

The NMD Debate: Influences on Policy-Making

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This paper attempts to unravel the forces influencing and shaping the decision-making process associated with the proposed National Missile Defense system. This has primarily involved analysis of information from the media, Congress, and various US government departments and agencies, such as the Pentagon, the State Department and the CIA.

As you can imagine, there are many actors, organisations and events that have shaped the development of NMD. These carry varying degrees of influence but collectively form an intricate web within which the decision-making has evolved, and continues to evolve. The influence one allocates each of these is purely subjective. The issue is far from black and white and the debate is far from rational since it has been heavily politicised from the outset.

This paper outlines what I consider to be the key actors and events that have shaped and pushed the NMD debate. This is by no means exclusive and there will no doubt be disagreement as to where the emphasis should lie.

I've selected seven key actors, though not necessarily in order of influence:

1. *Congress*
2. *The Republican Party*
3. *The Department of Defense*
4. *The Military – Industrial complex*
5. *The Intelligence Community*
6. *The State Department*
7. *The Office of the President*

Secondly I regard the following ten events as particularly important in the development of the NMD debate:

1. *1994: The Republican "Contract with America"*
2. *1995: CIA National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on the ballistic missile threat to the US*
3. *May 1997: The Pentagon Quadrennial Defense Review*
4. *April 1998: The selection of Boeing as Lead Systems Integrator (LSI)*
5. *August 1998: North Korean Taepo Dong-I missile test*
6. *January 1999: Presidential funding decision*
7. *July 1999: Passage of the Missile Defense Act*
8. *July 2000: CIA NIE*
9. *August 2000: Presidential Candidate platforms*

1. Congress and the 1994 Contract with America (see figure 1).

BMD has taken many forms over the past 2 decades, SDI, GPALS and now NMD. This most recent incarnation can be traced to 1994 when the Republicans took control of both Houses of Congress on a legislative platform called "Contract with America". Since then Congress has been the most influential and consistent actor pushing the NMD issue.

The Contract called for, amongst other things, "renewing America's commitment to an effective national missile defense system". This had a variety of repercussions:

1. The Ballistic Missile Defense Organisation within the Pentagon knew that it would have extra cash flowing in for the development of an NMD system and so set up a “Tiger Team” to formulate a variety of options. This led to the creation of the current “3+3” plan in 1996 (3 years development and followed by 3 years deployment) accompanied by the establishment of the NMD Joint Project Office (NMD JPO) within the BMDO.
2. The second consequence was a succession of NMD bills:
 - a. 1996 “*Defend America Act*”
 - b. 1997 “*National Missile Defense Act of 1997*”
 - c. 1998 “*American Missile Protection Act*”
 - d. 1999 “*National Missile Defense Act of 1999*”
3. Finally, Congress requested that the CIA produce a National Intelligence Estimate about the ballistic missile threat to the US up to 2015. This is discussed later.

Congressional Pressure on the President

Congressional pressure on the President to move forward with a National Missile Defense system has been powerful and sustained. The “3+3” plan mentioned above was adopted by Clinton and the Congressional Democrats as a compromise in the face of increasing Republican demands for comprehensive missile defences. After vetoing several previous NMD bills, the National Missile Defense Act of 1999 was eventually signed by the President in July that year, legally obliging the administration to field an NMD system when technologically feasible. Clinton signed the bill partly to try and diffuse a potent political issue for the Republicans in the coming Presidential campaign and partly because the support for the legislation in Congress could no longer be withstood. The influence of this Congressional Republican pressure was particularly acute at the onset of the Lewinsky saga in January 1999 where, following a vote by the House Republicans to begin impeachment proceedings, the President pledged an additional \$6.6 billion for NMD over five years.

Within Congress there are several key committees that have rigorously pursued the development of an NMD system. Both the influential House and Senate Armed Services Committees have actively endorsed extensive ballistic missile defense, and have held several important hearings about the proposed NMD system. The latest of these was in July, at which Secretary of Defense Cohen testified in favour of deployment.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee, chaired by Jesse Helms, has also been actively against any renegotiation of the ABMT with Russia, preferring unilateral abrogation instead. This follows the successful campaign led by the Committee to oppose ratification of the CTBT in 1999.

Both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees have voted to allocate *more* funding for NMD and other BMD systems than had been asked for by the President and the Pentagon. Indeed the Senate Appropriations Committee added an extra \$200 million for NMD, raising NMD funding to over \$1 billion for FY 00.

When passing the Defense Authorization Bill, which denotes the money available to the Pentagon for that financial year, both the House and Senate also included a provision requiring the Secretary of Defense to assess the advantages and disadvantages of deploying a ground-based NMD system at two locations, instead of one as proposed by the Clinton administration.

2. The Republican Party

We can see that although Congress as a whole (both Republican and Democrat alike) has been dynamic and instrumental in furthering the NMD cause, it seems that the Republican Party and its accompanying ideology is the real force behind the Congressional pressure for NMD. Both the Senate Republican Policy Committee and the House Republican Policy Committee have pushed for extensive ballistic missile defences within their respective legislative branches far more intensely than their Democrat counterparts. The strength and

coherence of the Republican majority within the Senate has been particularly effective. Following the Administration's dialogue with Russia to resolve the problems surrounding the ABM Treaty, 25 Republican Senators signed a letter to the President stating their refusal to ratify any agreements reached. Subsequent to the failure of the third integrated test in July 2000 all 45 Democrat Senators put forward an amendment to ensure the NMD system be tested against all possible countermeasures to ensure a viable system, thus delaying deployment. The 55 Republican Senators quickly put the motion down. In addition the Senate leaders hold great sway in the building of the Republican Party Platform.

The forthcoming Presidential election, as we are witnessing, has already become a battleground for NMD with Republican strategists planning to make missile defense "the most important issue of the 2000 election" according to the Chairman of the Republican National Committee. For example the election platform of Presidential Candidate George W. Bush states that:

"America must deploy effective missile defenses, based on an evaluation of the best available options, including sea-based, at the earliest possible date.

We will seek a negotiated change in the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty that will allow the United States to use all technologies and experiments required to deploy robust missile defenses...If Russia refuses to make the necessary changes, a Republican president will give prompt notice that the United States will exercise the right guaranteed to us in the treaty to withdraw after six months."

Alternatively the Democratic platform states that:

"Al Gore and the Democratic Party support the development of the technology for a limited national missile defense system...the Democratic Party places a high value on ensuring that any such system is compatible with the fundamental rationale of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty."

Ideology

Judging by the absence of public pressure on the administration or Congress for deployment of an NMD system, or for that matter public discussion, it is argued that the pressures to deploy are far more ideological than political. It appears that there runs throughout the Republican right a conviction that the ultimate protection of the nation is a realistic and necessary goal. To this end it is maintained that the Reagan dream of the complete weaponisation of space is, and always has been the driving ambition behind ballistic missile defence, with weapons, that could be used to attack as well as defend. Such a level of security is required as a matter of *principle* and the leaders of the country are obliged to secure this without delay, regardless of technical difficulties or international repercussions, as the Bush platform states:

"The new Republican president will deploy a national missile defense for reasons of national security; but he will also do so because there is a moral imperative involved"

Conservative think tanks

There are several key think tanks embracing the ideology of the Republican right, particularly on matters of national security. These institutes and organisations carry weight within the Republican movement, and therefore Congress, and are lobbying heavily for the deployment of NMD systems. They include the Heritage Foundation, the American Enterprise Institute, the Hoover Institute, High Frontier (the original SDI think tank), Empower America and the Center for Security Policy. Many of these think tanks count current and former Republican

Senators, former Pentagon and State Department officials, and each other's directors on their board of advisors. It is also stated that the Center for Security Policy receives 25% of its annual revenue from corporate sponsors, many of which are weapons manufacturing firms such as Boeing and Lockheed Martin. In addition it is maintained that the Center for Security Policy was instrumental in placing the issue of NMD in the 1994 Contract with America. Interestingly, Donald Rumsfeld, Chair of the Rumsfeld Commission (discussed below), is an adviser at the CSP and on the board at Empower America.

3. The Pentagon and the 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review (see figure 2).

There are many elements within the Department of Defense that are centrally involved in the development and decision-making of NMD. These are:

1. The office of the Secretary of Defense, in particular:
 - i. Deputy Secretary of Defense
 - ii. USD Acquisitions, Technology and Logistics (AT&L)
 - iii. Director, Operational Test and Evaluation (reports to USD AT&L)
 - iv. USD Policy
 - v. USD Comptroller
 - vi. Director, Program Analysis and Evaluation (reports to USD Comptroller)
 - vii. ASD Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence (ASD C3I)

2. Defense Agencies
 - i. BMDO which reports to the USD AT&L and is where the NMD JPO resides
 - ii. DIA which reports to the ASD C3I
 - iii. National Security Agency (NSA) which also reports to the ASD C3I

3. The office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS)
 - i. Chairman, JCS
 - ii. Military Service Chiefs (Army, USAF, US Navy)

The Office of the Secretary of Defense

The USD AT&L has a pivotal role in the development of NMD. The BMDO reports to him regarding the progress of BMD systems in development, including NMD. The Director OT&E, under the USD AT&L, is responsible for the testing of the NMD system as well as selecting and overseeing the performance of the Lead Systems Integrator (LSI). The contract for LSI was awarded to Boeing in April 1998. Deployment cannot commence until the Director OT&E has certified that the program has completed "initial operational test and evaluation."

The USD Comptroller plays an important role in presenting the Pentagon's budget for approval before Congress and evaluating how much money each project needs.

The ASD C3I has an important role in that he has primary responsibility for the DIA and the NSA, whose intelligence activities feed into the intelligence community and thus shape the NMD debate.

The Military

For the past 10-15 years all the services have been working on TMD systems, both low tier and high tier. However the Army has held most of the cards for NMD since it was recommended as the lead service for the system in 1999. Nonetheless the US Navy continues to push for a sea-based system based on its current TMD program that could be modified to provide a limited NMD capability by 2004. The Air Force is also developing an Airborne Laser to shoot down short-range missiles by 2009, but has an additional potential for destroying North Korea's long-range missiles. In addition the USAF is researching a space-based laser program that could be deployed by 2015.

The Service Chiefs for each arm of the military are located within the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff within the Department of Defense. This Office plays an important role in the

NMD debate. Its Chairman is the principal military adviser to the President, the Secretary of Defense and the National Security Council (NSC). It is responsible for drafting and implementing the Joint Vision 2020 document for the entire armed forces which outlines a doctrine of full dimensional protection to be based on “active and passive defensive measures, including theater missile defense and possibly limited missile defense of the United States”.

The May 1997 the Quadrennial Defense Review.

The 1997 QDR stated that the NMD program would need much more money for development and testing in order to allow a deployment decision by 2000 in accordance with the “3+3” plan. This was backed up by a General Accounting Office (GAO) report of June 1998, requested by Congress in response to the 1997 QDR, titled “National Missile Defense: Even with Increased Funding, Technical and Schedule Risks are High”.

This led to the formulation of the “Commission on Reducing Risk in Ballistic Missile Defense Flight Test Programs”, better known as the Welch Commission, tasked to identify best practices for the NMD program. The first Welch Report was published in 1998, followed by a second in November 1999. Both recommended delaying deployment. This was influential in Secretary of Defense Cohen’s decision to push back deployment from 2003 to 2005. The third Report published in July 2000 stated that a 2005 deployment date is still very high risk.

We can see that factors within the Department of Defense have significantly *shaped* the debate and some elements such as the BMDO, civilian Pentagon hawks and aspects of the military that stand to gain have actively *pushed* it forward. Additional funding for NMD from Congress and the President has further empowered these actors. However, the JCS and majority of the uniformed military have generally viewed NMD with scepticism, preferring to see the development of TMD systems instead. Many Commanders in all three services are worried that NMD will eat into their budget and the Air Force in particular has been less than enthusiastic. Over and above BMD, preference lies in funding more conventional equipment such as tanks, aircraft and ships. The Secretary of State has also sent mixed signals to the media, arguing that NMD deployment should definitely proceed but also stating that other threats such as terrorism pose a greater risk to the US than a missile strike. The Pentagon commissioned Welch Reports also urge caution over hasty deployment.

4. The Military-Industrial Complex.

Although the MIC is centrally involved in building the NMD system, and accepting the revolving door between the Pentagon and arms companies, it is not apparent that it has been instrumental in originating the debate. However, the vast sums of money involved in developing the NMD architecture have resulted in the MIC certainly *shaping*, if not *pushing*, the issue. The prospect of a decade or more of growing NMD contracts, it is argued, is one of the few bright spots in a surprisingly troubled financial future for the arms industry. Some leading analysts state that the need to acquire these contracts has led to rife deception surrounding the accomplishments of NMD technology. The arms manufacturers TRW, contracted to design the kill vehicle along with Boeing, stand accused of faking tests.

As LSI, Boeing has wide ranging authority, overseeing the organisation and evaluation of the entire NMD test series. It is stated that the test series has been systematically dumbed down to increase the chance of successful interception. Such deception (and it has happened before in the development of BMD since the early 80’s) certainly plays a part in driving the debate, as politicians come to believe in a technology that is not yet ripe.

The MIC also has an impact in Congress. Many of these companies have operations in a large number of states. NMD means money, money means jobs and jobs means votes for

Representatives and Senators. Campaign contributions are widespread for both officials and think tanks promoting NMD.

5. The Intelligence Community and the 1995 CIA National Intelligence Estimate (see figure 3).

In 1995 Congress requested that the CIA produce a National Intelligence Estimate concerning the ballistic missile threat to the USA. These estimates involve the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), the National Security Agency (NSA) and the State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research.

When the CIA report concluded that there was no immediate threat, many Congressional Republicans disagreed and called for the establishment of a Review Panel. During the testimony of this panel before Congress, several Republican Senators exclaimed their disbelief that the US could not shoot down a single errant ICBM. This testimony led to the formulation of a bipartisan "Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States" in 1996. This became more commonly known as the Rumsfeld Commission.

The Commission reported its findings in 1998. It concluded that the US faced an imminent ICBM threat that could emerge within the next five years with little or no warning. Many analysts argue that the report hyped the threat giving a huge boost to the pro-NMD lobby, a boost compounded by the testing of the North Korean Taepo Dong-I ICBM six weeks later in August 1998.

The Rumsfeld Commission is argued to have reported the *possible* threat that could emerge, as opposed to the *probable* threat addressed by subsequent annual CIA NIE's on the subject from 1996-2000. These estimates are seen to present a more realistic prognosis of future developments by balancing the argument that North Korea, Iran and Iraq *could* develop ICBMs capable of hitting the USA by 2015 against the fact that the major threat still lies in the strategic arsenals of Russia and China. The latest estimate, produced in July, was also charged with evaluating foreign responses to US NMD deployment. The report states that deployment could unleash an arms race in Asia, cause Russia to re-MIRV its ICBMs and cause friction between the NATO allies.

Hence the intelligence community appears to have played an important role in *shaping* the debate, though not necessarily *pushing* it. However, this latest estimate is said to be a key element in the Presidents forthcoming deployment decision.

6. The State Department (see figure 4)

The primary influence accorded to the State Department regarding NMD is the renegotiation of the ABMT with Russia. In addition, it is involved in assessing and trying to minimise any negative response to NMD deployment from China, Russia and the NATO allies, as well as any adverse impact on international arms control. The influence of such considerations and of the State Department in general on the NMD issue is open to question. However, it appears to be growing since, as Cohen admitted last month, the objections of the Allies have made a significant impact on deliberations surrounding the final deployment decision.

7. The Office of the President and the Deployment Readiness Review (see figure 5).

The Office of the President will be crucial in shaping the future of NMD. So far it seems that the President has gradually given in to primarily Republican calls for the deployment of NMD. Such progressive submission has been seen by many as an attempt to co-opt Republican issues and ensure the President's would be successor, Al Gore, is not seen to be

weak on defence. This has been done whilst simultaneously attempting to hold the ABMT sacrosanct, leaving the President with little room for manoeuvre.

The President was due to make an initial deployment decision in August, now put back at least a month. This is to be preceded by a Pentagon Deployment Readiness Review involving the Secretary of Defense, the DIA, USD Policy, USD AT&L and the Vice-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This is essentially a feasibility assessment after which the Secretary of Defense will give a positive or negative deployment recommendation. This recommendation will go before the NSC, comprising the President, Vice President, Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the JCS, DCI, Secretary of the Treasury, the Permanent Representative to the UN, and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. The President will also be advised by the Presidents Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. If an initial deployment decision is made, X-band radar site construction will begin on Shemya island off Alaska in 2001.

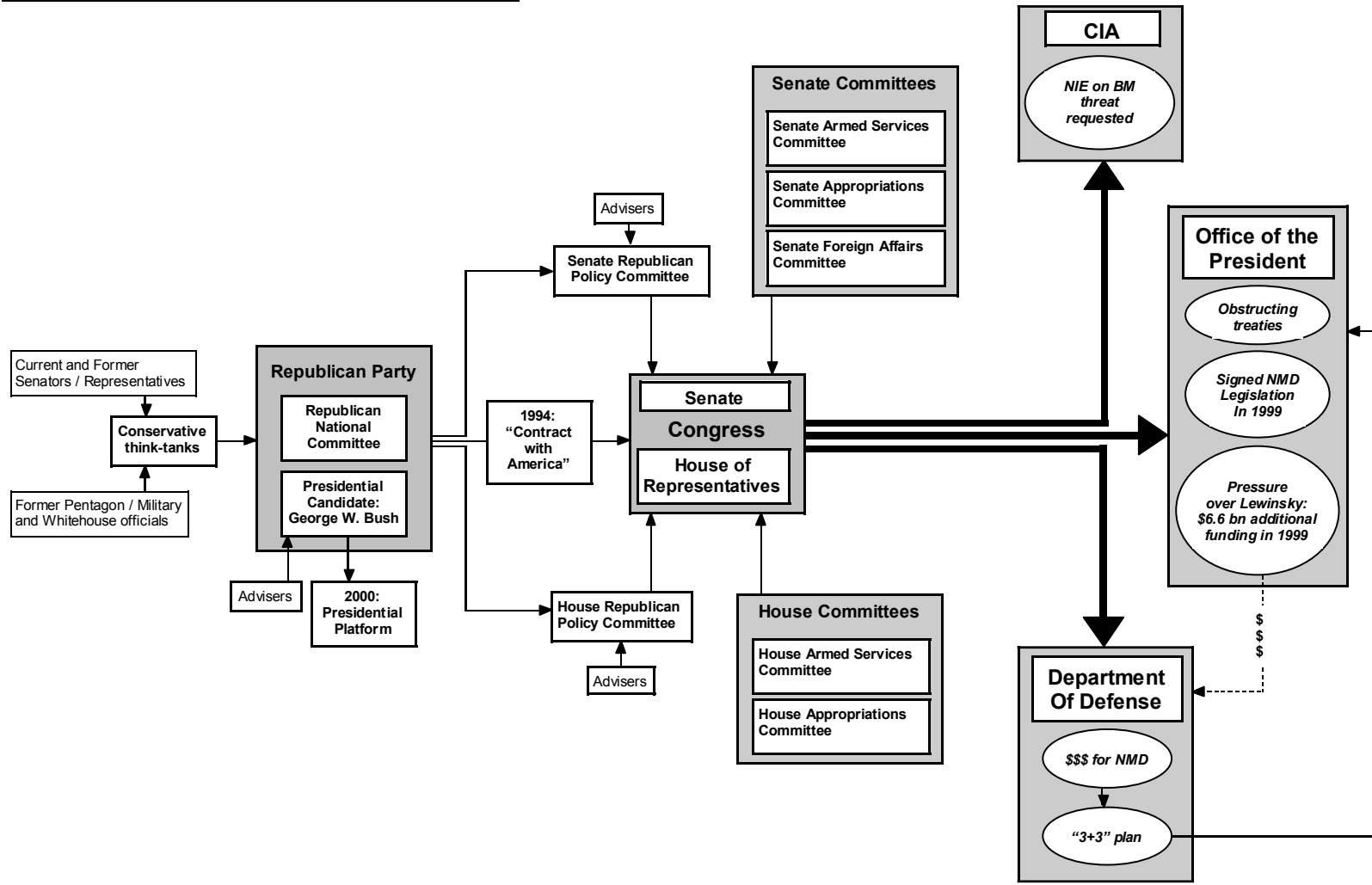
Following a positive recommendation, the next key decisions are due to take place in 2001 and 2003 by the Defense Acquisitions Board. This is the Pentagons senior-level forum for advising the USD AT&L on critical acquisitions decisions for major projects. The USD AT&L chairs the DAB, other members include the Vice Chairman JCS, the USD Policy, USD Comptroller, ASD for Strategy and Threat Reduction, ASD C3I, the Director OT&E, the Director PA&E and the Acquisition executives of the Army, Navy and Air Force. The 2001 decision will consider readiness to purchase elements of the deployable system. The 2003 decision will consider readiness to build and actually *deploy* the system.

Conclusions

Congress, particularly the Senate, has been the pivotal actor in framing the issue and pushing it forward. Its financial authority and legislative strength has caused the President to gradually give in to calls for the deployment of NMD. We also see that the Republican Party and its accompanying ideology is the real force behind the Congressional pressure for NMD via its majority in both the House and the Senate. This has been supplemented by pro-NMD factors within the Pentagon and the Military – Industrial Complex that wield significant influence on the shape and direction of the debate. This combination is crucial as analysts argue that history has shown once big military programs have Congress and contractors on board, they are rarely cancelled. The Intelligence Community and the State Department, though centrally involved, have been less instrumental.

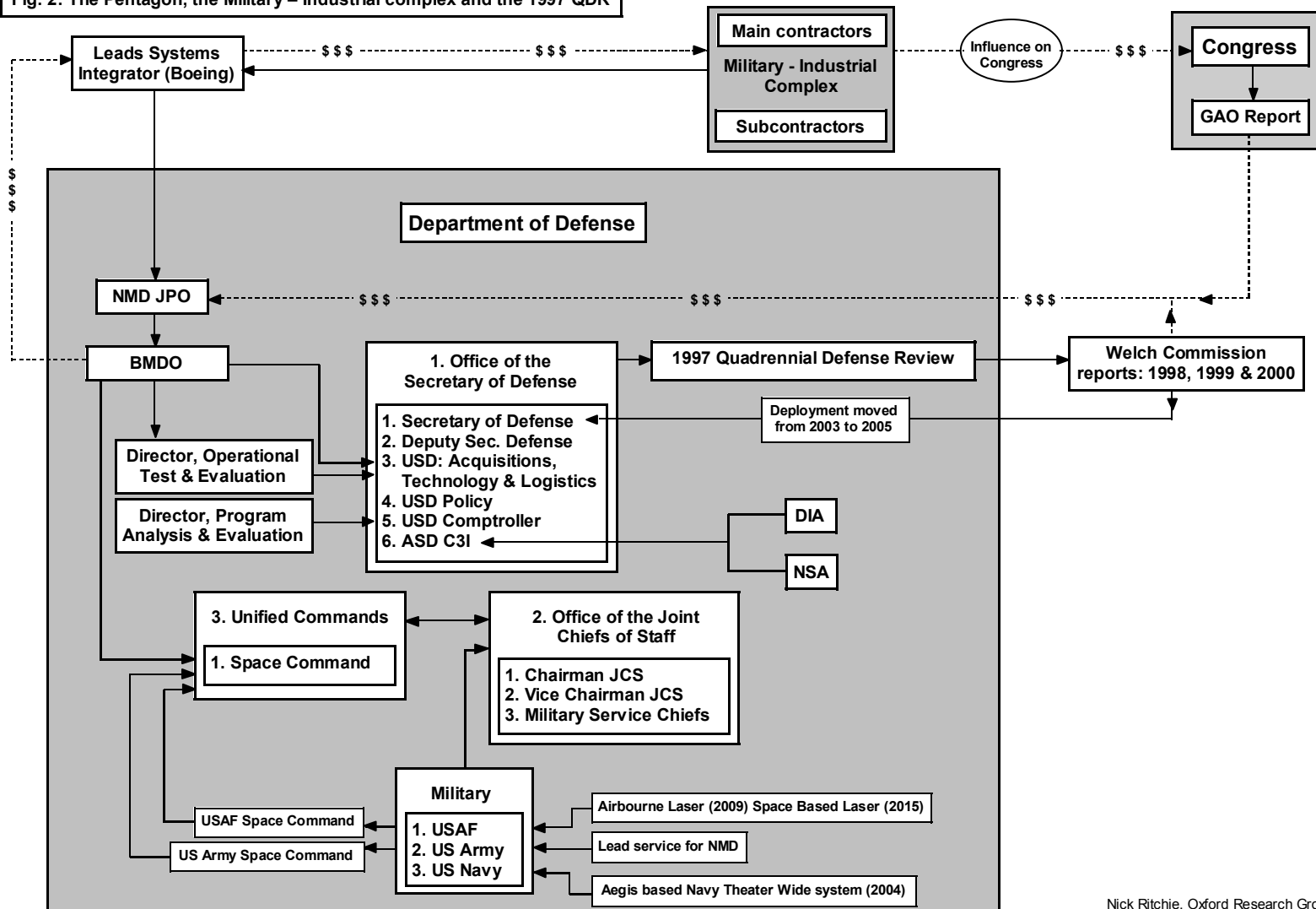
As stated at the outset, the issue is far from black and white. Within Congress, some Democrats very pro-NMD whereas some Republicans are urging restraint and elements within the Pentagon are unsupportive whereas others are heavily in favour. The politicisation of the issue is also a critical factor. It can be seen in the interpretation of events by the various actors involved to suit their needs. Nonetheless the final decision will be formed within the Office of the President and will ultimately be taken by the President himself, be that Clinton, Bush or Gore.

Fig. 1: The Influence of Congress and the Republican Party



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Fig. 2: The Pentagon, the Military – Industrial complex and the 1997 QDR



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Fig. 3: The Intelligence Community and the National Intelligence Estimates

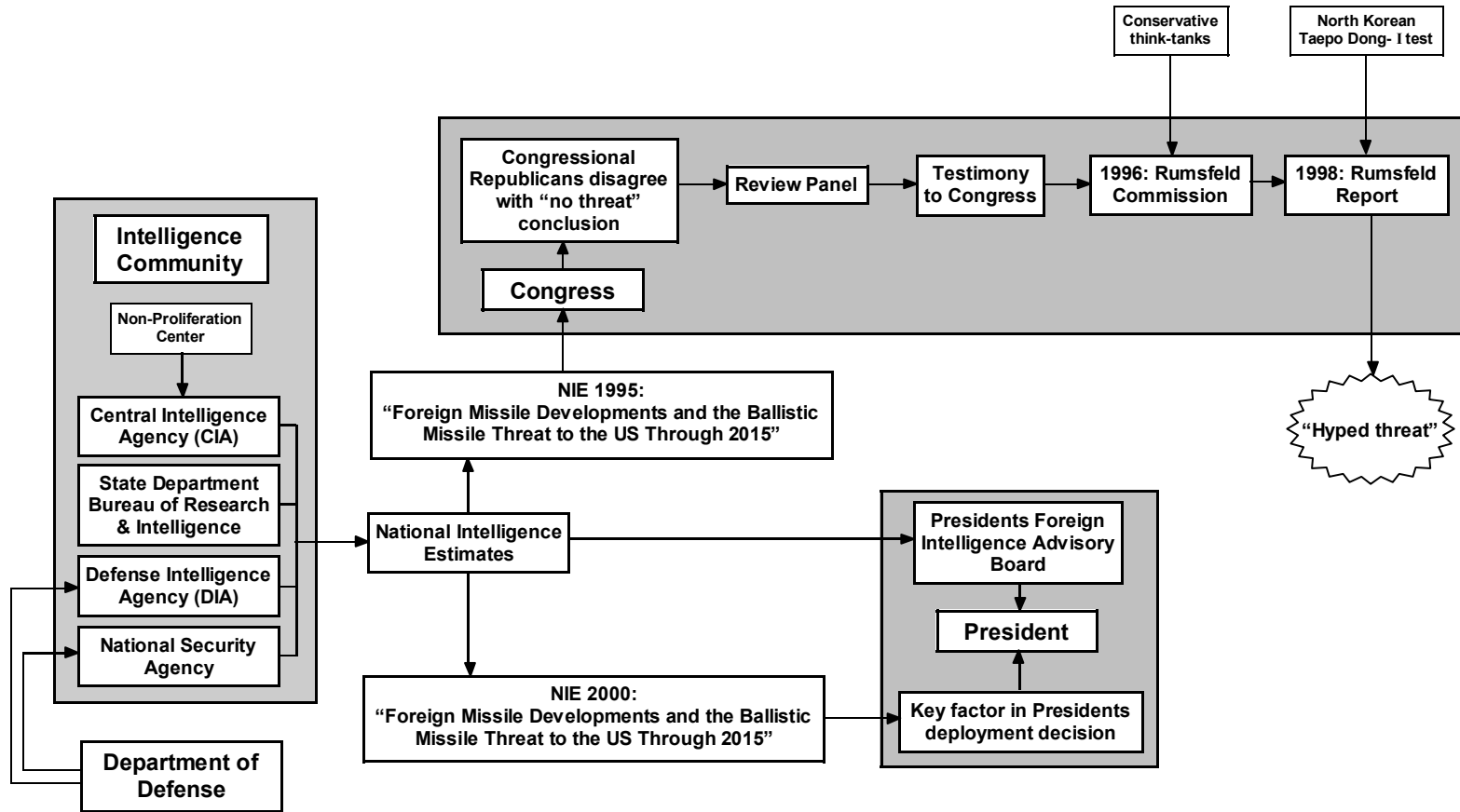


Fig. 4: The State Department and arms control

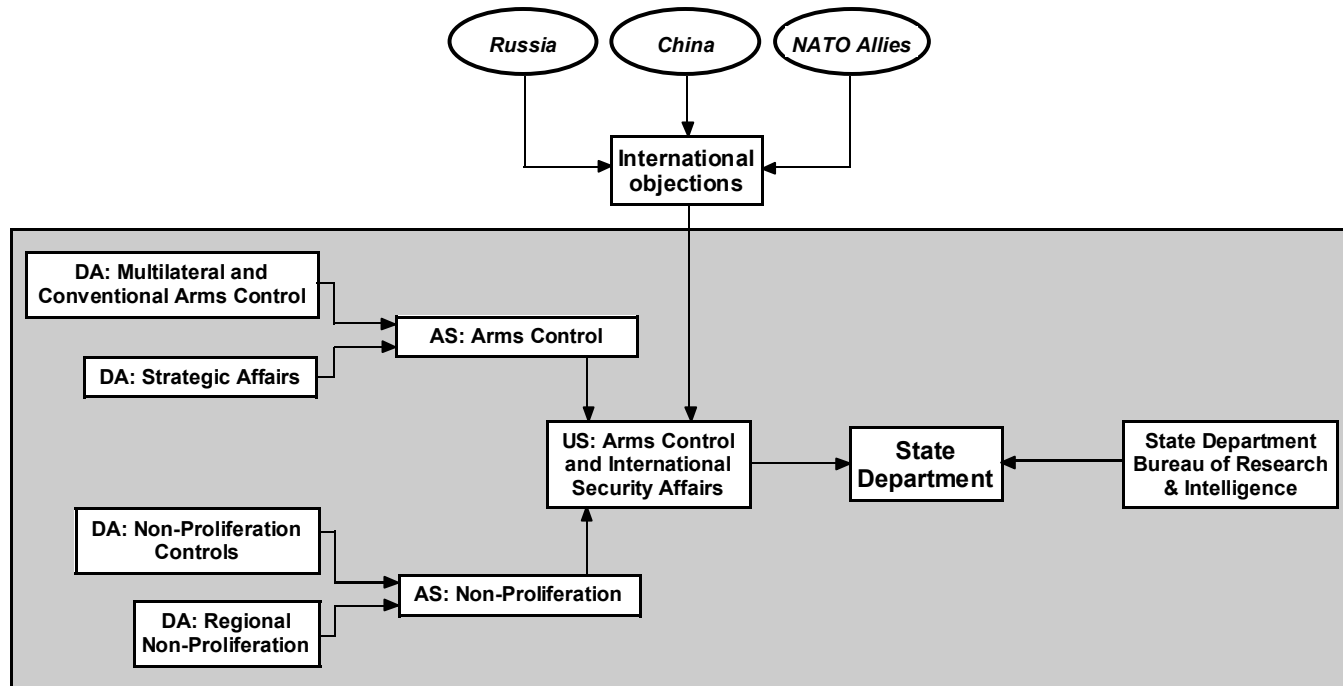
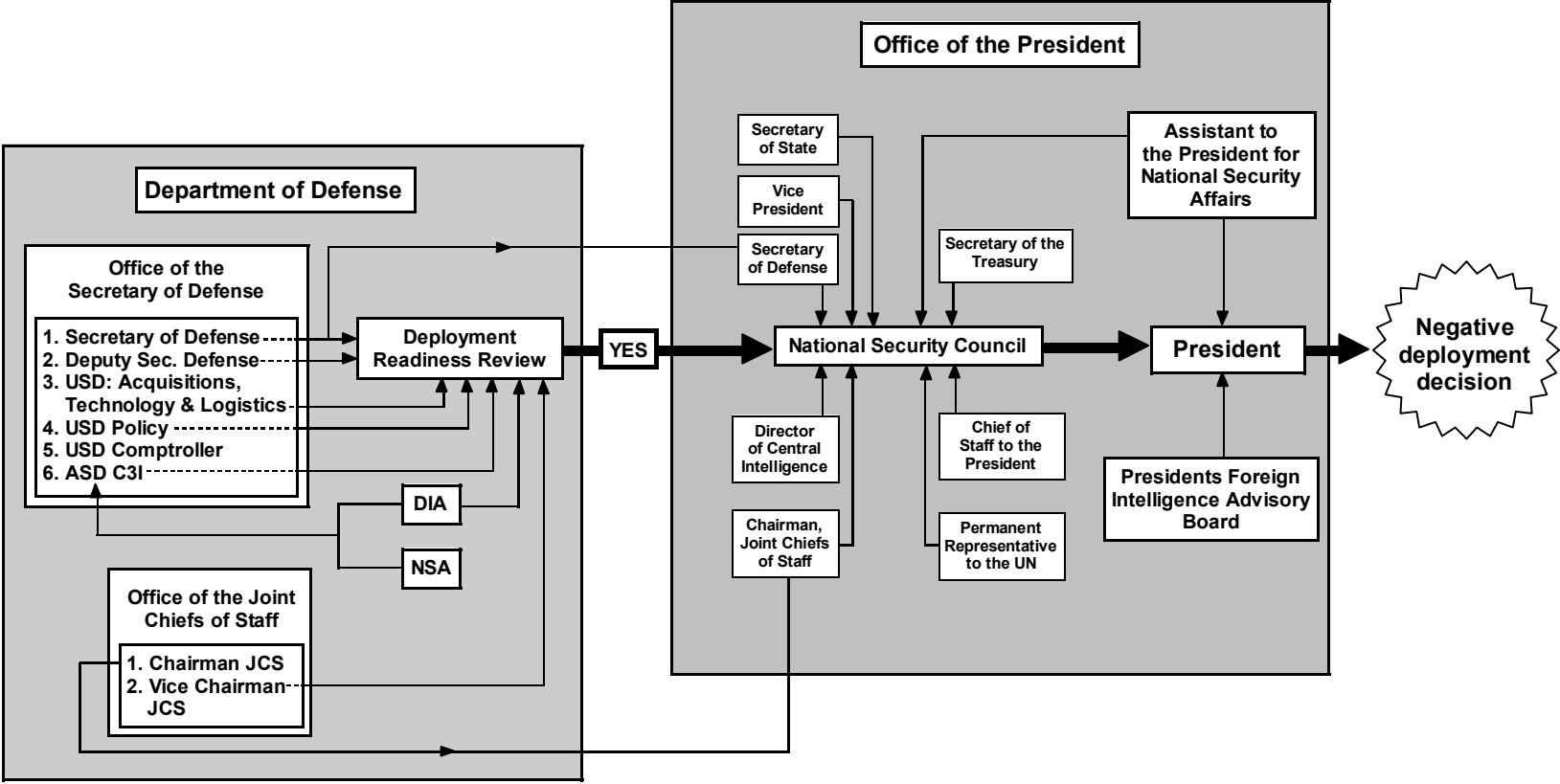


Fig. 5: The Office of the President and the Deployment Readiness Review



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