Great Basin Opposition
to the MX Missile:
A Case of Grassroots Mobilization and Political Influence

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AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE

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NANCY ELAINE WRIGHT

Submitted to the Department of Political Science on May 21, 1982 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Political Science

ABSTRACT

The campaign of opposition to MX missile deployment in the Great Basin of Nevada and Utah stands as a unique case of grassroots mobilization, because it took place in a region whose inhabitants both supported a strong U.S. military defense posture and considered the decision-making processes of foreign policy and national security remote to their overall concerns.

This study holds that the two paramount components of the Great Basin belief structure were support of a strong military sector to protect U.S. national security and a traditional skepticism of federal involvement in domestic affairs of the region. From this the author derives that the proposal to emplace the MX in Nevada and Utah posed a discrepancy in this value structure, in that while it was ostensibly indicative of the national security orientation that the residents favored, it also symbolized the high degree of federal involvement which they criticized.

In an effort to resolve this discrepancy, Great Basin residents factored incoming information about the missile into their pre-existing value structure according to principles of cognitive dissonance, absorbing those aspects that complied with this structure and avoiding confrontation with those that conflicted.

The study then proceeds to examine certain contextual elements, namely the ongoing Sagebrush Rebellion, launched in protest of federal ownership of western states' territory, and the Western Shoshone struggle over entitlement to land as stated in the Treaty of Ruby Valley. These elements enhanced opposition to the MX within the traditional Great Basin criticism of federal involvement.

Finally, the essay addresses the role of external actors in promoting the indigenous nature of the campaign. By allowing protest of the MX to evolve within the pre-existing value structure of the Great Basin residents, rather than trying to introduce a separate structure of opposition, these actors facilitated both cohesion and permanence in the protest effort.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

On Tuesday evening, June 5, 1979, President Jimmy Carter announced to a special meeting of the National Security Council his approval of full-scale development of the Missile Experimental (MX) system.¹ Three months later, in early September, he announced his preferred basing mode, a design that would consist of 200 mobile missiles to be shuttled among a total of 4600 shelters.² This twofold decision, which marked the culmination of a year-long governmental debate involving hundreds of agency officials, resulted in a proposed project that constituted, in the words of Arms Control Association President Herbert Scoville, Jr., "the largest construction project in our history, larger than the Panama Canal or the Alaskan pipeline."³ For the citizens of Utah and Nevada, whose states were designated to house the weapon system, the decision spearheaded the most active protest campaign in the recent history of the region. Indeed, judging from past observation, the MX proposal prompted a radical departure from traditional attitudes of most Great Basin residents regarding both national security policy and the U.S. strategic defense posture. Many Utah and Nevada citizens traditionally had supported an aggressive U.S. military stance, particularly toward the Soviet Union. Moreover, Utah's and Nevada's rural communities, which the MX was to affect most directly, had no heritage of political activity (save routine voting), especially with regard to matters of foreign policy and national security, from which they considered themselves far removed.
At the same time, however, certain regional circumstances foreshadowed a potential bias for opposition to the MX's emplacement in the area. To elaborate, the MX proposal was introduced into the Great Basin during a time of regional ambivalence toward many federal government policies. As a subsequent chapter will illustrate, the late 1970s was marked in the West by a rebellious criticism of the Carter Administration's energy and environmental policies. Many Western states, notably Utah and Nevada, perceived in these measures an unwarranted degree of federal control over the region's land, water, and mineral resources. The fact that much of these states' territory was federally owned augmented their residents' sense of helplessness, even while intensifying their resentment. This scenario, reinforced by the West's historical preference for strong local and regional control over federal involvement, was the foundation of what became known as the Sagebrush Rebellion, a movement to win state ownership of federal lands in the West.

Within this scenario, the MX posed a unique problem for the citizens of Nevada and Utah, in that while it was indicative of the defense policy orientation that they favored, it also represented a high degree of federal involvement in their lives, a phenomenon to which the Great Basin and other western states had a long heritage of opposition. Thus, while these two traditions -- support for strong national defense and opposition to federal involvement in regional matters -- were not contradictory unto themselves, the proposal to emplace the MX in the region brought them to a point of contradiction. The grassroots protest that ensued marked the reconciliation of this inconsistency.
Reconciliation of this nature is indicative of the theory of cognitive dissonance, which, in the words of Leon Festinger, "can be seen as an antecedent condition which leads to activity oriented toward dissonance reduction . . ." In our attempt to apply the theory of cognitive dissonance to the case at hand, the first step is to identify the basic components necessary for the creation of dissonance. Co-authors Jack Brehm and Arthur Cohen have postulated that these prerequisites are commitment, volition, discrepancy, and the importance of cognitions.

Thus far we have identified two commitments on the part of Great Basin residents: support for a strong military defense posture and criticism of federal involvement in the region's domestic affairs. Moreover, we can see that a certain degree of volition regarding both of these views is present. Citizens traditionally have affirmed both beliefs by voting for presidential and congressional candidates whom they deemed best to represent these beliefs. Furthermore, through the Sagebrush Rebellion, Nevadans and Utahans exhibited an even greater degree of volition with respect to the second commitment of skepticism regarding federal regulation.

While naming these two sets of components is fairly straightforward, identifying the element of discrepancy caused by the MX proposal is somewhat more complex. On the one hand, the potential strength that the MX would contribute to the strategic defense posture made its deployment consonant with the first commitment. The conditions involved in such deployment, however -- the use of federally owned land to which Nevadans and Utahans felt they were entitled, and the potential disruption of a delicate ecological balance as the result of federal policy -- ran counter to the
second commitment. The principal element of discrepancy, therefore, was
the co-existence within the MX proposal of elements that both reinforced
and contradicted the key commitments of the Great Basin belief structure.
Finally, the importance of cognitions included perceptions resulting from
incoming information regarding the missile and its projected impact through-
out the course of the controversy.

Having confirmed the existence of the prerequisites for dissonance,
we may return to Festinger, this time noting his hypotheses on cognitive
response. They are as follows: 8

(1) Because dissonance or inconsistency is inherently disconcerting
to the individual, he or she will be motivated to try to reduce
the dissonance and achieve consistency, or what Festinger
labels "consonance."

(2) When confronted with dissonance, a person not only will try to
reduce it, but also will actively avoid situations and
information that likely would increase the level of inconsistency.

Following a similar line of reasoning, John Steinbruner explains in
The Cybernetic Theory of Decision that the decision process "is organized
around the problem of controlling inherent uncertainty by means of highly
focused attention and highly programmed response."9

These statements pose a problem for our analysis, in that while,
as we have just noted, the basic components of cognitive dissonance were
present, the response was not a programmed one. On the contrary, as we
indicated earlier, the very uniqueness of the response, i.e., the grass-
roots campaign to stop the MX, is what makes the case worthy of analysis.
If we focus, however, not on Great Basin residents' unprecedented denouncement of a weapon proposal but instead on their tradition of resistance to federal involvement, we can more readily see the relevance of the cognitive dissonance model. That is to say, while opposition to the MX may have been unexpected within the framework of Great Basin attitudes toward national defense, it was a predictable reaction within the scope of pre-existing resistance to federal regulation and control.

If, then, the grassroots protest was a means of inconsistency management, what prompted management of this type to take place? After all, support for a strong national defense posture could have motivated residents in the two states to risk the negative repercussions of missile deployment for the sake of national security. Such a reply also would have reflected a process of inconsistency management and reconciliation, in that Great Basin residents would have relied on their pre-existing support for military strength to override any reasons to oppose the missile deployment. With this in mind, I contend that the grassroots mobilization against MX missile deployment in the Great Basin was the product of certain contextual elements apart from the MX issue itself and distinct to the region at that particular time. These elements not only provided a rationale for opposition to the MX but motivated the indigenous populace to take a leadership role in the mobilization effort. Moreover, key external opponents of the MX, in their sensitivity to these contextual elements, made a deliberate effort to cast the rationale for opposition to the MX into the pre-existing Great Basin value structure. To identify the circumstances surrounding the opposition and to illustrate the way in which they engendered the campaign of protest that resulted constitute the dual purposes of this essay.
Before addressing these questions, however, we should clarify what makes the uniqueness of this case significant. After all, unusual phenomena of a greater magnitude have occurred and even shaped the course of history, yet are not considered worthy of scholarly analysis.

If, however, we remind ourselves that a key purpose of such analysis is to venture beyond the realm of assumption with a view to confirming or disavowing supposition, the value of examining the MX campaign becomes evident for two reasons. First, the fact that such a phenomenon could evolve within such a non-conducive political environment questions the generally accepted belief that societal norms shape collective behavior. If this very "atomization," as Almond labeled it, formed the root of the Great Basin protest. That is to say, residents of Utah and Nevada manifested opposition to the MX initially precisely because of the negative impact that they believed it would have on their lives. Concern regarding strategic aspects of the missile and projected ramifications on alternative basing sites emerged from this self-centered basis for opposition. At the same time, the unprecedented nature of the MX campaign confirms contentions made by such scholars as Bernard Cohen, Bruce Russett, and
Donald Deluca, all of whom note the unpredictable nature of public opinion toward foreign policy and national security measures.  

Finally, while we readily may attribute much of the mobilization to the potential geographical proximity of the missile and the direct effect it would have on Nevadans' and Utahans' daily lives, we may wonder if this sense of urgency alone could produce such intensity, raise new concerns, and establish a permanent network of interactions among people who had not communicated at such length with each other prior to that time. This phenomenon becomes even more striking when we consider (as we shall later in this study) that the dual sense of urgency and self-interest that characterized grassroots opposition to the anti-ballistic missile (ABM) in the previous decade did not result in a greater awareness or concern over the weapon itself. For this reason, we may seek other causes to which the lasting quality of the MX campaign might be attributed. For the analyst, the discovery of such causes may prompt a reassessment of the dynamics of public opinion and participation in foreign and national security policy. For the arms control or peace activist, such a discovery may suggest a need to revise predicted constituent response. 

With these purposes in mind, let us now turn to the discussion at hand. The next chapter outlines the proposed structure and potential function of the MX itself, in addition to arguments both supporting and opposing deployment. Following this is a description of major events both in the evolution of decision-making regarding the basing mode and in the course of grassroots opposition. This narrative is succeeded by examinations of the roles of both the region's sociopolitical context
and the campaign leadership, and, finally, by a summary of conclusions derived from the analysis.
Notes to Chapter I


5 Ibid.


8 Festinger, op. cit., p. 3.


12 See, for example, Bernard C. Cohen, The Public's Impact on Foreign Policy, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1973), and Bruce Russett and Donald R. Deluca, "Don't Tread on Me: Public Opinion and Foreign Policy in the Eighties," Foreign Policy.

CHAPTER II

THE MX MISSILE: PURPOSES, FUNCTIONS, AND ALTERNATIVES

President Carter made the decision to build the land-based MX missile system on two grounds. First, he perceived the MX itself as a desirable counterforce weapon, having greater accuracy and yield and a larger number of warheads than the existing Minuteman ICBM force. He viewed this counterforce capability as essential to U.S. national security on the premise that the Minuteman ICBMs could not supply enough large, highly accurate warheads to cover the Soviet target system expected to be present by the 1980s. Second, Carter saw in the land-based mode a solution to the problem of ICBM vulnerability, a dilemma that had first become evident in the mid-1970s, when President Gerald Ford had advocated development of an MX system.

Carter's decision to build the MX marked a major deviation from his earlier policy orientation. Before leaving office, President Ford had requested federal funds for the MX in his final budget actions. After conducting a detailed internal examination of the strategic defense posture early in his administration, however, President Carter claimed that U.S. ICBM vulnerability was not severe enough to justify full-scale MX development.

By late 1978, Carter had reversed this decision largely on two grounds. First, the Soviet Union had flight-tested upgraded versions of their two largest and most powerful land missiles, the SS-18 and the SS-19, the year before, thus affirming its capability to conduct silo attack missions.
Second, Carter's decision was closely related to the pending SALT II treaty. According to SALT II, the United States would be allowed to possess a single new ICBM with a maximum of ten warheads. The development of the MX as this new ICBM was important to Carter both as a means of maximizing U.S. strategic capability and as a means of gaining support for SALT from those members of Congress who viewed the treaty as militarily disadvantageous to the United States.

Criticism of the MX proposal can be classified into three primary areas: (1) Soviet response to MX deployment; (2) the strategic fallacies of the system; and (3) the existence of equally effective, less costly, and less environmentally damaging means of solving the problem of ICBM vulnerability.

Regarding the first criticism, as stated previously, the MX was by design both a counterforce weapon and the largest system permissible under SALT. While the Soviet Union already possessed an equivalent system in the form of the SS-19, it nevertheless was likely to view MX deployment as a threat to its own security and respond accordingly, perhaps by adopting a launch-on-warning strategy. Such a measure would risk the possibility of accidentally initiating a nuclear exchange as the result of a computer's delivering a false signal of attack. Another possibility would be the Soviets' decision to construct an anti-ballistic missile (ABM) system to protect its land-based forces, a decision that would require a revision (or otherwise, possible abrogation) of the ABM treaty.

The contention that the MX was unworkable was based on the premise that, as a weapon with countersilo capability, that MX would not be effective unless used in a first strike. That is, according to a Soviet first-strike
scenario, the Soviet Union would be the first to empty a portion of its silos. Upon detecting a U.S. retaliatory strike, the Soviets would then empty the remainder of this silos to prevent them from being destroyed by the U.S. second strike. In this way, a second-strike countersilo missile could not act as a deterrent, because the Soviet Union would know the thrust of a U.S. attack would be not on valuable military-industrial targets, but rather on empty missile silos.

Within the realm of criticism of the MX were a number of alternatives to solving the problem of U.S. ICBM vulnerability. Some of these, such as a launch-on-warning missile strategy or protection of the land-based force with an ABM system, would pose problems already cited with respect to Soviet adoption of these measures. A sea-based MX, on the other hand, was seen as a possible solution without additional risks or shortcomings.8

One such sea-based design was labeled Shallow Underwater Missile (SUM), a system that would comprise a fleet of approximately fifty submarines, each of which would carry two ballistic missiles. This system would be deployed just off the coast of the United States, thereby avoiding the communications problems incurred by submarines situated in deeper waters.9 In addition, their small surface area and electric drive propulsion would make them less vulnerable than existing submarines such as Trident. Finally, such a system clearly would not produce the same environmental hazards of a land-based missile nor would it result in sudden population expansion and growth cost such as that brought about by land-based missile construction.10

As a result of sea-based proposals, such as SUM, much support for the MX centered not only on the ICBM vulnerability question but also on
resistance to the proposal of restructuring the strategic triad of ICBMs, sea-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and bombers by basing the MX at sea. For example, in the summer of 1980, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown testified before the Senate Committee on Armed Services, claiming:

Abandoning our ICBM force would concede an important perceptual advantage to the Soviets, a dangerously misleading signal, and the resulting dyad of forces would concede an even more important military advantage to the Soviets by easing the problems they face as they consider or pursue disarming first-strike, war-fighting, or damage-limiting capability.11

The question of the extent to which the strategic triad is valuable, even indispensable, to national security is an unresolved one. The projected negative repercussions of the MX, combined with the problematic nature of land-based alternatives, served to raise this question in the light of non-strategic tradeoffs. That is to say, was the maintenance of a triad worth the economic and environmental costs of a system such as the MX? It was within this framework that the strategic aspects of the MX controversy became important to the residents of Utah and Nevada. Had there existed no apparent alternatives to the land-based missile, the Great Basin inhabitants might have been willing to make the socio-economic and ecological sacrifices necessary to accommodate the basing mode. The fact that alternatives were present, however, along with visible support for those alternatives from their own elected state and national representatives, enabled Great Basin residents to oppose the MX without compromising their belief in a strong military defense posture.
Notes to Chapter II


3 Ibid., p. 261.

4 Scoville, op. cit., p. 97.

5 Burt, op. cit.


7 Scoville, op. cit., p. 140.


10 Ibid.

11 Cited in Congressional Digest, op. cit.
CHAPTER III
DESCRIPTION OF MAJOR EVENTS

Following Carter's decisions in June and September, political activity on the MX remained at a minimal level throughout the remainder of 1979. Nevertheless, the Senate did cast two votes on the issue. The first concerned an amendment by Senator Mark O. Hatfield (R.-Oregon) to replace the MX plan with an investigation of the possibilities for new submarines; the amendment was defeated with only eleven affirmative votes. The second entailed an amendment which passed, 89-0, introduced by Senator Ted Stevens (R.-Alaska) to avoid a senatorial commitment to any particular basing mode.¹

The advent of 1980 ushered the MX issue into considerable limelight on two levels: impact assessment and the upcoming Presidential election. On January 31, Ronald Reagan, then Republican candidate for presidential nomination, issued an official position on the MX, stating:

The race-track deployment proposed by the Carter Administration is enormously expensive and complicated and will require years to build. This proposed mode of deploying the MX should be scrapped because it is unworkable.²

While the projected scenario for the 1980 presidential election was still highly tentative, Reagan's statement foreshadowed the partisan aspect of the MX issue that the Republican and Democratic conventions would later amplify.
In early February Utah Senators Jake Garn and Orrin G. Hatch, and Nevada Senators Paul D. Laxalt and Howard W. Cannon, requested that President Carter take, in their words, a "comprehensive new look" at alternatives to the race-track basing mode. "The time has now come," they claimed, "to recognize that the changed security environment also provides us with a chance to build a new generation ICBM and base it in a mode that would be cheaper, more effective, and come on line quicker than would be possible with racetrack."3

A General Accounting Office Report issued at the end of February confirmed the senators' and others' concerns regarding cost-effectiveness by predicting a calculated total cost of at least $56 billion, as opposed to the $33 billion publicized by the Air Force.4 This authoritative refutation of the Air Force's claims exacerbated Great Basin skepticism. Soon, Senator Jake Garn was reporting that Utahan sentiment regarding the MX was, in his words, "incredibly adverse."5

Meanwhile, the Pentagon was conducting a twofold endeavor to proceed with deployment. First, Pentagon witnesses released studies claiming that the Soviet Union possessed the nuclear capability to send warheads into American coastal waters, an action that would generate giant tidal waves and thus could destroy U.S. submarines.6 Furthermore, the Pentagon claimed that an air-based missile system would pose equally serious problems, in that the Soviets could fire nuclear missiles to explode in midair, the result of which would be the annihilation of every U.S. airplane for 500,000 square miles.7 Operating on this premise, the Defense Department insisted that there was no alternative to constructing the land-based
Concurrent with these observations was the Air Force's effort to investigate alternative basing sites, notably in Texas and New Mexico. As in the case of the basing mode, however, the Air Force showed a reluctance to depart from original plans; in contrast to using the federally owned land of Nevada and Utah at no governmental expense, private land in the alternate states would cost an additional $1 billion.

By this time, both Nevada's Governor Robert List and Utah's Governor Scott Matheson were criticizing openly the seemingly reckless nature of the MX deployment procedure. Nevertheless, the ambiance remained one of latent concern more than active protest until late March when television host Bill Moyers conducted a televised debate on the issue in Salt Lake City. Following a heated discussion in which adamant Air Force representatives promoting the MX clashed with members of the arms control community who fervently insisted that the project was both unnecessary and non-viable, a somewhat antiquated farmer in the audience claimed, "First we were told about that land mode. Then the water mode. Then the air mode. But I favor the com-mode, for flushing down all this talk of nuclear war." The old farmer received a standing ovation and from that point onward, the Great Basin populace translated uneasiness into organized opposition.

Within two months the land-based proposal appeared less definite than before. In May Senators Laxalt and Garn together organized hearings before the Defense and Military Construction Subcommittees of the Committee on Appropriations in order to consider basing alternatives. Subsequently, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown and other officials announced changes in the system designed to placate the growing hostility toward the missile.
Still under increasing pressure from critics of the economic and environmental implications of the basing scheme, in May the Pentagon revised the basing mode from a "racetrack" loop to a "drag-strip" path, along which giant trucks would shuttle the missiles. This alteration would save $2 billion and use 20 percent less land. In addition, the Air Force agreed to a proposal to place only half the system in Utah and Nevada, with the remainder being situated in other Western states. This move was undertaken to alleviate the constituent pressure on Senators Garn and Laxalt, who still supported missile deployment.

As in the case of alternative basing modes and sites, however, the Air Force echoed substantial reservations about altering the original scheme. Even before the Pentagon study of the split-basing possibility was completed, high Defense Department officials predicted several negative repercussions. First, possibly up to 10,000 residents of Texas and New Mexico would have to be relocated. Second, the federal government was reluctant to utilize the productive farmland of the area for the missile site. Third, the Pentagon would have to purchase additional command and control aircraft in order to accommodate the expansion.

Recurrent indecision and uncertainty steered the MX issue directly into the wake of the presidential nominating conventions. The issue became particularly visible at the Democratic convention in August 1980, when President Carter's supporters, as well as those of nominated candidate Edward Kennedy launched attempts to mobilize opposition to the project. While Kennedy forces failed to push through a plank calling for abandonment of the MX, Carter delegate Joe Smith of Oregon drafted an anti-MX plank
that circulated the convention floor.\textsuperscript{17} At the same time, a handwritten memorandum by President Carter was making its way among the delegates as well. The note read as follows:

As commander-in-chief of American armed forces, my responsibility to protect this nation is paramount. It is crucial that our strategic nuclear forces not be vulnerable to a preemptive Soviet attack. The MX missile system is our optimum means of meeting these vital goals.

We Democrats must demonstrate to our nation and to the world that we are committed to defending our country, and to concluding a balanced nuclear arms control agreement. Therefore, it is very important for you to vote NO on Minority Reports 20 and 23 [the two dealing with the MX system].\textsuperscript{18}

Buttressing Carter's message was a letter from the high command of the AFL-CIO, also endorsing the missile system. The degree of significance that Carter delegates attached to either the President's or to the Federation's statements, or to the minority plank itself is not certain; in any case, the plank was defeated, by a vote of 1874 to 1277.\textsuperscript{19}

If the Democratic convention propelled the MX issue to a level of newfound support, the election itself drove it back into the hands of its opponents. Reagan's presidential victory evoked hopeful memories of his policy statements of ten months before. Even more heartening to the opposition campaign, however, was the two-to-one majority by which voters in eight central Nevada counties opposed on a referendum the deployment of the MX in the Great Basin.\textsuperscript{20}

On December 17, the Air Force released its Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), which had been due originally in July. The Air Force
met a barrage of government and grassroots criticism almost immediately after the multi-volume document's release. Congressman Jim Santini reportedly claimed that "if private industry had prepared a document as inadequate as the Air Force's . . . it would be soundly rejected." Governors Matheson and List likewise accused the Air Force of negligence and inconsistency in preparing the report. The Department of the Interior issued a lengthy critique of the DEIS, and charges of underestimating the MX's impact on the region came from a number of special interest organizations as well, including the Nevada Cattlemen's Association, the Public Lands Council, the National Wool Growers' Association, the Sierra Club, the National Audubon Society, and Friends of the Earth. The National Park Service cited the lack of attention to three particular areas: ramifications to the traditional lifestyle of Native Americans, the projected impact of transient construction labor on small towns, and effects on recreational areas and facilities.

On December 18, one day after the Air Force released the DEIS, Mormon Church President Spencer Kimball issued a Christmas message condemning construction of what he labeled "threatening nuclear weaponry." While he did not refer specifically to the MX project, the statement bore significant implications for two reasons. It was the first manifestation of a concern that appeared to run counter to the traditional Mormon support for substantial military expenditures that so typified the Great Basin region as a whole. Moreover, the statement foreshadowed the issuance of yet another manifestation during the following spring, one that specifically condemned MX deployment in Utah and Nevada. (While the
highly internal, private nature of the Mormon Church's decision makes it difficult to explain this gradual nature of opposition to the MX, we might speculate that the Church was taking advantage of the Christmas season to make a general yet forceful statement regarding the perceived nuclear threat to world peace. By so doing, it would have a basis of public and governmental response on which to issue its subsequent statement, which specifically condemned MX deployment in the Great Basin.)

Despite their obvious differences in source, content, and viewpoint, both events intensified the dynamics of the controversy. The contents of the respective statements, the timing of their release, and the reactions that they generated shifted the opposition campaign to a new vantage point and consequently brought activity on both sides to a climax. For instance, early in 1981 State Senator Frances Farley of Utah introduced the MX Planning Act, a measure designed to protect the state's constitutional rights in the wake of further MX developments. The act called for identification of key actors in decision-making at the federal level, accompanied by a legislative itinerary; a statement of the primary purposes of any proposed MX development project, including a full explanation of potential impacts and required permits; an indication of the degree to which a proposal might conflict with state programs involving privately or state-owned natural resources, along with proposals to mitigate these conflicts; and an explanation of any expected financial repercussions exceeding a 10 percent increase in expenses for any Utah governmental agency in the course of its daily operations.

Furthermore, in mid-March the General Accounting Office submitted to a House Interior subcommittee a report criticizing the DEIS as
"incomplete and misleading," as well as methodologically weak. As the Air Force concurrently intensified its endeavors to promote the missile with a public relations campaign that, in the words of a Washington Post correspondent, rivaled "that of McDonald's and Calvin Klein jeans," the opposition embraced an increasing number of conservatives and "hawks." In addition, the number of public hearings and panel discussions increased, with MX opponents usually constituting up to 90 percent of those present at the Air Force's environmental hearings. An anti-MX road show, which consisted of a group of indigenous grassroots campaign leaders offering panel presentations on the MX and its projected impact to the Great Basin environment and socioeconomic structure, embarked in early May for a three-week tour of ten cities in California, Washington, Oregon, Georgia, Minnesota, New York, and Illinois, thus bringing to a crest another wave of the controversy.

The churches mounted active opposition as well. A group of 26 Roman Catholic priests summoned a press conference to denounce the MX as "an immoral, wasteful, inflationary project unnecessary for the defense of the United States." The bishop of the Salt Lake City Roman Catholic Diocese similarly declared opposition to the MX on moral grounds. Finally, on May 5, two days after the aforementioned "road show" began, the First Presidency of the Mormon Church officially expressed its opposition to the Great Basin MX deployment with the following words:

Our fathers came to the Western area to establish a base from which to carry the gospel of peace to the peoples of the earth. It is ironic, and a denial of the very essence of that gospel, that in this same general area there should be constructed a mammoth weapons system potentially capable of destroying much of civilization.
The message, wired to President Reagan and to Utah's and Nevada's Congressional representatives, did not oppose the missile itself; rather, it asked the national government "to marshal the genius of our nation to find viable alternatives which will secure at an earlier date and with fewer hazards the protection from possible enemy aggression which is our common concern."35 In this way it marked both a confirmation and a deviation from the previous Christmas message, which had firmly criticized the construction of nuclear weapons, but only on a general basis. In short, it is apparent that in issuing the latter statement, the Mormon Church exchanged potency for specificity, in order that it might take a firm position even while retaining its institutional legitimacy by adhering to its traditional ideology.

Early summer revealed shifts in both policy and public opinion. The Reagan Administration began seriously considering abandoning the original basing schemes of the Carter Administration and investigating a number of alternative basing modes, including the possibility of utilizing an antiballistic missile defense system.36 Concurrently, a Cambridge Reports, Inc., nationwide opinion poll showed 73 percent of the public "more inclined" to accept the Nevada-Utah basing plan if Reagan were to support it.37

Notwithstanding this partial reversal, Senators Frances Farley and Karl Snow of Utah led a group of MX opponents in a collectively filed suit that accused the Air Force and other government agencies of violating environmental regulations in their deployment plans, thus declaring the proposed MX basing mode illegal under federal law and unconstitutional.
Specifically, the suit deemed the environmental violations "of such magnitude as to impose an unconstitutional form of military rule heretofore unprecedented in our legal system." In addition, several members of the Senate continued to urge Reagan to place the missiles in existing Titan and Minuteman silos, to be defended by anti-ballistic missiles.

Further intensified lobbying by opponents, as well as House support for the missile (albeit without a commitment on the basing mode) followed. In mid-July, Weinberger began speculating on the feasibility of deploying an airborne MX system, much to the disapproval of the Air Force. Shortly thereafter, Nevada's Governor Robert List yielded to accepting "a minimal number" of land-based missiles "if it was absolutely essential to the national defense." He qualified the concession, however, by stating his desire to be certain that "Nevada not be placed on the sacrificial altar if it is not necessary, and we don't think it is."

Late summer and early autumn found the Reagan Administration caught in a web of similar partial concessions, alternative proposals, and opposing sentiments. Reagan's consideration of an airborne MX was quickly countered by Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John G. Tower, who claimed that Congressional approval was unlikely, in view of previous attempts to gain support for an airborne basing mode. The possibility of protecting land-based MX missiles with ABM defenses emerged; however, the additional cost and the probability of having to abrogate the ABM treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union undermined the feasibility of that proposal as well. By late August, the President was seriously considering a reduced version of the original multi-shelter, land-based system.
The activity climaxed in early October, when President Reagan publicly announced that, as part of a comprehensive strategic package, he would seek Congressional approval to construct 100 MX land-based missiles, the initial 36 of which would be placed in existing Titan missile silos. Whether economic factors, constituent pressure, or internal political considerations prompted the final decision is not certain; most likely, it was a combination of all three aspects. In any case, the residents of Utah and Nevada no doubt felt entitled to claim as their own the victory that closed, in the words of Nevada's Governor List, "a very long and very difficult chapter" in the histories of both states. Just how the residents helped to bring about this victory is the subject of the remainder of this essay.
Notes to Chapter III


7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.


12 Interview (by telephone) with Paul Walker, consultant and former research director, Union of Concerned Scientists, Cambridge, Massachusetts, January 29, 1982.

13 Scoville, op. cit., p. 113.

14 Dennis A. Williams, "MX: Boon or Boondoggle?" Newsweek, May 26, 1980. (This article was reprinted by SANE and enclosed as part of the June 25, 1980 Great Basin MX Alliance newsletter.)

15 Ibid.


22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., pp. 2-3.

24. Ibid.


27. Ibid.


31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.


35. Ibid.


37. Ibid.

31


43. Ibid., p. A14a.


CHAPTER IV

THE INFLUENCE OF CONTEXT

As the opening pages of this study suggested, a number of elements apart from the MX issue itself helped to formulate the opposition. These contextual factors, which were present on both a national and a regional scale, influenced the opposition campaign on two levels. First, they provided grounds for a collective dissatisfaction that prompted protest. Second, they reinforced existing values and norms of the Great Basin populace, a phenomenon which strengthened the intensity and enthusiasm with which the residents mobilized their cause.

In order to understand better the role of sociopolitical context, let us turn to a theoretical model of social protest. In their work entitled Poor People's Movements, co-authors Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward assert that the "emergence of a protest movement entails a transformation both of consciousness and of behavior," which evolves in three dimensions. First, the "system" -- that is, the social and political context within which people function -- loses legitimacy, and the accompanying authority loses acceptance and respect. This loss of legitimacy is crucial to the emergence of social and political protest, because it destabilizes the normal constraints of institutionalization.

Piven and Cloward confirm this importance by stating, "Just as quiescence is enforced by institutional life, and just as the eruption of discontent is determined by changes in institutional life, the forms of political protest are also determined by the institutional context in which people live and work."
As we have noted previously, the institutionalized context of Nevada and Utah included staunch preference for regional and local control as opposed to federal regulation of domestic affairs. As we also have indicated, the Sagebrush Rebellion made this preference particularly evident during the time of the MX proposal. Because the MX project involved the transfer of some land under Bureau of Land Management (BLM) jurisdiction to the Air Force for missile sites, Great Basin residents quickly factored the issue into the Sagebrush Rebellion scenario. While the official development of that scenario began within the Nevada Legislature in July 1979, the movement had its roots in the passage of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of three years before. The FLPMA called for U.S. public lands to be retained in federal ownership, thus rendering the government permanent owner and manager rather than agent of public lands (which included 87 percent of Nevada and 66 percent of Utah).

The discontent triggered by the FLPMA flared into the ardent protest that became the Sagebrush Rebellion largely as the response to President Carter's energy and environmental policies vis-a-vis the Western states. For example, in the summer of 1978, one National Journal correspondent noted:

One of the biggest political headaches for Carter in pursuing water policy reform is the fact that Western states have grown to rely upon federal projects to maintain their agricultural economies and continue urban growth in an arid region. As the President calls for closer scrutiny of the efficiency of federal water programs, western interests perceive themselves to be under direct attack.
As a response to this perceived threat, seventeen members of the National Governors Association formed a subcommittee under the chairmanship of Governor Matheson of Utah specifically to urge that federal water funds be distributed more widely than suggested by Carter's proposals. The governors followed this measure with a similar action regarding Carter's energy policy. Their four-point program, drafted by Matheson and later adopted by Carter himself, emphasized a gradual approach to the use of synthetic fuels, short-term national energy conservation, the allocation of federal aid to western communities to cover the costs of population growth, and continued cooperation between the governors of the western states and the Carter Administration in the area of energy self-sufficiency, at both the regional and national levels. Concurrent with western states' struggle for greater regional autonomy regarding natural resource utilization, even while trying to augment their share of federal water allocations, was an increasing demand for federal aid to meet the social welfare needs of their communities. The Carter Administration's combination of urban reform and overall budgetary restraint had led to a reorientation from the West's problems of population growth to the dilemmas of urban maintenance associated with the North and East. As a result, many western states' populations felt, as they had regarding Carter's policy of federal water funding, that their needs were being neglected. Still, western Americans clung to their heritage of regional independence by urging that regional, state and local authorities be allowed to channel federal monies in what they perceived to be the areas most in need.

Throughout this course of events that culminated with the Sagebrush Rebellion, President Carter himself was a key target of criticism for
his policies affecting not only Utah and Nevada, but many other western states as well. As one reporter claimed, "Carter is cast as a culprit in most of the sagebrush rebellion scenarios. The President has managed to gall an astonishing range of western interests with his policies on water projects, coal regulation, irrigation, reform, Alaska lands protection and, most recently, synthetic fuels development."13

As was noted earlier, the proposed emplacement of the MX on public land readily facilitated its becoming a Sagebrush Rebellion issue. It would be erroneous, however, to equate support for the rebellion with automatic opposition to the missile; rather, a spectrum of four alignments coalesced around the Sagebrush-MX linkage.14 First, some environmentalists opposed both the MX and the Sagebrush Rebellion -- the first for reasons already cited, the second, because they viewed its success as an invitation for ranchers and miners to pursue their own interests heedless of conservationist measures. Second, others preoccupied with environmental concerns opposed the MX, but supported the Sagebrush Rebellion as a means toward their preferred goal of state ownership of the lands. Third, some exhibited a preference for the Air Force over the states as curator of the lands, given the former's pledges to ensure the environmental protection of potentially affected areas. Finally, supporters of both the Sagebrush Rebellion and the MX completed the spectrum; these individuals favored MX deployment as necessary for national security purposes but otherwise opposed further federal intervention.

Nevertheless, sagebrush rebels who opposed the MX constituted a majority over the others and readily incorporated protest of the missile
into the context of opposition to Carter's policies. Because the Sagebrush Rebellion was the product of a traditional stance of criticism, opposition to the MX was quickly absorbed into the established foundation of protest.

While the Sagebrush Rebellion provided an infrastructure of opposition to the MX for a number of Utahans and Nevadans, the Native Americans of the Great Basin -- more specifically, the Western Shoshone, the Southern Paiute, and the Washoe tribes -- initiated their protest of the MX in yet another context. In a general sense, this was a context of distrust of the federal government that had its origins in the events of centuries before. As Nevada anthropologist Martha Knack explains:

Like other social groups, Nevada's native Americans worry about what could happen to their lives, but unlike others, Indians already have extensive experience with federal social manipulation. Their history of reservation life, fluctuating federal policy, labyrinthian governmental regulations, and overtly intentional efforts to restructure their lives without their consent has taught them to be cautious of glowing federal promises and new schemes. 15

On a more specific level, the MX amplified Native Americans' perennial struggle for land entitlement, as well as their overall criticism that the U.S. government consistently had neglected the welfare of Native American citizens. Regarding the former, the Western Shoshone viewed the MX as partially the cause of the breakdown in negotiations with the federal government over rightful ownership of a tract of land as established by the Treaty of Ruby Valley. 16 The Treaty, enacted in 1863, recognized the frontiers of the Shoshone nation; however, the ambiguous wording of the treaty left open to interpretation whether or not the Western Shoshones actually owned the land. Soon after the Indian Claims
Commission was established in 1946, the Shoshones sued the government for ownership of the Ruby Valley. In 1962 the case reached a negotiated settlement for $26 million; however, most Shoshones refused to accept the money. They established the Western Shoshone Sacred Lands Association as an institutional means of confronting the Supreme Court on the issue. Nevertheless, in November 1979 the court forced distribution of the money. Because many Shoshones still have refused to participate in the exchange, however, the case remains suspended. Many members of the Shoshone tribe traced the abrupt breach in negotiations to the proposed MX deployment. As a consequence, they also believed that if they could find a means to sustain their claim to the Ruby Valley, all MX construction in Nevada would have to be halted. 17

Returning to the Piven and Cloward model of social protest, then, we might characterize the Sagebrush Rebellion and the Western Shoshones' land struggle as contextual elements that served to undermine the federal government's credibility in the eyes of Great Basin residents. The projected negative impact of MX deployment in the area further reinforced this loss of credibility, thus rendering a rationale for opposition to the missile that was consonant with pre-existing grievances.

With this in mind, let us return for a moment to the theory of cognitive dissonance that was set forth at the beginning of this study. At that point we identified the commitments of Nevadans and Utahans as support for a strong military defense and criticism of federal involvement in domestic matters affecting the region. We then concluded that the element of discrepancy in this scenario was the fact that the MX proposal reinforced the first commitment but negated the second. From
the subsequent discussion of strategic aspects of the MX, however, we acknowledged certain drawbacks in the missile system that cast doubt on the missile's value as a deterrent. Moreover, we recognized that, in view of alternatives to solving the problem of ICBM vulnerability, opposition to the MX was not necessarily incongruent with support for a strong military defense. Once Great Basin residents became aware of this fact through arms control advocates (such as Herbert Scoville of the Arms Control Association and Paul Walker of the Union of Concerned Scientists), who lectured in the area throughout the course of the controversy, their opposition to the MX intensified. Already rooted in distrust of federal policy, the protest of the MX then could benefit from greater endorsement on the grounds that opposition to the missile did not signify lack of support for national security.

Following the loss of institutional legitimacy, Piven and Cloward assert, comes a collective psychological transformation from the belief that superimposed policies may be challenged and that the events of the future may be altered.\textsuperscript{18} For the citizens of the Great Basin, this belief emerged from external signs of distrust of government and Air Force policies by their state and local representatives. In addition, criticism of the Air Force's plans on the part of various organizations and individuals outside the Great Basin not only reinforced the loss of legitimacy just discussed but also revealed the possibility that, given the increasing quantity and variety of opposition, the Air Force might not enjoy the support necessary to carry through with missile deployment. This possibility became evident early in the campaign when, as we noted
earlier, Utah and Nevada legislators at both the national and the state levels questioned the feasibility and the impact of the project. Later negative critiques by the General Accounting Office and the Department of the Interior cast further doubt on the Air Force's ability to enforce its proposals.

In the wake of increasing skepticism regarding the MX, many residents of the Great Basin began to be aware of their potential influence as constituents after members of the arms control community had ventured to Nevada and Utah to aid their cause. While most organizations of the arms control and disarmament communities manifested their opposition to the MX by endorsing petitions and issuing leaflets on the subject, SANE, a national membership organization devoted to arms control and disarmament, provided the majority of organizational assistance apart from that already present in the region. SANE field organizers Michael Mawby and Marilyn McNab opened lines of communication among various segments of MX opponents, provided financial assistance, and coordinated public presentations on the MX in the area by members of such arms control organizations as the Arms Control Association, the Council for Livable World, and the Federation of American Scientists. By endorsing the Great Basin opposition effort as it existed within the contextual parameters previously described, these external actors made themselves part of the circumstances that lent themselves to ardent protest.

Still the analysis is incomplete, for it fails to explain why some sectors of the potentially affected population responded strongly, while others remained latent, even as they opposed the missile. For example,
within the Native American population of the area, both the Western Shoshone and the Southern Paiute would have been drastically affected by MX deployment. The Western Shoshone took an active collective stance against the MX; however, the Southern Paiute as a tribe remained essentially passive. Instead, Paiute individuals either joined organizations that were active or coordinated activities outside the tribal structure. The reasons for this differentiation definitely are not clear from studies of potential impact. Both governmental and private research revealed irreversible ramifications concerning land and water usage, as well as religious practices, for the Western Shoshone and the Southern Paiute alike. Rather, we must seek explanations by looking more closely at the two peoples themselves.

One fundamental reason for the Southern Paiutes' lack of active resistance was the fact that they had accepted cash in exchange for land to which they had claimed ownership. As a result, they possessed no negotiating device comparable to that of the Western Shoshone. Moreover, unlike the Western Shoshone, who had formed the Western Shoshone Sacred Lands Association as an institutionalized means of protecting Shoshone rights, the Southern Paiute had no such organizational instrument. (In fact, the lack of institutionalization may well have been the reason for the Southern Paiutes' acceptance of cash payment in return for their land; the absence of an infrastructure for potential resistance diminished the chances of that resistance ever emerging.)

Another possible reason for the Southern Paiutes' quiescence may have been the nature of the political and economic development of the tribe, as well as their interactions with their Anglo-American neighbors.
Approximately one decade ago, a Georgian anthropologist undertook a comparative analysis of two Southern Paiute communities, one in Kaibak, Arizona and the other in Cedar City, Utah. The former kept a standard of living at least comparable to that of the Anglo-Americans in the area and maintained official affiliation with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and inter-tribal groups and a favorable rapport with Anglo-Americans living adjacent to their habitat. The Cedar City community, however, was nothing more than "a single, disorganized minority ghetto" with substandard living facilities, no formal ties with either the Bureau of Indian Affairs or inter-tribal groups, and almost no credibility or power among their Anglo-American neighbors. As a result, almost no political participation existed among the Cedar City Southern Paiute; rather, members of the community deemed themselves powerless and accepted their destinies as inevitable.

I have outlined the above findings for two reasons. First, most Southern Paiutes who would have been affected by MX deployment lived within the Cedar City community. Second, given the relatively short time period between the anthropological study and proposed missile deployment, we may presuppose a minimum level of improvement in the standard of living, even amidst optimally advantageous circumstances. This stands in sharp contrast to the Western Shoshone, many of whom were self-sufficient subsistence farmers and who had organized themselves specifically for the purpose of protecting their habitat.

This dichotomy between the Western Shoshone and the Southern Paiute suggests that even in the wake of a tangible and immediate crisis,
successful political action depends in part on a pre-existing institutional structure which individuals respect and with which they identify. Such structures usually are present primarily in societies whose members enjoy a certain sense of self-determination through economic self-reliance and social interaction with neighboring communities. The institutions thus serve to foster and protect this self-determination; therefore, stances that they take on issues are likely to be widely respected by their members. Reinforcing this argument is the strength reflected by the opposition to the MX of such strongholds as the Mormon Church, the National Cattlemen's Association, the National Wool Growers Association, and others. These organizations provided both a motive for individual protest and a means by which to aggregate and transmit that protest.

Thus, the juxtaposition of the Western Shoshone and the Southern Paiute may reveal one of the most basic prerequisites to successful political mobilization, namely the maintenance of pre-existing political institutionalization as an instrument to further political action.
Notes to Chapter IV


2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., p. 14.


5 Brodhead, op. cit., p. 53.

6 Ibid., and Kirschten, op. cit., p. 1928.


11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.


14 Brodhead, op. cit., pp. 55-56.


16 Ibid., pp. 59-65.

17 Ibid., plus Steve Linscheid, "Native America vs. the MX Missile," Grapevine (newsletter of the Joint Strategy and Action Committee), March 1981; Western Shoshone Sacred Lands Association newsletters, Autumn 1980, and August 1981; and interview (by telephone) with Glenn Holley, founder

18 Piven and Cloward, op. cit., p. 4.


20 Perhaps the most visible example of this was Janet Moose, Southern Paiute and Director of the non-profit organization Native Americans for Political Education and Action; Moose also served as a keynote panelist during the aforementioned 1981 road show that constituted part of the opposition campaign.

21 Major assessments were made by the Department of the Interior, the Great Basin MX Alliance, and the Western Shoshone Sacred Lands Association.

22 Interview with Glenn Holley, op. cit.


24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.
CHAPTER V
THE CONFIGURATION OF PROTEST

The preceding pages have illustrated the role of contextual elements in prompting Great Basin opposition to MX deployment. Moreover, they have shown how these contextual factors, along with strategic arguments against the MX, lent themselves to a protest effort that complied with the pre-existing belief structure of the region. In this way, the MX campaign served to reconcile the dissonance that the weapon proposal introduced into the minds of many Nevadan and Utahan citizens.

Context and negative strategic arguments alone, however, could not have instigated a mobilization of such scope or magnitude. Rather we must attribute the actual structure of protest to the efforts of the campaign leaders. In the case of the MX campaign, the key actors were Great Basin residents themselves. While we already have suggested that certain contextual elements contributed to this orientation, it is not clear that context alone can account for this high level of campaign indigenousness. Rather, it is possible for the leadership of mobilization to take a number of directions, regardless of the contextual parameters.

One way in which to examine this possibility is to compare the evolution of the MX campaign with similar, but not identical, protest efforts that occurred within a parallel context. The grassroots opposition to the ABM during the late 1960's and early 1970's is such an example. Like those of the Great Basin, the constituents of the areas designated potentially to house the ABM held predominantly conservative values.
and a parochial world view, and aligned themselves primarily with the Republican Party.

The following pages briefly outline grassroots protest in three sites selected for possible ABM construction between 1967 and 1969: Seattle, Washington; Chicago, Illinois; and Grand Forks, North Dakota. The first two were considered by the Defense Department for emplacement of the Sentinel system during the Johnson Administration, and the third ultimately became the location of the Safeguard System proposed by President Nixon. I have chosen these three campaigns because they represent a cross-section of varying styles and degrees of intensity of protest which, as will become evident later in this chapter, is germane to our study of the MX opposition. What follows is a brief description of each grassroots campaign.

Seattle, 1968-1969

From its origin, active opposition to ABM installation in the Seattle area was consonant with the effort to preserve Fort Lawton, the potential missile site. The territory comprising Fort Lawton originally had been donated to the Army; however, no battery had ever been constructed. Prior to the ABM proposal, the city of Seattle had attempted to acquire the area to serve as a park. The announcement that Fort Lawton might house the ABM brought an initial round of protest from environmental groups that had a history of political activity regarding local concerns (e.g. the John Audubon Society, the Wilderness Society, and the Sierra Club). Since environmentalists already enjoyed a high degree of institutional
visibility among the citizens at large, their efforts to save Fort Lawton readily attracted public attention that crystallized with the formation of the Coalition to Save Fort Lawton. The coalition comprised a diverse membership, including the Seattle Park Board and a number of conservationists, academics, and civic organizations, all of which channeled their energies toward the singular objective of having Fort Lawton abandoned as an ABM site. Their central argument was that emplacement of the ABM on Fort Lawton territory was wrong not because of any particular characteristics of the missile itself, but rather because the land was so well-suited for recreational purposes that missile construction would preclude. Their protest drew the matter to the attention of Senator Henry Jackson, who, after increased constituent pressure, confronted the Secretary of Defense in what ultimately became a successful effort to have the missile located elsewhere.4

The Defense Department's next choice was Bainbridge Island, just off the Pacific coast. When Fort Lawton residents learned of the new proposed missile site, the principal leadership of the campaign shifted to Bainbridge Island residents, most of whom protested the ABM proposal on similar environmental and aesthetic grounds. Nixon's announcement in the spring of 1969 to deploy Safeguard signaled the end of Bainbridge Island as a possible missile site, and Bainbridge Island residents consequently turned their attention to other matters.5
In Chicago and its environs, the ABM protest developed from two primary sources. The first was a group of scientists at Argonne National Laboratory who inadvertently learned of plans to locate a Sentinel system just west of Chicago. Having already familiarized themselves with the technical shortcomings of the missile, the Argonne Chapter of the Federation of American Scientists transformed passive criticism into vehement opposition. Within three weeks, the scientists captured local media attention as "The West Suburban Concerned Scientists," and soon thereafter they were responding to questions by Chicagoan citizens that the Army refused to address.

The scientists' involvement established a foundation of opposition that solidified and broadened with a series of village board meetings in Westchester and ultimately a resolution from the board opposing the selection of the suburb as a possible ABM site.

On December 12, 1969, the site installation was changed from Westchester to Libertyville, north of Chicago, and the campaign's focus consequently shifted as well. While the Argonne scientists took their rallying efforts north with the new proposal, much of the grassroots protest was triggered when fourteen locally renowned clergymen issued a formal statement of opposition to the ABM on moral grounds. The Northern Illinois Citizens Against the ABM was created soon thereafter and the group instituted a lawsuit charging the federal government with denial of due process by its failure to stipulate the locations in the authorizing legislation.
While such actions continued until the summer of 1969, when President Nixon announced his intention to modify the ABM system and select alternate locations, the dimension of the protest remained static, with missile opponents not addressing any aspect of the weapon system save prevention of its emplacement in their own locale. With this limited scope the network that the opposition produced quickly disintegrated with Nixon's transfer to a new system that would not involve the Chicago area.

North Dakota, 1969

When President Nixon assumed office in January 1969, he inherited widespread public and Congressional opposition and uncertainty regarding President Johnson's proposed Sentinel system. Two months later, Nixon announced his intention to proceed with a revised ABM system, the purposes of which would be to protect the American anti-Soviet deterrent, rather than to protect American cities from the possibility of a Chinese missile attack, which had been Johnson's rationale. Nixon also proposed to locate the modified system, which he renamed "Safeguard," in areas away from major population centers. One such choice was Grand Forks Air Force Base in North Dakota. Shortly following the announcement, a small group of antiwar activists and liberal clergy founded North Dakota Citizens Against the ABM and, with financial support from a number of peace organizations, engaged in such activities as leafletting, public speaking, and coordinating discussions on the issue with prominent scientists who opposed the missile. Meanwhile, the area's rural dwellers remained somewhat divided on the issue. Some dismissed the ABM proposal entirely
or supported Nixon's decision as a potential economic growth stimulant to the region. "We hardly even mention it," one farmer told a *New York Times* reporter. "You hardly even know there's a missile on your land."¹³ Of the anti-ABM demonstrations led by North Dakota college students, one farmer scoffed, "A bunch of kids in Grand Forks are doing all the protesting. What the hell do they know? They're 100 miles away."¹⁴

Others, however, manifested ardent opposition to ABM construction, primarily through the North Dakota State Farmers' Union, which consistently had criticized what it deemed to be an excessive military budget.¹⁵ Moreover, the union had campaigned actively for increased federal agricultural appropriations and therefore readily incorporated its protest of the ABM into its comprehensive platform that contended that the federal government was prioritizing unnecessary weapons deployment over basic human needs such as food production.¹⁶

When Congress approved ABM construction in the summer of 1969, most of the North Dakota Citizens Against the ABM leadership disbanded, returning only briefly one year later to stage a massive demonstration at the ABM site to protest its expansion.¹⁷ While the Farmers' Union also ceased its active protest of the ABM once the government had made its decision, it nevertheless maintained a unified concern regarding the construction boom that ensued. The fact that the state bore the major burden of growth cost incurred as a result of ABM construction was an issue that the union subsequently raised when North Dakota underwent subsequent rapid expansion due to discoveries of coal and crude oil in the years that followed.¹⁸

Curiously, the heaviest growth cost of the ABM fell, as we might expect, on the communities closest to the missile site, namely Nakoma
and Langdon. Yet the residents of these communities never participated actively in opposing the ABM; in fact, many enthusiastically anticipated the economic benefits while minimizing the costs of rapid economic expansion. In addition, because the Farmers' Union was relatively inactive in this eastern part of the state, the residents had no traditional institutional channel through which to express opposition. As a result, the most marked opposition to the missile occurred not near the immediate site, but rather where pre-existing institutional ties lent themselves well to such opposition.

* * * * *

With the above descriptions in mind, we might juxtapose the MX campaign with efforts against the ABM as follows:

(1) Internal issues such as depleting the water supply, incurring harmful radiation effects, and disrupting traditional lifestyles quickly incorporated, but did not overshadow, the external issue of missile deployment itself. (Conversely, in Seattle, the campaign to convert Fort Lawton into a park immediately incorporated the ABM proposal into its struggle; however, the attempt to preserve Fort Lawton actually took precedence over any major concern regarding the ABM itself.)

(2) While a few outside politically active coordinators first anticipated the potential for protest, they themselves declined to develop the infrastructure, choosing instead simply to provide the mainstream of Great Basin residents with information
and certain financial assistance with which to develop their own infrastructure. In this way, the MX campaign was, from its origin, an indigenous effort. (In Chicago, on the other hand, while a wide array of both farmers and suburban residents actively opposed the ABM and did so on the grounds that the missile would jeopardize their own lifestyles, the actual leadership of the campaign remained with the scientific community, and, to a lesser extent, with the clergy.

(3) The strong and rapidly evident connection between the MX issue and the basic interests of Great Basin residents allowed potent opposition to occur immediately in the locale of the MX itself. (This contrasts with the ABM protest in North Dakota, which was largely indigenous, but located in the geographical periphery, rather than in the potential ABM site.)

Having contrasted the MX protest with these branches of the anti-ABM campaign, we can see that the uniqueness of the former lay in the fact that while in all cases the "attentive public," whether it be scientists, academics, or antiwar activists, instigated the opposition, only in the case of the MX was the thrust of this opposition transmitted to the indigenous public as a whole (indeed, what Gabriel Almond well might label the "unattentive public").

Thus, while traditionally politically active individuals and organizations may have sustained the MX campaign financially and organizationally, the substance and configuration of the effort were a product of the Great
Basin residents themselves. Furthermore, because the issue was thus interwoven into the pre-existing fabric of the society, as we indicated previously, the network has remained intact, even following the decision not to deploy the MX in the area.

Earlier in this study, we suggested that external campaign organizers may have served as catalysts to prompt the indigenous development of opposition to the MX. These coordinators declined to superimpose a strategy of protest on the region, choosing instead to wait for Great Basin citizens to confront the Air Force on its own terms and with its own concerns. A major example of this is the early focus on the specific aim of halting Great Basin deployment, rather than any attempt to absorb this aim into a demand for more comprehensive arms control measures. Another was the low profile maintained by indigenous environmental and peace organizations; throughout the campaign's duration, members of those groups identified themselves under the Great Basin MX Alliance's rubric "miners, ranchers, local businesspeople, academics, outdoor enthusiasts, environmentalists, professionals, and Native Americans," rather than manifesting overt institutional protest. Finally, outside and indigenous activists alike made a concerted effort to leave undisturbed that part of the opposition that unfolded autonomously. The primary example of this was the sequence of interactions that led to the statement of opposition issued by the Mormon Church, a sequence in which the political activists of the area deliberately did not participate.

Perhaps Piven and Cloward best capture the importance of this nature of foresight with the following words:
Organizers and leaders choose to do one thing, or they choose to do another, and what they choose to do affects to some degree the course of the protest movement. If the area of latitude is less than leaders and organizers would prefer, it is also not enlarged when they proceed as if institutional limitations did not in fact exist by undertaking strategies which fly in the face of these constraints. The wiser course is to understand these limitations, and to exploit whatever latitude remains to enlarge the potential influence of the lower class. And if our conclusions are correct, what this means is that strategies must be pursued that escalate the momentum and impact of disruptive protest at each stage in emergence and evolution.24

Having confirmed the importance of such discretion, we still have left unanswered the question of what prompted this discretion on the part of field organizers in Utah and Nevada. Much, of course, may be attributed to individual judgment. The key element, however, was the campaign organizers' early awareness that the overall sociopolitical framework in which they were to operate was not conducive to their own purposes. Knowing this, they planned accordingly, avoiding perpetuation of their own philosophy in favor of trying to accomplish a more incremental but nevertheless more concrete objective.

Paradoxically, by deliberately confining the scope of protest, campaign coordinators observed an expansion of the range of opposition on the part of the Great Basin residents themselves. Indeed, by the time the campaign had reached its final stages, many Utahans and Nevadans opposed not only the emplacement of missiles in their home states, but the deployment of land-based missiles elsewhere as well. Moreover, a minority of Great Basin citizens began supporting more comprehensive arms control efforts as the result of their experiences and observations.
regarding the MX. This phenomenon strongly suggests that both capitalizing upon contextual advantages and thereby orienting campaign leadership to the mainstream of a society not only facilitates political mobilization but also enhances the likelihood that this mobilization will expand to address other concerns as well.
Notes to Chapter V


2 Interviews (by telephone) with Newell Mack, Boston, Massachusetts, Gregory Dash, and Donald Voorhes, Seattle, Washington.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.


7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Interview with George Stanford, Argonne National Laboratory, Chicago (by telephone).


11 Interview with George Stanford, op. cit.

12 Ibid.


14 Ibid.

15 Interview (by telephone) with Tom Davidson, Boston, Massachusetts, May 2, 1982.

16 Interview with Carl Linvre, North Dakota State Farmers Union, Jamestown North Dakota (by telephone).

17 Interview with Sue Schneiderhan and with Terry Lamb, Minneapolis, Minnesota (by telephone).

18 Interview with Carl Linvre, op. cit.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.
21 Interviews (by telephone) with Michael Mawby, SANE, Washington, D.C., and with Chad Dobson, New York. op. cit.

22 Citation on Great Basin MX Alliance letterhead.

23 Interview with Michael Mawby, op. cit.

24 Piven and Cloward, op. cit., p. 37.
CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSIONS

This essay opened with the statement that the proposal to deploy the MX missile in the Great Basin introduced an element of discrepancy into the residents' established belief pattern, which resulted in a degree of cognitive dissonance in the minds of Great Basin citizens. Because the MX ostensibly would strengthen the U.S. national defense posture, Nevadans and Utahans saw reason to support its development. In view of the region's criticism regarding federal control, however, the MX was regarded with skepticism, in that it would occupy federally owned land and hence disrupt the lifestyle and the ecological balance of the region's inhabitants.

We then asserted that, according to the principles of cognitive dissonance theory as set forth by Festinger, Brehm, Cohen, and Steinbruner, the citizens of Utah and Nevada would attempt to resolve this dissonance by factoring incoming information regarding the missile into their pre-existing value structure. In so doing, they would absorb those aspects of the MX issue that complied with this structure and avoid confronting those that conflicted.

Based on this reasoning, we then hypothesized that contextual elements apart from the MX issue itself were instrumental in providing a framework for opposition to the missile as a product of federal intervention. This postulation was based on Piven and Cloward's theory of social protest, which holds that successful collective action depends in large part on
the existence of institutional structures that engender such mobilization. For the sagebrush rebels who resented federal involvement and for the Native Americans who had a long history of distrustful relations with the government, the MX proposal and the controversy surrounding it stood as a confirmation of their arguments. Strategic criticisms of the MX itself subsequently brought Great Basin citizens to the realization that opposition to the missile was not in conflict with their traditional support for a strong national defense.

Having established the existence of this framework, we noted two phenomena that engendered the protest effort itself. First, pre-existing institutional structures that represented the residents' major interests, such as the Nevada Cattlemen's Association, the Mormon Church, and the Western Shoshone Sacred Lands Association prompted active collective protest among their constituents. The absence of such entities resulted in a marked absence or minimum level of protest, such as was the case of the Southern Paiute tribe. Second, the deliberate effort of outside field organizers not to superimpose a structure of protest, but rather to monitor and facilitate the indigenous development of protest, enabled the opposition to become an integral part of the sociopolitical infrastructure from which it evolved. This indigenous quality not only maximized the degree of opposition at the time of the controversy, but also laid a foundation for a permanent network that is likely to be revived in the event that the MX is introduced into Nevada and Utah once again.

Having summarized these findings, then, what can we infer from this case study? First, let us return to the theory of cognitive dissonance.
As was noted in the Introduction, according to this theory the act of resolving cognitive dissonance takes place within a highly programmed response. In the case of opposition to the MX, the pre-existing political behavior was manifested according to this model by the Sagebrush Rebellion, as well as by the Western Shoshone's intensified struggle to gain what they deemed to be rightful ownership of the Ruby Valley. The actual protest of the missile itself, however, was not similarly programmed; rather, it was unexpected.

From this we may derive that while the theory of cognitive dissonance may account for the recurrence of standard patterns of behavior in the wake of crisis or uncertainty, the theory itself does not address in detail the occurrence of unprecedented activity as the result of following such repertoires. This is not to say that the theory denies the occurrence of such unexpected actions; however, in focusing primarily on the decision-making process, it devotes little attention to the outcomes of that process.

I have noted this lack of focus on outcome not so much to question the strength of the theory itself as to suggest extended uses of the theory beyond the cases to which it usually is applied within the realm of political analysis. To elaborate, political scientists typically have used the theory of cognitive dissonance to explain the decision-making processes of policy advisors, especially when policy outcomes exhibit certain standard repertoires that reflect established thought patterns (e.g. Steinbruner, The Cybernetic Theory of Decision; Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics). The preceding study suggests, however, that this theory is also applicable to public
responses to policy outcomes; moreover, the theory can explain not only habitual actions or expected responses, but it can explain the occurrence of unpredictable behavior within a traditional framework.

Regarding the occurrence of unexpected behavior, while we might be tempted to view political participation at the grassroots level as a tenuous phenomenon, the Great Basin campaign has revealed that political quiescence is no more lasting or predictable than political mobilization. Indeed, in the case of opposition to the MX missile (as well as to the ABM system), protest occurred in places that we would have at least anticipated, in view of pre-existing values and a relatively passive stance toward matters outside the realm of daily living.

As a corollary to this conclusion, we may recognize that when a sector of the public responds to foreign policy measures, this response may be predicated not so much on perceptions of international events or of the foreign policy domain, but rather on domestic concerns. To recapitulate the findings of the case at hand, the indigenous public's opposition to potential MX deployment was based not on different perceptions of the Soviet Union than those held by the Carter and Reagan administrations, nor on the notion that foreign policy or national security advisors were amiss in their judgments regarding the best methods of protecting U.S. national security. Rather, their opposition was grounded in the fear of how the MX would affect their own lives. Yet by articulating opposition to deployment, Great Basin residents were attempting to alter the course of national security policy, even within this highly domestic framework.
From this we might infer that the inability of public opinion analysts to predict the nature and degree of public response to foreign policy and national security issues may be due partially to the fact that these scholars have failed to assess adequately the role of the domestic component in public response. That is, if a given foreign policy or national security measure can be linked to the domestic realm, the public at large is much more likely to elicit an active response than if no domestic aspect is apparent. Moreover, because that response is likely to be articulated within a highly domestic framework, public opinion analysts must ensure that they account for a broad spectrum of bases for response, both international and domestic.

This recognition of the domestic nature of public response to foreign and national security policy leads us to re-examine Piven and Cloward's theory of social protest, on which part of this study is based. While Piven and Cloward apply their model to the occasional uprisings of the poor, we have found this model useful for our purposes as well, because of the domestic aspects of the case just discussed. Just as the poor feel helpless as domestic policy which they deem not in their best interests is made without their consultation, so members of the public at large are likely to feel helpless when foreign or national security policy that directly affects their lives is made without their participation. Furthermore, as the preceding study has indicated, Piven and Cloward's assertion that the extent to which the masses will experience the sense of political efficacy necessary to protest such policy is contingent on institutional context, applies directly to the MX case as well. In
other words, then, we may conclude that to the extent that the Piven and Cloward model (or any other theory of social protest) addresses the issue of the public's isolation from the policy-making process, the theory is valuable to an analysis of public response to foreign and national security as well as domestic policy. Whether the desired goal is better wages, an undamaged physical and social environment, or an undisturbed heritage, the procedures undertaken to attain the goal are likely to be similar in each case.

Nevertheless, the importance of institutional context so evident in the MX case is of a somewhat different nature than that to which Piven and Cloward make reference. To wit, Piven and Cloward maintain that one of the first signs of popular restlessness in the United States is usually a sudden shift in traditional voting patterns (Piven and Cloward, Poor People's Movements, p. 16). Yet no such shift occurred in Nevada and Utah. What did occur at the national level was somewhat the reverse; despite the region's manifestation of traditional loyalty toward the Republican Party by voting for Gerald Ford as opposed to Jimmy Carter, the latter was elected president.

While the fact that the MX was the product of a Democratic presidential administration may have helped to fuel the protest in a Republican-dominated area, it does not explain the continuation and even escalation of protest following the election of Ronald Reagan. Rather, the preceding study has revealed other, more regionally-oriented contextual elements to be of greater significance. To wit, pre-existing grievances with the federal government, along with the existence of local institutions that represented
the population's long-standing interests, provided the foundation of protest.

The above suggests that the Piven and Cloward model, while robust in an overall sense, may overemphasize the importance of national electoral shifts as a gauge of impending protest, even while underestimating the equally important role of regional and local contextual elements. Furthermore, the importance of these elements may be contingent on a given society's level of internal sociopolitical development. For example, most Utahans and Nevadans maintained loyalty to the Republican Party in both the 1976 and the 1980 elections. Yet despite this consistency, they mobilized a collective protest in the form of the Sagebrush Rebellion that involved Republicans and Democrats alike. In other words, while the consistency of national voting patterns did not foreshadow either the Sagebrush Rebellion or opposition to the MX, the Sagebrush Rebellion itself pointed to the possibility of further opposition effort. Similarly, it was the localized land claim struggle of the Western Shoshone, rather than any shift in Native American voting habits, that suggested that the Western Shoshone might protest the MX as well.

Departing now from our consideration of the Piven and Cloward model, we might wish to affirm yet another important aspect of pre-existing institutionalization, this time with respect to the notion of immediate crisis. Early in the study we acknowledged that not only the proximity of the MX to Great Basin residents' habitat, but also the sense of urgency that this nearness created no doubt contributed to the fervor of the opposition. Yet at the same time we recognized that urgency alone was
not a sufficient impetus to launch a campaign of opposition. This argument became even clearer later in the study, when we observed that although the Southern Paiute Indians were to be affected as much as were the Western Shoshone, the former barely engaged in political protest. Still another confirmation of the inadequacy of the element of urgency or crisis was the fact that during the campaign against the ABM in North Dakota, those citizens who lived adjacent to the potential missile site expressed passive support for the missile, while those living in the western part of the state, where the presence of the ABM system was not felt as directly, were the leaders of the protest movement. The leadership was centered in this area not because of any greater sense of fear or awareness, but rather because the North Dakota State Farmers' Union, which offered both an infrastructure and a channel for political activity, enjoyed maximum visibility in the western part of the state.

If, as is evident from the above, the existence and degree of political protest depend more on pre-existing institutions than on a sense of urgency, then the MX case (and the ABM case as well) suggest new opportunities for grassroots protest to occur in areas where established institutional leadership offers the rationale and encouragement to act. The proximity of negative impact may be essential to arousing the consciousness of this leadership; however, it is the institution, rather than the crisis, that is likely to arouse the public at large. This is true especially in the foreign policy and national security domains, where the possibility of effecting change is likely to seem remote in the absence of tangible and trusted channels of communication and influence.
This relationship among a society's established institutions, its general populace and response to national security and foreign policy is crucial to both the analyst and the political activist. For the scholar of public opinion and foreign or national security policy, studying any one of these elements in isolation is likely to be misleading, in that public response to policy probably will evolve in a way that becomes evident only by examining the aforementioned relationship. For the political activist or grassroots coordinator, the relationship suggests that mobilization through respected channels of authority may be the surest way to successful and enduring mobilization among the public at large.
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