8 billion dollars request for missile defense should be fulfilled (ME) since the funds would be used toward unspecified research and development programs (ME) (action unknown), which may or may cause the ABM Treaty to be infringed (VP) or the Administration to withdraw from it (ME). It remained to be known if missile defense testing would continue to move forward (ME) despite conflict with the ABM Treaty (VP) (downside) despite negotiations with Russia remaining in progress (ME) (GP) (downside) (testing might compromise negotiations). In fact, the Administration had yet to firmly answer whether it believed the ABM Treaty to still be in force (VP). While the President had the power to withdraw from the ABM Treaty (ME), the action required consulting – and not merely informing – Congress prior to such a decision (VP).

Since the Administration was unsure of what its actions would be in the realm of missile defense (ME) (questions action), it was difficult to specify the reasons supporting the action, which had led to the perceived threats being described in a number of ways (CP). Biden perceived the Administration to “[have thrown] out any number of menaces, all of which are potentially real, and hope that at least one will prove persuasive” (CP) (questions factual basis of threats) (GP/VP) (infers the existence of covert reasons for action). The threat had been portrayed as a crude missile threat from Iraq, North Korea, Iran; the risk of U.S. forces deployed on the Korean Peninsula or another high-tension region across the globe being targeted by a missile; and the accidental launch of an advanced Russian ICBM (CP).

In sum, Biden was unsure about which threats existed, how real they were, how damaging and how immediate they would be (CP) (weight of CP is uncertain), and which other policy alternatives were available (ME). No missile defense system that the U.S. could develop in the near-term (ME) (feasibility) would be able to guarantee the country's defense against a rogue state attack with a WMD-armed missile in the (GP) (rejected goal). Leaders in Iraq, Iran, and North Korea knew that they would be destroyed by a retaliatory attack from the U.S. if they used such weapons against it (CP) (questions severity of threat) (ME) (deterrence minimizes severity of threats). While devastating, the DOD believed that an ICBM attack was the threat with the least likelihood of occurring (CP).

The lawmaker proposed safeguarding nuclear weapons and other WMD in the former U.S.S.R. (ME) and increasing funding for the Nunn-Lugar program (ME) to prevent rogue state and terrorist acquisition of weapons or expertise (GP). The U.S. could explore diplomacy (ME) to put an end to North Korea's development and sale of long-range missiles (GP). He also questioned the possibility of the U.S. reaching an agreement with Moscow on the modification of the ABM Treaty (ME) or on side agreements pertaining to missile defense (ME). The U.S. should convince China not to expand its nuclear arsenal (GP) to prevent an arms race in Asia (GP) (downside) which might also lead U.S. allies to acquire nuclear weapons (GP) (downside) (S. HRG. 107-110, 2001: 1-5).

During the same hearing, Senator Kerry stated that he, like many of his colleagues of a limited missile defense system (ME) that was transparent (GP) and ideally "mutually arrived-at or deployed" (GP). However, he challenged the Administration's goal of abandoning the principle of MAD (GP), and the perception that the concept was now outdated (ME). Since the U.S. missile defense system (ME) would not be able to deal with Moscow's offensive weapons (GP), the logic of MAD would still apply in the bilateral strategic relationship (GP).

The lawmaker rejected the view, voiced by the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy of the DOD, Douglas Feith, that the concept only applied to Washington and Moscow in the context of their adversarial relation during the Cold War (GP) (goal rejected by Feith, while Kerry believed it remained in place). The senator claimed that the logic of MAD still applied in the current environment (GP), because the concept was not about the state of the political relationship between Russia and the U.S., but about "the physical relationship of weapons that they had" (CP). The size of the nuclear arsenals and the deployment of nuclear weapons (ME) was still centered on MAD (GP). Secretary Powell had agreed that the U.S. would not be able to do away with MAD entirely (GP) (unachievable goal).

Feith claimed that some viewed MAD as about hostility and intent, and not as "a numerical or mechanical matter" (GP), and noted that Washington and Moscow no longer had such a relationship (CP). In turn, Kerry explained that he could not plan on the basis of the state of America's political relations with another country (CP) (rejected premise; the physical relationship of weapons would instead inform action). He noted that things could and indeed changed over time (CP). The senator did not know what would happen in 20 years or what kind of Russia they would have in 20 years (GP) (possible future state of affairs that undermines U.S. goals). He rejected "[looking] somebody in the

eyes and [saying] I trust you”⁹³ (CP) (rejects political relationship as a premise). The U.S. had to have a system in place that assured its physical security (GP). Since Russia did not agree to START II [GP] [downside] because the U.S. was developing a missile defense system unilaterally (ME), then the country was trapped within a framework of MAD (GP).

After Senator Kerry made his final intervention, Senator Biden commented, before yielding to another lawmaker: “I find it fascinating, this administration’s romance with Russia, and the certainty of Russia’s actions. That is interesting” (CP/GP/VP/ME – questions the factual basis of the Administration’s premises about Russia) (GP/VP) (if the positive representations of Moscow were not truly perceived, or if they were, at least, overstated premises [i.e., their relative weight as a reason informing action was overemphasized], then concealed reasons for action may be present, yet omitted from the discourse of the Administration⁹⁴) (S. HRG. 107–110, 2001: 30-33).

In a later intervention, Senator Biden questioned whether the deployment of a missile defense system (ME) would leave the U.S. more or less secure (GP). He believed that the goal would not be achieved if in exchange for a system capable of intercepting 90-99.5% of a handful of missiles fired by rogue states (GP), the U.S. generated an arms race in Asia (GP) (downside) (latter GP outweighs the former). He questioned whether the action would constitute the best way to use limited resources (GP) at a time when the state’s tax revenue had been cut (CP). Three of the five Joint Chiefs were unenthusiastic about the impact of missile defense on the conventional forces budget (GP) (downside).

He also remarked that it was interesting how, in his words, “we have embraced Russia now in a way that I never envisioned Bill Clinton embracing Russia.” He welcomed the approach as “a useful thing for a President to do” (ME), believing that it had had positive effects in the bilateral relationship (GP). However, he was amazed at how the DOD was so secure about Russia’s intentions, seeing as throughout his career he had always heard that America ought to look at capability – not intentions. Military planners always considered the worst-case scenario – be it in America or in Russia. In any case, that had been his experience for the last 28 years he had been a Senator “and it used to be anyway up until a month ago” (CP) (questions whether DOD’s optimism about Russia). If one side had the ability to diminish the other’s retaliatory capability to a certain degree (GP) (goal that missile defense could achieve), then military planners of the second side would assume that the first might conclude that a nuclear attack would be worth it (GP) (downsides) (S. HRG. 107–110, 2001: 60).

Inspired by Kerry’s remarks, Senator Torricelli (D-NJ) pointed out that since a missile defense system (ME) would be overwhelmed by the scale of Russia’s offensive capabilities in case of an attack (GP) (unachieved goal), then it would be ill-advised and unwarranted to abandon “this international

⁹³ Kerry references a quote by George W. Bush, who said the following about Vladimir Putin: “I looked the man in the eye. I found him to be very straightforward and trustworthy” (Bush, 2001f).

⁹⁴ Arguers can attempt to manipulate audiences, voicing false premises – for instance, incorrect assessments of the context of action – which are not truly reasons motivating them to seek the enactment of a certain course of action. They might be motivated solely by other reasons, including covert reasons (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012: 241-242).

regime of arms control [ME], and an ABM Treaty which can be much more easily modified than abandoned” (ME). Nothing in the missile defense research program (ME) required the U.S. to abandon the treaty (ME) or a generation of arms control agreements (ME). Putin’s recognition of the latter three premises (CP) “[might] save the administration from itself” (ME) (i.e., the Administration may remain committed to arms control agreements at Putin’s insistence) (S. HRG. 107–110, 2001: 36-38).

Later during the hearing, Senator Kerry noted that “the Pentagon has had its own reasons for opposing further warhead cuts,” (ME), noting that, according to the expert Bruce Blair, the “Single Integrated Operational Plan” (SIOP) (i.e., STRATCOM’s nuclear weapons targeting plan) “[had grown] from 2,500 sites in 1995 to 3,000 sites in the year 2000⁹⁵,” (CP) (perceives threat perceptions of Russia to exist in the DOD) despite “the sort of emergence” (CP) of a new relationship with Russia (downplays the improvement in U.S.-Russia relations). As far as he knew, no one in the DOD considered going below 1,500 nuclear warheads, meaning that the U.S. would continue to rely on the principle of MAD, an argument which Under Secretary Bolton concurred with (GP).

He also mentioned that the 1999 MDA contained a provision (section III) (VP) whereby the U.S. would pursue the continued, negotiated nuclear reductions with Russia (ME) that the ABM Treaty contemplated (VP). Moreover, the 1999 law included language (VP) declaring that the U.S. would conduct the required discussions with Russia to amend the accord (ME). Kerry believed that many of the Senators who had voted in favor of the MDA, himself included, had done so under the expectation that the U.S., in seeking to deploy missile defenses (ME), would respect those value premises, seeing as the accord was then considered to be the “law of the land” (VP) (downside on values) (S. HRG. 107–110, 2001: 55-56).

In the context of hearing of the Committee on Foreign Relations, Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton was asked, by Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY) to explain why Russia and China, which had been so vocal about American missile defense plans (CP), were modernizing their strategic nuclear forces (CP) and supplying WMD technology to rogue states (CP).

Bolton explained that the U.S. was the world’s most technologically advanced country (CP) and that its wealth (CP) allowed it to leverage that condition into military advantage (GP). Moscow and Beijing sought to prevent their respective technological gaps vis-à-vis the United States from expanding (CP). To alleviate Russian concerns (GP), the U.S. was conducting high-level talks with the country (ME) about developing a new strategic framework (GP), to be achieved via deep nuclear force

⁹⁵ While a documental source was not mentioned, Blair (2000) published a piece reporting such numbers on 18 May 2000. According to his article, that increase had taken place despite the fact that Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan had been dropped from the list in 1997. Russia dominated the list with 2,260 vital targets, 1,100 of them nuclear, with the rest falling under the “conventional,” “leadership,” and “war-supporting industry” categories. The author noted that the U.S. had nuclear weapons aimed at 500 factories which had produced virtually no weapons the year prior. (Blair, 2000). Senator Feinstein seems to have drawn from that piece in 7 June 2000 (CREC, 2001: S4619- S4620). China was included in the list in 1998-1999 as a result of Clinton’s 1997 Presidential Directive. Kristensen stated that Clinton’s nuclear guidance ordered the reduction of targets in Russia, while widening the scope of targeting in China (Kristensen, 2000).

reductions (ME), missile defense cooperation (ME), improved counterproliferation and non-proliferation activities (ME) and measures (ME) to promote transparency (GP) and confidence (GP). Russia contributed to missile and WMD non-proliferation efforts (CP) and the U.S. strived for its implementation of the non-proliferation regimes (GP). America “[continued] to monitor Russian actions closely, especially with regard to cooperation with Iran and other rogue states” (ME) (S. HRG. 107–110, 2001: 168).

On 27 July 2001, Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA), of the House Committee on IR (later renamed Committee on Foreign Affairs), believed that missile defense was becoming more acceptable to European allies and to Putin (CP). The legislator accused President Clinton of sabotaging the missile defense program (CP). He believed that America was in a position of vulnerability because there were some who would take the risk of attacking the U.S. (CP). The congressman believed that America could get out of the ABM Treaty because it had been celebrated with the old Communist dictators of a country that had since ceased to exist (CP).

Rohrabacher wanted the United States to be able know down missiles heading toward its territory from China, North Korea, Libya, or Iran (GP). He believed that a missile defense system would be an incredible contribution to world peace and security (VP). The United States ought to prevent being put “in a position of having to murder millions of people in another country” because their leader had attacked America (VP).

America’s technological genius could build a system that would protect it from a limited rogue state missile attack (ME). Relying on Cold War deterrence (i.e., inaction) made no sense (ME) because countries such as “Communist China” could care less about losing the lives of its citizens to America’s retaliation (CP). The U.S. should abrogate the ABM Treaty because it was a necessary step toward the thorough development of a missile defense system (ME) (CRECB, 2001: 14825-14831).

On 1 August 2001, the House Armed Services Committee expressed support for lifting an existing restriction on the retirement of the Peacekeeper ICBM fleet (ME) since the President had decided to negotiate with Russia (ME) (consultations) a new strategic framework (GP). However, the committee recommended maintaining the prohibition in place as it pertained to other systems until the release of the NPR (ME) (House Armed Services Committee, 2001). Representative Tom Allen (D-ME) criticized the decision to keep the restriction in place (ME), arguing that it was “a relic of hostility toward the Clinton administration” (VP) (covert reasons for action) (Pincus, 2001b).

On August 1, 2001, Wayne Allard (R-CO), of the Senate Armed Services Committee, conveyed his thoughts on missile defense deployment. He noted the hesitation of some of his colleagues when it came to approving the budget of the BMDO for the ensuing FY, due to concerns that they would be funding missile defense testing activities in violation of the ABM Treaty (CP). Allard stressed that the missile defense program that the president had proposed was “on a collision course with the ABM Treaty,” with compliance issues bound to emerge in the coming months (CP). Still, he explained that the planned testing activities were not meant to either violate or comply with the agreement. They were

simply “designed to proceed as efficiently as possible toward the goal of developing effective missile defenses” (VP).

The legislator explained that compliance with the agreement was a matter of legal and political judgement, with the United States reserving “for itself the authority to judge the compliance of its own programs.” Different sources had offered varying assessments of the BMDO’s planned testing activities, ranging from “compliant but waiting clarification” and “bumping into treaty constraints”, to “conflicting with the agreement” (VP). In all those cases, however, the United States would remain in compliance of domestic and international laws, meaning that either the test program would be changed to avoid treaty violations, or the country would exercise its right to withdraw from it (VP). The senator wanted to address the defensive needs of the United States through the development of effective missile defenses (GP).

For Allard, refusal to approve the BMDO budget until it was known for certain whether the planned missile defense testing activities would violate, or not, the ABM Treaty – effectively stalling the missile defense program – was not the best course of action. He explained that it was almost impossible to know, well in advance of a test or activity, if it was compliant with the agreement or not, because plans often changed right up to the moment of the test. Compliance determinations had been made, in the past, only a few days before the test, and even only the day before (CP). Thus, having compliance determined during the Senate’s budget deliberations did not make sense (ME). Furthermore, it was inconsistent with past practice, that is, the established processes and procedures used during the years of the Clinton presidency, and that the present administration wanted to maintain (ME).

According to the senator, the lack of consensus on the value of the ABM Treaty (CP), and the understanding, on the part of the administration, that its value had been overtaken by current events (CP), made instituting “absolute adherence to the ABM Treaty [as] a prerequisite for approval of a BMDO budget” less desirable than resorting to the “well-established processes and procedures to judge the treaty compliance of BMDO program activities” (ME). Thus, Allard supported funding the administration’s missile defense program (ME). Furthermore, selecting the opposite course of action, and tying program funding to ABM treaty compliance, would lead to compromises on other important U.S. goals. For instance, by undermining the flexibility of the U.S. president in negotiations with Russia (GP), and his ability to engage in constructive dialogue with Moscow (GP). Not approving the BMDO’s funding would also hinder the accelerated development of BMDs (GP) and, implicitly, prevent the United States from addressing its security needs (ME). The senator also accused democrats of basing their opposition to missile defenses on a hidden value premise: “a desire for confrontation with the administration, not cooperation” (VP) (CRECB, 2001: 15345-15346).

On 2 September 2001, Senator Mike Thompson (R-TN) (Finance and Governmental Affairs Committee) noted that a September 1999 National Intelligence Estimate on the Ballistic Missile Threat to America deemed that the country would “most likely” encounter ICBM threats from Russia, China, North Korea, and potentially Iran and Iraq during the upcoming decade and a half (CP). North Korea

could target the U.S. already with biological or chemical weapons (CP) and some rogue nations might acquire more sophisticated and more dangerous ICBMs a lot sooner than previously envisioned (CP). The U.S. needed a missile defense (ME) system due to the threat posed by rogue states (CP). However, America's liberalization of export control laws (ME) had enabled it to sell high-tech items to Russia and China, who then sold it to the aforementioned rogue states (GP) (downside). He opposed the current U.S. export policies (ME), which were exacerbating existing threats (GP) (downside) (CREC, 2001: S9042-S9044).

On 21 September 2001, the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Carl Levin (D-MI) introduced the 2002 NDAA to the Senate floor. He also expressed his views on the bill on 1 October 2001. For the senator, those were not ordinary times, since America was still dealing with the aftermath of the September 11 attacks (CP). In 2001, a bipartisan task force had concluded that the America's number one security threat stemmed from the danger of Russian WMD-related material being stolen or sold to terrorists and hostile nations and used against the U.S. homeland or troops abroad (CP). By comparison, the JCS had concluded that the least likely WMD delivery system was the missile (CP). Conventional means of delivery were more accurate, cheaper, and did not possess a "return address," (CP) whereas a missile attack could be tracked, leading to the instantaneous destruction of the attacking country, for instance, North Korea (CP) (ME) (i.e., retaliation might dissuade acquisition of WMD-armed missiles or deter their use against the U.S.). Since Pyongyang's number one priority was regime survival, alternative means of WMD were the greater concern (CP). The senator stressed that the administration had not provided Congress with information regarding whether the funds being authorized in the 2002 NDAA would be used toward activities that would violate the ABM Treaty (CP).

The senator wanted to make the United States "more secure" (GP) and "to act collectively in a civilized world against the uncivilized terror which [had] been perpetrated and inflicted upon [America]." He wanted to protect American citizens from more terror (GP).

The NDAA that had been produced by the Senate Armed Services Committee had a provision, approved by a margin of one vote⁹⁶, requiring "Presidential certification in the event that it was decided or determined there were activities that were going to be funded that were in conflict with the arms reduction and arms control treaty that [America] entered into."⁹⁷ Meaning, that the provision would allow Congress to decide whether such expenditures would be approved (ME). However, despite supporting the provision, Levin made the judgment to remove it from the bill before it was introduced in the Senate floor for consideration by the whole chamber (ME). The legislator believed that the

⁹⁶ Starting on June 6, 2001, the Democratic Party held the majority in the Senate, with a 51-49 edge, after a formerly Republican senator started to caucus with the Democrats. In the Senate Armed Services Committee, all Republicans voted against the language of the provision that Levin is referencing, and all democrats voted in favor (CRECB, 2001: 18139).

⁹⁷ According to the provision, if the ABM Treaty had not been modified or replaced at that time when the Administration sought to conduct non-compliant activities, Congressional approval for the obligation or expenditure of funds thereto would be necessary (Report 107-62, 2001: 131).

provision would “be removed by a vote of the Senate” if it had been embedded in the Senate NDAA (CP) (i.e., there were not enough votes to maintain the language in the full chamber). And even if it survived the Senate, it would have been vetoed by the president (VP) (the institutional reality once again informs the recommended action).

Thus, Levin decided to preemptively remove that language, and place it on a separate bill⁹⁸, which he had previously introduced for consideration in the Senate (ME), and that the Senate majority leader could attempt to call up a later time (VP). Having the language mandating that expenditures for ABM-banned activities required Congressional approval constrained Congress’ ability to act as a check on Presidential power, however. That was because, when calling up the bill, the majority leader would have to “move to proceed” if unanimous consent⁹⁹ was not obtained (VP).

Still, Levin believed that relying on a separate bill, thus delaying the decision on whether Congress approval was necessary, was the best course of action (ME). That was because the opponents of the provision had argued that the provision tied the hands of the president (VP) (Presidential authority to conduct foreign policy). And right then, in the aftermath of the 911 attacks, “was about the worst time” to resolve that argument (CP). Levin believed that “Congress should take the responsibility, under that oath to uphold the Constitution of the United States” (VP) to find out if it was “going to put funds into a bill for testing activities which [were] in conflict with an arms control agreement [VP] and which could have huge ramifications in terms of [U.S.] security” (GP). For Levin and many others, a unilateral withdrawal from the ABM would make the U.S. less safe, not more (ME). However, Levin did not think that the majority of the Senate would agree with his view that Congressional oversight (VP) and potential national security ramifications (GP) should not be outweighed by worries about tying the president’s hands (GP). Levin also considered it “highly unlikely” that the President would withdraw from the agreement at that time (CP) because the U.S. currently needed to act collectively against terror (GP) (withdrawing would lead to compromises on fighting terrorism).

It was urgent that the Senate passed the NDAA (ME) to satisfy the needs of the military (GP). The circumstances called for doing so (CP) “with great unity and with one voice” (VP). The bill was critical to U.S. defense and security (GP). It conveyed the following message to Americans and the world: the U.S. would take every necessary step to protect the homeland and its troops (GP), to work with its allies and protect them (GP) and to meet “the full spectrum of threats” confronting the country (GP) and “the entire Western World, and, indeed, all of civilization” (VP). The irreconcilable differences between the two parties (i.e., on missile defense funding and on the Congressional authorization for testing activities conflicting with the ABM Treaty) were set aside for a later date (ME). Efforts to resolve

⁹⁸ The separate bill in question was the BMD Act of 2001 (S. 1439). There was no further action on the bill following its introduction on 20 September 2001 (Report 107-62, 2001; S. 1439, 2001).

⁹⁹ A motion to proceed to consider is “[a] procedural vote taken by the whole Senate on the matter of whether or not to open debate on a bill. This occurs if the entire Senate does not agree to proceed by “unanimous consent” (The District Policy Group, n.d.). It is usually offered by the majority leader (Senate RPC, n.d.).

them could create them dissent (GP) (downside) at a time when unity was so important (VP) to achieve victory in the difficult war America was fighting in Afghanistan (GP).

Not adopting the NDAA being introduced would compromise a key value and run contrary to Levin's goals. He deemed important that the senators "[stood] together in these days" (VP). Meaning that Senate unity was a concern informing the Senator's decision to give his approval to a bill that would potentially fund ABM Treaty-infringing activities. Not doing so would compromise a value (unity) that he deemed important, and which underlined his other goals: increased security, protection of American citizens, and collective action against terrorism (GP).

Thus, having weighed all the premises for action, Levin accepted potential national security ramifications (GP) and jeopardizing legislative oversight over the Executive (VP) in return for a bill that would potentially contribute to the downfall of the ABM Treaty (GP), but which allowed for Congressional unity (VP), U.S. protection and increased security (GP), and action against terrorism (GP) in a post-911 environment (CP). For him, passing the NDAA was the best course of action (ME) given the political reality (CP) (most senators prioritized the president's freedom of action over legislative oversight), the difficulty of debating these issues in the current times (CP), and the institutional reality (VP) (presidential power the veto the bill).

Levin did not support a unilateral withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, because doing so would compromise U.S. goals. Countries like Russia and China would respond by building up their forces faster (GP), and by opting to MIRV instead of dismantling nuclear warheads (GP). Withdrawal from the ABM Treaty might also cause a rift in U.S.-Russian strategic relations (GP) which had fostered significant stability (GP). The nuclear proliferation risks would also increase, since Russia would maintain additional nuclear material available, which was at risk of being stolen (GP) (downsides). Those downsides were central in informing Levin's decision to prepare the provision on Congressional oversight (VP). The negative consequences of a unilateral withdraw comfortably outweighed the benefits of being able to confront (GP) the most remote threat the country faced (CP), and well as the understanding that Congress should not tie the President's hands (VP). However, by delaying the debate on the matter, the latter premise would carry "less of an emotional impact" (VP), since its linkage with the September 11 events would weaken over time (CP).

Unilateral action also put in jeopardy the fight against terrorism because the U.S. needed many countries to join in (GP). Overall, America would be "less secure rather than more secure" if it withdrew from the agreement because it "would do so in order to commit [itself] to testing a system which is a defense against the least likely means of attack, a missile" (ME).

Given that Levin saw rogue state or terrorist missile attacks as the most unlikely threat to the United States, intercepting them was not among his goals (GP). However, in addition to removing the ABM Treaty-related provision from the NDAA produced in the Senate Armed Services Committee, Levin introduced a bipartisan amendment to the bill authorizing additional funds totaling \$1.3. billion

for missile defense programs or DOD activities to fight terrorism¹⁰⁰ (ME). While the amendment was in tune with Levin's non-proliferation goals if the Executive decided to use the funding toward achieving them, the administration retained the discretion to use them for missile defense instead. If the latter proved to be the case, then the amendment would not contribute toward the chairman's non-proliferation goals, but towards a goal he did not have (ME) (CRECB, 2001: 17481-17484; 18138-18140).

On 24 September 2001, Senator Jeff Sessions (R-AL), of the Armed Services Committee, explained that in a 1998, the bipartisan Rumsfeld commission concluded, unanimously, that America could be subject to a missile attack by 2005; an attack that the country could not defend against (CP). Sessions believed that Iran, Pakistan, Iraq, and North Korea, among other nations, could represent such a threat by that date (CP). To the legislator, the world remained dangerous, America was vulnerable and continued to be challenged (CP).

Sessions claimed that America's European allies had significantly warmed up to the idea of missile defense (CP), and that the H.R. was on board too. The Senate was the only place left where problems remained (CP). The senator also reminded that two and a half years ago the chamber had overwhelmingly voted in favor (97-3) of deploying a national missile defense system once technologically feasible (VP). Due to that vote and given that President Bush had campaigned on the deployment of such a system, Sessions believed that it was time to acknowledge that America "[was] moving to contradiction of the [ABM] treaty, if [it had] not already" (CP) (the treaty is not a VP that should inform action).

Legally, the lawmaker believed that the ABM Treaty prohibited America from deploying a national missile defense system (VP) but noted that many legal scholars considered that compliance with the agreement was not required because the U.S.S.R. no longer existed (VP) (questions whether the ABM is legally binding). Sessions wanted America to no longer be vulnerable to missile attacks from the many nations threatening the U.S. (GP).

On whether missile defense would deliver his goal of action, the Sessions was optimistic. He noted that that since the 1990-1991 Gulf War, America had realized that it had the capabilities to knock down missiles (ME). He also stressed that the two sides of the aisle only disagreed on when missile defense should be deployed (CP), and that there was agreement (CP) on the idea that such a system was technologically feasible (ME).

Sessions rejected delaying the development and deploying of a missile defense, because by 2005 some nations would be able to reach the United States with a missile. That meant that if the United States wanted to be able to defend itself by then, it had to start now, since the course of action was not something that America could implement at a snap of its fingers (ME). It was the policy of no other

¹⁰⁰ The administration's budget request for missile defense was \$8.3 billion. The NDAA produced in the Senate Armed Services Committee authorized \$7 billion for such activities. Thus, the added \$1.3 billion would fully fund the administration's budget request for missile defense if the funds were not used toward non-proliferation activities.

nation to keep itself vulnerable to an attack (ME). Thus, for the senator, inaction was not the best policy available (ME).

On the matter of the ABM Treaty, Sessions believed that maintaining it was not necessary because circumstances had changed since 1972 (ME). Moving on from it was a necessary step towards the deployment of missile defense (ME). The options available to America were two: the president either got out of it (ME), or the Russians had to agree to America's missile defense system (ME). Even if Russia did not agree, the United States had to move on, because it could not let the agreement prevent the achievement of the pursued goal (ME).

Russia would be willing to negotiate with the United States (ME) regarding the ABM Treaty (GP). Sessions had faith that the two countries would reach an understanding that would further mutual interests (GP) if Russia was granted a few concessions (ME) (an agreement is feasible) (GP/VP) (downsides may be acceptable).. If Russia did not acquiesce with America's missile defense system (ME), the U.S. would have to accept the potential downsides. In his words, "[w]e want to have a friendly relationship with Russia [GP]. I pray we don't have a threat from Russia" (GP) (downside). However, as the September 11 terrorist attacks had shown, there were many nations wishing harm upon America (CP), and the country would not be safe [GP] [downside of inaction] if they attained the capability of targeting U.S. cities with missiles (CP) (downsides of inaction outweigh the downsides of action).

Sessions expressed his satisfaction with the removal, from the NDAA introduced in the Senate, of a provision whereby "if the Russians didn't agree to allow [America] to build a national missile defense, the President could not go forward but had to come back to Congress and ask for a vote" (ME). The Senator believed that Russia (CP) should not be given the power to veto whether the United States had a missile defense system deployed or not (VP), and the Senate should not restrict the President's ability to do so (GP). Moreover, the president had personal unilateral power to withdraw from the treaty (VP). He supported the bill's increase in missile defense funding (ME) (CRECB, 2001: 17744-17747).

On 25 September 2001, Senator Joe Biden (D-DE), chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, claimed that America's greatest threat was a nuclear attack caused by a weapon smuggled into the country by terrorists, and most likely originated from Russia (CP). He also stressed that a difficult war had been thrust upon the country after September 11 (CP). The United States should turn its attention to winning that war (GP) and to building its defenses against all forms of terrorism (GP), of which the missile was the least likely (CP).

Biden showed his discontentment over the fact that the NDAA introduced in the Senate floor no longer contained missile defense transparency provisions that he deemed important. Although the senator believed that the President had the right to withdraw from the ABM Treaty "in the face of Congressional silence" (VP), Biden considered that the removal of the provisions in question compromised transparency (VP) and Congressional oversight over the Administration missile defense policy (VP). Holding the "rightful power of the purse," Congress should have a clear blueprint of the Administration's spending plans before authorizing billions of dollars for missile defense activities that

could violate the ABM (VP). The ABM Treaty (ME) had been “a cornerstone of strategic stability which [had] served the United States well for the past 30 years” (ME).

In hastening actions to deploy missile defense, such as withdrawing from the ABM Treaty, the United States could compromise its goals pertaining to the War on Terror. Due to Russia’s geography and involvement in Central Asia, Moscow could hinder U.S. actions in Afghanistan (GP)). Given Russian and ally objections to a U.S. withdrawal from the accord (CP), such an action could jeopardize American war efforts in Afghanistan, which required the cooperation of those parties (GP). Moscow had claimed that it would continue to cooperate with the U.S. on its fight against terrorism, separating the issue from the ongoing discussions on nuclear issues (CP). However, the lawmaker was concerned “that both military and public opinion in Russia could shift substantially against cooperation with the United States” (GP) (downside of withdrawal).

On missile defense deployment, Biden questioned whether such a line of action would achieve the administration’s goal of addressing the rogue state threat. Defending against ICBMs, in his view, “[would] have little impact on international terrorism,” since terrorists were likely to use infiltration, not a missile, if their goal was to attack the United States with an WMD (ME). A better policy option, according to Biden, would be improving the security of military bases and installations in American soil, since they lacked basic anti-terrorism protections (ME).

Seeking the deployment of a missile defense system would also compromise other goals of the United States. The money, technical manpower and production capability being used to address the “less likely of threats” was being drained from the war effort. Due to a manager’s amendment, \$1.3 billion that had previously been assigned to other critical defense priorities, were now being reallocated for either missile defense activities, or for activities for combating terrorism (GP). The system in question was also distracting the country from other, more likely forms of terrorism (GP).

Nonetheless, after weighing all premises, Biden decided not to oppose the NDAA. The premises he opposed and the ones he put forward himself were outweighed by two others (ME). Firstly, “a unity of purpose in fighting the difficult war that [lied] ahead,” and that was shared by all members of the Senate (VP). Secondly, that unity of purpose underlined the goal that Biden deemed a priority: winning the war in Afghanistan (GP) (CRECB, 2001: 17856-17857).

On the same date, John Warner (R-VA), ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, expressed his satisfaction over the fact that, in the aftermath of September 11 (CP), the two parties had bridged their differences on missile defense to a considerable degree. Both sides agreed that they “now (...) [could not] ignore or eliminate any part of that full spectrum of threats that may be directed towards [America]” (GP) regardless of differences regarding their perceived likelihood (CP). The current version of the NDAA, unlike the one which the Armed Services Committee had passed, no longer risked hindering the President’s ability to exert his Constitutional powers to conduct foreign policy (VP) and conclude his negotiations with Russia on the ABM Treaty (GP) (premises are no longer compromised). Additionally, the new Senate NDAA met the President’s justifiable budget request for

missile defense (ME), allowing the U.S. to prepare itself against the threat of a limited attack (GP) (CREC, 2001: S9569). On 5 November 2001, Levin urged the celebration of an arms control agreement with Russia (ME) that allowed for mutual (GP), transparent (GP), predictable (GP) reductions that would be difficult to reverse (GP). Such an agreement would grant both states confidence that the other was complying with its terms (GP). Without an agreement, a situation could arise whereby either nation could worry that the other could easily, rapidly, and considerably increase its nuclear forces (GP) (downside). To grant the President the flexibility to carry out such reductions (GP), the current 1997 prohibition on nuclear reductions should be repealed by Congress (ME). Such a line of action received the support of senior civil and uniformed military defense leaders (ME), and Congress was keeping the U.S. at START I levels at a time when Presidents Bush and Putin were moving toward START IV (GP) (downside of inaction).

On 9 November 2001, nine Republican Senators – Jesse Helms, Jon Kyl (R-AZ), Don Nickles (R-OK), Trent Lott (R-MS), Richard Shelby (R-AL), Rick Santorum (R-PA), Larry Craig (R-ID), and Jim Inhofe (R-OK) – sent a letter to President Bush. They expressed their concern over reports that the Administration wanted to reach an agreement with Moscow that would leave the ABM Treaty intact (ME) while allowing for full testing of the U.S. missile defense program (ME). They stressed that the policy option was not plausible, given that the treaty constrained testing severely (VP) and contained no provision which would allow one of the parties to violate the accord with the consent of the other (VP). Furthermore, senior officials had many a time affirmed that the Administration would not violate the treaty (VP) (Disarmament Diplomacy, 2001c). Helms warned that any deal with Russia to preserve the ABM Treaty would be “dead on arrival” in Congress (VP) (“A shield in space,” 2001).

On 14 November 2001, Representative Thune (R-SD) claimed that the B-1B bomber (ME) was a key contributor to U.S. considerable achievements in the war in Afghanistan (GP). The aircraft (ME) contributed to protect America and keep it safe (GP) against terrorism and other potential threats against the country (CP). He highlighted those reasons for action given the ongoing talks about America’s future force structure and military strategy (ME) (favors preserving the capability) (CREC, 2001: H8161).

On 15 November 2001, Biden expressed opposition to the President’s announcement that the U.S. would carry out reductions to somewhere between 1,700 and 2,200 deployed warheads (GP) on the basis of personal assurances between Bush and Putin – a “handshake,” in other words (ME). Such a line of action would not make known what was promised and what was not (GP) (downside). A written agreement (ME), on the other hand, would provide specific commitments (VP), which would benefit U.S.-Russian relations (GP). Furthermore, the U.S. would learn about Russian nuclear posture (GP), making it easier “to determine how we should deal with them, how we should counter them” (GP). The Senator also questioned what the Administration’s plan for the approximately 4,000 U.S. warheads that would be removed from deployment was (ME) (unclear course of action), and what Russia would do with theirs (GP) (downside of a “handshake” agreement). On the same date, Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV), Chair of the Appropriations Committee also called for a written agreement (ME), seeing as a

handshake (ME) would leave too many questions with answer, including what would happen to the warheads removed from deployment (GP) (downside). Quoting Ronald Reagan, he argued that one should “trust, but verify” (GP) (Disarmament Diplomacy, 2001c).

On 13 December 2001, Levin reacted to the President’s announcement that the U.S. would withdraw from the ABM Treaty, made just hours before, while introducing the final NDAA bill to the Senate floor¹⁰¹. The senator reiterated the JCS’ assessment that ballistic missiles were the least likely means of WMD delivery (CP). Russia had not been offered the amendments to the ABM Treaty that would have allowed the U.S. to proceed with missile defense tests that potentially violated the accord (ME) (action not pursued).

Levin stated that the military and the top defense civilian leadership had urged the legislators to remove a provision, coded in law, prohibiting the executive from reducing the number of nuclear weapons below START I levels. He and others had tried to remove that provision, unsuccessfully, for years because the U.S. had “unneeded nuclear forces” (CP). The U.S. was living through extraordinary times, since it was engaging in a military campaign in Afghanistan (CP).

In introducing the NDAA, Levin sought to strengthen national security (GP). He wanted to guarantee that the American people remained safe and secure, particularly from WMDs (GP). He wanted to ensure that America remained “the most capable fighting force in the world” throughout the war effort against terrorism (GP). He wanted increased focus on dealing with America’s most likely threats (GP). The senator also aimed at moving his country “toward lower nuclear force levels contemplated under START III and below, and toward levels being sought by the administration” (GP). The final NDAA required the DOD “to provide additional information and program reviews to ensure adequate congressional oversight and transparency of the [missile defense] program” (VP). He believed that “security was enhanced when [America made] common cause with other nations in pursuit of common goals” (VP).

The Senator considered that the President should have stood by his pledge (VP) to offer Russia the required amendments to the ABM Treaty (ME). But since the President had instead proposed Moscow “something much broader (...) and not necessarily in the form of amendments,” he had backed away from a previous commitment he should have abided by (VP) (downside).

By withdrawing from the ABM Treaty unilaterally, Bush was compromising several U.S. goals. For one, according to the legislator, the United States was tearing down a “security structure, [a] source of stability, without having anything in its place” (GP). In addition, unilateral withdrawal from the agreement “needlessly [strained] [America’s] growing relationship with Russia, a partner in the new war on terrorism” (GP). The same could be said regarding U.S. relations “with allies, partners and other nations just when the world is united in a common fight against terrorism” (GP). Missile threats were

¹⁰¹ A joint Senate-House NDAA (reconciled NDAA or final NDAA are also used) is the result of a compromise between the Senate’s NDAA and the House’s own version of the document. The Senate’s NDAA had been previously introduced to the Senate floor by Levin, whose discourse concerning it we analyzed above.

the least likely threats and focusing on them would draw focus and resources away from the most likely security threats (GP). Unilateral withdrawal of the treaty risked “[unleashing] an arms race in offensive measures, countermeasures, ways to defeat limited defenses, decoys, and ways to overcome those countermeasures” (GP). Overall, having weighed the pros and cons of the course of action taken by the President (ME), Levin believed that the decision hindered national security (GP) (downside).

Furthermore, abrogating the ABM Treaty was not necessary (ME). For Levin, the agreement was not, currently, a significant obstacle to the activities of the BDMO, which until a few months before, was carrying out research, development and testing that were treaty compliant (CP). The new testing activities added recently by the administration, and that would conflict with the agreement, were, in his view, of marginal value. In Levin’s eyes, it was possible to test and develop missile defenses while remaining in the treaty (ME). And an agreement with Russia to amend the ABM would have allowed such testing anyway (ME). Remaining in the agreement in some form was the best course of action. The ABM Treaty had delivered America the following goals (ME): a stable relationship with Russia (GP) and the rational use of U.S. resources (GP).

Levin explained that the provision (ME) that had been dropped from the reconciled 2002 NDAA, and which would have imposed Congressional approval as a requirement for the expenditure of funds on ABM Treaty-infringing missile tests (VP), made it clear that its language did not prevent or limit the President from withdrawing from the accord (VP) (rejected downside). He claimed that it would not have been possible to obtain a majority vote in the Armed Services Committee for language affecting the President’s right to withdraw from the ABM Treaty (CP).

The Senator and the administration did not see eye to eye on the plausibility of a missile threat and, therefore, countering it was not one of his goals of action (GP). He was concerned with the downsides of going forward with missile defense on U.S. goals. Doing so would undermine U.S. strategic stability with Russia, since Moscow would see even a limited missile defense shield as possibly growing into a much larger program that could threaten its nuclear deterrent (GP). Bush’s decision could lead Russia to engage in MIRV-ing (GP), and cause China and other countries to accelerate their nuclear programs and “devise countermeasures and decoys that they could then sell” (GP). Unilateral action without consideration of other nation’s security diminished U.S. national security (GP) (downsides).

While the legislator believed that it would be best to use the funds being authorized for missile defense (ME) to tackle more likely threats (GP), he still backed a bill fully funding the President’s missile defense requests (ME). The NDAA introduced by Levin only authorized the construction of the “facilities that [were] necessary to establish a test bed, not an operational missile defense site” in Alaska. This change vis-à-vis the previous House and Senate versions reflected the views of a few Senators who felt very strongly about not authorizing an operation site (ME), since doing so would violate the ABM Treaty (VP) (downside).

Regarding unilateral cuts to the nuclear arsenal of the United States, the final NDAA removed statutory restrictions on the administration’s ability “to move the United States toward lower nuclear

force levels contemplated under START III and below, and toward levels being sought by [it].” Drawing from military and defense officials, Levin defended the merits of the decision on the grounds that the U.S. was spending needlessly on nuclear weapons (ME). He also argued that “eliminating the one statutory restriction on the President’s action regarding the size of [U.S.] nuclear forces” did not compromise Congress’ Constitutional “power to raise armies.” That was because the “power of the purse” still belonged to Congress, meaning that the legislature would still tell the President what level of nuclear forces he would maintain by determining what level of weaponry was going to be funded and maintained (VP) (CRECB, 2001: 25976-25981).

On 13 December 2001, Warner stated that, in the aftermath of September 11, the president felt that he had the duty (VP) to begin the exploration of technology and options for the deployment of a missile defense system (ME). America “[had] enemies willing to go to extraordinary lengths to attack [it] and indiscriminately kill thousands of innocent civilians” (CP). It was known that terrorists were seeking to acquire WMDs, and that many terrorism-sponsoring nations were seeking such weapons, and the means to deliver them (CP). The world was dangerous and unpredictable (CP).

The president had announced the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty (CP), and that the country was pursuing with Russia a new strategic relationship that replaced the MAD logic with mutual cooperation (GP). Putin had accepted the challenge, and the two Presidents would make further progress in establishing said relationship (CP).

The lawmaker stressed that the president had the right to withdraw from the ABM Treaty per article 15 of the agreement. In doing so, he had chosen to stay within the terms of the agreement, in no way violating the law (VP). Replying to criticism regarding the President’s lack of effort to include the legislative branch (VP), Warner posited that the lawmakers had received minimal consultation (CP). Furthermore, Congress and others, including Putin, had been informed of the President’s intentions (CP). There were also no precedents for a president formally “advising the Senate about the fact that he [had] reached a decision that a treaty [was] no longer of value to this country, and, therefore, he [was] going to exercise such a provision as the treaty may provide for the withdrawal” (CP). Furthermore, the War Powers Resolution of 1973¹⁰², which “explicitly set out the need for consultation with the Congress” was never accepted as “the letter of the law” (VP). Thus, Warner believed that the terms of the law and of the agreement had been followed by President Bush (VP).

The Senator shared the President’s goal of protecting the nation from all known threats, including attacks from ballistic missiles in limited number (GP). Underlying that goal was the President’s foremost and solemn obligation to defend American citizens (VP) and the nation’s vital interests (VP). The Senator also wanted the U.S. to remain able to deploy troops overseas (GP) and protect allies and friends (GP), without being vulnerable to nuclear blackmail (GP). Furthermore, no

¹⁰² The War Powers Resolutions is a congressional resolution designed to limit the U.S. president's ability to initiate or escalate military actions abroad” (War Powers Resolution of 1973, 2021).

nation should be allowed to veto (VP) (compromise of U.S. sovereignty) America's right to defend its territory and its people (VP) (compromise of America's right to self-defense brought on by inaction). Warner also wanted to protect the cause of freedom (VP).

Staying within the ABM was not the best course of action. The treaty was a way of controlling the arms competition between the two nuclear rivals during the Cold War, but its purposed had been served; America and Russia were building a new relationship and were no longer "implacable enemies" (CP). Thus, the accord was no longer necessary (ME). Furthermore, the treaty prevented America from achieving its goals by blocking the use of ABM technology that "would be more efficient, quicker (ME), and less costly to the taxpayer" (GP). Having abandoned it, the country would be able to build part of the system in space and the sea (ME). If it had stayed in place, America would be left vulnerable to missile threats (GP) (downside of alternative action), which "[was] not the wise course of action" (ME). The ABM Treaty had completed its mission (ME) (no longer necessary) of controlling the arms race between Washington and Moscow (GP). It had been viewed during the Cold War "as a building block to other arms control agreements" (GP) (outdated goals).

The Administration had been pursuing with Moscow "through a series of consultations [ME], a framework of understandings [GP] that would enable the United States to perform testing of new options and other steps [ME] leading to the eventual deployment of a ballistic missile defense system" (ME). Such consultations would continue (ME), but it was timely for the U.S. to announce that it would leave the ABM Treaty (ME). The U.S. had the right to withdraw from the agreement (VP), something Russia knew and accepted (CP). The Administration "[had] carefully laid the groundwork for U.S. withdrawal from the treaty" (GP) (suggests the achievement of certain goals via consultations with Russia), seeing as America's "action was preceded by U.S. and Russian commitments [VP] to accomplish the most dramatic reductions in offensive nuclear forces in the history of arms control" (GP) – a high priority for Moscow (CP). It made no sense to think that the U.S. withdrawal (ME) would lead to an arms race with Russia (GP) (rejected downside) given that there was "a sense of acceptance [CP] and a recognition that [their] close relationship [CP] will continue to grow" (GP) (CREC, 2001: S13121-S13122).

Warner rejected the view that so much money should not be spent on missile defense when it was the least probably means of delivery of a WMD (compared to a truck or a ship) (CP). He argued that the United States could not abstain from acting (ME). The possibility of a single missile being launched out of anger could not be discarded, and the destruction caused by a missile would likely be far greater than the one caused by other means of WMD delivery (CP). Inaction (ME) would also leave the United States open to nuclear blackmail (GP) and deter it from deploying troops abroad to protect allies and friends (GP). To achieve those goals, the U.S. had to deploy missile defenses (ME) (CRECB, 2001: 25975-25977; 25983; 25987).

Some members of Congress voiced statements containing threat perceptions of Russia which were not regarded as reasons for action in the context of the three policy changes under analysis in section 4.1. For instance, in early January 2001, as the Bush Administration was preparing for the

transition into office, U.S. news outlets broke the news that Russia had transferred non-strategic nuclear weapons into a Kaliningrad military base (Federation of American Scientists, 2012: 70-71; “Russia transfers nuclear,” 2001; “A Russian Base,” 2001).

According to a 4 January 2001 press report, Representative Benjamin Gilman (R-NY) (IR Committee) stated that if Russia had indeed transferred non-strategic nuclear weapons to Kaliningrad, then the U.S. “would have to view that as an alarming development that [threatened] the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe” (CP). The lawmaker believed the news to highlight the need to expand NATO to include Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania (ME) (“U.S. yet to query,” 2001).

Reacting to the events, Representative Curt Weldon (R-PA) (Armed Services Committee) was quoted in the press on 5 January 2001. He stated that he was very concerned that Russian nuclear weapons had been transferred to the Baltics (CP), despite Moscow’s prior assurances that they would not be moved (CP). He believed that the action “[sent] a very bad signal” (CP). Russia should have nothing to hide (ME), so inspections needed to be carried out, at the bare minimum (ME) (“Poland wants inspections,” 2001).

On 27 February 2001, Traficant called for the passing of a bill on the creation of an agency to investigate the Justice Department (ME). His appeal was grounded in the premise that Russia had purchased top secret documents from an FBI leak (CP) (CREC, 2001: H416). On 14 March 2001 Traficant noted that Russia and China were set to formalize an agreement that reflected their opposition to U.S. foreign policy (CP). The two states had spoken about the importance of hindering America’s missile defense system (CP), believing the country to be overly powerful (CP). In light of those developments and America’s trade deficit (CP), the country should stop providing the two countries with aid (ME) (CREC, 2001: H882).

On 25 April 2001, Senator Strom Thurmond (R-SC), was concerned about the changes reported by the Administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration, General John Gordon on Russia’s Ministry of Atomic Energy, whose leader had been dismissed (CP), with unclear implications for the CTR programs (ME). The change, along with others that had occurred in the Russian government, suggested, in the Senator’s view, “a more closed society reminiscent of the Soviet Union” (CP) (S. HRG. 107–355, 2001: 41).

On 12 June 2001, congressman Tom Allen (D-ME), of the House Armed Services Committee, explained that, according to the U.S. intelligence community, there were far more concerning threats to the homeland than missiles, which could be easily traced back to “North Korea or Iran or somewhere else” (CP). The threats facing America in the future would be trucks, boats or suitcases that could be brought inside or near a building and then blown up. There were precedents supporting that assessment: the terrorist bombing of the USS Cole on 12 October 2000, and the Oklahoma City terrorist bombing on 19 April 1995. The congressman also noted that the administration had not provided any particulars about missile defense and had avoided questions pertaining to its reliability and consistency (CP). Tens of billions of dollars later, America still did not have a working, tested missile defense system (CP).

Allen wanted to focus on addressing the threat posed by WMDs delivered by means other than the missile (GP). The congressman also accused the administration of pursuing a concealed goal in seeking the deployment of a missile defense system: the president's reelection (GP). He based his assessment on the deadline established by the secretary of defense for missile defense deployment, which was 2004, the date of the next presidential election, and which preceded the completion of the necessary testing (CP). Implicitly, the self-interest of the Administration was a hidden value premise (VP).

Allen listed several downsides of deploying missile defenses on U.S. goals. If all money were put into missile defense, then other threats would be underfunded (GP). In addition, the system's huge cost would also drain money from education, health care, and the environment (GP). Missile defense would also make the world less stable because it would encourage other states to increase their offensive weapons. It was very plausible that China would respond to American actions by developing more ICBMs, which would lead India and Pakistan to follow suit (GP).

Rushing toward missile defense deployment was not the best course of action available. While missile defenses "would be a good thing to have" if it worked and did not threaten U.S. security, that was unfortunately not the case. Some U.S. scientists were even stating that it would never work (ME). Experience had shown that when it came to weapons systems, the motto was to "fly before we buy" (ME), and military history showed that building a better shield always led to the forging of a better sword (ME). Also, given the unlikelihood of the threat, missile defenses were not a proportional response to it (ME). Missile defense would only be effective against states such as Iran and North Korea – "it [protected] against one single threat and [was] useful for no other purpose" (ME). Dealing and negotiating with the two states was a better policy alternative: it was a lot less expensive (ME). It was also a feasible endeavor: North Korea was willing to negotiate away its missile program (CP), and Iran had just elected a reformist president with a ¾ majority of the vote (CP).

Since missile defense technologies were unproven (ME), Allen believed that it would be unwise (ME) and unsafe to abandon arms control agreements. For him, abandoning the ABM Treaty to pursue the deployment of missile defenses would not improve America's overall security (GP) (downside). Given the success of the arms control regime, over the past 50-odd years, in maintaining the peace, the ABM Treaty should stay in place (ME). He also noted that deterrence, as an alternative to missile defense, could be sufficient to deter WMD use, given that it had worked for over five decades, and had proven successful as recently as during the Gulf War (ME) (CRECB, 2001: 10368-10369).

On 25 June 2001, Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV), chairman of the Appropriations Committee (including the Defense and Energy and Water Development Subcommittees) and member of the Armed Services Committee (including the Strategic Subcommittee) noted the mixed reactions of European allies and Russia regarding discussions with the U.S. about the ABM Treaty (CP). He believed their confusion stemmed from the fact that, on the one hand, the U.S. had showed intent to consult with them (ME). On the other, the Administration had made clear it clear that the decision was already made: the

U.S. would deploy a missile defense system as quickly as possible (ME). Byrd believed that consultations with European allies, Russia and China (ME) should be a means to preserve national security (GP). And not used to inform others of an already made decision and gain their acceptance (GP) (rejected goal) without taking their views into consideration (GP) (potential compromises could be acceptable). Since the scheduled missile defense tests (ME) would not conflict with the ABM Treaty at least through 2003 (VP), there was no need to hastily withdraw from it (ME) or amend it (ME).

Byrd also opposed the President's plan to deploy the U.S. missile defense system in 2004 (ME) due to questions over its effectiveness (GP) (undelivered goal). In fact, an internal DOD report had affirmed that a 2005 would not be warranted (ME) given the numerous failures of the program (CP). The military officers working on missile defense had described a potential 2004 deployment date as "high risk" (GP) (downside). Rumsfeld had claimed that it was not required for an early system to be entirely effective (GP) (downplays effectiveness issues), but Byrd dismissed the premise. He did not support a "scarecrow system" (ME) (i.e., a system that cannot deliver its intended goal) which would cost billions of dollars (GP) (downside) without providing an effective defense (GP) (undelivered goal) (CREC, 2001: S6844).

On 17 July, Representative James Traficant (D-OH) (no committee assignments¹⁰³) stated that China and Russia had signed the 2001 Sino-Russian Treaty of Friendship (CP) and referred to the United States as an imperialist state (CP). China and Russia had spied on America and sold its secrets, which were now known by all enemies of the United States (CP). America had no adequate defenses (CP) and faced an immense problem (CP). He expressed his satisfaction over a successful missile defense test (CP) – was a promising sign (ME) (feasibility of missile defense). The pursuit of technological advancement pursuant to the deployment of "a reasonable shift" was the only way (ME) to protect the American people (GP). He commended Ronald Reagan for having had anticipated "America would be challenged by maybe even rogue nations with nuclear capability that was illegally gained from America (CP) (CREC, 2001: H4037-H4038).

On the same day, Jim McDermott (D-WA) (of the Budget and Ways and Means Committee) noted that the successful missile test referenced by Traficant had failed repeatedly in the past (CP) despite the simplicity which characterized it (CP). The test had been turned into an unprecedented PR event (CP) to build up momentum for a missile defense system (GP) and for increased expenditures on the program (GP) (covert reasons). The system (ME) was already driving Russia and China together (GP) (downside) (CP) (downside already being experienced). He opposed "tearing up" the ABM Treaty (ME) to deploy missile defenses (ME), seeing as both Russia and China "have said not to do it" (CP) (CREC, 2001: H4038).

¹⁰³ On 3 January 2001, Traficant voted for the Republican Dennis Hastert for Speaker of the House (the chamber's leader). As result, he was expelled from the Democratic caucus and stripped of his seniority and committee assignments, including in the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, where he had been the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations and Emergency Management during the previous Congress (House Report 106–1038, 2001: IV).

On 19 July 2001, Representative Frank Wolf (R-VI) opposed giving China “Permanent normal trade relations” status (ME), in part due to his concern over the Sino-Russian Treaty of Friendship (CP). He believed the accord to represent an alliance against America (CP), and highlighted the pact’s Article 9, whereby consultations would be had if one of the parties perceived a threat of aggression, resulting in cooperation to eliminate it (CP) (CREC, 2001: H4311).

On 24 July 2001, Traficant claimed that Moscow spied on the United States every day (CP) and that it had informants within the FBI (CP). He believed that Russia was “stabbing [the United States] in the back” (CP) and that their intentions “[were] anything but honorable” (CP). As such, he believed that the United States should stop sending aid to Russia (ME), introducing an amend to the House floor to enact that policy (CREC, 2001: H4526).

Representative Thomas Lantos (D-CA) (IR Committee) followed Traficant’s statement to oppose his colleague’s amendment to the Foreign Operations, Export Financing and Related Programs Appropriations Act. He emphasized the importance of Russia establishing a viable civil society (GP). Without the realization of that goal, Russia “[would not] cease [GP] to be a potential security threat to the United States” (CP), nor would it achieve genuine economic prosperity (GP). He had introduced the Russia Democracy Act the month prior to achieve those goals, with the bill bolstering U.S. democracy, good governance and anti-corruption efforts in the country (ME) (CREC, 2001: H4526). The Representative had voiced all the abovementioned premises upon introducing the bill on 12 June 2001 (CREC, 2001: E1072).

On 12 September 2001, Senator Larry Craig (R-ID) (of the Energy and Water and Power subcommittees of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee) called for an extensive review of American post-Cold War strategy (ME) after the 11 September terrorist attacks (CP). Said strategy was centered on the exercise of global hegemony (GP) and preventing a potential rival [CP] such as Russia or China, from emerging (GP). He wanted the U.S. to focus more on domestic defense (GP), given its vulnerability to terrorist attacks (CP), than on global dominance (GP), even if the second goal was still important (outweighed goal) (CREC, 2001: S9311).

On 25 September, Representative John Spratt (D-SC) (of the Armed Services Committee) urged that the cuts made in the President’s budget proposal for the DOE’s non-proliferation and verification research and development be restored by the House’s NDAA. The request for FY2002 had been \$170 million dollars, 25% below FY2001 levels (\$227.5 million). He listed several items which would not be funded if the reductions were not reversed, including new seismic monitoring devices (ME) which would assist the U.S. in guaranteeing that Russia, China, or others were not performing underground low-yield nuclear tests to improve their nuclear weapons (GP)¹⁰⁴ (CREC, 2001: H6037-H6038).

¹⁰⁴ The 2002 Defense Appropriations Bill would end up providing \$3,5 million for nuclear test monitoring, despite funding thereto not having been contemplated in the House and Senate versions of the bill (Report 107-350, 2001: 375).

On 7 November 2001, Representative Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD) (Armed Services Committee) displayed a Russian journal article showing a Russian attack with an EMP against the United States (CP). Created by the detonation of a nuclear weapon in the atmosphere, such an attack would melt all U.S. microelectronics, including computers (CP). The lawmaker also spoke of Russia's strong investment in the Yamantau Mountain project¹⁰⁵ (CP). He believed the Russians to be paranoid, and that they did not see the Americans as friends given the expansion of NATO toward their borders (CP). NATO was not perceived as friendly, seeing as it had been the counterpart to the Warsaw Pact (CP). Thus, Bartlett wanted the expansion of NATO with Russia or not at all (ME). In his words, NATO expansion without Russia "is threatening to our national security [GP] and it is not in our long-term national security interest" (VP). The U.S. was making great progress in improving its relationship with Russia (CP), and the Representative did not want to antagonize the country (GP) or fuel its paranoia (GP) (downsides) (CREC, 2001: H7870).

We now move on to our analysis of think tank discourse, starting with the CSIS.

On 21 January 2001, Cordesman (2001c: 1-3, 5-7, 10-12) noted that Beijing had no "interest in being able to attack or threaten the U.S. except in the context of its regional ambitions and security needs" (e.g., concerning Taiwan) (CP). U.S. development of a missile defense system might lead to a Chinese nuclear buildup, leading India, and Pakistan to do the same, sparking arms races (GP). Sino-American relations would be damaged (GP), and China might feel less compelled to cooperate on matters on disarmament and non-proliferation (GP). China and Russia might also respond to U.S. deployments by intensifying "the flow of expertise, technology, and equipment to hostile states" (GP). As result of those downsides on U.S. goals, the America might find itself requiring even more costly and sophisticated defenses (GP). The U.S. might succeed in negotiating certain ceilings on Russian and Chinese strategic forces (GP) in exchange for clear limits to a U.S. national missile defense (NMD) system (ME). The author believed that China would probably increase the missile threat against America regardless of missile defense deployments, however (CP).

In another paper with the same date, Cordesman claimed that Iran and North Korea's missile programs were focused on regional strategic considerations rather than America. Therefore, the justification for building a missile defense system could not possibly "be built around the certainty" of an Iranian or North Korean threat (CP). Nonetheless, the need for a defense shield could not be rejected because of a lack of valid potential threats (ME) (Cordesman, 2001a: 9; 2001b: 18).

On another 21 January 2001 paper, Cordesman (2001d: 3, 13-15, 23-24, 44, 49-51, 54) noted that Russia wanted to drastically cut the size of its nuclear arsenal (to about 1500 warheads under START III counting rules) (CP). Russian relations with the United States were currently poor (CP).

¹⁰⁵ The Conference Report of the 1998 NDAA conveyed the Sense of Congress that Russia was constructing an immense underground facility of unknown purpose at Yamantau Mountain that was intended to survive a nuclear conflict. The project, Congress found, seemed inconsistent with the post-Cold War strategic partnership between the two nations of reduced strategic threats (Report 105-340, 1997: 325).

Moscow had raised the possibility of the U.S. developing an NMD “break out” capability. They suggested a series of scenarios in which a sudden increase of U.S. NMD sites and interceptors would result in America “[achieving] at least a damage limiting capability against Russian strategic offensive forces at a time Russia [could not] afford to build back to the levels required to overcome a large US NMD system” (CP). Moscow had also stated that a U.S. missile defense systems would limit its ability to conduct limited or demonstrative strikes [CP] while keeping that avenue available for America (CP). Still, the author claimed that it was difficult to gauge how serious Russia’s abovementioned concerns really were (CP).

Moving forward with an NMD system and withdrawing from the ABM Treaty were associated with several downsides. Russia had threatened to withdraw from START (GP), and all disarmament agreements of the past 30 years would be undermined (GP). Russia could respond by MIRV-ing, building mid-range ballistic missiles, deploying shorter-range missiles near its borders, and changing targeting and alert procedures (increasing nuclear risks, including accidental launches, to the U.S. and allies) (GP). A small Russian force “might *seem* more marginal in the face of a U.S. NMD system,” which might lead Moscow to retain large numbers of forces otherwise planned for retiring (GP). The deterioration of the strategic nuclear balance (GP), and of U.S.-Russian relations were also possible (GP). Moscow might become closer to Beijing or to regional alliances unfriendly to the U.S. (GP). Further challenges in dealing with Russia when it came to competition for global influence and strategic nuclear modernization were also in the cards (GP). Those downsides “that partly offset the value of NMD” (ME).

Thus, the author suggested sharing missile defense capabilities and technologies (ME) and moving ahead with shared early warning (ME). The U.S. should negotiate agreements on the ABM Treaty, NMD, and START II/III (ME). The U.S. should allow limited Russian MIRV-ing (ME), give Russia a larger number of warheads under START II/III (ME), and grant Moscow technical transparency on NMD (ME). However, it might be out of the question for Moscow to accept or trust American transfers of NMD technology (ME), to agree to changes to the ABM Treaty (ME), or to give the U.S. the go-ahead on NMD deployment (ME) (questions feasibility of actions).

In April 2001, Sokov (2001a: 1-5) stated that if no agreement were signed, and the U.S. withdrew from the ABM Treaty, Russia had cheap alternatives to increase the effectiveness from its shrinking nuclear arsenal, such as keeping more warheads (GP) or leaving START (GP) (consequences on goals). Moscow perceived START as too expensive anyway (CP). Russia would also increase cooperation with China (GP) or withdraw from the INF Treaty (GP) (consequences on goals).

The author was not convinced that unilateral reductions were faster (ME) and more cost effective than celebrating arms control treaties (GP). The decision to pursue the latter and the ensuing political debates were more time consuming than the actual negotiations, and the overall process leading to a formal agreement would not be too lengthy (ME). He was skeptical that Russia would carry out reductions in the absence of an agreement (GP), and that U.S.-Russian relations could be relatively

transparent without treaties (GP) (undelivered goals). Sokov considered that the preference for unilateral reductions was at times explained by a desire to avoid the domestic challenges associated with formal mechanisms of arms control (VP). The expert argued that unilateral action might prove less cost-effective than arms control, because “U.S. freedom from inconvenient treaty restrictions [meant] similar freedom for Russia” (GP). The lack of a formal agreement also “created potential sources of misunderstanding, mutual suspicion, and conflict” (GP) (downsides).

Sokov considered arms control preferable to unilateral action (ME) because reductions would be binding (GP) (VP) and verifiable (GP), fostering transparency (GP) and predictability (GP). He agreed with the view that Moscow did not merit special treatment (VP). Overall, the author acknowledged that unilateral cuts could be productive (ME), but they should be “immediately followed by consultations and preferably negotiations to conclude an agreement (...) to formalize unilateral measures” (ME).

We now move on to the RAND Corporation. In a January 2001 study, Gompert and Arnhold (2001: 2, 4-10, 13-20, 22-25) expressed their hope that the administration would take its time, instead of moving immediately toward missile defense deployment, as it intended (ME). By taking that line of action, the United States would be able to find common ground with its allies on the matter (GP). Otherwise, America “would risk not just disappointment [GP] but even deeper U.S.-European misunderstanding [GP] [downsides] than has already occurred” (CP). By giving American allies time (ME) (defends not rushing toward missile defense deployment) and consulting with them (ME), the U.S. should succeed in convincing European allies to change their negative viewpoint regarding missile defense (GP). The public and most of Congress (CP) supported missile defense (ME).

The U.S. was the only superpower and did not have to “be concerned about defense against its own strategic offensive forces” (GP) (not a goal of action). Russia was no longer a military threat to Europe or the U.S., and “[w]ith ‘its depleted offensive force and no defense, launching a pre-meditated strategic first strike on the United States’ was ‘nearly unimaginable’ (CP). While Europe was peaceful, other vital areas for the U.S. and its allies were not, and missile and WMD arms races extended from East Asia to Southeast Asia and the Middle East (CP). American and European interests [VP] [downside of inaction] in key regions “could be endangered by coercion and conflict under the shadow of WMD[s],” despite the credibility of the threat of military intervention (CP). The likelihood of WMD-tipped missiles being launched against the U.S. was very small, but that threat was likely the most effective “means of discouraging U.S. or coalition intervention” (CP).

America was expected and prepared to intervene, preserve, and restore peace and security in those regions (GP). The country’s “ability and will to project power [were] the essence of [its] global defense strategy (CP) and, thus, the United States should protect itself from blackmail and threats (GP). America should strengthen its deterrence “by raising doubts on the efficacy of WMD attacks” (GP) and reduce their danger (GP). The authors wanted to increase the theater defense of U.S. and allied forces (the immediate priority) (GP), but also of the American homeland from missile threats (GP), while avoiding “an easy break-out option for defense against high-end threats” (GP). The experts stressed the

importance of obtaining wide public support in Europe and North America for missile defense (GP), and of uploading solidarity within the Alliance (VP).

For the authors, maintaining the ABM Treaty in its current form was no longer necessary (ME), because the concerns that led America to sign the agreement had disappeared (CP). The accord was no longer needed (ME) to maintain the nuclear deterrent credibility of the United States and its allies (GP). It should be ended (ME), assuming that replacing it is not an option (ME). Missile defense capabilities, on the other hand, were necessary because nuclear deterrence, while helpful, was not sufficient in light of the goals (ME). Moreover, a failure of deterrence would force America to retaliate with nuclear weapons, which would lead to certain political (GP) and legal questions (VP) being raised, as well as to international condemnation (GP) (consequences on goals).

Gompert and Arnhold rejected the idea that missile defense could “decouple” the U.S. from European security (GP) (rejected downside). They also explained that missile defenses would not be effective against established nuclear powers (China and Russia) due to technical-economic barriers (GP) (not a goal of action). Despite its financial struggles, Russia would be able to preserve an offensive nuclear force that would be prohibitively expensive to defend against (CP). Still, fears of Russian mistrust, misperception and missteps were not unwarranted. To prevent those downsides (GP), Washington should try to convince Moscow that it was not trying to deprive it of its nuclear deterrence (GP). The best way to achieve that goal was “to slash the U.S. offensive strategic nuclear arsenal (GP). Achieving that goal could soothe Moscow’s concerns over Washington’s first strike potential (GP) once the U.S. missile defense system was factored in (ME).

For instance, in START negotiations (ME), the United States could lower its arsenal to below 1000 weapons (GP) and constrain the break-out potential of its NMD system (GP), in exchange for the acceptance of comparable limits by Moscow (GP), and a revision of the ABM Treaty (ME) allowing for a low-end missile defense system (ME). If Russia rejected such terms (GP) (unachieved goal), the authors argued that Washington should still reduce its arsenal to below 1000 accountable strategic offensive weapons (ME). The action might reduce U.S. leverage (downside) to secure Moscow’s acceptance to a revised ABM Treaty (ME) and to a U.S. national missile defense system (ME). However, if no agreement was reached, the U.S. could, nonetheless, withdraw from the ABM Treaty (ME), and deploy a low-end NMD system (ME) while carrying out nuclear reductions (ME). The U.S. proposal (ME) would demonstrate that it did not seek nuclear dominance over Russia (GP), possibly restoring its confidence to some extent (GP) and prevent some of its potential responses (GP). Today (CP), 1000 deliverable nuclear weapons would easily suffice (ME) “to devastate Russia or China or any other state” (GP). The U.S. would not need more than 1000 nuclear weapons – and might be able slash its arsenal even further – (ME) since Moscow would not be able to afford more (CP).

The experts were not concerned with Russia engaging in an arms race with the West (GP) (rejected downside), but with “aggravating its sense of inferiority, vulnerability, and resentment – a bad combination” (GP) (downside). If the U.S. were to deploy a missile defense system (ME) while

preserving an offensive force considerably larger than Russia's (ME), the country "could begin to feel more second-rate than ever" (GP). Even worse, Moscow might start questioning the credibility of their nuclear deterrent vis-à-vis America (GP). Russia's relations with the West might be hampered by U.S. actions (GP). Moreover, Moscow could respond by MIRV-ing its ICBMs (GP) or "by planning to launch its missiles on warning of attack" (GP) (downsides). Such downsides undermined what the authors deemed to be an important goal: reducing Russia's reliance on nuclear weapons (GP). The most sensible approach would be for the U.S. to preserve mutual nuclear deterrence (GP) at the lowest prudent level of strategic nuclear forces (ME). The best way to address Russia's envy and nervousness regarding America's missile defense system (GP) was not refraining from deploying missile defenses (ME) (rejected action), but to carry out deep cuts in the U.S. strategic nuclear arsenal (ME). The U.S. should also categorically exclude defense against Moscow's nuclear deterrent as a goal of its missile defense system (GP) (rejected goal).

The authors believed that an arms race with China would not emerge as a negative consequence of missile defense deployment (GP) if America carried out deep cuts in its strategic forces (ME). In any case, the U.S. would "be left no worse off;" it could live with vulnerability to Chinese nuclear retaliation (CP) (rejected premise for action). Other arms races around the world could emerge, however (GP) (downside). Still, by combining nuclear reductions (ME) with clarity that its nuclear weapons were not aimed at Russia and China (GP), America could form with the two states "a relationship in which neither nuclear threats nor a nuclear arms race would serve any purpose for either nation" (GP). By implementing deep cuts in its strategic nuclear arsenal (ME), America would contribute to reducing their importance in the world (GP), push back against criticism about U.S. missile defenses (GP), and strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime (GP).

Gompert and Arnhold were not concerned that the U.S. missile defense system would stimulate missile and WMD proliferation (GP) (downsides of action rejected). Proliferation had been taking place for over 30 years, despite the absence of missile defenses (CP). Besides, a defense shield would achieve the goal (ME) of dissuading states from threatening America (GP). Furthermore, deep cuts in America's strategic arsenal (ME) were more likely to slow proliferation than being exposed to missile threats (GP) (cuts would likely slow proliferation).

While missile defenses were "desirable (ME), feasible (ME), and affordable" (GP) (costs are an acceptable downside), they were not sufficient to deliver all the desired goals (ME). Thus, the U.S. should also ratify the CTBT (ME), reinforce the CTBT program (ME), consider eliminating the land-based leg of America's nuclear triad (ME), outlaw first use of WMD (ME), stop its transfers of proliferation sensitive BMD systems and technology to certain regions (ME), and continue to engage in arms control (ME). The new framework (GP), comprised by limited missile defenses (ME), deep cuts in strategic and offensive forces (ME) (ideally through arms control mechanisms [ME]), and efforts to reduce the utility of WMDs (GP) would be the right one for the U.S. and its European allies (ME). It would strengthen international security (GP). America should also double its cooperation with Moscow

in the Nunn-Lugar program (ME) to get the latter's "excess nuclear weapons and fissile material under lock and key" (GP).

In May 2001, Isaacson (2001), expressed his support for missile defenses, and boost-phase interceptors, specifically. The author wanted protection against North Korea (GP), the most concerning threat of the United States (CP). He believed that land-based midcourse interceptors were not the answer due to their questionable effectiveness (ME), whereas boost-phase interceptors could be deployed relatively quickly, were less technically complex, and the technology was straightforward (ME). Isaacson admitted that boost-phase interceptors could be countered, had limitations, and presented challenges, but described them as more manageable than those of the midcourse land-based option, even if the latter need not be abandoned entirely (ME). After all, for effective defense (GP), multiple, largely independent intercept opportunities in all phases of a missile's flight were necessary, making boost-phase interceptors insufficient to achieve that goal (ME).

Still, considering the threat, boost-phase interceptors were considered necessary by the authors in the short-term, and they had the advantage of being relatively affordable (ME). Furthermore, because the missile defense system that Isaacson advocated was practically useless against Russia or China, it would signal the two countries that it was not meant to counter them, and thus potentially preventing negative consequences of action (GP).

The ACA executive director Spurgeon Keeny expressed his views on the administration's proposed courses of action on several occasions (March to July and September 2001). The expert stressed Russia and China's opposition to U.S. national missile defense deployment (CP). U.S. NATO allies, Japan, and South Korea, as well as nearly all U.N. members, were seriously concerned about the consequences of a unilateral deployment of a missile defense system non-compliant with the ABM Treaty (CP). World opinion, and the majority in the Senate, opposed a withdrawal from the accord (CP). Bush's June trip to Europe had failed to obtain new support for missile defense and for the abandonment of the ABM (CP).

Despite initially showing lack of interest in amending the ABM Treaty, Russia clearly suggested the possibility of minor changes to the agreement following talks between Bush and Putin in that trip (ME) (feasibility), where the two leaders demonstrated "an unexpected degree of respect and cordiality (...) [CP] despite major differences on a range of issues" (CP). It would be difficult to convince China that the U.S. was spending hundreds of billions of dollars in missile defense to direct the system at North Korea (CP). He described missile defenses as ineffective (ME). He also explained that Russia's strategic nuclear forces "[were] the only threat that could destroy the United States" (CP).

Keeny noted that Bush had surrounded himself with people that saw arms control (ME) as going against U.S. interests (VP) by limiting development and deployment of weapons (GP) (rejects premises informing opposition to arms control). The administration, confident about America's considerable military superiority, was not interested in limiting the forces of potential adversaries (GP). Thus, the administration was not concerned by Putin's declaration that the end of the ABM would force Moscow

to withdraw from START I and II (CP). There was a cacophony of contradictory statements from U.S. officials about missile defense (GP/VP) (possible hidden or false premises; author questions what reasons truly informed the Administration's conclusion that missile defense ought to be pursued). National defense (GP) had become an irrational obsession (VP) (rejects VP underlying the goal).

America's mock "consultations" with allies and other interested parties were counterproductive because the U.S. message was that it would replace the ABM Treaty regardless of views (ME) (failure to achieve goal of receiving their support for missile defense). Bush sought merely a blank check to do whatever he wanted (GP) (covert goal of action). Meetings with Russia (ME) were simple attempts to persuade it that it had nothing to fear from America's missile defense plans (GP). Russian officials complained that Washington's emissaries and officials provided no additional information about the perceived threats, the ABM Treaty replacement, or the unilateral actions replacing the START process (CP). The President's inner circle was not initially aware "that there [was] nothing remotely close to deployment" (CP). The military was concerned (ME) (source of authority questions action) about the potential "black hole" for defense funds that missile defense could entail (GP) (downside).

The expert considered it important to bolster the non-proliferation regime (GP) and control the proliferation of WMD and their delivery systems worldwide (GP). That included eliminating the North Korean missile program (GP) and some Russian ICBMs (GP), as well as banning deployment of future Russian MIRV-ed ICBMs (GP). As the "leader of the free world" in WMD non-proliferation efforts, the U.S. should obtain (GP) the "genuine support of the world community" (VP). The country should also not disregard ally concerns (CP). Deploying a national missile defense would be a clear violation of the ABM Treaty (VP), although the president had the constitutional right to withdraw from it (VP). Keeney claimed that the U.S. was sacrificing a chance to eliminate North Korea's missile program (GP) by means of diplomacy – a course of action to achieve that could achieve that goal at little to no cost (ME). Keeney considered that to be the case because the administration pursued the covert goals of preserving the growing North Korean missile capacity (GP) to use it as a rationale for deploying a NMD system (ME). In doing so, the Executive was compromising national security (GP) even though it had "an obligation to pursue the negotiations" (VP).

The author believed that domestic political considerations were driving the decision to leave the ABM Treaty (GP) (covert goals). The President's "vague promises of unilateral reductions" were also a reflection of his goal of "[maintaining] maximum flexibility in structuring U.S. forces with no constraints on future deployments" (GP). For the Administration, that goal outweighed the elimination of Russia ICBMs (GP). Keeney also wanted "to reduce the leakage of materials and personnel from the Russian nuclear program" (GP), a goal being compromised by budget cuts on such programs (ME), despite the recommendation of an independent bipartisan commission to do the opposite (ME) (best course of action). Abandoning the ABM Treaty would also make other countries less likely to follow the U.S. when their interests were at stake (GP) (downside of action).

There was no precedent in the U.S. for a withdrawal from a formal, ratified, and deposited arms control accord (ME) (it is not the best policy). It was an irrational decision (ME) given the almost unanimous opposition from the world opinion and the Senate majority (CP). There was no reason to do it (ME) since there was nothing to deploy (CP). The author also rejected the view that pursuing arms control was not be best course of action because formal treaties took too long to negotiate. He explained that the president could use his influence with Senator Jesse Helms (chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee) to bring START II into force and START III negotiations could start immediately (ME). Abandoning arms control for unilateral reductions would not lead (ME) to verifiable reductions (GP), which would allow the U.S. to safeguard itself against rapid breakout changing the strategic balance” (GP) and, in turn, contributed to predictability and stability (GP).

The best course of action would be to focus solely on missile defense research and development (ME), permitted under the ABM Treaty (VP), and on diplomatic efforts (ME) to tackle the perceived missile threat (GP). The president should bring START II into force (ME), which should be possible (ME) (action will be feasible) in the new Senate (CP), and initiate START III talks (ME). The author also questioned the value of a missile defense system (ME). It would require abandoning the ABM Treaty (GP) and could potentially lead the U.S. to lose the START accords, which reduced and stabilized Moscow’s forces (GP) (downsides). In return for this, it was possible that maybe “the development and testing of undefined systems against uncertain future North Korean and Iranian threats” (ME) would be facilitated (GP). Instead, Keeny suggested that Bush took Putin up on his offer of “a joint cooperative effort” (ME) “to eliminate incipient threats before they [emerged]” (GP) (Keeny, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2001d, 2001e, 2001f, 2001g).

ACA’s new Executive Director Daryl Kimball reiterated many of his predecessor’s points (October 2001 to January 2002). He considered Bush’s November proposal of reducing U.S. strategic nuclear forces (GP). The expert believed that standing down a considerable number of strategic forces informally and immediately (ME) would make sense if the goal was merely to jump-start START negotiations (GP). Since that was not the case, and considering the drawn-out implementation period proposed by the president (GP) (downside), that time would be better spent in the pursuit of a formal agreement (ME) to make verifiable (GP) and irreversible cuts (GP), goals that unilateral action (ME) would fail to deliver and that the executive undermined. The President had rejected ideas drawn from the START III framework (ME) which ensured irreversible reductions (GP) by means of the verified (GP) dismantlement and destruction of nuclear warheads and their delivery vehicles (ME).

He criticized the goal of reducing the U.S. nuclear arsenal from 6000 to 1700-2000 deployed warheads (GP) over a period of 10-years (GP) (downside), since the cuts were barely below those defined in START III (GP) (limited goal). The president’s formula failed to address America’s increasing stockpile of (some 4500-5000) nondeployed “hedge” warheads (GP). In fact, the plan would simply move warheads from deployed to nondeployed status (ME), failing to reduce the overall size of the U.S. nuclear stockpile (GP). The non-deployed stockpile (ME) enabled the U.S. to quickly download

nuclear warheads onto delivery vehicles – reversing previous reductions – if a Russian nuclear build-up occurred (GP). These days (CP), however, the presence of such a hedge would disincentivize Russia from implementing the reductions it sought, especially absent U.S. missile defense constraints (GP) (downsides on goals). .

The president's proposal made nuclear stockpiles opaquer (GP) and perpetuated Cold War dangers (GP) (consequences on goals). Given the persistence of Cold War strategic thinking and long history of adversarial relations (CP), it was unlikely that an informal agreement would last (ME). Still, the expert acknowledged that the Bush plan might restart the arms reduction process (GP), including by removing a 1998 law forbidding U.S. reductions prior the entry into force of START II (ME). The establishment of clear limits on offensive and defensive systems (GP) would foster enduring stability and confidence between the two nations (GP). A solid foundation for cooperation (GP) rather than confrontation (GP) (downside) could be built if an agreement (ME) on major nuclear reductions (ME) and on missile defense research and development within the ABM Treaty framework was celebrated (ME).

The President faced pressure from within his Administration to withdraw from the ABM Treaty (CP) and not to implement his proposed fundamental changes to American nuclear force doctrine (CP). Small reductions of the U.S. nuclear target list (ME) or reassigning warheads from the active to the inactive reserve stockpile (ME) would have a minimal impact on Russia's concerns (GP) or change the current Cold War nuclear postures of both countries (GP). Instead, as a step toward moving beyond MAD (GP), as well as "eliminating [GP] the mutual suspicion generated by large nuclear arsenals" (CP), the president should direct the DOD "to drop mass-attack nuclear war options and disarming first-strike capabilities" (ME). Having done so (ME), Bush would be able to rapidly finalize an agreement with Russia (ME) resulting in mutual (GP) reductions to a total of 1,500 strategic nuclear warheads or less (GP).

Kimball also stressed that leaving the ABM Treaty was unnecessary (ME), given that many more years of treaty-compliant (VP) testing were needed (ME). And as the September 11 attacks had highlighted (CP), missile defenses [were] useless against cheaper and more available means of weapons delivery" (ME). Abandoning the ABM Treaty might also launch an arms race between China, India, and Pakistan (GP), hurt U.S. relations with China, Russia, and allies (GP), and undermine non-proliferation goals, which required their support to be achieved (GP) (consequences on goals) (Kimball, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2002c).

On 21 March 2001, a Congressionally mandated task force – the United States Commission on National Security/21st Century – spoke before the House Committee on Armed Services. The commission claimed that the U.S. should maintain strategic superiority in the nuclear realm (GP) and weigh the full spectrum of present and emerging threats (CP), not merely the U.S.-Russian balance (CP). Future arms control efforts should be pursued (ME) with the U.S. accounting for new Russian and Chinese nuclear capabilities (CP) ("U.S. National Security Strategy," 2001). In September 2001, Sokov

(2001b: 1-2, 5) posited that the recently signed Sino-Russian Friendship Treaty could reduce Moscow's flexibility in its policies toward America's missile defense project, by forcing the Kremlin to support Beijing's position. Russia had now less room for maneuver (CP). The two states perceived America to pose a threat to them, which could bring them closer together on other matters (CP).

Continued policy disagreements between Moscow and Washington could lead to further institutionalization of the Sino-Russian treaty (GP) that should instead be prevented (GP) (consequence on goals). Sokov posited that, to weaken relations between Russia and China (GP), and steer Russia back toward the West (GP), the United States should offer Moscow a deal on missile defense and nuclear arms reductions, on NATO expansion, or an economics package (ME). A deal on nuclear arms reductions and missile defense might still be possible (ME). However, to make that happen, the U.S. would have to accept compromises, namely in terms of commitment of resources or decisions (VP/GP), something that Sokov did not deem likely (ME), due to lack of support for them (CP).

Concerning China, deals on an economic relationship, concerning Taiwan, or on missile defense should also be considered (ME). Overall, offering incentives to Russia and China "might go [a] long way toward limiting Russia's interest in a close relationship with China" (ME). The United States should note, however, that the Sino-Russian agreement may have made a withdrawal from the ABM Treaty more costly (GP), making it a less desirable policy option (ME).

In March 2001, Hopf (2001: 1-3) expressed his views on missile defense. He believed that America's interest in deploying a defense shield was based on several premises for action that he denounced. He considered that the "relentless pursuit" of a NMD stemmed from "the place of the military-industrial complex in American political and social life" (CP), leading to a concealed goal of "continued production of arms and armies" (GP). The author also observed the "continued reproduction of the Cold War in popular culture and discourse" (VP), and a military that was "the physical embodiment of American superiority (VP), unilateralism (VP), and pretensions to universalist values" (VP). He denounced as a "malady" the "unilateral exercise of American power with only the lowest priority given to others' interests" (VP) and explained that the United States was on a quest for absolute security (GP), embarking on "a universalizing mission to remake the world after its own image" (VP). Only once all other states were like the United States (GP), Americans could finally feel secure (CP). Hopf rejected the abovementioned value and goal premises that he believed to exist in the context of action (CP), believing that they should not guide U.S. courses of action.

The expert also listed several consequences of missile defense deployments on several U.S. goals. Such a line of action, he denounced, "[threatened] to alarm allies (GP), and provoke putative enemies into a real, not illusory, arms race" (GP). Additionally, by acting unilaterally, U.S. authority was being eroded among other states, such as Russia, China, or NATO allies (GP). The U.S. was also provoking other powers, such as Russia and China to confront it (GP). Thus, Hopf argued that, as an alternative to unilateral action, and to achieve the goal of preserving America's dominance for far longer

(GP), the country should pursue “a long-term arrangement,” whereby it “[shared] hegemonic management of the globe with others, including Russia” (ME).

In February 2001, Mosher and Schwartz (2001) discussed missile defense, stressing that even though the debate had overlooked China, the United States ignored it at its own peril (CP). Beijing could become a much larger nuclear threat, lacking only, so far, the motivation for a large buildup (CP). While some analysts argued that such a buildup was inevitable (CP), a Pentagon report stated that China might accelerate the process if the United States deploys missile defenses (GP) (downside of action).

In January 2001, Hunter (2001a) noted that the last 50 years had been rich in foreign policy missteps by new presidents (CP). He stressed that many lower-tier positions would remain vacant for some time (CP), and that there would be a learning curve, as well as misconceptions to overcome, among the eventual hires (CP). On missile defense, there was a lack of agreement among republicans and democrats on the form that it should take, as well as ambivalence among parts of the military (CP).

Therefore, the author considered that the administration should “go slow” on missile defense, defending inaction as the preferred policy option at that moment in time (ME). To strengthen his point, he drew from a bipartisan panel of former and future government officials convened by RAND in 2000. According to the source, the president should “[p]romptly after inauguration (...) mandate a comprehensive review of all critical factors” (ME) instead of immediately going forward with deployment” (ME). The former course of action would prevent the potential “severe consequences across a wide range of concerns” that mismanagement of the issue could bring (VP/GP).

In February 2001, Hunter (2001b) emphasized that several European allies were concerned with a potential U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty (CP). Specifically, they feared that relations with Russia would be damaged, that they would either be left outside the antiballistic missile shield or face the costs of its inclusion, that the system would send the wrong signals to China, and that the U.S. would lose focus on the needs and concerns of its allies (CP). Thus, if Bush was “to continue the pace of fashioning European security for the 21st century” (GP) the administration should be sensitive to those concerns (CP) and work with the European allies (ME) before making an irrevocable decision (ME).

On 19 June 2001, Senator Helms called upon his colleagues to heed the expert advice of Dr. Constantine Menges who wrote, on 14 June 2001, a timely piece about the increasingly strong alliance between Russia and China. He requested that the article be printed in the Congressional Record. The essay stated that the Sino-Russian cooperation aimed at countering America worldwide (CP). Putin had agreed with China in that the U.S. sought unilateral security and military advantages and that it was necessary to establish a new economic and political order (CP). The Russian President had also accused Washington of economic and power domination (CP). Moscow accepted and repeated Beijing’s claims about the U.S. (CP), with their strategic alignment having been marked by a growing list of common anti-American goals in recent years (CP). Russia sold advanced weapons to China, which targeted the U.S., (CP) and Beijing hoped to draw Moscow in militarily in case of a military confrontation in the South China Sea (CP). Both states opposed U.S. missile defenses and sought to persuade U.S. allies to share

their position (CP) and were currently providing WMD to states hostile to the United States (CP). Closer ties with China reinforced Russia's authoritarian tendencies and the risk of the latter adopting a more belligerent approach in international affairs (CP).

The article stressed the need for preventing a military alliance between the two states (GP). Bush should convince Putin (ME) to assure America and the world that the 2001 Sino-Russian Treaty of Friendship excluded a military component¹⁰⁶ (GP). Failing to achieve that goal, the U.S. President should communicate (ME) that it viewed the treaty "as a China-Russia military alliance and a potentially grave threat" (CP). He recommended that the U.S. cut economic support to Russia considerably (ME) and expedited progress on missile defense (ME). It was still possible to revert Moscow and Beijing's tendencies toward increased confrontation (GP) and for the U.S. to adopt national policies to preserve deterrence (GP) and peaceful relations (GP) (CREC, 2001: S6445).

In August 2001, Hunter (2001c) wrote that he perceived Putin's implicit acceptance of America's plans to deploy missile defense. He explained that after the July 2001 G-8 Genoa summit, Putin "[ceded] leadership in questioning the U.S. antimissile program to the allies, the Chinese and members of Congress" (GP) (no downsides vis-à-vis Russia). This was due to the understanding that America's defense shield was "a long way off," and would probably never threaten Russia's strategic stability anyway (GP) (no downside). Therefore, in exchange for moving forward on missile defense, the United States should pay Putin's price for his acceptance: "support for Russia's still-flagging economy" (ME). To the author, this was not a bad deal, because helping the Russian economy to succeed was a goal of the United States anyway (GP). In his words, "[w]hat would remain is for the U.S. to decide whether it really wants national missile defenses and at what cost in money [GP] and relations with countries besides Russia [GP]," which remained as potential negative consequences of action.

In the fall of 2001, Levine (2001: 23, 30, 31) acknowledged the existence of irrational opponents of the United States: "terrorist groups, perhaps some of the rogue states [CP], and possibly potential controllers of the warheads now controlled by Moscow" (CP) and Beijing (CP). He also noted that rogue states might not need missiles (CP) and stressed that it was unknown how likely those risks were (CP). In making the decision to deploy an ABM system, Levine alerted against deciding based on "nostalgia for the simpler times of the Cold War" (VP), and on a wish to bring to life Reagan's missile defense vision (VP).

Overall, Levine argued that an ABM system could not protect Americans from all potential threats (GP); it would be insufficient in that regard (ME). When it came to damage limitation (GP), for

¹⁰⁶ According to Article 9 of the 16 July 2001 Sino-Russian Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation, "[w]hen a situation arises in which one of the contracting parties deems that peace is being threatened and undermined or its security interests are involved or when it is confronted with the threat of aggression, the contracting parties shall immediately hold contacts and consultations in order to eliminate such threats." The article appears to fall under the author's concerns over military cooperation. Article 6 of the treaty states, nonetheless, that "[t]he military and military technology cooperation of the contracting parties carried out in accordance with the relevant agreements are not directed at third countries" ("Treaty of Good-Neighborliness," 2001).

instance, “in case of loss of central control of Russian or (...) Chinese missiles”, or “irrational missile threats or attacks by leaders of rogue nations,” missile defense brought some distinct advantages (ME). It was not clear how likely those threats were, however (CP). As for damage limitation in the event of a nuclear exchange with Russia (GP), missile defense would bring debatable advantages (ME). The same could be said (ME) about the goal of delaying China’s achievement of a minimum deterrent vis-à-vis the U.S. (GP). However, it was unclear whether that was a desirable goal (GP).

A missile defense system could not achieve the following goals (ME): “[detering] irrationality by irresponsible groups that have gained control of Russian or Chinese missiles, or by rogue nations or terrorists” (GP); protecting against WMDs delivered by means other than missiles (GP); and protecting against non-state terrorist attacks (GP).

Levine was also unsure if America’s ABM system (ME) would even work (GP) (questions whether the system would deliver its intended goals). The author conceded that deterrence was irrelevant against terrorists, since the United States would not know who to threaten or punish, and that the threat of mass destruction was inconceivable against uncertain terrorists. Thus, ongoing courses of action were also insufficient considering the threats he perceived (ME). Sanctions based on suspicion might be effective, however (ME).

The author also noted several downsides of missile defense: its high costs (GP), the deterioration of relations between the United States and Russia and China (GP), the sparking of a new arms race (GP), and the deterioration of ally relations (GP). Overall, the author considered that the decision on missile defense was not straightforward, but that the downsides outweighed the benefits (in terms of goals delivered) (ME).

A compendium of papers dated December 2001 on “Russia’s uncertain economic future” was submitted to the Joint Economic Committee¹⁰⁷ by the CRS. The articles conveyed dominant viewpoints present in professional circles both in the United States and internationally. John Hart’s (of the CRS) overview of the compendium advised U.S. policymakers not only to acknowledge the multiple possible outcomes for Russia’s economic future (CP), but also their varying impacts on U.S. interests (CP). Successful reforms could reduce the threats to American security if they result in reduced defense expenditures, smaller weapons arsenals, decreased arms exports, and non-proliferation of WMD (CP). On the other hand, the growth of the Russian economy might enable the reestablishment of the country’s military forces in a way that might threaten American security (CP). Similarly, two potential outcomes were proposed in case Russia’s market reform was successful. While such a scenario could result in stable and lucrative commercial ties between the two states (CP), Russia might also become a more

¹⁰⁷ This bicameral committee was composed of several members who also integrated relevant committees, namely: Senator Jack Reed (D-X, Armed Services and Appropriations), Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA, Armed Services), Senator Paul Sarbanes (D-MD, Foreign Relations), Senator Robert Torricelli (D-NJ, Foreign Relations), Robert Bennett (R-UT, Appropriations [Water and Energy Subcommittee]), Sam Brownback (R-KS, Foreign Relations), Jeff Sessions (R-AL, Armed Services), Lincoln Chafee (R-RI, Foreign Relations), Representative Jim Saxton (R-NJ), and Representative Carolyn. Maloney (D-NY, Armed Services).

formidable competitor in the global market and an increased threat to American national security interests (CP) (S. PRT. 107–50, 2001: xix).

2. Juxtaposition of reasons for action

With respect to the ABM Treaty, missile defense, and unilateral reductions of nuclear forces debate of the Bush Administration, we start by juxtaposing the circumstantial premises of the securitizing actors (the Administration) with the circumstantial premises of the audience (Congress and experts).

The securitizing actors often highlighted the idea that the world had changed. The Cold War was over and a new, different, unpredictable, and dangerous world had been brought upon. Of particular concern was the threat posed by WMDs and the missiles which could deliver them. Such threats risked being proliferated to or developed by terrorists and rogue states, adversaries described seen as less rational, less responsible, less predictable, willing to use force, and gripped by hate of the United States, its values, and its allies. States such as Iraq, North Korea, and Iran might target the U.S., its deployed troops, allies, and friend with missiles armed with WMDs, including nuclear weapons. The Bush Administration argued that the U.S.S.R. was gone and Russia was not an enemy of the United States. The two states were no longer held hostages by each other's nuclear arsenals, and there was no reason why they would fight a nuclear war. Their relationship was not the same as it had been during the Cold War; it was possible to cooperate and establish new bonds. In essence, Washington was not concerned about a Russian land-invasion of Europe or a strategic nuclear attack from Moscow. From a security standpoint, U.S.-Russian relations were not an issue. The context of action was seen as conducive for carrying out nuclear force reductions. Due to Russia's significant financial difficulties, the country wanted to reduce its nuclear force levels and would struggle to engage in a nuclear arms competition. The new U.S.-Russia relationship enabled the nuclear reductions proposed (ME).

Still, the 2001 NPR stated that Moscow's nuclear programs and forces remained a concern. The document also warned that Russia's future was uncertain, and that U.S. planning needed to reflect that. Rumsfeld admitted that shedding the "Cold War" baggage would be difficult in the U.S. and Russia, and time was necessary in that regard. There was a group of people in both sides who worked "within a (...) Cold War construct" for 50 years. Suspicion persisted, even if misplaced at times, and changing certain aspects of the relationship could not be accomplished easily or suddenly (GP) after decades of mutual hostility. There were people still trapped in a "Cold War" mentality, a mindset that should not inform action.

The Administration's depiction of the missile threat was embraced by the lawmakers in the GOP. The democrats downplayed the threat posed by WMD-equipped missiles, believing that the delivery of WMDs by other means would be more realistic due to it being cheaper and more effective.

The experts were divided on the existence or the gravity of the rogue state and terrorist missile threat perceived by the Administration. Threat perceptions in the policy community ranged from uncertain and minimal to a significant concern. There were those who deemed that the lack of certainty regarding the existence of the threat or the fact that it was very small did not mean that it was not serious enough to justify the deployment of a missile defense system, while others disagreed, opposing the course of action.

The GOP agreed with the Administration in that the Cold War was over, that U.S.-Russian relations had improved, and that Moscow was not an adversary. For the most part, those views were either acknowledged or not strongly contested by the Democrats and the policy community, but some viewed the bilateral relationship at the time with some concern, describing it as tenuous, vulnerable to misperceptions and misinterpretations, or marked by a history of rivalry.

Thus, while circumstantial premises expressing less positive views of Russia were vastly outnumbered by the more favorable ones, they were nonetheless present in part of the audience and among the securitizing actors. There were a few bipartisan and expert concerns with a potential accidental or unintentional missile launch from Russia, a threat also identified in the QDR. However, it was a low-profile issue, in general, and the Administration admitted that it had a lower normative priority than the other missile threats. The optimism shared by the White House and the Republican legislators regarding ally support for U.S. missile defense plans was questioned by the Democrats and the expert community.-

The securitizing actors also used several value-based reasons for action. Missile defense was justified given the government's obligation or commitment to defend the American people, as well as U.S. troops, allies, and friends. Missile defense was described as beneficial to all mankind, and as promoting a more peaceful and safer world. A concern with allies' opinions was also a prominent feature of securitizing actors' discourse. The Administration's planned missile defense activities (ME) disregarded ABM Treaty constraints although the country was committed to abide by it while it remained in place. The existence of a provision within the ABM Treaty that enabled a party to withdraw from the accord if it chose to do so was also highlighted by the executive branch.

The Republicans highlighted the legal obligations enshrined in the 1999 Missile Defense Act in lieu of those codified in the ABM Treaty. In fact, they questioned whether the U.S. was bound by the latter, which had been celebrated with a country which no longer existed. Support for missile defense activities was also grounded in a value premise also voiced by the securitizing actors: that the executive had the obligation to defend its citizens.

The new relationship between the U.S. and Russia ought to be reassuring and marked by values such as trust, confidence, openness, and cooperation – not the logic of MAD (GP)¹⁰⁸. Such examples of

¹⁰⁸ When referencing a reason for action belonging to a different category as the ones we are juxtaposing, we will identify the former accordingly, as demonstrated. This will be done at times to demonstrate certain relations

value premises , which “occur within a broadly shared framework of moral and political values” (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012: 11), were commonly identified in the discourse of Republican legislators but less so in the Democratic Party. The Democrats focused instead on America’s legal commitments to the ABM Treaty, and on the consulting role that Congress should play on matters pertaining to activities which would conflict with the accord. The Democratic Party leadership acknowledged that an NDAA requiring the President to obtain Congressional approval for such activities would likely be vetoed by him. After the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, Congressional unity (i.e., bipartisanship) in the new context of action emerged in the Democrats’ discourse in connection with the party’s general agreement to support the 2002 NDAA, despite it potentially funding ABM Treaty-infringing activities (ME) without Congressional oversight. Levin believed that the latter value premise comfortably outweighed those associated with the Republican’s argument that Congress should not restrict the President’s ability to act (GP) in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks (CP).

Moving on to goal premises, we find that the administration wanted to deny WMD-equipped missiles, including in their boost phase. However, defense against a large-scale attack, which Russia and China could launch, was not a goal of action. By denying missiles, the Administration aimed to protect its citizens, including its troops deployed abroad, and to defend and reassure allies and friends. It also sought to strengthen deterrence and prevent proliferation and threatening operations and programs. The White House also wanted to guarantee America’s freedom to act during a crisis.

The U.S. wanted to establish a new strategic framework, being willing to discuss and consult with allies, Russia, and others (ME). This new framework encompassed missile defenses (ME), nuclear reductions (ME), counterproliferation (ME), non-proliferation (ME), arms control (ME), and diplomacy (ME). The combination of those elements formed a new concept of deterrence, which allowed the U.S. to live in a world marked by WMD and missile proliferation (CP). The fact that Russia was no longer an enemy (CP) enabled the U.S. to make changes in nuclear deterrence policy (ME) in pursuit of that new framework.

The Administration also put forward several goals concerning U.S.-Russian relations. It wanted to help Moscow overcome several of its internal problems and change the nature of the relationship between the two countries. It aimed to reduce and demystify Russian suspicions of the United States via transparency, verification, monitoring (ME), interchanges (ME) and consultations (ME). The Administration also sought lower U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons levels. However, the goal of mutual, parallel nuclear reductions with Moscow was outweighed by other premises informing the U.S. decision to carry out nuclear reductions, such as the country’s pursuit of a new strategic framework. As

between different category of premises, which is important to understand how political actors arrive at a decision on how to act.

explained by the Administration, America would carry out those reductions (ME) with or without Russia.

Potential consequences on U.S. goals vis-à-vis allies, Russia, or China, stemming from the abrogation of the ABM Treaty and missile defense deployments, were either downplayed or not envisioned. When it came to Russia, Myers, Powell, and Rumsfeld were unconcerned with the possibility of MIRV-ing taking place as a response to U.S. actions (CP). They argued that the total number of nuclear weapons was what mattered; not whether a country was MIRV-ing. A Russian decision to MIRV would be driven by cost-saving and force structure management considerations (CP). An arms race between Moscow and Washington was not likely to occur given that the former was facing economic constraints (CP), was not an adversary (CP), and both parties were reducing their levels of nuclear weapons (CP), having expressed intentions of continuing to do so (ME). Furthermore, U.S. missile defenses were not a threat to Russia, and thus not an incentive for MIRV-ing or a nuclear arms buildup. Concerns over an arms race were informed by “Cold War” thinking (CP). Moscow’s possible reactions to the end of the ABM Treaty and to missile defense deployments would not entail serious downsides on U.S. goals considering the warmer bilateral relationship (CP) and America’s aim of improving it further, including via nuclear reductions (ME). As for nuclear force reductions, enough warheads would be maintained not to jeopardize U.S. national security. In the same token, the New Triad, which combined offensive forces with defenses and a revitalized defense infrastructure, would reduce the risk of reducing U.S. deployed strategic nuclear forces. If a new relationship that encompassed moving beyond the ABM Treaty could not be established with Russia, the U.S. would withdraw from it (ME) (action outweighs goal) and then continue talks with Moscow (ME) on building the novel, broader, strategic framework for cooperation.

Congress also sought to protect America, allies, and friends from WMDs. However, Republicans wanted to deny missiles, and address America’s vulnerability to them. The Democrats, on the other hand, sought to address the range of WMD threats they perceived. WMD-equipped missiles were not perceived to be a very realistic threat (CP), so the party wanted to focus on non-proliferation goals in association with more likely WMD threats. The Administration’s goal of preserving America’s ability to intervene military abroad found bipartisan support.

When it came to potential consequences of action on goals, the Republicans and the Democrats held very different views. The Democrats listed several consequences of action associated with the ABM Treaty (ME) and missile defense deployments (ME). Several Democratic lawmakers believed that abandoning the ABM Treaty (ME) and deploying missile defenses (ME) would lead to an arms race with Russia and China, with India and Pakistan possibly in the mix. Many were also concerned with missile defense draining funds and diverting attention away from activities that addressed the more likely threats, or other needs. Other downsides were also highlighted. By leaving the ABM Treaty to deploy missile defenses, the U.S. risked straining relations with Russia, hindering arms control efforts, disincentivizing Moscow and Beijing from carrying out nuclear reductions, and negatively affecting

strategic stability. The importance of assuring America's victory in the war against terrorism led the Democratic leadership to support a Senate NDAA that pursued the goal, despite it risking U.S. infringement of the ABM Treaty (VP) and the downsides on goals listed above.

Some experts denoted interest in the goal of denying missiles, but most focused on the potential downsides of abrogating the ABM Treaty and deploying missile defenses. Their main concerns were the prospect of an arms race with Russia and China, but other potential downsides were raised. America's missile defense pursuits risked confrontation with Moscow, "Russian misperception, mistrust, and missteps," the deterioration of the strategic balance, and increased chance of accidental launches."

Contrary to the Democrats and various experts, the Republicans dismissed the possibility of downsides of action emerging vis-à-vis Russia. Sessions acknowledged that "a threat from Russia" could emerge as result of abrogating the ABM Treaty (ME) and deploying missile defenses (ME) but stated that the goal of denying missiles outweighed that potential outcome. Weldon stressed that U.S. missile defenses would not threaten Russia and were meant to be shared with it. Warner and Cochran did not envision the occurrence of an arms race due to U.S. missile defense plans (ME). The U.S. had preceded the withdrawal announcement with talks with Russia (ME) aimed at reaching a series of understandings with the country (GP) "that would enable the United States to perform testing of new options and other steps [ME] leading to the eventual deployment of a ballistic missile defense system" (ME). Such consultations would continue (ME), and the two countries had made a commitment to reduce their nuclear forces (ME). Russia understood that there would be no reason to engage in a strategic offensive arms buildup (CP). As Cochran argued, how could there be an arms race (GP) (no downside) if Moscow had no one to race with? (CP). Warner claimed that Russia accepted the U.S. decision to leave the ABM Treaty (CP) and that the two countries believed (CP) that the bilateral relation would continue to improve (GP).

The Republicans opposed demanding Congressional approval for missile defense activities liable to violate the ABM Treaty (VP) on the grounds that the legislative branch would be tying the President's hands at an inadvisable time: in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks (CP).

Regarding means-end premises, the administration called for the end of the ABM Treaty, because preserving it would mean continuing to rely on "Cold War nuclear deterrence," which could not fully address contemporary threats (GP), and maintain stability (GP). Considering the recent changes in the strategic environment (CP), the treaty was outdated and irrelevant.

Moving on from the ABM Treaty (ME) was necessary because U.S. needed comprehensive missile defense development, testing, and evaluation programs (GP), which required it to be free from the constraints of the agreement (GP). Slowing proliferation was also an insufficient course of action since resolute players would still be able to acquire missiles and WMDs (GP) (unachieved goal). Increasing force structure in contingencies involving WMD-armed adversaries should also be discarded as an alternative, because American and allied forces would incur high risks, regardless of their size

(i.e., the U.S. would remain deterred) (GP) (downside). With missile defenses, America would be able to deny the threat and use of WMDs (GP). Missile defense was not expected to be sufficient on its own, but would contribute to several U.S. goals once integrated with other means (defensive and offensive). The system would not replace nuclear deterrence but strengthen it. On whether missile defense was feasible, the securitizing actors acknowledged some challenges, but mostly expressed optimism. Preserving the ABM Treaty would hinder U.S. efforts to build a better relationship with Russia (GP) (downside). The reductions, coupled with cooperation at the economic, military, and political levels, could become the foundation of the U.S.-Russian strategic relationship (GP).

Engaging in unending arms control talks with Russia to move beyond the ABM Treaty (GP) and make nuclear force reductions (GP) was deemed unnecessary. Given the trusting and cooperative nature of the new U.S.-Russian relationship (CP) and the absence of Cold War tensions (CP), arms control was not required to achieve those goals. Mutual reductions (GP) could be conducted unilaterally by each party, which allowed for flexibility (GP) that arms control did not. America would reduce its nuclear force levels to the lowest possible level (GP) regardless of what Russia did (GP) (dismissed downside).

After the U.S. withdrawal announcement, Rumsfeld noted that, rather than causing problems (GP) (no downside), the decision had allowed the two states to look focus on the future without being anchored in Cold War legacies (GP), since Russia's response had been to reduce its nuclear forces – not launching an arms competition (CP).

Despite preferring unilateral action, the Administration was open to a formal agreement. Some START I and START II provisions could be formalized within the new framework (GP), since they provided confidence (GP) and transparency (GP) as nuclear reductions took place. The U.S. did not reject reaching a deal with Russia that connected defensive and offensive capabilities. However, negotiations pertaining to the two elements took place independently and they were not strongly connected. It was unclear how the two issues could feature together in a deal with Russia or what form it would assume. The U.S. would not delay progress on missile defense on the pace of negotiations with Moscow. U.S. quantitative considerations pertaining to nuclear reductions would not necessarily be linked in some form of negotiation also addressing missile defense, and the defensive element had modest impact on offensive weapons levels. There was a numerical discrepancy between the two: the U.S. would reduce offensive nuclear arms in the hundreds but build up defensive systems only in the "handfuls."

The DOD and the DOS believed that maintaining current nuclear weapons levels was unnecessary; the U.S. possessed too many (CP). The NPR stated that the reductions were critical to abandon the logic of MAD in relations with Russia (GP) and improve bilateral relations (GP). Confronted with Moscow's insistence on formal arms control negotiations (CP), the course of action was not rejected. In moving to a new framework (GP), the U.S. was open to formalize certain features, such as those relating to the START process. Washington remained interest in preserving START I and

START II provisions, particularly those relating to verification (GP), which would provide confidence (GP) and transparency (GP).

The democrats doubted whether leaving the ABM Treaty and deploying missile defenses would be sufficient and necessary considering the Administration's goals.. Thus, they made different policy recommendations. Several Democrats insisted that the treaty remained relevant and should be preserved, especially since there had been no successful missile defense tests to date. In the Senate, some legislators proposed amending the ABM Treaty, and while there was some openness to eventually leaving it, that option was rejected at the time.

The Democrats also questioned whether missile defense would work. They believed that the technology was not ready for deployment (CP), and thus would not achieve its intended goals.. There was some interest in obtaining such a system, however, despite the goal of denying missiles not featuring highly among the democrats' priorities (GP). More concerned with non-proliferation threats (CP) and different WMD threats (CP), the Democrats called for courses of action aimed at tackling them. Support was found on both sides of the aisle for unilateral nuclear reductions, although Kerry emphasized the importance of continuing to pursue arms control agreements.

The Republicans, in line with the Administration, saw the ABM Treaty as outdated, and an obstacle to the achievement of goals they believed missile defense would deliver. Given the perceived missile threats (CP), America could not afford to wait. Support was also voiced for unilateral nuclear reductions (ME) which, according with some GOP legislators, would preclude an arms race with Russia (GP).

Expert opinion was divided between support and opposition to missile defense deployment and to the U.S. abrogation of the ABM Treaty. Most specialists, regardless of their stance, advised that complementary actions be performed or different courses of action implemented, so as to minimize or avoid potential downsides vis-à-vis Russia. Overall, there was expert support for unilateral reductions, but a formal agreement with Russia was favored.

The Moscow Treaty: a vehicle for a capability-based approach to U.S. nuclear force requirements (Discourses of section 4.2 of Chapter 4)

1. Political Discourse Analysis

1.1. Securitizing actor discourse

On 20 June 2002, Bush requested the U.S. Senate the ratification of the SORT, also known as the Moscow Treaty (ME). He explained that both American and Russian nuclear arsenals were far larger than necessary (ME), despite the two countries' more cooperative relationship (CP). Russia and the United States were partners in the fight against terrorism, and in resolving regional conflicts (CP). Economic and cultural ties and exchanges between the two countries were also increasing (CP). The U.S. military now sized, planned, and sustained its forces (ME) in the recognition that Russia was not an enemy, but a friend (CP). There were well-established and expanding military-to-military and intelligence exchanges (ME).

The President remembered his audience that on 1 May 2001, he had called for a new strategic relationship with Russia (GP), which included further nuclear reductions (ME) and stemmed from the understanding that the Cold War had ended (CP). He then announced reductions (ME), to a level of 1700 and 2200, in deployed strategic nuclear warheads, to be implemented over the ensuing decade (GP). The levels sufficed to maintain U.S. security (GP) (not a downside). While the U.S. was prepared to make the reductions unilaterally (ME), Bush recognized that it would be preferable that reductions were reciprocal (GP). President Putin shared that view (CP), which led the two leaders to agree to record the reductions (GP) on a document (ME) that was legally binding (GP) (VP) (delivering the value premise is a goal of action) and would outlast their presidencies (GP). The document in question was the SORT (ME), which would take the two countries along a stable (GP), predictable (GP) path to substantial reductions in deployed strategic nuclear warhead arsenals by December 31, 2012" (GP). The completion of those reductions would put both states "at the lowest level of deployed strategic nuclear warheads in decades" (GP).

Traditional arms control efforts (ME) were considered as an alternative course of action but were rejected due to their inability to finalize agreements, which had led to the long impasse in further

reductions(GP) (downside). The SORT (ME) had broken through that impasse (GP). Besides, it was no longer necessary, in the words of the president, “to narrowly regulate every step we each take [GP], as did Cold War treaties [ME] founded on mutual suspicion and an adversarial relationship” (CP) (not a part of the current context of action). That level of the regulation was not a goal of action (GP) given the current U.S.-Russian relationship (CP).

The agreement “[was] clearly in the best interests of the United States [VP] and [represented] an important contribution to U.S. national security [GP] and strategic stability” (GP). The SORT (ME) would be beneficial to not only to Americans (GP) and Russians, but to the world at large (GP) (VP) (delivers a future state of affairs in which values are realized). The treaty (ME) would be an important element of the new relationship that was being built between America and Russia (GP), despite not being “neither the primary basis (...) not its main component” (ME). Meaning that other actions would be carried out to further build the new U.S.-Russian relationship (ME). The START verification regime would be used by both parties to deliver the goals (ME) of assuring transparency (GP), confidence (GP), and predictability (GP) (CRECB, 2002: 10985).

On 9 July 2002, Colin Powell expressed his support for the SORT (ME), a simple (ME) and flexible treaty (GP). He considered that the accord marked a new (CP) era and a new strategic relationship for the two states (CP). Moscow was emerging as a partner to the U.S. on many issues, with the two countries increasingly sharing interests and values (CP). Moscow was anxious to be a U.S. partner (CP). Still, some differences between the two states, and Russia was struggling to transition to a democratic market economy (CP). Thus, U.S.-Russian relations were still not at the level of nuclear-armed Britain and France (CP). Moscow had accepted the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty (CP). Despite his disagreement with the decision, President Putin claimed that Russia did not feel threatened by it (CP) and sought to develop a new strategic framework with America nonetheless (CP).

The Administration arrived at the number it would reduce its deployed nuclear weapons to (GP) on the basis of what it deemed necessary in the contemporary world (CP), in which Russia was not an enemy (CP). It arrived at said number without consulting with Russia (ME) but proposed that it matched the U.S. reductions (GP). Washington had told Moscow it would move toward that goal no matter what (GP), regardless of whether Russia decided to keep more or less deployed nuclear warheads (CP) or MIRV its missiles (CP). The Russians agreed to reduce to the levels the U.S. had proposed (GP) but felt strongly that if the two countries were establishing a new relationship (GP), then it should outlast the current Presidents (GP). Moscow proposed that the two countries signed a binding (GP) (VP) agreement (ME) that, in being ratified by their respective legislative bodies, would give confidence to the American and Russian “people that these are the acts not just of two presidents, but of two countries, two governments” (VP). The treaty, according to Russia, ought to be binding in terms of international law (VP). President Bush considered the Russian’s proposal, and agreed with it (ME), in his desire to have this kind of strong partnership with the Russian Federation and with President Putin” (GP).

Both countries' nuclear weapons arsenal far exceeded what was necessary (ME) to address the dangers of the present strategic environment (GP). Russia's tactical nuclear weapons remained an issue (CP), but the treaty was not intended to address it (ME). There were uncertainties when it came to Russian tactical nuclear weapons (CP), which were of particular interest to Secretary Rumsfeld, seeing as, unlike Washinton, Moscow had yet to comply with the reductions both parties had agreed to do unilateral in that category of weapons (CP). They were "quite a few in various states of repair, disrepair, needed maintenance, and operational" (CP) and posed more of a proliferation problem than strategic nuclear weapons (CP). The treaty did not restrict Russia's ability to MIRV (GP) (not a goal) because neither country had the incentive to attack the other with nuclear weapons (CP), meaning that the bilateral strategic relationship would not be destabilized by the deployment of Russian MIRV-ed ICBMs (GP) (not a downside). While the SORT did not eliminate specific warheads (GP), neither did previous agreements such as the INF, START I, or START II (ME) (lack of precedent). The matter was extremely complex and, therefore, no attempt was made at solving it, seeing as even previous, more intense arms control negotiations had failed in that regard (ME). Powell believed that the U.S. and Russia would continue to eliminate warheads nonetheless (GP). The goal would be delivered by economic reasons (GP), obsolescence (CP), the new U.S.-Russia strategic relationship (CP), lack of incentives on either side to keep unneeded warheads, (ME), and the overall cuts mandated by the accord (ME). Powell also addressed the fact that the warhead limit imposed by the treaty would take effect and expire on the same date: 31 December 2012. On that day, both sides could choose to go back to pre-treaty numbers of deployed strategic forces (GP) (downside). However, both parties might want to extend it beyond that date in the future (ME) (future action can prevent downside).

The international system was no longer bipolar, but more unpredictable and fluid (CP). The U.S. could not confidently predict "what nation; combination of nations, or non-state actors may pose a threat to [U.S.] vital national interests [VP] or those of (...) friends and allies [VP] in the years to come" (CP). The country also could not anticipate the WMD capabilities and delivery systems such enemies would be armed with (CP). Russia was no longer America's sole concern (CP). Given such uncertainties (CP) and the U.S. inability to manufacture new nuclear warheads (CP), the country required "the flexibility [GP] to retain warheads removed from operational deployment [ME] to meet unforeseen future contingencies [GP] and possible technical problems with the stockpile" (GP). which The SORT granted both parties the flexibility (GP) to determine the composition and structure of their strategic forces (ME), and how reductions would be made (ME). Thus, the U.S. would have the freedom to decide "how best to respond to future security challenges" (GP).

Essentially, the treaty would codify reductions to both states' strategic nuclear arsenals by the end of 2012 (about 2/3 of present levels) (GP), in a flexible (GP) and legally binding manner (GP) (VP), transitioning the two countries "from strategic rivalry [CP] to a genuine strategic partnership" (GP). The Treaty's preamble (ME), in tandem with a broader statement on the new bilateral relation (ME) helped

define a “normal relationship” between partners by denoting that it was based on mutual security (GP), predictability (GP), openness (GP), cooperation (GP), and trust (GP). The accord’s (ME) simplicity (GP) (limited goals) reflected the current state of U.S.-Russian relations (CP) and had the upside of being produced quickly (GP). A verifiable treaty (GP) “under the old Cold War paradigm” (CP) was not relevant or necessary (ME) because the two countries no longer considered the other to be a strategic threat (CP). Moreover, the START verification regime (ME) was still in effect (CP) and would continue to provide knowledge about “the disposition of Russia’s strategic nuclear warheads and the overall status of reduction in Russia’s strategic forces” (GP). It would provide (ME) confidence (GP), predictability (GP), and transparency (GP). Moreover, a Bilateral Implementation Committee would be created (ME) so that Americans and Russians could debate whether more transparency would be necessary (GP) (Powell, 2002a, 2002b).

Donald Rumsfeld urged the ratification of the Moscow Treaty by the U.S. Senate on 25 July 2002. The Secretary perceived a transformation in U.S.-Russian relations over the past year (CP), and acknowledged their joint efforts to fight terrorism (CP), and to lower the number of deployed offensive nuclear weapons (GP). The relations between the two states were no longer based on fear of mutual destruction (CP) – Russia was now a friendly power (CP). The U.S. and Russia were increasing their cooperation in many spheres (political, economic, security, non-proliferation, and others) (CP). The future security environment was uncertain (CP). The threats posed by terrorism and nuclear proliferation entailed small margins for error; the cost could be thousands of lives (CP).

Rumsfeld was concerned with Russia’s tactical nuclear weapons, an issue raised repeatedly in meetings with Russia. However, his worry did not stem from the fact that Russia had “multiples more” of those weapons than the U.S., given the different circumstances of the two states. Instead, he was preoccupied with the weapons’ security (CP). The U.S. lacked visibility on the matter (CP), but the secretary expected Russia to become more transparent (GP) as bilateral relations evolved (GP).

The U.S. and Russia were dramatically reducing their ready nuclear weapons (GP) and establishing a new relationship (GP), no longer set back by “past hostility” (CP) or hindered by “Cold War ways of thinking” (CP). The U.S. wanted to transform its nuclear deterrence from one centered in deterring the U.S.S.R. to one aimed at deterring new opponents that might not be discouraged by the threat of nuclear retaliation (GP). The U.S. aimed to retain flexibility (GP). Washington wanted “to better contribute to peace and stability” (VP), foster openness (GP), “and address (...) new threats and challenges” (GP). The treaty allowed the two countries to move directly towards the abovementioned goals (ME). The preservation of a balance of terror with Moscow was no longer a U.S. goal (GP).

According to Rumsfeld, the Moscow Treaty was the best policy choice available (ME), since it avoided “lengthy, adversarial negotiations,” in which both parties kept unnecessary weapons as bargaining chips (GP) (downsides of traditional arms control). At the same time, the treaty (ME) preserved the benefits of arms control, namely the consultations (GP), lower force levels (GP), stability (GP), predictability (GP), and dialogue (ME).

Rumsfeld rejected criticism based on the SORT's lack of detailed verification measures (ME). He stated that "[t]here simply isn't any way on Earth to verify what Russia is doing with all of those warheads" (GP) (goal is not feasible). Also, neither party "should have an interest in evading the terms of the treaty" (CP).

Rumsfeld also rejected the inclusion of warhead destruction requirements (GP) on the treaty as necessary (ME), since irreversible nuclear weapons reductions did not exist. Since the knowledge on how to build nuclear weapons could not possibly be lost (CP), every reduction was reversible (CP). The Secretary also justified the decision to keep some nuclear warheads (ME) rather than destroying them (ME), since they might be needed in case of safety or reliability issues with the U.S. arsenal (GP). The U.S., unlike Russia, did not produce nuclear weapons (CP). Deeper reductions (below 1700-2200) were rejected (GP) because maintaining that level would contribute (ME) to dissuade the emergence of near-peer competitors by highlighting "the futility of trying to sprint toward parity with the [U.S.] or, indeed, superiority" (GP). The U.S. nuclear arsenal also allowed the U.S. (ME) to assure friends and allies (GP) and prevent them from developing their own nuclear weapons (GP).

The reductions envisioned in the agreement would also be accompanied by investments in several "transformational capabilities" (e.g., missile defense, conventional strike capabilities, etc.) (ME), which would reduce America's reliance on nuclear weapons (GP) and allow the country to enact the deep reductions contained in the SORT (GP). Regarding the lack of a reduction schedule (GP), the goal was not pursued in order not to compromise another: flexibility (GP). In the absence of an agreement, the U.S. would have resorted to unilateral cuts (ME) to achieve the desired reductions (GP) (acceptable alternative action) (S. HRG. 107-806, 2002: 7-12, 15-16, 44).

During a 14 February 2002 Congressional hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith denied irreversibility as an attainable goal (GP) of nuclear reductions (ME). He argued that any state capable of destroying warheads could manufacture new ones with enough time and money (CP). He pointed out that Russia and the U.S. "[stood] on completely different footings" with regard to that ability. Russia possessed the ability to produce large numbers of new nuclear weapons every year (CP), whereas it had been a decade since the U.S. last produced a new nuclear weapon (CP). The decision to store nuclear weapons and render them unavailable for near-term use (ME) had been informed by the difference in America's ability to produce new nuclear weapons compared with those of other states (CP). Additionally, the U.S. relied, therefore, on its responsive force (ME) to preserve the safety (GP), credibility (GP), and reliability (GP) of the U.S. stockpile, and to hedge against large-scale technical or catastrophic failure of its nuclear weapons (GP). The restoration of U.S. ability to manufacture nuclear weapons would require a large investment and nearly a decade on the part of the U.S. (CP). Building the responsive infrastructure component of the New Triad (ME) and repairing the nuclear infrastructure (ME) may allow the U.S. to reduce the size of its responsive force (GP).

The positive shift in U.S.-Russia relations (CP) meant that the U.S. no longer had to be concerned with a massive nuclear first-strike from Moscow (CP) and that its nuclear force requirements had changed (ME). The U.S. could pursue the replacement of the “balance of terror” with a new strategic framework with Russia (GP). The U.S. undergoing a drastic shift from its Cold War approach on how to determine the size of its nuclear forces (ME), based on the logic of MAD (GP). The appropriate size of the U.S. nuclear force had not yet been determined (GP) but would not be dictated by “a possible resurgence in the threat from Russia” (CP). Feith claimed that the responsive capability (ME) would allow the U.S. to increase its number of deployed nuclear weapons (GP) if warranted by changes in the security environment (CP). Paradoxically, the decision was backed by a long-standing precedent to preserve such a capability (ME), with the “leap and hedge” approach to nuclear reductions of the Clinton Administration being the example utilized (ME). That approach had been grounded on the perceived requirement of hedging (GP) against the possibility of Moscow reversing its path toward democracy (CP). Furthermore, Feith also claimed that the Administration followed Moscow and Washington’s Cold War-era recognition “that the number and nature of their operationally deployed nuclear forces ready to go at a moment’s notice [CP] were the key determinants of their respective capabilities” (ME). Thus, at the time, arms control agreements (ME) did not contemplate warhead dismantlement (GP). The U.S. would continue today to focus on the most important aspects of its nuclear arsenal [CP] by reducing it (GP) through the removal of warheads from deployed missiles (ME). Maintaining a responsive force was the only prudent approach (ME) given that the uncertainty of the present era (CP) made flexibility necessary (GP). Still, the responsive force did not need to be as large as the Clinton Administration’s (GP). The U.S. would not utilize Cold War-era negotiating practices in pursuing an agreement with Russia (ME) because doing so would undermine U.S. flexibility (GP) and the Washington sought a new strategic framework in its relationship with the country (GP), not to perpetuate the old one (GP) (downside). “Cold War-style” arms control (ME) would also delay the reductions process, since the two states would hold on to their nuclear weapons as bargaining chips. Such was the adversarial logic of arms control (GP) (S. HRG. 107–696, 2002: 320-330).

On 20 May 2002, NSA Condoleezza Rice argued that the signing of the SORT meant that the vestiges of the Cold War were behind the U.S. and Russia (CP). She did not see as a problem the fact that Russia continued to make warheads (CP) while the U.S. essentially did not (CP). What kept the U.S. and Russia from going to war was not their respective number of nuclear weapons, or the ABM Treaty, “or some outdated notion of strategic stability.” It was the fact that they had no reason to go to war (CP). U.S.-Russian relations were increasingly broad, encompassing several spheres (CP).

The NSA hoped that the SORT would be the last arms reduction treaty to get so much attention; that the new relationship between America and Russia became a normal one (GP). The relationship should be based on common interests (GP) and mutual trust (VP). Rice stated that America wanted to bring Russia to the West (GP), including by promoting democracy in the country (GP). She also conveyed the President’s vision of a Europe that was “whole, free and at peace” (GP) (VP), and where

Russia found its place (GP). America and its transatlantic allies, “now with a growing relationship with Russia” (CP), should “[bring] others into the community of democratic, market-oriented states” (GP). Terrorism and WMDs were a threat to that community and its stability (CP).

The SORT achieved the goal (ME) of advancing the new U.S.-Russian relationship (GP) and setting the stage for a new era of cooperation (GP) and friendship (GP) (VP). It also codified (ME) “the most dramatic strategic arms reductions in history” – about 2/3 over ten years (GP).

However, it was not the arms control treaty that brought stability (GP), but the political relationship between the two countries (CP). While the SORT did not achieve the goal of destroying warheads (GP), Rice explained that there was no precedent for that (ME). Reductions were achieved (GP), instead, by converting platforms to other uses (ME), by storing warheads (ME) or dismantling them (ME) or by retiring platforms (ME). The NSA stated that destruction would still happen nonetheless (GP), with some warheads being stored as spares (ME). In any case, the agreement still had value. According to Rice, “when you have far fewer operationally deployed warheads (GP) it does say something about the readiness of the forces” (GP), and that had strategic value (GP). America would also seek to advance the U.S.-Russian relationship (GP) via the NATO-Russia Council (ME) (complementary action). The White House would also pursue an agenda aimed at increasing steps (ME) toward a democratic Russia (GP) (Rice, 2002).

On 17 July 2002, Richard Myers conveyed the belief that the Moscow Treaty should enter into force. He explained that making warhead reductions (GP) had been an ongoing process for three decades (CP). The general also perceived an uncertain strategic environment (CP). He underscored several goals which would be achieved through the agreement (ME): making warhead reductions (GP), putting the Cold War to rest (GP), implementing the recommendations of the 2002 NPR (GP), creating the foundation for a new relationship with Russia (GP) and, overall, providing for the long-term national security interests of the United States (GP) (VP). The accord also retained U.S. flexibility (GP) in drawing down its forces (given the ten-year implementation window) (ME), by enabling hedging (through the inclusion of a 90-day notification requirement) (ME), and by focusing on operationally deployed nuclear warheads, allowing the U.S. to preserve key conventional capabilities [ME] while said reductions were being managed (ME) (S. HRG. 107–622, 2002: 89-90).

1.2. Audience discourse

On 5-6 March 2003, Richard Lugar (R-IN), chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, brought the Moscow Treaty to the Senate floor for consideration and ratification, which he supported. For various reasons, “some economic, [GP] some safety,” (GP) both Russia and the U.S. had decided to unilaterally destroy warheads (CP). President Bush had announced unilateral reductions to U.S. nuclear levels (GP), and then invited President Putin to do the same (GP), which eventually led to the SORT

(ME). U.S-Russian relations had turned the corner (CP), although evident differences remained (CP). The two states were attempting to become partners in the fight against terrorism (GP), and further economic and political cooperation (ME) was expected (CP). The U.S. needed Russia's support in the war against terrorism (GP).

Moscow's nuclear forces were declining, and Russia would have preferred a limit of 1500 warheads (CP). Putin had decided to cut nuclear weapons spending due to budget stringencies (CP), seeking a treaty with the U.S. so that reductions could be pursued in a predictable manner (CP). Secretaries Powell and Rumsfeld had stated that Russia's tactical nuclear weapons continued to be "an important issue." Lugar identified the potential proliferation threat posed by Russia's non-strategic nuclear weapons (CP). He also acknowledged the threats presented by strategic offensive nuclear weapons (CP). Russia would be unable to meet the timeline of treaty obligations without the U.S. (CP). Some Russian and American warheads were currently chemically unstable and a danger for the nation holding them (CP). Putin and Bush had identified thousands of deployed warheads aimed at their countries "and the dangers of leaving things where they were" (CP). When it came to certain military facilities, there was still a lack of transparency on the part of the Russians (CP).

The resolution of ratification¹⁰⁹ of the SORT had been constructed by Lugar in partnership with Senator Biden with the mutual, underlying intent of presenting to the Senate a bipartisan document that could be broadly supported (VP). The role of the Senate in overseeing the treaty's implementation (VP) was assured by a condition in the resolution of ratification (ME), mandating the production of a report by the president on important items related to the treaty (VP). It also represented a step forward vis-à-vis America's obligations per Article VI of the NPT (VP). The Constitution granted the Senate a role in the treaty ratification process (VP) but was silent on whether the chamber would be involved in an eventual termination process (VP). Thus, "the process governing termination and withdrawal [was] a point of Constitutional debate" (VP). Overall, a Senate role in treaty termination was difficult to envision, especially given a lack of "an established practice derogating from the President's termination power" (VP). Lugar and Biden had assured the President that treaty consideration would be expeditious (GP) and bipartisan (VP). Lugar supported the reduction of U.S. operational deployed strategic nuclear warheads to a level between 1700 and 2200 by the end of 2012 (GP). That would contribute to a safer

¹⁰⁹ Treaties are considered by the Senate just as any other text of a bill. They are amendable, with such considerations taking place in the Foreign Relations Committee first. Senators do not vote on approving treaties, but instead give their advice and consent to them via resolutions of ratification, which empower the President to ratify treaties. Following a favorable vote, a resolution of ratification of the treaty is reported by the Committee to the full Senate, possibly incorporating amendments to the treaty approved by the former. The Senate first considers any declarations, statements, reservations, or understandings that may affect how the treaty is implemented or interpreted that the Committee on Foreign Relations may have attached to the resolution of ratification. The Senators can amend the text of the treaty itself, or instead amend the resolution of ratification by attaching to it their own reservations or propositions, having considered those of the Committee. Some declarations, understandings, and reservation may impose additional requirements on the Administration before a treaty enters into effect (Heitshusen, 2017: 1-2; Human Rights on the Hill, n.d.).

world (VP) and “relieve the anxiety of people all over the world” over the large number of U.S. and Russian deployed nuclear weapons (GP) (VP).

The resolution of ratification (ME) included a declaration which “[encouraged] the President to continue efforts to eliminate the threats posed by strategic offensive nuclear weapons to the lowest level possible [GP] while not jeopardizing our country’s national security [GP] or alliance obligations” (VP). It also encouraged the acceleration of U.S. reductions so that they would be completed before the envisioned date (end of 2012) (GP). Another declaration urged the President to consult with the Senate before withdrawing from the treaty (VP) to assuage the concerns of some senators (VP). Lugar also reminded the chamber that the Administration had made such a commitment (VP).

The SORT (ME) would benefit the broader U.S.-Russian relationship (GP) and the arms control cause (GP) and permit flexibility (GP). It provided a framework for continued destruction of nuclear weapons targeting the U.S. (CP). It underlined the importance of the Russo-American relationship (GP) in a context in which Moscow’s support was crucial for the war on terrorism (GP), and in dealing with North Korea and Iraq (GP).

There were several goals that the SORT failed to achieve. It did not institute a specific schedule for carrying out the reductions (GP). It also did not establish a verification regime (GP) allowing for “transparency to the point that both nations are inspecting that process” (GP). However, the U.S. and Russia had moved beyond Cold War tensions (CP), and the former would have carried out the reductions unilaterally anyway (ME). Those who were concerned with verification (GP) were seeing the treaty through Cold War lens (CP); Russia had no incentives (CP) to withdraw or violate the agreement (GP) (rejected downsides). Moreover, there were START verification measures still in place (GP), the DOE was producing reports on Russian warhead accountability (ME) and cooperation under the Nunn-Lugar program continued (ME) (goal of verifiability achieved through other means). Lugar admitted, nonetheless, that a “verification procedure which [spotlighted] the location and number of [the] weapons” being transferred following their status change from deployed to non-deployed would be a desirable goal (GP), given nuclear proliferation concerns (CP). However, achieving such a level of verification might have proven to be “a bridge too far” (GP) (possibly unachievable goal) since during the negotiations the U.S. had encountered Russian resistance (CP). The SORT also did not (ME) provide for “transparency to the point where both nations are inspecting [the warhead destruction] process” (GP). Lugar admitted that it would have been preferable to achieve that goal but stressed that the U.S. was able to verify the results of that process (GP), despite the lack of insight into warhead destruction (GP). Overall, the senator deemed that the goal of flexibility (GP) outweighed that of verification (GP) because the former better served the national interest (VP). He deemed the SORT’s level of verification (VP) sufficient (ME).

As for other goals not delivered by the SORT, the accord did not call for the destruction of warheads (GP). However, the goal would be achieved regardless (ME) (provisions on warhead destruction are not necessary). Both the U.S. and Russia had stated that a good number of warheads would be destroyed

(VP) (there are prior commitments) (GP). While the SORT did not address tactical nuclear weapons, the resolution of ratification (ME) contained a declaration urging President Bush to help Russia when it came to their “full accounting, safety and security” (GP). Russia had declined (CP) to discuss the future of that category of weapons (ME) (action is not feasible). Moreover, America’s European friends were helping to pursue that goal in a multilateral way (CP).

The SORT also did not deliver the goal of reducing the risk of a Russian nuclear launch due to false alarm and miscalculation (GP). Lugar suggested that an amendment could be offered to an NDAA (ME) in order to take nuclear weapons off alert status (GP). Still, the U.S. Congress should wait for the president to take the first step (ME) (Lugar supports the goal but defends inaction at the moment).

The withdrawal provision, allowing each party to leave the SORT for any reason with only three months’ notice, did not represent a weakness of the accord (ME). The provision more appropriately reflected America’s “much-improved strategic relationship with Russia” (CP). Hence, a decision to withdraw would not be prompted by reasons related to the SORT or the other party (CP). The provision to withdraw (VP) granted each party flexibility (GP) in responding (GP) to unpredictable future scenarios (CP). Not ratifying the treaty (ME) would hinder U.S. goals by jeopardizing the new relationship that the two countries were trying to establish (GP). Furthermore, maintaining the number of warheads unchanged was dangerous (GP) and expensive (GP) (downside), and the warheads were no longer required (ME). The treaty, by prioritizing flexibility (GP), could create proliferation risks on the Russian side (GP) (consequences on goals). To address the downside, the legislator recommended increased Nunn-Lugar assistance (ME) to help Russia meet its obligations under the accord (GP). Without the Nunn-Lugar program (ME), the benefits of the agreement would likely not be realized (GP). The U.S. was also working with Russia through the DOE to address issues concerning warhead storage and accountability (GP). The Moscow Treaty was not sufficient to meet U.S. security needs (ME); it required “cooperative threat reduction, dismantlement, and warhead security projects” (ME) (complementary actions).

In considering the treaty, the Senate had heard from key members of the Administration, numerous representatives of interest groups and think tanks, and other arms control and military experts (ME) (treaty receives support from authority figures). An arms control agreement such as those negotiated in the past, which were more rigid, demanding, and expansive, was rejected as a policy alternative. Such an accord (ME) would not serve U.S. and Russian interests (VP) because negotiations would be too lengthy and uncertain (GP) (downsides). Instead, Lugar defended the treaty (ME) considering the goals it did achieve (GP) and claimed that it “[was] an important step forward because it [maintained] the momentum of an arms control process that [had] been successful” (GP).

The treaty was not perfect, and it did not cover every desired need (ME). However, on balance, it served American national security (GP). Lugar stated that he and Biden would resist amendments to the resolution of ratification (ME) because, in their view, the Senate “[had] at least in a very general way covered territory of what [it] ought to be doing in terms of oversight” (GP) (VP) (goal of delivering

oversight is achieved). Whereas if amendments to the agreement were to pass (ME), they might be objectionable to the Russians (GP) (potential downside) who had to ratify it themselves (VP). The amendments could lead to the downfall of the SORT; therefore, the senators deemed it preferable to ratify the admittedly “limited treaty” (ME) (weighing of policy options). Thus, the Senate should “not call for bridges that [were] too far” (GP), and the U.S. would continue to negotiate with its “Russian friends” (ME) (future course of action) (CP) (Russia is a friend) (CRECB, 2003: 5264-5267, 5279-5280, 5404, 5409, 5419-5420, 5422).

On 5-6 March 2003,, Senator Joe Biden (D-DE), ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee, conveyed his support for the treaty as well. He claimed that the only threat to the very existence of the U.S. was an accidental launch of Russian nuclear missiles (CP). Thus, Biden was worried about Russian MIRV’d ICBMs (CP). The worst other threat was the stealing or diversion of Russian nuclear materials to terrorist groups or rogue states (CP). Russia’s nuclear warhead storage facilities were extremely insecure (CP), so the higher the number of stockpiled weapons, the greater the risk to the U.S. (CP). Another reason why Russia’s MIRV’d ICBMs were destabilizing was because, in a first attack, the attacking party could destroy several warheads on a MIRV’d ICBM with only one or two warheads. Thus, the defending party risked having a higher number of warheads destroyed by a first attack, motivating it to attack first instead (CP). Hence, in a short to medium-term (1, 10 or 20 years) U.S. or Russian military planners might decide to attack first (CP). The risk of a nuclear missile being launched in error was greater on the Russian side because, unlike the U.S. (CP), their early warning systems were in poor conditions (CP). While the administration was certain that such a scenario would not materialize, Biden was not (CP). He hoped that Russia felt about the U.S. in the same way that the U.S. administration felt about Russia; meaning, that the other party was not an enemy, but a friend (CP). He also considered Russian tactical nuclear weapons destabilizing (CP).

Biden highlighted how him, Senator Lugar, and Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) had insisted on a binding (GP) (VP) treaty (ME). The President had jokingly said to Biden that he “[owed] him one,” because the Administration never wanted a treaty (ME). In fact, the United States was going to pursue the reduction to 1700 to 2200 operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads (GP) no matter what Moscow did (CP) (Russian actions would not change goal) (GP) (mutual reductions are not a core goal of action). The administration believed that the Cold War was over, and Biden hoped that that was true (CP). Biden noted that although the President described Russia as a friend, it was not on the side of the U.S. on the UN Security Council or when it came to Iraq (CP).

Russia could not meet its commitments to reduce its deployed nuclear forces alone (CP). The U.S. did not plan to destroy the reduced nuclear weapons (GP), but to stockpile them (ME), and have them available to return to action¹¹⁰ (GP). Delivery vehicles would remain in service (ME). Despite

¹¹⁰ The Moscow Treaty allowed both parties to reduce their levels of deployed nuclear weapons by storing them, since the accord did not require the elimination of bombers, submarines, missiles, or warheads (CRECB, 2003: 5268).

Powell's assurances that some warheads would be dismantled, no steps had been taken in that direction (CP).

There were some conservative democrats and republicans who believed that all treaties were bad ideas, no matter how loosely formulated (GP/VP) (covert premises informing action). The lawmaker noted that the Republicans did not use to support arms control treaties unless the U.S. could be sure that certain missiles, warheads, and submarines would be destroyed (GP). Emphasis on flexibility, a "hallmark" of the Bush administration (GP), came with political risks (GP) (consequences on goals). The Administration was speaking of new "bunker buster" nuclear weapons for deeply buried targets (ME), resuming nuclear tests (ME), using nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states (ME), and preemptive nuclear attacks (potentially with nuclear weapons) (ME). It was also treating nuclear weapons as just any other kind of weapon (ME) (U.S. pursuit of those actions is considered a downside of the actions aimed at preserving flexibility).

The U.S. had made a commitment to reduce its nuclear weapons to a reasonable number as quickly as possible (VP). The resolution of ratification (ME) would allow for the Senate to oversee and support the treaty's implementation (GP) by requiring, via a binding condition, the executive to prepare an annual report on that subject (VP). Other declarations, albeit non-binding, urged further Senate consultation, including on the matters of withdrawing from, or changing the SORT (VP). The Senate had a constitutional duty to watch over the treaty (VP). Biden believed that the Senate and the President shared equal, constitutionally granted responsibility on the matter of treaties (VP). He believed that the Senate had the authority to insist that any withdrawal or extension of a treaty be confirmed by the chamber (VP) but acknowledged that that was an open constitutional question (VP). Given concerns of Senators Levin and Feingold that the role of the Senate was being compromised, Biden contended that, as it pertained to the SORT, it was not worth fighting (ME) (weighing of premises) that "genuinely serious constitutional fight" (VP) (accepts compromise on values). That was because he did not think there were enough votes to win it (CP), and because even if there were, the Administration would likely prefer not to have a treaty at all (ME). And he did not want to jeopardize the treaty because doing so "would do much more harm [GP] [downside] than any possible good could be done" from "[making] a legal point" (VP) (VP is outweighed by potential downsides of not adopting the accord). Biden preferred to fight another day, on another agreement (ME) (inaction), because the SORT "[rested] on an awful lot of good faith" to begin with (CP). That is, "good faith in our common interests and the common vision of our leaders" (CP). Making a legal point would not have much impact (VP) (low premise weight) because of the lack of substance and consequence (GP) (goals delivered are insufficient) of the Moscow Treaty (ME).

The stakes were not high enough (GP) (goals delivered by the VP did not justify insistence on a Senate role on treaty withdrawal or extension). Observation of the VP would do much more harm (GP) (downside) than any possible good could be done by our adopting this amendment" (VP) if the end result was "this Administration walking away from the treaty" (ME). The Senator's support for the

accord was partly grounded on the administration's commitment (VP) to destroy or dismantle some warheads (GP). A failure to live up to the commitment would "endanger the process by which the Senate gives advice and consent to the ratification" (VP). Biden also identified "military power" as a covert goal of the treaty (GP). He rejected the goal, seeing as its pursuit by other means had already led to downsides of action, such as in the context of the UN Security Council (GP) (downside). He associated the covert goal of "military power" (GP) with the U.S. aim of "[keeping] its powder dry," that is, of preparing itself for the future (GP). After all, the U.S. was celebrating a treaty (ME) that allowed both parties carry out significant reductions (GP) without warhead dismantlement or destruction (GP). There were several goals that the SORT did not achieve or guarantee (ME). Several of them had not even been attempted by the administration in their treaty negotiations (GP). The SORT did not provide a way to make its parties live up to the binding reductions it codified because it expired on the deadline for their completion (GP). The accord likewise set no benchmarks for measuring progress (GP). The SORT did not eliminate both sides' ability to MIRV (GP), de-alert weapons slated for later destruction (i.e., taking them off hair-trigger) (GP) or achieve the destruction of Russia weapons or delivery vehicles (GP) (GP). Still, Moscow had indicated that they would seek their destruction (GP), and that goal could be achieved by the Nunn-Lugar program (ME). Biden also sought visibility into Russia's forces (GP), which the treaty did not provide. However, it was possible that the Nunn-Lugar program (ME), along with the START verification process (ME), could replace the absence of verification in the SORT (GP). Biden also wanted to reduce Russian tactical nuclear warheads and improve their accounting and security (GP), which the treaty did not contemplate. However, a declaration in the resolution of ratification (ME) urged the president to take steps towards the realization of that goal (GP), and Biden acknowledged that a bilateral agreement on Russian tactical nuclear weapons was not likely (ME) (not feasible). On de-alerting warheads, Biden considered it to be the only way (ME) to improve the new relationship (GP) (goal cannot be achieved by other actions).

Continuing on the subject of undelivered goals, Biden wanted to speed up (ME) U.S. force reductions (GP), which another declaration encouraged the executive to do . If carried out, that action would be reassuring to Russia (GP) (prevention of downsides). The treaty also did not provide protection in case a situation of heightened mistrust or crisis emerged (GP) because it allowed Russia to go out and build tens of thousands of new nuclear weapons and silos between then and 2012 (GP) (downside). The agreement did not promote confidence (GP) or transparency (GP), although perhaps that could be done voluntarily via the envisioned transparency committee (ME). The Senator wanted the U.S. to carry out strategic offensive reductions beyond those mandated by the SORT (GP). A declaration in the resolution of ratification (ME) encouraged the president to do them (GP) without mandating them (VP). Doing so could generate savings (GP), without compromising national security (GP). There were also no provisions to ensure compliance (GP), seeing as the treaty prioritized another goal: flexibility (GP).

The treaty might generate several downsides on U.S. goals and values. Since Moscow had not defined "strategic nuclear weapons" or explained how reductions would be made (GP), the SORT could

lead to misunderstandings and quarrels over matters of compliance (GP). The treaty was a unilateral position that did not consider the “opinions of mankind” (VP), and the Senator expected the U.S. to pay for it now or down the road as a result of alienating others (GP). The SORT effectively ended START II, which would have obligated the country to eliminate its MIRV-ed ICBMs. Thus, Moscow was likely to continue to MIRV, augmenting the perceived need for a nuclear first strike (GP), and raising the threat of nuclear war (GP) (lists several downsides). The flexibility granted by the treaty could undermine both U.S. and Russian commitment to reductions (GP) and their confidence that the other side would carry them out (GP) (downsides). The absence of verifications was not expected to put the U.S. in jeopardy, according to Biden (GP) (rejected downside). However, it would allow the republicans, “who are not going to like it when things are not going so smoothly with Russia,” (CP) to accuse it of lying and cheating (CP) (perceived future behavior on the basis of current circumstances) (GP) (downside), because the U.S. was unable to verify Moscow’s compliance (GP) (unachieved goal). Distrust and misunderstandings would be allowed to creep in over the next decade (GP) (downside). The treaty could create proliferation risks in case Russian nuclear materials and weapons were not adequately stockpiled, seeing as both parties were free to stockpile them (GP) (downside). However, those risks could be combated via the Nunn-Lugar program (ME) and related programs in the DOS and the DOE (ME).

The SORT “[was] not a bad thing, but it [was] not such a significant thing” (ME). The reductions contemplated were not enough (GP), but they were better than nothing (GP). If not followed by other substantive actions, the accord “[would] become irrelevant at best [ME], counterproductive at worst” (GP) (downsides on goals).

The treaty was insufficient considering Biden’s goals, since there was much that it did not do (ME), and the resolution of ratification did not address many concerns (ME) (insufficient action). Still, the issues not contemplated could be raised in other venues (ME). In terms of precedents over the past three decades, the treaty was an unusual case (ME). Biden discouraged amendments (ME), fearing losing the treaty (ME). Besides, no amendment (ME) would fix all the treaty’s flaws (GP) or all it failed to address (GP) (unachievable goals).

Overall, the SORT (ME) contributed to a few goals. For one, it was a step forward towards a safer world (GP) (VP) and enhanced the national interest (GP) (VP) (it contributed to the goal of delivering the value premises). It would create momentum (GP) for mutual reductions (GP) and communicate good faith (VP). It moved the U.S. and Russia away from the Cold War era (GP). The treaty might (ME), albeit that was not guaranteed, promote a cooperative U.S.-Russian relationship (GP). The agreement would get the parties involved “in the right track” (GP). Biden also admitted that, in the end, the treaty might achieve the goals that it was meant to achieve (ME), without the downsides that the senator feared could materialize (GP). The resolution had been unanimously approved by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (VP), which believed that the treaty be used to foster “mutual confidence in the national security field” (GP).

The treaty (ME) had value (GP), but it was dangerous (GP) (downside) not to pass it (ME). Rejecting it would lead to consequences. It would harm the national interest (VP) and jeopardize relations with Russia (GP). It would communicate an attempt to deceive Moscow (GP) (downside)(CRECB, 2003: 5267-5272, 5281 5409-5411, 5420).

We now move on to think tanks experts, starting with the CSIS. In an October 2002 article, Sokov (2002: 1-4) explained that before the Cold War came to an end, MAD as a notion orienting U.S.-Soviet relations had been replaced by deterrence based on the notion of unacceptable damage. Complete destruction ceased then to be a requisite for deterrence (CP). The author explained that a relationship of deterrence can emerge without plans for immediate nuclear use (CP). Thus, nuclear deterrence (GP) would continue to exist between America and Russia until “a new quality of relationship is achieved and maintained for a protracted period” (GP). And since “[d]eterrence [was] first and foremost about perceptions (...) old suspicions might be rekindled, and the ability to inflict unacceptable damage might then be questioned,” if political relations got worse (CP). This could be caused by a wide array of international crises (CP).

The Bush administration praised the fact that the Moscow Treaty did not compromise U.S. flexibility (GP) concerning the operation, modernization, and maintenance of both states’ nuclear arsenals (ME). The author, however, considered a different goal more important: ensuring the predictability of U.S.-Russian strategic relations (GP). Both states needed to promote reassurance and mutual trust (GP), which could only be achieved after transparency was obtained (GP). And that was something that the SORT did not provide (ME).

Predictability (GP), trust (GP), and reassurance (GP) remained important goals, even if a first strike “out of the blue” was not realistic in the existing security environment due to the absence of systemic conflict (CP). To the author, the absence of transparency provisions in the Moscow Treaty (GP) put under question its own purpose to begin with (ME). Sokov believed it to be possible for the two countries to retain maximum flexibility (GP), while attaining significant information about each other’s nuclear arsenals (GP), by means of simple arms control treaties (ME) that, nonetheless, possessed transparency provisions (GP). Such a course of action (ME) would allow for the achievement of an important goal: preventing political and military crisis out of misperception and parochial political agendas (GP).

The expert also believed that the START verification system (GP) required replacement (ME), and that extending the agreement did not make sense (ME). He considered it important to verify the number of warheads on ballistic missiles (GP), which START did not contemplate (ME). To Sokov, “with or without START I [ME], the Moscow Treaty [ME] needs its own data exchange and verification system” (GP). He recommended that progress be made in that regard before START’s expiration (ME) (The Agenda for Arms Control Negotiations After the Moscow Treaty).

On October 2002, Pikayev (2002: 1-3) remarked that Russia and America understood that their relationship had changed dramatically since the Cold War (CP). Deterrence relations (GP) were no

longer motivated by political confrontations (CP), but by the existence of considerable nuclear stockpiles (CP). There were few adequate diplomatic trade-offs in the nuclear realm in which the U.S. and Russia could be interested (CP). Thus, placing new issues on the agenda of future bilateral nuclear dialogues could be problematic (GP). Russia wanted follow-up talks but was not ready to discuss tactical nuclear weapons (CP) (ME) (questions feasibility of an accord contemplating those weapons). Potential conflicts with medium-size Asian powers were seen by Russia as a threat and constrained its ability and willingness (CP) to engage with the U.S. on arms control addressing tactical nuclear weapons (ME).

The expert approved the Moscow Treaty (ME), believing that it “[provided] both sides with a solution to their most pressing needs in strategic nuclear and missile defense areas” (GP). Still, the SORT (ME) could be undermined by Russia’s attempts to capitalize certain provisions of START I to gain limits on American responsive forces (GP) (downside), which the accord (ME) did not limit (GP). Bilateral discussions (ME) to maintain deterrence relations (GP) could lead to negative consequences on the overall political dialogue between the two countries (GP) (consequences on goals). Thus moving forward, Moscow and Washington should “avoid burdening nuclear relations by discussing new topics” (ME) and limit their dialogue on nuclear issues (ME) (defends limited dialogue). The cautious approach entailed avoiding substantial progress (GP), focusing on a positive agenda (GP), discussing common threats in Asia (GP), and considering relaxing some START-imposed restrictions (GP). The author’s careful approach of limited nuclear dialogue would deliver the goals (ME) of maintaining START in place until its expiration in 2009 (GP) and ensure its continuation thereafter (GP). The author stated that the Administration lacked interest in further dialogue with Moscow on nuclear issues (CP) because it had already gained from it all it wanted (GP). And he agreed that there was no reason for America “to make any concessions the Russians [were] eager to gain” (ME) (no further action needed) (The Future of U.S.-Russian Nuclear Relations. A Rip Van Winkle Approach?).

In a RAND Corporation study entitled “Beyond the nuclear shadow,” Mosher *et al.* (2003: 8-10, 40-41, 62, 64-65, 135-137) perceived formidable obstacles (CP) when it came to reducing the role of nuclear weapons in U.S.-Russian relations (GP). Both states retained substantial nuclear force levels (CP). A deep-rooted level of mistrust stemming from Cold War times had survived (CP) and was being fueled by disagreements over issues like NATO expansion, Iraq’s future, and each other’s role in Central Asia (CP). Despite mutual willingness to build a new relationship (CP), those disagreements were unlikely to disappear quickly (GP). Russia’s nuclear force levels would probably shrink considerably over the course of the decade due to economic factors (CP). The Bush administration felt uncomfortable about reaching a level of 1700 to 2200 warheads before 2012 (GP). The study argued that there could be fears that “Russia [would] revert to a more aggressive nationalist foreign policy” (CP). Still, a Russian buildup would be detected before it became militarily significant (CP). The authors perceived a growing WMD proliferation threat (CP). The study identified 3 possible instances of nuclear use: unauthorized launch by a rogue commander or terrorist (given nuclear security concerns vis-à-vis Russia) (CP), a launch due to a training accident or system malfunction (considering Russia’s economic and social

problems) (CP), and a launch owed to incorrect information (CP). The threat posed by the latter was mitigated by current “overall positive” U.S.-Russian relations (CP), but the experts were concerned with the unreliability of Russia’s early warning systems” (CP).

Both states kept thousands of nuclear weapons on high alert (CP), and the authors perceived a vulnerability of command-and-control systems or nuclear forces to a nuclear first strike (CP). Therefore, they wanted to lower the risk of accidental or unauthorized nuclear use (GP). They also wanted to improve U.S.-Russian relations (GP) and nuclear safety (GP). To the authors, the Moscow Treaty was not sufficient (ME) to address the risk of nuclear use (CP): even if all the reductions that it codified were achieved, the two parties would still maintain about 2000 strategic warheads deployed each (GP) (insufficiently delivered goal of reductions).

The authors proposed that Russia and the U.S. accelerated implementation (ME) of the steps agreed to under the treaty (ME). The study suggested that the two countries immediately stood down all nuclear forces scheduled for elimination under the Moscow Treaty (ME). Doing so would further contribute to persuade Russia that America indeed sought to build a new relationship and had no interest in using nuclear weapons (GP). Secondly, it would fix “poor-first strike stability” between the two states (GP) caused by a growing imbalance of nuclear forces, since Russia would likely need to reduce its levels drastically (CP). They also suggested negotiations and consultations, formal and less formal (ME), to improve nuclear safety (GP). Accelerating planned reductions (ME) would lead to the elimination of Russia’s stock of old and accident-prone forces (GP). The experts also recommended other courses of action to further contribute toward lowering the risk of nuclear use (GP), including improving Russia’s access to early-warning and ICBM forces information (ME) (Mosher et al., 2003: 8-10, 40-41, 62, 64-65, 135-137).

Kimball, ACA’s executive director, expressed his views on the SORT on several occasions (April, June, and December 2002). He acknowledged that Russia and the U.S were no longer enemies and had no reason to go to war (CP). Kimball also noted the vulnerability to theft of Russia’s tactical nuclear weapons (CP), but also the Bush administration’s lack of interest in them (GP). The SORT was a welcome (ME) but incomplete step (ME) toward the goal of reducing U.S. and Russian nuclear dangers (GP).

The treaty failed to achieve several goals that the expert deemed important. Firstly, the SORT did not verifiably eliminate excess nuclear weapons (both tactical and strategic) (CP). Indeed, neither party was required to dismantle even one warhead or missile (GP). The treaty also placed no restrictions on strategic missiles and bombers (GP), did not dictate what should be done with the warheads removed from service (GP), and did not reduce the readiness posture of U.S. nuclear weapons (GP). The SORT might not succeed in eliminating Russia’s excess warheads (depending on how Putin would proceed) (GP). There were also no additional verification (GP) or transparency (GP) measures in the accord (ME). Flexibility (GP) was a goal being prioritized over predictability (GP), which the author did not agree

with, because it lessened the treaty's (ME) contribution to a more secure (GP) and stable U.S.-Russian relationship (GP). The SORT also only slightly affected Russia and America's nuclear potential (GP).

The treaty (ME) risked increasing the burden of safeguarding Russia's insecure and vast nuclear weapons complex (GP). It made it more difficult to predict future force levels (GP) and perpetuated MAD (GP) (downside). Deployed strategic nuclear warhead levels would be reduced to merely 2,200 (GP), with the treaty promising to remove some strategic warheads from launch status, but not all (GP) (goal is insufficient). There was no realistic threat scenario (CP) requiring more than a few hundred deployed warheads (ME). Despite the Administration's claims that Russia and the U.S. were no longer enemies and had no motive to go to war (CP), Washington's future nuclear force size and posture (ME) continued to be dictated by Cold War-era (CP) nuclear targeting (GP) and "detering and defeating Russia's nuclear and conventional military" (GP) (covert goals).

The U.S. should offer Moscow further assistance (ME) for the safeguarding (GP) and demilitarization of their surplus warheads and nuclear materials (GP). It should also conduct operational alert status changes (ME) to reduce the risk of miscalculation and accidental launches (GP). Washington should conduct new, comprehensive negotiations with Russia (ME) to achieve some of the goals, listed above, which the SORT failed to deliver (ME) (Kimball, 2002a, Kimball, 2002b).

On 15 November 2001, Biden called for a written agreement (ME) following the announcements made that week, whereby Bush and Putin agreed to reduce their country's nuclear forces (GP). A written agreement (ME) would ensure that the decisions would outlast their presidencies (GP) while personal assurances would not (ME). The former course of action (ME) could also ensure verifiability (GP) and predictability (GP), rather than leading to misunderstandings (GP) and breeding mistrust (GP) (downsides of the latter action).

Written agreements (ME) assured that each party knew, specifically, the commitments that the other had made (GP), which benefited bilateral relations (GP). With a handshake agreement between Presidents (ME) the U.S. would only know what Putin told his counterpart and the press (GP) (downside – lack of information). The 1991-1992 nuclear initiatives (ME), lacking an informal agreement, had generated concern over Russian compliance in January of 2001 (GP), and hindered U.S.-Russian relations as a result (GP) (downsides). Part of the problem was the lack of information regarding what Gorbachev, and later Yeltsin, had promised (GP) (downside). Furthermore, there was no agreement on verification (GP), so an inspection request could not be made (ME) in order to ease concerns (GP) that Russia stored nuclear weapons in Kaliningrad (CP). Among those troubled over that possibility last January, were Biden's colleagues in the Senate, as well as Washington D.C.'s "nuclear theologians" and strategic issues aficionados (CP), "who [did] not like arms control agreements [GP/VP] [covert reasons] and were much less trusting of Russia than they seem to be today" (CP) (casts doubt over changed perspectives about Russia).

The lack of verifiability (GP) fostered mistrust (GP) (downside). Not knowing which commitments had been made or whether they were being kept (GP) (undelivered goal), any new

President would be bombarded from every direction – the DOD, the intelligence community, and the think tanks – with claims that Russia was not complying with the terms of the deal (CP) (perceptions of Russia) (GP) (downside – mistrust). People would wonder the U.S. commitment to the deal as well, and whether it was looking for a way out (GP) (downside). Since nuclear-related issues always led to worst-case assumptions, given the high stakes involved (CP), the U.S. needed to know if Russia was being true to its word (GP), even if that did not mean that the country could not be trusted (CP). Moscow should know whether the U.S. was abiding by its commitments as well (GP) if America wanted to be trusted (GP). A new START III would be simple to draft (ME) and would ensure adherence to the role of the Senate’s constitutional role in matters pertaining to international treaties (VP) (CREC, 2001: S11896-S11898).

A Congressional hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee took place on 14 February 2002 to discuss the results of the NPR. Senator Levin noted that, according to the strategic document, the U.S. would not reduce the actual number of nuclear warheads (GP). Rather than irreversibly destroyed (GP), the warheads would be moved to the responsive force (ME) to allow for their potential redeployment (GP). Moscow would likely mirror Washington’s approach (ME) and retain its nuclear warheads as well (GP), which would increase the proliferation threat (GP), possibly hindering U.S. security rather than enhancing it (GP) (downsides).

Senator Reed concurred that the reductions proposed by the Administration (ME) merely entailed placing the same number of warheads under a different category (GP) (unachieved goal of reductions). Senator Daniel Akaka (D-HI) also criticized the lack of substantial reductions (GP), questioning what threat justified maintaining such a large nuclear stockpile (ME). Russia had long been the reason for the preservation of such a large (ME) retaliatory capability (GP); yet the country was now carrying out more substantial reductions than the U.S. (CP). China was increasing its nuclear stockpile, but it would still be far below the thousands that the U.S. possessed (CP).

Akaka asked whether U.S. retention of a responsive capability of thousands of warheads (ME) would lead Russia to do the same (GP) (downside). He also inquired whether encouraging a Russian responsive force (GP) (downside) rather than weapons dismantlement (GP) best served the U.S. national interests (VP). Feith believed that Moscow would not mirror U.S. behavior by retaining additional warheads (GP) (downplayed downside). Russia dismantled old warheads every year and continually manufactured new ones (CP), which constituted an inherent responsive capability (GP) (downplayed downside). Russia’s large stockpile of non-deployed nuclear weapons (CP) was better explained by the short shelf life of the country’s warheads requiring the support of an active complex to produce new ones (CP), than by the size of U.S. warhead inventories (CP). U.S. warheads had a much longer shelf life (CP) and the country had stop producing new nuclear warheads a decade ago (CP), leading to a reliance on warhead retention (ME) (both of Feith’s answers were partly redacted).

Senator Ben Nelson’s (D-NE) concern about the issue of decommissioning and recommissioning nuclear weapons (i.e., rendering the warheads unavailable for immediate use and

making them available to be reinserted in a delivery system) (ME) related Russia's recommission capacity, which was possible three times faster than America's (CP). Thus, in his words, "the question is really whether we are achieving parity [GP] by that interim step, if it is an interim step" (ME) (i.e., the step whereby weapons were withdrawn from the active stockpile but falling short of being actually destroyed). The Senator asked whether the U.S. and Russia should agree to destroy their warheads (ME). Ellis replied that he supported current dismantlement schedules (ME) and the warhead life extension programs (ME) to maintain a credible (GP) and reliable stockpile (GP). Prudent additional dismantlement programs (ME) could be pursued after the full completion of the life extension programs (ME), when the capacity of the nuclear weapons infrastructure to concurrently dismantle and extend warhead life was expanded (ME), or when the U.S. acquired an appropriate warhead production capability (ME).

Senator Warner claimed to have paid careful attention to Senator Nelson's observation on how Moscow was able to reconstitute its nuclear inventory faster than the U.S. (CP). Among his Republican colleagues, Senator Inhofe stated that his concern was "not so much Russia" (CP) but the states such as Iraq, Iran, Libya, and Syria, which were trading systems and technologies with Moscow, Beijing, and Pyongyang (CP). His focus lay with their ability to reach the U.S. with a long-range missile (CP). Senator Sessions noted that the U.S. was not performing nuclear tests (CP) and lacked the capability to manufacture new nuclear weapons that other states possessed (CP). He was concerned that destroying nuclear warheads (GP) rather than simply decommission them (GP) would encourage other states to pursue military parity with the U.S. (GP) (downside). Wanting to preserve "a clear superiority [GP] that deters war" (GP) in nuclear weaponry, the lawmaker stressed the importance of not destroying warheads overly fast (GP), seeing as some would encounter such a faith under the present Administration (GP). Senator Allard believed the NPR to provide an innovative approach to tackle (GP) the broad spectrum of threats and contingencies America would confront in the future (CP) by combining deep reductions in deployed nuclear weapons (ME) with the New Triad (ME) (S. HRG. 107-696, 2002: 314-320).

Later during the hearing, chairman Levin questioned Feith about his statement, in which he claimed that the NPR "[called] for the destruction of some, but not all of the U.S. warheads removed from the operationally deployed force" (GP). The lawmaker could not find any statement to the effect in the NPR and the slides provided to him during a DOD briefing (see Annex A, subsection 1.1 for the analysis of the slides in question), which stated that the downloaded warheads would be preserved for integration in the responsive force (GP). The Under Secretary assured that some of the reduced warheads would indeed be destroyed, although he could not provide any numbers (GP). The chairman also questioned the claim that the U.S. would not size its nuclear forces (ME) against the Russian threat (CP). In response, Feith acknowledged that the size of Russia's nuclear inventory (CP), capabilities (CP), and America's relationship with the country (CP) were not irrelevant in informing the sizing and posture of U.S. nuclear forces (ME). However, unlike it had been the case during the Cold War, the U.S. would

not be focused on a specific threat from a specific country (CP), utilizing a capabilities-based approach (CP) to determine U.S. nuclear force sizing (ME).

Noting that the numbers of nuclear delivery systems contemplated by the 2001 NPR was essentially the same as those of the 1994 NPR (ME), and that reductions were being pursued (ME) by moving warheads into warehouses (GP) for the purpose of flexibility (GP), Levin questioned the dramatic change in U.S. nuclear posture that Feith spoke of. The Under Secretary replied that in making reductions (ME) by rendering formerly deployed nuclear weapons unavailable for immediate use (GP), the U.S. was shifting its focus away from the maintenance of a balance of terror (GP) – an argument that failed to convince the Senator.

Senator Warner argued that storing the reduced warheads (ME) made sense seeing as the U.S. could not produce new nuclear weapons (CP), and current ones could yield negative results in testing (CP). Stored warheads could also be used to replenish parts on the ones integrating the active stockpile (GP). Admiral Ellis corroborated Warner's claim, adding that the responsive force granting the U.S. flexibility (GP) to respond to future developments (GP) in the international environment (CP). Feith also stressed the importance of flexibility (GP) given America's inability to produce new weapons (CP).

Senator Allard reiterated, for the record, Feith's latter premise (CP), and subsequently asked whether Russia possessed such a capability. General John Gordon, Administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration answered that Russia was producing new nuclear weapons (CP), leading the lawmaker to perceive a current imbalance in U.S. agreement with Russia that needed to be recognized (CP). He asked whether Moscow had indicated that it would pursue a nuclear build-up as a response to the NPR (CP), prompting Feith to state that Russia was unilaterally reducing its nuclear arsenal, same as the U.S. (CP). Allard asked whether it would be likely that warhead dismantlement would be required in the future (GP), leading Gordon to explain that given the current focus on extending the service lives of U.S. nuclear warheads, there was very little capacity for warhead dismantlement (CP). Given the importance of ensuring the credibility (GP) and reliability (GP) of the U.S. nuclear stockpile, life-extension activities (ME) took precedence over dismantlement efforts (ME).

Senator Reed posited that given that the U.S. inventory of nuclear weapons would remain roughly the same (ME) and the country would maintain "the same sort of basic platforms" that composed the nuclear triad (ME), the governing principle remained the logic of MAD (GP) whereby the U.S. ought to be able to survive a first strike and deliver a second strike (GP). The Senator believed that the U.S. was preserving the triad (ME) and approximately 8,000 nuclear warheads (ME) because while the new relationship with Russia had changed the strategic balance (CP), there were no guarantees that the relationship would be maintained (CP). The future was uncertain (CP) and Moscow could rapidly reload its systems (CP). He asked Feith to give examples of specific that could emerge and thus justify the force structure proposed by the NPR. The Under Secretary believed that there were particular threats that one could postulate (CP) but, unlike during the Cold War, the U.S. was not focusing on addressing any in particular (GP) (rejected goal). He stated that there were various countries pursuing nuclear

weapons, other WMD, and missile capabilities (CP) and that significant changes could emerge in the strategic environment and be a source of danger (CP). New coalitions of states might threaten the U.S. (CP), there could be changes in Russia (CP), China (CP), and other parts of the world (CP), and the U.S. might have to contend with various countries at the same time (CP). Thus, America would consider which capabilities it might encounter (CP) and need to counter (GP) when making nuclear force structure determinations (ME). Reed retorted by denoting Feith failure “to narrow the issues down to credible believable threats” (CP), positing that the Administration’s actions were being informed by premises he deemed notional, imprecise, and ambiguous (CP).

Senator Bingaman shared Senator Reed’s concerns over the shift from a threats-based approach (CP) to a capabilities-based approach to nuclear planning (CP). He perceived the changed focus on the premises utilized to inform action to be associated with a covert reason for action: ensuring that America would still need what it had before traditional military threats subsided (GP). Feith responded by noting that not everything would be retained, seeing as there would be very substantial nuclear force reductions (ME), even though the warheads, by and large, would not be destroyed (GP). He explained the focus on capabilities rather than threats was associated with the expectation of strategic surprise (CP). If the U.S. could not predict which threats would emerge (CP), it would instead aim to respond (GP) to the capabilities that potential adversaries might have (CP), which was something that America possessed information about (CP).

Senator Landrieu was not sold on the capabilities-based approach either (CP), fearing it could lead to unnecessary spending on threats that failed to manifest themselves (GP) while defunding defense against realistic threats (GP) (downsides). She preferred to invest in better intelligence (ME) to ascertain what the real threats were (GP). Seeing as the NPR stated that the U.S. would not eliminate warheads nor platforms (ME), she questioned whether Russia would opt not to eliminate its warheads either, resulting in the preservation (GP) (downside) of a serious preservation risk (CP). Feith agreed on the need for better intelligence (ME) and conveyed Russia’s commitment to the security of its WMD materials (CP) and the role of programs such as the CTR (ME) in reducing proliferation risks (GP). The official explained that he was not concerned about complete symmetries in the U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals (GP) and why he rejected the association between the U.S. warhead preservation (ME) and a potential decision by Moscow to do the same (GP) (downside). He explained that Russia, unlike the U.S., could replace warheads immediately given its warm production capability (CP), and that they were “producing new warheads on an ongoing basis in large numbers” (CP). Thus, destroying warheads was, for the Russians, not a very significant matter (CP). The lawmaker asked what legally binding agreement the U.S. would enter into with Russia on nuclear reductions (ME) and whether it would come before the Senate (VP). The official stated that both executive agreements (ME) and treaties (ME) were legally binding (VP). Depending on the nature of the agreement with Russia, the Administration would decide which vehicle would be the most appropriate (ME). There was openness to consider a treaty, if the agreement warranted one (ME), and Feith acknowledged the important role of Congress, and of the

Senate in particular, in such matters (VP). Senator Warner interjected to agree with Senator Landrieu that Congress should be involved (VP) in such “a momentous decision” (ME). The executive and legislative and executive branches ought to be co-partners in national security measures (VP) – a long-standing tradition (CP).

Senator Sessions expressed his concern over the fact that the U.S. could not manufacture new nuclear weapons (CP) whereas Russia could (CP), and subsequently asked whether other countries had such a production capability (CP). Feith explained that the U.S. was the only nuclear-weapon state lacking such manufacturing capabilities (CP). Sessions questioned the dangers of reaching an agreement with Russia (ME) whereby the two states did not test nuclear weapons (ME) or produced new ones (ME). Other states would not be bound by such an agreement (VP), and thus could expand their nuclear capabilities (ME). In pursuing an agreement with Moscow (ME), Feith argued that measures to bolster predictability (GP) and transparency (GP) were a top priority to ensure that neither U.S. nor Russian nuclear policies (ME) were informed by error (GP) or misinformation (GP) (downsides of inaction). Sessions wanted the U.S. to improve its relations with Russia (GP) and pursue such agreements (ME) but was preoccupied with the fact that they no longer lived in a world comprised solely of two nuclear powers (CP). India, Pakistan, and China were improving their nuclear capabilities (CP) and the senator feared that, by reducing (ME) its levels of operationally deployed nuclear weapons down to 1,700 or lower (GP), the U.S. would be encouraging other states to catch up (GP) (downside). Feith explained that the lawmaker’s concern had been contemplated during the NPR process (GP) (downside) and that it had informed the figure arrived at (ME), which represented “a sensible balance” between reducing too much and reducing too little (ME). Session accepted the number presented for operationally deployed nuclear weapons (ME) given that the responsive force (ME) granted the U.S. the flexibility (GP) to restore its former levels, if need be (GP), despite the lack of a manufacturing capacity in the country (CP).

Senator Levin resumed his questioning by asking Feith if, when considering the capabilities (ME) required to counter those that adversaries might develop and direct at the U.S. (ME), the Administration looked at potential threats (CP). Feith acknowledged that the U.S. was still looking at potential threats, albeit without the certainty that defined the Cold War era (CP). The capabilities-based approach (CP) was grounded on the unpredictability of the future (CP). In his words: “[o]ne could argue we are still taking threats into account, but we are not taking the kinds of definite projections about who is going to pose which threats from which quarters” (CP). Ellis explained it as an effort “[to look] to the extent that we can, at new threats that have not been envisioned yet and that do not exist at the current time” (CP). Levin asked about the relevance, in terms of military planning (ME), of Russian MIRV-ing (CP). Ellis argued that Cold War era analyses had opined that MIRV-ed warheads were less stable (CP). He argued that, as the U.S. had moved (CP), or strived to move, beyond that context of confrontation (GP), the implications may have changed (CP). The U.S. was moving in a direction (GP) that was the most suited for its national interests (VP) and hoped Russia would do the same (GP). Lastly, Levin noted

that, despite what Feith had told Senator Landrieu, executive agreements were not legally binding upon Congress (VP); treaties were (VP). The two instruments were different, with executive agreements only possessing the force of law on the executive who signed them (VP).

Senator Allard believed that the participants on the capabilities vs threats debate were splitting hairs because he saw a terrorist threat (CP) no different from potential rogue state threats (CP). Feith reiterated the difference between the two approaches was that the U.S. used to look at the U.S.S.R.'s very specific set of capabilities and size its nuclear forces by counting up targets in the country – something that it was no longer doing (CP). Still, capabilities-based analyses required one to look at threats (CP). The senator asked whether the U.S. was making itself more vulnerable (GP) (downside) at lower levels of deployed nuclear forces (ME), and encouraging other states to build up their offensive nuclear arsenals (GP) (downsides). Feith believed that the reductions would have been imprudent (ME) if not for the remaining elements of the New Triad, which he saw as a package (ME). The reductions would not be imprudent (GP) (rejected downside) because the U.S. was also developing defenses (ME), the greatest intelligence (ME), and the infrastructure (ME), as well as enhancing command and control capabilities (ME).

Senator Sessions was concerned about the possibility of entering into a treaty with Russia (ME) that resulted in America being unable to develop new nuclear weapons (GP) or increase its numbers (GP) (downsides), urging for the Administration to be careful in that regard. Feith assured that the Administration was conscious of the importance of maintaining its flexibility (GP) to address future threats (CP).

Senator Thurmond expressed his understanding that the Administration believed that nuclear stockpile adjustments should be done unilaterally (ME) because negotiations (ME) would impede or derail the reductions desired by both parties (GP). He asked whether the U.S. would propose to sign an agreement with Russia on reductions, and if not, then why (ME). He inquired about the legal standing of any understanding (VP) with Russia that lacked a signed agreement (ME). In response, Feith stated that Washington was negotiating an agreement with Moscow on strategic nuclear arms reductions (ME) because it was a high priority for the Russian government (CP). Still, the reductions that the U.S. had announced would be carried out unilaterally (ME) if no agreement was signed (ME). Washington was willing to consider a range of agreements (ME) aimed at fostering flexibility (GP), predictability (GP) and transparency (GP) since Moscow desired a signed document (CP). A package of agreements was being discussed with Russia, “some of which may be legally binding [VP], some of which may be politically binding [VP], and some of which may be statements of intent [VP], with transparency” (GP). Thurmond then asked for details regarding Russia's nuclear reductions, given its uncertainty on whether they had been announced (GP). Feith claimed that the Intelligence Community believed that Russia's nuclear warheads would fall below 2,000 by 2012 (GP) even without an arms control agreement (ME). The country was willing to conditionally reduce its number of accountable warheads under START I

from about 6,000 to between 1,500 and 2,200 (GP). Still, Russia produced new warheads and dismantled old ones continuously (CP).

Senator Bob Smith (R-NH) inquired about Russia's implementation of the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives (PNI) on the reduction of tactical nuclear weapons and the status of their current tactical nuclear stockpile. The U.S. had expressed concern about the security of Moscow's tactical nuclear arsenal (CP) while NATO was troubled about the large number of "tactical nuclear weapons of all types" possessed by the country (CP). The Alliance had urged Moscow to conclude those reductions (GP). Feith stated that Russia's reports on the status of the PNIs had ceased in 1995 and that no recent official exchanges on that matter had taken place (CP). In various venues, the Russians claimed that the PNIs had been completed apart from ground-launched tactical nuclear weapons (CP). Moscow continued to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in considerable numbers (CP) and excluded them from negotiations within the START framework (ME) (S. HRG. 107-696, Pt. 1, 2002: 314-320, 346-377).

On 18 September 2001, during a Congressional hearing of the House subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, chairman Sonny Callahan (R-AL) had requested confirmation that the rate at which Moscow was reducing its nuclear stockpile was comparable to America's downsizing of its nuclear stockpile (CP) (the response was classified) (U.S. H.R. Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, 2001: 101). On 7 March 2002, Callahan inquired about the prospective arms control agreement between the Washington and Moscow. He asked why Russia would accept the reductions that the Bush Administration intended, given that the U.S. warhead inventory would remain unchanged (GP) (warhead destruction is not a goal). He inquired whether Russia would do the same or dismantle their capabilities (GP) (potential downside). He wondered what the country was doing with its active and inactive warheads (CP) and whether it was still building them (CP), since he perceived the U.S. to plan to keep at least 10,000 nuclear warheads capable of being deployed (ME) for protection and armament (GP). He queried about the goal behind maintaining such a large stockpile (ME) (GP), implying that the number of warheads that comprised it was excessive by suggesting that the U.S. took a few of them to Afghanistan because they "might open some of those caves up" (ME) (U.S. warhead inventory may exceed requirements). The Representative also asked why the U.S. was stockpiling W84 warheads since they were classified as inactive (ME) (GP) (inquires what the goal of action is), pointing out the costs to the DOE (GP) (downside). He also claimed that by 2012 the U.S. would likely have a larger number of warheads in inactive status than it had now (ME) (questions policy choice).

In response to the congressman, General John Gordon, Under Secretary of Energy and Administration for National Security at the NNSA (DOE) stated that the large number of nuclear warheads that the U.S. would maintain was intended to provide a hedge, adding "and the question you are asking: Is the hedge worth it?" (ME). The General claimed he would prefer not to opine on the total number of warheads that the U.S. would need, leaving that question for those working on military requirements and claiming that the decision had yet to be made. He explained that the U.S. would stockpile an indetermined number of non-deployed nuclear weapons (ME) because they provided the

country with the flexibility (GP) and the hedge (GP) for changes in the international environment (CP) and uncertainties related to warhead aging problems (CP). Some warheads were around 40 years old (CP), and the U.S. could not build new ones from scratch in any reasonably short timeframe (CP). The Administration did not want to make any irrevocable decision (GP) (i.e., vis-à-vis warhead destruction) during that “transition time” (CP). By assuring the preservation of flexibility (GP), the U.S. would be able to rearm if needed (ME) and use stockpile warheads for spares (GP). The NPR did not commit to dismantle any weapons, a decision that the General agreed with (ME). However, he believed that some warheads would be retired, nonetheless (GP).

The issue of whether Russia would dismantle its nuclear warheads was still an open question that the U.S. would discuss with the country (GP) (unclear whether the goal would be achieved). Russia continued to build new weapons (CP) and tended (CP) to dismantle some of the old ones (GP). Despite the lack of a commitment to warhead destruction (GP), the General considered that, in downloading warheads from deployed delivery systems, the U.S. was indeed implementing a “reduction,” because it would not be possible to redeploy them in a quick and easy manner (GP) (goal of reductions is achieved). Everett Beckner, Deputy Administration for Defense Programs (NNSA, DOE) explained that the W84 had been taken out of the active stockpile following the GLCM’s retirement and maintained (ME) as a hedge against the possibility of future failure of some systems (GP), seeing as it was a good candidate for a number of them (ME). Gordon added that the W84 could be used in a different situation (CP), being modern, effective and safe (ME). As for the cost of maintaining the W84 (ME) (weighing of reasons), the General described it as relatively modest (GP) compared with what would cost to build a new system (GP) (U.S. H.R. Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, 2002).

During a 16 May 2002 hearing of the Foreign Relations Committee entitled “Examining the Nuclear Posture Review”¹¹¹, Senator Biden stated that he was not surprised that the document indicated that America would consider targeting other countries (CP) besides Russia (CP) and China (CP) (S. HRG. 107–677, 2002: 2).

Senator Russel Feingold (D-WI) (Committee on Foreign Relations) submitted a prepared statement to the record of that hearing. He expressed his support for the preliminary agreement that had been agreed by the U.S. and Russia (ME) to reduce both nation’s nuclear weapons stockpiles (GP). He deemed the course of action preferable to a less formal agreement (ME). He urged for the inclusion of provisions ensuring their destruction (GP) and the verifiability of the destruction (GP) of those deadly weapons (CP). Meaningful nuclear arms reduction (GP) would only be achieved via dismantlement and destruction (ME) (S. HRG. 107–677, 2002: 3). During the same hearing, Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN) agreed with the NPR’s conclusion that the U.S. should “no longer plan, size, or sustain its forces [ME] as though Russia presented a smaller version of the threat posed by the former Soviet Union”

¹¹¹ Since the 2001 NPR was classified, with only a few excerpts having been leaked, analysis of the experts and lawmakers’ testimonies during this hearing was important to better ascertain the full contents of the strategic document.

(CP). America's nuclear force configuration (ME) should aim, instead, to deter multiple threats posed by a myriad of sources (GP). The country should "be lighter [GP], quicker [GP], more able to adapt" [GP] to the evolving post-Cold War environment (GP). As U.S. nuclear forces decreased in size (ME), nuclear stockpile safety and security were critical (GP); the nuclear force needed to be reliable (GP). It could not fall into disrepair (GP) and its safety could not falter (GP) lest confidence in the nuclear deterrence decreased (GP) (downsides of inaction).

The recently announced treaty between the U.S. and Russia (ME), which would lower both state's deploy nuclear weapons levels (GP), would contribute to a safer world (VP). The treaty represented incredible progress in the fulfilment of U.S. obligations under the NPT (VP) and reduced the probability of nuclear war (GP). However, the treaty alone could not resolve the threats facing America, whose primary national security threat was the combination between terrorism and WMDs (CP). To reap the benefits of the treaty (ME) (insufficient action), America needed to assist Russia, who could not afford to do it alone (CP) in fulfilling its START I dismantlement obligations (GP) via the Nunn-Lugar program (ME).

Lugar also described the Russia's tactical nuclear weapons as a problem which the country never wanted to discuss (CP). He believed that the country viewed their non-strategic nuclear weapons as a replacement for their strategic nuclear weapons, which were more costly and dangerous, being prone to accidents as maintenance declined. Thus, as Russia downsized its ambitions and nuclear problem, it did the same with the size of its nuclear weapons (CP) (S. HRG. 107-677, 2002: 4-5, 23).

On the same occasion, retired Admiral William Owens offered his testimony about the 2001 strategic document in the quality of an expert. The retired service member did not believe that a large-scale nuclear attack from any country would be realistic (CP) unless a new, very unstable leadership rose to power in Russia following a complete failure of government (CP). He stated that he could not think of a requirement – present or future – for the current levels of U.S. strategic nuclear weapons (ME), or for planning to maintain, up to the year 2012, around 2,000 deployed nuclear weapons (ME). Let alone, he continued, the several thousand that would be kept in the reserve until that date (ME). Unless, the Admiral posited, the decision was related to "some fear of what happens in Russia" (GP). To which he added, "we must maintain a readiness to deal with that" (GP) (agrees with goal). However, the policy made it doubtful that the U.S. was not targeting Russia (CP), and that the new relationship with the country was based on "a new trust," in a manner akin to those established with the U.K. and France (CP).

Owens asked that the nuclear weapons-related costs be considered (GP) (downside), given that they could be used to address other threats or national security priorities (GP). Of even greater importance for the Admiral was the risk of America being perceived as insincere about wanting to make nuclear weapons less viable (VP) (downside) and sparking a continuing arms competition (GP) (downside). Owens also believed that America ought to be leading with respect to nuclear reductions below the levels being presently considered (VP). He stated that "in this new world" (CP), the U.S.-

NATO nuclear capability (ME) “hardly [melded] the alliance” (VP) (GP) (weak linkage between the action and the goal of preserving NATO unity). He claimed that the action undermined pursuit of the goal of eliminating every Russian tactical nuclear weapon (GP), and thus European security (GP) (the two goals outweighed the contributions to NATO unity delivered by the U.S.-NATO nuclear capability). He believed that the threat of Russia’s tactical nuclear weapons (CP) outweighed having a small NATO nuclear force (ME). The Admiral believed that Moscow was holding on to their non-strategic nuclear arsenal as a hedge against America’s conventional superiority (CP). He suspected that many U.S. policymakers supported NATO’s nuclear mission (ME), not solely to foster unity within the alliance (VP) (GP), but possibly to have a genuine capability against Russia as well (GP) (S. HRG. 107–677: 14, 16-18, 23).

During the same Senate hearing, Steven Weinberg, also an expert, believed that there was no possible justification maintaining a large, obsolete nuclear arsenal (ME), since even with an unlikely fast missile development, no country could threaten America’s sea-based deterrent for decades to come, other than Russia (CP). He could not think of any threat (CP) that would require the nuclear forces that the U.S. would possess by the time the U.S.-Russian arms control treaty would expire (i.e., the SORT) (ME). Weinberg called for a threats-based approach (CP) when making such decisions.

The only reason for retaining such a large nuclear arsenal would be to launch a preemptive attack against Russian strategic weapons (ME). After all, the great size of America’s nuclear forces would be irrelevant against other states (ME). With Russia’s nuclear forces becoming increasingly mobile, America’s nuclear forces might be able to put them at risk of a preemptive strike (CP). However, the course of action would be incredibly dangerous for both states (ME). The one true value of America’s large nuclear weapons arsenal (ME) was in enabling to country to exchange deep reductions (ME) in return for equivalent cuts in Russia’s nuclear forces (GP) – a first step toward reaching levels below a thousand nuclear weapons of all sorts (GP), a number recommended by the National Academy of Sciences (ME) (source of authority). While the exchange (ME) would not remove the threat of a mistaken Russian launch (GP), it would lower the number of casualties of such a scenario from hundreds of millions to millions of tens of millions (GP). The action would also mitigate the possibility of Russian’s nuclear weapons or other sensitive materials being acquired by terrorists, criminals, or hostile states (GP). The two states should pursue binding, ratified nuclear arms treaties (ME) which prioritized maximum transparency (GP) and irreversibility (GP) over the greatest possible future flexibility (GP).

While the future was indeed uncertain (CP), maximizing U.S. nuclear capabilities (ME) would only add up to that uncertainty (GP) (downside). A crisis of an unknown nature in bilateral relations might put America at risk from a large-scale, mistaken Russian nuclear attack (CP). Such a threat was a chronic one (CP), and it was the only kind from which America might not be able to recover (CP). Rogue state and terrorist threats paled in comparison (CP). The large size of the U.S. nuclear force could also exacerbate other threats, such as the acquisition of nuclear weapons by terrorist groups (GP), giving

other countries a bad example (GP), or encouraging other states to start nuclear weapons programs (GP) (downsides).

Weinsberg joined other renowned scientists in a statement which he submitted to the record, where they welcomed the nuclear reductions agreed to by Washington and Moscow, while calling for their acceleration (GP). They also expressed worry over whether the reductions contemplated in the accord (ME) would reduce the threats (GP) posed by the proliferation of Russia's weapons or weapons-usable material (CP) and by a mistaken, massive Russian nuclear attack due to false warning of an American first-strike (CP). The scientists' concern was grounded in their uncertainty as to how the cuts would be structured and implemented. They perceived the U.S. President to want to retain its non-deployed nuclear warheads in storage as part of a "responsive reserve force" (ME) that could be uploaded onto delivery systems relatively quickly (GP). The scientists' opposed the action, seeing as it would grant Russia the same level of freedom in deciding what to do with its weapons (GP). Moreover, Russia's non-deployed nuclear weapons would remain vulnerable to proliferation (GP) (downsides). The grave threat posed by Russia's nuclear weapons complex (CP) could only be mitigated (GP) if the warheads were secured and dismantled, and their nuclear materials made unusable (GP).

The around 2,000 strategic warheads that would be retain following the conclusion of the proposed reductions (ME) were more than enough to deliver the Administration's goal of meeting unspecified contingencies in the indefinite future; they could address any foreseen threat (GP). The goal of hedging against threats one cannot even envisioned (GP) could not be prioritized over the threat posed by Moscow's degrading warning system (CP) resulting in a catastrophic nuclear launch (GP). Warheads removed from deployment (GP) under the new treaty (ME) should not return to active service in any capacity. Instead of storing them (ME), the U.S. ought to much more rapidly dismantle them and make their contents unusable (ME) while fostering transparency (GP) and increasing financial support to Russia (ME). The planned reductions denoted little regard for U.S. obligations under the NPT (VP).

The scientists also advised Bush to pursue postures and procedures with Russia (ME), underpinned by transparency (GP), to make retaliation contingent upon a delay of a few days (GP). Since most U.S. nuclear weapons would undoubtedly survive any attack (CP), the country could pursue the latter action without any compromise on its ability to retaliate (GP) (rejected downside) (S. HRG. 107-677, 2002: 33-34, 38, 53-54).

Loren Thompson, another expert witness, claimed that the Cold War was over (CP), and Moscow had now "normal" concerns about security and sovereignty (CP). As it pertained to Russia, American military planners were more concerned about nuclear accidents (CP) and the proliferation risks (CP) than about intentional hostility (CP). However, new dangers had surfaced, such as rogue states and terrorist groups (CP). The new challenges were unpredictable even in the short-term (CP), which led the NPR to advocate for a flexible (GP) capabilities-based approach (CP) (i.e., focused on the capabilities of adversaries). In other words, nuclear planning (ME) would not be based on threats (CP), but on what the U.S. would need to cope with the broadest spectrum of potential adversaries (GP). Since U.S.

capabilities needed to deter possible aggressors (GP), dissuade competitors (GP), reassure allies (GP), and defeat enemies (GP), influencing a very broad range of action required diverse capabilities (ME). U.S. offensive nuclear forces needed to be able to “[survive] a surprise attack, and then responding in a measured way to many different contingencies” (GP). The NPR had proposed a three-layered tiered approach: operationally deployed weapons, reserve weapons (which can become ready for operational duty within a timeframe of months or years), and inactive nuclear weapons (waiting dismantlement but which can be refurbished and become operational once again) (ME). The large reserve (ME) served as a hedge against unanticipated dangers (GP) and enabled the U.S. to carry out nuclear reductions (GP). Planned reductions of the operational force had been agreed with the Russians: today’s operational force of 6,000 warheads would be reduced by a third over the next five years, and by two thirds over the ensuing ten years (ME).

Whether the reductions would actually occur (ME) however, would depend on future security trends (CP) or the ability of conventional weapons, such as precision-guided conventional munitions (ME), still under development (CP), to take over some of the purposes of nuclear weapons (GP). In combination with conventional capabilities (ME), America’s nuclear force structure would equip future Presidents with a comprehensive array of options (ME) with which to address security threats (GP). The strategic reserve (ME) granted the country the ability to restore nuclear capabilities (GP), which could also be accomplished through the revitalization of the nuclear infrastructure (ME).

The expert rejected the view that the U.S. would not need more nuclear weapons than those contemplated in the NPR (ME) because the future was impossible to predict (CP). Until the U.S. rebuilt its nuclear industrial base (ME), a reserve force was necessary (ME) because it was possible that, in the future, America would need a larger nuclear force (ME). If the current nuclear deterrent would have been utterly insufficient 20 years ago (CP) (historical precedent as a reason for action), it was not a stretch to imagine requiring a large force at some point in the future (ME). For instance, if an adversary acquired the capability to track U.S. SSBNs (CP) (hypothetical yet possible future context of action), then the U.S. might need more submarines (ME), albeit maybe not more warheads (ME). Thompson posited that “[it was] really quite possible that Russia could be back in a generation, because they’ve been there before” (CP). He supported a policy of reductions, followed by reassessment, followed by reductions because it was prudent (ME). The U.S. could not relinquish its reserve (ME) because it could not build new nuclear weapons (CP) and it should not reduce its nuclear forces more quickly either (ME). Doing so would be reckless (ME).

Biden stated that he did not doubt the possibility of Russia “coming back” (CP), but did not envision that happening in a decade, given their economic struggles (CP), \$7.5 billion dollar defense budget (CP), and \$30 billion-dollar national budget (CP). Not to mention, he added, “the places in the world they’re situated at this moment [CP], [and] the direction things are going” (CP). Maybe Russia could come back in 30 years, however (CP). He was more concerned about the downside of U.S. action vis-à-vis China (GP), since he perceived the current Russian leadership to “desire to look West,” which

had not happened since Peter the Great (CP). Still, whether that desire could be sustained was unclear (CP) and was dependent on what the U.S. did (ME) to promote it (GP) or to hinder it (GP) (downside).

Weinberg raised a hypothetical scenario whereby Russia had indeed “come back” (CP) (hypothetical yet possible future context of action), which he agreed it was possible (CP). If that were to happen, he argued that one would be in a “better world” (VP) if Russia and the United States had reduced their nuclear arsenals to only a few hundred (GP). As such, comparable (GP) reductions with Moscow (ME) would be preferable to the U.S. maintaining a larger nuclear reserve (ME).

Thompson questioned Weinberg’s policy preference, pointing out the possibility of Russia hiding a few hundred nuclear weapons (CP), which given the small nuclear arsenals of both nations (ME) granted Moscow a “major strategic advantage” (GP) (downside). He claimed the Administration was concerned with such a scenario (CP): “that by the time you realize the other guy isn’t playing by your rules, if you’re low enough, you may have lost” (GP) (downside). Responding to Biden, Thompson minimized the Chinese near-term threat, deeming it to be less significant than many considered it to be (CP). He noted Beijing’s incredible restraint as it pertained to their nuclear forces, which had lasted for more than a generation (CP), and emphasized China’s focus on regional threats such as Russia, India and Vietnam (CP) (S. HRG. 107–677, 2002: 39-41, 54-59, 62).

During the same hearing, Joseph Cirincione claimed that the NPR did not move beyond Cold War paradigms (GP). It retained the conflict’s reasons underpinning the size (ME) and the goals (GP) (rejected premises) of the U.S. nuclear arsenal, despite downsizing it (GP). At the same time, the document seemed to abandon what had been one of the goals of the failed START III: ensuring irreversible (GP) and transparent (GP) nuclear reductions (ME).

The document still called for preserving a considerable nuclear weapons force on high alert for the foreseeable future (ME). The action motivated other states to construct larger forces (GP) – Russia, especially (GP) (downsides). As result, nuclear-weapon accidents (GP), miscalculations (GP), and the threat of Russian arms being acquired by terrorist groups would increase (GP) (downsides).

The specialist criticized the process whereby the NPR had been elaborated, seeing as it had been written by those who had the most vested interest in nuclear weapons – the nuclear military command structure and the nuclear laboratories – without their contributions being combined with the expertise of a wider array of scientific and military experts (VP) (self-interest as a premise informing U.S. nuclear planning). Once finished, the nuclear reductions that Bush had articulated (ME), coupled with the treaty that the U.S. would soon sign with Moscow (ME), would leave the U.S. with between 9,470 and 9,970 nuclear weapons by 2012¹¹² (GP) (insufficiently delivered reductions goal).

¹¹² As the expert explains, in addition to the strategic nuclear weapons, there were also tactical nuclear weapons and warheads in storage. Although the abovementioned figures did not include non-intact warheads, Cirincione stated that stored plutonium and highly enriched component should also be taken into account – the U.S. had 5,000 of such items that could be reassembled into nuclear weapons (S. HRG. 107–677, 2002: 47, 52). The 2012 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Yearbook projected that the U.S. inventory totaled around 8,000 nuclear forces in January 2012. The SIPRI estimate included deployed nuclear weapons (strategic

Nuclear planning (ME) should be based on threats (CP), not capabilities (ME) (GP) (i.e., a capabilities-based assessment, which entailed asking which capabilities were required [ME] to cope with the widest spectrum of potential adversaries [GP] on the basis of their capabilities [CP]). Starting with a threat assessment was the way things used to be done (CP) (precedent as a reason for action). Basing the U.S. force structure and budgets (ME) on capabilities (ME) (GP) “[was] no way to run a Defense Department” (ME). Capabilities-based assessments (CP) of U.S. military requirements (ME) “[allowed] for the development of any size force or any weapon system that [was] politically attractive [VP] [rejected premise], whether or not the threat [CP] [justified] these capabilities” [ME].

For instance, the review identified Russia¹¹³, China, North Korea, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Libya as potential nuclear contingencies (CP). While the future size of the U.S. nuclear stockpile (operationally deployed weapons plus the reserve/responsive force) was still undetermined, it would presumably number in the thousands (ME). Such large nuclear forces were needed (ME), according to the document, to expand the operational deployed force [ME] to meet the abovementioned contingencies (GP). Yet, the review, lacking a threat-based assessment, did not explain why thousands of deployed nuclear weapons plus thousands of more in the reserve would be required [ME] to engage militarily with Syria, Libya, or any other nation (ME). Cirincione claimed that the only conceivable military use for maintaining a large, dispersed nuclear stockpile which included 2,000 strategic deployed nuclear weapons on high alert (ME) was to attack Russia (GP). He asked what other reasons was the action based on, besides uncertainty (CP) (which he rejected as a premise), if not Russia, and the need to target its military, political and industrial sites (GP)? If Russia still was the targeted, he questioned if the deeper nuclear reductions proposed by Putin (ME) allowed the U.S. to reduce its nuclear forces even further (GP) and funnel the savings toward more urgent military needs (GP).

Cirincione referenced Admiral Richard Mies’ 11 July 2001 Senate hearing as his justification for preserving the strategic nuclear triad. While the former STRATCOM Commander did not explicitly mention Russia as a reason justifying the preservation of the triad, the country was the only one “that [had] the potential, if not the desire, to launch a sudden, large nuclear attack on the United States” (CP). The expert concluded that Russia had to be the reason (CP) why U.S. nuclear forces (ME) had to “remain capable of withstanding a first strike [GP] and responding after the attack with an overwhelming and devastating nuclear counter-attack” (GP). Indeed, in justifying the importance of maintaining the strategic nuclear triad, Mies had explained that U.S. ICBMs [ME] promoted stability [GP] by forcing a potential adversary pondering a disarming first-strike to account for their geographical dispersion (i.e., making it more difficult to destroy them all and prevent a powerful retaliation) (CP). The Admiral had also stated that the dispersal of U.S. strategic bombers (CP) enabled their survivability (GP), whereas

and tactical) as well as other nuclear warheads falling under three categories: in the reserve, not fully operational, and waiting dismantlement (Kile, 2012).

¹¹³ The NPR stated that a nuclear strike contingency with Russia would be unexpected albeit plausible (CP) (NPR, 2001: 4).

the SSBNs were the most survivable nuclear forces (GP) deterring (GP) or ensuring a powerful and assured retaliation against any adversary (GP).

For Cirincione, in seeking to change its relationship with Moscow (GP), America should not abandon arms control treaties (ME). U.S.-Russian relations would only meaningfully change (GP) when the U.S. no longer retained a nuclear force (ME) that targeted thousands of sites in Russia (GP). Arms controls treaties were not “Cold War relics” (ME) (i.e., outdated in the current environment) – nuclear weapons were (ME). And their fate and purpose (GP) needed to be negotiated (ME) (S. HRG. 107–677, 2002: 45-53).

On 15 May 2002, Jesse Helms (R-NC) and Joe Biden (D-MD), the ranking member and the chairman, respectively, of the Committee on Foreign Relations, wrote a letter to Colin Powell. Understanding that the administration had decided to negotiate a legally binding (VP) agreement with Russia on strategic arms reductions (ME), the senators urged Senate involvement. They claimed that, apart from SALT, all arms control agreements celebrated over the past 3 decades had been transmitted to the chamber (ME) (precedent), pursuant to the Treaty Clause of the Constitution (VP). Since the future agreement would likely incorporate or continue certain aspects of the START, they also invoked a declaration of the resolution of ratification of said treaty. According to declaration 5, the Senate intended “to consider for approval all international agreements obliging the United States to reduce or limit its military power in a significant matter” (VP). There was no constitutional alternative to transmittal of the concluded agreement to the chamber for advice and consent (VP) (Biden & Helms, 2002).

On December 2001, Pavel Podvig (2001: 1-4) noted that Russia and America felt very upbeat about their new relationship (CP). Still, little progress had been made on nuclear disarmament and arms control issues (CP) due to disagreements over the ABM Treaty and on how to reduce offensive weapons (ME). America had announced a reduction to a level between 1700 and 2200 deployed strategic nuclear weapons over the next decade (GP), but there would be, seemingly, little reductions beyond that (GP) (limited goal of action). On the other hand, Russia suggested a reduction to a level of 1500 warheads on each side, but insisted on doing so by means of a treaty. Otherwise, U.S. reductions would not be seen as real (GP) (downside). Despite the rapprochement (CP), U.S.-Russian relations were still marked “by a significant degree of mistrust and [had] a fairly strong confrontational component” (CP). Thus, “[n]uclear deterrence [GP] [was] still considered an important component of the relationship”, although its nature changed: the number of nuclear weapons necessary for “unacceptable damage” came down to the single digits on both sides (CP). Both states had finally admitted that their nuclear arsenals are far too large (CP), but remained reluctant to reduce them, being unsure of how far they could go (GP). Podvig explained that efforts to revitalize traditional arms control had failed (ME) because a Cold War arms race was unlikely (CP).

America was willing to carry out reductions (GP) even in absence of Russian reciprocity (GP). This was shown by “the lack of U.S. reaction to Russia’s threats to respond to missile defense

development by either extending the service lives of its heavy ICBMs [CP] or deploying multiple warheads on its new Topol-M missiles” (CP). Washington was likewise unconcerned about Moscow’s nuclear testing program (CP). The author believed that those attitudes were explained by America’s hedge policy (ME) (i.e., preservation of a responsive force), which would allow it “to get its forces back to Cold War levels” (GP) and by Russia’s inability to maintain current levels of strategic forces (CP). Podvig argued that the traditional arms control agenda (e.g., a verifiable disarmament agreement or the ABM Treaty) “[had] been taken over by political issues that have nothing to do with arms control,” such as Russia’s intent on being perceived by the U.S. as an equal partner (CP). Thus, strategic parity and missile defense were questions that could not disappear until the underlying political issues were solved (CP). In sum, “progress on substantive arms control issues [was] virtually impossible” (ME). The author noted, however, that a comprehensive treaty (ME) with verification measures and control was hardly practical (GP), and maybe unnecessary (ME). He suggested that progress (GP) could be made in areas outside the realm of arms control instead, such as nuclear warhead dismantlement. Doing so might prove more important than traditional arms control approaches (ME) (The End of Strategic Arms Control? The End of Strategic Arms Control?).

On 25 January 2002, Sokov (2001: 1-4) remarked that the long ABM Treaty saga had ended without the initiation of a strategic nuclear weapons buildup by Russia (CP). The main risk between America and Russia was no longer direct conflict, “but a crisis generated by misperception, misunderstanding, or even provocation that might upset the emerging atmosphere of partnership” (CP). The U.S.-Russian relationship was being perceived too optimistically (CP).

The expert questioned the idea that nuclear deterrence no longer dictated U.S.-Russian relations (GP). To him, in the absence of “[a] long track record of cooperation and trust,” the nuclear capability of one state automatically generated security concerns on the part of another, triggering the creation of the ability to deter (CP). Still, in theory, the U.S. and Russia could build a relationship in which they did not deter each other (GP), and progress had been made in that direction since the late 1980’s (CP). For Sokov, U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenal reductions increased the relevance of other countries’ nuclear weapons (GP=, especially China’s (GP) (downside), which was expanding and modernizing its strategic nuclear arsenal (CP).

According to Sokov, it would be prudent to account for Russia’s sensitivities (GP). He also identified a propensity to overlook deterrence (CP), to overestimate the two countries’ relationship (CP), and to hastily make plans to abandon nuclear deterrence (GP) and existing arms control treaties (ME). He believed that mutual deterrence between the two states was likely to disappear (GP), but the process would likely be long (CP).

The expert warned against doing away with deterrence for the time being (GP). Doing so risked the reemergence of old problems (GP), and it could “derail progress on political, economic, and international issues” (GP) (downsides of abandoning deterrence). He did not reject the goal of moving

away from nuclear deterrence (GP); but considered that abandoning it (GP) (and arms control [ME]) in a hurry, as it was currently being attempted, was neither prudent nor careful GP) (downside).

Sokov believed that new agreements were still necessary, although they could be different from those celebrated during the Cold War (ME) since current goals differed. Imposing quantitative and qualitative limitations was key during the Cold War (GP) (downplayed goal), but achieving transparency was now more important (GP). That was because the two countries were not as concerned about each other's nuclear arsenal's capabilities and numbers (CP). Inaction (ME) or informal regimes were not the best policy options (ME). The Bush-Gorbachev presidential initiatives regarding tactical nuclear weapons showed the dangers of such an approach (ME). Russia's tactical nuclear arsenal was excessive (CP), and the suspected deployment of one of such weapons nearly caused a scandal in 2001 (CP).

According to the author, in the absence of arms control agreements (ME) that ensured the transmission of reliable information between the two sides (GP), conflicts could emerge (GP) (consequences on goals). Without transparency (GP), several downsides could arise. Russia and the United States would continue (CP) to be exceedingly vulnerable to misperceptions and misinterpretations (GP), and the risk of crises would increase (GP). Russia's integration in the West and U.S.-Russia cooperation could likewise be hindered (GP) (downsides of not pursuing an agreement).

Thus, for Sokov, nuclear arms reductions should be codified in a bilateral agreement (ME) and accompanied by high-level working groups (ME) and a new data exchange (ME) and transparency (GP) regime to replace existing ones (including START) (ME). The nuclear balance still needed to be managed (GP), although that goal could likely be achieved "in less stringent, formal ways than before." But some institutional mechanism was still needed (ME). Increasingly, achieving stability (GP) should be done through multilateral arms control treaties (ME). The author doubted that transparency could be achieved (GP) by means of nonbinding, unilateral statements of intention (ME), given the added complexities of a multilateral nuclear balance (CP) (The ABM Treaty: The ABM Treaty: The End of One Saga and the Start of Another).

2. Juxtaposition of reasons for action

We start by juxtaposing the circumstantial premises of the securitizing actors with those of the audience. The securitizing actors identified the threats posed by terrorism, nuclear proliferation, missiles, and WMDs. The Cold War was now over, and the current strategic environment was uncertain and unpredictable. Russia, described as a partner or a friend, cooperated with the U.S. in the fight against terrorism, but also increasingly in other spheres. At the same time, changes in the country were possible. Moscow and Washington were understood to possess an excessive number of nuclear weapons. Powell

and Rumsfeld showed concern over Russia's tactical nuclear weapons, but from a nuclear proliferation standpoint. It was dangerous for the U.S. and Russia to leave their nuclear weapons where they were.

When it came to the audience, mutual agreement was found across the aisle and among experts on the existence of differences between the U.S. and Russia on nuclear matters as well as concerning Iraq and the UN Security Council. Among specialists, Russian sensibilities, and its intent on being treated as an equal partner were also noted. The new relationship with Moscow was described in very positive terms by Lugar, whereas Biden was less certain about it, and experts even less so. Several specialists identified mistrust and crisis potential, despite no immediate risk of war.

Both senators acknowledged the risks associated with both states' nuclear arsenals from the standpoint of Russia's nuclear stockpile safety and proliferation potential, but also in terms of the risk of missiles being launched at one another. There was a general understanding among the audience that Russia wanted to carry out even deeper strategic reductions and that it could not maintain current levels. Two experts perceive the nuclear arsenals as excessive, but also the administration's disinterest in going lower. As for tactical nuclear weapons, they were perceived as destabilizing by Biden, with Sokov stressing that they could generate a crisis in a more stressful political environment. Lugar believed that the Senate did not play any role in a potential treaty withdrawal, while Biden considered it an open constitutional question for which there was not enough senatorial support to resolve in favor of the chamber.

As for goal premises, the securitizing actors emphasized, above all, improving relations with Russia, reducing the number of nuclear weapons, and maintaining the flexibility to tackle new threats and challenges. They also wanted to contribute to or preserve national security. Bush and Rumsfeld disregarded as a goal of action the kind of regulations present in previous arms control treaties. The president and Powell trusted that the goals of transparency, confidence, and predictability would be delivered by START verification measures. Rumsfeld believed that the SORT itself contributed to predictability, but also to dialogue, consultations, and stability. Rice and Rumsfeld identified desirable changes to U.S. nuclear deterrence strategy. Specifically, the NSA acknowledged the strategic value of achieving a different force readiness due to lower levels of deployed warheads. The DOD Secretary identified a desirable shift toward the deterrence of new opponents, instead of Russia. The reductions codified in the SORT would not bring national security consequences.

For Powell, the fact that the treaty's expiration would allow both parties to return to pre-SORT deployed force numbers did not constitute a downside on U.S. goals, seeing as they could opt to extend the accord. According to Rumsfeld, the establishment of a reduction schedule was not a pursued goal because it would jeopardize another: flexibility. The administration did not seek deeper reductions because the dissuasion of near-peer adversaries was a higher priority goal. The fact that both parties would be able to legally return to pre-SORT levels immediately after the expiration date of the treaty was downplayed as a compromise on U.S. goals by Powell, who believed that an agreement on a treaty extension could be reached (future CP and ME perceived).

Same as the securitizing actors, the audience established the preservation of the new U.S.-Russian relationship as an important goal. In fact, both senators believed that not ratifying the treaty would have the downside of hurting the relationship. However, Biden, Sokov and the ACA shared their concerns over the fact that bilateral relations would be hurt by the fact that the treaty favored flexibility over confidence, predictability, and transparency. Misunderstandings, misperceptions, and mistrust could arise as results and prevent the relationship from improving. Lugar accepted the view of the administration that flexibility was preferred, however, despite admitting that it might increase Russia's proliferation risk if its weapons and materials were not appropriately stockpiled. The same downside on U.S. goals due to the SORT was also identified by Biden and the ACA. Overall, the republican focused on the fact that the agreement achieved binding reductions and a framework for the destruction of Russian warheads (even if it was not mandated). Biden and most experts put a greater emphasis on the goals that the treaty did not achieve but were nonetheless important. Pikayev was an outlier among experts in the sense his main goal was to avoid substantial progress on nuclear matters so as to not spoil U.S.-Russian relations.

Concerning value premises, the securitizing actors utilized, for the most part, widely shared values, namely openness, cooperation, and peace. These values underscored the goal of improved relations with Russia. While the experts did not utilize value premises, they featured in Biden and Lugar's discourse. Both stressed the Senate's role in overseeing the implementation of the treaty, which was fulfilled by one of the conditions of the resolution of ratification. As for the Senate's role on treaty termination, the two senators argued that it was an open constitutional question. However, while the republican legislator noted the lack of a textual basis grating the Senate that role, as well the absence of an established practice, Biden, argued in support of the chamber's shared power with the Executive in the treaty-making process. However, the democrat believed it not to be "worth the candle" pursuing amendments requiring the White House to get the advice and consent of the Senate for treaty withdrawal, or for the president to give the chamber advance notice of such a decision. He accepted to compromise that value premise because there was not enough at stake when it came to the treaty, and due to the perceive consequences of failing to ratify it. Furthermore, both senators brought up the administration's commitment to consult with the Senate on treaty withdrawal. The two legislators also stressed the administration's commitment to destroy warheads, despite the lack of codification in the SORT. Biden stated that his support for the treaty was partly based on that commitment, and that failure to live up to it would endanger the process whereby the Senate gives advice and consent to the ratification of the SORT and any future accords. Both lawmakers believed the SORT to advance the national interest.

Moving on to means-end premises, we found that the securitizing actors stressed that the treaty delivered the goals they sought. The agreement would contribute, along with other actions, to a better U.S.-Russian relationship; one based on cooperation, trust, and friendship. The treaty would grant the U.S. flexibility to address future challenges and granted both parties a path toward considerable

reductions. It promoted predictability and mutual security and allowed the U.S. to leave the Cold War behind and focus on new threats and challenges.

The securitizing actors emphasized that the treaty was a better policy choice than traditional arms control, which led to lengthy impasses. The verification provisions that characterized traditional approaches to arms control were deemed not necessary, given better relations with Russia and the lack of motivation of either side to violate the agreement. Goals such as transparency, confidence, predictability, and knowledge of Russian arms forces could be delivered by the START verification provision which were still in effect. The Bilateral Implementation Committee could also help with matters of transparency.

The SORT was also preferable to unilateral disarmament because it would achieve goals that the latter would not. It codified reciprocal, binding reductions, and it would outlast the Putin and Bush presidencies. The treaty was an acceptable policy path, but not the preferable option.

The fact that the SORT failed to provide for the elimination of warheads did not weaken its value or its standing as the best policy course. There was a lack of precedent for an arms control treaty that eliminated warheads, and the reductions would happen anyway. Rumsfeld also rejected the notion of “irreversible” reductions and stressed the desirability of stockpiling warheads. To lower U.S. reliance on nuclear weapons and enable the reductions envisioned, the treaty would not be a sufficient action. It would be accompanied by the development of transformational capabilities such as missile defense and conventional strike means.

As for the audience’s means-end premises, we find discrepancies across the aisle. For Lugar, the SORT delivered several important goals. It delivered warhead reductions and provided a framework for their elimination, improved U.S.-Russian relations, granted the U.S. flexibility regarding its strategic systems, maintained arms control momentum, and did not compromise American national security nor its obligations. On the other hand, not ratifying the treaty would indeed hurt relations with Russia.

Seeking a treaty with provisions for verification of reductions and a schedule for their implementation was not the best course of action. On the contrary, the national interests were better served by the treaty’s flexibility, which allowed the U.S. to make its own schedule. Inaction was also not preferable to the agreement, because current levels of deployed nuclear weapons were too dangerous, expensive, and unnecessary. Traditional arms control was rejected as an alternative due to it being an overly lengthy and uncertain process. Amendments were discouraged by the senator because they put the treaty in jeopardy. Other withdrawal provisions were unnecessary in the current environment.

The SORT was not sufficient: complementary actions were needed. DOE programs, the Nunn-Lugar program, and the START verification regime were necessary to achieve transparency. Other actions were needed to de-alert nuclear weapons (thus reducing the risk of accidental launches) and to keep Russia’s tactical nuclear weapons safe, secure, and accounted for (to mitigate proliferation risks). The Nunn-Lugar program (and Russian willingness) would lead to the destruction of Russian warheads and mitigate proliferation risks caused by the SORT. Overall, the

Biden, who also supported the SORT, saw eye to eye with Lugar on certain points. He agreed that the Nunn-Lugar program would guarantee the destruction of Russian warheads. He opposed amending the treaty, fearing jeopardizing it, and concurred that including provisions on tactical nuclear weapons would not have been feasible. He also believed, like Lugar, that the treaty created momentum for mutual reductions and that not ratifying it would have downsides in U.S.-Russian relations.

For Biden, the treaty communicated good faith to Russia, made the world a safer place and advanced the national interest. Still, it didn't deliver several wanted goals. It did not force parties to maintain the reductions after 2012; set implementation benchmarks; remove nuclear weapons from hair-trigger, eliminate MIRV-ing; or promote confidence, transparency, and protection through verification. Overall, the treaty did not contain all that Biden wished it had but it was better than nothing.

The destruction of Russian warheads and obtaining visibility into Russian forces would be achieved via the Nunn-Lugar program and the START verification regime. Other goals, such as mitigating the threat of Russian tactical nuclear weapons, and achieving reductions as soon as possible and beyond SORT levels, were addressed, albeit not resolved (since they were non-binding), via declarations in the resolution of ratification. Thus, the accord was insufficient and would be counterproductive if not followed by other actions. Furthermore, in Biden's view, the only way to improve the new U.S.-Russian relationship would be by taking nuclear weapons off hair-trigger status.

Ratification was supported despite the potential downsides of increasing the risk of accidental launch (in case of Russian reliance on MIRV-ing) and of greater nuclear proliferation risks (in case reduced Russian weapons and materials were not adequately stored). By not achieving verification, the SORT also hazarded negative impacts on U.S.-Russian relations.

The experts supported the Moscow Treaty. Podvig and Sokov argued that traditional Cold War-style arms control treaties were possibly unnecessary. Sokov also rejected informal regimes, given America's negative experience with the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives. Still, as Sokov and the ACA pointed out, verification provisions and associated goals such as transparency and predictability were not delivered by the course of action. While the ACA, Sokov, and Mosher et al. stressed the importance of continued negotiations and agreements, Pikayev and Podvig took a different position. The former doubted that real progress could be achieved, and the latter wanted to avoid it altogether, so as not to harm U.S.-Russian relations. So as to achieved goals not delivered by the SORT, the ACA, Sokov and Mosher et al. suggested complementary actions to the treaty, such as: replacing the START regime, taking nuclear weapons off alert, accelerating reductions, eliminating excess nuclear weapons, restricting strategic missiles and bombers, offering Russia additional assistance, continuing negotiations with Moscow, and granting Russia access to early-warning and ICBM forces information. Thus, several experts echoed Biden's concerns about the many goals that were not delivered by the SORT and stressed the need to follow the treaty with complementary actions – a position also held by both senators.

The New START Treaty, nuclear modernization, and a renewed commitment to missile defense (Discourses of section 5.1 of Chapter 5)

1. Political Discourse Analysis

1.1. Securitizing actor discourse

On 26 March 2010, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton urged the ratification of the New START. America and Russia still possessed over 90% of the world's nuclear weapons, although the Cold War was long over (CP). Those arsenals were unnecessary to defend America and its allies from today's greatest threats: terrorism and nuclear proliferation (CP). The U.S. "[would] continue to have disagreements with [its] Russian friends" (CP), but there were opportunities for cooperation (CP).

The senator wanted to reduce the threat posed by nuclear weapons (GP) and make verifiable and significant reductions to U.S. and Russian arsenals (GP). She wanted America to increase cooperation with Russia (GP), to protect nuclear materials from proliferation (GP), and to strengthen the global non-proliferation regime (GP). The treaty advanced the national interest (VP) and was beneficial to global security and stability (VP).

The New START allowed the U.S. (ME) to hold other countries accountable for their international responsibilities (especially Iran and North Korea) (GP) by demonstrating American commitment to progress toward nuclear disarmament under the NPT (VP). The New START was essential (ME) to make progress on nuclear non-proliferation (GP), nuclear security (GP), and counterterrorism (GP) because it was part of a broader effort (ME) to reset relations with Russia (GP). The treaty was a crucial (ME) step forward in Russo-American cooperation (GP). A U.S.-Russian arms control agreement without a verification regime was not the best course of action (ME). Achieving verification (GP) brought transparency (GP) and built trust (GP), which in turned reduced (GP) chances of miscalculation (CP) and misunderstandings (CP). The New START was beneficial to the U.S. and Russia (ME) and would generate real results (ME) ("Press Briefing," 2010).

On 26 March 2010, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates backed the New START and called for heavier investments in the American nuclear infrastructure.

He explained that the U.S. nuclear arsenal continued to be an important pillar of America's defense posture (CP), both for deterrence (GP) and assurance of allies and partners (GP). However, those goals could be achieved with fewer nuclear weapons (ME) (staying the course is not the best option). The world had changed, and America and Russia had gone "from being one misstep away from MAD to the substantial arms reductions of this new agreement" (CP). Gates wanted a safer and more secure world (VP).

The New START achieved or contributed to several goals of the secretary (ME): strengthening nuclear stability (GP), reducing the number of deployed strategic nuclear weapons (GP), and ensuring an effective verification regime (GP). It was another milestone from arms control to disarmament (ME). Investments on the nuclear complex were necessary (ME) to keep U.S. nuclear weapons effective, secure, and safe as the number of nuclear weapons declined (GP).

Gates argued that the agreement would not lead to negative impacts on U.S. goals: it would not affect the strength of America's nuclear triad (GP) and did not limit the improvement and deployment of missile defense systems (GP). Thus, the treaty did not negatively impact U.S. plans to protect itself and its allies (GP) ("Press Briefing," 2010).

In April 2010, the DOD's NPR was released. The document called for the ratification and implementation of the New START Treaty. The review also stated that the United States ought to modernize its nuclear weapons-supporting facilities.

The NPR asserted that the nature of the relationship between America and Russia had fundamentally changed since the Cold War (CP). Despite political differences and Russia's continued modernization of its nuclear forces, the two countries were no longer adversaries and chances of military confrontation were strongly reduced (CP). The U.S. and Russia cooperated on matters of shared interest, including nuclear terrorism and nuclear non-proliferation (CP), which were progressively more urgent threats (CP). The review underscored the president's belief that it was important to move on from "Cold War thinking" (CP) (the Cold War should not inform action).

America's allies and partners "[were] on the front lines of a changing global security environment." Some were in a position of unprecedented security and sought a reduced reliance on nuclear deterrence. Others faced new challenges and counted on America's protection (CP). There were concerns, among U.S. allies, regarding Russia's non-strategic nuclear forces (CP).

Over the last ten years, the nuclear infrastructure and its workforce had become underdeveloped and underfunded (CP). The nuclear complex "had fallen into neglect," being comprised of "oversized and costly-to-maintain facilities" some of which dating back to the Manhattan Project (CP). There were mounting security, safety, and environmental issues, as well as costs associated with the facilities (CP). The U.S. nuclear stockpile was sustained "well beyond [its] originally planned lifetime" by means of a warhead life extension program which refurbished warheads "to nearly original specifications" (CP). According to current plans, the Minuteman III ICBMs and Trident II SLBMs would be sustained for at least two decades (CP). A successor to the Ohio-class submarine was already under development (CP).

and the process would continue (ME). Decisions on a follow-on ICBM, and on a replacement to the current ALCM were not yet made (CP). The service life of the Minuteman III would end in 2030, while the ALCM would end its service life over the next decade (CP). Current U.S. levels were of approximately 2,200 deployed strategic nuclear warheads (CP).

America had made security commitments to allies and other security partners (VP). The U.S. would “maintain a safe, secure, and effective arsenal,” for as long as nuclear weapons existed (VP) (commitment). The country “[sought] the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons” (VP).

The United States ought to ensure stability with existing nuclear powers (GP) and counter threats presented by emerging nuclear-armed countries (GP). Doing so also allowed the United States to protect itself and its allies against nuclear threats and intimidation (GP) and discourage the latter from pursuing their own nuclear weapons (GP). Promoting strategic stability (GP) and increasing transparency (GP) and mutual confidence with Russia (GP) helped creating the conditions for a nuclear-weapons free world (GP) and build a stronger foundation for tackling nuclear terrorism and nuclear proliferation (GP). Ensuring verification (GP) and transparency (GP) of American and Russian nuclear arsenals would foster stability (GP) and predictability (GP) in bilateral strategic relations.

By fulfilling NPT nuclear disarmament obligations (VP), the U.S. could mobilize international support for non-proliferation and nuclear security measures worldwide (ME). The U.S. aimed to shift its focus toward nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism (GP) and maintain a smaller nuclear triad (GP). It wanted to increase the number of nuclear warheads waiting dismantlement (GP). The country also sought to avoid a “dangerous nuclear competition” with Russia (GP), including by means of establishing wide-ranging cooperation on missile defense with the country (ME) (potential future course of action). The entering into force of the New START contributed to the abovementioned goals and underscored the aforesaid values (ME). The treaty also set the stage (ME) (potential future course of action) for deeper, verifiable nuclear reductions” (GP). The U.S., like Russia, had unnecessary levels of nuclear weapons for deterrence (ME) (maintaining current levels was not the best policy). While strict nuclear parity was not as compelling as it was during the Cold War because of improved U.S.-Russian relations (CP), Moscow’s nuclear forces (CP) continued to be a significant factor in deciding how fast and how much America was prepared to reduce its own (ME). That was because great disparities in nuclear capabilities could lead to downsides on U.S. goals by creating concerns on both sides (CP), as well as among America’s allies and partners (CP). Moreover, such disparities “[might] not be conducive to maintaining a stable, long-term strategic relationship, especially as nuclear forces [became] significantly reduced” (GP). Thus, non-mutual reductions were rejected as a policy alternative (ME): in moving to lower levels, it was important that the country was joined by Russia (ME). In negotiating the New START, the U.S. considered many lower levels of nuclear weapons, and the numbers that were agreed on received the approval of the President, the JCS, STRATCOM and the DOD Secretary (ME).

The NPR rebuffed several potential consequences of the New START on U.S. goals. It stated that it would not negatively affect the contributions of non-nuclear systems to American regional

deterrence (GP) nor ally and partner reassurance goals (GP). That was because the U.S. would avoid limitations on missile defense (ME) and preserve options for the use of long-range missile systems and heavy bombers in conventional roles (ME). Additionally, the U.S. “could sustain stable deterrence [GP] with significantly fewer deployed strategic nuclear warheads, assuming parallel Russian reductions (GP). That was due to recent, fundamental changes in the security environment (CP), the growth of U.S. conventional military capabilities (CP), the easing of Cold War rivalries (CP), and the improvements in missile defenses (CP). Furthermore, the nuclear force reductions under the New START would be carried out “in ways that [maintained] the reliability and effectiveness of [U.S.] security assurances to [U.S.] allies and partners” (GP). The U.S. also retained the ability, under the New START, to adjust its planned force structures (GP). To maintain strategic stability at the best cost (GP), America’s reductions under the New START would be accompanied by efforts to retain the strategic nuclear triad (ME). The triad (ME) would provide the U.S. with an assured second-strike capability (GP), supporting strategic stability (GP). The document stressed the importance of ensuring strategic stability with existing nuclear powers, especially Russia (GP) and China (GP), with the former being America’s only peer in the realm of nuclear weapons capabilities (CP). The NPR explained that the number of strategic delivery vehicles could be reduced (GP) while maintaining stable deterrence (GP). The country would also maintain the ability to “upload” several non-deployed nuclear weapons (ME) as a hedge (GP).

The NPR put forward several complementary courses of action to achieve goals that the New START could not fully deliver or did not address (ME). Washington ought to pursue post-New START agreements and/or parallel voluntary measures with Russia (ME) to achieve further transparency (GP), and broader reductions, encompassing more than just deployed strategic nuclear weapons (GP). Future reductions were meant to “continue to strengthen deterrence of potential regional adversaries, strategic stability vis-à-vis Russia and China, and assurance of [U.S.] allies and partners” (GP). The U.S. should intensify its efforts to mobilize international support for measures (ME) aimed at tackling nuclear non-proliferation and promoting nuclear disarmament (GP). Those efforts were expected to be facilitated by the conclusion of the New START (ME). The U.S. would also “de-MIRV” all deployed ICBMs (ME) to “enhance the stability of the nuclear balance by reducing the incentives for either [Russia or America] to strike first” (GP). The U.S. also sought to increase warning and decision time (GP) to reduce the risks of nuclear use due to misjudgments or false warning (GP). It was contemplating its options in that regard.

The U.S. sought to engage with other nuclear weapon states (ME), including China, on means of expanding the nuclear reductions process (GP). The document proposed the pursuit of bilateral, high-level talks on strategic stability with Russia and China (ME) for “more stable, resilient, and transparent strategic relationships (GP). That was because maintaining strategic stability at lowered force levels (GP) was expected to “be an enduring and evolving challenge for the United States in the years ahead,” compounded by Russia and China’s nuclear and other military modernization programs (CP). Moscow and Beijing also claimed that U.S. conventional missile programs and missile defenses were destabilizing (CP). As a result, dialogue with the two states would be even more important (ME).

Strategic dialogue with Russia (ME) aimed at assuring that U.S. missile defenses and future conventional long-range ballistic systems were not intended to alter the strategic balance with the country (GP). The U.S. also sought explanations from Russia regarding its modernization program and military doctrine (GP) and make progress on the issue of Russia's tactical nuclear weapons (GP). The United States believed that building more stable relations with China and Russia (GP) could lead to "a reassuring and stabilizing effect in their regions" (GP) and enable cooperation on nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism (GP).

The Stockpile Stewardship Program (SSP) (ME) and investments in the nuclear infrastructure (ME) and human capital (ME) were essential to facilitate reductions (GP) while sustaining deterrence under the New START and beyond it (GP). Those actions allowed America (ME) to make major stockpile reductions by reducing the need to maintain "large numbers of non-deployed warheads as a hedge against technical [GP] or geopolitical surprise" (GP). Modernization and workforce investments was crucial (ME) to the acceleration of the dismantlement of unnecessary nuclear weapons (GP) and overall U.S. arms control and non-proliferation objectives (GP). The country would preserve the smallest possible nuclear stockpile (ME) that fulfilled U.S. deterrence requirements (GP).

The SSP would ensure (ME) the safety, security, and effectiveness of its nuclear stockpile (GP) without the development of new warheads (ME) or nuclear testing (ME) (the two courses of action are not necessary). By certifying that each weapon type was reliable (GP), America credibly assured its non-nuclear allies and partners that they did not have to acquire their own nuclear weapons (GP), "while seeking greater stockpile reductions than otherwise possible" (GP). Thus, a modern physical infrastructure (national laboratories and supporting facilities) (ME) and an extremely competent and specialized workforce (ME) would "sustain the nuclear deterrent [GP] and support the President's nuclear security agenda" (GP). The modernization (ME) of America's aging nuclear complex infrastructure (CP), along with human capital investments (ME) would allow the country to significantly reduce the number of nuclear weapons retained (GP) as a hedge against geopolitical or technical surprise (GP). It would also enable the dismantlement of retired warheads (GP) and America's understanding of foreign nuclear weapons activities (GP) (NPR, 2010: iv-vii, ix-xii, xiv, 1, 5-7, 12, 19-25, 28-30, 37-42, 46-47).

On 18 May 2010, Michael Mullen, chairman of the JCS, spoke to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, recommending the ratification and implementation of the New START. He emphasized the continuing role of nuclear weapons in the defense of the U.S. (CP), and the fact that the START had expired six months ago, leaving the country without a treaty with Russia (CP). He also stated that the U.S. nuclear complex was "aging" (CP).

Mullen wanted to strengthen transparency and openness in relations with Russia (GP), to prevent nuclear terrorism (GP) and mitigate nuclear proliferation risks (GP). He sought to reduce American and Russian strategic nuclear arsenals (GP) while strengthening national security (GP) and strategic stability (GP).

The chairman believed that those goals would be achieved by the treaty (ME). He described the verification measures it contained as critical (ME) for compliance monitorization (GP). The agreement was the wise, right thing to do, and it had been done right (ME). Coupled with the administration's commitment to invest in warhead life-extension programs and in the nuclear infrastructure (ME), the New START "[was] a very meaningful step forward" (ME).

The treaty did not compromise U.S. goals: the central limits of the agreement (ME) and a provision affording each party "the freedom to determine its own force mix" (ME) granted the country "the necessary flexibility to field the right force structure" to address national security needs (GP). The U.S. would also retain its nuclear triad "in sufficient diversity and numbers" (ME) to assure strategic stability with Russia (GP) and maintain U.S. capabilities to deter other nuclear states (GP).

In response to a written question, the Admiral stated that Moscow was developing and deploying new SLBMs and ICBMs, including a heavy ICBM and another MIRV-capable system (CP). It was starting design work on a new heavy bomber (CP) and developing and deploying new strategic nuclear warheads (CP). Those developments were of concern to the DOD (CP), which would take every required step to ensure that U.S. forces – especially strategic forces – would be capable to accomplish their missions in the face of Russian technological or other kinds of advances (GP). He also claimed, responding to another question, that any act by Moscow to violate its obligations under the New START and/or to deceive Washington as it attempted to verify Russian compliance with the accord would be deemed "extremely serious" (CP). The impact of Moscow's tactical nuclear weapons on strategic stability under the New START would be little to none (GP) (downside) (S. HRG. 111–738, 2010: 48–49, 79, 88).

On 16 June 2010, STRATCOM Commander General Kevin Chilton spoke before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. He pushed back against the view that the reductions contemplated under the New START (ME) were rather modest (GP), arguing that the U.S. would be left with exactly that was needed for deterrence (GP). By preserving a non-deployed stockpile (ME), the U.S. would be able to hedge against technical failures in the currently deployed nuclear arsenal (GP) as well as against any concerns or changes in the geopolitical environment (GP) requiring the U.S. to increase its levels of deployed nuclear forces (GP). The preservation of a large inventory (ME) had been informed by the country's inability to produce new nuclear weapons (CP), given that the decay of the infrastructure of the U.S. nuclear weapons complex (CP). By contrast, Russia possessed the ability to produce nuclear weapons (CP), granting the country the ability to hedge in that manner (CP). Thus, the general supported investments in the nuclear infrastructure and on personnel and expertise (ME) to sustain the stockpile (GP) and to potentially allow the U.S. to consider future reductions of its non-deployed nuclear arsenal (GP). Moscow's total nuclear force size would continue to be "a significant factor in determining how much and how fast [America was] prepared to reduce [its] forces in the future, according to the Commander. He added that "[t]he size and pace of U.S. nuclear force reductions [would] be

implemented in ways that maintain effective deterrence [GP] and sustain the credibility of [U.S.] security assurances to [its] allies and partners” (GP) (S. HRG. 111–738, 2010: 288, 303).

On 18 September 2010, President Obama sent a letter to the Senate Majority and Minority Leaders – Harry Reid (D-NV) and Mitch McConnell (R-KY). Therein, he declared that the United States would continue to develop, improve, and deploy missile defense systems, including the EPAA (i.e., NATO’s BMD system).

He perceived a growing threat stemming from the proliferation of ballistic missiles (CP), including a potential launch of an Iranian ICBM against the United States (CP). The president stated that Russia had been invited to cooperate on missile defense (CP).

The 1999 Missile Defense Act informed U.S. missile defense policy (VP). Consistent with that policy was the use of missile defenses for protection of U.S. territory against deliberate, unauthorized, and accidental limited ballistic missile attacks (GP). Another goal of said policy was the defense, against regional threats, of American deployed forces, allies, and partners (GP). U.S. missile defense policy was also informed by the country’s commitment to NATO’s Article 5 on collective defense (VP). Obama expressed a commitment to the continuing development and deployment of effective missile defenses throughout his presidency (VP), as long as the necessary funding was provided by Congress (VP).

The development of NATO’s territorial missile defense capabilities was necessary for defense against the perceived threats (ME). The EPAA was “the right response” (ME) and would achieve the goal (ME) of enhancing NATO’s current defenses against Iran (GP). Still, the timing and details of the later stages were susceptible to threat changes and technological advances (it was an “adaptive” approach) (ME). Achieving the goal of strengthening U.S.-Russian relations (GP) could allow NATO and Russia to cooperate on missile defense (ME). Doing so could increase (ME) “the overall effectiveness and efficiency of [their] combined territorial missile defenses” (GP). Cooperating with Russia would not limit NATO and U.S. missile defense capabilities because the pursued system would not be a joint system (GP) (denies consequences on U.S. goals).

The New START placed no limitations on the development or deployment of the U.S. missile defense program (GP) (no downsides on goals). The U.S. did not agree with Russia’s unilateral statement about the New START, which affirmed that an American missile defense build-up “[giving] rise to a threat to the strategic nuclear potential of the Russian Federation” gave Moscow the grounds to withdraw from the treaty (CP). Obama stated that U.S. development and deployment of missile defense systems did not and would not threaten the strategic balance with Russia (CP). Thus, “the continued improvement and deployment of U.S. missile defense systems” did not constitute grounds for Russia to question the viability and effectiveness of the New START,” and “would not give rise to circumstances justifying Russia’s withdrawal from the Treaty” (CP) (not a part of the institutional reality that ought to inform action) (Obama, 2010a).

On 16 November 2010, Vice President Joe Biden called for the ratification of the New START and for the modernization of the U.S. nuclear infrastructure. He noted that America and Russia possessed

over 90% of the world's nuclear weapons (CP), and that the New START enjoyed broad bipartisan support, as its approval in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had shown (CP). The U.S. nuclear infrastructure had been neglected for several years (CP) and the president had made a commitment to modernize it (VP). This was demonstrated by plans to invest \$80 billion dollars over the next decade, and by recent budget request increases following the administration's consultations with Senator Jon Kyl (R-AZ) (CP).

The vice president wanted to ensure Russia's cooperation in the enforcement of strong sanctions on Iran (GP), and in supplying U.S. troops in Afghanistan (GP). The New START was linked to those goals by means of "[being] a fundamental part of [America's] relationship with Russia (ME). Not ratifying the agreement would compromise U.S. goals. The country would have no people on the ground to inspect Russian nuclear activities (GP); no verification regime to track Moscow's strategic nuclear arsenal (GP), nor verified nuclear reductions (GP); and there would be less cooperation between the two nations (GP). Overall, "the time to act [was] now" (ME), and the treaty was of extraordinary importance (ME) to U.S. national security, which would be compromised by a failure to ratify the accord (GP) (Biden, 2010).

In February 2010, the DOD published its first ever Ballistic Missile Defense Review (BMDR). The document presented plans to maintain the current level of capability in terms of homeland missile defense, "while developing future, proven capabilities." The country was developing regional missile defense capabilities for near- and long-term deployment. It would also further improve already developed regional missile defense capabilities. The U.S. would pursue a phased adaptive approach to regional missile defense in Europe and in other regions where the U.S. had security commitments. The U.S. would pursue expanded cooperation and international efforts with allies and partners on missile defense, as well as Russia.

Over the past decade, the U.S. deployed systems despite their being still in development and thus unproven (CP). Currently, the U.S. territory was well-protected against limited ICBM attacks due to its homeland missile defense (the Ground-based Midcourse Defense [GBMD]) and could counter them for the foreseeable future (CP). The BMDR considered that the ballistic missile threat was increasing, and that several states were developing nuclear, biological, and chemical warheads for their missiles (CP). Regional actors, mainly Iran and North Korea, were developing ICBMs (CP), but it was uncertain how and when that threat to the U.S. homeland would mature (CP). Only Russia and China could conduct large-scale ballistic missile attacks against the U.S. homeland, but such attacks were very unlikely, and the two countries were important U.S. partners for the future (CP). Russia and China were concerned about the adverse effect of U.S. missile defenses vis-à-vis their strategic capabilities and interests (CP). Russia was no longer an enemy of the U.S., and there was no significant prospect of war between the two states, which cooperated when advantageous (CP). America's GBMD (ME) would be employed to defend the homeland against limited attacks of any source (GP), even if it could not cope with large scale missile attacks from Russia or China (CP).

Regional threats, on the other hand, were certain and growing rapidly (CP). They stemmed from missiles of short, medium, and intermediate range that could target regions where the U.S. maintained security relationships or deployed forces (CP). The document singled out North Korea, Iran, and Syria as regional actors threatening U.S. forces and allies (CP). The U.S. had made significant progress in the development and deployment of capabilities to protect against such attacks over the past decade (CP). Still, U.S. capabilities “were modest numbers when set against the rapidly expanding regional missile threat” (CP), and regional demand for U.S. missile defense assets would exceed supply for the foreseeable future (CP).

The BDRM set forward several goals. The U.S. wanted to defend its territory from limited ICBM attacks (GP). The U.S. sought to deter the acquisition, deployment, and use of ballistic missiles by regional adversaries, primarily by eliminating their confidence that such attacks would be effective (GP). The country aimed to strengthen regional deterrence architectures (GP). The U.S. ought to defend its forces, allies, and partners against regional missile threats (GP). America should also enable its allies and partners to defend themselves (GP).

The U.S. wanted to ensure the flexibility of American BMD capabilities (GP) to hedge against changing and uncertain threats (GP). To do so, the U.S. needed to maintain its advantageous position (GP). The U.S. did not need to “be able to negate every deployable missile in an enemy’s arsenal (GP) (not a goal of action), but it “must be able to protect what we [the U.S.] and our partners value (GP). The U.S. and Russian military postures ought to be brought into alignment with their post-Cold War relationship (GP) (see CP above). The U.S. wanted a cooperative and collaborative relationship with Russia and China (GP). The focus of America’s missile defense were not large-scale missile attacks from those countries (GP) (goal of action is rejected). The U.S. missile defense system did not constitute an attempt to affect the American strategic balance with Russia and China (GP) (not a goal of action).

When it came to homeland missile defense, it was not necessary for the U.S. to develop those “capabilities at the same accelerate rate as it [had] in recent years” (ME) (staying the course is not the best action). That was because the U.S. could counter, for the foreseeable future, projected Iranian and North Korean ICBM threats (CP). Furthermore, staying the course meant “[accepting] the same level of risk in the development program” (GP) (downsides on goals). Still, to hedge against uncertainties (GP), the U.S. would sustain and improve its homeland missile defense system (ME). By deploying only proven technologies (ME), the U.S. would improve confidence (GP), reliability (GP), and cost control (GP).

To strengthen regional deterrence (GP), the U.S. would apply phased adaptive approaches, including in Europe (ME). It would pursue a phased adaptive approach within each region tailored to their unique threats (GP). Development of capabilities that were flexible, relocatable, and adaptive (ME) facilitated their surge and integration in new regions (GP), providing a hedge against uncertainties (GP), given an expected future insufficient supply of assets (CP). It would also make the assets more survivable (GP). The EPAA would utilize “existing and proven capabilities” and integrate new

technologies over time after testing (ME). The approach would facilitate upgrading (GP) and be cost-effective (GP).

In addition to improving deterrence (GP), phased adaptive approaches (ME) enabled strong partnerships with America's regional partners and allies in meeting security challenges (GP) and allowed for an appropriate level of burden sharing (GP). The EPPA contributed to extended deterrence (GP) and was a visible demonstration of America's Article 5 commitment to Europe (VP). The EPAA achieved the goals (ME) of accelerating the deployment of proven technologies (GP) and could improve the long-term protection of the U.S. territory (GP). However, regional architectures were not meant to replace homeland missile defense (ME).

America aimed to strengthen deterrence in key regions (GP) through military (ME) and non-military means (ME). In fact, missile defense was part of a larger strategic framework (ME) aimed at strengthening "broad efforts to mitigate the missile (and nuclear) threats [GP] through political and cooperative measures" (ME). Thus, phased adaptive approaches would be complemented by U.S. engagement with allies, partners, and Russia in capability development (ME), and "in international cooperation on a broad range of missile defense-related activities" (ME).

To strengthen international cooperation (GP), the U.S. would engage with Russia and China on missile defense (ME), but without accepting any negotiated constraints on its missile defense program (GP) (no compromises on goals). The EPAA allowed (ME) for cooperation with Russia (GP). Establishing a cooperative relationship with Russia on BMD was a U.S. goal, assuming favorable political circumstances (GP). The U.S. wanted "to enlist Russia in a new structure of deterrence" (GP) aiming to address the security threats posed by states seeking to acquire illicit capabilities (GP). Furthermore the U.S. wanted to create a mutual understanding with Russia vis-à-vis a new approach to strategic stability that included offensive and defensive capabilities (GP). By doing so, the U.S. hoped to facilitate deeper nuclear reductions of both nations' nuclear arsenals (GP). The U.S. would also continue missile defense discussions with China (ME) (Ballistic Missile Defense Review, 2010: iii-vi, 4-5, 11-13, 16-16, 18-20, 23-28, 30-31, 34-35).

On 26 March 2010, Michael Mullen, the chairman of the JCS, expressed his support for the New START (ME) in light of the goals it would achieve or contribute to. The treaty fostered trust (GP) and confidence between the American and Russian militaries (GP) and reduced the stockpile of strategic nuclear weapons (GP) while achieving a balance that was more in tune with the present security environment (ME) (inaction is not the best action). The treaty reduced (ME) U.S.-Russian tensions (GP), strengthened non-proliferation efforts (GP), and enhanced the military's ability to defend and protect U.S. citizens (GP). The New START did not compromise America's flexibility when it came to deploying and maintaining nuclear forces (GP), nor its ability to develop conventional global strike capabilities (GP) ("Press Briefing by," 2010).

On 13 May 2010, President Obama urged the U.S. Senate to "give early and favorable consideration to the [New START] Treaty." He established as goals enhancing the national security of

the United States (GP), to mutually reduce and limit the world's two largest nuclear arsenals (GP) and promote predictability and transparency in the Russo-American strategic relationship (GP). He also wanted the U.S. to be able to verify Russia's compliance with, and effective implementation of the agreement (GP). Those goals would be achieved under the treaty (ME).

Obama explained that the agreement would not compromise U.S. goals. The U.S. would continue to maintain a strong nuclear deterrent under the New START (GP). America would preserve the ability to determine the structure and composition of its strategic nuclear forces within treaty limits (GP) and to modernize them (GP). The agreement did not impose constraints on America's missile defense program (GP) or the planned long-range conventional strike capabilities (GP) (Obama, 2010b).

On 2 February 2011, President Obama wrote a letter to Congress, where he stated that U.S. national technical means of verification (e.g., satellites), in tandem with the New START verification activities, were sufficient (ME) to monitor Russian compliance (GP) and to provide timely warning of Moscow preparation to "break out" of the limits of the agreement (GP). He also stated that he intended to "replace or modernize" the nuclear triad (VP) (ME). Following ally consultation (ME), the U.S. would attempt to negotiate with Russia an agreement (ME) to address the disparity between Russian and U.S. tactical nuclear weapons (GP) and secure and reduce the former country's stockpile through verifiable means (GP).

It was U.S. policy continue to develop, modernize, and deploy missile defenses (ME) to defend (GP) against missile threats (CP) such as those posed by Iran and North Korea (GP) and as a strategic and technological edge (GP). Such efforts included all phases of the EPAA (ME). The systems did not threaten the U.S.-Russian strategic balance (GP) (no downsides), and thus did not constitute a basis for doubting the New START's effectiveness and viability and justify a Russian withdrawal (VP) (Obama, 2011).

On 2 October 2011, Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy James Miller, stated that, while "precise numerical equality or parity" was not as important nowadays, Russia ought to join the U.S. [GP] as it worked to further nuclear reductions (ME). The DOD approach was to work on a proposal (ME) for reductions of deployed (GP) and non-deployed (GP), strategic (GP) and non-strategic nuclear weapons (GP). The U.S. sought transparency with Russia (GP). America ought to support the technical and geopolitical hedges (GP) at a reasonable cost (GP). The technical hedge related with potential technological issues that might emerge with a delivery system or warhead (GP) (hedging against such risk is a goal of action). The geopolitical hedge concerned potential future changes in the environment (hedging against such risk is a goal of action). Such support would be provided by having a stockpile (ME) and the infrastructure (ME). President Bush had reduced the stockpile from 10000 nuclear weapons to 5000 during his presidency (CP). This very sensible change (ME), that was not negotiated (ME), "allowed the different scaling for future size of the infrastructure [GP] and allowed NNSA to plan along the lines that they are now" (GP) (H.A.S.C. No. 112-88, 2011: 23-24).

The June 2013 DOD Nuclear Employment Report stated that the U.S. could “safely [pursue] up to a one-third reduction in deployed nuclear weapons from the level established in the New START” (ME). Doing so would not jeopardize U.S., ally, or partner safety (GP). It would also not affect America’s ability to maintain the strength and credibility of its strategic deterrent (GP) (denied downsides). The strategic environment’s most imminent and dangerous threat was nuclear terrorism (CP), followed by nuclear proliferation (CP). The U.S. was concerned with the expansion and modernization of China’s nuclear arsenal (CP). Russia and the U.S. were no longer enemies (CP). Despite differences between the two countries (CP) and the former’s nuclear modernization program (CP) the likelihood of military confrontation had lowered drastically.

America wanted to preserve strategic stability with Russia (GP), its only peer in nuclear weapons capabilities (CP). Despite the strict need for numerical parity between the two countries (GP) (denied goal of action), the DOD rejected significant reductions of nuclear forces (ME) that would lead to large disparities in nuclear capabilities (GP) (rejected goal). Doing so could lead to concerns on both sides (GP), as well as among American allies and partners (GP), and potentially hinder the prospects of a stable, long-term relationship between the U.S. and Russia (GP) (lists several downsides). Thus, lower levels of nuclear warheads (GP) required Russia to join the U.S. (ME). The U.S. sought negotiated cuts with Russia (ME) in order for both countries to “continue to move beyond Cold War nuclear postures” (GP). The U.S. would also pursue dialogue with China on nuclear issues (ME) to preserve strategic stability (GP) and promote a more resilient (GP), transparent (GP) and stable security relationship with Beijing (GP). America would pursue diplomatic measures (ME), further international sanctions (ME), and other measures (ME) to hold North Korea and Iran “accountable for their continued violations of their international obligations [GP] and to bring them into compliance with their obligations” (GP).

America wanted a solid hedge against geopolitical and technical risk (GP) with total fewer nuclear weapons (GP). Thus, the U.S. would preserve sufficient levels of non-deployed nuclear weapons (ME) to hedge against technical failure (GP); failure of weapons experiencing life-extensions; lack of confidence in life-extension programs (GP); and geopolitical developments that might require the U.S. to upload additional weapons (GP). The country was “shifting from hedging with large numbers of non-deployed warheads [ME] towards a responsive infrastructure over time” (ME). However, to make that change (ME), the U.S. needed its nuclear enterprise to have a more modern physical infrastructure. While such investments were being made (ME), such an infrastructure would not be available, according to the document, at least for another decade, and potentially for longer (CP). The near-term prudent approach, therefore, was for the U.S. to preserve its current hedging approach, which was based on retaining extra non-deployed nuclear warheads (ME) (U.S. DOD, 2013: 2-3, 6-7).

On 25 February 2014, the soon-to-be Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Work, declared, in the context of his nomination hearing, his views regarding President Obama’s willingness to reduce, by up to one-third over New START treaty limits [ME], America’s nuclear forces (GP). Work believed that any reduction of U.S. nuclear forces below the treaty limits of the New START “should only be

done on a mutually [GP] negotiated basis [ME], subject to the trajectory of other potential threats” (CP) (S. HRG. 113-611, 2014: 230).

On September 2014, Deputy Secretary of Energy Daniel Poneman had stated that “[t]he whole design of modernization [ME] [enabled] [the U.S.] to do reductions (GP). For as long as the country had nuclear weapons, it should keep secure, reliable and safe (GP), which was important for extended deterrence (GP) (Broad & Sanger, 2014).

On 7 November 2015, Carter described Russia as a source of turbulence that was flouting principles such as sovereignty, freedom, and peace, as well as the international community (CP). Russia had violated Ukrainian and Georgian sovereignty (CP), intimidated the Baltic states (CP), and was prolonging the Syrian civil war (CP). It was engaging in challenging activities in the air, in space, in cyberspace and at sea (CP). Russia was nuclear saber-rattling (CP), an action which raised questions regarding its commitment to strategic stability and norms against nuclear use (CP). Nuclear weapons were being brandished by Russia without caution (CP). The U.S. did not seek to make an enemy out of Russia; it was not pursuing any sort of conflict with the country (CP). However, America would defend its interests (VP) and the “principled international order” (VP). Carter aimed to make the world a better place: one that was safer and freer (VP). The U.S. ought to deter Russia’s aggression (GP), increase its safety (GP), defend its allies (GP) and reduce their vulnerability (GP).

To achieve those goals, the U.S. was pursuing a balanced approach (ME). On the one hand, it would cooperate with Russia when and where interests aligned (ME). On the other, the U.S. would make several moves in response to Russia’s actions. Several were classified, but the secretary mentioned modernizing the U.S. nuclear arsenal (ME) so that the U.S. nuclear deterrent remained effective, secure, and safe (GP), to deter nuclear attacks (GP), and reassure allies (GP).

America was investing in the technologies more important to address the Russian provocations (GP), such as a new long-range bomber (ME), new unmanned systems (ME), the electromagnetic railgun (ME), lasers (ME), and new systems for space, cyberspace, and electronic warfare (ME). The U.S. was also changing operational plans for defense and deterrence (ME) in response to the change in Moscow’s behavior (CP) (Carter, 2015).

On 9 February 2016, the DOD released a press release regarding the President’s budget request for the department. The statement described a rapidly changing security environment that was markedly different from the one with which the DOD had been engaging from the past 25 years (CP). The budget reflected strategic threats in Asia, the Middle East and Europe, including Russia’s aggression (CP), terrorist attacks by various groups (CP), Iranian and North Korean actions and threats (CP), and China’s claims of sovereignty and island-building in international waters (CP). The DOD aimed to serve and protect the United States (GP), as well as its friends and allies (GP) and defend the national interest (VP). The budget would allow the DOD to take a strong, balanced approach (ME) to counter Russian aggression in Eastern Europe (GP). In order to do so, the U.S. was investing a broad range of capabilities (ME). The budget request for FY 2017 would permit the modification and expansion of air defense

systems (ME), the development of new unmanned systems (ME), the design of a new long-range bomber (ME) and a new long-range stand-off cruise missile (ME), and the modernization of the U.S. nuclear arsenal (ME).

As for the nuclear enterprise, many systems remained effective (CP). However, to maintain said effectiveness (GP), multiple weapon systems required considerable modernization (ME). The funds requested by the DOD reflected the administration's enduring commitment to the modernization of the U.S. nuclear complex (VP) (U.S. DOD, 2016b).

On 12 January 2017, Vice President Joe Biden stated that for the past three years, Russia had refused to negotiate with the U.S. (CP) additional reductions of deployed (GP) and non-deployed nuclear arsenals (GP). However, U.S. leadership on such matters would not wait for Moscow (VP). In Biden's words, "[was] strongest when we lead not only by the example of our power, but by the power of our example" (VP). Obama had concluded that the U.S. could safely reduce its stockpile even (GP) (rejected downside). Thus, the president had set aside almost 500 nuclear warheads for dismantlement, in addition to those previously scheduled to be retired in 2016 (ME). U.S. efforts had reduced the threat posed by nuclear weapons (GP) and positioned the new administration to continue to make progress toward nuclear disarmament (GP) (Biden, 2017).

1.2. Audience discourse

Senator John Kerry (D-MA), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, expressed his support for the New START on several occasions. He took on a leadership role when it came to negotiating the treaty's ratification with the republican senators, many of which opposed or had reservations about the agreement. We analyze below several speeches from 29 November 2010 to 22 December 2010. The senator stated that global terrorism was a complicated national security challenge (CP). He raised fears over the acquisition of nuclear materials by terrorists (CP) and showed concern with the progress made in Iran and North Korea's nuclear programs (CP). The insight obtained through the START verification regime had been degrading since the expiration of the treaty over a year ago (CP). The United States had surplus weapons that had no place in the current strategic environment (CP).

He wanted the U.S. to set an "example for the world" and to demonstrate leadership (VP) by moving away from nuclear weapons and toward greater controls, accountability, security, and safety for the American people (GP). He wanted to control and restrain nuclear weapons (GP) by limiting the number of deployed warheads to 1550 (as set by the treaty) (GP), thus increasing stability between America and Russia (GP). He aimed to reduce the danger from nuclear weapons, including accidents (GP), to have a mechanism of verification in place with Russia (GP), to and foster communication and understanding (GP).

Kerry wanted to strengthen the relationship between Washington and Moscow (GP), and increase transparency (GP), accountability (GP), predictability (GP), and building trust (GP). He sought to improve America's knowledge of Russian nuclear forces (verification) (GP), to reduce the threat (GP), and to create stability (GP). He aimed to enhance U.S. national security, to reduce the numbers of nuclear warheads in the world (GP), and foster U.S. world leadership (VP).

The senator also sought to enhance the global proliferation regime (GP), to keep nuclear weapons out of the hands of terrorists and dangerous regimes (GP), and to constrain Iran (GP). He looked to make a statement by demonstrating U.S.-Russian willingness to disarmament to those aspiring to acquire nuclear weapons (GP), which would strengthen the hand of the UN and the U.S. in dealing with them (GP), and put greater pressure on Iran, North Korea, and others (GP). Kerry wanted to "[address] the lingering dangers of the old nuclear age" (GP) while combating new age threats (GP).

The accord would make the world more secure (VP), and the Senate had the constitutional responsibility to advise and consent to it (VP). America bore a "sense of responsibility with respect to the challenge of nuclear weapons" (VP). The treaty was "too important to get caught up in partisan politics" (VP) (not a premise that ought to inform action); the senators should act in the best interest of the country (VP).

Kerry believed that ratifying the New START Treaty would contribute toward the goals he listed (ME). He considered that there was no alternative to reaching a bilateral agreement with Russia, when it came to achieving the goal of leveraging Iran and North Korea, given that the two countries held 90% of the world's nuclear weapons (ME). Kerry agreed that Russian cooperation vis-à-vis Iran was not reason enough to embrace a treaty that did not promote security and stability (GP). But he believed that not only the agreement reached those goals (ME), but also that rejecting it would have a negative impact on U.S.-Russian relations (GP), including by creating an arms race (GP) (consequences on U.S. goals). The current "cooperative atmosphere, partly increased by virtue of this treaty agreement" was already helping address the Teheran threat. For instance, Russia had refused to sell Iran the S-300 air interceptor missile and supported sanctions against the country (ME). Russia would indeed be forced to reduce the number of deployed nuclear weapons (ME) (treaty achieves goal). Moscow was not, as some had claimed, already below the 1550 threshold (CP) (rebuffs critics' CP).

Previous experience had shown the benefits of arms control agreements between the two nuclear superpowers and that achieving the listed goals could be expected (ME). The New START stood on the shoulders of the previous START agreements; it was not fundamentally new (ME). To Kerry, the treaty was simply "common sense" – why would one not want to limit the number of nuclear weapons that Russia had pointed at the United States? (ME). If one paid attention to the facts, explained the legislator, one would "come to only one conclusion:" the treaty ought to be ratified (ME). A bipartisan review of the treaty set up by the chairman and the ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee recommended the ratification of the agreement (ME). The agreement also received the support of the country's most eminent statesmen, republicans and democrats, and military leaders (ME).

Kerry tackled republican claims that, due to the “lame duck” session context (CP), lack of time to consider it (CP) and other more pressing issues (CP), the Senate ought to focus on other matters in detriment of the New START (ME). He rejected those CPs, and the conclusion that postponing¹¹⁴ the decision on the treaty’s ratification was the best policy choice (ME). The senator explained that the current Senate had worked on the treaty extensively and exhaustively for a year and a half and had been privy to the negotiations as they went along – the same could not be said of the future Senate (CP). Thus, it was the present Senate that had the “obligation to complete the advice and consent on that treaty” (VP). The democrats had also given the republicans additional time to review the treaty and gathered documents and testimonies (CP). A year and a half of work on the treaty hardly meant that the democrats were rushing toward its ratification (CP). The democrats had repeatedly delayed the decision on the treaty to accommodate Republican interests (CP). And those who complained about a lack of time certainly did not seem to be in any rush to bring amendments to the floor. Thus, the senator “clearly [smelled] a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy strategy going on” (CP), implying that the critics in the GOP had covert reasons not postpone ratification of the treaty (VP/GP) (i.e., lack of time and concern with other issues were not truly why some senators wanted to postpone the eventual ratification). The republicans had also created that lack of time through their constant filibusters on other matters – something that was, historically, very uncharacteristic (CP). The democrats had been often forced to file cloture motions, which then easily passed (CP). That was not what the Founding Fathers had intended (VP), made no sense, and the American people did not support it (CP). It negated the fundamental concept of majority rule (VP). The American people expected the Senate to make time for matters of national security (VP).

Kerry also accused the Republicans of lying in saying that in the past treaties had required more time before they were put to a vote, or that other bills could not be dealt with at the same time as the treaty (CP). The original START only needed five days of Senate floor time, whereas START II and the Moscow Treaty needed only two (CP). The democrats were ready to vote on the treaty (CP) and for Kerry there was enough time to do it (CP). The democrats already had slowed down the process of ratification at the request of Senator Lugar “because of the need to work on modernization.” Additional time had also been given to ask questions, get answers, and “pull people together,” to accommodate republican concerns (VP). Furthermore, postponing ratification would jeopardize U.S. goals. With the START expired, America “knew too little [GP] about the only arsenal in the world that has the potential to destroy [it]” (CP). Not acting was, thus, “irresponsible:” every day mattered (ME). Moreover, the American people were angry at the Senate’s inability to get business done and of its partisan fights (CP).

The senator denied several compromises on U.S. goals due to the treaty’s ratification. Even with New START’s reductions, 1550 nuclear weapons were more than enough to deter (GP). The treaty’s

¹¹⁴ The postponement suggested by Republicans would delay the decision until the formation of the new Senate, which would have a smaller Democratic Majority.

verification provisions, in tandem with the planned structure of the U.S. strategic forces, would not allow Russia to significantly cheat or breakout (GP). The U.S. military, including the JCS, were confident in the verification regime (ME).

As for the greatest criticism received vis-à-vis the treaty, the legislator denied that its ratification would constrain the U.S. missile defenses (GP) (Kerry denies downsides on goals). The senator's view was corroborated by George W. Bush, the chairman of the JCS, and the Director of the MDA (ME). Three bases for that criticism were presented by republicans. Firstly, there was a passage in the New START's preamble which recognized "the interrelationship between strategic offensive arms and strategic defensive arms" and stated "that current strategic defensive arms [did] not undermine the viability and effectiveness of the strategic offensive arms of the Parties." However, according to Kerry, the language was not "within the four corners of the treaty, meaning that it was not binding (CP) (it was not an institutional fact that should inform action). Kerry explained that the language on missile defense was irrelevant: both countries could withdraw for whatever reason. There was no need for a legal pretext (CP) (not a part of the institutional reality that ought to inform action). Thus, acknowledgment of a link between defensive and offensive system was irrelevant (GP) (rejects downsides). For one, it was a truism (CP). And additionally, America was moving forward with the fourth phase of EPAA regardless (GP) (no downside). There were also, within the resolution of ratification of the New START, several statements claiming that missile defense plans would not be affected (GP) (not a downside). That said, it was the policy of the previous (CP) and the current administration "not to build a missile defense that would render useless Russia's nuclear capabilities" (GP). Thus, Kerry rejected removing mentions of missile defense from the preamble of the treaty by means of an amendment because it was unnecessary (ME). Doing so would not change Moscow's withdrawal rights, advantage the U.S. position, or change what America had made clear (ME). Moreover, doing so would kill the treaty (ME). Changing the preamble would require the treaty to be renegotiated with Russia only to return to the Senate for consideration once again (ME). Renegotiating the treaty with Russia was not the best course of action because "[a]t that point, you reopen all of the other issues, and some of them are contentious, which are difficult, which people may have a different view on, [ME] and which will affect our relationship" (GP). The military and the intelligence and national security communities believed that the Senate should ratify the treaty as soon as possible (ME). Kerry was willing to "find a common language" with some of its Republican colleagues to address their concerns (VP) in a way that did not "kill" the treaty and did not require America to return to the negotiation table with Russia (e.g., through a declaration or an understanding, but not an amendment to the treaty itself) (ME).

The second base for criticism about missile defense constraints concerned Russia's unilateral statement stating that the New START "can operate and be viable only if the [U.S.] refrains from developing its missile defense capabilities quantitatively and qualitatively." On this matter, Kerry claimed that the statement was simply a matter of domestic politics for the Kremlin, and that the Russians knew of America's intentions when it came to missile defense and understood that the treaty

did not affect them (CP). Russia had made similar claims about the original START, tying it to U.S. compliance with the ABM Treaty, and yet had not withdrawn from the former (CP). Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov had acknowledged that the New START did not deal with missile defenses (CP). The resolution of ratification made clear that the treaty did not limit U.S. missile defenses (GP) (not a downside).

Thirdly, the New START prohibited the use of ICBM and SLBM launchers for placement of missile defense interceptors therein. However, according to Kerry, that limitation was irrelevant because it was more expensive to do that than to build a new silo for a ground-based missile, which the U.S. could still do if it wished (ME). It was inadvisable to force Russia to make a split-second decision regarding whether a missile flying out of an ICBM silo was an interceptor or a nuclear weapon headed to Moscow (ME). He also noted that the previous administration never recommended either conversion (ME).

The New START would not compromise missile defense testing either (GP) (rejects downside). The U.S. remained committed to deploy a missile defense system in Europe (the phased adaptive approach) (VP) to address a rogue state threat (especially Iran's) (CP). The 1999 Missile Defense Act was "the law of the land" (VP). In keeping with the Act, America's unilateral statement about the New START stated that its "missile defense systems are not intended to affect the strategic balance with Russia" (GP) (not a goal of action). Since under the new treaty U.S. "targets [would] no longer be subject to START constraints," the New START was actually reducing limitations on missile defense development (GP). That reason alone justified pursuing a new agreement instead of extending START (ME) (rejects policy alternative). But in any case, Russia did not want to proceed under the START framework (ME) (not a feasible alternative).

Kerry recommended the acceptance of a republican amendment (4904) (ME) requiring presidential certification and communication to Russia that America's continued development and deployment of missile defense systems (including all phases of the EPAA) did not threaten the U.S.-Russian strategic balance (GP) (not a downside on goals). Thus, said continued development and deployment did not constitute grounds for justifying a Russian withdrawal from the treaty (VP), which would remain viable and effective (GP) (denies compromise on goals).

Moving forward with the EPAA in detriment of deploying a GBI in Poland was not a decision motivated by a different world view of the Obama administration (denies CP). Instead, the idea came from the military, which believed that the EPAA would "more directly [address] the threat in Europe and [offer] several distinct advantages (ME).

Another core portion of the New START debate was centered on the maintenance of America's nuclear deterrence and on the modernization of U.S. nuclear weapons infrastructure. Kerry explained that those concerns had been addressed by the Administration and Congress by means of complementary actions towards producing modernization funding (ME). The administration proposed to spend \$85 billion over the next decade on the modernization of the nuclear weapons complex (ME), which satisfied

the three nuclear weapons laboratory directors (ME). The proposed modernization budgets delivered (ME) “adequate support to sustain the safety, security, reliability, and effectiveness of America’s nuclear deterrent within the limit of 1,550 deployed strategic warheads established by the new START Treaty with adequate confidence and acceptable risk (GP). It was a level of support that the nuclear infrastructure received today had never been seen before (CP).

Additionally, in accordance with the resolution of ratification of the New START, the President was required to report to Congress how he would address eventual shortfalls if any of the modernization funding does not materialize in the ensuing years (ME). The senator acknowledged that the administration did not control a Republican H.R. would do next year in terms of funding but noted that Democrat Senators on the Appropriations Committee had given their assurances (VP) and that his party “[had] shown a good faith effort” by making modernization funding available ahead of schedule (CP). Kerry explained that the administration was not linking the New START to modernization (ME) but responding to the inadequacies in the original funding levels found by senator Kyl, and with which Kerry agreed (CP). The government believed that modernization was necessary for its own sake; for maintaining the nuclear arsenal viable (GP). Still, Kerry recommended the acceptance of a republican amendment (4892) (ME) requiring the president to “to certify a way forward to fund the two large facilities that are part of the nuclear weapons complex” (GP).

The language of the resolution of ratification of the New START expressed the sense of the Senate that it was necessary to carry out “the modernization and replacement of the strategic delivery vehicles” (triad) (GP). Since the service life of the delivery vehicles exceeded the duration of the treaty (CP), it was inappropriate to reject the agreement on the grounds that the administration had yet to commit to such a decision. Future administrations would be responsible for making that call (ME). Still, Kerry recommended the acceptance of a republican amendment (4864) (ME) requiring the president to certify his intention to modernize the strategic nuclear triad (GP).

The treaty also allowed the U.S. to maintain flexibility regarding “which weapons (...) to put into which modality” (GP) while allowing for the elimination of surplus weapons (GP) that had no place in the current strategic environment (CP). Responding to the critics who claimed that under the New START Russia would be able to engage in MIRV-ing, Kerry explained that they were doing so due to financial restrictions that did not allow them to pursue other options (CP). Nonetheless, he assured that the United States had “preserved a very significant breakout capacity” (GP) (not a downside on U.S. goals) and that the treaty maintained the advantageous position of the country’s strategic posture (GP).

Tripling the number of inspections contemplated in the New START by means of amending it was not necessary (ME). The new system was less costly and less complicated but more effective. The U.S. had now less sites to inspect, would be able to collect more data, and could rely on other technical means (e.g., satellites, ground stations, and ships) (ME). The military and the DOD believed that the treaty achieved the goal (ME) of sufficient monitorization of Russian compliance (GP). A larger number

of inspections in U.S. bases would be disruptive (GP) (downside on goals). Again, it was noted that changing the treaty would lead to its demise (ME) (not the best course of action).

Senator Kerry addressed criticism against the New START on the basis that it did not prohibit rail-based launchers. He explained that the Nunn-Lugar had destroyed all Russian launchers of that category (CP). It was highly unlikely that after spending years destroying them, Moscow decided to utilize their very limited resources to build them and deploy them again, knowing that such action would be quickly detected by the United States (CP). Russia was not the U.S.S.R.; it was a state “with which [America] [had] a very different relationship and (...) a whole set of combined interests.” The treaty should be put into that context (CP). In any case, Kerry was adamant that a rail mobile ICBM would fall “under the 700 [limit of deployed missiles and bombers]” set by the New START (VP). In any case, the resolution of ratification required the president to formally communicate to Russia that understanding (ME) (complementary action).

The lawmaker explained that a treaty that addressed tactical nuclear weapons would have taken a lot longer to complete, which would have been undesirable (ME) seeing as START had expired and there were no verification measures in place (GP) (downside of alternative action). In any case, without verifications in place, an agreement on tactical nuclear weapons would have been harder to reach (ME). The current agreement empowered the U.S. (ME) to achieve its goals in the tactical realm (GP) by revitalizing cooperation on arms control (GP). In any case, according to U.S. military leaders, tactical parity was not a necessary goal of action (GP), as they had no impact on the strategic nuclear balance between the United States and Russia (GP). Thus, the START Treaty should not be rejected on the grounds that it did not limit Russia’s tactical nuclear weapons (ME), a goal that Kerry himself would like to eventually achieve (GP). Although Russian tactical nuclear weapons were a legitimate concern (CP) as well as a threat to U.S. allies (CP), rejecting the New START would make it impossible to get Russia to reduce them (ME). NATO allies realized that and supported the New START (CP). America would be there for its allies (VP). Kerry prioritized addressing Russian ICBM and SLBM, which were the most proximate threat to the U.S., seeing as they could “target the (...) homeland and deliver a devastating effect” (CP). Still, the senator recommended the acceptance of a republican amendment (4908) (ME) requiring negotiations with Russia to reduce in a secure and verifiable manner the country’s stockpile of non-strategic nuclear weapons (GP).

Kerry opposed amending the treaty in order to increase the limits it set for deployed ICBMs, SLBMs and bombers from 700 to 720 (ME). The republican proposal had been made on the grounds that the administration had yet to precisely explain how the reductions would take place (CP). Kerry justified his position by arguing that the treaty allowed for seven years to make that decision – it did not have to be made right now (ME). In fact, the flexibility provided by the New START on nuclear force drawdown was a plus (ME). And since the military was satisfied with the numbers established by the treaty (CP), there was no reason to open the treaty up for renegotiation (ME). The New START limits sufficed to defend America and its allies (ME).

Kerry addressed Senator Kyl's concerns regarding the fact that the New START counted conventionally armed ICBMs or SLBM under the nuclear warhead ceilings. He explained that the U.S. was not banning strategic range conventional weapon systems altogether (GP) (not a goal of action), even though that was Russia's desire (CP). Those capabilities were niche and extremely costly to do in very high numbers and were far from being ready for deployment. They probably would not be ready within the 10-year life of the treaty (CP). He also explained that such counting rules were necessary because verifying compliance with a treaty that limited nuclear-tipped ICBMs and SLBMs but not the identical conventionally armed SLBMs and ICBMs would be extremely difficult (ME). Allowing Russia to deploy extra SLBMs and ICBMs based only on their assurances that they were not nuclear armed "would be absolutely foolish" (ME). It was only under such counting rules that U.S. interests would be protected, and that one could foster stability (ME). Both parties had arrived at an "equilibrium between both sides' perceptions of the other side's capacity and of what kind of threat that exposes each side to (ME). Not counting those conventional missiles as nuclear, as Kyl was suggesting, would create an arms race (GP), leaving everybody less safe (GP), and risked a Russian breakout – even without cheating, Moscow could "simply leave the treaty and arm those missiles with nuclear warheads on very short notice" (GP). Addressing Kyl's concerns would likely create more instability (GP) (Kerry listed several downsides of alternative action). It would also kill the treaty (ME). Kerry believed that objections concerning those counting rules were grounded on a hidden goal – they were "a guise to try to kill the treaty" (GP). The resolution of ratification contained language stressing (ME) America could deploy conventional prompt global strike forces (GP).

Not sharing the president's goal of a nuclear free world (GP) was not a reason to vote against the treaty (ME). The goal was, assured Kerry, a long-term pursuit that constituted "a way of beginning to think differently about how we [the U.S.] resolve conflicts." It was worth trying to move toward that "organizing principle" (GP). Achieving that goal would require other countries' transparency (GP) and would be accompanied by a more restrained state of affairs (CP). Achieving the goal would require a new treaty (ME) that would never receive a favorable vote in the Senate in the world of today (CP). Kerry believed that concerns over the prospect of a nuclear-free world were merely a "sort of a distraction" (GP/VP) (identifies covert reasons for action). The lawmaker rejected the argument that the treaty was a distraction from the fight against terror (GP/VP) (rejects covert reasons for action).

Senator John McCain (R-AZ) had stated that the treaty could not be considered in a vacuum given events that had transpired involving Russia. Particularly, McCain was preoccupied with Russia's human rights violations in the case of Russian businessman Mikhail Khodorkovsky and with Moscow's violation of Georgia's international borders and ethnic cleaning therein. Thus, he questioned whether Russia could be trusted to adhere to the treaty. Kerry associated himself with McCain's concerns (CP). However, he believed that his understanding of the context of action should not inform his decision regarding the New START, because the agreement was not built on trust (VP). The current position, on the other hand, was less desirable (ME), because America "[was] in a forced position of "trust," where

[it did] not necessarily (CP). Furthermore, Kerry stressed, it was important to build relationships (ME), even at the worst of times, if it meant that one's country was more stable, safer, and more protected (GP). Such had been the case during the Cold War (ME), and every president, Republican or Democrat knew that arms control agreement made strategic sense (ME). The lawmaker noted that the resolution of ratification required annual presidential certification (ME), that the verification activities were sufficient to ensure effective monitoring (GP).

Kerry also rejected an amendment offered by Senator Kyl, whereby a side agreement on SLCM limitations would have to be reached before the New START could enter into force (ME). The senator explained that as of December 2008, Russia planned to deploy zero nuclear SLCMs (CP). Kerry did not want to delay the treaty from going into effect for months or years (ME). He also believed that without the New START a discussion with Russia on tactical nuclear weapons would not be possible to achieve (ME). Furthermore, tactical nuclear weapons could not upset the strategic balance between Russia and the United States: SLCMs could not take out America's nuclear deterrent in a first strike (CP). Thus, the U.S. could still retaliate and deliver a devastating blow if attacked by Russian SLCMs (GP) (rejects downside on U.S. goals). Moreover, "limits on nuclear sea-launched cruise missiles [were] inherently unverifiable" (ME) (action is not feasible) and he did not want to give Russia too much access to U.S. submarines (GP) (consequences of policy alternative). These conclusions had already been reached during the first Bush administration (ME). The Presidential Nuclear Initiatives, which were still operative, were considered a better framework to address the SLCM question (ME). He proposed putting additional emphasis on the importance of tackling the issue of tactical nuclear weapons in the resolution of ratification (ME).

Not ratifying the treaty would generate several downsides on U.S. goals. Moscow would not be constrained in its development of force structure, which would have a disturbing impact on the international strategic environment (GP). U.S. credibility and reliability as a partner and in the context of future treaty negotiations would be jeopardized (GP). Inaction would also threaten the Nunn-Lugar program (GP).

Overall, Kerry did not believe the treaty to be flawed enough to warrant several of the amendments that the republicans proposed to the resolution of ratification (ME). In any case, he gave his blessing to four of the republican amendments presented (see above: 4864, 4908, 4892, 4904). The senator also noted that the treaty was brought to the Senate floor following a "very significant vote" of 14-4 (ME). He emphasized that the negotiation process was marked by reciprocity, and that the United States was not the only party making concessions (ME) (CRECB, 2010: 18182-18188, 22039-22042, 22282-22284, 22290, 22292-22294, 22300-22301, 22308-22309, 22312-22313, 22316, 22320-22321, 22343, 22345-22346, 22489, 22497-22498, 22522, 22526, 22534-22537, 22558, 22560-22561, 22950-22951, 23000-23001, 23012-23013, 23017, 23023-23024, 23072-23073, 23082-23083, 23087, 23096-23097, 23196-23197, 23209, 23217, 23442, 23445; S.Amdt.4864 to Treaty Document 111-5, 2010;

S.Amdt.4892 to Treaty Document 111-5, 2010; S.Amdt.4904 to Treaty Document 111-5, 2010; S.Amdt.4908 to Treaty Document 111-5, 2010).

Senator Kyl, the Republican Whip¹¹⁵, and member of the Finance and Judiciary Committees, spoke against the New START on many occasions, assuming the role of the GOP leader on the New START (Rogin, 2010; Baker, 2010). We analyze below several speeches from 24 May 2010 to 21 December 2010. The lawmaker rejected the viewpoint that the New START ought to be ratified because doing so would allow (ME) the United States to take the next step towards a world free of nuclear weapons (GP). He rejected that goal premise, believing that it was neither feasible nor desirable (ME). Nuclear weapons had deterrent value (CP) and countries would maintain the ability to rearm (CP).

Kyl considered that some of his colleagues “seemed intent on rushing the treaty” for covert reasons that should not inform that decision. He believed that the democrats wanted to focus on the New START at that point in time because several of their colleagues had been voted out of office in the past election and would soon leave the Senate (CP) (covert reason informing action). Kyl also claimed that the democrats were focusing on the New START to divert attention from the Omnibus appropriations bill (GP) (hidden goal of action). He also denied rumors that “there was some deal in the works to trade the extension of the existing tax rates for support of the START treaty” (GP) (denies a hidden republican goal). Since the Senate was dealing with a series of other issues at that time, it was difficult to have the kind of debate that was needed on the agreement, and that “[was] not the best way to get [the treaty] done” (ME). Kyl feared that the Senate would file cloture¹¹⁶ and cut off the debate before the work on the amendments to the resolution of ratification was complete (VP). By dual tracking the New START and the Omnibus appropriations bill, the Senate was not adequately considering the latter either (GP) (downsides on goals). The senator noted that the START and the 3-page long Moscow Treaty had been ratified after approximately 430 days and 9 months, respectively (CP). He could not recall a precedent for rushing a treaty so complex (ME) (defends delaying ratification).

As result, Kyl defended inaction on ratification at that point in time (ME). The senator believed that such a course of action would not lead to compromises on U.S. goals. The administration had assured Congress that there would be no problem in letting START expire because both countries had “agreed to continue observing the spirit of the treaty’s terms,” and not to take any measures that would undermine strategic stability (GP). Thus, it was not true that maintaining the New START unratified let the United States disadvantaged (GP), and that ratifying the treaty was urgent because of the current lack of verification (GP).

¹¹⁵ The “whip” is a House of Senate member who “coordinates with other party leaders to make sure that all of their lawmakers vote the same way on a specific piece of legislation” (MasterClass, 2022).

¹¹⁶ Cloture is a Senate procedure. It “limits further consideration of a pending proposal to thirty hours in order to end a filibuster.” It requires the approval of three-fifths of the Senators (60 votes) (Budget Council, n.d.; Document 113-18, 2013: 15-16). Cloture on the New START debate was invoked on 21 December 2010, leading to its end and to a final vote on the agreement on 22 December 2010. The cloture vote received the support of all democrats and 11 republicans (67-28) (Collina, 2011).

Unless, of course, it was not true that such a “spirit of cooperation existed” (CP) (questions premise). After all, the administration had announced negotiations on a “bridging agreement” with Russia on verification (until the New START entered into force), that seemingly were never concluded (CP). He rejected the conclusion that it was urgent to put the New START’s verifications in place (ME) if it was true that U.S.-Russian relations had been reset (CP). Either the reset was false (CP) or putting verifications in place urgently was not necessary (ME). But the administration could not claim that both were true at the same time.

If the “wonderful relationship” that the U.S. allegedly had with Russia was not real (CP), then the administration should have instead extended the START verification provisions for another five years (ME). Kyl also rejected the understanding that the New START should be ratified (ME) in order not to make Russia mad, and not jeopardize cooperation between the two countries (GP) (potential downsides on goals). If the reset was real (CP), those downsides would not occur (GP). Again, the administration could not claim both premises to be true at the same time (ME). The lawmaker was doubtful that the reset had been a success (CP) and that it would aid (ME) in addressing the issue of Iran’s nuclear program (GP).

The senator doubted that the New START Treaty would achieve some of the goals that it was meant to achieve. For one, he was unsure (ME) that the agreement would demonstrate U.S. leadership and strengthen its hand in holding Iran, North Korea, and other governments accountable (GP). The treaty did not (ME) prohibit Russia from selling anti-aircraft missile systems to Iran (GP). Kyl had not seen any real progress on non-proliferation since the signing of the treaty (CP). He claimed that the treaty distracted the administration from goals that should be prioritized: reducing the dangers stemming from terrorism and proliferation (GP) (downsides). In his opinion, the New START did nothing to advance those goals (ME) seeing as Iran and North Korea’s proliferation activities had increased since the U.S. and Russia had started reducing their arsenals (CP). Instead of Russia’s, Kyl would rather focus on Iran and North Korea’s nuclear programs (GP).

Kyl believed that, due to the verification tools of the treaty, Russia might decide to cheat because it had an history of doing so on every arms control agreement celebrated with the U.S. (CP). If Russia decided to do so, the U.S. would not be able to tell (GP) (downside on goals). But even if it could tell, the U.S. would still lose intelligence since the verification regime had been weakened in comparison with the original START (GP) (downside on goals). The number of inspections, under the New START, would be reduced to less than half, and none of them would ever enable the U.S. (ME) “to have a good sense of the total number of warheads” (GP) (unachieved goal). At lower force levels, better verification was crucial (GP). Thus, extending START would have been a preferable policy course to signing the New START (ME).

The senator acknowledged that Russia’s modernization efforts and their deployment of new systems created more uncertainty (CP) in a context in which inspections were lacking (CP), but he was not concerned with a short-term (i.e., in the next few months) threat to national security from Russia

(CP) (GP) (not a downside of inaction). Thus, the treaty did not have to be rushed (ME). He was interested in avoiding lack of transparency (GP) and “additional challenges for [U.S.] ability to monitor Russia’s current and future capabilities” (GP) which he believed would result from the New START’s flaws on verification (ME) (not the recommended action). Thus, Kyl supported an amendment increasing the number of inspections (ME).

The lawmaker stressed that the U.S. nuclear “stockpile [was] aging, refurbishments [were] behind schedule, the Cold War infrastructure [was] falling apart (CP), and the critical science and technology skills that [underwrote] [U.S.] nuclear deterrence [were] atrophied (CP). Thus, he doubted that the New START (ME), despite being negotiated on the premise of numeric stability (GP), could strengthen strategic stability (GP) (goal is not achieved). Deployed weapons had to be “safe, secure and, most critically, for stability they must be reliable” (GP). Therefore, as 41 senators (all 40 republicans and Joe Lieberman [I-CT]) had told President Obama, there was a direct link between nuclear force reductions (GP) and modernization of the American nuclear weapons complex (ME). Consequently, “a renewed emphasis by the administration on sustaining [America’s] stockpile and modernizing the infrastructure” was a necessary complementary action to the New START (ME). However, the senator “[was] concerned the administration [had] not done all it should,” with the funding being provided remaining short of what was necessary (ME). He explained that the administration had “to update the plan and incorporate a lot of new costs” (ME), believing that the administration had not “been sufficiently careful in defining the requirements and identifying the amount of money (CP) (current efforts are insufficient). He also was unsure of how much money for nuclear weapons activities would be provided in the future (CP). Furthermore, just as important as the money was flexibility (GP), which was compromised by NPR restrictions on warhead modernization (VP). Hence, the Senator believed that such restrictions on modernization should not be in place (ME).

Another of the senator’s concerns pertained to the fact that he believed that the administration was not fully committed to the nuclear triad, since there was no funding for follow-on strategic systems in the 1251 plan¹¹⁷, except for SLBM submarines (CP). He feared that the administration wanted to further reduce the ICBM leg of the triad, a goal that he rejected (GP). The arms control agenda of the administration (GP) (i.e., a nuclear free world) should not be a premise informing ICBM levels (ME). While the service life of the current systems exceeded the duration of the treaty, it would take a long time to develop them and deploy them (CP). If the triad was not modernized (GP), then modernizing warheads would be of little significance (GP). The confidence provided by the nuclear triad was also crucial to guarantee that strategic stability was strengthened by the New START (GP), meaning that investments in the maintenance and modernization of delivery systems were also needed (ME). The

¹¹⁷ The plan outlined Obama’s commitment to nuclear modernization. It was named after a section of the 2010 NDAA with the same number that required said modernization (Senate RPC, 2012). The 10-year plan concerned the maintenance and modernization of U.S. strategic delivery systems and nuclear warheads, as well as their supporting infrastructure (Reif, 2013; Section 1251 Report, 2010).

U.S. nuclear delivery systems that composed the nuclear triad were “aging and (...) prey to neglect and loss of critical capabilities (CP).

Modernization (ME) and consideration of the New START went hand in hand (ME), even if modernization would be necessary regardless (ME). Every other nuclear power was modernizing its forces and China and Russia were modernizing their delivery systems as well (CP). He noted that every other nuclear power could “produce a warhead to put back into production when one comes out of production” but the U.S could not (CP). In considering the future needs of the stockpile, the U.S. ought to pursue new approaches, including “an intense, unified push to restore a viable production capacity for nuclear warheads [GP]. Herein lives the greatest chink in our armor” (CP). Kyl quoted former Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger who had recently testified that Russia possessed the ability to produce new nuclear warheads, turning over their nuclear weapons inventory every decade (CP) – a capability that the U.S. did not have (CP).

The U.S. was also still using Manhattan Project-era buildings to build its nuclear weapons (CP), and they had to be brought to modern standards (GP) if they were meant to modernize American nuclear weapons (ME). U.S. nuclear weapons had been built in the 1980’s and designed to last only 10 years (CP), meaning that they had to be secured “as safe, secure, and reliable” (GP). The timeline was critical, and Congress could not waste any more time (ME) (delaying action is not an option). The only way for the country to maintain a credible deterrent (GP) while reducing the number of nuclear weapons (GP) was either by testing its stockpile (ME) or pursuing a modernization program (ME).

The senator believed that the article V of the New START compromised U.S. missile defense goals by forbidding the conversion of ICBM or SLBM launchers into launchers for missile defense interceptors. In his view, the treaty was “[establishing] a dangerous precedent with respect to including missile defense limitations in future offensive arms control agreements” (GP). The article was unnecessary, and the United States had gotten nothing in return (ME). The senator viewed article V in the context of the treaty’s preamble, Russia’s unilateral statement about the agreement, and recent remarks by senior Russian officials. The preamble stated that “current strategic defensive arms [did] not undermine the viability and effectiveness of the strategic offensive arms of the parties.” Thus, Kyl worried that “moving beyond ‘current’ systems could provide grounds for [Russia’s] withdrawal,” since the country could consider it an “extraordinary event,” which would allow such action (GP) (downside). The preamble also acknowledged the “interrelationship” between offensive forces and missiles defenses” (GP) (downside), something that the Bush administration had been able to decouple (CP).

The Senate should clarify that, in ratifying this treaty, that the U.S. [was] not reestablishing the Cold War link between offensive forces and missile defenses. Whether that was true or not was irrelevant; what mattered was that Russia could use it as grounds for withdrawal (GP) (downside). Thus, he supported amending the treaty to remove all mentions of missile defense, including the mention of a link between offensive and defensive systems (ME). He rejected *a quid pro quo* between offensive systems and missile defenses (ME), as Reagan had done in Reykjavik (CP). He believed there to be no

harm in recreating the relationship that had been established between Reagan and the Soviets on missile defense at the time (ME). Removing said language was the only way to avoid future confusion and pressure from Russia (ME). The Russians had been trying to reduce the effect of U.S. missile defenses on their strategic capabilities for decades (CP). America needed to push back (ME), but the administration, so far, had not (CP).

Russia's unilateral statement about the New START and the declarations of Moscow's senior officials also led Kyl to anticipate consequences on U.S. goals, since they linked the viability of the agreement to refrain, on the part of the U.S., when it came to missile defense development (GP) (downside). Kyl believed that the United States was providing Russia with the potential to blackmail it or exert political pressure by threatening to withdraw from the treaty. The preamble did not have to be legally binding to be influential (GP) (downside). Whereas Senator Kerry had stated that the preamble was a non-binding "throwaway statement (...) done for domestic consumption," he also pointed out that making any changes would be a "treaty killer." Since the two premises could not be simultaneously true, one could not argue that the preamble had no importance (GP) (thus, maintaining it would indeed compromise U.S. goals). Furthermore, Kerry's view whereby Russian's threats of withdrawal would be irrelevant since either party could abandon the treaty if they wished to do so, missed the point. Russian threat of withdrawal from the treaty was irrelevant because either party could do so if it wished anyway, missed the point. The problem was that Russia was allowed to believe that it could legally withdraw from the agreement if the U.S. continued to develop its missile defense systems. And in threatening to do so, Kyl feared that the U.S. President would cave into Moscow's demands and jeopardize the system's progress (GP) (downside). Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov had already stated that Russia would have the right to abandon the agreement if the U.S. missile defense buildup began "to considerably affect the efficiency of Russian strategic nuclear forces" (CP).

Kyl considered that the New START marked a return to the Cold War balance of terror (i.e., missile defenses are destabilizing), and that would result in less effective defenses against North Korea and Iran (GP) (downside). The senator wished that America's unilateral statement about the New START had firmly expressed America's commitment to missile defense development and deployment, pushing back on Russia's statement (ME). The statement should have made clear (ME) that U.S. development of missile defenses did not constitute grounds for Russia to withdraw from the agreement, directly contradicting Russia's statement (GP). That was what had been done with START (CP). While the resolution of ratification contained some language on the establishment of missiles defenses, the senator deemed it not enough (ME).

In addition, the U.S. unilateral statement clarified that missile defenses were meant to address limited attacks only, which could compromise future U.S. goals. In case of strategic surprise, accidental launches, or disintegration of the present strategic relation with key nuclear powers, American should leave itself room to respond to such challenges (GP). The U.S. might decide to return to the concept of protecting itself from any nuclear attack, including from Russia (GP). Kyl did not believe that the best

course of action was to enter a treaty with Russia while such divergences on missile defense remained (ME). The treaty set the stage for misunderstandings and confrontation as missile defense activities continued (GP) (downsides).

Kyl was unsure if the current administration was truly committed to the development of a missile defense system (CP). After all, America had “[given] away ground-based European systems” before treaty negotiations were finished (CP). Kyl believed that Obama would back away (CP) from its commitment to missile defense (VP) (which should not be compromised) and would change it in some way if it bothered Russia (GP) (downside). He was concerned that the GBI system that the previous administration had developed had been replaced by an inferior approach (the EPAA) (CP). He suspected that this decision was grounded on a hidden reason for action – the fact that the current administration never liked the approach of the Bush administration (VP).

The fourth phase of NATO’s phased adaptive approach, which could provide a defense against a long-range ICBM against a country like Russia (GP) would only be available by 2020 (CP). Thus, he believed that Russia had already succeeded in forestalling U.S. missile defense development and deployment¹¹⁸ (CP). Overall, Kyl believed that the New START would either cause troubles with Russia in the future (GP) or, to avoid them, America would make sure that its missile defense system was not affective against Russia, meaning that it would not be effective against an ICBM from Iran or North Korea either (GP). Furthermore, there were disagreements about U.S. missile defense intentions within the U.S. government as well. The DOS claimed that missile defenses would only be effective against regional and intermediate-range threats. On the other hand, the White House was considering writing a letter stating that America was going to develop the kinds of missile defenses that would “qualitatively improve [America’s] position vis-à-vis Russia” (CP). He believed that the treaty could not be ratified (ME) “with all of [that] uncertainty out there” (CP).

Kyl also raised the possibility that the U.S. nuclear force structure under the New START could compromise the country’s deterrence missions (GP) (downside on goals), especially regarding security guarantees to allies and partners (VP) (downside on values), because America did not know how Russia was going to configure its nuclear forces (CP). He pointed to the fact that Russia was increasing its reliance on nuclear weapons (CP), conducting war games against NATO members (CP), and modernizing its strategic and tactical nuclear forces across the board (CP). He noted that it was unclear how the U.S. nuclear force structure was going to look like after eliminating 180 strategic delivery systems, in accordance with the treaty’s terms (GP) (potential downside). According to a September 2008 DOD and DOE white paper, a force of approximately 900 delivery systems was needed for deterrence purposes – so how come 700, as established by the New START, was now the correct number? (ME) He believed that 700 was a number “cutting into the bone,” jeopardizing deterrence

¹¹⁸ On 16 December 2010, Senator Jeff Sessions (R-AL) expressed his belief that the missile defense sites in Poland and Czechia had been discarded in return for Russian cooperation on other issues, including the New START (CRECB, 2010: 22299-22300).

missions (GP) (downside). While administration experts had said that 700 was enough, they also warned that the number “[was] the limit beyond which we don’t dare go.” Believing that the limit of 700 deployed bombers and missiles was too low to begin with (ME), he supported an amendment increasing said number to 720, believing it to be closer to the necessary going further (ME). The increased number would also account for the fact that the conventional Prompt Global Strike (PGS) would be counted as nuclear (ME). The treaty’s counting rules represented, for the senator, a concession he opposed when it came to the PGS system (GP).

Furthermore, because the preamble of the treaty explained that both parties were “mindful of the impact of conventionally armed ICBMs and SLBMs on strategic stability,” Kyl posited that the New START “[set] the stage for further limitations on U.S. conventional strike capabilities” (GP) (downside). This was problematic because the capability was needed (ME) to deal with WMD, terrorist, and rogue state threats (CP), and the treaty might prevent the country from doing so (GP) (downside). The administration had said that there were no constraints on “current” and “planned” conventional strike capabilities, but the use of those terms implied potential future restrictions (GP) (downside). If there was no reason to talk about tactical nuclear weapons under the treaty, then it was not necessary to talk about conventional capabilities either (ME). He stated that there were mechanisms to allow conventional ICBMs to be differentiated from nuclear ICBMs (CP), meaning that the argument that they could be confused with one another, and thus it was important to restrict both, should be rejected (ME).

Moreover, the assumption that the United States would still have enough delivery systems (at 700) assumed that Russia was not going to cheat (GP) or “break out” (GP) (potential downsides). He also pointed out that China was modernizing and developing its nuclear forces (CP) and warned against changes in the geopolitical environment (CP). The numbers “[were] approaching levels where the arsenals of other countries will bear on a strategic balance” – and the same applied to tactical nuclear weapons (CP). Such low numbers might also prove to be an incentive for China to build up, seeing as parity with the U.S. and Russia would not be far off (GP) (downside). As he put it, the U.S. “[had] little to gain and much to lose if [it] can’t be certain the numbers in New START are adequate” (ME).

Kyl also questioned the view that the treaty (ME) strengthened strategic stability (GP) on the grounds that it did not address the 10-1 disparity between the U.S. and Russia regarding tactical nuclear weapons (GP). He foresaw “possibilities for Russian efforts to threaten to use nuclear weapons to influence regional conflicts” (CP). He also suspected that Russia was forestalling talks on tactical nuclear weapons to get concessions from the United States on missile defense at some point (CP). The Russians might be, in fact, interested in moving their tactical nuclear weapons to the Chinese border, but wanted to get something in return from moving them from the European theater (CP). Kyl defended delaying the decision on the ratification of the agreement (ME) until the impact of Russian tactical nuclear weapons on strategic stability and America’s extended deterrence was better understood (GP).

While the administration defended the view that they had to first ratify the New START in order to address tactical nuclear weapons in the following agreement, the senator believed that not to be the

best course of action, seeing as America would have lost all its leverage by then. Tactical nuclear weapons should be addressed now rather than later (ME). Kyl considered that the New START also hindered strategic stability because it mandated both sides to share with each other unencrypted data from only five ballistic missile flights a year (GP) (downsides on goals). Under START, data sharing took place after almost every flight (CP). The lawmaker supported an amendment adding to the preamble of the treaty language acknowledging the interrelationship between strategic and tactical capabilities (ME). He supported it due to its undeniability (CP) and because the only argument against the amendment was the fact that the Russians would oppose it (CP), a premise which should not inform action (ME). He wanted to renegotiate the preamble of the agreement with Moscow (ME). If the preamble was just a “throwaway piece of paper” as argued by the democrats, there would be no consequences in doing so (GP) (denies downsides of renegotiating). Kyl believed that the goal of stability that the treaty pursued (GP) should be underscored by “common understanding and agreement on core principles;” which was not the case (VP) (compromise on values). The New START also represented a compromise vis-à-vis the Senate’s constitutional power to advise and consent to treaties. That was because the accord suggested that members of a U.S.-Russian Bilateral Consultative Commission could reach a “secret agreement on changes to ensure the ‘viability and effectiveness’ of the treaty” (VP).

Kyl believed that some rail mobile forces provisions should have been included in the treaty (ME), as Russia had some plans to develop them (CP). He stressed the publication of a news piece from a Russian News Agency (ITAR-TASS, since renamed TASS) entitled: “Russia Completes Design Work For Use Of RS-24 Missiles On Rail-based Systems” (CP). Thus, he questioned Kerry’s assessment that “the Russians would be crazy to think about doing this” (CP). He also noted the absence of a side agreement to limit SLCM, which had been done with START. To him, this was problematic (ME) because America was retiring its SLCMs at a time when Russia was developing its own (CP). He did not perceive SLCMs as tactical, but strategic weapons (CP). The U.S.-Russian non-strategic nuclear weapons imbalance was an increasing concern, particularly as reductions of strategic nuclear weapons carried on (CP). Kyl wanted to avoid a negative impact on strategic stability (GP). Thus, he proposed an amendment whereby before the New START could come into force, the president had to negotiate with Russia a bilateral agreement (ME) preventing the latter from deploying a significant number of SLCMs during the duration of the New START (GP). The bilateral agreement had the advantage of not forcing a renegotiation of the New START (GP) (not a downside), building on the START precedent (ME). He believed that no delay would necessarily occur on the entering into force of the New START (GP) (no downside) and stressed that his amendment was solely about SLCM, not about the broader tactical nuclear weapons question (ME).

Russia would also be able to legally increase its strategic force levels above the New START’s deployed warhead limits (1550) due to the treaty’s counting rules (GP) (downside on goals). Indeed, Kyl believed that the treaty would drive Russia to MIRV their ICBM force, which would be

destabilizing “because it [created] a situation where you basically have to use them, or you lose them” (GP) (downside). For him, this was reason enough to wait on further documentation and not to act right now (ME). America was de-MIRVing its ICBM force to a single warhead (CP) while encouraging Moscow to do the opposite in light of the treaty (GP) (downside). In fact, Russian officials had announced “that all new mobile Topol-M missiles [would] carry multiple warheads” (CP).

For the senator, the terms of the treaty, as currently defined, were not the best course of action available because the United States agreed to reduce its forces, but Russia did not have to make any. The United States should have gotten those concessions from Russia, seeing as it was making several for the Russians (on tactical nuclear weapons, on Prompt Global Strike, on verification, and on missile defense) (ME). It was the first time since before WWII that America agreed to one-sided reductions in military power (ME) (not the best course of action). Russia had gotten everything it wanted, but the United States did not. It was a lopsided agreement (ME). The administration was “dealing with a nonproblem in the START treaty with Russia, a country that was no longer an enemy” (CP) to the detriment of more important issues – Iran and North Korea (CP) (GP).

Nuclear weapons were not likely to be a future source of conflict between America and Russia (CP). However, Kyl was still concerned with a Russian breakout. As he put it, “[w]hat if all of a sudden they decided to confront us over some issue relating to a country on their border or something else and we were not aware they had gained a significant advantage over us?” If that were to happen, America would need a long time “to deal with that” (CP). Kyl believed that the goal of reducing the number of nuclear weapons (GP) could be achieved through unilateral reductions if a country desired to do so (ME). Thus, he rejected President Obama’s view that the number of nuclear weapons had been coming down because of arms control agreements, which he saw as unnecessary (ME).

Kyl also believed that “every arms control treaty [had] to be justified within its own four corners,” meaning that gaining leverage against another country (GP) or its cooperation (GP), or wanting to avoid making another country “mad,” (GP) should not be reasons for action (rejects goals of action). The Senate was still waiting on some documents that the senator deemed important to decide on the agreement’s ratification (CP). To ratify the treaty without the Senate having managed to perform its due diligence represented a compromise on values – the chamber had a constitutional duty to advise and consent on treaties, it could not simply rubberstamp it (VP). Kyl also considered that the Senate’s role in the treaty process had already been threatened (VP) by the administration’s decision not to let the chamber access the treaty negotiation record (CP).

The legislator rejected the conclusion presented by the administration whereby there were only two policy choices available: to have the New START regulating the American nuclear security relationship with Russia (ME), or to have no treaty at all (ME). He argued that it was possible to amend the treaty (ME) or to negotiate a new one (ME), and he believed those courses of action to be preferable to ratifying the New START (ME) (CRECB, 2010: 8913-8919, 22555-22557, 22284-22292, 22341-

22345, 22493-22497, 22532-22534, 22558, 22560-22561, 22948-22950, 23005-23006, 23085-23087, 23199-23200, 23208-23210, CREC, 2010: S4124).

Senator Lugar, ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, expressed his support for the New START. We analyze below several speeches from 15 December 2010 to 22 December 2010. He described a national security context that he believed should be kept in mind during consideration of the New START. The legislator stated that the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq had cost many American lives (CP). He highlighted extremely high tensions in the Korean peninsula, with Pyongyang's nuclear program remaining an unresolved issue (CP). America feared Iran might develop a nuclear weapon (CP) and was tackling terrorist threats in many locations across the world (CP). The senator was also concerned with Pakistan's instability and the security of its nuclear arsenal (CP). America remained vulnerable to disruptions in oil supplies (CP) and was facing serious constraints in terms of resources (CP).

Large remnants of Moscow's Cold War nuclear arsenal still existed and continued to threaten the U.S., whether through accident, miscalculation, proliferation, or any number of other scenarios (CP). That was a core national security problem that required the government and the Senate's attention (CP). That "[was] an existential problem" that ought to be taken seriously (CP)

Some of Russia's nuclear weapons could be pointed at cities that the senator represented (VP) (socially recognized duty). America had been immensely fortunate to avoid a mishap that could have destroyed its civilization during the Cold War (CP). While the nuclear problem was circumscribed during the last two decades, it was not eliminated, and U.S. cities "[remained] vulnerable to accident, miscalculation and proliferation stemming from the Russian nuclear arsenal" (CP). Thus, one still had to "pay very close attention to the disposition of Russian nuclear forces" (GP). While Russia was not an enemy, and America's relationship with the country was "both wary and hopeful" (CP). There was potential for U.S.-Russian cooperation despite the frustrations caused by surviving Cold War sensibilities (CP). But skepticism of the Russian government or political disagreements with it (CP) should not discourage one for the pursuit of verification and transparency (GP). On the contrary, the treaty was made more important (ME) considering the friction in the broader U.S.-Russian relationship (CP).

Lugar believed that his Republican colleagues were mistaken in saying that the American people were focused on other matters – jobs, the economy, and bringing hope into their lives (CP) (rejects premise). In his eyes, the world did not necessarily "wished them well," and did not take a time out while Congress dealt with economic issues (CP). He wanted to eliminate "a lot of the threat" posed by nuclear weapons, even if he did not envision an attack (GP).

To him, waiting to ratify the New START was not an option; START had expired and it was important to act now. It "[was] not a question of a discretionary treaty that somehow might be held over to a more convenient time" (ME). The wait had already had a negative impact on the Nunn-Lugar program (GP), as the Russians were waiting on the New START's ratification (CP). The senator

continued to receive monthly reports from the Russians on warhead and missile destruction progress, and he feared he would stop receiving them if Moscow lost faith in the ratification of the agreement (GP) (downside). He believed that Russia needed America's help to destroy its old warheads (CP) and that it was unknown how long they would survive a potential accident (CP), which would affect many innocent people (VP). Thus, it was urgent to consider ratification of the New START (ME).

The senator wanted to pursue mutual reductions in nuclear warheads and delivery vehicles (GP), so as to promote stability (GP), pursue transparency (GP), and reduce weapons' maintenance costs (GP). He wanted to maximize the safety of Russian and American nuclear arsenals (GP), encourage global cooperation for the achievement of nonproliferation goals (GP), solidify cooperation on nuclear security issues with Russia (GP), and maintain knowledge of Moscow's nuclear capabilities and intentions (GP). The treaty would contribute toward those goals (ME).

Lugar wanted to "[mitigate] the threat posed by Russia's nuclear arsenal" (GP). Thus, as the country contended with the challenges listed above, the last thing America needed was to reject a process with a proven track record (ME). He based that assessment on grounds that over the last fifteen years, the START contributed to help the U.S. "keep a lid on the U.S.-Russian nuclear rivalry (CP). It had allowed the U.S. to maintain a working relation with Russia and assured each party of the nuclear capabilities of the other (CP). However, since START expired over a year before, the United States had not been able to collect data and verify compliance (CP). The senator wanted to resume those inspections (GP) to "reduce the possibility that [America] will be surprised by Russian nuclear deployments or advancement (GP). The New START would allow that (ME).

The senator explained that rejecting the treaty would lead to serious downsides. In his view, a failed treaty ratification would expand Washington's arms competition with Moscow (GP), strain the national budget (GP), and detract the military from other national security priorities (GP). It would guarantee less transparency (GP) and procedures for confidence-building (GP), diminish defense cooperation with Russia (GP), and complicate military planning (GP). It would hinder U.S. knowledge of Russia's nuclear forces (GP) and U.S. nonproliferation efforts (GP). Satellite coverage that could be used against terrorists would be wasted on Russia instead (GP). A failure to ratify the agreement would please Iran, North Korea, Syria, Burma, and others that avoided complying with their legal obligations, sought to question U.S. non-proliferation credentials, and wanted Russia to resist harsh economic measures against them (GP). It was not worth compromising those goals for the sake of a treaty that the military wanted ratified (ME).

On the other hand, by establishing nuclear cooperation with Russia, the U.S. would be able (ME) to limit the options of the abovementioned states (GP). In addition to seeking to collaborate with Russia on non-proliferation (GP), the U.S. also sought its cooperation regarding Afghanistan (GP), and to avoid obstacles in the UNSC, where Russia had veto power (GP). According to the Pentagon and the JCS, the agreement would (ME) bolster national security (GP) without compromising deterrence (GP)

or constraining missile defense plans (GP) (denies downsides). Every DOD and DOS Secretary who shared their view on the treaty expressed its support (ME).

Relying on intelligence to obtain information in lieu of the treaty was not the best policy alternative (ME): during the Cold War, uncertainty surrounding Moscow's nuclear arsenal led to an enormous intelligence budget (GP) and contradictory risk assessments (GP). That line of action impacted negatively on the American psyche and the taxpayers' pockets (GP) (downsides of alternative action). While the senator was not suggesting that they were on the brink of returning to Cold War times (CP), those times had not been a benign experience (CP) and America should not seek to revive nuclear competition in an environment without limitations and verification (GP). The U.S. should not be careless both in terms of allowing the relationship with Russia to deteriorate (GP) and about weakening American knowledge of Russian's nuclear weaponry (GP). That would be an "incredible strategic blunder" seeing as Russia still possessed thousands of nuclear weapons (ME). The U.S. should not distance itself from "an historic rival" (CP) in the field that most affected American national security (GP) (downsides of alternative action). That would be a mistake, given the proven track record of arms control cooperation (ME): the START process prevented, for fifteen years, miscalculations and surprises (CP). START had allowed the United States to "manage an adversarial relationship that previously had been cloaked in volatile uncertainty and accompanied by enormous financial costs to our own society" (ME). On nuclear matters, the U.S. needed "to keep Russia close" (GP). The two states shared an interest in achieving several goals: limiting arms competition (GP), attaining predictability (GP), keeping WMDs out of the hands of terrorists (GP), and keeping open lines of communication between their military and political establishments (GP).

Lugar rejected competition with Russia as a policy alternative to ensure America's security vis-à-vis Russia (ME). He believed that "that [had] not been the view of the American people," nor what they voted for in the last Congressional elections (CP). And it certainly was not the view of Ronald Reagan (VP).

The senator explained that ever since the creation of the Nunn-Lugar program, many senators were very concerned with showing their mistrust of the Russians and of their dislike for arms control treaties, leading always to "extraordinary problems with verification of any treaty" (CP). Some even said that "you can never trust the Russians. You can never deal with the Russians" (CP). In his view, the inspections that would be carried out under the New START would (ME) greatly reduce the possibility of U.S. surprise "by future advancements in Russian weapons technology or deployment" (GP). Such inspections would only be achieved through the agreement (ME). The senator also believed that the New START verification regime was preferable to that of START. It provided (ME) both parties with confidence of the other's compliance and important verification enhancements (GP), while being simpler and safer to implement, less costly, and less operationally disruptive (ME). There were less bases in Russia to inspect today and lower rates of missile production (CP), thus the number of necessary inspections was lower (ME). The verifications goals would be met; the same level of oversight would

be achieved (ME). In tandem with America's strategic force structure, which was flexible and survivable (CP), Russia would not be able to sufficiently cheat or breakout under the new agreement (GP) (denies downside). The reduced number of inspections was adequate (ME) to the new reality. The U.S. no longer sought to constrain an arms race (GP) and encourage a shift from ICBM MIRV-ing (GP) (rejects goals of action). Both sides wanted the flexibility to structure their forces as they saw fit (GP), a view consistent with that of the previous U.S. administration (CP), and now Russia possessed a smaller number of nuclear systems, which were deployed in fewer bases (CP). Following New START reductions (GP), the senator believed that Russia would close even more bases (GP).

The senator believed the counting rules of the New START to be superior because the same set of rules would be used by both parties, meaning that data exchanged would be more accurate (ME). If the New START was not ratified for a lengthy period, the information gathered under the START would deteriorate (GP) (downside). Inaction was, therefore, not the best course of action (ME). He also noted that those who concluded that the treaty should not be ratified because it was a Cold War relic (ME) (outdated) were the same who "[lamented] the passing of START I's [ME] Cold War verification regime" (GP) (questions whether critics indeed considered the treaty to be outdated, since they valued verifiability, a goal that it delivered). Furthermore, extending START was not a preferable alternative to the New START: the military did not like several aspects of the old treaty (ME) and preferred a more flexible approach (GP), which the new agreement provided (ME). He also noted that economic conditions in Russia impeded "a massive restructuring of its strategic nuclear forces" (CP).

Furthermore, "the START process [was] far more than just verification" (GP); it allowed (ME) for the establishment of "unprecedented arms control and nonproliferation initiatives" (GP). Notable among them was the Nunn-Lugar program, which joined the U.S. and Russia in destroying WMDs in the former U.S.S.R. and beyond (CP). As the senator saw it, the two countries had the choice to continue that nonproliferation effort or not, "and that choice is embodied in the New START." Meaning that U.S. nonproliferation goals would be compromised if the treaty was not ratified (GP). The START process (ME) linked U.S. and Russian defense establishments (GP) and was critical to nonproliferation activities (GP).

Senator Lugar explained that the New START did not impede U.S. missile defense goals. The treaty did not change the fact that the United States was in charge of its "own missile destiny" (GP) (not a downside). After all, the preamble "[did] not permit rights nor impose obligations" (CP) (rejects preamble as a part of the institutional reality that ought to inform U.S. action on missile defense). Regarding the interrelationship between offensive and defensive systems, the congressman saw it as a truism (CP). The prohibition, under the treaty, of converting ICBM and SLCM launchers into defensive missile silos, did not affect U.S. missile defense options. Doing so would be more expensive than "building a modern, tailor-made missile defense interceptor silo" (GP) (no downside). In fact, undertaking such conversions would be a "major setback" for America's missile defense program (GP) (downside of alternative action). On Russia's unilateral statement, which stated its right to abandon the

treaty if U.S. missile defense programs expanded, Lugar saw it as inconsequential (GP) (no downside). Unilateral declarations in arms control treaties were standard (i.e., START) (CP) and did not alter the parties' legal rights and obligations (CP) (rejects preamble as part of the institutional reality). The resolution of ratification had language conveying that understanding (ME), and U.S. actions would remain consistent with the 1999 Missile Defense ACT (VP). In fact, there was strong bipartisan support for pursuing present missile defense plans and the government was "heavily involved" in the matter (CP). Lugar also noted that Russia did not abandon START after missile defense interceptors were deployed in California and Alaska, nor after the U.S. withdrew from the ABM Treaty, nor after missile defense plans were announced in Czechia and Poland (CP). Congress should not reject a treaty (ME) that was in U.S. interest (VP) on account of unrealized Russian ambitions (GP) (unmet goals).

Some senators had argued that phase four of the Phased Adaptive Approach could threaten Russian missiles, despite being developed to address the threat from an Iranian missile (GP). Thus, they argued, Russia could threaten to withdraw from the New START on those grounds, leading the U.S. to delay or inhibit the deployment of the new defensive missile. Lugar believed that such a downside would not occur. He explained that the U.S. military "went to great lengths to show that no missile interceptor under deployment could neutralize Russian strategic forces." Phase four interceptors "[were] not of the size or (...) range to be able to reach Russian strategic missile fields" (GP) (not a downside). None of the witnesses who testified in the Foreign Relations Committee had argued that, over the duration of the New START, the U.S. would be able to effectively defeat massive strategic missile attacks against it. That "[was] a technical reality and not a political choice" (CP).

Regarding tactical nuclear weapons, which the New START did not cover, the senator noted that not ratifying the treaty would make future limitations of those Russian arms much less likely (GP) (downside of inaction). He also believed that the U.S. was overvaluing their utility and undervaluing America's deterrent (CP). Russia's tactical nuclear weapons had very short ranges, were used for homeland air defense, and were either devoted to the Chinese border or in storage (CP). A Russian nuclear strike on NATO states was deterred by NATO conventional superiority, American tactical and strategic nuclear forces, and British and French nuclear weapons (CP). In his words, "Russian tactical nuclear weapons do not threaten our strategic deterrent" (GP) (not a downside). NATO allies understood that (CP) and supported the agreement (CP).

Lugar explained that the treaty did not impact on modernization and replacement of strategic offensive arms. The agreement explicitly stated that such activities "may be carried out" (GP) (no downside). In fact, the administration had submitted to Congress the 1251 report, a plan for sustaining and modernization the American nuclear weapons complex. The plan committed to an investment, over ten years, of about \$80 billion dollars, with \$5 billion being added following an update. The administration submitted a budget request for the following FY that represented an increase of almost 10% over the previous year. As a result of those complementary actions (ME), there was "adequate support to sustain the safety, security, reliability, and effectiveness of America's nuclear deterrent"

under New START's central limits" (GP). The directors of the U.S. nuclear weapons laboratories were very satisfied with the updated 1251 report (ME). Furthermore, the resolution of ratification declared that the United States was committed to modernizing and replacing nuclear weapons delivery vehicles, and to retain the flexibility of nuclear and conventional delivery systems (VP). The senator also obtained assurances from the DOD Secretary that, throughout the length of the treaty, America would maintain a credible triad of systems, including the ICBM silo-based leg (VP) (invokes commitment). The triad would provide sufficient capabilities to provide for a credible and effective deterrence (GP).

Lugar opposed amendments to the resolution of ratification that would change the language of the preamble, believing that doing so would "kill" the treaty and deprive the United States of the opportunities it provided (ME). He suspected that the colleagues doing so "did not like the treaty to begin with," or "have not liked any treaties with the Russians," thus hinting at the existence of covert reasons for action (VP/GP) which should not inform a decision to ratify the treaty or not (ME). For the senator, "the costs associated with requiring renegotiation of the treaty (...) far outweigh the benefits the Senate might gain by demanding a new treaty (ME). He rejected the view that other foreign policy issues were of greater importance and that the New START was almost a diversion of the Senate's attention (CP).

Lugar also opposed an amendment being offered on rail mobile missiles. He explained that neither the United States nor Russia possessed such systems (CP). Russia had decided that maintaining it would be either expensive, useless, or vulnerable, and thus destroyed it in the context of the Nunn-Lugar program (CP). Also, if the Russians were to revive their rail mobile missile program, it would count under New START's central limits, meaning that the treaty would lower the downsides of that potential development (GP). Not only was the amendment not needed (ME) but approving it would make a renegotiation of the treaty necessary, which the senator again rejected as the best course of action (ME).

The treaty received military consensus (ME) and it was already delivering positive results (ME) by creating "a much stronger American political consensus in favor of modernization of our nuclear forces and implementation of our missile defense plans" (GP). It had led to "explicit commitments" by appropriators and the president (ME). Ratifying the treaty, he believed, would "solidify (...) domestic determination to achieve these national security goals (ME) (CRECB, 2010: 22034-22039, 22498-22500, 22310-22312, 22538-22540, 23007-23008, 23073-23074, 23196-23197, 23469-23470).

We will now move on to think tanks, starting with the CSIS.

On 1 January 2010, David J. Kramer stressed the end of a downward spiral in U.S.-Russia relations that Russia's invasion of Georgia had accelerated (CP). Still, he did not believe that a considerable improvement in the bilateral ties was possible (GP), due to fundamental differences in values, interests, and outlook between the two countries' leaderships (CP). He doubted Russia's interest in the reset (CP). He also believed that Russia's declining economy (CP), troubles adjusting to the loss of an empire (CP), and its demographic crisis (CP) would not make the country more willing to cooperate on issues such as Iran (GP). The author described Russia's leadership as revisionist, insecure,

and corrupt (CP). He believed that the Kremlin would probably decide to use the image of America as a threat to keep its grip on power (CP). Kramer stressed that America's changed missile defense plans were positively received in Moscow (i.e., from the deployment of the Ground-based Midcourse Defense system in Poland and in Czechia to the EPAA) (CP), but that Prague and Warsaw were disappointed (CP). As result, Russia would no longer target Poland and the Czech Republic with Iskander missiles (CP). The expert described Obama as less interested in missile defense than its predecessor (CP).

The author noted that it was in the interest of the United States (VP) to negotiate a good New START deal (ME). However, he implied that the country should have taken advantage of its apparent leverage (ME). After all, Russia had a much greater need for the treaty due to its difficulties in maintaining its nuclear weapons (CP) and inability to compete in an arms race (CP). Russia's nuclear forces were already nearing New START limits regardless of U.S. force levels (CP). However, he perceived that the Obama administration had forfeited the leverage because it rushed towards an agreement (ME), wanting to show that U.S.-Russian relations "[were] back on track" (GP) and progress towards global nuclear disarmament (GP). Rather than treating the expiration of the START as "some fatal deadline" (CP), the U.S. should have used its leverage to negotiate a better deal for itself (ME).

Kramer also considered the linkage between missile defense and arms control made in the New START to be a mistake (ME). The Administration was heightening the concerns of Central and Eastern European countries that the region was not at heart of U.S. foreign policy anymore (GP) (downside). And indeed, Obama was facing accusations (CP) that he caved to Russia on missile defense (GP) (downside) to secure the New START (GP) and attain greater cooperation with Moscow vis-à-vis Iran (GP). The author believed that, in lieu of creating incentives for Russia to apply pressure on Iran to comply with UN resolutions, which would make missile defense sites in Poland and Czechia unnecessary (ME) (a new missile defense approach) – an approach rejected by Moscow – the Administration should proceed with the Bush Administration's plans in Central and Eastern Europe (ME) (Kramer, 2010: 61-62, 65-68).

Moving on to experts of the RAND Corporation, Olga Oliker, Keith Crane, Lowell H. Schwartz, and Catherine Yusupov authored the report "Russian Foreign Policy: Sources and Implications," last updated in January 2009 and published that year. The experts recommended the United States to open talks with Russia on a follow-up to START (ME). They explained that Russia was interested in arms control (ME) (action is feasible) because negotiating with the United States increased its prestige (CP) and because it wanted to maintain quantitative nuclear parity with the United States (CP), which would be unlikely without a new arms control treaty (CP). The Cold War showed that arms control enabled U.S.-Russian cooperation in other areas (CP), strengthening the case for a new agreement (ME).

The authors wanted to foster U.S.-Russian cooperation in the near-term (GP), to reassure Russia by allowing it to have verification (GP), and to reduce nuclear force sizes (GP), thus reducing costs (GP). They also aimed to "improve the overall tenor of the relationship (GP). A new treaty would allow for the achievement of those goals (ME). Indeed, it could be of great mutual benefit to both countries

(ME). It could also induce Russia (ME) to discuss the reinstating or modification of the CFE (GP). They also suggest that nuclear or CFE talks could be coupled with engagement on missile defense (ME) to ease Russia's concerns (GP). The experts stated that U.S. and Russian policies easily aligned in the realm of arms control (the action is feasible) (ME) (Oliker, Crane, Schwartz, and Yusupov, 2009: 189-190).

On 1 August 2010, Oliker (2010) explained that many states continued to see nuclear weapons as useful (CP). She explained that, for Russia and the U.S., nuclear weapons were important mostly for deterrence, but the two states retained the right to use them under certain circumstances (CP). Still, the role of nuclear weapons for Russia and the United States could be maintained at much lower numbers (reductions would not compromise their role) (GP).

The author considered that, when it came to the goal of shrinking huge arsenals (GP), arms control was crucial (ME). It could also achieve other goals (ME), such as “[drawing] more states into disarmament and safeguards [GP] and [helping] ensure the safety of nuclear weapons and materials” (GP). Wide-range international cooperation on non-proliferation would also contribute (ME) to achieve security (GP). However, while the New START achieved many goals, Oliker was not optimistic that it achieved the goal (ME) of truly “[laying] the groundwork for disarmament” (GP). Achieving that goal would require another goal to be brought forth first: a future state of affairs in which “the political roles that nuclear weapons play [were] either be deemed moot by leaders or filled by other weapons or policy tools (GP).

Moving on to the ACA, Kimball expressed his views on the New START on several occasions (September and December 2009, January-March 2010 and October and December 2010). He stated that it was difficult to change nuclear policy due to “entrenched interests inside the Pentagon and elsewhere” (CP). Most U.S. and Russian deployed nuclear weapons only existed to deter a massive nuclear attack from the other (CP). If necessary, they would also defend U.S. allies and forces against conventional attacks and counter biological and chemical threats (CP). By December 2009, republicans and democrats had already debated the New START for months (CP) but some, particularly senator Kyl, were attempting to undermine support for the accord (CP). By April 2010, the accord “[had] been thoroughly vetted” (CP).

Given America's conventional superiority (CP), maintaining such a large nuclear arsenal was unnecessary (ME) and ran contrary to U.S. interests. It prevented the U.S. from gathering international support to prevent nuclear terrorism (GP) and strengthen the NPT (GP) (downsides of inaction). Deep U.S.-Russian strategic reductions were feasible, prudent, and long-overdue (ME). The overwhelming majority of formal military and national security leaders (republican and democrat) supported the accord (ME).

The New START's verification and monitoring provisions (GP) provided each party with predictability (GP), stability (GP), and confidence that the other state was following the agreed upon terms (GP). The accord was a significant diplomatic achievement (ME), but it was only a first step

(action not sufficient) (ME): thousands of excess nuclear weapons remained in the U.S. and Russian arsenals (CP). Those weapons were liabilities in the fight against terrorism and proliferation (GP) (downside of not achieving further reductions). Indeed, the two presidents should start to negotiate a new round of reductions (ME) and invite leaders of other nuclear-armed states to high level-talks (ME). Such talks (ME) would be aimed at increasing transparency (GP), confidence (GP), and taking steps toward global disarmament (GP). Still, by approving deep and verifiable cuts to the world's largest nuclear arsenals (ME), the New START increased U.S. (GP) and global security (VP).

The accord would also pave the way (ME) for future, more comprehensive talks (GP) (ME) (contributed to the goal of subsequent action), which could address all types of nuclear warheads (including tactical) (GP) and would strengthen the NPT (GP). To further encourage Russia to engage in talks on tactical nuclear weapons (GP), the U.S. and NATO could come to a joint decision to withdraw from Europe the "obsolete" stockpile of weapons of that same category (ME). It was not worth it to risk verifiable reductions to Moscow's strategic nuclear weapons (GP) in order to settle the issue of short-range weapons (GP). The cuts contemplated in the New START would not lead U.S. allies to obtain their own nuclear weapons (GP) (negates downside). Such claims downplayed the role of American conventional capabilities (CP), the costs and risks of obtaining nuclear weapons (CP), and overstated the role played by extended nuclear deterrence (CP).

Extending the START was not a feasible alternative (ME) because Russia would not agree to it (CP). And without the New START (ME), Russia would probably keep over 2000 deployed strategic nuclear weapons indefinitely (GP) (downside of inaction). Delaying the treaty was dangerous and unwise (ME). The U.S. should not rekindle nuclear competition with Russia (GP) and without the agreement both parties might be tempted to carry out more expensive modernization and hedging strategies (downsides) (GP). Failure to ratify the accord would undermine U.S. non-proliferation leadership (VP) and goals (GP), jeopardize U.S.-Russian cooperation (GP), and delay the re-establishment of effective inspections and monitoring between the two parties (GP) (downside) at a time when a verification gap existed since the START's expiration (CP). It would also generate uncertainty about U.S. nuclear policy (GP) and undermine the fragile political consensus (GP) (downsides) to raise funding for nuclear stockpile maintenance (ME).

While some Senate republicans believed that ratification of the New START should be followed by a commitment to modernize America's nuclear forces, the condition was unnecessary and would be unprecedented (ME). Current strategic missile and bomber systems were deemed reliable, modern, and accurate (CP). The administration had increased by 10% its budget request for nuclear infrastructure modernization (CP). Earlier in the year, it had also outlined a 10-year, \$80 billion nuclear modernization plan (CP). Senator Kyl and other republicans were stalling to obtain even more funding for a nuclear weapons production infrastructure that was already well-funded (GP) (covert goal of action). The claims that it was imprudent to carry out more reductions in America's active stockpile before it completely remanufactured, and its associated facilities modernized, was absurd (rejects consequences of action)

(GP). Kimball noted that such a claim contradicted the views of the directors of the nuclear weapons laboratories and of the military leadership (CP). They did not believe that the U.S. should wait until hundreds of warheads were remanufactured (ME) in order to hedge against a resurgent Russia (GP) or in the remote chance that some warheads required a more extensive life-extension program (GP) (Kimball rejects such goals of action). In fact, warhead refurbishment was going exceedingly well (CP). Thus, enough was enough (ME): the administration had dealt with Kyl's concerns and had even gone beyond them (CP).

Concerns by some republican senators regarding the treaty's (ME) verification provisions (GP) and their belief that it constrained U.S. missile defenses (GP) had already been addressed (denies downside). After all, Obama had rebuffed Russian attempts to limit U.S. missile defense plans (GP), and the mention of the relationship between offensive and defensive arms in the preamble was non-binding (GP). The New START also possessed "a more effective, transparent verification method" than START (ME). It changed or removed costly and irrelevant practices in today's world and included new and innovative verification techniques." The U.S. would be able to gather more information on Russia's forces than before (GP) (Kimball, 2009a, 2009b, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d, 2010e).

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee submitted a report, dated 1 October 2010, which stated that, according to the Secretary of Defense, the U.S. would retain a hedge (ME) against strategic or technical surprise (GP). The Secretary claimed that, under the New START (ME), Russia would be unable "to achieve militarily significant cheating or breakout under New START" (GP) (denies downside). He explained that, were Russia to attempt to do so, the U.S. would quickly respond "by increasing the alert levels of SSBNs and bombers [ME], and by uploading warheads on SSBNs, bombers, and ICBMs" (ME). Thus, America's strategic posture planned for the treaty (ME) "[would] help deter any future Russian leaders from cheating or breakout from the treaty, should they ever have such an inclination (GP) (Exec. Rept. 111-6, 2010: 29-30).

Senator Bob Corker, member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, expressed his views on the New START on several occasions. Below, we analyze several of his speeches from 1 December 2010 to 22 December 2010. Initially, the lawmaker believed there to be a lot of work to do during the month of December (CP). Thus, the New START should not be brought up for a vote before other more important issues to the American people were addressed first (ME) (defended inaction).

Corker believed that when it came to overseas military issues, "partisanship absolutely should stop at [the] Nation's shore" (VP). He accused the democrats of asking the republicans to act among those lines when it came to the New START, despite being partisan on other matters (CP). He noted that the democrats had, on 16 December, filled cloture on "Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act," and on the "DREAM Act;" that is, "during a lame duck session in the middle of the START treaty" (CP). The first two issues were "absolutely partisan", and campaign promises of the democrats (CP). As result, the debate on the New START had been "poisoned" (CP). He believed that it did not make sense to resolve existing differences on the New START (ME) while the senators were also dealing with other issues

thrown in by the democrats for political gain (CP). Still, as consideration of the treaty progressed, the senator urged his colleagues to move forward with amendments, despite him not having any himself. He wanted to move forward with the process (ME).

Corker noted that the resolution of ratification of the New START which had come out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had received tremendous republican input. It had been written mostly by republicans, and even named as “Lugar-Corker resolution” (CP). Corker noted that many nuclear weapons facilities in the United States were obsolete and in need of investment (CP). Thus, for the past year, Corker and Kyl worked to assure its proper modernization (CP). Thanks to the debate on the treaty, the president and the Democrat Senate appropriators had made a commitment to modernization (VP), which probably would not have occurred otherwise (ME). Thanks to Senator Kyl’s efforts and the cooperation of Senator Kerry, the president, the appropriators, and others, \$86 billion would be invested in the modernization of the nuclear arsenal, with \$100 billion being invested in delivery vehicles (ME). On nuclear issues, nothing was more threatening to national security (GP) (downside of inaction) than not investing in the nuclear arsenal (ME). He believed that the Americans wanted the nuclear arsenal to be in good conditions as the country prepared itself to undertake reductions (CP). The Senate had the right and the responsibility to decide on the treaty (VP).

On 18 December 2010, Corker supported an amendment submitted by Senator McCain which removed from the treaty’s preamble the language that linked offensive and defensive systems (ME). Nonetheless, he believed that the treaty did not limit U.S. missile defenses. That was due to a letter he had received that very same day from the president which provided such assurances, and a conversation with the vice-chairman of the JCS (GP) (no downside). The only exception was a restriction on the conversion of offensive launchers into defensive ones, which was not relevant (GP) (no downside). The military leaders did not want to take that line of action and carrying it out was the most expensive way of creating a defense shield (ME). The preamble was nonbinding (CP) (not an institutional fact that ought to inform action), and the president had written a letter to the Senate “absolutely committing to the missile defense system (...) being deployed in Europe, absolutely committing to a national defense system” (VP). If not for the treaty, this commitment (GP) would have likely not been expressed (ME). Additionally, some of the unilateral statements presented to Russia on missile defense (GP) would have never been made without the treaty being in place (ME). While the agreement was called “New START,” he felt like he could call it “the Missile Defense and Nuclear Modernization Act of 2010 because all of these things have come into play to make [America] safer” (ME). He believed that the administration had “bent over backwards to try to solve every problem that has come up,” not only for those who might vote for the treaty, but also for those that would not (CP).

According to the JCS, which was mostly comprised of military officers appointed by a republican president (CP), the treaty increased (ME) U.S. national security (GP). He took the DOD Secretary Robert Gates’ word that the treaty would (ME) strengthen strategic stability at a lower level of nuclear weapons (GP), provide a meticulous verification regime (GP), and strengthen U.S. leadership (VP) in

stopping nuclear proliferation (GP). It did so without compromising U.S. flexibility (GP) (not a downside) to structure its strategic nuclear forces according to its national security interests (VP).

Corker supported and presented on the Senate floor an amendment (4904) to the resolution of ratification, which had been worked through and negotiated with Senator Kerry. The amendment (ME) certified the president's commitment to missile defense (GP) and continued efforts on ground-based and phased-adaptive approach interceptors (GP). It ensured that the president's language on the matter, as expressed in his letter to the Senate, was included in the resolution of ratification, clearing up any confusion regarding the preamble's language (GP). The amendment also expressed to Moscow that missile defenses would be pursued "in every way possible" (GP) and that doing "in no way [affected] [the U.S.-Russian] relationship from that standpoint as it [related] to this treaty" (GP) (no downside). The amendment also expressed to the Russians the fact that the preamble was nonbinding (GP). Overall, the senator supported the agreement believing that "every issue that [had] been raised [had] been answered strongly and legitimately" (ME) (CRECB, 2010: 18455, 22522, 22953, 23160-23165, 23430-23431, 23444, 23446-23447).

Senator John McCain articulated his viewpoints on the New START on various instances. We analyzed some of his speeches from 16 December 2010 to 22 December 2010. The legislator claimed that the New START could not "be totally considered in a vacuum," because "[e]vents that [had] transpired in the last several years in Russia should bring great concern and pause to all [senators]" (CP). He went on to talk about Russia's abuses of power, corruption, growing authoritarianism, and disregard for the law in the context of the continued incarceration of Russian businessman Mikhail Khodorkovsky and his associate Platon Lebedev (CP). Thus, he doubted that the New START would reach its intended goals. Considering Russia's disregard for the rights and legal obligations owed to one of its citizens, he asked: "how will they treat us and the legal obligations, be it this treaty or any other, they owe to us?" (ME). He also mentioned the imprisonment of Sergei Magnitsky because of his investigation into Russia's corruption (CP), the unresolved attacks against Russian journalists, (CP), and the violence waged against the political opposition (CP). He believed there to be a connection between Russian officials' treatment of their fellow citizens and the government's "aggressive behavior abroad." The most blatant example of such behavior was the military occupation of Georgian territory, where ethnic cleansing occurred (CP). He questioned what kind of relation the United States could have with such a country, and its place in American foreign policy. Essentially, he doubted that America could trust Russia to adhere to treaties and respect international law (ME).

Senator McCain complained that discussion on the New START was taking place at a time when cloture was filed on two other issues ("Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act" and the "DREAM Act") (CP). There were also other issues requiring the Senate's attention (GP) (implicit downside). McCain blamed the democrats of asking the republicans to put partisanship aside while the Senate majority leader continued to bring up issues and force the chamber to vote on them (CP). For the legislator, the democrats were forcing votes to obtain "some kind of political advantage" (VP/GP) (perceives covert

reason for action). He believed that the Senate was operating that day in an environment that lacked cooperation (VP), comity (VP), and bipartisanship (VP) (values being compromised). He stated that the republican side of the aisle was growing weary of the democrats' antics (CP) and believed that the newly elected Congress should make the decisions once the Omnibus appropriations bill was passed (ME) (supports delaying decision on ratification). The American people had spoken (VP) and delivered a defeat to the democrats (CP).

The Senator was concerned with the New START's "permissive" verification provisions (ME), which would make monitorization of Russian activities challenging (GP) and result in reduced transparency (GP).

McCain described a world where North Korea and Pakistan had nuclear weapons, whereas Iran had missiles and the ability to deliver nuclear weapons (CP). Furthermore, other countries were developing nuclear weapons and the vehicles to deliver them (CP). The proliferation of WMDs and missile technology was one of the 21st century's greatest challenges (CP) and the Senator considered them to be a higher priority than Russia's offensive nuclear weaponry (CP). Accordingly, he was concerned with the impact of the New START on America's ability to put in place defensive missiles (GP) to protect the country's security (GP).

Despite declaring the preamble as "nonbinding" (CP) (not an institutional fact that ought to inform action), McCain was concerned with a statement it contained, which acknowledged "the interrelationship between strategic offensive arms and strategic defensive arms" and affirmed "that current strategic defensive arms [did] not undermine the viability and effectiveness of the strategic offensive arms of the Parties." This statement compromised, in his view, U.S. missile defense goals (GP). He explained that President George W. Bush had succeeded in "[b]reaking the link between offensive force reductions and limits on defense" by signing the Moscow Treaty after withdrawing from the ABM Treaty (CP). For the first time, America and Russia reduced their nuclear weapons without any treaty restricting missile defense (CP). It established "a new nuclear agenda no longer focused on the Cold War face-off between the Warsaw Pact and NATO" (CP). After all, the real threat was that nuclear weapons were obtained and used by the world's most dangerous regimes, a threat for which missile defenses were crucial (CP). The senator believed that recognizing the existence of the interrelationship between nuclear weapons and missile defense was not appropriate today (ME), because the United States and Russia "[were] not devoted to one another's destruction" (CP). That had been the case during the Cold War (CP), but today's world had "many new and constantly evolving threats," including rogue states such as Iran and North Korea (CP). Thus, the United States could not be limited in the development, deployment, and improvement of missile defenses without compromising national security (GP) (downside).

Knowing that American missile defense systems would be superior to theirs, the Russians continued to try to block their deployment (CP). Declarations from Russian officials, including Putin, Dmitry Medvedev, and Sergey Lavrov revealed their belief that Moscow had the right to withdrawal

from the treaty in case of a U.S. missile defense buildup, and that America now faced constraints in that regard (CP). By linking defensive and offensive systems in the preamble, the United States was opening itself up for Russia's political pressure to limit U.S. missile defense decisions (GP) (downside). The problem was compounded in several ways. For one, the preamble's language was accompanied by a limitation on the body of the agreement forbidding the conversion of offensive launchers into defensive ones, creating a troubling precedent (GP) (downside). Additionally, as reductions of offensive arms carried on, the interrelationship would strengthen (CP), compounding the damage of acknowledging it (downside). Next, Russia's unilateral statement about the New START explicitly declared that America was limited in missile defense systems development and deployment (CP). Lastly, by stating that current defense systems did not "currently" undermine strategic offensive arms, the New START's preamble "[established] that future missile defense deployments could undermine the treaty" (GP) (downside).

In the future, Iran, North Korea, or another rogue state could surprise the U.S. by attaining long-range nuclear missiles, forcing the latter to build-up its missile defenses (CP). If such a scenario materialized, and Russia declared that the New START's effectiveness and viability were compromised, U.S. decision-making would find itself under an unacceptable constraint (GP) (downside). In the senator's view, U.S. negotiators should have made a unilateral statement "to decisively and unequivocally discredit the Russian Government's claims." They could have stated that U.S. missile defense decisions were not a legitimate and valid reason for a Russian withdrawal and that America would continue to develop its missile defense systems (ME). Instead, negotiators opted for an "equivocal" statement (ME) (not the best action).

Believing that the preamble required fixing, the senator offered an amendment striking from the preamble of the treaty the language on the interrelationship between strategic offensive and defensive arms (ME). Doing so would undercut Russia's unilateral statement and its position that America faced binding limitations on missile defense (GP). Alternatively, given that Senator Kerry had stated that the preamble was meaningless (CP), he suggested getting rid of it altogether (ME). If it was a throwaway statement, there would be no consequences of doing away with it (GP/VP) (no downsides). McCain also rejected assurances from President Obama, in the form of a letter expressing his commitment to missile defense, as an alternative to removing the New START's preamble. In his words, "letters are letters and Presidents don't last forever. But binding treaties do, until they are either broken or they are revoked" (ME).

After failing to amend the preamble of the treaty, Senator McCain, along with Senators Lieberman and Corker prepared an amendment (4904, see above), which obtained Senator Kerry's approval. Despite the senator's persisting concerns over how defensive missile defense systems were dealt with in the treaty (GP) (downsides), Amendment 4904 represented an improvement over the previous version of the resolution of ratification, by adding new language on the subject (ME). The modernization of the U.S. nuclear inventory (ME) and continued progress on missile defense (ME) –

without any restraints (GP) – were important to guarantee the nation's security (GP) (CRECB, 2010: 22301-22308, 22496, 22526-22530, 22537-22538, 22951-22953, 23442-23443).

On 5 April 2010, Heather A. Conley called the New START (ME) light on reduction (GP) (falls short on goal), but “heavy on a symbolic victory for both the U.S.-Russian reset [GP] and Global Zero policies” (GP) (delivers those goals). She noted that U.S. attempts at resetting its relationship with Russia (GP) impacted on U.S. goals vis-a-vis Central Europe (GP). The region feared that America was prioritizing its relationship with Russia over that with Central European countries (CP). The low point had been when the current U.S. administration altered its missile defense plans: no longer would 10 missile defense interceptors be placed in Poland, nor a radar system in the Czech Republic (CP). However, the downside of the reset and of the new missile defense plans was smoothed (GP) by the administration's efforts to restore its relationship with the region (ME). The new NATO Strategic Concept (ME) was also expected to reassure Central European states (GP) (Conley, 2010).

On 13 May 2010, the CSIS published a consensus statement following trilateral (U.S., U.K., France) nuclear dialogues involving 22 experts on the role of American, British, and France nuclear weapons. According to the statement, President Obama's goal of a world without nuclear weapons was laudable (GP). Still, that goal required for another to be reached first: a security environment in which “long-standing, intractable regional conflicts” were resolved, and states no longer felt that they needed nuclear weapons (GP). In that desired state-of-affairs, state's sovereignty, survival, and core interests would be assured (VP). Until then, a world free of nuclear weapons was unachievable (ME). Still, the New START was a step toward that goal, albeit insufficient on its own (ME). Other complementary actions, leading to the goal that ought to be pursued first, were necessary (ME). And they should be accompanied by a more comprehensive and reliable non-proliferation regime (ME) (Murdock et al., 2010: 2).

On 5 April 2010, Andrew Kuchins noted the improvements in the U.S.-Russian relationship under Obama (CP). The relationship had been practically frozen after the war in Georgia, when there was the danger of a new Cold War (CP). Russia continued to see the West, and especially America and NATO, as its number one security threat (CP). Thus, the U.S. and Russia had different strategic outlooks, which had complicated New START (CP) negotiations. He noted that Russia's strategy vis-à-vis Iran was to appear to cooperate with the U.S. while avoiding having to make hard decisions (CP). This could compromise the administration's Russia agenda, including on arms control, since in Congress there was not a lot of sympathy for the Russians (CP). The author also noted that the deterioration of Russia's conventional capabilities increased its reliability on nuclear weapons, whereas the opposite was, to some extent, true for America (CP). This would make, according to Kuchins, difficult to reach an agreement with Russia on a post-New START round of reductions (CP). Russia and other countries were concerned with the American nuclear disarmament agenda (CP). Given that U.S. conventional weapons were nearing nuclear capabilities, and that the country was developing missile defenses, certain nations were

concerned that America was trying to make the world safe for it to intervene militarily whenever it wanted (CP).

The author considered the New START to contribute significantly towards several goals (ME), namely the U.S.-Russian reset (GP), and the administration's pursuit of further nuclear weapons reductions (GP) and increased nuclear security (GP). While it was only a first step toward those goals (ME), it was a necessary one – “those agendas would be severely hampered” otherwise (ME). The course of action (ME) was also extremely important for Obama's image abroad (GP). Kuchins was modestly optimistic about the reset when it came to nuclear issues (ME), but also regarding Afghanistan and Iran (GP). The New START was an important achievement considering the expiration of the START (CP), which had led to the loss of its entire verification and monitoring regime (CP). In replacing it, the New START (ME) ensured that a significant degree of the START's regime would be maintained (GP), increasing U.S. national security (GP) (Kuchins, 2010: 2-5, 11, 15).

On 5 April 2010, Janusz Bugajski warned that America's attempts to improve relations with Russia, mainly through the New START (ME), were raising concerns among Eastern and Central European countries (GP) (downsides). Those countries feared Russia's aspirations in its neighborhood (CP) and Moscow had staged several provocative exercises the year prior next to NATO borders (CP). He noted that Poland and Czechia's interest in missile defense was not so much linked to Iran but grounded in efforts to establish closer ties with the U.S. at a time of doubts over NATO's solidarity (CP) and attempts by Western European states to reset relations with Russia (CP). Thus, actions such as the recent deployment of Patriot missiles and of a small U.S. contingent in Poland were important (ME), seeing as they tied “NATO closer to the defense of these countries” (GP) (Bugajski, 2010: 7-8).

The 2011 NDAA prohibited reductions below New START levels (ME) unless either of the following two conditions applied. The first was that the President had provided certification that the assessment of the threat or strategic environment allowed such an action (CP). The second was the certification that technical measures had been implemented (ME) to assure that the remaining U.S. strategic nuclear forces were at an equal or improved level of reliability (GP), security (GP), and safety (GP) despite the reduction (ME). In addition to either of those two conditions, the President also had to certify that: the remaining U.S. strategic nuclear forces sufficed for protection against unanticipated geopolitical events and technical challenges (GP); that the reduction was compensated by measures such as conventional forces (ME), nuclear modernization (ME) or missile defense (GP), to assure an equal or improved deterrence capability (GP) and credibility as before (GP); and that efforts to modernize the U.S. nuclear weapons complex (ME) were sufficient to guarantee that the remaining U.S. strategic nuclear forces were supported by a sufficiently responsive infrastructure (GP) (HASC No. 5 Legislative Text and Joint Explanatory Statement to Accompany H.R. 6523, 2010: 250).

The 2013 NDAA mandated that any significant reductions, in any given year, in the U.S. active and inactive nuclear stockpiles (ME) require presidential certification as to whether the action would result in America having less nuclear weapons than Russia was estimated to have in its stockpiles (GP)

(potential downside). That being the case, the White House was to produce a report “detailing whether the recommended reduction [ME] would create a strategic imbalance [GP] or degrade deterrence and extended deterrence between the total number of nuclear weapons of the United States and the total number of nuclear weapons of the Russian Federation” (GP) (downsides). In addition, any reduction to the U.S. nuclear forces required the President produce a report detailing considerations of the expansion of nuclear forces of other countries. The report was to include information on all nuclear weapons states (nuclear weapons possessed, modernization plans, nuclear doctrine, and production capacity of strategic delivery systems and nuclear warheads) (CP). The report ought to inform Congress of potential downsides of the recommended reductions on America’s nuclear deterrence (including extended deterrence) (GP) and assurance (GP); and ability to tackle any technical challenges, or unanticipated strategic or geopolitical events (GP) (downsides). Any unilateral changes in the size of America’s total nuclear stockpile by more than 25% (ME) required the initiation of an NPR (ME).

It was also the Sense of Congress that Russia’s considerable advantage in non-strategic nuclear weapons “[constituted] a threat to the United States and its allies [CP] and a growing asymmetry in Western Europe” (CP). Those weapons ought to be considered (CP) when weighing the balance of the nuclear forces of the two states (ME). The U.S. should pursue negotiations with Russia (ME) to reduce the country’s deployed and non-deployed arsenal of non-strategic nuclear weapons (GP). America had to maintain its commitment to extended deterrence (VP) “as an important component of ensuring and linking the national security interests of the United States [VP] and the security of its European allies” (GP) (Report 112-705, 2012: 292, 295-297).

The 2014 NDAA expressed the Sense of Congress that the pursuit of strategic nuclear arms reductions below New START levels with Russia (GP) should occur within the framework of a mutually negotiated agreement (ME) that was verifiable (GP). Such treaty ought to be made pursuant Article II, section 2, clause 2 of the Constitution¹¹⁹ (VP) and account for “the full range of nuclear weapon capabilities that threaten the United States and the forward-deployed forces and allies of the United States, including such capabilities relating to nonstrategic nuclear weapons (CP). We note that Russia’s non-strategic nuclear weapons were considered to “constitute a threat to the United States and its allies” in the 2013 NDAA (“Legislative Text and Joint Explanatory Statement to Accompany H.R. 3304,” 2013: 198-199; Report 112-705, 2012: 295-297).

A 2013 DOD report expressed U.S. intentions to abandon the current hedging approach, based on a large stockpile of non-deployed nuclear warheads (ME). Instead, the country ought to hedge by having a nuclear enterprise with a responsive, modern physical infrastructure (ME), which required investments on nuclear modernization (ME). Until such an infrastructure was available, the U.S. would retain a large hedging stockpile (ME). Russia had refused to negotiate reductions of deployed and non-deployed

¹¹⁹ “[The President] shall have Power, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate [VP], to make Treaties [VP], provided two thirds of the Senators present concur [VP]” (Constitution Annotated, n.d.).

nuclear weapons (CP). Thus, America took the initiative to make progress on the latter (GP), communicating the retirement of almost 500 nuclear warheads in 2007 (ME). Significant reductions of nuclear forces (ME) that would lead to large disparities in nuclear capabilities (GP) (rejected goal) were rejected. They could lead to concerns in Moscow and Washington (GP), and among U.S. allies and partners (GP). Prospects of a stable, long-term relationship between the U.S. and Russia might also be undermined (GP) (downsides). Thus, the U.S. would pursue negotiated cuts with Russia (ME) so that the two countries could move beyond their present nuclear postures that were reminiscent of the Cold War (GP) (U.S. DOD, 2013).

2. Juxtaposition of reasons for action

We start by juxtaposing the circumstantial premises of the securitizing actors with those of the audience. The securitizing actors identified the threats posed by terrorism and nuclear proliferation in a changed global security environment where there was an increasing ballistic missile threat. The DOD predicted a future threat to the homeland posed by Iranian and North Korean ICBMs that had not yet matured and that could be countered for the time being by U.S. missile defenses. The latter had been improving and were seen with concern by Moscow and Beijing, which deemed them destabilizing. Russian and Chinese attacks targeting U.S. territory were deemed unlikely. Continued U.S. missile defense development did not constitute grounds for a Russian withdrawal from the New START. The BMDR expressed concern regarding the existence of growing threats at the regional level, singling out North Korea, Iran, and Syria.

Russia was not an enemy: the Cold War was over, relations had improved, and the country was cooperating with the U.S. on some matters, despite the existence of some differences between the two countries. Still, Russian nuclear forces would dictate the size of the American arsenal, and U.S. allies perceived Moscow's tactical nuclear weapons as a threat. Nuclear weapons would remain a pillar of U.S. defense, but the nuclear complex was aging, underfunded, and underdeveloped. Several Russian technological developments were "of concern" to the DOD. Russia was developing and deploying new ICBMs, SLBMs, and new warheads, and starting design work on a new heavy bomber.

When it came to the audience, there was agreement across the aisle on the existence of a terrorist and rogue state missile threat, especially from Iran and North Korea – the same concern held by the securitizing actors. As for Russia, there were bipartisan and expert suspicions. Among treaty supporters, Kerry stated that the U.S. did not necessarily trust Russia while Lugar admitted relations with Moscow were wary, albeit hopeful. Republican opposers to the New START (Kyl and McCain) described the reset as fake and brought up Russia's human rights violations and aggressive behavior abroad. Experts observed an improvement in U.S.-Russian relations but noted Moscow's provocative military exercises and its perception of America and NATO as a threat.

Kyl did not consider Russia an enemy and was not worried about a near-term threat posed by the country. He feared, however, that one might develop over time (possibly as a result of the New START in its current form). However, he was concerned that Moscow might cheat on the New START, “break-out,” develop rail-mobile ICBMs, and with the potential effects of Russia’s superiority in tactical nuclear weapons on strategic stability. Moreover, Russia was increasing its reliance on nuclear weapons and conducting “war games” against NATO members. Lugar and Kerry highlighted the threat posed by Russian nuclear weapons, with the latter describing it as an existential problem due to the possibility of accidents, miscalculations, proliferation, and other scenarios. Kerry was not concerned with Moscow’s MIRV-ing, and both him and Lugar downplayed the threat of tactical nuclear weapons and the likelihood of Russia developing rail-mobile ICBMs. Overall, Russia was not perceived as an enemy or as an immediate threat in the Senate. A common trend among experts was to highlight the unease of Central European allies in light of the changed missile defense plans, and America’s attempts to reset relations with Russia.

Kerry, Corker, and Kyl acknowledged the inadequateness of the U.S. nuclear complex. The first noted, however, the unforeseen level of support for its modernization granted by the administration. Also on a positive note, Corker brought up his and Kyl’s efforts to assure its proper modernization over the past year. Kyl was less optimistic: he judged that the administration had not done enough and expressed uncertainty about future funding. The ACA believed that Kyl’s concerns had been more than addressed by the administration and noted the satisfaction of the nuclear weapons’ laboratory directors. While Kyl lamented that no funding for follow-on strategic systems had yet been given (except for submarines), Kerry pointed out that the life expectancy of the ICBMs and bombers exceeded the duration of the treaty. Both Kerry and the ACA perceived the U.S. to have thousands of excess nuclear weapons. The senator admitted that there was not enough support in the Senate for pursuing a world free of nuclear weapons, a scenario that Kyl dismissed as unachievable, since the required knowledge to build nuclear would always exist.

Kerry, Lugar, and the ACA warned against the degradation of insight into Russian nuclear forces following the expiration of START. Lugar noted the hypocrisy of those who lamented the passing of the START’s verification regime, and yet described the New START as a Cold War relic. Both supporters and opposers of the New START agreed that the treaty’s preamble was non-binding. When it came to the debate on the treaty’s ratification, both sides held different views regarding the process. Kerry accused the republicans of delaying the ratification by repeatedly asking for more time and by filibustering other matters. He believed there to be enough time to vote on the treaty, and that the Senate had worked on it for a long time. Lugar, a republican supported of the agreement, preferred to emphasize the urgency of the ratification. Kyl believed that the treaty was being rushed, wanted more information from the administration and, like McCain, believed that the democrats were in a hurry to vote on the treaty because several of their colleagues had been recently voted out. Corker and McCain stressed the full agenda of the Senate and denounced the antics of the democrats during the debate. Still, Corker later

praised the administration's efforts to address every issue that had emerged. For the ACA, the treaty had already been vetted thoroughly.

Lastly, on missile defense, Kerry stressed that Russia knew of America's plans to continue to develop its missile defenses and that changed plans were a result of the military's preference for the EPAA. He stressed, just as Obama had done, that America's continued development and deployment of missile defenses did not constitute grounds from Russia to leave the treaty. Lugar emphasized the strong bipartisan consensus on missile defense improvement. Kyl and McCain, on the other hand, underlined Russian attempts to block missile defense development. They mentioned a statement from Foreign Minister Lavrov whereby his country would withdraw from the New START if U.S. missile defense build-up affected the efficiency of Russian nuclear forces. Kyl doubted the administration's commitment to missile defense and deemed the EPAA inferior to the previous plans, believing that Russia had already succeeded in forestalling American missile defenses. Among the experts, Kramer perceived Obama as less interested in missile defenses, and believed Moscow to be pleased with the link established, in the treaty's preamble, between offensive and defensive systems, especially given the recently changed U.S. missile defense plans.

Regarding value premises, the securitizing actors expressed the treaty's contributions to the world in the form of broadly shared values such as peace, safety, stability, and security. They also brought on U.S. obligations in the context of the NPT and of NATO's Article 5. The president expressed his commitment to the modernization of the nuclear infrastructure and to the continued development and deployment of missile defenses. Obama also stated, following the New START's ratification, his intentions to modernize or replace the nuclear triad (a requirement of the resolution of ratification). The 1999 Missile Defense Act remained the law of the land.

As for the audience, Kerry and the ACA believed that the U.S. had the responsibility to act as a leader in the nuclear realm. They were joined by Lugar in emphasizing the agreement's contributions to a more secure world, including to those threatened by Russia's old nuclear weapons. While Kerry, Corker and Kyl mentioned the Senate's role in advising and consenting to treaties, the latter, unlike the first two, believed that that such a constitutional duty was being compromised. That was due to the Senate being unable to perform its due diligence, the fact that the chamber had not been able to access the negotiation record, and the looming threat of cloture. While there was bipartisan agreement that partisanship had no place in matters of foreign policy, republicans Corker and McCain believed that the value premise had been compromised by the way in which the democrats were operating on a variety of matters.

Same as the Administration, Kerry, Corker, and some experts believed that the New START served the national interest. The two senators and Lugar expressed the country's commitment to modernization and missile defense, which included that of support of the democrat senators. Kyl believed that Obama would back away from its commitment to missile defense and suspected that changes in the U.S. missile defense plans were due to the fact that the president never liked the approach

of his predecessor. While Kerry reinforced America's commitment to the security of its allies, Kyl believed that the New START compromised such security guarantees.

There were several, in the audience, who perceived the existence of covert reasons for action (VP/GP) informing the decision of some senators to accept or reject the treaty. Without giving any examples, Kerry believed them to exist among some republican critics of the accord. He accused them of voicing concerns over a potential nuclear free world as a distraction and stressed that the treaty was not an attempt to draw attention away from the war on terror, despite such accusations. The senator believed that some complaints were mere attempts to kill the agreement. Lugar suspected that many of his colleagues rejected the agreement because they disliked any treaties, including with Russia. McCain, on the other hand, accused the democrats of seeking some form of political advantage, while Kyl believed that the democrats were rushing the treaty because several of their colleagues had lost their seat in the previous election. He claimed that the focus on the New START was meant to divert attention from the appropriations bill, and denied rumors that his party was seeking a *quid pro quo* in the form of an extension of the current tax rates in return for supporting the accord. He also speculated that the treaty was being rushed because the U.S. relationship with Russia was not as "wonderful" as the administration had painted. The ACA considered that the republican opposers to the New START, particularly Kyl, were dragging their feet to obtain even more funding for the nuclear weapons complex.

We now move on to the goal premises and the means-end premises. The securitizing actors believed that the New START would achieve, or contribute to, a series of goals, namely: holding other countries accountable for their international obligations to counter their emerging threat; contributing to national security; protecting the U.S. and allies while discouraging from acquiring nuclear weapons; inspect Russian nuclear activities; reducing the threat of nuclear weapons; making progress on nuclear non-proliferation, counter-terrorism, and nuclear security; easing tensions and advancing cooperation and relations with Russia, including vis-à-vis Iran and Afghanistan; achieving verification for compliance monitorization; strengthening transparency, trust, confidence, predictability, openness, and stability with Russia; lowering the risk of nuclear use; reducing the number of deployed strategic nuclear weapons of both parties; allowing for increased warhead dismantlement over time; avoiding an arms race with Russia; maintaining flexibility in determining the American "force mix," and preserving the ability to develop PGS capabilities. The New START was part of a broader effort to improve relations with Russia, which also aimed to achieve the goal of bringing both countries' strategic postures into alignment with their current post-Cold War relationship. Russia's tactical nuclear weapons would have little to no impact on strategic stability under the New START.

A treaty without verification provisions was rejected as the best course of action. Achieving verification enabled transparency and trust, which in turn reduced the odds of misunderstandings and miscalculations. The treaty's verification activities, accompanied by U.S. monitoring techniques, were sufficient to determine Russia's compliance and to provide timely warning of any breakout attempts. Inaction was not the best course of action either, given that deterrence and ally and partner assurance

could be delivered with less nuclear weapons and current levels were unnecessary and not in tune with the present security environment. Delaying the treaty's ratification was also rejected due to its importance to national security. It needed to enter into force so that the U.S. achieve the goals of inspecting Russia's nuclear activities and increase cooperation with the country. Non-mutual reductions were also not recommended because it was important that Russia joined the U.S. in moving to reduced nuclear levels. If the goal of parity were not pursued, there would be concerns on both sides, and among U.S. allies and partners. Thus, the New START, in its current form, was the recommended course of action: it was beneficial to both parties, would deliver real results, represented a milestone in arms control and disarmament, and had been "done right". The nuclear weapons levels it established received the approval of the president, the DOD Secretary, STRATCOM and the JCS.

The SSP and investments in the nuclear infrastructure, on the other hand, were expected to deliver or contribute to the goals of assuring the effectiveness, security and safety of the U.S. nuclear arsenal as the number of nuclear weapons decreased; sustaining deterrence and facilitating reductions; reduce the need to maintain large numbers of non-deployed nuclear warheads as a hedge; accelerating warhead dismantlement; guaranteeing the reliability of the stockpile to assure allies and partners; and support the president's nuclear security agenda. The U.S. needed to preserve a large stockpile of non-deployed nuclear weapons so that the U.S. could hedge against geopolitical surprises or technical challenges by uploading them onto nuclear delivery vehicles. The preservation of the "hedge" stockpile was necessary given that Russia possessed nuclear warhead production capabilities (CP), while the U.S. did not (CP).

By sustaining and improving its homeland missile defense system with proven technologies, the securitizing actors aimed to hedge against uncertainty while improving cost control, reliability, and confidence in the system. The U.S. aimed to defend its territory against limited ICBM attacks. It was unnecessary to maintain the current accelerated rate of capability development because the U.S. was able to counter the Iranian and North Korean threats.

Phased adaptive approaches and capability development of proven technologies thereto, were expected to deliver the goal of strengthening regional deterrence across several regions. The phased adaptive approaches were expected to protect U.S. forces, allies and partners against ballistic missiles; contribute to deter ballistic missile acquisition, deployment, and use; enhance NATO's defenses against Iran; allow for upgrading and cost-effectiveness; enable security partnerships with allies and partners and burden-sharing; preserve the flexibility to hedge against threats; contribute to extended deterrence; accelerate deployments of technology; and improve homeland defense without replacing it. The EPAA, deemed "the right response" to the perceived threats, would also allow for cooperation with Moscow to help preventing nuclear competition and enhancing American and Russian combined defenses. Thus, the U.S. would maintain its policy of development and deployment of missile defenses, including all phases of the EPAA. Cooperating with Russia would not entail the downside of limiting U.S. missile

defenses seeing as the pursued system was not meant to be a joined system. Missile defense was part of a broader strategic framework to strengthen deterrence in key regions. Thus, to mitigate nuclear and missile threats, the U.S. would cooperate with allies, partners, and Russia in missile defense-related activities. And to strengthen international cooperation, the U.S. would engage with Russia and China on missile defense discussions.

Other complementary actions were proposed by the securitizing actors to avoid downsides on goals, contribute toward new goals, or to help realize some of the abovementioned. Post-New START agreements and parallel voluntary measures with Russia were proposed to allow for deeper, verifiable reductions; to achieve more transparency; and to strengthen deterrence, strategic stability, and ally and partner reassurance. Strategic dialogue could allow Washington to obtain explanations regarding Moscow's military doctrine and nuclear modernization efforts and make progress on the issue of Russian non-strategic nuclear weapons. The U.S. ought to engage with other nuclear weapon states, especially China, to foster transparency, strategic stability, expand the nuclear reductions process. Doing so was expected to enable cooperation with Russia and China on nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism. The U.S. should also intensify efforts to gather international support for measures meant to tackle nuclear proliferation and promote nuclear disarmament. Conventional capabilities would retain their contributions to regional deterrence, and work in tandem with missile defense and a reliable and effective (albeit reduced) nuclear triad to reassure allies and partners, retain strategic stability, and preserve deterrence. Non-deployed nuclear weapons would also be retained for hedging purposes. It was recommended that the U.S. de-MIRV-ed all its ICBMs to foster strategic stability with Russia, but further options should be considered to lower the risk of nuclear use.

Finally, we jointly address the goal and means-end premises of the audience. The two most outspoken champions of the New START – Kerry and Lugar – agreed with the securitizing actors in that the agreement would achieve or contribute: to mitigate the threat posed by Russia's nuclear weapons; to improve relations and communication with Russia, and ensure its cooperation on various matters (e.g., arms control, Iran); and pressure other states to comply with their international obligations. The treaty would allow the U.S. to verify Moscow's compliance, reduce the chance of surprise in case of advancements or deployments in the Russian side, and increase U.S. knowledge of the other party's nuclear arsenal. The understanding that those goals would be achieved by the treaty was found in the expert community as a whole. Several experts joined Kerry, Lugar, and Corker in highlighting the New START'S contributions to national security. A few specialists also expressed their belief that the treaty would improve U.S.-Russian relations and could lead to further cooperation between the two countries. For the ACA, the treaty contributed to predictability and transparency, a view shared by Kerry. The pursuit of a world without nuclear weapons was a popular goal among the experts, albeit one that the New START was far from achieving. Indeed, the ACA wanted a new round of reductions, with the inclusion of other nuclear-armed states. While Kyl dismissed the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons as unrealistic, Kerry claimed that opposing disarmament was no reason to vote against the treaty. For

the democrat, there was no alternative: in order to leverage Iran and North Korea, the U.S. needed to reach an agreement with Russia, seeing as the latter two held over 90% of the world's nuclear weapons.

For Kyl, the New START treaty addressed a non-problem in Russia – no longer an enemy (CP) – to the detriment of what he considered the high-priority goals: addressing the Iranian and North Korean nuclear threats. A similar view was held by McCain. Kerry, on the other hand, wanted to address old age threats while combating new age threats. Kyl rejected the view of some treaty supporters that the agreement provided the necessary verification of Russian activities and, consequently, with transparency. He argued that the reduced number of inspections would lead to losses in intelligence gathering, which would allow Russia to cheat. The U.S. would face challenges in monitoring Russia's forces. McCain held similar views on verification, believing the New START's provisions to be too permissive, which would result in less transparency and monitorization challenges.

For Kyl, given the downsides he anticipated, extending the original START would have been preferable. Alternatively, he recommended amending the agreement to add more inspections in order to avoid creating challenges for U.S. monitorization. He did not believe that ratifying the New START was urgent because of the current lack of inspections because he was not concerned with a short-term Russian threat. Therefore, Kyl suggested delaying the decision on ratification as well. Assuming that the reset was real, as the democrats claimed, he could not understand why the agreement needed to be ratified on the grounds of its urgency.

Lugar and Kerry rejected Kyl's views and the actions he recommended, arguing that Russia would not be able to cheat or breakout, that delaying ratification would lead to further deterioration of U.S. information on Russian forces, and that the planned inspection regime was adequate, allowing for flexibility and less intrusive inspections at U.S. bases. Lugar stressed that not ratifying the treaty would be what would lead to less transparency. Relying on intelligence instead of the treaty's verification was not the best course of action due to its unreliability, uncertainty, and cost. The New START inspections were irreplaceable. He also discarded competition of Russia as an alternative – it was not the view of the American people, nor would it be President Reagan's.

Kerry noted that the military believed the New START's verification to be sufficient and that the resolution of ratification required presidential certification of effective monitoring. Moreover, there was now less to inspect than when START was negotiated, and verification was urgent because the U.S. did not necessarily trust Russia. Reinstating verification, on the other hand, meant that trust was no longer required. The point that Moscow could not be trusted was also raised by McCain, but in an effort to gather support against ratification: given Russia's track record of disregard for the rights and legal obligations owed to its citizens, the country could not be trusted to adhere to treaties. Corker took the DOD Secretary at his word that verification would be meticulous. The ACA believed that the U.S. would be able to gather more information than before under the new treaty, wanting to close the current verification gap. The association also warned of the costs of nuclear competition with Russia.

Kyl also rejected the goal set by the New START when it came to deployed missiles and bombers, believing a level of 700 total to be too low. In his view, that level jeopardized deterrence missions, and encouraged China to build-up its nuclear forces. The U.S. risked too much for little gain. Thus, he recommended the acceptance of an amendment increasing the missile and bomber limit to 720. The increased number was closer to the necessary and would account for the fact that the PGS missiles were being counted as nuclear under the treaty, and uncertainties regarding the future U.S. nuclear force structure. He also opposed a passage in the preamble acknowledging the impact of conventional capabilities on strategic stability. For Kyl, there was no reason to address conventional capabilities in a nuclear treaty that did not even cover tactical nuclear weapons. Thus, the treaty was setting the stage for limitations in U.S. conventional capabilities.

Those views were rejected by Lugar and Kerry. The first believed that deterrence would be assured with the planned investments in the modernization of the nuclear complex, whereas the second deemed the established limited as adequate. Kerry and Corker stated that the flexibility provided by the treaty was desirable, with the former stressing that there was no need for urgency in determining America's future nuclear force structure. Kerry also reiterated America's commitment to its PGS system, which the resolution of ratification expressed. Including conventionally armed ICBMs and SLBMs in the New START contributed to stability and security, whereas not doing so risked creating a sidebar arms race and increased risk of a Russian breakout. Finally, it was difficult to differentiate conventional and nuclear missiles, and the U.S. did not want to take Russia at its word that certain deployments were not nuclear. That assertion was challenged by Kyl, who claimed that there were ways to differentiate nuclear and conventional capabilities. Both Oliker and the ACA approved the treaty's numbers on reductions, denying downsides in that respect. In fact, the expert community showed great support for carrying out the reductions envisioned by the agreement, although several authors stressed that the New START was only a first step towards the deeper reductions that ought to be carried out. For the ACA, U.S. nuclear weapons were a liability in the fight against nuclear proliferation and terrorism, and not acting to reduce them hindered U.S. efforts to address those issues, a point also made by Lugar. Corker and Kerry also considered that the treaty contributed to U.S. non-proliferation goals, while Kyl voiced his skepticism.

Kerry, Lugar, Corker, and the ACA considered that the New START enabled stability. Kerry also considered that data sharing would be more accurate. However, such claims were met by Kyl with skepticism. The latter doubted that the treaty would strengthen strategic stability since: it reduced mandatory data sharing with Russia, it did not address Moscow's tactical nuclear weapons, it encouraged Russia to MIRV, and America's nuclear stockpile and nuclear infrastructure were aging. Kyl perceived a direct link between nuclear force reductions and the modernization of the U.S. nuclear complex. The only way for U.S. deterrence to be credible at the lower numbers contemplated in the treaty, was to resort to nuclear testing or to a modernization program. He sought the latter and stressed that the funds allocated thus far remained insufficient. The modernization program ought to include the nuclear triad,

and Kyl rejected delaying the decision to replace the air and ground legs of the nuclear triad, seeing as development and deployment would take a long time.

Kerry did not see the planned nuclear modernization program as a complementary action to the New START, but as an independent, necessary action, in light of the current inadequacies of the nuclear complex. As for the triad replacement program, Kerry deemed it unnecessary to come to an immediate decision; the call belonged to future administrations. Still, he supported a republican amendment requiring the president to certify its intentions to modernize or replace the triad. Kerry also believed that the modernization budgets that had been put forward sufficed to maintain the U.S. nuclear deterrent safe, secure, reality and effective at the New START levels. Moreover, the directors of the nuclear weapons laboratories were content with the funds to be allocated, a point also made by the ACA. Nonetheless, Kerry offered his support for a republican amendment aiming to assure that enough modernization funding would be provided to the laboratories. Lugar and Corker highlighted that the New START benefited the U.S. modernization and missile defense programs by creating a political consensus in their favor, by generating commitments from the administration and the appropriators, and by leading to statements being presented to Russia (on missile defense).

Kyl and McCain also objected to the treaty because of its perceived downsides on U.S. missile defense goals. Their complaints were based on an article forbidding the conversion of offensive missile into interceptors and on some of the missile defense language in the preamble. They believed that his country was establishing a dangerous precedent and allowing Russia to blackmail it in the future by threatening to leave the accord in the face of U.S. missile defense advancements. The senators considered that America's unilateral statement and the missile defense language present in the resolution of ratification were insufficient and recommended either eliminating from the preamble its problematic language or removing the entire preamble. They wanted to make it clear to Moscow that U.S. missile defense advancements did not constitute grounds for a Russian withdrawal. Kyl believed that the New START would create problems with Moscow in the future or that, to avoid them, the U.S. would assure that its missile defense would not be effective against Russia, which would mean that the system would not be effective against Iran or North Korea either.

McCain rejected a letter from the president to the Senate reiterating his commitment to missile defense as an alternative course of action, because it was not binding, and presidents did not "last forever." He presented an amendment removing from the preamble the language regarding the interrelationship between offensive and defensive systems. Corker and Kyl supported the amendment. However, unlike his colleagues, Corker believed that the New START would not negatively affect U.S. missile defense plans, following a letter received by the president and talks with the JCS vice-chairman. In any case, following the failure of the McCain amendment, McCain and Corker worked together to successfully amend the resolution of ratification to, in their view, improve its language on missile defense. Despite supporting the amendment, Kyl believed that celebrating a treaty with Russia while such differences on missile defense remained, and while U.S. plans on the matter were uncertain, was

not the best course of action. Among experts, Kramer held McCain and Kyl's view that it would have been better not to acknowledge the abovementioned interrelationship.

Kerry, Lugar, and Corker denied that the treaty had a negative impact on U.S. missile defense goals. In fact, noted Kerry, President George W. Bush, the JCS and the MDA had upheld that very idea. Kerry believed that removing the missile defense language from the preamble was unnecessary, because it was non-binding and would lead to the agreement's demise. He also pointed out that the conversion mentioned by Kyl had not been recommended by the preceding administration, while Corker mentioned that the military was not interested in that conversion option. Lugar argued that carrying it out would be a great setback to U.S. missile defense plans. He also dismissed concerns regarding Russian statements that it could withdraw from the treaty in case of U.S. missile defense advancements, while Kerry remarked that either party could present any reason for leaving the New START. Kerry also provided support for a republican amendment adding language to the resolution of ratification stating that U.S. missile defenses would not affect the strategic balance with Moscow, and thus did not justify a Russian withdrawal from the New START.

Kyl wanted to address the disparity in non-strategic nuclear weapons between the U.S. and Russia, complaining that the goal was not achieved by the agreement. He recommended delaying the ratification until the impact of those Russian capabilities on strategic stability were better understood. Alternatively, he proposed adding to the treaty's preamble language acknowledging the interrelationship between strategic and non-strategic nuclear capabilities. Lugar and Kerry opposed such claims and recommendations, arguing that not ratifying the New START would make future limitations on Moscow's non-strategic nuclear weapons less likely. Moreover, seeking to include non-strategic nuclear weapons in the treaty would have taken a long time. Nonetheless, Kerry supported a republican amendment requiring the administration to seek verifiable and secure reductions of Russia's non-strategic nuclear arsenal. As for the ACA, the association considered that it was not worth risking verifiable reductions to Russia's strategic nuclear arsenal to resolve the issue of short-range nuclear weapons.

Kyl also sought to prevent a Russian deployment of rail mobile ICBMs, but Kerry and Lugar noted that such capabilities would fall under New START limits and that the resolution of ratification had language stressing that fact. Kyl attempted to limit Russian SLCM development, requesting a side agreement to achieve that goal – something that had been done with START – that needed to be agreed on before the New START entered into force. Kerry rejected the recommendation, since Moscow had zero plans to deploy the capability, which would have no impact on the strategic balance. Moreover, the side agreement would, in Kerry's view, delay the entry into force of the New START, something that Kyl did not agree with. Moreover, according to the democrat, the capability in question was inherently verifiable, and would require giving Russia access to U.S. submarines, which would be undesirable. Thus, Kerry proposed resorting to the still operative Presidential Nuclear Initiatives to address the issue, and to include the SLCM issue in discussions with Russia on tactical nuclear weapons. That point could

be made in the resolution of ratification without amending the treaty, as the republican had also proposed.

Besides the goals achieved by the agreement, Kerry and Lugar also supported it due to the downsides of alternative courses of action, namely inaction, extending START, or amending the New START in a way that would require its renegotiation. The legislators claimed that not ratifying the agreement would lead to an arms race with Russia and threaten the Nunn-Lugar program. Kerry added that a failed ratification would impact the strategic environment negatively by not constraining Russia's force structure development and jeopardize U.S. credibility and reliability in future treaty negotiations. Renegotiation would affect relations with Russia, reopen a series of contentious issues, and deprive the U.S. of the goals the treaty contributed to or achieved. The democrat aimed at finding a common language with his republican colleagues that would avoid such an outcome. Lugar believed that if the agreement did not come into force, the national budget would be strained, the military would be detracted from other priorities, and there would be less cooperation and confidence-building with Russia. Military planning would become more difficult, had satellite coverage would be wasted on Russia instead of being used to track terrorists. The ACA also feared a costly arms competition and hampered U.S.-Russian relations if the treaty's ratification failed. Moreover, the fragile consensus for increased nuclear stockpile maintenance funding could be undermined.

Kyl opposed the view that being mindful of Russian's views and of potential negative impacts on cooperation with the country should be goals of action: the treaty ought to stand on its own merits. He rejected the claim that Russia would not be able to cheat, believed that the New START would push it to MIRV, and deemed that the treaty's counting rules would allow the country to legally increase its strategic force levels. Among experts, the concern regarding the entry into force of the New START related to the reactions of U.S. allies in Central Europe¹²⁰. Still, Bugajski and Conly pointed out that the administration had taken some steps to smooth things over with allies. Lugar stressed that the U.S. allies that flanked Russia supported the New START.

Overall, Kyl believed that the best course of action would have been to extend START, and opposed the ratification of the successor treaty, at least in its current (unamended) form. Leaving the New START unratified would not, he claimed, leave the U.S. disadvantaged. In addition to the several abovementioned issues he found in the treaty, Kyl believed that the U.S. should have gotten more concessions from Russia (e.g., on tactic nuclear weapons, missile defense, the PGS system, and on verification). That view was also held by an expert (Kramer), but rejected by Kerry, who remarked the reciprocity of the negotiation process, and that Russia had made concessions as well. In any case, as Lugar affirmed, unrealized Russian ambitions were no reason to reject the New START, given that it served the national interest. Kyl also considered that negotiating a new treaty was preferable to ratifying

¹²⁰ Some republican senators, such as Jeff Sessions (R-AL) and George Voinovich (R-OH) raised the same concern (CRECB, 2010: 22950, 23171).

the existing version, an option rejected by Lugar who considered that the costs of doing so would outweigh the gains. In any case, Kyl saw arms control agreements as unnecessary, and believed that reductions could be achieved unilaterally, if desired. This claim too was rejected by Kerry: the experience of the Cold War had shown the benefits of arms control.

Extending START was rejected as a policy alternative by Kerry, Lugar, and the ACA. The senators claimed that the old treaty's constraints made it less flexible, and thus less desirable. The ACA and Kerry stated that Russia had no interest in that alternative action. Kerry pointed out that some of the treaty's opposers were paradoxically describing it as a Cold War relic while lamenting the passing of the START regime. Lugar deemed the new inspections as cheaper, simpler, safer and less disruptive and the ones conducted under START. The ACA deemed the new inspections superior. As for amending the treaty, Kerry and Lugar opposed doing so in a way that would lead to its negotiations, because such a line of action would assure that it would never enter into force. Kerry provided his support for a few amendments, however, seeing as they added language to the resolution of ratification without changing the treaty itself, and thus avoided renegotiations with Russia. Kerry also rejected delaying the decision on ratification, which he linked to several CPs and VPs: he perceived covert reasons for action on the part of the republicans, claimed that the current Senate's extensive work on the treaty meant that it held the responsibility to decide on its ratification, and stated that it was a pressing national security matter. For Kyl, another reason to delay the decision on ratification was the fact that Congress was simultaneously dealing with the treaty and the Omnibus appropriations bill. Postponing the New START debate would allow both bills to receive the attention they needed. McCain and Corker had initially the same position, defending delaying the treaty's ratification due to Congress' full agenda. Later, Corker changed his position, wanting to move forward with the process and expressing his satisfaction about the fact that the treaty had built consensus regarding missile defense and nuclear modernization. Kyl also claimed that there was no precedent for rushing an arms control deal such as the New START, attempting to convince his colleagues to delay the ratification. Kerry deemed that claim to be false and argued that it would be irresponsible to wait: the military and the intelligence and national security communities had urged the Senate to hasten the ratification. In a point also made by the ACA, the New START had received the support of prominent military, political, and national security leaders – both democrat and republican. Ratifying the treaty was “common sense.” Corker mentioned that the JCS, whose majority of members had been appointed by a republican president, supported the accord. He considered that every issue that had been raised had been strongly and legitimately answered. Lugar noted that several DOD and DOS Secretaries had backed the treaty, which was already yielding positive results.

The INF Treaty: military measures, limitations on warhead dismantlement, and new reasons for modernization (Discourses of section 5.2 of Chapter 5)

1. Political Discourse Analysis

1.1. Securitizing actor discourse

A July 2014 DOS report determined Russia to be in violation of its obligations, under the INF Treaty, not to possess, produce, or flight-test a ground-launched cruise missile (GLCM) with a range capability of 500 km to 5,500 km, or to possess or produce launchers of such missiles” (CP). Hoping to resolve its concerns over the violation (GP), the U.S. had repeatedly raised the issue at hand with Russia in 2013 (CP) and would continue to do so (ME) (Compliance report, 2014: 8, 10).

In a 23 October 2014 letter to the Senate Armed Services Committee, the chairman of the JCS Martin Dempsey stated that Russia’s violations of the INF Treaty constituted “a serious challenge to the security of the United States and [its] allies” (CP). Given that such actions took place “in the broader context of Russian regional aggression,” (CP) the United States had to carry out “a strategic response” (ME) (2015 NDAA, 2014: 16919). During an 18 March 2015 hearing of the House Committee on Armed Services, Dempsey stated that Russia was doing several things that were provocative in nature, including the violation of the INF Treaty (CP). The general wanted to make clear to Russia that their actions would result in diplomatic, political, and possibly military costs (GP) in terms of how America could posture itself (ME) and the way it would “plan and work with (...) allies to address those provocations (ME). In the context of a 7 July 2015 meeting, the general stated that, while no decision had been made, the military was considering a wide range of military options (ME). The options being contemplated were compliant with the INF Treaty (VP) because the U.S. wanted to preserve it (ME). The agreement served U.S., allied, and Russian interests (VP) (GP) (serving the VP is a goal of action). The U.S. “[would] not take any action inconsistent with [its] obligations under the INF Treaty, as long as those obligations remain in force” (VP). The military options were active defenses (ME) to counter INF-class cruise missiles (GP), counterforce capabilities (ME) to prevent attacks from the abovementioned missiles (GP),

and countervailing strike capabilities (ME), in order to enhanced American or allied forces (GP) (H.A.S.C. No. 114–22, 2015: 23-24; S. HRG. 114–342, 2015: 102).

DOD Principal Deputy Undersecretary for Policy Brian McKeon testified on 10 December 2014 and on 1 December 2015 in House hearings on Russian arms control cheating before the committees on Armed Services and Foreign Affairs. He denounced the fact that Moscow had not acknowledged the existence of a cruise missile that was not in compliance with the INF (CP). He explained that Russia had instead accused the U.S. of violating the agreement (CP), claims that were “categorically unfounded” (CP). If Russia were to deploy the non-compliant cruise missile system in significant numbers, there was a risk of greater instability in Europe (CP). Russia’s military modernization and activities in Europe, among them the INF violations, were being considered as a whole by the U.S. when considering how to respond (CP). Russia was not violating the INF “in isolation from its overall aggressive behavior” (CP). Thus, America’s response should address Russia’s aggressive behavior in its entirety, not just the treaty violations (GP).

The administration would brief Congress regularly (VP) and discuss Russia’s non-compliance with allies and partners (VP). Inaction was rejected as a policy option (ME), due to the several downsides on U.S. goals that would occur. Specifically, Russia’s violations affected America’s ability to pursue non-proliferation and arms control regimes (GP) (downside), threatened its security and that of its allies and partners (CP) (Russian actions are a security threat) (GP) (downside), and affected strategic stability (GP) (downside).

In responding, the U.S. ought to try to preserve the viability of the accord (ME). It should bring Russia to compliance (GP), avoiding “an escalatory cycle of action and reaction” (GP). The position of the DOD was that the INF served (ME) U.S. and ally security interests (VP) (GP) (serving the VP is a goal of action). Refusing to get into specifics, McKeon stated that the DOD was, nonetheless, considering military countermeasures, “ranging from reactive defense to counterforce to countervailing defense measures” (ME). The country would pursue a broad range of efforts, including “increasing posture and presence [ME], refocusing planning and shaping of future military activities in Europe [ME], and improving defensive measures to neutralize or undercut Russia offensive capabilities” (ME). Some options were INF Treaty-compliant; others were not¹²¹ (VP) (potential compromise on values).

The goal of such actions was to deny Russia any advantage in case it deployed the INF-banned missiles (GP) and make America more secure (GP). In December 2015, McKeon denied that the administration was delaying the implementation of military efforts (no covert reasons for action – VP/GP). He explained that some of the military investments that would be made had not been planned as recently as two-three years ago (CP).

¹²¹ He stated that the DOD would be able to recommend such options to the U.S. “leadership if a decision were taken to go down that path” (“Russian arms control cheating,” 2014: 33).

Staying in the INF (ME) while countries such as North Korea, Iran, Pakistan, or China were not restricted by any treaty (CP) did not represent a compromise on U.S. goals since current defense requirements were still met (GP). McKeon added that the INF only covered GLCM and associated launchers, that America had made significant investments in missile defense, and that it possessed ample supplies of sea-launched and ALCMs (CP) (“Russian arms control cheating,” 2014: 10-11, 23, 28, 33, 37; “Russian arms control cheating,” 2015: 12-13, 23, 62).

On 4 February 2015, during his nomination hearing, the soon-to-be confirmed Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter considered it clear that Russia was in violation of the INF (CP). Russia’s INF-banned systems threatened the U.S. and its European and Asian allies (CP) and made a U.S. response necessary (ME). The violation was consistent with Moscow’s strategy of offsetting U.S. and NATO conventional superiority through nuclear weapons reliance (CP). Carter wanted to protect the interests and the security of the U.S. (VP/GP), and those of its allies and partners (GP) and bring Moscow to compliance (GP). He stated that the U.S. “should consider a comprehensive strategy of diplomatic, economic, and military responses” to achieve those goals (ME).

The nominee believed that Russia ought to be convinced that it would less secure if it remained non-compliant due to the resulting response from the U.S. (GP) and that the accord was a “two-way street” (GP). After all, the INF still (ME) served U.S. and allied interests (VP) (GP) (serving the VP is a goal of action). If Russia remained in violation, then U.S. had to respond in a way that prevented Russia from obtaining military advantage from INF violations (GP). The DOD should look at a range of response options which could include active defenses (ME) to counter INF-banned cruise missiles (GP), counterforce capabilities (ME) to prevent cruise missile attacks (GP), and the use of countervailing strike capabilities (ME) to enhance American and allied forces (GP). During an 18 March 2015 hearing of the House Armed Services Committee, the secretary was prompted by Mike Rogers (R-MI) to modify the Aegis Ashore site in construction in Romania so that it would have the capacity to defend itself against the intermediate-range missiles being tested by Russia. Carter confirmed that defenses were one of the response categories that could be considered (ME) (S. HRG. 114–567, 2015: 60-61, 113-114; H.A.S.C. No. 114–22, 2015: 25).

On 27 April 2015, Secretary of State John Kerry voiced some remarks at the 2015 NPT Review Conference. He stated that the U.S. would continue to scale down its nuclear arsenal. The U.S. would seek to accelerate by 20% the dismantlement of retired nuclear warheads.

The number of nuclear weapons in the U.S. stockpile had fallen to 85% below the Cold War peak, resting at 4717 as of September 2014 (CP). America’s progress was indisputable; over the last 20 years 10251 warheads had been dismantled, and about 2500 were currently retired and waiting elimination (CP). Nuclear proliferation represented one of the greatest threats (CP) to peace and security (VP) and to the ideals of the UN (VP). America was “unequivocally committed” to its obligation, under the NPT, to “steadily disarm” (VP). President Obama’s course of action was meant to move, step by

step (ME), the U.S. toward nuclear disarmament (GP) by reducing (GP) the backlog of retired warheads in the queue for dismantlement (CP) (Kerry, 2015).

On 9 July 2015, during his nomination hearing, the soon-to-become chairman of the JCS, Joseph Dunford, identified Russia as the greatest threat to U.S. national security (CP). That was due to its nuclear arsenal (CP), its capability to violate the sovereignty of U.S. allies (CP), and its ability to do things contrary to U.S. interests – as it was currently the case with its “aggression” (CP). It posed an existential threat to America (CP). Its behavior “[was] nothing short of alarming” (CP). Russia’s violation of the INF Treaty was concerning (CP), and the U.S. would consult with its allies on that matter (VP). The development of INF-class missiles posed a direct threat to U.S. allies (CP).

The general believed that the U.S. should not withdraw from the INF just yet (ME). Instead, it should remain in the agreement (ME) while trying to preserve its viability (GP). The U.S. should attempt to return Russia to compliance (GP) and prevent the country from obtaining any significant military advantage from its violation (GP). To that end, the DOD was developing and analyzing response options (ME).

Dunford believed that the U.S. could consider reductions below the limits of deployed nuclear weapons set by the New START (ME) before modernization efforts were completed (CP) (the current situation of incomplete modernization efforts was not a premise that ought to inform action). However, that course of action should only be carried out if achieved the goal of “hand-in-hand” reductions of Russia’s deployed nuclear weapons (GP). The focus ought to be placed on measures (ME) meant to “maintain or strengthen deterrence of adversaries [GP], assurance of [U.S.] Allies and partners, and strategic stability” (GP). The U.S. should not take unilateral action (ME).

Given the current environment (CP), Russia’s existing arms control obligations would have to be met (GP) before additional arms control agreements were concluded (ME). Reductions needed to be verifiable (GP). Still, before the U.S. had a “responsive infrastructure” and a modern stockpile (GP), it would be the most prudent course of action for the country not to make significant changes to the “hedge” (i.e., “spares” of non-deployed nuclear weapons) (ME). Given Russia’s recent behavior, including their development of INF-class missiles (CP) that directly threatened NATO allies (CP), it was not the time to stop ongoing deployments of U.S. nuclear weapons in NATO countries (ME), seeing as the action had been, for decades, “an effective centerpiece of Alliance cohesion, resolve and deterrence” (GP). Dunford supported a bomber leg of the triad with gravity bombs and cruise missiles (ME). When it came to the modernization of the nuclear deterrent, the general stated that it was a required capability; the most important one (ME) to protect the nation (GP). Since the nuclear deterrent was America’s “top military priority” (ME), one ought to think about how to fund it instead of wondering whether one could afford it (ME). After all, nuclear weapons posed an existential threat to the nation (CP) (S. HRG. 114–567, 2015: 276-277, 282-283, 286, 293, 323, 336).

In accordance with a 2016 NDAA requirement, the DOD published a 12 July 2016 report outlining the plan pertaining to the development of military capabilities (ME) aimed at countering (GP)

and defending against missile attacks of intermediate range (GP). Moscow's development of a system in violation of the INF Treaty was merely part of a broader pattern of Russia's recent aggressive and coercive behavior (CP). Europe faced new strategic realities (CP), seeing as Russia was destabilizing the security order in the continent (CP) by virtue of its occupation and attempted annexation of the Crimean Peninsula (CP); continued aggression in eastern Ukraine (CP); active attempts to divide NATO [CP]; support for separatism in Georgia and Moldova (CP); and modernization of various military capabilities, including those in the nuclear sphere (CP). The deployment of an INF Treaty-prohibited GLCM in Europe or the Asia-Pacific region would enhance Russia's military capabilities against America's deployed forces and allies (CP), amounting to "an indirect threat to the continental United States" (CP).

The Administration preferred not to unilaterally withdraw or abrogate the INF Treaty (ME) because Russia's return to compliance was the preferable goal (GP). Still, given the country's broader pattern of aggression (CP), the goal was not likely to be achieved without a response from the U.S., reason why a decision had been made to pursue a multi-pronged approach (ME). Its goals were to deter Moscow's coercive behavior (GP); reassure U.S. allies and partners (GP); and guarantee and strengthen the ability of the U.S. and its allies to deny any significant military or political advantages that Russia might acquire by deploying INF Treaty-prohibited capabilities (GP).

As part of the multi-pronged approach (ME) a range of potential military (ME) and non-military options (ME) had been identified and were under consideration. Those options would not focus on the treaty violation alone (CP), considering Moscow's general bellicose actions and behavior (CP). Three military options were proposed. Active defenses (ME) were intended to deny any considerable military advantage that Russia's offensive military capabilities could provide it (GP) by destroying them after launch (GP). Counterforce options (i.e., air and missile forces) (ME) would be employed to destroy or render unserviceable certain Russian military capabilities to prevent INF-range strikes (GP). Countervailing strike options (ME) would enhance U.S. and allied forces (GP) by "countering the effect of Russian capabilities with military responses of equal force during a time of crisis or war" (GP). The DOD voiced a commitment (VP) to various investments that, as a whole, "[formed] a comprehensive response to the broader strategic environment, including Russian military actions [CP], Russia's aggressive behavior [CP], and its violation of the INF Treaty" (CP). Those investments included an array of actions to be pursued unilaterally, bilaterally, and collectively with NATO (ME). The information concerning specific military response efforts was classified.

The Pentagon announced that it would continue to fund the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) (ME), through which the U.S. maintained a presence in the Baltics and Central Europe (ME) to reassert a credible conventional deterrent vis-à-vis Moscow (GP), to build-up capacity (GP), and reassure NATO allies (GP). The ERI also facilitated the expansion of bilateral and multilateral exercises in Europe (ME), strengthening U.S. warfighting capability (GP) in the face of the newer Russian threats (CP), and improving interoperability (GP).

The DOD would examine options to ensure the credibility (GP) and survivability (GP) of NATO's nuclear posture across the full spectrum of potential conflict (CP). The U.S. would enhance its forward presence in the Baltic states and Poland (ME) to demonstrate "the Alliance's solidarity [VP], determination [VP], and ability to act to [trigger] an immediate response to any aggression" (GP). The DOD would focus on threats to NATO which had been emanating from Russia, including hybrid warfare (CP), cyberattacks (CP) and propaganda campaigns (CP).

NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements were key to the Alliance's deterrence (GP) and defense (GP). In that regard, the dual-capable F35-A was expected to be operational by 2025 (ME) while the B61-12 nuclear gravity bomb Life-Extension Program – a demonstration of America's commitment to NATO (VP) – was expected to meet its First Production Unit goal in March 2020 (ME) (i.e., the first unit produced and delivered for operational use). The Pentagon was investing in a broad spectrum of capabilities to counter Moscow's intermediate-range systems (ME) (the specific capabilities were classified information). The DOD had not yet "identified the need for deployment locations in East Asia and Eastern Europe for any of the capabilities described in [that] plan" (ME). Overall, the DOD was undertaking the required steps to build U.S. and NATO capabilities (GP) and develop plans to deter Russian's coercion (CP), aggressive actions (CP), and destabilizing influence (CP), while pressuring the country to resume compliance with the INF Treaty (GP) (U.S. DOD, 2016a).

Rose Gottemoeller, DOS Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security, testified before House and Senate committees on 10 December 2014, 1 December 2015, and 17 March 2016. She stated that Russia's violation of the INF (CP), its confrontational posture (CP), and actions in Ukraine (CP) had undermined U.S. trust and predictability (CP) and required a response (ME). Russia had been developing a ground-launched cruise missile (GLCM) that violated the INF and had the capacity to deploy it (CP). That category of missiles could reach their targets in a very short time, thus posing a threat of short-warning attacks which concerned U.S. allies in Europe and Asia (CP). Thus, it was necessary to act (ME).

Moscow refused to acknowledge the violation and instead accused the U.S. of non-compliance to deflect attention from their actions (CP). The INF on-site inspections regime ended in 2001 (CP). The U.S. took violations of arms control agreements very seriously (CP). U.S. allies had made clear that they wanted to preserve the INF and bring Russia back to compliance (CP). The United States would consult with allies and partners in making arms control considerations (VP). America and Russia had special responsibilities in the realm of nuclear arms control (VP) due to their stockpile levels (CP).

Diplomatic efforts to bring Russia to compliance had historical precedents (ME). Previous U.S. administration worked diplomatically with the Russians for 5 years to bring them to compliance with the ABM and the CFE treaties, succeeding in the former case (CP). Arms control remained "the best path" to achieve the goals (ME) of limiting and reducing nuclear threats (GP) and preventing nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism (GP). For the last four decades, nuclear agreements had been recognized as an important tool (ME) to enhance the security of the U.S., allies, and partners (GP).

Gottemoeller rejected withdrawing from the INF Treaty as the chosen course of action to deal with the violation (ME). That was because abandoning the treaty would lead to downsides on U.S. goals by “[giving] the Russians a bye;” – a free ride to do whatever they wanted (GP). It would legalize their illegal actions (GP).

Still, in addition to diplomatic efforts, options in the military sphere (ME) were being considered to “push [Russia] back into the treaty” (GP) or to prepare the U.S. for a scenario in which it decided not to be a party to treaty anymore (GP). The United States was also reviewing potential measures in the economic sphere (ME). The announcement of Russia’s violation of the INF along with America’s commitment to the accord “[had] imposed significant costs on Russia” (GP) because it Moscow not free to pursue its GLCM program unrestrained (GP) (“Russian arms control cheating,” 2014: 2-3, 25, 28, 38, 42, 45; “Russian arms control cheating,” 2015: 6-7, 12; S. HRG. 114–781, 2016: 12-13, 53-54).

On 15 April 2015, during a hearing concerning the NDAA 2016, and specifically the nuclear forces budget request, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities Robert Scher acknowledged Russia’s violation (CP). Moscow remained unconvinced that complying to the accord was in its best interests (CP) and America’s patience was not limitless (CP). The secretary expressed several goals: to bring Moscow to compliance by convincing it of the treaty’s benefits (GP), to deter Russian aggression (GP), and to ensure that the treaty violations did not bring Russia a significant military advantage (GP). However, if current talks did not persuade Moscow, military options would be considered. Indeed, the U.S. was looking at what actions it could take. He mentioned the same three categories of military activities as Carter, starting with active defenses (ME) to protect locations in Europe in range of INF-violating missiles (GP). The second category aimed at attacking missiles where they were in Russia (GP), and the third looked to holding targets “at risk within Russia itself” (GP). Those more aggressive steps would not be carried out without prior discussions with allies (VP). Like Carter and McKeon before him, Scher did not go into much detail about the military actions on the table¹²² (H.A.S.C. 114-38, 2015: 6).

General Philip Breedlove, NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe and Commander of the U.S. European Command stated on 2 April 2014 that the introduction in Europe of a weapon capability in violation of the INF was a development that could not go unanswered (i.e., inaction is not a policy alternative) (ME) (Gordon, 2014). After the DOD determined that Russia was indeed in violation of the accord, the general expressed his views on the matter on several occasions. They included a DOD Press Briefing on 25 February 2015, and testimonies before the House Armed Services Committee on 25 February 2015, and 25 February 2016.

Breedlove claimed that America faced an aggressive, resurgent Russia (CP) eager to exert influence over its neighborhood to create a buffer zone and reestablish a leading role on the world stage

¹²² The intentional use of obscure terms such as “counterforce” or “countervailing” was also noted in the press (Burns, 2015).

(CP). Moscow wanted to rewrite the rules of the international order and saw the U.S. and NATO as a threat to that goal (CP). Russia was applying all instruments of national power to challenge U.S. and NATO resolve and unity (CP). In 2015, Europe faced a much more challenging and different security environment compared with just a year ago (CP). Russia was not a good faith negotiating partner (CP). The world was watching those events unfold (CP).

The general explained that Russia had tested systems outside of the boundaries of the INF (CP). Those systems posed a threat to U.S. deployed forces in Europe (CP). The U.S. had not witnessed the deployment of such systems (CP). Putin was not happy that the EPAA missile defense system was progressing (CP) and sought to divide the EU and NATO on issues such as sanctions and the INF Treaty (CP).

New U.S.-Russia and NATO-Russia relationships were goals that made sense in the longer term (GP). The vision of a free, whole, peaceful, and prosperous Europe (VP) protected long-term U.S. national interests in the best possible way (VP). The general wanted to start with diplomacy (ME) to signal to Russia that its violation of the INF would not be accepted by the U.S. (GP) and bring it back to compliance (GP). If diplomacy failed and Russia's infringement continued, the U.S. would "begin to look at the next series of options," i.e., "kinetic means" (ME). Doing so aimed at "[changing] the cost calculus for Russia in order to help them to find their way to a less bellicose position" (GP). Thus, Breedlove agreed with the DOD framework to change Putin's decision calculus (GP), which could include active defenses (ME), counterforce capabilities (ME), and countervailing strike capabilities (ME). Inaction was not the best policy option (ME): if Moscow felt rewarded by the outcomes to their actions, they might become emboldened to try them again elsewhere (GP) (downside) (H.A.S.C. No. 114-10, 2015: 5-6, 35; H.A.S.C. No. 114-98, 2016: 3, 11-12; Breedlove, 2015).

During a 25 June 2015 hearing before the House Armed Services Committee, and in a written statement to the representatives, Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Work perceived a changed and volatile strategic environment (CP). Russia was rapidly modernizing its nuclear forces (CP). Russian senior officials were issuing provocations through irresponsible statements regarding the country's nuclear weapons to intimidate the U.S. and its allies (CP). He stated that Russia had an "escalate to de-escalate" nuclear doctrine and that one could not control escalations (CP). The DOD questioned Russia's commitment to strategic stability given its careless nuclear saber rattling (CP). Nuclear weapons were the highest priority in the country's modernization plan and represented one of the largest portions of its defense budget (CP). Its nuclear modernization program was concerning in light of Moscow's behavior in Ukraine, aggressive military exercises, and its rhetoric of suggesting nuclear threats against the U.S., allies and partners (CP).

China was also doing nuclear upgrades and modernization. They were engaging in MIRV-ing, expanding their mobile ICBM force, and pursuing a sea-based nuclear element. However, China seemingly did not seek quantitative nuclear parity with the U.S. or Russia (CP). North Korea was expanding its missile and nuclear programs (CP), and its belligerence and attempts to develop ballistic

missile submarines and long-range missiles were seriously concerning (CP). The North Korean threat could be countered or mitigated (GP) with U.S. missile defense capabilities (ME). Overall, nuclear weapons were a critical component of the current security environment and would remain so (CP).

Given the aforementioned developments and foreign nuclear weapons programs (CP), it was imperative (ME) that the U.S. wanted to maintain a safe, robust, secure, reliable, and effective nuclear triad (GP) while adjusting U.S. force levels to the New START¹²³ (ME). He stressed the importance of nuclear weapons (CP) and the volatility of the current national security environment as reasons informing that conclusion (CP). A strong deterrent (GP) was critical to national security (GP). The DOD had to “ensure capabilities that [provided] the President with a range of effective options [GP] for imposing unacceptable costs on any aggressor that may hope to achieve its objectives through the threat or use of nuclear weapons” (GP).

To those ends, Work urged congressional support for the nuclear modernization program (ME). Thus, the DOD “[had] developed a plan to transition [America’s] aging systems” (ME). The secretary warned that the systems were close to aging out (CP) and, accordingly, rejected modernization delays as an alternative course of action (ME). That would put the security, safety and effectiveness of the U.S. nuclear forces in jeopardy (GP). The U.S. would otherwise “[lose] deterrent capability in the 2020s and 2030s” (GP) (downsides) (H.A.S.C. No. 114–43, 2015: 2-4, 74).

On 7 November 2015 and on 9 February 2016, the DOD remarked Russia’s nuclear saber-rattling (CP) and regarded the country a strategic threat (CP). It stressed the changes in Moscow’s behavior (CP). America remained committed to nuclear modernization (VP). It also sought to defend the national interest (VP), the “principled” world order (VP) and make the world a safer, freer place (VP). The DOD set several goals, informed by a changing security environment (CP) and strategic threats across the entire world (CP).

The DOD sought to counter Russian aggression (GP) and defend the U.S., allies and friends (GP). The change in Moscow’s behavior (CP) compelled the U.S. to update and advance its operational plans (ME) for deterrence (GP) and defense (GP). They included the new long-range bomber (ME), a new long-range stand-off cruise missile (ME), and the modernization of the U.S. nuclear arsenal (ME). Said investments were part of a balanced approach (ME) to address Russian aggression (GP), which also included dialogue (ME). Modernization and/or replacement of the nuclear triad (ME) continued to be motivated by the importance placed on maintaining the U.S. nuclear deterrent secure, safe and effective (GP), so that it would deter nuclear attacks (GP) and reassure allies (GP), but Russia’s aggressive policies (CP) had informed the pursuit of investments in a wide range of capabilities, including in the realm of nuclear modernization (ME). Contingency plans and operational posture needed to be adapted (ME) to deter Russian aggression (GP) and reduce vulnerability among allies and partners (GP). A

¹²³ Like the DOE had done in September 2014, the DOD also linked nuclear modernization to the New START reductions.

number of moves in response would ensue (ME) many of which could not be described in the forum where the discourse was conveyed. The U.S. would invest in technologies most relevant to Russia's provocations (CP), which included the new long-range bomber (ME) and unnamed systems (ME) and innovative technologies such as lasers (ME) (Carter, 2015; U.S. DOD, 2016b). On 12 July 2016, as part of a report mandated by Congress, the DOD presented an assessment conducted as the U.S. started to confront Europe's new strategic realities (CP), considering newer threats from Russia, each a part of an overall pattern of aggressive and coercive behavior on the part of the country (CP). Several capabilities were listed in association with the deterrence (GP) and defense (GP) of NATO. The Pentagon announced that the dual-capable F-35A should become nuclear operational by 2025 (ME). The B61-12 nuclear gravity bomb Life-Extension Program (ME), a crucial component of U.S. strategic forces and of U.S. commitment to NATO (VP) was expected to meet a First Production Unit goal by March 2020. The Pentagon would invest in a broad range of capabilities (ME) to counter the challenges stemming from Moscow's INF-range systems (CP). The information on those capabilities was classified.

1.2. Audience discourse

On 25 March 2014, Rubio claimed that fresh off the invasion of Ukraine, Russia's cheating on the INF Treaty could only be interpreted as sinister, and "an equal part of President Putin's long-term plan for a resurgent Russia" (CP). He believed that unless both sides were complying, treaties had no reason to exist (ME) (i.e., they do not deliver the intended goals). He introduced a resolution to address Russia's violation of the INF with several republican senators, with a companion resolution (i.e., with the same text) being introduced in the House by republican representatives (ME). If the U.S. did not act (ME) (rejects inaction), the viability of future arms control agreements would be hindered (GP) (downside) ("Rubio, Senate, House," 2014).

According to the resolutions, Russia was in material breach¹²⁴ of INF obligations (CP). That behavior constituted a threat to the United States, its deployed forces, and U.S. allies (CP). In deciding how to act, America should maintain consultations with allies (VP). The members of Congress wanted Russia to eliminate the military systems in violation of the treaty (GP) and urged the president to demand Moscow the fulfilment of said goal (ME). They questioned whether remaining in the treaty under the present situation (ME) served the national interest (VP) (potential downside). They urged the administration to not engage in further reduction of U.S. nuclear forces (ME) or in nuclear arms reduction negotiations with Russia until the goal was achieved (ME) (CRECB, 2014: 4833).

¹²⁴ "[T]he violation of a provision essential to the accomplishment of the object or purpose of the treaty" (Vienna Convention, Article 60[3][b]).

In the 2015 NDAA (agreed to on 12 December 2014), Congress cites the 2014 Compliance report, which denounced Russia's violation of the INF (CP), as well as the chairman of the JCS, who perceived a broader context of Russian regional aggression (CP). Dempsey had also claimed that Moscow's non-compliance with the agreement was a serious challenge to U.S. and ally security (CP). It was the sense of Congress that Russia's violation had an adverse impact on the security of the United States and its European and East Asian allies (CP). Congress wanted Russia to fully and verifiably (GP) return to compliance (GP). The president ought to "take appropriate actions," seeing as the treaty served (ME) U.S. and allied interests (VP) (GP) (serving the VP is a goal of action). Congress also quoted Dempsey's claim that it was necessary to meet Russia's violation of the accord (GP) and its regional aggression (GP) with a "strategic response" (ME). The bill required the DOD Secretary to submit a plan to Congress outlining any steps being taken or planned, including those relating to potential future military capabilities (section 1651) (ME), to defend against or deter (GP) the threat of a Russian deployment of INF-class systems (CP) (H.R. Committee Print, 2014: 285-286, 371). The House bill contained a provision (section 1644) requiring the development of a plan to test the capability of the Aegis Ashore missile defense to counter intermediate-range GLCM, but the provision did not make it to the final NDAA, being replaced by the abovementioned section 1651 (CRECB, 2014: 16742). A provision in the House bill (section 1230A) would have limited the availability of funds for implementing the New START (ME) until a certification was made by the DOD that Russia had met several conditions, namely, compliance with the INF Treaty, the CFE Treaty and the New START (GP), and respect for Ukraine sovereignty (GP). However, the provision did not make it to the final NDAA, which replaced the House provision with another (section 1247), requiring a DOD-JCS report stating why the New START remained in the U.S. national security interest (VP) (CRECB, 2014: 16726; H.R. 4435, 2014: 614, H.R. 4435, 2014).

Representative Mike Rogers (R-AL), member of the Armed Services Committee and chairman of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee, was vocal about the INF treaty on several hearings of the House Committee on Armed Services. In a 25 March 2014, hearing, Rogers expressed his concern over Russia's threats against U.S. allies (CP), its invasion of Ukraine (CP), and its INF violations (CP). He called on the president to declare Russia in violation of the accord, something that, in his words, "we have reportedly known about for years" (CP) (H.A.S.C. No. 113-93, 2014: 2, 7). On 10 December 2014, the legislator posited that the administration was doing nothing to address Russia's violation of the INF (CP). Inaction was not the recommended option (ME) because it would lead Moscow to believe that it would not suffer any consequences for violating the INF or other treaties (GP) (does not achieve goal). Doing nothing led to consequences (GP), as Russia's occupation of Crimea showed (CP) ("Russian arms control cheating," 2014: 27, 29). In an 18 March 2015 hearing, the representative expressed his satisfaction with the position assumed by Secretary Carter during its nomination hearing, in which he stated that Russia's violation could "no longer be tolerated [CP] without some sort of response" (ME). He proposed a modification of the Romania Aegis Ashore site (ME) "with the capacity to defend itself

against those intermediate-range missiles that [Russia] [was] illegally testing” (GP) (H.A.S.C. No. 114–22, 2015: 24).

Representative Jim Cooper (D-TN), member of the Armed Services Committee and ranking member of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee, voiced his thoughts on the INF Treaty during several meetings of the House Armed Services Committee (17 July 2014, 10 December 2014, 1 December 2015). He worried that such meetings, while good for democracy (VP), were not good for American foreign policy strength (GP). In fact, they were doing a service to Moscow, because they exposed internal divisions, which is why he asked that the public part of the sessions be kept as short as possible (CP). He wanted to address Russia’s violations of the treaty in a partisan manner (VP). The Russians, he noted, did not have such open meetings (CP). He also argued that revealing a treaty violation might hurt intelligence gathering (CP). Thus, it might be hasty to question why the administration chose not to “immediately made [the violation] a big issue” (ME) and why the allies were not notified without delay (ME) (defends inaction up to this point).

While ICBMs could be weighed appropriately to become INF missiles, given the category some flexibility, the latter were basically a “poor man’s” ICBM (CP). Iran and North Korea were only in the INF “space” because they could not yet build ICBMs (CP). While startling (CP), the violation was basically a European (and to some extent Japanese) issue, because INF missiles could only truly threaten their capitals (CP). The treaty was of primary benefit to U.S. NATO and Asian allies (CP). He was surprised that the Europeans were not more engaged in the INF debate (CP) and calling out Putin for his actions, including “in regard to destroying [their] own nations” (CP). He encouraged full NATO briefings (ME) and public engagement on the matter (ME) because the Europeans needed “to get their heads more in the game” (GP). Putin and others were warmongering with their INF violations (CP). The legislator claimed that everyone knew the Russian cheat (CP), and voiced outrage for Russia’s annexation of Crimea and invasion of Ukraine (CP) and their bombings of anti-Assad Syrian forces (CP). Still, relations with Moscow were not “black and white,” with Cooper noting America’s heavy dependance on Russia’s RD-180 rockets for assured access to space (CP).

Cooper argued that instead of saber-rattling in congressional sessions (ME) for domestic consumption (GP), the U.S. should act strong and intelligently. He believed that lifting defense sequestration¹²⁵ (ME) would scare the Russian president the most (GP). He hinted at cutting on nuclear-stockpile related costs in order to lift sequestration (ME). The lawmaker also suggested leveraging oil prices as a potential weapon in addressing Moscow’s INF violations (ME). Cooper wanted a “first rate strategic response” to Russia’s violations (ME) (H.A.S.C. No. 113–120, 2014: 9-11, 19-20; “Russian Arms Control Cheating,” 2014: 26-27; “Russian Arms Control Cheating,” 2015: 4, 13, 35).

¹²⁵ According to Ferdinando (2016), “[s]equestration [was] a provision of the Budget Control Act of 2011 that [imposed] across-the-board spending cuts if Congress and the White House [could not] agree on more targeted cuts aimed at reducing the budget deficit.

On 14 May 2015, Jerry Nadler (D-NY), of the Judiciary and Transportation and Infrastructure Committees, introduced an amendment to the House 2016 NDAA which would strike section 3121 from the bill (ME). Said section capped at \$50 million dollars the yearly expenditures on nuclear dismantlement and disposition activities for 5 years (2016-2020)¹²⁶. It also forbade the use of those funds for the dismantlement of the W84 warhead¹²⁷. The inclusion of the section on the authorization bill was unnecessary (ME), counterproductive to long-term American national security (GP) (downsides) and opposed by the military and the National Nuclear Security Administration (ME).

Nadler explained that the program being capped was scheduled to cost around \$50 million dollars (CP), so there would be no practical impact (ME). There was a large queue of approximately 2500 warheads waiting for dismantlement (CP). Preventing the acceleration of the dismantlement of retired warhead was not the best course of action (ME): maintaining them was expensive (GP) and a proliferation risk (GP) (downsides), seeing as they could be potentially stolen by terrorists (CP). Keeping retired warheads that were already scheduled for dismantlement did not contribute (ME) to national security (GP). They would not (ME) protect America (GP). The W84 warhead had been retired twice, once in 2007 (CP), and then again recently because the W80 had been preferred for the long-range standoff option (CP). Thus, there was no reason to keep it (ME) and doing so cost money (GP) (downside).

Not accelerating the disarmament process (ME) would also have negative consequences: it would send the rest of the world the wrong message about the value of nuclear weapons, thus undermining nuclear non-proliferation efforts (GP) (downside). Furthermore, the U.S. had made a commitment, under the NPT, to eventually reduce its nuclear weapons to zero (VP) (compromise on values). The U.S. already had 5000 active warheads, which were more than sufficient “to destroy the world” (CP). Getting rid of them (ME) would not weaken the U.S. vis-à-vis the Russians (GP) or anyone else (denies downsides). It was not unilateral disarmament (GP) (denies downsides) to dismantle retired weapons already scheduled for such (CP). Restricting the DOD’s ability to ascertain “the appropriate rate of warhead dismantlement of retired and surplus warheads” was needless and without purpose (ME).

Nadler acknowledged the existence of a Russian threat (CP). The representative did not agree that nuclear modernization should be a priority (ME) and deemed it a separate issue (ME). But assuming that it was a priority indeed, then accelerating the dismantlement process might actually help (ME)

¹²⁶ The Senate version of the 2016 NDAA contained no such provision, but the Senate receded (in the Conference to resolve differences between the two chambers’ bills) with an amendment imposing the \$50 million ceiling on 2016 expenditures only (NDAA 2016 Conference Report, 2015: 875).

¹²⁷ The Senate version of the 2016 NDAA did not include such a provision but later receded (also in the Conference) with an amendment forbidding the use of FY 2016 funds for purposes of dismantling the W84 warhead (used in GLCMs) (NDAA 2016 Conference Report, 2015: 875). The W84 was inactive and in storage, having been previously used in the BGM-109G Gryphon cruise missile, which was then withdrawn from Europe and then destroyed or disabled as result of the entering into force of the INF Treaty (“BGM-109G Gryphon,” n.d.).

Washington versus Moscow (GP). After all, dismantling retired warheads (ME) would free up money for nuclear modernization (GP) (CRECB, 2015: 6982-6983).

On 14 May 2015, Rogers followed Nadler's intervention by voicing his opposition to the latter's amendment, which would strike section 3121 from the 2016 NDAA (ME). He stated that nuclear weapons dismantlement was not a priority (ME), but nuclear modernization was (ME). He opposed DOS Secretary Kerry's announcement that the United States would accelerate the dismantlement of its nuclear warheads by 20% (GP). For the representative, pursuing the goal of hastening unilateral nuclear disarmament was "insane" because Russia continued to make overt nuclear threats against America and its allies (CP). Rogers noted that the U.S. was not forced by any current arms control agreements to dismantle any nuclear weapons (VP). Section 3121 of the 2016 House NDAA still allowed the administration to carry out the dismantlement plan of the FY 2016 budget request (ME), but prevented the acceleration envisioned by Kerry (GP). Not accelerating nuclear weapons dismantlement was the right course of action (ME) in light of the Russia threat (CP); doing otherwise would send the wrong message (GP) (downside). Section 3121 also forbade the dismantlement of a nuclear cruise missile warhead (the W84) for five years (ME). For the legislator, maintaining section 2131 in the NDAA was the prudent approach (ME) given Russia's violation of the INF Treaty by flight testing and deploying GLCM of intermediate range (CP) (CRECB, 2015: 6983).

On 14 May 2015, Robert Bishop (R-UT), of the House Committee on Armed Services, also expressed his opposition to the Nadler amendment (ME). The U.S. should not "rush headlong into unilateral disarmament" (ME) while Russia was violating the INF Treaty (CP). He claimed that section 3121 "wisely [prohibited] the disarmament of nuclear warheads for 5 years [ME], enough time to see if actually Russia will live up to its agreement" (GP). Unilateral disarmament got America nothing (ME) and would send the wrong message to U.S. potential adversaries (GP) and, above all, U.S. allies (GP) (CRECB, 2015: 6983).

On 10 June 2015, Jim Bridenstine (R-TX), of the House Armed Services Committee, introduced an amendment to the 2016 Defense Appropriations Bill (Bridenstine-Rogers-Turner¹²⁸-Poe¹²⁹ amendment), which would appropriate the sum of \$25 million dollars¹³⁰ to fund military responses to Moscow's continuing violation of the INF Treaty (ME). That amount was the exact same that the House Armed Services Committee had authorized "in a bipartisan [VP] and noncontroversial provision" (CP). The provision had passed the House Armed Services Committee on a 60-2 vote¹³¹ (CP). Despite

¹²⁸ Mike Turner (R-OH).

¹²⁹ Ted Poe (R-TX).

¹³⁰ The amount was categorized as a program increase for INF response option development (Conference report 2016 NDAA, 2016: 974).

¹³¹ The \$25 million dollars authorized by the House Armed Services Committee and, thus, included in the committee's draft of the bill (later presented, debated and voted on by the full chamber) made it into the final House version of the 2016 NDAA. The bill was approved on 5 November 2015 with 370 yeas and 58 nays (CREC, 2015: H8078, H8128). The Senate version of the NDAA contained no such provision, nor did the final bill signed into law by the president.

admitting that the Senate had not acted on that matter yet (the Senate version of the NDAA contained no such provision for a program increase) (CP), he stressed that there was not only overwhelming support for the provision in the committee, but also on the floor of the House (CP).

Senior DOD officials had stated that the U.S. was considering a range of military options to respond to Russia's INF violation (CP). The countervailing and counterforce options entailed extending the range of the Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS); land-basing Tomahawk or modifying comparable capabilities; and other capabilities of a classified nature (ME). Modifying current systems was deemed preferable (ME), because developing brand-new capabilities (ME) (rejects alternative action) would cost much more (GP) and take more time (GP) (downsides).

The lawmaker's amendment should be accepted (ME) in order to let Putin know that he could not profit by violating the INF Treaty (GP). Quoting a New York Times article, the representative noted that the U.S. had made no progress in terms of persuading Russia to acknowledge its violation (GP), much less resolve it (GP). The administration had also failed to neutralize any advantages Russia might gain from its violation in case diplomatic efforts failed (GP) (unachieved goals)¹³² (CRECB, 2015: 9198).

Pete Visclosky (D-IN) followed Bridenstine to express his opposition to the amendment (ME). He started his speech by stating that he shared the republican lawmaker's concerns regarding Russia (CP). He also shared his goal of assuring that the country abided by the INF Treaty (GP). Still, Visclosky considered the amendment premature (ME) (defends inaction) because the U.S. was still considered what options to use (CP) to deal with Russia's violation of the treaty (CP). Furthermore, the House did not have direct authorization (VP), given the absence of action by the Senate (VP) and the president's signature of the authorization bill into law (VP) (CRECB, 2015: 9198).

The 2016 NDAA (agreed to on 10 November 2015) stated that Russia's development and deployment of a nuclear GLCM violated the INF (CP). It also noted the increasing reliance of Moscow on nuclear weapons (CP). As a result of the two premises, the viability of the INF was compromised (ME). Congress wanted Russia to return to compliance on the INF (GP), as well as several other accords (GP). When it came to the INF, that meant agreeing to verification measures (GP) and destroying ground-launch missiles of intermediate-range (GP). The legislators also wanted Russia to end its occupation of foreign sovereign territory (GP), and its plans to deploy nuclear weapons therein (GP). Congress wanted the president to persistently compel Russia to return to compliance (GP) through military (ME) and non-military actions (ME), seeing as doing so (ME) was in the America's best interests (VP).

The legislative branch wanted the U.S. to develop economic (ME) and military responses with its allies (ME). If Moscow did not return to compliance, several goals were to be pursued by means of active defenses (ME), counterforce capabilities (ME) and counterstrike capabilities (ME). The three

¹³² Bridenstine's amendment was rejected (CRECB, 2015: 9198).

types of capabilities were meant to achieve, respectively: the defense against ground-launched missile attacks of intermediate-range (GP), the prevention of the aforementioned attacks (GP), and the enhancement of U.S. and ally forces (GP). In the view of the legislators, the counterforce and counterstrike capabilities were to be developed even if they were not in compliance with the INF (VP). In case Russia did not start taking steps to return to compliance by, including by agreeing to verification measures (GP) to confirm that any missile in violation of the INF will be eliminated (GP), then no later than 120 days after the enactment of the NDAA, the administration was mandated to submit a plan for the development of the abovementioned 3 military capabilities (ME). The plan should also include other response options (ME) deemed useful to bring Russia to compliance (GP) or to respond to a failure to do so (GP). The DOD should carry out the development of the 3 military capabilities using funds authorized to be appropriated for FY 2016 by the 2016 NDAA (ME).

The bill also limited to no more than \$50 million dollars the FY 2016 funds that could be used for nuclear warhead dismantlement (ME). The bill authorized to be appropriated the amount solicited in the administration's budget request: approximately \$48 million dollars. It also prohibited the use of any FY 2016 funds to dismantle or dispose of W84 nuclear warheads (ME) (2016 NDAA Conference Report, 2015: 337-339, 474, 875; Public Law 114-92, 2015: 129 STAT. 1304). The House and Senate versions authorized the same amount, also approximately \$48 million dollars (Report 114-102, 2015: 546-547; Report 114-49, 2015: 499).

However, the 2016 Appropriations Bill approved the administration's call for accelerating the dismantlement rate of retired nuclear weapons, effectively accepting it. The bill appropriated the amount of \$52 million dollars for the implementation of the administration's course of action (Consolidated Appropriations Act 2016 – Committee Print Book 1, 2015: 704, 716). The amount is approximately \$4 million dollars above the DOD budget request released on 2 February 2015, and which preceded Kerry's call for action on 27 April 2015 during the 2015 NPT Review Conference. The sum also exceeded the ceiling of \$50 million dollars for FY2016 imposed by the 2016 NDAA by approximately \$2 million dollars. The House Appropriations Committee had sought the appropriation of the exact amount of the administration's budget request (Report 114-91, 2015: 148), while the Senate Appropriations Committee pursued the appropriation of 52 million (Report 114-52, 2015: 117). In the end, the amount featured in the final bill codified the sum proposed by the Senate Appropriations Committee, overruling the authorization process.

The 2016 NDAA had required the administration to submit to Congress a plan for the development of three categories of military response options. However, the 2017 NDAA (agreed to on 8 December 2016) would later claim that the plan submitted was insufficient and did not adequately address said options (VP) (unmet legislative requirements). The conference report of the 2017 NDAA stressed that Congress requested the elaboration of the plan through a provision that contained nothing that "[was] intended to direct testing or deployment of systems that would cause the United States to violate the INF Treaty" (VP). The 2017 NDAA (section 1231) withheld \$10 million dollars of funding

for the DOD to provide support services to the Executive Office of the President (ME). The funding was to be withheld “until the Secretary of Defense [completed] the meaningful development of the military capabilities” (ME). The bill (section 3125) also limited to \$56 million dollars the yearly expenditures for nuclear dismantlement and disposition activities for the period between 2017 and 2021 (ME). The same section also mandated that no funding authorized to be appropriated by the bill could be used to accelerate U.S. nuclear weapons dismantlement activities in FYs 2017 to 2021 (ME)¹³³ (Conference Report 114-840 NDAA 2017, 2016: 493, 769, 1192-1193).

Unlike what happened the previous year, the 2017 Appropriations Bill followed the direction of the 2017 NDAA. It appropriated, thus, for warhead dismantlement and disposition activities the same amount authorized: \$56 million dollars¹³⁴ (ME). That amount is considerably below (by almost \$17 million dollars) the sum which had been requested by the administration for FY2017: \$68,984,000 dollars (CREC, 2017: H3763). Thus, the 2017 Appropriations Bill prevented the acceleration of nuclear warhead dismantlement pursued by the administration.

The final appropriations bill differed significantly from the versions of the Appropriations Committees in the Senate and the House in the terms of the funds appropriated. Both had sought to appropriate the exact amount of the administration’s budget request. Paradoxically, the Senate version of the Appropriations Committees in the Senate expressed support for the administration’s dismantlement efforts. They endorsed the course of action “now [ME] as a way of preparing its workforce for necessary stockpile production work beginning later this decade” (GP). As for the House version, its additional views section commended the chairman of the Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies (of the Appropriations Committee) – Mike Simpson (R-ID) “for his strong support of the dismantlement activities” (CP). Such activities would contribute (ME) to reduce the stockpile of retired warheads (GP), but also “[would] bring additional needed workforce to the Pantex facility in Texas in support of the larger mission of maintaining [the] nuclear stockpile” (GP) (Report 114-236, 2016: 93, 113; Report 114-532, 2016: 138, 188).

We now move on to think tanks. On 21 November 2016, Colin P. Clarke and William Courtney (2016), of the RAND Corporation, stated that Moscow was in violation of the INF (CP) and that relations with the West were poor (CP). They also noted that Russia opposed U.S. missile defenses and that the two countries were modernizing their nuclear forces (CP). The authors argued that American diplomacy with Russia was likely going to run into headwinds soon into the Trump administration (ME). This was because Russia was expected to make unrealistic demands, expecting one-sided concessions due to an inflated sense of self-importance (CP). Clarke and Courtney proposed two-way investment and trade

¹³³ The House version of the 2017 NDAA contained a provision prohibiting the use of any funds to dismantle or dispose W84 nuclear warheads. The provision was struck when resolving differences between the two bills (Conference Report 114-840 NDAA 2017, 2016: 1310).

¹³⁴ The House and Senate versions of the NDAA sought to authorize \$54984000 dollars and \$56234000, respectively (CREC, 2016: H6871).

(ME), cooperation on the International Space Station (ME), and an end to sanctions (ME) as courses of action aimed at stabilizing U.S.-Russian relations (GP).

Moving on to the CSIS, on 29 July 2014, Thomas Karako (2014) noted that what arms control commentators had written off as “frivolous accusations by hawkish legislators and overzealous journalists,” (CP) had finally been recognized by the administration: Russia was in violation of the INF Treaty (CP), as the press and Congress had been saying for years (CP).

The administration had suspected that Russia was in violation of the agreement since 2011 (CP), but it did not inform Congress prior to ratification of the New START (CP). The administration took too long to report and protest the violations (ME) (rejects inaction as the right course of action).

Moscow had a long track record of disrespect for international treaties (CP), and the U.S. should reconsider giving it the benefit of the doubt. By opting not to act (ME), the administration was compromising commitments made by the president in Prague, in 2009: “Rules must be binding [VP]. Violations must be punished” (VP). The 2010 NPR and the DOS’ 2010 Verifiability Assessment for the New START contained similar words (VP). Thus, Russia ought to suffer the consequences of its actions (GP). There was a capability gap for the United States under the INF (CP), that ought to be closed (GP). Russia should be reminded that its non-compliance would only lead to increased U.S. interest in the very missile defenses that Moscow so often complained about (GP). To that effect, the U.S. could carry out minor adjustments to the Aegis Ashore system (ME) in order to make it capable of cruise missile defense (GP). Russia should be persuaded to verifiably return to compliance (GP).

For the author, attempting to save the INF through diplomacy while hedging against its end through other means could achieve the goal (ME) of granting some constraint regarding additional Russian missiles (GP). It was a “measured” response (ME) that was preferable to “fielding defenses and other currently proscribed systems” for the time being (ME) (VP). Still, the DOD should investigate the feasibility of certain capabilities if the INF were not in place (ME). Doing so was consistent with the accord (VP) and allowed the U.S. to address the aforementioned capability gap (ME) by holding at risk the intermediate-range systems of Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran (GP). He suggested an improved Multiple Launch Rocket System (ME) and ATACAMS (ME) and utilizing the Vertical Launch System intended for the Aegis Ashore system in Europe to host land-attack cruise missiles (ME). Addressing the capability gap (GP) through deployment of those capabilities (ME) might leave the U.S. “relatively advantaged” in a post-INF world (GP).

The U.S. should not withdraw from the INF (ME); since doing so would compromise U.S. goals by allowing Russia to fulfill its apparent need for INF-banned systems without “[bearing] the onus of coming out and saying so” (GP). And if Russia indeed supported the INF, reinstating its inspection regime (GP) allowed for the verification of compliance (GP). Since it was signed, the INF Treaty had reduced the threat of attacks, defused tensions, reassured allies, and improved strategic stability (ME).

On 16 October 2014, Paul Schwartz (2014) claimed that before the 2014 compliance report was released, “a growing chorus of congressional and administration officials [had already] lent support to

claims of Russian INF Treaty violations” (CP). Still, in his words, it was “difficult to assess the merits of these claims without knowing the actual facts. Nor [was] it easy to make definitive judgments regarding the severity of the violations or their implications” (CP). Press reports about Russia’s violations had focused on two cases, linked to activities dating back to 2008: the R-26 “Rubezh” ballistic missile and the R-500 “Iskander-K” GLCM (CP). Concerning the first, assuming that it was tested for ranges (i.e., the maximum distance that could be covered by a missile) exceeding 5,500km, then it was an ICBM, which the INF did not contemplate, and was therefore not prohibited (CP) (in such a case, it was not an institutional fact that ought to inform action). However, if Russia’s R-500 had been flight-tested for a range exceeding 500km, then the production and testing of said capability was indeed a violation of the INF (VP) (in such a case, it was an institutional fact that ought to inform action).

A new GLCM could allow Russia to carry out longer-range precision conventional and nuclear strikes against crucial key civilian and military targets in Europe (CP) and target U.S. missile defense systems (CP). Russia would use nuclear weapons to prevent defeat in a conventional military war if its very existence was at stake (CP) and a nuclear-capable GLCM would increase Moscow’s ability to do so (CP). After all, Russia’s ability to hit many parts of Europe was limited (CP). Since the GLCM could be fired from beyond the range of most adversary weapons, the capability could avoid preemptive strikes, being thus more reliable than other Russian air and sea-based platforms (CP). Russia feared the increasing imbalance between itself and states such as China, North Korea, and Iran in terms of intermedia-range systems (CP).

If the violations were not only significant, but also “part of an ongoing pattern of abuse by Russia [CP], then they would constitute an important and disturbing new development in relations between Russia and the West” (CP). In acting, the U.S. ought to consult with NATO allies (VP).

Preserving the treaty was important because it still achieved several relevant goals (ME): it reduced a potential military threat from Russia (GP) and reduced the chance of preemptive attacks and mistakes (GP). It had led to the elimination of a problematic weapons category (ME) in which America was less dependent than Russia (ME). Inaction was not an option (ME), because it would lead to consequences on U.S. goals: Russia would “game” the situation, fielding banned systems (GP) “while avoiding the stigma associated with revoking the INF Treaty altogether” (GP) (downsides on U.S. goals).

Schwartz believed that the U.S. should continue its diplomatic efforts (ME) but pursue a dual-track strategy if they failed. That strategy included coercive and “positive inducement” elements. The first included announcing and then enhancing U.S. missile defense systems to intercept Russian GLCM (ME). He believed that doing so would mitigate or even negate (ME) Russia’s expected military benefits from deploying GLCMs (GP). Doing so was feasible (ME). Alternatively, or in addition, the U.S. could develop and deploy INF-class weapons (VP) (accepts downside on values) such as supersonic ballistic missiles with good terminal-phase maneuverability (e.g., an upgraded Pershing II) (ME). Doing so would (ME) send a signal to Moscow that deploying the GLCM system risked triggering an arms race

(GP). With said action, the expert wanted to sufficiently raise the costs for the Russians (GP), so they would perceive it more beneficial to return to compliance than abandoning the treaty (GP). His policy recommendation could (ME) threaten Russian air bases and air defense system, thus jeopardizing the country's significant military modernization investments made in recent years (GP). Still, it was necessary to pick the right kind of weapon so as to avoid downside on U.S. goals: The deployments could, after all, made it easier for Moscow to leave the INF Treaty (GP).

As for positive inducements, the U.S. should open talks with Moscow to address the latter's threat perceptions regarding other states' INF arsenals (ME). The author believed that the dual-track approach (ME) would succeed in either returning Russia to compliance (GP) or agree to amend the INF Treaty in terms with which both parties would be content. The latter might require expanding the treaty to bring in other states (GP). A similar dual-track approach had already proven successful in addressing the Soviet INF challenge in the 1980's (ME). The author acknowledged that achieving the goals above without jeopardizing NATO unity would not be an easy task, however (VP) (potential downside).

On 30 January 2014, Senators Marco Rubio (R-FL) and Jim Risch (R-ID), members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, reacted to a New York Times story that revealed multiple compliance issues regarding Russia and the INF (CP). For Rubio, it was clear that Putin was not to be trusted (CP). Despite the reset, Putin had undermined democracy in Russia and the independence of neighbor countries (CP). The U.S. lacked clear sight in dealings with Moscow (CP). Rubio wanted to address the compliance issues (GP). In the meantime, the U.S. should not negotiate further reductions of its strategic nuclear arsenal (ME) nor reduce it unilaterally (ME). Risch accused the administration of hiding the information of Russia's violation from Congress and the American people (VP). Secretary of State Kerry had expressed, as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the need for real consequences to Russian cheating (CP). Risch believed that Kerry ought to maintain that position (VP). The number one priority of the government was the protection of the American people (VP) (Rubio and Risch Comment on Russia Treaty Violation, 2014).

On 22 January 2015, Rogers and his colleague in the Armed Services Committee Mike Turner (R-OH) wrote a letter to Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel and Secretary of State Carter. They were concerned about Russian plans to deploy nuclear weapons in Crimea (CP). Such an action constituted an escalation in Moscow's recent aggression that posed a new military threat to U.S. allies and forces (CP). Action was necessary to protect the national interest (VP). Economic sanctions (ME) and diplomacy were failing (ME) to check Putin's aggression (GP) (goal is not achieved). The U.S. could not continue to adhere, unilaterally, to agreements such as the INF Treaty (ME) (rejected course of action). In order to change Putin's calculus (GP), U.S. defense policy and force posture ought to be changed (ME). Current policies, which had previously been naïve, were now dangerous (ME): Russia had no interest in being a partner to the West, which it considered a threat (CP). The U.S. needed to assure the security of U.S. deployed forces and allies (GP). One step that should be carried out to achieve

the goals was adding new sites for the deployment of DCA in Eastern Europe and forward-deployed nuclear weapons (ME) (Rogers & Turner, 2015).

On 14 May 2015, “Mac” Thornberry (R-TX), chairman of the House Committee on Armed Services declared his opposition to Nadler’s amendment (ME). He claimed that the U.S. had a limited number of facilities, people and money (CP), which could be used “to take things apart” (ME) or to help modernize the country’s stockpile (ME) so that it could be safer, reliable, and more effective in providing nuclear deterrence (GP). The representative was concerned that in accelerating warhead dismantlement (ME), as Kerry had announced, the administration would use more money, people and facilities than they should (GP) (downside). America could not do everything (CP); it needed to set priorities, and the administration had gotten their priorities wrong (ME) (rejects accelerating warhead dismantlement). The priority should be defending America (GP), especially considering that Russia and China continued to build nuclear weapons (CP) (CRECB, 2015: 6983-6984).

As it had happened in the House version of the 2015 NDAA, the 2016 House bill included a provision (section 1249) limiting funds for implementation of the New START (ME) until the same conditions established by the chamber in 2015 were met by Russia (GP). The provision was included following the passing of an amendment by representative Doug Lamborn (R-CO), of the Armed Services Committee, on 14 May 2015. The lawmaker deemed Russia untrustworthy (CP) seeing as the country was violation the INF and CEF Treaties in addition to the Budapest Memorandum (CP). Russian forces were also fighting in Ukraine (CP). His amendment would limit funds for implementing the New START (ME), thus preventing the continued reduction of U.S. nuclear weapons (GP). Given Russia’s violations and the terms associated with that status quo, it was not the right time (CP) for the U.S. to continue to unilaterally disarm (ME). His amendment received Rogers’ support, who stated that the Russian president had no respect for sovereignty or international law (CP) and would cheat on the New START as soon as an opportunity presented itself (CP). Russia respected only strength (CP). The amendment aimed at protecting the U.S. (GP), not getting back at Russia (GP) (denies goal of action). Once Russia was in compliance with those agreements (GP), New START funding would be released (ME) (CREC, 2015: 6972-9673).

On the same day, Cooper expressed his opposition to Lamborn’s amendment (ME), highlighting its downsides on U.S. goals. According to the DOD, the New START (ME) provided the U.S. with a crucial window into Moscow’s strategic nuclear arsenal (GP), thus making America more secure (GP). It also sustained effective deterrence (GP) and increased strategic stability (GP). Those goals, which the New START achieved (ME), would be compromised (GP) if Lamborn’s provision, which “would amount to a unilateral U.S. treaty violation” entered into force (VP) (compromise on values). Limiting funding for essential national security activities would also, according to the DOD, compromise the U.S. national security interest (VP) (compromise on values). The lawmaker accused his colleague of seeking to get back at Russia (GP) (rejects a perceived hidden goal of action) through the amendment (ME). Still, Cooper described the Russian actions listed by Lamborn as “despicable” and concurred that

Moscow was probably in violation of the three abovementioned agreements (CP). He also stated that by not bringing forward the amendment during Committee meetings, Lamborn was leaving the chamber with insufficient time to properly debate it (CP). He also noted that Russia was the one treaty that Moscow was seemingly adhering to, a point that his republican colleague had not denied (CP). He also remembered that the treaty had entered into force after receiving a solid show of support from the Senate (CP). While the House might question the decision, the power to ratify the agreement laid solely with the Senate (VP). In the end, Lamborn's amendment was approved by the House and integrated the chamber's version of the 2016 NDAA (CREC, 2015: 6972-9673). However, the final version of the bill would drop Lamborn's provision in favor of a report stating why implementation of the agreement remained in the U.S. national security interest (VP). The bill expressed Congress' concern about the impact of Moscow's growing number of deployed strategic delivery vehicles (CP) despite it being legal under the New START (VP) (Legislative Text and Joint Explanatory Statement to Accompany S. 1356, 2015: 779-780).

On 10 June 2015, senator Tom Cotton, of the Armed Services Committee, spoke about his amendment, which would limit the administration to spend on nuclear dismantlement \$50 million dollars per year for the next five years (ME). He opposed efforts from the Obama administration to accelerate nuclear disarmament unilaterally, as he described it, because doing so was illogical (ME). He justified his stance on the basis of Putin's nuclear threats against the U.S. (CP), his invasion of sovereign states (CP) and the fact that his missiles were shooting down civilian aircraft (CP). Accelerating warhead dismantlement would (ME) send Russia, other adversaries and U.S. allies the wrong message (GP) (downsides). He believed that nuclear warhead dismantlement was not a priority (ME); nuclear modernization was (ME). The lawmaker's amendment simply codified the administration budget of \$48 million (ME) (accepts dismantlement activities as planned by the administration¹³⁵ before Kerry's 27 April 2015 announcement at the NPT Review Conference).

Cotton argued that his amendment ought to be called up, made pending and voted on. The amendment should be debated, and his colleagues should not object it being brought to the floor for that purpose (VP). The matter at hands was, he argued, important (CP). Furthermore, the administration had on several occasions been less than forthcoming in dealing with Congress on nuclear policy. He stated that it was now known that the administration had downplayed Russia's activities in the context of the INF Treaty at a time when Congress was contemplating the ratification of the New START (CP) (CRECB, 2015: 9058-9059).

In response, senator Diane Feinstein (D-CA), ranking member of the Appropriations Committee, stated that the Appropriations Committee, of which she was ranking member, had approved an additional \$4 million dollars (i.e., above the approximately \$48 million dollars requested by the administration) for dismantlement activities (CP). She supported the administration's commitment to

¹³⁵ The DOD budget request for FY 2016 had been released on 2 February 2015 (U.S. DOD, 2015).

accelerating dismantlement (VP) and its goal of eliminating redundant nuclear weapons (GP). The funding (\$52 million dollars) “[was] adequate and justified” (ME). She disapproved of the Cotton amendment, because there was no reason (ME) to micromanage the weapons activity of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) (GP) (downside). The NNSA “routinely [shifted] employees from weapons stockpile stewardship and modernization work to dismantlement to keep the workforce fully and usefully engaged (GP). Complicating that process (GP) (downside) was unnecessary (ME). Moreover, the retired nuclear weapons no longer had any role in U.S. national defense (GP) (negates downsides) (CRECB, 2015: 9059).

Chairmen of the House Armed Services Committee Thornberry and of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Devin Nunes (R-CA), penned a letter to President Obama on 17 October 2016. They perceived a failure of the administration to confront Russia for its violation of the INF (CP). The legislators believed that the violation had finally been acknowledged in 2014 because of pressure from congressional committees (CP). They believed that the situation had deteriorated, and that Moscow was now in material breach of the INF (CP) and that the breakout of the accord had military impacts that required a response (CP). America ought to impose penalties for Russia’s non-compliance (GP) and U.S. nuclear doctrine should continue to guarantee the security of U.S. allies (GP).

Thornberry and Nunes mentioned that Under Secretary Gottemoeller had claimed that Russia would face economic sanctions (VP) (administration commitment). Additionally, senior DOD leaders had testified that the Pentagon would develop military responses (CP) to ensure Russia understood the consequences of its actions (GP), and Congress had signed a law requiring their implementation (VP). However, no sanctions had been imposed (CP), and the administration was not letting the military pursue the options that General Dempsey had recommended (CP).

The two representatives wanted the administration to give up the idea of eliminating a leg of the nuclear triad (ME) and for the president to uphold the 2010 modernization commitment (VP). The New START should not be prematurely extended (ME) because it was a source of leverage with Russia (GP). The U.S. should also not carry out destabilizing changes to its nuclear doctrine (ME), seeing as it guaranteed ally security (GP). The country should implement the promised economic sanctions against Russia (ME) and the military options mentioned by the administration (ME). Inaction was not an option (ME) – American and allied security could not wait until 20 January 2017 (GP) (downsides of inaction) (date when the new president would be sworn in) (Thornberry & Nunes, 2016).

On 28 June 2016, Jacob Heim (2016a: 1-2, 3-4, 7, 10, 13; 2016b: 1-2) acknowledged Moscow’s violation of the INF (CP), which raised questions about its durability (CP). He argued that China’s swift military modernization, which has focused on conventional, land-based precision cruise and ballistic missiles (CP) could threaten U.S. forces (CP). They could also be crucial in enabling counter-intervention campaigns, which could threaten the U.S. in case of a conflict in the Taiwan Strait (CP).

The author argued that the U.S. should try to salvage the agreement (ME) by convincing Russia to reverse its non-compliance (GP). It was too soon to withdraw (ME) and to negotiate with Moscow

was the prudent course of action (ME), since the treaty had been beneficial to the U.S. in the past (ME). It was also premature to amend the treaty (ME) so that it would allow fielding conventional intermediate-range land-based theater ballistic missiles (ME). Still, if Russia continued to deny its violations and refuse to comply with the accord, the U.S. might be forced to adjust (ME) (raises the possibility of a new course of action). The prospects of the negotiations with Russia were unclear and could take several years (ME).

In the meantime, while the U.S. attempts to convince Russia to return to compliance (GP), and in lieu of withdrawing from the INF (ME), the U.S. should analyze the military potential of conventional land-based theater ballistic missiles (TBMs) (ME). That course of action had the potential to achieve two goals (ME): providing leverage that would bring China into arms control negotiations (GP) and provide U.S. forces with a survivable capability that could penetrate many defenses (GP). The TBMs could potentially help offset Beijing's military modernization (GP).

The TBMs had lower development risk than other strike technologies and could have deep magazines (ME). However, the course of action might prove unfeasible if no nations agreed to host them (ME). They could also lead to compromises on U.S. goals by being more expensive than cruise missiles (GP) and slow to deploy (GP). They could also hinder stability and crisis management (since they could be used for surprise attacks) (GP), and lead to an arms race (GP) (downsides). In any case, the expert recommended that the U.S. started examining the risks and benefits of fielding TBMs (ME) in case circumstances change and the military requests options in the Pacific (GP).

On 27 July 2015 Karako (2015) posited that the U.S. should do more on missile defense (ME), including to address "lower-tier threats [CP] like Iskanders, SS-21s, and INF Treaty-noncompliant cruise missiles" (GP). The author wanted to counter Moscow's non-strategic missiles (GP) and deter Russian aggression (GP) by "raising the cost and uncertainty of attack [GP], blunting conventional military forces [GP], and buying time for NATO to react" (GP). He sought to stabilize U.S-Russian strategic relations (GP), project ally cohesion (GP), and communicate to Moscow that aggression would be counterproductive (GP). Those goals would be achieved by means of a more integrated and robust air and missile defenses (ME). Expanding EPAA fit the motto whereby "good fences made good neighbors" (ME). He rejected consequences of goals: the course of action would not undermine Russia's strategic deterrence (GP). After all, no one objected the air defenses and interceptors around Moscow (CP).

In December 2016, Karako (2016c) noted that Russia's provocations and aggression actions (CP), along with its non-compliance with the INF (CP) made it important to "hedge against further deterioration of relations and non-compliance with arms control agreements" (GP). He proposed achieving that goal by exploring new long-range strike and maneuvering boost-glide vehicle options (ME). The capabilities could be deployed (ME) if the INF collapsed (VP), in case a more serious violation took place (VP), or when the New START expired (VP). Arms control negotiations (ME) should not be linked restrictions on U.S. or ally missile defense systems (GP).

In another December 2016 article, Karako (2016b) noted that Russia and China continued to improve their already advanced missile arsenals at the tactical and strategic levels (CP). Russia was modernizing the three legs of its triad (CP), held NATO at risk with its short-range ballistic and cruise missiles (CP), and was in violation of the INF Treaty (CP). In the future, claimed the specialist, NATO would need to pay attention to the Russian threat, particularly when it came to its aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles, short-range missiles (e.g., Iskander), theater ballistic missiles, and cruise missiles (e.g., Kalibr) (Kalibr and Iskander can be uploaded with nuclear warheads) (CP). Missile defense efforts in Europe (ME) had been “steered entirely away from Russian capabilities, but this [might] need to change” (GP) (recommends new goal of action for missile defense). The EPAA ought to acknowledge and adapt to those new lower-tier threats to NATO (GP).

On 6-7 October 2014 and 4-5 June 2015 CSIS hosted two workshops with U.S., European, and Russian experts on limiting non-strategic nuclear weapons, publishing summaries of their main contributions. The Russian participants of the workshop believed the collapse of the agreement to be imminent (CP) and that the entire arms control architecture was at risk (CP). They also called for explanations regarding the “countervailing” measures that the U.S. was pursuing (ME).

Jeffrey McCausland noted that U.S. policymakers were becoming increasingly concerned about possible Russian violations of the INF Treaty (CP). To resolve the issue (GP), he recommended that the two parties reconvened the INF Treaty’s Special Verification Commission to do so (ME). It was in the interest of both Russia and the U.S. (VP) to resolve the questions concerning Moscow’s R-500 cruise missile (GP). General Evgeny Buzhinsky noted that the INF Treaty restricted Moscow’s land-based missiles, but not Washington’s submarine-launched missiles (CP). He believed that the alleged INF Treaty violations would “blow over” (CP). Ronald Lehman raised the possibility of some assumptions regarding the INF Treaty’s verification maybe been wrong since definitional issues and counting rules could change over time (CP). Russia and the U.S. should aim to reduce uncertainty (GP) and for greater precision regarding those issues and rules (GP).

Sergey Rogov noted the absence of real dialogue between the United States and Russia on the INF Treaty, despite mutual accusations of violations of the accord (CP). Rogov remarked that the Russian R-26 “Rubezh” system arguably in violation of the INF was an ICBM of shorter range capable of striking targets in Europe (CP). However, the flight trajectory of U.S. ICBMs and SLBMs could also be reduced (CP). Another accusation being made in the United States concerned a Russian R-500 “Iskander-K” GLCM (CP). Russia accused the U.S. of several violations, linked to target-missiles, drones, and the Aegis Ashore system (CP). The system’s missile launchers might launch cruise and ballistic missiles that could reach Moscow in a few minutes (CP). The collapse of the INF would jeopardize the New START (GP) and preclude any negotiations on non-strategic nuclear weapons (GP) (downsides). The expert considered that DOD Secretary Carter’s proposed “countervailing measures” were very worrisome, since he interpreted them as meaning “prevailing strike capability” (ME). He supported dialogue as a way to prevent the end of the INF and of the arms control regime (ME). While

the INF Treaty's Special Verification Commission should restart its work (ME), direct involvement of top officials was necessary (ME).

Overall, all workshop participants agreed that, in the current backdrop of crisis in Ukraine (CP), INF Treaty (CP) and missile defense disputes (CP), sanctions on Russia (CP), and negative media reporting of West-Russia relations (CP), Washington and Moscow needed lower the risk of inadvertent escalation (GP), increase transparency (GP) and confidence (GP), and resolve INF-related disagreements (GP). For real progress, a political umbrella to organize such efforts was necessary (ME), albeit likely requiring improved relations (GP). Participants recommended several actions to achieve those goals, including showing Russia that the MK-41 missile launcher for Aegis Ashore SM-3 missile interceptors could not hold offensive surface-to-surface missiles (ME). Another recommendation was to reconvene the Special Verification Commission of the INF Treaty (ME) to address potential treaty violations (GP) ("CSIS, 2014: 4, 6, 11-12; CSIS, 2015a: 2-3, 7, 11-12, 55).

Kimball (2015, 2016b), Executive Director of the ACA (March 2015 and March 2016), noted that Putin's efforts to annex and destabilize Ukraine had sent U.S.-Russian relations to their lowest-point in more than a quarter of a century (CP). Such Russian actions had also put NATO members in the Eastern flank on edge (CP). Nuclear weapons cooperation had yet to be seriously affected but further progress had been temporarily delayed (CP). Obama had proposed deeper cuts on deployed strategic nuclear warheads and delivery systems, but Russia rejected doing so until negotiations took into consideration U.S. missile defense, other states' nuclear arsenals, and U.S. conventional prompt-strike weapons (CP). Russia's INF violations, and U.S. accusations of such, led to an even more difficult nuclear dialogue (CP). Moscow had rebuffed U.S. efforts to address the INF question (CP).

While the two countries were no longer "in the type of ideological competition they had during the Cold War" (CP), they remained trapped in a relationship of MAD (CP). Both states' nuclear forces ready for prompt launch comfortably "[exceeded] any common-sense deterrence 'requirements'" (ME) (current levels are not necessary). Currently, there was potential for a direct conflict between Russia and NATO (CP). Russian officials had started to underline their nuclear weapons as a deterrent against a perceived increased threat from U.S. and NATO conventional capabilities (CP). Russia was also eyeing new types of nuclear weapons (CP).

Aiming to send Moscow a message (GP), U.S. members of Congress had proposed several courses of action, such as accelerating nuclear modernization (ME), exploring new nuclear weapons (ME), deploying tactical nuclear weapons near Russia's border (ME), and halting funding for implementing the New START (ME). Those policy recommendation were rejected by the expert because there was potential for direct conflict between the NATO and Russia (CP) and sending political messages with nuclear weapons (ME) could lead to it (GP) (downside). The actions would jeopardize international security (GP) and strategic stability (GP) (downsides).

The DOD had also started to frame replacement and upgrading plans for "U.S. strategic bombers, nuclear-armed cruise missiles, and land- and sea-based strategic nuclear forces [ME] as part

of its strategy to “counter Russia’s aggressive policies in Eastern Europe” (GP). Again, Kimball opposed those policy recommendations (ME) since they would give Russia an excuse to hasten its nuclear modernization plans (GP) (downside) and would perpetuate excessive and costly force levels for generations (GP) (downside). Nuclear weapons (or even a nuclear weapons build-up) could not solve (ME) the challenge posed by Russian actions in Ukraine (GP) or protect U.S. Baltic allies (GP). Obama and his successor “[had] a responsibility [VP] to pull back from a nuclear action-reaction cycle” (GP) which increased risks for the U.S. and Russia (GP).

Wanting to reduce the size and the costs imposed by the U.S.-Russian strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons arsenals (GP), as well as resolve missile defense disagreements (GP), the expert proposed that the two countries resumed discussions on new and creative arms control measures (ME). They should also reiterate their commitment to the INF (ME) and agree to special inspections (ME) to settle worries about compliance (GP). The U.S. and Russia should engage in talks (ME) to limit and later phase out nuclear cruise missiles (GP). Achieving that goal would allow the two states to give up the modernization programs for those missiles (GP) and avert cruise missile buildups worldwide (GP). The U.S. could also halt plans to develop a new nuclear cruise missile (air-launched) (ME) and phase out the missile that it was replacing (ME).

On 19 March 2013, Mike Rogers, chairman of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee (R-AL), worried that while “every other nation [was] growing or modernizing its nuclear forces” (CP), the U.S. was dealing with restrictions on defense spending (CP). America’s real and potential adversaries were aware (CP) that the country was not investing responsibly in its nuclear forces (ME) (rejects staying the course). For instance, he noted, Russia tested three new ICBMs since the entry into force of the New START (CP). Quoting Putin, he stated that Russia saw nuclear weapons as the country’s main guarantee of territorial integrity and sovereignty, playing a vital role in preserving regional and global stability and balance (CP). Rogers also noted that China was readying new nuclear capabilities (CP) and described Iran and North Korea as imminent threats (CP).

He rejected the president’s goal of a world without nuclear weapons, which he saw as a fairy tale at best (ME) (questions whether it is achievable), and potentially a dangerous goal (GP) (downside). He drew that understanding from statements from present or former members of U.S. administrations, Congress and the military (ME). He noted that the other countries were going the opposite direction (CP).

At a time when the president pursued mutual reductions with Russia (ME), Rogers stressed that “going below New START levels of warheads and launchers, including the possibility of coordinated mutual actions” required careful consideration (ME) (questions course of action). Such a course of action should not be pursued unless the goals of verification (GP) and reciprocity (GP) were guaranteed, and it was accompanied by “adequate and stable funding for the long-term investments required [ME] to maintain high confidence in [the U.S.] nuclear arsenal” (GP). He believed that the republican senators

and representatives would insist on those terms (CP) if the U.S. were to go below New START levels (GP).

America's nuclear forces were aging (CP), and the entire triad needed to be modernized and replaced very soon (ME). The nuclear deterrent was the most proven and cost-effective way (ME) to promote peace for Americans and their allies (VP) (GP) (the VP is a goal of action) (H.A.S.C. No. 113–21, 2013: 31-33).

On 21 May 2014, Rogers spoke against cutting nuclear weapons funding, which he equated to “unilateral disarmament” (ME). He opposed that course of action due to the “expanding nuclear weapons programs of Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, Pakistan, and others” (CP). He also mentioned Putin's “massive and unplanned nuclear weapons exercise just over a week [before] and his invasion of Ukraine and his violation of the INF Treaty and his questionable implementation of the New START Treaty” (CP). The cuts, he claimed, would hinder U.S. national security interests (VP) and those of U.S. allies (VP) (downsides).

Rogers spoke of the important role played by nuclear weapons in deterring aggression (GP) and Obama's modernization commitment (VP). He expressed his support for preserving the nuclear triad (ME), reminding that Martin Dempsey, the JCS chairman, had assured the debate on that matter was closed (ME). The administration and the JCS agreed that maintaining it was important due to its contributions (ME) for U.S. deterrence and defense (GP). He did not consider that the costs of U.S. nuclear forces would generate downsides vis-à-vis other goals, because the country was spending less than 5% of the defense budget on nuclear forces (GP); an historic low (CP) (CRECB, 2014: 8869-8870; H.A.S.C. No. 113–84, 2014: 22).

Senator Jack Reed (D-RI), of the Appropriations (Defense subcommittee) and Armed Services Committees, noted on 3 June 2015 that the 2016 NDAA authorized a concept development for replacement of the U.S. land-based ICBMs. He claimed that it was the most responsible leg of the triad (ME) and that it “[acted] as a counterbalance to Russian ICBMs” (GP). He quoted Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter, who stressed that “nuclear deterrence [formed] the bedrock of [U.S.] defense policy;” thus, the mission could not be neglected (ME) (implicitly, neglecting the nuclear deterrence mission would undermine U.S. defense policy [GP] [downside]) (CRECB, 2015: 8410-8415). On 7 December 2016, Reed stated that modernizing all legs of the triad was critical (ME), “in light of the increasingly belligerent actions by Russia, which conducted a nuclear exercise immediately after invading Crimea as a form of nuclear intimidation (CP) (CREC, 2016: S6785-S6787).

On 11 February 2016, Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Senate Majority Leader and member of the Appropriations Committee (and of the Defense Subcommittee) stated that the U.S. faced challenges from countries such as China, Russia and Iran, which were attempting to aggressively expand their influence (CP). Russia was rebuilding its conventional and nuclear forces, conducting espionage and cyberattacks and supporting paramilitary forces in Ukraine (CP). Likewise, China was modernizing and rebuilding its conventional and nuclear forces (CP). America had to rebuild and modernize its nuclear

forces (ME) to deter Russia, China, Iran, North Korea and other states (ME). It should also modernize its conventional forces (ME) balance and contain those states' regional aspirations (GP) (CRECB, 2016: 1797-1798).

On 15 June 2016, Representative Mike Coffman (R-CO), of the Armed Services Committee, asserted that Russia was “flexing its nuclear muscles” (CP), that Beijing and Moscow were “aggressively modernizing” all aspects of their nuclear arsenal (CP), and that North Korea was conducting nuclear weapon tests and long-range missile tests (CP). Thus, it was mandatory that Congress authorized and appropriated enough funds (ME) to guaranty the reliability and operational readiness of U.S. nuclear forces, and particularly that of the sea leg of the triad (GP). The global security environment was increasingly dangerous (CP), and the U.S. needed to bolster nuclear deterrence (GP) (CRECB, 2016: 8817-8818).

On the same day, Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ), of the Appropriations Committee rejected cutting funding for the development of the new cruise missile (the LRSO), a course of action he likened to “unilateral disarmament” (ME). Doing so would lead to downsides on U.S. goals by weakening the airborne leg of the triad, on which the country depended for deterrence (GP). As he stated, “[y]ou can be darn sure that the Russians and Chinese are not sitting back” (CP). He accused democrat congressmen Mike Quigley (D-IL), of the Appropriations Committee, Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) of the Ways and Means Committee, and John Garamendi (D-CA) and Adam Smith (D-WA), of the Armed Services Committee, of attempting to undermine the LRSO (covert reason for action) (GP/VP) by offering an amendment which would put \$75.8 million dollars intended for the cruise missile towards deficit reduction (ME) (rejects course of action) (CRECB, 2016: 8824-8825)

According to Quigley, the amendment would put the LRSO back on its 2015 acquisition schedule. The democrat believed that it made little sense to spend an additional \$75.8 million than originally planned in the 2015 schedule, due to “so much uncertainty” about whether the LRSO was necessary or affordable (ME). Quigley noted that several experts (CP) had stated that the capability was not needed (ME). The representative believed that the current bombers were able (ME) to penetrate enemy airspace and drop a nuclear bomb above the target (GP), making the LRSO redundant (ME). And if the U.S. needed to launch nuclear missiles from thousands of miles away, the ICBMs would do just that (ME). There was no need to rush the development of the LRSO (ME): only two years ago, the Air Force requested a delay to pay for higher priorities before changing its mind the following year (CP). Moreover, the ALCM would not be phased out until the 2030s (ME). Instead of investing in its outdated and oversize nuclear arsenal (ME), the U.S. should invest on priorities (ME) which would actually make the U.S. safe (GP) or reduce the country's debt and deficits (GP) (CRECB, 2016: 8824).

Indeed, there were some in the democratic party who were concerned with America's nuclear weapons spending. On 23 March 2015, Blumenauer introduced the Smarter Approach to Nuclear Expenditures (SANE) Act. The bill had 21 co-sponsors, all democrats, 11 of which were listed as such when the bill was introduced on said date (original sponsors) (H.R.1534 Cosponsors, 2015). A

companion bill (identical or very similar bill) was introduced in the Senate on the same date by Edward Markey (D-MA) and sponsored by Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Al Franken (D-MN), all of which original sponsors (S. 831 Cosponsors, 2015).

Blumenauer claimed that the SANE Act allowed (ME) the U.S. to adopt a more stable and practical nuclear deterrent (GP), while reducing costs and risks (GP) and without compromising U.S. (GP), ally and partner security (GP) (denies downsides). In June 2013 Pentagon, the Pentagon claimed that those goals could be achieved while reducing deployed nuclear weapons up to a third below New START levels¹³⁶ (ME). He also claimed that some experts claimed that the U.S. could go even lower (ME) without such downsides occurring (GP). The congressman reminded that the U.S. president had made a commitment (VP) to completely rebuild all legs of the nuclear triad (ME). The SANE action did not challenge the president's commitment, but instead attempted to inject strategic reality (GP) and fiscal responsibility into U.S. nuclear weapons planning (GP). After all, as the former Vice-chairman of the JCS, General James Cartwright had stated in 2013, the U.S. did not have the money to recapitalize all three legs of the triad (CP). The 2014 Quadrennial Defense review had corroborated the General's view (CP).

Overall, the lawmaker believed that the U.S. was building a nuclear force which far exceeded (ME) the requirements to deter nuclear threats (GP). As result, current nuclear weapons planning would lead to downsides on U.S. goals, seeing as “[rebuilding] a nuclear triad with such capacity excesses” (ME) would impede investments in other areas (GP), such as conventional forces (GP) (downsides). Blumenauer reminded that the U.S. defense budget was “already squeezed” (CP) and that nuclear deterrence was irrelevant (ME) vis-à-vis international security challenges such as ISIS¹³⁷ (GP), the Ebola virus (GP), or Russian aggression in Ukraine (GP) (unachieved goals). The legislator deemed preferable to scale back and limit new nuclear weapons programs now “(ME) instead of “waiting for ‘disarmament by default’” (ME). Thus, the SANE Act was critical (ME) to securing the U.S. nuclear deterrent (GP) without compromising essential investments in readiness and other programs (GP) (CRECB, 2015: 4037-4038).

In the 2017 NDAA, Congress as a whole agreed with the administration's claim that a Russian threat was a premise that ought to inform modernization efforts. The bill described “an increasingly dangerous world in which foreign adversaries including the Russian Federation, are making explicit nuclear threats against the United States and (...) allies” (CP). America ought to deter aggression (GP) against its interests (VP) and those of its allies (VP). The U.S. ought to assure its allies of the credibility of its extended deterrence (GP). In the face of nuclear provocations such as coercion and blackmail (CP), the U.S. ought to take several steps (ME) in support of a credible, strong deterrent (GP). Such steps

¹³⁶ Still, the SANE Act did not call for reductions of deployed strategic warheads below New START limits (S. 831, 2015: 3-4).

¹³⁷ The abbreviation refers to the Islamic State, also called Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or Daesh. The terminology used to refer to the organization varies according to the speaker.

included maintaining a diverse and flexible nuclear force (ME); granting the maximum priority to the modernization of the triad, the DCA, and associated command and control elements (ME); and assuring ally participation in nuclear defense exercises, planning, and training (ME) (2017 NDAA Conference Report, 2016: 626-628).

Several experts also utilized Russia as a premise justifying action in the context of American nuclear modernization activities.

In January 2014, Elbridge Colby spoke at CSIS on the future of the U.S. nuclear triad. He described Russia, China and Iran as adversaries (CP). He stated that conventional deterrence was not as good as nuclear deterrence (CP). Thus, conventional capabilities could not replace nuclear weapons (ME). Case in point, he considered it plausible that potential adversaries like North Korea or, under certain circumstances, Russia, could use nuclear weapons in a way that could make U.S. conventional posture difficult to apply (CP). Moreover, over a few decades, the U.S. could lose its conventional advantage (CP).

Colby expressed his belief that, going forward, the United States should maintain a triad of nuclear capabilities (ME); not a dyad or a monad (ME). He believed that doing the latter would represent a weakening of the U.S. nuclear deterrent (GP), with America running the risk of countries such as North Korea, Iran, China and Russia taking advantage of such a scenario (GP). He believed it to be possible that such countries would interpret the diminution of America's nuclear capability as creating areas of possible military advantage, not only in terms of direct conflict (GP), but also "in the ability to credibly threaten military force for political advantage" (GP). This could contribute to international instability (GP) or a more hostile environment, including by sparking arms races (GP). To "build down" the triad would mean unnerved allies (GP) and greater likelihood of war (GP). The U.S. would end up weaker and with fewer options to apply military force to resolve conflicts (GP) or to stand firm during face-offs (GP) (downsides on goals), with consequences for the national interest (VP) (downside on values). He believed that the cost of nuclear modernization was small in comparison with the overall DOD budget (GP) (denies downsides), and that the enormous problems in the defense budget were not in the nuclear force (CP) (Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2014).

On 24 July 2014, Sarah Mendelson and John Harvey stated that Russia's activities in Ukraine were troubling (CP), although it was too early to claim that they had launched a new Cold War (CP). In any case, the nuclear dimension of the crisis was not insignificant (CP). He believed that existing U.S. nuclear forces (ME) would deter Russia (GP). Thus, it would be unwise to start working on warheads with novel military capabilities (ME) or to upload warheads stored for purposes of "geopolitical hedge" (ME). Still, he recommended that nuclear modernization programs were kept demonstrably on track (ME). Putin's actions (CP) made it more important to introduce a nuclear capability to the F-35 aircraft (ME), to extend the life of the B61-12 warhead (ME), and to be able to forward deploy DCAs (ME).

However, the goal of such measures was to assure European and Asia allies (GP); not threatening Putin (GP) (denies goal of action). Now it was not the time (CP) to revitalize the debate on

withdrawing U.S. nuclear weapons from the European continent (ME) or to reduce, unilaterally, U.S. strategic forces (ME) (rejects courses of action). The U.S. should consult with allies (VP) in order to increasing their involvement in extended deterrence (GP). This did not mean deploying DCAs in new states (ME) (rejects courses of action), but rather engaging in dialogue with allies on matters such as: facilitating DCA deployments, involvement in exercises, and providing additional information about DCAs (ME) (Mendelson & Harvey, 2014).

On 13 July 2016, CSIS CEO John Hamre (2016) issued a statement to the Senate Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies, of the Appropriations Committee (which covers nuclear weapons activities). He stated that the ACML was approaching the end of its service life (CP). When negotiating the New START, President Obama had made a commitment (VP) to modernize the ALCM fleet (ME). He claimed that the U.S. should not abandon LRSO (ME) because the capability constituted one of the few advantages that the country would bring (GP) in a future, new round of strategic arms reductions with Russia (ME). The expert wanted such negotiations with China as well (ME). Moreover, the LRSO assured that the air leg of the triad remained (ME) valuable for deterrence (GP). Abandoning the capability would put the U.S. in a disadvantageous position (GP) (downside on goals). There was a strong consensus in Congress for nuclear modernization (CP). Defunding the LRSO program (ME) would shatter that consensus (VP) (downside on values). Hamre also noted that the airborne leg was the least provocative (GP) and that there was no history of Russia or China misinterpreting U.S. use of conventional cruise missiles as a nuclear attack (GP). The LRSO was also the least likely way to conduct a “decapitation” strike against Russia or China, making it the less threatening in that respect (GP) (denies downsides). Hamre believed it to be worth it to use 3-4% of the nuclear budget (ME) to deter nuclear war (GP).

In December 2016, Karako (2016a) explained that the strategic environment and the U.S.-Russian relations described in the 2010 NPR had since worsened (CP). Russia had made incursions into Crimea and Eastern Ukraine (CP) and was in violation of the INF Treaty (CP), and China was seemingly conducting a nuclear weapons build-up (CP). Great power competition and potentially conflict were back at the fore of national security discourse (CP). Moreover, America’s strategy of “strategic patience” with North Korea had apparently failed (CP), and questions remained about Iran’s long-term nuclear status (CP). The author quoted President-elect Trump, who stated that Moscow had “gone wild with their nuclear program” (CP) and confirmed his assessment that the U.S. nuclear force had several elements which were well beyond their expected service life (CP). According to Karako, the U.S. required “a modern, flexible, and adaptable nuclear enterprise [GP] suited to the deterrence (GP) challenges of the 21st century” (CP). Thus, the U.S. should stay the course in regard to nuclear modernization (ME). It should maintain the replacement program for the Ohio-class nuclear submarine (ME), develop a new bomber (ME), replace the ALCM with the LRSO (ME), and modernize the ICBM leg of the nuclear triad (ME). The latter (ME) was a “critical source of stability” (GP). He noted that, even at their peak, nuclear modernization programs would only comprise 5-6% of the DOD budget

(ME). Sustaining deterrence was the highest priority (GP) given concerns regarding the use of nuclear blackmail and coercion (CP) to force the U.S. and its allies to back down from alliance commitments (VP). Indeed, security environment trends indicated that deterrence was becoming more complex (CP). A renewed commitment to pursuing credible and flexible deterrent options (GP) could reassure allies (GP) and strengthen extended deterrence (CP). New capabilities, missions and weapons might also be required (ME).

Still, same as in Congress, there were experts who opposed a large-scale modernization of the nuclear triad, and who argued against the continued necessity to preserve it. Among them was Liz Whitfield (2014) who, on October 2, 2014, argued that the threat environment differed radically from that of the Cold War (CP). The most realistic scenario for a nuclear attack was no longer one that was a “bolt from the blue”, but instead the result of a gradually escalating crisis where tensions and nuclear threats escalated over time (CP). The budget environment had changed as well, seeing as defense budgets were declining (CP), leading to competing priorities between conventional and nuclear capabilities (CP). In the late 2020s, there would be a “modernization mountain,” meaning that all three legs of the triad would come up, at one, for modernization (CP). The U.S. would likely not get through the modernization mountain without cutting its nuclear forces significantly (CP). Thus, the author deemed the most prudent nuclear forces configuration to be a dyad, that is, one with bombers and nuclear submarines or ICBMs and nuclear submarines (ME). Either dyad (ME) would preserve America’s nuclear deterrence and maintain its extended deterrence (GP) pledge (VP). Both dyads would protect America (GP) and strengthen its credibility in the world stage (GP) when it came to the country’s commitment to non-proliferation and eventual disarmament (VP).

2. Juxtaposition of reasons for action

We will first juxtapose the circumstantial premises of the securitizing actors with those of the audience. The securitizing actors claimed that Russia was in violation of the INF Treaty by developing and testing a GLCM, something which the country refused to acknowledge. Instead, Moscow was accusing the U.S. of being non-compliant with the agreement, which was not true. Breedlove stated that the U.S. had not yet witnessed the deployment of the GLCM.

The violation was understood to take place within a broader context of Russian aggression, such as its military modernization, actions in Ukraine, and reliance on nuclear weapons, and not in isolation. For Dunford, Russia was America’s greatest threat due to their nuclear arsenal and aggressive behavior. He described the country as an existential threat. Carter and McKeon considered that Russia’s INF-class missiles posed a threat to the United States and its allies, while Breedlove emphasized their threat to America. Dempsey deemed that they constitute a “challenge” to U.S. and ally security. Dunford and

Gottemoeller highlighted the threat posed by the missiles to U.S. allies¹³⁸. As such, threat perceptions were present among securitizing actors.

Moving on to the audience, Congress also deemed Russia in violation of the INF Treaty, with several republicans in the House and the Senate considering that Moscow was in “material breach” of the agreement. However, the republican’s assessment of the violation was not unanimous, as shown by the fact that NDAA’s for FYs 2015, 2016, and 2017 made no such claims. Some republicans believed that the violation should have been disclosed earlier, a point of view shared by an expert (Karako). Cooper, on the other hand, posited that the administration might have done so in order not to hurt the process of intelligence gathering. He also raised some degree of doubt regarding Russia’s activities, stating that the country was “probably” in violation of the INF and CFE treaties and the Budapest Memorandum. A few specialists demonstrated some caution in making definite judgements about whether a violation had indeed happened (Schwartz and Lehman), with Russian experts Rogov and Buzhinsky downplaying America’s accusations. Experts Heim, Clarke and William Courtney, Karako, and Kimball did not question Moscow’s violation of the accord, however.

In the audience, a group of republican senators and representatives (through resolutions offered on 25 March 2014), as well as democratic representative Nadler, described Russia’s violation as a threat. The 2015 NDAA deemed it to be the sense of Congress that the infraction had an adverse effect on U.S. and ally security, both in Europe and in Asia. The document described the potential deployment of GLCMs by Russia as a threat (so far, the capability had only been perceived to be tested, however). Republican representatives Thornberry and Nunes pointed out the negative impacts at the military level that stemmed from Russia’s non-compliance with the accord. Russian plans to deploy nuclear weapons in Crimea were perceived as a military threat to U.S. forces and allies by Rogers and Turner. Representative Rogers, along with senator Cotton, also mentioned the nuclear threats against America that had been issued by Moscow. In a dissenting stance, democratic representative Cooper considered the INF Treaty to be basically a European and Japanese issue, seeing as intermediate-range nuclear missiles could only really threaten their capitals. As a whole, Congress also expressed concern over the increasing number of Russia’s deployed strategic delivery vehicles.

Among the specialists, the ACA considered that there was a chance for a direct conflict between NATO and Russia. Karako labelled Russia’s INF-class missiles (as well as other dual-use missiles) as a threat, albeit a “low tier” one. Schwartz stated that the new GLCM could be used by Russia to target European targets and U.S. missile defense systems. He also believed that Moscow would use nuclear weapons to prevent a conventional military defeat if its existence was at stake. Thus, threat perceptions of Russia were present both among the securitizing actors, and some audience members – across the aisle, and amid experts. Heim described China’s military modernization, particularly its investment in

¹³⁸ On 19 December 2010, during the New START debate, Senator Kerry deemed Russia’s tactical nuclear weapons “primarily a threat to [U.S.] allies in Europe” (CRECB, 2010: 23013).

conventional land-based cruise and ballistic missiles as a threat to U.S. forces, specifically in case of a conflict in the Taiwan Strait.

Several in the audience, same as the administration, highlighted a context of action marked by Russia's aggressive behavior. Such behavior included threats to U.S. allies, actions in Ukraine and Syria, military modernization, invasion of sovereign states, downing of civilian aircraft, and increased reliance on nuclear weapons. Thus, those who agreed that Russia was in violation of the agreement did not view it separately from the country's other aggressive actions. Representatives Rogers, Lamborn, and Cooper, along with senator Rubio agreed that Russia could not be trusted not to cheat, a belief shared by expert Thomas Karako, but that DOS official Gottemoeller also acknowledged to some extent. Rubio, like General Breedlove, stated that America was dealing with a "resurgent" Russia. Clarke and Courtney also emphasized, like Breedlove, Russia's dissatisfaction with America's missile defense system. The low point in U.S.-Russian relations was also acknowledged by several specialists. Thornberry and Nunes accused the administration of not letting the military pursue the response options recommended by the JCS chairman, which McKeon denied, explaining that the military investments that would be made had only recently been planned.

When it came to value premises, the securitizing actors stated that Congress would be informed regularly about Russia's non-compliance. The administration would also consult with allies on the matter, particularly regarding the envisioned military responses. On 10 December 2014, McKeon stated that some of the military measures under consideration were not compliant with the INF Treaty but could be recommended to the U.S. "leadership if a decision were taken to go down that path." On 7 June 2015, Dempsey claimed that the U.S. "[would] not take any action inconsistent with [its] obligations under the INF Treaty, as long as those obligations remain in force¹³⁹." America had special responsibilities in the nuclear realm given its stockpile levels, and was committed, under the NPT, to gradually disarm. A free, whole, peaceful and prosperous Europe served the U.S. national interest. The U.S. ought to be concerned with the national interest of its allies.

As for the audience, some overlap with the value premises of the administration was observed. Same as the securitizing actors, Congress as a whole, and several legislators individually, showed concern with the national interest, believing that responses needed to pursue it. McCausland also stated that the resolution of U.S. and Russia's compliance issues was in the interest of both states. Rubio accused the administration of hiding information from the American people, while his colleague Risch believed that action was needed to protect it. He also called upon Kerry to maintain a position he had upheld as a senator, whereby the U.S. ought to inflict upon Russia consequences for its cheating. Expert Karako made the same point, stressing that the administration had vowed to punish cheaters, including during Obama's 2009 Prague speech. Democratic representative Nadler brought up America's

¹³⁹ The statements might not contradict each other, assuming that McKeon meant that testing and deployment of INF-class weapons would only take place in case of a potential U.S. withdraw from the agreement.

commitment to nuclear disarmament under the NPT, whereas his republican colleague Rogers argued that no arms control agreement forced the U.S. to dismantle any nuclear weapons. Republican representatives Rogers, Nunes and Thornberry pressured the administration to uphold its nuclear modernization commitment, considering, among other premises, Russia's non-compliance with the INF Treaty (CP).

Several republican senators and representatives, as well as an expert (Schwartz) agreed with the administration's view that the U.S. ought to consult with its allies. Moreover, in responding to Russia's violation, the legislative branch wanted military and economic measures to be developed along with U.S. allies, according to the 2016 NDAA. On the matter of compliance with the INF Treaty, the 2016 NDAA presented a view also defended by the administration: the counterforce and counterstrike capabilities ought to be developed regardless of whether they complied with the agreement. That said, as the 2017 NDAA made clear, there were no intentions at that time to conduct direct testing or deployment of those capabilities in a way that would violate the treaty. Karako also deemed it preferable, for the time being, not to deploy proscribed systems and to seek to remain within the accord's parameters. He also supported developing the capabilities, however, which could be deployed in case a more serious violation took place or if the INF and New START Treaties were no longer in force. Thus, a preference not to compromise a value premise (a legal commitment) is expressed by those audience members. In a dissenting view, Schwartz accepted compromising said legal commitment, stating that the U.S. could opt to develop and deploy INF-class missiles. His main concern was not the legal commitment, but the action's potential downsides on NATO unity.

Congress considered that the administration had not followed a legislative requirement to elaborate a plan for the development of military responses options to Russia's non-compliance with the INF. Republican representative Bridenstine presented an amendment to the House's defense appropriations bill, which would appropriate \$25 million dollars to fund military measures to respond to Moscow's violation of the INF Treaty. He did it based on the strong, non-controversial bipartisan support that the action had received in the House, during the drafting of the chamber's version of the 2016 NDAA. This understanding was rejected by Visclosky, his colleague in the democratic party, who noted the absence of "authorization" to do so, seeing as the lack of Senate action precluded the inclusion of said sum in the final NDAA. He also noted that the administration was still considering said actions (CP). Cooper described cutting of funding for implementation of the New START as akin to a unilateral violation of the agreement and remembered the Senate's more important role in the "treaty-making" process in comparison with the House.

We now move on to the goal and means-end premises of the securitizing actors. The administration wanted a new U.S.-Russia and NATO-Russia relationships in the long run. It sought to address Russia's overall aggressive behavior, not just its violation of the INF Treaty. By announcing that Moscow was in violation of the agreement, the U.S. had precluded it from pursuing its GLCM program with restraints.

For the administration, inaction was not an option: Russia's violation could not go unanswered. Not responding to Moscow's actions would generate downsides on U.S. goals: it would hinder America's ability to fight proliferation, perpetuate the security threat to country and its allies, affect strategic stability, and could embolden Russia to repeat such actions elsewhere.

The U.S. remained interested in preserving the INF Treaty, however. It remained the best way to constrain and reduce nuclear threats and prevent nuclear terrorism and proliferation. It also served U.S. and ally security. Saving the accord would also preclude both parties from engaging in "an escalatory cycle of action and reaction." Leaving the treaty would compromise U.S. goals by giving Russia a free ride to do anything it wanted and legalize their illegal deeds. Staying in the agreement despite other countries were not restricted by it did not compromise U.S. goals because the country's defense requirements were still met.

The securitizing actors argued in favor of dialogue with Russia given a successful precedent to bring the country to compliance with the ABM Treaty. Doing so aimed at bringing Russia back to compliance with the INF Treaty – by far the most mentioned goal in all the discourse about the violation. The U.S. wanted to convince Russia that the accord was a "two-way street," and of its benefits to Russia's security.

In October 2014, the JCS chairman recommended that the U.S. conducted a "strategic response," that is, a reaction encompassing a range of measures. In December 2014, Gottemoeller announced that the U.S. would do everything necessary to counter the violation, which included working not only in the diplomatic, but also on the economic and military front.

The military measures were meant, not only to bring Moscow to compliance, but also to prepare the U.S. for a potential post-INF future, as well as "deter this aggression from Russia." They were intended to make America more secure and deny any military advantage stemming from a potential Russian deployment of INF-class missiles. The military options would signal Russia that the U.S. would not accept its infringement of the treaty and that their actions would result in costs being imposed upon it. The measures constituted an attempt to change Moscow's "cost calculus" in order to move it "to a less bellicose position." The range of options considered by the administration included active defenses to intercept INF-class GLCMs, thus protecting locations in Europe. Another alternative being considered were counterforce capabilities, which were expected to prevent cruise missile attacks by means of granting the U.S. the ability to attack those missiles in Russian territory. Lastly, countervailing capabilities would enhance U.S. and allied forces by holding targets at risk within Russia besides the GLCMs.

The administration also strived to accelerate by 20% the dismantlement of America's retired nuclear warheads, in order to gradually move the country toward nuclear disarmament and reduce the backlog of retired nuclear warheads waiting dismantlement.

The goal and means-end premises of the audience revealed a considerable level of overlap with those of the securitizing actors. Firstly, like the securitizing actors, Congress sought to achieve several

goals related to Russia's actions. Some of them were not directly related with Moscow's INF Treaty violations. For instance, the legislators sought an ending to Russia's occupation of sovereign territory (and the nuclear weapons deployments therein) and its return to compliance with other treaties.

Same as the administration, the audience rejected inaction as a policy choice, with several of its members pointing out the downsides on U.S. goals that could occur. Rubio believed that a lack of a response would hinder the viability of future arms control agreements. Thornberry and Nunes mentioned the negative effects on U.S. and ally security, an observation also been made by the administration. For Rogers, deciding not to act would prevent the U.S. from imposing costs upon Russia – a goal that the securitizing actors also articulated. An expert (Schwartz) pointed out that inaction would mean that Russia could deploy the INF-class missiles while avoiding the stigma of abandoning the accord. Karako argued that the U.S. should not withdraw from the treaty for the same reason – a point also made by the DOS.

Indeed, the audience shared the administration's preference for preserving the INF Treaty. Schwartz highlighted the treaty's importance in reducing a potential military threat from Russia and reducing the odds of mistakes and attacks. He emphasized that the accord had eliminated a problematic weapons category in which America was less dependent than Russia. Rogov argued that the demise of the accord would jeopardize the New START and negotiations on non-strategic nuclear weapons. Karako noted the treaty's historical contributions when it came to threat reduction, diffusing tensions, reassuring allies, and improving strategic stability. Congress stated in the 2015 NDAA that the accord still served U.S. and allied interests – a belief also held by the administration. Indeed, saving the treaty by bringing Russia to compliance was the most common goal in the audience. However, representatives Rogers and Turner warned that the U.S. could not continue to unilaterally implement the treaty. Furthermore, Rubio alerted that treaties had no reason to exist unless all parties were complying and the 2016 NDAA acknowledged that the agreement's viability had been compromised.

The administration's use of dialogue as the main approach to bring Moscow to compliance with the INF Treaty, or to address Russian aggression more broadly, received some contestation on the part of the audience. Republican representatives Bridenstine, Thornberry, Nunes, Turner, and Rogers criticized the lack of results. A group of republican senators and representatives called upon the president to demand Russia's return to compliance. Among experts, there was considerable support for dialogue, expressed by Heim, Schwartz, Kimball, Karako, Rogov, and other participants of the CSIS workshops. The latter proposed establishing a political umbrella to organize efforts to increase transparency and confidence, avoid escalation, and resolve INF-related disputes. They also proposed the convenience of the INF's Special Verification Commission so that both the U.S. and Russia could resolve their mutual complaints of non-compliance. Congress, Karako and Kimball wanted to be able to verify Russia's compliance through inspections. The legislative body made clear that the verification procedures were meant to confirm the destruction of Russia's INF-class missiles. Schwartz and Heim were open to amending the treaty if compliance issues remained unresolved.

Without disavowing dialogue as a means to achieve their goals, several members of the audience recommended that the administration pursued additional courses of action, particularly military measures. For the majority, by pursuing military measures, the U.S. would attempt to bring Russia to compliance while preparing itself for the possibility that the country would refuse to do so. The former goal was associated with the imposition of costs upon Russia so that it would consider it more beneficial to remain in the treaty than violating it. The latter goal entailed preventing Moscow from obtaining any significant military advantage from its violation of the INF Treaty. Such goals were articulated by the administration, Congress and experts Karako and Schwartz.

Karako supported dialoguing with Russia but called for hedging against the end of the treaty by investigating the feasibility of certain military measures. He suggested considering improvements on ATACMs and the Multiple Rocket Launch system. He also suggested improvements on missile defense to intercept GLCMs, deter Russia, improve ally cohesion, and stabilize U.S.-Russian relations. Overall, the actions proposed could constrain Russian missiles and leave America in an advantageous position in case the demise of the INF occurred. Karako believed that expanding the EPAA to strengthen U.S. missile defenses would not lead to consequences on U.S. goals, seeing as doing so would not undermine Russia's strategic deterrence, and the country had air defenses and interceptors deployed around Moscow. He also suggested that missile defense systems deployed in Europe be used against Russian capabilities, including nuclear-capable missiles. This would represent a change vis-à-vis the goals of U.S. missile defense system.

Schwartz preferred a "sticks and carrots" approach which combined talks with Russia with actual development and deployment of military capabilities. Enhancing missile defense systems could mitigate or negate any military advantage Russia might benefit from a prospective deployment of GLCMs. The U.S. could also deploy INF-class weapons to signal Russia that its actions risked triggering an arms race, raising the costs for the country in a way that it would lead it to prefer returning to compliance with the accord. He admitted, however, that the deployments could lead Moscow to abandon the INF Treaty. Heim pointed out that the agreement had been beneficial to America in the past, making dialogue the more prudent approach, although the U.S. should analyze the military potential of TBMs. If talks with Moscow did not bring it back to compliance, then the capability might prove useful to use against China, offset its modernization programs and convince it to engage in arms control talks. Karako had also mentioned the usefulness of certain military capabilities in a post-INF world to hold at risk Chinese INF systems, as well as Russian, Iranian, and North Korean.

Congress called for a "strategic response" in the 2014 NDAA, with the bill's two subsequent versions vehiculating the legislative bodies' support for the three military response options that had been proposed by the administration: active defenses, counterforce capabilities and countervailing strike capabilities. The capabilities were intended to provide defense against INF-class missiles or prevent attacks using them, and to enhance U.S. and ally forces. More specifically, counterforce capabilities

would target Russian INF-class missiles, while countervailing strike capabilities would put at risk other targets in Russia.

For the legislative branch, the military measures were to be coupled with non-military actions, namely diplomacy and economic measures – the same stance as the administration – to bring Russia to compliance by imposing costs to the country. The legislative branch hoped that, by doing so, the U.S. could change Putin’s calculus by making defiance of the INF Treaty less attractive. If those goals could not be achieved, then the military measures would prepare the U.S. for a future without the INF Treaty, thus denying Russia any potential advantages from infringing the agreement. A provision in the 2017 NDAA which withheld funds for services to the Executive Office of the President until the development of the military capabilities was completed is indicative of the strong congressional support for them.

Indeed, Bridenstine even attempted to include an additional \$25 million dollars in appropriations for the development of the three military measures that the administration had proposed. The funds had previously been included in the House NDAA for FY 2016 with overwhelming bipartisan support in the chamber. Visclosky opposed doing so since the administration was still considering the options in question, and the amendment proposed by Bridenstine did not receive enough support in the House.

Overall, the legislators and experts supported the specific military measures proposed by the administration and were in the same wavelength regarding the goals to be pursued through them. While the legislators parroted the same terms used by the administration, the experts were more specific in their proposals of military measures, focusing on the adaptation of several existing capabilities¹⁴⁰. In the 2016 NDAA, Congress showed openness to alternative military response options as well. Two experts stood out as outliers when it came to the pursuit of military measures. Russian expert Rogov considered the countervailing measures to be very worrisome, while the ACA believed that resorting to military measures would lead to downsides. The association’s executive director claimed that such actions would jeopardize international security and strategic stability and could result in a direct conflict between Russia and NATO. Instead, he recommended that negotiations with Russia were resumed to achieve several arms control goals.

Some audience members also called for the enactment of other actions in connection with Moscow’s violation of the INF Treaty, as well as other of its activities. Some republican representatives aimed to limit the implementation of the New START and the House indeed passed provisions thereto which were not agreed to by the Senate. Lamborn was among those representatives, seeking to prevent the reduction of U.S. nuclear weapons, which would amount to unilateral disarmament since Russia was not to be “blindly” trusted (CP). To protect America, he aimed to prevent New START funding from being released before president could certify that Russia was in compliance with the INF Treaty, the CFE Treaties, and the Budapest Memorandum. Cooper rejected Lamborn’s proposal, believing that it

¹⁴⁰ Part of the debate concerning military response options took place in closed congressional sessions. Thus, while some of the specialists’ recommendations fit into the broad categories of military options taken under consideration by the administration, it is possible that some of the courses of action they proposed did not.

would lead to downsides on U.S. goals by hindering deterrence, strategic stability, and denying America visibility into Russia's strategic nuclear arsenal. The New START, the democrat posited, contributed to make the U.S. more secure. Nunes and Thornberry wanted to use a prospective extension of the New START to leverage Russia.

Other republican lawmakers opposed further reductions of the U.S. strategic nuclear arsenal, albeit without referencing the New START. Several republican lawmakers in the House and the Senate rejected unilateral reductions of the U.S. nuclear arsenal until the issues regarding Russia's compliance with the INF Treaty were resolved. Following the administration's attempt to accelerate the rate of dismantlement of retired nuclear warheads, some republican representatives opposed the course of action. Acceleration dismantlement was insane, illogical, and imprudent, would bring America no benefits, and was, overall, not a priority. It would also generate several downsides of U.S. goals by sending the wrong message to Russia, other adversaries, and U.S. allies, and would hinder the modernization of America's nuclear stockpile. If that were to happen, there would be further negative consequences vis-à-vis the safety and reliability of the stockpile and U.S. nuclear deterrence.

Through the 2016 NDAA (section 3124), the legislators attempted to prevent the acceleration of warhead dismantlement during that FY by limiting the funds allocated thereto (the House version of the provision [section 3121] would have imposed limitations from 2016 to 2020, however). The administration would still be allowed to carry out the dismantlement plan put forward by the administration in the 2016 budget request, but Congress prohibited the dismantlement of the W84 warhead (Report 114-270, 2015: 875). In the end, the 2016 Appropriations Bill approved the acceleration of disarmament for FY2016, however, overruling the authorizations process. In opposition to the NDAA, the Appropriations Bill appropriated an amount (\$52 million dollars) above the ceiling of \$50 million dollars imposed by the 2016 NDAA for FY2016, and above the sum authorized (about \$48 million dollars) by the 2016 NDAA.

Representative Nadler attempted to remove from the House NDAA the provision preventing the acceleration of the dismantlement process which the administration pursued. Ultimately, he did not secure the necessary votes to strike the provision from the House NDAA. Senator Feinstein, on the other hand, succeeded in preventing an amendment preventing said acceleration from being offered in the Senate by objecting to it. As a result, the Senate bill did not contain limitations on warhead dismantlement, although the final NDAA did, indeed.

Both Nadler and Feinstein believed that the provision was not necessary and that there was no reason for it. Nadler argued that slowing down the dismantlement process also had downsides: it was expensive; a proliferation risk; counterproductive to national security; and would send the wrong message to the world, thus undermining non-proliferation efforts. Furthermore, the course of action would free up funding that could be used for nuclear modernization, helping America's position vis-à-vis Russia. Nadler also noted that the National Nuclear Security Administration and the military supported the acceleration proposed and posited that the cap being imposed would have no practical

impact. He stressed that the W84 warhead had been retired twice because there was no need for it. Feinstein posited that complicating the dismantlement process would disrupt NNSA operations. Both her and Nadler believed that accelerating the dismantlement process would not weaken American national defense. They justified their stance by pointing out that the warheads in question were redundant, and did not play any role, seeing as they were already retired and waiting dismantlement. Feinstein, the ranking member of the Appropriations Committee who would go on to overturn the NDAA's imposed limitations on warhead dismantlement and disposition, deemed the appropriated funding (\$52 million dollars, approximately \$4 million dollars above the sum requested by the administration before Kerry's speech at the NPT Review Conference, and which was later authorized in the 2016 NDAA) adequate and justified.

In 2017, Congress once again included in the NDAA a provision (section 3125) preventing the acceleration of nuclear warhead dismantlement. This time, however, the funding limitations were imposed for the FYs from 2017 to 2021 (the Senate version of the provision [section 3113] would have imposed limitations for 2017 only). Although the House NDAA contained a provision stopping the dismantling of W84 warheads, the final NDAA did not include said provision (Report 114-840: 1310). Unlike what had happened in the previous bill, the 2017 Appropriations Act codified the position of the NDAA. It limited the funding appropriated for FY2017 to the amount authorized (\$56 million dollars), almost \$13 million dollars below the administration's request, effectively preventing the acceleration of nuclear warhead dismantlement and disposition.

Paradoxically, however, the republican-led Appropriation Committees of the House and Senate expressed support for accelerating dismantlement activities. The House believed that the course of action would lead to an increase in the workforce, which would help in maintaining the nuclear stockpile and in reducing the stockpile of retired warheads. The Senate saw those activities as important to prepare the workforce for future stockpile production work.

The U.S. missile defense system: an end to limitations?

(Discourses of section 5.3 of Chapter 5)

1. Political Discourse Analysis

1.1. Securitizing actor discourse

On 27 April 2016, Trent Franks (R-AZ), vice-chairman of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee stated during a committee meeting that the country ought to update the language of the 1999 Missile Defense Act. He claimed that since that date the threat posed by ballistic missiles had increased “precipitously” (CP). In 2015 alone there were more than 300 missile launches and over 60 foreign space launches (CP). U.S. adversaries were further developing missile technology to exploit gaps in America’s missile defense framework, such as direct descent anti-satellite missiles and weapons and hypersonic boost-glide vehicles to maneuvering ballistic missiles (CP).

North Korea had two satellites in orbit (CP), China and Russia were both developing complex missile technology to exploit American weaknesses (CP) and Iran continued to develop missile technologies (CP). Franks presented an amendment to the 2017 NDAA that would repeal section 2 of the 1999 Missile Defense Act¹⁴¹ and replace it with the following text (ME):

“It is the policy of the United States to maintain and improve an effective, robust layered missile defense system capable of defending the territory of the United States, allies, deployed forces, and capabilities against the developing and increasingly complex ballistic missile threat with funding subject to the annual authorization of appropriations and the annual appropriation of funds for National Missile Defense” (Report 114–840, 2016: 1256).

Franks deemed it necessary to change the language of the 1999 Act (ME) because it called for a “limited” defense against ballistic missile attack (GP) (seeks an end to limitations). That language was inadequate, outdated and did not match the reality (ME) of the present complex threat environment (CP).

¹⁴¹ Section two of the 1999 Missile Defense Act states that [i]t is the policy of the United States to deploy as soon as is technologically possible an effective National Missile Defense system capable of defending the territory of the United States against limited ballistic missile attack (whether accidental, unauthorized, or deliberate) with funding subject to the annual authorization of appropriations and the annual appropriation of funds for National Missile Defense” (Public Law 106–38, 1999).

American missile defense policy should aim to do more than just the defense of U.S. territory (GP). It needed to counter (GP) a greater, more complex, more diverse, and growing threat (CP), in defense of U.S. territory, allies, deployed forces, and capabilities (GP), by means of a robust and capable missile defense system (ME). His amendment accounted for the fact that America's missile defense system was now much more mature (CP) as well as for the need to meet and address (GP) the abovementioned threats (CP) (U.S. House Armed Services Committee, 2016a).

Mike Rogers¹⁴² (R-AL) followed Franks communication by extending his support for the amendment presented. He viewed the amendment as long overdue (ME). The 1999 Act had been written at a much different time (CP). Russia was then a peaceful partner (CP), and China had not yet deployed a sea-launched ballistic missile force (CP) and the U.S. was regrettably still a party to the ABM Treaty (CP). The current policy made no sense today (ME) because both Russia and China were developing BMDs to counter American offensive capabilities (CP).

In his words, under the present U.S. BMD policy, "we will defend the homeland against Russian sea-launch cruise missiles, but not sea-launched ballistic missiles." In other words, as he put it, "we will defend a sailor on an aircraft carrier [GP], but not if he's at home with his family" (GP) (current policy did not achieve the goal) (U.S. House Armed Services Committee, 2016a).

Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX) successfully offered an amended similar to Franks', which would change U.S. missile defense policy by striking the word "limited" from the 1999 Missile Defense Act (ME). On 12 May 2016, he justified the change by explaining that his amendment "[removed] a flawed statutory constraint on U.S. missile defense policy [ME] that has limited the ability of the Department of Defense to adequately plan for the protection of the homeland and the American people (GP) (downside of current policy)." The new policy would allow "defense officials to consider and plan against the full spectrum of ballistic missile threats" (GP), which would allow Washington to "more completely fulfill its constitutional obligation [VP] to provide for the common defense" (GP). Cruz provided further justification by drawing on comments from a U.S. Ambassador (Dr. Robert G. Joseph) and an expert (Dr. Keith B. Payne). According to the former, strengthening missile defense (ME) contributed to deterrence (GP) and stability (GP) and protected the American people (GP). The shift in policy "[freed] planners from an unnecessary restriction on defense planning" (GP). The latter argued that the current policy reflected outdated Cold War thinking (ME) (CP) (action is outdated and informed by the Cold War experience) and did not make sense "in a new era in which numerous countries [were] acquiring unprecedented missile capabilities" (CP) ("Sen. Cruz Scores Victory," 2016).

¹⁴² There was no further discussion after Franks and Rogers' communications. A vote on the amendment followed (unrecorded) and the "ayes" had it. The Franks amendment was, therefore, adopted (U.S. House Armed Services Committee, 2016a). Speaking to the media, Frank expressed his surprise by stating: "I'm a little stunned that we didn't get more profile on it," Franks said. "That's fine with me, because that may have made my job easier" (Willman, 2016).

On 17 May 2016, representative Cooper believed it to be an error “to mandate a poorly-thought-out, unaffordable, and unrealistic missile defense policy (ME), including plans for a space-based missile deterrent” (ME) (CRECB, 2016: 6198).

On 26 May 2016, Senator Edward Markey (D-MA), of the Foreign Relations Committee, described a similar provision in the committee version of the 2017 Senate NDAA, which removed the word “limited” from the 1999 Missile Defense Act, as misguided (ME). The current policy (CP) aimed at protecting U.S. territory against missile attacks by states such as North Korea and Iran without threatening the nuclear deterrent of Russia and China (GP). He agreed with those goals because aiming missile defenses at Russia or China would be destabilizing and self-defeating (GP) (downsides). A drastic expansion of U.S. missile defenses (ME) could lead Moscow and Beijing to fear that the United States would attempt to protect itself from their retaliation so that it could execute a preventive nuclear attack on Russia or on China (GP). This would result in the escalation of a cycle of offense and defense (GP) and in the empowerment of those in the United States (the Pentagon, the military, and the arms contractors) and their respective counterparts in Russia and China to happily launch a weapons buildup (GP) (downsides). Taking steps that increased the likelihood of nuclear war (GP) (downside) was the “the wrong way to go” (ME). It was a return to the earlier era of the Cold War, “when both sides built up ever greater stockpiles of nuclear weapons” (GP) (downside of expanding missile defenses). The lawmaker urged a debate on the policy change (CP) (perceives a lack of debate on the matter) on the Senate floor before its adoption (ME) (defends postponing the decision until a debate is held).

A Cold War-style escalation of new offensive and defensive weapons would not only trigger the same response in Moscow and Beijing but would also send the wrong message to countries such as Pakistan, Iran, India, and Saudia Arabia: that the U.S. “[was] preaching nuclear temperance from a bar stool (GP) (downside). Thus, instead of provoking Moscow and China by expanding missile defenses that were doomed to fail (ME), the U.S. should negotiate a new arms control agreement (ME) to prevent a nuclear war (GP) and build a better future for all (VP). He filed an amendment to strike the provision changing U.S. missile defense policy from the NDAA¹⁴³ (CRECB, 2016: 7496-7498).

On 2 December 2016, Blumenauer opposed the “significant shift” in American missile defense policy (ME) because it could contribute to nuclear proliferation (GP) and would send to other countries “a counterproductive signal” (GP) (downsides) (CREC, 2016: H7133). Rogers, on the other hand, supported the policy change because he did not want there to be limits to American missile defense deployments (GP). He believed the 1999 policy to be “Cold War-minded (ME) (CREC, 2016: 7126).

The 2017 NDAA conference report contained a provision stating that it was U.S. policy “to maintain and improve an effective, robust, layered missile defense system [ME] capable of defending the territory of the United States, allies, deployed forces, and capabilities [GP] against the increasingly complex ballistic missile threat” (CP). However, the report also stressed that the provision did not

¹⁴³ Markey could not gather enough support for his amendment to bring it to vote (Willman, 2016).

require “the development of missile defenses [ME] against any country or its strategic nuclear forces” (GP) (denies goal of action) (Report 114-840. To accompany S. 2943, 2016: 628, 1256).

During the August 2014 Space and Missile Defense Symposium in Huntsville, Alabama, General Charles Jacoby, Commander of the U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) and North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) stressed the importance of homeland cruise missile defense (GP). He claimed that the developing missile technologies of U.S. adversaries such as Russia (CP) and China presented a real problem for America’s present defenses (CP). Moreover, cruise missile technology was available, transferrable, and exportable (CP), meaning that non-state actors presented a threat to the United States as well (CP) (Weisgerber, 2015a).

On 5 November 2014, Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Jonathan Greenert and United States Army Chief of Staff Raymond Odierno sent a memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, where they called for the development of a long-term approach that addressed missile defense priorities at the homeland and regional levels. Specifically, they recommended “a holistic approach [that] was more sustainable and cost-effective [ME], incorporating “left-of-launch” [ME] and other non-kinetic means [ME] of defense” (GP). They highlighted the increasing challenges posed by the increasingly capable ballistic missile threats (CP) and continued to outpace U.S. active defense systems (CP) (Greenert & Odierno, 2014).

During a 19 May 2015 conference, Admiral James Winnefeld, chairman of the JCS, claimed that a cruise missile attack against the homeland “could be intended to take away [America’s] ability to decide and respond to an ICBM attack” (CP). Thus, in his view, “homeland cruise missile defense [was] shifting above regional ballistic missile defense (...) as far as importance [went]” (CP). He explained why the U.S. “[chose] not to invest the enormous resources that would be required to defend against a massive Russian ICBM attack coming over the North Pole (...) [ME] [but] [cared] about cruise missile defense in the homeland” (GP). He clarified that the element of surprise was almost impossible with an ICBM attack and the U.S. would always have time to reach (CP). The same was not necessarily true for a cruise missile attack (CP). Such an attack, he warned, “could be intended to take away [America’s] ability to decide and respond to an ICBM attack” (CP).

The U.S. was working towards being configured properly to protect important areas of the U.S. territory, such as D.C., against cruise missile attacks (GP). The U.S. was testing the Joint Land Attack Cruise Missile Defense Elevated Netted Sensor System (JLENS) (ME) and putting other systems in place (ME) to greatly improve early warning around the capital region (GP). The country was also changing some of the systems (ME) that would be used to knock down cruise missiles headed towards the capital (GP). Such efforts would be extended (ME) to other areas of the homeland in need of protection (GP). It would be, however, cost-prohibited (GP) (downside) to protect every part of the country from cruise missiles (GP) (C-Span, 2014).

On the same date, during a hearing before the House Armed Services Committee, Admiral William Gortney, USNORTHCOM and NORAD Commander, was asked against the cruise missile threat against

the homeland. He answered that there was only one nation with effective cruise missile capability: Russia (CP). He mentioned, in that context, Russia's long-range aviation, cruise missile submarines, bombers, and the country's ability to put the capability on surface ships (CP) (H.A.S.C. No. 114–25, 2015: 15).

At a nuclear deterrence conference, STRATCOM commander Admiral Cecil Haney noted that several countries continued to modernize and develop their nuclear weapons systems (CP). New technologies such as HGVs complicated U.S. sensing and defensive approaches (CP). The U.S. was carrying out research and development activities in the realm of hypersonics (ME). America was working to ensure that the country had several options to address the hypersonic threat (ME) seeking, first and foremost, to deter its use (GP) while also retaining other “mechanisms to counter that kind of capability” (GP) (Gertz, 2015).

In a statement to the House Armed Services Committee, STRATCOM's Lieutenant General David Mann stated that ballistic and cruise missiles were becoming more complex, accurate, numerous, and achieving longer-ranges, partly due to proliferation of advanced technologies (CP). Such systems were increasingly incorporating countermeasures such as multiple independent reentry vehicles, electromagnetic jamming, hypersonics, MaRVs, and electromagnetic jamming (CP). Most ballistic and cruise missile were mobile ground-based systems, making their detection and tracking before launch harder (CP). Several countries were developing cruise missiles using various launch platforms, and nearly thirty possessed ballistic missiles of about fifty different types (CP). There were thirteen IRBM and eight ICBMs under development, with North Korea probably having tested the latter (CP). An holistic approach, he argued, “that effectively [integrated] offensive and defensive, passive, kinetic and non-kinetic, and alternative capabilities to defeat air and missile threats” was required (ME) to address the evolution of many sophisticated missile capabilities (CP). Homeland and regional missile defense capabilities required enhancing (ME) (Mann, 2016: 3-5).

In August 2016, at the Space and Missile Defense Symposium, Vice-Admiral James D. Syring, director of the MDA, argued that, from a missile defense perspective, the U.S. needed “to develop a future operational space layer [ME], given where the threat is going with hypersonics [CP] and more capability development with ICBMs” (CP). A capability for persistent tracking and assessment (GP) from space was a must (ME). Hypersonic capabilities posed a problem not only when it came to interception (CP). He stated that the U.S. will have a sensor problem “regionally and worldwide because of that threat if the threat evolves” (CP). He added that the sensor problem might be more challenging than the interceptor problem (CP) (Missile Defense Advocacy, 2016; Judson, 2016).

At the same event, Haney highlighted the challenge posed by hyper-glide vehicle technology (CP). Those types of capabilities, he claimed, were becoming an increasingly more difficult challenge for U.S. sensing and defensive approaches (CP). In his words, “[w]e have to think about it and look at it in different ways so that, again, we are maximizing sensing [ME] to be able to understand what exactly is it going at so we can then look at how do we take it out” (GP) (Judson, 2016).

1.2. Audience discourse

In the context of a 14 April 2016 meeting of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee of the H.R. on the 2017 NDAA, McKeon submitted a statement in which he explained that “it [had] been long-standing U.S. policy (ME) (precedent) not to seek to build missile defense capabilities that could threaten China’s or Russia’s strategic deterrent” (GP) (downside). Instead, every U.S. administration relied on the nuclear triad (ME) to credibly deter Chinese and Russian ICBM attacks against the homeland (GP). A change of policy, he claimed, “would raise profound questions about whether the United States is now pursuing the development and deployment of large-scale, advanced missile defense capabilities to negate either Russia’s or China’s strategic deterrent” (GP). That being the case, U.S. strategic stability vis-à-vis the two countries would be hindered (GP), and they could “respond by accelerating and expanding their strategic nuclear forces [GP], or by developing a more advanced asymmetrical response capability” (GP). Moreover, building missile defenses able to cope with a sophisticated, large-scale missile attack from Russia or China would be cost-prohibitive (GP) (list several downsides). As such, it was the position of the DOD that sustaining and modernizing the strategic nuclear triad constituted the most reliable and effective way (ME) to deter a major nuclear power from launching an attack against the United States (GP) (H.A.S.C. No. 114–120, 2016: 128-129).

On 7 July 2016, the administration reacted to the 2017 Senate NDAA as reported by the committee, by strongly objecting to striking the word “limited” from the 1999 Missile Defense Act. The 1999 wording (ME) “[was] specifically intended to convey [GP] that the U.S. homeland missile defense system [was] designed and deployed [ME] to counter limited attacks (in number and sophistication) from Iran and North Korea [GP], and not to counter the strategic deterrence forces of Russia and China” (GP) (denies goal of action). The administration considered that maintaining “a modern and robust strategic nuclear deterrent” [ME] to be the most effective and reliable way to deter major nuclear powers from considering an attack on the U.S. (GP) (Statement of Administration Policy, 2016).

Among experts, Karako (2016b), from the CSIS, stated in December 2016 that countries all over the world were developing an increasing range of cruise and ballistic missiles to threaten, asymmetrical, U.S. forces, allies, and the homeland (CP). He also stressed that North Korea was the most pressing threat due to its provocations and missile and nuclear tests (CP). Iran was also increasing its missile capabilities and had a steady testing program (CP). As for Russia and China, both were improving their theater and strategic nuclear arsenals (CP). Russia was modernizing all legs of its nuclear triad (CP), possessed a suite of short-range ballistic missiles and cruise missiles to threaten NATO (CP), and was violating the INF Treaty (CP). Its nuclear-capable cruise and short-range missiles were low-tier threats to NATO (CP). China was improving its ICBMs and SLBMs and short-range missiles were a key part

of its regional conflict strategy (CP). Overall, he perceived an “increasingly complex ballistic missile threat” (CP).

Missile defense efforts in Europe (ME) had been “steered entirely away from Russian capabilities” during the Obama presidency (CP). Karako posited that that “[might] need to change” (GP) (recommends new goal of action). The EPAA ought to acknowledge and adapt to those new lower-tier threats to NATO (GP). He supported the revision of the 1999 Missile Defense Act, because it removed some anachronisms (ME) and better reflected the emerging threat environment (ME).

Kingston Reif, of the ACA, perceived the change in policy, which he opposed, to alter the role and purpose of American missile defenses, despite not imposing changes to ongoing missile defense budgets and programs (ME). The clear goal, which he rejected, “[was] to remove legislative barriers to configuring U.S. ballistic missile defenses not only against Iran and North Korea, but Russia and China as well” (GP). For Reif, the policy language had not constrained the effectiveness of U.S. missile defenses (GP) (denies downside of staying the course). The impediment to faster progress on system deployment had been technical setbacks (CP) (Donnelly, 2016).

Several premises voiced by Franks came out of a 2016 Hudson Institute report directed by a former advisor of his (forthcoming at the time). He also quoted the report on other speeches (U.S. House Armed Services Committee, 2016a, 2016b). The study directed had also help launch the bipartisan Congressional Missile Defense Caucus, with Franks as co-chair (SpaceNews editor, 2007; Heinrichs, 2016: 25).

The report identified a new missile era, with over 60 foreign space launches and more than 300 missile launches in the previous year (CP). The U.S. had neglected in his technological advantage over rogue states and near-peer competitors, and they were becoming more and more able to challenge America’s military superiority (CP). U.S. options to respond to adversary aggression were constrained and would be more so in the future, given their development of missile forces to hold at risk American deployed forces, space assets and homeland (CP). The present threat environment was more complex and diverse than ever before (CP).

Russia and China, near-peer adversaries, held the ability to hold at risk the U.S. homeland and key target areas, and were investing in complex missile systems such as direct-ascent anti-satellite missiles, HGVs, and anti-ship missiles (CP). Individually, Russia was carrying out a massive nuclear modernization program, which included delivery systems technologies designed to evade U.S. missile defenses (CP). Moscow was also engaging in MIRV-ing (CP) and could be doubling its nuclear warhead output despite New START limitations (CP). Russia was flight-testing a hypersonic glide-vehicle with high maneuverability (CP) and investing in anti-satellite technologies (CP). Its capabilities indicated “a concerted effort to increase the efficiency of first strike capacity and thereby gain strategic advantage for purposes of political coercion and escalation control” (CP). Moscow had moved nuclear weapons to the center of its defense strategy (CP), showed willingness to de-escalate conventional threats with

nuclear weapons (CP), had made implicit or explicit nuclear threats (CP), and conducted an unprecedented number of nuclear exercises (CP).

China was building and testing several new types of offensive missiles, upgrading older missile systems, adding new missile units, and acquiring ways to counter BMDs (CP). Beijing continued to develop anti-ship cruise missiles (CP), had tested a HGV similar to Russia's (CP), and was investing in anti-space missile systems (CP).

North Korea and Iran were achieving greater missile ranges, accuracy, and mobility, amassing greater numbers of missiles, and possessed more advanced countermeasures (CP). Individually, Iran had the largest and most diverse missile force in the Middle East (CP) and was committed to achieving an ICBM capability (CP). It had conducted four successful space launches (CP), and its medium-range ballistic missiles could strike U.S. deployed forces, allies and partners in Eastern Europe and the Middle East (CP). North Korea, like Iran, was heavily investing in missiles (CP) and was a proliferator of missile technology (CP). It issued coercive military threats supported by its nuclear and ballistic missile programs (CP). The country was committed to directly threaten the U.S. homeland with nuclear missiles (CP). It had conducted several nuclear tests and succeeded in orbiting two satellites (CP). It could likely attack the U.S. with a nuclear missile (CP) and possessed several hundred ballistic missiles of short and medium range that it could use against Japan and North Korea (CP). It was also testing a SLBM (CP).

America's missile defense system was designed to handle limited threats posed by rogue states, not complex missile threats from Russia and China (CP). Said system was being challenged by Iran and North Korea's pace of qualitative and quantitative improvements in missile technology (CP). Moreover, various components of the missile defense system were obsolescing and requiring increased investment. Despite some earlier breakthroughs, funding had been cut during the Obama presidency (CP).

The U.S. faced challenges to its military preeminence and coercion attempts by contemporary missile threats (CP), a situation that was expected to continue in the future (CP). Adversaries sought to target space assets due to their vulnerability and America's reliance on them (CP). While the U.S. did not possess them, the development of SBIs was not prohibited by any treaties, norms or international conventions (CP).

The report rejected keeping the course as the best policy option (ME). Inaction would "place the security of Americans [GP] and the United States' military pre-eminence at the mercy of countries like China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran (GP) (downsides of action). Keeping the course had also failed (ME) to deter adversary investment in offensive weapons development (GP) (unachieved goal). Rather, it was the existence of U.S. capability gaps (CP), not its military strength (CP), what had prompted adversaries to seek to exploit American vulnerabilities (CP) (GP) (downside of inaction). Thus, strengthening U.S. missile defenses, including by deploying SBIs (ME) should not be rejected on the basis of the argument that it would instigate and arms race with Russia and China (GP) (rejects downside of proposed course of action). Indeed, the Hudson Institute wanted the qualitative improvement of the

U.S. BMD system (ME) so that the missile threat could be outpaced (GP) and present vulnerabilities closed (GP).

To meet future and contemporary missile threats (GP), the U.S. ought to reform its missile defense policy from a limited to a robust one by amending the 1999 Missile Defense Act (ME). It should also sustain and modernize the present missile defense systems (ME), deploy space-based interceptors (ME), and invest in directed energy technology to one day replace or aid the space-based interceptors (ME).

The development of space-based interceptors (ME) would enhance America's land- and sea-based capabilities (GP) and keep pace with current threats (GP) by enabling the country to provide a robust defense against missile threats to the homeland, critical space assets, allies, and deployed forces (GP). SBIs (ME) would grant the U.S. the ability to destroy several missiles in their boost phase, while they were still over adversary territory and before they could deploy their nuclear warheads, decoys, or countermeasures (GP). The U.S. missile defense system, with space-based interceptors (ME), would be a strong deterrent (GP) and a means of defense in case of deterrence failure (GP). The better use of the space domain (ME) aimed at "[nullifying] any adversary's ability to coerce and blackmail the United States with missiles, possibly armed with nuclear weapons" (GP).

An SBI capability could be deployed at a reasonable cost and in the near future by leveraging modern technology (ME). The report rejected another downside of the action. It stated that the risk of debris caused by SBIs was manageable and usually negligible (GP). For the institute, "[r]emaining vulnerable to current missile threats [ME] is to knowingly place the security of all Americans at the mercy of countries like China and Russia" (VP). This was "simply inexcusable" given that nature of the threat, and the fact that the U.S. possessed the technology to defend against it" (Hudson Institute. *Space and the Right to Self Defense*, 2016: 6-15, 24).

On 23 July 2014, a hearing before the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces of the Armed Services Committee took place, being entitled "Adapting U.S. Missile Defense for Future Threats: Russia, China and Modernizing the National Missile Defense Act." During the meeting, representative Rogers stated that the U.S. "[was] deploying a cruise missile defense capability [ME] to protect the National Capital Region from cruise missiles, including, according to the commander of NORTHCOM, Russian cruise missiles" (GP). He asked a witness, Ambassador James Woolsey, chairman of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, whether it made sense to protect the capital from Russia's cruise missiles, but not to "deploy missile defenses [ME] to protect the American people against a Russian ballistic missile (GP), receiving a negative answer. Rogers further questioned whether it made sense to try to convince Russia that U.S. missile defenses were not about them (ME), while Moscow and Beijing openly developed missile defenses against America (CP), again receiving a negative answer (H.A.S.C. No. 113-121, 2014: 7-8, 77).

The House Armed Services committee stated in their version of the 2016 NDAA that there was a worldwide ballistic missile threat that was growing in numbers, capability, and sophistication (CP).

The committee considered that THAAD-ER¹⁴⁴ (THAAD extended range) (ME) “could be a vital capability improvement for the Ballistic Missile Defense System to defeat evolving and emerging threats, including hypersonic vehicles and anti-ship ballistic missiles” (GP). The committee was interested in ascertaining “the potential utility of THAAD–ER or similar capability to counter emerging and evolving threats in each of [the] respective geographic area of responsibility” of the U.S. Central (Egypt, Middle East, Central Asia and some parts of South Asia), Pacific, and European Commands (Report 114-102, 2015: 292-293).

The 2016 NDAA directed the MDA to start the “concept definition of a space-based ballistic missile intercept layer to the ballistic missile defense system.” The space-based ballistic missile intercept layer should provide additional defensive options against HGVs, maneuvering reentry vehicles, and direct ascent anti-satellite weapons (GP) or a boost-phase layer for missile defense (GP) (Legislative Text and Joint Explanatory Statement to Accompany S. 1356, 2015: 425-426).

The 2017 NDAA mandate the production of a report concerning the efficacy of deploying Aegis Ashore components and Aegis Ashore sites (ME) for defense of the continental United States against ballistic and cruise missiles (GP). The Secretary of Defense was to designate a Defense Agency or military department with acquisition authority concerning the capability (ME) for homeland cruise missile defense (GP). The MDA was to develop a capability (ME) for countering HGV and conventional prompt strike capabilities that might be used against the U.S., allies, and deployed forces (GP). The agency was ordered to “develop architectures for a hypersonic defense capability [ME], from detecting threats [GP] to intercepting such threats” (GP). Said architecture ought to include kinetic (ME) and nonkinetic options (ME) for the aforementioned interception (GP). The MDA was directed to develop a program of record to develop the abovementioned capability (ME). Moreover, the chairman of the JCS was directed to submit a report concerning the threat posed by HGVs and maneuvering ballistic missiles to the U.S., allies, and deployed forces (CP). The Director of National Intelligence was to submit a report concerning the cruise and ballistic missile threat to the U.S., deployed forces, friends, and allies “from short-, medium-, intermediate-, and long-range nuclear and non-nuclear ballistic and cruise missile threats” (Report 114-840, 2016: 629-635).

CSIS expert Tom Karako identified in 2015 a unified problem set encompassing “[t]he full spectrum from smart artillery to UAVs to cruise missiles to maneuvering reentry vehicles of various kinds and anti-ship cruise missiles, anti-ship ballistic missiles, [and] hypersonics” (CP). He posited that all components of the set ought to be stopped (GP). In his words, [f]or an integrated air and defense program [ME], you have to be doing a lot of things simultaneously” (GP). On a different occasion, on 19 May 2015, he argued that missile defenses was now about more than simply ballistic missile missiles (GP), because “the precision-guided revolution [had] spread to potential adversaries to include artillery,

¹⁴⁴ The MDA has not yet agreed to finance the development of an ER variant (Dean, 2023).

antiship missiles, cruise missiles, UAVs, hypersonics, and counterspace” (CP) (CSIS, 2015b; Freedberg, 2015).

On 7 January 2015, Karako stated that by extending the range of THAAD (ME) “could potentially both counter hypersonic threats and have homeland missile defense applications, supplementing [Ground-Based Midcourse Defense]” (GP) (Weisgerber, 2015b).

On 5 April 2016, Karako and Ian Williams (2016) stated that missile defense was about more than merely ballistic missiles (GP). They quoted Admiral Winnefeld, who had stated last May that, in his opinion, “homeland cruise missile defense [was] shifting above regional ballistic missile defense (...) as far as importance [went]” (CP). The cruise missile threat to U.S. forces abroad and the homeland, and the importance of addressing it, was an ongoing concern (CP). Admiral Winnefeld had warned last May that a potential surprise attack on America’s command and control threatened to hurt strategic stability (CP). Russia’s missile launches into Syria were a message to the United States that the country possessed that capability (CP). China was strongly investing in cruise missiles as part of its strategy of anti-access/area denial in the Asia Pacific (CP). Iran had unveiled a cruise missile the year prior (CP). There was a grave concern with cruise missile system proliferation (CP). There was a cruise missile detection problem which was a part of a “larger capability gap for both the homeland and forces abroad”¹⁴⁵ (CP).

The U.S. was attempting to design and deploy an architecture (ME) to detect and track cruise missiles (GP). However, doing so had proved challenging. The recent history of the Joint Land Attack Cruise Missile Defense Elevated Netted Sensor System (JLENS), a capability for cruise missile detection (GP), demonstrated just that (CP). If not JLENS (ME), then the U.S. would need some other way (ME) to detect and track cruise missiles (GP).

On 14 June 2016, James Acton, co-director of the nuclear policy program at the CEIP, posited that Moscow was not developing HGVs to deal with THAAD, suspecting them to “be extremely effective at penetrating existing defenses like the Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD) System - used to defend the continental U.S” (Dorminey, 2016).

In July 2016, Karako, Rumbaugh, and Williams (2016: 2-3) identified several new technologies and challenges in the missile defense realm, such as “greater mobility and survivability, more sophisticated countermeasures, longer ranges, the proliferation of cruise missiles, hybrid boost-glide vehicles, other forms of hypersonic threats, and greater means of deception (CP). They claimed that the U.S. ought to invest in regional and homeland missile defense technologies (ME) to outpace future missile threats (GP). As General Mann had stated, there were numerous countries possessing an even greater number of ballistic missile variants (CP). Missile defense had become harder (CP) due to the

¹⁴⁵ According to Karako, cruise missile defense was significantly different from BMD. The latter flew high, and their trajectory was predictable, making them easier to detect and track. Their speed, altitude and the presence of debris or decoys made their interception difficult, however. Cruise missiles were the opposite: easier to intercept, but harder to find. They were maneuverable, which made their flight path and destination more difficult to predict. They also flew low and were slower, making detection and tracking from ground-based radars harder (Karako & Williams, 2016: 1).

fact that adversaries now possessed more accurate, diverse, and robust capabilities (CP), which threatened U.S. and allied forces (CP). Such threats might overcome the existing missile defense systems and they included electronic warfare, directed energy, cyber intrusions, and hypersonics (CP). The experts claimed that, in the future, decision-makers would have to ponder whether the MDA should expand its focus to tackle the broader array of air defense, cruise missile, and hypersonic threats (GP), instead of concentrating its efforts almost exclusively on the BMD mission (GP).

On 22 July 2016, Karako (2016d: 5) conveyed his view that the JLENS was seemingly dead, given the recent lack of funding. He noted that the number one priority of the army in that area was the Integrated Air and Missile Defense Battle Command System (IBCS). Even though the U.S. was doing “astonishingly little” to address the cruise missile problem (CP), a capability such as the JLENS (regardless of the name or who would build it), was required, nonetheless (ME) (rejects inaction).

On 20 October 2016, RAND expert Daniel Norton (2016) penned an article on hypersonic weapons. Due to their high-speed, maneuverability, and high-altitude flight profile, threat engagement opportunities for such weapons was reduced, increasing their effectiveness and survivability. He claimed that Russia and China were developing ballistic missile-launched hypersonic weapons and HGVs (CP). Moscow had newly launched an HGV on an ICBM (CP), while Beijing had tested seven times since 2014 a HGV that could be launched by ballistic missiles of many sizes (CP). The two states’ hypersonic weapons could be used against many surface targets, thus presenting a broad set of challenges (CP). Seeing as China’s hypersonic weapons would be more costly than subsonic cruise missiles, he posited that they might be used solely against ships and critical infrastructure, that is, well-defended, high-value targets (CP).

The U.S. might be compelled to find ways to defend against those capabilities (GP), even if it opts not to procure hypersonic weapons (ME). If Russia and China’s hypersonic weapons become operational, the U.S. will have to address the threat that they pose (GP). Addressing the threat might require several efforts aimed at accomplishing goals such as “destroying or dazzling Russian intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance” (GP), deceiving or blinding the missile seeker (GP) and to destroying the missile itself (GP). Upgrading air defense systems might also be required (ME), and mitigation steps, such as hardening critical facilities, could also be undertaken (ME).

2. Juxtaposition of reasons for action

We start by juxtaposing the circumstantial premises of those who supported the change in policy with those who did not. The supporters of a new missile defense policy highlighted the missile threats in the strategic environment. Representative Franks and the Hudson Institute counted more than 300 missile launches and 60 foreign space launches. They perceived the exploitation of U.S. vulnerabilities by U.S. adversaries, including in the space arena. Franks and the institute also highlighted the

development of complex missile technology by U.S. adversaries, including hypersonic boost-glide vehicles and maneuvering ballistic missiles. Russia was flight-testing an HGV. Cruz called attention to the fact that many countries were obtaining unprecedented missile capabilities.

The institute described Russia and China as near-peer adversaries¹⁴⁶ which could hold the U.S. territory and key target areas at risk. Russia was undertaking a massive nuclear modernization program, which included technologies aimed at permitting delivery systems to evade American missile defenses. It was also engaging in MIRV-ing, could be increasing its nuclear warhead output, was more reliant on nuclear weapons, might use nuclear weapons to de-escalate conventional threats, conducted a never-before-seen number of nuclear exercises, and was issuing nuclear threats. China was developing and testing new missiles and improving older ones, increasing its number of missile units, and obtaining means to counter BMDs.

As for Iran and North Korea, Franks noted that the latter continued its development of missile technologies, whereas the first had been able to put two satellites in orbit. The institute made the same points but went into further detail. The two countries were increasing the numbers, range, accuracy, and mobility of its missiles and achieving improvements regarding countermeasures. Iran possessed a large and diverse missile force and aimed to obtain an ICBM capability. North Korea was investing greatly in missile technology, issuing coercive military threats, could probably attack U.S. territory with nuclear missiles, might use short- and medium-range missiles to threaten Japan and North Korea, and was testing an SLBM.

The institute saw those efforts to develop missile forces as attempts to hold at risk U.S. deployed forces, territory, and space assets. The report expressed the belief that those states were attempting to coerce the U.S. and were becoming increasingly able to challenge U.S. military superiority and its missile defense system with their missile programs. The U.S. was understood to possess capability gaps and its missile defense system required investment, with certain components facing obsolescence. It acknowledged some breakthroughs achieved by the system, but there had been a lack of investment since the Obama presidency.

Karako identified several of the same missile threats when it came to Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea. As for Russia, he was also concerned with the country's violation of the INF Treaty and its nuclear-capable cruise missiles. The expert, like Franks and Congress (through the 2017 NDAA) identified what they described as an "increasingly complex ballistic missile threat."

Supporters of a new missile defense policy also highlighted other circumstantial premises. Rogers claimed that Moscow and Beijing aimed to counter US offensive capabilities by developing missile defenses and, thus, America's current policy currently made no sense (ME). The institute explained that there was no legal prohibition to the deployment of space-based interceptors.

¹⁴⁶ Franks described Russia and China in the same way on other occasions (Franks, 2017).

Rogers, along with Franks and Karako, compared the present situation with the one which existed at the time of the 1999 Missile Defense Act. For Rogers, the most notable changes were the fact that Russia was no longer seen as a peaceful partner, China now possessed a SLBM force, and the U.S. was no longer part of the ABM Treaty. Franks stated that the U.S. missile defense system was now more mature, and Karako pointed to the threats that had emerged since then. The Hudson Institute report believed the present threat environment to be more diverse and complex than it had ever been.

Those opposing changes to America's missile defense policy highlighted different circumstances of action, not focusing on the strategic environment. Markey complained of the lack of debate on the proposed policy change, while an ACA expert stated that technical setbacks had been the reason for slower missile defense deployments (not the language of the 1999 Act). Value premises were scarce, but Senator Markey expressed his wishes to build a better future for all (one without a nuclear war). The Hudson Institute claimed it to be inexcusable to "knowingly place the security of all Americans at the mercy of Russia and China."

We now move on to the goal and means-end premises. The supporters of repealing section 2 of the 1999 Missile Defense Act in Congress¹⁴⁷ sought to do so in order for the U.S. to be able to carry out another course of action: "maintain and improve an effective, robust layered missile defense system." By doing so, the U.S. would achieve the goal of defending its territory, capabilities, allies, and deployed forces. Franks claimed that defense against missile attacks could not be limited. In the same line, Rogers wanted to defend the homeland against Russian sea-launched ballistic missiles, something that the current policy did not cover. Karako was also open to the idea of directing U.S. missile defenses toward Russian capabilities. Nonetheless, the position codified in the 2017 NDAA was that the change in missile defense policy did not mandate the development of any specific capabilities "against any country or its strategic forces."

For the Hudson Institute, providing said "robust defense" entailed the urgent deployment of space-based interceptors, in addition to sustaining and modernizing current missile defense systems, and continuing to invest in directed energy technology.

Rogers, Franks, Cruz, and Karako rejected maintaining the current missile defense policy because it was outdated and did not match the current threat environment (described above). As Franks put it, the U.S. missile defense policy needed to counter a different threat nowadays: one that was "greater, more complex, more diverse, and growing." The Hudson Institute described the threat in similar terms, rejecting keeping the course because it would entail continued U.S. vulnerability. Said vulnerability was inexcusable due to the feasibility of using available technologies to end it. The institute wanted to outpace the missile threat and close U.S. vulnerabilities. Cruz wanted to better protect the homeland and the American people "against the full spectrum of ballistic missile threats," which was Washington's constitutional obligation (VP). The change in missile defense policy by striking from the

¹⁴⁷ Including the legislative body as a whole, through the 2017 NDAA.

1999 Missile Defense Act the word “limited” removed an unnecessary defense planning constraint (GP). By strengthening missile defense (ME) the U.S. was contributing to deterrence (GP) and stability (GP)

Cooper and Markey opposed repealing section 2 of the 1999 Missile Defense Act in order to expand U.S. missile defenses. The first described the policy change as poorly thought-out and unrealistic, whereas the second deemed it a return to the times of the Cold War and “doomed to fail.” Markey wanted to delay the decision to change the language of the legislation until a debate was held. His opposition to the policy change notwithstanding, Reif noted that despite altering the role and purpose of U.S. missile defenses, the NDAA did not impose alterations to current missile defense programs or budgets. He considered that repealing section 2 of the 1999 Act was not necessary, because the law had not constrained the effectiveness of U.S. missile defense systems. The expert feared that the proponents of the policy change clearly pursued the goal of configuring U.S. missile defenses against Russia and China. Indeed, in a statement, the administration justified its desire to preserve the 1999 language precisely because it achieved the goal of making it clear that the U.S. missile defense system was meant to counter limited attacks from Iran and North Korea, and not Russian and Chinese strategic deterrence forces. Markey voiced the same goal. The senator called for an alternative course of action: the negotiation of a new arms control agreement to prevent nuclear war.

For the administration, the goal to be pursued vis-à-vis the major nuclear powers was deterrence, to be achieved through the preservation of a robust and modern U.S. nuclear deterrent. McKeon voiced the exact same goal premise and means-end premise, adding that not building missile defense capabilities that could threaten Beijing and Moscow’s strategic deterrents had been a “long-standing U.S. policy.”

Several proponents of preserving the current missile defense policy argued that the proposed change would lead to downside on U.S. goals. McKeon believed that changing said “long-standing U.S. policy” would raise questions as to whether the U.S. was pursuing “large-scale, advanced missile defense capabilities” in an attempt to negate the strategic deterrents of Russia and China. That, in turn, could undermine U.S. strategic stability and be a catalyst for a nuclear arms buildup by the two countries. Moreover, such a system would be technically challenging and, as Cooper also claimed, extremely costly. Markey perceived the downsides in a similar fashion to McKeon: it would be self-defeating and cost-prohibitive to aim missile defenses at Russia or China. A dramatic expansion of U.S. defenses would lead Moscow or Beijing to feel threatened and lead to an arms race between the two countries and the U.S., increasing the likelihood of nuclear war. He believed that the shift in policy would send the wrong message to other countries, a downside also perceived by Blumenauer, who also believed that the new policy would contribute to nuclear proliferation. The Hudson Institute denied that an arms race would be a downside of expanding U.S. missile defenses, however. Its report perceived that to be a negative consequence of inaction, which was creating capability gaps that U.S. adversaries were seeking to exploit. U.S. military strength, on the other hand, was what would prevent arms races. Inaction, the

report added, was placing American security and military superiority at the mercy of countries such as Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea.

For the institute, sustaining and modernizing U.S. missile defenses should include the deployment of space-based interceptors. The SBI would enhance U.S. sea- and land-based systems, provide a “robust” defense against threats to space assets, the homeland, allies, deployed forces; allow for the destruction of missiles during the boost phase; strengthen deterrence; provide a form of defense in case of deterrence failure; and prevent nuclear coercion and blackmail. SBIs could be deployed soon, entail a reasonable cost, and the risk of debris was not very significant. The U.S. also should invest in direct technology in support and eventual replacement of SBIs.

The INF Treaty: from an integrated strategic to a withdrawal (Discourses of section 6.1 of Chapter 6)

1. Political Discourse Analysis

1.1. Securitizing actor discourse

On 17 July 2017, Selva called for the pursuit of diplomatic and military measures. He called for the U.S. to begin research and development programs to field but not test intermediate-range ballistic and cruise missiles.

The general stated that Russia was “trying to walk the middle line” when it came to the treaty: not abrogating, but also not returning to compliance (CP). When confronted about their violation, the Russians had so far “been mute on how they intend to respond” (CP). He believed that Moscow had fielded an intermediate-range cruise missile that could be either conventional or nuclear (CP).

Selva wanted to increase pressure on the Russians (GP) to compel them to return to compliance (GP). The general mentioned the existence of options inside the treaty (VP) to do so, both diplomatically (ME) and in the military realm (ME). The U.S. could carry out research and development activities to field but not test intermediate-range ballistic and cruise missiles (ME). The country could also resort to the New START’s bilateral consultative committee to achieve those goals (ME). It was not guaranteed that either action would succeed, however (ME). If Russia were to communicate their willingness to abide by the treaty once again, weapon systems inspections would be necessary (ME) to verify compliance (GP).

The general rebuffed several potential consequences of remaining in the INF Treaty (ME). He did not believe that the treaty’s obligations led to an offensive imbalance in the Asia-Pacific (GP). The U.S. also remained able to hold at risk targets inside China through the deployment of missile systems on aircraft and ships (GP). In the general’s view failure to respond to Russia’s violation (GP) would render other arms controls agreements less compelling (GP) (downside of failing to respond). Still, Moscow did not gain any advantage in Europe from the deployment of the banned missile system in its current location (CP) (U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, 2017: 28-31, 49-51).

On 7 September 2017, the Trump administration reacted to the House version of the 2018 NDAA¹⁴⁸. The Executive Office of the President opposed the establishment of a program of record for

¹⁴⁸ The INF Treaty Preservation act supplied much of the text on the bill’s INF Treaty section (Tennis, 2017).

the development of a road-mobile, ground-launched cruise missile system (ME). The GLCM provision “unhelpfully [tied] the Administration to a specific missile system, which would limit potential military response options” (GP) (downside). Moreover, the administration opposed a section of the bill demanding it to produce a report which would free the U.S. from the prohibitions of the article VI¹⁴⁹ of the INF, if it determined that Russia was in material breach of the accord (VP).

The section “would raise concerns among NATO allies [GP] and could deprive the Administration of the flexibility to make judgments about the timing and nature of invoking our legal remedies under the treaty” (GP) (downsides). Still, the administration was in support of “broad authorization of research and development on missile systems [ME], including those prohibited by the treaty” (VP). Furthermore, the administration was “developing an integrated diplomatic, military, and economic response strategy” (ME) to maximize pressure vis-à-vis Russia (GP). It was also assessing which military capabilities were needed (ME) for national security purposes (GP)¹⁵⁰ (Rules Committee Print 115–23; Statement of Administration Policy, 2017a).

On 8 December 2017 the DOS laid out the administration’s “INF Integrated Strategy,” which called for the pursuit of diplomatic, economic, and military measures. The strategy included research and development activities for conventional, ground-launched, intermediate-range missile systems. It also called for the reintroduction of nuclear-armed SLCMs. Russia was in violation of the INF Treaty but refused to discuss the issue despite repeated efforts from the United States (CP). It continued to develop systems in violation of the accord (CP). America wanted to induce Russia to take concrete steps to return to compliance (GP). Achieving that goal would allow the U.S. to preserve the INF Treaty (ME), in turn restoring confidence in arms control to manage strategic stability (GP).

The U.S. remained committed to the treaty: it would not violate it and would abide its terms (VP). The United States could not “stand still” (ME) and, to pursue to abovementioned goals, would continue to pursue a diplomatic solution (ME), but would now also tack on economic (ME) and military measures (ME). As far as military measures are concerned, America would review “military conceptions and options, including options for conventional, ground-launched, intermediate-range missile systems” (ME). Those research and development activities would achieve another goal (ME): enabling America to defend itself and its allies in case Russia continued to violate the agreement (GP). Those research and development activities did not violation U.S. legal obligations under the INF Treaty (VP) (Nauert, 2017).

On 4 October 2018, at NATO headquarters in Brussels, James Mattis stated that the U.S. was complying with its arms controls obligations (CP). The country had tried to bring Russia back to compliance (GP) for over four years and across two administrations (CP). Russia’s actions were being discussed at length by the U.S. with its allies (VP), with whom the country was concerting its diplomatic

¹⁴⁹ Neither party was to produce or test-launch missiles (or accompanying launchers) with a range banned by the treaty (U.S. DOS, 1987).

¹⁵⁰ The report that the House version of the 2018 mandated was removed from the final 2018 NDAA, but the final bill authorized funding for the GLCM (2018 NDAA Conference Report, 2017: 968-969).

(ME) and defense posture options (ME). America was still trying to get Russia to abide by the treaty (GP). The secretary preferred not to disclose how the U.S. would respond if Russia did not return to compliance but noted that there was a host of possibilities. Inaction was not an option (ME); the situation was untenable (CP) (Mattis, 2018a).

On 20 October 2018, during a press gaggle, President Trump called for a withdraw from the INF Treaty. He stated that Russia had been in violation of the INF for years (CP). He implied that President Obama should have negotiated or pulled out (ME). America was going to terminate the accord (ME) because not doing so meant that Russia would continue to “go out and do weapons,” while America was not allowed to do so (GP) (downside of preserving the treaty). In addition, America was going to develop weapons that the INF currently banned (ME). Still, the U.S. was open to the possibility of not doing so (ME), as long as Russia and China agreed to stop developing those weapons (GP) (Trump, 2018).

On 22-23 October 2018, NSA John Bolton voiced his support for the U.S. abandonment of the INF Treaty. He denounced Russian violations as starting in 2008 and stated that the U.S. had started calling Russia out in 2013 (CP). He stressed that North Korea, China, and Iran were not covered by the treaty (CP) and had made significant strides to acquire intermediate-range capabilities (CP). He believed that somewhere between a third and a half of China’s ballistic missiles would violate the INF (CP). China’s threat was very real (CP), and U.S. allies in Europe and the Middle East were concerned about Iran’s capability (CP). To him, “there was a new strategic reality out there” (CP).

The U.S. was preoccupied not only with the impact of Russian violations on the European theater (CP), but also with the East Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East theaters (CP). Confronted by a journalist with the fact that allies were concerned with America’s decision, Bolton highlighted the U.K.’s support (CP). When the reporter pointed out that the U.K. was the only country to voice support, the NSA answered: “Well, that’s a very important country, given total defense expenditures. I believe Japan and others will support this” (CP). Bolton stressed that the U.S. would be in consultations with allies throughout the process (VP). According to him, the decision on how to deal with the INF Treaty belonged to the president (VP). He wanted the U.S. to be capable of responding to Russia’s INF violation (GP), but also address “global issues” related to other theaters besides Europe (GP).

The NSA believed that Russia could not be brought to compliance, and that efforts toward that goal were doomed to fail (GP) (goal is not achievable). Since Russia did not believe that it was in violation of the agreement (CP), it could not be persuaded to abide by it (GP). Concerning the universalization of the treaty, he explained that such an idea had emerged in 2004, with some efforts being made in that regard, but they had failed (i.e., that alternative is not feasible) (ME).

Bolton cast doubt over the notion that the preservation of the INF was the right policy (GP). He noted that only two countries were bound by it, and of the two, only the U.S. complied with it (CP). It “[was] a Cold War, bilateral ballistic missile-related treaty [ME] in a multi polar ballistic missile world”

(CP). He also noted that intermediate-range SLCMs would not violate the INF if deployed on a naval ship but would if moved ashore. It was “an angels on the head of a pin” situation (ME).

According to Bolton’s interpretation of the president’s words, if both Russia and China were to dismantle all their equipment that did not conform with the INF treaty’s provisions (GP), the U.S. might reverse its decision to abandon the treaty (ME) (alternative action). However, he believed there to be “zero chance of that happening” (GP) (unachievable goal). The U.S. had not yet decided if it was going to deploy intermediate-range weapons in Europe and Asia (ME). The U.S. withdrawal was not the problem (ME), Russia’s violation was (CP). The U.S. could not stand by and remain unable to respond to the violation (ME); the situation was untenable (CP) (Bolton, 2018a, 2018b).

On 30 October 2018, Mattis explained that Russia had initially negated the existence of the missile that violated the INF (CP). After accidentally revealing its existence, Russia claimed that the missile, while real, did not violate the accord (CP). Russia then baselessly accused the U.S. of non-compliance with the INF (CP). While the U.S. was still trying to bring Russia to compliance (GP) through diplomatic efforts (ME), the Secretary believed that the course of action would not deliver the intended goals. In his view, the U.S. had done all it could, diplomatically (ME). Mattis hinted at a military response, for which there were symmetric and asymmetric options (ME) (Mattis, 2018b).

On 1 February 2019, President Trump announced that the U.S. was leaving the INF Treaty. Russia had violated the INF with impunity for far too long (CP), developing a banned system that threatened U.S. allies and overseas troops (CP). America’s NATO allies supported the decision to withdraw from the treaty considering Moscow’s violation (CP) and associated risks to arms control (GP) (downside of alternative action). The country remained open to effective, verifiable, and enforceable (GP), arms control with Russia (ME). If that were to happen, the U.S. was prepared to develop a relationship with Russia at the economic, military, political, and trade levels (GP).

Trump wanted to deny Russia any military advantages from its violation (GP), and advance U.S., ally, and partner security (GP). Given the lack of Russian compliance, the latter goal was not being fulfilled by the treaty (ME). Moreover, by staying in the accord, the U.S. was the only party being constrained by it (i.e., consequences on U.S. goals) (GP). Thus, abandoning the treaty was the chosen course of action (ME). However, if the context of action changed, with Russia destroying all violating missiles, launchers, and related equipment (GP), the U.S. would reconsider its policy choice (ME) (alternative action). As for denying Moscow any military advantages, the U.S. would proceed with the development of its own military response options (ME) (Trump, 2019a).

On 12 January 2017, during his nomination hearing, the future Secretary of Defense James Mattis stated that Russia’s violation of the INF Treaty was a threat to U.S. forces and interests (CP) and increased the risk to U.S. allies (CP). Russia should return to compliance (GP) and the U.S. ought to respond “in league” with its allies (VP). Inaction was not the best policy option (ME) due to consequences on U.S. goals: if Moscow was allowed to violate treaties without consequences, that could erode the foundations of arms control as a whole (GP). Remaining in the treaty (ME) in the face of

Russia's violation (CP), did not grant Moscow "significant military advantage" (GP) (denies downside of U.S. compliance with the INF Treaty) (Mattis, 2017).

On 8 March 2017, the vice-chairman of the JCS, General Paul Selva, testified before the House Armed Services Committee. He claimed that Moscow had deployed a land-based cruise missile which infringed "the spirit and intent" of the INF Treaty (CP). The system was a risk to most U.S. facilities in Europe (CP) and the general suspected that it was deployed for the deliberate purpose of threatening NATO (CP). In the words of the vice-chairman, the deployment "more threatens NATO and infrastructure within the European continent than any other (...) area of the world that we have national interests in or alliance interests in" (CP). Russia's leverage points were unknown to the general (CP).

Selva believed that Russia and China were the two nations that posed an existential threat to the United States (CP). Since the release of the 2010 NPR, a change had taken place, in that the U.S. had realized that Russia wanted to assert itself as a great power (CP), something that needed to be addressed (GP). The general also believed that in order to get Russia to return to compliance (GP), pressure from the U.S. and the international community was necessary (GP). The U.S. had confronted Russia within the New START bilateral consultation committee and would continue to do so (ME). There were no U.S. military requirements that could not be satisfied (GP) (denies downside of preserving the treaty) because of American compliance with the INF Treaty (ME) (H.A.S.C. No. 115-11, 2017: 11-12, 18, 31).

The NPR of the Trump administration, released in February 2018, laid out the same three-fold response to Russia's INF violations.

The report stated that Russia was in violation of the accord since July 2014 (CP), and that for over four years (CP) the U.S. had sought to pressure Moscow (GP) to return to compliance (GP). Russian non-compliance was untenable (CP); thus, inaction was not an option (ME). Russia's violations of its international commitments, along with its increased reliance on nuclear capabilities to include coercive threats (CP), and its refusal to negotiate any limitations on its non-strategic nuclear forces (CP), demonstrated clearly that Moscow "[had] rebuffed repeated U.S. efforts to reduce the salience, role, and number of nuclear weapons" (CP).

For U.S. allies, a situation whereby America complied with the treaty whereas Russia did not was "a grave and urgent concern" (CP). The document drew from declarations of the North Atlantic Council to stress the importance of full compliance with the INF (GP), and existing concerns with Russia's SSC-8 ground-launched cruise missile system (CP). The NATO Council urged Moscow to address those concerns (GP), and the U.S. sought to press Moscow to return to compliance (GP).

To achieve those goals, America would pursue diplomatic (ME), economic (ME), and military measures (ME). The country would continue to pursue a diplomatic resolution (ME) and had already

sanctioned Russian companies involved in the development of the SSC-8¹⁵¹ (ME). It would also start INF-compliant (VP) research and development activities “by reviewing military concepts and options for conventional, ground-launched, intermediate-range missile systems” (ME).

Moreover, for the longer term, the U.S. would pursue a nuclear armed SLCM to achieve several goals (ME). The course of action would “provide a needed non-strategic regional presence [GP], an assured response capability [GP], and an INF-Treaty compliant [VP] response to Russia’s continuing Treaty violation” (GP). According to the NPR, America might reconsider the pursuit of the capability (ME) (alternative course of action) if Moscow “[returned] to compliance with its arms control obligations [GP], [reduced] its non-strategic nuclear arsenal [GP], and [corrected] its other destabilizing behaviors” (GP) (alternative course of action). The administration believed that the decision could potentially achieve the goal (ME) of incentivizing “Russia to negotiate seriously a reduction of its non-strategic nuclear weapons” (GP). There was an historical precedent for that course of action (ME): the deployments of Pershing II and cruise missiles during the Cold War had motivated the U.S.S.R. to negotiate nuclear arms reductions (CP).

Arms control, under certain conditions, achieve the goals (ME) of fostering predictability and transparency (GP), and improve U.S. and allied security (GP). Thus, America remained ready to pursue arms control agendas (ME), seeking “to reestablish the conditions necessary for greater trust with Russia [GP] and improved transparency with China [GP] as it [expanded] and [modernized] its nuclear forces” (CP). The U.S. complied with (VP), and was committed to, the preservation of the INF Treaty (ME). Still, the value of a treaty depended on the compliance of all parties (ME) (does not achieve goals). Tolerating the status-quo (ME) (inaction) hindered U.S. allied, and partner security (GP). It undermined prospects for future arms control agreements with Russia (GP) and hindered arms control regimes more broadly (GP) (downsides of inaction) (U.S. DOD, 2018: 10, 55, 73-74).

On 4 December 2018, at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, Secretary of State Pompeo expressed his support for the U.S. withdrawal from the INF Treaty. He voiced Russia’s non-compliance with the INF, most recently through the late 2018 deployment of several battalions of SSC-8 missiles (CP). In response to U.S. concerns, going back to 2013, Moscow consistently denied the violations, requesting more information, and making counteraccusations (CP). The violations could not be assessed in isolation, but as a pattern of Russian international lawlessness (CP). Europeans and Americans were placed in danger because of Moscow’s missile systems (CP). Moreover, states like Iran, North Korea and China were not parties to the INF Treaty, and thus free to build intermediate-range missiles at will (CP). The U.S. had tried to include other nations in the INF Treaty (ME), unsuccessfully (CP). NATO supported the U.S. decision to announce that in 60 days it would suspend participation in the agreement (CP). America still hoped to improve its relationship with Russia (GP).

¹⁵¹ The U.S. Department of Commerce imposed sanctions on two Russian companies due to their involvement in the development of the GLCM system on 20 December 2017 (Erästö & Topychkanov, 2018).

Pompeo sought to confront Russia with its cheating on arms control obligations and hold it accountable (GP), albeit still hoping to convince the country to return to compliance (GP). He wanted to respond to Russia's non-compliance (GP). The United States upheld the rule of law and was bound by its commitments (VP). The U.S. leadership was to never abandon its responsibility to protect America's security and sovereignty (VP). The United States decided to act by announcing the suspension of its INF-related obligations in 60 days (ME) unless Russia returned to verifiable (GP) and full compliance (GP). This was a "common sense action" (ME); it made no sense to adhere to a treaty (ME) that constrained one's ability to respond to Moscow's non-compliance (GP) (downside of preserving the treaty). In other words, inaction (ME) would not achieve the goal to respond to Russia's actions (ME); it was the equivalent of burying one's head in the sand (ME). The current policy was not working: the U.S. had exercised the utmost patience and effort to no avail. It had raised more than thirty times, including at the highest levels, the issue of Russian non-compliance, and expressed that consequences would ensue if no changes in behavior took place (ME).

Besides, staying in the treaty under current circumstances and tolerating Moscow's lawlessness conduct undermined U.S. security (GP), interests (VP), and values (VP). If Russia was not held accountable (GP), America would be cheated by other nations (GP), its citizens would be exposed to greater risk (GP), and its credibility would be squandered (GP). By remaining in the INF Treaty, America would also "continue to cede crucial military advantage to revisionist powers like China," by allowing intermediate-range missiles to continue to be used to coerce and threaten America and its Asian allies (GP) (downsides of remaining in the INF Treaty) (Pompeo, 2018).

During a Washington Post interview on 7 December 2018, General Joseph Dunford, the chairman of the JCS expressed his strong belief that the arms control regime which started, in earnest, in the 1980's provided (ME) a degree of strategic stability (GP). However, for arms control to result in strategic stability, it was necessary that both parties complied with existing agreements, which was not the case for Russia and the INF Treaty (CP). America had been highlighting said non-compliance for the past 3-4 years (CP).

The general believed it to be ideal if Russia complied with the INF (GP), which would allow "for a broader conversation, regarding other arms control agreements, to include an extension of [the New] START" (GP). He believed an extension of said accord to be difficult to envision (ME), "if the foundation of that is no compliance with the INF Treaty" (CP). He wanted to have a conversation with Russia on mechanisms (ME) that could improve strategic stability in the 21st century (GP), seeing as conditions and weapons had changed (CP). He pointed out that some capabilities which had been fielded, and others which would be fielded, were not even envisioned by the present arms control regime (CP). Still, it was difficult to tackle those new issues (GP) without a foundation of compliance with older, 20th century issues (ME) (preserving the INF Treaty is necessary). He described the decision to give Russia a window of 60 days to return to compliance before the United States followed suit (ME) as one last ditch attempt to get Moscow to abide by the accord (GP) (Washington Post Live, 2018).

1.2. Audience discourse

On 16 February 2017, Senators Tom Cotton (R-AK) of the Armed Services Committee, Marco Rubio (R-FL) of the Foreign Relations and Appropriations Committees, and Ron Johnson (R-WI) of the Foreign Relations Committee, introduced a bill to the Senate floor (S. 430) known as the INF Treaty Preservation Act of 2017. A companion bill was introduced in the House by Rep. Ted Poe (of the Foreign Affairs Committee) and Mike Rogers (of the Armed Services Committee) (H.R. 1182). According to the Act, Russia was in violation of the INF Treaty, had no progress had been made on resolving the issue since 2013, despite it being raised at the highest levels (CP). Moscow's actions constituted a material breach of the treaty (CP). Compliance with the INF (ME) had resulted in the imposition of "multiple validated military requirement gaps" on the U.S. (GP) (downside). The legislators wanted to bring Russia back to compliance (GP) and deal with the weapon capability that Russia had introduced in Europe (GP). It was not in the national security interest of the United States (VP) (downside) to be legally prevented from developing GLCM of intermediate range (ME) (preservation of the INF Treaty). While Russia was in material breach, the U.S. was "legally entitled to suspend the operation of the INF" in whole or in part (VP).

Russia's violation could not go unanswered (ME). Its "actions [had] defeated the object and purpose of the INF Treaty (ME). If Russia's violations continued, the U.S. should suspend the application of the INF Treaty (ME). The legislators proposed providing additional funding for the development of counterforce capabilities, countervailing strike capabilities, and active defenses (per the 2016 NDAA) (ME). They also wanted authorization of additional appropriations for facilitating the transfer of intermediate-range missile systems to allied countries (ME) and other R&D and evaluation activities for a dual-capable (i.e., conventional and nuclear) road-mobile GLCM system of intermediate-range (ME). They also wanted a report on existing anti-warfare defense capabilities (ME) that could defend the U.S. and its allies from Russia's intermediate-range GLCMs (GP). Lastly, the lawmakers wanted to block the authorization and appropriation of funds relating to the extension of the New START (ME) and certain decision relating to the Open Skies Treaty (ME) (S. 430 – INF Preservation Act, 2017: 1, 3-12).

On 23 March 2017, Senator Jack Reed, ranking member of the Armed Services Committee, quoted news reports stating that Russia had fielded, on February 14, a system (the SSC-8) in violation of the INF (CP). He described the system as a threat to all of NATO (CP). Furthermore, Moscow had deployed nuclear-capable short-range ground-launched Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad (CP). However, Russian aggression went beyond those actions: the country had carried out snap nuclear exercises during the 2014 invasion of Crimea (CP) and was in violation of the Budapest memorandum (CP). He expressed his deep and increasing concern over Russia's "broader malign activities" (CP). During a hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Reed also described Moscow's "escalate-

to-deescalate” nuclear doctrine as “not only deeply disturbing but potentially catastrophic” (CP) (Reed, 2017; CREC, 2017: S1961-S1963).

In a 17 July 2017 speech, Cotton stated that while it was likely best to preserve the INF (ME), if Russia abided, verifiably, to it (GP), there was only one way to save the accord (ME). That way was showing Moscow that the U.S. would abandon it if Russia did not comply with it (ME). Thus, he aimed at changing Putin’s calculus by showing that he had more to gain by accepting the treaty’s terms (GP) (Cotton, 2017).

On 13 September 2017, Cotton discussed the 2018 NDAA, stressing that it had passed out of the committee he presided with a unanimous vote (CP). The actions undertaken by Russia in non-compliance with the INF Treaty were serious (CP). He acknowledged calls (CP) for the developmental testing of systems (ME) that were not compliant with the accord (VP). Despite wanting to address the threat posed by Moscow’s noncompliance (GP), the committee opted to look at the kinds of research that were within the confines of the treaty (VP), seeing as it was the “cautious and measured approach” (ME). He believed that bringing Russia back to compliance to be the best goal to pursue (GP), and thus did not support withdrawing from the treaty (ME). The bill authorized funding for the modernization of the nuclear triad, which included replacements for the aging B-52 bombers, Ohio-class submarines, and Minutemen III ICBMs (ME) (CREC, 2017: S5250-S5253).

Senator Elizabeth Warren, of the Armed Services Committee, also spoke about the 2018 NDAA on 12 and 14 September 2017. She expressed her concern over Russian aggression (CP) and stated that everyone knew that Russia was in violation of the INF (CP), having INF-class missiles earlier in 2017 (CP). Secretary Mattis stated that Russia’s violation did not provide it with a “significant military advantage” and General Selva had corroborated that claim (CP).

According to the senator, the U.S. ought to exert pressure on Russia (GP) to bringing it to compliance with the treaty (GP), a goal that served not only U.S. interests, but also those of European and Asia Pacific allies (VP). However, that would be difficult to achieve since there was no indication that Kremlin planned to resume treaty obligations any time soon (CP). Thus, the U.S. ought to pursue two other goals: ensure that Moscow did not gain a military advantage from its treaty violation (GP), and that it “[took] the blame on the world stage” for doing so (GP). The U.S. should limit itself to actions permitted under the INF (VP), even if a “firm and unequivocal response” was needed: inaction was not an option (ME).

Despite approving the bill as a whole, Warren strongly disagreed with the decision made to authorize research and development funding for new generation intermediate-range missiles (ME). The U.S. should not violate the agreement just because Russia was doing it. In other words, the conclusion that the U.S. should violate the treaty did not follow from the premise that Russia was non-compliant with it (ME). The U.S. “should not immediately react to an adversary’s treaty violation by violating the same treaty [itself]” (ME) because that was not “how working in good faith in the international community is done” (VP) (downside). Those words, with which Warren agreed, were quotes from

Senator Mike Lee (R-UT). In addition, per Warren, Russia's non-compliance (CP) was not a reason for the U.S. to violate "a core anti-nuclear proliferation treaty" (GP) which had been "the bedrock of European security for nearly three decades" (GP) (downsides).

Furthermore, Washington would not be able to assure that Russia did not gain any military advantage from its violation (GP) and that it took the blame for violating the INF Treaty (GP), if the U.S. signaled to the world that it had lost faith in the treaty by authorizing research and development activities for INF-class missiles (ME). The authorized course of action would "undermine the spirit and intent of our longstanding treaty commitment" (VP) (downside). U.S. allies and adversaries would see it that way because the U.S. had "publicly sworn never to test or deploy" such a system (VP).

The INF Treaty achieved several goals related with the realization of values (ME). It had served as a foundation for building "a safe and peaceful world in a nuclear age" (VP). The U.S. should pave the way "toward sustained peace and security" (VP) (GP) (delivering those values is a goal of action).

The system contemplated in the bill (the road-mobile, ground-launched cruise missile system) (ME) would also be very costly, meaning that either the U.S. was wasting taxpayer dollars on R&D of a system that it never intended to build or test (GP) or signaling that it was going to walk away from a treaty commitment (VP) (downsides). Thus, the course of action that the NDAA was codifying would make everyone less safe (GP). It would give Moscow "the excuse it [was] looking for to shed remaining international constraints (GP), to justify an acceleration of its intermediate-range nuclear program (GP), and to spark a new contest of nuclear escalation" (GP). Consequently, the number of deployed nuclear weapons would increase, leading to a constant threat of their use through a single preemptive move or miscalculation (GP). The action also might "embolden Putin to up the ante by deploying some more missiles and perhaps withdrawing from the INF (GP). The senator quoted the administration as saying that the action would "'unhelpfully' tie them 'to a specific type of missile system (...) which would limit potential military response options'" (GP) (list several downsides).

According to the senator's interpretation, U.S. allies, and the White House did not want a new generation of missiles of intermediate range (CP); therefore, it was obviously that they were not necessary (ME). The idea that the action was America's "most effective response to Russia" was further questioned by a Pentagon report identified several options to achieve the goal of pressuring Russia to compliance, including additional active defenses (ME) and improvements to the European Reassurance Initiative (now European Deterrence Initiative) (ME).

The Pentagon also favored a multipronged option over a U.S. treaty withdrawal (ME) or abrogation (i.e., treating it as non-existent) (ME). Such an option entail "an integrated diplomatic, military, and economic response strategy to maximize pressure on Russia"¹⁵² (GP). Warren also believed there to be other "tools of national power" (ME) that could be used to strengthen, not weaken, the INF (GP). The course of action contemplated in the bill was "not the strategic response of generals and

¹⁵² See Statement of Administration Policy (2017b).

statesmen” (ME). Given that that the INF had removed thousands of nuclear weapons (GP), all options needed to be exhausted before it was abandoned (ME).

The senator saw no evidence to support the claim that the new missile was needed (ME) to compete with Russia (GP) and counter China (GP), which was not restricted by such accord (CP). Furthermore, it was unclear whether it would be possible to deploy the system in Europe (ME) (questions feasibility), since it required allies to be willing to host them (CP) and it was unclear whether there would be any, according to General Selva (CP). Moreover, the last time that the U.S. “weighed a land-based escalation in Europe” millions of citizens protested and, since then, calls for nuclear disarmament in Europe had only grown (CP). It was important for the U.S. not to compromise NATO unity (VP), which could have been Russia’s goal in deploying land-based cruise missiles in Europe (CP). Russia had done the same during the Cold War, in part, for that reason (CP).

On 27 July 2017, Warren introduced an amendment (SA 685) which prohibited the use of any funds authorized to be appropriated by the 2018 NDAA for activities that are not permitted under the INF Treaty. She also offered, along the Senator Mike Lee, on 12 September, an amendment (SA 984) that would require the production of reports on the ramifications of Moscow’s GLCMs. Until the congressional defense committees received such reports, no funds authorized to be appropriated by the 2018 NDAA could be utilized for a research and development program for a dual-capable road mobile ground-launched missile system of intermediate range (ME)¹⁵³. Thus, for the two senators, the preferable policy choice at that time was to delay the action contemplated in the authorization bill (ME), which Warren described as a “knee-jerk” reaction (ME) (CREC, 2017: S4587, S5206-S5208, S5233, S5725-5726).

The House version of the 2018 NDAA directed the administration to write a report which would free American from the prohibitions of the article VI of the INF Treaty (VP), if the document determined that Russia was in material breach of the agreement, which the bill claimed to be the case (CP). The bill also mandated the administration to establish a program of record to develop a conventional road-mobile GLCM of intermediate-range (ME). The U.S. should pursue military response options, namely active defenses (ME), counterforce capabilities (ME), and countervailing strike capabilities (ME). It should also seek further missile defense assets in Europe (ME) to protect U.S. and NATO forces from Russia’s GLCM (GP) that were non-compliant with the INF Treaty (CP). All actions were intended to encourage Moscow’s return to compliance with the accord (GP) (H.R. 2810, 2017: 493-496). The Senate version of the bill contained a provision for the establishment of a research and development program for a road mobile land-based missile system of intermediate-range. Unlike the House provision, which concerned an INF-class conventional road-mobile ground-launched cruise missile, the Senate’s system was

¹⁵³ Neither amendment was voted on (Council for a Livable World, 2017). In the end, the final 2018 NDAA authorized the appropriation of funds for the development of a conventional road-mobile ground-launched cruise missile system. The House bill had recommended the development of a conventional system, while the Senate preferred a dual-capable system. The Senate receded to the House on that matter (Report 115-404, 2017: 968).

intended to be dual-capable (i.e., could be conventional or nuclear-armed) (Report 115-404. To accompany H.R. 2810, 2017: 968-969).

In conference report of the 2018 NDAA, released on 9 November 2017, it was stated that it was the sense of Congress that Russia was in material breach of the INF Treaty (CP). Congress quoted Admiral Harry Harris, Jr., Commander of the United States Pacific Command, who on 27 April 2017 expressed his worry over the fact that numerous countries were developing INF-class missiles, especially China (CP). He stated that the world was now multilateral (CP). The admiral believed in the value of the accord (ME) because it imposed limitations on nuclear weapons (GP). However, the treaty (ME) also limited America's ability to counter Beijing's land-based missiles, as well as other countries' (GP) (downside).

The prohibitions imposed by the INF Treaty had led to (ME) "multiple validated military requirement gaps in the realm of convention PGS options (GP) (downside). They (ME) also prevented the U.S. from developing INF-range dual-capable ground-launched cruise missiles (ME) (course of action not feasible), which was not in the national interest of the United States (VP) (downside).

Given Russia's material breach of the INF Treaty, the U.S. was legally entitled to suspend, partly or in whole, the operation of the accord, as long as Russia remained non-compliant (VP). Congress noted that the INF prohibited testing and deployment of intermediate-range missile systems, but not research and development (VP). While the INF Treaty was in place, the legislative branch did not intend for the U.S. to violate the accord, and none of the bill's provisions should be construed into forcing the U.S. into doing so (VP). Article XV of the INF Treaty granted the U.S. the right (VP) to withdraw from it (ME) (bill raises potential course of action), if extraordinary events related to the accord happen to jeopardize the country's supreme interests (VP).

Inaction was not an option; the situation could not go unanswered, as General Breedlove had said in April 2014 (ME). The U.S. should encourage Russia's compliance (GP). To that effect, the bill authorized the appropriation of funds for RDT&E of counterforce capabilities, active defenses, and countervailing strike capabilities (ME). The U.S. should also seek additional missile defense assets in Europe (ME) to protect U.S. and NATO forces (GP). The bill also authorized funds for a conventional road-mobile ground-launched cruise missile of intermediate-range (ME). It also mandated the president to produce a report containing a proposal for the imposition of additional sanctions with respect to Russia, albeit without directing their implementation (ME) (bill raises potential course of action) (Report 115-404. To accompany H.R. 2810, 2017: 392-394, 968-969; Public Law 115-91, 2018: 131 STAT. 1672-131 STAT. 1673).

In the conference report of the 2019 NDAA, released on 25 July 2018, it was stated the actions undertaken by Russia in violation of the INF Treaty (CP) "had defeated the object and purpose of the accord" (ME) (bill questions preservation of the treaty). Still, the bill continued to recommend that the U.S. attempted to encourage Russia to return to compliance (GP) and expressed the sense of Congress that the U.S. was "legally entitled to suspend the operation of the INF Treaty," partly or in whole (VP),

while Russia remained in material breach of the accord (CP). The U.S. was to pursue the counterforce capabilities (ME), active defenses (ME), and countervailing strike capabilities (ME) recommended in the 2018 NDAA. The 2019 NDAA also called on the president to submit the report on Russia sanctions (ME) mandated by last year's authorization bill (VP) (Report 115-874, 2018: 415).

On 20 and 21 October 2018, Senator Rand Paul (R-KY), of the Committee on Foreign Relations, expressed his disapproval over America's decision to abandon the INF Treaty. America had complaints that Russia was not in compliance (CP) and Russia had grievances that some U.S. missile launchers in Europe were illegal (CP). America should not get rid of the treaty because it was part of Reagan's legacy (VP). The accord had led (ME) to a reduction of nuclear-tipped missiles from 64000 to 15000 (GP). The senator believed that Bolton was the one that had advised the president (CP) and Paul believed that the NSA did not recognize the important, historical achievement of Reagan and Gorbachev (i.e., Bolton's conclusion was based on premises that Paul disagreed with, and which had led the NSA to the wrong conclusion that the U.S. ought to leave the accord) (ME). John Bolton should not "be allowed anywhere near U.S. foreign policy" (ME) (policy should be rejected because Bolton was not credible as an expert source).

The withdrawal was undoing decades of work on arms control (GP) (downside), and the U.S. should attempt to fix any problems with the treaty instead (ME). Thus, the recommended course of action was to appoint nuclear negotiators to have a rational discussion with the Russians on mutual complaints of non-compliance (ME). Paul supported signing an agreement with China on intermediate-range missiles (ME), "but that would have to be a brand-new agreement and there [was] no reason to end the agreement [America] [has] with Russia" (ME). Paul did not want America to end up in an arms race situation with Russia or another country (GP) ("Sen. Rand Paul on US-Saudi," 2018; Rand Paul [@RandPaul], 2018).

On 3 December 2018, Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) (Armed Services and Appropriations Committees), Bob Menendez (D-NJ) (Foreign Relations Committee), and Mark Warner (D-VA) (Vice-Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence) penned a letter to the president. They stressed their concern about Russia's INF violations (CP) but noted that that nuclear modernization programs (GP) and nuclear defense planning (GP) (downsides) relied on the arms control architecture that had been built by the U.S. (ME) (not preserving the INF Treaty would lead to downsides concerning other courses of action). The senators feared that the president would also renege other arms controls treaties (ME) (rejected course of action).

There were several compromises on goals and values associated with the decision. The announcement had occurred without any notice and in the absence of Senate consultations, let alone of a "a path toward Senate advice and consent to the withdrawal" (VP). The decision was being made "over the objections of [America's] closest allies [CP] to the serious detriment of European security and stability" (GP). The withdrawal could also exacerbate tensions in U.S. relations with European allies (GP) and lead to an arms race (GP). The course of action preferred by the administration "[took] the

focus away from Russia's transgressions and malign behavior" (GP). Instead, it showed that the U.S. "[was] willing to shred our commitments unilaterally [VP] without any strategic alternative" (GP). Russia would be able to increase production and deployment of its currently banned intermediate-range missile system, threatening Europe further (GP). The decision was a geostrategic and political gift to Russia (GP) (they list several downsides).

The administration had not explained the rationale for the decision (ME). Indeed, in a recent hearing, senior DOS and DOD officials provided no indication of an imminent withdrawal (CP), nor that U.S. forces anticipated to achieve any military benefits from a short-term withdrawal (ME) (questions decision). The decision lacked "strategic forethought" and planning and was hasty (ME). Arms control was an integral component of nuclear deterrence that had provided (ME) strategic stability for ages (GP) and was important for U.S. and international security (GP) ("Menendez, Reed, Warner," 2018).

On 12 December 2018, 26 members of the Democratic Caucus of the U.S. Senate penned a letter to Trump on his decision to withdraw from the INF. They acknowledged Russia's violation of the accord (CP), but also noted that NATO did not want a new arms race (CP) and that U.S. allies were not likely to want to station more nuclear weapons in Europe (CP). The U.S. had no comprehensive strategy to deal with the security threats resulting from the end of the treaty (CP).

The lawmakers felt that the administration was abandoning goals they deemed important – reducing the global number and role of nuclear weapons (GP) and ensuring America's strategic stability (GP). These goals were a generational, bipartisan feature of U.S. leadership (VP). Nonetheless, the senators still wanted to address Russia's violation (GP) and deny potential Russian military gains stemming from it (GP). The U.S. should act in close concert with its allies (VP).

To pursue those goals, the senators suggested redoubling diplomatic efforts to preserve the treaty (ME). Seeing as the treaty was still beneficial (ME), that course of action was preferable to simply terminating it (ME). The treaty had been one of "Reagan's most significant accomplishments" (VP), had enjoyed bipartisan support at the time of its approval (VP), and had led to positive results. It had (ME) eliminated a category of missiles and was the bedrock for latter arms control treaties (GP).

Withdrawing from the agreement, on the other hand, risked several compromises on U.S. goals and values. Russia would be emboldened by America's withdrawal and left without any legal constraints, creating a growing threat to U.S. allies and troops (GP). Moscow would get a "get out of jail free" card (GP). Acting without taking ally concerns into account (VP) weakened the joint resolve necessary to address Russia's violation (GP). Without the INF and, potentially, the New START, there would be no "verifiable limits on U.S. and Russian nuclear forces for the first time since the early 1970s" (GP) (downsides). The New START provided (ME) "crucial insight into the location, movement, and elimination of Russia's strategic forces" (GP).

The senators warned the administration that developing new types of nuclear weapons, as the administration had proposed, threatened a bipartisan consensus (VP) (downside) that investments on the

nuclear deterrent and supporting infrastructure required sustained arms control measures (ME). The administration's plans to double down on unnecessary nuclear weapons (ME) while scrapping arms control agreements (ME) erode U.S. non-proliferation efforts (GP) and risked another arms race with Russia (GP) (downsides) (Democratic Caucus, 2018).

Senator Reed, the ranking member of the Armed Services Committee, again protested the decision to withdraw from the INF on 1 February 2019. He stated that the president had shown a pattern of abandoning international commitments and of letting Putin "off the hook" (CP). Reed noted that the decision represented a compromise on a past commitment: the modernization of the U.S. nuclear arsenal, according to Reed, "has always been tied to arms control. [It] was part of the New START bargain" (VP). He wanted to hold Russia accountable for its violations (GP), a goal unfulfilled by Trump's decision (ME). On the contrary, the administration was releasing Russia from its obligations (GP) (downside). Furthermore, the policy choice could spark an arms race (GP), since the abandonment was taking place without a replacement to achieve the goal of containing the expansion of the destabilizing systems in question (GP) (Reed, 2019a).

Senator Fischer stated on 4 February 2019 that U.S. officials had raised the issue of INF non-compliance for the first time in 2013, although there had long been concerns on the matter (CP). After denouncing Russian violations in 2014, the issue was raised at numerous diplomatic engagements (CP), which continued during the Trump presidency (CP). Treaty-compliant research and development activities on conventional, ground-launched missiles had begun during the Trump administration (ME) in order to show Russia that its non-compliance would result in the U.S. production of additional military capabilities (GP). In 2017, the Trump administration sanctioned Russian companies that participated in the development of the INF-banned system. Despite all those efforts, Russia "[continued] to produce and deploy illegal systems in greater and greater numbers" (ME) (course of action failed to achieve goal of Russia's return to compliance). It was clear that Moscow did not intend (CP) to return to compliance (GP). The Russian threat increased due to their violations, especially when it came to U.S. allies (CP) which, nevertheless, supported the withdrawal (CP).

Fischer denied that an alleged contempt for arms control on the part of the administration was a covert reason informing the decision to leave the treaty (VP) (denies covert concern). She also denied that China was the primary reason for the withdrawal, with Russia being a secondary consideration at best (GP) (denies China as a primary goal). She believed that America needed to make sure that Russia's violation of the agreement did not provide it with any military advantage (GP). It was also important to deter Moscow's growing arsenal of nonstrategic nuclear weapons (GP), impose costs on Russia (GP), and getting it to stop its destabilizing behavior (GP). It was important to show Moscow that its pursuit of banned capabilities would lead to a more capable and lethal U.S. military (GP).

Current actions did not work, and a firmer approach was needed (ME). Continuing to allow Russia's non-compliance led to consequences on U.S. goals through the imposition of unilateral limitations (GP). To remain in compliance "to prop up the illusion of an effective arms control

agreement [did] not make [ME] [the] [U.S.] safer” (GP). Withdrawing was the tough, but correct decision (ME). A treaty that was being ignored by the other party (CP) did not (ME) enhance U.S. security (GP); in fact, it was dangerous (GP) (downsides). If Russia concluded that it could break treaties and affect the balance of power in Europe without incurring high costs, it would be motivated to carry out additional misbehavior (GP), endangering the broader non-proliferation regime (GP).

The lawmaker rejected the idea that withdrawing would generate the downside of liberating Russia from the treaties limitations, seeing as Russia was already ignoring them (GP) (denies downside). In fact, it was the other way around – Moscow wanted Washington to stay in the treaty because the status quo benefited them. It was preserving the INF Treaty that compromised U.S. goals (GP).

Fischer agreed with the continuing efforts toward the development of a nuclear sea-launched cruise missile (ME) to deter Moscow’s growing arsenal of non-strategic nuclear weapons (GP). Seeing as that was a longer-term effort, the U.S. needed, in the meantime, to accelerate R&D efforts into ground-launched systems (ME), for a near-term response to Russia’s actions (GP) (CREC, 2019: S820-S821).

On 6 February 2019, the ranking member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Menendez, spoke on the chamber’s floor about the presidential announcement of the U.S. withdrawal from the INF Treaty. He claimed that the U.S. was leaving an accord that had been approved by the Senate by a vote of 93-5 (VP) without meaningful consultation with the Committee on Foreign Relations – which was charged with jurisdiction and responsibility over treaties (VP) – and without Senate approval (VP). Despite many opportunities to do so, including hearings of the aforementioned committee the DOD and the DOS had given no indication of an imminent decision to withdraw (CP), nor that the U.S. military anticipated benefits from a near-term withdrawal (ME) (questions decision).

The senator stated that the Article 2 of the U.S. Constitution provided the President and the Senate with shared power over treaties. That included “an exceptionally high bar for advice and consent” (VP). The president’s unilateral decision on the INF Treaty was irreconcilable with that shared constitutional power, seeing as he received no Senate input (VP) (downside). The INF Treaty was not an isolated case (CP); the president “[was] eroding the constitutional powers and [the Senate’s] institutional prerogatives” vis-à-vis other treaties (VP) (downside).

The withdrawal was not only misguided on process, however (ME); it was also misguided on substance (ME). The senator acknowledged Russia’s violation of the INF Treaty, stating that that had never been in question (CP); merely how the U.S. should respond (ME). The country had openly violated the treaty (CP) and displayed no willingness to return to compliance (CP). It had produced, flight-tested, and deployed INF-class missiles (CP). Moscow wanted to target Europe’s military and economic infrastructure (CP), seeking to coerce European and Asian allies by means of posing a threat to them at the conventional and nuclear levels (CP). Those actions “[fit] within a pattern of malign behavior that [sought] to undermine the security framework that contributed to the peaceful end to the Cold War (CP).

Russia had suspended its participation in the CFE Treaty (CP) and annexed Crimea (CP). Moscow's new missile capabilities threatened the interests of the U.S. and its allies (CP).

Menendez questioned the administration's approach, which he accused of lacking a coherent strategy and any realistic plan (ME) to address that threat (GP). The president was shredding the treaty without any credible alternative (ME) because the U.S. did not have assets in place – nor was it anywhere close to developing, manufacturing, and developing them (CP) – to defend against or counter the new Russian missile (GP). Moreover, by abandoning the treaty, the U.S. was giving Russia “a pass on its obligations and giving them the unfettered and unconstrained opportunity to expand the deployment of their new missile system” (GP) (downside). The course of action was not just bad policy (ME), but dangerous to European security by leaving U.S. allies vulnerable to Moscow's aggression (GP) (downside).

The senator was exceedingly concerned that the president had no understanding of (ME) (discredits Trump as an expert source; president reached the wrong conclusion) or appreciation for how important arms control treaties were (VP) (covert concern). Thus, he feared that he would abandon all limitations on the nuclear forces of the U.S. and Russia, such as the New START (ME) (rejects course of action). Menendez reminded that the U.S. had historically celebrated agreements with its adversaries (CP), even in recognition that it was dealing with hostile powers that were not to be trusted (CP) (the premise should not inform the decision to negotiate and enter into agreements).

The lawmaker urged the administration to develop a new, coherent strategy (ME) for the stabilization of the U.S. arms controls regime (GP), and to ensure U.S.-Russian nuclear forces stability (GP) – despite the challenges in the bilateral relationship (CP). He recommended the negotiation of a “durable agreement” with Russia to achieve those goals (ME). A strong, credible deterrent (ME) that worked within the framework of an arms control environment that was legally binding, constrained, and stable (ME), was the best way to deliver American security interests (VP) (GP) (the goal is delivering the value premise). On their own, neither “blind faith” in arms control treaties, nor unconstrained nuclear arms races, were the best way to deliver that goal (ME) (CREC, 2019: S913-S914).

On 1 August 2019, senators Inhofe and Risch issued a joint statement. They argued that the U.S. had worked hard, for almost six years, to avoid withdrawing from the treaty under republican and democratic administrations (CP), with the goal of returning Russia to compliance (GP). However, dialogue with Moscow did not achieve the intended goal (ME). That was due to Russia's “denials, obfuscation and false counter-accusations” (CP). The U.S. and its NATO allies alike believed that Russia was the sole responsible for the end of the INF (CP). America remained committed to uphold other existing treaties (VP) and possibly explore new frameworks (ME) that increased national security (GP).

America and its allies should engage with their citizens (ME) to prevent downsides stemming from the chosen course of action. Russia was expected to use disinformation and propaganda to re-write the history of the INF's demise (GP) (downside). Moreover, the U.S. and its NATO allies would take

the necessary steps (ME) to prevent another potential consequence of action: the impact of the end of the INF Treaty vis-à-vis the effectiveness and credibility of NATO's deterrence and defense posture (GP) (downside). The lawmakers believed that the administration ought to work with NATO allies to develop and field capabilities (ME) that could be used to defend against cruise missiles such as those that Russia had deployed in violation of the agreement (GP) ("SFRC Chairman Risch," 2019).

We now move on to think tanks. On 26 March 2018, Austin Long (2018a), an expert of the RAND Corporation, addressed the "new exotic nuclear delivery systems" revealed by Putin on 1 March 2018 (CP). The expert saw them as a result of Russia's "abiding fear and respect" for America's nuclear capabilities and missile defense system (CP). He believed there to be real benefits to arms control with Russia (ME). However, the future of U.S.-Russian arms control remained bleak (ME) unless the U.S. accepted limitations on missile defense to tackle Moscow's concerns (i.e., accepting downsides on U.S. goals) (GP). Given that Russia had made it clear that they considered the INF Treaty to be tied to the ABM Treaty (CP), Long posited that "the only solution [might] be to start from scratch" (ME). Meaning, to launch a "broader set of negotiations" (ME) aimed at "new mutually acceptable limits on intermediate-range systems [GP], "new" Russian systems [GP], and missile defenses" (GP). Not achieving such an agreement would lead to consequences on U.S. goals, namely, the likely "end of formal arms control for the foreseeable future" (GP).

On 19 April 2018, RAND's William Courtney (2018a) noted that both the U.S. and its allies had been subdued in their public discussions of Russia's violations of the INF Treaty (CP). Raising the profile of Moscow's violations and the measures to counter them (ME), as well as relying more on existing INF Treaty mechanisms (ME) could help "Western governments "sustain political and public support for arms control as a tool to reduce threats" (GP).

We now move on to the CSIS. On 19 April 2017, Maggie Arno (2017) wrote that accusations of Russia's violation of the INF Treaty "came to a head" (i.e., got to a point where something needed to be done about it) after its reported deployment of INF-range cruise missiles (CP), leading to the INF Protection Act being introduced (CP). In the meantime, Moscow denied any violations (CP) and perceived itself as being surrounded by threats (CP). For the expert, the INF Treaty was useful to the U.S. because it provided the country (ME) with a signaling mechanism, in the sense that a Russian withdrawal from it (or from the New START) could "signal intentions to pursue strategic offensive weapons [GP], forcing the United States to determine appropriate countermeasures" (ME). While the New START also worked as a signaling mechanism, it could not replace the INF Treaty because Russia could simply wait for the expiration of the former (ME).

Arno believed there to be three possible courses of action: to withdraw (ME), to preserve (ME), or to modernize the accord (ME). She believed that the best course of action was to modernize and expand the INF Treaty, as doing so could achieve several goals (ME), namely: to include other countries (GP), to preserve an important signaling mechanism (GP), to assure treaty parties that they were moving toward disarmament (GP), to provide assurances to U.S. allies (GP), and to strengthen the non-

proliferation regime (GP). The inclusion of other states in the new arms control agreement, including NATO members and China (ME), could “bring Russia back into compliance by addressing its perceived security threats on its borders” (GP). For the author, if Moscow deemed INF-range capabilities as necessary to deter its perceived threats, the original version of the INF Treaty was not worth preserving for Russia (CP), or the U.S. (ME).

The specialist considered that, instead of preserving the treaty, the INF Treaty Preservation Act could instead dictate its doom (ME). Not only would the development of INF-class missiles violate the INF Treaty (VP), but it would also exacerbate Russia’s insecurity (GP). Moscow might also perceive the development of the capabilities mentioned in the Act as a violation and assign blame on the end of the accord on U.S. (GP). Other actions covered by the INF Protection Act also likely contributed to Russia’s insecurity and could be perceived as hostile (GP) (lists several downsides). Russia needed to be included in any effort to renegotiate, modernize, or preserve the treaty (ME), something that the Act did not do (ME).

On 24 October 2018, Ian Williams (2018) raised the possibility that U.S. reports failed to reveal the full extent of Russia’s illegal INF activities (CP). He claimed that Putin was distrustful and thrived politically from clashing with the West (CP). Russia could use its illegal missiles to “[cut] off critical command and control nodes, logistical hubs, and air bases deep within NATO territory” (CP). Those missiles were difficult to track and destroy before they could launch, since they could be fired from Russian territory (CP). Only by means of those missiles “[could] Russia feel confident in the viability of its precision strike complex” (CP). Thus, Moscow did not wish to give them up (CP). China was not a party to the treaty and could use INF-range missiles to threaten U.S. bases and allies in the Pacific (CP).

Leaving the INF Treaty (ME) would allow the U.S. to “affordably [strengthen] the defense of its allies and overseas forces [GP] and [demonstrated] that it [took] arms control obligations seriously” (GP). In deciding to withdraw from the agreement, the U.S. president should have sought greater consultation with allies (VP) (acknowledged downside). No fully-fledged program of INF-range missiles could be carried out for the time being, seeing as the U.S. remained in the accord (VP).

Williams agreed with the decision to walk away from the agreement. It made no sense (ME) to remain in a bilateral treaty with only one compliant party (CP). Keeping the INF alive (ME) while compelling Russia to return to compliance (GP) had been ineffective and near-term success was doubtful (ME). The U.S. was doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result (ME). The imposition of sanctions had also been ineffective (ME). Giving concessions to Russia (i.e., giving up missile defense sites) (ME) in exchange for a return to the treaty (GP) would compromise U.S. goals. It would devastate the credibility of U.S. security commitments (GP) and encourage Russia to pursue further concessions through use of its weapons program (GP) (downsides).

The author supported the pursuit of INF-range missiles (ME) to counterbalance Russia (GP). There was an historical precedent to why that was a promising course of action (ME): Russia becomes

more interested in arms control when it falls behind (CP). Still, it was uncertain if Moscow would ever return to the INF Treaty (GP) (potentially unachievable goal). Williams also noted that changes in the strategic environment and in technology had changed greatly since the INF Treaty was signed (CP), implicitly questioning its usefulness today (ME). Leaving the INF Treaty (ME) would also grant the U.S. higher flexibility to address (GP) the growing Chinese military threat (CP), since the accord limited the quantity and promptness of U.S. firepower in the Pacific (GP) (downside of preserving the INF Treaty).

On 4 December 2018, Rachel Ellehuus, Ricklef Beutin and Quentin Lopinot (2018) observed that that few allies had joined the U.S. in publicly calling out Russia's INF violations until recently (CP). European governments viewed the treaty as a key pillar of European security, and its historical importance still shaped the attitudes and action of politicians and citizens in the continent (CP). Europeans believed that it reduced the risk of conflict, and created security and transparency, as long as its obligations were being followed (CP). Russia was unlikely to do anything in the 60 days given by the U.S administration before it announced that it was leaving the accord (CP). No matter what, NATO unity should be a guiding principle for the U.S. (VP).

The authors questioned the utility of the treaty (ME) given Russia's violations (CP), new developments in weapons technology (CP), and the fact that China was not a party to it (CP). Still, they believed that the treaty still fulfilled an important goal (ME): it "[dispersed] any doubt about a decoupling of U.S. and European security interests in Europe (GP). A U.S. withdrawal from the INF Treaty would allow Russia to openly develop and deploy INF-range missiles (GP) and continue to blame the treaty's downfall on the U.S. (GP) (downsides).

On the other hand, leaving the INF Treaty (ME) could be advantageous for the U.S. regarding China (GP), and possibly even compel it to adhere to some form of arms control (GP). A U.S. deployment of INF-range missiles in Europe might (ME) provide NATO with some military advantages (GP), it was unclear how much of a difference they would make (ME) in the balance of forces (GP) in the continent given existing air- and sea-based systems (CP). Moreover, that decision would likely result in very divisive discussions among American allies (VP) (downside). As an alternative course of action to the deployment of INF-class missiles (ME), the U.S. and NATO could focus on a different goal. That is, "ensuring the utmost credibility of the Alliance's nuclear posture" (GP) through modernization of nuclear forces deployed in Europe (ME). The experts also recommended that the U.S. and its allies devise a common strategy that ought to include serious efforts to inform their publics about the issues at hand (ME) in order not to compromise NATO unity (VP) and prevent new entry points for disinformation (GP).

Kimball, the ACA's Executive Director, shared his views on the INF Treaty on multiple occasions. We analyzed discourses released on the following dates: March 2017, December 2017, 8 December 2017, 21 October 2018, 23 October 2018, November 2018, 6 December 2018, and 2 August 2019). The arms control expert considered that Russia's deployment of ground-based cruise missiles, prohibited

under the INF Treaty, did not considerably change the military balance, despite it being a serious matter (CP). Both the U.S. and Russia said they supported the accord (CP).

The expert opposed the administration's decision to develop new conventional missiles that were banned by the INF Treaty (ME). While the accord did not forbid research and development of the capability (VP) (not a downside), the administration was setting the stage for an INF Treaty violation at some point (VP). Doing so would also divert the focus away from Moscow's violations (GP) (downsides). If the administration sought to bring Russia to compliance (GP) and prevent it from gaining military advantage from its violation (GP) – goals with which Kimball agreed – developing that capability would not be helpful (ME). It would not make (ME) the Europe or the U.S. safer (GP) (unachieved goal) but it would make the problem worse by allowing it to escalate (GP) (downside). Instead of contributing to Russia's return to compliance (GP) (unachieved goal), developing the new conventional INF-range missiles (ME) would probably give Russia an excuse to continue its course of action (GP) (downside).

The new INF-class ground missiles were also not necessary (ME) to cover some Russian and Chinese targets (GP), because the U.S. had formidable, treaty-compliant, sea- and air-launch missiles (CP). On 17 July 2017, Selva had stated that such capabilities (ME) were able to hold targets in China at risk (GP). The new missiles would also take a long time to develop and (ME), be costly, thus diverting funds away from other programs (GP). Kimball also warned that due to their very short flight time to their targets, there was little warning time, which made INF-range missiles particularly destabilizing (GP) (downsides). Given NATO's lack of support for the new U.S. missile (CP), and the fact that no European ally had volunteered to host it (CP), America would divide the Alliance if it decided to force its acceptance (GP) (downside). The administration should instead focus on maintaining American and European military preparedness at the conventional level (GP), to deter adversaries (GP) without violating the treaty (VP).

For Kimball, the INF Treaty was clearly in the best interest of the U.S., Russia, and Europe (ME). He proposed that the U.S. and Russia utilized the Special Verification Commission, a forum to resolve compliance issues (ME) in order for each side to discuss concrete and practical solutions to their compliance concerns (GP), and ultimately remove Russian non-compliant missiles (GP). Diplomatic efforts to solve compliance had so far been limited (CP) and such options remained unexhausted (ME). The author believed that diplomacy could allow for the preservation of the agreement (ME). For instance, the two parties could arrange mutual transparency visits to the U.S. missile interceptor in Romania and to the locations where Russia's non-compliant missiles were located (ME). The modification or removal of the missiles with which Russia was concerned had not been seriously pursued either (ME). If Russian deployments continued, the U.S. should insist that the cruise missiles be counted under the limits established (GP) in the next round of nuclear arms control reductions (ME). Furthermore, the U.S. should continue to bolster ally conventional defenses (ME) that would be targets

of Russian intimidation or aggression (GP) (defense against Moscow's aggression and intimidation is an implicit goal of action).

The specialist considered that the 60-day deadline given by the Trump administration to Russia, whereby Washington would withdraw from the INF Treaty if Moscow did not return to compliance, was unlikely (ME) to lead Moscow to acknowledge the violation (GP). He also considered that the demise of the INF Treaty would make preserving the New START all the more important (ME), since as, without it, there would be no legislation limiting U.S.-Russian nuclear arsenals (GP). While Trump had suggested having China join the INF Treaty, the course of action was unlikely to be feasible (ME). Due to how Beijing deployed its relatively small nuclear arsenal, a three-party treaty would represent a win for Russia and the U.S., but a loss to China (CP). The idea of multilateralizing the INF Treaty had been around for over a decade, but neither Russia nor the U.S. had seriously explored the concept (CP).

Kimball considered that the U.S. decision to withdraw from the INF Treaty was “an unnecessary [ME] and self-defeating wrong turn” (GP) (downside), taken under the influence of John Bolton (CP), that risked an arms race and military competition with Russia (GP) (downside). It did nothing to bring Russia to compliance (GP) (unachieved goal) and it diverted attention from Moscow's actions (GP). Russia would be able to deploy the missiles in question in greater numbers and without concern (GP). The loss of the INF Treaty was a blow to peace and security worldwide (GP) that would renew Cold War-era tensions (GP) (lists several downsides).

After the U.S. left the INF Treaty, Kimball called for the exploration of arms control options (ME) to prevent an “Euromissile race” (GP). He also proposed that the U.S. did not field INF-range missiles or equivalent nuclear capabilities in Europe, on the condition that Russia did not deploy intermediate-range missile systems capable of reaching NATO member states (ME). Kimball and Kingston Reif also described the INF Treaty (ME) as having been “crucial to Euro-Atlantic security” (GP), positing that withdrawing from it did not grant the U.S. (ME) any military advantage in Europe or anywhere else (GP) (Kimball, 2017a, 2017b, 2018a, 2019a; Kimball & Reif, 2018a; Hellman, 2017; Galperovich, 2017; Martinez, 2018).

The senate Republicans produced a policy paper on the INF on 8 March 2017. Moscow's INF violation significantly threatened U.S. allies (CP). The senators believed that if Russia were to deploy the banned GLCM systems it had tested, “there would potentially be a military vulnerability and a gap in America's ability to respond” (CP). U.S. allies would be held at risk and America would be unable to hold Russia at risk in the same way (CP). That would weaken U.S. defense and deterrence (CP).

The lawmakers wanted confront Russia's violation (GP) and bring it to compliance (GP) to reinvigorate America's deterrence and defense (GP). The latter goal could also be achieved by the development of military responses to Russia's military advancement (ME). In case Russia deployed illegal systems, the U.S. ought to be prepared for a world in which the INF Treaty did not exist (GP), so that the U.S. would not “[be] “caught flat-footed with no military response” (GP).

Regarding the military measures, the senators highlighted that the administration was required by section 1243 of the 2016 NDAA to submit a plan for the development of certain capabilities (VP), which the previous administration had failed to do (CP). The capabilities in question were four-fold, starting with counterforce capabilities (ME) for the prevention of attacks from INF-class missiles (GP). Secondly, countervailing strike capabilities (ME), whose aim was to enhance U.S. and allied forces (GP). Thirdly, active defenses (ME) to defend against INF-class missile attacks (GP). Lastly, other options (ME) deemed useful to encourage Russia's full compliance (GP) or respond to the country's failure in doing so (GP). The NDAA had directed the DOD to use RDT&E funds to develop those capabilities (ME).

For the republican senators, confronting Russia's violation should also include the reaffirmation of the U.S. commitment to nuclear modernization (ME). Nuclear weapons did not cost all that much and, thus, did not generate budget problems (GP) (denies downside). They were the bedrock of U.S. security (GP) and there was an existing presidential (i.e., Obama's) commitment related with that course of action (VP).

The lawmakers believed that Russia might find more value in adhering to the INF Treaty (GP) if its compliance was linked to other arms control treaties (ME). They proposed signaling that the U.S. did not plan on extending the New START and to reject certain Moscow's requests under the Open Skies Treaty (ME).

Overall, the legislators believed that the options above were preferable to withdrawing from the treaty (ME), since the latter was likely what Russia would prefer the U.S. to do, seeing as Moscow would be able to get out from the treaty's restrictions (downsides) (GP) (Senate RPC, 2017).

On 12 June 2017, Mike Rogers, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, discussed an amendment to the 2018 NDAA presented by Representative Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) striking the language from the bill that green-lit a conventional road-mobile, ground-launched cruise missile system that would violate the INF if tested or deployed. Rogers urged the amendment's defeat (ME). He explained that both the Obama and the Trump administrations considered Russia to be in violation of the INF (CP) and that neither had express any belief in Moscow's return to compliance (CP). He also noted that 95% of China's missiles were in INF range (CP) and that the INF (ME) hindered U.S. ability to counter them (GP), as well as other country's land-based missiles (GP) (downsides). The U.S. should not give others veto power over what systems the U.S. develops (VP).

Those circumstances were problematic (CP) and needed to be addressed (GP). Rogers also wanted to bring Russia to compliance (GP), and he believed that that could not be achieved without exerting pressure (GP). The system under discussion would do so (ME). Rogers also wanted a land-based counter to the anti-access area denial capabilities of U.S. adversaries (GP), and the system in question would not only provide value in that regard, but also, according to the army (ME), across a range of military operations (GP). For the senator, it was too early to be concerned about the downsides

potential deployment of the system because it had yet to be developed, let alone deployed (GP) (downplays downsides of action)¹⁵⁴ (CREC, 2017: H5729-H5730).

On 14 September 2017, senator Deb Fischer (R-NE), of the Armed Services Committee, also spoke about the 2018 NDAA, which she supported. She reminded her colleagues that Moscow's INF Treaty violation had reportedly started in 2008 (CP), and that the U.S. had formally raised the issue with Russian officials four and a half years ago (CP). Thus, developing the capabilities under discussion was hardly a "knee-jerk" reaction, like Senator Warren had described it (ME). Fischer wanted to take the first step to impose Russia costs, punishing it for its violation (GP) and increase pressure on Moscow (GP) within the limits of the treaty (VP). Indeed, the development of capabilities banned by the INF Treaty did not violate the accord (no compromise on values) (VP).

Waiting for more studies to be complete before developing the new capabilities was not the right course of action because it would ensure that the Kremlin's action would remain unanswered (GP) (downsides). Besides, previous NDAA's had already requested studies (CP). Inaction had already led to consequences: it allowed Russia to increase its violation of the accord (GP). Thus, it was not the best course of action (ME). Continuing down that road could bring further downsides: undermining the INF Treaty (GP) and the wider nonproliferation agenda (GP). On the other hand, the new capabilities would achieve the intended goals (ME). General Selva had specifically identified using R&D programs to increase pressure on Russia (ME) (CREC, 2017: S5732-5733).

On 21 October 2018, Senator Bob Corker (R-TN), the chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, stated that Russia had been, without question, in violation of the INF for years (CP). He also noted that some in the defense world feared that China would move beyond where the U.S. was in the realm of intermediate-range systems because Beijing was not a part of the INF Treaty (CP). He had also heard that the administration wanted to end the New START (CP).

The senator wanted to avoid "moving down the path to undo much of the nuclear arms control treaties that [America] [had] put in place" (GP). He emphasized that "that would be a huge mistake" (ME), and that the New START had worked (ME). The U.S. should find a way to stay in the INF Treaty as well (ME). He hoped that the administration was attempting to get Russia to come into compliance (GP) and that that was the reason that the U.S. had threatened to withdraw (ME). Corker also did not want Russia to move ahead of the U.S. quickly when it came to intermediate-range missiles (GP). Thus, he supported R&D mechanisms to pursue that goal (ME) (Corker, 2018).

On 24 October 2018, Senator Reed reacted to media reports claiming that NSA John Bolton had confirmed that the Trump administration intended to withdraw from the INF. He stated that Vladimir Putin had long wanted to end the treaty but did not want to be the one doing so (CP). By doing it for him, the administration was incurring compromises. It was "[playing] into Russian hands" (GP) and

¹⁵⁴ On 12 July 2017, following a debate, a voice vote was held on the Blumenauer Part B Amendment No. 8, and the noes prevailed (H.R.2810 – All actions, 2017).

fragmenting NATO unity (VP). Moreover, extending of the New START would now be more difficult (GP) (downsides). Trump was making an “unforced error” (ME) and his glib and impulsive action (ME) could be the beginning of the end for the arms control architecture that had for decades provided stability (GP) (downside). The preferable course of action would have been “to build international pressure” (ME) so as “to hold Russia accountable [GP] and force it back into serious negotiations” (GP) (Reed, 2018).

On 4 December 2018, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Jim Inhofe (R-OK), expressed his support for the president’s decision to leave the INF. He believed that Putin had “openly flaunted” the accord for too long (CP). The U.S. was constrained by the agreement (GP) (downside of preserving the accord), while Russia violated it without repercussions (CP). The Kremlin could not be trusted to uphold international commitments (CP). The senator agreed with putting Putin “on the clock” (GP) and for Russia to suffer consequences for its actions (GP). Either Russia returned to compliance in 60 days (GP), or the U.S. would leave the treaty (ME). Inaction was not an option (ME); it would lead to consequences on goals. Tolerating Russian deception would hinder national and ally security (GP). Allies, troops, and infrastructure would be at greater risk (GP). An accord that was only followed by one side (CP) was unsustainable (ME) (Inhofe, 2018).

Senator Risch (R-ID), who became chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee on 3 January 2019, issued statements on the INF Treaty on several occasions. We analyzed his statements on 22 October 2018, 4 December 2018, and 1 February 2019. According to the lawmaker, Russia was in material breach of the treaty (CP), which it had violated for years (CP), and the international community was aware of that (CP). The United States was the only country limited by the treaty (CP). Russia had shown no interest in changing its bad behavior, even after it became known that the U.S. was planning to announce its withdrawal from the treaty (CP). The decision to abandon the agreement received the unanimous support of all U.S. allies (CP) and America would continue to consult with them as the withdrawal date approached (VP). The context of action had changed since the Cold War: the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. were no longer the only global superpowers (CP). There were new strategic threats stemming from “a rising China” (CP) that required consideration (GP). The later CP was particularly relevant when considering U.S. alliances and commitments to “uphold international security” (VP).

The senator wanted for the United States to attain the security that the treaty provided once (GP), but not anymore (ME). The U.S. had no choice but to withdraw (ME). Since the treaty was a one-way street (CP), it could not serve its purpose if Russia was violating it (ME). It was, therefore, time to find alternative ways to attain said security (ME). Moreover, the treaty was preventing the U.S. from providing effective deterrence in Asia (GP) (downside) (Risch, 2018a, 2018b, 2019).

Moving on to think tanks, on 28 February 2017, Tom Karako (2017a) stated that, apparently, Russia had “deployed a battalion of launchers equipped with SSC-8 GLCMs” near NATO’s border (CP). Obama had done nothing (CP) to punish Russia for its INF violations (GP), despite having expressed his commitment to do so (VP). The situation could not go unanswered; the violations were

now too big to ignore, and the U.S. had to act (ME). Russia could not be allowed (ME) “to continue its “soft exit” strategy of quiet violation” (CP). The U.S. should demonstrate to Russia that it could not compete with America (GP) and negate the advantages Moscow might believe it gets from its non-compliance (GP).

Karako considered the provisions of the INF Treaty Preservation Act as policy options. He believed that current capabilities could be adapted for a land attack mission (ME), but that several air- and sea-launched systems might be considered as well (ME). When it came to seeking missile defenses to counter Russia’s SSC-8 (ME), Karako believed that while the Act focused on defending against GLCM (GP), such capabilities might be useful versus sea and air-launched missiles as well (GP). He downplayed the idea that missile defenses were destabilizing (GP) (denies downside) because that argument never seemed to apply to Russia’s S-300 and S-400 battalions” (CP). The author posited that transfer of INF-range missiles to U.S. allies might be possible (ME).

In a March 2017 report, Karako (2017b: 74-75) claimed if the INF Treaty ceased to exist, the U.S. should consider “the inclusion of strike assets (...) for both Aegis Ashore sites and numerous non-U.S. Aegis ships” (ME) to “help create flexibility to hedge against future geopolitical uncertainty” (GP) (Missile Defense and Defeat, 2017). On a 22 October 2018 news piece, Karako talked about a potential deployment of critical land-based platforms in the Pacific if the INF Treaty was no longer in place (GP). He stated that, without the accord, “it might just be a little bit easier to come up with delivery systems that are not quite so sophisticated that can serve our purposes (ME), but we are not limited by the shackles of the treaty” (GP) (downside) (Seligman, 2018).

On 13 June 2017, Andreas Lutsch (2017) stated that, with Russia reportedly deploying GLCMs in locations where they could hold European targets at risk (CP), the INF was effectively dead (CP). The author questioned whether countering Russia’s deployment of INF-range missiles by doing the same was the right course of action (ME). While that course of action had an historical precedent that led to the celebration of the INF Treaty (CP), the goal at the time was to prepare for a failure of deterrence (CP), and the arms control process that eventually took place lead to “destabilizing side-effects and political problems in NATO” (CP), even if Cold War tensions melted in the end (CP). Thus, the author saw the INF Treaty problem of the past as different from the current one (CP).

The current threat should be addressed under U.S. leadership (VP) and consultation with allies (VP). Lutsch posited that there might be better options than imitating Russia actions (ME). It would be more prudent for the U.S. not to alter its obligations per the agreement (ME) nor give “Putin the present of withdrawing from it” (GP). Thus, he suggested the deployment of “a mix of additional offensive and limited defensive capabilities [ME] or sea-based nuclear-tipped cruise missiles” (ME). Moreover, mimicking Russia would raise the question of why NATO does not maintain, like Moscow, a large arsenal of non-strategic nuclear weapons (GP) (i.e., the U.S. might eventually decide to copy Russia’s actions in the realm of non-strategic nuclear weapons) (downsides).

In the expert's view, changes in NATO's deterrence and defense capabilities [ME] as a response to INF Treaty violations (CP) should be accompanied by "an information policy [ME] that [reflected] NATO unity [VP] in an effort to legitimize NATO decisions" (GP). Doing so could avoid a collapse of public support (VP), a risk that was incurred during the 1980's INF crisis (CP).

The CSIS and the Russian International Affairs Council convened in a series of expert meetings in Moscow, leading to the release, on 17 November 2017, of a report authored by Olga Olier and Andrey Kortunov (2017: 3). Generally speaking, participants agreed that the INF Treaty ought to be preserved (ME), seeing as failure to do so might weakening arms control efforts more broadly (GP) (downside). They believed that Track II diplomacy with former senior officials and negotiators might be useful (ME). The American participants suggested that Washington "might be amenable to defining mechanisms that could assure the Russian Federation that the Aegis Mark-41 Vertical Launch System cannot be used to launch missiles (which would violate the INF)" (ME). This course of action would be carried out in exchange for the resolution of Russia's GLCM question (GP).

On 6 February 2018, Rebecca Hersman (2018a: 2-3) agreed with the NPR's support for adherence to the INF Treaty (ME). The document also proposed the reintroduction of a nuclear-armed SLCM capability (ME) as replacement for the nuclear Tomahawk land-attack missile (also a SLCM) that was retired after the 2010 NPR (CP). The proposed action was, in part, a counter to Russia's INF Treaty violations (GP). To Hersman, the approach was preferable to the GLCM being proposed by some legislators (ME) because it was compliant with the INF Treaty (VP) (avoids compromises on values). Still, it was not clear why the need for the SLCM was not met by other existing low-yield options (ME) (questions necessity for the course of action).

On 22 March 2018, William Courtney (2018b) suggested that, in pursuing a New START extension (ME), the administration made clear that it would pursue nuclear and missile defense options (ME) to penalize Russia (GP) for violating the INF Treaty (CP).

On 27 November 2018, Courtney and Greg Thielmann (2018) observed that while the administration took a political risk in not consulting with Congress about the withdrawal, it seemly came out unscathed (CP). They recommended that the administration consulted with Congress before deciding whether to renew the New START (VP). The experts also noted that neither Russia nor the U.S. made "energetic use" (CP) of the INF Special Verification Commission (ME) to resolve compliance issues (GP).

During a 1 February 2019 event to discuss the new MDR, Karako (2019e) stated that the U.S. had "a Russia missile program," which was connected to the INF Treaty (CP). He credited the MDR for endorsing some form of active defense (ME) against cruise missiles, such as the SSC-8, regardless of where it was launched from (GP).

On 20 February 2019, Andrew Reddie (2019) observed that the collapse of the INF Treaty occurred against the backdrop of the uncertainty regarding the New START renewal (CP). He also noted that several European countries opposed the withdraw (CP) despite clear Russian infringements (CP).

For the expert, it was unclear which goals the administration sought with the withdrawal. Nonetheless, Reddie believed that, in doing so, the administration was seeking Russian compliance (GP), to build symmetrical capabilities to oppose Moscow's deployment of intermediate-range forces (GP) and enable another course of action: the multilateralization of arms control to include Beijing (ME).

Regarding the first goal, history suggested that withdrawing from an agreement (ME) was not a good option to bring non-compliant states to compliance (GP). On the other hand, withdrawing from the accord (ME) would make it possible to achieve the second goal (GP). Still, it was unclear whether any European states would agree to host INF-range missiles (CP) (ME) (questions feasibility). As it pertained to the inclusion of Beijing in arms control efforts (ME), if the U.S. withdrew from the INF Treaty (ME), it could make deployments of INF-range missiles in East Asia (ME), possibly allowing for the enactment of the first course of action, and enhancing regional stability in the region (GP). However, the same deployment issues which applied to Europe might apply to East Asia too, perhaps even more so (ME) (questions feasibility of deployments). Reddie suggested that the U.S. could have used mechanisms within the INF Treaty (ME) to bring Russia to compliance (GP). U.S. allies would have likely preferred that option (CP), particularly given the uncertainty of the current administration's support for NATO (CP). Lastly, the expert did not perceive an impact from the withdrawal on the "fundamentals of nuclear deterrence" (GP) (rejects downside). Still, he posited that reneging the accord might make future agreements harder to reach (GP) and made it more difficult to face proponents of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the NPT (GP) (downsides).

The CSIS organized, in partnership with the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) and the Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique (FRS), the European Trilateral Track 2 Nuclear Dialogues, which gathered senior nuclear experts from the three countries. According to the consensus statement released on 22 February 2019, Russia's non-compliance with the INF Treaty was the reason for its downfall (CP). The collapse of the accord coincided with Russia's growing militarism (CP) and deterioration of relations with the U.S. (CP). European allies were slow to realize the seriousness of Russia's non-compliance (CP), although the U.S. was slow in providing detailed information about it (CP) and failed to consult them sufficiently (VP) (downside). Close cooperation and consultation between the U.S. and NATO were fundamental and needed to improve (VP). Alliance cohesion was fundamental (VP). Arms control agreements can contribute to several important goals (ME). They can provide enhanced predictability (GP), transparency (GP), and cooperation (GP). They also create political and policy consensus on nuclear policy (GP), reassure allies (GP), and reduce nuclear risks (GP). The experts deemed the deployment of land-based, INF noncompliant systems in Europe unnecessary (ME) in the current security environment (CP). They encouraged clear U.S. assurances that the country viewed those capabilities as such (ME) to reduce divisions within the alliance (VP) (GP) (the goal is to minimize a downside on values). The experts did not strictly oppose, however, exploring the development of those capabilities (ME) "as a hedge against future risk" (GP) (CSIS, 2019).

On 31 July 2019 Megan Donahoe (2019: 5) stated that, with the end of the INF Treaty, a conflict between Russia and NATO would probably take the form of a quick land grab by disguised forces, reinforced by INF-range missiles (CP). She noted a key consequence of the U.S. decision to withdraw from the INF Treaty: freed from the accord, Moscow attained a strategic advantage against NATO and the EU. Russia could use INF-class nuclear missiles for purposes of nuclear blackmail to protect the actions of its disguised forces (GP) (downside). A new INF Treaty was likely not possible, seeing as Russia had no incentive to such negotiations (ME).

2. Juxtaposition of reasons for action

We start by juxtaposing the circumstantial premises of the securitizing actors with those of the audience. The securitizing actors again raised Moscow's violation of the INF Treaty, denouncing the development and the deployment of battalions of Russian SSC-8 missiles¹⁵⁵. The administration claimed that even though the U.S. had, for years, communicated to Russia its concerns regarding its illegal activities, Russia had refused to discuss them. It had first negated the existence of the missile, only to later claim that the capability was INF Treaty-compliant while accusing the U.S. of violating the accord. Russia was attempting to assert itself as a great power.

The securitizing actors perceived several threats. On the one hand, Moscow's violation of the accord was a threat to U.S. forces, interests, European allies, facilities in Europe, and NATO. Russia posed an existential threat to the United States, was increasingly relying on its nuclear capabilities to include coercive threats and had displayed a pattern of international lawlessness. On the other, the strategic environment encompassed other threats. The administration claimed that China posed a very real, existential threat to the United States, remaining free to build intermediate-range missiles at will. Between a third and a half of China's missiles would violate the INF Treaty if the country were a party to it, having made considerable strides to acquire that capability. The securitizing actors were concerned with the European, South Asian, East Asian, and Middle Eastern theaters. In addition to Russia and China, concerns were voiced regarding Iran and North Korea, which were not prohibited from developing intermediate-range missiles, since they were not covered by the INF Treaty and, like China, had made considerable progress in that regard. There was, therefore, "a new strategic reality 'out there'," which also included capabilities that were not even anticipated by the current arms control regimes.

Other circumstantial premises were also voiced. The current Russian violations of the INF Treaty were understood not to grant the country any considerable military advantage. While Trump and Pompeo highlighted the support of NATO allies for the U.S. decision to leave the agreement, Bolton

¹⁵⁵ In February 2017, two SSC-8 battalions were reportedly deployed (Missile Defense Project, 2024).

admitted, facing pushback from a journalist, that only the U.K. had so far expressed their backing. Still, Bolton believed that other allies would follow suit.

Just as the administration, there was no contestation of Russia's violation of the INF Treaty among the audience, who noted the country's deployment of INF-class cruise missiles. Republican senators Cotton, Rubio and Johnson and representatives Poe and Rogers (through the Senate and House versions of the INF Treaty Preservation Act), as well as senator Risch, considered that Russia was in material breach of the INF Treaty, and the 2018 NDAA communicated the same understanding. The administration's discourse analyzed did not describe Russia's violation in such terms, and neither did the experts. The think tank community claimed that U.S. allies had mostly refrained from publicly accusing Russia of treaty violations, and that they were slow to understand their seriousness. Members of Congress of both parties doubted Russia's interest in returning to compliance, a view that experts Arno and Williams suspected to be true. Inhofe and Risch corroborated the administration's claims of Russia's denial of its illegal activities.

Russia's actions in violation of the accord were seen as a threat by the audience. The referent objects of such threat perceptions were U.S. allies; all of NATO, including its command-and-control nodes, air bases and logistical hubs; Europe's economic and military infrastructure; and U.S. and allied interests. Senate republicans feared that a Russian deployment of its INF-range cruise missile would result in a U.S. military vulnerability and a gap in America's ability to hold Russia at risk in the same way.

Several legislators of both parties and experts described a broader Russian threat, resulting from its deployments of Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad, military exercises, invasion of and activities in Ukraine, "escalate-to-deescalate" nuclear doctrine, coercion of U.S. allies, growing militarism, land-grab intentions, exotic new nuclear delivery systems, attempts to undermine the security framework that had led to the end of the Cold War, and the suspension of its participation in the CFE Treaty. Some in the audience described Russia's actions as part of a pattern of "malign" activities. A group of 26 democratic senators perceived the emergence of strategic threats resulting from the end of the INF Treaty.

However, Russia was not the only threat perceived. Rogers noted that 95% of China's missiles were in INF range, while Corker observed that some in the defense world feared that Beijing would achieve superiority against the U.S. in realm of INF systems, seeing as it was not a part of the accord. Risch considered that there were new strategic threats originating from "a rising China," and CSIS expert Williams posited that Beijing could threaten U.S. bases and allies in the Pacific by means of its INF-range missiles. China was, for the expert, a growing military threat. Overall, there was resonance between the securitizing actors and the audience regarding the existence of a Russia threat caused by its non-compliance with the INF Treaty, although, to a lesser degree, China's INF-range ground-based missiles also emerged as a mutually perceived threat.

The group of twenty-six democratic senators, as well as the ACA, noted that U.S. allies might not agree to station INF-range missiles in their territory. As for the view of U.S. allies regarding a potential American withdrawal from the INF Treaty, the audience displayed disagreement. Democratic senator Reed stated their objection, a view with which CSIS expert Reddie agreed. In the same wavelength, Ellehuus, Beutin and Lopinot also pointed out how much U.S. allies valued the agreement. Republican senators Fischer and Risch, on the contrary, conveyed the support of U.S. allies for the American withdrawal. The republican stance on that matter was the same as the administration's although, when pressed, Bolton admitted that most U.S. allies had yet to express their support.

Warren and the ACA stressed that Russia's violation of the INF Treaty did not grant it any significant military advantage, the same view held by Mattis and JCS Vice-chairman Selva. Republican Senator Paul and the ACA perceived Bolton to be behind the president's decision to withdraw from the accord. The group of twenty-six democratic senators claimed that the president had no comprehensive strategy in place to deal with the end of the INF Treaty. Corker and Menendez considered the way that the administration had dealt with the INF Treaty not to be an isolated case.

While Inhofe claimed that Russia could not be trusted, Menendez rejected such a reason for action. He noted that, historically, the U.S. had celebrated agreements with hostile powers which could not be trusted. Senators Reed and Menendez complained that the president had announced that the U.S. would leave the accord without giving any warning of such plans.

Two experts, Williams and Lutsch, drew lessons from the past to make policy recommendations, reaching different conclusions. The former believed that the historical precedent that had led to the celebration of the INF Treaty during the Cold War should be taken into account, because Russia became interested in arms control when falling behind. The latter perceived the INF problem of the present to be different from the one during the Cold War.

Ellehuus, Beutin and Lopinot, Williams, and senator Risch perceived the context of action as different from the one that characterized the Cold War, with the experts emphasizing the technological changes, and the legislator noting the rise of China and the emergence of a multipolar world. The 2018 NDAA also described the world as multipolar. Thus, we find resonance with the securitizing discourse regarding some of the elements of the new strategic reality.

Among supporters of the INF Treaty withdrawal, Inhofe claimed that a treaty followed by only one party was unsustainable, a view shared by CSIS expert Williams and senators Fischer and Risch. Similarly, the administration had described the situation as untenable for that reason.

We now move on to the value premises. The administration supported America's development of capabilities that were banned by the INF Treaty, but not the violation of the agreement by means of its testing and deployment. Similarly, the proposed nuclear SLCM was INF Treaty-compliant. Other values included the national interest, which was being threatened by Russia's actions and the importance of ally consultation on U.S. decision-making.

The value premises articulated by the audience were more numerous and more diverse. Compliance with the INF Treaty was a high-profile premise in audience discourse. Senator Reed claimed that the Committee on Armed Services, of which he was the ranking member, preferred to conduct treaty-compliant research. That was corroborated by Fischer and Warren, his republican and democrat colleagues, respectively. Through the 2018 NDAA, the U.S. Congress stated that the legislative branch did not intend to violate the accord, and that none of the provisions in the bill forced the country to do so. Congress, through the 2018 authorization bill, noted that while testing and deployment of INF-range missiles was prohibited by the treaty, research and development was not. A full-fledged program, as an expert (Williams) noted, was prohibited. In this regard, there was resonance between the premises of the audience and those of the administration. The latter held the same views on compliance.

Still, for democrats Warren and Menendez, the republican Lee, and the ACA, the research and development activities under consideration should be rejected due to other value-based premises. For Warren, by carrying out those activities, the U.S. was signaling that it intended to abandon its treaty commitments. As she and senator Lee pointed out that was not “how working in good faith in the international community [was] done.” Menendez shared Warren’s view that the action “[undermined] the spirit and intent of [America’s] longstanding treaty commitment.” U.S. allies and adversaries would see things in such a way, given that the U.S. had “publicly sworn never to test or deploy” INF-range land-based systems. Likewise, the ACA claimed that the U.S. was setting the stage for a future violation of the accord. CSIS expert Hersman appeared to believe that U.S. development of the INF-range GLCM would result in a future violation, seeing as she preferred the development of a nuclear SLCM, since at least the latter was not illegal.

Despite expressing a preference for compliance with the accord, the legislative branch, through the 2018 and the 2019 NDAA, conveyed the sense of Congress that the U.S. could legally suspend, in whole or partly, the operation of the INF Treaty, as long as Russia remained in material breach of the accord. In this regard, the legislative and the executive branch did not see eye-to-eye. The administration opposed abrogating the accord, stating that it would not violate it, and would abide by its terms. It stated that the U.S. upheld the rule of law and abided by its commitments.

For Reed, Warren, and Menendez, in announcing that the U.S. would withdraw from the INF Treaty, the administration was compromising the Senate role, granted by the Constitution, when it came to jurisdiction and responsibility over treaties. The senators noted that the administration had given the Senate no notice of its decision to leave the treaty, and that the chamber had not given its advice or consent on the decision, let alone approval, given the absence of any form of consultations. As Menendez put it, Trump “[was] eroding the constitutional powers and [the Senate’s] institutional prerogatives.” The senators’ view clashed with that of the administration: according to Bolton, the president had the right to act as he saw fit regarding the INF Treaty.

The national interest was another prominent value premise. As a whole, Congress deemed that it was not in the national interest of the United States to be constrained from the development of GLCMs. However, Warren and Menendez associated that value premise with the preservation of the INF Treaty. The administration believed that Russian actions undermined the national interest of the U.S. and its allies. The 2018 NDAA Conference Report, issued on 9 November 2017 and long before the president's announcement that the U.S. would leave the INF Treaty, noted that the country had the right to leave the treaty if extraordinary circumstances were to jeopardize national supreme interests.

A group of democratic senators described the goals underlined by the accord as general, bipartisan feature of U.S. leadership. While there was bipartisan and expert agreement regarding the idea that the U.S. ought to act in consultation with its allies, a group of democrat senators, the participants of the CSIS Track 2 Nuclear Dialogues, and Williams, believed that the country had failed to do so sufficiently. There is, therefore, resonance between the audience and the securitization regarding the importance of ally consultation. However, unlike some audience critics, Pompeo and Mattis assured that the U.S. had engaged in extensive talks with its allies, before and after Trump's announcement of the U.S. withdrawal on 20 October 2018.

A group of democrats claimed that withdrawing from the INF Treaty undermined the bipartisan support in the Senate that had led to the accord entering into force. The same group argued that by leaving the treaty, the administration was threatening a bipartisan consensus regarding the need for investments in the U.S. nuclear deterrent and related infrastructure to be accompanied by sustained arms control measures. That point was also made, individually, by Reed.

A common value premise among those who questioned military measures and the U.S. withdrawal from the INF Treaty was NATO or ally unity. Warren believed that the U.S. was jeopardizing it by seeking to develop a GLCM that allies, and its citizens, might not want deployed in their territories. The democrat caucus saw a weakening of ally joint resolve as result of the U.S. withdrawal from the treaty. Ellehuus, Beutin and Lopinot also acknowledged that the withdrawal would create divisiveness among allies, and recommended steps to preserve NATO unity. Lutsch emphasized the need for preserving NATO unity in deciding to change NATO's deterrence and defense capabilities. The participants of the CSIS event recommended assurances that the development of U.S. INF Treaty non-compliant missiles was unnecessary, in order to reduce divisions among NATO allies. Reed believed that, in leaving the INF Treaty, the U.S. was fragmenting NATO unity, and several experts emphasized the need to preserve it, following the country's announcement of the withdrawal.

Menendez believed that the president's lack of appreciation for arms control treaties was a covert reason for its decision to announce the U.S. withdrawal. This view was rejected by Fischer who denied Trump's contempt for arms control agreements. There was a bipartisan effort to use Ronald Reagan's legacy as a reason for the U.S. not to leave the agreement, issued by Paul and the group of democrat senators.

We now move on to the goal and means-end premises. The administration wanted to implement an integrated diplomatic, military, and economic response strategy (the “INF Treaty Integrated Strategy”) in response to Russia’s violations of the INF Treaty. At the military level, the securitizing actors supported research and development activities for the development of conventional, ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles of intermediate range prohibited by the INF Treaty. No decision was made regarding testing or deployment. The securitizing actors also proposed the reintroduction of nuclear armed SLCMs. The White House opposed the establishment of a program of record to develop a road-mobile, ground-launched cruise missile system, not wanting to be tied to a specific system, which would limit potential response options at the military level.

The proposed intermediate-range missiles were intended to achieve several goals. On the one hand, they were meant to defend the U.S. and its allies in case Russia’s violations continued, as well as denying Russia any military advantages from its deployments of intermediate-range missiles. On the other, the military measures, coupled with others in the diplomatic and economic realm, were intended to increase pressure on Moscow and bring it into compliance with the INF Treaty.

Among the diplomatic options, the New START bilateral committee was raised as a possibility. Selva claimed that there were no guarantees that diplomacy or military measures would succeed in bringing Russia to compliance. He believed that, to achieve that goal, pressure from the U.S. and the international community was necessary. While on 4 October 2018, Mattis discussed diplomatic and military options, the Secretary changed his tune by the end of the month, 10 days after President Trump’s press gaggle declaration that the U.S. was going to leave the accord. Thus, on 30 October Mattis claimed that diplomacy would not achieve the goal of Russia’s return to compliance, but the U.S. would still attempt to achieve the goal through military measures.

The NPR also recommended another military measure: the development of a nuclear-armed SLCM. The measure constituted a response to Russia’s violation of the INF Treaty which also aimed to provide a necessary non-strategic regional presence in addition to an assured response capability. The document informed of U.S. intentions to potentially abandon the development of the capability if Russia returned to compliance with its obligations in the realm of arms control, in addition to correcting its overall destabilizing behavior, and reducing its non-strategic nuclear arsenal. The military measure had proved effective in the past when it came to the latter goal, seeing as the U.S.S.R. had decided to negotiate arms reductions following deployments of U.S. Pershing II cruise missiles in Europe. Addressing Russia’s attempts to assert itself as a great power was a broader goal of U.S. national security.

Inaction was rejected as a policy alternative because the situation was untenable (CP). The U.S. was jeopardizing its security and that of its allies, and hindering arms control regimes more broadly, including the prospect of future arms control negotiations with Russia.

On occasion, the administration argued the INF Treaty was not currently advancing U.S. national security. However, it pursued, nonetheless, the goal of Moscow’s return to compliance.

Achieving that goal would allow for the preservation of the accord, which in turn would restore confidence in arms control and help manage strategic stability. The proposed military measures and, under certain circumstances, arms control, would contribute to national security. Arms control could also contribute to transparency, predictability, and trust. Russia's return to compliance would also enable a broader dialogue on other, potentially new arms control agreements, which would be difficult to envision otherwise. The INF Treaty allowed for a foundation of compliance with 20th century issues that could be used to tackle the new, 21st century issues. The administration deemed violating the treaty undesirable, seeing as it would raise concerns among NATO allies.

During Trump's announcement that the U.S. would leave the INF Treaty, as well as in subsequent discourses of the administration, the accord was understood as a constrain to America's weapons development. Including, according to Pompeo and Bolton, in U.S. response options to Russia's violation. Furthermore, for Bolton, remaining in the treaty under the current circumstances entailed downsides, seeing as the U.S. was ceding military advantage to revisionist powers such as China, which could use their INF-class missiles to coerce and threaten America and its allies in Asia. Bolton claimed that preserving the INF Treaty was not the best policy because it was an outdated, irrelevant accord, that was unsuited to a multipolar world, and with which only the U.S. complied. He also stated that Russia could not be brought to compliance and, thus, all efforts thereto would fail.

Those more recent assessments of the downsides of preserving the INF Treaty are contradicted by earlier declarations of the JCS Vice-chairman and by the Secretary of Defense James Mattis. General Selva had claimed that the obligations imposed by the accord did not create an offensive imbalance in the Asia-Pacific, and that the U.S. could deploy other missile systems to hold at risk targets inside China if necessary. In fact, U.S. compliance with the INF Treaty was not an obstacle to the satisfaction of any current military requirements, according to the general. Likewise, Mattis stated that staying in the treaty in the face of Russia's violation was not allowing it to accrue any "significant military advantage" from its illegal activities. Still Admiral Harry Harris, Jr. had expressed concerns that the treaty limited U.S. ability to counter Beijing and other country's ground-based missiles. Thus, there were different views on the matter among securitizing actors.

On 1 February 2019, President Trump described his proposed withdrawal from the INF Treaty as an overdue decision. However, the decision could be overturned if Russia verifiably returned to full compliance in 60 days, destroying all illegal missiles, launchers, and related equipment. Pompeo deemed the decision "common sense." The administration hoped to develop an improved relationship with Russia at several levels if the latter returned to compliance. The U.S. would still move forward with the proposed military options.

Trump's unofficial withdrawal announcement on 20 October 2018 included China in that requirement, according to Bolton. The NSA believed there to be no chance of Russia and China destroying their land-based intermediate-range missiles within the window given. The withdrawal, for Bolton, was about more than responding to Russia's violation; it was about addressing "global issues."

Bolton and Pompeo explained that attempts at expanding the INF Treaty had been made across the years but were unsuccessful.

There was bipartisan support for preserving the INF Treaty both before, and after the president's announcement that the U.S. would leave the accord on 20 October 2018. The same applies to the expert community. As for the administration, the preservation of the treaty was deemed the best course of action up until the aforementioned date. Thus, in that regard, there was resonance between the securitizing actors and the audience for a period of time. As noted by Warren, Paul, and a group of democrat senators, and Congress as a whole (quoting Admiral Harris), the INF Treaty had achieved important nuclear reductions by imposing limitations on both the U.S. and Russia. The democrat caucus expressed the treaty's contributions to strategic stability and the fact that it was the bedrock for latter accords. A policy paper authored by senate republicans believed that achieving Russia's return to compliance would reinvigorate U.S. deterrence and defense. The paper also stated that the development of military capabilities could achieve the latter goal as well, in case non-compliance issues remained unresolved.

Experts noted the importance of the accord as a signaling mechanism, in contributing to Euro-Atlantic security, in reassuring allies of America's commitment to European security, in reducing nuclear risks, and in enhancing predictability, transparency and cooperation. For the group of 26 democrats, and well as Reed, Menendez, and Warner, the treaty and arms control in general, were of importance for the U.S. nuclear deterrent. The democrat caucus and Warren made a direct link regarding the complementarity between nuclear modernization and arms control. The administration's premises were considerably aligned with those of the audience, seeing as the former acknowledged the importance of strategic stability, transparency and trust, which arms control provided, making the restoration of confidence in arms control important.

Overall, up until 20 October 2018, the audience and the administration appear to prefer the preservation of the treaty, which was associated with the goal of bringing Russia to compliance, which was to be delivered by other courses of action. This was true for the republicans as well, who drafted the INF Preservation Act which strongly influenced the 2018 NDAA text on the accord. Similarly, the administration drafted the INF Treaty Preservation Strategy early in the Trump's presidency.

Despite supporting the goal of bringing Russia to compliance, the logic behind remaining in the accord was questioned. Before 20 October 2018, senators Cotton, Rubio, and Johnson, and representatives Poe and Rogers (through their respective versions of the INF Treaty Preservation Act) along with Congress as a whole (through the 2019 NDAA), believed that "the object and purposed of the treaty" had been rendered null by Russia's actions and suggested suspending implementation, partly or in whole, if Moscow's non-compliance continued. The bill also stated that the U.S. was entitled (VP) to withdraw from it. Among experts, Arno noted that the treaty's original version might not be worth preserving if Russia kept its INF-class missiles, a point also made by Ellehuus, Beutin and Lopinot. Arno also suggested modernizing the INF Treaty and expanding it as a policy alternative,

although Donahoe and Kimball doubted the feasibility of the proposal. For Arno, modernizing the treaty would allow the U.S. to include other countries, including NATO members and China, which could bring Russia to compliance. The accord's modernization would also allow the U.S. to preserve a signaling mechanism, assure treaty parties that progress was being made towards disarmament, assure U.S. allies, and strengthen the non-proliferation regime.

The Trump administration included three military measures that had been proposed during the Obama administration in its INF Integrated Strategy, and they were to be accompanied by diplomacy and economic measures (threefold option). The economic and diplomatic measures received less attention than those in the military sphere. Still, the 2018 and 2019 NDAA mandated the president to produce a report with a proposal for the implementation of additional sanctions against Moscow. Warren supported the administration's three-fold proposal. Fischer and CSIS expert Williams denoted the inefficiency of the sanctions that had been implemented against Russian companies.

As for diplomacy, the group of 26 democrats wanted the U.S. to redouble its efforts in that realm instead of leaving the INF Treaty. Reed, Paul, and Menendez shared that preference for the former policy in lieu of the latter. Reed wanted the U.S. to build international pressure to hold Russia accountable and force it to comply with the agreement. Paul wanted to appoint nuclear negotiators to discuss each side's non-compliance complaints. Menendez proposed the negotiation of a new agreement with Russia for the stabilization of arms control and nuclear relations.

Among experts, Reddie claimed that instead of leaving the treaty, the U.S. should use the INF Treaty's Special Verification Commission, a proposal also endorsed by Courtney. For the latter, such a course of action, in addition to raising the profile of Russia's violation, could have helped sustain public and political support for arms control as a threat reduction tool. Courtney and Thielmann noted that neither country had made "energetic use" of the Commission (CP) to resolve compliance issues. Kimball utilized similar premises. He opposed the U.S. withdrawal from the accord and noted the limited utilization of the Commission for the resolution of the compliance concerns, and for the removal of Russia's illegal missiles. Diplomacy could allow the treaty to be saved, and the two parties could arrange mutual transparency visits to the locations of U.S. missile defense systems and Russia's non-compliant missiles. The U.S. should engage in a new round of nuclear arms reductions with Russia and insist in the inclusion of the new Russian INF-class land-based systems to prevent an arms race in Europe. The participants of a CSIS event, whose contributions were reported by Olikier and Kortunov, recommended U.S. assurances that its Mark 41 Vertical Launching System could not be used offensively and posited that Track II diplomacy might prove useful. Long proposed starting from scratch with Moscow and launching broad negotiations on INF-range land-based systems and missiles defenses. Otherwise, the two parties would be unable to delve in formal nuclear arms control for the foreseeable future. Before the president's 20 October 2018 announcement that the U.S. would leave the INF Treaty, a policy paper of the republican senators proposed using the New START and the Treaty on Open Skies as leverage to make compliance with the first accord more appealing to the Russians. As for those in the audience who

placed less faith in diplomacy, Risch and Inhofe noted, in defending the president's withdrawal announcement, that such efforts had yielded no results. New arms control frameworks could be explored, however, if they contributed to national security.

Overall, we find in the audience significant support for the use of diplomacy to bring Russia to compliance, among both experts and legislators of both parties. Early in the Trump presidency the administration sought diplomacy, along with economic and military measures to bring Russia to compliance and restore confidence in arms control. Thus, before Trump announced that the U.S. would leave the treaty, one finds resonance between the premises of the audience and those of the securitizing actors, regarding the use of diplomacy and its associated goals. Still, the audience voiced support for new forms of arms control as a means to resolve Russia's non-compliance issues, whereas the administration was focused on resolving those matters to preserve the current arms control regimes. The preservation of existing treaties, especially the New START, was also voiced by Reed, Menendez, Warner, the democrat caucus, and Kimball, in any case.

The resonance weakens after the president's announcement. At that point, Risch and Inhofe noted that the course of action had failed to achieve any goals, but some experts express their belief in diplomacy, nonetheless, being joined by several democrats and a republican. As for administration, Mattis conveyed the understanding that all diplomatic options had been exhausted, a view with which many in the audience vehemently disagreed.

When it came to the means through which the U.S. ought to use to bring Russia to compliance, there was mostly support for the use of military measures; particularly those that had already been proposed and accepted during the Obama administration. Meaning, the counterforce capabilities, the active defenses, and the countervailing capabilities. Moreover, Congress supported those measures because it wanted the U.S. to be prepared for a world in which Russia did not return to compliance. The legislative branch also deemed that the U.S. ought to seek additional missile defense assets in Europe to protect U.S. and NATO forces. Among experts, Lutsch supported the deployment of additional offensive and limited defensive capabilities, while Karako endorsed some form of active defenses against Russia's SSC-8 and the adaptation of capabilities for land attack missions. However, Arno warned that some of the military measures contemplated in the INF Preservation Act (and, thus, the 2018 NDAA) could increase tensions between the U.S. and Russia. The additional missile defense assets, in particular, might be perceived as hostile. Thus, for the most part, the administration, and the vast majority of the audience, supported the development of the military measures that had been proposed during the previous administration, and sought to achieve the same goals as before.

Several members of the audience considered the development of a nuclear SLCM as a policy option after it featured in the NPR in connection with Russia's violation of the INF Treaty. Fischer supported the capability, aiming to deter Moscow's increasingly large arsenal of non-strategic nuclear weapons. Lutsch and Hersman deemed the new capability preferable to developing INF-range land-based systems. When it came to NATO's deterrence strategy, Lutsch deemed the nuclear sea-based

system to be a more prudent course of action than withdrawing from the INF Treaty or mimicking Moscow's violation. The SLCM would not violate the INF Treaty, a reason which also explained Hersman's preference. Still, she questioned its need, given America's other low-yield options.

Overall, there is not much resonance between the securitizing actors and the audience when it came to the nuclear SLCM and its relation to Russia's violation of the INF Treaty (meaning, we do not focus, in this subsection, on the premises for developing the SLCM that are not connected with the accord). After all, the administration aimed (among other goals), to bring Russia to compliance by developing the capability. However, the audience focused instead on the goal of deterrence of Russia with the capability. And both experts merely preferred that course of action given the alternatives being considered by the administration, seeing as they believed that the U.S. should not violate the INF Treaty. Kimball proposed making concessions on missile defense by removing or modifying the systems that concerned Russia to resolve the country's non-compliance with the accord. That course of action was rejected by Williams however, who anticipated as downsides the devastation of U.S. credibility, and future attempts by Russia to use its weapons programs to obtain future U.S. concessions.

Another military measure mentioned by the audience was nuclear modernization, which the republican senators, according to a policy paper produced, should be a part of U.S. efforts to confront Russia's violation. Nuclear weapons, after all, did not generate budget problems and were the bedrock of U.S. security. Ellehuus, Beutin and Lopinot, on the other hand, saw the modernization of nuclear forces deployed in Europe as an alternative to deploying INF-class land-based missiles, if the U.S. intended to reinforce the credibility of NATO's deterrence. The course of action was not mentioned by the administration in connection with the INF Treaty in the discourses analyzed.

Considerable disagreements emerged in the audience regarding another military measure – the conduction of research and development activities for a GLCM that would be illegal under the INF Treaty if tested or deployed. For the democrat Warren and the republican Lee, who opposed said activities, the conclusion that the U.S. ought to mimic Russia did not follow from the premise that the latter was violating the INF Treaty. Moreover, allies and the administration did not want a new generation of INF-range missiles. The Pentagon preferred to pursue a threefold course of action, which Warren also supported. She questioned whether the missile was needed to achieve the goals of competing with Russia and countering China. Moreover, it was unclear whether deployment of the capability would be possible since U.S. allies would have to agree to host them. Warren believed that congressional support for the development of the capability was a “knee-jerk reaction.” Warren and Lee wanted to delay that action, which was contemplated in the 2018 NDAA, until reports were produced on the ramifications of Moscow's GLCMs. Warren warned that developing the illegal system would lead to downsides. It would undermine European security and non-proliferation; waste taxpayers' money; enable Russia to shed the remaining international constraints by accelerating its INF-class missile program, which would lead to an arms race; increase the number of deployed nuclear weapons and, thus, nuclear risks; and embolden Putin to leave the treaty or deploy more missiles. Moreover, the

administration did not want to be tied to a specific missile system, since it would limit its potential response options. If the U.S. move forward with R&D for a road-mobile GLCM, it would not achieve the goals of preventing Moscow from obtaining military advantages from its violation or assuring that it took the blame for its treaty violations.

Among experts, the course of action was contested by Lutsch who deemed mimicking Russia was an imprudent policy choice. He also worried that Washington would decide to do the same as Moscow in the realm of non-strategic nuclear weapons. He recommended that an information campaign be carried out to legitimize NATO's actions. Similar to Warren, experts Reddie and Kimball questioned the feasibility of developing INF-range missiles, seeing as it was unclear whether U.S. allies, both in Europe and in Asia, would agree to their deployment.

The ACA also rejected the development of conventional GLCMs because the U.S. already had the capabilities necessary to hold targets at risk in Russia and China – a point also made by a securitizing actor: Selva. The action would not contribute to bring Russia to compliance nor prevent it from obtaining military advantage from its violation. It would also not make America or Europe safer and would take a long time to develop. Moreover, the proposed GLCM would lead to downsides on U.S. goals. The action would divert focus away from Moscow's violations, escalate the problem, give Russia an excuse to continue its illegal actions, divert funding from other U.S. programs, negatively affect strategic stability, and divide the Alliance if the U.S. forced allies to accept the deployments. The U.S. ought to focus on maintaining conventional military preparedness to deter adversaries. It could also bolster ally conventional defenses of potential Russian targets. The association also proposed that the U.S. did not deploy INF-class missiles on the condition that Russia did not do the same. The participants of the CSIS event deemed the INF Treaty non-compliant systems unnecessary given the present context of action, although the experts did not oppose exploring their development, assuming that the goal was to hedge against future risk. Arno warned against the downsides of developing non-compliant missiles: they could increase Russia's insecurity and blame the U.S. for the end of the accord, perceiving the development of the capability as a violation.

There was, however, considerable support for the development of an INF-class GLCM, which was voiced by the Senate and House versions of the INF Treaty Preservation Act. The bill also included support for other military measures, particularly those already contemplated in the 2016 NDAA. The legislators wanted to change Putin's calculus by showing that he had more to gain by remaining in the treaty. They believed that Russia would not return to compliance unless the U.S. showed its willingness to leave the accord. Wanting to pressure Russia into compliance, Rogers considered that the system would not only do that, but also be valuable across a range of military operations. Fischer rejected Warren's accusations of a "knee-jerk reaction" because Russia's violation was not a recent issue. Delaying action would only allow the country to increase its violation and undermine the accord and the non-proliferation agenda. She noted that Selva had supported R&D for the capability. The senator wanted to punish and pressure Russia, showing the country that its illegal activities would only result in

the U.S. producing additional capabilities. Rogers argued that it was too early to worry about the downsides of deploying a system which had yet to be developed.

Same as the INF Treaty Preservation Act, the 2018 NDAA sought the pursuit of the 2016 NDAA military measures as well as R&D activities for the GLCM missile of intermediate range. Doing so was meant, again, to bring Russia back to compliance. Unlike the Act, the legislation sought a conventional-only system, however. Corker supported the R&D activities to prevent Russia from surpassing the U.S. in that realm. An expert, Williams, supported the pursuit of the INF-class GLCMs to counterbalance Russia, basing his conclusion on an historical precedent. Karako, another supporter, posited that U.S. allies might agree to host those missiles (which senator Warren and experts Reddie and Kimball doubted). Ellehuus, Beutin and Lopinot believed that an INF-range land-based system could provide NATO with some military advantages but it was unclear in what way, given existing U.S. sea- and air-based INF-range systems. Kimball made a similar point, noting that America's sea- and air-based systems of intermediate-range could be tasked with covering some Russian and Chinese targets.

Overall, despite a division, independent of party, in the U.S. Congress, regarding America's potential new missile system, most legislators supported research and development thereto. This was shown by the language of the 2018 NDAA, which borrowed, in large part, language from the INF Treaty Preservation Act. While not consensual, most experts opposed the capability, however. The ACA, for instance, believed that the new system would do nothing to return Russia to compliance, and would probably incentivize it to continue its violation. There was some degree of resonance between the administration and the majority in the audience regarding the course of action, because the latter accepted to conduct research and development activities to produce a new intermediate-range system. The administration's discourse conveyed its opposition to the legislative branch proposal, codified by the 2018, of developing a specific system, however. It sought, instead, a "broad authorization" for R&D activities.

The INF Treaty Preservation Act pointed out, on 16 February 2017, certain downsides of complying with the accord. Specifically, republican legislators highlighted how it had resulted in "multiple validated military requirement gaps." On 12 June 2017, Rogers, a leading figure behind the House version of the Act, considered, nonetheless, that the treaty hindered America's ability to counter China's INF-range missiles, as well as other country's land-based missiles. Those points also featured in the 2018 NDAA Conference Report. The two downsides were drawn from securitizing actor discourse: a 2013 DOD report and a 2017 statement from Admiral Harris. Still, as noted before, Selva's own statements revealed the general's confidence in the U.S. ability to hold targets in China at risk, contradicting Harris' view.

Still, for the legislators at the time, as well as the administration, those downsides did not yet outweigh the benefits of maintaining the accord if Russia could be brought to compliance. This points to a degree of resonance between the securitizing actors and the Congress on the importance of trying to preserve the treaty.

After Trump announced that the U.S. would leave the INF Treaty on 20 October 2018, several republican legislators came forward to support the decision, using the downsides of staying in the accord as reasons for action. This is possibly indicative that no longer the benefits of the accord outweighed the perceived downsides for both the administration and the legislative branch. Risch believed that the accord was hindering U.S. deterrence in Asia. Inhofe believed that tolerating Russia's non-compliance would put U.S. forces, allies, and infrastructure at greater risk, hindering national security. He complained about the treaty's unilateral constraints as well. By 4 February 2019, Fischer no longer strived Russia's return to compliance, instead stating that not only was the treaty not making America safer, but it was also endangering the country. She also complained of America's unilateral limitations. In the senator's view, by staying in the accord, the U.S. was incentivizing Russia to step up its misbehaving, which undermined the non-proliferation regime. The status quo benefited Moscow, which wanted the U.S. to remain in the treaty. Among the specialists, Karako claimed that the "shackles" of the INF Treaty were preventing the U.S. from deploying vital land-based platforms in the Pacific. The U.S. would be able to develop less sophisticated systems that could serve its purposes in the region. Similarly, the administration complained that the treaty was unilaterally constraining the U.S., forcing the country to cede military advantage to China, and undermining the national response to Russia's violations. The treaty was also hindering U.S. security. Thus, we find a degree of alignment between the premises used by the administration to describe the downsides of staying in the agreement, and those used by the supporters of the course of action in the audience.

The sponsors of the INF Treaty Preservation Act, and Congress as a whole (through the 2018 NDAA) proposed suspending compliance, partly or completely, with the INF Treaty if Russia remained in material breach of the accord. The 2018 NDAA also noted that the U.S. was in its right (VP) to withdraw from the treaty. Those calls for suspending and withdrawing from the treaty can be understood as a form of consent for a decision to abandon the treaty – in part, temporarily, or definitively – at a time when the administration wanted to pursue other courses of action. After president Trump's 20 October 2018 announcement, some republican legislators and experts voiced their support for the decision, while many democrat legislators, some republicans, and several experts expressed their opposition.

Senators Reed, Menendez, and Warner complained that the administration had not explained the rationale for the withdrawal, and that the decision was rushed and lacked strategic foresight. Reed also noted that by leaving the accord, the U.S. was not holding Russia accountable. For Menendez, the withdrawal was the incorrect decision on substance. The president did not have a plan or a coherent strategy and was leaving the accord without credible alternatives in place. The decision was viewed as bad policy. Paul affirmed that Bolton failed to appreciate the INF Treaty for the important, historical achievement that it was. He supported signing and the INF Treaty with China, but that was no reason to undo the accord that the U.S. had with Russia. Corker believed that it would be a mistake to undo the arms control treaties that America had put in place. Thus, there was clear support for preserving the INF Treaty among legislators of both parties. Among experts, Reddie believed that withdrawing from the

agreement had historically been shown not to be a good option. Still, the action would allow the U.S. to build a symmetrical capability. Kimball claimed that the withdrawal did nothing to return Russia to compliance and would not grant the U.S. any military advantage anywhere. Reed, Menendez, and Warner made a similar point in saying that the administration had failed to divulge the military benefits of the withdrawal.

While after Trump's press gaggle announcement several senate republicans, such as Fischer, Risch, and Inhofe, came out in support of the decision, an 8 March 2017 policy paper of the Senate republicans noted that staying in the treaty would be preferable due to the downsides of withdrawing. They noted that Russia wanted the U.S. to abandon the accord to escape its restrictions. Other downsides of withdrawing from the INF Treaty were raised by legislators and experts after the announcement of the U.S. withdrawal. Reed agreed with the senate republicans' 2017 view that the U.S. was playing into Russia's ends by leaving the accord. Extending the New START would now be more difficult, and Trump's impulsiveness could be the beginning of the end for the arms control architecture that had, for long, contribute to stability. Reed, Menendez, and Warner noted downsides regarding other courses of actions. He stressed that nuclear defense planning and nuclear modernization relied upon the arms control architecture. The withdrawal negatively affected European security and stability and could exacerbate tensions between the U.S. and its allies in Europe and lead to an arms race. The U.S. was taking the focus away from Russia's violation, which would be able to increase its violation and further threaten Europe. The decision was a political gift to Russia, and the U.S. had no strategic alternative to the accord being exited. The group of 26 democratic senators also agreed that the Russia would now increasingly threaten U.S. forces and allies, and that the country had received a "get out of jail free" card. The U.S. was weakening ally joint resolve needed to tackle Russia's violation and leave the New START as the last nuclear treaty between the two countries. America was eroding non-proliferation efforts and risking an arms race with Russia. Reed also considered that Russia was being released from its obligations and that an arms race was a possible outcome given the lack of a policy in place to contain the expansion of Russia's destabilizing systems. Indeed, as Menendez pointed out, the U.S. had no means to defend against or counter Russia's SSC-8 system. Moscow was being given a pass on its obligations and given the opportunity to increase its violation, which would leave U.S. allies in Europe vulnerable and less secure. Among republicans, Paul also feared a potential arms race with Russia or other countries, and believed that the U.S. was undoing decades of progress on arms control.

As for the experts, Arno lamented the loss of a signaling mechanism with the end of the treaty. Oliker and Kortunov noted that the participants of a CSIS event in Moscow feared that the withdrawal would weaken broader arms control efforts, a concern also held by Reddie. He also noted that the U.S. would find it more difficult to face supporters of the NPT and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. However, he was not worried about downsides regarding nuclear deterrence fundamentals. Donahoe believed that, after the withdrawal, Moscow gained a strategic advantage against the EU and NATO and could use its new INF-range missiles for nuclear blackmail during "land-grab" efforts. The

ACA's Kimball saw the withdrawal as not only necessary but self-defeating. The U.S. was risking military competition and an arms race with Russia. The country could now freely and nonchalantly deploy the previously illegal systems. The end of the treaty negatively affected peace and security across the world and renewed Cold War-era hostilities. Moreover, it did nothing to bring Russia to compliance and diverted attention from its actions. Reddie mostly saw the U.S. withdrawal as a negative development, although he acknowledged that the course of action enabled the country to develop symmetrical capabilities to counter Russia's deployment of INF-class missiles.

Still, many in the audience backed the president's policy choice. In expressing her support for the withdrawal on 4 February 2019, Fischer voiced goals that she had also articulating in a previous speech where she defended the treaty's preservation. She continued to consider that the U.S. ought to impose costs on Russia, get the country to stop its destabilizing behavior, and show it that its illegal activities would only contribute to strengthen America's military. New goals included guaranteeing that Russia did not acquire any military advantage from its violation and deter its growing non-strategic nuclear arsenal. She claimed that the administration's decision was a tough but correct one, because what the U.S. had been doing thus far was not working – a point also made by Williams. Fischer denied that China-related goals were the primary reason for the withdrawal, pointing to Russia instead.

Cotton both supported Trump's announcement and the preservation of the INF Treaty. The latter was seen as a way – and the only way – to achieve the latter. Showing that the U.S. would leave the treaty if Russia did not abide by it was meant to change Putin's calculus, making him see that he had more to gain by accepting the terms of the accord. Similarly, Corker did not want the U.S. to leave the accord, and hoped that, in announcing the withdrawal, the administration was striving to bring Russia to compliance. Corker saw the announcement as a way to either get Moscow to abide by the treaty, or as a way to prevent the downsides of staying in an accord that only the U.S. complied with.

Inhofe and Risch acknowledged downsides of leaving the INF Treaty, despite supporting the decision. They wanted the implementation of complementary actions to address the downsides. To address the negative effects of the end of the treaty on NATO's deterrence and defense posture credibility and effectiveness, the U.S. ought to develop and field the capabilities necessary for defense against Russia's illegal system. In order to fight Russia's disinformation and propaganda, the U.S. ought to engage with its citizens to prevent Moscow from re-writing the history of the accord's demise. A similar point was made by Ellehuus, Beutin and Lopinot, although they continued to see the treaty as useful. Risch also stated that the China threat required consideration.

As for the experts, Williams believed that leaving the INF Treaty would lead to the strengthening of the defense of U.S. allies and forces and demonstrate that the country took arms control obligations seriously. The U.S. would also have more flexibility when it came to addressing the China threat. Similarly, Ellehuus, Beutin and Lopinot considered that the U.S. withdrawal could be advantageous vis-à-vis China, and maybe even compel it to engage in arms control negotiations. Still, they acknowledged that Russia would now be able to continue its previously illegal actions openly and

continue to blame the U.S. for the end of the INF Treaty. That view was rejected by senator Fischer, however, who downplayed the liberation of Russia from INF Treaty constraints as a downside of the withdrawal, noting that the country was already ignoring them.

U.S. missile defense: mixed messages, continuity, and change (Discourses of section 6.2 of Chapter 6)

1. Political Discourse Analysis

1.1. Securitizing actor discourse

According to the 2019 MDR, the U.S. would adopt a comprehensive and layered approach to missile defense. The country aimed to protect the homeland (GP), U.S. forces abroad (GP), allies and partners (GP); deter threats and attacks from adversaries (GP); assure allies and partners (GP); hedge against future risks (GP); hold a position of strength during diplomatic engagements (GP); and maintain the ability to conduct regional military operations (GP). Therefore, the U.S. would combine deterrence, active and passive missile defenses, and attack operations (a comprehensive and layered approach to missile defense) (ME) (MDR, 2019: II).

The 2010 BMDR, released by the Obama administration in February 2010, had described a U.S. post-Cold War relationship with Russia whereby the two countries were no longer enemies, war was not very likely, and they would cooperate when advantageous for both parties (CP). It stated that America's "GMD [Ground-Based Midcourse Defense] system [ME] would be employed to defend the United States against *limited* missile launches from any source" (emphasis added) (GP) (BMDR, 2010: 5, 12-13).

Conversely, its successor, the 2019 MDR, released by the Trump administration on 17 January 2019, included Russia (and China) in its list of present and emerging missile threats to the U.S. homeland (CP). It stated that NATO and the U.S. were perceived by Russia as the main threat to its revisionist policies (CP), and that the country often simulated nuclear strikes against U.S. territory (CP). Moscow had modernized its nuclear arsenal, and its military doctrine emphasized nuclear coercion and use (CP). According to Russian leaders, the country possessed HGVs with great in-flight maneuverability (CP). The DOD now claimed that, in case of conflict, homeland missile defense systems (ME) "would defend, to the extent feasible, against a ballistic missile attack upon the U.S. homeland *from any source*" (emphasis added) (GP). While the 2019 MDR did not utilize the word "limited," unlike the 2010 BMDR, the new review made it clear that the U.S. homeland missile defense system (ME) "[was] designed to defend against the existing and potential ICBM threat from rogue states such as North Korea and Iran" (GP) (MDR, 2019: XII). It explained that the country "[relied] on nuclear deterrence [ME] to address

the large and more sophisticated Russian [GP] and Chinese ICBM capabilities [GP], as well as to deter attacks from any source” (GP).

The MDR expressed the DOD’s plans to expand and modernize the existing U.S. homeland missile defense capabilities (ME), a decision in line with Congressional intent as laid out in the 2017 NDAA, whereby the U.S. was to “maintain and improve an effective, robust layered missile defense system capable of defending the territory of the United States, allies, deployed forces, and capabilities against the developing and increasingly complex ballistic missile threat” (MDR, 2019: IV, XII).

The 2010 BMDR review only covered ballistic missiles. The 2019 MDR, on the other hand, considered that other, more advanced offensive missile threats to the U.S. territory, were on the horizon, particularly HGVs and sophisticated cruise missiles (CP). Russia and China were developing such capabilities, whose incredible speeds and unpredictable flight paths challenged U.S. missile defenses systems (CP).

The U.S. should research improvements (ME) for early warning, detection, and tracking of hypersonic and cruise missiles aimed at the U.S. homeland (GP). The Pentagon was seeking improved “ways and options to collect and process information from existing space-based¹⁵⁶ and terrestrial sensors [ME] to track current and emerging cruise missiles and HGV threats and warn of an impending attack” (GP). After research was completed, an AOA would be initiated [ME] “for materiel solutions to provide early warning and attack assessment against these advanced threats” (GP). Such effort, while currently regionally focused, constituted a first step toward the modernization of the American early warning system (ME) against the abovementioned missile threats to the U.S. homeland (GP). Following a 2017 NDAA requirement¹⁵⁷ (VP), the Secretary of Defense would “designate a Service or Defense Agency with acquisition authority [ME] with respect to the capability to defend the homeland against offensive cruise missiles” (GP). Following another 2017 NDAA requirement¹⁵⁸ (VP), “the Director of MDA is assigned the responsibility of Executive Agent for the development of capabilities [ME] to counter HGV (GP) and conventional prompt strike threats (GP). The MDA was also to produce “a plan [ME] identifying the resources, testing, and personnel requirements necessary for defense against hypersonic threats” (GP). The U.S. and Canada would also seek to replace the North Warning System with a new system (ME) that would be designed to increased America’s ability to surveil missile threats approaching North America (GP).

The 2019 MDR also called for a plan “to accelerate efforts to enhance missile defense tracking and discrimination (GP) sensors [ME], to include addressing advanced missile threats, such as HGVs

¹⁵⁶ For instance, the satellites of the Defense Support Program (U.S. Space Force, 2020).

¹⁵⁷ The Secretary of Defense was to designate a Defense Agency or military department with acquisition authority (ME) when it came to “the capability to defend the homeland from cruise missiles” (GP) (Report 114-840. To accompany S. 2943, 2017: 628-632).

¹⁵⁸ Those capabilities could be employed against the US., its allies, or its deployed forces (CP). The MDA was directed to “develop architectures for a hypersonic defense capability [ME], from detecting threats [GP] to intercepting such threats” (GP) (Report 114-840, 2017: 635).

(GP). Space-based sensors (ME) could monitor, detect, and track missile launches from almost anywhere on the planet (GP). They were unimpeded by geographical limitations and did not require basing rights or agreements with foreign states, unlike land-based sensors (ME). Thus, they could be placed wherever needed “to achieve the ideal viewing geometry for launch detection, missile tracking, threat discrimination, and intercept detection/kill assessment of missile threats to the U.S. homeland, [U.S.] forces abroad and to [U.S.] allies and partners” (GP). The sensors [ME] could also hedge against expected and unexpected developments concerning missile threats to the homeland (GP). NORAD and the Air Force were upgrading aircraft tasked with monitoring the U.S. airspace with new sensors (ME) for “tracking and targeting challenging offensive air threats like advance cruise missiles” (GP). The U.S. and Canada were examining options to replace or renew the North Warning System (ME) so as to adapt it to the new threats (GP). NORAD was pursuing a plan intended to improve both countries defense against cruise missiles (GP).

The new review also stated that the DOD would examine concepts and technologies for space-based interceptors (ME), which could prove advantageous in boost-phase defense (GP). The action was a response to the 2018 NDAA¹⁵⁹ (VP). Much had changed since the last time the country considered integrating space-based interceptors in a missile defense architecture (CP). With the development of the missile arsenals of rogue states (CP), “space will play a particularly important role in support of missile defense” (ME). The benefits of space-based sensors might also apply to space-based interceptors (ME), including when it came to their access to missiles launched from almost any part of the world (GP), potentially during their boost-phase (GP). They could increase the odds of interception (GP), reducing the required number of overall interceptors (GP), and destroy missiles over enemy territory (GP). To defend against rogue state missile threats to the American homeland (GP), and in order to keep pace with the threat (GP), the U.S. ought to use advanced technologies, such as kinetic or directed-energy boost-phase defenses (ME), in combination with existing defenses (ME). Much had changed since the last time that the U.S. had considered to use kinetic or directed-energy boost-phase missile defenses (CP). While technically challenging (ME), such technologies were feasible (ME), affordable (GP) (rejects downside) and a strategic “must-have” (ME).

The 2019 MDR also called for supplementing the American homeland missile defense (GP) with the Aegis Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) Block IIA interceptor (ME). The interceptor could ease the burden on the GBI system (GP) and contribute to the protection of U.S. territory (GP) against the

¹⁵⁹ Section 1688 of the 2018 NDAA stated that the MDA ought to “develop a space-based ballistic missile intercept layer to the ballistic missile defense system [ME] that [was] (...) regionally focused [GP]; (...) [and] capable of providing boost-phase defense” (GP) (Report 115-404. To accompany H.R. 2810, 2017: 504). The Senate version of the bill did not contain a similar provision, and the House version mentioned defending against asymmetric threats as a goal of action (GP) (Report no. 115-200, 2017: 686-691).

evolving long-range missile capabilities of rogue states (CP). The administration would continue to test the interceptors against ICBM targets (ME), as directed by Congress¹⁶⁰ (VP).

The report recommended the deployment of an additional 20 GBIs in Alaska (ME), which would carry the new Redesigned Kill Vehicle (RKV) (ME) – a more effective (GP), reliable (GP) and affordable Exo-atmospheric kill vehicle (EKV) (ME). A new interceptor field in Alaska was also being built (ME). Those three enhancements enable the U.S. to defend against a larger number of rogue state ICBMs (GP). However, the MDR delayed, without excluding, a potential construction of a new GBI interceptor site in the continental U.S. (ME). The DOD also recommended the development of “a plan to convert all Aegis destroyers to be fully missile defense capable, including against ballistic missiles” (ME). By doing so, the U.S. aimed to stay ahead of the offensive missile threats to the homeland posed by rogue states (GP), meet a wide range of regional offensive missile threats (GP), and hedge against future threats (GP).

The DOD was also enhancing current missile defense sensors and fielding new and improved ones (ME) to increase their capability to discriminate between different threats (GP). Thus, the COBRA DANE radar’s life will be extended (ME), the Sea-Based X-band will be upgraded (ME), and the Long-Range Discrimination Radar will be constructed in Alaska (ME), while additional radars in Hawaii and in the Pacific region were in the cards (ME). Those homeland missile defense improvements, taken together, will allow for reductions in the number of GBI required for interception of offensive missiles (GP), due to increased efficiency and effectiveness (GP). The U.S. will invest in and deploy enhanced capabilities to confirm that an attacking warhead has been destroyed by a U.S. interceptor (GP) – the Space-based Kill Assessment (ME) and a network of space-based infrared sensors (ME). Per the review, missile defense sensors would increasingly support several different missions (GP).

The MDR also presented a comprehensive approach to missile defense against rogue state and regional missile threats (CP). The approach, “through a combination of deterrence, active and passive missile defenses, and attack operations” (ME), aimed to prevent and defeat missile attacks (GP). Active defenses (ME) would attempt missile interception in all phases of flight (GP), passive defenses (ME) would mitigate the consequences of missile attacks (GP), and attack operations (ME) would be utilized, during a conflict, for the neutralization of offensive missiles before they were launched (GP). The approach contributed to the protection of the American homeland (GP), forces deployed abroad (GP), allies (GP), and partners (GP). It also hedged against future risk (GP), allowed for U.S. diplomats to negotiate from a position of strength (GP), and preserved U.S. freedom of action in regional military operations (GP).

For protection against a range of progressively dangerous and complex missile threats (GP), the U.S. would also strengthen the integration of its homeland and regional missile capabilities, among other

¹⁶⁰ The MDA was directed to carry out a test to evaluate and demonstrate if the SM-3 Block IIA missile interceptor (ME) could defeat a simple ICBM (GP) threat from North Korea (CP) (Report 115-404. To accompany H.R. 2810, 2017: 496-497).

actions (ME). The country would also pursue innovative and advanced missile defense technologies and concepts, such as boost-phase defense (ME), to outpace rising offensive missile threats (GP) such as cruise and hypersonic missiles (CP) (MDR, 2019: II-III, XIII, XVI, XIX, 6, 30, 36-37, 43-45, 54-55, 57, 59-60, 79-80).

Regarding exclusively regional missile defense policy, the 2019 MDR claimed that Russia “[was] fielding an increasingly advanced and diverse range of nuclear-capable regional offensive missile systems that [threatened] deployed U.S. forces, allies, and partners” (CP). The country was using those missile systems to enable a “coercive escalation strategy and nuclear threats to U.S. allies and partners” (CP). It had also fielded an intermediate-range ground-based system in violation of the INF Treaty – the SSC-8 (CP). Moscow was developing a new generation of regional cruise and ballistic missiles in support of an anti-access/area denial strategy aimed at “[defeating] U.S. and allied will and capability in regional crises or conflicts” (CP). Russia had demonstrated in Syria its advance cruise missile capability (CP). There were also several comprehensive developments in Beijing’s offensive missile capabilities (CP), which posed a nuclear and conventional threat to U.S. forces in the Indo-Pacific region (CP), and which severely concerned U.S. allies and partners therein (CP). The document identified several Russian (air-, sea-, and ground-launched) and Chinese (air- and ground-launched) regional missile systems (CP). North Korea and Iran were also identified as missile threats to U.S. deployed forces, allies, and partners (CP). U.S. potential adversaries were, according to the DOD, “fielding an increasingly diverse, expansive, and modern range of regional offensive missile systems that can threaten U.S. forces abroad, allies, and partners” (CP). Those systems could provide them with military and coercive advantages (CP).

Thus, the U.S. would strengthen regional defenses [ME] “against offensive missile threats from any source” (GP). U.S. missile defenses (ME) would defend American “forces abroad, allies, and partners (...) against the full range of regional missile threats” (GP). The U.S. would enhance regional missile defense capabilities by improving current systems (THAAD, Aegis Sea-based Missile Defense, and PAC-3) (ME), finishing construction of the Aegis Ashore site in Poland [ME], and increasing the inventory of missile defense interceptors (Patriot, THAAD and SM-3) (ME). The review also proposed greater integration of homeland and regional missile defense capabilities, and attack operations with active and passive missile defenses (ME). The Army was developing the Indirect Fire Protection Capability (IFPC) (ME), seeking to obtain additional defense against air threats such as cruise missiles (GP) (MDR, 2019: V-VI; X-XI; XIV-XV; 18-19; 34-35, 53, 80).

The 2010 BMDR did not link regional missile defense to Russia. Instead, it emphasized the possibility of cooperating on missile defense with the country (ME), which was then not perceived as a threat (see above). However, the 2010 review stated that “it [was] important that China understand that the United States will work to ensure protection of our forces, allies, and partners in East Asia against all regional ballistic missile threats” (GP) (BMDR, 2010: 34-35) – that is, potentially, against China.

In introducing the 2019 MDR on 17 January 2019, President Trump claimed that the U.S. would upgrade and modernize its missile defenses. It would deploy more interceptors, radars, and sensors; develop new missile defense technologies; and invest in a space-based missile defense layer.

The president stated that the goal of U.S. missile defense policy was “to ensure that we can detect and destroy any missile launched against the United States - anywhere, anytime, anyplace” (GP). The U.S. “[would] terminate any missile launches from hostile powers” (GP). The overriding goal of U.S. missile defense policy was “to detect and destroy every type of missile attack against any American target, whether before or after launch” (GP). A strong America (GP) was, according to Trump, “the best way to prevent conflict [GP], promote peace [VP], preserve freedom [VP], and protect [the] great [American] people” (GP). Trump claimed that the world was changing (CP) and the U.S. ought to change faster (GP). Iran might pursue ICBM capabilities that could reach the U.S. (CP). Thus, the U.S. ought to develop new technology (ME) to outpace its adversaries (GP).

The review called for 20 additional GBIs in Alaska (ME), and new sensors and radars (ME) to detect foreign missile launches against the U.S. (GP) and defend the American people by shielding every city in the U.S. (GP). The U.S. was adjusting its posture (ME) to defend the American people from all kinds of missile strikes – not only ballistic – including cruise and hypersonic missiles (GP). There were “some very bad players out there” (CP), and to guarantee “that enemy missiles find no sanctuary on Earth or in the skies above” (GP) the U.S. was investing in a space-based missile defense layer (ME) (Trump, 2019b).

On 23 January 2019, Pompeo stated that what “Russia [was] seeing from the Trump administration (...) [was] a missile defense review that [made] sure that America will be capable of defending itself not only next year but 20 years from now” (GP). He was certain “that none of [those] things sat well with Vladimir Putin” (GP) (Pompeo, 2019b).

Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy David J. Trachtenberg explained, on 1 February 2019, that the U.S. continued to rely on deterrence (ME) vis-à-vis Russia and China’s strategic nuclear arsenals (GP), so as to prevent the two countries “from taking an aggressive action against [America] or [its] allies” (GP). Still, the U.S. would not “artificially constrain the development and evolution of [its] missile-defense capabilities” (GP) (rejects downsides). The U.S. needed to outpace the missile threat from rogue states such as North Korea and Iran (GP). Moreover, in the words of the Under Secretary, it was the view of the DOD “that any missile that is launched against the United States from anywhere at any time, we’re going to do our best to defend against, plain and simple” (GP).

Trachtenberg also highlighted the considerable emphasis of the 2019 review on Moscow and Beijing’s regional missile capability development (CP) and the need for the U.S. to counter it (GP). He confirmed that Russia and China, particularly, “[were] developing all kinds of missile capabilities integrated into their strategy and doctrine that [could] be used in a regional context” (CP). In fact, the MDR was dropping the word ballistic from its title in acknowledgment of the nature of missile threats to U.S. territory and deployed forces, as well as allies and friends, went beyond simply ballistic missiles

(CP). They included “cruise missiles, hypersonic missiles, missiles that are smaller, faster, more difficult to track, defend against” (CP) (Trachtenberg, 2019).

On 8 May 2019, General Terrence J. O’Shaughnessy, Commander of the U.S. Northern Command, stated that the U.S. homeland was not a sanctuary (CP). Russia and China were revisionist powers (CP), whose strategies were centered on holding the U.S. at risk with conventional and nuclear weapons (CP). They had shown to be willing to attack American civilian and defense infrastructure in case of conflict (CP). To deter its adversaries (GP), the U.S. had to be able to detect and defeat threats to its territory (GP). The country had to improve its ability to see and defeat the already fielded long-range cruise missiles of its adversaries (GP), thus needing, to achieve that goal, space-based sensors (ME). He perceived the development of a capability gap in the U.S. when it came to the hypersonic and cruise missile threat (CP). Thus, urgent action was required (ME). If Russia were to attack the U.S. homeland, it would likely resort to cruise missiles, bombers, or potentially hypersonic missiles (CP). The U.S. needed to stay ahead of those threats (GP) (H.A.S.C. No. 116–38, 2019: 5, 10).

On 12 March 2020, Robert Soofer, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear and Missile Defense Policy reiterated that the U.S. relied on nuclear deterrence (ME) to address Russia and China’s more complex nuclear threats (GP). At the same time, he stated that the U.S. was developing a new space-based system (ME) for tracking more sophisticated missiles such as hypersonics (GP). The country was exploring options for a more effective layered homeland capacity for missile defense (ME) to defeat missile attacks from rogue states over the next decade (GP). The rogue threat, he warned, was increasing its capability (CP). He downplayed Russian concerns resulting from the U.S. testing the SM-3 IIA missile (a component of America’s layer missile defense) against ICBMs (ME). Soofer claimed that Russia had more interceptors around Moscow than the U.S. had in total (GP). Moreover, Russia’s missiles were too sophisticated and numerous for the SM–3 IIA missile to address (GP) (H.A.S.C. No. 116–82, 2020: 8-9, 19).

On the same date, Vice-admiral Jon A. Hill, director of the MDA claimed that the U.S. had to take steps toward developing new-generation defensive capabilities, which ought to include a space-based sensing layer.

A space-based global sensor capability [ME] was necessary for hypersonic and cruise missile defense against the homeland (GP). Current tracking sensor systems needed to be improved (ME) so that the U.S. “[could] handle the evolution of the ballistic threat, dim targets, and to track the unpredictable maneuvers globally for the hypersonic threat. The MDA was “undertaking architectural work in advanced technology development needed [ME] to support hypersonic missile defense and cruise missile defense of the homeland (GP). He added that a crucial part of that architecture “[was] a persistent space-based global sensor capability [ME] to provide full track custody [GP] supporting fire control engagements (GP) (H.A.S.C. No. 116–82, 2020: 6, 16). For General O’Shaughnessy, given the technological advancements in capabilities such as HGVs (CP), space-based sensors were the only way (ME) to give appropriate warning (GP) and defeat the threat (GP) (H.A.S.C. No. 116–82, 2020: 17).

A June 2020 DOD document called for a U.S. layered homeland missile defense. The paper claimed that the DOD's "fundamental responsibility was the protection of the American people, the homeland, and the American way of life" (VP). The document singled out Iran and North Korea as threats to the homeland (CP). It stated that it was U.S. homeland missile defense [ME] policy to stay ahead of those threats (GP), while relying on nuclear deterrence [ME] to deal with Russia and China's strategic missile arsenals (GP). Thus, the "complementary layered missile defense of the U.S. homeland" [ME] that the Pentagon was proposing was intended to counter a future rogue state threat (GP), seeing as the U.S. was prepared for the current one that they posed (CP). The layers of homeland missile defense would be comprised by the existing GMD, a future Next Generation Interceptor, the Aegis BMD system, the SM-3 Block IIA, and a new THAAD (ME). The document also denied instability (GP) and arms races (GP) when it came to Russia and China as downsides (GP) (U.S. DOD, 2020b).

In answering advance policy questions in the context of his 28 July 2020 nomination hearing, the soon-to-be Commander of USNORTHCOM and NORAD Glen D. VanHerck claimed that cruise missile defense was a top priority. He "[advocated] for systems [ME] capable of detecting and defeating cruise missile threats [GP] to keep pace with [those] challenges" (GP). He wanted to defend North America against said threats (GP) (VanHerck, 2020: 30-31).

1.2. Audience discourse

The 2018 and the 2019 NDAA Conference Reports called for the development of persistent space-based sensor architecture (ME) (Report 115-404. To accompany H.R. 2810, 2017; Report 115-874. To accompany H.R. 5515, 2018). The House version of the 2018 NDAA justified the course of action on the basis of the goal of defending the homeland, deployed forces and allies (GP) against the threat posed by ballistic and hypersonic missiles (CP) (H.R. 2810, 2017: 683-686). The House version of the 2019 NDAA explained that delaying the development of a space-based sensor architecture (ME) would leave the U.S. at a disadvantage against hypersonic threats (CP) (GP) (downside of delaying action) (Report no. 115-70, 2018: 795-797). The Senate version of the 2019 NDAA directed the production of a report about the necessity of discrimination improvements (GP) within the missile defense architecture (ME). The document articulated perceptions of discrimination challenges (CP) concerning emerging hypersonic and cruise missile threats (CP) (S. 2987, 2018: 815-816).

The 2018 NDAA Conference Report also stated that the DOD ought to ensure the initial operational deployment of an effective interim directed-energy or kinetic boost-phase BMD as soon as practicable (ME). The bill also directed the MDA to "conduct research and development regarding options for a space-based defensive layer, including with respect to space-based interceptors [ME] and directed energy platforms" (ME) (Report 115-404, 2017: 502, 504-505).

The 2019 NDAA Conference Report directed the Director of the MDA to submit a report on how hypersonic missile defense could be accelerated (ME) in order to meet (GP) emerging hypersonic threats (CP). To achieve that goal, the hypersonic missile defense program was to be deployed “in conjunction with a persistent space-based missile defense sensor program” (ME). The document also called for strengthening the layered defense of the American homeland (ME) to protect the continental U.S. (GP) from the North Korean and Iranian long-range threats (CP). To achieve that goal, Congress supported the testing of regional systems and their potential deployment (if testing was successful) (ME), or the deployment of a new GBI site (ME). However, the deployment of regional assets for homeland missile defense was conditional on DOD certification that there would not be downsides to strategic stability (GP) (potential downside). The NDAA also directed the MDA to produce a report on any required discrimination improvements within the missile defense architecture (GP). The report should also contain a plan on how the agency planned to quickly deploy advanced discrimination capabilities (ME) in light of developing adversary threats, including cruise and hypersonic missiles (CP). The 2019 NDAA Conference Report directed the DOD to begin development of space-based BMD interceptors, boost-phase BMD capabilities (ME), and a space-based sensor architecture (ME), regardless of the decision of the upcoming MDR (ME). The bill also called for an interim missile defense capability (ME) for regional cruise missile defense (GP) that could be deployed before the Indirect Fire Protection Capability became fully operational (ME). Cruise missile defense was considered a critical capability for defense against Russian and Chinese threats (CP). Thus, Congress wanted the deployment of an interim capability in Europe and Asia (ME) to defend significant fixed site locations and air bases (GP). There was a grave concern over the scarcity of U.S. ground-based cruise missile defense capabilities (CP) (Report 115-874. To accompany H.R. 5515, 2018: 26-28, 505, 526-529, 536-537, 530, 799-800, 1070, 1075).

On 17 January 2019, some legislators voiced their views on the 2019 MDR. Senator Jim Inhofe (R-OK) spoke of the importance of countering the threat (GP) posed by Iran and North Korea (CP) and of maintaining or establishing a competitive advantage relative to U.S. adversaries (GP), whose capabilities were swiftly advancing (CP). Thus, he supported the MDR’s emphasis on developing advanced technologies for modernization of the U.S. missile defense system (ME) (Mitchell, 2019). Representative Mike Turner (R-OH) also highlighted the advancement of adversary capabilities (CP) and the importance of keeping the American people and U.S. allies safe (GP) by maintaining or enhancing deterrence (GP) (Turner, 2019). Mac Thornberry (R-TX) believed that the U.S. faced “an unprecedented range of serious and complex threats” (CP), such as a rogue state missile attack against the American homeland or U.S. allies and friends (CP). The U.S. needed to develop and deploy a defense (ME) against those threats (GP) (Thornberry, 2019).

Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) believed that space-based capabilities were worth exploring (ME), but the U.S. had to “weigh investments among competing national security priorities” (GP) (potential downsides). The U.S. had to make smart investments (ME) to ensure the reliability and effectiveness of

its missile defense system (GP) and protect Americans and allies (GP). An effective and “high-tech” missile defense system was a U.S. priority (ME). Such a system would deter conflict (GP) and protect the homeland and U.S. forward-deployed forces (GP). It would also “create an opening for diplomacy (GP). It was not, however, “a magic bulletproof shield” (ME). The U.S. should continue the nuclear triad modernization as well (ME) (Reed, 2019b).

Senator Markey (D-MA) opposed the MDR’s proposal of “weaponization of space” (ME), despite the changing missile threat environment (CP). He believed that “spending billions of dollars to try and defend America from every missile [its] adversaries [possessed] [was] not a winning strategy” (GP) (rejects goal). It was ineffective (ME), dangerous (GP), costly (GP), and possibly destabilizing (GP) (downsides).

Instead, the U.S. should focus on strengthening its limited regional missile defenses (ME) and expanding the arms control architecture (ME), and engaging diplomatically with Russia, China, and others (ME). He wanted to ensure that “the weapons of the future,” such as hypersonic missiles (CP) did not undermine U.S. security (GP). The senator did not want to waste billions of taxpayer’s dollars (GP). Missile defense [ME] and arms control [ME] worked together as components of U.S. deterrence (GP) (Markey, 2019).

The chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Representative Adam Smith (D-WA), considered that instead of hurrying to buy and deploy unproven missile defense systems (ME), the U.S. should invest in proven missile defense efforts (ME), to improve the reliability of the current system (GP). He regretted that the MDR was emphasizing the first in lieu of the second course of action (ME). A space-based interceptor layer (ME) would be prohibitively expensive (GP) (downside) and challenging at the technological level (ME).

Smith wanted to protect the American people and allies (GP) in the face of the North Korean threat (CP). The first course of action would lead to downsides by wasting taxpayer’s money (GP) and fueling an arms race (GP) by giving Russia and China an incentive to increase their nuclear weapons quantitatively and qualitatively (GP) (Smith, 2019a).

On 8 May 2019, Mike Turner (R-OH), ranking member of the House Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, stated that, last year, the lawmakers had recognized, “on a bicameral and bipartisan basis” (VP), the hypersonic missile threat posed by Russia and China (CP), which had led them to provide additional funding to a program to provide the U.S. with space-based sensing capability. The program was deemed necessary (ME) to detect and track hypersonic threats headed to U.S. territory (GP) (H.A.S.C. No. 116–38, 2019: 2) (see analysis of the 2019 NDAA Conference Report above). On the same date, Bradley Byrne (R-AL), of the same committee, agreed on the importance of space-based sensors (ME) for hypersonic defense (GP) (H.A.S.C. No. 116–38, 2019: 15-16).

The Senate version of the 2020 NDAA, introduced by Senator Inhofe on 19 June 2019 stated that it was the Sense of the Senate that the U.S. should “continue to pursue a comprehensive missile defense strategy [ME] that [would] deliver integrated and effective capabilities to counter [GP] ballistic,

cruise, and hypersonic missile threats (CP). The document noted that U.S. adversaries were rapidly expanding their offensive missile capabilities and adding new ones to their arsenals (CP). They were integrating those capabilities in their war planning, military exercises, and coercive threats (CP). Moscow and Beijing were quickly improving their offensive missile capabilities and developing advanced ground-, air-, and sea-launched cruise missiles and hypersonic capabilities (CP). The proliferation of ballistic, cruise, and hypersonic missiles all threatened the U.S. homeland, deployed forces, allies, partners, and regional balances (CP). The U.S. ought to outpace its adversaries' offensive missile capabilities (GP). The U.S. missile defense programs ought to defend against hypersonic, cruise, and ballistic missiles in all phases of their flight (GP). U.S. missile defense policy should be expanded [ME] to contemplate the defense of "allies, deployed forces, and capabilities [GP] against the developing and increasingly complex "ballistic, cruise, and hypersonic missile threats" (CP) – not just "ballistic missiles," as the 2017 NDAA had defined. Moreover, it was important to develop and deploy a space-based sensor architecture (ME) to ensure that "missile defenses of the United States [were] more effective against ballistic missile threats [GP] and more responsive [GP] to emerging threats from hypersonic and cruise missiles" (CP) (CREC, 2019: S3940; Report 114-840, 2016: 628).

The 2020 NDAA Conference Report, released on 9 December 2019, defined it as U.S. missile defense policy to maintain and improve (ME) "an effective layered missile defense system capable of defending the territory of the United States [GP] against the developing and increasingly complex missile threat posed by *rogue states*" (CP) (emphasis added). The document further clarifies that it was U.S. policy to "rely on nuclear deterrence [ME] to address more sophisticated and larger quantity near-peer intercontinental missile threats to the homeland of the United States" (GP). Moreover, the U.S. would maintain and improve "an effective regional missile defense system [ME] capable of defending the allies, partners, and deployed forces of the United States against increasingly complex missile threats" (GP) (Report 116-333, 2019: 587). The missile defense language of the 2020 NDAA Conference Report originated in the House version of the 2020 NDAA (section 1672), which contained a provision to modify section 1681 of the 2017 NDAA "to reflect the principles governing U.S. missile defense as outlined by the 2019 Missile Defense Review." Representative Cooper highlighted this update to U.S. missile defense policy in his opening statement of a session pertaining to the FY20 Strategic Forces Subcommittee markup (U.S. House Armed Services Committee, 2019).

The 2020 NDAA Conference Report stated that the appropriate agencies ought to "develop a hypersonic and ballistic missile tracking space sensor payload" (ME). The bill also repealed a requirement of the 2018 NDAA which stated that the Director of the MDA was to "establish a space test bed to conduct research on a space-based missile intercept layer" (ME). The Act also mandated research to ascertain whether the security benefits [GP] of developing and deploying homeland missile defenses (ME), would outweigh the downsides stemming from potential adverse reactions from rogue states (GP) and near-peer adversaries (GP). Said research ought to consider the effectiveness of

homeland missile defenses endeavors (ME) when it came to deterring ballistic missile development by near-peer adversaries and rogue states (GP). (Report 116-333, 2019: 587-588, 596, 1452-1453).

On 12 March 2020, Turner reiterated his threat perceptions of Moscow and Beijing in a time of great power competition (CP). He stated that Russia was fielding strategic hypersonic weapons (CP) while China was in the process of developing regional hypersonic weapons (CP). He believed that the U.S. needed to develop the capacity defend itself from those threats, approving the fact that the 2021 presidential budget request had included \$206.8 million for hypersonic defense (GP). He regretted, however, that said budget had zeroed the funding for high-powered lasers (i.e., directed-energy) for missile defense (ME) as well as for the MDA's efforts to develop hypersonic and ballistic missile space-based sensors (ME) (H.A.S.C. No. 116-82, 2020: 2). On the same date, Seth Moulton (D-MA), of the same committee, set forward the argument that the U.S. and Russia were in the middle of a "never-ending escalatory cycle." Every time the U.S. improved its missile defense, Russians developed more advanced capabilities. Despite Washington's assurances that U.S. missile defenses were designed to address rogue threats [ME], Russia was continuously modernizing its forces (GP) (downside) (H.A.S.C. No. 116-82, 2020: 23).

Like its predecessor, the 2021 NDAA Conference Report, released on 3 December 2020, directed the development and procurement of a hypersonic and ballistic missile tracking space sensor payload (ME). Moreover, it directed the production of an assessment on how the development and deployment of regional missile defense systems – specifically, THAAD and Aegis BMD systems – (ME) for layered homeland missile defense would be perceived by near-peer foreign countries and rogue nations, and how they would be likely to respond (GP) (potential downsides). In addition, a report was to be submitted to Congress covering several issues, including: the requirements of the proposed layered homeland missile defense architecture (ME); potential complementary actions required to support the course of action (ME); potential impacts on the posture plans of the Navy (GP), and on the deployment of two variants of the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer (a warship that can be used for missile defense)(GP); relevant policy considerations (potential downsides); life-cycle cost estimate (ME); a feasibility assessment on the THAAD adaptation (ME); and assessments concerning the industrial base capacity, training, manning, and sustainment needed for support of the architecture (ME).

The bill mandated another report (ME) on the defense of Guam (GP) from threats such as ballistic, hypersonic, and cruise missiles (CP). It questioned how deploying additional missile defense systems in the island could affect strategic stability (GP) and the likely responses from near-peer competitors (GP) and rogue states (GP) (downsides). The production of a report on vulnerabilities of the contiguous United States to cruise missile threats was also directed (ME). The law also required an independent cost estimate (GP) (potential downside) and two successful flight intercept tests before production on the new-generation interceptor could start (ME) (questions feasibility) (Report 116-617, 2020: 682, 685-688, 691-693).

The explanatory statement for the 2021 DOD Appropriations Bill expressed congressional support for the development of a Hypersonic and Ballistic Tracking Space Sensor program (ME), required to track and detect ballistic and hypersonic missiles (GP), for the development of an interceptor (ME) against hypersonic weapons (GP) (“Explanatory Statement,” 2020: 5-6).

We now move on to the experts. A 7 May 2019 RAND report stated that any defense that the U.S. could deploy in the foreseeable future would be unable (ME) to intercept (GP) the numerous nuclear weapons and decoys that Moscow and Beijing have the means to deliver (CP). They could fire ballistic and cruise missiles from land launchers and submarines and resort to long-range bombers (CP). Thus, the U.S. would rely on a strategy of massive retaliation (ME) to deter attacks by nuclear states (GP). To enable that course of action and deter state power attacks, the U.S. ought to modernize its nuclear arsenal and delivery systems (ME) to assure a “modern, reliable, and effective nuclear weapons and the means to employ them (GP). To defeat limited missile attacks (GP), the U.S. should grow and improve its missile defenses (ME). Indeed, building a limited BMD (ME) and fully modernizing the nuclear deterrent (ME) were high priorities actions for the authors of the report (America’s Strategy-Resource Mismatch, 2019: x-xi, 10, 14, 176).

On 17 January 2019, CSIS expert Thomas Karako stated that, “[f]or the first time, the document [i.e., an MDR] puts Russia and China in the same sentence as missile defenses, making explicit what has hitherto been implicit” (GP) (Karako, 2019a).

In January 2019, Karako claimed that a space sensor layer [ME] and counter-hypersonic capabilities [ME] were pressing. He urged legislators not to wait (ME) (rejections delayed action) (Mehta, 2019). On 4 February 2019, Karako (2019b) acknowledged that the 2010 BMDR stressed a regional missile threat stemming, still, from rogue states, whereas according to the new review, the U.S. would “presumably (...) defend and aggressively defend against regional missiles from Russia and China” (GP). He considered that the U.S. had woken up to the fact that it possessed “a Russia problem” (CP), which is why he supported the 2019 MDR’s endorsement of active defenses (ME) against cruise missiles, such as the SSC-8 for U.S. forward forces, regardless of where they came from (GP). On 28 May 2019, Karako (2019c: 3-6, 13) claimed that the 2019 MDR was lacking in terms of “necessary scale and urgency of change to adequately contribute to deterrence and defense goals in relation to Russia and China” (GP). He deemed that the review fell short in the pursuit of concrete actions [ME] to contend with the complex regional missile threat their integrated attacks posed (CP). Countering [GP] Moscow and Beijing’s missile threats was, after all, “no small undertaking” (CP). On 6 September 2019, the expert reiterated several of his previously expressed premises, warning that “a new period of missile threats [had] already arrived, consisting of a spectrum of advanced ballistic and cruise missiles as well as hypersonic glide vehicles” (CP) (Karako, 2019d).

In March 2019, Karako and Wes Rumbaugh (2019) deemed that the actions set forth by the 2019 MDR and the administration 2020 budget were insufficient to address the central challenge at the time (ME) – “the return of long-term strategic competition” (CP), and the most challenging missile

threats of the new era (CP). They supported the president's goal of detecting and destroying all missiles launched against the U.S. (GP), seeking improvements in the "overall U.S. deterrence and defense goals in relation to Russia and China" (GP). The administration's focus remained centered on the limited ballistic missile threats posed by "weak" rogue states in detriment of the "high-end" threat of complex, structured, and integrated missile attacks from Russia and China (CP). Some studies (ME) about countering HGVs (GP) constituted exceptions, however. They called for more funding for a space-based sensor layer (ME), and, with the goal of countering more advanced missile threats (GP), the experts recommended either adapting existing interceptors or developing new ones (ME). Space-based sensors (ME) were crucial for the "birth-to-death" (i.e., in all phases of flight) discrimination and tracking of HGVs and ballistic missiles (GP). Given that HGVs were less predictable and much more maneuverable than ballistic missiles (CP) terrestrial sensors were likely insufficient (ME), being necessary their fusion with space-based sensors (ME). The U.S. should also move quicker in the development of new interceptors (ME) to counter HGVs (GP) (Karako & Rumbaugh, 2019).

In March 2020, the experts expressed their disappointment at the cancellation of the MDA's cancellation of its Directed Energy Demonstrator program, which terminated its investment in boost phase missile defense (ME). They welcomed actions carried out in the "defeat side" of the category of missile defense and defeat, mainly encompassing "programs for prompt strike operations that might be integrated into an overall posture [ME] to counter missiles both before and after launch (GP). Still, they perceived that to be a moment of considerable uncertainty concerning the future of homeland cruise missile defense, hypersonic defense, the space sensor layer, and directed-energy, actions which they supported, as well as "the shape of the larger missile defense enterprise" (ME). The specialists argued that being able to track hypersonic missiles (GP) would be useful even for strategic warning (GP), but interception (GP) would also require increased funding for hypersonic defense programs (ME). Funding for hypersonic defense for FY2021 was disappointed, with the Regional Glide Phase Weapon System, for regional hypersonic defense (ME) mentioned as one of the unfunded priorities (Karako & Rumbaugh, 2020).

On 17 January 2019 and in March 2019, December 2019, and January 2020, Kingston Reif, an expert at the ACA, expressed his views on U.S. missile defense policy. He disagreed with the president's declaration that the goal of U.S. missile defenses ought to be the detection and destruction of "any missile launched against the United States anywhere, anytime, anyplace" (GP).

The MDR emphasized U.S. reliance on deterrence (ME) to deter Russian and Chinese from striking the American homeland with their ICBMs (GP), revising the role of missile defenses established by the 2017 NDAA (ME). However, since Trump's statement contradicted the review, Russia and China might justifiably wonder which language – Trump's or the review's – reflected U.S. policy (GP) (downside). The president's goal would be unachievable (GP) (rejects goal), destabilizing (GP), and costly (GP) (downsides). According to the specialist, "an open-ended and unconstrained missile defense buildup [ME] would be misguided [ME] and would diminish U.S. security (GP) (downside).

Reif also criticized the review by stating that the “significant and costly [GP] [downside] expansion of the role and scope of U.S. missile defenses” (ME) proposed by the review would probably increase Moscow and Beijing’s concerns that their nuclear deterrents could be under threat (GP). That could undermine strategic stability (GP) and complicate further nuclear arms reductions (GP) (downsides). Those downsides were associated with using regional missile defenses against Moscow and Beijing (GP), defending the homeland against hypersonic and cruise missiles (GP), enhancing homeland missile defense (GP) with SM-3 Block IIA interceptors (ME), achieving boost-phase missile defense (GP), and ensuring the detecting and destruction of any missile launched against the America homeland (according to Trump’s statement). He rejected those goals and claimed that space-based interceptors would also be tremendously destabilizing (GP), as previous research had shown (downside).

Furthermore, the DOD’s decision to delay, for now, decisions to field space-based interceptors (ME) and construct another GMD site (ME) were indicative of how controversial and expensive they were (ME) (inaction is the preferred choice). Additional studies on space-based interceptors would lead to the same realizations that had been obtained in previous research: that they were unworkable (ME) and unaffordable (GP) (downside). A 2012 National Academy of Sciences report had concluded that boost-phase missile defense of any kind (directed-energy or kinetic, and whether based air, space, sea or land) was not feasible (ME) or practical (ME). Defense against hypersonic missiles over a broad area was even more difficult than against ballistic missile threats, seeing as the latter’s flight trajectory was more predictable (GP) (questions goal).

For the expert, building additional interceptors (ME) and testing the Aegis SM-3 Block IIA interceptor against an ICBM target (ME) to supplement homeland defense (GP) “[threatened] to cross the line between expanding missile defense capabilities to counter regional and ‘rogue’ state threats to the homeland (GP), and the development of capabilities that can counter Russian and Chinese long-range missiles (GP). Russia and China had shared their concerns about the review (CP) and might undertake measures to counter new U.S. missile defenses (GP) (downside). The expert recommended that the U.S. did not seek destabilizing actions (GP) (downside) such as SM-3 Block IIA testing (ME) or space-based interceptors (ME) and pursued, instead, comprehensive strategic stability dialogues with Moscow and Beijing (ME). It would be more disciplined to focus on improving the shortcomings of current systems, particularly the GMD (ME) and to improve missile detection and tracking capabilities (GP). Reif noted that the review broke new ground in the sense that it proposed enhancing defenses (ME) against ballistic, hypersonic, and cruise missile threats at the regional level regardless of their source (GP).

The ACA expert welcomed the fact that the 2020 NDAA put the brakes on the controversial (ME), unaffordable (GP), and dangerous (GP) dream of protecting the American homeland against large-scale missile attacks from Moscow and Beijing (GP) and of putting interceptors in space (ME) (Reif, 2019a, 2019b, 2020; Donnelly, 2019).

Writing for the ACA in March 2019, Laura Grego (2019) claimed that the 2017 NDAA had “[opened] the door to defending against the larger and more sophisticated Russian and Chinese missile arsenals.” However, it was unclear how the administration wanted to proceed, partly due to inconsistent messaging: Trump and Pompeo’s speech were inconsistent with the 2019 MDR (ME) (policy change or policy continuity was unclear). In any case, “the significant buildup of strategic-capable ballistic missile defenses” that the 2019 review proposed had strategic implications for Moscow and Beijing “whether they are currently described as its targets or not” (GP) (downsides). Thus, Russia and China might improve and diversify their nuclear delivery system to prevent U.S. credible first-strike capability (GP) (downside).

For instance, while the document’s discussion of preemptive attacks (ME) was focused on rogue states (GP), she considered that Moscow and Beijing would likely not be able to ignore this new U.S. approach (GP) (downside), especially given U.S. increased expenditures on overhead sensors (ME). American interest in space-based interceptors would likely worsen Russian and Chinese concerns (GP). Moreover, space-based interceptors would likely be cost-prohibitive (GP) and destabilizing (GP). They would make it difficult to impose limits on anti-satellite and space weapons (GP), jeopardizing a future sustainable (VP) and secure space environment (GP) (lists several downsides).

The 2019 MDR made it clear that Russia (GP) was now included in the realm of regional missile defense (ME). The document described Russian and Chinese efforts to overcome missile defenses – hypersonic and cruise missiles, or MIRVs – as novel threats (CP) (rejects premise) and not as hedge policies against a U.S. missile defense system that had been unconstrained since the end of the ABM Treaty (CP).

Writing for the ACA, Elaine Bunn (2019) suggested that the policy ambiguity resulting from the contradictions between Trump’s speech and the 2019 MDR may have been intentional and aimed at undermining Moscow’s confidence in its “escalate-to-de-escalate” strategy (GP) (covert goal). While the president’s rhetoric might have been simply aspirational, the expert considered that the administration indeed envisioned defending the homeland from Russian and Chinese missile attacks, and not only from North Korean and Iranian missile threats (GP).

For the expert, the separation between Russian and Chinese threats from other state threats was simply a technical matter. Defending U.S. territory from an Iranian or North Korean ICBM was feasible (GP) but doing the same against a willing Russian or Chinese attack was not (GP) (rejects goal). By adding 20 more GBIs (ME) to outpace a North Korean or Iranian threat (GP), the U.S. might elicit a negative reaction from Moscow and Beijing, regardless of American assurances that it was not relying on its homeland missile defense system against them (GP). Russia and Moscow had been reacting negatively to U.S. homeland and regional missile deployments despite American assurances that they would not undermine the two country’s strategic deterrents (GP) (downsides).

Bunn also considered U.S. plans to test the SM-3 Block IIA interceptors, which were part of the Aegis BMD System, against an ICBM (ME), for an extra layer for homeland defense against the long-

range missiles of rogue states (GP). She believed that doing so would probably lead Moscow to complain that the testing enabled NATO missile defenses with the same interceptors to intercept Russian ICBMs. As result, NATO-Russian tensions might increase (GP). China might also complain, seeing as Japan planned to deploy the same capability (GP) (downsides).

For the expert, it was unclear whether the DOD was proposing to defend the U.S. homeland by intercepting HGVs and cruise missiles from Russia or China (GP), or if the department simply sought to improve U.S. early warning of those attacks (GP) (unclear goal of action). On the one hand, she questioned the reason for trying to defend U.S. territory against HGV and cruise missile threats (GP) with missile defenses (ME) but not Russia or China's numerous and sophisticated ballistic missiles (GP). On the other, she acknowledged that enhanced early warning capabilities would allow (ME) for more time to disperse national command authorities (GP) and change opponent's calculus regarding the effectiveness of a decapitating strike (GP). In any case, the message articulated by the MDR was possibly self-contradictory (ME) (conclusion may be wrong).

Bunn considered that one of the reasons why the new MDR made it clear that Russia was part of U.S. regional missile defense efforts was the fact that, under the INF Treaty, Moscow was not supposed to have land-based INF-class missiles (CP), and there was little concern over short-range missiles or intermediate-range missiles launched by sea or air (CP). However, the U.S. was now concerned that Russia could use regional cruise and ballistic missiles to undermine or stop the U.S. from reinforcing its European allies, especially in the Baltic countries (CP). Indeed, the annexation of Crimea and invasion of Ukraine had changed U.S. and NATO perceptions of Russia (CP). The specialist believed that, in strengthening regional missile defense capabilities (ME), the U.S. should hold further consultations with European allies (VP), and conversations were expected to be difficult (CP).

Programs for boost-phase interception (ME), directed-energy (ME), and space-based interceptors (ME) might be relevant for homeland and regional missile defense against several kinds of missiles from an array of countries (GP). In the past, efforts in boost-phase interception had been marred by technological hurdles or operational drawbacks (ME), but the capability was conceptually appealing (ME) and new solutions might be found in the research proposed by the 2019 review (ME).

The 2021 NDAA directed the production of a report on cruise missile defense of the United States (GP). The report ought to include the identification of any existing vulnerabilities of the contiguous United States to cruise missile threats, as well as a plan to diminish them (GP). It also mandated the submission of a report on the defense of Guam from cruise, hypersonic, and ballistic missiles (GP) (Report 116-617, 2020: 691-693).

2. Juxtaposition of reasons for action

We start by juxtaposing the circumstantial premises of the securitizing actors with those of the audience. For the securitizing actors, diverse missile threats existed in the strategic environment. Russia and China were described as current and emergent threats to the American homeland. Moscow perceived the U.S. and NATO as its main threats, and frequently simulated nuclear strikes against American territory. Moscow's military doctrine emphasized nuclear use and coercion, and its nuclear arsenal had been modernized. The most likely way in which Russia would attack the U.S. homeland would be by means of cruise missiles, bombers, or hypersonic missiles. Russia and China – revisionist powers – were developing advanced offensive missile threats in sophisticated cruise missiles and HGVs. The long-range missile capabilities of rogue states were also evolving. Iran might pursue ICBM capabilities that could reach America. Teheran and Pyongyang posed a threat to the American homeland, even if the U.S. was currently prepared for it for the time being.

At the regional level, Russia was deploying progressively more advanced and diverse set of nuclear-capable missiles, which threatened U.S. forces, allies, and partners, enabling Moscow's coercion strategies and nuclear threats. Among such missiles was the SSC-8, which was banned under the INF Treaty. Russia was developing a new generation of cruise and ballistic missiles to support a strategy of anti-access/area denial during regional conflicts or crises. There had also been significant developments in China's offensive nuclear missile capabilities, which threatened U.S. forces in the Pacific. Indeed, Russia and China were developing many different missile capabilities for use in regional contexts. They were seen as revisionist powers that were willing to attack U.S. civilian and defense infrastructure during a conflict, and whose strategies revolved around holding the country at risk with conventional and nuclear weapons. North Korea and Iran's deployed regional offensive missiles were increasingly modern, expansive, and diverse, threatening American forces, allies, and partners.

Overall, the U.S. homeland, deployed forces, allies, and partners were threatened not only by ballistic missiles, but also by cruise and hypersonic missiles, which were faster, smaller, more difficult to defend against, and track. Some securitizing actors perceived a changing world, marked by technological advancements in capabilities such as HGVs. At the same time, much had changed since the U.S. had considered capabilities such as space-based interceptors and kinetic and directed energy boost-phase defenses. General O'Shaughnessy perceived a U.S. capability gap to be developing when it came to the hypersonic and cruise missile threat.

As for the audience, similarities are found in their threat perceptions relative to the securitizing actors. The 2019 NDAA highlighted a Russian and Chinese cruise missile threat for which the U.S. lacked the capabilities to defend against. The 2020 NDAA, identified a ballistic, hypersonic and cruise missile threat to the American homeland, U.S. forces, allies, and partners. Russia and China had improved their offensive missile forces, having developed air-, ground-, and sea-launched cruise and hypersonic missile capabilities. Individually, senator Markey and representative Turner saw hypersonic missile capabilities as threats, with the latter claiming the existence of strong congressional support for

that view. Senator Inhofe, along with representatives Thornberry and Smith, focused on the rogue state missile threat.

However, the House version of the 2018 NDAA had already highlighted a ballistic and hypersonic missile threat at the homeland and regional levels. The Senate version of the 2019 NDAA mentioned emerging hypersonic and cruise missile threats, same as the 2019 NDAA Conference Report, which also cited long-range threats posed by North Korea and Iran. Those documents reveal that the threat perceptions highlighted in the 2019 MDR already existed in the legislative body before the release of the report.

As for the experts, Karako and Rumbaugh identified a Russian and Chinese “high-end” threat of complex, structured and integrated missile attacks, which should receive more attention from the administration. They claimed that the government was overly focused on the “weak” rogue states in detriment of the return of great power competition and more challenging missile threats which, according to Karako, included advanced ballistic and cruise missiles and HGVs. For Karako, countering the regional missile threat posed by those more advanced Russian and Chinese missile systems was not an easy task. Grego rejected the administration’s portrayal of Moscow and Beijing’s efforts to overcome U.S. missile defenses, such as hypersonic and cruise missiles, as novel threats. They were, instead, hedge policies against the unconstrained development of U.S. missile defenses since the downfall of the ABM Treaty. Bunn considered that U.S. concerns over Moscow’s potential use of regional cruise and ballistic missiles stemmed from its recent actions in Ukraine and the fact that Russia was not supposed to have ground-launched INF-range cruise missiles under the INF Treaty.

Like the securitizing actors, the legislators of both parties perceived a changed missile threat environment. The 2020 NDAA observed that adversary missile capabilities were improving and becoming more numerous. Karako perceived the emergence of a new era of missile threats, while Bunn highlighted Russia’s new SSC-8 system. Overall, for the most part, there are resonance between the circumstantial premises voiced by the securitizing actors and those voiced by the audience.

We now move on to value premises. For Trump, the goal of intercepting missiles aimed at any American target (GP) was underlain by the value premises of freedom and peace. A DOD policy document articulated the departments core responsibility to protect the American people and their way of life. In accordance with congressional requirements laid out in the 2017 NDAA, the Secretary of Defense would select a Service or Defense Agency with acquisition authority regarding the capability to defend the American homeland against cruise missiles. The administration also claimed to be following congressional directives, that is, provisions of the 2018 NDAA, in pursuing the development of space-based interceptors (ME) and testing existing missile defense systems against ICBM targets (ME). The democrat legislators in the audience – Markey and Smith – accused the administration of wasting taxpayer dollars in aiming to defend against all missiles (GP) and in buying and deploying unproven missile defense systems (GP), respectively. Turner claimed that there was bicameral and bipartisan support for space-based sensors (GP) to fight the Russian and Chinese missile threat to the

U.S. homeland (CP). Grego believed that pursuing space-based interceptors (ME) jeopardized a future sustainable space environment. Bunn deemed that in enhancing regional missile defense capabilities (ME), the U.S. ought to consult with allies.

As for goal and means-end premises, the 2019 MDR claimed U.S. homeland missile defense systems were designed to defend against rogue state ICBM threats, mainly from North Korea and Iran. The U.S. would explore options for a layered homeland missile defense capacity toward that goal, and with the added objective of staying ahead of that threat. While the U.S. was prepared for the current rogue state missile threat (CP), the country should be prepared to counter a future one. Such a layered missile defense system would be composed by the GMD, a future Next Generation Interceptor, a new THAAD, the Aegis BMD system and the SM-3 Block IIA interceptor. The latter could ease the burden on the GBI system and contribute to protect U.S. territory. By testing it against ICBM targets, the U.S. could defend against a larger number of rogue state ICBMs. The DOD aimed to convert all Aegis destroyers to be fully capable of missile defense to stay ahead of the threats to the homeland posed by rogue states and hedge against future threats. The Pentagon denied that the layered missile defense system would lead to the downsides of instability and arms races with Russia and China. President Trump and the review also called for 20 additional interceptors in Alaska in order to protect the American people. The report did not arrive at a decision regarding a new GBI site elsewhere in the continental United States but raised that possibility.

Unlike the DOD, there were concerns regarding the downsides of deploying homeland missile defense systems in the audience, both among legislators and experts. Per the 2019 NDAA Conference Report, the deployment of regional assets for homeland missile defense was conditional on the DOD certifying that there would be no negative effects on strategic stability. The 2020 NDAA directed that research be conducted to ascertain whether the advantages from deploying homeland missile defenses would outweigh potential downsides resulting from adverse reactions from rogue states and near-peer adversaries. The 2021 NDAA raised the same concerns over the deployment of additional systems in Guam, in addition to downsides on strategic stability. The 2018 NDAA, on the other hand, directed that testing be conducted to ascertain whether the Block IIA interceptor could defeat a simple North Korean ICBM. Representative Moulton posited that U.S. missile defense improvements were creating an endless escalatory cycle of capability development between the country and Russia.

Among experts, Grego noted the strategic implications of a build-up of strategically capable missile defenses for Russia and China. Like Moulton, experts Grego and Bunn believed that U.S. assurances that the focus of its missile defenses against long-range missile attacks laid with rogue states – not near-peer competitors – might not prevent the occurrence of downsides vis-à-vis the former. According to Grego, Moscow and Beijing might diversify and improve their nuclear delivery systems. Bunn claimed that the two were already reacting negatively to U.S. homeland and regional missile defense deployments. Reif also believed that America's unconstrained missile defense build-ups impacted its security negatively. Building additional interceptors and testing the Block IIA interceptor

might cross the line between countering regional and rogue state threats to the homeland and countering Russia and China's ICBMs. The two countries might take steps to counter the new U.S. missile defenses. While Reif proposed that the U.S. agreed to limit the number, location, and the capabilities of the missile defense systems it was developing to assuage Russian and Chinese concerns, he noted that the 2019 MDR forswore any limits on American defenses. Trachtenberg confirmed the MDR's statement. Bunn believed that adding 20 GBIs to outpace missile threats for Iran and North Korea might lead to a negative response from Russia and China. She also believed that the same downside would likely take place if the U.S. went forward with its plans to test the Block IIA interceptor against ICBMs. NATO-Russian tensions might worsen as a result.

Despite the aforementioned concerns over testing and potentially deploying regional systems for homeland missile defense, the 2019 NDAA Conference report supported the two courses of action, although the latter and dependent of the success of the former. The courses of action were intended to strengthen the layered defense of the U.S. homeland and protect it from the North Korean and Iranian ICBM threat. Alternatively, the U.S. could also deploy a new GBI site. After the DOD delayed the decision to construct such a site, Reif argued that it was due to how costly and controversial the course of action was.

Reacting to the release of the MDR, senators Inhofe and Reed, along with representatives Turner and Thornberry supported the report's emphasis on the continued development and/or modernization of U.S. missile defenses to counter several goals such as counter the rogue state threat and outpace it, maintain deterrence, and protect the American people, U.S. deployed forces, and allies. Representative Smith, on the other hand, believed that in order to protect the American people and allies from the North Korean threat, investments should be made in proven missile defense systems to improve their reliability – not new technologies. Senator Markey called instead for strengthening regional missile defenses. Both Smith and Markey warned against investing in space-based technologies due to several perceived downsides – including when it came to Russia and China – and better policy options. The 2020 NDAA Conference Report clarified that it was U.S. policy to maintain and improve missile defenses to defend the American territory against the rogue state threat.

Contradicting the goal designated by the MDR for homeland missile defense systems, Trump claimed that the aim of U.S. missile defense policy was to detect and destroy any missile launched against the homeland, before or after launch. Pompeo seemed to imply that U.S. missile defenses were intended to assure that the country could defend itself from Russian launches. Trump justified the U.S. policy he described with the goal of keeping the U.S. strong, which would preclude conflict and protect the American people. The contradiction we highlighted is based on the 2019 report's claim that U.S. missile defenses aimed to defend America against rogue state long-range missile attacks only.

Indeed, the 2019 MDR claimed that the U.S. continued to rely on nuclear deterrence against Russian and Chinese ICBM capabilities to prevent aggressive action against the country or its allies. Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Trachtenberg made the same claim, although it stated

that the U.S. would try its best to defend against any missile launched against its territory. Another DOD official – Soofer – and a DOD policy document reiterated that the U.S. relied on nuclear deterrence against Russia and China strategic and more complex nuclear threats.

In the audience, a provision of the 2020 NDAA declared it to be U.S. policy to rely on nuclear deterrence to deter near-peer ICBM threats to the homeland, modifying, in the process, section 1681 of the 2017 NDAA. The provision arose from the House version of the bill, which strived that U.S. policy reflected the principles outlined by the 2019 MDR. For senator Markey, the goal of defending America from every missile its adversaries possessed was not effective, in addition to costly, dangerous, and likely destabilizing.

The expert Bunn argued that the ambiguity might have been intentional and aimed at undermining Russia's confidence in its "escalate-to-deescalate" strategy. Alternatively, the rhetoric might have been aspirational, or a concrete sought-after goal. In any case, the separation between the missile threats posed by Russia and China, and those posed by others was merely technical in nature. Defending the U.S. homeland from a rogue state ICBM was feasible, but doing so against a willing attack from those two states was not. Karako and Rumbaugh supported the president's goal, wanting improvements, on the whole, on American deterrence and defense goals in relation to Moscow and Beijing. Still, the actions set forth by the 2019 MDR were insufficient to achieve Trump's professed goal and address the return of great power competition. As Karako claimed, the report lacked urgency and scale in its policy recommendations. Reif, on the other hand, disagreed with the president's goal, pointing out that by contradicting the 2019 MDR, his statement could lead Moscow and Beijing to question what America's missile defense policy toward them was. Pursuing that goal would be misguided, unachievable, costly, destabilizing, dangerous, controversial, and diminish U.S. security by fueling a missile defense build-up. He welcomed the fact that the 2020 NDAA put an end to the goal of defending the American homeland from large-scale missile attacks from Russia and China. A 2019 RAND report reiterated the view that the goal of homeland missile defenses was to deter limited missile attacks. Towards that goal, the U.S. should grow and improve its missile defenses. No defense that the U.S. could deploy in the foreseeable future would be able to cope with Moscow and Beijing's numerous nuclear weapons and decoys. Thus, to deter their nuclear attacks, the U.S. ought to rely on a strategy of nuclear retaliation, a course of action that the full modernization of the nuclear triad would enable. Senator Reed also supported the modernization of the nuclear triad, given that missile defenses were not infallible shields. In all, despite U.S. assurances regarding the goals of U.S. homeland missile defenses vis-à-vis Russia and China, experts Reif, Grego and Bunn, along with democrat lawmakers Markey, Smith, and Moulton believed that some of the actions taken to address the rogue state missile threat to U.S. territory might lead to downsides. Russia and China might indeed respond in ways that negatively impacted U.S. goals.

According to the MDR, the U.S. would employ a comprehensive layered approach to missile defense against rogue states which would encompass deterrence with active and passive defenses and

attack operations. Active defenses would strive to intercept missiles in all flight phases, whereas passive defenses would seek to mitigate the outcomes of missile attacks. Attack operations would seek to neutralize offensive missiles before their launch. By employing this approach, the U.S. sought to protect the homeland, its deployed forces, allies, and partners, while hedging against future risk, enabling U.S. diplomats to negotiate from a position of strength, and enabling American freedom of action to intervene in regional military actions. The country also sought to deter threats and attacks from adversaries and assure allies and partners. Despite the focus of the approach on rogue states, Grego argued that Russia and China would likely react negatively to it. Karako and Rumbaugh, on the other hand, supported the goal of countering missiles both before and after their launch.

Another recommendation of the 2019 MDR was that the U.S. combined existing defenses with kinetic or directed-energy boost-phase defenses. The goals were to defend against rogue state missiles launched against the U.S. homeland and keep pace with that threat. For the report, while technologically challenging, the technologies were affordable, feasible, and considered to be strategic requirements. Space-based interceptors might prove advantageous in boost-phase defense.

In the audience, the 2018 NDAA Conference Report backed the deployment of a kinetic or directed-energy boost-phase missile defense capability once practicable. The Senate version of the 2020 NDAA expressed support for defense against cruise, hypersonic and ballistic missiles in all phases of flight. Among the experts, Bunn admitted that programs aimed at boost-phase missile defense might be valuable for homeland and regional missile defense, believing the concept to be appealing. She supported the research proposed by the 2019 MDR, despite noting the technological and operational drawbacks that marked previous attempts to develop boost-phase intercept capabilities. Reif, on the other hand, quoted a 2012 study which had concluded that boost-phase missile defense of any kind was unworkable. On March 2020 Karako and Rumbaugh opposed the decision to cancel the Directed Energy Demonstrator program, which ended the administration's investment in boost-phase missile defense.

The 2019 MDR called for improvements in sensors and radars for discriminating and tracking, from almost anywhere on the planet, present and future cruise and hypersonic missiles and HGV threats and assure early warning of impending missile attacks at both the regional and homeland levels. They were meant to address the scope of identified missile threats from anywhere on the planet, and hedge against both expected and unanticipated missile threat developments. Space-based sensors, in particular, had the advantages of not requiring basing rights and agreements with other countries, and of being unimpeded by geographical constraints. The sensors, coupled with 20 additional interceptors in Alaska were intended, according to Trump, to shield every city in U.S. and protect the American people. The Director of the MDA also explained that a space-based global sensor capability was needed for homeland cruise and hypersonic missile defense. Hill also affirmed that the MDA was undertaking architectural work in advanced technology development needed to achieve that goal. He claimed that current tracking sensor systems were not able to handle the evolution of the ballistic and HGV threat.

General O'Shaughnessy deemed the sensors an urgent necessity, given the aforementioned threat perceptions of Russia and China (CP) and a developing capability gap in the realm of hypersonic and cruise missile threats (CP). The U.S. needed to outpace such threats. The capability was also the only way to obtain appropriate warning and defeat technologically advanced missile threats such as HGVs. He also claimed that the U.S. needed the space-based sensors to improve its ability to see and defeat the long-range cruise missiles that its adversaries had already deployed. The sensors were needed to improve America's ability to see and defeat the fielded long-range cruise missiles of its adversaries. Soofer corroborated the view that the space-based capability was required to meet more advanced missiles threats like hypersonics. General VanHerck advocated for developing capabilities for detecting and defeating homeland cruise missile threats, which needed to be outpaced. Lastly, wanting to defend the homeland against offensive cruise missiles, the DOD would designate a Service or Defense Agency with acquisition authority to pursue that goal. Overall, as Trump explained, America was adjusting its posture so as to defend the American people from all missile threats – not just ballistic, but also the cruise and hypersonic kinds. The Director of the MDA expressed the importance of a space-based sensor capability to provide full track custody in support of fire control engagements. The capability was a critical part of an architecture that was under development for hypersonic and cruise missile defense of the U.S. homeland.

In the audience, in 2018, the House appeared to share the same view as O'Shaughnessy, arguing that delaying the development of a space-based sensor architecture would leave America in a disadvantageous position against the hypersonic missile threat. Indeed, the 2018 and 2019 NDAA's called for the development of said architecture. The 2019 NDAA Conference report urged the acceleration of the hypersonic missile defense program, in conjunction with space-basing capabilities to address emerging hypersonic threats. The Senate version of the 2019 called for the production of a report on the need to improve missile discrimination, perceiving that to be a challenge in the realm of cruise and hypersonic missile threats (CP). The 2019 NDAA also mandated the elaboration of a report on any required discrimination improvements in the realm of missile defense. The report had to include a plan on how to rapidly deploy capabilities to fulfill such requirements, given the evolving threat posed by adversary threats such as hypersonic and cruise missiles (CP). The Senate version of the 2020 NDAA called for the development and deployment of the space-based sensing architecture for enhanced effectiveness of U.S. missile defenses against ballistic missile threats and hypersonic and cruise missiles. The final version of the 2020 bill also directed the development of a ballistic and hypersonic missile tracking space sensor payload, which was reiterated in the final 2021 NDAA. The bill also directed the production of a report on how to defend Guam from ballistic, hypersonic and cruise missiles. The 2021 NDAA mandated the production of a report on cruise missile defense of the United States, which was to include the identification of any vulnerabilities of the contiguous U.S. to cruise missile threats and a plan to mitigate them.

Individually, senator Reed deemed space-based capabilities worth exploring, although investments would have to be weighed against other priorities. Representative Turner deemed space-sensing capabilities necessary to detect and track hypersonic missiles headed to American territory. The U.S. ought to develop the capacity to defend itself from those threats to the homeland and at the regional level. Similarly, Byrne supported the sensors for hypersonic defense. As aforementioned, the 2017 NDAA directed the designation of a Defense Agency or military department with acquisition authority concerning the development of a capability to defend the U.S. homeland from cruise missiles. Senator Inhofe and the Senate version of the 2020 NDAA expressed the need to outpace U.S. adversaries' missile capabilities, given their advancements in that regard (CP) and the proliferation of ballistic, cruise and hypersonic missile threats (CP). Several lawmakers emphasized the importance of protecting the U.S. allies and/or the American people. For Turner, the goals would be achieved through another – the maintenance or strengthening of America's nuclear deterrence. For Reed the goals would be delivered by ensuring that U.S. missile defenses were reliable and effective. Markey perceived the weaponization of space to hinder U.S. security. The Senate version of the 2020 NDAA called for an expansion of U.S. missile defense policy to defend U.S. allies, deployed forces, and capabilities by countering ballistic, cruise, and hypersonic missile threats. The explanatory statement for the 2021 DOD Appropriations bill called for the development of an interceptor against hypersonic weapons and for the development of a space-based sensor for tracking hypersonic and ballistic missiles.

Among experts, Karako and Rumbaugh supported a space-based sensor layer for countering more advanced missile threats. The capability would be crucial for discrimination and tracking, in all phases of flight, of ballistic missiles and HGVs. Terrestrial sensors were insufficient on their own and needed to work alongside sensors in space. To counter those more advanced missile threats, the experts also recommended either adapting existing interceptors or building new ones. Karako urged the lawmakers not to delay action on counter-hypersonic capabilities and on a space-based sensor layer, deeming them urgent. Grego claimed that such sensors, coupled with the MDR's discussion on preemptive attacks, could worsen Russian and Chinese concerns over U.S. missile defenses. Without mentioning sensors, Reif supported improving the shortcomings of the current U.S. missile defense systems, including missile tracking and detection capabilities. He also noted that defending against hypersonic missiles was even harder than doing so against ballistic missiles, which had a more predictable flight trajectory. Bunn acknowledged that enhanced early warning capabilities would allow national command authorities more time to disperse and change the calculus of an adversary when it came to its ability to deliver an effective decapitating strike. Karako and Rumbaugh made a similar point by claiming that tracking hypersonic missiles would be useful for strategic warning. Still, Bunn was unsure whether the proposed space-based sensors aimed simply to improve America's early warning of Russian and Chinese HGVs and cruise missile attacks, or if the DOD actually aimed to defend the U.S. territory by intercepting such them. If that were the case, she wondered why the department sought to defend the American homeland against such threats but not against the sophisticated and numerous

ballistic missiles in Moscow and Beijing's possession. In that respect, she argued, the MDR's message was vague and possibly self-contradictory.

According to the MDR, the benefits of space-based sensors might apply to space-based interceptors as well. They could access missiles launched from all corners of the world, potentially in their boost-phase, and increase the odds of a successful interception. They reduced the number of required interceptors overall and allowed for the destruction of missiles over adversary territory. Trump linked the capability with the goal of assuring that there would be no sanctuary for enemy missiles. New technology was necessary to outpace U.S. adversaries; the world was changing (CP) and the country had to change faster. Thus, the administration sought to examine concepts and technologies for space-based interceptors.

In the audience, space-based interceptors found both support and opposition. The 2018 NDAA also directed the MDA to develop a space-based ballistic missile intercept layer that was regionally focused and capable of boost-phase defense. The House version of the bill indicated that defense against asymmetric threats was a goal of that course of action. However, the 2020 NDAA repealed the aforementioned 2018 NDAA's requirement that a space test bed be established for research on a space-based missile intercept layer. Senator Reed believed that space-based capabilities were worth exploring, although inaction might be preferable because the U.S. ought to invest wisely and there were other security priorities. Senator Markey forthrightly denounced what he described as the "weaponization of space" and called for inaction on the development of space-based architectures. Representative Smith believed that the space-based interceptors would be too expensive and technologically challenging. The course of action would stimulate an arms race and incentivize Russia and China to further invest in their nuclear weapons arsenals. Instead of pursuing an unproven capability, he recommended that the U.S. focused on improving the reliability of the current missile defense system. Still, Reed and Smith shared a goal in common: assuring a reliable U.S. missile defense system.

Among experts, Reif deemed that the DOD's decision to delay the deployment of space-based interceptors demonstrated how controversial and costly they were. Previous research had showed that, in addition to unaffordable, space-based interceptors were also unworkable and extremely destabilizing. He welcomed the fact that the 2020 NDAA had put an end to that dangerous dream of obtaining the capability. Bunn adopted a different position, positing that the capability might be relevant for both homeland and regional missile defense against different missiles from an unspecified range of countries.

The MDR stated that the U.S. would strengthen regional missile defenses to face threats from any source, in protection of U.S. forces, allies, and partners. To defend against the full range of regional missile threats, the country would improve current regional missile defense capabilities – THAAD, Aegis Sea-based Missile Defense, and PAC-3. The U.S. would also complete construction of the Aegis Ashore site in Poland and increase the inventory of interceptors – Patriot, THAAD and SM-3 Block IIA. Trachtenberg corroborated the need to counter Russia and China's regional missile capability development. The review also called for greater integration of regional and homeland missile defense

assets, and attack operations with active and passive missile defenses. The comprehensive and layered approach against regional missile threats also contributed to protect U.S. forces, allies, and partners. It also hedged against future risk, allowed diplomats to negotiate from a stronger position, and preserve American freedom of action in operations abroad.

Space-based sensors were also aimed at intercept detection and kill assessment of missile threats at the regional level, that is, against U.S. forces, allies, and partners – not just when it came to the American homeland. By pursuing the conversion of Aegis destroyers into fully missile defense capable systems, the administration intended to meet a wide range of regional missile threats, stay ahead of the rogue state missile threat to the homeland, and hedge against future threats.

The 2019 MDR stated that the Army was developing an Indirect Fire Protection Capability for regional cruise missile defense. The goal was supported by the legislature as well as Karako. However, the action was not sufficient for Congress, which sought the deployment of an interim capability in Europe and Asia until the IFPC was operational.

Same as the securitizing actors, the legislature, through the 2020 NDAA Conference Report, supported the improvement of the regional missile defense system to defend U.S. forces, allies and partners against progressively more advanced missile threats. The House version of the 2018 NDAA supported the deployment of a space-based sensing architecture for regional missile defense purposes, that is, to defend U.S. deployed forces and allies from ballistic and hypersonic missiles. Notably, this language preceded the 2019 MDR. As aforementioned, the 2018 NDAA's provision directing the development of a regionally focused, boost-phase capable space-based ballistic missile intercept layer was repealed in the 2020 NDAA.

Senator Markey specified that he supported strengthening “limited” missile defenses, while urging the expansion of the arms control architecture as well as diplomatic engagement with Russia, China, and other states. Reed agreed with the administration in that missile defenses created an opening for diplomacy. Among experts, Karako supported the expansion of the scope of regional missile defenses to include Russia and China. He supported the use of active defenses against cruise missiles, such as Russia's SSC-8, to protect U.S. forward forces, no matter where they came from. However, he believed that the MDR lacked the needed “scale and urgency of change” to contend with the complex regional missile threat posed by Russia and China (CP). He agreed with pursuing that goal but delivering it would be a considerable undertaking (CP). He deemed that the lack of concrete actions thereto proposed by the 2019 MDR meant that the goal would not be delivered. Bunn noted that Russia and China were already reacting negatively to U.S. regional – not just homeland – missile deployments. Similarly, Reif believed that expanding the role and scope of U.S. missile defenses would likely exacerbate Russian and Chinese concerns that their nuclear deterrents were under threat, with downsides regarding strategic stability and when it came to further nuclear arms reductions. Those downsides were associated with the goals of using regional missile defenses against Russia and China, defending the homeland against cruise and hypersonic missiles, achieving boost-phase missile defense, enhancing

homeland missile defense with SM-3 Block IIA interceptors, and ensuring the detecting and destruction of any missile launched against the U.S. (per Trump's statement). Space-based interceptors were deemed by Reif as destabilizing, even if Bunn admitted that they might be important at both the homeland and regional levels. Overall, similarly to senator Markey, Reif recommended that the U.S. pursued, in lieu of destabilizing actions, strategic dialogues with Russia and China. Grego agreed with Reif's view that space-based interceptors would be destabilizing and prohibitively expensive. The capability would also make it make it difficult to set limits on space and anti-satellite weapons, jeopardizing security in the space environment.

Supplementing the nuclear modernization program: the pursuit of low-yield nuclear weapons (Discourses of section 6.3 of Chapter 6)

1. Political Discourse Analysis

1.1. Securitizing actor discourse

On 8 March 2017, General John Hyten, then the STRATCOM Commander, was asked about a December 2016 report of the Defense Science Board (DSB) recommending the development of low-yield nuclear options. Hyten responded by saying that the U.S. force structure currently possessed “a number of capabilities [CP] that [provided] the President of the United States a variety of options to respond to any numbers of threats” (ME) (i.e., low-yield nuclear weapons are not necessary). Despite the disparity in the number and variety of non-strategic nuclear systems between Russia and the U.S. – which favored the former – (CP), the triad “[was] sufficient [ME] to maintain strategic stability and manage the risk [brought on by the disparity]” (GP). That is, he added, as long as the U.S. nuclear modernization program was implemented (ME). He did not believe that such a thing as a tactical nuclear weapon existed; all nuclear weapons created a strategic effect (CP) (H.A.S.C. No. 115–11, 2017: 30, 96). On 31 March 2017, the general was again asked about the same report. He stressed America’s enormous improvement in conventional capabilities in the past twenty years (CP). The general stated that if something bad were to happen, the country possessed “a series of very flexible options [GP] from conventional all the way up to large-scale nuke” that he could present to the President as response options” (ME) (current options achieve the goal). The use of U.S. conventional capabilities constituted “a very powerful effective response” (ME) (i.e., implies that current capabilities are sufficient) (“Military Reporters,” 2017).

The Pentagon’s 2018 NPR called for the development of supplements to the replacement program (i.e., replacement of the U.S. strategic triad and sustainment of the warheads carried by it). Specifically, the U.S. “[would] modify a small number of existing SLBM warheads to provide a low-yield option and, in the longer term, pursue a modern nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile.”

The threat environment had deteriorated dramatically (CP), and America’s nuclear force replacement program predated that development (CP). The U.S. had retired its nuclear-armed SLCM

following production of the 2010 NPR (CP), which was important (ME) to achieve goals in Asia (GP). The DOD perceived Russia to believe that limited nuclear first use, possibly using low-yield nuclear weapons, could provide it with a coercive advantage over the U.S. and its allies during crises or conflict (CP). That was due to Russia's greater number and variety of non-strategic nuclear systems (CP). Russia's mistaken perception was demonstrated in statements and exercises (CP). Moscow was violating the INF Treaty (CP), was modernizing thousands of non-strategic nuclear weapons employable by planes, ground forces, and ships (CP), and demonstrated destabilizing behaviors (CP). Recent Russian statements concerning nuclear doctrine seemingly lowered the country's threshold for nuclear first use (CP). The U.S. faced a nuclear challenge from Russia composed of eleven non-strategic nuclear weapons, including a nuclear GLCM prohibited under the INF Treaty (CP). The U.S., by comparison, had only one type, the B61 gravity bomb (carried by F-15E allied DCAs) (CP). North Korea was illegally developing different strategic and non-strategic nuclear systems to threaten the U.S. and its allies and partners (CP). Pyongyang "may mistakenly perceive" those systems to afford it an "advantageous nuclear escalation option" when paired with threats of strategic nuclear attacks against America (CP).

There were "emerging deterrence requirements in the near term and beyond" (GP). It was a strategic imperative to correct Russia's mistaken perception that limited nuclear use could provide a coercive advantage over the U.S. and its allies (GP). The DOD wanted to preserve deterrence stability (GP) by enhancing the flexibility, responsiveness, and range of U.S. deterrence options (GP). Mimicking or quantitatively matching Russia's non-strategic nuclear arsenal was not a goal of action (GP). The country was instead seeking to ensure that adversaries did not "perceive an advantage through limited nuclear escalation or other strategic attack" (GP). The document also denied enabling "nuclear warfighting" as an intended goal of action (GP). The Pentagon wanted to enhance America's "ability to tailor deterrence and assurance" (GP). It also wanted to bring Russia to compliance with the INF Treaty (GP).

The courses of action called for by the administration allowed the U.S. to achieve several goals (ME). Firstly, deterrence and would be strengthened (GP) as result of the supplements "denying potential adversaries any mistaken confidence that limited nuclear employment can provide a useful advantage over the United States and its allies" (GP). Moreover, the course of action would raise the nuclear threshold (GP) and contribute to ally assurance (GP). The new capabilities "[would] provide additional diversity in platforms, range, and survivability [GP], and a valuable hedge against future nuclear "break out" scenarios" (GP). They would also significantly increase the U.S.' ability to tailor deterrence and assurance (GP) and extend America's range of "credible (...) options for responding to nuclear or non-nuclear strategic attack" (GP).

Individually, the new SLBM warhead "[would] help counter any mistaken perception of an exploitable "gap" in U.S. regional deterrence capabilities" (GP). It would "ensure a prompt response option that [was] able to penetrate adversary defenses" (GP). It "[was] a comparatively low-cost and

near-term modification to an existing capability” (ME). The low-yield warheads would replace the existing higher-yield weapons, not increasing the number of America’s deployed ballistic missile warheads (GP) (rejected downside of action).

The SLCM “[would] provide a needed non-strategic regional presence, [and] an assured response capability (GP). It allowed the U.S. to respond to Russia’s repeated violations of the INF Treaty (GP), its non-strategic nuclear weapons (GP), and other destabilizing behavior (GP). The SLCM might give Moscow the incentive to negotiate reductions of its non-strategic nuclear weapons (GP), in the same way that Western deployment of intermediate-range missiles culminated with the signing of the INF Treaty (CP).

Relying on the current non-strategic nuclear force (F-15E DCA) was not sufficient (ME). The low-yield SLBM and SLCM were necessary because they did not require or relied on host nations (ME). Nonetheless, the DCA would be maintained and enhanced as necessary (GP) and would be upgraded with the nuclear-capable F-35 aircraft (ME). America would also ensure and improve the survivability, effectiveness, and readiness of the Europe-based DCA (GP).

The SLCM was complementary to LRSO, although it could not replace it: the LRSO (ME) was needed “to sustain an effective air leg of the triad” (GP). The supplements were prudent options (ME) compliant with all agreements and treaties (VP). The U.S. would reconsider pursuing the SLCM, a long-term option (ME) (policy alternative), if Russia “[returned] to compliance with its arms control obligations [GP], [reduced] its non-strategic nuclear arsenal [GP], and [corrected] its other destabilizing behaviors” (GP). Finally, Mattis stated in the NPR’s preface, nuclear reductions (GP) were expected to be extremely challenging (ME) in the current environment (CP). By making sure that the U.S. nuclear deterrent remained strong (GP) the country would maximize its chances of convincing other nuclear powers to engage in meaningful forms of arms control (U.S. DOD, 2018: III, VIII, X-XIII, 53-55, 62-64).

In the context of two hearings of the Armed Services Committee of the H.R. (on 7 March 2018 and on 28 March 2019), General Hyten called for the fielding of the two low-yield nuclear capabilities recommended by the NPR. He reiterated that statement before the Senate Appropriations Committee on 20 March 2018.

Hyten stressed that China and Russia were expanding the number and diversity of their nuclear forces, while continuing to emphasize nuclear weapons in their respective strategies (CP). Russia, especially, portrayed a threat (CP). Moscow believed that it had the advantage at lower levels of conflict given its arsenal of non-strategic nuclear weapons and nuclear doctrine of first use in a limited conflict (CP). Russia possessed eleven different delivery platforms for non-strategic nuclear weapons (CP). The country’s strategy, doctrine, and capabilities called for limited nuclear weapons use to coerce NATO and defeat its conventional forces (CP). Russia perceived the U.S. and NATO nuclear posture as insufficient to deter limited nuclear use, as shown by the modernization and expansion of its non-strategic nuclear weapons arsenal (CP). Moscow demonstrated, overall, a “continuing pattern of

behavior” in the nuclear sphere that threatened the U.S., from its nuclear doctrine, nuclear modernization, and increased expenditures (CP). There was a clear threat from both Russia and China (CP) driving the need for the SLCM (ME). To Hyten, the most important element of deterrence was the perspective of the adversary, not one’s own (CP).

North Korea’s growing nuclear prowess was evidence of its “belief that nuclear weapons provide escalation options against the U.S. and [its] allies in the Pacific” (CP). The security environment was prone to quick changes and technology was always advancing (CP). There were countries that sought to diminish U.S. capabilities and advance their own by relying on such technological advancements (CP).

While the U.S. nuclear posture was successful in deterring adversaries today (CP), the general wanted “to credibly deter the threats of the near future” (GP). The U.S. would remain within New START limits (VP). To hedge against an uncertain future (GP), America needed to enhance the agility, readiness, and flexibility of its nuclear forces (GP). The country was committed (VP) to enhancing nuclear security and non-proliferation (GP), and to negotiate arms control agreements (ME) to carry out nuclear reductions (GP). As long as, he added, those commitments did not generate downsides on U.S. goals and values. Namely, the U.S. should not harm nuclear deterrence readiness (GP), hinder the stability of its relations with potential adversaries (GP) or reduce ally confidence in the American extended deterrence (GP). The STRATCOM Commander did not see the SLCM as a bargaining chip (ME) for Moscow’s return to compliance with the INF Treaty (GP). The NPR’s recommendations that the U.S. developed a new low-yield nuclear SLBM and SLCM were driven by threats (CP). Still, he admitted that the SLCM (ME) gave U.S. “negotiators things to work with, which [was] a good thing” (GP) (GP is not the main drive for the capability, the CP [threat] is).

The ongoing modernization programs were not sufficient (ME). The supplements were necessary (ME) to improve the responsiveness and flexibility of U.S. nuclear forces (GP) and ensure Russia and North Korea that there was no benefit to the use of nuclear weapons in any scenario, at any level of escalation (GP). The supplements (ME) prevented miscalculation of the consequences of nuclear weapons use (GP) and raised the nuclear threshold by making it less likely to be broken (GP). The new weapons also achieved several U.S. goals (ME) by improving the U.S. nuclear deterrent (GP), enhancing ally assurance (GP), and allowing the country to negotiate from a position of strength (GP). If the U.S. had to respond to an attack, it should respond in kind, that is, proportionally (ME). Such a line of action would prevent “the conflict from escalating worse” (GP).

Existing low-yield options (ME) (rejects policy alternative) “[might] not be the right response in terms of timeliness and survivability to get to where the threat [was]” (GP). Airplanes had to fight through denied environments (ME). On the other hand, the new SLBM and the SLCM provided “unique attributes” to existing U.S. capabilities (ME). The former (ME) was prompt, survivable (GP) and suitable to hit targets that were well-defended against air-delivered weapons and bombers (GP). The latter option (ME) was an assured response capability that did not require a host nation (ME), that was

forward deployable (ME), and “[provided] additional diversity in delivery platforms, range, survivability, and future hedging” (GP). With the development of the recommended capabilities (ME), the U.S. was going to be “in a very good place that we can deter for the coming [future]” (GP). The supplements were required for the U.S. “to maintain and enhance the flexibility [GP], diversity [GP] and responsiveness of U.S. nuclear forces now and in the future” (GP).

The commander did not agree with the critics who claimed that the new SLBM warhead should not be developed because use of the weapons would lead to the detection and destruction of the submarine carrying them (GP) and would initiate a nuclear war (GP) (denies downsides). He assured that the submarine would not be destroyed in such a scenario (GP) and that Russia would view the use of the weapon as a non-massive, non-existential attack (GP) (denies downsides). Moscow would not have to respond right away and would behave rationally (CP) (H.A.S.C. No. 115–80, 2018: 32, 54, 57, 62; S. HRG. 115–674, Pt. 1, 2018: 468-470, 473-474, 476, 490; H.A.S.C. No. 116–22, 2019: 9, 11).

On 6 February and April 12, 2018, the DOD Secretary James Mattis testified before the House Armed Services Committee and expressed his support for the development of the new low-yield nuclear weapons. He also testified on 26 April and 9 May 2018 before the Senate Appropriations Committee, reiterating that view. According to Mattis, Russia and China were modernizing their nuclear forces, and North Korea was a threat (CP) to global peace (VP). China was pursuing new nuclear capabilities and modernizing its conventional nuclear forces (CP). Iran’s nuclear ambitions were an unsolved question, and nuclear terrorist was still a tangible threat (CP). There were bellicose and cavalier statements coming out of Moscow, including talks of “escalation to de-escalate” and about offensive actions (CP). Russia was violating the INF Treaty (CP). Russia calculated that the U.S. would not respond to the use of a low-yield nuclear weapon with a high-yield nuclear weapon (CP). The global situation was sobering (CP). Mattis agreed that any nuclear use “[was] a strategic game changer” – there was no “such thing as a tactical nuclear weapon” (CP).

The U.S. had engaged in consultations with NATO allies (VP). Mattis noted that the NPR enjoyed a great deal of support among NATO allies and that none had opposed the inclusion of the supplemental capabilities (CP). Many allies perceived them as appropriate “as an appropriate counter-balance to Russian, Chinese and North Korean developments (CP), while some did express reservations over possible Russian and Chinese reactions (CP). Effective deterrence, according to Mattis, was about guaranteeing that opponents did not miscalculate about the costs of nuclear employment (CP). The U.S. was concerned over the fact “that potential adversaries may believe they can effectively threaten or employ limited nuclear strikes” (CP). Russia claimed that it could escalate to de-escalate; meaning that that it could “use a low-yield nuclear weapon in a conventional war to compel surrender” (CP). The country knew that if it used such a weapon, the choices of the U.S. would be to respond with a high-yield nuclear weapon or surrender or, in other words, “suicide or surrender” (CP). Moscow had also issued other “bellicose and cavalier statements” about nuclear weapons (CP). Putin was increasingly more willing to discuss nuclear weapons use, including as means to “escalate to de-escalate” (CP).

Considering “the range of potential adversaries, their capabilities and strategic objectives [CP], the [NPR] [called] for a nuclear deterrent fit for its time – a tailored and diverse set of nuclear deterrent capabilities that provides a flexible, tailored approach to deterring one or more potential adversaries” (GP). A deterrence that is fit for its time is one that adjusts to any changes an adversary or potential adversary is making (ME). That was what the U.S. had uncovered with Russia and its idea that it could escalate to de-escalate (CP). Indeed, the supplemental capabilities (ME), in tandem with the triad (ME) “[provided] a diverse set of nuclear capabilities that [would] provide flexibility [GP] to tailor the U.S. approach to deterring different potential adversaries (GP). America’s deterrent had “to keep pace with the thinking of today’s adversaries or competitors” (GP).

In light of the present dynamics of deterrence and of the current, complex security environment (CP), the NPR proposed two supplemental nuclear capabilities (ME). They were intended to strengthen deterrence (GP) and “deny any adversary the confidence that limited nuclear use [could] provide an advantage” (GP). In case someone, particularly Russia, miscalculated and used a low-yield nuclear weapon, the U.S. needed to look credible (GP). America “[did] not want even an inch of daylight to appear in how [it] looked at the nuclear deterrent (GP). Adversaries needed to know that America had options besides “surrender or suicide” (ME) (i.e., new options were needed). Creating a nuclear warfighting capability was not a goal of action (GP); the U.S. was merely seeking to deter (GP). The supplements were also consistent with the New START seeing as the number of deployed American strategic nuclear weapons would not increase. The U.S. would reduce the yield of a number of those strategic nuclear weapons to make them low yield (VP) (rejects downside).

The low-yield options would make it (ME) abundantly clear to the Russians that the U.S. could respond in kind if an escalate-to-deescalate strategy were executed (GP). They raised the deterrent effect of America’s capabilities (GP) and reduced the chance of nuclear war (GP). Both the SLCM and the new low-yield SLBM were necessary to address current deterrence concerns that potential adversaries might believe they could threaten or employ lower-yield nuclear strikes (ME). The new options (ME) would grant the U.S. the flexibility to tailor its deterrence approach across a spectrum of contexts, threats, and adversaries (GP). They would offer the U.S. an option besides surrender or suicide (i.e., to do nothing or escalate) (ME). A nuclear exchange between Russia and America would be disastrous for both nations and the planet (GP) (downside of opting for escalation).

Relying solely on the existing low-yield nuclear capability, the gravity bomb, was not the best course of action. Technological advances (CP) had made it more difficult for bombers to penetrate modern air defense systems (ME), which were altogether different than a decade or two ago (CP). While the U.S. was working on air penetration capability (ME), the country had to deal with where it was today (CP). The gravity bombs were also more vulnerable in operation locations and fixed storage (ME). The SLBMs (ME) were better able to penetrate modern defenses (GP) and were highly accurate and survivable (GP). They were “a survivable capability [GP] to credibly hold at risk heavily-defended targets [GP], which an adversary might believe [CP] could be successfully defended against current air-

delivered nuclear weapons” (ME). The capability strengthened U.S. nuclear deterrence (GP) because it gave the country options besides suicide or surrender (ME). Still, the gravity bomb ought to be preserved (ME) because it could be forward deployed (GP), provided visible ally and partner assurance (GP), contributed to ally burden sharing (GP), and tangibly demonstrated American extended deterrence guarantees (GP).

Seeing as the U.S. did not want to abandon the INF Treaty (ME), the development of the SLCM (ME) would give U.S. negotiators “something to negotiate with” as they strived to bring Russia back to compliance with the agreement (GP). Russia would not “be willing to give up something to gain nothing” and the SLCM would allow the U.S. to negotiate from a position of strength (ME). The U.S. wanted options in case Russia’s violation of the INF Treaty continued (ME). The SLCM allowed the U.S. to close a capability gap (ME). Mattis also noted that the SLCM was not a new capability because the country had previously deployed such weapons (i.e., the securitizing actor establishes a precedent for the capability) (ME). The SLCM was INF Treaty-compliant (VP).

For Mattis, a “combination of [America’s] current nuclear deterrent and significant conventional weapons capabilities” was insufficient considering the threat. Once Russia started talking about using low-yield capabilities to escalate a conventional fight, the U.S. had to adapt its deterrent (ME). The U.S. could not remain “frozen in a Cold War mentality [CP], where [it] [was] willing to go high-yield immediately against a high-yield attack” (ME) (perceptions of the past rejected as a reason for action in the present).

The secretary rejected a consequence of action raised by critics, namely that the deployment of low-yield SLBM alongside higher-yield SLBM would create instability in a crisis, since the former could be mistaken by the latter (GP). The secretary claimed there to be little to suggest that a single ballistic missile launch could be viewed by an adversary as an all-out attack causing a response in kind (GP) (rejects downside). America had a nuclear detection system that could swiftly determine the yield of a nuclear detonation, and some adversaries had a similar ability (CP). Thus, missile discrimination by an adversary was not a fundamental concern (GP) (rejects downside).

Mattis rejected the notion that the new capabilities would lower the nuclear threshold (GP) (denies downside). In fact, he considered that the low-yield SLBM would enhance stability in a crisis by reducing an adversary’s incentive to use nuclear weapons by making the action more costly than they can tolerate (GP). The capabilities made clear that the U.S. “[had] a deterrent if the Russians choose to carry out what some of their doctrine people have promoted (GP). The U.S. wanted to be sure that the Russians recognized that the U.S. could respond in kind; that it did not have to use high-yield nuclear weapons (GP). A single nuclear-powered submarine launching a single or a small number of low-yield nuclear SLBMs would not be susceptible to a counterattack. The NPR, noted Mattis, had determined such risks to be minimal (GP) (minimizes downside).

For the secretary, “[p]reserving this range of options [required] the capitalization of [America’s] Cold War legacy nuclear deterrent forces as initiated during the previous Administration,” including

nuclear delivery systems and nuclear command and control (ME). Replacement programs would guarantee that there would not be capability gaps (GP) once the legacy systems aged out. Many nuclear deterrence delivery systems had been extended well beyond their originally planned service lives (CP). Despite such efforts, the end of their service life would be reached between 2025 and 2035 (CP). The cost of America's nuclear modernization program (GP) (downside) was considerably lower "than the cost of failing to deter war by underinvesting in these capabilities" (GP) (downside) (i.e., the downside of inaction was greater than that of nuclear modernization) (H.A.S.C. No. 115-67, 2018: 18-19, 24-25, 57-58, 60-61, 75-76; H.A.S.C. No. 115-98, 2018: 12, 90-91; Department of Defense Appropriations for fiscal year 2019, 2018: 9-10, 27-28, 42; S. HRG. 115-674, Pt. 1, 2018: 847-848).

The February 2018 NPR stated that the United States expressed the importance of hedging. The country had to hedge (ME) against both prospective and unanticipated risk (GP). Although the U.S. had drastically reduced its nuclear stockpile since its Cold War peak (CP) and deployed no new nuclear weapons in over 20 years (CP), the nuclear-threat environment had rapidly deteriorated since the 2010 NPR, having become more diverse and advanced (CP). Potential adversaries were developing and deploying nuclear weapons and delivery vehicles with great dynamism (CP). As the country reduced the salience and number of its nuclear weapons, others – such as Russia and China – had done the opposite (CP). In this uncertain environment (CP), Russia was enhancing and expanding its nuclear forces – strategic and non-strategic – and issuing nuclear threats (CP). China was modernizing and expanding its nuclear forces with little to no transparency (CP). North Korea was pursuing nuclear weapons and missile capabilities and issuing nuclear threats (CP). All three states were engaging in progressively more aggressive behavior in cyber space and outer space (CP). Fast advances and dissemination of military technology, coupled with the dynamic security environment described created a range of potential threats (CP) for which the U.S. needed to be prepared (GP).

The U.S. was still committed (VP) to global elimination of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons (GP). However, the current environment (CP) made it exceedingly difficult to make additional progress (ME) towards near-term nuclear weapons reductions (GP). Russia was in violation of its obligations under several agreements (CP) and had rejected U.S. attempts to follow the New START (ME) with another series of negotiated nuclear reductions (GP) and to pursue non-strategic nuclear weapons reductions (GP).

The aforementioned changes in the threat environment (CP) would shape U.S. thinking as the country planned its nuclear policy and strategy (ME) and started the sustainment and replacement of its nuclear forces (ME). Thus, America would tailor (GP) its hedging strategy (ME) across the range of potential adversaries (CP) to meet potential, future, uncertain risks as well as challenges (GP). America could hedge in two complementary manners (ME). The first was "having a robust nuclear weapon production infrastructure that has the design, engineering, and manufacturing capabilities [ME] needed to quickly produce new or additional weapons needed to address changes in the threat environment" (GP). The second was "[retaining] a significant non-deployed inventory of weapons that can be added

to current delivery vehicles [ME] to address geopolitical threat or technical failure (GP). Given the present state of the American infrastructure for production of nuclear weapons (CP), the country would preserve a reserve stockpile of non-deployed nuclear weapons (ME). Those “hedge” weapons could be uploaded onto delivery platforms (ME) to augment the deployed force (GP). Thus, they were able to support American nuclear strategies in case of unexpected geopolitical changes in the strategic environment, or unanticipated operational, technical, or programmatic risks¹⁶¹ in U.S. nuclear forces (GP).

Hedging strategies (ME) contributed to deterrence (GP) and assurance (GP) and could hinder adversary confidence that they could gain advantage through an expansion of their nuclear capabilities or a “break out” (GP). To address potential challenges (GP), flexibility to hedge against future risks was necessary (GP). Several courses of action would be explored to deliver the latter goal, including “examine the potential for retired warheads and components to augment the future hedge stockpile” (ME) and measures (ME) for reducing the time required to design, develop, and produce a nuclear warhead (GP). Overall, by hedging (ME), the U.S. aimed to achieve two parallel goals. The first was to “[reduce] the likelihood that challenges will emerge in the categories of geopolitical, technological, operational, and programmatic risk” (GP). The second, “[to reduce] the harm that would result if preventive measures proved inadequate” (GP). That “two-track hedging strategy [would] help guide the capabilities [ME] and size of U.S. nuclear forces and supporting infrastructure” (ME). The country would posture (ME) its “nuclear capabilities to hedge against multiple potential risks and threat developments” (GP).

The country remained committed (VP) to the goals of the NPT (GP), but advancements towards nuclear arms reduction (GP) would be very challenging in the short-term (ME), given the current environment (CP) (U.S. DOD, 2018: III, V-VI, IX, XVII, 2-3, 24, 37-40, 63).

A written statement by Acting Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan to the House Armed Services Committee, dated 26 March 2019, reinforced previous support for the new low-yield nuclear weapons.

He stressed that Moscow “[was] aggressively developing and modernizing a suite of strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons” (CP). He argued that both capabilities (ME) closed “troubling gaps in regional deterrence” (GP) and were not redundant (ME). The low-yield SLBM (ME) “[would] provide a highly tailored response to specific developments in Russia's forces and doctrine” (GP). That is, Moscow’s mistaken belief that it could resort to limited nuclear use without risk of a military response

¹⁶¹ Geopolitical risks include scenarios such as an expansion of the nuclear forces of an adversary, new alignments among adversaries, further nuclear proliferation, the emergence of new adversaries, and changes in adversary doctrine and strategy. Operational risks concern “the potential for operational shortfalls that reduce the effectiveness of U.S. nuclear forces.” Technical risks include technical challenges stemming “from a breakdown of a key element of U.S. nuclear forces, or from adversaries’ technological breakthrough.” Programmatic risks relate to “potential risks to the U.S. sustainment of adequate nuclear capabilities such as delays to maintenance programs” (U.S. DOD, 2018: 38).

from the U.S. (CP). The SLCM (ME), on the other hand, “[would] provide a similar capability [GP] in response to serious developments and trends in Russia's nonstrategic nuclear forces” (CP). Overall, the new capabilities (ME) would enhance stability (GP) and deterrence (GP). Nuclear modernization of U.S. nuclear forces was, therefore, not sufficient (ME). Supplements were necessary (ME) (H.A.S.C. No. 116–17, 2019: 90).

On 4 December 2019, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy John Rood explained that the modification, for SLBMs, of an existing warhead to be low yield was “going well” (CP) although development of the SLCM was not as advanced (CP). He explained that while the U.S. had been reducing its reliance on nuclear weapons and the size of its stockpile, countries like Russia and China had been moving in the opposite direction (CP). He explained that the supplements were a necessary aggressive action (ME). They were needed “to restore deterrence [GP] where we thought it might be becoming weaker than we like” (CP). The new capabilities (ME) would send a signal that the U.S. had a variety of more survivable means (GP) than the existing gravity bomb (ME). Potential consequences of action related to the costs of the systems were rebuffed. He stated, quoting Mattis, that “the nation can afford survival” (GP). The new capabilities were deemed stabilizing (GP) (Tadjdeh, 2019; “Undersecretary Affirms Need,” 2019).

General Selva, the vice-chairman of the JCS, testified before the House Armed Services Committee on 6 February 2018, where he called for the development of the supplements to the nuclear modernization program identified in the NPR.

He claimed that one could not precisely determine what was necessary (ME) “to deter with high confidence across a range of potential adversaries and circumstances” (GP). Still, it was possible “to get indications that one’s deterrence strategy, posture, and capabilities [were] potentially inadequate” and could result in deterrence failure (CP). Russian doctrine, strategy, and capabilities called for the use of low-yield nuclear weapons to coerce NATO or defeat its conventional nuclear forces (CP). Moscow’s adoption of this strategy and doctrine, coupled with its efforts to modernize and expand its arsenal of non-strategic nuclear weapons (CP), showed that the present U.S. and NATO nuclear posture was not perceived as “undeniably sufficient to deter such nuclear use” (CP) (GP). Selva noted that all of America’s current non-strategic nuclear weapons were air-delivered (CP).

The capabilities proposed by the NPR would reduce Moscow’s confidence in its strategy [GP] by increasing America’s “array of credible response options that can render their strategy ineffective” (GP). The supplements would not lower America’s nuclear threshold (GP) (rejects downside). To the contrary, the course of action “[was] designed to raise the nuclear threshold of potential adversaries,” particularly Russia (GP). The new low-yield SLBM (ME) would increase the credibility of an American response to Russia’s limited nuclear use (GP) and could hit targets that were well-defended against air-delivered strikes (GP). Moreover, the new SLBM warhead was a near-term solution (ME) that was not particularly expensive (GP) (rejects downside). It was necessary for the U.S. to possess multiple low-yield strike capabilities (ME) “to address various potential adversary threat environments (...) in a more

credible manner” (GP). The various capabilities were not redundant, but complementary (ME) (H.A.S.C. No. 115–67, 2017: 58-59).

On 12 April 2018 and on 26 March 2019, before the House Armed Services Committee, the chairman of the JCS Joseph Dunford voiced his support the development of new low-yield nuclear options. He reiterated that view on 8 March 2019, before the Senate Appropriations Committee.

He explained that Russian nuclear capabilities had grown over time (CP). Moscow believed that the use of non-strategic nuclear weapons, of which they had thousands of (CP), would cause the U.S. to be confronted with a situation in which they “either risk the homeland, or (...) concede that they have escalated to the point where they achieved their political objectives” (CP).

The general wanted the U.S. to have deterrence across the spectrum (GP) and to strengthen it, overall (GP). He wanted to convince Russia that America had capable, credible responses to whatever the potential attacker decided to do (GP). The U.S. ought to persuade Russia that the costs of nuclear use would surpass whatever it hoped to gain; that it would achieve no strategic advantage (GP). The chairman considered that his goals would be reached by means of the low-yield options recommended by the administration (ME). They were, to Dunford, “critical for deterrence” (ME) (H.A.S.C. No. 115–98, 2018: 74-75; H.A.S.C. No. 116–17, 2019: 68; Department of Defense Appropriations for fiscal year 2020, 2019: 39).

Andrea Thompson, Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security at the DOS, submitted additional material to the record following a hearing of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on 18 September 2018. In doing so, she expressed support for the supplements to the nuclear modernization program that featured in the NPR.

She stated that Russia’s non-strategic nuclear weapons posed a threat to the United States (CP). To reduce that threat and increase transparency (GP), the U.S. had attempted to engage in discussions with Russia regarding those weapons (ME). However, that course of action produced no results (ME), seeing as Moscow refused to discuss its nonstrategic nuclear forces (CP), imposing preconditions on any talks that were unacceptable to the U.S. and its allies (i.e., the course of action was associated with unacceptable downsides) (GP/VP). The U.S. remained committed (VP) to arms control negotiations with Russia (ME), provided that the outcome would increase U.S., ally, and partner security (GP). The U.S. would consult closely with NATO allies on any discussions with Russia regarding its non-strategic nuclear weapons (VP). America sought a reduction of Russia’s arsenal of non-strategic nuclear weapons (GP).

The supplements (ME) recommended by the NPR were meant to achieve the goal of countering Moscow’s “mistaken perceptions of an exploitable gap in U.S. regional deterrence capabilities” (GP). The SLCM (ME), according to the Under Secretary, might motivate Russia to negotiate seriously reductions of its non-strategic nuclear weapons (GP) (S. HRG. 115–795, 2018: 43).

On the nomination hearing of the soon-to-be Secretary of State on 12 April 2018, Mike Pompeo was asked about the need for the supplements to the modernization program recommended by the NPR. Pompeo subscribed to the position of the document.

He considered that the supplements to the modernization program (ME) would greatly improve (ME) America's ability to tailor deterrence (GP) and assurance (GP). They would also enhance U.S. credibility (GP) and signal to potential adversaries that there would be no exploitable advantages stemming from "concepts of coercive, limited nuclear escalation" (GP) (S. HRG. 115–339, 2018: 267).

On 9 July 2019, the White House issued a Statement of Administration Policy expressing deep concerns regarding several provisions of the House version of the 2020 NDAA. Among others, the presidency strongly opposed the provisions that reduced funding for the W76-2 modification programs (ME) and blocked its deployment on Trident II D5 missiles (ME). The low-yield ballistic missile warhead (i.e., the W76-2 warhead) was "a measured response" (ME) "to a real-world escalatory threat" (CP). Potential adversaries were investing in nuclear modernization (CP), and the nuclear environment was worsening (CP). Deploying the W76-2 warhead achieved the goal (ME) of reinforcing the credibility of the U.S. nuclear deterrence posture (GP). On the other hand, the provisions of the House version of the NDAA concerning the SLBM led to several compromises on U.S. goals. They sent a dangerous message to America's adversaries (GP), undermined nuclear deterrence (GP), and increasing the nuclear risk faced by the U.S. and its allies (GP) (downsides). The president's advisors recommended that he vetoed (VP) the NDAA in its current form (ME) (including, but not limited to the SLBM provisions of the House version of the bill) (Statement of Administration Policy, 2019).

1.2. Audience discourse

Adam Smith (D-WA), ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee, together with representatives Ted Lieu (D-CA) (Foreign Affairs Committee), John Garamendi (D-CA) (Armed Services Committee), and Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) (Ways and Means Committee), and senator Ed Markey (D-MA) (Foreign Relations Committee), introduced the bicameral "Hold the LYNE" (Low-yield nuclear explosive) Act on 17 September 2018¹⁶². The Hold the LYNE Act prohibited research, development, production, and deployment of a SLBM low-yield nuclear warhead (ME). Such capability was, for Smith, unnecessary; the current nuclear deterrent was adequate to achieve U.S. national security

¹⁶² The House bill (H.R. 6840) and the Senate bill (S. 3448) were referred to the respective Committees on Armed Services. The bills "died," seeing as their never returned from their respective committees to the House and Senate floors for further action (H.R. 6840 – All actions, 2018; S. 3448 – All actions, 2018; NCSL, n.d.). The following year, on 7 February 2019, the Hold the Lyne Act was again introduced in the House (this time with 21 original co-sponsors instead of 3) and the Senate (now with Markey being joined by 6 other senators) and referred to their respective Committees on Armed Services. The Act "died" once more, never returning to the House and Senate floors for further action (H.R. 1086 – All actions, 2019; S. 401 – All actions, 2019). Both in 2018 and 2019, all sponsors of the Hold the Lyne Act – original sponsors or not – were either Democratic or Independent legislators.

goals (ME). Moreover, the capability compromised U.S. goals by siphoning money from actual military needs (GP), lowering the nuclear threshold (GP), fostering an arms race (GP), and increasing the chances of miscalculation (GP) (“Reps. Lieu, Smith,” 2018). For Senator Markey (D-MA), developing the new SLBM warhead “[was] the height of fiscal and political folly” (GP) (downsides). There was no military requirement for it (ME) and risked miscalculation because it was indistinguishability from any other submarine-launched nuclear weapons (GP) (downside). The administration “[was] surrendering decades of American leadership that [had] helped move the world away from the dangers posed by nuclear weapons” (VP) (downside). He added that “[a] nuclear weapon is a nuclear weapon” and developing a new one would be dangerous and ill-advised (GP) (downside) (“Senator Markey, and Reps,” 2018).

The Hold the Lyne Act mentioned that the U.S. had an unparalleled nuclear arsenal that included 1350 strategic nuclear warheads (CP). A new low-yield SLBM (ME) risked lowering the nuclear threshold (GP) and increasing the chance of miscalculation (GP), which might lead to an all-out nuclear exchange (GP) (downsides). The low-yield W76-2 would be indistinguishable from high-yield W88 and W76 nuclear warheads (GP) (downside). Quoting former senator Sam Nunn and former Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz, the bill claimed that “[t]he most immediate priority should be to structure and posture U.S. and Russian nuclear forces [ME] to deter nuclear use [GP] and reduce the risk of an accidental, mistaken or unauthorized launch” (GP). American calls for more “useable” nuclear weapons (ME), coupled with Russia’s concept of escalate to de-escalate (CP) made the world a more dangerous place (VP) (GP) (downside).

Quoting George Schultz, former Secretary of State, the bill stated that “[a] nuclear weapon is a nuclear weapon. You use a small one, [and] then you go to a bigger one” (GP) (downside). He added: “nuclear weapons are nuclear weapons and we need to draw the line there” (ME). The Act also advanced that never before had U.S. SSBNs carried low-yield nuclear weapons; thus, the country was establishing an historical precedent (ME). Moreover, said precedent might hinder “the unique and paramount role of ballistic missile submarines as the assured, survivable, second-strike capability of the United States to deter large-scale nuclear war (GP) (downside). Finally, American ought to reject policies (i.e., the low-yield nuclear SLBM) (ME) that would weaken national security (GP) and increase the risk of nuclear war (GP) (downsides). Thus, the bill would prohibit research, development, production, and deployment of the Trident D5 low-yield nuclear warhead (ME) (“To prohibit the research,” 2018).

On 13 June 2018, Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), of the Armed Services Committee, stressed that the U.S. and its allies possessed “overwhelming non-nuclear coercive power” (CP). Moreover, America already had a significant arsenal of low-yield nuclear weapons (CP) and was in the process of upgrading its delivery systems (ME) so as to ensure that the U.S. nuclear deterrence was flexible (GP) and capable of reaching any place (GP). Thus, she was unconvinced that it was necessary to obtain additional low-yield nuclear weapons (ME).

Warren was also concerned that the new nuclear SLBM would be strategically unwise given potential consequences on goals and values. Discrimination of the yield of the weapon used was a

concern. Russia might not be able to differentiate between an incoming Trident SLBM that posed an existential threat and a low-yield missile intended “as more of a warning” (GP). The capability carried the risk of a rapid escalation into a nuclear war (GP) and cast a shadow on America’s commitment to non-proliferation (VP). U.S. credibility in negotiating with other states, such as North Korea, to demand that they reduce their nuclear arsenals (GP) would be hindered (GP) (downside), because America was breaking its long-standing commitment to reduce its own (VP) (downside). She noted that the 2019 NDAA that had been reported to the Senate from the Armed Services Committee had a provision whereby the DOD would not have to ask Congress for permission to develop a new low-yield nuclear weapon in the future, with a notification of intent sufficing (ME). This would compromise Congress ability to have a say in the development, deployment and costs associated with the capability (VP). Special Congressional scrutiny (VP) was important because nuclear weapons “are in their own class;” any use was a “strategic game changer” and they were not like other weapons (CP). The still existing provision that the NDAA would do away with had been approved unanimously in the Senate (96-0) fifteen years ago, having received favorable votes from 10, still sitting, republican senators (VP). The provision of the 2019 NDAA “was offered at the eleventh hour, behind closed doors, and on a party-line vote” (i.e., its inclusion compromised bipartisanship [VP] and transparency [VP] and was inconsistent with norms of reasonableness [due to absence of proper debate] [ME]). She, therefore, offered, with by Senator Reed, an amendment to the 2019 NDAA (ME) which sustained that bipartisan consensus (VP) on Congressional oversight concerning the development of low-yield nuclear weapons (VP) (GP) (amendment achieves the goal of delivering the VPs). As representatives of the America people, the Senate ought to have a voice on the matter (VP). Warren deemed preferable to limit funding for the low-yield SLBM (ME) until its impact was better understood (GP) (potential downsides cannot be discarded) (CREC, 2018: S3878-S3879).

On 13 June 2018, Senator Jim Inhofe (R-OK), chairman of the Armed Services Committee, expressed his views on the 2019 NDAA on the Senate’s floor. Regarding Senator Reed’s amendment, he noted the introduction of an amendment, in the Senate Armed Services Committee, that would have prevented the obligation or expenditure of funds for deploying a low-yield nuclear warhead for a SLBM, until the DOD submitted a report related to the schedule, cost, and program implications of the development of the capability. That amendment had been voted down 16 to 11 (i.e., two democrats and the republicans voted against it) (CP) (there was support for it). Inhofe believed that Russia perceived that limited nuclear first-use would leave the United States with only two choices: do nothing or escalate (CP). Thus, Russia might attempt to gain a strategic advantage by using nuclear weapons (CP). The U.S. ought to correct Russia’s misconception (GP). America needed “every capability the Russians have,” and that included the low-yield SLBM (GP). The senator wanted to make nuclear use less likely (GP), preserving and enhancing deterrence (GP). Those goals would be achieved through the development of the low-yield capability (ME). Inaction was not an option because the U.S. would be left with either using high-yield nuclear weapons or doing nothing – two unacceptable choices (ME). Inhofe opposed

the requirement of congressional authorization for the development of nuclear weapons (the Reed-Warren amendment). He noted that Congress was already required to do so in each year's authorization and appropriations bill (VP) (i.e., no compromise on values; Congress retained the "power of the purse") (CREC, 2018: S3886; Report 115-262, 2018: 617).

Mac Thornberry (R-TX), chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, talked about the new low-yield nuclear warheads on 5 February 2018 and 7 June 2018. He confirmed that the U.S. already possessed such a capability. Still, he stressed that they were air-delivered (CP), unlike the ones being proposed in the 2019 NDAA, which were sea-launched (ME). The Russians had several hundred of lower-yield nuclear weapons, and were openly writing and speaking about utilizing them, including in conventional conflicts (CP). They had plans to "escalate-to-deescalate," and wanted to fracture NATO, and dominate sovereign states (CP).

The representative did not view the low-yield SLBM as a new nuclear weapons system its development was simply a matter of extracting "some of the fissile material out" from existing higher-yield nuclear warheads (ME). The U.S. already had air-delivered low-yield nuclear weapons and the only difference would be the different delivery system (ME) (establishes a precedent). He understood deterrence as dynamic (CP) and described the current great power tensions "as the driving force in international security" (CP). Russia and China were making new, more modern nuclear weapons, whose characteristics differed from their Cold War arsenals (CP). Moscow was making nuclear weapons that were not covered by any treaty (CP). All senators should come together in the name of national security (VP).

The legislator supported the low-yield nuclear capabilities (ME) to complicate the calculations of U.S. adversaries (GP) and make it clear that the U.S. nuclear deterrent was credible at every level (GP). He sought to make it clear that no adversary would get away with whatever they assumed they could get away with (GP). America needed to take steps towards guarantying that assurance of allies and deterrence of adversaries continued credible (GP) and effective (GP).

The low-yield nuclear SLBM warhead (ME) was intended to enhance the credibility of the U.S. response (GP), which would "[strengthen] deterrence [GP] "by denying potential adversaries the advantages [GP] they appear to believe they could realize from nuclear first use" (CP). No adversary of the U.S. – "Russia, North Korea, no one" (CP) was to "[believe] that they could get away with using these weapons" (GP). The warhead would contribute (ME) to the prevalence of deterrence (GP) and the prevention of conflicts (GP). The SLCM was a sensible move toward achieving two goals (ME): reassuring allies (GP) and pressuring Russia into arms control negotiations targeting weapons not yet covered by such agreements (GP).

Thornberry also called for continued modernization of America's nuclear deterrent (ME) to assure that it remained safe, secure, and credible (GP). Doing so was not expensive considering the overall defense budget (GP) (downplays downside). In any case, "America could afford survival" (ME). (CREC, 2018: H4942, Thornberry, 2018).

On 10-11 July 2019, Michael Turner (R-OH), of the House Armed Services Committee, expressed his disappointment about the House version of the 2020 NDAA that was presented on the chamber's floor. The bill prohibited the deployment of the low-yield W76-2 warheads (ME) that had been funded and produced (CP) and were to be deployed on a bipartisan basis (VP). Russia had adopted a doctrine of "escalate-to-deescalate" (CP) and had practiced scenarios in which they would resort to limited nuclear use believing that the U.S. would be less likely to respond (CP) because America "[had], usually, higher yield, bigger weapons" (CP). The U.S. ought to be very concerned about how said doctrine affected Russia's calculus (CP).

To the lawmaker, recalling the SLBM low-yield nuclear warhead from deployment was akin to "unilateral nuclear disarmament" (GP) and rewarded Russia's aggression (GP) (downsides). It would reduce the U.S. nuclear arsenal which was only there to deter adversaries from using nuclear weapons (GP). The bill represented what he described as "a significant deviation from our past sentiment of bipartisanship" (VP). After all, the "Strategic Forces portion" of the NDAA received no Republican votes in the Strategic Forces Subcommittee or in the full Armed Services Committee due to the presence of the "disarmament" provision (ME). Thus, the representative presented an amendment striking said provision from the NDAA (ME).

Turner cast doubt as to whether not deploying the low-yield nuclear warheads was the best course of action by noting that Congress should not randomly wanted to pull them back (ME). He believed that the decision should be in the hands of those charged with military policy instead (VP) (downplays the role of Congress in nuclear weapons policy). He argued against the provision by claiming that Putin would be pleasantly surprised with it (ME). The legislator wanted to make the U.S. safer (GP) and change Russia's calculus by demonstrating that the U.S. had the ability to respond proportionally when threatened (GP). Those goals would be achieved by means of the SLBM low-yield nuclear warheads (ME). He rejected consequences of action linked to those capabilities: the money had already been spent to produce them (GP) and they were not destabilizing (GP). The low-yield SLBM was not a new weapon (ME). After all, the U.S. had other low-yield nuclear weapons and they faced no similar criticism (CP).

Turner rejected Adam Smith's argument that the provision in question was not a universal nuclear disarmament provision. He believed that to be the case because the provision only inhibited the U.S. and "it [required] the pulling of a nuclear weapon that [was] scheduled for deployment" (GP) (downside). The bill also failed to get something from Moscow (GP) in exchange for the disarmament (ME). Turner proposed that the U.S. negotiated treaties with Russia (ME) to get rid of both sides' low-yield nuclear weapons (GP). He offered an amendment that would take out the "disarmament" provision in question (ME). On 11 December 2019, Turner offered his support for the final 2020 NDAA, which did not include the provision he opposed. At that time, he stated that he wanted address Russia's INF Treaty violations (GP) and that he saw the deployment of the low-yield nuclear SLBM as a counter to them (ME) (CREC, 2019: H5347-H5348, H5713-H5714, H10083).

On 20 August 2019, eighteen democratic senators wrote a letter to chairman Inhofe and ranking member Reed, believing the new low-yield warhead to be unnecessary (ME), dangerous (GP) (downside), and redundant (ME). The U.S. already had multiple low-yield choices, namely the B61 gravity bomb variants and the ALCM¹⁶³ (CP), which were being replaced at an enormous cost (ME). There was no way of knowing whether a low-yield SLBM nuclear warhead (ME) would control any conflict (GP).

Moreover, deploying the new capability would lead to compromise on U.S. goals. It would reduce the nuclear threshold (GP) and make nuclear use and escalation more likely (GP). Secondly, Russia would not know if an incoming missile carried a low or high-yield warhead (GP). They probably would assume the worst and escalate the conflict (GP). Thirdly, using the new capability would disclose the location of the nuclear submarine, putting at risk America's most valuable and survivable deterrence asset at risk (GP) (several downsides listed). It was irresponsible (ME) to put America's last line of defense at risk (GP) (downside) on the basis of "a theory on tactical exchange that has not even been proven as a likely scenario" (CP) ("Letter to NDAA Conferees," 2019).

On 11-12 July 2019, and 24 October 2019, Adam Smith – now the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee – spoke in favor of the provision prohibiting the deployment of the low-yield SLBM warhead that was included in the House version of the 2020 NDAA. For the representative, "low-yield" was a misnomer: it was a nuclear weapon, it would "destroy a lot of stuff," and its use was a "total game-changer" (CP). He contested the idea that Russia "[was] going to use a low-yield nuclear weapon first without any new clear provocation." There was no evidence of that. That plan had been muttered by "a few people (...) but [was] nowhere in official doctrine" (CP).

For the chairman, it was the debate about low-yield nuclear weapons itself what weakened deterrence (ME). In his words, "what we are saying to the Russians is there is a scenario under which they can use a nuclear weapon and we won't respond, and I don't think that should ever be true" (GP) (downside). Deploying a low-yield nuclear weapons was dangerous (ME) because it took the U.S. "down the road of saying, we can have a manageable nuclear war." It was making nuclear war acceptable (GP). Talking about a proportional response meant "that nuclear war then [became] something that you can contemplate" (GP) (downsides). The capability was also unnecessary (ME): the U.S. had a wide range of nuclear weapons; not just the high-yield kind (CP). It had the world's greatest nuclear arsenal (CP). The legislator further questioned the need for the new low-yield nuclear weapon, arguing that if Russia did not believe that the U.S. would respond with a high-yield nuclear weapon, then it might not believe that the U.S. would respond low-yield nuclear weapon either (ME) (questions the conclusion that the U.S. ought to deploy low-yield nuclear weapons, by questioning the truthfulness of a premise

¹⁶³ The 2018 NPR claims that the present non-strategic nuclear force of the United States consists exclusively of a rather small number of gravity bombs (B61s) carried by F-15E DCA (U.S. DOD, 2018: X). However, according to Reif (2016), "the ALCM warhead is believed have a built-in option to allow detonation at lower or higher yields."

informing said conclusion – that Russia would believe that the U.S. would respond with that category of weapon but not one with a higher yield).

Smith believed that the best course of action was making it clear to Russia that if it started a nuclear war, the U.S. would respond, and that it could not promise that the response would be proportional. That there would be an “overwhelming and probably nuclear response” (ME). The use of diplomacy (ME), and the clear articulation of policy (ME), were the courses of action that would deter Russia and prevent a nuclear war (GP). It made no sense to think that Russia would believe that the U.S. would respond proportionally, but not overwhelmingly (CP). Those arguing that Russia would not believe American claims that it would respond to Moscow’s nuclear use unless it possessed the low-yield capability being proposed had a concealed goal of action. They were using that argument as “an excuse to build more and more and more and more” (ME). Moreover, those critics carried a “sort of insecurity” and nervousness (CP) (rejects that the premise should inform action) and believed that as long as America looked strong (GP), everything would be fine (GP) (rejects relation between the two goals). And to achieve those goals, the U.S. needed to continue to spend more money to “have more” (ME). This was a message that was being driven by contractors (CP) whose interest was to make more money (GP) (covert reason) (rejects the course of action and the premises informing it). The world was more complicated than that (CP) and required more imaginative and complex solutions (ME). While he agreed with maintaining America’s military advantage over near-peer adversaries (GP), that goal would not be achieved, and the world would not be safer (VP) by adding more low-yield warheads to the U.S. nuclear arsenal (ME).

The chairman rejected the notion that the provision prohibiting deployment of low-yield nuclear weapons entailed “unilateral nuclear disarmament.” It was simply preventing the deployment of a different form of nuclear weapons (GP) (rejected downside). The U.S. still had thousands of nuclear weapons that it was not getting rid of; it was not “universally” getting rid of all of them (CP).

The legislator also rebuffed the idea that the decision to deploy or not the aforementioned weapons should be left to others. Congress should not just okay everything that the Pentagon wanted without having a say in it (VP). He also rejected the idea that the provision to prevent deployment of the new warhead had been made randomly (ME). He explained that there was a debate on the matter that had been going for years (CP) and that many former national security experts believed that the weapons would be destabilizing (GP) and make the U.S. less safe (GP). They could not be used without things getting out of control (GP) (downsides). There was also no precedent, in the 75 years of the U.S. nuclear deterrent, for a low-yield SLBM (ME). However, Smith believed that due to the strong opposition from the White House and the Senate (CP), it would be very difficult for the House provision on low-yield nuclear weapons to prevail in the final legislation (VP) (legislator is bound by the institutional context of foreign policy decision-making)

Smith also touched on the replacement of the ICBM leg of the nuclear triad. He stated that General James Cartwright (vice-chairman of the JCS from 31 August 2007 to 3 August 2011) whereby

the U.S. did not need more than 500 nuclear delivery vehicles (ME). He argued that the U.S. could like have an adequate deterrent at a lower number which would not require building a brand-new ICBM (ME). The life of existing ICBMs could be extended if the U.S. relied on fewer of them (ME). However, there as a parochial interest (ME) being driven, in large part, by defense contractors (CP) seeking to make money (GP) (covert reason), whose message was “more is better, spend more money, be tougher, be stronger, have more” (ME) (rejects the course of action and the premises informing it). An additional problem related to the fact that states such as Wyoming, North Dakota, and Montana were “found of their missiles” (i.e., the ICBMs they host in their territory)¹⁶⁴ (ME) because they wanted the jobs their provided, even if they could not possibly be that many (GP) (rejects covert premise, which should not inform the course action). Those states were the ones pushing back about possible ICBM reductions, being paranoid about it, and not wanting any reductions, regardless of the circumstances (ME). Smith opposed that conclusion, describing it as not rational and parochial (ME). The representative also believed that the U.S. should re-engage its diplomatic corps (ME), which had been gutted over the past three years (CP) (CREC, 2019: H5713-H5714, Smith, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d).

According to a news piece dated 24 October 2019, Smith claimed that the stumbling block in negotiations with the republicans on a final NDAA was the construction of Trump’s promised border wall between the U.S. and Mexico (ME)¹⁶⁵. He described the so-called “skinny bill”¹⁶⁶ being proposed by Senator Inhofe as a “backup plan” until the border wall issue was resolved (ME) (Brown, 2019). He stated that the skinny bill did not (ME) restrict funding for the border wall (ME), making it a challenge to bring it to the House floor (VP) (institutional reality). It was also the equivalent of failure (ME). It let down the U.S. troops (VP) and hindered national security (GP) (downsides) (Hitchens, 2019). On 29 October 2019, the press quoted Smith’s assertion that the skinny bill was a “no-go” because “it [did not] do anything” (ME) (Kheel, 2019).

On 10-11, 20 and 30 December 2019, Smith expressed his support the final 2020 NDAA, despite it failing to include several provisions that were present in the House version of the bill, including the one prohibiting the deployment of the new low-yield SLBM nuclear warhead. The legislator explained that Trump, Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell, and Senate Armed Services chairman Jim Inhofe hated all the provisions that did not make it into the final NDAA. The republican-controlled Senate and White House “fundamentally opposed” the Democratic priorities in the House version of the NDAA (CP). The democrats wanted “100 things” while the republicans “[wanted] nothing,” making negotiations difficult (VP). He stated that fighting harder for the provisions of the House bill or “holding

¹⁶⁴ The three states, along with Colorado and Nebraska, host the United States’ collection of ICBMs – the nuclear “sponge” – which is expected to “soak up” a nuclear attack. It is intended to draw fire away from targets such as New York and San Francisco, to the American Upper Midwest instead, in case of a nuclear first strike (Collina & Vikram, 2019).

¹⁶⁵ The House bill imposed funding limits for the border wall, while the Senate bill did not (Brown, 2019).

¹⁶⁶ The skinny bill was a “stripped-down version” of the annual NDAA which “would remove nearly every other point of conflict for negotiators, so that it creates an easier path toward passage.” Funding to deploy a low-yield SLBM nuclear warhead was not among the issues addressed in the skinny NDAA (Shane III & Gould, 2019).

the line” would not have worked (VP) (legislator is bound by the institutional context of foreign policy decision-making). The chairman and the democrats fought until the very end and did everything they could (VP) (institutional reality). In Smith’s words “[t]hey [the republicans] are where they are, OK? [CP] And you know, you have to respect that” (VP) (institutional reality). As he explained, “[w]e (...) have the problem that we have a divided government” (VP) (institutional reality): a republican president and Senate, and a democratic H.R. “who do not agree on a lot of issues” (CP).

He further elaborated by explaining that McConnell and Inhofe would have been overjoyed to pass a the skinny NDAA that contained no Democratic priorities (CP). The skinny bill was not an acceptable policy alternative for Smith, however, because it would not include any of the democrats hardly fought key policies concerning paid parental leave, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, and the “widow tax” relief (ME) (other policies). If the democrats agreed “killed” the NDAA – which Trump, McConnell and Inhofe were willing to do (CP) – they “would have gotten nothing. Not a singular democratic priority” (ME). Moreover, jeopardizing the bill would put America “on the brink of another government shutdown” (VP) and “[upset] all of the Pentagon’s responsibilities (VP) (downsides).

The final NDAA (ME), on the other hand, “better [provided] for the widows and families of those service members who have made the ultimate sacrifice for [America]” (VP). It would improve the lives of million by granting paid parental leave (VP) and “have real impacts on Americans leading real lives” (VP). The bill (ME) promoted a more inclusive and diverse military (VP), and it would protect public health (VP). Overall, the widows, families and parents would benefit from the bill (GP) (bill achieves the goal of delivering several value premises) and that “[was] enough” (ME). The democrats had achieved more “than anyone ever thought possible” (ME) given the realities of a Trump White House and a Republican-controlled Senate (VP) (institutional reality) who hated the democratic provisions (CP).

In Smith’s view, the House “put its stamp on [the NDAA] in a bipartisan way” (VP) (value is not compromised). The final NDAA promoted U.S. national security (GP), reflecting Democratic priorities (VP) and American values (VP). The final NDAA lived up to progressive values; in fact, “it [was] the most progressive defense bill in decades” (VP). It allowed for “the largest expansion of the social welfare state since the Affordable Care Act” (VP) and was an enormous accomplishment (ME). It represented, he added, “the best of our country and the best of this body” (VP). While several issues, such as the low-yield nuclear warhead were not resolved to his satisfaction, or that of the democratic party, Smith explained that “[t]he question [was] what’s doable in those areas” (VP) (institutional reality).

The representative also mentioned two additional provisions, exclusive to the House bill, which had failed to make the cut into the final NDAA. One (ME) would have reduced America’s influence on the war in Yemen (GP), and another (ME) would have assured that the U.S. would not go to war with Iran without Congressional authorization (VP) (GP) (unachieved goal of delivering the value premise). There were, thus, potential downsides regarding American values (VP) and peace in the region (VP), as

well as regarding congressional authority in matters of war (VP). Smith added that passing legislation in a democracy meant listening to all voices, listening to the people (VP). America had to show the world that its representative democracy worked (VP). Just because one did not get everything it wanted when participating in a representative democracy, it did not “[mean] that the process didn’t work” (VP). It was important to retain that spirit and get things done (VP), despite the divisiveness of the current times (CP). That was essential to freedom (VP), as well as peace and stability worldwide (VP) The bill met the needs of the people (VP) (Rep. Adam Smith [@RepAdamSmith], 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d, 2019e, 2019f, 2019g, 2019h, 2019i, 2019j, 2019k, 2019l, 2019m, 2019n, 2019o; The Associated Press, 2019b; Gould, 2019a; CREC, 2019: H10082, H10090-H10091).

Inhofe issued several statements on the NDAA 2020 (the ones we analyzed, and which included some statements to the press, encompass the following dates: 25 June, 16 September, 24 and 29 October, and 6 November 2019). Inhofe believed that the democrats were dragging their feet on the final NDAA for no good reason (ME) (rejects inaction). He senator warned that Russia and China were not waiting around while democrats and republicans squabbled (CP). Both countries were modernizing their nuclear forces with haste (CP). Beijing had just paraded dozens of hypersonic missiles, and Russia was developing new and dangerous nuclear weapons programs (CP). Iran and North Korea continued to pursue nuclear programs (CP). Considering the threats to itself and its allies, America’s “nuclear deterrence [was] so significant” (GP). Nuclear weapons could not be treated as a Cold War relic (ME) but revitalized and modernized (ME) if America wanted to preserve a credible deterrent (GP) and catch up with China and Russia (GP). The two countries had surpassed the U.S. in the nuclear realm, having developed, for instance, hypersonic systems (CP). Moreover, North Korea and Iran continued their pursuit of nuclear programs (CP). Inhofe defended nuclear modernization arguing that five percent of the DOD budget was a small price to pay (ME) to avoid nuclear war (GP). Inhofe also noted that the NDAA had historically (CP) enjoyed broad bipartisan support (VP).

The House democrats were putting their liberal social agenda (GP) ahead of a more important premise: the needs of the troops (VP). Moreover, they were “prioritizing their misguided attempts to undo the results of the 2016 election through impeachment [GP], instead of taking care of our troops with an NDAA” (VP). Inhofe accused the democrats of delaying the NDAA due to covert premises for action. In his words: “these guys are running for president, and they want to be on TV instead of up here doing their job” (GP).

The congressman stressed the importance of bipartisanship: it was a give and take between both sides (VP). He accused the democratic party of jeopardizing that premise by inserting partisan politics into a must-pass bill (VP). The democrats were seeking to prove a political point, a goal which the senator opposed (GP). Passing the NDAA was a constitutional duty of the U.S. Congress (VP), and partisan divisions (CP) needed to be overcome in the name of national security (GP).

The U.S. faced the possibility of a delayed NDAA and a full-year continuing resolution¹⁶⁷ (ME). Inhofe rejected that possibility due to its associated compromises on U.S. goals. There would be delays to new programs (GP), military operations would stop (GP), taxpayer dollars would be wasted (GP), and the U.S. military would be left further behind (GP). That course of action would send a terrible message to the world, including allies, enemies, and America's own military, which would undermine national security (GP) (lists several downsides). The legislator wanted to give the U.S. troops and military what they deserved; one "that [put] service members and their families first (VP): a comprehensive, full-year defense authorization bill (ME). He rejected "[passing] a bill with as many partisan provisions [VP] [rejects downside] as [those] in the House bill." The House bill was a "non-starter:" it would go nowhere in the Senate (VP) (institutional reality), and it would get vetoed by the president (VP) (institutional reality).

To ensure that the armed forces received "the tools they need to fight and win no matter what" (GP), Inhofe filed a skinny NDAA (ME) (alternative course of action). For the senator, "a skinny bill [was] simple." The bill (ME) "[extended] necessary authorities for military operations [GP], [took] care of the servicemembers and their families [VP], and [authorized] essential military construction and acquisition programs [GP]. That's it. That's one paragraph."

The skinny bill was not the best course of action (ME) but was deemed preferable than an NDAA with the House "partisan provisions" (ME) (VP) (rejects downside) or a full-year continuing resolution (ME). The skinny bill would achieve the following goals (ME): extend necessary authorities (GP), authorize critical construction and acquisition programs of the military (GP), take care of the troops and their families (GP), and carry out oversight over military acquisition programs (VP). The skinny bill was a "simple, politics-free version" of the NDAA (ME). It would fulfill congressional responsibilities and duties (VP) while maintaining vital national security programs (GP). The skinny bill would not replace a "full bill" (ME) but could be necessary if no agreement was reached soon on the later (ME). It was a last resort "that only had the necessary things in it" (ME) (CREC, 2019: S4495-S4496, Inhofe, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d; Gould, 2019b; Shane III & Gould, 2019; Kelley & Lesniewski, 2019).

We now move on to think tanks. A May 2015 CSIS report on U.S. nuclear strategy and posture for 2025-2050 posited that U.S. adversaries were considering using nuclear weapons to get America to "back off" during a conflict (CP). U.S. nuclear forces were not designed for limited exchanges of low-yield nuclear weapons, but for a global nuclear conflict at the strategic level (CP). American nuclear superiority led adversaries to ponder breaking the nuclear threshold to avoid unfavorable results at the conventional level (CP). The Russian military claimed to be developing "very low-yield," accurate

¹⁶⁷ Continuing resolutions can be understood as "temporary spending bills that allow federal government operations to continue when final appropriations have not been approved by Congress and the President. Without final appropriations or a continuing resolution, there could be a lapse in funding that results in a government shutdown" (GAO, 2022).

weapons producing little radiation (CP). Between 2025 and 2050, while no major advances in warhead design were expected, all nuclear powers would modernize the ones they had (CP). Moreover, in that timeframe, Russia and China were likely to develop “clean” low-yield nuclear warheads or warheads optimized for EMP (electromagnetic pulse) (CP). The former were emphasized in Moscow and Beijing’s nuclear doctrines (CP).

The authors of the report wanted America to make breaking the nuclear threshold less attractive (GP) and ensure that there were no gaps in U.S. nuclear response options that would prevent a proportional retaliation to nuclear use against the U.S. and its allies (GP). The U.S. could not be self-deterred (GP). Nuclear warfighting was rejected as a goal of action (GP). Instead, the experts wanted the country to “[demonstrate] the resolve to match an adversary’s escalation of a conflict to the nuclear level” (GP). The report recommended acquisition of “a robust set of proportionate nuclear responses” with accurate, low-yield, special-effects options (i.e., “low collateral, enhanced radiation, earth penetration, electromagnetic pulse, and others as technology advances”) (ME). The acquisition of discriminate, more employable options (ME) would allow the U.S. to respond proportionally “at the lower end of the nuclear continuum” (GP), raising the nuclear threshold (GP) and reducing the chances of escalation (GP). The U.S. would send “a powerful political message” – that adversaries could not win by going nuclear (GP).

The strategy being recommended was not new; it was grounded in the shift from the 1950’s strategy of “massive retaliation” to “flexible response” (ME) (a policy precedent is raised). Demonstrating awareness (GP) to adversaries’ plans to offset American conventional superiority with nuclear weapons (CP) by developing new response options, would “be doubly impactful” (ME). The U.S. would show “the same kind of hard-nosed, realistic thinking that led [an adversary] to consider employing a nuclear weapon in the first place” (ME). Current nuclear response options (ME) might cause the U.S. to not respond in kind (GP) (potentially unachieved goal), given that they were “dirtier” and larger, causing considerable collateral damage (GP) (downsides of current options). The authors rejected the idea that America’s superiority at the conventional level meant that it did not need to base its nuclear strategy on “weak state tactics” – as some experts had claimed (ME). They believed that America’s conventional superiority, which gave the country escalation control at the non-nuclear level, made adversaries more reliant on nuclear weapons and more likely to use them (CP) (Murdock et al., 2015: VI-VIII, 12-13, 120, 122-123).

The Defense Science Board (DSB), an independent Federal Advisory Committee providing advice to the DOD, produced on December 2016 a report identifying seven priorities for the ensuing administration, one of them being deterring the use of nuclear weapons (GP). According to the report, U.S. conventional dominance served as an impetus for greater interest in nuclear weapons by states that cannot overmatch America otherwise (CP). The DSB highlighted efforts by Moscow and Beijing to modernize and advance their nuclear weapons, as well as their investments in INF-range missiles (CP). Russia doctrine was publicly one of “escalate to de-escalate” (CP). The nuclear threshold might be

decreasing (CP), and U.S. modernization started well behind Russia and China's (CP). The DSB also highlighted North Korea's nuclear threat (CP), Pakistani proliferation of theater nuclear weapons (CP), Iran's halted nuclear weapons acquisition plans (CP), and the potential development of nuclear weapons by U.S. allies and partners that doubted U.S. extended deterrence and security guarantees (GP) (downside of inaction). The almost complete focus on life extension of the U.S. nuclear forces (CP) limited the country's flexibility to tackle future uncertainties (GP) (downside of inaction). The U.S. ought to hedge against the possibility of a nuclear Armageddon (GP) and against an uncertain future (GP). It needed "a more flexible nuclear enterprise [GP] that could produce, if needed, a rapid, tailored nuclear option for limited use should existing non-nuclear or nuclear options prove insufficient" (GP). The country should place options "on-the-shelf" in case they were urgently needed (ME). The DSB suggested several capabilities considering the abovementioned goals (ME), among which lower yield nuclear weapons (ME) (Defense Science Board, 2016: 22-25).

On 20 February 2018, CSIS research Olga Oliker, along with Andrey Baklitskiy, questioned the existence of Russia's "escalate-to-deescalate" doctrine, arguing that there was little evidence of a drop in Moscow's nuclear threshold (CP). While Russia pundits had published articles advocating such a doctrine, they had continually failed in changing the policy (CP). Russian policy maintained that nuclear weapons were to be used as a response to WMDs or when the state's very existence was at stake (CP). Russian exercises, capability, and rhetoric were used as evidence to support the argument that Moscow possessed such a doctrine. However, the authors argued that the scenarios for Russia's nuclear exercises seemingly did not "fit the model of a small-scale nuclear strike early in a conflict" (CP). Russia's possession of non-strategic nuclear weapons was also not evidence of "escalate-to-deescalate" plans, because "weapons could be used for all sorts of things" and the U.S. also had that capability (CP). Lastly, despite the reckless talk from Russian experts, Moscow's senior officials "[had] been far more careful with their threats" (CP). Thus, increasing U.S. reliance on low-yield nuclear weapons constituted "a dangerous solution [ME] to a non-existent problem" (CP). Still, Moscow had recently emphasized the development of new systems that could be deployed in either nuclear or conventional mode (CP) and was also developing hypersonic systems (CP). The authors also drew from other experts who noted that Russia's nuclear strategy included coercive elements (CP). Moscow's nuclear policies were not purely defensive (CP).

In any case, even if Moscow had such a doctrine, such a course of action would be the wrong solution (ME). The deterrent balance would be undermined (GP), possibility triggering the crises that the capabilities were meant to avert (GP). Moreover, U.S. military superiority (GP) and the sufficiency of existing capabilities would be put in question (GP) (downsides). The authors recommended instead that the U.S. relied on a combination of conventional and nuclear weapons, deemed "more than enough" to achieve the following goal (ME): "[making] anyone think twice about the advantages of trying to 'escalate to de-escalate' in an actual fight with the United States (GP) (Oliker & Baklitskiy, 2018).

On 4 December 2018, Rachel Ellehuus (2018) argued that NATO efforts to adapt to a post-INF world (GP) would be bolstered by the new low-yield SLBM (ME). Specifically, the capability would signal that the U.S. could mirror any escalatory measure by Russia (GP), thereby negating any advantage Moscow could hope to gain by “escalating to win” by holding targets inside Russia at risk (GP). The systems would protect Europe and the U.S. (GP) without the deployment of additional nuclear weapons in Europe (ME), which could have proved difficult (CP) and lead to divisions in the Alliance (GP) (no downside).

On 19 January 2018, RAND’s Daniel Gerstein (2018) argued that experts had made compelling cases both in favor and against developing low-yield nuclear weapons (ME). Since low-yield weapons were more easily incorporated into a conflict (ME), in terms of warfighting (GP), they would reintroduce a powerful tool to the U.S. arsenal (ME). They increased the chance (ME) of certain targets, such as command bunkers, being destroyed (GP). However, new low-yield capabilities could lead to negative consequences on U.S. goals. Their use could be misinterpreted (GP) and result in a strategic nuclear exchange (GP) (downsides). Developing such weapons could signal a new willingness to use them for warfighting, and not for deterrence (GP). They could also undermine non-proliferation programs (GP). All in all, the author considered the downsides of a return of tactical nuclear weapons to be more significant (ME), claiming that developing such capabilities “would send a dangerous signal” (GP).

The ACA’s Executive Director Daryl Kimball shared his views on the potential development of a new low-yield nuclear weapon on several occasions (July/August 2017, 12 January 2018, 15 February 2018, October 2019). He noted that the DSB’s recommendation of the capability was followed by its board members’ acknowledgment that there was no military requirement for it (ME) (not necessary). There was no proof (CP) that Russia believed that the U.S. did not possess the tools (ME) for a decisive response in the event of a future conflict (GP) (no proof that inaction does not deliver the goal). Whether Russia had a strategy of “escalate-to-deescalate” was a “hotly disputed” question (CP) that was not supported by official Russian nuclear doctrine (CP). European allies would probably not support U.S. deployments of new nuclear weapons on or close to their territories, nor a strategy grounded on the risk of limited nuclear conflict in their area (CP). Russia and the U.S. maintained “Cold War-era nuclear launch-under-attack postures” that heightened the risk of miscalculation (CP).

The idea that it was necessary to provide the U.S. president with more credible nuclear options in case of a military conflict with Russia (ME) was “dangerous, Cold War thinking” (CP) (action should not be informed by the Cold War experience). Once nuclear weapons were used there was no guarantee that there would be no escalation to an “all-out global nuclear war” (GP) (downside of additional nuclear options) rapidly killing millions of people. And the resulting nuclear winter would lead to a global famine, and to the suffering and death of many more people (VP) (downsides).

While President Trump’s questioning of the value of alliances and NATO might lead Putin to perceive that he could get away with limited nuclear use (CP), that political problem would not be resolved (GP) by additional low-yield nuclear weapons (ME). While Kimball agreed that relations with

Moscow had deteriorated (CP), there was no reason to try to match Russia (ME). After all, the U.S. had excellent conventional capabilities as well as low-yield nuclear weapons (CP). There were significant investments being made (CP) to assure that the latter would be able to penetrate even the most advanced air defenses (ME). The new low-yield weapons “[were] a solution in search of a problem” (ME).

Pursuing the new nuclear warheads or delivery systems compromised U.S. goals: it could further escalate tensions (GP), hasten the global technological arms race (GP), and comprise non-proliferation goals (GP). The action would also “play into Moscow’s hands” (GP) given that, in the nuclear realm, the country can match NATO (CP).

Deploying new nuclear weapons was a “radical departure” of current U.S. nuclear practice and policy, which stated that the “fundamental role of U.S. nuclear weapons is to deter nuclear attack” (ME). The author feared that they would lower the U.S. and Russian nuclear thresholds. On the one hand, some in the U.S. might use them in the belief that a nuclear conflict could be controlled (GP). On the other, that line of thinking might convince Moscow “that it could get away with limited nuclear use without putting its survival at risk” (GP) (downsides).

Overall, there were too many shortcomings in the rationale for the course of action under consideration (ME). There was no evidence that the new weapons (ME) would strengthen deterrence (GP) or compel U.S. adversaries to make different decisions (GP). Any marginal benefits provided by such weapons were easily outweighed (ME) by the security and diplomatic costs associated with their development and possibly testing (GP) (downsides). However, even if more low-yield nuclear options were deemed necessary, the recommended low-yield SLBM and the nuclear SLCM were “deeply flawed” (ME). Kimball believed that the two capabilities possessed a “discrimination problem” because there was no way to know if a launched SLBM was armed with a high- or low-yield warhead, or whether the cruise missile was nuclear or conventional. That would lead to miscalculation (GP) and unintentional escalation (GP).

The nuclear SLCM was also meant to be used as a bargaining chip with Russia (GP), but it was not realistic due to the many requirements that would need to be met for the U.S. to abandon the pursuit of the capability (ME). Given Russian concerns with NATO conventional superiority (CP), it was also not clear how a new nuclear option would be useful as a bargaining chip (ME) (course of action does not deliver the goal). The challenge posed by Russia was not nuclear, but conventional (CP). Thus, the U.S. should focus on addressing the latter challenge instead (GP). The expert recommended the extension of the New START (ME) and the subsequent pursuit of a follow-on agreement that limited all nuclear weapons, including non-strategic (ME) (Kimball, 2017c, 2019b; Kimball & Reif, 2018b; Daryl G Kimball [@DarylGKimball], 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2018d, 2018e, 2018f, 2018g, 2018h, 2018i, 2018j, 2018k, 2018l, 2018m, 2018n, 2018o, 2018p, 2018q).

Sixteen democratic senators wrote to President Trump, in a letter dated 29 January 2018, about the reported contents of the forthcoming NPR. They believed that the new low-yield nuclear weapons were not necessary (ME) to achieve the goal of maintaining deterrence (GP). They believed that the

development of such capabilities would lead to several consequences on goals. The legislators claimed that those weapons would be destabilizing (GP), pressure other countries to follow suit (GP), and require additional resources that would be better spent elsewhere (GP). They wanted those funds to be used to maintain America's conventional superiority instead (GP). Moreover, the senators believed that their country had the "unique responsibility to continue to lead the international community towards eventual nuclear disarmament" (VP) (downsides) ("Letter on NPR," 2018).

A 12 February 2018 X (former Twitter) post published in the "House Armed Services Democrats" account addressed a Pentagon chart cited by DOD Secretary Jim Mattis on 6 February. In the view of the democratic committee members, the chart misleadingly suggested that America was falling behind Russia, China, and North Korea in the nuclear arms race, due to the new nuclear systems that had been developed by those states since the release of the 2010 NPR. According to Mattis, those states had developed 34 new systems, while the U.S. had developed only the F-35 aircraft (CP). In rejecting the administration's portrayal of U.S. nuclear capabilities (CP), the democrats drew from a Washington Post article by Glenn Kessler, who claimed that the chart was clearly "ginned up to cast the U.S. nuclear arsenal in the worst possible light" (CP) and ignored (CP) U.S. modernization efforts (ME). (House Armed Services Democrats [@HASCDemocrats], 2018; Kessler, 2018).

On 2 February 2018, Adam Smith claimed that America's nuclear deterrent was "extremely robust [and] highly credible" (CP), and thus capable (ME) of "responding to any attack and defending [U.S.] allies with decisive force" (GP). The development of low-yield nuclear weapons would lead to downsides on goals: they would lower the nuclear threshold (GP), promote an arms race (GP), make miscalculation (and a nuclear war) more likely (GP), and put at risk the country's "most survivable nuclear forces" (i.e., submarines) (GP). The action would also divert resources away from the capabilities (GP) that America needed to counter its near-peer adversaries (GP). Smith wanted to avoid a "button-pushing contest" (i.e., nuclear warfighting) (GP) (downsides) (Smith, 2018).

Smith concurred, on 22 May 2018, that the U.S. faced "an incredibly complex set of threat environments" (CP). He believed there to be an enormous risks of Russia rising back up (CP) and expressed concerned with what North Korea (GP) and Iran were doing (CP). He did not believe that "tactical" nuclear weapons existed in the sense that he saw them at the same level as other nuclear weapons (CP). He acknowledged that Russia was building them (CP) but perceived the U.S. deterrence as strong (CP). He stated that Russia was the primary focus of America's nuclear deterrence (GP), but the country ought to also have a strong deterrence for China (GP), North Korea (GP), and Iran as well (GP). The representative also wanted to avoid miscalculation and stumbling into a nuclear conflict (GP). He believed that the course of action proposed in the NPR, that is, the proposed low-yield nuclear weapons, to be dangerous (ME), considering the goal of deterring nuclear war (GP). Instead of achieving it (GP), the capabilities risked "creating the very thing they were trying to prevent" (GP) (downside). The military would start imagining a survivable nuclear war (GP) (downside) – a mindset that, in the past, almost led the country to stumble into a nuclear conflict more than once (CP).

America should not be communicating to Russia “that nuclear war [was] something of a degree” (ME). The best approach, and all that was needed, was communicating to Russia “that nuclear weapons [were] the red line to end all red lines.” That their use would result in an overwhelming response (ME). After all, the U.S. had more than enough firepower to credibly deter Russia (GP), including some low-yield nuclear weapons already (ME). Moreover, considering the goals, he also wanted the U.S. to pursue dialogue with Russia, China, and North Korea (ME) (CREC, 2018: H4368-H4369; H4561).

On 26 July 2018, Smith reiterated the ideas above, adding that the proposed low-yield nuclear weapons were a waste of money (GP) that would raise the nuclear threshold (GP) (downsides). He questioned the strategic gains resulting from the development of the “new” (CP) low-yield nuclear weapons (ME). Since any nuclear use would “change the rules of the game” (CP) and the U.S. did not abide by the reckless and dangerous “escalate-to-deescalate” doctrine (CP), America should not mirror Russia’s strategy (ME) (CREC, 2018: H7704).

On 6 June and on 13 June 2018, senator Jack Reed (D-RI), ranking member of the Armed Services Committee, noted that the U.S. had several low-yield nuclear weapons, but they were air-launched (CP). The idea that Russia’s implementation of its “escalate-to-deescalate” doctrine meant that the U.S. “[would] accept the existing status of Russian forces, even if they occupy NATO territory” (CP), which was contrary to America’s long-standing commitment to NATO” (VP). Still, Reed acknowledged the threat posed by the Russian doctrine (CP). The world was becoming more complicated, not only because of the nuclear weapons of major powers, but also those of other countries (CP). The legislator noted that two amendments, offered in the Armed Services Committee, and in the full Appropriations Committee, by democrats, had failed. One would have required DOD reports before deployment of the SLBM low-yield nuclear weapon (ME). The other would have eliminated funding for the development of the capability (ME). He wanted the Senate to maintain congressional oversight over the development and deployment of the new nuclear weapon, and over any other new or modified nuclear weapons in the future (VP).

He believed that more time was needed to assess the complex, potential consequences (GP) of developing a low-yield SLBM (ME) as response to Russia’s “escalate-to-deescalate nuclear doctrine” (CP). He noted the lack of expert consensus on the matter, with some supporting the low-yield SLBM, while others opposed it (ME). Evaluating the NPR’s policy recommendation was difficult (ME) given that deterrence was based on perceptions and communication (CP). Still, he was skeptical that the proposed action would achieve (ME) the goal of preventing both sides from future use of nuclear weapons (GP).

For Reed, the goal of limited counterresponse (GP) that was behind the NPR’s policy proposal could be achieved with the current air-launched capabilities (ME). Furthermore, the U.S. was currently modernizing the nuclear triad, including by replacing America’s aging ALCMs with long-range stand-off weapons and extending the life of the B61 gravity bomb (ME). Such efforts (ME) “should by 2030 offset the increasingly complex anti-access/anti-denial environment Russia [was] capable” (ME).

The 2019 NDAA would remove a law passed in 2003 on a bipartisan basis (VP) allowing for research, but not development, production, or deployment of low-yield nuclear weapons without congressional authorization (VP). He put forward an amendment to the 2019 NDAA to ensure congressional oversight on that matter (VP), given the nature and capability for destruction of nuclear weapons (CP). Congress should have the responsibility and obligation to authorize new nuclear weapons (VP), as it had had since 2003 (ME) (invokes precedent) (CREC, 2018: S3008-S3010, S3879-S3881, S3886).

On 22 May 2018, Mike Rogers (R-AL), of the House Armed Services Committee, asserted that the statement “Russia is not an enemy and is increasingly a partner,” from the 2010 NPR, was obviously wrong in “many, many ways” (CP). Moscow was not a partner, but a competitor (CP). Russia had several thousands of low-yield nuclear weapons and would regularly carry exercises with them (CP). It had announced even more of such weapons recently (CP) and had an “escalate to deescalate” doctrine (CP). The U.S. needed to correct Russia’s mistaken perception that it could use nuclear weapons to force America to surrender early in a conflict (GP). The U.S. had to “shore up” its deterrence posture (GP). Rogers rejected several consequences of action stemming from the development of the new SLBM low-yield nuclear weapon. The Navy had confirmed that having the capability did not increase the risks to the submarine carrying it (GP), and Mattis and Hyten rejected the idea that the risk of strategic miscalculation would be increased (GP) (downsides). Rogers saw attempts at limiting the program for the development of the W76-2 low-yield warhead as associated with the covert goal of “[slowing] down the long-overdue modernization and improvement of [America’s] nuclear forces” (GP) (CREC, 2018: H4560-H4561). On 13 June 2019, Thornberry stated that blocking the deployment of the new SLBM low-yield warhead made no sense (ME). He explained his claim by asking: “[w]hy we would want to take away options for ourselves [ME] when our adversaries have options?” (CP) (Gould, 2019c).

Twenty-five republican senators wrote to President Trump in a letter dated 28 November 2018. They believed that the maintenance and modernization of nuclear weapons capabilities and infrastructure (ME) that had been pledged by the administration when the Senate agreed to ratify the New START had been delayed or reduced in scope (VP) (broken pledge). There was a possibility that the asymmetry between American and Russian nuclear weapon infrastructure capabilities would worsen as a result (GP) (downside of delayed or reduced modernization).

The security environment had become more dangerous since the treaty had entered into force, with Russia being in material breach of the INF Treaty (CP) and having adopted nuclear escalation strategies (CP). Moscow had unveiled new nuclear capabilities not covered by any arms control agreement (CP), had conducted an extensive nuclear modernization program (CP), and enjoyed considerable advantages in terms of nuclear weapons production capacity (CP). The legislators were concerned with the possibility that the U.S. would “[have] to deal with more than one peer competitor at a time” (CP) while facing limits on its own warheads (VP).

The senators claimed that the value of the New START “[depended] on a sustained and vigorous U.S. nuclear weapons modernization program” (ME). If the agreement was to continue to advance U.S. national security (GP), the strategic modernization program (ME), including the new low-yield nuclear options, were necessary (ME). Wanting to tackle the disparity between America and Russia’s tactical nuclear weapon stockpiles in a verifiable manner (GP), the senators recommended the pursuit of an agreement toward that end (ME). Still, they noted that doing so might not be feasible (ME), given Russia’s lack of interest in doing so (CP). In considering extending or replacing the New START, the U.S. ought to take into account: the status of U.S. (CP) and Russian modernization programs (CP); the imbalance posed by Moscow’s non-strategic nuclear weapons (where it held at least a 10-1 advantage over the U.S.) and its and recently unveiled systems (CP); Russian system abuse of international norms and arms control (CP); the possibility that the U.S. might have to deal with more than one peer-competitor at a time (CP) (“Senator Fischer, Republican,” 2018).

On 10 June 2019, Smith negated the existence of a covert premise informing action in the context of the 2020 NDAA. He explained that the democrats were not trying to score political points with the bill (GP). The democrats were simply “trying to produce the best product” (ME). He stated that, in the Armed Services Committee, legislators “[did] things in a bipartisan way,” and that the importance of bipartisanship “[could not] be overstated” (VP) (denies downside on values) (House Armed Services Democrats [@HASCDemocrats], 2019a).

On 12 June 2019, the House Armed Services Democrats twitter account claimed that the new low-yield nuclear weapons were unnecessary (ME) in light of U.S. national security goals (GP). America already had over 1000 nuclear weapons of that category (CP) and adding more (ME) would not make the country safer (GP) (House Armed Services Democrats [@HASCDemocrats], 2019b).

On 11 December 2019, John Garamendi (D-CA) also expressed his support the final 2020 NDAA, despite regretting the fact that it did not delay the deployment of the new nuclear SLBM warhead (ME), and despite its downsides on the funding for military programs (GP), which were redirected for the border wall (ME). However, he supported the fact that bill’s provisions aimed at the troops, including their families (ME), climate change (ME), and fluorinated compounds (H10084-H10085).

On 9 March 2017, Michael Anastasio, of the DSB, explained before the House Armed Services Committee that Russia (CP) and China were developing “more and more capable denial capabilities” (CP). If the U.S. president ever made the decision to use certain systems, it was important for them to be on target despite attempts to deny it (GP). It was important that the U.S. was able to “respond to a different requirement than we [the U.S.] have today sometime in the future” (GP). Anastasio stated that there were many different options to consider for such a hedge (ME), among them low-yield options (ME) (H.A.S.C. No. 115–14, 2017: 6, 11-12, 56).

Rebecca Hersman (2018a, 2018b) of the CSIS commented on the proposed new low-yield sea-launched capabilities on 6 February and 18 October 2018. For her, it was not clear why the need for the capabilities could not be met by existing low-yield nuclear options (ME). She also hoped that the course

of action would not lead the U.S. to break the ongoing nuclear testing moratorium (GP) (potential downside). She noted that the new SLBM warhead would not be very costly, and at best a rounding error in the global U.S. nuclear modernization program (GP) (rejects downside).

Pavel Podvig noted on 20 March 2018 that several scholars doubted that Russia had an “escalate-to-deescalate” doctrine (CP). While deliberate direct conflict between Russia and NATO was extremely unlikely, it was not as remote as it had appeared in the years following the end of the Cold War (CP). Thus, there were increasing risks associated with non-strategic nuclear weapons (CP). He believed that the U.S. research program aimed at developing a new intermediate-range system (ME) or the plan to reintroduce a nuclear SLCM (ME) would increase tensions in Europe (GP) and the risk of miscalculation leading to nuclear escalation (GP) (downsides). Wanting to reduce such risks (GP) and improve predictability (GP), he proposed measures aimed at improved communication (GP) between the U.S. and NATO and Russia (ME). To limit the options that relied on nuclear ambiguity (GP) (downside), Podvig proposed that the U.S. moved all non-strategic nuclear weapons to storage sites away from operational units (ME), a practice that Russia had long followed (CP). Doing so might even allow for mutual verification (GP), although an agreement was unlikely (ME).

The expert noted that Russia might soon have a sizeable force of nuclear SLCM, introducing a destabilizing factor (CP). To reduce the risks associated with the nuclear SLCM (GP), the author suggested an arrangement that would prevent their reintroduction (GP). As he explained, “[s]hort of a formal agreement [ME], this can be done through an exchange of data on the number of deployed nuclear cruise missiles, similar to the one that existed in START (ME). He believed that doing so (ME) would increase predictability (GP), despite not prohibiting the deployment of nuclear SLCM (GP) (unachieved goal) and the fact that verifying the information exchanged would be difficult (GP). While Russia had little motivation to agree to such a data exchange (ME), given that it was the only party with nuclear SLCMs on its ships (CP), the new U.S. SLCM proposed in the NPR (ME) might give Russia the needed incentive (GP), although a verifiable agreement would still be very unlikely (ME). Alternatively, Podvig proposed a verifiable agreement (ME) to assure that all SLCM were deployed in conventional mode, without nuclear warheads (GP). However, since achieving such an agreement would be extremely difficult (ME), a political commitment not to deploy nuclear SLCM (ME) might contribute to reduce nuclear risks (GP) (Podvig, 2018: 5-8).

In a February 2019 paper, Maggie Tennis from the CSIS explained that Russia saw its non-strategic nuclear weapons as compensating for its conventional inferiority (CP). Still, despite the perception of the U.S. defense community that Russia’s nuclear policy included “escalate-to-deescalate” plans, it was possible that that was not in fact the case (CP). She questioned whether the proposed low-yield capabilities (ME) would increase deterrence (GP) (unachieved goal), given that Russia might perceive the U.S. as having lowered its nuclear threshold (GP) (downside) – the same perception the U.S. had regarding Russia (CP). That could generate several downsides. The systems could give both parties the incentive to expand their nuclear forces (GP) and put their weapons on alert (GP). And since

any nuclear use would occur outside of Russia and the U.S., there would be less geographical restraint (GP) (lists several downsides) (Tennis, 2019: 175, 177-178).

On 11 December 2018, Aaron Richards (2018) claimed that the efficacy of the U.S. nuclear deterrent was potentially weakened by the aging nuclear stockpile (CP). He also stressed that U.S. adversaries and competitors were not waiting for the U.S. to modernize (CP). He supported a range of warhead yield options (ME) as part of a series of measures in the realm of nuclear modernization (ME) to improve the flexibility (GP) and survivability of the U.S. nuclear deterrent (GP).

On 30 October 2017, Vincent Manzo (2017) quoted former DOD Secretary Ash Carter in saying that that the most probable use of a nuclear weapon would occur in the form of “smaller but still unprecedentedly terrible attacks, for example, by Russia (CP) or North Korea to try to coerce a conventionally superior opponent to back off or abandon an ally during a crisis” (CP). Thus, U.S. nuclear forces ought to be able to deter limited nuclear escalation in conventional conflicts (GP). The author believed that “a diverse suite of delivery vehicles and yields” (ME) would increase the chances of success of a strategy to reestablish nuclear deterrence (i.e., deter an adversary from using nuclear weapons again) (GP). Manzo also argued that the modification of nuclear systems or addition of new capabilities did not necessarily represent a greater reliance on nuclear weapons (GP), the establishment of new roles for them (GP), or the lowering of the nuclear threshold (denies several downsides) (GP).

On 2 February 2018, Anthony Mascaro (2018) argued that the U.S. would struggle to deter regional adversaries (GP) if its bomber and DCA force was vulnerable to a first strike launched by them (CP). He was concerned that the U.S. nuclear triad would soon face a considerable “credibility problem from the “burgeoning nuclear arsenals of regional states” (CP). Such a scenario would take years to materialize, but eventually several regional states would have reliable nuclear ICBMs, creating a credibility problem to the U.S. triad (CP). The author wanted to solve that future, but impending dilemma of the U.S. bomber and DCA forces becoming vulnerable to a first strike from a regional adversary (GP). He believed that a nuclear-tipped SLCM would mitigate the problem (ME). Relying on ICBMs or SLBMs (ME) for a retaliatory strike against a regional adversary was not the recommended option because peer competitors might mistakenly believe a launch to be directed at their territories (GP). The ICBMs, specifically, would also create nuclear fallout that could drift to neighboring states (GP) (downsides).

The SLCM would achieve the goals (ME) of strategic stability (GP) and, due to its survivability, of balancing the threat to the bomber force (GP). Its nuclear fallout risks were lower (GP), and it would not alarm peer competitors, because its trajectory would clearly point toward the aggressor (GP) (minimizes or denies downsides). The SLCM would not be redundant (ME) because the U.S. did not store nuclear weapons in every corner of the world, and transferring nuclear weapons to bases near the regional adversary, to be used by DCA, was time-consuming (GP) (downside of inaction, i.e., of continuing to rely on nuclear DCA). Those bases might also be vulnerable to strikes, and thus unusable (ME). The SLCM (ME) was deemed a credible (GP), secure second-strike capability against regional

aggressors (GP) that was not meant to create a “useable” first strike capability (GP) (rejected goal of action).

On May 2017 Sandy Winnefeld and James Miller (2017) addressed Russia’s violation of the INF Treaty (CP) and stated that Moscow (CP) and Pyongyang were expanding their nuclear capabilities to threaten American allies (CP). They wanted to bolster nuclear deterrence (GP), to assure U.S. allies (GP), make it clear to Russia that there were serious consequences to violating the INF Treaty (GP), and that it needed to correct that “mistake” (GP). The experts believed that the goals could be achieved by bringing back the nuclear SLCM (ME).

Doing so would not violate any treaty (VP), be “overtly costly” (GP) or lead to an arms race (GP) (denies downsides). After all, Russia already possessed such a capability (CP). The SLCM was a credible (GP) and survivable (GP) extended nuclear deterrence option in Europe and the Pacific (ME) that did not require any action from U.S. allies or their agreement (ME). It would achieve the goals (ME) of assuring U.S. allies (GP) and providing “a hedge against the potential vulnerability of future ballistic missile submarines” (GP).

The authors rejected the view that the capability was not necessary. The SLCM (ME) would be “a far more credible rung on an escalation ladder” (GP) than conventional weapons [ME], which meant much less to Moscow than nuclear weapons (CP). Inaction “at best [did] nothing for nonproliferation [GP] and at worst irresponsibly [exposed] [U.S.] allies in Europe and Northeast Asia” (GP). They also considered that developing an SLCM was preferable to “a tit-for-tat” INF Treaty violation (ME) or, even worse, a withdrawal from the agreement (ME).

On a 13 February 2018 and in a June 21 testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Austin Long, from the RAND Corporation, claimed that the NPR misunderstood Russia’s nuclear strategy. Even if one assumed that Russian military doctrine emphasized “escalate-to-deescalate” plans – which was debatable – (CP) Moscow’s political leadership had shown less political appetite for nuclear use unless vital national interests were at stake (CP). This view was supported by Moscow’s major investments on the development of its non-nuclear options, capabilities, and doctrine, putting into question claims that its nuclear threshold had been lowered (CP) (“Policy Roundtable,” 2018: 23-25; Long, 2018b: 3-4).

On 16 February 2018, Austin Long (2018c) considered whether the low-yield nuclear SLBM would negatively impact on U.S. goals by creating a “discrimination problem.” Meaning that, once launched, an adversary would not be able to tell that it was a low-yield, and not a high-yield, nuclear-tipped missile. He explained that because the American and British Navy shared a common pool of missiles, with the later possessing low-yield nuclear SLBMs (CP), “all potential adversaries already [had] an SLBM discrimination problem” (GP) (minimizes missile discrimination as a downside). Furthermore, New START verification procedures (ME) gave Moscow “greater confidence that a single Trident launch [was] in fact a limited response (GP) (minimizes downside). While adversary doubts about their early warning systems might lead them to believe that more launches than the one detected

are on the way, that was not a concern uniquely tied to the new low-yield nuclear capability that the U.S. wanted to develop (GP) (minimizes downside). The use of limited nuclear options was not new to U.S. nuclear policy, and it was grounded on the belief that Russia/U.S.S.R. could distinguish between a large attack and a single launch (CP). The author believed Russia to be able to interpret a single Trident launch as a limited nuclear response (CP). Thus, U.S. deployment of a low-yield SLBM (ME) would do nothing to affect the already existing discrimination problem (GP) (minimizes downside).

On 11 March 2018, Long (2018d) considered another potential compromise associated with a low-yield nuclear SLBM: that a single launch would compromise the location of the launching submarine. He noted that none of Russia, China or North Korea had a reliable space-based early warning system, and that ground-based radars could only detect a launch after a missile reached a given altitude (CP). Unless an adversary had anti-submarine warfare assets very close by, which was unlikely for all three of those states, sonar tracking would not be possible without a great deal of luck (CP). U.S. submarines were elusive, would not sit still (CP), and it would be difficult for an adversary submarine to close the distance (GP) (minimizes downside).

Adversaries could develop a system to launch nuclear long-range ballistic missiles back at the U.S. submarine, but nuclear weapons were not very effective against underwater targets moving at fast speeds (CP). Moreover, such a system would be very costly to Russia relative to the costs to the U.S., and it was unlikely that the former would decide to develop it (CP). The Navy had long developed ways to protect its submarines after their launching of SLBMs (CP). Overall, compromising the location of a submarine after the launch of a low-yield SLBM should not be considered a downside of obtaining that capability, unless, in the future, Russia (or later China) made considerable expenditures to develop countermeasures so that low-yield SLBM could not be used safely (GP). The capability was a low-risk option (ME) with a high chance of penetrating air defenses (GP).

2. Juxtaposition of reasons for action

We start by juxtaposing the circumstantial premises of the securitizing actors with those of the audience. Seeing as premises are not used in a vacuum, and form relationships between them, we also mention other premises (in brackets – VP, GP, and ME) in order to explain how the CPs are used in the discourse (i.e., what goals, values, and courses of action they relate to).

The securitizing actors, seeking the development of low-yield nuclear options (ME), based such calls for action on several reasons pertaining to the threat environment, with Russia being at the forefront. It was directly described as a threat, and it was the one most often mentioned and described in greater detail. Moscow was understood to mistakenly believe that limited nuclear first use could provide it with a coercive advantage over the U.S. and its allies during a crisis or conflict given the greater variety and number of non-strategic nuclear weapons in Russia's arsenal. In such a scenario,

Moscow could “escalate-to-deescalate;” that is, use a low-yield nuclear weapon to force an adversary to surrender, incorrectly believing that the U.S. would be left with the choices of responding with a higher yield nuclear weapon – suicide – or surrendering. Russia believed that America would opt for the latter option, perceiving U.S. and NATO nuclear posture as insufficient to deter such a form of nuclear use.

Russia’s nuclear threshold appeared to have been lowered and the country was expanding and modernizing its nuclear forces, including the non-strategic kind. Moscow displayed a pattern of destabilizing behavior, had issued aggressive, cavalier, and increasingly more frequent statements about nuclear use, and was increasing its reliance on nuclear weapons. It was also violating the INF Treaty. Russia had eleven different delivery platforms for its non-strategic nuclear weapons, whereas the U.S. had only a gravity bomb delivered by F-15E DCA. On 8 March 2017, Hyten believed that such disparity was not reason to develop low-yield nuclear weapons (ME), as long nuclear modernization efforts (ME) continued, while also highlighting America’s variety of response options and advancements in conventional capabilities. He would change his mind from March 2018 onwards, however, declaring his support for developing low-yield nuclear weapons (ME), perceiving ongoing modernization efforts to be insufficient (ME) in light of the threat posed by Russia, China, and North Korea.

Indeed, other threats emerged as reasons for action among the various securitizing actors. They highlighted China’s modernization of its nuclear forces and its pursuit of new nuclear capabilities, with the country being perceived as having increased its reliance on nuclear weapons. General Hyten describing Beijing as a clear threat. The DOD perceived North Korea to mistakenly believe that its strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons would grant it with an “advantageous nuclear escalation option” against the U.S. and its Pacific allies. Mattis described the country as a threat to global peace. The Secretary of Defense also pointed out Iran’s unresolved nuclear question and the threat of global terrorism. Overall, the securitizing actors perceived a deterioration of the global threat environment, deemed more prone to rapid changes at a time when technology was progressing rapidly. They observed a worsening nuclear environment, containing a range of potential adversaries posing an escalatory threat, by virtue of believing that they could successfully threaten American with, or carry out, limited nuclear strikes.

The DOD considered that the U.S. modernization program predated the abovementioned developments in the threat environment and noted that many nuclear systems were well past their originally intended service life. The U.S. had retired its nuclear SLCM following the production of the 2010 NPR. Those reasons for action underlined the department’s support for nuclear modernization (ME) but also for supplementing the program with the sea-launched low-yield nuclear weapons (ME).

The securitizing actors also voiced several views on deterrence, which were used to support the claim for action: that the U.S. needed additional low-yield nuclear weapons (ME). Some securitizing actors emphasized the importance of the perception of adversaries regarding the U.S. nuclear deterrence, which was more important than one’s own. To effectively deter, one needed to guarantee that adversaries did not miscalculate about the costs of using nuclear weapons. Rood considered the U.S. nuclear

deterrence to be weaker than desired, while Selva believed that Russia did not perceive the nuclear postures of the U.S. and NATO as incontestably sufficient to deter the use of low-yield nuclear weapons. Hyten, on the other hand, was not worried about the present circumstances of the U.S. nuclear deterrence, even if he sought “to credibly deter the threats of the near future” (GP). Mattis considered that any nuclear use was a “strategic game changer” and that there was no “such thing as a tactical nuclear weapon.”

The securitizing actors also grounded their support for supplementing the nuclear modernization program (ME) on the understanding that air defense systems were now more advanced, and the fact that all U.S. low-yield nuclear weapons were air-delivered. Mattis also highlighted the support of U.S. allies for the capabilities. The historical precedent of Western deployment of INF-range missiles in Europe, which led to the signing of the INF Treaty was used as an historical precedent justifying developing the SLCM (ME) as an incentive (GP) for Russia to negotiate reductions of its non-strategic nuclear weapons arsenal (ME) – something that the country had so far refused to discuss.

The administration’s calls for action found both supporters and critics in the audience. Those who supported (ME) or opposed additional low-yield nuclear weapons (ME) used several CPs to justify their position. The former, just as the securitizing actors, perceived a Russian threat – by far the most commonly mentioned and the one described in greater detail. Republican lawmakers Inhofe, Thornberry, Rogers, and Turner (individually), along with 25 republican senators (in a letter to the president) accused Russia of having adopted nuclear escalation strategies, which some legislators labeled as an “escalate-to-deescalate” doctrine. Moscow perceived that limited nuclear first use would leave America with only two options – suicide or surrender. Russia might, therefore, attempt to use nuclear weapons to gain strategic advantage. The country was a competitor with thousands of low-yield nuclear weapons with which it regularly carried out exercises, holding at least a 10 to 1 advantage over the United States. It was also making new, more modern nuclear weapons, which were not covered by any treaty, having unveiled some of them. Moscow was in violation of the INF Treaty, was modernizing its nuclear forces, and enjoyed considerable advantages in nuclear weapons production capacity compared with the United States.

There were several experts (Murdock et al., the DSB, Manzo, and Winnefeld) who supported the development of low-yield nuclear weapons on the basis of threat perceptions of Russia. They mentioned Moscow’s violation of INF Treaty and development of INF-range missiles, its nuclear modernization program, its development of low-yield nuclear weapons, and the possible use of a strategy of limited nuclear escalation. The country was also accused of developing more advanced denial capabilities.

To some extent, the critics of the course of action also echoed some of the threat perceptions of Russia voiced by those who supported it. Smith acknowledged Russia’s nuclear weapons build-up and Reed, along with the sponsors of the Hold the Lyne Act, considered that the country had adopted an “escalate-to-deescalate” doctrine. Still, those democratic legislators did not consider that such threat

perceptions of Russia made additional low-yield nuclear weapons necessary. Smith questioned the idea that Russia would resort to limited nuclear use without provocation, noting the absence of such plans in the official doctrine.

Overall, the expert community was split when it came to the administration's course of action. While some specialists, abovementioned, supported it partly on the basis of threat perceptions of Russia, some authors, despite sharing them, did not deem that they made additional U.S. low-yield nuclear weapons necessary. Kimball admitted that Trump's questioning of the value of alliances might lead his Russian counterpart to believe that Russia could get away with nuclear use. However, the U.S. possessed outstanding conventional capabilities, in addition to low-yield nuclear weapons, with significant investments being made to assure that they could penetrate even the most modern air defense systems. Podvig posited that Russia might soon have a sizeable and destabilizing force of SLCMs but did view that possibility as a reason for the U.S. to develop additional low-yield nuclear weapons. Olikier and Baklitskiy noted that Russia's nuclear strategy was not purely defensive and integrated coercive elements, but also did not recommend the low-yield capabilities. Moreover, several experts shared Smith's doubts on whether Russia indeed have an "escalate-to-deescalate doctrine." For instance, Olikier and Baklitskiy noted that while some experts had advocated that doctrine, they had failed to change Russia's policy on nuclear weapons use. The authors, as well as Long, perceived Russian senior officials to be less interested in using nuclear weapons. Podvig and Kimball observed a lack of expert consensus on the matter, and Tennis expressed doubts as well. The latter also explained Russia's reliance on nuclear weapons as a form of compensation for its conventional inferiority.

As it was the case with the securitizing actors, other threats emerged as reasons for action in the audience for developing low-yield nuclear weapons. Several republican legislators noted that China was rapidly modernizing its nuclear arsenal, possessed hypersonic missiles, and was making new, more modern, nuclear weapons. A group of 25 republican senators was worried that the U.S. would have to face more than one peer competitor at a time, while being constrained by warhead limits (VP).

Supporters of the calls for action in the expert community also perceived Beijing as a threat. A CSIS report believed it likely that China would develop "clean" low-yield nuclear weapons. And the DSB noted Beijing's development of denial capabilities and its efforts to develop and modernize their nuclear weapons, as well as its investments in INF-range missiles.

As for other threats, Inhofe mentioned North Korean and Iran continued pursuit of nuclear programs, a claim with which Smith concurred, despite its rejection of the claim for action. Among the specialists, Winnefeld, Manzo, and the DSB saw North Korea as a reason to pursue the low-yield capabilities, perceiving the country as a nuclear threat that was expanding its nuclear capabilities and could use them for coercive purposes. The DSB also mentioned the Pakistani proliferation of non-strategic nuclear weapons and Iran's halted nuclear program. Mascaro perceive an impending credibility problem of the U.S. nuclear triad stemming from "burgeoning nuclear arsenals of regional states."

Broadly, the republican supporters of the claim for action described a more dangerous security environment marked by great power tensions, where U.S. adversaries had several nuclear options which they might believe they could use to gain strategic advantages. This was not disputed by the democrats, who perceived a more complex strategic environment due to the nuclear weapons, not only of major powers, but also of other countries. Supporters of the low-yield capabilities in the expert community perceived a world in which U.S. adversaries considered using nuclear weapons to get America to back off during a conflict and where all nuclear powers were modernizing their nuclear weapons. A CSIS report and the DSB believed that American conventional superiority had led to increased interest in nuclear weapons by outmatched opponents. The nuclear threshold might, therefore, be decreasing.

The democrat legislators utilized several circumstantial premises to explain their opposition to the low-yield capabilities proposed by the securitizing actors. The House Armed Services Democrats rejected the DOD's assertion that America was falling behind Russia, China, and North Korea on the nuclear arms race, and emphasized U.S. modernization efforts. The sponsors of the Hold the Lyne Act stressed America's unparalleled nuclear arsenal, and Warren emphasized the tremendous conventional coercive power of the country and its allies. The House Armed Services Democrats and a letter penned by 18 democratic senators – as well as Warren and Smith, individually – mentioned that the U.S. already possessed a considerable arsenal of low-yield nuclear weapons. The ACA also emphasized U.S. excellent conventional capabilities and its already existing low-yield nuclear weapons, adding that significant efforts were being made to assure that the latter would penetrate even the most advanced air defenses.

Republican legislators Thornberry and Turner, on the other hand, noted that America's low-yield nuclear capabilities were air-delivered, and that the U.S. mostly had higher-yield nuclear weapons. Among the experts sharing the republican position on additional low-yield nuclear weapons, Mascaro claimed that the DCAs and U.S. bombers were vulnerable to a first strike. The CSIS report stated that U.S. nuclear forces were not designed for limited nuclear exchanges of low-yield nuclear weapons. The DSB also emphasized the fact that America's nuclear modernization program had started considerably after Russia and China's and criticized the U.S. focus on life extension programs. Richards believed that America's aging nuclear stockpile was weakening the efficacy of the country's nuclear deterrent. With a similar view on modernization, senator Inhofe warned that nuclear weapons were not a simple Cold War relic.

The members of the audience also shared different views on deterrence to justify the course of action they supported. Among opposers of the additional low-yield capabilities, Smith claimed to perceive America's nuclear deterrence as exceptionally credible and robust. In the same vein as Mattis and Hyten, he did not believe there to be such a thing as a tactical nuclear weapon; they were at the same level as other nuclear weapons. Any nuclear use would "change the rules of the game," and even low-yield nuclear weapons use was a "total game changer" – statements which echoed Mattis' own words. Like Mattis, Hyten, and Smith, Warren described any nuclear weapons use as a "strategic game

changer.” Despite perceiving the use of low-yield nuclear weapons in similar ways as the democratic legislators, the Secretary of Defense did not see the shared assessment as a reason for the U.S. not to develop the capability. Warren and Reed saw nuclear weapons as fundamentally different from other weapons, reasons why they insisted that congressional oversight over them ought to be preserved (VP). The Hold the Lyne Act stated that “a nuclear weapon is a nuclear weapon,” alluding to the downsides of escalation following the use of a low-yield nuclear weapon (GP) (downside). Reed deemed the need for the low-yield capabilities to be difficult to assess, given that deterrence was based on communications and perceptions. He and Smith also mentioned the destructive power of nuclear weapons. The latter also rebuffed the need for more low-yield weapons, claiming that it made no sense for Russia to believe that the U.S. would respond in kind, with one of those weapons, but not overwhelmingly. He linked that belief with a message being driven by avaricious defense contractors, which was reassuring by those who were nervous and insecure: that as long as the U.S. kept spending money on additional weapons (ME) to look tough (GP), everything would be fine (GP). However, the world was more complicated than that. The ACA noted that the DSB had acknowledged that there was no military requirement for the low-yield capabilities. The republican representative Thornberry, on the other hand, perceived deterrence as dynamic, and the requirement for the new capabilities to be based on new developments, particularly great power tensions.

Two experts expressed views on the position of U.S. allies regarding the low-yield nuclear weapons. Ellehuus, a supporter of the call for action, highlighted the fact that the SLBM had the advantage of, unlike other nuclear weapons, not requiring deployments in Europe (ME), which might have been difficult for allies to accept. Kimball, who did not approve of the capability, stated that U.S. allies would likely not accept deployments of nuclear weapons neither on, nor close to their territories. He also expected them to oppose a strategy based on limited nuclear conflict in Europe.

Lastly, another reason which representative Smith brought up to justify the difficulty in coming to an agreement on a final 2020 NDAA, and the democrats’ eventual compromise on the bill (ME), was the existence of partisan divides on several issues – including, but not limited to, the deployment of the low-yield nuclear SLBM. There was, he claimed, strong opposition to those priorities in the republican-controlled Senate and in the White House. Indeed, Turner noted the complete absence of support for recalling the capability from deployment in the House GOP. That partisan divide had already been noted the previous year by senator Reed – on the low-yield nuclear SLBM specifically – although Inhofe noted that there was support for the capability, including in the democratic party, as an Armed Services Committee vote had shown.

We now move on to the value premises. The securitizing actors defended the development and deployment of additional low-yield nuclear weapons (ME) by claiming that they were compliant with all treaties and agreements, including the New START and the INF Treaty. In arriving at the conclusion that the supplements should be developed, they claimed to have consulted with U.S. allies. They also assured that, in pursuing the capabilities, the U.S. continued committed to nuclear security (GP), nuclear

non-proliferation (GP), and to negotiating arms control agreements (ME) to carry out nuclear reductions (GP).

The audience resorted to value premises more often in defending (ME) or opposing the low-yield weapons (ME), compared with the securitizing actors. Among the opposition, a group of 16 democratic senators and representative Smith denoted America's responsibility and leadership role in moving the world away from the dangers of nuclear weapons and towards nuclear disarmament. In developing new low-yield nuclear weapons, the U.S. was breaking a long-standing commitment to reduce its own. Adding more low-yield nuclear weapons to the U.S. arsenal (ME) would not make the world safer. In fact, as the Hold the Line sponsors highlighted, the dangers that nuclear weapons posed to the world, with the ACA's director denoting the tragedies resulting from nuclear weapons use and their potential to kill millions of people. The expert community rarely resorted to value premises, although Winnefeld noted that bringing back the nuclear SLCM – which she supported – would not violate any treaties, a point that the administration had also made.

While the securitizing actors stressed America's continued commitment to non-proliferation, Warren perceived that commitment to be undermined by the low-yield nuclear weapons that the country wanted to develop. Senator Reed indicated that America's commitment to NATO clashed with the idea that Moscow believed that the Washington would allow Russian forces to implement its doctrine of "escalate-to-deescalate" and occupy allied territory (CP). A letter penned by 25 republicans, on the other hand, focused on a different commitment, which the lawmakers believed had been broken: the nuclear modernization commitment made when the Senate ratified the New START (ME). They believed that nuclear modernization (ME) had been delayed or reduced in scope and feared that it would contribute to a growing asymmetry between U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons infrastructure capabilities (GP) (downside).

In 2018, Warren and Reed insisted that a provision included in the 2019 NDAA that had been reported to the Senate from the Armed Services Committee be scrapped. The provision authorized the DOD to develop and deploy low-yield nuclear weapons without the chamber's permission (ME). The democratic senators justified their position by stressing the importance of congressional oversight. Reed believed that the Senate had the obligation and responsibility to authorize new nuclear weapons, and noted that the current law prohibiting the development, production, or deployment of that category of weapons had been approved on a bipartisan basis. Warren also noted that bipartisan consensus that had led to the approval of the current law and noted that the amendment that had been added to the NDAA which repealed it had been adopted on a party-line vote and without transparency. The amendment was also offered at the last possible time (ME). The Reed-Warren amendment¹⁶⁸, which would strike the

¹⁶⁸ The amendment was not adopted, having been ruled non-germane (S.Amdt.2842 to S.Amdt.2366 - Actions, 2018), that is, not "on the subject" of the pending bill or other business" (Senate RPC, 2023). The final NDAA contained a similar provision to the one which Reed and Warren tried to remove (section 3117) (Report 115-262, 2018: 411), after the House receded to the Senate with an amendment (Report 115-874, 2018: 655, 1117).

amendment that had included the provision that the senators opposed, would restore the previous bipartisan consensus (which had received, in 2003, the support of 10 sitting republican senators [CP]) and congressional oversight over low-yield nuclear weapons development.

Inhofe opposed the removal of the provision, pointing out that congressional authorization would have to be given nonetheless, seeing as the legislature retained the “power of the purse.” The following year, amid a debate on whether to deploy the low-yield nuclear SLBM, Turner claimed that the decision should be placed in the hands of those charged with military policy. His claim was rejected by Smith, who underscored that Congress had a say in the matter and that it should not simply approve everything that the DOD wanted. Turner pointed out that the decision to develop and deploy the low-yield nuclear SLBM in the first place had been made on a bipartisan basis. The House provision blocking the deployment of the capability, he added, compromised the chamber’s “past sentiment [CP] of bipartisanship” given the total absence of republican support in the Armed Services Committee for blocking deployment of the SLBM (CP).

The negotiations of the 2020 NDAA between the republicans and the democrats resulted in the use of a considerable number of value premises. As mentioned above, there were considerable partisan divisions on a number of issues, including on whether to prohibit the deployment of the low-yield nuclear SLBM or not. The House Armed Services Committee leadership advocated for the latter (ME), while the Senate Armed Services Committee leadership backed the former position (ME).

The House Armed Services chairman Smith frequently mentioned the difficulties in assuring that the democratic priorities – including blocking the deployment of the low-yield nuclear SLBM – would prevail in the final 2020 NDAA due to reasons related to the institutional reality: the House NDAA, he explained, was a non-starter in the republican-controlled Senate and would get vetoed by President Trump. They hated those priorities (CP). The House democrats fought as hard as they could to pass their policy priorities but the Senate republicans wanted none of them, describing them as “partisan.” Passing legislation in a democracy entailed listening to all voices, meaning that resolving, to his satisfaction, policy issues in certain areas, was not “doable.” The democrats, Smith assured, had done everything they could, but they had to respect the republicans’ positions: fighting harder or holding the line would not have worked. He also mentioned that the “skinny bill” proposed by senator Inhofe would be difficult to bring to the House floor because it did not restrict funding for the border wall (ME). Ultimately, after the two parties agreed on a final NDAA, Smith emphasized the importance of bipartisanship.

His counterpart in the Senate – Inhofe – emphasized the importance of the same value but accused the democrats of jeopardizing it by attempting to insert partisan priorities of the House in the NDAA. Refusing to pass a bill with so many partisan provisions, the senator filed a skinny NDAA which, despite not being the best course of action (ME) was, for him, preferable to the House proposal. Smith rejected the skinny bill as a policy option (ME) due to its downsides on values: it would upset the responsibilities of the DOD and risk a government shutdown. The skinny NDAA would also let down the troops. For Inhofe, however, the democrats were the ones jeopardizing the needs of the troops by

putting their liberal social agenda first (GP). They should be taking care of the troops with an NDAA instead. Historically (CP), the senator noted, the NDAA enjoyed broad bipartisan support.

Smith expressed other value premises in explaining his support for the final 2020 NDAA, which contained some, but not all of the democrats' priorities, and which did not block the deployment of the low-yield SLBM. He claimed that the bill provided for the families of servicemembers, promoted a more inclusive and diverse military, and protected public health, having a real impact on real American lives. He believed that the bill reflected American values, was the most progressive in decades, and reflected, in his words, "the best of our country and the best of this body." Contradictorily, he also claimed that the bill jeopardized American values, peace in the Middle East and congressional authority in matters of war. Still, the U.S. had shown that its representative democracy worked, despite current divisiveness (CP), which was essential to peace, freedom, and stability worldwide.

Inhofe agreed that the final NDAA took care of the servicemembers and their families in addition to carrying out congressional oversight over military acquisition programs. The bill fulfilled the duties and responsibilities of Congress, which the democrats were compromising by delaying its passing (ME).

We now move on to the goal premises and the means-end premises. Starting with the securitizing actors, General Hyten was asked, on 8 March 2017, about whether developing low-yield nuclear weapons was necessary. In response, he claimed that the U.S. had a variety of very flexible options, from conventional weapons "all the way up to" high-yield nuclear weapons, to respond to any threats. The triad, coupled with the nuclear modernization program, was sufficient to preserve strategic stability and control the risk brought on by the Russia's greater number and types of non-strategic nuclear weapons. American conventional capabilities allowed for a mighty and effective response. His tune changed the year that followed and the subsequent. Hyten now claimed that the existing low-yield options might not be correct response when it came to timeliness and survivability, noting that they had to fight through denied environments. Despite previously boasting about the flexibility of existing options, he later claimed that the selected supplements were required "to maintain and enhance the flexibility, diversity and responsiveness" of present and future U.S. nuclear forces.

Hyten's most recent position was the one shared by the other securitizing actors. The current non-strategic nuclear force was deemed not sufficient because bombers faced increasing difficulties in penetrating modern air defenses. The gravity bombs they carried were also more vulnerable. The U.S. needed various low-yield strike capabilities to address credibly the threat environments of multiple potential adversaries. The current U.S. nuclear deterrent and conventional capabilities were insufficient considering the threat. The nuclear deterrence needed to be adopted to address Moscow's threats of nuclear escalation because America should not be willing to immediately resort to high-yield nuclear weapons. The country needed options beside surrender or suicide; an escalation would be disastrous for the two countries as well as the planet. At the same time, the securitizing actors stressed the importance of the non-strategic nuclear force, which was complementary to the triad and to the new supplements, and not redundant. The gravity bomb provided visible assurance to allies and partners, contributed to

ally burden sharing, demonstrated U.S. extended deterrence guarantees, and could be forward deployed. America would maintain and strengthen the effectiveness, readiness, and survivability of the DCA fleet, which would be upgraded with the nuclear capable F-35. The country was also attempting to make strides on air penetration capability.

For the administration, the supplemental capabilities were intended to strengthen near and longer-term deterrence requirements and correct Russia's – or other adversaries' – mistaken belief that limited nuclear escalation or other strategic attack would provide it with a strategic advantage over the U.S. and its allies. Russia and North Korea, in particular, were to realize that any form of nuclear use, at any level of escalation, and in any scenario, would not be beneficial, and the supplements prevented any such miscalculation. A proportional response, which the proposed weapons would provide, impeded a "conflict from escalating worse." Moscow needed to know that the U.S. could respond in kind, without high-yield nuclear weapons. Overall, there should be absolutely no question about the credibility of the U.S. nuclear deterrence: adversaries needed to know that the U.S. had options besides suicide or surrender, and more survivable options than the gravity bomb. There should not be any perceptions of exploitable gaps to be taken advantage of by means of coercive, limited nuclear escalation concepts.

The low-yield capabilities would preserve deterrence stability and increase the range, flexibility, agility, readiness, and responsiveness of U.S. deterrence options, and strengthen the country's ability to tailor deterrence and assurance. They would allow for a deterrence that was fit for its time; one that could be adjusted across a spectrum of threats, adversaries, potential adversaries, and contexts.

The course of action would allow for added "diversity in platforms, range, and survivability," provide an important hedge versus future nuclear breakout contingencies and raise the nuclear threshold – particularly Russia's. The proposed low-yield options would also expand America's range of credible options for responding to nuclear or conventional attacks – they were crucial for deterrence.

The supplements were prudent options which did not require or relied on host nations. They provided unique attributes to existing American capabilities. Enabling nuclear warfighting was not a goal of action, and neither was imitating or quantitatively matching Moscow's nuclear arsenal. The capabilities were not redundant; in fact, they closed capability gaps. As for the costs of such systems, Mattis minimized them by claiming that the U.S. "[could] afford survival."

Individually, the low-yield nuclear SLBM ensured a prompt, survivable, suitable, highly accurate, and responsive option capable of penetrating adversary defenses – it could credibly hold at risk targets that were well defended against aerial attacks. It was a measured response option which countered mistaken perceptions of exploitable gaps in America's regional deterrence, enhanced stability in a crisis, and decreased an adversary's incentive for nuclear weapons use. It was an extremely "tailored response to specific developments in Russia's forces and doctrine." It was a relatively low-cost near-term adaptation of an existing capability that did not increase the number of U.S. nuclear weapons.

As for the low-yield nuclear SLCM, such a capability was important to achieve goals in Asia. It was also intended as a response to Russia's violations of the INF Treaty, its arsenal of non-strategic nuclear weapons, and the country's overall destabilizing behaviors. The capability might give the country the incentive to return to compliance with the agreement and to negotiate reductions of its arsenal of non-strategic nuclear weapons. If that were to occur, and Moscow also corrected its destabilizing behaviors, the U.S. would reconsider developing the capability. The nuclear SLCM allowed the U.S. to negotiate with Russia from a position of strength, although General Hyten perceived the need for the capability to be driven, above all, by the Russian and Chinese threats. The DOD admitted that Russia would not return back to compliance with the INF Treaty without getting something in return and, seeing as the U.S. did not want to abandon the agreement, the development of the nuclear SLCM was deemed a preferable course of action. Moreover, the capability would also provide the U.S. with options in case Moscow's violations continued, and to respond to overall concerning trends and developments relative to Russia's non-strategic nuclear forces. It also closed a capability gap. Blocking the deployment of the nuclear SLBM would send a dangerous message to the adversaries of the U.S., hinder nuclear deterrence, and increase the nuclear risk to the country and its allies. In fact, the president threatened to veto the 2020 NDAA (VP) if it were to prevent said deployment (one among other courses of actions he opposed and was concerned might feature in the bill).

Several downsides associated with the development of the SLBM were rejected by the securitizing actors. The use of the capability would not lead to a nuclear war because Moscow would perceive it as a non-massive attack that did not pose an existential threat (CP). Russia would delay a response and act rationally in such a scenario (CP). Moreover, similar to the U.S., some of its adversaries had the means to rapidly determine the yield of a nuclear detonation (CP). There was little to suggest that a single ballistic missile launch would be mistaken by an adversary as an all-out attack leading to a response in kind. The submarine would also not be destroyed as a result of the use of the low-yield system. The submarine's susceptibility to a counterattack was minimal, according to the NPR.

The nuclear SLCM offered the U.S. an assured response capability and a necessary non-strategic regional presence, was forward deployable, did not require a host nation and granted the U.S. "additional diversity in delivery platforms, range, survivability, and future hedging." It was not a new capability, but one that the U.S. had had before.

With the exception of Hyten in March 2017, the securitizing actors (and later Hyten himself) deemed that the ongoing nuclear modernization efforts were not sufficient, requiring supplementation with additional low-yield nuclear capabilities. Preservation of existing response options remained necessary to assure that no capability gaps would emerge after the Cold War legacy systems ended their service lives. The costs of nuclear modernization paled in comparison with the costs of failing to deter war by not sufficiently investing in the course of action.

Despite the absence of results, the U.S. remained interested in negotiations concerning Russia's non-strategic nuclear arsenal. America sought to increase U.S., ally, and partner security, and enhance

transparency. However, so far Moscow's preconditions had been unacceptable to the U.S. and its allies (GP/VP) (downsides). In pursuing arms control agreements to carry out nuclear reductions, and in enhancing nuclear security and non-proliferation, the U.S. would not hinder stability in relations with potential adversaries, damage nuclear deterrence readiness, or negatively affect the confidence of its allies on U.S. extended deterrence guarantees. By ensuring that the U.S. nuclear deterrent remained strong, America was giving itself the best possible odds of convincing other nuclear powers to engage in meaningful arms control initiatives. Near-term nuclear reductions (GP) were viewed as extremely challenging (ME) in the current environment (CP).

We now address the goal premises and means-end premises of the audience. The audience was divided when it came to the additional low-yield nuclear capabilities that the securitizing actors pursued. Our discourse analysis revealed strong republican support for the enactment of the policy change that the administration had recommended, but also considerable democrat disagreement. We observed a split among experts as well. Eventually, the low-yield nuclear SLBM received the go ahead for deployment, and development on the low-yield nuclear SLCM continued throughout the Trump administration.

The republicans agreed with the pursuit of the capabilities, parroting many of the reasons for action that had been voiced by the administration. Current options would mean that the U.S. could be left with two unacceptable choices – use high-yield nuclear weapons or do nothing. The U.S. needed sea-launched low-yield nuclear capabilities in addition to the existing air-launched low-yield nuclear weapons. The supplements were also perceived as a response to Moscow's violations of the INF Treaty.

The nuclear SLBM was intended to counter Russia's (or other adversary's) misconceptions that nuclear use could be utilized for gaining strategic advantage – and in turn making that scenario less likely. The SLBM would change Russia's calculus by demonstrating America's ability to respond proportionally. The system would preserve and enhance deterrence, enhance the credibility of the U.S. response, and prevent conflicts, making the country safer. The low-yield SLBM would not represent an increased risk for the submarine carrying it, did not entail increased risks of miscalculation, and was not destabilizing. Some republicans did not perceive the low-yield SLBM as a new weapons system. The U.S. was simply removing fissile material from existing higher-yield nuclear weapons. Moreover, the country already had low-yield nuclear weapons; the only difference would be the different delivery system. Blocking the deployment of the SLBM was described as making no sense because the U.S. would be taking away options for itself that its adversaries possessed. The capability should not be "randomly" pulled back. As for the nuclear SLCM, the capability would reassure U.S. allies and pressure Moscow to negotiate arms control agreements on weapons systems presently not covered by them. Rogers accused the opponents of the SLBM nuclear warhead of having the covert goal of slowing down the modernization and improvement of U.S. nuclear forces.

Republican discourse addressing the additional low-yield nuclear weapons would at times express support for nuclear modernization as well. Doing so would preserve the safety, security, and credibility of the U.S. nuclear deterrence. The asymmetry between U.S. and Russian nuclear infrastructure might

worsen if modernization was not carried out, delayed, or reduced in scope. In fact, nuclear modernization was required for the U.S. to keep up with Moscow and Beijing. The course of action was not overly expensive considering the country's defense budget or the stakes involved (survivability in the face of a prospective nuclear war). Modernization was needed to preserve the value of the New START and advance national security in light of the perceived nuclear threats from Russia, China, North Korea and Iran (CP). Particularly, because of the first two states, which had surpassed the U.S. in the nuclear realm (CP).

Several experts also expressed their support for the supplements recommended by the administration, utilizing several of the same arguments as the administration and the republicans. They feared that the current response options might lead the U.S. not to respond in kind. It was pointed out that high-yield weapons were dirtier, larger, and generated considerable collateral damage. America's conventional superiority did not suffice; they meant much less to Moscow (CP). Additionally, U.S. air-launched nuclear weapons would soon become vulnerable to first strikes (CP), making it difficult to deter regional adversaries. Moreover, transporting nuclear weapons for DCA use was time-consuming. Relying on ICBMs or SLBM instead carried the risk of peer competitors believing that a launch intended for a U.S. regional adversary was instead heading toward their territories. The ICBMs also entailed the added problem of nuclear fallout affecting neighboring countries. By not developing the capabilities, the U.S. risked having its allies develop nuclear weapons due to doubting American security guarantees. U.S. flexibility to tackle future uncertainties would be limited. The U.S. required capabilities able to reach their target despite the attempts of adversary capabilities to deny their access.

The experts recommending the low-yield systems claimed that they would raise the nuclear threshold, close capability gaps, reduce the chances of escalation, and send a powerful message to U.S. adversaries: that nuclear use would not grant them victory. By having the ability to respond proportionally, the country would not be self-deterred. There was already a precedence for shifting from a strategy of "massive retaliation" to one of "flexible response." In fact, by developing low-yield nuclear weapons, the U.S. was showing its awareness of adversary plans to offset American conventional superiority with nuclear weapons (CP), which would have a remarkable impact. The U.S. required a more flexible nuclear enterprise allowing for a swift, tailored response option in case existing conventional or nuclear weapons proved insufficient. The country needed more available options in case they were needed; it ought to hedge against the prospect of a nuclear apocalypse and an uncertain future with different deterrence requirements. A diverse suite of options strengthened the survivability of the U.S. nuclear deterrence and increased the chances of a successful reestablishment of deterrence. Low-yield nuclear weapons were also easier to incorporate in a conflict and increased the chance of destruction of specific targets.

The specialists claimed that the nuclear SLBM would reinforce NATO efforts to prepare for a world without the INF Treaty by negating any strategic advantage Moscow could expect to gain through nuclear escalation, seeing as the U.S. could emulate any form such an action might take. The capability

was a low-risk option with a high chance of defense penetration, and which did not require deployment in Europe. It did not necessarily indicate greater U.S. reliance on nuclear weapons or a new role for them. Same as the securitizing actors and the legislators, Long rejected downsides related with the SLBM system. One of such critics concerned a potential discrimination problem with the capability: that once launched it could be perceived to be carrying a high-yield warhead. The RAND specialist explained that a discrimination already existed due to the British Navy's low-yield nuclear SLBMs (CP) and that Russia would be able to interpret a single low-yield nuclear SLBM launch as a limited nuclear response (CP). As for claims that a single missile launch would reveal the location of the submarine, Long refuted them by pointing out technical and reliability issues concerning adversary early warning systems and sonar tracking (CP). Moreover, U.S. submarines would not stand still (CP), the Navy had ways to protect them (CP), and it would be very costly to Russia (or later China) to develop a way to strike them with nuclear long-range ballistic missiles (CP). Nuclear weapons were inefficient against underwater fast-moving targets (CP). Cancelling the deployment of the SLBM was akin to unilateral nuclear disarmament and would reward Russian aggression without the U.S. extracting from Moscow something in return.

Regarding the nuclear SLCM, supporters for the capability in the expert community highlighted several goals to be reached by the capability. Manzo claimed that system would mitigate U.S. deterrence credibility vis-a-vis regional adversaries in a future when air-launched nuclear weapons were vulnerable to a first strike. It was not meant to be a "useable" first strike capability, but to allow for a secure second strike. It was a survivable capability that increased strategic stability and balanced the threat to air-launched nuclear weapon systems, thus not being redundant. It also presented lower risks of nuclear fallout and would not alarm peer competitors given that its trajectory would clearly point towards a regional adversary. Winnefeld explained that the SLCM would strengthen deterrence, assure allies, and send a message to Russia that its violations of the INF Treaty had consequences and that its actions needed to be corrected. It was a credible and survivable extended deterrence option for both Europe and the Pacific that did not require ally participation or consent, and which hedged against potential future vulnerabilities of SLBM submarines. Deciding not to develop the capability would not contribute to non-proliferation goals, but might, in a worst-case scenario, irresponsibly expose to coercion, or preemptive attack, U.S. allies in Europe and Northeast Asia. The SLCM was also preferable to a retaliatory violation of the INF Treaty or leaving the accord. It was also claimed that the system was not exceedingly costly, nor would it lead to an arms race.

As for the democrats and the experts who disagreed with the administration's calls for action, their reasons naturally differed strongly from the republicans and the experts who supported them. The democrats claimed that the current systems would allow the U.S. to decisively respond to any attack, defend its allies, and maintain deterrence. The best and sufficient approach would be to communicate to Russia that nuclear weapons use was a red line that would be met with an overwhelming response. In fact, it was by debating about developing low-yield nuclear weapons that the U.S. was weakening its

nuclear deterrence – the U.S. should never communicate the existence of a scenario in which it would not respond to the use of nuclear weapons. American diplomacy and a clear articulation of policy should state that if Moscow started a nuclear war, the U.S. would respond, and could not promise that it would respond in kind. That would be the line of action that would deter Russia and prevent a nuclear war. The country should also have a strong deterrence for China, North Korea, and Iran as well. The sponsors of the Hold the Lyne act sought the prohibition of research, development, and production of a SLBM low-yield nuclear warhead – an unnecessary capability. The U.S. had sufficient firepower – including low-yield nuclear weapons – to credibly deter Russia and achieve its national security goals. Instead of developing new nuclear capabilities, which would communicate to Moscow that there were different degrees to a nuclear war, the two countries should instead strive to reduce the risk of unauthorized, mistaken, or accidental nuclear launches. Furthermore, U.S. nuclear weapons delivery systems were being upgraded to ensure the nuclear deterrent's flexibility and ability to hit any target. The democrats questioned the strategic gains brought on by the new low-yield weapons, arguing that adding more would not make the country safer. Current air-launched capabilities could achieve the NPR's goal of limited counterresponse when coupled with modernization efforts to address Russia's complex anti-access/anti-denial environment. The U.S. was upgrading and replacing at enormous costs its nuclear forces. Indeed, while securitizing actors, the republicans, and an expert (Richards) saw the proposed low-yield nuclear weapons and the nuclear modernization program as courses of action to carry out in tandem, the democrats, along with an expert (Kimball) saw ongoing modernization efforts as reasons not to develop those nuclear weapons.

The democrats also claimed that there was no military requirement for the new, redundant, nuclear SLBM, deemed as a "more useable" nuclear weapon. Skepticism was expressed regarding the SLBM's ability to prevent both the U.S. and Russia from future nuclear weapons use. If one assumed that Russia did not believe in a U.S. response with a high-yield nuclear weapon, then one would have to assume that it might also not believe in a low-yield nuclear response as well. Whether the low-yield system would control any conflict was unknown. Adding more low-yield nuclear weapons would not contribute to the desirable goal of maintaining U.S. superiority over near-peer adversaries because the world was complicated (CP). It required more complex and imaginative solutions that simply adding more and more capabilities. There was also no historical precedent for a U.S. deployment of the capability. In 2018, the democrats attempted (but failed) to eliminate funding for development of the low-yield SLBM and in the following year strived to block its deployment. In 2018 they also tried (unsuccessfully) to mandate the DOD to produce certain reports on the capability. Senator Reed believed that more time was needed to assess the complicated and possible consequences of developing that weapons system, an action that divided experts and was difficult to evaluate. Indeed, the democrats' attempt to prevent the deployment of the low-yield SLBM was not a random decision – a debate had been going on for years (CP).

Moreover, according to 18 democratic senators, developing the low-yield nuclear SLBM was irresponsible given several associated downsides on goals. The system would increase the risk of nuclear use and escalation. Russia would be unable to know the yield of the SLBM being launched (the low-yield and high-yield nuclear warheads were indistinguishable) and assume the worst, escalating the conflict. The use of the capability would also disclose the location of the submarine, putting at risk America's last line of defense – its most valuable and survivable deterrence asset. Other downsides were also raised, with democratic legislators warning that the SLBM would lower the nuclear threshold, promote an arms race, increase the chances of miscalculation – and potentially of an all-out nuclear war – and divert resources away from actual military needs required to counter near-peer adversaries. Those resources ought to be used to preserve U.S. superiority in the conventional realm.

The SLBM system encouraged nuclear warfighting; it was making nuclear war acceptable and possibly manageable. It also hindered U.S. leverage in demanding that other countries reduced their nuclear arsenals. Talking about a proportional response entailed contemplating nuclear war as a potential option. Developing and deploying the low-yield SLBM would be a dangerous, ill-advised, and destabilizing course of action that would weaken national security and make America less safe. Blocking the deployment of the capability did not entail unilateral nuclear disarmament – it was a matter of prohibiting a different form of nuclear weapon from entering service, not of “universally” doing away with all of them. Smith accused those who claimed that Moscow would not believe that the Washington would respond to Russia's nuclear use unless the U.S. had the proposed low-yield nuclear systems of having the covert goal of wanting “to build more and more.”

The SLCM shared many of the same downsides of the SLBM, according to the democratic legislators. The capability would be destabilizing, contribute to an arms race, and demand resources that should be spent elsewhere. There would likely be increased chances of miscalculation and nuclear war – not lower. The system was dangerous, not the best way to deter, and would lead the U.S. military to start imagining a survivable nuclear conflict. It would also hamper U.S. negotiations with other countries, whose nuclear arsenals it wanted to reduce.

Several experts shared the democrats' position regarding the low-yield supplements. They asserted that existing nuclear weapons and conventional capabilities were plentiful to make anyone rethink the advantages of “escalate-to-deescalate” against America. It was unclear why the requirements for the additional supplements could not be met by existing low-yield nuclear weapons, assuming that they existed at all. It was dangerous to increase reliance on those weapons and thinking that more credible nuclear options were necessary in case of a conflict with Russia. Significant investments were already being made to assure that existing low-yield nuclear weapons would be able to penetrate any air defenses, even the most advanced.

There was no proof that Russia did not think that the U.S. did not have the necessary options for a decisive response. And even if Trump's dismissal of the value of NATO and U.S. alliances had led the Kremlin to believe that it could escape punishment if it were to use nuclear weapons, the proposed

supplements would not solve the political conundrum. In fact, the Russian challenge was conventional, not nuclear (CP) and the U.S. ought to focus on addressing the former instead. The new low-yield systems were described as a solution for a non-existent problem as well as the wrong solution even if Moscow indeed had an “escalate-to-deescalate” doctrine. There was also no reason to match Russia in the realm of non-strategic nuclear weapons. Deploying new nuclear system was a drastic departure of current U.S. policy and practice, which asserted the fundamental role of nuclear weapons was deterring nuclear attacks. There were too many shortcomings associated with the administration’s course of action, and no evidence that the new weapons would change the calculus of U.S. adversaries or increase deterrence. The proposed options were too flawed, even if one were to assume that more low-yield nuclear weapons were necessary. It was not clear how the SLCM would be used as a bargaining chip in negotiations with Russia, and unlikely that efforts to do so would be successful.

Any marginal benefits that the weapons might provide would be outweighed by their associated downsides. The specialists pointed out that the new low-yield capabilities might lead the U.S. to break the current moratorium on nuclear testing and warned that the systems might trigger the very crises that they were meant to avert. They might serve as an incentive for a U.S. and Russian expansion of their nuclear forces, and for putting their nuclear weapons on alert. With any nuclear conflict taking place outside of their territories, the two countries might feel less constrained to fight. The capabilities would undermine the deterrent balance and call into question America’s military superiority and the sufficiency of its existing conventional and nuclear capabilities. Like the democrats, some experts were concerned with the potential misinterpretation of low-yield nuclear weapons use resulting in miscalculation and unintentional escalation. There was not way to know if a launched SLBM was nuclear or conventional, high-yield or low-yield. The SLCM would also increase the risk of miscalculation and of nuclear escalation.

The development of the new systems might send a dangerous signal: U.S. intent of using them for warfighting, not deterrence. And once nuclear weapons were used, there was no guarantee that the outcome would not be an all-out nuclear war. If fact, the low-yield capabilities might lead Americans to believe that a nuclear war could be controlled, while convincing Moscow that it could resort to limited nuclear use without risking its own survival. Indeed, the nuclear threshold might be lowered as a result. The additional low-yield capabilities could also undermine non-proliferation goals, escalate tensions, and fuel the arms race. Russia could match NATO in the nuclear realm (CP), so the new systems would “play into Moscow’s hands.” There were also security and diplomatic costs to consider, although Hersman admitted that, in terms of costs, the SLBM nuclear warhead would be no more than a rounding error in the overall U.S. nuclear modernization program.

The republican support for the deployment of the low-yield SLBM nuclear warhead and the democratic intent to block it were a point of contention during 2020 NDAA negotiations, along with other issues. Smith claimed that the main stumbling block in the negotiations was the border wall, a course of action which the republicans supported but the democrats did not. In the end, an agreement

was reached on a final bill, which allowed for funding to be provided for deploying the low-yield nuclear weapon. Smith asserted that his party was achieved much more than anyone had expected from the republicans – an extraordinary achievement – and argued that the bill furthered U.S. national security. He highlighted two specific goals of action that the legislation failed to achieve: reducing American influence in the war in Yemen and delivering the goal of assuring that a value premise would not be compromised: that the U.S. would not go to war with Iran without congressional authorization. His colleague in the House, Garamendi, regretted the fact that the bill did not delay the deployment of the new low-yield warhead and the bill's downsides on funding for military programs, which were to be used for the border wall. Still, he welcomed provisions aimed at the troops and their families, fluorinated compounds, and climate change.

Smith's counterpart in the higher chamber – senator Inhofe – accused the democrats of dragging their feet during the negotiations for no good reason and accused them of prioritizing their efforts to impeach the president and overturn the 2016 presidential election. He believed the democrats to be attempting to prove a political point during negotiations – a claim with which Smith disagreed. Inhofe also accused the democrats of delaying the passing of the NDAA because they “[were] running for president and (...) [wanted] to be on TV instead (...) doing their job” (covert reasons). The republican senator rejected passing a bill with as many partisan provisions (VP) (downside) as the House NDAA and claimed that such divisions between the two parties needed to be overcome in the name of national security. Service members and their families deserved (VP) a full-year NDAA. Otherwise, military operations would be paused; programs would be delayed; taxpayer dollars would be squandered; the U.S. military would be left further behind; and the country would send a terrible message to the world (allies, enemies, and the American military included), which would undercut national security.

Nonetheless, senator Inhofe filled a skinny NDAA, a decision which he based on several different premises (see above), but also several goal premises and means-end premises. He explained that the skinny NDAA provided the troops with the tools required to fight and win, extended needed authorities for military operations, and authorized key military construction and acquisition programs. The skinny bill was a last resort, not being a replacement for a full bill, but filling it was a necessary step if an agreement on the latter was not reached soon. The skinny NDAA was a politics-free bill, which only had the necessary things in it, but was able to maintain crucial national security programs. Representative Smith rejected adopting the skinny NDAA which he saw as a back-up plan until the border wall dispute was resolved. In addition to several other reasons (see above), Smith opposed Inhofe's proposed action because it did not restrict funding for the wall, was the equivalent of a failure, and did not accomplish anything. The skinny bill did not include many key policies for which the democrats had fought hard (i.e., policies on parental leave, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, and the “widow tax” relief). The agreement reached on a final, full-year NDAA, on the other hand, delivered those democratic priorities. The skinny bill, the representative claimed, would have hindered national security.

All republicans, democrats, and experts – same as the securitizing actors – expressed interest in arms control negotiations with China, North Korea and, particularly, Russia. The legislators wanted to prevent nuclear war and verifiably address the disparity between the U.S. and Russian non-strategic nuclear weapons – potentially eliminating both states’ arsenals of that category of weapons. The republicans questioned the feasibility of that course of action, however, given Moscow’s disinterest. Among the experts, Kimball defended new agreements limiting all nuclear weapons and extending the New START, although a large group of republican senators questioned doing so considering the context of action (see above). Podvig proposed a formal agreement or arrangement with Russia to prevent the reintroduction of nuclear SLCMs. Failing to do so, the two countries could agree to share data on deployed SLCMs to increase predictability. While Russian disinterest in both courses of action was expected, U.S. plans to reintroduce the capability might give Moscow the needed incentive, even if the chances of an agreement were slim. The expert also suggested that the two countries pursued an agreement to assure that all SLCM were deployed with conventional warheads, but admitting that doing so would be extremely unlikely, Podvig advised that both states made a political commitment not to deploy SLCM in nuclear mode to reduce nuclear risks. The expert also proposed that the U.S. moved all non-strategic nuclear weapons to storage sites away from operational units – something Russia already did. That course of action would reduce risks and nuclear ambiguity, improve predictability, and improve communication between the two states. His proposed action might even allow for mutual verification, despite the unlikelihood of an agreement.