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Determining Defense:

Bureaucracy, Threat and Missile Defense

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POLS 4997W

Why has interest in the U.S. missile defense systems changed over time? The common belief is that national security decisions and technological choices are rationally determined in response to external threats. Is it possible that technological defense decisions are shaped by bureaucracy and political ideology as well? I measure interest in missile defense through the amount of money allocated to these projects, evaluating how it has changed since Ronald Reagan first announced the Strategic Defense Initiative in 1983. To assess why it changes over time, I evaluate congressional and presidential politics, national security strategy reports, and other documents to determine the relative influence of each. While I find that the decision-making process underlying missile defense is obscure and often opaque, both threat and ideology shape interest in these systems.

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“I support development and deployment of a limited national missile defense. Few, if any of our duties surpass our obligation to provide for the common defense of our nation.”

Former U.S. Senator Joseph Lieberman

Introduction

Maintaining national security is no simple task. Keeping the United States safe from attacks and threats is naturally the principal role of the military, but how exactly does the military execute this? Deploying missile defense systems is one strategy, with paramount importance in today’s technologically advanced world. These defense systems are used to intercept incoming enemy missiles before they can reach a country. Missile defense first achieved notoriety during the Reagan administration with the Strategic Defense Initiative, otherwise labeled ‘Star Wars’, and has since grown to a worldwide industry valued at over \$55 Billion USD (Marketwatch 2018).

How has government interest in missile defense changed since its beginning in 1983? Specifically, how has this interest helped missile defense evolve from the Strategic Defense Initiative, a technology once considered implausible, to being a vital portion of the U.S. national defense system? How is this change of significance reflected in surrounding legislation and other government documents? As no military purchase is possible without prior allocation in the federal defense budget, the budget and money spent on missile defense should depict the level of need or importance of such systems for each given year. However, I believe this relationship does not accurately reflect the motivations behind all missile defense procurement. To investigate what factors shape the missile defense budget, I first look at the strategic threat

environment from the 1980s until now, to determine what the United States labeled as a threat and why missile defense was considered the necessary solution. Conventional wisdom says that the military is a reactionary force, meaning each branch directly faces a current threat and adjust its strategies and operations in order to combat it. However, the threat environment is not always a consistent measure of technological necessity, as it is possible to conceptualize and act upon threats in differing ways (Critchley 1979). Furthermore, in order to maintain a strategic advantage a state may choose to keep many of its capabilities secret, meaning a government trying to formulate defense policy in response may rely on conjecture or suspicions of what they may have to fight against one day. Based on this presumed lack of perfect knowledge and my understanding of pertaining literature, I believe it necessary to explore other possible bureaucratic influences like politician support. Upon completing my analysis, I find that both factors – the threat environment and the influence of Congressional policymakers – are of equal significance in the decision to fund and ultimately deploy a national missile defense system. Without funds, the Department of Defense is unable to procure and develop new technologies; without a reason (threat), the Department of Defense will struggle to prove the importance of such systems to policymakers, and without policymakers, no budget will be passed allowing for weapons procurement. Funding for the Missile Defense Agency year to year did fluctuate, but changing political majorities in the executive and legislative branches did not directly result in increases or decreases. Instead, missile defense funding tended to rise as a part of the increasing general defense budget, related to increasing threats the United States faced each year. I found both the threats faced by the United States and the political influences of parties and bureaucracy each shared influence over the funding for missile defense, but determining which factor takes

precedence was not feasible in this study. Therefore, I cannot say the interest in missile defense, shown by its funding, was based on threats or political reasons alone.

With the research completed, I hope my results can be generalizable to more defense technologies than just missile defense. The FY2019 National Defense Authorization Act from the Department of Defense asked for a total sum of \$708 Billion USD; the Missile Defense Agency, which is directly responsible for the procurement of missile defense technology, will have a budget of only \$8 Billion USD for FY2019 (Missile Defense Agency). Missile defense represents only a small fraction of the spending needed for new technologies by the military, but with the general gap in literature and previously conducted research as to what influences the growth and need for military systems, it is possible the findings in this thesis may explain the decision to fund systems other than missile defense. In other words, although my case study is focused on missile defense, the variables I am analyzing in this paper are relevant to all defense procurement and appropriations. There will never be a single explanation for what drives defense spending and the purchasing of new technologies, and with the military-industrial complex playing such a large part in the economy, the reasoning behind continued purchases is perpetually obscure. This study sheds light on external factors behind funding trends, but determining why each system is funded would require future research.

Missile Defense

Before progressing, it is important to specify what the term “missile defense” actually means. Missile defense refers to the systems a nation uses to intercept and destroy incoming missiles before they can reach their intended targets. Missile defense did not have its origins in Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative, although many assume this to be the case. Initial missile

defense efforts began after World War II due to evidence the Soviet Union was building missiles comparable to those of the United States, promulgated further by the detonation of the first Soviet bomb in 1949. In 1955 the United States released Nike Zeus, the first official defense against intercontinental ballistic missiles, although the first successful intercept was not until 1962. Due to the high cost and uncertainty regarding such a groundbreaking technology, Nike Zeus was the subject of much scrutiny. The decision was made to discontinue the Nike Zeus program, abandoned in favor of its successor, Nike -X. “It employed many advanced technologies, including a new a family of electronic phased array radars... a new terminal defense interceptor called Sprint, which made possible the use of atmospheric filtering to discriminate between enemy warheads and decoys; and it retained the Zeus missile, subsequently modified and renamed Spartan” (Missile Defense Agency). Although Nike -X was heavily supported by President Kennedy, President Lyndon Johnson called for the deployment of the Sentinel system upon his ascent to the presidency. Once Nixon took office, he renamed the Sentinel system Safeguard, and it was used to protect U.S. nuclear forces. These preliminary systems relied on interceptor missiles with warheads of their own, it was not until 1984 that hit-to-kill technology was conceptualized.

The next chapter in the growth of missile defense were the 1972 Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, or SALT I, which were championed by the Nixon administration and quickly led to the production of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. The provisions of the ABM Treaty limited both the United States and the Soviets to two interceptor sites, with later changes reducing the site limit to one. It was a challenge to continue sophistication of existing systems while staying inside the treaty’s provisional limits, even with the growing need for stronger missile defense. President Reagan countered this during this presidency and called for a broad

interpretation of the ABM Treaty, granting the United States more freedom with missile defense. Clinton would later reverse this decision in 1993. Soon after his declaration, Reagan unveiled his plan for the Strategic Defense Initiative and raised both awareness and scrutiny of missile defense. The concept of laser-based systems using machines in space was deemed outlandish, but Reagan viewed it as a way to “achieve our ultimate goal of eliminating the threat posed by strategic nuclear missiles.” (Reagan Library) As this statement was made still in the height of the Cold War, nuclear weapons and the risk of attack was still in the forefront of the U.S. government’s mind.

The Missile Defense Agency describes the current U.S. system as a layered architecture, meaning that... Each level serves a specific purpose and ultimately ordered together to target the missile. Reagan’s ‘Star Wars’ initiative was also devised in a similar manner, with an interceptor layer on the ground and another via satellite, along with a planned command and control system on the ground (Sanger 1987). The first layer consists of the sensor radar arrays used to track and detect targets. These radars can either be sea-based or ground-based, some examples being Army/Navy Transportable Radar Surveillance, the Sea-Based X-Band Radar or the SPY-1 Radar. There are also space- based systems, such as the Space Tracking and Surveillance System (STSS) or the Space-Based Kill Assessment system (Missile Defense Agency).

The second layer is the actual interceptor stage, composed of systems such as Aegis and Aegis-Ashore, Ground-Based Interceptors (GBIs), Standard Missile-3 Interceptors, the Patriot system and Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD). To successfully target incoming missiles, these systems are designed to either detonate in the near proximity of the target and trigger a premature explosion, or ‘hit-to-kill’, directly striking the missile and rendering it obsolete before it can reach the target location. Researchers are currently developing technology

for boost-phase intercepts, meaning missiles could be destroyed during their initial ascent into the Earth's atmosphere. This would provide much greater flexibility of action and time to warfighters, but systems such as these would require 24/7 surveillance and reconnaissance to know exactly when and where a missile is launched.

In addition, existing systems tend to be either mid-course or terminal-course. This means they target missiles in the middle of their flight sequence, at the highest point of their arc, or in the terminal phase once missiles begin their final descent towards their intended target. Targeting missiles in the launch phase is exponentially more difficult as it requires instantaneous detection of a missile launch and the ability to fire an interceptor in close proximity to the missile. Also called boost-phase, the launch phase is the slowest portion of a missile's journey as it is directly countering gravity to create enough lift and force to reach its intended target.

The link between the first and second layers is the Command and Control Battle Management and Communications system (C2BMC). Per the Missile Defense Agency, C2BMC allows warfighters and military leaders "to systematically plan ballistic missile defense operations, to collectively see the battle develop, and to dynamically manage designated networked sensors and weapons systems to achieve global and regional mission objectives" (Missile Defense Agency). The integration of the interceptors and radars becomes manifest in this stage, where warfighters are able to determine a missile's intended target and therefore the need to launch an interceptor to destroy it. Not all missile defense systems share the same purpose, however. For example, the Strategic Defense Initiative was envisioned to intercept ICBMs, the same with the Ground-Based Midcourse Defense system located in Alaska. Israel's Iron Dome and Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), however, are designed to shoot down intermediate- and other missiles of lesser ranges.

Operation Desert Storm was the first time a defense system was used to successfully intercept an incoming enemy missile. During combat, the deployed U.S. Patriot system was able to stop a Scud missile fired by the Iraqis. It was not long after that development began for the Patriot Advanced Capability-2 (PAC-2) and Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3), along with Ground-based Midcourse Defense and Ground-based Interceptors and the Aegis systems. Not only did Operation Desert Storm showcase the capabilities of missile defense systems on the battlefield, but it also drew attention away from systems geared solely towards nuclear weapons, shifting the focus to short- and intermediate-range missiles instead.

Ultimately, missile defense programs have four goals: 1) deterrence, 2) ensured defeat of enemy attacks, 3) assurance of American allies, and 4) to dissuade any adversaries from pursuing advanced missile technology (Weitz 2013). First, deterrence refers to discouraging enemy action based on the threat of the consequences of an attack. In other words, instilling fear in the enemy as to the American retaliatory measures was the enemy to attack first. Ensured defeat means the ability to strike down an incoming missile with a kill-vehicle or interceptor, hence why the military conducts frequent missile defense system tests against prop targets (Pugacewicz 2017). An example of assuring allies would be the American-deployed Aegis Ashore systems in Romania to protect NATO countries, or the THAAD systems in South Korea to reassure safety amidst North Korean aggression. The fourth goal is dissuade other states from pursuing advanced weapons capabilities. This is what critics of missile defense center on when labeling BMD as an antagonistic endeavor. States desire weapons that can evade or triumph over defense systems and therefore develop stronger and more capable technologies (Pugacewicz 2017; Weitz 2010). Examples of this are Russia and China developing cruise missiles that the United States currently does not have a surefire way to defend against.

Of course, missile defense programs are not without controversy. Recent discussion surrounds missile defense and its merit as either a preventative measure against ballistic missile attacks, or a mode of provocation against American adversaries. Controversy has swirled around this topic since the Reagan era and the initial idea of the Strategic Defense Initiative, but yet the reliance upon missile defense has only grown. There are those that argue for arms control instead of ensuring deterrence through purely defensive means, but arms control simply limits offensive capabilities and does not provide greater security for a nation (Weinberger 1986). However, the notion of mutually deterred destruction surrounding the creation of SDI and the Cold War with Russia would then turn mutual vulnerability into mutual invulnerability, a paradoxical idea (Feinrider 1986). “SDI, which has as its goal the ability to render harmless Soviet nuclear-armed missiles, whether they be part of a first or a retaliatory second-strike, hardly qualifies as "peaceful,"” (Feinrider 1986).

Although the SDI did not come to be, missile defense is still looked at as a method of “coercion and destruction” by some, with the belief such systems can be used for offensive means (Norman 1987). Critics claim ballistic missile defense (BMD) can lead to the increased proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), ballistic missiles, technological advancements by adversaries (what is referred to as vertical proliferation) and can be an antagonist to other nations with similar capabilities (Pugacewicz 2017). To this, I would respond that no missile defense system thus far has been tested with 100% accuracy, either by the United States or other powers, and is more of a reserved defense mechanism if ever an attack were to be launched against the United States. “Missile defense appears to be closely calibrated with an active and interventionist global posture for which continued strategic freedom of action is a precondition.” (Pugacewicz 2017). Frühling claims as well that missile defense challenges the

possibility of escalation, affecting “alliance strategy, threat perception” and contributes to the overall guarantee of security the United States offers to those it is allied with (Frühling 2016).

Literature Review

To understand how and why the design of missile defense systems has changed over time, it is useful to look towards other areas of research. First, scholars have discussed what is classified as a threat to national security, and if the United States is too quick to label an external conflict as a dire situation desirous of American involvement. Deploying a missile defense system could be a possible solution to this perceived threat. Furthermore, there are many varying explanations as to the decision-making behind pursuing a certain technological development or weapons system, whether it is due to the influence of defense contracting companies or the actual need for such procurement. Experts have also debated what factors have the greatest influence on military and defense strategy making, public opinion and the allocated budget to name a few.

Choosing a Defense Technology

Before discussing literature on what factors are included in this study of missile defense, understanding the process behind military innovation and surrounding theories is a necessity. Determining which explicit factors influenced missile defense is only possible after knowing how and why missile defense systems arose. This section describes the relationship between emerging military capabilities and changes or trends in war.

The process by which the Department of Defense (DoD) enters into agreement with a defense contracting company has been criticized for being arduous, but before a contract is

signed the DoD must first identify which capabilities it wishes to develop. Behind this is the idea of military innovation, where warfare and military capabilities evolve intermittently (Horowitz 2010). This means that new technologies, an example being GPS, leads to increased intelligence and surveillance over areas of the world. However, the development of GPS might not have been a necessity in order to wage effective wars yet it changed what warfare looked like. The relationship between technological development and new warfare abilities or strategies is a never-ending cycle. Scholars have long debated whether a military changes tactics due to a new conflict and forces technological advancement, or if technology spurs the evolution of how a military operates (Horowitz 2010; Durmaz 2016). Within the DoD is the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), responsible for experimenting with new systems and ideas “to reap the benefits of technological developments” (Durmaz 2016). Arguably the best way to maintain a strategy of ‘deep engagement’, or forward deployment to maintain security and peace around the world, is to pursue technologies that allow the United States to do so (Gholz 2017).

Another explanation behind technological procurement is to maintain military effectiveness. Gregory Hildebrant used the Vietnam War as an example of this, claiming the increase in B-52 bomber manufacturing, coupled with an increase in payload capability, would complement the military objective of carpet-bombing of Vietnam. He argued the combatant commanders at the time analyzed the success and destruction rate of the sorties, determined the damage done to be insufficient, and asked for the development of larger weapons to increase military effectiveness (Hildebrant 1999). While this stance is defensible, the majority of literature argues that advanced technological development is a proactive rather than reactive measure (Durmaz 2016; Posen 2003). Many point to what is called the Revolution of Military Affairs, or “intensive use of information technologies and sophisticated weapons systems” that

allow a country to effectively defend itself (Durmaz 2016). Defense spending is also a potential “tool of foreign policy influence”, as stronger capabilities not only can intimidate possible adversaries, but also influence allied countries to adhere to American wishes more frequently (Blankenship, Miles).

One can also look at the aforementioned notion of military innovation to describe the current trend in defense procurement; more often than not, newer adaptations and improvements have been made to already existing system instead of the costlier measure of a brand new technology. “When the weapons system comes to the end of its useful life, the military unit needs a successor to justify its continued existence” (Kaldor 1983). Take as an example the recent improvement of the Aegis system and upgrade of the SM Block-IIA missile to the -IIB version, the technology may have been past its time but the purpose it served was still vital, hence the newer upgrades. Literature also exists that speaks of the uncertainty of defense technological procurement, as the need or initial proposed improvements of a system may shift if there is a change in the threat environment, lack of equally capable systems while old systems receive upgrades, or Congress chooses not to allocate funds for further development (Rogerson 1995).

Threat Assessment

Perhaps the most obvious explanation for the structure of American’s missile defense system is that it evolves alongside the threat environment. This is mainly due to the clear stages of threats that arose during the past century. During World War II the threat was clearly exhibited, from German U-Boats vying for control of the Atlantic to the attacks on Pearl Harbor that spurred the American wartime machine and definitive entry into the war. Transition then to

the fight against communism in the mid-20th century where the thought of a communist spread meant imminent danger for the United States. Scholars argue as the Cold War began to dissipate, however, the lines that once distinctly made a threat clear have begun to fade. Harriet Critchley explains this by saying "...there was substantial consensus in the West as to who the enemy was, what the enemy wanted and how the enemy would try to get it...[now] can vary from issue to issue," (Critchley 1979). This would then mean national security is "the ability of national institutions to prevent adversaries from using force to harm Americans or their national interests and the confidence of Americans.." (Sarkesian 1989).

One of the main discussions surrounding threat classification focuses on strategic value, or what is outlined as a vital interest to the United States and why. Having clear depictions of areas of strategic value makes "coherent analysis" of a potential threat possible despite a rapidly changing and developing world (Critchley 1979). This definition of strategic value is separated into three ideas: territory, worth and access. Territory means the location of what area of interest policymakers are looking at, for example Iraq in the Middle East. Worth refers to how vital of an interest a threat or place may be, take the importance of fighting communism during the Cold War as an issue of worth. What defines worth, however? Lastly, Critchley defines access as determining which issues "can affect a state's own security and its relations with allies and potential adversaries" without detrimental effect to those alliances (Critchley 1979). This is relevant to my research question because alongside the growth of domestic missile defense, the United States has also provided systems to her allies in NATO, Japan and Korea. Per Critchley's definition, this would be an example of determining an issue that can strengthen a relationship with an ally while also defending against potential enemies.

Compared to this definition, there is also the argument to be made the United States engages in situations worldwide simply because it has the power to. Whether or not foreign involvement may be warranted, it is pursued with the goal of maintaining American superiority, especially militarily, because having such high positioning is what is best for the world (Posen 2003). Posen articulates this further by explaining American “control of the commons”, or land, air, sea, what he notes as a key enabler of keeping the United States as the chief power worldwide (Posen 2003). When assessing a threat, therefore, would any situation that might dispute this superiority then warrant a shift in strategy to counter the challenge and maintain this “control of the commons”?

Friedman and Logan would counter this by saying alliances are also a factor in determining what is labeled as a threat to the United States, especially being entangled so greatly in NATO (Friedman, Logan 2012). They argue that having such strong ties to many countries of the world leads to greater opportunity for conflict. There are also those that believe alliances help prevent conflict, as knowing the risk of the United States becoming involved would act as a deterrent to those powers whose capabilities would pose a minimal threat to the ones America possesses. This point of view, however, can be countered again by those who believe America is too eager to get involved both militarily and diplomatically; “Rather than... admit that our military policy is aimed at something other than safety, we talk as if no corner of the world is too irrelevant to threaten us.” (Friedman, Logan 2012). Scholars then utilize this thought paradigm to understand American regime change, counterinsurgency and state-building missions, even in regions of the world that might not pose such a significant threat to the United States (Friedman, Logan 2012; Frühling 2016). “Different geographic and political circumstances mean that allies

will have different interests and perspectives... then [different] implications on strategy,” (Frühling 2016).

As proven by these various notions on what constitutes a threat to America and her allies, there is no one concise definition. It is this lack of such that leads me to analyze the defense budget and bureaucratic influences behind missile defense procurement. For example, if the National Security Strategy for one year listed Russia as the greatest threat, this could include the spread of communism and regional aggression as well as Russian nuclear and missile capabilities. Simply labeling what is the greatest threat does not provide full clarity on the steps needed to counter said threat. Since it is possible no two administrations agree on the threat, I must also look at other variables that may fluctuate alongside a changing threat definition.

Bureaucratic and Domestic Influences

Despite the idea of developing defensive capabilities solely for the purpose of ensuring American military hegemony, there are several scholars that argue maintaining military might is not the principal reason for such system development. The political ideology of the president when constructing his national security policy may also be a factor; Wingerter notes that Reagan, H.W. Bush, Bush and now President Trump have all advocated for stronger use of missile defense, as national security and bolstering the defense budget seems to be a recurring trend of the Republican Party (Wingerter 2011). Each president pushed for stronger military strategy as well (Wingerter 2011). This theory would suggest that under a conservative President, the defense budget or defense procurement increases to a level higher than what it might be under a more liberal administration. When tracing the fluctuation of the defense budget from the year 1981-present, I would then expect to find this trend.

The second theory regarding what pushes strategy and decision-making is the strength of influence over the Pentagon and policymakers, either from interest groups or defense contracting companies themselves. From exploring literature related to this topic, there is evidence that the defense-industry relationship is one of mutual beneficence as companies profit from the sales to the government and the government is able to strengthen the military. There are also experts who say “corporate dependence on government largesse creates an irresistible economic incentive for defense contractors to push for larger US military spending” (Wingerter 2011). Major contractors like Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and Northrop Grumman all receive 70-90% of their profits from government contracts (Kaldor 1983; Wingerter 2011; Rogerson 1995; Kulve, Te, Smit 2003), by default the government is the only body able to purchase and deploy their products. Some argue this need for profit results in a domestic arms race within the industry, with companies competing against one another for the contract (Kaldor 1983). When trying to then determine what explains the growth of missile defense over time, literature on this topic would then suggest that the need for profit forces the government to procure systems of insufficient importance, largely in part due to the ever-growing influence of the military-industrial complex. This is the opposite of procuring systems based solely on countering a threat. My research design is structured to provide clarity on this discussion.

Research Design and Methodology

My goal is to uncover what drives the funding of US missile defense over time, ultimately reflecting the government’s interest in this system since 1983 . Given the discussion so far, one might hypothesize that assessing a threat environment does not lead to a decisive

missile defense policy. As seen in the literature, there is no one conclusive measure of what is deemed a threat or what is a valid interest to the United States. Therefore, I look at other factors besides the threat environment to determine what shapes missile defense procurement. Although I include threat as one of the factors in this study, through my research I will explore other variables that wield an influence such as the political ideology of the legislative and executive branches, and what these majorities mean for final budgeting allocations.

This study is inherently inductive as I leverage the available evidence to construct a theory of what shapes missile defense funding. My dependent variable is the funding given to the Missile Defense Agency from the years 1985 to present, with the threat environment and political make-up of the executive and legislative branches as my independent variables. Before moving into the exact methodology of how I will perform this study, it is imperative to first describe how and why these variables were chosen.

Since its conception under the Reagan administration in 1983, missile defense has become a cornerstone of U.S. national security strategy. This was not a spontaneous process, however. I explain how missile defense grew to the system it is today, and in doing so it is necessary to look for underlying factors behind how a defense policy is made. First and foremost, the purchasing of any weapons system requires Congressional approval and allocation of funds based off of what the Department of Defense requests in the National Defense Authorization Act. Congress must approve and see the need for the procurement of missile defense systems, and therefore examining the trend of funding for these systems is an important measure of dictating how they have come to be.

Secondly, the defense budget for each fiscal year is part of the overall government budget, a contentious topic between the Democratic and Republican Parties. Typically, if the

Republican Party has a majority in Congress, there is greater support for military strength and defense. Therefore, political ideology is one of the other variables I look at since political affiliation is closely tied to government spending. Historically, the Republican Party has praised itself on fiscal responsibility, focusing on keeping the government accountable and reducing regulations and unnecessary spending. They are also, somewhat contradictory, the party dedicated to a strong defense structure and military. I was interested to see what this meant in terms of the defense budget. The Democratic Party, on the other hand, is still a strong advocate of national security policy to ensure American safety but has often decreased the defense budget in the past. By breaking down each year and allocation and tying it to the party in power, pinpointing a trend in the figures was much clearer.

The last variable I examined is the threat environment from 1981 to present. As mentioned above, the lack of a concrete definition of threat and what is defined as a vital interest to the United States means threat may not be the best measure of why and how the missile defense system has expanded. However, the United States also has a history of threat-based strategy and procurement and consequently analyzing what was labeled as such is still a vital part of this study. My initial belief was that having a labeled threat, with the Cold War as an example and the painting of communism as the one true enemy, gives general permission to policymakers and the military to engage in almost anything in order to counter said threat. What I seek to explain, however, is how this might also apply to missile defense.

As I am tracking the changes and growth of missile defense funding since its initial suggested policy, I utilized a method of research known as process tracing. The first variable I examined is the defense budget and allocated funds towards missile defense since the mid-1980s to now. I chose 1983 as the starting year for the defense budget because Ronald Reagan first

announced his Star Wars initiative to counter the Soviet threat during that time, and missile defense has only grown in popularity since then. I originally believed funding for missile defense will be directly tied to my second variable, the perceived threat faced by the United States. This is the notion of threat-based procurement, and the budget should reflect the necessary funding to do so. By using the National Security Strategies published by each president since 1987, I was able to complete this comparison. The documents contain the yearly strategies for the military and articulate how they will act to respond against world issues and threats. Lastly, it was necessary to track Congressional legislation and comments by lawmakers about missile defense when they are voting on the budget or other defense issues. This is directly tied to political ideology, as many scholars dictate that defense spending is a result of the party affiliation in power during each administration.

I used process tracing and historical comparison to evaluate how these factors influence missile defense funding and interest. Process tracing, by definition, “can be used both for case studies that aim to gain a greater understanding of the causal dynamics that produced the outcome of a particular historical case and to shed light on generalizable causal mechanisms linking causes and outcomes within a population of causally similar cases,” (Beach 2017). In other words, I traced the circumstances behind the missile defense system in place today to understand its existence. The method of historical comparison is a strong component of this tracing because even more broadly, I looked to understand how missile defense first was conceptualized, then made a reality. I then traced its growth process to understand each step in funding that led to missile defense playing a crucial role in United States deterrence and the defensive capabilities arsenal. Because I chose to process trace, this study is intrinsically qualitative. I analyzed some quantitative data like the defense budget, but I did not perform an

experiment, survey, or regression nor was I looking to gather empirical data, often parts of a quantitative study.

Data Sources

Defense Budget

The lengthiest portion of my study is dedicated to analyzing the defense budget from the year 1983 to present. I chose the scope of these years because Reagan first announced the possibility of the “Star Wars” Strategic Defense Initiative, the first heavily publicized method of missile defense, in the year 1983. I start in the year 1983 to determine the exact amount of money dedicated to each service for the procurement of weapons systems before the concept of missile defense generally came to be. Before Reagan proposed the Strategic Defense Initiative the U.S. military had the Nike-Zeus and Sentinel missile systems, both directed at defending against Soviet missile launches but both programs were quickly cancelled in the 1960s as they were considered too provocative. Therefore, the generally accepted beginning of missile defense and the starting date for the purposes of this study is 1983 under Reagan.

I will first access the approved Congressional budgets from the year 1983 to present in order to collect the exact dollar amount spent on defense budgeting. Upon collecting these figures, I will compile a table with the defense budget for each year and then calculate the percent differences in growth/decrease between each year to gain a better understanding of trends in defense spending. I will then turn to the National Defense Authorization Acts, which is the Department of Defense budget requests sent to Congress each fiscal year before the Congressional budget is set.

Bureaucratic Politics

To study political ideology, interest groups and politics and how they may have played a role in the determination of defense spending and strategy, I will collect a series of speech manuscripts, comments pertaining to missile defense, Congressional memos and floor comments within defense debate, and any relevant Congressional Research Service reports prepared for members of Congress. Within the Department of Defense archives as well there are manuscripts of speeches the Secretary of Defense has given, as well as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and other top military officials. I have already read through several, some dating back to 1981 that discuss the reality of developing a missile defense program and how there will be a dire need for one in the future. By using these I hope to trace the development of missile defense as part of national security from its creation, as these speeches contain the thoughts of the policymakers determining missile defense's role as part of U.S. strategy. Congressional Research Service reports are readily available online, and provide a comprehensive nonpartisan overview of any given topic a Congressman/woman requests. I have already collected seven pertaining to missile defense, its growth and how the U.S. system compares to those of American competitors such as Russia and China. Since these reports are extremely detailed and in-depth, I foresee being able to use these as part of my research to provide a holistic overview of missile defense.

The most challenging part of this research is locating Congressional texts and memos, as well as floor debate comments from members that pertain to this study. This is due to the extensive amount of floor records and minutes from any one session in Congress, narrowing down the selection to find relevant information will time consuming. Another possible problem with this approach is personal bias if I am to examine individual remarks from Congressional

members, individual feelings towards missile defense will not provide an all-inclusive look at why decisions about funding for missile defense have been made. Also, members most likely are hesitant to reveal any external influences, more specifically the sway of interest groups. With that said, taking note of the party each member belongs to who comments on missile defense may garner a greater understanding of what each ideology thinks of the subject, a helpful tool when I look through Congressional records to determine which parties had the majority during the years the budget was signed. I can use this information to explain why there was an increase or decrease of funding in any given year by knowing what party was in power, and then on the broader scale, determine a trend in missile defense support or disapproval in policymakers.

Threat Analysis

Lastly, I will be using the National Defense Reviews and National Security Strategy Archives to identify what threats were deemed most dangerous to the United States from the years 1987 to present. These reviews include strategies from six different president administrations: Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama and now President Trump. They will be critical to this study as each encompasses all defense and military strategy for the United States for any given year, including comprehensive analysis of what perceived threats have been in the past, which threats the United States is currently facing and what the Department of Defense and national security professionals expect to encounter in the future. Within this discussion of the threat are proposed steps the military plans to take in response which include but are not limited to: the deployment of troops to any given region, increased funding for peacemaking processes in a given region, increase emphasis on a certain technology or a suggestion or hint at moving towards a new technology or system.

Given my proposed examination of what affects missile defense policy and system development besides what the threat environment is, it is pertinent to first know the labeled threats by the military for the years I am discussing. I will read through each of the strategies with main focus on the introduction and opening sections of the acts, where the tendency is to outline the threats faced by the United States. The later sections contain the proposed solutions, which I do not find as relevant to this study unless there is a discussion or proposal of a strategy related to missile defense.

To reiterate, the design of this study is a qualitative method of process tracing in order to determine the growth and structure of missile defense since its conception in 1981, and to discern which factors, the budget, threat or political bureaucracy have had the greatest influence over which missile defense technologies were pursued. During my initial literature review I found similar studies which discussed the exact methods and reasons for why the government signs defense contracts, all of which had a similar approach to my own. I am looking to expand further upon these studies and provide a comprehensive review of missile defense in the United States and how and why it is the system in place today.

Results

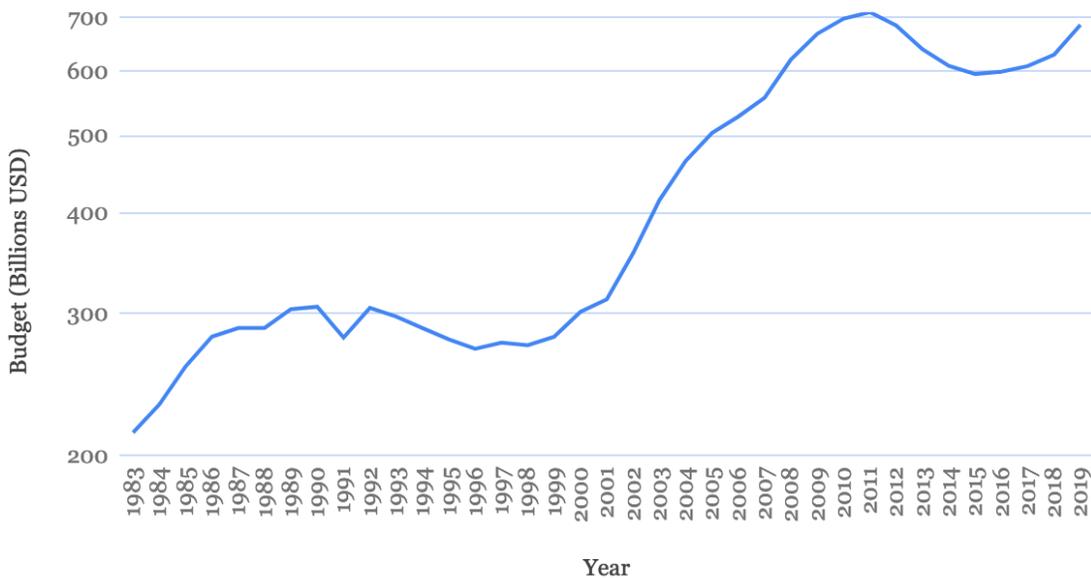
Budget

As described above, I use budgeting for missile defense programs as my dependent variable. The goal of this study is to depict the growth of missile defense with the agency's budget as its proxy, and in doing so I first compare the national defense budget (Graph 1.1) to the Missile Defense Agency budget (Graph 1.2) to discern if there are patterns in the funding of U.S. defense as a whole that match the pattern of funding for missile defense. Exact budget

details for the Missile Defense Agency, labeled the Strategic Defense Initiative Organization at the time, were unavailable until the year 1985, when the SDIO had an operating budget of \$1.4 Billion. Therefore, my comparative analysis of the budget cannot definitively begin until the year 1985.

Graph 1.1

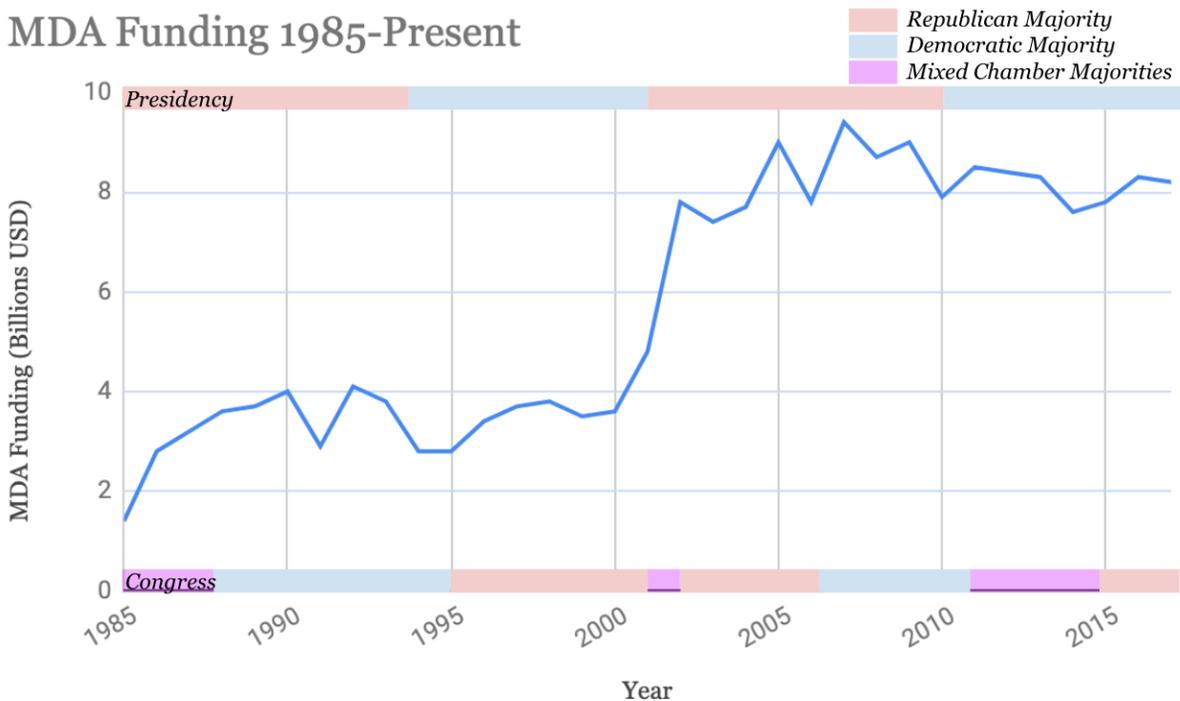
U.S. Defense Budget 1983-Present



(Data Courtesy of SIPRI)

21 of the 34 years of this comparison (1985-2019) showed an annual increase in both the annual defense and Missile Defense Agency budget. During the years 1991, 1993-1994, and 2012-2014 there was a decrease in both MDA and defense. MDA’s budget increased four separate times while the defense budget decreased (1988, 1996, 1998, 2015), but decreased seven times while the overall defense budget grew (1999, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2017, 2018).

MDA Funding 1985-Present



(Data Courtesy of MDA)

Additionally, from 1987 to 1988 the MDA budget increased by \$.4 Million while the defense budget remained stagnant, and from 1994 to 1995 the MDA budget remained at \$2.8 Billion while the defense budget increased. The largest increase in MDA funding was from 2001-2002 with an increase of \$3 Billion, and the largest decrease was 2013-2014 where funding was lessened by \$1.3 Billion. The decade of largest missile defense funding growth was 1995-2005, starting at \$2.8 Billion in 1995 and finishing at \$9 Billion in 2005.

Bureaucratic Influences

This section contains the MDA appropriation figures and political parties from the President and both chambers of Congress, as well as attempted legislation in Congress regarding missile defense. Table 1.1 combines the dependent funding for the Missile Defense Agency with

the independent variable of political ideology, and Table 1.2 shows the proposed legislation compared to the parties in majority. Each row of Table 1.1 contains the appropriations amount in Billions USD that the President asked for, what each chamber of Congress offered and then what the final appropriation amount was. Congressional majorities were included to help determine trends between the funding levels and dominant political parties deciding the amount. The lowest amount given to MDA since its conception was \$1.4B USD in 1985, and the highest was \$9B USD in 2009, the last budget passed by George W. Bush. The largest disparity between a presidential request and final appropriation is -\$1.6BUSD, with 1988 as an example. President Reagan requested \$5.2B USD yet the ultimate appropriation was \$3.6B USD. 14 of the 32 years the Democratic party held the House majority, compared to the 17 years it held in the Senate.

MDA Appropriations 1985-2017

Table 1.1

Year	President	House	Senate	Actual	Congressional Majorities	
1985	1.8 (Reagan -R)	1.1	1.6	1.4	House - D	Senate - R
1986	3.7 (Reagan -R)	2.5	3.0	2.8	House - D	Senate - R
1987	4.8 (Reagan -R)	3.1	3.4	3.2	House - D	Senate - D
1988	5.2 (Reagan -R)	3.1	3.6	3.6	House - D	Senate - D
1989	4.5 (Reagan -R)	3.2	3.1	3.7	House - D	Senate - D
1990	4.6 (H.W. Bush -R)	3.1	4.3	4.0	House - D	Senate - D
1991	4.5 (H.W. Bush -R)	2.3	3.6	2.9	House - D	Senate - D
1992	5.2 (H.W. Bush -R)	3.5	4.6	4.1	House - D	Senate - D
1993	5.4 (H.W. Bush -R)	4.3	3.8	3.8	House - D	Senate - D
1994	3.8 (Clinton -D)	2.8	2.8	2.8	House - D	Senate - D
1995	3.2 (Clinton -D)	2.8	2.8	2.8	House - R	Senate - R
1996	2.9 (Clinton -D)	3.5	3.4	3.4	House - R	Senate - R

1997	2.8 (Clinton -D)	3.5	3.7	3.7	House - R	Senate - R
1998	2.6 (Clinton -D)	3.7	3.6	3.8	House - R	Senate - R
1999	3.6 (Clinton -D)	3.4	3.4	3.5	House - R	Senate - R
2000	3.3 (Clinton -D)	3.6	3.9	3.6	House - R	Senate - R
2001	4.5 (Clinton -D)	4.6	4.8	4.8	House - R	Senate - D
2002	8.3 (W. Bush -R)	7.9	6.3	7.8	House - R	Senate - R
2003	6.7 (W. Bush -R)	7.4	6.2	7.4	House - R	Senate - R
2004	7.7 (W. Bush -R)	7.5	8.2	7.7	House - R	Senate - R
2005	9.2 (W. Bush -R)	8.7	9.2	9.0	House - R	Senate - R
2006	7.8 (W. Bush -R)	7.6	7.9	7.8	House - R	Senate - R
2007	9.3 (W. Bush -R)	8.9	9.4	9.4	House - D	Senate - D
2008	8.9 (W. Bush -R)	8.6	8.7	8.7	House - D	Senate - D
2009	9.3 (W. Bush -R)	8.4	9.0	9.0	House - D	Senate - D
2010	7.8 (Obama -D)	7.8	7.8	7.9	House - D	Senate - D
2011	8.4 (Obama -D)	8.6	8.4	8.5	House - R	Senate - D
2012	8.6 (Obama -D)	8.6	8.4	8.4	House - R	Senate - D
2013	7.8 (Obama -D)	8.4	8.3	8.3	House - R	Senate - D
2014	7.7 (Obama -D)	8.0	7.8	7.6	House - R	Senate - D
2015	7.4 (Obama -D)	7.7	7.6	7.8	House - R	Senate - R
2016	8.1 (Obama -D)	8.1	8.3	8.3	House - R	Senate - R
2017	7.5 (Obama -D)	7.8	8.0	8.2	House - R	Senate - R

(Data Courtesy of the MDA)

History of Missile Defense Legislative and Executive Action *Table 1.2*

Year	Title and Source	Purpose	Congressional Result
1983	National Security Decision Directive 85 (Reagan)	To promote strategic arms reduction, while placing emphasis on defensive systems instead of offensive	H. of R. - Democratic Senate - Republican Result - N/A
1983 - Reagan calls for broad interpretation of ABM Treaty, allowing for missile defenses			
1991	H.R. 1446 (Timothy Penny, D-MN)	To establish a Joint Tactical Missile Defense program as research counterpart to the SDI Organization	H. of R. - Democratic Senate - Democratic Result - N/A
1993 - Clinton returns to narrow approach, banning ABM system deployments per treaty			
1995	H.R. 7 (James Hayes D-LA, Benjamin Gilman R-NY, Floyd Spence R-SC, Ed Bryant R-TN)	To ensure system readiness, develop Theater Missile Defense (TMD) system and to produce ground-based interceptors	H. of R. - Republican Senate - Republican Result - Passed House, Senate hearings held but no vote
1995	H.R. 2483 (Martin Hoke, R-OH) “Defend America Act I”	To urge President to withdraw from ABM Treaty and successfully test missile defense systems	H. of R. - Republican Senate - Republican Result - Introduced,
1996	National Defense Authorization Act (Introduced by Senator Thurmond, crafted by DoD)	To develop Theater and National Missile Defense systems (NMD), to negotiate with Russia and if necessary, withdraw from ABM Treaty	H. of R. - Republican Senate - Republican Result - Voted upon by both chambers, signed into law
1996	S. 1635 (Robert Dole, R-KS) “Defend America Act II”	To develop and deploy an operational NMD system before the year 2003	H. of R. - Republican Senate - Republican Result - Considered in Senate
1998	Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States (Committee appointed by bipartisan leadership)	Found the possibility of advanced launch warning waning, the U.S. must strengthen its radar and detection systems as the threat is growing	H. of R. - Republican Senate - Republican Result - N/A
1999	S. 257 (Thad Cochran, R-MS) “National Missile Defense Act of 1999”	To declare U.S. policy of deploying NMD as soon as possible, and to continue negotiations with Russia over ABM Treaty provisions	H. of R. - Republican Senate - Republican Result - Passed in Senate

2002 - United States withdraws from the ABM Treaty
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(Data courtesy of Congress)

Table 1.2 above reflects major legislation attempts and policy changes regarding missile defense from 1983-2002. All five attempts to create laws regarding missile defense (H.R. 1446, H.R. 7, H.R. 2483, S. 1635, S. 157) failed before being introduced and considered in both chambers of Congress. Reagan released his security directive in 1983, shifting the policy discussion towards SDI and more defense programs. No voting was required as it was simply a policy outline. The National Defense Authorization Act of 1996 was the only one of the acts above to pass through Congress, calling for funds for missile defense to counter Russian aggression. The 1996 NDAA presented guidelines for further debate and allocations as to how to address the issue of missile defense. As well, all NDAAs must pass in both chambers of Congress in order to begin the budgeting process.

National Security Threats

Below, Tables 1.3 and 1.4 depict the results from my investigation into the National Security Strategies published from the year 1987-2017. In the 17 strategies I analyzed, missile defense is mentioned under the defense and military chapters a total of 34 times. It most frequently appeared in President Bill Clinton's review from 2001, a total of 5 times. Barack Obama had no mention of missile defense in either of his strategies from 2015 or 2016. Of the 34 mentions, the most frequent keywords I counted were 'threat' and 'strategy/strategic', a total of 11 and 18 times, respectively. 'Deterrence' was mentioned 9 times out of the 34, and 'safety' was counted as 3. Nuclear proliferation and Weapons of Mass Destruction were listed as the greatest threats 9 times out of the 17 listed threats. The Soviet Union, or Russia in later times,

was listed as the greatest threat of the year on 6 separate occasions. Ethnic conflict was listed four times, China and the rise of terrorism were both mentioned twice. The spread of communism, regional threats, political transitions and North Korea were all mentioned once.

National Security Strategy Missile Defense Mentions

Table 1.3

Year	President	# of Mentions	Greatest Threat:
1987	Ronald Reagan	4	The Soviet Union and spread of communism
1988	Ronald Reagan	2	The Soviet Union and their nuclear arsenal
1990	George H.W. Bush	3	The Soviet Union and their integration into the Free World
1991	George H.W. Bush	3	The Soviet Union and their nuclear arsenal
1993	George H.W. Bush	2	Potential regional threats
1994	Bill Clinton	1	Ethnic conflict and nuclear proliferation
1995	Bill Clinton	1	Ethnic conflict and political transitions
1996	Bill Clinton	2	Nuclear proliferation
1997	Bill Clinton	2	Nuclear proliferation and Weapons of Mass Destruction
1998	Bill Clinton	2	Ethnic conflict and nuclear proliferation
2000	Bill Clinton	1	Nuclear Proliferation
2001	Bill Clinton	5	Russia, China, North Korea, ethnic conflict
2002	George W. Bush	2	Rise of terrorism
2006	George W. Bush	1	Rise of terrorism
2015	Barack Obama	0	Weapons of Mass Destruction
2016	Barack Obama	0	Weapons of Mass Destruction
2017	Donald Trump	3	Russia and China

(Data courtesy of NSSA)

Frequency of Keywords in all National Security Strategies: *Table 1.4*

Threat	Deterrence	Strategy/Strategic	Safety
11	9	18	3

(Data Courtesy of NSSA)

Analysis

Per my hypotheses, after compiling my data I expected these variables- the threat environment, party ideologies and pertinent legislation - equally affected the growth and deployment of new missile defense systems. The military will request a certain budget amount to best prepare forces to fight new threats, and Congress and the Executive branch presumably will respect that request while announcing their own versions of the federal budget. Overall, the findings above show that a connection does exist between the these factors, but for any particular year it may be difficult to isolate what may have the greatest influence over the funding for the Missile Defense Agency and/or a new missile defense system.

As shown in Tables 1.1 and 1.2, there is a direct connection relationship between the overall U.S. defense budget and the budget allotted to the Missile Defense Agency. Both steadily increased since the year 1985 to now, and most of the minor decreases mirrored each other. As the Missile Defense Agency budget is a portion of the overall defense budget, it is only normal to assume there will be a general trend between the two.

Upon comparing the budget variable with that of the perceived threat from the National Security Strategies, the trend and strength of relationship between the two was generally as

distinct as that of the two budgets. As Ronald Reagan initially championed the concept of the Strategic Defense Initiative and the need for missile defense, the MDA budget grew from \$1.4B USD in 1985 to \$3.7B USD in 1989 when George H.W. Bush assumed the presidency. During those years, even up to 1991, Reagan and H.W. Bush both listed the Soviet Union, the spread of communism, and the Soviet nuclear arsenal as the greatest threats facing the United States. The Clinton years also saw a general raise in the MDA budget, with six of the seven security strategies his administration published outlining weapons of mass destruction as the greatest threat, going so far as to identify Chinese, North Korean and Russian missiles as the most dangerous at the beginning of 2001. 1999, however, the one year of the Clinton administration where a security strategy was not published, was the only year during his tenure of 1993-2001 that the MDA budget decreased. All other years that weapons of mass destruction were labeled as a threat the MDA budget either increased in conjunction with the overall defense budget, or increased while the overall defense budget faced a decline. From this, it shows there is a definitive tie between what is outlined as a threat and what funds are allocated. This would make sense considering when the Department of Defense presents to Congress its National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for each year, the President also has influence over policy initiatives and what goals it would like the Department of Defense to achieve. Therefore, if the President declares the need for missile defense as an overarching strategic goal, the Department of Defense will structure its NDAA to reflect such requests before presenting it to the Congress.

Although most of the data supports this trend, the Obama and Trump years contradict the notion that an Executive-acknowledged threat always has the greatest pull on the budget. During 2015 and 2016 Obama listed weapons of mass destruction as the greatest threat, going so far as to say “Our military will remain ready to deter and defeat threats to the homeland, including

against missile, cyber, and terrorist attacks, while mitigating the effects of potential attacks...” (Obama 2015). While this passage may hint towards having a readily deployable missile defense system, neither of Obama’s National Security Strategies directly mention the term ‘missile defense’ or its importance, compared to the 1-5 mentions range seen in all the other documents. During both those years, the missile defense budget increased. On the other hand, Trump’s 2017 document calls for enhanced missile defense as a strategic necessity for the U.S. but the MDA budget has steadily decreased since then, even while general defense funding has increased. Factors outside of this study, such as budget concessions in order to achieve other goals, might help explain this disparity between the threat and budget.

What is interesting to see, however, is how desired funding appropriations differed between the President and the chambers of Congress based on political ideology. My initial expectation was that a split-party setting - when the President is from a different party than the majority of both Congress chambers - would lead to lesser funding for missile defense than the amount requested by the President. For the Reagan years, this hypothesis came true. For many years of his presidency, Reagan was battling a Democratic majority in both the House and the Senate. Even in 1985 and 1985, where the House was Democratic and the Senate Republican, the funding amount allotted to missile defense was much less than the executive branch asked for. The same remained true for the George H.W. Bush presidency, the amount he requested was greatly lessened by the Democratic Congress. However, from Clinton on, there was not as much of a discrepancy between the funding requests. During the early years of the Clinton administration, when Clinton was first faced with a fully Republican majority Congress, and then the second year with a fully Democratic Congress, both appropriated final amounts were less than Clinton requested. After this, however, final amounts tended to be higher than what the

President asked for, regardless of conflicting party ideologies. As the Strategic Defense Initiative and further missile defense development was once seen as an extremely conflictual goal, it would then make sense that Reagan and H.W. Bush faced more funding denials and reductions than the other administrations of this study.

It is possible there was general unwillingness to fund such a controversial and untested system. After Operation Desert Storm, however, we see the funding for missile defense generally increase above the amount desired by the President. This change was regardless of party, suggesting that the actual threat of Iraqi Scud missiles was the catalyst in the missile defense decision-making process. Before Desert Storm, party lines did seem to have an influence in the funding amount. It is possible, however, that what drove the funding amounts for further missile defense development started out as an ideological battle against a President outside of the party, but transitioned to a threat-based motivation after facing actual missiles in a battle.

Conclusion

As outlined in the literature, what may constitute a threat depends on what an individual state considers a risk to its own security or strategy (Critchley 1979). When discussing missile defense in any of the National Security Strategies, missiles posing a threat to the U.S. and the need for strategic defenses were the two most frequently used phrases throughout the strategies. This strengthens the hypothesis that missile defense is directly tied to a threat environment, and is strengthened even further by the greater funding of missile defense after Operation Desert Storm. Be that as it may, what the comparison of the National Security Strategies and the funding amounts show is that the threat outlined in the strategies had very little effect on

budgeting. The strategies from the years 1990, 1995, 2001, 2002, 2006 and 2017 did not mention nuclear proliferation or weapons of mass destruction as part of the greatest threats, yet the final funding levels were comparably higher than the amounts requested by the President, considered the author of the National Security Strategies.

What this discrepancy shows, along with the changes in funding, is that there is no one factor that determines how missile defense developments continue. It would be nearly impossible to call these changes arbitrary, and it is equally difficult to pinpoint the exact motivations and decisions that together shape interest in missile defense systems. Yet, the data gathered in this study show demonstrate that threat and political lines are all influential in determining funding, and ultimately interest in missile defense systems.

Due to the nature of the topic, it will be impossible to ever know the full decision-making process underlying missile defense. This begs the question of public accountability, and if the general public can keep the Department of Defense and ultimately the government responsible for their actions. Of course, due to national security reasons there are new systems and behind-the-scenes decisions that need to remain confidential, that is only to be expected. However, there should be general transparency as to how systems like missile defense are being funded, as well as explanations for why the U.S. should pay for such technologies. It should not be a challenge to determine how or why the government spends money on certain items. Additionally, what does the lack of one deciding factor in procurement decisions mean for future capabilities and purchases moving forward? If there is no clarity as to what makes a system necessary, how can the government predict for future needs and technologies? This is important because it represents a lack of consistency and ability to determine vital aspects of American defense capabilities.

Upon completing this study I still am still unable to determine if the threat environment or bureaucratic politics held a greater influence, so there is no simple answer to the question of what explains interest in missile defense since 1985. There were years, the year 2000 for example, where the greatest outlined threat to national security was nuclear proliferation yet missile defense funding dropped \$.2B USD from the \$3.8B USD it was two year prior, when the greatest threat was still nuclear proliferation. If the threat environment was the biggest influence, missile defense funding against ICBMs should have increased, especially as the Congressional majorities stayed the same. This serves as another instance where what the expected public outcome is actually different from the true outcome, strengthening my finding that there are possible factors underneath the surface that wield heavy influence. Perhaps this is concessions in one area of funding in order to secure funding for another, party politics or other more inconsistent measures. Wingerter was correct in his research then, that there is often a lack of clarity between defense contracting companies and the government (Wingerter 2011). With that said, it is the hope all defense decisions are still made with the best interests of the country in store (Gholz 2017).

The findings of this study can greatly help policymakers moving forward as it shows the need for clear reasons behind all allocations and appropriations. The U.S. government's spending each year continues to rise, and I predict there are certain items allocated for in the budget which are not a priority or immediate concern of the government, not just in the defense sector. Moving forward, weighing each funding request and service against one another not only would produce a clear budget and easy for the public to follow, but would also help reduce sunk costs or loopholes for programs no longer needed. This would also help to reduce the federal debt. As well, utilizing this practice in the defense budget can help predict for future needs, like

previously mentioned. This would ensure every American dollar spent is going towards a necessary cause and that the US is adequately prepared for future conflicts.

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