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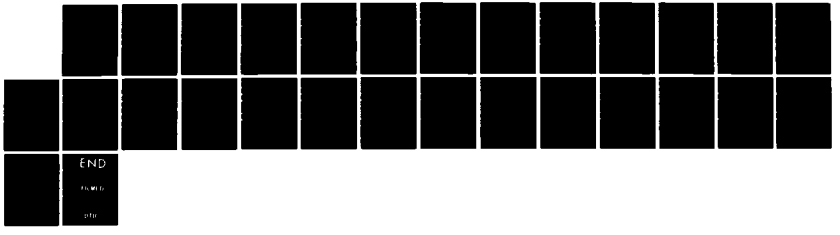

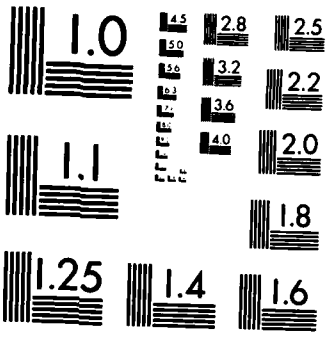

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STUDENT REPORT

Public Reception of "Star Wars": Application of Lessons Learned to Future Space Strategy Options

Ms. Nancy R. Johnson 85-1350

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TITLE PUBLIC RECEPTION OF "STAR WARS": APPLICATION OF LESSONS LEARNED TO FUTURE SPACE STRATEGY OPTIONS

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SPONSOR Lt Colonel Ted Schroeder, Air Force Research Associate, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Submitted to the faculty in partial fulfillment of requirements for graduation.

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Paper provides an analysis of the media's influence on public opinion. The arms control issue is selected from among several issues identified for the Strategic Defense Initiative for analysis of media's management and the subsequent effect on public perception of SDI. Recommendations are then made for securing public support for future space strategy options.

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PREFACE

My purpose for researching this paper's topic was to obtain personal knowledge of our National Space program - its past, current status, and future direction. B researching a specific program, the Strategic Defense Initiative, and the media management of one of the program's current issues, I gained considerable insight about the past history of our space program and the possibilities for its future. The topic evolved from a study developed by my sponsor, Lt Colonel Ted Schroeder, called the Space Strategy Option Model. This model is designed to aid our national decision makers, civilian and military, in their efforts toward shaping and implementing space policy in support of U.S. national goals. The intent of this paper is to analyze the media's potential influence on public opinion which subsequently influences the political environment affecting future space strategies. Recommendations can be made for positive public perception of future space strategies based on parallels drawn from the media's management of a current issue for the Strategic Defense Initiative. The intended purpose of this paper is to provide useful information to Lt Colonel Schroeder as he continues to develop the Space Strategy Option Model.

In addition to my sponsor, I would like to acknowledge the assistance received from the following individuals and/or offices that aided my research and development effort and helped me to obtain the necessary research materials. First, Mr. Al Engel, with the TRW Space and Technology Group, who suggested the broad research topic based on the needs of the study. Secondly, my faculty advisor, Major Jim Smith, who then narrowed the subject area to the Strategic Defense Initiative, and provided guidance on development of the objectives for the problem statement. Background materials on the Strategic Defense Initiative were sent by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs as well as the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force for Public Affairs. Finally, a fellow course officer, Major Tom Boyd, provided me with the necessary contacts in the public affairs offices which saved a considerable amount of time in the initial research of the topic.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ms. Nancy R. (Becky) Johnson has been employed by the Department of the Air Force since 1973. She is currently a budget analyst for the Office of the Surgeon General, Directorate of Medical Plans and Resources, in the Financial Management Division. Ms. Johnson holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Economics from Mary Washington College, Fredericksburg, Virginia. She plans to pursue the Masters Degree in Systems Management at the University of Southern California upon return to her assigned position.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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REPORT NUMBER 85-1350

AUTHOR(S) MS. NANCY R. JOHNSON, USAF

TITLE PUBLIC RECEPTION OF "STAR WARS": APPLICATION OF LESSONS LEARNED TO FUTURE SPACE STRATEGY OPTIONS

I. Purpose: To determine if news media coverage of a particular subject or issue influences the public's perception of it. After this is substantiated, the Strategic Defense Initiative and the related arms control issue is addressed. Public opinion polls are cited and an evaluation of selected polls is performed. Finally, recommendations are provided for program management of future space strategies.

II. Objectives: To establish that media does influence public opinion. To perform an evaluation of public perception based on news media influence. And, to provide recommendations for future decision makers.

III. Discussion: Results of public opinion polls are discussed, compared, and contrasted.

IV. Conclusions: Management by the news media of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) may have influenced the public opinion poll results which are discussed in Chapter four. Timing of the poll results coincides with heavy media coverage of the arms control issue and the recent arms negotiations. It is important that the SDI program manager understand that media can and does influence public opinion.

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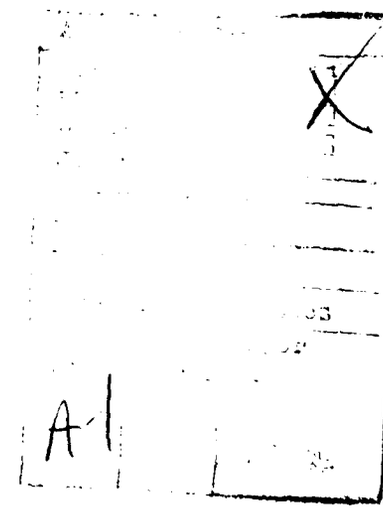
V. Recommendations: Based on analysis of the Strategic Defence Initiative, arms control issues, and the results of public opinion polls, recommendations are provided for program managers to consider when evaluating possible methods of securing positive public support.



Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

This paper analyzes the impact of media coverage on public opinion of the Strategic Defense Initiative and arms control. It establishes that media does influence public opinion, and it provides methods for a program manager to work with the media, such that he can secure positive public support for his program. This paper addresses one specific program, the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), and the arms control issue. Documentation in this paper of the author's research on these subjects is restricted to the print media only. Finally, some recommendations are provided as to how future space programs and/or options could be managed such that public opinion provides a minimum of negative effect.

Chapter two postulates that the media can and does influence the public's perception of a program based on how the media handles an issue. The attitudes and views of those people who are in the public eye and who are easily able to influence the media greatly affect public perception. This paper cites articles supporting the premise that media influences public perception of issues, especially where there are scientific controversies. It is the author's opinion that media coverage of the Strategic Defense Initiative provides a representative example of the media's views as expressed on a scientific controversy.

Chapter three provides some background information on the Strategic Defense Initiative such that the reader has a basic understanding of the program. It is not the intent of this paper to discuss in depth the complex technical intricacies of the program. The purpose of this paper is to show how a current space initiative is being managed by the media and what the program is experiencing in the way of public opinion based on the influence of the media. The arms control issue is discussed relative to the controversies surrounding the Strategic Defense Initiative program. Arms control is one of the major issues covered by the press, and it is also an issue followed by the reading public because of the implications for the public's future.

Chapter four discusses the arms control issue as handled by the media. It also explores the media management with the public

opinion poll results to determine whether the media may have had an influence on those results. Chapter four also summarizes results from recent polls and classifies proportions of the population as to their position on controversial issues. In general, the public, in January 1985, felt that the Strategic Defense Initiative would work; however, the public is also skeptical about the possibility of the Strategic Defense Initiative providing any leverage for the United States in arms reduction talks.

Chapter five addresses lessons learned from the media management of the Strategic Defense Initiative. Based on the type of space initiative that SDI represents, it is possible that applications can be made from this program to that of future programs. Realization and acceptance of these "lessons learned" and subsequent recommendations resulting from media coverage of SDI could possibly secure favorable public support if applied to future programs.

Chapter Two

PUBLIC PERCEPTION: MEDIA'S INFLUENCE

Whether the media (in particular, the written medium of newspapers and magazine articles) does in fact influence public opinion has been debated by several authoritative studies over the past years. This paper supports the opinion that media coverage does influence the public perception of an issue or a scientific controversy such as the Strategic Defense Initiative. The objective of all news reporting is to provide the public with a solid base of information on which to enable the public to form its opinions (16:69). This, in turn, affects the political decisions made by our national decision makers because they are aware of the effects public opinion can have on their voter constituency. Policy decisions concerning the future course of major governmental programs such as the Strategic Defense Initiative can be impacted significantly without the presence of favorable public support. It is difficult to quantitatively determine whether that which the news media prints really affects what the public is thinking or feeling about a certain issue.

Increased circulation of newspapers and magazines is one measurable determinant which indicates that more people are being exposed to issues. This increased circulation impacts heavily on public opinion. Even if the population is not interested in all issues printed, they are at least being exposed to the issues on a more frequent basis (16:71).

We are continuously being exposed to an information boom which is increasing on an exponential basis, resulting in everything becoming more complicated, more scientific, and more technical such that we do not have adequate education in order to comprehend what is happening (16:72). A program as intricate in structure and as full of scientific terms as the Strategic Defense Initiative is a prime candidate for the readership to just pass over for the less complicated issues. Along with these specialized fields of knowledge comes the specialized language which the media translates into layman language for the public (16:73). Concern over how well the press does this job of interpretation of the issues and the issues has resulted in a credibility gap between the press and the public. The public also has a limited capacity to assimilate all the news items being reported. The public requires information in a more concise form, using less time. Thus, the

media determines what to transmit and what to exclude. This influences public opinions because the media sometimes concentrates on just a few issues, and the situation is further complicated because not all views are heard (16:73).

If the public is not adequately informed on an issue, policy makers risk a confrontation with voters if the policy makers decide on an important issue without first making sure that the American public supports that position. Public discussion about issues such as arms control or treaties for nuclear weapon proliferation takes place, primarily, in two places, Congress and the press. Long range policy for such issues pivots on whether the public concurs with the decision. The individual citizen desiring to be well informed of the issues must read widely in the press and then apply his own thinking process to what he has been exposed. This results in his personal opinion concerning a position on a specific issue (16:74).

Also, studies have indicated that people can be influenced by noteworthy individuals labeled "opinion leaders." These opinion leaders are newspaper and magazine readers and are really just increasing the power of the press in influencing the public's opinion. In some cases the opinion leaders are the writers and the broadcasters themselves (16:72). In many instances, the public will be swayed by these individuals because the public either lacks the knowledge to understand the issue or the public just does not have the time to continuously follow the issues. Chapter four contains some examples of how opinion leaders have postulated certain positions on the Strategic Defense Initiative.

There is also some evidence that the media plays an active role in shaping and even constructing controversy, rather than simply reporting the news. Since the public has an inherently conservative bias, the public's "better safe than sorry" attitude will often cause the public to reject the concepts of advanced technology. Therefore, any appearance of a dispute over advanced technology will often work to the benefit of those who are in opposition to the technology (9:106-114).

Mr. Allan Mazur says that scientific controversies are difficult to report to the public and that the press has often been criticized for the inaccuracies which have resulted from selected media coverage of scientific information. He feels that the media has a considerable effect on the perception of scientific information because the sources of scientific information to the media and hence to the public are usually partisans in the controversy in question (9:106). Often a handful of scientists get a major share of the press attention because they are known for their controversial positions on public issues. Mr. Mazur says that their special access to the media allows them to promote their favorite issues (9:106). He also feels that a rise in the public's reaction against scientific technology appears to coincide with a rise in quantity of media coverage,

which suggests that media attention tends to elicit a conservative public bias. There are many controversial and noteworthy events which take place in the fields of science and technology; however, only a few such events are reported by the media. Even when the media seems to meet reasonable standards of accuracy, the media still seems to have considerable influence on the ways in which scientific information is perceived by the public (9:106).

Sources for scientific data to the media and hence to the public usually have a vested interest in the particular controversy; i.e., spokespersons for one of the sides, or partisan technical experts who provide technical information and status reports. Only a few scientists are considered to be important sources, and most others never talk to reporters because they are never asked. Consequently, there are a small number of important media sources as well as the small number of media people who handle the bulk of scientific coverage (9:107).

Media coverage of scientific controversies may do more than define, describe, or amplify an event; it may have profound effects on public attitudes, the precise nature of which is difficult to specify (9:109). Detailed studies of a few technical controversies suggest that there is at least one effect of media coverage on attitudes; and that is, when media coverage of a controversy increases, public opposition to the technology in question (as measured by public opinion polls) increases; and when media coverage wanes, public opposition falls off. For example, measured public opposition to the antiballistic missile rose sharply in mid-1969 after a peak of media coverage on this issue had occurred earlier in the year (9:109).

Mr. Mazur theorizes that if doubt arises about safety issues, the public prefers to reject technology and take the side of safety. This appearance of a dispute works to the benefit of the opponents of a particular technology. Thus, he concludes that sometimes high amounts of media coverage of a scientific issue increase the public's perception of danger and increase the public opposition to the issue, which can ultimately defeat its survival (9:114).

The realities of information flow in the media may often be quite different from how the public perceives them. Numerous studies have suggested that many readers of newspapers and watchers of television are turned off by the complexities and unpleasant aspects of the news itself. Therefore, controversial information or negative publicity about a program such as the Strategic Defense Initiative will tend to create higher and higher amounts of negative reaction to media coverage of a particular issue (3:709-719).

Previous studies on the impact of mass media have often examined the connection between the media agent and the public perceptions of the salience of the issues which were reported,

Some studies have indicated that the ongoing collaboration of journalists and government staff members has had a significant effect on the way the news event is presented to the public. The way that the media event is presented will often determine how the story about the issue will affect interest group leaders and decision makers (5:16-35).

The preceeding information clearly supports the premise that public opinion can be influenced by what the press transmits, how it transmits the news, and the degree to which it determines the amount of coverage and public exposure to an issue. It can increase or decrease the importance of an issue in the public's eye by subtle techniques of increased exposure, selection of what to transmit or exclude from the public, and how it chooses to present the information. The public may approach an issue with preconceived opinions about that issue, but the media can and often does have some effect on whether or not the public changes its perception of the particular issue. We will now address the Strategic Defense Initiative and the media's management of this program during the past year in order to demonstrate that media has influenced the public's perception of the arms control issue.

Chapter Three

THE STRATEGIC DEFENSE INITIATIVE

BACKGROUND

During a speech to the American people on March 23, 1983, President Reagan stated "our ultimate goal ... (is) eliminating the threat posed by strategic nuclear missiles," and "our only purpose ... is to search for ways to reduce the danger of nuclear war" (1:3). Following the speech, President Reagan directed that studies be made on the technical feasibility and policy and strategy implications involved with establishment of a defensive capability for strategic nuclear missiles. One study, known as the Defensive Technologies Study, headed by Dr James Fletcher, concluded that new technologies were becoming available that would justify a long-term research effort to identify future technical options concerning development of a defense against ballistic missiles. Two future security strategy studies (one interagency and one contractor) concluded that defensive systems could strengthen stability and deterrence and enhance prospects for arms reduction. Increasing the effectiveness of defense would provide a measure of insurance and protection against irrational or accidental nuclear attack. The President then established the Strategic Defense Initiative in order to develop technologies for effective ballistic missile defense. In March 1984, the Strategic Defense Initiative Organization was established (1:3).

Even though many details are still not clear, the general framework for the strategic ballistic missile defense system is being defined. The ultimate goal of the program is to provide security for the United States and its allies; whereas, the immediate objective is to conduct research on those technologies for defensive systems which might be capable of intercepting ballistic missiles after they have been launched and preventing them from hitting their targets (1:3).

Once developed and proven, these advanced technologies could be used to design an effective system which would eliminate the ability of ballistic missiles to support preemptive nuclear strikes, and create military and economic initiatives for negotiated force reductions by reducing the value of ballistic missiles as an offensive weapon (1:3). The United States has set a goal to

achieve, through defensive measures as well as arms control, deep reductions in nuclear offensive forces. Reliable ballistic missile defenses would provide continuing insurance against potential third party nuclear blackmail (1:4).

Strategic defenses have two components, which are ballistic missile defenses and defenses against "air-breathing" threats (bombers and cruise missiles). As the Strategic Defense Initiative moves into the future and the system completes research, development, and deployment resulting in a progressively more effective and efficient defense against strategic nuclear offensive weapons, the United States will obtain sufficient leverage to ensure the negotiation and implementation of reductions in numbers of nuclear ballistic missiles. Deployment of a highly effective, multi-phased defensive system will permit force levels to reach their negotiated nadir. The ultimate objective of the Strategic Defense Initiative is a thoroughly reliable defense against ballistic missiles, which will reduce the possibility of war (1:5-6).

A critical component of the Strategic Defense Initiative is a positive command and control system which can respond within minutes after a launch has been detected. SDI will have an integrated system architecture which will include battle management using computer and software technology required for a multi-tiered defense system as well as a technologically advanced command, control, and communications capability (1:11).

Several crucial issues have been raised concerning the Strategic Defense Initiative controversy. One major concern has been the impact that the Strategic Defense Initiative would have on arms control and the subsequent arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union. The remainder of this chapter introduces and describes the various arguments proposed by newspapers and magazine articles concerning the Strategic Defense Initiative and its possible effects on arms control.

ARMS CONTROL ISSUE

A major concern about the Strategic Defense Initiative is the effect that this space-based anti-missile program could have on the future of the arms race and on the attempts to regulate it. When the United States and the Soviet Union concluded the first round of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT 1) in 1972, they signed a treaty limiting anti-ballistic missiles (ABMs). At the time, the virtual ban on ABM systems which was agreed to by the superpowers in that treaty seemed to be a major advance in arms control. Consequently, the ABM treaty came to be regarded as a successful strategic arms control agreement due to its uniqueness in blocking deployment of a whole new type of weaponry, and due to the fact that it would act as a prerequisite for limiting or reducing offensive forces (6:54-55; 8:1).

A number of changes in the strategic environment have made it necessary to relook at the ABM issue. First, new technology has been developed that can be applied to ABM systems, and this capability is expected to advance substantially in the coming decade. Second, survivability of the United States retaliatory forces may have been assured twenty years ago, but cannot be counted upon now that the Soviet Union has deployed highly accurate, multiple warheads in large numbers. Third, ABM-applicable technologies have improved. Finally, the Soviet Union has invested heavily in air defense systems (8:1-3). There is a possibility of a unilateral Soviet ABM breakout, which could produce a dangerous and destabilizing asymmetry on short notice. Some experts feel that it is possible that the Soviet Union may try a pre-emptive strike at United States strategic forces, while using their ABM shield and based on the assumption that residual retaliation would largely be intercepted by the Soviet ABM defense systems. Others believe that this asymmetry could have adverse effects on NATO security. The systems being researched under the Strategic Defense Initiative raise questions about the durability of the ABM treaty as well as the Outer Space Treaty and how they would be affected by SDI (8:2).

A principal issue is how to best protect the United States and its allies against possible nuclear attack; whether by continuing to rely on deterrence through mutually assured destruction (offensive strategy), or by shifting to active defense aimed at assured survival (defense strategy). This has caused a division between those wanting to stay with the status quo and those divided between deploying a limited defense against ballistic missiles now and others who believe that the threat of ballistic missiles may one day be nullified (6:84; 8:4-5).

A major political issue having important security ramifications is the concern of the United States' allies over the potential impact of a U.S. strategic defense program on NATO interests in a stable military balance and in the reduction of East-West tensions through arms control and other measures. The allies fear that defense of the U.S. against ballistic missile attack would risk the United States pulling away from its strategic commitment to defend Europe by providing for extended deterrence. However, it has been stated that it may be possible to extend strategic defense coverage to Japan and Europe by using regional systems with similar technology. It could contribute toward making regional military balances more stable. Also, if adopted by both sides in a roughly symmetrical manner, strategic defenses might also improve the prospects for an arms control ceiling and nuclear weapons reductions (8:5).

The principal opposition to deploying a limited or comprehensive defense against ballistic missiles is over the arms control implications and the risks to stability if an unrestrained, parallel offensive or defensive arms race were to be started. It would be highly damaging to the future of arms control if a sudden, unilateral cancellation of the treaty by either side were to occur (8:5).

Supporters of a comprehensive strategic defense are concerned about possible destabilizing effects of the transition from a defensive to a mixed defensive/offensive strategy. The Soviet Union, during such a transition, might launch a first strike against U.S. strategic forces. The outcome would depend on how the transition had been conducted. Stable transition requires that both sides appreciate the objective of stability and the possibly crucial role that arms control could play (8:5).

Consideration should be given to the limiting of weapons in space and to the limiting of unnecessary weapons. With the possibility of a comprehensive anti-satellite (ASAT) ban, which has not been ruled out entirely, attention should be given to a possible fallback threshold of space weapons that could be verified and legally enforced by an appropriate arms control agreement. Development and testing of ASAT weapon capabilities could be recognized and restricted through arms control agreements with some degree of confidence in the ability to verify the compliance with the agreement (8:6).

Congress and other policy makers should be aware that no matter which technology paths are taken and future deployment choices are made, various kinds of arms control measures will be a minimum requirement, if not absolutely necessary. As in the case of limited ballistic missile defense, the most beneficial results of defense deployment in terms of strategic stability would be those which are accompanied by arms control limits or by reductions in the offensive threat. Secondly, by maintaining a sense of proportion about the interaction in strategic competition which could intensify threats, in addition to remembering the inherent limitations of technology in solving political and military problems, policy and decision makers can be more objective when supporting arms control proposals. It becomes vitally important not to arouse expectations that are impossible to satisfy because it could lead to a political backlash against attainable measures necessary for long-term strategic stability and enhanced national security (8:6).

Arms control plays a prominent part in the Strategic Defense Initiative. It is generally recognized and agreed upon by national leaders in both the United States and the Soviet Union that, due to the uncontrollable and catastrophic character of nuclear war, prevention of the war is one of the areas of mutual interest, even under strained and harsh circumstances. Accordingly, if the Strategic Defense Initiative will enhance deterrence, increase strategic stability, and improve the prospects for arms control, the United States should actively pursue strategic defense and arms control agreements (6:90; 13:89; 15:30-31). Chapter four discusses media management of the Strategic Defense Initiative and how various media have presented the SDI issue. There are some examples which highlight the dichotomy of positions and opinions presented by the media on controversial, emotional, and scientific issues.

Chapter Four

MEDIA MANAGEMENT OF THE STRATEGIC DEFENSE INITIATIVE ARMS CONTROL ISSUE

ANALYSIS OF ARMS CONTROL ISSUE

As indicated in Chapter two, the media does influence public opinion. Decision makers need to be cognizant of the impact of the media on the decision making process. Policy decisions concerning major programs can be affected by the media coverage and resultant public opinion polls. The role of opinion leaders must be recognized, understood, and appreciated, particularly when regarding the media's potential impact on controversial, scientific programs.

Chapter three provided background information on the arms control issue and the Strategic Defense Initiative; whereas, this chapter discusses how various newspapers and other publications presented the issues to the people, which side of the argument they defended, and the content and approach taken by the authors. This chapter concludes with an evaluation of selected public opinion polls concerning SDI and arms control.

Just before the United States and the Soviet Union returned to the negotiating table in January 1985, a deluge of newspaper articles hit the American public with speculation as to whether the pursuit of the Strategic Defense Initiative would have any impact on the outcome of the proceedings. This is not to say that the issue had not been analyzed all along by the media, but there was obviously a significant increase in the complexity and the amount of discussions and coverage by the media. Certain publications almost always predictably either take a pro or a con position concerning the worth of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI); and their articles and any subsequent articles published by that publication tend to consistently support that same position. Many articles were written jointly by scientific experts or those with foreign policy analysis skills in an apparent attempt to lend more weight and credibility to the particular position which was being postulated by that particular article. Many of the magazine articles tended to be lengthy and complex which sometimes discourages those readers who are looking for a quick understanding of an issue. The theme of some articles appears to be an attack on another article which has been written by a peer, rather than the

article presenting an unemotional, unbiased, factual approach to the situation. This author feels that the public's perception of the issue was often influenced more by the precise, concise article in the local or metropolitan newspaper, as compared to the longer, more detailed articles that often appear in the periodicals.

An article written in the 1984/1985 issue of Foreign Affairs was jointly authored by McGeorge Bundy, George F. Kennan, Gerard Smith, and Robert S. McNamara. These authors have formerly held positions ranging from Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, to Ambassador to the Soviet Union, to Chief of the United States delegation to the 1969-1972 Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, to Secretary of Defense. Their expertise in discussing the arms control issues raised by the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) certainly must be acknowledged. Their article, "The President's Choice: Star Wars or Arms Control," presents the issue as a choice between the two and proceeds to attack every argument that defends the SDI as a form of arms control. The authors postulate that unless the SDI is radically constrained during the next four years, it will bring vast new costs and dangers to the United States and to mankind. They think that there is an urgent requirement for a rational assessment of the nature and the hazards of the SDI, and they call for Congress and the public to reconsider their support for the SDI. Finally, they indicate that they have obtained the best technical advice they could find regarding the feasibility of the program; and they feel that although the President has good intentions, the results will be bad. Their article is very effective in an emotional sense, by making the reader aware that the technical aspects have been researched prior to the analysis and that the reader has no need to verify the data that they have presented. Their article's intent is to ensure that the reader understands why, in their opinion, the SDI does not represent a form of arms control. Their article is obviously biased and it presents a position that the President's objective of rendering nuclear weapons "impotent and obsolete" is not achievable through the Strategic Defense Initiative program (4:24-31).

Mr. Paul A. Chadwell, writing in the September 1984 issue of National Defense, reported on Secretary of Defense Casper W. Weinberger's address to the National Press Club on the subject of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) in May 1984. His address which was titled "Strategic Defense - A Possible Dream " was in sharp contrast to some of the various press and other sources that regard SDI as being unrealistic. Secretary Weinberger's address was prompted by the conviction and the support for SDI by some of the nation's top scientists and security experts, who regard space defense as being both practical and necessary (12:6).

Secretary Weinberger referred to the participants and members of the Fletcher and Hoffman commissions as authoritative

proponents of the SDI concept. He further stated that doubters are frequently proved wrong through the evolution of technology. He referred to President Truman's Chief of Staff who repeatedly stated that the atomic bomb would never go off. He also referred to the president of MIT who, in 1945, declared that the concept of an intercontinental missile was too absurd to even contemplate. Finally, he compared these doubters to those people and organizations who are doubtful and pessimistic about the SDI. For example, the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) has released reports which are incorrect, lack objectivity, and contain no acknowledgement of the true research and technology character of the SDI. Another example is the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS), who have also misinterpreted the goals and purposes of the SDI. Many experts in the DOD feel that some of the data presented by these two groups is incorrect by a considerable factor (12:6).

The preceeding paragraphs illustrate and point out the fact that politically motivated arguments are often perpetuated by inaccurate media coverage, which results in the public being misinformed about controversial, scientific issues.

Secretary of State George P. Shultz made a statement on 1 January 1985 which indicated that the support for President Reagan's plan to develop the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) has been growing. The Secretary substantiated the increasing public support for the SDI program and he emphasized the importance of this crucial program in ensuring the future stability of the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. The plan has been receiving both increasing support and increasing opposition for nearly two years. The Secretary of State explained that this was a result of the public thinking it over, acquiring more knowledge about the SDI program, and understanding the potential it has for eventual arms reduction and increased survivability for this nation. Mr. Shultz indicated that the experts expressed opposition to the SDI at first, and he stated that the uninformed were puzzled due to the complexity of the program. However, he stated that as people have learned more about the SDI program, they have tended to shift their views more and more toward agreement as to the importance of the Strategic Defense Initiative program (7:1).

PUBLIC OPINION POLLS

A poll of Californians conducted in February 1984 indicated that 82 percent of those polled favored development of the Strategic Defense Initiative. The survey showed a preponderance of support across the political spectrum of conservatives, moderates, and liberals. Additionally, support for the space-based defense system was much stronger among younger people as compared to older people (2:3).

According to a survey taken by the New York Times and CBS in January 1985, the American public is deeply skeptical that an arms control agreement will be achieved with the Soviet Union in the next four years. The poll results indicate that only one-fourth of the public believes that an arms agreement will be achieved during President Reagan's second term. The President's plan for the Strategic Defense Initiative met ambivalent reactions. Most people believe that the SDI will work, despite the challenges from some politicians and scientists. Yet, the majority of those polled also fear that SDI will make the arms race more dangerous. Furthermore, a modest plurality feel that the SDI will ease the arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union. Seventy percent of the public feel that President Reagan is sincerely seeking an arms agreement; yet, most are pessimistic that an arms agreement will be achieved. The poll also indicates that women are more dubious of the Soviet Union and less likely to believe the Soviet leadership's claims to want an arms agreement. However, men are more likely to believe that SDI will work and provide useful leverage for the United States when negotiating arms control agreements (11:8).

The New York Times poll covered all of the United States and was randomly conducted to represent each part of the population according to its proportion. There was more support for the Strategic Defense Initiative issue among Republicans and among people who had previously served in the armed forces. Sixty percent of the 18-29 year-olds felt that SDI would make the arms race more dangerous. In summary, people over thirty, those with prior military service, and men were the most enthusiastic and supportive of the Strategic Defense Initiative program (14:10).

World opinion and the results of polls concerning world opinions are also determining factors towards the continuance of the research and development for the SDI program. Some arms control advocates have argued that the President's R&D program for the SDI would violate the ABM treaty of 1972, and some of the foreign affairs experts expect the Soviet Union to attempt to manipulate public opinion regarding the arms race in order to increase public pressure and opposition to the SDI program (10:1).

Reasons given by those opposed to the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) program include high cost, skepticism regarding the effectiveness of the SDI program, more potential for increased arms production by both the Soviet Union and the United States, and the assumption that the SDI program will delay the possibility of any progress with the current day peace talks and arms reduction negotiations. Conversely, those who are in favor of the Strategic Defense Initiative program say that it is essential that the United States develop the capability in order to ensure continued deterrence, that the cost is still worth it because it is necessary, and that the SDI will provide additional bargaining leverage towards arms reduction talks. Chapter five will address the lessons learned and present some recommendations for decision makers to consider regarding the potential impact of the media.

Chapter Five

APPLICATION OF LESSONS LEARNED TO FUTURE SPACE STRATEGY OPTIONS (RECOMMENDATIONS)

A complete, credible, and accurate education program is necessary in order to ensure favorable public support for any future programs. The education program should include a methodology for informing media personnel as well as those people in the program management office who interface with the media. As indicated in the previous chapters, the media does influence the public's perception of issues, and it is essential that any program office have a viable public affairs function. Public affairs officers must be competent and efficient, as well as willing to work closely with the media. The program manager should ensure that these people are knowledgeable about the scientific and technical aspects of a program.

Media coverage should be closely observed, especially at times when the amount of coverage increases. The program management personnel need to be aware of the possible negative impact on public opinion whenever there is an excess of media coverage. However, excessive publicity does not necessarily ensure a favorable or an unfavorable change in the public opinion. For example, the publicity surrounding the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) has made it a household word, which has resulted in a higher appeal level. It has also resulted in a better informed public.

World opinion needs to be watched. Both our allies and our adversaries can influence the public opinion of the United States, especially with controversial issues.

Decision makers should consider all segments of the population, including the younger people and the women, both of whom are gaining more and more into the workplace, and who are rapidly acquiring a greater voice in matters such as government policy and decisions.

Studies written by the so-called experts are often invalid. These types of reports, articles, or editorials can damage the image of a program and result in lowered public opinion and also create potential funding difficulties.

If the public perceives danger, they tend to resist support for a program. And, if there is enough resistance, the program can be cancelled. For example, with the Strategic Defense Initiative,

the support is really being provided by the executive office of the Federal Government. There are many different opinions and positions on the Strategic Defence Initiative issue within Congress; however, the support by the President has decreased the public's perception of danger, and consequently decreased the public's resistance to SDI.

The program management office needs to maintain its integrity with all involved. For example, as soon as some results from R&D testing become available, these results should be provided to the public, to Congress, and to the media. The information provided to the media by the public affairs office within the program management office should be consistent and factual. There should be a complete understanding among all concerned such that the image of integrity is upheld and maintained. Accurate, reliable, and credible data will enable the program management office to maintain its integrity with Congress, the media, and with the world.

As previously indicated, one of the most important considerations for a program decision maker is to ensure favorable public support. This can be accomplished by establishing an ongoing, adequate program to educate the public throughout the life of the program to ensure that misconceptions do not get promulgated. The establishment of a source of credible information for all is important; and it is especially needed for young people and women, since their support for future space programs is becoming more and more a necessity for program survivability.

This paper establishes that media does in fact influence public opinion, which can impact funding, Congressional support, and the overall success of a program. This chapter has provided some recommendations that should be considered by a program decision maker when considering the influence of the media. Accordingly, the potential impact of a successful public affairs function which is consistently credible, unemotional, objective, and honest with the media needs to always be recognized. Finally, it cannot be overemphasized how important and essential it is that the people in program management positions appreciate the necessity of favorable public opinion, and how it will contribute to succesful mission accomplishment.

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