

CHAPTER 5

SALT II: The Quest for Stability

On August 30, 1974, at 7:30 a.m.—the beginning of a hot and humid Washington summer day—James Schlesinger, Henry Kissinger, and Brent Scowcroft were breakfasting at the Pentagon in the secretary's office. During a run-down of defense issues meriting the attention of the secretaries of defense and state, Kissinger turned to strategic matters. "I want to talk about SALT for a minute." Schlesinger handed Kissinger draft instructions for the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks delegation in Geneva. "The delegation," intoned Schlesinger, "should discuss the elements of the balance, the implications of growth and stability."¹

Strategic stability had long been Schlesinger's hobbyhorse throughout the protracted SALT negotiations. The concept prevailed when the superpowers' strategic forces were so arranged that they would not tempt either adversary to strike first against the arsenal of its foe. U.S. officials had watched with alarm as the Soviets had aggressively built up their nuclear arsenal during the late 1960s and early 1970s. By May 1972, when Richard Nixon and Leonid Brezhnev signed the Interim Agreement and the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty comprising SALT I, the Soviet buildup had converted American superiority in strategic arsenals to a condition of strategic parity between the superpowers. The Soviets had been developing several new intercontinental ballistic missiles, which fell under SALT I limits, and their subsequent modernization—marrying large throw weights with increased accuracy and multiple independently targetable reentry vehicle technology—were emerging as a real threat to the Minuteman missile. Large throw weights meant large warheads. A couple hundred accurate, MIRVed Soviet missiles with large throw weights could annihilate America's most accurate,

promptest land-based missiles—those best able to destroy Soviet ICBMs—in a surprise attack. This condition undermined stability.²

At this morning meeting, Kissinger asked if the American delegation could offer the Soviets the “edge” in total number of launch vehicles in return for an American advantage in the number of MIRVed launch vehicles. Schlesinger dismissed this idea out of hand: “MIRV’s [*sic*] are a lot of crap.” It did not matter, Schlesinger continued, if the United States possessed a lead in MIRVs if its missiles lacked accuracy and throw weight. Schlesinger used the example of the most recent submarine-launched ballistic missile to join the American arsenal, the Poseidon. “Poseidon is not a very good weapon,” he argued. The Poseidon missile, though MIRVed, could only mount [REDACTED], he argued. This low yield, coupled with an accuracy permitting it to detonate within [REDACTED], meant that it could never hope to destroy Soviet missile silos, protected underground and hardened to withstand blast pressures of [REDACTED] per square inch. The 656 submarine-launched ballistic missiles comprising the American sea-based nuclear deterrent were essentially useless against a Soviet ICBM force nestled deep inside 1,360 silos. The United States must use SALT, Schlesinger believed, to redress the American disadvantage in throw weight, or else strategic stability would gradually disintegrate. One day Soviet strategists would realize that against their improved arsenal, Minutemen ICBMs were sitting ducks.³

SALT was not only a negotiation between American and Soviet diplomats in Geneva, Switzerland. In Washington, DC, dozens of officials worked out American negotiating positions, the product of innumerable memoranda, working papers, National Security Council meetings, and NSC subcommittee meetings. Additionally, any agency or department which possessed an equity in SALT had its own internal SALT committees or task forces. Throughout the

negotiations, the Office of the Secretary of Defense maintained the position that SALT could not be an instrument for codifying American strategic inferiority and Soviet strategic superiority.⁴

The decision made by the Nixon administration to participate in the first round of Strategic Arms Limitation Talks with the Soviet Union was based on the arrival of strategic parity between the superpowers. Strategic parity is a condition whereby both superpowers maintain strategic arsenals large enough to ensure that, despite a devastating first strike, residual forces remain to ensure a retaliatory strike promising unacceptable damage to the original aggressor. After the United States compelled the Soviet Union to stand down in the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, the Soviet Union embarked upon a concerted buildup of its own strategic forces, especially its ICBM force, that could threaten a resumption of the arms race that prevailed before 1962.⁵

SALT negotiations, conducted during the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations, were an ongoing series of discussions between American and Soviet officials toward limiting an explosive arms race in the superpowers' nuclear arsenals. These negotiations resulted in the SALT I and SALT II agreements, which froze and placed numerical ceilings on the number of strategic nuclear delivery vehicles (SNDVs) permitted to each superpower. In force from 1972 through 1977, SALT I—comprising the Interim Agreement on Strategic Offensive Weapons and the ABM Treaty—froze the respective arsenals at their existing levels and provided the option to increase the number of certain weapon systems to a maximum ceiling. The United States adhered to a quantitative limit of 1,054 ICBMs and 744 SLBMs on 44 submarines, while the Soviet Union adhered to a quantitative limit of 1,618 ICBMs and 950 SLBMs on 62 submarines. The clear numerical disparity between American and Soviet forces resulted from the technological advantage enjoyed by the United States. The American strategic forces had more warheads (not

limited by the Interim Agreement), MIRV technology, and more accurate delivery vehicles. The Interim Agreement permitted a higher Soviet SNDV ceiling to maintain relative equivalence between the two arsenals. The ABM Treaty permitted each superpower to designate a national capital site and an ICBM field for ABM defense, with each site containing 100 ballistic missile interceptors. SALT I limited neither MIRVs, warheads, nor modernization of existing weapons.⁶

Since the next agreement would take treaty form, its terms had to win approval from two-thirds of the Senate. Senior administration officials worried that liberal Democrats, eager to reduce defense spending, would weaken their hand in negotiations with the Soviets. In their judgment, the key figure was Washington Democratic Senator Henry Jackson, a liberal on domestic issues but a supporter of strong defense budgets. President Nixon allowed Jackson the unusual privilege of selecting Army Lt. Gen. Edward L. Rowny to be the Joint Chiefs of Staff representative for SALT.⁷

Within the Pentagon, Deputy Secretary William Clements and Admiral Thomas Moorer handled the technical discussions over various American negotiation positions through the Verification Panel. This interagency body, chaired by Kissinger in his capacity as assistant to the president for national security affairs (national security adviser), served as the principal forum for presenting and assessing SALT options. The panel included senior officials from State, OSD, JCS, Central Intelligence Agency, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and the NSC staff. Typically, the interagency working group prepared options for the panel to debate. An NSC meeting might follow. Then, drawing upon submissions from State, Defense, and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, specialists on the NSC staff would draft national security decision memoranda for presidential approval. These NSDMs gave direction and guidance to the

American SALT negotiators for their discussions with their Soviet counterparts. Bureaucratically the Verification Panel provided Kissinger with significant leverage in the arms control process.⁸

A central critique of SALT II was that it failed, ultimately, to achieve strategic stability. While SALT I and II did limit superpower arsenals, these limits were ceilings, so that SALT permitted an increase in the number of each side's SNDVs. Because there was no limit on MIRV technology, and modernization of strategic systems was explicitly permitted, superpower arms racing was in fact exacerbated. MIRVing ballistic missiles permitted a single missile to target multiple aimpoints, and concentrated this destructive capacity in fewer vehicles, giving a premium to the side which struck first (the striking side loses no vehicles to enemy warheads and can destroy most enemy ballistic missiles in their silos). Modernization of missile guidance systems and warhead reentry vehicles increased accuracy, in turn increasing the likelihood that a single warhead could destroy a silo. Soviet missiles possessed heavier throw weights to counteract inaccurate guidance systems. Should the Soviets pair heavy throw weight and advanced missile guidance, American intelligence analysts feared that a portion of the Soviet ICBM force could wipe out almost all American capacity to retaliate against Soviet ICBMs.⁹

The OSD, particularly during the tenure of James Schlesinger, feared that the Soviet advantage in throw weight enshrined by SALT I coupled with technology improvements on the newest Soviet ICBMs, especially the SS-18 and the SS-19, would destabilize the strategic balance in favor of the Soviets. Schlesinger pointed out to President Ford that the Minuteman force carried small-yield warheads to communicate that the United States did not wish to pose a hard-target (the capability to destroy ICBM silos) threat to Soviet ICBMs. In SALT II negotiations, OSD pushed for Soviet throw-weight limitation by restraining or terminating Soviet heavy missile production. Simple equality in numbers of SNDVs or numbers of warheads would

not satisfy the security of American strategic forces; strategic stability could only be maintained, Schlesinger argued, if there was rough equivalence in American and Soviet throw weight, what Schlesinger termed “essential equivalence” between American and Soviet strategic forces. Schlesinger and OSD faced opposition from Henry Kissinger and the NSC staff, who tended to focus on the negotiability of proposals and crafted proposals based on other metrics—launcher numbers, MIRVed ICBMs, and total number of RVs—that Schlesinger believed did not address the core source of strategic instability.¹⁰

U.S. Concerns about Soviet SS-9 Force

The first session of SALT II began in Geneva, Switzerland, on November 21, 1972. The basic U.S. objective was a permanent agreement on central strategic systems limiting ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers that also preserved strategic stability and adhered to the principal of equal aggregates.¹¹ The prospect of resuming deliberations with the Soviets prompted basic questions: what kind of weapon systems should the agreement encompass; whether to pursue quantitative or qualitative limitations on central strategic systems; whether to reduce Soviet strategic forces or build up American strategic forces. Preparations for SALT II had been underway for a half year before Elliott Richardson became Secretary of Defense (during Melvin Laird’s tenure) and thus warranted discussion in this account.

On the eve of SALT II, perhaps the most unsettling aspect of the U.S.-Soviet strategic balance to American officials was the decided Soviet advantage in throw weight. The Interim Agreement had given the Soviet Union a lead in both ICBMs and total throw weight as compensation for an American lead in the number of warheads and qualitative advantages in MIRVed missiles and accurate guidance systems. Because the Interim Agreement did not

prevent either the modification of existing missile systems or the development of new missile systems, the Soviets could undertake a modernization effort that would erode, and eventually erase, these American technological advantages. Coupled with the Soviet lead in number of ICBMs and throw weight codified in the first phase of SALT, the emerging Soviet posture could destabilize the superpower strategic balance, precipitating an arms race or even incentivizing a Soviet first strike against America's Minuteman ICBM force, the promptest and most accurate leg of the U.S. nuclear triad.¹²

OSD feared a surprise attack on the Minuteman force because its total or near-total destruction would rob the United States of its ability to retaliate against the remaining Soviet ICBM force and limit further damage against the United States. The president would thus have the option of attacking Soviet cities in retaliation, inviting in response the destruction of American cities by surviving Soviet ICBMs. The Minuteman force permitted OSD to pursue its preferred counterforce strategy in a nuclear war. Strategic parity with the Soviet Union necessitated options other than execution of the single integrated operational plan and a spasmodic nuclear exchange. Selective counterforce targeting held out the prospect of both holding down U.S. and allied casualties and terminating the war short of nuclear holocaust. As future Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger noted in a 1968 talk to a DoD panel studying limited nuclear options:

The argument for sub-SIOP options is not that they are especially appealing, but only that such options may be less miserable than the other alternatives under given circumstances. The sub-SIOP option may be compared to playing Russian roulette with three chambers filled, hardly an enticing prospect for decisionmakers. However, at the present time the full SIOP is comparable to playing Russian roulette with all six chambers filled with cartridges of perfect reliability.¹³

Survivability of Minuteman thereby became a linchpin in both U.S. strategic planning and formulation of negotiating positions for SALT. The Interim Agreement had stabilized the superpowers' respective strategic postures, but Soviet R&D efforts were already undermining this new balance. At an October 1972 meeting of the Verification Panel, a CIA representative, drawing a conclusion from available evidence, asserted, "In any event, we believe the existence of a big new [Soviet] missile has been confirmed." This missile would replace the SS-9, which in 1972 was the only Soviet missile capable of threatening Minuteman silos.¹⁴

In general, opinion within the NSC, OSD, and JCS was that a first-strike advantage against Minuteman would not accrue to the Soviet Union quickly. However, opinions differed regarding when Soviet strategic forces would threaten the Minuteman force and whether this state of vulnerability would in fact incentivize a Soviet first strike. According to NSC analysis, in relying on "extremely advanced Soviet threats" for fashioning a permanent agreement, the U.S. national security establishment had overdrawn the threat to Minuteman. These conservative estimates were discounting the moderating effect of potential SALT restrictions, and Minuteman vulnerability was occurring earlier than prevailing conditions warranted. In fact, even if technical Minuteman vulnerability should occur—that is, the Soviet ICBM force becomes demonstrably capable of wiping out Minuteman in a single strike—strategic stability would prevail because of the secure retaliatory capability presented by U.S. Polaris and Poseidon SLBMs. OSD, while supporting an agreement, demanded reductions in Soviet missile number and throw weight. OSD argued that Minuteman vulnerability was insoluble without limiting the accuracy of Soviet ICBMs. The JCS considered a first strike against Minuteman extremely unlikely; accounting for the reliability of SS-9 components, the assessed accuracy of the SS-9 guidance system, and atmospheric effects on Soviet warheads, such a strike would be "extremely difficult, if not

impossible.” However, JCS concurrence in the SALT process was based on continued research and development on new strategic offensive systems and associated technologies for ensuring the lasting survivability of the nuclear triad. The Air Force considered Minuteman vulnerability grossly overdrawn. Making the connection between ICBM survivability and SALT, NSC staffer Philip Odeen noted “... a main issue we face in SALT is whether we can postpone and discourage the development of ICBM killing counterforce while keeping open our options to respond if such a threat develops. It was in this security context that stakeholders in SALT developed negotiating positions.¹⁵

Establishing Initial American Objectives for SALT II

A follow-on agreement whose outcome would satisfy the U.S. arms control objectives of strategic stability and equal aggregates in delivery vehicles consisted of three parts: quantitative limits, qualitative limits, and strategies for countering Soviet concerns about specific U.S. weapon systems. Quantitatively, potential U.S. positions incorporated ceilings both on the number of missiles and total throw weight. Qualitatively, a U.S. negotiating position had to address both superpowers’ MIRV efforts, as well as prospects for the development of new missile systems. Regarding Soviet objections to certain American negotiating positions, the primary American concern was the Soviet desire to place forward-based systems (FBSs) within the scope of SALT II.

Before entering the first SALT II session, NSC negotiators had agreed any discussion on quantitative limits proceed from a basic position which mandated equal aggregates in delivery vehicles, with freedom to mix. Having established this base, National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger used the Verification Panel as a forum for determining the “specific composition” and

“numerical level” of the equal aggregate. The panel also discussed whether to include missile throw weight as a component of the aggregate. Panel members agreed that an equal aggregate must include ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers. On establishing a ceiling for equal aggregates of SNDVs, the Verification Panel worked out three options—aggregates at (1) the current American level of 2,200 SNDVs, (2) the current Soviet level of 2,500 SNDVs, and (3) “significant reductions” (about 1,500 SNDVs). The Soviet level would be the easiest to negotiate, but Kissinger was unsure whether Congress would provide funding for a strategic buildup to meet this higher ceiling. The American level would require Soviet reductions of its SS-9 force, a favorable development for the United States; Kissinger doubted the Soviets would make this “unilateral” concession. At the “significant reductions” level, Kissinger thought it would have a “favorable impact on the strategic balance,” but the panel needed to do more work on this option before it could be presented to the Soviets.¹⁶

Kissinger conceived of equality in throw weight as a numerical question, although there were others on the Verification Panel who argued that, because larger throw weights were a requisite for both MIRVed and large-yield payloads, throw-weight constraints were a proper qualitative limitation. In general, U.S. missiles possessed throw weights far smaller than their Soviet counterparts. Kissinger told President Nixon that “the current USSR throw-weight advantage would become a real threat to Minuteman as the Soviets proceed with their MIRV program.” As with the SNDV limitations, the Verification Panel presented three throw-weight options—the Soviet level, the U.S. level, and an intermediate level. The Soviet level would be easy to negotiate and would, Kissinger believed, “prevent further Soviet increases. However, it would be of doubtful strategic value to the U.S.” The U.S. level would require the elimination of

the SS-9 as well as the SS-9's replacement missile. The intermediate level would permit some limitation of the SS-9 and an increase of the U.S. throw-weight total.¹⁷

Verification Panel discussions indicated that the primary concern of NSC principals in fall 1972 seemed to be numerical limits on SNDVs; if a SALT II agreement could lower total Soviet throw weight, superpower strategic stability would be greatly improved. However, qualitative limits might serve to cement the American advantage in number of warheads, the development and deployment of MIRV technology, and missile accuracy. In Verification Panel meetings, the OSD viewpoint was that Minuteman vulnerability could never be redressed without constraints on missile accuracy. The other quantities—warhead yield and throw weight—could and would be adjusted so that an accurate guidance system would eliminate the need for a high-yield warhead, which would eventually eliminate the need for larger throw weights.¹⁸

Of primary importance at the beginning of the negotiations was the possibility of a ban on MIRV technology or a limit on the number of MIRVed systems. Another fruitful area for discussion included measures to slow development and deployment of new missiles and components, such as reducing the number of missile tests or annual production rates. For the first session of SALT II, disagreement existed as to whether or not to submit this subject for discussion to the Soviets; if so, Kissinger feared it was too early in the negotiations to reveal specific U.S. proposals.¹⁹

The American delegation had to be ready to respond to Soviet proposals impinging on American weapons systems of concern. The Soviets had conceded to the American request to keep forward-based systems (FBSs) out of the Interim Agreement. The Soviets would likely press for inclusion of American FBSs in a follow-on agreement.²⁰ FBSs included all such

bombers and missiles for NATO, as well as U.S. submarine bases at Holy Loch, Scotland and Rota, Spain. Kissinger believed this issue possessed “critical” political importance to the U.S. relationship with NATO and U.S. capacity to flexibly deploy forces in the future. The Verification Panel worked out four options for the initial round at SALT II: (1) no discussion of FBSs until questions regarding central strategic systems had been resolved; (2) U.S. agreement in principle not to build up FBSs such that it undermines a potential SALT II agreement; (3) token measures to placate the Soviets; (4) tabling an argument that all equivalent Soviet systems capable of reaching U.S. forces or bases must be included in an FBSs agreement. This latter option Kissinger considered tantamount to agreeing to the proposition that SALT cover “fringe systems.”²¹

Principal OSD Negotiating Position

A week before the first session opened, then-Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird had sent Nixon his thoughts on the kind of treaty the U.S. should negotiate. Laird highlighted the importance of strategic stability and parity based on equal aggregates for the central strategic systems of each superpower. To him, an agreement should reduce “the aggregate numbers and throw-weights of offensive systems in a step-by-step process over time.” The U.S. delegation should not propose a reduction in U.S. heavy bombers, discuss the imposition “of MIRV bans or other qualitative limits” (except in verifying a throw-weight limit), or enter into a discussion of FBSs. At this early stage, Laird counseled against crafting fallback positions. “We wish to negotiate as forcefully as possible for the treaty outlined above.”²²

Laird believed an acceptable treaty would force the Soviets to eliminate their “advantages in the number and throw weight of strategic missiles.” Otherwise, the Soviets would use

favorable SNDV numbers to threaten Minuteman. “This means that in nuclear exchanges they could raise the ante more times than we, while still holding in reserve an ultimate retaliatory capability.” The Soviets could force the U.S. to back down in a crisis. Fearing future unfunded strategic programs, Laird pushed for equality in throw weight and number via Soviet reductions, “rather than depending upon U.S. deployments of missiles with very large throw weights.” The United States required MIRV, wrote Laird, as a hedge against rapid deployment of Soviet ABM systems and to ensure coverage of Soviet target systems “in retaliation or limited exchanges.”²³

In closing, Laird counseled the president:

Our starting position must be clear, tough, and strategically defensible. Even if we should later decide to settle for an agreement which does not provide substantial reductions or full equalization of missile throw weights, we will be in a superior negotiating posture if we have made these objectives clear and firm.²⁴

National Security Decision Memorandum 197, issued on November 18, 1972, laid out the final approved negotiating position for the U.S. delegation in the first round of talks. The U.S. delegation was to treat the first session as exploratory and preparatory and seek a permanent agreement “based on essential equivalence in central strategic systems.” The agreement had to achieve a high degree of equivalency among superpower central strategic systems. Any agreement had to include “equality in ICBM numbers and overall throw weight.” Freedom to mix was an integral element of essential equivalence in a permanent agreement. The U.S. delegation was to convey to the Soviet side the “unique capabilities” of the larger Soviet ICBM throw weight and “the destabilizing effect of the Soviet advantage” in large ICBMs. The U.S. delegation could accept for discussion permitting mobile ICBMs, the non-transfer of strategic weapons to third countries, and FBSs. Non-transfer and FBSs would not be discussed until after agreement had been reached on central strategic systems.²⁵

SALT II Enters a Second Year

As the U.S. SALT delegation tabled the NSDM 197 position in Geneva, NSC principals wrestled with the question raised by the delegation's head, U. Alexis Johnson, "of what it was we were trying to do in SALT." American planners established specific American SALT objectives, particularly the maintenance of some measure of equality between superpower strategic forces. Two schools of thought developed regarding how best to achieve equality—whether to seek a limitation on MIRVs or insist on equal aggregates. In fall 1973, reacting both to continuing Soviet negotiatory intransigence and the development of a viable Soviet MIRV capability, the NSC developed new proposals for Soviet consideration—equal ICBM MIRVed throw weight and restraints on weapon system production—designed to break the deadlock. As the U.S. negotiating position developed during 1973, OSD steadfastly championed an equal-aggregates approach with the goal of limiting Soviet ICBM throw weight.²⁶

The fundamental concern underlying U.S. objectives in SALT II was the potential future vulnerability of the Minuteman force to Soviet surprise attack. In January 1973, U. Alexis Johnson stated that a "key objective" was to "get rid of the big Soviet missiles" that, paired with MIRV technology, posed a first-strike threat to the U.S. ICBM force. OSD shared this concern. Briefing Secretary of Defense Richardson, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Systems Analysis Gardiner Tucker, argued that "Soviets have hard-kill and can exceed U.S. missiles. Soviets can beat us in warheads." Tucker addressed vulnerability later in the meeting, noting that SALT II must permit the United States to convert its ICBMs to SLBMs; the latter were essentially invulnerable.²⁷

Proponents of the vulnerability thesis had their critics. Air Force Lt. Gen. Royal B. Allison, the JCS representative on the U.S. SALT delegation, believed that fears of vulnerability

were overdrawn. The JCS thought a Soviet first strike against the U.S. land-based missile force was too complex for the Soviets to risk undertaking. Johnson agreed that American planning for SALT was the victim of “over-focusing on the Minuteman problem.” SALT, Johnson noted, must consider U.S. requirements for fighting a nuclear war “in the event deterrence failed.” “The key problem we need to address is what are our SALT objectives,” Kissinger opined. The vulnerability of U.S. ICBMs was certainly an important factor in crafting U.S. negotiating positions, but “what is the significance of vulnerable, land-based missiles. If bombers and SLBMs are survivable, what difference does it make if the ICBMs are vulnerable?”²⁸

NSC analysis clarified the primary U.S. objective in SALT. The United States declared equality—specifically that which produced strategic stability—a “fundamental objective” in the negotiations. In this way, vulnerability was a function of the rough equivalence of the U.S. and Soviet strategic arsenals. What equality meant in the context of SALT was a matter of interpretation and subject to disagreement. “The real question is, how do we define equality,” Kissinger mused. “Do we mean (1) equality in first-strike capability, (2) equality in second strike capability, (3) equality in numbers of launchers and re-entry vehicles, or (4) equality in assured destruction capability.” In determining what kind of equality the United States should pursue in SALT, Kissinger believed the “agreement can’t result in serious inequalities in numbers of delivery vehicles.” A decision on an acceptable force level under a SALT II regime required answers to three questions: (1) “would these levels ratify the current strategic situation,” (2) “what options would be available to each side under” SALT II, and (3) “would each country be able to implement its options?” Kissinger eventually settled on an “ideal limit” of 6.5 million pounds of throw weight for each superpower, which would allow the United States to keep its strategic programs and require the Soviets to cut their launcher numbers, especially the heavy

throw-weight SS-9. Kissinger tempered his optimism: “I have great confidence in Alex’s negotiating ability, but I’m not sure he could get that kind of level for us.”²⁹

In general, OSD took the position that any agreement had to enhance the overall survivability of U.S. strategic forces. To meet this objective, OSD wanted to use weapon programs as leverage to extract Soviet concessions during the negotiations. DoD had three major strategic programs in research and development: the B-1 bomber, the Trident SLBM, and the Mk-12 warhead for Minuteman III. JCS Chairman Moorer noted in his diary that Richardson saw great potential in using U.S. programs as a negotiating tactic. Richardson asked in a meeting with the Joint Chiefs whether “... we have leverage? Is Trident and B-1 enough? How might we use other defense programs as leverage? Can we propose another program?” OSD also saw its new weapon systems as a way to ensure the survival of the Minuteman force. American programs could serve both as bargaining chips and a hedge against the failure of negotiations.³⁰

OSD’s interest in using defense programs as negotiating leverage led Richardson to emphasize what he termed “time phasing” in considering equality in SALT. “We may have more leverage with the Soviets than we think with these new programs,” Richardson noted. In determining the components of an American proposal, the relative timelines for the American deployment of new strategic programs and the Soviet deployment of MIRVs on their larger throw-weight ICBMs mattered greatly. Kissinger worried that Congress might not appropriate funds for a buildup to the present Soviet launcher level (about 2,500), but Richardson noted that because money existed in the five-year defense program for these new programs, whether Congress provided funds in FY 1974 or FY 1975 for an American buildup was of lesser consequence, and for the Soviets to capitalize on their throw-weight advantage required time as well.³¹

Through spring 1973, OSD continued to support Laird's November 1972 position on U.S. goals in SALT. Gardiner Tucker argued to Richardson in February that the United States should not modify NSDM 197 unless the Soviets were willing to adopt a more equitable approach to their current SALT position. OSD was willing to drop its demand for a land-mobile ICBM ban and acknowledge that throw-weight limits, including SLBMs, might be a fruitful negotiating approach, but required further study. Reductions, wrote Tucker, remained off the table because JCS worried that they would negatively affect U.S. plans in the event of nuclear war. Although by early 1974 OSD would strongly support reductions as part of a permanent SALT agreement, concern persisted that reductions were not conducive to essential equivalence. The DoD SALT Task Force argued in February 1974 that even though the pre-exchange strategic "inventories" of each superpower could satisfy essential equivalence, real parity required more U.S. weapons to destroy a larger Soviet target base. Reductions would not satisfy this requirement.³²

From these discussions emerged NSDM 206, dated March 11, 1973, the second set of instructions to the American SALT delegation. The instructions directed the delegation to seek specific Soviet views regarding Soviet objectives in SALT. The delegation should assert that a SALT agreement based on essential equivalence in strategic forces would prove beneficial in preserving the survivability of each side's strategic arsenal. Any agreement on aggregate numbers of strategic systems required "equal sub-limits on ICBM numbers and equal ICBM throw weight levels" Instructions for the subsequent round of SALT in May would set forth a detailed American proposal for consideration by the Soviets.³³

The Verification Panel developed a revised negotiating position in NSDM 213, the instructions to the SALT delegation for the SALT session beginning May 4, 1973. NSDM 213

provided specific proposals based on the American objective of essential equivalence based on equal aggregates of strategic nuclear delivery vehicles. The instructions called for a ceiling of 2,350 delivery vehicles. Within the aggregate, SLBMs and heavy bombers could replace ICBMs; this condition favored the United States, which sought in the long term to reduce ICBM vulnerability by moving its missile force out to sea. According to NSDM 213, the United States was prepared to “conclude a provisional agreement freezing ICBM MIRVs to accompany the Interim Agreement” and prohibiting “development, testing, production, and deployment of new and modified MIRV/MRV systems for ICBMs.” There were several corollary constraints, primarily that MIRVs could only be deployed if they had already been flight tested prior to July 1, 1973, on previously tested missiles. Regarding ICBM throw weight, prohibition of an increase in either side’s total would be acceptable if accompanied by constraints on MIRV technology and deployment. Judging an OSD Program Analysis and Evaluation summary of NSDM 213, Tucker wrote Richardson that the “NSDM is largely free of ambiguity and appears to be a thoughtful approach to SALT II.” Although NSDM 213 differed somewhat from the Defense Department’s position (NSDM 213 possessed neither freedom to mix to land-based ICBMs nor an equal MLBM sublimit), Tucker believed, “My staff and I have no objections to NSDM-213 which, in my judgment, are sufficient to justify a SecDef reclama.”³⁴

NSDM 216, forwarded to the delegation just days after NSDM 213, provided additional instructions. NSDM 216 explicitly prohibited both the construction of new land-based ICBM launchers and the conversion of “light and older” ICBM launchers into launchers capable of supporting “modern large ballistic missiles [MLBMs],” a reference to the SS-9 and SS-18. The NSDM 216 provisions prevented the Soviets from deploying more than 313 SS-9 missiles or its

SS-18 replacements. NSDMs 213 and 216 would throw into sharp relief the preferred negotiating positions of OSD and the JCS on the one hand, and the NSC on the other.³⁵

OSD and the JCS harbored strong reservations regarding the content of NSDMs 213 and 216. The central objections voiced by OSD and the JCS concerned the provision for limits on MIRVs without a requirement for prior agreement on equal aggregates of delivery vehicles and the provision allowing the Soviets to maintain their full complement of 313 MLBMs, while the United States was permitted no such complement.

On May 2, 1973, JCS Chairman Moorer forwarded to Kissinger a joint OSD/JCS proposal which called for: (1) equal aggregate totals of SNDVs, with a sub-ceiling on MLBMs, (2) the right to replace bombers with SLBMs, MLBMs, and light ICBMs, and (3) a 313-MLBM sublimit for each side. The delegation could then agree to a reduction of “central strategic systems” down to 2,200 SNDVs by 1977; phased reductions could be negotiated upon reaching the 2,200 level. To restrict Soviet MIRVing of their MLBM force, the proposal recommended either a ban on development of an air-launched ballistic missile (ALBM) or a willingness to limit the U.S. MIRVed ICBM force to 550 Minuteman IIIs in return for a Soviet agreement not to MIRV their MLBMs. MIRVing and MRVing of light ICBMs and SLBMs would be permitted. The FBS discussion depended upon agreement to the provisions on central strategic systems. Moorer wrote that “it is much more important to achieve agreement on equal aggregates of central systems, even at the 2500 level, than it is to accept an agreement which is asymmetrically in favor of the Soviets in numbers of launchers.”³⁶

OSD and JCS reaction to the promulgation of NSDMs 213 and 216 was swift and negative. Clements sent Kissinger a May 9 memorandum which registered “Admiral Moorer’s and my concern over several points contained in the guidance set forth in NSDMs 213 and 216.”

Kissinger apparently did not heed these concerns. On May 10, Clements sent Kissinger another memo requesting that the NSC modify both national security memoranda to clarify that (1) any MIRV freeze must occur after Soviet agreement to equal aggregates on central strategic systems, (2) the permanent agreement must include an equal MLBM sublimit for each side, and (3) the permanent agreement must include “full” freedom-to-mix, that is, the right to replace SLBMs and heavy bombers with ICBMs. Clements implied that the current guidance did not further an agreement that promoted essential equivalence, which he defined as “equal aggregates and equal rights to ICBMs and MLBMs” Kissinger should “reconsider ... the recommendations set forth above” before the two delegations met again.³⁷

Kissinger complained about Clements and the JCS to President Nixon in a telephone call the next day. Kissinger grumbled, “Now, we have a massive problem with the Chiefs and Clements, who’s stupid but well meaning [*sic*] on SALT.” Kissinger continued, “I’m not going to bore you with the technical details, but they are digging in on almost everything” To Kissinger, the OSD/JCS proposal was dead on arrival. After agreeing to equal aggregates, the Soviets would have no MIRVs on their heavy throw-weight missiles—to say nothing of SLBMs and light ICBMs—while the United States would have completed “nine-tenths” of its Minuteman III MIRV deployment and would possess a complement of 288 MRVed Polaris and 320 MIRVed Poseidon SLBMs. “All right, what do you want me to do?” asked Nixon. Kissinger prepared a memo for Nixon’s signature demanding that the JCS tow the administration—that is, Kissinger’s—line.³⁸

The Joint Chiefs recapitulated their views in a mid-May memorandum. As NSC staffer Philip Odeen put it, “The JCS views come as no surprise; they differ with the current U.S. position in several key areas.” In negotiating a permanent agreement, “it may be increasingly

difficult to keep them in line.” Odeen highlighted Clements’s willingness to support the JCS position on SALT: “In his short memo ... Clements reiterates his own strong support for the JCS line of equal aggregates, equal MLBMs, and full freedom-to-mix ... it will be particularly important that Jim Schlesinger take a strong role in the Pentagon on SALT matters.”³⁹

Whereas OSD and the JCS perceived essential equivalence as a product of equal aggregates of delivery vehicles and limits on Soviet MLBMs, the NSC considered MIRV limitations the most critical component of the U.S.-Soviet strategic relationship in SALT. The NSC position regarding approaches to SALT II is laid out in two May memoranda, one from Kissinger to Nixon and a second from Philip Odeen to Kissinger. Writing to Nixon, Kissinger presented three potential MIRV limitation options for Nixon’s approval. A late April Verification Panel meeting developed a consensus among “all the agencies in the National Security Council” that a limitation on Soviet MIRV was worth the price of constraints on American MIRV development or deployment. The State Department supported a total freeze on MIRV deployment; the Defense Department opposed this option because it threatened Trident. The United States would cease MIRVing Minuteman missiles and would stop its Trident SLBM program, while the Soviets would get no MIRVs. The second option was “a minimum MIRV agreement,” which entailed banning MIRVs on heavy ICBMs; this would remove the counterforce threat posed by the SS-9. Both sides could MIRV an equal number of light ICBMs. The third option, which constituted a middle ground, was a ban on MIRVing all land-based ICBMs. It would freeze the United States at its present level of 350 MIRVed Minuteman missiles and leave the Soviets with no MIRVed ICBMs. Each side could have SLBM MIRVs, and the Soviet Union could keep an edge in total number of SNDVs to account for the American edge in MIRV. Kissinger favored option three, asserting it “would make a major contribution to

strategic stability and could have minimal verification risks.” Kissinger also thought that in dealing with the Soviets, the “best we can accomplish” was likely the second option, a ban on MIRVing heavy ICBMs with the right to MIRV an equal number of light ICBMs.⁴⁰

Because the Soviets were keenly aware of the American advantage in both MIRV numbers and technology, the NSC also had to consider a SALT II agreement that did not place controls on MIRVs. Philip Odeen assessed this possibility in his memorandum, “SALT without MIRV?” “The Soviets may eventually accept some minimum MIRV deal,” thought Odeen. The Soviets were intent on MIRVing their heavy ICBMs, so Kissinger’s second limitation option, a Soviet heavy-American light ICBM constraint with freedom to MIRV SLBMs would be the most attractive to the Soviet delegation. What if the Soviets did not want any MIRV limitations, mused Odeen? All was not lost; SALT need not become “moribund.” Odeen saw a role for restraints “in specific strategic weapon programs,” or resort to the OSD and JCS approach of equal aggregates and full freedom-to-mix. Odeen thought the United States would have to pay a price for such an approach, perhaps by addressing forward-based systems and limiting specific programs of concern to the Soviet Union. Odeen believed that simple quantitative limitations would not end the threat to Minuteman, because the Soviets could still MIRV their heavy missiles. The best option for arms control without MIRV limitations would be what Odeen termed “restraints.” Restraints would be one of several mechanisms American officials would consider in attempting to end the stalemate that had descended upon SALT in the wake of NSDMs 213 and 216.⁴¹

New Approaches to SALT

Through summer 1973, the Soviets made no substantive counterproposals to the provisions outlined in NSDMs 213 and 216. Compounding this Soviet intransigence, OSD and the Joint Chiefs continued to support their maximal SALT position of equal aggregates with full freedom-to-mix and an equal sublimit on MLBMs. Soviet desire to MIRV their own ICBMs meant any meaningful MIRV limitation was a remote possibility; the OSD and JCS position rendered such limitation an impossibility. The Washington Summit between Nixon and Brezhnev, which occurred in mid-June 1973 and for which the Soviets had been eager to achieve a viable MIRV agreement, featured, in the strategic realm, only an agreement on the prevention of nuclear war. The National Security Council had to come up with fresh approaches for negotiating with the Soviets and did so by examining options for prospective negotiating positions.

Henry Kissinger's NSDM 233, providing instructions to the SALT delegation for the negotiating that began on September 24, 1973, reaffirmed the U.S. proposals contained in NSDMs 213 and 216, and directed the delegation to elicit Soviet feelings on those proposals. Despite a decision to continue with the same guidance, in Washington, DC, efforts were underway to find a new path forward in SALT. Lending this exercise a sense of urgency was confirmation that the Soviet Union had successfully tested its first MIRV in August 1973. There was no chance now that the Soviets, who were also flight testing their third-generation ICBMs, the SS-17, -18, and -19, would agree to a MIRV freeze or any limitation which would codify the decisive American superiority in MIRV numbers and technology. The Soviets also put forward a new proposal on October 9, 1973, that would limit MIRVs to a "portion" of total ICBMs and SLBMs "permitted under the agreement" and limit each side to the number of ICBMs and SLBMs active when the agreement is signed.⁴² A third provision cut off the development of

Trident by prohibiting a “new generation SLBM,” and a fourth prevented ALBM testing by banning all strategic air-to-surface missiles.⁴³

Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger’s team wasted little time in fashioning a proposal that tackled the Soviet MIRV threat directly. The Soviets would have to reduce their ICBMs from 1,400 to 1,000 to match the U.S. level and would have to completely get rid of their SS-9 force as they MIRVed their light SS-11s and SS-17s. In the end, each side would have 1,000 ICBMs mounting 3,000 warheads and the Soviets would retain a throw-weight advantage of 3 million pounds to the U.S. level of 1.7 million. Chairman Moorer recorded that Schlesinger believed that if the Soviets worried about the Chinese, “we would not object to the implacement [*sic*] of additional IRBMs—aimed at China. We would weep only ‘crocodile tears.’”⁴⁴

A panel of officials from the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) and OSD developed new proposals in a September 1973 think piece. These proposals would support the objective of essential equivalence and “maintain or enhance the survivability and penetration capability of strategic offensive forces.” The panel put forward three categories of proposals: equal aggregates, “slowing the arms competition,” and “enhanc[ing] the survivability of SSBNs and bombers.” The panel did not opt for a specific measure, but the exercise illuminated specific OSD interests and concerns in the negotiations. Of note, equal aggregate options were political options that would not assure ICBM survivability, and qualitative constraints would prevent the Soviets from curbing the technological lead enjoyed by the United States.⁴⁵

The NSC, meanwhile, began to reckon with the possibility of a shift in emphasis from MIRVs to other components of the strategic relationship as a way of moving forward in SALT. The joint ACDA/OSD paper featured prominently in Odeen’s and Helmut Sonnenfeldt’s memorandum to Kissinger for a September 17, 1973 meeting of the Verification Panel. Odeen

and Sonnenfeldt presented five MIRV options for the Verification Panel to consider, all of which “permit completion of the planned U.S. Minuteman and Poseidon Programs.” Essentially, all options permitted the United States to keep its lead in warheads, reduced the Soviet throw-weight advantage, and compelled the Soviets “to expend a major portion of their force in any attack on Minuteman.” However, Odeen and Sonnenfeldt acknowledged both the apparent futility in a constant resort to MIRV limitations and the unwillingness of OSD and the Joint Chiefs to slaughter sacred cows. Echoing their thoughts on the joint ACDA/OSD paper, they asked, “What restraints are we willing to accept to halt the new Soviet MIRV programs?” The options provided in the paper required little to no U.S. sacrifice and required the Soviets to stop “at least one of their new ICBM programs.” The “bureaucracy,” they noted, had been drafting a paper “purporting to identify sources of U.S. leverage in SALT.” Odeen’s and Sonnenfeldt’s next comment was trenchant. What went unsaid “in the ‘leverage’ paper is that our greatest leverage derives from our ongoing programs (Trident, B-1, SLCM) and not from paper programs that are no more than a gleam in the Pentagon eye.” They continued, “It follows that the bureaucracy also has not faced the fact that some of our *real* programs will have to be limited in SALT” if the United States was going to limit heavy Soviet ICBMs, new Soviet ICBMs, and Soviet SLBM programs.⁴⁶

The United States entered late 1973 and early 1974 in disarray regarding SALT. The National Security Council on one side and the OSD and JCS on the other continued to peddle their respective lines on SALT, yet the active instructions to the SALT delegation had elicited no substantive Soviet comments or counterproposal for five months. The latter part of 1973 saw the first real attempts to break free of the NSDM 213 straitjacket, but the Defense Department refused to limit or curtail any of its ongoing strategic-system development programs and the

NSC would not draft a MIRV limitation proposal that constituted a meaningful limit on the United States. The new Soviet proposal of October 1973, debated in the closing week of 1973 and early 1974, marked the next major shift in the U.S. approach to SALT.

Equal MIRVed Throw Weight

Auspicious events in SALT bookended 1974. Its beginning saw work on a U.S. response to the first concrete Soviet proposal of SALT II, its end a grand superpower summit wherein each side agreed to equal aggregates, sublimits for MIRVed missiles, and continued negotiation on cruise missiles. James Schlesinger brought his prodigious knowledge and deep expertise on nuclear weapons to bear on the interagency planning process. The potential for arms racing must be forestalled and strategic stability maintained, which required limitations in Soviet throw weight. Throw weight matched with high-yield warheads and technological improvements could provide the Soviet ICBM force a potent counterforce capability. For DoD, if SALT was worth pursuing, it must blunt the Soviet push for strategic superiority, and the only meaningful avenue to achieve this goal, reasoned Schlesinger, was with throw-weight limitations.

A New Soviet Proposal

On October 9, 1973, the Soviet delegation tabled a new proposal for a permanent SALT agreement. The Soviet proposal represented the first serious movement in the negotiations since the American delegation presented its position in line with NSDMs 213 and 216. As Kissinger told Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko during an October visit to Moscow, SALT “is completely stalemated.” Richard Nixon, in a letter to Brezhnev, noted, “The negotiations for the limitation of strategic arms have not progressed as rapidly as I had hoped following our

agreement on basic principles in Washington last June.” Nixon did not want either side to commit itself to inflexible negotiating positions. “I would like you to know, incidentally, that it is precisely for this reason that our side has not tabled a new proposal in Geneva following the submission of your most recent proposal.”⁴⁷

The National Security Council regarded the new Soviet position as a sincere effort toward progress in the talks. The most significant aspects of the proposal were a limitation on multiple reentry vehicles to a proportion of the total number of SNDVs and a cap on ICBM and SLBM numbers to those already in each country’s arsenal upon the signing of the agreement. The proposal prohibited a “‘new generation’ of SLBM submarines.” Bombers would be constrained to agreed levels and production of air-to-surface nuclear missiles forbidden. Sonnenfeldt and Aaron believed that with the new proposal “we can now begin to deal concretely with specific aspects of the Soviet position without making any further commitments on FBS.” Agreement on the status of FBS was no longer a Soviet pre-condition for proceeding with other components of SALT. On MIRVs, “the real significance” was that the Soviets “have taken the step of tabling a MIRV proposal which though highly self-serving, is not completely outrageous and does improve the prospects of a constructive discussion of MIRV limits.”⁴⁸

Equal MIRV Throw Weight

The final SALT talks of 1973 ended in November, with the delegations scheduled to reconvene in Geneva in February 1974. During the recess, an interagency panel worked up a new American negotiating concept, a provision for equal ICBM MIRV throw weight. A State Department briefing memorandum noted “this approach has considerable merit in that it severely constrains Soviet ICBM MIRV potential and provides for a measure of equivalence.” Equal MIRV throw

weight addressed a growing concern within the national security bureaucracy that the new generation Soviet ICBMs married large throw weights, MIRV capability, and increased accuracy. Large throw weights permitted heavier high-yield warheads that could make for a devastating Minuteman-killing capability. Working from an interagency paper, SALT stakeholders discussed the negotiating value of the equal MIRV throw-weight concept and debated the illustrative options the interagency panel had crafted.⁴⁹

The debate surrounding equal MIRV throw weight in December 1973 and January and February of 1974 also marked the emergence of two salient features of American planning for SALT through late 1975: Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger as a vocal advocate for the negotiating positions and principles supported by OSD and JCS and the intellectual rivalry between Schlesinger and Henry Kissinger regarding the scope and purposes of SALT. Due to his work at RAND, the Office of Management and Budget, and the CIA, James Schlesinger assumed his office with a deep knowledge of strategic forces requirements, deterrence theory, and nuclear arms control, making him uniquely qualified to participate in SALT and act as an advocate for DoD.⁵⁰

Seemingly content to permit NSDMs 213 and 216 to govern U.S. negotiating when he took control at Defense in July 1973, Schlesinger used the October 1973 Soviet proposal and the work of the interagency panel on the equal MIRV throw-weight concept to mount a sustained campaign in support of throw-weight limitations as the best means for ensuring strategic stability and survivability of the Minuteman force. Schlesinger believed American negotiating leverage did not lie in trading programs like the B-1 bomber or the Trident SSBN (as Kissinger did), but rather in an American capacity for a strategic buildup that would crumple strategic stability and spark a new arms race. This difference in opinion was largely due to Kissinger's belief that

Congress was out to cut the Defense budget, whereas Schlesinger thought Congress had never seen a strategic program it did not like. Over breakfast at the Pentagon in January, Schlesinger told Kissinger, “You must convince them [the Soviets] that they can’t be better than we are,” and “You tell the Soviets that unless they come along, we will build up.”⁵¹

The interagency paper offered four options for achieving an agreement through equal MIRV throw weight. Within these four options were a bewildering and arcane array of sub-options, collateral restraints, alternative force structures, verification considerations, and analyses of strategic implications of potential SALT positions. The key point to draw from the paper and the discussions surrounding the equal MIRV throw-weight concept is that, in general, American officials knew the Soviets would ultimately possess more ICBM throw weight than would the Americans, unless the Americans were prepared to build up and rearrange their strategic forces. The options in the paper sought to reduce existing Soviet throw weight and prevent future growth in Soviet throw weight.⁵² According to the interagency panel, equal MIRV throw weight was attractive because “equal MIRVed missile throw-weight limits can curb the long-term momentum in Soviet strategic missile programs, be consistent with, and contribute to essential equivalence and strategic stability.” In the final analysis, “equal limits on MIRV throw weight at the levels considered in this paper can preclude, to a large extent, Soviet exploitation of their large advantage in ICBM throw weight and contribute to achieving essential equivalence and strategic stability.”⁵³

The options achieved equal MIRV throw weight via ICBMs only, ICBMs and SLBMs, and equal numbers of launchers. The fourth option provided for both equal launcher numbers and equal MIRV throw weight. Options A and B represented the preferred choices of the National Security Council and the Defense Department and JCS, respectively. This is in part

because Options A and B held ICBM throw weight at 1.3 million pounds, which represented the total throw weight of the programmed U.S. force of 550 Minuteman IIIs, while Options C and D required a U.S. buildup and permitted the Soviets to retain far more throw weight than U.S. programmed forces.⁵⁴

The Verification Panel met on January 8, 1974, to discuss the options in the interagency paper. Kissinger determined there was a need for a comprehensive proposal encompassing “equal aggregates of 2,350 with reductions to 2,000 over a 10-year period,” a mechanism for translating throw-weight limits to limits on specific missile programs and examining what such limits would do to “specific missile types.” U. Alexis Johnson was charged with creating a proposal to limit MIRVed and non-MIRVed throw weight through a ban on heavy missiles. Schlesinger remarked “our short-range objective is to cut off MIRV deployment in a significant way; our long-range objective is equally weighted aggregates.” Further discussion on trivial points led Kissinger to reiterate that a comprehensive agreement featuring equal aggregates and reductions would need to “get down to fundamentals.” Schlesinger intoned,

It’s a question of the price we pay. U.S. bargaining power is not in Trident or B-1. U.S. bargaining power lies in stirring up the American people and persuading the Soviets that we insist on essential equivalence. If they won’t bargain, we will start a major program, which will lead to instability and will end détente. That is the true bargaining power of the U.S.⁵⁵

“If they [the Soviets] believe it. If we can get more in the Defense budget and show them programs that really worry them,” retorted Kissinger.⁵⁶

DoD and SALT in 1974

Schlesinger, who had cut his intellectual and professional teeth at RAND working on nuclear strategy, came to U.S.-Soviet arms limitation with well-defined notions of what the United States

wanted from SALT and how SALT and U.S. strategic force requirements should interact. Schlesinger's expertise especially in the realm of deterrence and strategic forces planning may have made an intellectual and political clash with Henry Kissinger inevitable. Jan Lodol's comment to a member of the DoD SALT Task Force that "even under Jim Schlesinger" there had not been any trouble regarding SALT until the NSC began exploring an equal MIRVed throw-weight proposal, speaks to Schlesinger's desire to create a space for meaningful DoD input; after all, any SALT regime would directly affect the makeup of the U.S. strategic arsenal, the missions that arsenal could perform, and the force requirements for those missions.⁵⁷

Schlesinger's entry into the NSC–DoD battle over SALT reflected his opinion that missile throw-weight was the chief determinant of strategic capability. Thus, the equal MIRVed throw-weight proposal impinged directly upon Schlesinger's ideas about how best to construct a robust, survivable U.S. strategic force and, conversely, how the Soviets might construct a strategic force able to threaten U.S. strategic objectives and preferred strategic options. In the 1970s U.S. strategic flexibility resided almost entirely in its ICBM force. The Command Data Buffer program was providing the Minuteman force with quick, reliable, and remote retargeting. Because this force could be retargeted quickly and remotely, it was the cornerstone of a renewed effort to create limited nuclear options for U.S. strategic forces. These new options held out the hope of limiting nuclear exchanges—keeping them below a level tantamount to cataclysm. Unfortunately, a Soviet strategic force based on large ICBMs capable of carrying large warheads could eventually take out Minuteman and eliminate in a fell swoop Schlesinger's vaunted flexibility.⁵⁸

And this, for the DoD was the crux of Minuteman vulnerability. Throughout the SALT negotiations, the DoD never believed the credibility of the deterrent was under threat. Rather,

Minuteman alone could become vulnerable, which threatened the response options available to American officials; it was a technical problem with dire political consequences. At a high-level internal OSD meeting on SALT, officials touted this flexibility and feared its loss. “Minuteman is central because this is where options lie,” “want ICBM high level of survivability because of comparative ease of retargeting, flexibility, etc. etc. .” One official noted “that even without any other MIRVs, Soviets eventually can take out Minuteman!! (Thus, losing our targeting capability).” There could be no limited war without limited options, no limited options without a retargeting capability, and no retargeting capability without Minuteman.⁵⁹

Soviet throw weight threatened Minuteman, and any SALT agreement worth entering required controlling this throw weight. At the time, the United States possessed essential equivalence, could maintain deterrence, and existed in a state of strategic stability with the Soviet Union. The DoD favored arms control but believed arms control had to occur “in light of existing trends and potential dangers.” The options pursued by the NSC—launcher numbers, MIRV numbers, and a sublimit on MIRVed missiles—were “superficially attractive.” To DoD officials, the confluence of a pronounced disparity in throw weight favorable to the Soviets, a Soviet penchant for large warheads, and the certainty of improved Soviet guidance and Reentry Vehicle (RV) technology would produce strategic instability. An American advantage in MIRVs was useless if the Soviets MIRVed their larger missiles with larger warheads, just as establishing a missile ceiling was pointless if it allowed both parties to build far beyond their envisaged programs. Schlesinger explicitly discounted the MIRV threat, arguing it would take the Soviets the better part of the decade to MIRV their ICBMs. Essential equivalence with reduced throw weight “particularly on ICBMs” was the only sure way to preserve strategic stability and prevent ICBM vulnerability.⁶⁰

Schlesinger believed controlling throw weight through essential equivalence must be the objective for U.S. arms controllers. Schlesinger told the SALT Policy Guidance Committee, “This is our theology; there *will* be an essential equivalence of the central systems.”⁶¹ He continued, “We do *not* need to be meticulous in throw-weight equivalence, as long as we have *programs that are balanced*.”⁶² OSD’s SALT proposal Option B2, “Equal Aggregates at 1700,” satisfied these dictums. It forced the Soviets to reduce their arsenal by several hundred launchers, while the United States could carry out its planned programs. The U.S. need only eliminate some of its older systems, while the Soviets would have to forgo deployment of their new heavy ICBM, the SS-18; this latter provision had the added virtue of eliminating the premier Soviet counterforce weapon that could eventually threaten Minuteman. Such was the OSD SALT position and its underlying rationale when Gerald Ford assumed the presidency and began to acquaint himself with SALT.⁶³

Schlesinger versus Kissinger

The SALT negotiations entered a year of great dynamism in 1974. This dynamism was as much the result of a clash between the titanic personalities of Schlesinger and Kissinger as of intellectual ferment produced trying to contend with any Soviet proposals or intellectual intransigence. OSD perceived Kissinger’s interest in SALT as primarily political. As OSD and the DoD SALT Task Force saw it, for Kissinger, the important thing was to make an agreement with the Soviets. That a SALT agreement ought to contribute materially to the national security interest of the United States was a consideration secondary to how the Soviets might perceive the desirability or negotiability of a U.S. proposal. The equal MIRVed throw-weight approach was

facing Soviet resistance and Kissinger and the NSC had been exploring the viability of a MIRV ban separate from a permanent agreement; OSD considered this approach “tactical.”⁶⁴

Suspicious of Kissinger’s motives, Nils Frederick Wikner, head of the DoD SALT Task Force, drafted a letter Schlesinger could send to Kissinger reiterating the Defense Department’s desire for a permanent, comprehensive agreement based on equal aggregates and throw-weight limits whose product was essential equivalence. Wikner explained his motives in a covering memorandum to Schlesinger. “The pursuit of a [*sic*] ICBM MIRV Deal [*sic*] is a political choice not a technical military choice.” The letter did not explicitly agree to a separate protocol. “The psychology of the Secretary of State is such that if an explicit agreement [to a MIRV ban] were given he would feel no obligation to pursue a permanent agreement,” and would single-mindedly pursue a MIRV ban.⁶⁵

Schlesinger and Kissinger represented different U.S. approaches to SALT. These differences, both tactical and philosophical, created striking dissension at a working level between the DoD SALT Task Force and the NSC Verification Panel Working Group (VPWG). At an internal DoD meeting on SALT, Schlesinger remarked on the need to “drive down VPWG throats the *overall equivalence* argument.”⁶⁶ Schlesinger complained that NSC studies were make-work. “We in DoD do not need to devote our energies to studies not designed to do something,” Schlesinger proclaimed. The SALT Task Force could do Verification Panel assignments during “your play time.”⁶⁷

Over at the NSC, Jan Lodal, head of the VPWG, launched a belligerent attack on OSD participation in the SALT process. Apparently, Lodal believed that Schlesinger had used the new equal MIRVed throw-weight proposal to create “problems.” Colonel Donald Marshall, a member

of the DoD SALT Task Force, wrote a memorandum for the record detailing Lodal's outburst and accusations, which at times veered into the absurd.⁶⁸

In front of the full VPWG, and then in the hall after the meeting, Lodal "charged us with being 'delinquent,'" and resisted all attempts by Marshall to discuss his concerns at length to see "what we [OSD] could do to assist him." According to Marshall, Lodal believed that OSD "was not fulfilling its promises" and that "No one at OSD is working"; instead, its members were "engaging in intellectual masturbation." "There were no problems," charged Lodal, "even under Jim Schlesinger, up until a couple months ago." OSD was "sitting on our ass, playing games." Lodal further charged OSD with a refusal to engage in the interagency process and withholding data from the State Department and the ACDA. Lodal's final outburst apparently included a "lecture on patriotism" and a threat to tattle on the DoD SALT Task Force to Kissinger, who would "see 'Jim' about it."⁶⁹

Lodal's outburst, according to Marshall, stemmed from a lack of understanding about how OSD and DoD worked SALT questions. With tongue in cheek, Marshall noted that "People working on SALT in OSD/DOD have other responsibilities as well as fulfillment of tasks levied by the Chairman of the VPWG." Lodal did not know how many people in DoD worked on SALT, misapprehended his authority vis-à-vis VPWG representatives from other agencies, and failed to perceive the "ad hoc" nature of study requests and timelines put out by the VPWG. Marshall asked Nils Frederick Wikner to intervene and disabuse Lodal of his notions, as well as act to filter all NSC requests to prioritize those studies that materially support the SALT negotiations. Marshall concluded with a request to "inform the Secretary of Defense of the general nature of our problems with Mr. Lodal and his staff." Ultimately, Schlesinger summed up the adversarial relationship best when he noted sardonically that "we are negotiating not only

with the Russians, but we are negotiating with the NSC and ‘we must continue driving this argument [the need for essential equivalence] down their throats.’”⁷⁰

Negotiating a Ten-Year Agreement

At the Nixon-Brezhnev summit in June-July 1974, the Soviets rejected the U.S. equal MIRVed throw-weight proposal. With Nixon caught in the jaws of Watergate, his credibility destroyed, and his political capital spent, no movement occurred in the SALT negotiations until Gerald Ford assumed the presidency. Ford received his first in-depth acquaintance with SALT during a mid-September NSC meeting. Commenting on the status of the talks, Kissinger noted that each side had tabled a proposal the other side perceived as self-serving. “In Geneva, we have focused on equal aggregates and equal throw weight. We have made essentially no progress with this approach.” In a March 1974 meeting with Kissinger, Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev had proposed a three-year extension of the 1972 Interim Agreement, to 1980. The Americans rejected the proposal on the basis that it failed to constrain Soviet programs while mandating a low ceiling on the number of Trident SLBMs. In June, Nixon had counter offered a two-year extension of the Interim Agreement to 1979 with MIRVed launcher limits of 1,100 for the U.S. and 700 for the Soviet Union, a proposal the Soviets rejected in turn. In fall 1974, SALT negotiations faced stalemate.⁷¹

Kissinger flew to Moscow in October 1974 in an effort to break the deadlock. Brezhnev proffered a Soviet proposal based on launcher numbers over ten years, 2,400 launchers for the Soviets and 2,200 for the U.S. Brezhnev justified the differential as compensation for British and French SLBM launchers. Kissinger saw no trouble with the offer on its face. The current U.S. strategic program “consists of 1976 launchers,” Kissinger wrote to Ford. This number was well below the 2,200 ceiling in the Soviet proposal. The U.S. number included 1,000 ICBMs, 496

Poseidon SLBMs, 240 Trident SLBMs, and 240 B-1 bombers. Reaching 2,200 launchers required retention of obsolete systems and procurement of newer systems; Kissinger considered each path to 2,200 launchers expensive and unnecessary. Buttressing his opinion, Kissinger asserted that the extra 200 launchers afforded the Soviet Union could not be translated into a meaningful strategic advantage. As Kissinger saw it, the concern lay entirely with the congressional response and electoral repercussions. “Nevertheless, given the adverse political reaction you might suffer if you accepted this disparity in launchers, I believe we must press Brezhnev to accept numerical equality.” Brezhnev accepted U.S. rights to 2,400 launchers in 1985, but “he would expect us to agree not to exercise our rights to go to 2400.” A middle road might be found in a U.S. achievement of rights to 2,400 launchers beginning in 1983.⁷²

Kissinger suggested a counterproposal along the following lines. First, in 1984 and 1985 each side would be limited to 2,400 total launchers, including a ceiling of 1,320 MIRVed missiles. The United States would agree to stay at 2,200 launchers through 1983 in return for Soviet agreement to limit itself to 1,120 MIRVed launchers through 1983. The agreement would establish a ceiling of 250 “new” strategic bombers, 288 SLBMs on “Trident-type ships,” and 180 “new heavy ICBMs.” No later than 1984, “the US and USSR will resume negotiations on a further agreement limiting strategic arms,” with an emphasis on “phased reductions” in launcher numbers. This proposal was passed to Anatoly Dobrynin, Soviet ambassador to the United States in November 1974, in advance of the Vladivostok Talks on November 23–24, 1974.⁷³

Defending Throw Weight

As discussed above, Schlesinger and the DoD SALT Task Force took the position that a viable SALT agreement must control Soviet throw weight to protect arms stability. A draft SALT fact

sheet defending the agreement worked up by Lodal after the Vladivostok Talks noted, “However, missile throw weight is only one measure of strategic power. Consideration must also be given to other strategic measures, such as missile accuracy, number of nuclear warheads, and number of strategic bombers.” The United States led in these indices of strategic power, Lodal wrote. His position would find few supporters in DoD.⁷⁴

In September and October NSC meetings, Schlesinger explained the DoD position to other agency principals in the Ford administration. At a September NSC meeting, CIA Director William Colby led off with a sobering briefing on the Soviet strategic arsenal: “The current Soviet programs for development of intercontinental attack weapons are unprecedented in scope.” The Soviets were testing four new ICBMs, the SS-16, -17, -18, and -19. The SS-17 and SS-19 doubled the throw weight of their predecessor, the SS-11. The SS-18 was intended to replace the SS-9. Combining large-yield warheads, MIRVs, and accuracy improvements, the SS-18 was a silo buster. Kissinger, downplaying these developments, noted that the SS-19 would be placed in SS-11 silos and that U.S. national technical means could detect silo modifications for emplacement, rendering an intelligence “advantage for us.” Schlesinger shot back, “These new missiles will have three or four times the throw weight of the ones they are replacing. Thus, while the modifications may be an intelligence advantage, they are a strategic disadvantage.” Schlesinger continued, “We deployed a large number of small warheads in order to represent no hard target threat to the Soviets. Theirs will be a hard target threat to us.”⁷⁵

Schlesinger pressed the strategic stability argument. An increase in Soviet throw weight paired with MIRVs would destroy strategic stability. The SS-9 and SS-18 outclassed Minuteman III throw weight by a factor of eight. Given this disparity, throw-weight control through some combination of reductions and deployment bans was essential. Schlesinger next raised the

specter of Minuteman vulnerability. The U.S. ICBM force was sensitive to degradations in operational accuracies, while the high-payload Soviet ICBM force was protected from this danger. Assuming a Soviet capability to successfully deploy an RV in a target area of a quarter nautical mile, Schlesinger asserted 80 percent of Soviet reentry vehicles optimized for hard-target missions could reduce Minuteman to 100 survivors, achieving a 90 percent kill rate against the Minuteman force. Kissinger and Colby countered that this capability would not threaten the credibility of the deterrent—Soviet counter-silo operations left U.S. SLBMs and bombers intact. Schlesinger dismissed this argument, pointing out that “ICBMs are the basis of both counterforce and selective attack capabilities. They are the main threat.” If the Ford administration wanted the selective attack options promised by the new U.S. targeting doctrine in NSDM 242, Schlesinger insisted that the ICBM force must be protected.⁷⁶

These NSC meetings featured superbly arcane discussions of the interaction among throw weight, total number of RVs, and the number of MIRVed launchers. How exactly did the hard numbers tie-in to the political perception of equality? What was a negotiable position that satisfied domestic ideas of equality? Schlesinger got into extended arguments with Ford regarding what the United States might be willing to trade in an agreement. The basic question was what number (between 2,000 and 2,500) of strategic launchers would constitute the U.S. negotiating position at Vladivostok, and how this starting number affected corollary restraints on throw-weight and MIRVed ICBM limits. The arguments are frankly confusing. Schlesinger championed throw weight as the necessary index of strategic power, but later dismissed an extra 300 Soviet MIRVed ICBMs (beyond the 700 offered in the June 1974 U.S. proposal) as strategically meaningless. Ford replied, “I would like to take you on in that debate if I had 300 more MIRVed missiles.” Schlesinger seemed to argue for equal RVs on both sides. Ford

addressed Schlesinger, “Whatever [the Soviet throw weight] ... you recommend that we accept equality in reentry vehicles.” Schlesinger replied that for equal RVs, the Soviets would need to agree to a MIRV throw-weight limit. “I wrote down equal RVs when you said it before,” Ford retorted. The U.S. could reduce its RVs in exchange for Soviet limitations on throw weight. What was the point of this obtuse badinage?⁷⁷

These arguments in the NSC stemmed from the failure of Ford and Kissinger to understand the core DoD position. Throw weight would not match a muscular Soviet force of heavy ICBMs, high-yield warheads, and MIRVs. For the DoD, SALT, at base, was an exercise in constraining strategic capability to maintain strategic stability and reduce the incentive of either a Soviet or U.S. first strike. In one of the October NSC meetings, Schlesinger presented the essence of his case:

You have two basic objectives in SALT—arms balance and arms stability. If you want to emphasize arms balance, you have to go for equal aggregates. If you want to emphasize arms stability, you need control over throw weight, yields, as well as numbers. In 1972, we achieved both arms stability and arms balance. U.S. technology offset grosser Soviet numerical advantages, and we had bombers. On stability the Soviets had cruder forces and poorer accuracy. The U.S. had smaller yield and throw weight and uncertain accuracy.⁷⁸

By 1985, argued Schlesinger, “we face a different situation.” Because of the unequal numbers for strategic launchers in the Interim Agreement, and the increased throw weight and accuracy of the new Soviet missiles, the U.S. would possess a perceptual disparity and a real loss in capability relative to Soviet forces. The United States could “live with an increase in instability, but [as a result] it would be difficult not to come up to their level,” Schlesinger concluded. In the absence of an agreement, Schlesinger argued, congressional support for new and expanded strategic programs would be necessary; he noted that congressional support for strategic

programs had never been withheld. Ford was diffident, remarking, “Thank you very much. I would only hope we could get Congress to agree.”⁷⁹

The Vladivostok Accord

The Vladivostok Accord was concluded subsequent to meetings between Ford and Brezhnev on November 23–34, 1974. The accord committed the parties to concluding a permanent agreement in 1975 that would run from October 1977 through 1985. Each side would be permitted a ceiling of 2,400 launchers, of which 1,320 could be MIRVed ICBMs and SLBMs, the precise mix of which was at the discretion of each side. For heavy bombers equipped with air-to-surface missiles exceeding a range of 600 kilometers, each missile would be charged against the 2,400 ceiling. No new ICBM launchers could be constructed, but launcher volume could be increased or decreased to a maximum of 10–15 percent of the original volume. Modernization and replacement of older launchers were permitted. New types of strategic weapons—a reference to air-launched, ground-launched cruise missiles, sea-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs, GLCMs, and SLCMs) as well as air-launched ballistic missiles (ALBMs)—could be covered under these negotiations. Negotiations for this 1977–1985 agreement would commence in January 1975.⁸⁰

Principals at a December 2, 1974 NSC meeting, including Schlesinger, were generally satisfied with the outcome of the summit. Ford noted that after comparison with all intelligence estimates of potential Soviet strategic programs absent an agreement, the levels agreed to at Vladivostok were lower. Ford was optimistic: “If the public is given this information, I think they will agree.” Schlesinger seconded Ford’s sentiment: “You can make two observations. First, it is universally recognized that the Soviet program could go beyond 2400 SDVs [SNDVs], and second, the numbers here are lower than the numbers in the Interim Agreement.” Kissinger

crowded over the coup the United States had achieved at Vladivostok. Equal aggregates were achieved, the 600-kilometer ceiling on ALCMs and SLCMs protected the B-1's nuclear short-range attack missile (SRAM), compensation for Forward Base Systems as well as Chinese weapons was not covered in the agreement, and Soviet insistence for 1,100 MIRVed launchers over five years was converted to 1,320 MIRVed launchers over ten years. Kissinger was effusive regarding FBS: "And anyone who talks about strategic superiority—our FBS might not be worth much in a second strike, but in a first strike they could do a lot of damage to the Soviet Union—" Schlesinger interrupted, "I hope you will not use that argument publicly."⁸¹

Schlesinger did raise the question of throw weight, which the agreement left unconstrained. Schlesinger, however, was sanguine. The agreement had achieved equal aggregates. While "it would be more advantageous for both sides to agree to limits on throw weight," the agreement gave the United States the right to pursue Trident, B-1, and the new M-X missile and increase its throw weight if circumstances required. Schlesinger noted that "the agreement you [Ford] have made does not permit them [the Soviets] to outclass us." Indeed, by establishing agreed launcher ceilings, Schlesinger argued that the U.S. could say that it was prepared to seriously discuss arms reduction, which could constrain throw weight.⁸²

Throughout the meeting, mostly passing references were made to the unresolved matters of verification, cruise missiles, mobile ICBMs, and non-circumvention of the agreement by a buildup in non-covered systems. Such concerns were dismissed, overshadowed by the momentous achievement the Vladivostok Accords represented. In 1975 this sanguine attitude would come back to haunt efforts to conclude the 10-year agreement.⁸³

The momentum created by the breakthrough at Vladivostok proved to be short-lived. The Vladivostok Accord gave the superpowers a viable framework for SALT II but set aside certain

issues to be worked out prior to concluding the new agreement. These issues seemed minor, but upon them SALT II would founder, a victim of intramural U.S. quarreling and mutual U.S.-Soviet intransigence. The hope suffusing SALT discussions in early 1975 yielded to resignation by winter 1976–1977 as U.S. officials declared existing U.S.-Soviet differences insoluble and further progress impossible.

Outstanding Issues after Vladivostok

The Vladivostok Accord set aside several questions for settlement prior to concluding a new agreement. The unresolved elements included: verification of MIRVed ICBMs and SLBMs, how—and whether—to count cruise missiles under the Vladivostok 2400 aggregate, the inclusion of the Soviet Backfire bomber within the 2400 aggregate, and the status of mobile land-based ICBMs. Beyond these issues, other ambiguities also required resolution. Cruise missiles proved the thorniest negotiating problem because of the several variables implicated in reaching an understanding with the Soviets. Backfire proved the most emotive issue because the Soviets were both frustrated and angry that U.S. officials would not accept Soviet assurances that the Backfire was not configured for intercontinental missions. A piece of extended discussion from Kissinger regarding the status of SALT highlights how arcane SALT negotiations had become by fall 1975.

If we give the Soviets 600 kilometers on SLCMs and on cruise missiles other than heavy bombers, and limit the number of heavy bombers equipped with ALCMs, the Soviets get quite a bit. We will have tough sledding on the nuclear versus conventional arming, but if the HE warhead reduces the range so much it may drive ALCMs back.... If they plan to build 375 Backfire, then offering 300 outside the agreement is not bad. We can trade those off against SLCMs and the FB-111. We will hold all SLCMs at 600 kilometers except the 200 which will be matched against the Backfire.⁸⁴

Prisoner to a morass of considerations such as whether Backfire would only be stationed in the southern USSR and the B-1 bomber would carry cruise missiles in its bomb bay or on its wings, forward momentum in the negotiations eluded U.S. and Soviet officials. The issues and corresponding U.S. negotiating positions are esoteric and technical, but a summary of issues is necessary to provide context for discussion of DoD positions and preferences.

The need for an adequate verification regime for MIRVed ballistic missiles proceeded from the subceiling of 1,320 MIRVed launchers within the Vladivostok Accord's 2400 aggregate. MIRV verification was the process of determining, or "counting" which ICBMs and SLBMs were MIRVed, and which were not. For the Soviets, the SS-18 and SS-17 ICBMs had single-warhead and MIRVed variants. The SS-19 ICBM had only been tested with a single warhead. As such, U.S. officials feared the Soviets could breakout easily from SALT constraints by MIRVing single-warhead ICBMs that had been tested in a MIRVed mode. With reference to U.S. strategic forces, officials wanted to prevent the counting of the single-warhead Minuteman II, which had only mounted a single warhead, as MIRVed. The United States would lose valuable room in its arsenal for more MIRVed ICBMs, beyond the programmed 550-strong MIRVed Minuteman III force, depending on how MIRVed ICBMs might be verified. The worst scenario U.S. officials envisaged was having to give up a portion of the Minuteman III force. JCS Chairman General George Brown remarked during a Verification Panel meeting, "The loss of Minuteman III versus Minuteman II is far greater in things other than MIRVed warheads—responsiveness, accuracy, targeting."⁸⁵

The U.S. position on MIRV verification was designed to rely upon national technical means. For all ballistic missiles, the U.S. position was that once a missile had been tested with MIRV, that missile type was considered MIRVed; all launchers modified to accommodate

MIRVed missiles were subject to inclusion in the MIRVed ballistic-missile subceiling; and rules worked out in the Standing Consultative Commission, a U.S.-Soviet body for adjudicating disputes arising in the SALT regime, would govern when converting a launcher supporting a MIRVed missile to support of an unMIRVed missile. For SLBMs, the U.S. considered all submarines of a given class to carry MIRVed SLBMs if any submarines within that class mounted MIRVed SLBMs. For ICBMs, a U.S. Government note to the Soviet Union specified that national technical means “will be unable to monitor this limitation [the number of MIRVed ICBMs] unless there is specific agreement on certain rules of deployment.” Responding to Soviet concerns that single-warhead SS-18s would be counted as MIRVed under U.S. verification schemes that designated all launchers MIRVed at ICBM complexes with any MIRVed launchers, the United States would only count MIRVed SS-18s under the subceiling as long as support equipment associated with MIRVed ICBMs was not present at designated single-warhead SS-18 complexes.⁸⁶

With respect to cruise missiles, placing them within a SALT agreement was a daunting exercise and an intractable stumbling block. The Soviets were terrified of U.S. cruise missile technology. They did not have a corresponding research and development program, nor did they have a technological base commensurate with such a program. In August 1975 discussions with Kissinger, Anatoly Dobrynin made clear Soviet displeasure with this U.S. weapon system. The Soviets could not accept an agreement that allowed the U.S. “11,000 free warheads” on [air-launched cruise missiles] ALCMs not counted under the 2400 aggregate. The Soviets “don’t know what to do with this sort of situation.” The Politburo wanted to request significant reductions in military spending at the next Party Congress, but American plans to deploy cruise

missiles meant asking for budget increases for air defense and a Soviet cruise missile program, “neither one of which they had intended to do.”⁸⁷

More than any other question unresolved after Vladivostok, placing cruise missiles into the SALT framework resulted in myriad labyrinthine and abstruse discussions and studies. Kissinger opined, “On cruise missiles, there are a host of problems. There is the type of cruise missile, the range, whether to count or ban, and the platforms on which they are permitted.” Verification Panel and NSC meetings featured extended discussions of cruise missile capabilities and uses followed by collective realizations that a viable SALT proposal would necessarily foreshorten these capabilities and uses. U.S. officials faced key considerations in relating cruise missile development and deployment to SALT. What missions would cruise missiles perform? What constraints on cruise missiles could the nation tolerate to obtain a SALT agreement? How might launcher platforms mitigate or exacerbate such constraints? Attempting to achieve strategic arms control while exploiting a unilateral advantage in a promising dual-capable weapon system was difficult at best.⁸⁸

The opening U.S. negotiating position on cruise missiles restated the Vladivostok understanding that the 600-kilometer limitation on NTM applied only to ballistic missiles, not cruise missiles. The U.S. was prepared to count all cruise missiles with ranges greater than 3,000 kilometers under the 2400 aggregate and permit the agreement “to cover ASMs launched from all aircraft,” not just bombers. The U.S. position left unaddressed SLCMs (the other promising cruise missile configuration), ranges inside of 3,000 kilometers, and any distinctions arising from nuclear and conventional payloads for a cruise missile. This silence spoke to U.S. intentions for this new weapon system; SALT constraints would only limit the utility of the cruise missile.⁸⁹

The Soviets proved intransigent in discussions on the status of the Tu-22M Backfire bomber, which had undergone flight testing in the early years of the SALT II negotiations. The United States sought to count the Backfire as a heavy bomber within the 2400 aggregate. The Soviets were unequivocally opposed. They remained firm in their position that the Backfire was not intended for use in intercontinental operations, while U.S. officials remarked that, like the cruise missile, the Backfire was an ambiguous system, designed for use in tactical, nonstrategic roles, but capable of performing strategic missions. Disagreement on Backfire became heated. Brezhnev seemed personally hurt that the U.S. Government would not take his word that Backfire was neither intended nor optimized for intercontinental missions. Kissinger mentioned that Brezhnev “exploded” over the Backfire issue when Brezhnev and Ford met in Helsinki in July 1975.⁹⁰

Through 1975, the attempt to solve the Backfire impasse, which presented a negotiating problem because the Soviets could use the U.S. position on Backfire to reintroduce into a new SALT agreement the Forward Basing question, which the Soviets had agreed to set aside at Vladivostok. U.S. negotiators feared the one-way intercontinental capability of the Backfire, and so sought to address it in SALT; however, the FB-111, a U.S. medium bomber, had similar performance characteristics. Hence, including Backfire required including the FB-111 and risked reopening SALT as an appropriate venue for FBS negotiations.⁹¹

The U.S. delegation considered multiple approaches to the Backfire. The Soviets could agree only to base the Backfire in the southern USSR and not develop a refueling capability. The agreement could provide for leaving a certain number of Backfires and FB-111s outside of its constraints, counting any bombers in excess of that number. Removing the issue from SALT,

Backfire could run free in exchange for a similar number of cruise missile platforms, or the Backfire and cruise missile questions could be deferred to a later negotiation.⁹²

The United States did not articulate a specific position on land- or air-mobile ICBMs for the opening round of negotiations in Geneva, only remarking that the issue required further study. The Soviets proposed a ban on air-mobile ICBMs, which the Americans rejected as inconsistent with the understanding achieved at Vladivostok giving each side the right “to determine the composition” of the 2400 aggregate. The two options open to the U.S. were to maintain its position proceeding from Vladivostok or to propose a combined ban on both land- and air-mobile ICBMs. Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko presented a Soviet proposal in July 1975 that would ban land-mobile ICBMs and count air-mobile ICBMs under the 2400 aggregate. Soviet corollary constraints attached to this proposal rendered it in effect a combined ban. In a memorandum to Ford, Kissinger wrote that a combined ban would be in U.S. interest, as political and land-use considerations made a U.S. land-mobile ICBM unlikely, and the U.S. would likely not “develop and deploy an operational” air-mobile ICBM by the time the agreement expired in 1985.⁹³

Progress on SALT remained slow through 1975, but some forward movement occurred. Specifically, Ford reported to the NSC in August 1975 that “we made some progress but not a lot.” Both sides agreed to ban cruise missiles of greater than 600-kilometer range “on aircraft other than heavy bombers.” Intercontinental cruise missiles and ballistic missiles with ranges exceeding 600 kilometers were prohibited, and ballistic missiles stationed on the seabed and inland waterways were likewise banned. The delegation in Geneva had been working out a provision banning orbital weapons. Lest this give NSC principals any hope, Ford reminded those assembled that cruise missiles and Backfire remained unresolved.⁹⁴

Preparing for a World without SALT

In DoD, the lack of progress attending SALT post-Vladivostok was concerning. In August 1975 Schlesinger sent Ford a memorandum reminding him of the options available for maintaining strategic stability and parity should SALT fail. The United States, Schlesinger noted, had accounted for SALT in assessing the pace and scope of Soviet strategic programs. Failure to conclude an agreement from Vladivostok portended ominous consequences: “that the Soviets find a relatively unconstrained competition preferable to the constraints of a reasonable and equitable SALT II agreement,” and “that they foresee an advantageous position for themselves in the not very distant future.” The United States could best respond to this outcome by, “at a minimum,” increasing the pace of its strategic programs and even upgrading general purpose forces.⁹⁵

Without SALT II, the nation would likely lose arms balance in the immediate future. Schlesinger proposed an FY 1977 increase of three billion dollars in Defense budget outlays, two billion for strategic forces and one billion for conventional forces. Schlesinger prescribed a host of measures to meet an accelerated Soviet strategic program. He sought funding for two Trident submarines, an accelerated development of the Trident II SLBM, an increase in the B-1 production rate, and an accelerated deployment of the ALCM and SLCM. As a hedge against ICBM vulnerability, the United States had to accelerate development of a mobile, large throw-weight ICBM. To “widen our advantage over the Soviets” in MIRVed missiles and “enhance our hard-target destruction capability,” Minuteman III had to deploy beyond the programmed force level of 550 missiles. Development of a Global Positioning System and maneuvering reentry vehicles (MaRVs) would increase U.S. missile accuracy “as a partial offset to the Soviet lead in missile throw weight.” For conventional forces, Schlesinger sought to increase air mobility,

deploy conventional ALCMs and SLCMs, and improve air defenses by developing airborne warning systems, the SAM-D air defense missile, and the F-15 fighter. These measures would “foreclose any real or perceived advantage” in Soviet strategic programs and “hedge against a more venturesome Soviet foreign policy.”⁹⁶

Schlesinger’s Positions on the Issues

DoD positions on the set of SALT issues described above were informed by the recent operationalization of the NSDM 242 guidance on limited nuclear war and the potential of cruise missile systems, then in development, to perform both conventional and strategic missions. Schlesinger’s continuing quest for strategic stability undergirded these twin pillars. In post-Vladivostok negotiations, maintaining strong positions was key, especially because Brezhnev was anxious for an agreement. “We would be inclined to give only a little ground, showing a considerable degree of firmness, responding to their tactics in kind,” argued Schlesinger.⁹⁷

DoD saw the cruise missile as a flexible weapon system amenable to a range of contingencies. William Clements boasted that “our cruise missile projects drive them up the wall because their defense will not protect them from our cruise missiles, and they know it.” Schlesinger asserted that DoD “feel[s] strongly that the conventionally armed cruise missiles will be a major weapon of the next decade,” and that “we get excited about cruise missiles in the conventional role.” The DoD was developing the ALCM to penetrate Soviet air defenses; ALCMs could penetrate and saturate Soviet air defense and give the B-52 a standoff capability. Flying low and slow and under radar, ALCMs could evade Soviet tracking. DoD projected several contingencies for which conventionally armed cruise missiles would be useful tools.⁹⁸

SLCMs could perform “sub-SIOP,” “peripheral” missions in limited war. In general, a sub-SIOP mission would use strategic and theater weapon systems to execute measured, discriminating strikes to avoid escalation to total nuclear war. Schlesinger gave the National Security Council the examples of strikes against the Soviets for incursions into Iran and a strike against Murmansk to retaliate for a Soviet invasion of Norway. For such missions, he assumed 50–60 missiles would prove adequate. Schlesinger argued that the SLCM “would allow us to exercise limited nuclear options without exposing our bases.” SLCMs provided nuclear capability where none existed. “It’s part of deterrence in areas where we have no base structure. It’s a secure way to deliver nuclear weapons.” The SLCM could also be used conventionally; the Navy wanted to develop and deploy a ship with “the conventional punch of a carrier” through reliance upon SLCMs. Schlesinger envisioned, for example, SLCMs holding Soviet Black Sea naval assets “at risk.” A SALT agreement that foreswore cruise missiles was unacceptable to the DoD. “We cannot abandon these types of weapons,” insisted Schlesinger. In a SALT agreement, the DoD sought to protect ALCMs with a 3,000-kilometer range for penetration but was prepared to fallback to 2,500 kilometers. Because SLCMs could get closer to their targets, a 1,500-kilometer maximum limit was permissible.⁹⁹

Schlesinger considered the Backfire a political problem. The DoD had determined that the Backfire was “optimized” for peripheral missions. Soviet assurances on Backfire would alleviate DoD concerns over its intended use. Schlesinger was prepared to trade 375 Backfires for 75 FB-111s and 200 SLCMs. Another option that Schlesinger floated was keeping Backfire out of a SALT II agreement in exchange for Soviet promises not to raise FBS in SALT III. However, the United States ultimately chose to address the Backfire problem, any understanding

had to allow that the Backfire and FB-111 “have different capabilities.” Hence, a symmetrical offset was impossible.¹⁰⁰

Schlesinger believed mobile ICBMs would increase strategic stability because they were less vulnerable to a first strike. Potential Soviet deployment of its mobile ICBM, the SS-16, was not a problem because national technical means could determine when deployment was occurring, and subsequently track the locations of deployed mobiles. Schlesinger saw yet a further boon for stability—Soviet heavy ICBMs would be traded against the low throw-weight SS-16. There were political considerations as well. If SALT II banned mobile ICBMs, Schlesinger feared that Congress would not provide research and development funding for a U.S. mobile ICBM when the Soviets had completed R&D on the SS-16. For these reasons, Schlesinger did not support a ban on land- or air-mobile ICBMs.¹⁰¹

Some consensus was reached by the National Security Council out of the consequences of silo modification. Increasing the depth, diameter, or some combination of the two values could permit the installation of newer, larger ICBMs, which could threaten strategic stability. Schlesinger believed the issue bore no military significance because the Interim Agreement had placed a ceiling of 15 percent on dimension increases in any direction. There was continuing disagreement with the Soviets over how this prohibition was to be interpreted, but the prohibition still placed an outer bound on maximum silo size, which Schlesinger deemed robust enough to prevent aggressive growth in Soviet throw weight.¹⁰²

Finally, negotiating the definitions of heavy versus light ICBMs had marked implications for strategic stability. Schlesinger told President Ford, “The light versus heavy missile question is very important.” The Soviets had proposed that the “overall launching weight” of the SS-19 stand as the maximum permissible weight for a light ICBM. “With improved propellants in the

SS-19,” explained Schlesinger, “they could have 12000 pounds throw weight under their definition.” The MLBM constraint negotiated in SALT I would be meaningless. The Soviets could deploy hundreds of thousands of pounds in extra throw weight without charging the missiles against their MLBM allotment. Therefore, Schlesinger, along with Kissinger, advocated for a corollary throw-weight limit.¹⁰³

Options in Early 1976

James Schlesinger left office in November 1975 under a cloud. Ford dismissed Schlesinger from his post on November 2. The dismissal had been a long time coming. Schlesinger’s and Kissinger’s intellectual antagonism was an open secret, and Ford increasingly found Schlesinger’s arrogance unbearable. Disagreements between the White House and Schlesinger, surfacing in Congress or the press, were an increasing occurrence in the latter half of 1975. Ford summed up the affair to Kissinger, “I will emphasize that this was all my decision. It was, as you know. I just couldn’t work with Jim any longer.” Schlesinger later recounted that he had been aware of the impending dismissal for a few days and did not express surprise when Ford told him he was being replaced.¹⁰⁴

President Ford selected Donald Rumsfeld, then assistant to the president and director of the White House Operations Office, to replace Schlesinger. Rumsfeld entered office with views on strategic matters that accorded generally with Schlesinger’s. These included the necessity of negotiating from a position of strength, the importance of Soviet throw-weight reduction, the desirability of (U.S.) weapon system modernization, and the benefits of a revised nuclear weapons employment policy allowing for limited options.¹⁰⁵

The beginning of Rumsfeld's tenure was marked by the production of a flurry of negotiating positions for possible presentation to the Soviets. Once again, the Backfire and cruise missiles were the major sticking points, and once again, DoD championed Soviet throw-weight reduction as SALT's chief objective. Over winter 1975–1976, the Verification Panel considered five options and several variants for presentation to the Soviets.¹⁰⁶ In the main, DoD options sought to constrain Backfire, reduce Soviet throw weight, and maximize cruise-missile range.¹⁰⁷

Of these five options, DoD supported 1, 4, and 5. Options 2 and 3 let Backfire run free while constraining cruise missiles, a situation intolerable to the DoD. Option 1 deferred the resolution of Backfire and cruise missile systems to SALT III, allowing for the negotiation of interim cruise missile and Backfire constraints; it was popular in DoD precisely because deferral held open the promise of unconstrained cruise missiles. Option 4 counted both Backfire and ALCMs under SALT limits. With a 2500-kilometer limit on cruise missiles, Option 4 left unimpeded DoD's ability to use SLCMs for conventional missions and ALCMs for bomber penetration.¹⁰⁸

Option 5, drafted by James Wade, the director of the DoD SALT Task Force, extracted a Soviet concession in exchange for a limit on new MLBMs. "I am concerned," wrote Wade, that the options, while permitting Backfire "to be outside the SALT aggregate 2400 ceiling," also retained "the restrictive cruise missile limits and simply relax[ed] the controls on Backfire." Option 5 would keep MLBMs at their January 1, 1976 levels and commit to "the total phase-out of all MLBMs" in the future. For DoD, Option 5 redressed a "major inequity," the preponderant advantage in throw weight embodied by 300-odd Soviet heavy missiles with no corresponding U.S. counterpart.¹⁰⁹

At a January 8, 1976 NSC meeting, the principals elected to move forward with a modified Option 4, a preferred DoD option. It possessed the significant liability that the Soviets had steadfastly refused to countenance including Backfire in the aggregate. Kissinger railed “I have tried for six months to get Option IV. I have tried every conceivable variation to get Backfire counted. You, Mr. President, personally heard them reject this position.” If the United States were determined to proceed with Option 4, Kissinger thought that presenting it to Brezhnev was a nonstarter; Anatoly Dobrynin would be sure to pass it on to the Politburo for consideration in advance of Kissinger’s trip to confer with Brezhnev on January 19 and the resumption of negotiations in Geneva on January 28.¹¹⁰

A final NSC meeting was held the day of Kissinger’s departure. Ford counseled Kissinger to be flexible, admonishing, “There isn’t any question about it; no agreement is the worst possibility.” Rumsfeld rejoined, “No agreement is the worse option—if you mean within the scope of those options which we are considering. However, a worse option is a bad agreement.” He continued, “This discussion is not nit-picking; to the extent that our relationship with the Soviet Union is to be durable, we have to be sure we get a good agreement—thus we are not nit-picking but demonstrating our seriousness of purpose.”¹¹¹

The Defense Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff would undercut Option 4, which Kissinger was presenting to Brezhnev in Moscow, at a January 21, 1976 NSC meeting. As presented to Dobrynin, Option 4 had traded both ALCMs on heavy bombers and SLCMs on surface ships in the 1320 MIRV sublimit for counting Backfire in the aggregate. Based on his discussions with Brezhnev, Kissinger recommended a modified Option 3, with a separate category featuring Backfire limits in exchange for limits on surface-ship SLCMs. Ford queried acting JCS Chairman Admiral James Holloway regarding how many SLCMs the Navy could put

on each ship. Holloway replied, “We have no surface ship SLCM program at this time.” Ford was incredulous. “This absolutely surprises me. In modified Option IV, Defense agreed to count surface ship SLCM platforms in the MIRV limit. How could you put this forth? I am dumbfounded by what you are saying today.” Ford questioned Holloway and Deputy Defense Secretary Clements, attempting to understand the scope of any surface ship SLCM program and how it then tied into SALT in the first instance.¹¹²

President Ford: Well, why did DOD propose Option IV?

Admiral Holloway: We in the Navy didn’t think much about SLCMs on surface ships since they are not that good.

President Ford: Well, you can’t have it both ways. DOD proposed modified Option IV. You have undercut the validity of IV.¹¹³

Holloway noted that DoD had included surface ship SLCMs in the MIRV limit to “help kill SLCMs on surface ships.” Ford was astounded.

But then you are letting Backfire go free without any offset. You are undercutting DOD’s proposal on Option IV modified. All I am saying is that I have been acting on the basis that DOD supported modified Option IV. Your argument raises questions about Option IV.¹¹⁴

National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft wrote to Kissinger that Ford “ranted about the total inconsistency with previous Defense positions, said that Rumsfeld and Brown could god damn well try themselves to get the extra money necessary when we failed to get a SALT agreement.”¹¹⁵

With DoD already balking on Option 4, Kissinger’s discussions with Brezhnev further upended the U.S. negotiating position. The Soviet position worked out in Moscow was designed to prevent U.S. exploitation of its advantage in cruise missile technology—other than ALCMs on heavy bombers, cruise missiles could not possess a range more than 600 kilometers. Backfire, which the U.S. wanted to count in the aggregate, would be outside SALT and the U.S. would have to satisfy itself with Soviet assurances on its technical capabilities. Scowcroft described

Rumsfeld as reacting “quite well” to Ford’s presentation on Kissinger’s efforts in Moscow. “As always, he [Rumsfeld] was extremely cautious and did not commit on anything specifically.”

Rumsfeld thought “definite progress was being made and the situation was much improved.”¹¹⁶

“Option III Elaborated” and Stalemate

In February 1976 Rumsfeld advocated for “a fleshed out Option III.” Rumsfeld pointed out that the key “homeland-to-homeland” systems were ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers. The Americans and the Soviets were failing to reach an agreement on what he called “grey area” systems, those which possessed regional capabilities but could be so configured on various platforms to perform homeland-to-homeland missions. Essentially, Rumsfeld was calling for the National Security Council to revisit a deferral option. The superpowers could conclude a formal agreement regarding central strategic systems while continuing to negotiate limits on “grey area” systems.¹¹⁷

In concluding a SALT II solely concerned with central strategic systems, there would be agreed understandings regarding “grey area” systems. Such negotiations would be completed in October 1977. The Soviets would not upgrade Backfire or accelerate its deployment rate beyond an agreed upon monthly rate. The Americans would refrain from deployment of its long-range cruise missiles prior to 1980, and neither side would test cruise missiles with ranges in excess of 2,500 kilometers “during the interim period.” “Grey area” systems beyond cruise missiles and Backfire could be considered in the negotiations, but such systems must “fit the concept of a ‘grey area,’ namely those systems having a theatre nuclear role but also having, under certain circumstances, homeland-to-homeland capabilities.”¹¹⁸

Ford swallowed this deferral option like a bitter pill. According to Rumsfeld, at a February 15 meeting with Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, and Richard Cheney, Ford “felt that Defense was being unreasonable.” Ford noted that the United States was close to agreement with the Soviets on several aspects, and the “ban on ALCMs over 600 [kilometers] on other aircraft he gave to the Soviets in exchange for the throw-weight/lift-weight.” Ford considered the two measures “tied together and he had never DOD or anyone else raise this subsequent to that time.” That ALCM range limits were apparently exchanged for throw-weight limits astounded Rumsfeld. Rumsfeld believed that cruise missile systems on multiple platforms represented an American advantage that must be protected, but the actions of Kissinger, the JCS, and even Schlesinger “leaves me in an awfully weak position in discussing these things.” At the same time, opinion inside OSD faulted DoD for the lukewarm reception the cruise missile positions were receiving outside DoD. A memorandum from OSD Planning and Evaluation argued that “DoD’s failure to support, with detailed quantitative analysis, our stated rationale for the other launch options ... has greatly reduced our ability ... to gain support for our positions in Congress and the SALT community.” Rumsfeld’s memorandum on the meeting with Ford is worth quoting at length.¹¹⁹

I was absolutely amazed at his statement on ALCMs and other bombers was given in exchange for lift/weight and launch-weight at either Helsinki or Vladivostok but there was no way to argue with it and I said, you’re the President.¹²⁰

The President seemed upset with DoD and the intransigence and Henry phrased it in the context of Brown and I said it wasn’t so. I said there are a lot of ways to blow SALT. One is by being too tough, and not yielding enough. We all understand that. Another is by being too soft and giving so much that you end up accepting a deal that can’t be ratified here in the United States because it lacks simplicity or symmetry or equity. A third way is for us to fail to find a way to address the gray area issues because it makes a mockery of SALT if we don’t deal with such systems as Backfire, cruise missiles.... And the fourth way we can do it

is by being so weak on our Defense side here that the Soviets don't even bother to have to negotiate with us.¹²¹

The day after the meeting, Kissinger transmitted to Dobrynin a proposal that incorporated the deferral position Rumsfeld supported. Brezhnev rejected this approach in March. At this point, progress in SALT stopped. In an Oval Office discussion on March 24, Rumsfeld argued for a "procedural" approach, wherein Ford and Brezhnev would meet in January 1977 in "a summit without SALT, where the two of you can just talk. I would just shy away from dusting off a proposal we had made." When Ford argued that he should go to Congress for more money and the United States should either work up a new proposal or suspend the talks, Rumsfeld rejoined, "I would urge you to expand your guidance to include the procedural option and not just review our two proposals and breaking off." Rumsfeld believed Congress would not provide further funds for Defense if the Soviets had not done anything to merit their allocation.¹²²

While the U.S. and Soviet delegations continued to meet in Geneva, a feeling of stasis pervaded planning in Washington. "No agreement appears likely until after the U.S. elections in November," began an OSD memorandum on SALT. "There seems to be little, if any, discernible pressure as evidenced in the work in the Task Force to reach conclusions on the two key issues of BACKFIRE and CRUISE MISSILES." Another OSD memorandum concluded, "Purportedly, there is 'very little doing' in SALT, other than the usual time-filling papers." An ACDA memorandum put it most bluntly. "It is the product of repeated efforts on our part to satisfy Soviet concerns. We cannot make progress in SALT now unless the Soviets move." Though each side often seemed close to resolution of outstanding questions, and delegation discussions continued through 1976, the United States continued to present variations of its January and February options. The issues set aside in November 1974 were still outstanding in January 1977. Ford bequeathed an arms-control stalemate to his successor.¹²³

The DoD experience in SALT II was the quest for stability. The stability enshrined by SALT I was fragile. While the DoD consensus was that the U.S. deterrent was credible, its future viability remained an open question. Facing a new generation of Soviet large throw-weight missiles with fast-approaching deployment dates and with no new corresponding U.S. systems, the DoD sought to use SALT II to constrain the Soviet strategic arsenal and protect its Minuteman force.

Schlesinger and Rumsfeld grappled with how to pursue stability in SALT. Schlesinger successfully lobbied to keep forward-based systems out of SALT and to include equal aggregates, both of which tended toward essential equivalence. Ultimately—as officials postulated in 1973 at a high-level internal OSD meeting on SALT—limits on launchers and MIRVs would not “overcome ICBM vulnerability, lessen the competition, or remove the resulting instability.” This is because Soviet throw weight in their new ICBMs would thoroughly outclass American throw weight, arrayed explicitly to present no first-strike threat. The DoD sought not only to maintain deterrence, but also to prevent coercion. In 1972 Laird counseled Nixon that the Soviets would “raise the ante more times than we” with their massive throw-weight, and the U.S. would “therefore be under great pressure to back away from any major confrontation with the Soviets.” In 1974 Schlesinger feared an American president, some seven years hence, up against a Soviet leader with eight thousand [REDACTED] warheads. This president would only have the Minuteman force’s [REDACTED] with which to respond, and he would consider “that the ability of the United States to stand up in negotiations is substantially weakened.” And with Minuteman eliminated, the U.S. would have no means to constrain strategic conflict. Any search for stability, then, must include reductions in ICBM throw weight.¹²⁴

DoD negotiating positions limited Soviet ICBM throw weight, either severely reducing or eliminating entire types of Soviet missiles. Freedom to mix clauses in the agreement permitted shifting throw weight to bombers (which are second-strike weapons) and SLBMs (in which the United States had a preponderant technological edge). The central problem with DoD options was their negotiability; the Soviets could not be expected to deprive themselves of their newest weapons systems in the absence of U.S. reciprocity. But if these options were unnegotiable, so much the better. Rumsfeld remembers that “Some of us at the Department of Defense remained concerned that the terms, as they then stood, were not good enough, and might be improved.” If the Soviets would not go along, then, unlike the consensus view at the National Security Council, Congress would always provide funding for strategic programs that would match the Soviets. Schlesinger noted that the “marginal costs of expansion are only on the order of 2 or 3 billion dollars a year. It is picayune. We are spending twice that much on food stamps.”¹²⁵

Other actors in the SALT process contested DoD views on SALT. Procedurally, Kissinger believed the Soviets would provide concessions, which the United States would pocket without any give in its own positions; Schlesinger and Rumsfeld believed the Soviets were never giving enough in the negotiations. And while Schlesinger and Rumsfeld believed a potential U.S. strategic buildup was a threat that should incline the Soviets to deal with the United States. Kissinger and Ford doubted that Congress would appropriate funding for a buildup if SALT collapsed. The NSC practice of breaking negotiating packages into constituent parts clashed with the DoD and JCS view that, in general, negotiating options are to be presented and accepted or rejected whole cloth. In Congress, the mood favored retrenchment in defense spending; on SALT, defense hawks believed it was a blank check for the Soviets to achieve strategic superiority, while politicians on the left charged that the new nuclear weapons employment

policy, on which U.S. SALT options were partly predicated, was a watchword for an unnecessary and provocative U.S. first-strike counterforce capability. Buffeted between these forces, SALT II stalled aborning as the Ford administration ended. In January 1977, while DoD had not achieved its hoped-for constraints on Soviet throw weight, it had at least ensured that no agreement contrary to its positions was concluded.

Endnotes

1. Brent Scowcroft, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 30 Aug 1974, folder August 30, 1974—Kissinger, Schlesinger, box 5, National Security Adviser, Memoranda of Conversations, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, 3-4, <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0314/1552772.pdf>, accessed September 26, 2018. Scholarship on SALT has flourished in the last decade. The classic accounts of SALT are John Newhouse, *Cold Dawn: the Story of SALT* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1973), Strobe Talbott, *Endgame: the Inside Story of SALT II* (New York: Harper Collins, 1979), and Thomas Wolfe, *The SALT Experience* (Cambridge: Ballinger, 1979). The interaction of technology and SALT is highlighted in Stephen Pomeroy, *An Untaken Road: Strategy, Technology, and the Hidden History of America’s Mobile ICBMs* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2016). An analysis of the dichotomy between the private positions and public pronouncements of U.S. presidents regarding nuclear weapons and strategy—forcing them to play a “double game”—is the subject of James Cameron, *The Double Game: the Demise of America’s First Missile Defense System and the Rise of Strategic Arms Limitation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017). For an assessment of SALT that prizes contingency, choices, and the role of individuals, see David Tal, *U.S. Strategic Arms Policy in the Cold War: Negotiation and Confrontation over SALT, 1969-1979* (New York: Routledge, 2017). SALT as a control mechanism for force structure, nuclear strategy, and a restive domestic audience is explored in Matthew Ambrose, *The Control Agenda: a History of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018). For a work that expertly situates SALT as a fundamental element of the broad-ranging WMD diplomacy of the Nixon Administration, see Erin Mahan and Patrick Garrity, *Averting Doomsday: Arms Control and the Nixon Presidency* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2021). For groundbreaking revisionist views of the détente years in which U.S. policymakers leveraged SALT as a forum for superpower competition, see Brendan Rittenhouse Green, *The Revolution That Failed: Nuclear Competition, Arms Control, and the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020) and John D. Maurer, *Competitive Arms Control: Nixon, Kissinger, and SALT, 1969-1972* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022). The role of SALT in preserving a multidecadal nuclear peace by using arms control to establish “guardrails” in a nuclear world is explored in Michael Krepon, *Winning and Losing the Nuclear Peace: the Rise, Demise, and Revival of Arms Control* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2024).

2. Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, Third Edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 151–161; memo, Hyland for Sonnenfeldt, “SALT Reexamined,” 29 Aug 1973, *Foreign Relations of the United States [FRUS], 1969–1976*, vol. 33, *SALT II, 1972–1980*, ed. Erin Mahan (Washington, DC: GPO, 2013), 33:111–115 (doc 35); NSC, meeting minutes, “SALT,” 14 Sep 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:298, 300–301, 308 (doc 74). Throw weight is the maximum weight that a missile can carry; this measurement includes warheads, the reentry vehicle housing the warheads, decoy warheads, the post-boost vehicle (which maneuvers the reentry vehicle after it has separated from the missile), and guidance system. MIRV technology permits a single missile to carry multiple warheads, each of which may be dispatched to a separate target.

3. "Memorandum of Conversation," 30 Aug 1974, 4; George J. Refuto, *Evolution of the US Sea-Based Nuclear Missile Deterrent: Warfighting Capabilities* (Xlibris: 2011), 175–179, 183–184; Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Strategic Research, "Status of Soviet Strategic Offensive Forces 1 February 1975," 5, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/0005672884>, accessed September 26, 2018; NSC, meeting minutes, "SALT," 14 Sep 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:298, 300–301.
4. NSC, meeting minutes, "SALT," 14 Sep 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:298, 300–301, 308, 313; Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld to President Ford, memo, "SALT Contingency Planning," 12 Apr 1976, *FRUS 1969–1976*, vol. 35, *National Security Policy, 1973–1976*, ed. M. Todd Bennett (Washington, DC: GPO, 2014), 35:320–321 (doc 77).
5. Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 115–117; Raymond Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1994), 219–220, 847–865.
6. Richard Dean Burns, *The Evolution of Arms Control: From Antiquity to the Nuclear Age* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), 33–34; Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems, 26 May 1972, *FRUS 1969–1976*, vol. 32, *SALT I, 1969–1972*, ed. Erin Mahan (Washington, DC: GPO, 2010), 32:910 (doc 316).
7. Walter Poole, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy 1973–1976*, vol. 11, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff* (Washington, DC: Office of Joint History, 2015), 59–60.
8. George Bunn, *Arms Control by Committee: Managing Negotiations with the Russians* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 110–112.
9. NSC, meeting minutes, "SALT," 14 Sep 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:298–317 (doc 74); see NSC, meeting minutes, "SALT," 7 Oct 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:321–337 for elaborate discussion of these issues.
10. See Ashton B. Carter and David N. Schwartz, eds., *Ballistic Missile Defense* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1984), 122–137 for an assessment of Soviet silo-killing capability against Minuteman. NSC, meeting minutes, 14 Sep 1974, subj: SALT, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:312–313 (doc 74). See Defense Intelligence Agency, report, "SS-X-18 Ballistic Missile System," 20 Nov 1974, ST-CS-10-341-75, Digital National Security Archive (DNSA), x.
11. The concept of "equal aggregates" was that, however each side arrayed its strategic forces, each would possess the same number of launchers (ICBMs, SLBMs, and bombers) in its arsenal.
12. Memo, Philip Odeen to Henry Kissinger, 24 Feb 1973, subj: Minuteman survivability and SALT, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:42–44 (doc 13).
13. James Schlesinger, "Rationale for NU-OPTS" (RAND, 18 Dec 1968), 5, Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA), 168.7132-617 dated 18 Dec 1968 with IRIS number 1035929.
14. NSC Verification Panel, meeting minutes, 31 Oct 1972, subj: SALT, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:5 (doc 2).

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15. Poole, Walter S., *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, 1969–1972*, vol. 10, History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (GPO, 2013), 109; Odeen to Kissinger, 24 Feb 1973, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:42–43 (doc 13).
 16. Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, 8 Nov 1972, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:22–24 (doc 4). Henry Kissinger defined “freedom to mix” as the right “to change the number of each system within the overall total so long as the number of ICBMs does not increase.”
 17. NSC Verification Panel, meeting minutes, 31 Oct 1972, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:12–13 (doc 2); memo, Kissinger to Nixon, 8 Nov 1972, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:24–25 (doc 4).
 18. Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, 8 Nov 1972, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:25–26 (doc 4); NSC Verification Panel, meeting minutes, 31 Oct 1972, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:15–17 (doc 2).
 19. Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, 8 Nov 1972, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:25–26 (doc 4); NSC Verification Panel, meeting minutes, 31 Oct 1972, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:14–17 (doc 2).
 20. Forward Based Systems (FBS) included those elements of the strategic arsenal deployed in Europe or the Pacific. These included the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s (NATO) theater nuclear forces (TNF) and the French and British nuclear forces.
 21. Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, 8 Nov 1972, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:25 (doc 4).
 22. Memo, Laird to Nixon, 14 Nov 1972, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:28 (doc 6).
 23. *Ibid.*, 29.
 24. *Ibid.*, 30.
 25. NSDM 197, 18 Nov 1972, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:31–32 (doc 7).
 26. Ronald Spiers, “SALT Verification Panel Meeting—January 30, 1973,” 31 Jan 1973, 2, DNSA.
 27. Moorer, Memorandum for the Record, 12 Feb 1973, subj: Meeting with SecDef, Monday, 12 February 1973 [1602/1811], *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:40–41 (doc 12).
 28. Ronald Spiers, “SALT Verification Panel Meeting—January 30, 1973,” 2; memo, Odeen to Kissinger, 24 Feb 1973, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:43–44 (doc 13); NSC, meeting minutes, 8 Mar 1973, subj: SALT, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:49–50 (doc 14). It is germane to note that while JCS downplayed concern regarding Minuteman vulnerability throughout 1973, they displayed consistent concern that the strategic balance would become incrementally unfavorable to the United States over time because they believed American technological advantages were transitory, while Soviet advantages in launcher numbers and throw weight were enduring. The JCS viewpoint is discussed below.
 29. NSC, meeting minutes, 8 Mar 1973, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:50, 53 (doc 14).
 30. Moorer, Memorandum for the Record, 12 Feb 1973, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:40–41 (doc 12).
 31. NSC, meeting minutes, 8 Mar 1973, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:50, 52 (doc 14).
 32. Memo, Gardiner Tucker for Elliot Richardson, 27 Feb 1973, subj: Verification Panel SALT meeting, from USSR 388.3 (JAN-FEB) 1973, Acc 330-78-0002, OSD Records, WNRC; memo, Richard Shearer for N. Fred Wikner, 27 Feb 1974, subj: Targeting Asymmetries, folder SALT

Miscellaneous Feb 1974, box 9, SALT Working Papers, 1973–1980, OASD (Atomic Energy), 1, at National Archives and Records Administration II.

33. NSDM 206, 11 Mar 1973, NSDM 206, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:61–62 (doc 16).

34. NSDM 213, 3 May 1973, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 78–80 (doc 23); Gardiner Tucker, “Analytical Summary of NSDM 213, SALT Instructions to Geneva-II, Phase 2—Information Memorandum,” 5/4/1974, from USSR 388.3 (May) 1973, box 8, Acc 330-78-0001, OSD Records, WNRC.

35. NSDM 216, 7 May 1973, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:82 (doc 25).

36. Memo, Moorer to Kissinger, 2 May 1973, subj: Approach to SALT phase two, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:76–78 (doc 22).

37. Ibid., 1–2.

38. White House, tape transcript, 11 May 1973, Conversation between President Nixon and Henry Kissinger, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:83–84 (doc 26).

39. Memo, Odeen to Kissinger, 25 Jun 1973, subj: JCS views on SALT, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:95–96 (doc 31); George Refuto, *Evolution of the US Sea-Based Nuclear Missile Deterrent: Warfighting Capabilities* (Middletown, Delaware: Xlibris, 2011), 135, 141, 173.

40. Memo, Kissinger to President Nixon, May 1973, subj: SALT MIRV limitations, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:91–93 (doc 29).

41. Memo, Odeen to Kissinger, 15 May 1973, subj: SALT without MIRV? *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:84–87 (doc 27).

42. The new Soviet proposal sparked a great deal of discussion about throw-weight limitation, as opposed to equal aggregates of delivery vehicles.

43. NSDM 233, 28 Sep 1973, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:121–122 (doc 39); Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and OSD Staff, “Alternative Approaches to SALT—Summary Paper,” (ACDA: 13 Sep 1973), 1, DNSA; memo, Helmut Sonnenfeldt and David Aaron to Kissinger, 9 Oct 1973, subj: SALT new Soviet proposals, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:122–123 (doc 40).

44. Moorer, Memorandum for the Record, 30 Aug 1973, subj: Meeting with SecDef on SALT, Wednesday, 29 Aug 1973 (U), *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:116–117 (doc 36).

45. ACDA and OSD Staff, “Alternative Approaches to SALT—Summary Paper” ACDA, DNSA, 1–9.

46. Memo, Odeen and Helmut Sonnenfeldt to Kissinger, 14 Sep 1973, subj: SALT Verification Panel Meeting, Monday, September 17, 1973, DNSA, 1, 3–6. Italics indicate underlining in original text.

47. Erin Mahan, Editorial Note, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:125 (doc 41).

48. Memo, Sonnenfeldt and Aaron to Kissinger, 9 Oct 1973, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:123–124 (doc 40).

49. Memo, Winston Lord and Leon Sloss to Kenneth Rush, 27 Dec 1973, subj: Equal ICBM MIRV throw-weights, DNSA, 1; Thomas Wolfe, *The SALT Experience* (Cambridge, MA:

Ballinger, 1979), 277; OSD and State Department, 7 Jan 1974, "SALT--Illustrative Options Paper for January 8 V.P.," DNSA.

50. Roger R. Trask, *The Secretaries of Defense: A Brief History, 1947–1985* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1985), 40–43.

51. Henry Kissinger, James Schlesinger, and Brent Scowcroft, Memorandum of Conversation, Kissinger/Schlesinger, 8 Jan 1974, Box 3 Memoranda of Conversations—Nixon Administration, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, 5, <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0314/1552649.pdf>, accessed September 26, 2018.

52. The projected throw-weights of the new Soviet missiles, relative to the throw-weight of the Minuteman III, give a sense of how much punch the new Soviet ICBMs could pack. The SS-17 and SS-19 had a throw weight of 5,500 pounds and the SS-18 had a throw weight of 16,000 pounds. The SS-16, which had not been flight-tested with MIRVs, had a throw weight comparable to the Minuteman III.

53. OSD and State Department, 7 Jan 1974, "SALT—Illustrative Options Paper for January 8 V.P.," DNSA, 1-2.

54. *Ibid.*, 31–32, 40, 53, 56. Note: Pagination in this document is inconsistent, so PDF pages have been cited.

55. NSC Verification Panel, subj: SALT, 8 Jan 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:157 (doc 46).

56. *Ibid.*, 153, 156-157.

57. Memo, Donald Marshall, 15 Jan 1974, subj: Comments made by Jan Lodal as to OSD Participation in SALT, folder Memo for SecDef to SecState, box 4, OASD (Atomic Energy) SALT Working Papers 1973–1980, OSD Records, National Archives and Records Administration II.

58. OSD, untitled and undated meeting notes regarding a high-level DoD discussion of SALT and nuclear strategy, 1974 1973, (2) UNMIRVED THROW WEIGHT, 5, OASD (Atomic Energy) SALT Working Papers 1973–1980, OSD Records, National Archives and Records Administration II, 1–4.

59. *Ibid.*, 1–4

60. *Ibid.*, 1–4; *ibid.*, 1-2. The differing page numbers here referenced as "ibid." refer to two different, untitled meeting notes from the same meeting, in the same folder.

61. Italics indicate underlining in the original text.

62. Italics indicate underlining in the original text.

63. Donald Marshall, meeting minutes, 31 Jul 1974, subj: 29 July Meeting of the SALT Policy Group, SALT MISCELLANEOUS 1974–75, 9, OASD (Atomic Energy) SALT Working Papers 1973–1980, OSD Records, National Archives and Records Administration II, 1–3; C.D. Pollak, meeting minutes, subj: DOD SALT Policy Guidance Committee Meeting, SALT MISCELLANEOUS 1974-75, 9, OASD (Atomic Energy) SALT Working Papers 1973–1980, OSD Records, National Archives and Records Administration II, 5–7.

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64. Memo, N. Fred Wikner to James Schlesinger, 9 Mar 1974, untitled, Memo from SecDef to SecState, 4, OASD (Atomic Energy) SALT Working Papers 1973–1980, OSD Records, National Archives and Records Administration II, 1.
65. *Ibid.*, 1.
66. Italics indicate underlining in the original text.
67. Donald Marshall, meeting minutes, 31 Jul 1974, subj: 29 July Meeting of the SALT Policy Group, SALT MISCELLANEOUS 1974–75, 9, OASD (Atomic Energy) SALT Working Papers 1973–1980, OSD Records, National Archives and Records Administration II, 1–3.
68. Marshall, 15 Jan 1974, subj: Comments made by Jan Lodal as to OSD participation in SALT.
69. *Ibid.*, 1.
70. *Ibid.*, 2–3; Marshall, meeting minutes, 31 Jul 1974, subj: 29 July Meeting of the SALT Policy Group, cover sheet, SALT MISCELLANEOUS 1974–75, 9, OASD (Atomic Energy) SALT Working Papers 1973–1980, OSD Records, National Archives and Records Administration II, 2.
71. NSC, meeting minutes, 14 Sep 1974, subj: SALT, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:306–307 (doc 74).
72. Memo, Kissinger to President Ford, undated [Feb 1974], subj: Our SALT Proposal, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:374–375 (doc 85).
73. *Ibid.*, 378–379.
74. Jan Lodal, “Fact Sheet on Vladivostok SALT Negotiations,” 14 Dec 1974, in the Digital Collections, 1974 Vladivostok Summit Meeting on Arms Control, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, 2, <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/exhibits/vladivostok/fact.pdf>, accessed September 26, 2018.
75. NSC, meeting minutes, 14 Sep 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:295–298 (doc 74).
76. *Ibid.*, 312–315.
77. NSC, meeting minutes, 7 Oct 1974, subj: SALT, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:331–337 (doc 76).
78. NSC, meeting minutes, 18 Oct 1974, subj: Mideast Status SALT, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:366 (doc 81).
79. NSC, meeting minutes, 7 Oct 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:330–331 (doc 76); NSC, meeting minutes, 18 Oct 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:366–367 (doc 81).
80. NSC, Aide-Mémoire, 10 Dec 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:403 (doc 91).
81. NSC, meeting minutes, 2 Dec 1974, subj: SALT, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:393–395 (doc 90).
82. *Ibid.*, 398–399.
83. *Ibid.*, 396, 398, 400–402.
84. Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation, 19 Sep 1975, subj: SALT, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:486 (doc 106).
85. NSC Verification Panel, subj: SALT, 20 Jan 1975, DNSA, 5.

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86. NSDM 2285, 6 Feb 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:407–408 (doc 93); Note from the United States to the Soviet Union, May 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:420 (doc 97).
87. NSC, meeting minutes, 9 Aug 1975, subj: Middle East, SALT, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:455 (doc 103).
88. Memo, Kissinger to President Ford, Jul 1974, subj: Analysis of Soviet SALT proposals, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:427, 430–434 (doc 100); NSC, meeting minutes, 9 Aug 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:455 (doc 103); NSC, “NSC Verification Panel, Meeting Minutes,” 20 Jan 1975, 1–12, NSC document in DNSA. Document 100 provides a good summary analysis of service views on the capabilities and utility of the cruise missile.
89. NSDM 2285, 6 Feb 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:407 (doc 93); memo, Kissinger to Ford, Jul 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:427, 430–434 (doc 100).
90. Memo, Kissinger to Ford, 25 Sep 19 Note from the United States to the Soviet Union 75, subj: Discussion with Foreign Minister Gromyko, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:490 (doc 109); Note from the United States to the Soviet Union, May 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:420–421 (doc 97); NSC, meeting minutes, 9 Aug 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:456 (doc 103).
91. NSC, meeting minutes, 17 Sep 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:468 (doc 105); Note from the United States to the Soviet States, May 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:420–421 (doc 97); Department of State, 19 Sep 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:482 (doc 106).
92. NSC, meeting minutes, 17 Sep 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:468 (doc 105).
93. NSC, Aide-Memoire, 10 Dec 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:403 (doc 91); Kissinger, 6 Feb 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:408 (doc 93); memo, Sonnenfeldt and William Hyland to Kissinger, 15 Jul 1975, subj: Gromyko’s Plan, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:423–424 (doc 98); memo, Kissinger to Ford, Jul 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:429–430 (doc 100).
94. NSC, meeting minutes, 9 Aug 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:455 (doc 103).
95. James Schlesinger, “Hedges against a Failure of SALT II,” 5 Aug 1975, 1, OSD document in DNSA.
96. *Ibid.*, 2–3.
97. NSC, meeting minutes, 25 Jul 1975, subj: The Soviet Union and SALT, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:449 (doc 101).
98. NSC, meeting minutes, 25 Jul 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:452 (doc 101); NSC, meeting minutes, 17 Sep 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:479 (doc 105).
99. NSC, meeting minutes, 9 Aug 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:460, 463 (doc 103); NSC, meeting minutes, 17 Sep 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:474, 476, 479–480 (doc 105).
100. NSC, meeting minutes, 25 Jul 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:447 (doc 101); NSC, 17 Sep 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:473–474 (doc 105); Department of State, 19 Sep 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:484 (doc 106). It should be noted that the capabilities of the Backfire were productive of countless memoranda and studies from agencies with a stake in SALT, and intramural disagreements relating to specific capabilities were longstanding.

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101. Memo, Kissinger to Ford, undated [Jul 1974], *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:429–430 (doc 100); NSC, meeting minutes, 25 July 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:446–449 (doc 101); NSC, meeting minutes, 17 Sep 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:471–473 (doc 105).
102. NSC, meeting minutes, 25 Jul 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:442 (doc 101).
103. *Ibid.*, 449.
104. James Schlesinger, interview by Maurice Matloff and Alfred Goldberg, Washington DC, 1 Aug 1991, Oral History Collection, OSD/HO, 29; memorandum of conversation, 16 Oct 1975, no subject, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 35:265–266 (doc 59); memorandum of conversation, 3 Nov 1975, box 16, National Security Adviser, Memoranda of Conversations, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, 1–2, <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0314/1553284.pdf>, accessed September 26, 2018.
105. Senate Armed Services Committee, *Nomination of Donald Rumsfeld to Be Secretary of Defense: Hearings*, 94th Cong., 1st sess., 12–13 Nov 1975, 26–29, 32–33, 41, 62, 76–77.
106. Tracking these options through winter 1975–1976 is difficult. The Verification Panel had either four or five basic options under consideration at any given time, and beyond these four or five were several variants. Furthermore, the same or similar options were assigned both number and letter designations that seemed to change weekly. This chapter uses the number designations assigned in the DoD “SALT Options Paper” of January 7, 1976, see endnote 107.
107. OSD, “SALT Options Paper,” 7 Jan 1976, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, 6–7, <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0005/1561572.pdf>, accessed September 26, 2018.
108. *Ibid.*, 6; memo, George Vest, “SALT—Verification Panel Meeting,” 18 Dec 1975, Department of State document in DNSA, 3, 6.
109. OSD, “SALT Options Paper,” 7 Jan 1976, 7; memo, James Wade to William Hyland, with attachment, “Option G,” 30 Dec 1975, OSD document in DNSA, 1–2.
110. NSC, meeting minutes, 8 Jan 1976, subj: SALT, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:531 (doc 114); Note from the United States to the Soviet Union, undated [Jan 1976], *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:532–533 (doc 115).
111. NSC, meeting minutes, 19 Jan 1976, subj: SALT, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:550–551 (doc 116).
112. NSC, meeting minutes, 21 Jan 1976, subj: SALT, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:559–560 (doc 119); Sonnenfeldt and William Hyland, “Memo, SALT,” 21 Nov 1975, 3, Department of State document in DNSA. See Document 119, 559–566, for extended discussion on SLCMs and Backfire in SALT.
113. NSC, meeting minutes, 21 Jan 1976, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:566 (doc 119).
114. *Ibid.*, 566.
115. Message, Scowcroft to Kissinger, 22 Jan 1976, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:572 (doc 120).
116. Message, Scowcroft to Kissinger, 23 Jan 1976, untitled, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:579–580 (doc 125); Paper Prepared by the Ad Hoc Interagency Working Group to Verification Panel Working Group, 29 Jan 1976, subj: New SALT options, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:581 (doc 126).

117. Memo, Rumsfeld 12 Feb 1976, subj: Approach to SALT Two, OSD Document in Donald Rumsfeld Library.

118. Ibid., 5.

119. Memo, Rumsfeld, 15 Feb 1976, subj: Meeting with the President, OSD Document in DRL; memo, E.C. Aldridge to Rumsfeld, 8 Oct 1976, subj: Cruise missile briefing—information memorandum, OSD Document in DRL.

120. Rumsfeld, 15 Feb 1976, subj: Meeting with the President.

121. Ibid., 4.

122. Note from the United States to the Soviet Union, undated [Feb 1976], *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:607 (doc 132); Memorandum of Conversation, 24 Mar 1976, subj: SALT, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:613–614 (doc 135).

123. Memo, Donald Marshall to Donald Cotter, 15 Jun 1976, "Current Status of SALT" and John LeFebvre to Marshall, 4 Jun 1976, "Status of SALT--Current and Future," both in OSD Records, OASD Atomic Energy, SALT Working Papers, 1973–1980, in Box 5, "(2) UnMIRVED Throw Weight," at National Archives and Records Administration II; memo, John Lehman to President Ford, 6 Aug 1976, subj: SALT, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 33:637 (doc 140).

124. OSD, Untitled and Undated Meeting Notes Regarding a High-Level DoD Discussion of SALT and Nuclear Strategy, 1974 1973, 2; OSD, "Dr. Schlesinger's Comments during BUSY GIANT IV," 2 Oct 1974, folder SAC 333 1974, Acc 330-78–0010, OSD Records, WNRC.

125. Donald Rumsfeld, *When the Center Held: Gerald Ford and the Rescue of the American Presidency* (New York: Free Press, 2018), 256; OSD, "Dr. Schlesinger's Comments during BUSY GIANT IV," 64.