

# **The Last Decade of the Cold War**

**From Conflict Escalation to Conflict Transformation**



Editor

**OLAV NJØLSTAD**

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# THE LAST DECADE OF THE COLD WAR

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# THE LAST DECADE OF THE COLD WAR

From Conflict Escalation to Conflict Transformation

Editor:

OLAV NJØLSTAD

*Norwegian Nobel Institute, Oslo*



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## Series Editor's Preface

Understanding the Cold War means understanding its endings as well as its beginnings. Although we are still far away from accessing the key source materials for the 1980s, this innovative volume begins a necessary re-evaluation of that crucial decade, and especially of the final period of Cold War confrontation from 1980 to 1985. The task that Olav Njølstad and his contributors have undertaken here is a very important one, not least since we know today that with exception of the final years of the Stalin era and the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, we never came closer to a military confrontation between the superpowers than we did during this period. That in itself will be enough of a reason for future historians to pay particular attention to the early 1980s.

When they do so, these historians will be bound to deal with three key questions, which also dominate the contributions to the present volume. One is the origins of the early 1980s crisis—unlike the Korean War or the conflict over Cuba, the extreme tension of the late Cold War era does not seem to have one immediate cause. Then there is the character and the form of the Soviet crisis—what was it that happened to the Soviet Union sometime in the late 1970s that gave origin to the sense of decline that seemed to be everywhere within the system in the years that followed? Finally, there is the role of the Reagan presidency—was this leader, so often sneered at by intellectuals during his time in office, the man who not only saw us safely through a period of intense confrontation, but also, when time was ripe, saw to it that the Cold War could be ended peacefully?

To judge from this volume, the keys to understanding the intensity of the 1980s confrontation must be sought in the previous decade, but at several different levels of international history. One is the dissolution of Richard Nixon's *détente* project into mutual recriminations, threats and counter-threats during Jimmy Carter's time in office. The Soviet leaders clearly came to believe that Carter wanted a return to a more confrontational policy, while the President—with a sense of righteousness bordering on the sanctimonious—accused the Soviets in a series of mini-crises (Ethiopia, Afghanistan) of subterfuge and dishonesty. Then there is the gradual turn to the right in US public opinion, created in part by increased distrust of government following Nixon's disgraceful exit and by the forceful critique of *détente* formulated by the neo-conservative wing of the Republican Party. And then—most dangerous of all—towards the end of the 1970s, there is the collapse of trust between the two superpowers in strategic and military terms, a process that led directly to the Soviet war scare of 1983.



The effect of the new Reagan Administration anti-Soviet rhetoric and its dedication to a military build-up was therefore to heighten already existing tension to a harmful level. But the effect of the Reagan victory would probably not have been as serious in the Kremlin if it had not been for an already existing notion that the Soviet Union was losing the Cold War. One reason for this were the difficulties in the economy—all too visible to the leadership from the early 1980s on. Another was the crisis in Poland, which the Soviet leaders believed had come to only a temporary halt with the introduction of martial law in December 1981, and the lack of political or military results after the intervention in Afghanistan. And then there was the increasing lethargy and indecisiveness of the geriatric Soviet leadership, unable to formulate clear strategies and unwilling to resign and let younger people take over.

Reagan, then, in many ways got lucky, as he did so often during his career. When he came to office, instead of the threatening Soviet bear that he had fully expected to find, he found an elderly badger, still dangerous and determined, but wary, afraid and preoccupied with its own ailments. What set Reagan apart was the degree to which he was willing to adjust his policies to the new realities as he perceived them—that the Soviets, eventually, would come around to a new process of limited cooperation (but this time without the concessions from the US side that the right had criticised in the previous decade).

In the end, as we know, Reagan did not have to offer any concessions. With the new course set by Mikhail Gorbachev after his first year in office, the Soviet Union was more than willing to offer one-sided concessions, if only the United States was willing to pay lip-service to Gorbachev's vision of a new age of superpower cooperation. The 1980s in Cold War terms, therefore, become two stories, rather than one. The first is about the road to the edge of the precipice, the other is about finding the way back, after the weather had cleared. The international group of scholars who have contributed to this volume provides us with good starting points for mapping both.

Odd Arne Westad  
Series Editor

## List of Abbreviations

ABM	Anti-Ballistic Missile (treaty)
BMD	Ballistic Missile Defence
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CMEA	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
COMECON	Council for Mutual Economic Cooperation
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CSBMs	confidence and security-building measures
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
CWIHP	Cold War International History Project
DDR/GDR	German Democratic Republic (East Germany)
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency (US)
EDC	European Defence Community
EEC	European Economic Community
EMU	European Monetary Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FDR/FRG	Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany)
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
GATT	General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs
GKChP	State Emergency Committee (USSR)
ICA	International Communication Agency (US)
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
INF	Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces
IRBM	Intermediate-range Ballistic Missiles
JCL	Jimmy Carter Library
LRTNF	Long-range Theatre Nuclear Forces
MAD	Mutual Assured Destruction
MFN	Most-Favoured Nation
MIRV	Multiple Independently Targeted Re-entry Vehicles
MNCs	Multinational Companies
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NIE	National Intelligence Estimate (US)

NKVD/KGB	Soviet Secret Police
NSA	National Security Archive (US)
NSC	National Security Council (US)
OMB	Office of Management and Budget (US)
PCI	Italian Communist Party
PD	Presidential Directive (US)
<i>PPP</i>	<i>Public Papers of the Presidents</i>
PRC	Policy Review Committee (US)
PRM	Presidential Review Memorandum (US)
RDF	Rapid Deployment Force
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitations Talks/Treaty
SDI	Strategic Defense Initiative (US)
SED	United Socialist Party of (East) Germany
SLCMs	Sea-Launched Cruise Missiles
SNF	Short-range Nuclear Forces
SPD	Social Democratic Party (West German)
START	Strategic Arms Reduction Talks/Treaty
TNF	Theatre Nuclear Forces
UN	United Nations
WEU	Western European Union
WHCF	White House Central File

# Introduction

The 1980s were extraordinary years for anyone interested in the history of the Cold War and the study of international relations. Not only did the Cold War end, or at least reach its final stage, but prior to that, the 1980s was also a period of almost unprecedented rivalry and tension between the two main actors in the East-West conflict, the United States and the Soviet Union. Why and how that conflict first escalated and thereafter, in an amazingly swift process, was reversed and brought to a peaceful conclusion, are questions that Cold War historians will continue to discuss for many years to come. To answer them fully, historians will need access to documents and oral history sources still unavailable or untapped. Equally important, they will have to analyze a vast number of historical events and examine a wide range of possible causal factors and relationships. We hope that this volume will mark an important step forward in that process, in addition to presenting state-of-the-art summaries of the documentary evidence accessible at this time.

The book is organized in four parts. The first puts the 1980s into the broader historical context of the Cold War and international history of the second half of the twentieth century. Here, three prominent historians in the field address big, perhaps unanswerable, questions such as: What was the Cold War all about? Why did it last so long? And how does the 1980s fit into the big picture? In his opening essay, which includes an enlightened discussion of some of the main methodological and theoretical problems involved in this particular historical discourse, including the intriguing question of why so few people were able to foresee the sudden and peaceful collapse of the Soviet empire in the late 1980s, Michael Cox wisely reminds us about the inherent danger of hindsight in our analyses of how and why the Cold War ended. The Cold War was *not* always bound to end the way it did, he insists. The fact that there were plenty of alternative scenarios at hand made the unlikely Soviet retreat from the ideological and military confrontation with the West almost impossible to predict until the very last moment. As to the question of why the Cold War ended the way it actually did, Cox argues that whereas the change in ideas and values, especially on the Soviet side under Gorbachev, played a crucial role 'it would be absurdly one-sided to suggest that it was ideas alone which did it.' Ideas could only play a role, he submits, because of certain basic material realities, the most important one being the ultimate failure of the communist system as a material civilization.

In historical processes there is always an intrinsic, albeit often well-hidden, connection between initial situation—‘how it all started’—and final outcome. As Melvyn P. Leffler demonstrates, the unexpected ending of the Cold War becomes easier to explain when we look back to the early post-World War II period and see how the East-West conflict came about in the first place. In his analysis, four critical factors caused and thereafter influenced the evolution of the Cold War. First, the configuration of the international system after the conquering of Germany and Japan, and the differing threat perceptions stemming from it among the former wartime allies. Second, the poor material living conditions in Europe and most parts of Asia after the war, which added new intensity to the ideological-political rivalry between liberal capitalism and communism with respect to their ability to enhance individual well-being and generate economic growth. Third, the process of decolonization made the United States and the Soviet Union perceive the furtherance of their respective interests in the Third World as a zero-sum game. Finally, the birth of the atomic age triggered new fears and new ideas about national security that soon led to an unprecedented arms race that greatly complicated US-Soviet relations. Leffler goes on to show how each of these factors had by the mid-1980s undergone such fundamental changes that, provided the right catalyst was in place, it could pave the way for a peaceful dissolution of the conflict. That catalyst, he argues, occurred in the form of an individual: Mikhail Gorbachev. According to Leffler, the new Soviet leader alone had the courage and imagination to realize the magnitude of these changes as well as the position to act—‘however hesitantly and inconsistently’—upon that realization.

Although the essays in this volume fall nicely into four parts, there are numerous links and crossovers between them in terms of themes and arguments. Geir Lundestad’s essay is a good example of this. Though he addresses many of the same big questions as Cox and Leffler, the way he answers them clearly points in the same direction as most of the essays in Part IV on the role of Europe in the last decade of the Cold War. The thrust of his argument is that the contribution of Europe has been grossly underestimated, both with respect to the origin and particularly the end of the Cold War. While acknowledging the key role of Gorbachev in the peaceful winding down of the East-West confrontation, he also stresses how Gorbachev’s thinking was influenced by a range of European initiatives in the 1970s and early 1980s. The most important European contribution to the end of the Cold War, however, was the role of the East European peoples themselves in the crucial months of 1989 that secured their political freedom and brought down the previously Soviet-sponsored communist governments of their countries. As Lundestad notes, it is hard to think of a more significant contribution.

Even if we recognize that Europe, and especially the peoples of its central-eastern region, were important players in the Cold War endgame, it is impossible to deny that the primary engine in that process was located even farther to the east. Thus, in Part II, the focus shifts to the role of the former Soviet Union in general and the radical shift in Soviet thinking and policy under Gorbachev in particular. From quite different perspectives, the four essays by Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, Matthew Evangelista, Bill Odom and Jacques Lévesque discuss the socio-political roots and economic and military causes of the ‘New Thinking’ on Soviet foreign policy and military affairs which followed Gorbachev’s rise to power.

According to Brooks and Wohlforth, the key to understanding the end of the Cold War is the dramatic decline of the Soviet economy in the late 1970s, and especially, the 1980s.

Recent evidence, they claim, demonstrates that the decline 'began earlier, progressed faster, was far more pronounced, and had far greater effects on policy deliberations' than most scholars have presumed. In addition to spelling out the most significant economic and social manifestations of the decline, they argue that, in turn, this economic change also resulted in a profound change in the deeply embedded foreign-policy mindsets of the Soviet elite, with Mikhail Gorbachev as the prime example of this so-called 'identity change'. Thus, in line with Cox they argue the primacy of material factors in order to explain what motivated the radical reorientation of Soviet foreign policy in the second half of the 1980s. Gorbachev realized that, with an inefficient and rapidly declining economy at home, the burdens involved in maintaining the Cold War status quo would soon become intolerable, especially since the much stronger United States was likely to respond in kind to any renewed Soviet assault on its global interests. Hence, a strategy aimed at winding down the Cold War confrontation won widespread acceptance within the Soviet leadership, since this appeared to be a precondition for efficient domestic economic reform. To Brooks and Wohlforth, the Cold War ended 'because the weaker side began to decline and opted to capitulate to the stronger side'.

This conclusion immediately raises a next question: *Why* did the Soviet economy perform so poorly in the 1970s and 1980s? That question is thoroughly addressed by Odom, who argues that the Soviet economy was bound to stagnate after Stalin, because it was deprived of its only true incentive for renewal and transformation: the bloody and unpredictable purges against political cadres and state bureaucrats. When the occasional and unpredictable bloodying of the power apparatus was done away with under Khrushchev and then, under Brezhnev, was replaced with the almost opposite policy goal of maintaining the 'stability of cadres', the structure of incentives within the system began to work efficiently against systemic change. Thus, even if there were plenty of economic as well as military reasons for New Thinking, Gorbachev style, all the way back to the 1950s and 1960s, these reasons were never acknowledged by the power elites at the time in ways that could help revitalize and transform the Soviet economy. While Odom gives Gorbachev credit for having recognized the dual need for economic reform and unilateral withdrawal from the Cold War (the latter as a necessary precondition for the former), he also argues that Gorbachev's *perestroika* was doomed almost from the beginning by his simultaneously launched *glasnost* policy. Whereas *perestroika* could have been part of a neo-Stalinist revitalization effort designed to overcome the 'stagnation' under Brezhnev and bring the communist command economy back on track, *glasnost* was an invitation to liberal thinking and democratic influence on the government's policies. In short, whether Gorbachev realized it or not, the product of his reforms was self-contradictory, and within half a decade of his rise to power the economic and political crisis had become so deep that the system drifted rapidly towards its own dissolution.

In contrast to Odom and Brooks and Wohlforth, our next two contributors assign pre-eminence to non-materialist factors in their respective explanations of the shift in Soviet security policy under Gorbachev. Starting with Matthew Evangelista, he readily admits that military and economic factors provide a general context for understanding what happened. But, he goes on, it is impossible to understand the sources and nature of Gorbachev's policy initiatives in this field without taking into consideration 'the ideas promoted by Soviet reformers and their transnational allies and the general worldviews

and values of Soviet leaders'. In his survey of the Soviet unilateral nuclear test moratorium of August 1985, the INF Treaty, the unilateral conventional-force reductions announced by Gorbachev in his famous speech to the United Nations in December 1988, and, finally, the Soviet adherence to START I in the face of Reagan's provocative SDI ('Star Wars') program, Evangelista finds that Gorbachev's radical departure from past policies was a result of an ideological transformation in favor of 'non-offensive defence' and the somewhat utopian goal of a 'common European home' in a nuclear weapons-free world.

Jacques Lévesque takes a kind of middle-ground position in this debate. On the one hand, he agrees that material factors played a crucial role in the reorientation of Soviet policies under Gorbachev. 'There is no doubt,' he claims, that that shift 'was determined and impelled by the growing gap between the Soviet Union's economic performance and its foreign and defence commitments.' That being said, however, he insists that the most remarkable fact with respect to the end of the Cold War was *not* that it happened when it did; rather, it is 'its entirely peaceful character that makes it such an extraordinary phenomenon in modern history'. And that character, he argues, cannot be fully explained in 'realist' terms. As Lévesque sees it, it was the ideas and ideological assumptions that guided and shaped Soviet foreign policy under Gorbachev that made it possible to end the Cold War in a peaceful way. More specifically, he portrays Gorbachev as a man strongly influenced by two contradictory ideological influences: First, his 'New Thinking' had a distinct Leninist tint and impulse, including what Lévesque refers to as its 'messianic character'. Initially, at least, Gorbachev believed that the historical trends worked in favour of socialism and, provided the Cold War could be substituted with peaceful international cooperation, that a new international order could be constructed that would be more advantageous to the Soviet Union. At the same time, he and his closest aids were heavily influenced by the ideas of European social democrats like Willy Brandt and Olof Palme as well as by the theoretical legacy of west European reformist communists like Antonio Gramsci. Indeed, the very term 'New Thinking' was often attributed to a prominent Western liberal intellectual: Albert Einstein. The thrust of these influences, Lévesque argues, made it morally and intellectually impossible for Gorbachev to resort to violence in order to defend the integrity of the Soviet empire and, eventually, of the Soviet Union itself.

It takes two to tango, the saying goes, and the last decade of the Cold War was no exception in that respect. Clearly, the Soviet Union was not alone on the scene, even if much of the action was driven by Soviet initiatives, especially from 1985 onwards. Thus, in Part III we turn the focus towards the United States, the other main actor in the Cold War. Among the topics discussed are the origin and historical significance of the new US assertiveness in the early 1980s, which contributed so much to the increasing tension between East and West, as well as the strategic perceptions, calculations and goals of US policy-makers. What expectations did they have with respect to the unfolding changes in the Soviet Union and in Soviet foreign policy, and to what extent did US actions influence the direction and outcome of those changes?

In Chapter 8, Raymond L. Garthoff draws upon his extensive research and prolific writing on these topics to provide an overview of the US role in winding down the Cold War. He argues against the widely held view among Western conservatives that the military build-up and anti-Soviet rhetoric and diplomacy of the Reagan administration

put the Soviet Union on the defensive and forced Gorbachev to seek accommodation with the West before the burden of the competition would make it impossible to save and reform the communist system. According to Garthoff, 'the pursuit of domestic reformation and the quest for ending the Cold War were independent aims'. 'New Thinking', he argues, was not compelled either by Reagan's hard-line policies (SDI not forgotten), or by internal Soviet economic stagnation. Rather, it sprang out from the recognition that the Cold War had become an unnecessary as well as dangerous zero-sum competition, which could not possibly enhance Soviet interests in any way; thus, the only rational thing would be to get rid of it. Though he downplays the impact of Reagan's confrontational policies on 'New Thinking', Garthoff argues that Reagan's more conciliatory stance towards Moscow in his second term contributed in important ways to permitting Gorbachev to implement his new foreign and security policies. As for the Bush administration, Garthoff confirms the common view that Bush and his advisers remained somewhat sceptical towards Gorbachev and, except for the questions of German unification and German membership in NATO, preferred not to intervene too heavily in the revolutionary processes that took place within the rapidly dissolving Soviet empire.

The three remaining essays of Part III add important nuances to this overall interpretation without really challenging its main assumptions. In Chapter 9, Olav Njølstad presents new evidence demonstrating the depth of the shift in US Soviet policy in the last two years of the Carter administration and the extent to which Carter's national security team in 1980 was preparing even tougher anti-Soviet measures should Carter be reelected for a second term. The 'last decade' of the Cold War should therefore be seen to have started a year or two before Reagan took office. In terms of US perceptions and policies, it makes sense to talk about a 'long last decade of the Cold War' also in another respect: both within the Carter administration, especially among those policy advisers who gained influence in its last two years, and in the Reagan administration there was an increasing self-confidence on the part of the United States and its allies with respect to the long-term trends in the East-West competition. In fact, Njølstad shows that by the summer of 1980 people in the Carter White House were feeding the US President with the radical notion that the dissolution of the Soviet empire was 'not a wholly fanciful prediction for later in this [the twentieth] century', and recommending that 'US policy should sight on that strategic goal for the longer run'.

The essays of Beth Fischer and Odd Arne Westad deal in depth with US Cold War policy under Ronald Reagan. Fischer presents three alternative perspectives on what role the Reagan administration played in improving superpower relations in the 1980s. The first sees Reagan as irrelevant to the process (rather, what ended the Cold War was Gorbachev's desire for domestic reform); the second—known as the 'Reagan victory school'—gives Reagan's hard-line policies the main credit, arguing that these forced Gorbachev to make increasingly radical concessions to the West; the third sees Reagan as an impediment to improving relations and holds that his confrontational approach to the Soviet Union may actually have prolonged rather than shortened the Cold War. In Fischer's view, both of these perspectives suffer from the mistaken assumption that Reagan pursued a hard-line policy toward Moscow for the bulk of his two terms in office—something she convincingly shows he did not—and also fail to see how Reagan and Gorbachev actually shared a number of goals and views. Her own conclusion is that



the hard-line policies of the first Reagan administration had only marginal impact on Gorbachev as it was more or less abandoned even before he came to power, and that Reagan's conciliatory approach in his second term, albeit of obvious importance with respect to establishing an atmosphere of bilateral cooperation and personal friendship, was only of secondary importance when compared with the revolutionary changes taking place on the Soviet side.

This conclusion seems even more justified in light of Westad's insightful survey of US anti-communist interventionism in the Third World in the 1980s. Westad shows that, at least as far as the US-Soviet rivalry in the Third World was concerned, the radicals within the Reagan administration—that is, those policy advisers who wanted to roll back Soviet influence in Africa, Asia and Latin America—maintained their influence on US policy well into Reagan's second term, not the least with respect to Afghanistan. Thus, underneath the new conciliatory diplomacy a series of anti-Soviet political, economic and military initiatives were implemented, partly by means of covert action. What triggered the new US interventionism was an ideologically based conviction that the wave of revolutionary change in the Third World was the result, not the cause, of direct Soviet involvement and could only be reversed by a US, or US-supported, counter-offensive. As the radicals saw it, the natural development of the newly independent states towards capitalism and democracy had been deliberately perverted by Moscow during the *détente* era of the early and mid-1970s. Their determined effort to reverse this trend, which won a small but symbolically important victory with the invasion of Grenada in October 1983, appear to have had at least as much impact on the development of US-Soviet relations in the second part of the 1980s as the conciliatory approach Reagan eventually adopted in other policy areas.

Obviously, there is a lot more to be said about the Third World and the Cold War in the 1980s but that will have to wait for another book. Part IV of the book deals with the central role of Europe. After all, one striking feature of the last decade of the Cold War is that Europe once again became the center stage of the conflict. Despite the cruel and dramatic war in Afghanistan and the bloody military conflicts in Central America, Africa and South-East Asia, the endgame of the Cold War was played out primarily through events and developments taking place in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Part of the reason was the gradual retreat of China from the Cold War conflict, something which left more room and leeway to other actors. As has been spelled out by Professor Tao Wenzhao and others, the Chinese government preferred to stay more on the outside of the conflict for at least three main reasons. First, Beijing wanted to concentrate on the economic and social reforms launched by Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s. Second, after the normalization of diplomatic relations with the United States in 1978 and the development of a limited US-Sino security relationship in 1979–80, Chinese leaders began to worry that China was becoming too dependent upon the United States; thus, they put the breaks on as far as US-Chinese *rapprochement* was concerned. Third, from the late 1980s onwards, the *perestroika* and *glasnost* reforms of Gorbachev gave more reasons for worrying, as Beijing started to realize that the Soviet example might trigger a call for similar reforms in China—a fear that, in their eyes, was proven right by the political student protests at Tiananmen Square in mid-1989.<sup>1</sup> The net result was that China played a more remote role in the last decade of the Cold War than in any of its previous stages.

Starting with the Soviet non-intervention in Poland in 1980–81, Europe, on the other hand, was fully back into the limelight, and hardly ever stepped out of it again until after the Cold War, for all practical purposes, had been overcome nine years later with the democratic elections in Poland, the fall of the Wall, and the subsequent ‘Velvet Revolutions’ in Eastern Europe in that remarkable year of 1989. In a fascinating group of essays, Hans-Hermann Hertle, Frédéric Bozo, Sean Greenwood, Leopoldo Nuti, Olav Riste, Andrzej Paczkowski and Vojtech Mastny analyze the role of Germany (East and West), France, Great Britain, Italy, Denmark/Norway, Poland and Eastern Europe, respectively. From a variety of angles they try to come to grips with how their chosen countries coped with the new challenges and opportunities of the 1980s, with a particular eye on the interplay between domestic and external factors. When seen together, the main conclusion seems to be that Europe, in particular West Germany and the more liberal of the Warsaw Pact countries, had considerable impact on the way in which the Cold War ended. And even the countries with less influence on the main events and developments were deeply affected by them, in terms of both domestic policy and intra-alliance relations.

In the West, the 1980s saw European countries deeply split over national security policies and governments torn between, on the one hand, hopes of a more prominent role in the emerging common European security structure and, on the other hand, fear of marginalization within NATO unless they were receptive to US positions and priorities. As shown by Bozo, Nuti and Riste, the voters and governments in France, Italy and Denmark/Norway were not only divided over Reagan, SDI and NATO’s military modernization, they also disagreed on how to perceive and deal with Gorbachev. Even in Great Britain, Greenwood points out, where the Thatcher government maintained its strong political position throughout the 1980s, the last decade of the Cold War eventually evoked fears of marginalization, as the British stood by and witnessed how Germany became the central European player in the Cold War endgame.

In the East, the 1980s saw more and more people, even within the state and party apparatus, questioning the ability of their communist regimes to compete successfully with the capitalist West and secure the well-being of their citizens. Whatever strategy the East European governments chose in order to secure their position—cracking down on the domestic opposition; seeking financial assistance from the West or, like Hungary, making small attempts at economic reform—a vast majority of their peoples had already lost belief in and patience with dogmatic communism. When it turned out that Moscow was unable to provide economic support and unwilling even to contemplate the use of military force in support of the existing order, a deep paralysis struck the East European leaderships and—as Hertle, Paczkowski and Mastny convincingly demonstrate—played the ball into the hands of popular forces in favour of radical social and political change.

Despite this book’s division into four topical parts, there are many common themes and questions that cut across them. One such theme is the role of ideology for the peaceful ending of the Cold War. Besides the interesting debate on the relative importance of ideas and material factors already mentioned, several authors stress how old ideas and notions were used in new ways and acquired new connotations in the 1980s. For instance, Lévesque points out how Gorbachev’s idea of socialism was characterized by extreme ‘elasticity’—that is, eventually, everything that was good for freedom and democracy was deemed to be good for socialism. In this matter, Gorbachev

may well have been able to deceive himself but certainly not the peoples of Eastern Europe or their increasingly disillusioned leaders. Indeed, people like Kadar, Ceausescu, Jaruzelski and even Zhikov eventually emerged as disillusioned apologists of the socialist system, which, in Kadar's words, had proved 'incapable of unhampered development'. In the US, policy-makers once again began to look at the Cold War as a dynamic and open-ended process rather than a permanent stalemate, leading people like Huntington, Brzezinski and Odom in the Carter administration to talk about an emerging 'Second Era' of the Cold War, which they believed would bring the Soviet Union increasingly on the defensive. A similar, and even more assertive, approach was of course reflected in the anti-Soviet and anti-revolutionary offensive of the first Reagan administration as well.

A second common theme is the many fundamental differences between the opening game and the endgame of the Cold War. This is not only the main theme of Leffler's essay, but is a theme touched upon by other authors as well. For instance, Paczkowski, Lundestad and Bozo all call attention to the radically decreasing fear of Germany in Europe, and even of the Soviet Union in the 1970s and 1980s. Thus, Jaruzelski looked completely out of touch with reality when, in December 1985, he warned Mitterrand that, if left unchecked, 'Great German aspirations' would eventually be annulling the outcome of World War II. Twenty years earlier, such alarms would have found ready listeners within governmental circles almost throughout Europe. All things considered, the peaceful ending of the Cold War appears intrinsically connected to the peaceful solution of the 'German question' in twentieth century European history.

A third common theme is the role of individuals versus systems and structures. For obvious reasons, much of the discussion evolves around the contribution of Gorbachev, which is judged crucial by most of the scholars represented here. Not only is it true, as pointed out by Leffler, that the final outcome of the Cold War would have been totally unacceptable to all of Gorbachev's predecessors (as, for that matter, *no other* outcome would have been acceptable to Reagan/Bush or any of their Cold War predecessors!). Even more important, Gorbachev's rhetoric and political initiatives—especially his 'controlled avalanche of concessions' in arms-control matters (see Lévesque)—were instrumental in transcending the zero-sum game character of the Cold War mindset (see Garthoff, Evangelista, Lévesque). Indeed, Odom likens the radicalism in Gorbachev's departure from the ideological heritage of the past with that of a Roman Catholic pope dismissing the virgin birth and the resurrection of Christ as outdated myths. Besides Gorbachev, our scholars also make the roles of Carter, Reagan, Bush, Mitterrand, Thatcher, Kohl, Jaruzelski, Walesa and Honecker subjects for scrutiny, with mixed judgements for most of them. Generally speaking, the 1980s stand out as a period that gave plenty of room for individuals to influence the direction of history, either by successful initiatives, inaction, misjudgements or mistakes. Thus, Honecker is found to have deepened the East German economic and social crisis in 1988–89 because his 'Besserwissen' (complacency) made him totally incapable of learning from his own failures, whereas Jaruzelski, who eventually accepted the ending of communist one-party rule in Poland, proved himself 'capable of learning, even against his own will' (Mastny).

Another theme that is touched upon by several authors is the importance of détente for the way events unfolded in the 1980s. Lundestad, Lévesque and Mastny, in particular, stress how Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik* and the Helsinki process influenced the thinking of intellectuals and liberal-minded people in the East, including some who rose to power in

the 1980s. Thus, at the important Warsaw Pact leadership meeting in April 1989, leaders from Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria and the USSR openly admitted that the communist bloc countries had to deal with their 'human rights deficit', a notion that clearly illustrates how ideas and values associated with the Helsinki process but deeply contested by Soviet and East European authorities at the time had now, reluctantly, been adopted by influential Warsaw Pact leaders. As several of the authors here make clear, détente created economic and financial dependencies that may have had great impact in the final stages of the Cold War. The case of East Germany is particularly illustrative. According to Hertle, from 1975 to 1979, annual transfer payments from West Germany to the GDR rose from DM599.5 million to almost DM1.56 billion. Moscow accepted this because of its own inability to support the DDR economy but in terms of East-West relations, 'this policy continued to spin the spiral of indebtedness'. Most important, however, the increasing indebtedness of the East European countries—especially, the GDR, Romania and Poland—changed the power relationship within the communist bloc. When it became clear, as it eventually did in the fall of 1989, that Moscow was both unable and unwilling to fulfill its hegemonic responsibilities and solve the financial problems of its allies, the legitimacy of its rule was severely undermined. This was even more so, since Moscow had already ruled out the option of applying military force against its allies in order to preserve the existing order.

Gorbachev's rejection of the Brezhnev Doctrine is another recurrent theme in this volume. As pointed out by Paczkowski and Mastny, Gorbachev's famous assurance to the Warsaw Pact leaders at Chernenko's funeral in March 1985 could be interpreted in different ways, and should not be seen as a finite break with the past. But, at least by the end of 1987, there was strong reason to believe that Gorbachev's renunciation of force in general, and the Brezhnev Doctrine in particular, was a deadly serious commitment on his part that he would not easily go back upon. The big question, then, is how and why he and his supporters within the Soviet leadership had reached this conclusion. In addition to the extremely costly and painful lessons drawn from the military campaign in Afghanistan, at least three factors seem to have been crucial. First, Gorbachev and his supporters appear to have been genuinely appalled by the idea of resolving conflicts, domestic or international ones, by the use of force. They had, for reasons the authors represented here disagree about, adopted a mindset that gave preference to cooperation and non-violent change over confrontation and brutal suppression. In Gorbachev's own phrase, 'Cold War methods, methods of confrontation, have suffered defeat in strategic terms'.

Again, a strong case can be built in favour of the lasting impact of détente. After a decade of talk about 'peaceful coexistence', 'non-interference' and 'basic human rights', enlightened people in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe found it embarrassing to see their leaders switch back to the aggressive language and harsh methods of suppression from the *predétente* era, even if they put much of the blame for the increasing international tension on the West, and US President Ronald Reagan in particular. Inspired by Eurocommunism, especially the Italian brand, and by West European social democrats like Willy Brandt and Olof Palme, people like Aleksandr Yakovlev, Eduard Shevardnadze, Anatoly Chernyaev and Mikhail Gorbachev simply found the use of excessive force to be 'uncivilized' and therefore contrary to socialism (which they still saw as the superior way of organizing human society). Gorbachev's pardoning of Andrei

Sakharov is a case in point; Yakovlev's painful memories from Prague 1968 another. Adding to this was another lesson from the past one-and-a-half decade: suppression of the internal opposition, either at home or in the east European satellites, appeared to be increasingly counter-productive. As Paczkowski points out, the conclusions drawn from the large tide of strikes in December 1970 imposed far-reaching caution upon the Polish leadership as they began preparing for the crackdown against the trade union Solidarity a decade later. Excessive use of violence had simply become too hazardous. Whether it was such calculations that made the coup makers of August 1991 back down when they realized that they could not reach their goal unless they were ready to apply massive military force against their own people, is hard to tell. It is at least possible, as Lévesque suggests, that the new reluctance to use violence and suppression 'did weigh on the behaviour of the putschists' as well, and that the culture in support of non-violent change at this point had won such general acceptance within the Soviet leadership that even the hardliners found it impossible to act in Stalinist ways. An alternative interpretation would be that both Gorbachev and his conservative opponents realized that excessive use of violence, either at home or in Eastern Europe, would freeze relations with the West and thereby ruin all hope for a successful modernization of the Soviet economy.

The final recurring theme to be mentioned here is the question of whether the peaceful ending of the Cold War was inevitable and therefore should have been expected, if not predicted, by policy-makers and/or political scientists, East and West. Here, Cox is probably expressing the consensus view when he argues that the Cold War was not bound to end the way it actually did and that the events of 1989–91 were inevitable only in retrospect. Part of the reason, this book suggests, was the crucial role of individuals. As Odom points out, Gorbachev, 'exercising free will, ended the Cold War. How could anyone be expected to have predicted that he would?' (Interestingly, as shown by Njølstad, Odom himself was among the few Western experts and policy-makers who actually, in the summer of 1980, came pretty close to predicting the collapse of the Soviet Union within the next two decades.) Gorbachev's unclear goals and total lack of strategy for how his radical, and partly self-contradictory, domestic reforms could be carried through, surely added to the unpredictable nature of the whole process. Indeed, as Odom and Lundestad in particular remind us, the most important result of Gorbachev's policies was their *unintended* consequences. Thus, it was not only by exercising free will that the Soviet leader ended the Cold War; it was also, ironically, by inept policy-making.

Further, a number of other individuals, such as Walesa, Jaruzelski and Prime Minister Rakowski in Poland, influenced the stream of events by acting in ways that were almost impossible to predict for others. In addition, various types of collective action intervened in the causal processes in unexpected ways. As Paczkowski reminds us, 'the scale of social dissatisfaction [in Poland during 1980–81] came as a surprise to everyone, both in Warsaw, Moscow and in Washington'. In similar ways, Hertle and Mastny provide compelling examples of how the 'Velvet Revolutions' in Eastern Europe in 1989 were put in motion and carried through, in part by unforeseen government decisions, accidental circumstances and improvised popular actions. In Mastny's striking phrase, 'accidents do happen, even inevitably'—something which helps explain why large-scale historical processes like the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union are almost impossible to predict. Hertle's finely worded conclusion about East Germany really covers it all: 'even if structural reasons caused the crisis of the GDR, the actual

course of the events can only be understood as “the result of an unpredictable linking of contingent events”.’

The essays included in this book were first presented at a Nobel Symposium on the last decade of the Cold War held at Lysebu on the outskirts of Oslo in June 2002 and have since been substantially revised. The conference gathered 36 scholars and former policy-makers from 12 different countries for three days of talk and fruitful discussion. Besides the 18 scholars represented here, two of the participants deserve particular mention: Anatoly Chernyaev, former personal aide to Mikhail Gorbachev on foreign policy, and Jack F. Matlock, Jr, former US ambassador to the Soviet Union. Their insights and reminiscences were of tremendous value to the conference, not least in bringing the perceptions, concerns and dilemmas of the 1980s so vividly back to life. Karen Brutents, Douglas MacEachin and Ivan N. Kuzmin also added much to our discussions in this respect. In addition, the conference profited greatly, both scholarly and socially, from the presence of Christopher Andrew, Jordan Baev, Tom Blanton, Benjamin B. Fischer, Kjell Goldmann, Torbjørn Knutsen, Christian Ostermann, Helge Ø. Pharo, Marie-Pierre Rey, Alexandr V. Shubin, Jarle Simensen, Stein Tønnesson and Tao Wenzhao. The editor thanks them all, as he also thanks the Norwegian Nobel Committee for agreeing to host a symposium on this topic; the Nobel Foundation Symposium Committee, headed by Michael Sohlman, for funding the symposium; and the staff of the Norwegian Nobel Institute for helping to organize it. Finally, I want to express my gratitude to the Cold War History series editor Odd Arne Westad and to Frank Cass senior book editor Andrew Humphrys for their enthusiastic support in the preparation of this volume.

## NOTES

- 1 Tao Wenzhao, ‘China in the Last Decade of the Cold War’, paper presented at the Nobel Symposium on the Cold War in the 1980s, 16–19 June 2002.



PART I:  
THE 1980s IN HISTORICAL  
CONTEXT



# The 1980s Revisited or the Cold War as History— Again

*Michael Cox*

The overwhelming majority of the chapters in this book plot the course of the end of the Cold War and the transition in the East-West relationship from conflict escalation to conflict transformation, culminating with the extraordinary events of 1989 and 1991—the first of which saw the effective collapse of Soviet power in Eastern Europe, and the second of which witnessed the implosion of the USSR itself. This is a story that has been told several times before, and will no doubt be told several times again as different scholars try to plant their own theoretical and intellectual flag on this particular patch of important historical territory.<sup>1</sup> The discussion thus far has certainly been a fascinating one, which has been enriched by the active intellectual role played in it by many of the key actors who happened to be present at disintegration.<sup>2</sup> It is also a debate without end which has already divided writers and scholars almost as much as that other great story concerning the beginning of the conflict in the months and years following World War II. It would be pointless here to try to sum up this discussion. But it is at least worth mentioning that what happened between 1989 and 1991 has given rise to at least half a dozen theories about its probable causes, precipitated something of a crisis in the discipline of international relations (not to mention the now defunct subject of Sovietology), given Cold War studies a major shot in the arm, and forced quite a few scholars to wonder about the more general claims of the social sciences, given the latter's abysmal record in actually predicting what happened.<sup>3</sup> Not bad for an event which only a few years prior to its actual occurrence had been deemed to be most unlikely, and a decade earlier almost inconceivable!<sup>4</sup>

The task I have been allotted here is at one level somewhat easier than that being performed by some of the other participants, insofar as I have not been asked to write a detailed chapter based on what we historians like to refer to as 'original research'. On the other hand, it might be considered to be a good deal more taxing because unlike most of the other contributors I have been asked to answer some fairly large (in fact, impossibly huge) questions, not just about the 1980s in particular—though I will say something about that—but about the Cold War in general. Naturally, being a rather literal sort of person I have actually read the questions; moreover, being a teaching academic I am bound to follow the advice I always give to my own students before they enter the exam hall: that is, always make sure you answer the questions set and not those one would have preferred to have been asked, or those you had actually prepared an answer for. It is easy to give advice: far more difficult, however, to take it yourself. That said, I will endeavour in this somewhat schematic, and I hope provocative chapter, to answer the questions set.

First, the questions themselves. These, in rough order, ask what was the Cold War all about, an apparently easy question with a fairly obvious answer. But as we all know,

things are never quite what they appear to be. The second asks why did the Cold War endure for over 40 years, another deceptively easy question to which there is no easy or ready-made answer. Finally, where does the 1980s itself fit into the longer history of the Cold War, if in fact it fits in at all. These questions, I would suggest, raise another set of issues, which relate, directly and indirectly, to the way historians have thought about the Cold War. One I am bound to ask, which is: how well did we really understand the Cold War when it was actually in progress? I ask this for the fairly self-evident reason that if we comprehended it as well as we thought we did at the time, then why did we fail almost completely to anticipate its demise in the 1980s?<sup>5</sup> This in turn connects to a second problem concerning our understanding of the Cold War now. As historians, we all agree that we now know more about the Cold War, even if we do not know as much as some writers appear to think we know. The big issue, though, is whether or not this new material has brought us any closer to answering the important as opposed to the little questions about the Cold War. I would want to suggest it might not have done.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, a case could be made that while our detailed knowledge of the Cold War has improved considerably, theoretical thinking about the relationship has not. Moreover, some of the 'new' thinking which has been done, rather than taking the debate forward, has tended to lead to the repetition of some fairly old truths.

Finally, I want to say something about the difficult problem of perspective. Here I would insist (or at least raise the possibility) that modern historians have, in their different ways, been deeply influenced in how they think about the course of the Cold War by the fact that one of the two protagonists died such a speedy, almost painless death in 1991. Perhaps this is unavoidable. However, it does carry risks: one is the distinct tendency in some writing to search for symptoms of the Soviet system's decay and decline long before they began to make themselves manifest; and the other is to take it as read that the Cold War was always likely to end in the way in which it did (assuming it was going to end at all).<sup>7</sup> This is not only being doubly wise after the event. It also ignores the very obvious point that, until the late 1970s at least, few assumed the West could, or would, win the Cold War. In fact, a strong case could be made that until the final decade of the conflict, many people were of the opinion that it was the USSR, and not the United States, that was pulling ahead internationally. Certainly, Soviet leaders showed no signs of giving up the struggle or going under during the 1970s.<sup>8</sup> It is critically important to remember this—in part because it makes what happened during the 1980s look even more incredible, and partly because it forces us to think more carefully about how we write and think about the Cold War as a living phenomenon. The astonishing events between 1989 and 1991 provoked, and continue to provoke, questions that few of us ever expected to be asking. But we should be careful not to assume that, because these events happened, there was a natural and smooth progression leading ineluctably towards the final denouement. Hindsight is a wonderful thing, but it is something that should be avoided like the plague by all serious historians.<sup>9</sup>

### *The Cold War as History*

If there is one thing that can be said with any certainty about the long academic debate about the meaning of the Cold War it is that it was remarkably intense and often deeply

divisive. One British historian referred to it in typically understated fashion as being 'somewhat vitriolic',<sup>10</sup> and this seems as good a way as any of describing the discussion before 1989—particularly that centrally and critically important part of it which took place in the United States. Most Europeans, it would be fair to say, often felt like spectators in this battle of ideas; and though we might all have had a dog to support in this particular fight—and to be fair, the different dogs in question did occasionally glance up from their bickering to see what we might be saying—it is difficult not to feel that this was, by and large, an American discussion, dominated by Americans and shaped by American preoccupations largely concerning the role of the United States in the Cold War. None the less, the discussion impacted on us all and certainly Europeans made their mark (though much less than they would like to imagine) in a highly complex discussion about the deeper causes of the East-West impasse.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps how complex can be best appreciated by merely listing the extraordinary range of academic opinion there was about the conflict in general, and the period between 1945 and 1950 in particular.

Thus, depending on intellectual taste, political preference and methodological stance, writers interpreted the transition from wartime alliance to post-war confrontation in at least one of the following ways: as a belated response by the West to the Soviet refusal to allow free elections in Eastern Europe, a defensive Western reaction to the threat of Soviet military power, reasonable concerns in Washington about the further spread of communism to western Europe, a more general crisis in the balance of power caused by Germany's defeat in World War II, misperceptions on both sides about the other's intentions, the American practice of atomic diplomacy, a clash of social systems and possibly civilizations, US hegemony, Open Door expansion (to create an open world economy favourable to US interests), domestic political pressures, the military-industrial complex, bureaucratic politics, learning the (wrong) lessons of history, a security dilemma, and ideas and values. If that long list does not satisfy, one can always blame it all on the perfidious British, who according to one school of thought at least, helped start it all either as a way of breaking the back of US isolationism by playing to anti-communist fears in the United States, or by pursuing its own imperial ambitions, which were bound to end in an extended conflict with Soviet Russia.<sup>12</sup> All this (and no doubt much more) has led at least one leading European historian of the Cold War to conclude that there would appear to be as many answers to the question about how the contest began, 'as there are scholars who have researched the subject'.<sup>13</sup> Louis Halle made much the same point several years ago. There is not just one Cold War, he argued in an almost post-modern vein, but many. In fact, according to Halle, there would seem to be 'as many Cold wars as there are individual minds', and 'none of them', he concluded, was even 'the "true" Cold War'.<sup>14</sup>

Of course, most academics have tried (and still try) to make sense of all this by simplifying, and perhaps the biggest simplification we have all made has been to reach for our Hegelian triad of Cold War theories. First, as we tell our students as if they were attending a bible class, there were the traditionalists. This was an odd amalgam of writers ranging from straight-forward apologists for US foreign policy to realist critics like George Kennan and Hans Morgenthau. This 'school' disagreed about a great deal, including how to define the Soviet threat, and the means by which the United States should respond to it. What they did agree about, however, was that the basic cause of the Cold War had to be sought in an analysis of the Soviet Union, and in the way in which

this totalitarian regime, with its unique pre-revolutionary history and aggressive communist system fundamentally opposed to capitalism, conducted itself outside of its own borders. The responsibility for the Cold War therefore lay with the USSR. Not so, claimed the revisionists from Wisconsin led by the remarkable, and remarkably influential William Appleman Williams. The USSR was too weak, its foreign policy too defensive, and its leaders too cautious, for Russia to seek confrontation with the United States. If nothing else, it was just not in its interests to do so. Hence, the underlying sources of the antagonism had to be unearthed somewhere else, and that somewhere, according to the revisionists (and I simplify), was not Soviet ideology and Soviet capabilities taken together—the favourite topics of the traditionalists—but the refusal of the much more powerful United States to co-exist with a system so different from its own; a system, moreover, which kept the doors of its own rather pathetically weak empire closed to US economic penetration. Hence, said the revisionists, don't blame the insecure Russians for what happened after 1946 or 1947. They, after all, had fewer options than the Americans. Instead, blame the United States.

Not surprisingly, such an explanation, which laid all the responsibility for the Cold War at the door of the United States while providing little in the way of an explanation as to why US policy-makers might have been concerned about the USSR after World War II, did not find ready admirers everywhere: and one who perhaps admired the revisionists more in the 1970s than he was to do later was John Gaddis—the final synthesis in our very brief journey through Hegel.<sup>15</sup> Whether Gaddis aimed to go beyond more traditional accounts by integrating the insights of the revisionists (while rejecting their method), or simply aimed to make traditionalism intellectually more capable of dealing with radical attack, remains unclear.<sup>16</sup> It is not even clear that he advanced a new theory of the Cold War. However, what he did do—much to the relief of most liberal intellectuals—was to plot a middle, and more comfortable, course between two essentialist positions, one of which looked for the key to the Cold War in a study of Russian and Soviet history, and the other of which sought to grasp its dynamics through a detailed analysis of US political economy and the drive for an Open Door. This, I think, was critical. Post-revisionism no doubt succeeded for all sorts of good academic reasons, including the close attention it paid to American archives, its recognition of the messy character of the US foreign policy process, and (it has to be said) the quite brilliant way in which Gaddis himself managed to synthesize a mass of complicated material and still tell an interesting story without losing the plot. But, one suspects, it did particularly well because it took the political sting out of the debate and guided it back into the much calmer waters where most academics felt more comfortable.<sup>17</sup>

Naturally, this brief summary hardly does justice to what had become a minor academic industry by the 1980s. Nor does it really embrace each and every theoretical position, including the latter-day expression of what some see as a more sophisticated version of revisionism which has been served up to us under the twin labels of 'corporatism' and 'world systems' theory.<sup>18</sup> Nor, according to certain writers, does it tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Some, in fact, would insist that what unites these three competing schools is perhaps far more significant than what divides them—and what unites them, it has been argued, has been a relentless concentration on the actions of the superpowers and an almost complete indifference to the active role played by other players in the Cold War, including, most obviously, the European

powers.<sup>19</sup> Finally, such a triptych of interpretations, some believe, does very little to advance our understanding of the wider global context within which the Cold War occurred. To use the jargon derived from international relations, the three theories in question are all very 'state-centric' in character, and consequently fail to take account of the larger changes that were taking place in the world between 1914 and 1945. These were critical, for they not only made the Cold War possible—as the authors of NSC (National Security Council) Document 68 admitted quite openly—but established the context within which the conflict was then fought out. Indeed, these various developments, which weakened the position of Europe in the international system, undermined the stability and integrated character of the global capitalist economy, encouraged the growth of ideologies hostile to private property and fostered massive instability in what was to become known as the 'Third World', were not merely incidental to the Cold War. They are absolutely crucial in explaining why it assumed the intense, global form which it did. However, in our standard three narratives (or so it has been argued) they sometimes get very little mention. Perhaps in terms of making the Cold War easily comprehensible, it is a lot easier to focus on what the two major states did and did not do in the post-war era than to develop a complex analysis of the wider international system in transition. On the other hand, in terms of explaining the deeper trends that ultimately made for a highly volatile and uncertain world within which the USSR and the United States were then compelled to operate, such an approach is rather limited, to say the least.<sup>20</sup>

There is of course more, much more. Indeed, long before the enemy archives were opened and spewed forth yet more documents on this or that event, we were already suffering from something close to information overload on nearly every single issue and crisis, ranging from Vietnam (there was an almost pathological fascination with this particular subject amongst American historians) right through to the different reasons why détente rose and then fell in the 1950s, only to rise and fall one more time ten and 20 years later (more a European preoccupation). Much of this work was outstanding: a good deal of it, however, was excruciatingly detailed and one suspects written by the specialist for the specialist. Moreover, while some of it was conceptually innovative, more and more books and articles on the Cold War—at least those based on original documents coming from the 'old' archives—tended not to focus on big issues but small ones. Perhaps this was a function of the doctoral system; possibly it was the easiest way to get tenure in universities; and maybe it was a relief getting away from all those infernal debates about fundamental causes. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that an increasing proportion of work being published on the Cold War could have been written—and in the majority of cases was—with little or no reference to the 'big-picture' discussions which had so divided Cold War historians in the 1960s or 1970s. The result was to make most Cold War history empirically more dense but analytically less exciting, and perhaps conceptually less interesting too.

Yet in spite of this, real debate did continue—and needless to say, it failed to resolve very much. Take the issue of nuclear weapons, a particularly hot topic in the 1980s. What role did they play in the larger scheme of things? Did they stabilize the conflict or contribute to the 'long peace', as defenders of deterrence suggested? Or did they, as critics of the arms race insist, make it far more dangerous? It was by no means clear. What, moreover, were we to make of the role played by intelligence? Did the activities of

the intelligence services and spies make the Cold War more acute, a popular view among those who wrote about the immediate post-war period; or did they, alternatively, make the world a safer place—which they appeared to do in 1962, and then later again during the famous war scare of 1983. Finally, what about that other great phenomenon of the Cold War: the military-industrial complex? Assailed by radicals in the 1960s for all sorts of policy and economic misdemeanours (even Eisenhower took a famous swipe at ‘it’ in 1960), it is surprising to see how this previously most abused of institutions seems to have come in from the cold. Indeed, this ethical pariah appears to have taken on a new lease of moral life in more recent Western writing. Thus, far from burdening the market economy, some now argue that it actually helped develop it enormously; and instead of turning the United States into a ‘garrison state’, it now appears to have played a much less malignant role.<sup>21</sup> In fact, in some accounts, the military is now praised highly for having affected the integration of African-Americans into mainstream American society, while helping diffuse important technologies such as the internet—now seen by some as the great personal liberators of the twenty-first century. But perhaps we should not be surprised by all this. After all, as Carr pointed out many years ago, one should never be surprised by the speed with which historical fashion changes. As he noted, what might appear to be obviously true in one decade becomes manifestly untrue in another; while the bad guys of one age can soon be transformed into the heroes of another. Such are the vagaries of history.<sup>22</sup>

### *The Cold War as Theory*

Although Cold War history evolved over time, reflecting changed circumstances and widening scholarly access to an increasing amount of original material, certain questions remained constant, and these tended to generate some of the more interesting methodological debates. Obviously, given the duration of the Cold War and its importance in all of our lives, there were to be several of these. But three in particular strike me at least as being of most interest: one concerns causation, another the problem of definition, and the third periodization. First, cause.

Students of the Cold War, like historians everywhere, are primarily concerned with relating a well-researched tale and attempting to uncover the underlying reason or reasons why certain things happen. Like most historians, they want their story to be interesting and accurate; but they also assume that their particular narrative could have several different endings. In other words, they tend to eschew determinism. History, so historians tell us, is an open-ended process without a known, predetermined outcome. This, at least, is what they seem to insist upon in public. Yet in practice this is not how the story about the Cold War has always been recounted. In the case of Cold War origins, for example, there has been a distinct inclination amongst many analysts to write as if what happened was bound to happen because of some historical logic.<sup>23</sup> In fact, the only group who still seriously seem to believe that the Cold War might have been avoided are those most often accused of being determinists themselves: namely, those in the wider revisionist camp, many of whom appeared to think that a different set of policies pursued by the United States might have avoided the rift and led to a less confrontational relationship with the USSR. Indeed, critics of US policy more generally have been inclined to think

that a different set of policies might have led to different outcomes, while supporters have tended to believe that nothing serious could have been done to change the course of Cold War history given the nature of the Soviet system. Even the end of the Cold War could have come about, they argue, only when the 'objective' balance of forces had shifted decisively against the USSR. In fact, the whole debate about what happened in 1989 has divided quite sharply into those who feel it was the most likely outcome given the flaws in the Soviet system of power, and those who insist it only happened because of good luck or chance. Certainly, in disciplinary terms, political scientists and international relations theorists have been more inclined to believe that if the Cold War came to an end, then it did so for good reasons: historians, in the main, have been more apt to conceive of what happened in terms of contingency. 'Yes', they argue, one should always look for the causes of the end of the Cold War—but 'No', they continue, we should not then conclude that it had to happen. International factors and changing relative capabilities might have made the end possible. However, anybody studying the documents cannot seriously insist that what occurred was the only possible outcome. Indeed, according to some of them, the end of the Cold War was not so much the product of structures but the actions, conscious or otherwise, of just one man, and one man alone: Mikhail Gorbachev. Take him out of the historical narrative, they argue, and one ends up with a quite different outcome.<sup>24</sup>

This, then, leads to the issue of definition. Here we confront an even greater intellectual conundrum. Historians might write about something called the 'Cold War'. However, they have not always used the term in a consistent fashion. Certainly, given their regular pairing of these two words together one might have assumed that there would be some level of agreement about what the term means. But this is far from being the case. Indeed, the more one looks in detail at the way in which the concept of 'Cold War' has been used, the more one is struck by the fact that analysts are quite often talking about subtly different things. Thus a few employ it to suggest an almost century-long period of suspicion between the United States and Russia, stretching right back to the late nineteenth century. Others take it to mean the years between 1917 and 1991, the full lifespan of the Soviet Union as an integrated communist system. One or two see the 'war' as stretching from 1941 to 1991. Many more assume the term applies only to the years of Europe and Germany's division between 1947 and 1989. Some identify it with the maximum period of bipolarity lasting between 1945 and 1991. Quite a few use the term to apply only to those special periods of abnormally intense superpower rivalry—normally understood to mean the years between 1947 and 1954 concluding with Stalin's death and the end of the Korean War; the period 1958 to 1962, which terminated with the Cuban missile crisis; and, finally, the four years coinciding with Reagan's first term. The other moments are normally referred to as periods of *détente*, the obvious implication being that these were not years of Cold War.<sup>25</sup>

It follows, of course, that if historians cannot agree about what they mean by the idea of a Cold War—hence their different accounts of its duration—then it follows that they will not always agree about when it came to an end either. Which brings us to the thorny issue of periodization. It is true that most writers (including the majority contributing to this book) tend to think of the Cold War as coming to a conclusion at some point between 1989 and 1990, the unspoken assumption here being that it could not have done so until after the USSR effectively decamped from Eastern Europe and East Germany.<sup>26</sup> But this

is not accepted by everybody. Thus some seem to think that the end of the Cold War could not have come to an end until the USSR had disappeared; others imply that it had already come to an end many years before. The most cursory survey of the secondary literature would in fact suggest that a large number of respected commentators (writing at a much earlier point in time) had already concluded that important developments—amongst which they normally included the Sino-Soviet rift and the gradual decline of communism as a serious intellectual force amongst intellectuals—were already bringing something called the ‘Cold War’ to an end. Some writers even identified the Cold War with something called *Pax Americana*, and argued that, because this was coming to an end in the 1960s, the Cold War in its original form could no longer be sustained.<sup>27</sup> This, indeed, became a dominant theme in much American writing on the Cold War in the 1970s. Nor was this all. According to many commentators, the Cold War in its original form was further undermined when both sides to the conflict resolved most of their main differences in a series of important bilateral deals signed in the 1970s. What was left as a result was little more than a series of secondary problems that hardly constituted the basis of a real antagonism. Thus when people talk of the Cold War coming to an end in 1989, they seem to forget that it had already done so several years before when the various actors—including China and the United States, the two Germanies, not to mention the USSR and the United States—began to engage seriously with each other. One writer has even argued that what occurred in 1989 did not overthrow the Cold War as such—that had already happened—but the post-Cold War order.<sup>28</sup>

Now all this might seem and sound quite scholastic, and in some ways it is. However, words matter, for they define what we are talking about; historians of the Cold War, I would suggest, have not been as rigorous as they might have been when it comes to employing key terms—even one as central to their professional *amour propre* as the ‘Cold War’. Admittedly, the view that the conflict had already concluded long before 1989 is a somewhat bizarre one.<sup>29</sup> If nothing else, it cannot explain what happened when Reagan took office and then launched his own version of containment; it also ignores the rather self-evident fact that one of the principal reasons for the ongoing antagonism was precisely because Europe and Germany remained divided. None the less, the argument, even in its most overstated form, does remind us of something real and important, which is that the Cold War evolved and changed over time and was not just of one piece. It also reminds us of something else as well: that the relationship developed certain rules and definite procedures as it went along. To this extent it was not a zero-sum game or an unregulated competition between two completely hostile camps. That is certainly not how it felt in Europe from the 1960s onwards. Indeed, a case could be made (and de Gaulle made it more forcefully than most) that the superpowers often agreed on many things, one of which was the desire to limit the spread of nuclear weapons to other countries, and the other to keep Europe as a whole under their dual control.<sup>30</sup> Even the United States, which was formally opposed to it tacitly came to accept the status quo on the continent, especially after the failure of the Hungarian uprising in 1956. In part, this was out of a very real fear of nuclear confrontation. To this extent, the Cold War system in Europe was the price paid to prevent another war.<sup>31</sup> But it was also the reflection of certain preferences. After all, a divided Europe turned out to be a good deal more orderly than the united one which had existed between the two wars. The existence of two blocs certainly did a great deal to control and contain the ever-present dangers of nationalism,



which had played such havoc with the peace settlement after 1919. Two Germanies, it was regularly remarked in jest—though the point was an extremely serious one—were certainly better than one. The new European system was not without its contradictions; but compared with those which had so mangled the continent after 1914 they were mild by comparison.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, the issue of Europe and its continued division necessarily raises the question of what happened in the 1970s in that rather extraordinary period commonly referred to as the era of *détente*. As has often been remarked, the term itself was a deeply ambiguous one which meant rather different things to different people. For Kissinger, of course, *détente* was primarily a tactic designed to help the United States manage the international system in an age of US retrenchment and Soviet nuclear parity by devolving costs to allies, while attempting to make the USSR and China part of the solution rather than remaining part of the problem. For most west Europeans, however, it represented a good deal more: not so much a policy tactic, rather the central vehicle for securing peace and stability on the continent as whole, which over time—or so it was hoped—would bring about gradual change in the communist bloc without necessarily challenging Soviet power frontally. That at least was the theory and why, basically, the European powers—the French and the Germans in particular—always had a much greater interest in maintaining *détente* than the United States.<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately for the Europeans, the policy never really got off the ground in the United States; and it was then knocked off course completely by one crisis after another, beginning with Watergate and ending with the unedifying spectacle of two American ‘teams’ (rather unoriginally labelled Team ‘A’ and Team ‘B’) trying to work out how serious the Soviet threat was becoming. Certainly, for many Americans brought up on the truths of the Cold War, *détente* seemed to be little more than a modern-day form of appeasement, which, like its predecessor, could only encourage totalitarian expansion. To be fair, there was enough bad faith on the Soviet side to give aid and comfort to this particular kind of worst-case analysis. One set back thus followed another, and within a short space of time the whole edifice—or at least the superpower part of it—began to crumble: and the rest, as they say, is history. Afghanistan, Poland and the Euromissile crisis might have put the final nails into the coffin. But long before Soviet tanks moved south and General Jaruzelski declared martial law in Poland, the policy had imploded, opening the way to what has sometimes been referred to (again somewhat imprecisely) as the new or Second Cold War of the 1980s.<sup>34</sup>

### *The Long Cold War*

The collapse of superpower *détente* followed in quick order by the election of Reagan, the elevation of Gorbachev, *perestroika*, New Political Thinking, a succession of Summits, the INF (Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces) Treaty of 1987, Gorbachev’s December 1988 speech to the UN, the withdrawal of Soviet power from Eastern Europe, and the implosion of the USSR, raises all sorts of important issues that have been dealt with in some detail in many of the chapters of this book. The most critical of these, I suppose, relate to the quite unexpected way in which events started to move forward during 1984 and after Gorbachev had assumed power in 1985, the larger international context within which the end of the Cold War then unfolded, the European as well as the

American role in all this, the important part played by certain diplomats and advisers and the notable contrast between what was happening in Eastern Europe and the USSR and what was taking place in China. All in all, an impressive range of issues.

Naturally enough, historians in general have not just been interested in describing what happened in 1989, though there are many fine studies on this;<sup>35</sup> they have also been concerned to find out why it happened—and the list of reasons they have managed to come up with so far is impressive, and continues to grow. Indeed, on that long academic menu now known as ‘why did the Cold War end’, we can find all sorts of tasty intellectual delicacies, ranging from how Reagan won it, why Gorbachev lost it, and the part played by peace movements, the Helsinki agreement and transnational ideas, right through to luck, miscalculation, imperial overstretch, people power, learning and adaptation, perception and misperception—not to mention that old favourite standby known as Soviet economic decline. And this is only for starters.<sup>36</sup> For the true aficionados there is, in addition, the impact of the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan, as well as the important roles performed at different times in different places by the CIA in Poland, George Shultz in the US State Department, Lech Walesa in Solidarity, and most important of all (at least for Catholics) the Pope in the Vatican. So it goes on, the great search for the essential cause of 1989.<sup>37</sup>

All of these issues are vitally important. None of them, however, concerns me here. What does interest me, though (and here I return to one of the questions set out at the beginning of this chapter), is not how and why did the Cold War come to an end, but, rather, why did it last as long as it did or not come to an end much earlier? No doubt all social systems, with the exception of modern capitalism it would seem, have a finite life span. But what was truly extraordinary about the demise of communism was not just that it went under—that was remarkable enough—but that this happened with barely a shot being fired in anger. As a renowned French writer once remarked, it is not simply that a particular order failed, but that it departed the historical stage without any great fanfare, quite literally ‘on tiptoe’. Nor was this all. The Soviet empire left virtually nothing in its wake, except a lot of problems, a series of resentments, and the widespread belief that the whole thing had been a total disaster from beginning to end; an experiment which had nothing to teach future generations, other than to ensure that they did not go down the same historical path again. But this was about all. In some larger, historical sense, the whole thing ‘ended in a sort of nothingness’, almost as if it had never been there in the first place.<sup>38</sup>

So how do we solve the apparent riddle of a house of cards with proven flaws, whose structures many people now consider to have been fundamentally hollow, lasting for so long? Surely, Soviet weaknesses must have been obvious to all at the time? Yet the system managed to persist: more than that, it even conveyed the impression that it was a true superpower, which constituted a serious threat to the Western world.<sup>39</sup> There are several possible answers to this, two of which focus on US policy itself.

According to the first of these theories, US policy was much too defensive and therefore unable to take advantage of known Soviet vulnerabilities. The United States might have talked about liberation and roll-back; unfortunately, however, it did not practise it with any degree of seriousness. There were several reasons for this, including the normal State Department worry about sounding or being too aggressive, as well as the additional concern about not upsetting the Europeans. Whatever the causes, at the end of

the day, the United States set itself the rather limited objective of only containing the USSR rather than trying to undermine it. This was a fatal error of judgement, which limited options and reduced American choice, culminating in the disastrous presidency of Nixon, who relished playing the part of the great American statesman on a bipolar stage in which it was taken for granted that the Soviet Union would always be there. As it turned out, the only US President who had the gumption of trying to do something different was Reagan. He put the squeeze on, and look what happened. The edifice came tumbling down, and so what had once been thought to have been impossible turned out to be entirely feasible, while what had always been regarded as unrealistic by the so-called experts turned out to be reasonably easy. All this was achieved without war. The pity was that the strategy of pressure was not applied much earlier, thus saving the world—not to mention the peoples who had to live under communism—much grief and heartache.<sup>40</sup>

The other version of this particular tale arrives at the same conclusion but by a quite different intellectual route. According to this view, the Cold War lasted for as long as it did, not because the United States was too pusillanimous, but rather because it was far too aggressive. The father of this particular thesis, of course, was none other than George Kennan, who advanced it with his typical persuasive skill as he became more and more alienated from the US foreign-policy elite in the early 1950s.<sup>41</sup> His more nuanced analysis was then taken up by all sorts of anti-Cold War activists, first in the late 1960s, and then again in the early 1980s—significantly the two periods during which US policy was under greatest critical attack. Yet what the critics had to say was not without its own internal logic. The strategy of containment—they insisted—which involved building positions of strength and surrounding the USSR with a string of advanced military bases, necessarily made an already insecure Soviet leadership feel even more insecure. This then made them hold on to their *cordon sanitaire* with even greater determination than they might have displayed otherwise. It also forced them to respond by matching the West missile for missile, tank for tank, rifle to rifle. Indeed, given their understandable level of insecurity, they responded by building even more of these wretched things than the West itself. The only way out of this particular security dilemma was for the West to adopt a less hostile posture.<sup>42</sup> But instead of doing this, it did the opposite. Moreover, when proposals did come forth to end the stalemate (such as those advanced by Kennan himself in 1957) they were treated with grim suspicion, thus prolonging the conflict even more. In fact, if it had been left to the West, the competition might have gone on for ever; and the only reason it did not do so was not because of anything the West did, but because Gorbachev happened along and broke the link in the chain. If he had not done so, then the Cold War might have continued for ever—fuelled by Western suspicion and driven forward by an uncompromising attitude towards the USSR.

Both these explanations command some following in the wider intellectual community; and no doubt the attempt to rewrite the history of the Cold War in this way does have its uses. But there are certain problems with these two approaches, apart from the more obvious one that they smack of that dreaded academic disease known as counter-factual history.<sup>43</sup> First, they both assume that the United States could have a major, as opposed to a minimal, impact on what went on inside the USSR or the larger Soviet bloc. Naturally, there are different views about this. But the consensus would seem to be that what happened inside the communist world for the greater part of the Cold War was much more likely to be influenced by its own contradictions than anything done to it

by an external agent—even one as powerful as the United States. Second, the two views taken together rest on an untested and unproven assumption: namely, that the United States actually wanted to end the Cold War but failed to do so because it pursued the wrong policy. Again, there must be some doubt about this too. In fact, there is a good deal of circumstantial evidence to suggest that while the Cold War was hardly cost free (and limited US global reach while denying it access to those areas and regions that were directly under Soviet control itself), the relationship was not without its positive side. As many writers have pointed out, the United States did not appear to be too unhappy co-existing in an extended, almost permanent competition with an unattractive and repressive rival—a rival which not only provided it with a fixed point of opposition around which it could then organize its own international affairs, but also helped it mobilize domestic support while neutralizing any domestic opposition there might have been to its foreign policy (at least did until the disaster that was Vietnam). One does not have to believe in conspiracies to know how useful such a hostile relationship turned out to be;<sup>44</sup> nor does one have to ignore the celebrations that followed in 1989 to realize that many people in Washington were less than happy to see the back of the Cold War, and unhappier still to see the disintegration of the USSR two years later. Not everybody, it seems, looked forward to a future without the blocs and the USSR with much enthusiasm.<sup>45</sup>

Yet even this begs a much bigger historical question—which is that right up until the 1980s hardly anybody of significance ever really thought that the USSR would go under anyway. Of course, from the perspective of the post-Cold war era, it now looks only too obvious that Soviet communism was riven by fatal flaws. As one very wise fellow pointed out after the event, the USSR was probably always in ‘hopeless shape’.<sup>46</sup> However, this is not how things looked at the time. In the 1950s, for example, the planned economy seemed to be especially dynamic, and during the next decade it continued to look very buoyant as well. Indeed, even into the last decade of the Cold War—when the system was supposed to be at death’s door—the Soviet economy still appeared to command enough reserves to enable it to soldier on well into the twenty-first century.<sup>47</sup> If we go back a few years more, the picture looked even rosier still. The 1970s, in fact, is a particularly useful decade from which to survey the Cold War. The Soviet model continued to inspire a following in the Third World; Poland was a problem, but Soviet control over Eastern Europe as a whole looked to be secure: and last, but by no means least, its main American enemy was clearly in deep trouble. The situation was grim alright. However, it did not appear to be grim for the Soviet Union, but rather for the United States, which was mired down in Vietnam, facing increased economic competition from both Europe and Japan, and whose moral and material vitals were fast being eaten away, or so it seemed, by a combination of inflation, rising trade deficits, and a more general loss of faith in the American dream.

Nor was this all. As the situation deteriorated within the American ‘empire’ (leading more than one commentator to the irresistible conclusion that the United States was in decline), it seemed on the surface at least that all manner of opportunities were opening up for the USSR. First, in the Third World where American credibility was at an all-time low. Second, within the United States itself. This was especially critical according to Soviet theorists writing at the time. Their analysis was not without some basis in fact. As they repeated at nearly every possible turn, the crisis of American imperialism in the

1970s was not only causing political turmoil at home but forcing the increasingly more influential part of the capitalist class (represented by Nixon and Kissinger) into seeking some form of accommodation with the socialist camp: partly to acquire new markets, partly to reduce international tensions at a time when the United States was least able to deal with them, and partly to gain some political foothold in the Soviet bloc. Détente was not without its dangers. The human rights campaign of the late 1970s proved that. On the other hand, the opportunities it represented for the Soviet Union were enormous. It would allow the USSR to rejuvenate its own economy. It would permit it to exploit economic contradiction in an increasingly divided imperialist camp. And it would induce the West to accept the consequences of World War II in Europe. There was a world to play for in this new age of capitalist crisis, which was producing important changes in the correlation of forces that were broadly speaking favourable to the USSR. This at least is how things looked to most people in Moscow as the two protagonists entered into the last decade of the Cold War.

### *Predicting the Future and Getting it Wrong*

Viewed within this larger perspective, the history of the 1980s was a most remarkable one, if for no other reason that it presents a picture of itself which stands in almost diametrical opposition to that which any reasonably informed person might have anticipated at the end of the 1970s—that terrible ‘decade of neglect’ according to most conservatives, which began with the disastrous policy of détente and ended with the perhaps even bigger disaster that was Jimmy Carter. Indeed, from the historian’s point of view, what is so interesting about the 1980s is not just that it ended in unexpected triumph for the United States in the Cold War, but that this followed a long period of retreat during which (as we have seen) the USSR appeared to be gaining the upper hand. Many of these gains might have been leading to over-extension; the United States, moreover, would make the USSR pay a heavy price for foolishly having reached beyond itself. But all this lay in the years ahead. For the time-being, the Soviet leadership could bask in its own glory, almost completely unaware—except in the far reaches of certain think-tanks—that dark days lay ahead. History, for the moment, seemed to be on its side.

Understanding the 1970s not only puts the 1980s into some clearer perspective, but also helps us explain what some still regard as one of the great intellectual problems of the late twentieth century: namely, why so few people failed to predict what actually took place in 1989 and 1991. True, some of Ronald Reagan’s more ideologically inclined advisers, such as Richard Pipes, could speak with confidence about the triple crisis of Soviet power and suggest how this might be exploited. A few of his more belligerent supporters in the Pentagon no doubt hoped they could spend the USSR into the ground through an extended arms race. Reagan himself talked in his normally cheery fashion in 1982 about consigning the Soviet system to the proverbial trash-heap of history. But after the 1970s, this all looked like so much eye-wash based on wishful thinking, a fundamental ignorance of international realities, and what most analysts at the time thought was an even more profound misunderstanding of the USSR. Many Americans may now want to insist that Reagan and his advisers got the Soviet collapse right. However, this all looked a very long way off in the early part of the 1980s, when the

majority of people—including many on the conservative right—were still rather impressed by the might of the Soviet Union. Even Reagan himself fed this idea by constantly harping on about the dangers of Soviet expansion, and the very real imbalances which he claimed existed between the Soviet and US militaries. Indeed, if anybody contributed to the view that the Cold War would go on and on, it was Reagan himself, with his powerful images of an evil Soviet empire striding forward to take over the great globe itself.

This brings us, then, to the thorny and difficult issue of ‘prediction’—a methodological mine-field if ever there was one, strewn with all sorts of theoretical dangers and intellectual traps for the unwary.<sup>48</sup> As we have strongly indicated, in the 1970s and for most of the next decade, there was no reason to believe that the end of the Cold War was nigh or that the collapse of the Soviet Union was imminent. Indeed, a reasonable person in the early or mid-1980s might have come to all sorts of conclusions about the Soviet future, but the least likely one of all was that it did not have one. Yet, as we now know, the Cold War did come to end; and the USSR did fall apart. The impossible, in other words, happened. It seems reasonable to ask, therefore, why most of us (with a few notable exceptions) failed to think this could ever happen. Certainly, the forward march of Soviet influence in the 1970s may have contributed to this view. But there were other, equally important, reasons why the end of the Cold War was to come as such a shock. There are several different ways of thinking about this vexed problem. But three issues in particular deserve some mention here.

The first concerns methodology rather than empirical knowledge about the USSR itself. As Keynes once observed, human beings are creatures of intellectual habit and invariably come to assume that if something exists for an extended period of time, then there is every reason to think it will continue to exist into the future. Of course, he was referring to the long peace of the nineteenth century, but the same argument could be made with equal force about the Cold War. After all, it had endured for many years; it had its own set of rules; and nobody seemed in any great rush to bring it to an end—indeed, nothing could have been further from most people’s minds. Nor was this all. Even those tasked within the policy community about thinking long term about the Soviet future were always more inclined to assume it would endure rather than pass away: in part, because their own projections about the future were normally predicated upon what they knew about the Soviet past;<sup>49</sup> and in part because it was bureaucratically dangerous to think ‘outside of the loop’—and within that loop the dominant view was that the Soviet Union had always been a threat and would remain so, in spite of Gorbachev’s various efforts after 1985. Indeed, the Gorbachev phenomenon itself tended only to reinforce this intellectual conservatism. Thus, if he was serious about reforming the USSR and making it a more effective superpower, then he was a problem: in fact, more of a problem than his immediate predecessors, because he would be able to conduct the Cold War more effectively. If, on the other hand, he failed (which was more likely) then he would be overthrown by hard-liners and the situation would return to ‘normal’. Either way, it was better to keep one’s powder dry rather than bank on someone who would either turn the Soviet Union into a more attractive and efficient form of socialism (something not to be welcomed in the larger struggle for the hearts and minds of men and women around the world), or who would soon be displaced by a group of born-again Stalinists who would return the USSR to the bad old days.

This in turn raises a second issue concerning the various ways in which most Western experts tended to think about Soviet foreign policy and Soviet relations with Eastern Europe. One should not simplify: the picture is by no means a uniform one. However, there was a powerful strain of intellectual opinion in the West that considered the USSR to be always primed for expansion but not—it seems—for retreat. The reasons for thinking in this way were neither silly nor dishonest. None the less, it meant that when the USSR did begin to do something rather different, most experts simply could not believe it, and could not explain it either. Furthermore, when it came to Eastern Europe there appeared to be even more powerful reasons for thinking that the Soviet Union would not do anything especially innovative. Indeed, the reasons had been repeated for several years in all the standard textbooks on the subject. Thus the USSR would remain where it was, or so it was argued before 1989, because it was not in its political interests to get out of Eastern Europe; it would also stay put because there was no guaranteeing what would happen to the Soviet Union itself if it allowed the peoples of Eastern Europe to decide their own fate; and, finally, there was little or no chance of the USSR decamping, because this might, possibly, lead to a united Germany. As we now know, in the end what Gorbachev hoped to get by not using force in Eastern Europe, and what in fact he got, were very different things. He certainly did not think that the ‘Sinatra Doctrine’ would lead to the collapse of East Germany, and like many people at the time was most upset when it did. But we should not be too clever after the fact. Most Western experts at the time did not think he would even get to the point of giving up any country in Eastern Europe, and were quite literally flabbergasted when it began to dawn upon them (probably at some point during the summer of 1989) that that was precisely what he was thinking of doing.

Finally, as Fred Halliday has wisely reminded us all, what often makes most great events truly ‘great’ is their often quite unexpected character—and historians, he argues, should not be criticized for having failed to do the impossible, which is to predict them. That is simply not their job, nor indeed is it possible given the messy character of the historical process. All this is true, and because it is true we should not be too tough on those failed to foresee the end of the Cold War.<sup>50</sup> However, there is still a problem to be solved, and I would want to suggest that for all manner of complex reasons it was, in fact, especially difficult for those who had been trained and reared as Sovieologists to see what lay ahead over the brow of the hill. The picture is a most complicated one; and I do not want to make what was a diffuse group of people appear to be more uniform than they actually were. Yet the bulk of the profession, in my view, still found it very difficult to conceive of either 1989 or 1991: many because they held to the view that the USSR was and remained a totalitarian state which could never change; others because they thought Gorbachev would be able to reform the communist system; some because they really did think that the Soviet system had achieved some degree of legitimacy, if not necessarily in Eastern Europe then most certainly within the USSR itself; and a few no doubt because their whole professional life was bound up with something called the Soviet Union remaining in being. The idea that it could fall apart was really beyond belief. As one expert put it, what happened was not supposed to happen and should not have happened; and once it did, left many within the wider Sovietological community in total disarray.

*Conclusion or What's 'New' about the New Cold War history?*

Finally, though most of us might have failed in our efforts to anticipate the death of communism and the collapse of the USSR, we have all benefited as historians of the Cold War from what happened. As Mel Leffler has observed in his own contribution to this book, times could not be better. 'Never before', as he points out, 'have Soviet officials reflected so thoroughly on events in which they participated'; 'rarely', moreover, 'have so many US officials as well as other foreign leaders written so thoughtfully about the decisions they made'; and there is no precedent whatsoever for the almost endless number of round-tables and conferences which have been held on the Cold War in which former enemies have gotten together to reflect on their past exploits.<sup>51</sup> Certainly, at a time when history and historians in general have never been under more intellectual siege from a battery of new 'discourses' which question the very idea of truth and doubt the value of archives, there has been something deeply comforting about being a Cold War historian in an area which not only has two dedicated journals of its own (where before it had none), not to mention a magnificent bulletin, but where we really can argue about the 'facts' and what actually happened in real time without being accused of empiricism, positivism and any number of other academic deviations which historians in other fields have been routinely accused of over the past decade or so.

All this much is obvious. But a certain note of caution has to be sounded before we all get carried away with the magnificence of our footnotes and the fact that we have far more access to the former enemy's archives and much better access to our own. Interestingly, it is John Gaddis who has alerted us to at least one problem about the new Cold War history: that because of the increasing plethora of documents, it is becoming nigh impossible sometimes to distinguish the essential from the trivial. Indeed, Gaddis advises that modern historians of the Cold War 'have got to back off from their preoccupation with particular trees'—however fascinating they might be—and try 'to look at the forest as a whole'. Unfortunately, that is not what they have been doing of late, with the result that although their level of detailed knowledge about this or that event might be better, their understanding of the Cold War overall might have worsened. To this extent, having more documents has proven a mixed blessing. As Gaddis puts it, rather forcefully in fact, 'the availability of new documents' has 'if anything' not led to better analysis but to 'regression'. Indeed, today, he concludes, 'we are probably *less* inclined toward large-scale analysis than we were a decade ago', before we had access to all these archives.<sup>52</sup>

The view that more may not be better is certainly a challenging one for historians of the Cold War: but even more challenging still is the outside possibility that much of what we now claim to be 'new' may not be so new at all. As Lundestad amongst others has noted, while much progress has been made over the past decade in our understanding of the Cold War, we should not necessarily conclude that what is termed 'new' is quite as novel as some enthusiasts would like us to believe.<sup>53</sup> What is clearly not so new is the way in which certain historians now seem to want to lay most, if not nearly all of the blame for the conflict at the feet of one Joe Stalin and the Soviet Union. Now it may well be that this is where the new 'facts' inevitably lead, but somehow I doubt it. The facts, after all, never speak for themselves but have to be woken up from their slumber and interpreted—which necessarily raises the big question as to why they are being



interpreted by certain leading figures in the profession in a particularly traditional way. One can only speculate, of course, but it would not be too much to suggest that the new orthodoxy is less a function of the empirical data, and more a reflection of the deradicalized and somewhat conservative times we happen to be living through. I would also suggest that it might also be the result of where much of the new data happens to be coming from. Nobody but a fool would not welcome the new sources. But because in the main they focus our attention almost entirely on the 'other side' (and quite often on some of its more dirty dealings and antics abroad), they inevitably compel us to look at the active part played by the Russians in keeping hostilities alive. Not surprisingly, we are then led—or at least some commentators have been led—to what they see as the not unreasonable conclusion that what the USSR did or did not do after 1945 is the key to unlocking the mysteries of the Cold War.

This in turn connects to a third issue—causation—and within this the role of ideology. As has been observed, if the new Cold War history can claim to be innovative in any sense it is in its 'rediscovery' of the importance which ideas played in shaping Soviet actions during the Cold War. In theory, there is nothing wrong with this at all; quite the opposite. But, again, we have to be cautious, in my view. First, because it may lead some novices to the unwarranted conclusion that we older hands never thought about the problem of ideology before. We did and at great length—long before the archives were opened. Second, because it is bound to reinforce the view (which may be no bad thing, according to some analysts) that the Soviet Union had some grand design or blueprint. Many no doubt will welcome this insight. But for some of us at least, this return to old ways of thinking about Soviet intentions seems something of a backward step. It also carries the hidden or implicit danger of assuming that ideology was only a Soviet phenomenon. But nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, a case could be made (and has been made most forcefully elsewhere) that whereas leaders like Stalin might have been quite realist when it came to thinking about the world, US leaders were anything but. In fact, if anybody was ideological in terms of having a vision of how they would like to change the rest of the world after 1947, it was not so much the Russians but the Americans. Moreover, it was this and not some fanciful Soviet notion of world revolution—which they did not believe in anyway—that transformed the Cold War and turned it into the global struggle it finally became.

Finally, we come back to that old Cold War question about capabilities. As we have noted, there is much in the new writing about ideas and values, especially Soviet ideas and values. There is also a very powerful current of opinion which now insists that it was a change in these ideas in the 1970s and 1980s that finally brought the Cold War to an end. Perhaps so; but it would be absurdly one-sided to suggest that it was ideas alone which did it. They clearly played a role but could only do so—I would submit—because of the ultimate failure (as Braudel might have put it) of the communist system as a material civilization. There is enough evidence to suggest that, whatever happened before, by the last decade of the Cold War, the Soviet elite—or at least a key part of it—was fast coming to the conclusion that without fundamental economic reform the USSR would continue to fall behind its main capitalist competitors. Winning poor allies in the Third World was one thing. Building more and more rockets was another. But neither was a substitute for serious economic renewal. Of course, so in awe were we of what the Soviet Union had achieved in the past (and so misled were we too by what turned out to

be phony Soviet statistics) that we could not bring ourselves to think that these economic issues would ever lead to something fundamental happening. Which is one of the reasons, of course, why we then failed to ‘predict’ its demise. The study of the basic weaknesses of the Soviet economy, the difficulties it faced in developing and introducing new technology, and its almost Third World position within an increasingly dynamic world economy just about to enter the computer age, may not be the stuff of spy novels. However, they might afford us just as many insights about why the Cold War came to an end as discussions about ideas and values. They may even help us understand how the Cold War was fought and why the United States—in spite of many setbacks in the 1970s—could always afford to be relatively confident. Indeed, though it may be unfashionable to say so, perhaps we need to do far more work on these basic material realities than we do at present. They may not only afford us fresher insights into understanding how the Cold War was fought than searching for something as elusive as Stalin’s paranoid personality. They may also help explain why the competition between two so-called ‘super-powers’ of apparent equal weight ended so easily (and on American terms) over 40 year later. It might not have been inevitable. But as Lenin himself once predicted back in 1919, what in the end would determine the outcome of the struggle between capitalism and socialism would not be the weight of arms but the productivity of labour. On this, if nothing else, Lenin might turn out to be a better source of wisdom about the fate of the Soviet system in the 1980s than those who later pulled down his statues.

#### NOTES

- 1 A useful collection of documents on the 1980s is contained in *Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) Bulletin*. See ‘The End of the Cold War’, Issue 12/13 (Fall-Winter 2001).
- 2 This has taken two main forms: participation in one or more of the several conferences held on the history of the Cold War and memoirs. Neither is without their problems. However, for a sample of the latter genre coming from the Russian side (in English) see Georgii Arbatov, *The System: An Insider’s View in Soviet Politics* (New York: Times Books, 1992), Valery Boldin, *Ten Years That Shook the World: The Gorbachev Era as Witnessed by His Chief of Staff* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), and Anatoly Cherniaev, *My Six Years With Gorbachev* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).
- 3 The most decisive intervention in this discussion was made by John Lewis Gaddis. See his ‘International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War’, *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Winter 1992/93), pp. 5–58.
- 4 The theoretical debate about whether the end of the Cold War is explicable in ‘realist’ or ‘constructivist’ terms—that is, as the product of an international power shift or an ideational transformation (largely on the Soviet side)—has preoccupied international relations for several years. By far and away the best defence of the realist perspective has been advanced by William C. Wohlforth. See his ‘Realism and the End of the Cold War’, *International Security*, Vol. 19 (1994/95), pp. 91–129. The ‘ideas’ approach has been articulated most systematically in empirical fashion in Robert D. English, *Russia and the Idea of the West: Gorbachev, Intellectuals and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).
- 5 I discuss this issue in Michael Cox, ed., *Rethinking the Soviet Collapse: Sovietology, the Death of Communism and the New Russia* (London: Pinter/Cassell, 1998).

- 6 This point is also made by John Lewis Gaddis in his 'On Starting All Over Again: A Naive Approach to the Cold War' in Odd Arne Westad's excellent edited collection, *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations, Theory* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), p. 29.
- 7 Apparently, Zbigniew Brzezinski—who did foresee the end of communism, albeit rather late in the day—still considered East Germany to be a stable state. See his justly celebrated, *The Grand Failure: The Birth and Death of Communism in the 20th Century* (New York: Macmillan, 1989).
- 8 This important point is made in Richard Day, *Cold War Capitalism: The View From Moscow 1945–1975* (Armonk, NY: M.E.Sharpe, 1995), p. xi.
- 9 'Now it has happened...the collapse of communism is being everywhere foreseen to have been inevitable.' Thus writes Bohdan Harasymiw in his useful *Soviet Communist Party Officials: A Study in Organizational Roles and Changes* (Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science Publishers, 1996), p. ix.
- 10 The comment on vitriol is made by David Reynolds in his own edited collection, *The Origins of the Cold War in Europe: International Perspectives* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 3.
- 11 Perhaps the most—possibly the only—influential European concept to travel well across the Atlantic was Geir Lundestad's notion of an (American) 'Empire by Invitation', first published in the Norwegian-based *Journal of Peace Research* in 1986. Significantly, the efforts by another European (Alan Milward) to influence the larger debate about the Marshall Plan and the importance—or lack thereof—of the US role in fostering post-war European recovery seem to have come to nothing. See his important, and in Europe, highly influential study published under the title of *The Reconstruction of Western Europe 1945–1951* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984).
- 12 On how the British began the Cold War see John Kent, 'The British Empire and the Origins of the Cold War', in Anne Deighton, ed., *Britain and the First Cold War* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1990), pp. 165–83.
- 13 Geir Lundestad, *East, West, North, South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 7.
- 14 Louis Halle, *The Cold War As History* (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1967), p. 435.
- 15 Still the best defence of post-revisionism can be found in John Lewis Gaddis, 'The Emerging Post-Revisionist Synthesis on the Origins of the Cold War', *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 7 (Summer 1983), pp. 171–90.
- 16 Radical historians, however, continue to regard Gaddis as an intellectual adversary and never as a friend. As evidenced at a recent conference attended by the author on 'Cold War Triumphalism', International Center for Advanced Studies Project, New York University, 19–20 April 2002.
- 17 For a lucid summing up of the three schools (and much more besides) see the essay by Melvyn Leffler in Gordon Martell, ed., *American Foreign Relations Reconsidered 1890–1993* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 106–24.
- 18 See, for example, Thomas J. McCormick, *America's Half-Century: United States Foreign Policy in The Cold War* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).
- 19 See Lawrence S. Kaplan, 'The Cold War and European Revisionism', *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (Spring 1987), pp. 143–56.
- 20 For one attempt to think of the Cold War as international history and not just as the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, see Melvyn P. Leffler and David Painter, eds, *Origins of the Cold War: An International History* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).
- 21 See, for example, Aaron L. Friedberg, *In the Shadow of the Garrison State: America's Anti-Statism and its Cold War Strategy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).
- 22 E.H. Carr, *What is History?* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1961).
- 23 'The fundamental underlying cause of the Cold War was the belief in both the Soviet Union and the United States that confrontation was unavoidable, imposed by history.' Raymond

- Garthoff, *The Great Transformation: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1994), p. 751.
- 24 See Mark Almond, '1989 Without Gorbachev: What if Communism Had not Collapsed?', in Niall Ferguson, ed., *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals* (London: Picador, 1997), pp. 392–415.
- 25 The issue of definition is discussed with verve and style in Fred Halliday, *The Making of the Second Cold War* (London: Verso, 1983), pp. 1–23, and in Anders Stephanson, 'Cold War Origins', in Alexander DeConde et al., *Encyclopaedia of American Foreign Policy, Second Edition, Volume I* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2002), pp. 223–39.
- 26 Some writers, however, still tend to conflate the notion of the end of the Cold War in 1989 with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. See, for instance, Richard Crockatt, *The Fifty Years War: The United States and the Soviet Union in World Politics, 1941–1991* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 338–71, and Martin Walker, *The Cold War and the Making of the Modern World* (London: Fourth Estate, 1993), pp. 302–23.
- 27 See Marshall D. Shulman, *Beyond The Cold War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1965).
- 28 Allen Lynch, *The Cold War Is Over—Again* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992).
- 29 The less bizarre argument could (and has been) made that the 'Cold War' actually ended in December 1988, when Gorbachev announced the 'unilateral withdrawal of the most offensively oriented Soviet troops and weapons from Eastern Europe and renounced the Brezhnev doctrine of military intervention to prop up pro-Soviet regimes'. See Chapter 5 by Matthew Evangelista in this book.
- 30 Those who doubt this should consult Anton DePorte's important study (now largely unread) *Europe between the Superpowers: the Enduring Balance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979).
- 31 A key point referred to by Odd Arne Westad in his 'Introduction' essay in *Reviewing the Cold War*, p. 15.
- 32 For one of the more critical and influential reflections on the inter-war period see the justly famous study by E.H.Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919–1939* (1939 1st edn; new and revised edn, intro. by Michael Cox, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).
- 33 See Richard Davy, ed., *European Détente: A Reappraisal* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1992).
- 34 For details on this period see Raymond Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1985) and Odd Arne Westad, ed., *The Fall of Détente: Soviet-American Relations during the Carter Years* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1997).
- 35 The best being Jacques Lévesque, *The Enigma of 1989: the USSR and the Liberation of Eastern Europe*, trans. F.Furet, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).
- 36 For a somewhat iconoclastic (and mainly non-American) guide through this minefield see Ralph Summy and Michael E. Scala, eds, *Why the Cold War Ended: A Range of Interpretations* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995).
- 37 As an aside, I think it is a pity that the debate about the role of Reagan and Gorbachev and the end of the Cold War seems to divide so sharply between the 'Reagan won it' camp and the 'Gorbachev was a saint' school. One study which does not fall into this trap is William C. Wohlforth, ed., *Witnesses to the End of the Cold War* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).
- 38 François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1997), pp. vii, ix.
- 39 James Schlesinger later admitted that US respect for the Soviet Union in the Cold War was 'based on inflated perceptions of its military power'. See his 'New Instabilities, New Priorities', *Foreign Policy*, No. 85 (1991–92), p. 21.

- 40 Perhaps the best example of this neo-conservative reading of the Cold War, and the role played in it by the innovative Reagan, has been written by Peter Schweizer. See *The Reagan Administration's Secret Strategy that Hastened the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1994).
- 41 I have discussed Kennan's role as Cold War critic in Michael Cox, 'George F. Kennan: Requiem for a Cold War Critic, 1945–1950', *Irish Slavonic Studies*, Vol. 11 (1990–91), pp. 1–35.
- 42 See, for example, Michael McGwire, 'The Genesis of Soviet Threat Perception', Brookings Institution Paper, Washington, DC, 1987.
- 43 On the sins of counter-factualism see, in particular, E.P.Thompson's comments in his *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (London: Merlin Press, 1978), p. 300.
- 44 John Foster Dulles, it seems, was a great fan of Arnold Toynbee's influential thesis that each and every great civilization in history only managed to survive by responding to a great external challenge; take away that challenge and the civilization in question begins to unravel.
- 45 For a powerful expression of this view see John Mearsheimer, 'Back to the Future: Instability In Europe After the Cold War', *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Summer 1990), pp. 5–56.
- 46 David Greenberg, 'The Empire Strikes Back: Why Star Wars Did not End the Cold War', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 2 (March-April 2000), p. 136.
- 47 It was no doubt for this reason that CIA Director, Robert M.Gates could conclude, on 19 January 1988, that he believed that 'a still long competition and struggle with the Soviet Union lie before us'. See his comments in his 'What is Going On in the Soviet Union', delivered to the Dallas Council on World Affairs. For a broader perspective see the very useful collection edited by Benjamin B.Fisher, *At Cold War's End: US Intelligence on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, 1989–1991* (Reston, VA: Central Intelligence Agency, 1999).
- 48 Thus Robert Keohane has argued, 'the criticism that we failed to predict the demise of the Soviet Union misunderstands what students of international relations can do...claiming that political scientists should have predicted the end of the Cold War is like demanding that if there had been scientists 65 million years ago, they should have been able to predict that the earth would soon collide with a comet or asteroid and that this collision would lead to the extinction of dinosaur.' See his 'International Relations, Old and New', in R.E.Goodin and H.D.Klingemann, eds, *A New Handbook of Political Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 463–4.
- 49 According to George Breslauer, the social sciences in general are not much good at dealing with what he termed 'turbulent fields'. See his 'Reflections on the Anniversary of the August 1991 Coup', *Soviet Economy*, Vol. 8 (April-June 1992), p. 164.
- 50 See Fred Halliday's observations on the unpredictable in history in his *Two Hours That Shook The World. September 11, 2001: Causes and Consequences* (London: Saqi Books, 2002), pp. 24–6.
- 51 See Mel Leffler, 'The Beginning and the End: Time, Context and the Cold War', pp. 29–59 below.
- 52 See Gaddis' essay in Westad, ed., *Reviewing the Cold War*, p. 29.
- 53 See G.Lundestad, 'How (Not) to Study the Origins of the Cold War', in Westad, ed., *Reviewing the Cold War*, pp. 64–80.

## The Beginning and the End: Time, Context and the Cold War

*Melvyn P. Leffler*

The end of the Cold War baffles us: almost nobody expected it. Events spiralled out of control engulfing participants in actions they could not have imagined just a few years before. Rather than being inscribed in the seamless web of history, so much seemed contingent on the actions of a remarkable man, Mikhail Gorbachev, and the people around him. Yet, why he did what he did remains a topic of heated debate among political scientists and historians, journalists and international relations scholars.<sup>1</sup> Realists and neo-realists, believing in the centrality of power in international politics, argue that Gorbachev had little choice. Faced with the stagnation of the Soviet economy and the erosion of the military and technological base of Soviet power, Gorbachev had to embark on a series of fundamental reforms in order to resuscitate the Soviet system and ensure the future security of the Soviet regime as well as enhance its long-term influence.<sup>2</sup> Liberals and neo-liberals dispute the centrality of power and focus on the salience of ideas, ideals, ideologies and institutions. Gorbachev, they claim, assimilated new beliefs from a generation of younger advisers and experts who were momentarily exhilarated by the Khrushchev thaw, disillusioned by the era of stagnation under Brezhnev, and inspired by ongoing contacts with Western scientists, media and culture.<sup>3</sup>

Scrutinizing the literature, I have been impressed by the insights, imagination, and sophistication of the scholars who have been writing about the end of the Cold War. I have also been impressed by the memoir literature. Never before have Soviet officials reflected so thoroughly on events in which they participated,<sup>4</sup> and, rarely, have so many US officials as well as other foreign leaders written so thoughtfully about the decisions they made, decisions that rather peacefully transformed international politics in five or six years.<sup>5</sup> The dialogue has been enhanced by a series of roundtables and conferences sponsored and hosted by an array of institutions, universities, private foundations and scholarly institutes around the world, and most notably the Cold War International History Project, the Norwegian Nobel Institute and the US National Security Archive. The two great achievements of these symposia have been to augment the dialogue among former officials and scholars, and to encourage the opening and dissemination of archival materials.<sup>6</sup> Thanks also to the enlightened actions of many governments, we have more documents about the end of the Cold War from more governments than anybody thought imaginable a decade ago.<sup>7</sup>

I have been reading the literature and documents with avid interest, and, of course, with my own particular perspective that evolves from my earlier work on the United States and the origins of the Cold War. I want to suggest that the denouement of the late 1980s can be examined most fruitfully by properly understanding the context in which the Cold War initially unfolded and then by comparing it with the changed circumstances of the Reagan/Gorbachev and Bush/Gorbachev years. By so doing, we can gain a better appreciation of how the passage of time reshaped the international system and the

perceptions of threat within it, as well as eroded the appeal of one ideological belief system and underscored the viability of another. By examining international history in comparative perspective over time, we can see how inextricably interrelated were the structure of the international system, the ideologies that competed for dominance within it, and the beliefs of the leaders who sought to comprehend their environment, safeguard the survival of their countries, and protect and disseminate their society's core values. In brief, I want to suggest that the battles between realists and liberals need to be transcended as we gain a better appreciation of the synergistic relationship between structure, ideology and beliefs.

Nevertheless, however refined our appreciation of that synergy, we shall not remove elements of contingency and agency from history. In studying both the origins and end of the Cold War, one is continually reminded that structures and ideologies constitute contexts in which leaders operate and make difficult, agonizing decisions. Those decisions, although shaped by the structure of the international system and by ideological mindsets geared to peculiar perceptions of threat and opportunity, nevertheless remain highly contingent. Leadership counts. We shall see that the Cold War ended because the structure of the international system changed, perceptions of threat were altered, and the appeal of ideologies was transformed. But these factors alone, or together, would not have sufficed to bring about the changes that occurred if not for the particular character, beliefs, values and operating procedures of Mikhail Gorbachev.<sup>8</sup>

### *The Beginning*

Four critical factors influenced the origins and evolution of the Cold War. First, the configuration of the international system at the end of World War II highlighted the problems emanating from the destruction of German and Japanese power, and shaped the threat perceptions of the victors. Second, depression and war, mobilization and indoctrination, despair and impoverishment accentuated post-war ideological and political debates about the content of political economies most conducive to enhancing individual well-being, removing personal vulnerability, generating economic growth, and reducing national insecurity. Third, the resiliency of national independence movements in the Third World and the onset of a 30-year period of decolonization engendered perceptions of threat and opportunity that shaped the behaviour of the two great powers throughout Asia, Africa, the Middle East and even Latin America. Fourth, the introduction of atomic weapons and the development of nuclear arsenals inspired fantasies and fears, risk-taking and adventurism, theories of deterrence and compellance that greatly complicated relations between Moscow and Washington.

These factors shaped the Cold War notwithstanding the desires of US and Soviet leaders. Neither President Harry S. Truman nor the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin initially wanted a Cold War. Truman's attitudes have long been known and most clearly expressed in his diary entries and in his letters to his wife. 'I'm not afraid of Russia', he jotted in his diary on 7 June 1945. They have always been our friends and I cannot see why they can't always be.' Acknowledging the repression and special privilege that characterized Soviet Russia, the president made clear that these matters were of little concern to him. 'They evidently like their government or they would not die for it. I like

ours so let's get along.'<sup>9</sup> Truman felt no personal repugnance for Stalin. After meeting him at Potsdam, Truman wrote to his wife, 'I like Stalin. He is straightforward. Knows what he wants and will compromise when he can't get it.'<sup>10</sup> For a while, the president shared Harriman's view: 'If it were possible to see him/Stalin/more frequently, many of our difficulties would be overcome.'<sup>11</sup>

Stalin, of course, was not the accommodating negotiator that many Western statesmen conceived him to be. As Vladimir Pechatnov has recently shown, Stalin could even be tougher and more recalcitrant than his taciturn and intransigent foreign minister, V.M. Molotov, especially when Stalin felt that Western statesmen were seeking to outsmart him, revise or equivocate on past agreements, or exert unwarranted pressure. In late 1945, he believed that the Americans were trying to intimidate him on matters relating to reparations, the Balkans, Japan and the procedures for the meetings of the Council of Foreign Ministers. Stalin would not succumb to pressure or intimidation; but neither did he rule out agreement with the Americans. For reasons of self-interest, Stalin hoped that collaboration would facilitate the control of Germany, the payment of reparations, and the granting of loans. Time and time again, he went out of his way, in 1945, 1946 and 1947, to assert that conflicting ideologies did not mean confrontation. 'I absolutely believe' in cooperation, he told Alexander Werth. 'To cooperate, it isn't necessary that nations have the same system', he emphasized to Harold Stassen.<sup>12</sup>

Whether such cooperation would occur, of course, depended on whether Stalin could reconcile this goal with other priorities. Stalin may have believed that cooperation was in the Soviet interest, but he was accustomed to seeing threats everywhere. Capitalist nations might want to quell their differences with one another, but competition for markets and raw materials drove them to war, thereby endangering the security and survival of the Soviet Union itself.<sup>13</sup> For Stalin, ideological predilections and recent national experience confirmed the world was a dangerous place. And the most dangerous prospect of all inhered in the revival of German and Japanese power, and the prospective alignment of their power with a Western coalition.

As World War II came to a close, no foreign-policy question assumed more importance than controlling the revival of German power and safeguarding Soviet frontiers from renewed aggression. Stalin's views were reiterated in conversation after conversation. These views were simply stated: 'In 1871', Stalin said, 'Germany attacked France... Forty years later, in 1914, Germany attacked again. After the last World War, Germany restored its strength and began to wage war in 1939. Germany possesses an immense regenerative capability.' If effective solutions were not implemented, 'we will have a new war in 15 years'.<sup>14</sup> Although a solid entente with the United States and Great Britain was needed, Stalin told General Charles de Gaulle, Soviet frontiers required protection.<sup>15</sup> 'History teaches us', he told the members of the new Polish provisional government in June 1944, 'that one must not wait long for the recovery of German power.' Since Germany would revive, there 'is need for an agreement of four states: Poland-the Soviet Union-England-America'.<sup>16</sup>

Stalin feared, hated and admired Germany. With appalling disregard for his own brutality, he stated, 'The Germans are masters of breaking people down. Their policy consists of awakening inhuman feelings in people and destroying all that is human. The Germans do not believe in human feelings.' They were masters of 'degradation'.<sup>17</sup> They needed to be punished, demilitarized, occupied and monitored. Yet policies also needed



to be calibrated not to engender a spirit of revenge, because Germans were too talented to be repressed for very long. Indeed, their potential had to be co-opted, or, at least, controlled. In his best scenario, Stalin probably aspired for a unified, socialist state. But at the end of the war, his instincts told him that socialism would not easily take hold in areas of Germany he did not occupy and that Germany was likely to be divided rather than unified. The only certainty was that German power would revive, and the Soviet Union had to be able to protect itself.<sup>18</sup>

In his attitudes towards Germany, Stalin reflected the fear and loathing of his countrymen. A newly emerging literature on Soviet society and culture illuminates the suffering, grief and horror wrought by the German invasion and occupation. The death toll was nearly 26 million, with another 18 million wounded. The Nazis murdered 11.3 million civilians in occupied territory, roughly 16 per cent of the population.<sup>19</sup> Newspapers published and exposed German atrocities. The people, from rural peasants to sophisticated intellectuals, were infused with hatred and revenge. Ilya Ehrenburg wrote, 'If you haven't killed a German in the course of a day, your day has been wasted... If you have killed one German, kill another: nothing gives us so much joy as German corpses. Your mother says to you: kill the German! Your children beg of you: kill the German! Your country groans and whispers: kill the German! Don't miss him! Don't let him escape! Kill!'<sup>20</sup>

Fear and revenge were not unknown in US policy-making circles. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau felt a deep loathing of the Nazi leadership, demanded their punishment, and aspired to thwart the revival of German power. This is not the place to recount the story of post-war US policy towards Germany, but even before Roosevelt's death proponents of a more lenient orientation in the Department of State and the War Department began to reverse the Morgenthau Plan.<sup>21</sup> Very quickly, officials in Washington realized that German coal, in particular, would be essential for European reconstruction; very quickly came warnings from the US military government that if suffering were not allayed, German communists would gain popularity and eventually win power.<sup>22</sup> Absolutely nothing worried US officials more than the prospect of a revived, unified Germany aligned with the Kremlin. 'The only really dangerous thing in my mind', said George F. Kennan as he took charge of the Policy Planning Staff in 1947, 'is the possibility that the technical skills of the Germans might be combined with the physical resources of Russia.'<sup>23</sup>

In the early post-war years, the future power of the Soviet Union loomed large, but it was the Kremlin's potential to co-opt, lure, or seize Germany that most frightened US officials. That nightmare inspired Washington policy-makers to take action, along with Great Britain, to revive the Western zones, unify them, and ensconce a West German entity firmly within a Western orbit. But while moving in this direction, US officials were forever worrying that a restored West Germany might escape the American orbit, gain independent power, and assert its strength either alone or in combination with Soviet Russia. This fear prompted some of the most imaginative, complicated and daring initiatives of the Truman presidency. Merging the zones, augmenting the level of industry, introducing currency reform, and organizing a North Atlantic alliance were all deemed imperative in order to rehabilitate, contain and co-opt German power, while thwarting the Kremlin's own expansionist impulses and encouraging negotiations from a position of strength. These measures were viewed as defensive, designed to thwart future

dangers, and indispensable for the success of the Marshall Plan and the recovery of the rest of Western Europe.<sup>24</sup>

US actions, however prudent, inspired fear in the Kremlin and encouraged Soviet actions. Stalin talked about a unified, neutral Germany and wanted his East German minions to pursue policies designed to enhance communist appeal throughout Germany. But the mass raping of German women by Russian troops, as well as Stalin's support for the confiscation of property, the seizure of reparations, and the blockade of Berlin complicated Soviet control over Eastern Germany, and precluded any realistic expectation that the Kremlin could collaborate with the West to control the revival of German power or to lure western Germany into its grasp. Stalin's failures in Germany caused frustration and dismay in the Kremlin. He and his successors feared that a revived western Germany might fall into the clutches of German militarists and, either alone or in alignment with the United States, seek to revise the post-war frontiers, challenge the Soviet security zone in Eastern Europe, undermine the communist regime in East Germany, and threaten the peace of Europe.<sup>25</sup>

The strategic calculus about Germany's future orientation was inextricably linked to the clash of ideologies and political economies. This was not a clash imposed by the great powers, but had indigenous roots. Throughout Europe, people yearned for a better future. They had just endured two world wars, a great depression and genocide. For more than a century, the forces of nationalism and industrialism formed a backdrop for the social, economic and political discourses that infused liberalism, socialism, fascism and communism. Fascism was defeated, but the contest among democratic capitalism, socialism and communism was unresolved. Peoples everywhere demanded a better future from their governments, but the shape of the future was unclear.

Officials in Washington and Moscow grasped the fluidity of circumstances, the contingency of the times, and the portentous implications for the survival of their own core values. American policy-makers were appalled by the devastation they witnessed in Europe and the misery that seemed to engulf people's lives. Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy went to Europe in April 1945. 'There is complete economic, social, and political collapse going on in Central Europe, the extent of which is unparalleled in history', he reported to his boss, Henry L. Stimson, the secretary of war.<sup>26</sup> McCloy's colleagues in the State Department agreed. 'There is a situation in the world', Assistant Secretary of State Dean G. Acheson told a congressional committee, that 'threatens the very foundations, the whole fabric of world organization which we have known in our lifetime and which our fathers and grandfathers knew.'<sup>27</sup> Peoples every-where, Acheson warned, looked to the state for answers. 'They have suffered so much, and they believe so deeply that governments can take some action which will alleviate their sufferings, that they will demand that the whole business of state control and state interference shall be pushed further and further.'<sup>28</sup>

While US officials felt threatened by circumstances, Stalin saw opportunities. Communism, he proclaimed, had proven its superiority by its triumph over fascism, by its capacity to turn out the tanks, armour and planes to defeat the Nazi invaders.<sup>29</sup> With his armies ensconced throughout Eastern Europe and with communist parties competing for votes and influence, he could now encourage his minions to capitalize on circumstances, form coalition governments and manoeuvre to gain power. As Eduard Mark has recently shown, Stalin hoped for the formation of 'new-type' democracies everywhere. But,

initially, he did not want his minions to precipitate conflict, alienate the Americans or challenge the British where their vital interests were concerned.<sup>30</sup> He told the French, Italian and Greek communists to avoid conflict.<sup>31</sup> He told the Bulgarians that through elections and parliamentary manoeuvring, communists might come to power. Time was on his side: capitalism was faltering; socialism in Europe would triumph. Stalin did not have to contemplate Soviet seizures of power if he thought the tide was flowing in his favour.<sup>32</sup> He was not alone in thinking that it was. Describing conditions in Czechoslovakia at the end of the war, Igor Lukes has written: 'Many in Czechoslovakia had come to believe that capitalism...had become obsolete. Influential intellectuals saw the world emerging from the ashes of the war in black and white terms: here was Auschwitz and there was Stalingrad. The former was a byproduct of a crisis in capitalist Europe of the 1930s; the latter stood for the superiority of socialism.'<sup>33</sup>

US officials recognized the capacity of the Kremlin to capitalize on the widespread distress, should it seek to do so. In early 1946, Acheson warned that, 'The commercial and financial situation of the world is worse than any of us thought a year ago it would be. Destruction is more complete, hunger more acute, exhaustion more widespread than anyone then realized.'<sup>34</sup> Communists throughout Europe could exploit the misery for their political benefit. 'All the indications we receive', wrote Ambassador James C. Dunn from Rome, 'show that the Communists are consistently gaining ground and that our policy to assist the development of a free and democratic Italy is losing ground.'<sup>35</sup> Should communists come to power in these countries, they might orient themselves in the Kremlin's orbit, vastly eroding the United States' position of power in the world, threatening its core values, and requiring dramatic changes in its domestic life. Proponents of democratic capitalism, therefore, had to seize the initiative; they had to demonstrate that they had the capacity to allay the hardship and engender hope for a better future. With this in mind, Secretary of State George C. Marshall announced the US initiative to support European recovery. If this were not done, Kennan warned, the United States would face a Europe that 'would be no less hostile to us, and no less dangerous to us, than would have been the European "New Order" of Hitler's dreams.'<sup>36</sup>

Starvation, misery, turmoil and discouragement accentuated the political-ideological struggle throughout Europe. Both Moscow and Washington realized that domestic political contests would shape the configuration of internal regimes and their foreign-policy orientation. When Stalin met with Marshall in Moscow in April 1947, he emphasized his desire to cooperate, his suspicion of German power, and his hope patiently to negotiate a settlement in cooperation with the West.<sup>37</sup> But given the explosive socio-political context, US officials could not patiently await a negotiated outcome that might never materialize.<sup>38</sup>

Nor could they ignore another major phenomenon of the early post-war years: the rise of revolutionary nationalism and the erosion of colonial empires. Policy-makers initially dealt mainly with problems in French Indochina and the Netherlands East Indies. They were perfectly well aware, however, that the developments in South-east Asia adumbrated a major shift in the configuration of international politics. In one of its first reports, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) stressed that 'The growth of nationalism in colonial areas...has major implications for US security, particularly in terms of possible world conflict with the USSR.' Independence movements, the CIA stated, were inspired by economic nationalism and racial antagonism between white and native

peoples. 'To the extent that the US supports the European powers on this issue', the CIA warned, 'it too will incur the ill-will of these new, nationalistic states.' And it concluded that 'The gravest danger to the US is that friction engendered by these issues may drive the so-called colonial bloc into alignment with the USSR.'<sup>39</sup>

While accurately grasping the indigenous sources of the independence movements and supporting self-determination in principle, top US officials had difficulty supporting independence movements in practice. In late 1946, Acheson explained that he did not want to take measures that would weaken or alienate the European democratic governments; they were already beleaguered by domestic social ferment, political division and economic paralysis.<sup>40</sup> But intelligence analysts were well aware that US neutrality and inactivity were compromising the US position in South-east Asia. 'By taking no coercive action against the actual fighting now in progress', argued intelligence analysts in the War Department,

we have tacitly encouraged France and Holland to continue their efforts to regain control over their colonies... Indonesian and Viet Nam reaction towards such visible evidence of US concurrence in the subjugation of natives peoples by use of armed force is dispelling their previous conviction that the United States is a freedom-loving nation, and is making them look to Moscow for leadership. A continuation of the current unsettled conditions in French Indochina and the Netherlands East Indies will inevitably lead to Communist or extremist control of the native governments.<sup>41</sup>

Stalin initially took little interest in South-east Asia.<sup>42</sup> Even in China, his aid to the Chinese communists was sporadic and halfhearted.<sup>43</sup> In China and South-east Asia, social strife and civil conflict, revolution and war were not the result of Stalin's machinations. They were the consequence of a century of European imperialism and nationalist responses as well as the more immediate legacy of World War II, Japanese occupation and liberation. In 1945, neither the Russians nor the Americans wanted to be ensnared in these conflicts, but they were sucked in by circumstance, suspicion, fear and opportunity. Stalin was no romantic revolutionary, but when prospects for entente and détente collapsed in Europe, he could not help but envision success in the underdeveloped world. Asia, he told the Politburo in March 1948, 'is, and should always be' our trump card. 'Millions of masses enslaved in the current century are already awakened and regardless of how scheming the colonial imperialists may be, they cannot deny them the desire to become free and to live an independent life.'<sup>44</sup>

Embedded in the structure of the international system at the end of World War II was the onset of a three-decade period of decolonization, offering recurrent opportunities to the Kremlin and inspiring the West with fear and trepidation. Aspirations to work out agreements for a cooperative condominium or for an enduring détente were present, but they were always trumped by the fears and opportunities occasioned by the configuration of the international system, by uncertainties about Germany's place in it, by decolonization, and by the ideological contest for people's loyalties. Hovering over these matters during the early post-war years and poisoning relations for decades thereafter was US superiority in atomic and nuclear weapons and delivery systems.

At the end of the war, possession of an atomic monopoly infused US officials with a great sense of power. Although the principal reason for dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was to defeat Japan, US policy-makers were eager to demonstrate US power and to reap the expected diplomatic dividends. The diary entries of Secretary of War Stimson, Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, President Truman and his confidant Joseph Davies, the former ambassador to the Soviet Union, vividly illustrate how the impending use of the atomic bomb shaped their hopes for a post-war settlement. In mid-May, for example, Stimson wrote that now was the time

to keep our mouths shut and let our actions speak for words. The Russians will understand them better than anything else. It is a case where we have to regain the lead and perhaps do it in a pretty rough and realistic way... We really had all the cards. I called it a royal straight flush and we mustn't be a fool about the way we play it. They can't get along without our help and industries and we have coming into action a weapon that will be unique.<sup>45</sup>

In planning for the Potsdam Conference, the testing of the atomic bomb was very much on Truman's mind. When, at Potsdam, he heard about the successful test, he was 'tremendously pepped up'.<sup>46</sup> The 'differences in psychology' were enormous, Stimson noted in his diary.<sup>47</sup> Initially, nobody was more influenced than Truman's new Secretary of State, James F. Byrnes. The atomic bomb, he believed, 'had given us great power, and ...in the last analysis, it would control'.<sup>48</sup>

These quotations illustrating the gut reactions of US policy-makers to the advent of the bomb are suggestive of a larger, more complex and nuanced story, which has been both ably recounted and hotly disputed by scholars.<sup>49</sup> My goal here is to underscore a critical point: the atomic monopoly was felt to be an immense instrument of power. Some officials, like Stimson, were willing to negotiate it away if concessions could be elicited; other, like Byrnes, were initially more wary of negotiating and more inclined to wield the bomb as a club; and Truman himself quickly came to be awed by the responsibilities that inhered in the possession and possible use of the atomic weapon.<sup>50</sup> But notwithstanding all the angst, reservations and uncertainties, there were a few simple truths: the bomb was omnipresent in American thinking; should major war erupt, it would be used.<sup>51</sup> Secretary of State Marshall soberly told the Italian foreign minister in October 1948 that no one wanted peace more than President Truman, 'but that if forced the point could be reached where the bomb would have to be used. Public opinion in America, due to intense Soviet provocation, had now reached the stage where it would fully support and demand the use of the bomb, and the Soviet Government knew this'.<sup>52</sup>

Since atomic weapons could and would be used in a major war, possession of the atomic monopoly and, subsequently, strategic superiority bolstered US diplomacy, encouraged tougher stands on important issues, and inspired risk-taking on behalf of political and strategic goals. At the outset of the Berlin crisis in June 1948, General Lucius Clay crisply stated, 'they are bluffing and their hand can and should be called now. They are definitely afraid of our air might.' The United States, he believed, could merge the Western zones, introduce currency reform, form the Federal Republic, and

boost the level of industry because, ultimately, the Russians would not be willing to risk war. A crisis would escalate, but the Russians would step back from the brink of war.<sup>53</sup>

Strategic superiority did not simply deter premeditated Russian aggression across the heart of Europe. Strategic superiority meant that the United States could act more boldly over issues about which it felt strongly. Hence, when the Soviets detonated their own bomb, the United States had to develop the hydrogen bomb. Truman was told: 'Sole possession by the Soviet Union of this weapon would cause severe damage not only to our military posture but to our foreign policy position.'<sup>54</sup> Nobody, of course, believed this more than Paul Nitze, who took over the State Department Policy Planning Staff in 1950 and exerted significant influence over strategic thinking for the next 30 years. The United States, in his view, had to have superior strategic/atomic/nuclear power in order to carry out its foreign policy successfully around the world. The Kremlin, he insisted, 'constantly weighs the ratio of its power to the power of its adversaries...'. During times of crisis, Nitze was convinced, 'great risks must be run and great efforts expended if we are to be successful'.<sup>55</sup>

So long as the USSR could not retaliate effectively against the United States, this posture caused anger, frustration, humiliation and determination in the Kremlin. Stalin himself might bluster against the significance of atomic weapons, but everything we now know about him indicates that he respected, even feared, US power.<sup>56</sup> David Holloway, the most renowned analyst of the Kremlin's early atomic policies, writes that Stalin and Molotov believed that 'the United States would use the atomic bomb to intimidate the Soviet Union, to wring concessions from it, in order to impose its own conception of the post-war world... It was crucial, therefore, to show the Soviet Union was tough, that it could not be frightened.'<sup>57</sup> But frightened he was both during the Berlin crisis of 1948 and during the Korean War; that is to say, frightened enough not to interfere with the airlift or to intervene directly in the Korean conflict.<sup>58</sup>

In sum, at the end of World War II, neither Truman nor Stalin sought confrontation. A Cold War, they realized, would interfere with the pursuit of other national goals, both foreign and domestic. But however much they might have wanted to avoid confrontation, the configuration of the international system, the spectre of German power, the clash of ideologies, the spread of revolutionary nationalism in Asia and Africa, and the advent of atomic and nuclear weapons conspired against a permanent détente or more relaxed forms of competition. Whereas in 1945 Stalin talked repeatedly about sustaining the entente and imagined the possibility of ongoing collaboration, by late 1947 and early 1948 his rhetoric was radically different. The world, he unequivocally told the Politburo on 14 March 1948, was divided into 'two hostile camps'. Their 'respective points of view are absolutely irreconcilable. If one of the camps does not capitulate to the other, armed conflict between them, sooner or later, will be absolutely inevitable.'<sup>59</sup>

This radical change of disposition was not something that Stalin willed or planned. It was the result of the peculiar interaction of time, circumstance and personality. Stalin was always paranoid, always inclined to see threats, always scheming and calculating, always ready to react with brutality. Initially, he grasped that a showdown with the United States was not in Soviet self-interest and hoped to avoid it. He had seized new territory, rounded out his borders, crushed Germany, occupied all of Eastern Europe, and was manoeuvring to form friendly governments and new-type democracies. Time, he thought, was on his side.

Truman, however, would not allow time to unfold as Stalin hoped. Truman was exasperated by the Kremlin's actions in Eastern Europe, frightened by the ideological appeal of communism, and worried that the Kremlin might lure all of Germany into its orbit. Where Stalin saw opportunity, Truman saw risk. When the president announced the Truman Doctrine in March 1947, launched the Marshall Plan in June, and set about rebuilding Germany and working with the British to form the North Atlantic Treaty, Stalin saw confrontation. He was now ready to wage the Cold War openly and everywhere. He immediately grasped for advantage in the Third World, where opportunities beckoned and the United States was vulnerable and incapacitated by its friendship and responsiveness to its democratic allies with colonial empires.

### *The End*

The Cold War, I am arguing, was inscribed in the context of the period. The configuration of the international system, the fear of Germany, the ideological appeal of statist solutions to the problems of human well-being, the unravelling of colonial empires, and the shadows cast by atomic and nuclear weapons engendered fears and hopes, risks and opportunities that almost guaranteed confrontation. By the mid-1980s, these circumstances had radically changed. But it took a person of considerable courage and imagination to realize the magnitude of these changes and to act, however hesitantly and inconsistently, upon that realization.

Gorbachev's initial foreign-policy preoccupation was to quell the strategic arms race. The buildup of the early Reagan years alarmed the Kremlin.<sup>60</sup> Reagan's advisers were intent on regaining strategic superiority after the erosion of the United States' relative position during the 1970s. They talked about developing the capacity to wage and win a nuclear war. A more robust strategic posture, they hoped, would cast shadows long enough to thwart Moscow's penchant for risk-taking in the Third World.<sup>61</sup> From the Kremlin's perspective, the military buildup in the United States seemed like an attempt to gain pre-emptive capabilities in order to intimidate the Soviet Union to submit to the United States' will. President Reagan's talk of a 'Star Wars' defence system reified notions that the United States might be seeking defensive capabilities so that it could launch an attack without fear of Soviet retaliation. The inescapable conclusion, Gorbachev told Reagan in November 1985, was 'that the only possible use of a strategic defense was to defend against a weakened retaliatory strike not against a first strike'.<sup>62</sup>

The atomic/nuclear dimension that had infused a special dynamic into the Cold War for four decades threatened once again to catalyze a new arms race and poison relations, even without precipitating overt hostilities; indeed, this was one of the essences of the Cold War. Science and technology had been continually harnessed by the state for military purposes and strategic ends. But, over the decades, the liabilities and dangers of this approach had become increasingly evident. The anti-nuclear movement had grown; organized groups lobbied more tenaciously than ever; and scientists themselves became ardent opponents of the arms race. Robert English and Matthew Evangelista, among others, have now written incisively about the impact of these groups. A new intellectual milieu arose, influencing the thinking of key Soviet scientists and foreign-policy experts.

Gorbachev, moreover, was inclined to listen to them. So was the man he chose as his foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze.<sup>63</sup>

They had a different view of security, and were aware of the dramatic changes in technology that, in effect, made war unthinkable. Of course, there were compelling economic reasons to constrain the arms race and reduce the weight of military expenditures on the budget. But such economic factors alone do not explain the actions of Gorbachev and Shevardnadze. For them, nuclear weapons assured the defence of their country. For them, strategic arsenals did not cast shadows that would shape their foreign-policy behaviour because they were convinced that no rational human being would ever dare to use such weapons. Instead of driving the Cold War, nuclear weapons became a reason for taming it. 'It is crystal clear', wrote Gorbachev in 1987,

that in the world we live in, the world of nuclear weapons, any attempt to use them to solve Soviet-American problems would spell suicide... Even if one country engages in a steady arms build up while the other does nothing, the side that arms itself will all the same gain nothing... This is why any striving for military superiority means chasing one's own tail. It can't be used in real politics.<sup>64</sup>

Gorbachev and Shevardnadze departed dramatically from traditional interpretations of security needs, partly because of the way they perceived threats, partly because of the need for economic reforms, and partly because of their views on nuclear weapons. As early as 1986, Gorbachev's aide, Anatoly Chernyaev, noted the general secretary's seriousness of purpose in curbing the arms race and reducing nuclear weapons. 'My impression', wrote Chernyaev on 16 January 1986, 'is that he's really decided to end the arms race no matter what. He is taking this "risk" because, as he understands, it's no risk at all—because nobody would attack us even if we disarmed completely. And in order to get the country out on solid ground, we have to relieve it of the burden of the arms race, which is a drain on more than just the economy.'<sup>65</sup>

Some of Gorbachev's liberal advisers told him that existing nuclear weapons protected the Soviet Union from external aggression. 'The existing nuclear means', argued Georgy Shakhnazarov, 'guarantee us from direct aggression and thereby makes redundant a further increase of conventional armaments and military forces.'<sup>66</sup> Gorbachev and Shevardnadze basically believed this notion. The arms race, they thought, made no sense. Pursuing parity was counter-effective. Additional arms added nothing to security, encouraged illusory risk-taking, and burdened the economy. According to Shevardnadze,

Traditional, centuries-old notions of national security as the defense of the country from external military threat have been shaken by profound structural and qualitative shifts in human civilization, the result of the growing role of science and technology and the increasing political, economic, social, and informational interdependence of the world.<sup>67</sup>

The world had changed vastly, and Gorbachev and Shevardnadze understood the changes. Nuclear weapons provided security against attack; they could not be used for other purposes. In the past, Gorbachev stressed, there had been ample reason for the



Soviets to fear for their security. 'Ever since the October revolution, we have been under permanent threat of potential aggression.'<sup>68</sup> But the arms race made no sense. It was a 'stupid' dialectic, he told the Politburo on 20 June 1988.<sup>69</sup> It was important to be militarily strong, 'but for purposes of security, not intimidation'.<sup>70</sup> He was now well aware that the real threat to the Soviet system emanated from within, from the failure of the system to have the appeal it once had. Nobody, he said, 'wants to live in the old way any more, to tolerate and reconcile themselves to what has been obsolete, which is holding back our movement, which is blackening and darkening our conditions, our life, our socialist system'.<sup>71</sup>

Policy-makers in Washington and Moscow both grasped that the appeal of Marxism-Leninism to the Third World was gone. The revolutionary nationalist 'moment' in history was history. By the 1980s, all the European colonial empires had disintegrated. Many less developed countries in Asia and Africa had been free for a generation, free to experiment with nationalization and planned economies, and free to see the usually disappointing results. 'In one of the great geopolitical ironies of our times', commented a State Department analyst prior to the Geneva summit in 1985, 'it is now the Soviet Union whose clients are waging counter-insurgency operations against national liberation and resistance movements'.<sup>72</sup> Ideologically, the Soviet Union was on the defensive. In a package of materials prepared for National Security Adviser Colin Powell on the eve of Gorbachev's visit to Washington in December 1987, the State Department wrote: 'The once widespread appeal of Marxism-Leninism in Asia has faded as the socialist countries have lagged far behind the free market economies of the region in trade and investment.' In Africa, as well, the Soviets 'were taking a less confrontational approach in their dealings with us on the region's conflicts'.<sup>73</sup> Gorbachev himself grasped that 'the international impetus of Socialism had lessened'.<sup>74</sup> He did not see developing countries as an important revolutionary force. For him, according to Elizabeth Kridl Valkenier, 'the tumultuous era of liberation' was over.<sup>75</sup>

In all their meetings with Reagan and his advisers, Gorbachev and Shevardnadze stressed their desire to collaborate with the United States in solving regional disputes. At their very first private meeting, Gorbachev disputed the president's allegations that the Kremlin was fomenting revolution around the world:

The Soviet Union did not consider that a way of life could be imposed if a society were not ready for it... All these things which happen in the world have their national roots. The US should not think that Moscow was omnipotent and that when he, Gorbachev, woke up every day he thought about which country he would now like to arrange a revolution in. This was simply not true.<sup>76</sup>

At the Moscow summit in May 1988, Gorbachev and Shevardnadze especially reemphasized their desire to collaborate with the United States to resolve peacefully all regional disputes. It was evident, Gorbachev told Reagan, that problems in the world could not be solved by military means. 'In this diverse world of varied ideologies and nations, it was essential to live together in peace.' Gorbachev proposed that they issue a statement agreeing that

no problem in dispute can be resolved, nor should it be resolved, by military means. They regard peaceful coexistence as a universal principle of international relations. Equality of all states, non-interference in internal affairs and freedom of socio-political choice must be recognized as the inalienable and mandatory standards of international relations.<sup>77</sup>

For Moscow, the worldwide ideological struggle was waning. In Europe, as well as the Third World, communism was faltering. Whereas at the end of World War II, Stalin had reason to hope and Truman had reason to fear the spread of communism throughout Europe, by the 1980s the socioeconomic landscape had been transformed, and so had the ideological discourse and political dynamics. Gorbachev, emphasized Chernyaev at a conference, grasped 'that we had lost the ideological war which we had been conducting for so many decades in the international arena.'<sup>78</sup> In western Europe, democratic capitalism, market economies and the social welfare state had triumphed. In Eastern Europe, planned economies and one-party rule had failed. In his memoirs, Gorbachev acknowledged that when he occasionally travelled in the West in the 1960s and 1970s, his 'belief in the superiority of socialist democracy over the bour-geois system was shaken as I observed the functioning of civic society and the different political systems'. One question especially 'haunted' him: 'why was the standard of living in our country lower than in other developed countries?'<sup>79</sup>

Gorbachev and Shevardnadze desperately wanted to renew the vitality of socialism in their own country. They hoped they could do so through democratization and restructuring. By reducing military expenditures and eroding the enemy image, they hoped to end the arms race, reallocate expenditures, and focus on domestic priorities. In contrast to the years immediately after World War II, when economic needs were even more pressing, Gorbachev chose to eradicate the image of the enemy and focused on the deideologization of international politics. In contrast to Stalin in 1946, and especially in 1948, Gorbachev used the rhetoric of dialectical materialism to conclude that capitalism had been tempered and that the post-war period had 'provided evidence of a profound modification of contradictions which have determined the main processes in the world economy and politics'.<sup>80</sup> In September 1988, Shevardnadze boldly announced to the United Nations, 'the Soviet Union supports a deideologization of international relations and the exclusion of an overwhelming component of ideological differences from foreign policy and diplomacy'. In December, Gorbachev reiterated this view.<sup>81</sup>

Gorbachev and Shevardnadze were willing to apply this principle even to Eastern Europe. They hoped their reforms at home would serve as a model for revitalizing friendly socialist regimes in Eastern Europe. However, they were not eager to admit the mistakes of their past relations with Eastern Europe, to acknowledge the inappropriateness of the 1968 crackdown in Czechoslovakia, to allow socialist governments to be toppled from power, or to see the cohesion of the Warsaw Pact endangered. None the less, they were willing to follow the logic of their domestic priorities and emerging beliefs, so long as there was no direct outside intervention from Western countries.<sup>82</sup> Gorbachev and Shevardnadze repeatedly declared in 1988 and early 1989 that the first principle of international relations was 'the recognition of freedom of social and political choice by each people and each country'.<sup>83</sup> Before the Council of Europe in July 1989, Gorbachev acknowledged that 'Social and political orders of one

country or another changed in the past and may change in the future as well.' The 'competition between different types of society is oriented towards the creation of better material and spiritual living conditions for people'.<sup>84</sup> He and Shevardnadze were willing to withdraw their troops and accept, however grudgingly and reluctantly, the overthrow of communist regimes.<sup>85</sup>

However committed they were to revitalizing socialism at home, Gorbachev and Shevardnadze grasped that, for the moment, it had lost its appeal abroad and it was counter-effective to try to preserve it through the use of force.<sup>86</sup> In a memorandum prepared in February 1989 for Gorbachev's close associate, Alexander Yakovlev, the International Department of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) flatly stated that 'in a number of socialist countries, the process of rejection of the existing political institutions, and of the ideological values by the societies, is already underway now'. The reasons were clear.

The European socialist countries found themselves in a powerful magnetic field of the economic growth and social well-being of West European states. Against this background, on the one hand, their own achievements grew dim, and on the other hand, the real problems and difficulties that exist in the West, are practically imperceptible. The constant comparing and contrasting of the two worlds, of their ways of life, production, cultures, entered our life thanks to the means of mass communication and there is no way around it... The influence of this magnetic field will probably grow even stronger with the beginning of functioning of the common European market.<sup>87</sup>

More significantly, Gorbachev and Shevardnadze do not seem to have felt that fundamental Soviet security imperatives were endangered. They were much more concerned about internal priorities and nationalist unrest within the Soviet Union than about external dangers. Of course, they understood that the European socialist countries formed a 'security belt, which created a strategic umbrella for the center of socialism'.<sup>88</sup> They hoped, in part, that a change in governments in the socialist countries, should it occur, would not endanger alliance relationships. Experts at the Bogomolev Institute advised Yakovlev that 'a transfer of power to alternative forces does not mean an external and military threat to our country'. The leadership needed 'to liberate ourselves from some persistent ideological stereotypes, for instance from the assumption that only a communist party can provide guarantees for the security of Soviet borders'.<sup>89</sup>

Gorbachev and Shevardnadze, of course, had already gone a long way to liberate themselves from the ideological baggage of the past. They seemed firmly to believe that 'despite the profoundly contradictory nature of the modern world and fundamental differences of the states which comprise it, it is mutually connected, mutually dependent, and forms a definite integral whole'.<sup>90</sup> With Chernobyl constantly in their minds, they emphasized that nuclear and ecological threats dictated the transcendence of common human values. As they observed events unfold in Eastern Europe in 1989, they were willing to let them take their course, provided there was no external intervention.<sup>91</sup> They were seeking to break down the Iron Curtain, 'Fulton in reverse', as Gorbachev stated at one Politburo meeting in October 1988.<sup>92</sup>

Their view was that the international environment was relatively benign. Geopolitics, ideology and technology shaped this view. Gorbachev and Shevardnadze did not see traditional threats to their security; they were confident that nuclear weapons provided insurance against external threats; they believed that the internal contradictions of capitalism had been tempered. Whereas Stalin believed that it was impossible under prevailing conditions in the capitalist world to resolve the contradictions that precipitated intra-capitalist conflict, Gorbachev explicitly found that this was no longer true. 'Both capitalism and socialism are changing', he boldly declared. The lessons of the last war, the strength of socialism and the logic of technological change had forced capitalist nations to modulate their differences, reconcile contradictions and balance interests. Peace was the common interest of all nations, and this corresponded with Leninist thinking, Gorbachev stressed again and again.<sup>93</sup>

This predisposition was shaken by the unanticipated turn of events in Germany during late 1989 and 1990. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the precipitous moves toward German unification profoundly disturbed Gorbachev and Shevardnadze. The spectre of a renewed threat emanating from a united Germany concerned them as did no other matter. 'I was fourteen when the war ended', wrote Gorbachev in his memoirs. 'Our generation is the generation of wartime children. It has burned us, leaving its mark both on our characters and on our view of the world.'<sup>94</sup> For Shevardnadze, the issue was even more difficult. 'The war [World War II]', he wrote, 'shaped me as it did millions of my contemporaries. It formed my convictions and purposes in life.' Shevardnadze could not easily forsake the division of Germany; two Germanies had been critical to his conception of security for the entire post-war era. 'We had paid an enormous price for it, and to write it off was inconceivable. The memory of the war was stronger than the new concepts about the limits of security.' He could not forget history: 'two world wars unleashed by Germany, especially the last war, which cost our country 27 million lives'.<sup>95</sup>

Even if Gorbachev and Shevardnadze had been inclined to forget their past, their opponents would not allow them to do so. German experts in the Soviet foreign ministry and the party apparatus observed developments with trepidation. Gorbachev and Shevardnadze laboured on the issue in an incredibly improvised way, deeply preoccupied with other matters. Hannes Adomeit has written thoughtfully and comprehensively about the decision-making process, or lack thereof. But although Gorbachev and Shevardnadze tried to avoid presenting the matter to the Politburo, opponents none the less screamed loudly about the dangerous implications of developments. Igor Ligachev raised the issue at the Central Committee plenum in early February 1990:

We should not overlook the impending danger of the accelerated reunification of Germany, or, in fact, the engulfment of the German Democratic Republic. It would be unpardonably shortsighted and a folly not to see that on the world horizon looms a Germany with a formidable economic and military potential. Real efforts of the world community, of all democratic forces in the world, are needed in order to prevent in advance the raising of the issue of the revision of the post-war borders and, to put it directly, not to allow a new Munich. I believe the time has come to recognize this new danger of our era and tell the party and the people about it in a clear voice.<sup>96</sup>

None the less, Gorbachev and Shevardnadze proceeded to acquiesce to the unification of Germany. Shevardnadze, in particular, moved with great trepidation, but he moved. In their memoirs, both Secretary of State James Baker and German Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher spend considerable time detailing their efforts to assuage Shevardnadze's grave misgivings, first, about the unification of Germany, and, second, about the incorporation of a unified Germany in NATO. 'He seemed overwhelmed', writes Baker, 'by the emotional weight of the issue.'<sup>97</sup>

Of course, Shevardnadze was not alone in feeling this apprehension about the rebirth of German power. Every official in the West as well as the East was thinking anew about the same factors that had gripped their predecessors at the end of World War II. An autonomous Germany, unified and strong, might regain power and act aggressively; a united Germany inside an opposing bloc could alter the entire balance of power. You are in the 'same boat' as our NATO allies, Bush told Gorbachev in December 1989 at their meeting in Malta. To control a united Germany, the United States wanted it riveted in the NATO alliance.<sup>98</sup> Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher certainly insisted on this position as a fundamental prerequisite of any final settlement of the German question, but even then she worried that a united Germany would dominate a federated Europe. Since Bismarck, she thought, Germany has 'veered unpredictably between aggression and self-doubt'. French President François Mitterand felt not much happier than Thatcher, but was circumscribed by his country's longstanding relations with the FRG (Federal Republic of Germany). 'Nobody', wrote Gorbachev, 'was very enthusiastic about what was happening.'<sup>99</sup>

Suddenly, in late 1989–90, the international environment cast dangers and threats similar to those immediately after the war. But the context was different; times had changed; values had been altered; new institutions had been forged. They made a huge difference. Initially, Gorbachev did not want Germany unified, and then he did not want it ensconced in NATO. But his fears were tempered by the realization that he was dealing with a Germany that had been peaceful for almost two generations. President Bush told Gorbachev during a critical meeting in May 1990 that 'Germany can be trusted. It has paid its dues.' 'For fifty years', Bush continued, 'there has been democracy in Germany. This should not be ignored.'<sup>100</sup> Gorbachev did not ignore this fact. The FRG, he already acknowledged, had gone through 'a period of rapid economic development of the contemporary capitalist economy with minimal military expenditure, and this experience has remained a part of history'.<sup>101</sup>

Although Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Hans-Dietrich Genscher infuriated Soviet leaders by their precipitous moves to unify Germany, Gorbachev and Shevardnadze basically trusted German motives and values. Their meetings and conversations with Kohl and Genscher at critical moments during 1989 and 1990 vividly reveal the efforts of the generation raised in wartime to overcome the legacy of their youth and to forge a new order based on common values. Germany, Genscher liked to tell his interlocutors, could be trusted because Germany was now free. 'I staked Germany's future on changes based on our value system.' Gorbachev, however uncertain about the dangers of the future and buffeted by his domestic foes, grasped that to thwart the movement towards German unity would require the use of force, which, according to Chernyaev, 'was out of the question for him because that would bring about the demise of his cause, of the policy of Perestroika and the very idea of reforming Soviet society'. For Gorbachev, with his

domestic priorities imperilled, Germans' right to self-determination now trumped the importance of preserving a socialist regime in the GDR (German Democratic Republic).<sup>102</sup>

However, common values that transcended differences in ideology do not suffice to explain Gorbachev's actions. He acquiesced to a united Germany within NATO because ultimately he perceived that NATO was a critical means to control German power in the future. 'The presence of US troops', Gorbachev told Baker, 'could be very constructive and be positive in the situation as it evolves... We really don't want to see a replay of Versailles, where the Germans were able to arm themselves. The lessons of the past tell us that Germany must stay within European structures.'<sup>103</sup> A US withdrawal from Europe, Gorbachev stated, 'was not in the interests of the Soviet Union'.<sup>104</sup> Of course, Gorbachev wanted NATO restructured to make it less threatening to the Soviet Union. He also wanted to ensure that Germany would not be allowed to develop weapons of mass destruction and that its forces in the east would be limited and circumscribed. But within these parameters he recognized that a united Germany inside NATO was less of a threat than a united Germany outside NATO, especially if the new Russia could develop a special relationship with the new Germany.<sup>105</sup>

### *Conclusion*

For Brent Scowcroft, Bush's national security adviser, 'the Cold War ended when the Soviets accepted a united Germany in NATO'.<sup>106</sup> For him, as for many US officials since the early post-war years, the greatest threat had always been the spectre of a united Germany harnessed to an aggressive communist alliance spearheaded by the Soviet Union. The Cold War, therefore, appeared to end when the deideologization of Soviet foreign policy was coupled with the co-option of German power in a Western coalition. As a consequence of these developments, both the ideological threat and the strategic nightmare that had inspired the United States' Cold War anxieties vanished. The Soviets were no longer competing ideologically in the Third World; they were not insisting on kindred socialist regimes in Eastern Europe; they were not capable of attracting the loyalty of the peoples of western Europe or of subverting their governments. They could not conquer, harness, or co-opt the resources of Europe and Asia. For Washington, the Cold War was over because it had been won, both strategically and ideologically.

For Moscow, the unfolding of events could be explained in part by the march of time. German power, which always appeared so foreboding, seemed tempered by a new set of values and harnessed by new institutional regimes, including NATO, CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe), and the European Union. The allure of ideological gains, so intoxicating in the early decades of the Cold War, was eroded by acceptance of the inadequacies of the Soviet model of development, by knowledge that the peoples of Eastern Europe were repudiating their regimes, and by recognition that Marxist-Leninist experiments had failed miserably in the Third World and at substantial cost to the Kremlin. The fear of atomic and nuclear blackmail, which inspired so much of the arms race, was allayed by confidence that the Soviets had immense capabilities and knowledge that nuclear plenty made nuclear threats hollow.

Events would not have unfolded as they did, however, without the agency and leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev. Once in power, Gorbachev seized the levers of the regime to outline a direction in which the Soviet Union had to move. It was a direction rather than a vision because Gorbachev had no clear blueprint for the future. He improvised and learned, and his improvisations became ever more dramatic as he encountered difficulties and confronted unanticipated problems. But the direction was infused with real conviction, with a passionate commitment to make socialism work in one country. In his speeches, not simply his foreign-policy speeches but in all his speeches, you observe a man of deep ideological commitment. Day after day, speech after speech, Gorbachev declared that his goal was to reform and revitalize socialism. The socialist experiment, he insisted, was of 'great universal significance. It has offered to the world its answers to the fundamental questions of human life and appropriated its humanist and collectivist values, at the center of which stands the working man.' Through restructuring, he forever preached, 'we want to give socialism a second wind and to unveil in all its plenitude the vast humanist potential of the socialist system. That is our premise as we consistently and unswervingly move onward.'<sup>107</sup>

Gorbachev, it must be stressed, was not interested in the socialist system for its own sake. He differed greatly from Stalin, who constantly saw the system endangered by enemies, but ignored the ultimate intentions of the system. For Gorbachev, the ends were clear. The 'principal goal of socialism', he told Hungarian leader Miklos Nemeth, 'is overcoming alienation and putting man in the focus of attention'.<sup>108</sup> He repeated this theme again and again. 'Stalinist distortions', Gorbachev insisted, 'led to the loss of the main thing in the Marxist-Leninist concept of socialism—the concept of man as the aim and the highest value and not a means or a "cog"'.<sup>109</sup> Socialism, he believed, should instill in humankind 'feelings of dignity, of being master of his own country; it gives him social protection and confidence in the future, opening ample scope for acquisition of knowledge and culture, and creating conditions for realizing of individual abilities and talents'.<sup>110</sup> The responsibility of European leaders, he told the Council of Europe, was to enable man to 'continue the role destined for him on this Earth and perhaps in the universe, so that he can adapt himself to the stressful newness of the present day existence and win in the struggle for the survival of the present and also future generations'.<sup>111</sup>

Gorbachev's aim was to restore the vitality of socialism for humankind and fulfil its potential inside the Soviet Union. His desire was to shift resources from the military budget to domestic renewal. His foreign policy was almost totally designed to serve the needs of his domestic agenda. This was possible because he neither saw great threats nor great opportunities beyond his borders. He could grudgingly tolerate the displacement of socialist regimes in Eastern Europe because he knew they had lost their appeal and because he did not see them as indispensable as a security belt. Only when the Berlin Wall came tumbling down and German unification was thrust to the forefront of international politics did Gorbachev step back and ponder traditional security issues. But even then, he believed that the Soviet Union was too strong to be endangered and that Germany was too reformed and too enmeshed in NATO to be threatening.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, in return for agreeing to a united Germany, he could elicit a huge economic payback that might sustain the restructuring process that was so important to him.<sup>113</sup>

The very fact that Gorbachev could imagine the economic benefits flowing from a united Germany to outweigh the strategic danger illuminates how vastly different the context and the agents were at the end of the Cold War compared with at its beginning. As much as Stalin hoped for financial aid and reparations from the West to expedite reconstruction, he never would have traded those benefits for a united Germany linked to a capitalist coalition. Germany was simply too dangerous, and the dialectics of capitalist development too portentous. The security of the Soviet Union and its communist system of political economy were not to be risked. The dangers were too great; the opportunities too vast.

For Gorbachev, the external threats were small and the external opportunities even smaller. Although he ultimately failed in his efforts, success for him depended on democratizing socialism and making it work in his country. Because he transformed the ultimate ends of the Soviet experiment from protecting a system with universal claims to ameliorating the welfare of people within the system, Gorbachev was neither seeking foreign enemies nor dependent on them to preserve his totalitarian rule at home. Instead, he needed friendly governments and foreign aid to buttress his attempts at socialist renewal. For him, a geopolitical landscape that had a relaxation of tensions at its core was the key to a successful reformation of socialism that had the well being of the individual as its centrepiece. This nexus brought together geopolitics and ideology in ways that could not have been imagined when the Allies met at the Elbe in 1945, and when Stalin and Truman first pondered the risks and opportunities of the post-war world.

## NOTES

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## The European Role at the Beginning and Particularly the End of the Cold War

*Geir Lundestad*

After 1945, the United States and the Soviet Union became the leading powers in international relations; the Cold War was very much seen as a contest between the two superpowers. They had made brief appearances on the European scene in 1917. Then, the United States had rejected Woodrow Wilson's vision of its participation in world affairs; instead, it withdrew into an isolationism even more rigid than before World War I. The new communist leaders in the Kremlin had in part isolated themselves; in part, they were kept in isolation by the capitalist powers. Now, in 1945, both states were prepared to play the part in international affairs that their power suggested.

Europe was in effect put under the administration of the two new superpowers. The Soviet Union ruled with a very firm hand in the East; in the West the United States had a vast arsenal of instruments at its disposal. Yet, in some ways the United States' influence in the West went even deeper than did that of the Soviet Union in the East. World War II also started the withdrawal of the European powers from Asia and then Africa. The European domination of the rest of the world that had started centuries ago was coming to a surprisingly rapid end.

The torch was indeed being passed on from the leading west European powers to the United States. After 1945, the United States was not only the world's strongest power in general. Its universities were also particularly powerful, as could be witnessed by the American domination of the Nobel prize, often seen as the highest standard of excellence. Although there are no Nobel prizes for history and political science, American historians and political scientists also came to dominate writings on the Cold War. In addition to the general standing of the United States, there were two more particular reasons for this domination. American academics were more eager to deal with contemporary history than their European counterparts, who tended to remain stuck in earlier periods, of which there were so many in Europe. The United States was also clearly in a class of its own in its willingness to release relevant sources on the Cold War years.

For years, even decades, the study of the Cold War was a field almost entirely dominated by American historians. They presented the new interpretations and the new evidence; they founded the leading schools on the origins of the Cold War, whether traditionalist, revisionist or post-revisionist. Their research was very impressive indeed. The United States' domination was enhanced by the fact that the Soviet Union, the other superpower, had so little to offer in the way of interesting research on the Cold War.

Yet, US domination came at a price. American accounts of the Cold War could be accused of 'moralism, presentism, exceptionalism, provincialism, and other extravagances'.<sup>1</sup> There was always a guilty party in American writings on the Cold War,

whether Stalin and the Soviet Union, as traditionalists averred, or the United States itself, as revisionists emphasized; these writings emphatically reflected the current concerns of US foreign policy; the underlying assumption was always that the United States was special, whether in its goodness or in its evil; Washington basically determined outcomes in different parts of the world either by what it did and what it did not do.

There was no reason for the Europeans to gloat, however. European historians started late in analyzing the Cold War. When we finally began, we were frequently so overwhelmed by the American interpretations and evidence that we had little new to add. When we had our own points to offer, we were often quite provincial in our own way. The first big wave of contributions came from British historians. That was to be expected, both from the country's general standing and from the quality of its universities and historians. These historians tended simply to point out that Britain's role in the Cold War had been neglected and then went on to tell us what Britain's policies had been. Except for their empirical findings, important as they were, most British historians had relatively little to offer in the way of overall interpretation. Then came the German and the Scandinavian historians, who told us how their histories had been neglected, and, finally, the French, who told us how their country had not received the attention it deserved. It was all very predictable.

Now we are studying the end of the Cold War. Again, the Americans have taken the lead. Now we are told who gets the credit, not the blame, for the outcome. While the Soviet Union generally got the blame for the Cold War, the United States gets the credit for ending it. It is often seen as a question of personalities. Reagan is the big favourite, and some celebrate him in rather explicit ways (for example, Peter Schweizer, Reagan policy-makers Caspar Weinberger and Richard Pipes, and Francis Fukuyama in his fashion). Others celebrate Reagan in somewhat more subdued fashion, in that they also assign a large role to Gorbachev (for example, John Lewis Gaddis,<sup>2</sup> Don Oberdorfer, Reagan policy-makers Robert Gates, Jack Matlock and George Shultz). Then there are a few Americans who dislike praising Reagan and clearly give most of the credit to Gorbachev (for example, Raymond Garthoff<sup>3</sup>).

Particularly in the wider public debate, but even among historians, presentism—in the form of being excessively influenced with present-day political concerns—is indeed very visible, this time expressed in the triumphalism that reigns after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the unchallenged supremacy of the United States in international affairs. Unilateralism is the new version of exceptionalism, especially among US politicians, and provincialism, in the form of the 'illusion of omnipotence',<sup>4</sup> has returned.

Now, however, the international participants are more visible than they were in the early years of the debate on the origins of the Cold War. Historians and political scientists from many countries have participated in the emerging debate on the end of the Cold War. Few have followed the American lead in stressing Reagan's role; almost without exception they have pointed to Mikhail Gorbachev as the person who did more than anyone else to bring the Cold War to an end (for example, Archie Brown, Jacques Lévesque). This time, Russian scholars have been able to participate meaningfully in a debate in which their country figures so prominently, some criticizing Gorbachev strongly (usually those with ties to the old system), others seeing him in a much more positive light (for example, Vladislav Zubok<sup>5</sup>).

What I propose to do in this chapter is to discuss European, Western and Eastern contributions to the end of the Cold War, not from historians, but from the actors themselves in the historical process. It seems to me that in the focus on the United States and the Soviet Union, on Reagan and on Gorbachev, the role of the Europeans has not received the attention it deserves. To avoid the charge of European provincialism I will not automatically assume that the European role has been the primary one. As we shall see, many of the European efforts to temper or end the Cold War were unsuccessful.

Others were, however, very successful indeed. No events did more to bring the Cold War to an end than the sweeping away of the central and Eastern European regimes in that momentous half-year in 1989, from the National Assembly elections in Poland in June to the fall of Ceauşescu in Romania in December. The peoples of central and Eastern Europe took charge. Those who had counted for the least in the history of the Cold War finally reigned supreme. So, it seems to me, they, rather than Gorbachev and Reagan and Bush, important as their contributions were, should get most of the credit for ending the Cold War, if credit is what we should be distributing. Thus, this part at least could be seen as my limited contribution to writing even diplomatic history 'from below'.

### *A Note on the Origins of the Cold War*

Before we proceed to the main topic, the end of the Cold War, just some brief comments on the origins of the Cold War. From the European perspective, it is most striking how frequently even Britain has been omitted from the main story. When the term 'superpower' was first used in 1944–45 it was assumed as a matter of course that Britain was one of three such powers. While its decline had been sharp, it was still a significant actor for many years after 1945, and its role has to be integrated into the general histories of the Cold War.

Here I shall focus only on one aspect, the fact that in 1945–46 the main antagonists were Britain and the Soviet Union, not the United States and the Soviet Union. In this respect, it made virtually no difference that in the middle of the Potsdam Conference power in London was transferred from Churchill and the Conservatives to Attlee and Labour. In 1944–45, the British Chiefs of Staff and even the Foreign Office were clearly less optimistic that their American counterparts about the possibilities of continued cooperation with the Soviet Union once World War II was over. At Yalta, Roosevelt repeatedly made comments at Churchill's expense in an effort to establish himself in some sort of middle position between the two antagonists; Truman did less of this at Potsdam, but the political distance was still greater between London and Moscow than between Washington and Moscow. At the Council of Foreign Ministers meetings in London and Moscow in late 1945, Secretary of State James Byrnes was the one trying to make compromises, although he met with a negative reaction from Truman after Moscow. Soviet propaganda clearly distinguished between Britain, with its 'reactionary' social-democratic government as the chief obstacle to 'peace', and the United States. British imperialism, not American capitalism, was generally the target of attacks from the Kremlin.

Only gradually in 1946 did British and US policies become more unified. By the end of 1946, the Foreign Office was finally happy. The main reason for this was

the reaction of the United States...to the continued expansionist policy pursued by the Soviet Union...a movement in American public opinion which by the end of the year had substituted for any previous tendency to appease the Soviet Union a determination to oppose her further advance and the extension of Communist influence at every point on the borderland between the Soviet and the Anglo-American zones of influence.<sup>6</sup>

Here I want to mention only three implications of the fact that in 1945–46 British-Soviet differences were indeed more pronounced than US-Soviet ones. First, Britain has clearly not been given the attention it deserves in the theories of the origins of the Cold War.<sup>7</sup> The same applies to other great-power actors, and to the many local actors that are apparently too much to handle for those of us who want to say something about the more general origins of the Cold War.

Second, it is increasingly being argued by John Lewis Gaddis<sup>8</sup> and others that ideology has not received the attention it deserves in the discussion about the origins of the Cold War. While the overall point is well taken, too much can be made of ideology. Thus, in this context it is somewhat awkward that the capitalist United States stands between social democratic Britain and the communist Soviet Union. (Many social democrats, also inside Britain's Labour Party, had the same feeling and urged Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin to change his course.) Third, one reason Britain was in such conflict with the Soviet Union had to do with centuries-old great-power considerations. Many of the pre-Cold War structures lingered on. Britain and Russia were traditional enemies in a broad belt from Greece and Turkey to Iran and India.

### *Early European Attempts to Improve the Cold War Climate*

The swings of the foreign-policy pendulum have tended to be considerably wider, not to say wilder, in the United States than in Britain and some other west European countries. This has to do with many factors, from the greater freedom of action a superpower has compared with other powers, to the more moralistic nature of US foreign policy compared with that of Britain. In Washington, things are often seen as black or white, in European capitals they tend to be gray. In 1944–46, London had a more sceptical view of the Soviet Union than did Washington; then, for some years, the two capitals had roughly parallel views; from 1949 to 1950 Washington was definitely more anti-Soviet than London.<sup>9</sup>

This was the background for British efforts to improve relations with the Soviet Union. The first such determined effort was Prime Minister Winston Churchill's strong interest in a three-power summit. His interest originated as early as 1950, but was strengthened a great deal after the death of Stalin in 1953 seemed to offer better chances of change. However, the Eisenhower administration disliked the idea of an early East-West summit; Western eagerness would serve only to strengthen the Soviet position. Bonn was initially sceptical of such summits too, and insisted that a solution to the German problem be a precondition for a meeting. Paris was preoccupied with the war in Indochina, and Washington was afraid that Paris would use a summit as an excuse to

delay ratification of the European Defence Community (EDC). Even Anthony Eden's Foreign Office was wary of Churchill's idea. Only in 1955, after the Kremlin had shown concrete evidence of its desire for improved relations, Konrad Adenauer had visited Moscow, the EDC had collapsed and West Germany had joined NATO instead, and, ironically, Churchill had finally let Anthony Eden take over as prime minister, was a four-power summit held in Geneva. It created the 'spirit of Geneva', but led to few substantial results.<sup>10</sup>

It is difficult to believe that an earlier summit would have meant much change in the temperature of the Cold War, much less represented an end to the conflict itself. It was rather unclear what Churchill expected a summit would lead to. His relative optimism about the outcome of such a meeting was undoubtedly influenced by his desire to see Britain, and he himself, play a larger role on the international stage. The same was undoubtedly the case when, at the end of the 1950s, Eden's successor, Harold Macmillan, attempted to bring more flexibility into US positions, particularly concerning a test-ban treaty with the Soviet Union. His objective was even more limited than Churchill's had been, particularly after the United States and Britain had been so at odds over Suez in 1956. Macmillan was determined never again to open such a split with Washington.

It was different with Charles de Gaulle. The French president's objective in the Cold War was really to transcend the legacy of Yalta, which the French saw as the division of Europe into East and West.<sup>11</sup> De Gaulle wanted to create a Europe united 'from the Atlantic to the Urals'. When, in 1966, after he had solved the Algerian problem, he took France out of NATO's integrated military structure, if not out of NATO itself, he clearly hoped that this would trigger a dissolution of the two blocs, at least in the longer term. As Frédéric Bozo has argued, 'questioning Atlantic integration was also and most especially, for de Gaulle, to contest the bloc system as a whole; could French policy with respect to NATO inspire USSR satellite states that were tempted to take the same steps within the Warsaw Pact?'<sup>12</sup>

The answer to de Gaulle's question about France inspiring the Warsaw Pact members was clearly 'no', at least in the short term. When de Gaulle came to Moscow in June 1966, hot on the heels of his withdrawal from NATO's integrated structure, he was celebrated, but Brezhnev still made it perfectly clear that he had no intention of setting the East European countries free, and that definitely included East Germany. When the French president visited Poland in 1967, he was again instructed rather bluntly about the realities of power in the region. The Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in August 1968 provided definite evidence that the dissolution of the blocs would be a very long-term affair indeed. Furthermore, France's withdrawal had a rather more limited effect even on NATO than de Gaulle had hoped and many others feared. In fact, under US leadership, the remaining 14 members made a show of solidarity; in the Harmel report of 1967, NATO's purpose was redefined to include détente as well as deterrence. This was done in such a way that even the French felt they had to sign up to the report.<sup>13</sup> NATO lived on in good shape, particularly after France accepted far-reaching military agreements for cooperation in times of war.

West Germany's *Ostpolitik* represented the next European effort to transform the nature of the Cold War. In his long years as chancellor, Konrad Adenauer had insisted that German unification be a precondition for any wider Cold War understanding in Europe. This attitude would have made it virtually impossible to achieve any easing of

the Cold War in this part of the world. President Kennedy had become increasingly frustrated by *der Alte's* intransigent attitude. The Kiesinger-Brandt coalition government in the years 1966–69 started to modify German policy; under Willy Brandt's leadership the SPD-FDP (Socialist-Liberal) government of 1969–74 transformed it entirely. Brandt was willing to go much further than his predecessors in recognizing realities in Eastern Europe: the governments and borders of Poland and East Germany were accepted. In return, Bonn achieved recognition of its close ties with West Berlin and increased contact across the Iron Curtain.

This German policy met with a great deal of scepticism in Washington and even in several European capitals, including Paris. In content, *Ostpolitik* was really quite complementary to Nixon-Kissinger's own *détente*. It could in fact be argued that *Ostpolitik* constituted the very heart of *détente*, in that the mutual recognition of *status quo* in Europe was even more important for *détente*, than were the arms-control agreements signed by Washington and Moscow.

Germany's history was so special. *Ostpolitik* brought back memories of *Schaukelpolitik*, of Germany playing East against West, of the Soviet Union and Germany, the two outcasts of inter-war Europe, moving closer together, a policy that with a great deal of historical simplification was said to have resulted in the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression pact of August 1939. The new fear was that the Kremlin, by playing the strong cards it held in controlling former German territory in Poland and East Germany, would be able to persuade West Germany to abandon its strong moorings with NATO and the West. *Ostpolitik* could also create expectations among the East Europeans that could be destabilizing for East-West relations. Riots and rebellions could not be excluded.

Brandt repeatedly stressed that his *Ostpolitik* was firmly based on his Western loyalties, but this hardly put Washington's fears to rest. A National Security Council (NSC) document affirmed that, while Washington should continue to give general support to the 'avowed objectives' of *Ostpolitik*, 'We should not conceal...our longer range concern over the potentially divisive effect in the western alliance and inside Germany of any excessively active German policy in Eastern Europe as well as our concern over the potential risks of a crisis that such a policy might create in relations between Eastern European states and the USSR.'<sup>14</sup> When, in January 1972, Brandt diplomatically thanked Nixon for his support for *Ostpolitik*, Nixon coolly corrected him and stated that his decision was not to support Brandt's policy, merely not to oppose it.<sup>15</sup> In fact, at least temporarily, concern over *Ostpolitik* helped drive France and the United States closer together. Nixon and French President Georges Pompidou agreed that West Germany, despite its cultural and economic ties with the West, was always drawn towards the East. 'The East holds millions of Germans as hostages. This is why we must keep Germany economically, politically, and militarily tightly within the European Community.'<sup>16</sup> Pompidou feared that in the long run *Ostpolitik* could lead to German unification and the military withdrawal of the United States from Europe.

In the end, however, the Germans could not be discriminated against. They had to have the same freedom of action as did everybody else; it was impossible to deny Brandt the right to pursue policies which Nixon and Pompidou were pursuing themselves. Washington and Paris adjusted to the new situation and became somewhat less concerned as the results of *Ostpolitik* began to show and their worst fears proved unfounded.<sup>17</sup>

*Ostpolitik* did not end the Cold War, nor was this what the policy aimed at, at least not directly. Its objective was, rather, *Wandel durch Annäherung*—transformation by moving closer together. By recognizing the *status quo*, Bonn hoped to transform it. In this context three points are of particular importance. First, *Ostpolitik* was largely successful in transforming the Cold War in Europe. By accepting the *status quo*, *Ostpolitik* in many ways represented the missing peace treaty for Germany after World War II. The division of Germany and the special position of West Berlin was recognized and thus solved. While there had been numerous greater and smaller crises over Berlin before *Ostpolitik*, there would be none afterwards. Brandt's *Ostpolitik* and Nixon-Kissinger's détente provided the underpinnings of the greatly improved relationship between East and West in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Second, through *Ostpolitik* the West Germans removed the old Soviet argument about the German danger, an argument that may have been very real for both the Soviets and the Poles in particular, but was certainly also exploited by the Kremlin to keep the East Europeans in place.<sup>18</sup> Accepting *Ostpolitik* could not be reconciled with continued vehement attacks on 'revanchist' Germany. All kinds of contacts were opened up with the West in general, and West Germany in particular. West Germany quickly became the most important trading partner for the Soviet Union and the East European countries. All these contacts were to make it much more difficult for the Soviet leaders to exercise the kind of control over Eastern Europe that they had long enjoyed.

Third, *Ostpolitik* was also to have very significant consequences on West German attitudes. While the new policy gave the East Europeans added room to manoeuvre, in some ways it circumscribed West Germany's own action. Bonn now had a vested interest in the new relationships and it became rather averse to anything that might endanger them. Therefore, when new crises developed outside of Europe, in Angola, Ethiopia and Afghanistan, and even in Europe, over deployment of US Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) and in Poland in 1980–81, Bonn tended to be opposed to Western responses that might impact negatively on these new relationships. Chancellor Helmut Schmidt even attempted to assume some sort of mediating role between Moscow and Washington, albeit without much success. West Germany clearly did not have the leverage to do this under such adverse circumstances.<sup>19</sup> In terms of the pendulum swings vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, while the US pendulum swung from cooperation with high hopes under Nixon-Kissinger to disappointment under Jimmy Carter and new confrontation under Ronald Reagan, the German pendulum remained stuck in a cooperative framework. Many European countries, particularly the smaller ones, followed the Germans on this point.

### *The Helsinki Effect and the Road to 1989*

*Ostpolitik* made possible the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the so-called 'Helsinki process'. The idea of an all-European security conference had been raised by Soviet leaders as early as 1954. Initially, the Kremlin's purpose had really been to dissolve NATO, to make the United States withdraw its troops from western Europe, and to achieve the recognition of East Germany. As such, the idea could go nowhere. However, when the Soviet leaders accepted the US role in Europe and the West

Germans accepted the *status quo* in Europe, a new foundation had been laid for an all-European security conference.

Most of the west European countries, including the neutral states, supported the idea of getting something back for recognizing the *status quo*, and also wanted to promote certain basic principles that were to apply to the wider European area. Thus was born the idea of advancing the movement of people, ideas and information through the CSCE. The Europeans did not really expect any major results from the Soviets. The Nixon administration thought the advancement of ideas and information acceptable, but was against promoting human rights through the CSCE. Not even Congress was interested in this. Since the Soviet leaders were against anything that smacked of interference in domestic matters, the effort to promote human rights could only lead to conflict with the Soviet Union and put détente under strain.<sup>20</sup>

In the negotiations during 1972–73, the United States wanted to conclude the CSCE talks quickly and avoid any confrontation with the Soviet Union, but in the end still chose to support its European allies on human rights. ‘Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief’ was to be affirmed as one of ten basic principles guiding relations among the participating states. In addition, certain specific points were to be given a more concrete form in basket III of the planned document. Kissinger even promised Brezhnev that the United States would ‘use its influence not to embarrass the Soviet Union or raise provocative issues’.<sup>21</sup> The west Europeans reacted very negatively to the US lack of interest, but, probably because of its long-standing interest in a successful outcome, the Kremlin actually offered substantial concessions in the Final Act signed by all the heads of state in Helsinki in August 1975, after about two-and-a-half years of negotiations.

Moscow saw the Final Act as a major triumph; many in the West also saw it as a Soviet victory. Not only Ronald Reagan and the Republican right, but also some liberals on the left argued that, by going to Helsinki, Gerald Ford had violated the United States’ commitment to freedom in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union. (Early in the Reagan administration there was even talk of withdrawing from the CSCE.<sup>22</sup>) Yet, Congress did approve the Final Act. Most important, however, dissidents in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe were surprised to find that in the Final Act there were many points they could use for their own purposes. The Act itself stipulated that it had to be spread widely throughout the member states. Many individuals and groups now came to use the Act in their protests against their authorities. Sakharov, Orlov, Charta 77 and even Solidarity are names that could be mentioned in this context. This was clearly way beyond anything the Soviet leadership, or the West for that matter, had thought likely as a result of Helsinki.<sup>23</sup>

Now, beginning under Gerald Ford, and accelerating under Jimmy Carter, the American attitude changed. Congress got involved. Watchdog Helsinki committees sprang up in western Europe and in the United States. Starting in 1976, NATO, flooded with documentation about the violation of the human-rights clauses, affirmed its support for Helsinki. Soon the initiative passed to the United States, since the west Europeans had become afraid that the strong emphasis on human rights would lead to renewed East-West tension in Europe. In the United States, détente was already coming under a lot of criticism; the human-rights violations fitted well into a rapidly increasing wave of criticism of Soviet actions.



The post-Helsinki mobilization was strongest in Czechoslovakia, Poland and the Soviet Union itself. Soon the communist regimes hit back against the growing dissident activity. The Helsinki review conferences in Belgrade in 1977–78 and in Madrid in 1980–83 were consequently quite tense affairs. In the Soviet Union alone, more than 500 arrests were made, but the Helsinki groups managed to survive. Not only that, they managed to undermine the legitimacy of those in power. In this, they represent a line of the continuity from the 1970s to the Gorbachev era. As Robert Gates has argued:

The Soviets desperately wanted the CSCE, they got it and it laid the foundations for the end of their empire. We resisted it for years, went grudgingly, Ford paid a terrible price for going—perhaps reelection itself—only to discover years later that CSCE had yielded benefits beyond our wildest imagination. Go figure.<sup>24</sup>

The East European peoples had always been the weakest party in the Cold War. Eastern Europe was where the Cold War started, but the peoples of the region had very little say in what happened. In Czechoslovakia, the Communist Party had triumphed in the 1946 elections and all the major parties supported foreign-policy cooperation with the Soviet Union, in great part because the Western powers had failed so miserably at Munich in September 1938. In Bulgaria, too, feelings were friendly towards the Soviet Union because Russia had traditionally acted as its protector vis-à-vis the Turks. In the other East European countries, and particularly in Poland and Romania, support for the Soviet Union and for the local communists was much more limited. After a period of transition in the first years after 1945, the Soviet system of heavy industrialization, collectivization of agriculture and political purges had been imposed on all the countries, with only limited attention being paid to local circumstances (for example, private ownership remained in agriculture in Poland). Moscow had stopped Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia from taking part in the Marshall Plan.<sup>25</sup> In 1953, the Red Army had intervened in East Germany, then in 1956 in Hungary, and again in 1968 in Czechoslovakia to keep developments there under control, as seen from Moscow's perspective.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the economic situation in most of the countries of Eastern Europe went from bad to worse. Dissatisfaction with the communist authorities was growing. No one believed that the communists had the answer to the many problems facing the East European countries. The crisis was particularly difficult in Poland, where the situation was brought under control in December 1981 only when party leader General Wojciech Jaruzelski declared a state of emergency. In October 1982, the Solidarity trade union was formally dissolved by law.

Yet, this was only the quiet before the storm. With the economic crisis deepening in Poland the authorities were forced to open up the political system. The debt-ridden country could secure loans from the West only by political reform. By the end of the 1980s, the standard of living in Poland was lower than it had been ten years earlier, and the inflation rate had reached three digits. Intellectuals, workers and peasants had managed to cooperate closely in Solidarity under Nobel Peace Prize laureate Lech Walesa's leadership. From Rome the 'Polish' pope exerted considerable political-moral influence. In the Soviet Union, Gorbachev's *glasnost* and *perestroika* policies set the

agenda. Walesa and Solidarity suddenly had considerable bargaining power. As Lenin had stated, 'Collapse, revolution, occur when the rulers can no longer rule in the old way, and the people no longer obey in the old way.'<sup>26</sup>

The essentially free National Assembly elections in Poland in June 1989 acted as a catalyst. Poland led the way in an accelerating process whereby developments in one country quickly influenced events in the others. A process of liberalization had already been going on for several years in Hungary under the leadership of reform communists. When, in September, Hungary opened its borders to East Germans who wanted to emigrate to West Germany, the consequences for East Germany were great. The fall of Erich Honecker in October and the opening of the Berlin Wall in November in turn spurred on the demonstrations in Czechoslovakia, which led to the demise of communist rule there in November-December 1989. This in turn contributed to the resignation of long-time leader Todor Zhivkov in Bulgaria, in power since 1954, and the overthrow of Nicolae Ceauşescu in Romania. The stronger base of the regime in Romania was the reason why bloodshed erupted there, in contrast to the other countries in the region where the regimes collapsed like falling dominoes.<sup>27</sup>

Western capitals were afraid that the peoples of Eastern Europe were moving too fast. In Washington, the Bush administration wanted to handle these delicate matters with great care. In fact, it spent much of 1989 reviewing Reagan's policies towards the Soviet Union; many felt that the previous president had been too exuberant in his enthusiasm to end the Cold War. Several key advisers had seen détente come and go in the Nixon administration and they did not want to see any repetition. Washington and Bonn had a particular handle on the situation in Poland, in that they controlled the credits that the regime needed so badly. They clearly wished to promote reform, but warned Solidarity against formulating excessive demands. After the June elections Ambassador Davis in Warsaw invited a group of Solidarity leaders to the US embassy to convince them to support Jaruzelski in the upcoming presidential elections. On his visit to Poland after the National Assembly elections Bush praised the 'Polish leaders' and promised economic assistance to a government still dominated by communists. He even pushed a doubtful Jaruzelski to run for president. 'I told him', Bush himself informs us, 'his refusal to run might inadvertently lead to serious instability and I urged him to reconsider.'<sup>28</sup> Here was a US president trying to persuade a communist leader to run for office. The Polish *Sejm* elected Jaruzelski by a single-vote majority. This was only a short pause on the road to complete victory for Solidarity. There could be no doubt who held the initiative in the developments in Poland: Solidarity and the Polish people.<sup>29</sup>

The same was certainly the case in crucial East Germany. On 28 November 1989, Chancellor Helmut Kohl laid out his ten-point plan for German unification. In point five he spelled out his framework: first, free elections in the GDR, then the development of 'confederative structures' between the two German states, and, eventually, a federal system for all Germany. Movement towards unity would, Kohl told Bush, be a 'longterm process'. Privately, at this time, Kohl and his advisers thought they would be lucky to achieve unification 'within five or ten years'.<sup>30</sup>

Kohl's plan was considered quite dramatic and was presented without any discussion with the Western allies (or with Foreign Minister Genscher.) The Western powers felt that Kohl was unduly speeding up events in Germany. Unlike Mitterrand and Thatcher,

Bush nevertheless decided to support the Chancellor's pace, as long as Kohl backed the president's objective of all Germany becoming part of NATO.

Yet, less than a year later the process was fully complete. The day 3 October became a new national holiday. All talk about 'confederative structures' disappeared. The many who advised going slow, from leaders of the East German opposition and the SPD to Thatcher and Mitterrand, and in their ways even Kohl and Bush, were overruled by the East German people, who for so many decades during the Cold War had counted for so little. Most East Germans wanted swift and complete unification. At the East German elections in March 1990, the CDU (Christian Democrats), which was the strongest proponent of this course, received 48 per cent of the vote, emerging as by far the largest party. The SPD, traditionally so strong in the East, was badly punished by the voters for its lukewarm attitude to rapid unification. East Germany simply ceased to exist; the five East German *Länder* were just added to the existing 11 *Länder* of West Germany.

The unification of Germany was in some ways 'George Bush's finest hour'. He established early and clear goals, goals that were much more courageous than what he had indicated in the first months of his administration. Caution was soon to return, however. It was to reach a climax on 1 August 1991, when he warned the Ukrainian parliament against the dangers of 'suicidal nationalism'.<sup>31</sup>

### *Gorbachev, Reagan and the End of the Cold War*

In the spring of 1989, President George Bush had plainly stated that the Cold War would be over when the division of Europe had been ended and Europe was 'whole and free'.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the liberation of Eastern Europe and the unification of Germany were definite proof that the Cold War was indeed over. The local populations had taken charge of events and produced this outcome. This was without doubt the most significant European contribution to the end of the Cold War.

Yet, this outcome was of course related to certain external factors. By far the most important of these factors was Gorbachev's role. Mikhail Gorbachev had come to power in 1985 with no clear plans for Eastern Europe. Naturally, it was to be expected that he wanted the rather limited initial reforms in the Soviet Union in 1985–86 to be repeated in Eastern Europe. Yet, in his speech at the Polish Communist Party Congress in June 1986, he expressed his conviction that socialism had deep roots in Eastern Europe, and that the working people there 'could not imagine being without socialism. This means that socialistic progress is irrevocable.' He continued, 'threatening the socialist system, attempting to undermine it from the outside and tear a country out of the socialist fold, means violating not only the will of the people, but also the entire order since the Second World War, and in the final analysis, peace itself'.<sup>33</sup>

Even so, Gorbachev's policies came to represent a crucial factor for developments in Eastern Europe. He made it plain that there was no fixed communist model to follow any longer. Through his increasingly sharp criticism of his predecessors' actions, he gave the impression that the East European leaders ought to set their own course. There could still be no doubt that he wanted reformist communists like himself to take charge of events. Early on he made it clear, although only indirectly at first, that Moscow would not use

force to determine the outcome of events, but no one could be certain that he would stick to this attitude once developments moved beyond the reform-communist model.

Gorbachev's speech to the United Nations in December 1988 went a long way to breaking with the past. Yet, only in July 1989, and even more firmly in December of that year, did the Warsaw Pact formally renounce the Brezhnev Doctrine.<sup>34</sup> By then, the East Europeans had amply illustrated in practice how they had already ended its life. On 22 August 1989, Gorbachev called new Polish party leader Mieczyslaw Rakowski to tell him that the communists should accept the new Polish government led by Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki and with the communists in a minority position.<sup>35</sup> The last chance for intervention had passed. As Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman Gennadi Gerasimov stated in October 1989: the Brezhnev Doctrine was dead and it had been replaced by the Sinatra Doctrine. All the East European leaders could now do it 'My Way'.

Even into the summer of 1989 many in the various opposition movements in Eastern Europe feared that there might be a Soviet intervention after all. It is only we outside observers who in hindsight can see how it had become increasingly difficult for the Kremlin to intervene in Eastern Europe. In 1953 in East Germany and in 1956 in Hungary the Red Army had single-handedly taken action with little apparent need to justify its actions. In 1968 the intervention in Czechoslovakia was a joint operation by most of the Warsaw Pact members, justified by the Brezhnev Doctrine's insistence that within the socialist bloc leaving socialism was not simply for one single country to decide upon alone. In 1980–81 the Kremlin, even under the old leadership, refrained from sending in the Red Army. It had become too costly in so many different ways, particularly following on the back of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

Thus, even before Gorbachev, there were reasons not to intervene in Eastern Europe. Gorbachev had additional reasons not to do so. His *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the Soviet Union could not be combined with intervention. The use of force in the form of a massive intervention would mean that his whole mission of reform had failed. Once the system of sanctions had been removed, Gorbachev was the captive of events in Eastern Europe as well as in the Soviet Union. Since he was not ready to use force on a major scale to protect his personal power in the Soviet Union, it made little sense to do so in Eastern Europe. Moreover, at a time when economic costs were becoming so dramatically more important for the Kremlin, it had to take into account that the costs of the Soviet role in Eastern Europe had become increasingly high. The region had gone from being a source of income in the 1940s and 1950s to being one of expenditure in the 1970s and 1980s.

It soon became clear to Mikhail Gorbachev that small doses of reform made little difference; bigger doses were needed. When even these did not do the trick and in fact only made the situation worse, in that the economy was collapsing and his political authority was being questioned in Eastern Europe, Russia and the republics, Gorbachev made his most significant contribution to history by not using force on a major scale in a last effort to control these dramatic events. (It is true, however, that on a minor scale he flirted with the use of force in Kazakhstan, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Lithuania.)

For a long time, Gorbachev simply did not understand the implications of what was happening in Eastern Europe. As his close adviser Anatoli Chernyaev has pointed out, 'Gorbachev thought that bringing freedom to our Eastern satellites would lead them to adopt socialism with a human face. He made an enormous mistake because these

countries brutally turned their back to us.’<sup>36</sup> In November 1989, Gorbachev told new East German party leader Egon Krenz that all the Western leaders he had recently spoken to,

presumed the preservation of the post-war realities, including the existence of the two German states... Nor did they want the Warsaw Pact and NATO to dissolve, and therefore they favored Poland’s and Hungary’s remaining in the Warsaw Pact. The balance of power was not to be disturbed since nobody knew what repercussions this would have.<sup>37</sup>

In December 1989, Gorbachev told the members of the Warsaw Pact that ‘NATO and the Warsaw Pact should be maintained despite their shortcomings because they are elements of security’ Ceausescu, enjoying what would be his last days in power, supported him; the other leaders just ignored his offer.<sup>38</sup> Thus, Vojtech Mastny would appear to be right that, from Gorbachev’s point of view, we are indeed talking about ‘The Unintended Liberation of Eastern Europe’.<sup>39</sup>

Analyzing Gorbachev’s policies, I would place major importance on the situation within the Soviet Union, and particularly on the rapidly worsening state of the economy. Dramatic evidence of this was provided on 27–28 December 1988, when Gorbachev was asked at a Politburo meeting ‘how did it come about that we “strip down” independently?’ In his answer, he urged his ministers to keep the economic situation a secret, because ‘if we admit now that we cannot build a longer-term economic and social policy without [unilateral cuts], then we will be forced to explain why’, and because ‘If we say today how much we are removing for defense from the national revenue, this may reduce to naught [the effect] of the speech at the United Nations.’<sup>40</sup>

The evidence is dramatic about the decline of the Soviet economy. Yet, as the inveterate post-revisionist I am, and the heart of post-revisionism is being against one-factor explanations, it would be wrong to analyze Gorbachev’s actions in terms of this one-factor explanation only. Clearly, the influence of ideology was important. Almost everybody at the top level in the Soviet Union recognized that the economy was in trouble. None the less, they drew different conclusions from this, in great part because their ideological inspirations already were, or at least would soon become, different.<sup>41</sup>

For the end of the Cold War, the West was important in many ways too. In any bipolar relationship the attitude of the other side counts, particularly in one as intense as the East-West confrontation during the Cold War. In general terms, the West influenced Soviet actions by its political and economic success. As Gorbachev told a Central Committee conference in May 1986: ‘We are encircled not by invincible armies but by superior economies.’<sup>42</sup> In comparison with the West, it was becoming increasingly evident that the Soviet Union was in an economic, social and moral crisis. Détente had robbed the Soviets of the enemy that had meant so much for the cohesion of the Eastern bloc, while the Helsinki process had set certain standards for human rights that had significant consequences in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union itself.

More specifically, the economic situation and the containment policy of the West worked together. The competition, especially with the United States, increased the costs of Soviet foreign policy greatly, given the Soviet desire to be the military equal of the United States. No one knew, and no one will apparently ever know, how great the Soviet Union’s imperial costs were. They certainly shocked Gorbachev when he came to power,

and made him determined to pursue economic reform and improved relations with the West. They were in fact two sides of the same coin. Guesstimates seem to indicate that defence and other imperial expenditures in the early 1980s constituted roughly 20–40 per cent of Soviet GNP (gross national product).<sup>43</sup> Dobrynin reports from his first meeting with Gorbachev in April 1985 that the new leader ‘strongly believed that we could not gain victory “over imperialism” by force of arms, nor could we solve our domestic problems without ending the arms race’.<sup>44</sup> If this was the situation in 1985, one can imagine how it was when the economy really began to collapse. As Gorbachev himself stated, the situation could only be compared with that in ‘poor...countries, where half of their budget goes to military spending’.<sup>45</sup> The already outrageously expensive arms race threatened to become even more expensive with the US Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).

For Gorbachev’s foreign policy to succeed the West had to cooperate. Western Europe clearly was prepared to do so. Even Margaret Thatcher’s Britain felt that in 1981–83 Ronald Reagan had gone too far in his anti-Soviet policies. In 1983–84, Reagan’s attitude to the Soviet Union changed, and he became willing to meet with and have serious discussions with the Soviet leaders. In the ensuing years Gorbachev made a string of spectacular concessions to the West; by contrast, the West gave up very few of its positions. But by behaving in a constructive and sympathetic way, by showering Gorbachev with praise, as opposed to all the criticism he received at home, and by giving him many foreign policy ‘successes’, so different from his domestic failures, the West, and Reagan in particular, stimulated Gorbachev to make the crucial choices he did.

It is true that in *realpolitik* terms the job of the United States was easy; basically, it consisted of cashing in on all the various concessions Gorbachev was making. Still, Reagan’s contributions should not be underestimated. By coming from the far right, he pre-empted criticism of his policies. We can only imagine how different the situation would have been if Walter Mondale had won the election in 1984 and Reagan had been in opposition. It is also instructive that in 1986–87, Thatcher in Britain, Mitterrand in France and Kohl in West Germany felt that Reagan was moving too fast in approaching Moscow.<sup>46</sup> As we have seen, as late as 1989, President Bush felt that Reagan might have gone too far in cooperating with Moscow, and therefore spent much of his first year evaluating what had been done before deciding to continue Reagan’s policy of cooperation.

The end of Soviet rule in Eastern Europe did more than anything else to bring the Cold War to an end. Most likely, Gorbachev had no intention of ‘losing’ Eastern Europe; his most important contribution was to do nothing to stem the rapid flow of events in the region. In reaching this conclusion, he was encouraged by Washington and the west European capitals. That meant that the peoples of Eastern Europe, more impatient than ever, could finally decide on their own what their future was going to be. As Gorbachev himself admitted at Malta, ‘Cold War methods, methods of confrontation, have suffered defeat in strategic terms. We have recognized this. And ordinary people have possibly understood this even better.’<sup>47</sup>

## NOTES

- 1 This was the somewhat intemperate charge in G.Lundestad, ‘Moralism, Presentism, Exceptionalism, Provincialism, and Other Extravagances in American Writings on the Early

- Cold War Years', *Diplomatic History*, 13(4) (Fall 1989), pp. 527–45, also published in idem., *The American 'Empire' and Other Studies of US Foreign Policy in a Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 11–29.
- 2 In Gaddis' case, I am thinking particularly of his essay on Reagan in *The United States and the End of the Cold War: Implications, Reconsiderations, Provocations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 119–32.
- 3 R.Garthoff's *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1994) is quite simply breath-taking in its command of detail, perhaps less so in its interpretations.
- 4 The expression comes from Denis W.Brogan, and he defines it as 'the illusion that any situation which distresses or endangers the United States can only exist because some Americans have been fools or knaves'. See Brogan, *American Aspects* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1964), p. 9.
- 5 For a useful summing up of the debate on the end of the Cold War, see Vladislav M.Zubok, 'Why Did the Cold War End in 1989? Explanations of "The Turn"', in Odd Arne Westad, ed., *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations, Theory* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), pp. 343–67. Zubok's most recent contribution is his 'Gorbachev and the End of the Cold War: Perspectives on History and Personality', *Cold War History*, 2(2) (January 2002), pp. 61–100. Useful is also Saki Dockrill, 'Beyond the Cold War Mind Set: An Alternative Interpretation of the End of the Cold War in Europe', Norwegian Nobel Institute seminar paper, 25 April 2002. See even Michael J.Hogan, ed., *The End of the Cold War: Its Meaning and Implications* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
- 6 The quotation is from Donald Cameron Watt, 'Britain, the United States and the Opening of the Cold War', in Ritchie Ovendale, ed., *The Foreign Policy of the British Labour Governments, 1945–1951* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1984), p. 58. See also Alan Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary, 1945–1951* (London: Heinemann, 1983); David Reynolds, 'Great Britain', in Reynolds, ed., *The Origins of the Cold War in Europe: International Perspectives* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 77–95; Lawrence Aronsen and Martin Kitchen, *The Origins of the Cold War in Comparative Perspective: American, British and Canadian Relations with the Soviet Union, 1941–48* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988); Victor Rothwell, *Britain and the Cold War 1941–1947* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1982).
- 7 Tony Smith forcefully makes the argument about the importance of the local actors in his 'New Bottles for New Wine: A Pericentric Framework for the Study of the Cold War', *Diplomatic History*, 24(4) (2000), pp. 567–91. I agree with much of his analysis, but, as always, the real problem is how to combine this element with the undoubted influence of superpowers and other outside actors.
- 8 John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
- 9 See G.Lundestad, 'Uniqueness and Pendulum Swings in US Foreign Policy', originally in *International Affairs*, 3 (1986), reprinted in a revised version in *The American 'Empire'*, pp. 117–41.
- 10 The story about the preparations for the 1955 Geneva summit and the summit itself is best and most recently told in Günter Bischof and Saki Dockrill, eds, *Cold War Respite: Geneva 1955* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2000).
- 11 Europe had not really been divided at Yalta. The division followed as a result of military operations. If Europe was divided at Yalta, why was Poland the most difficult issue there? It can be argued, as Averell Harriman told me and many others, that the only thing that was true in de Gaulle's version of Yalta was that he had not been present himself. Yet, as we see so often in newspapers and journals, on this point de Gaulle triumphed over the many historians who have rejected his version.

- 12 Frédéric Bozo, *Two Strategies for Europe: De Gaulle, the United States, and the Atlantic Alliance* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), pp. 143–258, particularly 144–7, 160–3, 175–8, 190–2, 196–7, 221–32, 245–9.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 National Archives, NSC documents, National Security Decision Memorandum 91, 6 November 1970, p. 2.
- 15 Richard Reeves, *President Nixon: Alone in the White House* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), p. 417.
- 16 Quoted in Reeves, *President Nixon*, p. 414.
- 17 Henry A. Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1979), pp. 411, 422, 529–34, 966; Dana H. Allin, *Cold War Illusions: America, Europe, and Soviet Power 1969–89* (London: Macmillan, 1995); Charles G. Cogan, *Oldest Allies, Guarded Friends: The United States and France since 1940* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), pp. 151–3.
- 18 For a recent study of Germany's role in the Cold War, a study that may in fact overstate this role, see Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945–1963* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).
- 19 Thomas Banchoff, *The German Problem Transformed: Institutions, Politics, and Foreign Policy, 1945–1995* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999).
- 20 My analysis of CSCE builds on the excellent account in Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).
- 21 Quoted in William Burr, ed., *The Kissinger Transcripts: The Top-Secret Talks with Beijing and Moscow* (New York: New Press, 1998), pp. 220, 248; Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect*, pp. 77–80.
- 22 Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect*, pp. 132–4, 150–1.
- 23 Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents (1962–1986)* (New York: Random House, 1995), p. 346.
- 24 Robert Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Helped Win the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 89.
- 25 I first analyzed these developments in G. Lundestad, *The American Non-Policy towards Eastern Europe 1943–1947: Universalism in an Area not of Essential Interest to the United States* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1975).
- 26 Quoted in Alec Nove, 'The Fall of Empires—Russia and the Soviet Union', in Geir Lundestad, ed., *The Fall of Great Powers: Peace, Stability, and Legitimacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 136.
- 27 Among the many accounts of the events in 1989 I prefer Jacques Lévesque, *The Enigma of 1989: The USSR and the Liberation of Eastern Europe* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).
- 28 George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Norton, 1998), pp. 112–23, particularly 117.
- 29 This account of events in Poland builds primarily on Andrzej Paczkowski, 'Playground of Superpowers: Poland 1980–1989', paper presented at the Norwegian Nobel Institute seminar, 22 March 2002. See also his chapter, 'Playground of the Superpowers, Poland 1980–89', in the present book.
- 30 Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 118–25.
- 31 Bush later argued that this remark was misinterpreted. For this, see Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 515–16.
- 32 Quoted in Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed*, p. 24.
- 33 See G. Lundestad, *East, West, North, South: Major Developments in International Politics since 1945*, 4th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 262–3.



- 34 Don Oberdorfer, *The Turn. From the Cold War to a New Era: The United States and the Soviet Union 1983–90* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), pp. 353–86.
- 35 Paczkowski, 'Playground of Superpowers'.
- 36 Quoted in Marie-Pierre Rey, "'Europe is Our Common Home": The Gorbachevian USSR and Western Europe, 1985–1991', paper presented at a Norwegian Nobel Institute seminar, 6 June 2002, p. 11.
- 37 *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, vols 12/13 (Fall/Winter 2001): The End of the Cold War, Memorandum of Conversation Gorbachev-Krenz, November 1, 1989, pp. 144–5.
- 38 Oberdorfer, *The Turn*, pp. 385–6.
- 39 See Wojtech Mastny's chapter, 'Did Gorbachev Liberate Eastern Europe?', in the present book.
- 40 *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, vols 12/13, Politburo Meeting 27–28 December 1988, p. 28.
- 41 For an interesting debate about the role of the economy versus that of ideology, see the exchange between Stephen C. Brooks/William C. Wohlforth and Robert D. English in *International Security*, 26(4) (Spring 2002), pp. 70–111. See also Matthew Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces: The Transnational Movement to End the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).
- 42 Quoted in Dusko Doder and Louise Branson, *Gorbachev: Heretic in the Kremlin* (New York: Viking, 1990), p. 207.
- 43 I have made a more extensive analysis of Gorbachev's policies in "'Imperial Overstretch", Mikhail Gorbachev, and the End of the Cold War', *Cold War History*, 1(1) (August 2000), pp. 1–20.
- 44 Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, p. 570.
- 45 *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, vols 12/13, Minutes of the Meeting of the Politburo, 27–28 December 1988, p. 28.
- 46 See the chapters by Frédéric Bozo, Sean Greenwood and Hans-Hermann Hertle in the present book.
- 47 *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, vols 12/13, Documents on the December 1989 Malta Summit, p. 232.



**PART II:**  
**EXPLAINING THE SHIFT**  
**IN SOVIET THINKING AND**  
**POLICY**

## Economic Constraints and the Turn towards Superpower Cooperation in the 1980s

*Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth*

By the 1960s, the long years of the Cold War had shaped stable policy mindsets in the decision-making elites in both superpowers and lodged them deeply within their national security institutions and practices. Although there were notable shifts in the patterns of superpower relationships over 20 years of what might be called the 'mature' Cold War, what struck observers at the time, and still stands out in hindsight, is stability. By the 1980s, it had become clear that in the absence of major change in these deeply embedded foreign-policy mindsets—what many international relations scholars have come to call foreign-policy 'identities'—superpower cooperation could not develop beyond very strict limits. When superpower cooperation of a new and profoundly deep type finally emerged in the late 1980s, the tumultuous politics of identity change—at least, on the Soviet side—were at centre stage.

The end of the Cold War thus added a major impulse to the turn towards the study of ideas and identity in international relations.<sup>1</sup> The experience appeared to ratify the central proposition of constructivist scholarship that states' interests are powerfully shaped by their identities.<sup>2</sup> But the new wave of scholarship left unanswered two fundamental questions: Why do these deeply embedded ideas and policy practices (for convenience, let us adopt the convention and call them 'identities') change? And what role, if any, do material incentives play in prompting them to change and shaping their evolution?

In this chapter, we address these questions, using the Soviet turn towards superpower cooperation after 1985 as a case study of identity change. We argue that there are many reasons to expect that changing economic incentives can contribute to identity change, and that they clearly played a central role in the Soviet case. Elsewhere, we have established that changing economic incentives were of central importance in prompting the Soviet Union to alter course in international relations.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, few scholars appear to question that basic proposition any longer.<sup>4</sup> However, many scholars hold that while economic incentives may have contributed strongly to the initiation of new Soviet approaches, only other factors such as new thinking or entrepreneurial leadership can explain the profound depth and extensiveness of the subsequent impulse toward cooperation.<sup>5</sup>

We show that this last argument is untenable. If a certain magnitude of economic pressures prompted Moscow to shift its approach, then there are strong reasons to expect an even larger amount of economic distress to generate movement towards a proportionately greater reduction in Soviet foreign-policy claims on the international system. This, it turns out, is precisely what happened during the turn to superpower cooperation, which only reached fruition when the Soviet Union was literally on its last legs, economically.

The chapter proceeds in four parts. First, we explain why scholars of international relations have been slow to explore the potential connections between economic incentives and identity change. In that section we set forth our simple model of identity change based on the standard economic mode of explanation: people change behaviour in response to relative costs and benefits measured in economic terms. Second, we briefly review the nature of the economic constraints facing the Soviet Union during the 1980s. Third, we show how changes in the Soviet approach to the outside world—associated policies, practices and beliefs that are all captured under the rubric of identity—progressed in tandem with these mounting economic constraints. We then show how each major policy departure was intimately related to rapidly escalating economic costs. The third section addresses the Soviet leaders' decision not to use force to retain their direct control over their Warsaw Pact allies in Eastern Europe. Finally, the fourth section addresses Moscow's anguishing decision to accept US and West German terms for a final ending of the Cold War in Europe.

### *Economic Incentives and Identity Change*

Given the premise of this chapter, two prior questions arise. First, why scholars of international relations have not already addressed the connection between economic change and identity change? Second, why should we expect to them be related at all?

#### *Why IR scholars have not explored the connection*

Broadly speaking, social explanations come in two forms originally identified by Max Weber: the economic and the social.<sup>6</sup> At least within international relations (IR) scholarship in the United States, three intellectual biases prevent scholars from integrating these two perspectives and addressing the connections between economic constraints and identity change.

First, IR scholars who focus largely on economic incentives generally ignore questions of identity because they have taken their cue from economics, which, they believe, made immense progress precisely by excluding complex questions of preferences and tastes from their models.<sup>7</sup> Following their economist brethren, IR scholars who focus on economic incentives prefer to build their models by holding preferences constant and altering incentives. The net result is that examining how changing economic incentives affect identity formation simply does not present itself as a problem that is worthwhile for these scholars to explore. While a significant number of rational-choice theorists have recently turned their attention to the question of preference formation, relatively few have shown any interest in examining identity issues.<sup>8</sup>

Second, scholars interested in ideas and identity routinely use Kenneth Waltz's neo-realist framework as the foil for their analyses, because neo-realism is typically seen as providing the definitive theoretical word on material incentives in the international environment.<sup>9</sup> But neo-realism encourages a restrictive focus on the balance of capabilities to the exclusion of a broader analysis of economic incentives.<sup>10</sup> In addition, the standard neo-realist conception of state preferences, in which security trumps all other priorities, including economic capacity, leads scholars away from the causal mechanisms

we address here.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, in situations such as that faced by the Soviet Union in the 1980s, it may make little sense to draw distinctions between economic capacity and security as state objectives, because, as we show, Moscow's changing material fortunes undermined both goals simultaneously.<sup>12</sup>

Third, constructivist scholars generally adopt a dismissive stance towards what they consider material factors, such as economic incentives. The burden of most constructivist arguments is to downplay the significance of material incentives and to highlight the role of ideas.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps the most prominent statement to this effect is Alex Wendt's claim that 'social life is "ideas all the way down"'.<sup>14</sup> When pressed, only 'radical' constructivists would likely defend an unconditional 'ideas all the way down' stance and all that such a theoretical position implies, empirically and theoretically.<sup>15</sup> Emblematic of this fact is that Wendt, in his later writings, has explicitly backed away from this position.<sup>16</sup> But even mainstream constructivism—or what Hopf calls 'conventional' constructivism—reflects an underlying assumption that ideas operate in the foreground of international relations and material forces in the background.<sup>17</sup>

Constructivist investigations of identity transformations clearly reflect this underlying theoretical stance. The explanatory goal in these studies is, typically, to show that change in identity can be understood without having to rely upon material incentives. Hence, while few constructivists would align themselves with an 'ideas all the way down' position and many would grant that identity changes do not occur in a material vacuum, in practice, their analyses of identity transformations often appear to adopt just such a position. The essential problem is that two of constructivism's central criticisms of mainstream IR—concerning both its failure to recognize the significance of identity and its focus on material factors—overlap in a particular manner that encourages constructivists to marginalize the role that changing economic incentives may play in transformations of identity.

IR scholars of all theoretical stripes thus face strong incentives to ignore or reject out of hand the possibility that changing economic incentives may significantly affect identity transformations. This bias almost certainly exacts a punishing toll, for there are a number of reasons why economic change and identity change may be related. As we show below, this is a hypothesis that needs to be considered.

### *Economic incentives and identity change*

Scholars use the term 'identity' to describe a complex package of ideas, mindsets and policy practices that is deeply embedded in the political fabric of a state. Together, these ideas and practices affect how elites think about their country, its interests and how it relates to the rest of the world.<sup>18</sup> Because they help shape interests and expectations, identities tend to be sticky, that is, resistant to change.<sup>19</sup> What then pushes aside path dependency to foster a new identity? One simple causal mechanism that needs to be considered is rising economic costs. That is, states may be prompted to change their approach to foreign policy when they conclude that the existing approach has become or is about to become unsustainably costly. There are many other potential causes, of course, but there are strong logical grounds for expecting that mounting economic constraints will at least sometimes contribute to identity change.<sup>20</sup>

First, in the absence of rising economic costs, actors may never question their state's identity in the first place. A state's identity makes sense of itself and its place in and relation to a complex world. So long as things are stable or going well, why change? But if maintaining the current identity suddenly leads to increased economic costs, actors are more likely to question it.

Second, absent a substantial increase in the economic costs of sustaining the old approach to foreign policy, and actors within a state who are prone to question the state's identity will be much less likely to assume political power. If everything is going well or is stable, then why select leaders who might subvert the tried-and-true identity? But if that identity is leading to increased material difficulties, pressure for change will likely mount. In these circumstances, those who are willing to alter or adjust the hallowed precepts of the existing identity and its associated practices are more likely to assume power.

Third, absent escalating economic costs, it will be difficult for those who favour redefining the polity's understanding of itself and its place in the world to convince sceptics to go along. All the standard arguments in political science about why dramatic changes in state practices are often difficult apply with particular force to changes that portend threats to the accepted identity. In order to initiate a change of current practice, the would-be identity entrepreneur must be sufficiently powerful or convincing to overcome all potential 'veto points'.<sup>21</sup> If everything is going well or is stable, it will be harder for the identity entrepreneur to convince those who are resistant to change that new practices and understandings are necessary. In turn, those against a change in the status quo will be in a stronger political position because they will be more able to present a convincing justification for why no change should be undertaken. The converse will be true as well if the current identity is leading to reduced material advantages or a reduced ability to maintain the status quo; in these circumstances, those who are resistant to change will be in a much less tenable political position and will be easier to convince.

In short, there are strong logical reasons to expect that, absent a significant change that leads to reduced material advantages or increased material difficulty in maintaining the status quo: (1) few actors within a system may question the state's current identity; (2) those actors who do question the current identity will be less likely to assume political power; and (3) those actors who have questioned the identity and who do assume political power will be less able to convince or overcome those who are against changing the status quo.

In the case of the Soviet Union and the turn towards cooperation in the 1980s, this leads to a simple hypothesis: Moscow shifted from the old approach in response to the rising economic costs it imposed; moreover, the magnitude of the shift away from the old approach was a function of the severity of the economic constraints facing the Soviets. The re-emergence of cooperation between the longstanding superpower rivals was a dramatic story, with the twists and turns that one associates with any major event. Both the United States and the Soviet Union had to adopt new policies in order to make the journey out of the Cold War. But underneath the complex diplomacy, the big story was the Soviet Union steadily decreasing the scope of its claims on the international system, in general, and on the United States, in particular. That decrease, we argue, was largely in response to the increased material costs of sustaining those claims.

*Soviet Decline, Globalization and the Turn Towards Cooperation*

While particular individuals may be eager for major policy change at any given time, large polities are likely to resist such change until they are under pressure. So, how much economic pressure was the Soviet Union's foreign policy under in the 1980s? The conventional wisdom among scholars a decade ago was that Soviet material decline was negligible.<sup>22</sup> A second wave of empirical scholarship in the mid-1990s found that the Soviet material decline had actually been quite significant beginning in the early to mid-1980s.<sup>23</sup> Recent evidence shifts this assessment still further.<sup>24</sup> In particular, it is now clear that decline began earlier, progressed faster, was far more pronounced, and had far greater effects on policy deliberations than scholars assumed. Moreover, it is now apparent that changes in the world economy—especially the globalization of production—dramatically changed the incentives facing Moscow in the 1980s. In the subsections that follow, we review the basic nature of this evidence.

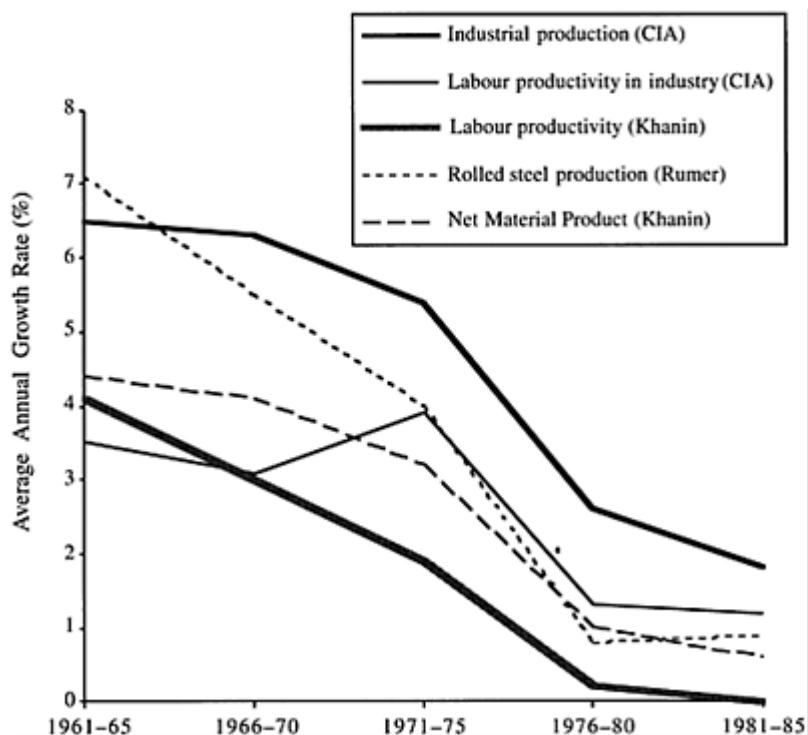
*Decline*

The Soviet economy grew at impressive rates in the 1950s, and registered a respectable performance in the 1960s, but in the second half of the 1970s it entered an acute decline from which it never recovered.<sup>25</sup> By the time Mikhail Gorbachev became general secretary of the Communist Party in 1985, the Soviet Union had grown on average at least 1–2 per cent slower per annum than the United States over the preceding decade.<sup>26</sup> And American allies such as Germany and Japan were also growing rapidly, making Moscow's relative decline all the more salient. The entire Soviet economic system was geared toward increasing such industrial-age metrics as steel production, yet, as Figure 4.1 shows, even those indices declined precipitously after 1976. Meanwhile, the country's longstanding qualitative lag increased in exactly this period, with the productivity of research and development (R&D) and technological progress both declining.<sup>27</sup> Compounded over time, an economic growth lag of 1–2 per cent per annum below the United States would have had devastating effects on the Soviets' ability to keep up with their Cold War competitors. Taking the US allies into account as well as the growing technological lag makes the equation appear even worse. With each passing year, it would have become harder for the Soviets to match US capabilities.

The causes of Soviet decline continue to be debated, but there is widespread agreement that an important part of the explanation lies in the large and growing costs of the Soviet Union's international position. As Vladimir Kontorovich sums up, 'The achievement of strategic parity with the west and the macroeconomic stagnation, or decline, in the late 1970s to early 1980s, are strongly related.'<sup>28</sup> Defence claimed a massive propor-



Figure 4.j1. The Soviet Decline



Sources: Gertrude E.Schroeder, 'The Slowdown in Soviet Industry, 1976-1982', *Soviet Economy*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (January-March 1985), pp. 42-74; Boris Z.Rumer, *Soviet Steel: The Challenge of Modernization in the USSR* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989) and G.I.Khanin, 'Ekonomicheskiy rost: Alternativnaia Otsenka' [Economic Growth: An Alternative Estimate], *Kommunist*, No. 17 (November, 1988), pp. 83-90.

tion of Soviet resources. Despite daunting measurement problems, different sources converge around an estimate of roughly 40 per cent of the Soviet state budget and 15-20 per cent of GDP (gross domestic product) in the early 1980s, or at least four times the US level.<sup>29</sup> By any comparative standard, this is a punishingly high peacetime commitment to military power. Not only was the defence burden high, but it was generally rising from the mid-1970s on.<sup>30</sup>

These quantitative measures, dramatic as they are, fail to capture the fact that the Soviet military-industrial complex had a priority claim on scarce qualitative resources, such as high-technology and R&D expertise.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, defence allocations were only part of the story. Moscow's international position imposed other costs that were also increasing in this period. The CIA estimated that the costs of the Soviet Union's 'global position' more than doubled between 1970 and 1982.<sup>32</sup> At the beginning of the 1980s, the Central Committee estimated Soviet spending on foreign aid alone at 2 per cent of

GDP.<sup>33</sup> In addition, as we shall discuss in more detail below, the costs of Moscow's East European dependencies began to escalate in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Two critical conclusions emerge from this discussion. First, the Soviet Union was in a state of severe relative decline beginning in the second half of the 1970s. Second, declining Soviet economic performance was to a significant degree a reflection of the international environment. The Soviet Union's position as one pole in a bipolar system, and as a formal challenger to the US-dominated international status quo, imposed massive and growing burdens on a Soviet economy that was in desperate need of renewed growth. Moreover, by the late 1970s, it was becoming increasingly evident to Soviet analysts that the world's most advanced economies—all of which were arrayed against the Soviet Union—were undergoing an important transformation involving the rapid development of high technology. The Soviets dubbed this the 'scientific and technological revolution', and there was little doubt that it was leaving them behind. This brings us to a second critical economic shift that influenced the course of the Cold War competition.

### *The changing structure of global production*

As inefficiencies mounted in the Soviet economy during the 1970s, the global economy was concomitantly undergoing important transformations that served greatly to accelerate the opportunity cost of the Soviets' international economic isolation. Underlying these transformations were two inter-related technological shifts that accelerated in the late 1970s and early 1980s: the massively increased cost, risk, complexity and importance of technological development; and dramatic improvements in transportation and communications technology. The escalating cost and importance of technological development created strong incentives for crucial shifts in the structure of global production, which, in turn, were facilitated by cheaper and better transport and communications. Four shifts in the structure of global production were especially relevant to the superpower rivalry during the Cold War's last years: (1) the upswing in the number and importance of inter-firm alliances; (2) the growing opportunity cost of being isolated from foreign direct investment (FDI); (3) the increase in international outsourcing; and (4) the enhanced efforts by many global firms to break up the value-added chain and locate different parts of the production process in countries that offer the greatest locational advantages.<sup>34</sup>

The Soviet Union and its allies were almost completely isolated from these global production changes, which achieved their greatest salience among the Soviets' international competitors—the United States and its allies. Thus, 'globalization' was not in fact global: it took sides in the Cold War. While US and Western multinational corporations (MNCs) could exploit a greatly expanding web of international inter-firm alliances during the 1980s to increase their opportunities for technological innovation and reduce the risks and difficulty associated with R&D, the Soviets were completely excluded from this trend.<sup>35</sup> While rapidly increasing FDI inflows allowed the United States to gain access to the latest technologies and production methods from throughout the world, the Soviets were largely dependent on autonomous improvements in technology and production methods.<sup>36</sup> Instead of being able to disperse production throughout the world to reap various efficiencies, as firms from the United States and its

main allies—Japan, West Germany, France and Britain—were able to do, Soviet enterprises were forced to generate almost all of their key components and production within the Eastern bloc.<sup>37</sup>

While relative Soviet autarky was a staple feature of the Cold War that had long entailed significant economic handicaps for Moscow, these handicaps greatly increased in relative importance as the cost, complexity and difficulty of technological development spiralled upwards in the late 1970s and 1980s, and as the globalization of production concomitantly accelerated.<sup>38</sup> Isolation from the globalization of production increased the difficulty of keeping up with the West in terms of general economic and technological productivity, likely the key concern of many new thinkers. Moreover, Soviet isolation from these global production changes simultaneously made it much more difficult to remain technologically competitive in the arms race—of foremost importance to more traditionally minded old thinkers. Inter-firm alliances in the 1980s were concentrated in those sectors with rapidly changing technologies and high entry costs, such as microelectronics, computers, aerospace, telecommunications, transportation, new materials, biotechnology and chemicals.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, production appears to have been most geographically dispersed in those sectors of manufacturing with high levels of R&D costs and significant economies of scale, such as machinery, computers, electronic components and transportation.<sup>40</sup> These sectors read like a ‘who’s who’ of dual-use industries. In short, the very sectors that were becoming most internationalized in the 1980s were those that provide much of the foundation for military power in the modern era. For this reason, Soviet isolation from ongoing global production changes became a significant handicap relative to the West in the 1980s in the military realm.<sup>41</sup>

In sum, relative decline and Soviet isolation from ongoing global production changes created strong incentives for the country to retrench internationally; that is, to halt and, eventually, reverse the growth in the costs of Moscow’s global position. A Soviet leader could have resisted changes for a period of time, the length of which one can argue over counterfactually. An explanation rooted in changing economic incentives simply posits that the agents concerned responded to expectations of economic trends. Here, the most important question is: What were the alternatives to retrenchment? By 1985–87, there was no evidence that just clinging to the status quo and hoping trends would miraculously reverse themselves would be a sustainable policy over the long run. A renewed assault on the West would only increase the economic burden Moscow already faced. Given the United States’ economic and military ascendancy, higher tensions would only reinforce its dominance over its own alliance and hence its ultimate superiority over Moscow. Preventive war was out of the question, given overall US material superiority, nuclear deterrence and the declining economic value of territory.

That left some policy of scaling back the costs of the Soviet Union’s international position. But it is important to stress that economic pressures built over time. The effects were subtle at first—increased strains on the always shortage-prone Soviet policy-making environment. Over time, decline accelerated, economic pressures mounted and ever tougher trade-offs confronted Moscow. In these conditions, the model we set forth above would suggest that the turn toward cooperation, and the agonizing assault on the hallowed precepts of the old Soviet identity, would intensify over time. The evidence concerning perceptions of economic constraints and their connection to new ideas and policies is indeed strongly consistent with this basic model: the magnitude of the shift

away from the old approach was a function of the severity of the economic constraints facing the Soviets. The sections that follow review this evidence in three key turning points in Soviet policy, beginning with the relatively easy initial policy departures in 1985–87, and ending with the anguishing decisions that marked the Cold War's end on largely Western terms in 1990.

### *Phase I: Economic Constraints and Initial Policy Departures*

Soviet policy-makers at the highest levels began to agonize over relative decline in the early 1980s, just as the systemic decline of the Soviet Union became undeniable.<sup>42</sup> Internal assessments of Soviet economic decline either matched or were more pessimistic than the data presented in Figure 4.1.<sup>43</sup> Naturally, there was a two to three-year lag between recognition of the systemic trend and the new policy response. Of course, the old Cold warhorses who then occupied the Kremlin preferred to avoid any change in the basic ideological precepts that lay at the root of the old identity. However, even in this period (roughly 1981–85), evidence reveals leadership efforts to constrain foreign-policy costs and close the widening gap between capabilities and commitments. In particular, Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko all struggled to stem the growth in defence spending in the early 1980s, despite the hard line coming from Washington and heavy pressure from the military.<sup>44</sup>

The evidence shows how decline and resource constraints helped propel new policy departures. Memoirs and other recollections—by new and old thinkers alike—consistently document that the mounting evidence of Soviet relative decline and technological inferiority played a role in the evolution of individuals' policy perspectives.<sup>45</sup> The momentum behind new policy directions was intimately related to cascading information on the Soviet Union's material failings compared with the United States and its chief allies. At each wrenching step in the process of discarding old policy approaches and adopting new ones, resource constraints were of central importance.<sup>46</sup>

It is clear, moreover, that both new and old thinkers strongly resisted a complete abandonment of traditional Soviet ideas and policy practices. Precisely as constructivist theory (as well as most other social science theories from cognitive psychology to the new institutional economics) would expect, polities resist massive change. Gorbachev's initial response did not threaten system fundamentals. He adopted a policy of 'acceleration' (*uskorenie*) of the Soviet economy via discipline, new personnel in key managerial roles, an anti-vodka campaign and massively increased investment in the machine-tool sector of the economy (roughly 70 per cent of which was devoted to military production). In security policy, Gorbachev began by reversing the Brezhnev-Andropov-Chernenko effort to cap military spending and programmed into the 1986–90 five-year plan an increase in military outlays; he approved an effort to end the Afghan War by military escalation; and he agreed to increase arms transfers to Third World clients to magnify Moscow's bargaining leverage in talks on regional issues.<sup>47</sup>

A similar story of resistance (both intellectual and political) and pressured change applied to Moscow's relation to the world economy. As our analysis of globalization would suggest, Soviet analysts and, later, policy-makers concluded that it was necessary to 'participate more fully in the international division of labor' (in non-socialist parlance,

to increase Soviet access to global firms and the international economy) in order to prevent a severe erosion of the Soviet Union's technological capacity and relative position.<sup>48</sup> During the 1980s, this became a prominent argument advanced by scholarly experts.<sup>49</sup> In particular, they maintained that the oil boom of the 1970s had shown that 'passive' technology transfers (that is, simply purchasing technology from foreign suppliers) was insufficient; it was also necessary to be engage in 'active' technology transfers (that is, interacting directly with global firms) in order to acquire the full benefits of the latest foreign technologies and to acquire management skills.<sup>50</sup>

However, powerful ideological, political and bureaucratic constraints confronted any policy-maker who ventured to act on this assessment. Thus, upon entering office Gorbachev stressed that the Soviets could redress the technological gap with the West without relying upon technology transfers from abroad, but rather through 'transfusions' of ideas and innovations from within the USSR and the Soviet bloc.<sup>51</sup> In particular, Gorbachev pinned his hopes on what he called 'dismantling our internal CoCoM'; that is, trying to get the commercial sector to learn from and duplicate the supposed efficiency of the military sector.<sup>52</sup> At the same time, the Gorbachev team placed greater emphasis on trying, as Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzkhov stated in 1986, to get the CMEA (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) to 'move away from largely trading links toward interaction in production, toward a high degree of specialization and coproduction'.<sup>53</sup>

By 1987, however, it became apparent to Gorbachev that an attempt to apply the productivity 'secret' of the military sector to the commercial sector was doomed to failure. As Gaddy points out, this was because 'The "secret" was that the military sector cannibalized the economy... To ask the military industry to apply its methods to serve civilian industry was not simply politically impossible but also illogical'.<sup>54</sup> At the same time, it was also becoming clear that efforts to duplicate the increasing international production linkages that were occurring in the West by expanding specialization and production linkages within CMEA were bearing little fruit.<sup>55</sup> Increased specialization within CMEA was fine in principle, but it was evident that none of the countries in the Eastern bloc had the capacity to match the West technologically using indigenous sources. This is most apparent by examining East Germany, which had long been the most economically competitive member of the Eastern bloc.<sup>56</sup> Even in East Germany, major reforms and policy initiatives in the 1980s intended to match the productivity and technological capacity of the West in areas such as computers and consumer electronics were utterly disastrous. For example, extensive efforts in East Germany to produce computer chips (at a cost of 12–14 billion Eastern marks) in the 1980s were completely ineffective. As Charles Maier points out, 'The GDR aspired to produce 500,000 256-kilobyte memories (already outmoded abroad) and had turned out only 90,000 even after importing Western equipment...[Moreover,] the 256K memory cost GDR consumers 534 marks instead of 4–5 valuta [convertible] marks' that the chips cost on world markets.<sup>57</sup>

Thus, it very soon became clear that if the Soviets were going to obtain advanced technology and enhance economic productivity, this was not going to be accomplished by relying upon sources from within the Soviet bloc. It was in this context that, in 1987, Gorbachev began to discuss publicly the mounting costs of Soviet international economic isolation.<sup>58</sup> More importantly, Gorbachev's public pronouncements were matched by politically difficult and momentous policy reversals: efforts to participate in the IMF (International Monetary Fund), the World Bank, and GATT (General Agreement on

Tariffs and Trade); to achieve greater cooperation with the then EC (European Community); and, most notably, the decision in 1987 to legalize foreign direct investment within the Soviet Union for the first time since the 1920s.<sup>59</sup> To be sure, these initial moves regarding joint ventures were quite modest (foreign participation in joint ventures was limited to 49 per cent) and great efforts were made to camouflage the nature, extent and existence of these reforms.<sup>60</sup> But, as time progressed and as the nature of the Soviet's technological lag became even more apparent, efforts to attract foreign direct investment expanded greatly: while majority Soviet equity in joint ventures had initially been the 'sine qua non of the Soviet leadership', in December 1988 majority foreign ownership (theoretically up to 99 per cent) of joint ventures was permitted in an effort to increase greatly the attractiveness of the Soviet Union as a site for foreign investment.<sup>61</sup> While the Soviet leadership advanced many reasons for pursuing joint ventures, 'the main ones were to acquire technology and management know-how and to develop exports of manufactured goods'.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, Gorbachev's modest early efforts at reforming the foreign trade monopoly gave way to the granting of direct foreign trade rights for virtually all enterprises in late 1988.<sup>63</sup>

Gorbachev's initial policy package failed to turn the economy around (see Table 4.1) and produced only the beginnings of a potential burden-reducing entente with the West. As resource constraints mounted, the foreign-policy strategy became more radical. By 1988, the Soviets had moved from graduated initiatives premised on reciprocity to escalating unilateral concessions. By then, resource constraints were escalating even further, and there was a lack of any obvious quick fixes other than to reduce the external pressure and perhaps exploit the economic benefits of reduced tensions as rapidly as possible.<sup>64</sup> As Shevardnadze's adviser Sergei Tarasenko noted in an interview:

Already after the 19th Party Conference, as we confronted the difficulties inside the country, the realization began to take shape that we would be able to continue on for a little while and perhaps retain the status of a great power only by relying on the United States. We sensed that were we to take two or three steps away from the US, we'd be tossed aside. We had to move as close as possible to the United States...[This point of view came to the fore in 1988], when the policy of acceleration turned out so badly. The USA had always wanted to cut us down [*dozhat' nas*]. Had we at that time acted in a confrontational way, the Americans would have easily cut us in two.<sup>65</sup>

Table 4.1: Soviet Economic Performance under Gorbachev

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
GNP growth (%/yr) <sup>a</sup>	4.1	1.3	2.1	1.5	-12	-13
Internal Debt (as % GDP) <sup>b</sup>	20	22	36	43	55	na
Budget Deficit (as % GDP)	-2.4	-6.2	-8.8	-11	-14	-20
Balance of Payments in Convertible Currencies (\$US bn) <sup>c</sup>	0.637	-2.3	-0.72	-3.7	-11.8 <sup>d</sup>	na

*Sources:* David Kotz with Fred Weir, *Revolution from Above: The Demise of the Soviet System* (London: Routledge, 1997); International Monetary Fund, The World Bank, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *A Study of the Soviet Economy* (Paris: OECD, 1991); Sergei Germanovich Sinel'nikov, *Biudzhetyi krizis v rossii, 1985–1995 gody* (Moscow: Evraziia, 1995); Michael Ellman and Vladimir Kontorovich (eds), *The Destruction of the Soviet Economic System: An Insider's Account* (Armonk, NY: M.E.Sharpe, 1998).

*Notes:* <sup>a</sup> 1986–90 are CIA estimates; 1991 is official Russian data as reported in Sinel'nikov.

<sup>b</sup> 1986–89 are official data; the figure for 1990 is an estimate reported in Ellman and Kontorovich, *The Destruction of the Soviet Economic System*.

<sup>c</sup> On a settlements basis. Payments deficits in non-convertible currency.

<sup>d</sup> Firsthalf of 1990 only.

Throughout, change was resisted. After all, the policy changes harmed the direct material interests of large and influential sectors of the Soviet political economy; and they progressively required explicit renunciation of the hallowed precepts of the old Soviet foreign-policy identity. But this resistance was hampered by the fact that the 'old thinkers', who adhered strongly to the old identity, tended to see the same underlying trends as the new-thinking policy entrepreneurs. William Odom finds, 'In interviews and in their memoirs senior former Soviet military officers uniformly cited the burden of military spending as more than the Soviet economy could bear.'<sup>66</sup>

Traditionally minded officials such as KGB chief Vladimir Kryuchkov, chief of Gorbachev's staff Valery Boldin, Defence Minister Marshal Dmitry Yazov, Chief of the General Staff and military adviser Marshall Sergei Akhromeev—all of whom participated in or (in Akhromeev's case) sympathized with the August 1991 anti-Gorbachev putsch—agreed that the Soviet economy could not bear the Cold War status quo and that the technological gap was large and widening.<sup>67</sup> Despite deep disagreements with Gorbachev, Akhromeev, insisted that 'All who knew the real situation in our state and economy in the mid-1980s, understood that Soviet foreign policy had to be changed. The Soviet Union could no longer continue a policy of military confrontation with the United States and NATO after 1985. The economic possibilities for such a policy had been exhausted.'<sup>68</sup> When asked in an interview whether the Soviet Union had to get out of the Cold War, Yazov responded: 'Absolutely...We simply lacked the power to oppose the USA, England, Germany, France, Italy—all the flourishing states that were united in the NATO bloc. We had to seek a dénouement... We had to find an alternative to the arms race... We had to continually negotiate, and reduce, reduce, reduce—especially the most

expensive weaponry.’<sup>69</sup> Not only did he express these views in hindsight, he used the very same arguments while implementing retrenchment policies as defence minister.<sup>70</sup>

Given their recognition of these underlying trends, old thinkers faced great difficulty in making the case for a plausible alternative to retrenchment. Indeed, despite a sustained and intensive research effort, scholars have yet to uncover contemporary evidence of a strategic alternative.<sup>71</sup> Clearly, many traditionally minded officials were convinced at the time, and remain so in retirement, that they could have implemented a retrenchment strategy better than Gorbachev was able to. But they were not able—in office or in hindsight—to make a coherent case for a general foreign policy alternative.

### *Phase II: Giving up the Outer Empire*

Rising economic constraints pressed the Soviets to retrench. But what, exactly, was meant by retrenchment? How much would Moscow have to give up? Answers to these questions were often obscured at the time by the temporary euphoria unleashed by Gorbachev’s new thinking, which sometimes made it seem as if Moscow could have more sway in world politics at less economic cost.<sup>72</sup> Eventually, however, the real implications of retrenchment were bound to become clear. A development that forced the Soviets to face the tough trade-offs implicit in their policy in a starkly new manner was the fall of allied communist regimes in central Europe.

The decision not to use force to retain suzerainty over central Europe exemplifies our model of the role of economic costs in explaining how changes in long-standing foreign policy identities can occur. The security benefits of a buffer zone in central Europe had diminished once the Soviets had acquired an assured ‘second-strike’ nuclear capability in the 1960s. But the Soviets had little need to question their Cold War foreign-policy commitment to central Europe as long as there was no reason to think that maintaining these commitments was unbearably costly. Undertaking a decision to abandon the East European dependencies would obviously have been a major policy departure, running up against all the political, institutional and intellectual impediments to major change with which scholars are so familiar.

The economic opportunity cost of maintaining the Soviet empire, however, began to escalate rapidly beginning in roughly the mid-1970s. The best-researched account of Soviet-Warsaw Pact economic relations concludes that, during the 1980s, ‘Soviet subsidies to the region were becoming an intolerable burden... What had been a serious problem in the early 1970s had grown into a crisis of threatening proportions by the mid-1980s.’<sup>73</sup> This imperial crisis stemmed from a variety of factors. Following the rise of the trade union Solidarity in Poland and the imposition of martial law in 1981, the Soviets bankrolled a huge outflow of subsidized loans in the early 1980s to Poland, East Germany and Bulgaria and, at the same time, sought to ‘ease Eastern Europe’s financial situation by accepting increased imports’.<sup>74</sup> However, the goods that the allies shipped to the Soviets were falling further and further behind world standards; most were of much lower quality than the Soviets could have obtained on the open world market in exchange for the energy and raw materials they sent to Eastern Europe.<sup>75</sup>

At the same time, the Soviets’ marginal cost of extracting the energy and raw materials they supplied to Eastern Europe in exchange for these goods was progressively



increasing, because most of the easily exploitable sources in the Soviet Union had already been exhausted.<sup>76</sup> By 1983, as noted, Siberian oil production began to decline, and the perennial Soviet problem of 'shortage amidst plenty' suddenly worsened.<sup>77</sup> Finally, the East European allies' need for Soviet help increased as time progressed, because they suffered a marked slowdown in both technological competitiveness and economic growth—declining from an average real GDP growth rate of 3.23 per cent in 1971–80, to 0.9 per cent during 1981–85, and eventually reaching an average growth rate of –1.16 per cent in 1989.<sup>78</sup>

For these and other reasons, by the mid-1980s the Soviets felt 'increasingly exploited by the East Europeans', and there was growing Soviet 'exasperation at what they considered the self-seeking behavior of their East European liabilities'.<sup>79</sup> This led Soviet leaders to take the uncomfortable step of publicly castigating their allies in the CMEA. The most notable public expression of this growing frustration was at the 1984 CMEA summit, where General Secretary Konstantin Chernenko issued a stern warning to the East European countries to start living up to their economic 'responsibilities',<sup>80</sup> and the summit's final document bluntly directed them to start 'supplying the USSR with the products it needs'.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, at a 1986 summit of CMEA party leaders in Moscow, 'the Soviet leadership had repeated complaints about the poor quality of East European manufactured exports to the Soviet Union'.<sup>82</sup>

While the economic rationale for cutting back Soviet ties with Eastern Europe was thus becoming stronger and stronger, it would be wrong to say that these changing incentives led mechanistically to a positive Soviet decision to withdraw from Eastern Europe. In fact, available evidence indicates that there was no plan to withdraw from Eastern Europe, whether to reap economic benefits or for any other reason. Some key decision-makers—notably, Shevardnadze and Ligachev—retrospectively claimed 'that the Politburo renounced the Brezhnev doctrine in 1985'.<sup>83</sup> The evidence, however, does not support the argument that such a proactive decision was actually made. On the contrary, Vladislav Zubok's extensive review of recently released archival documents concludes that, 'All the evidence indicates that Gorbachev and his advisers had no new policy for Eastern Europe...'.<sup>84</sup>

Rather than a clear, forward-looking strategy, what the Soviets had in these years was a clear sense of their immediate requirements: to reduce the burden of subsidies to the allies; to get them to supply better goods; and to lower the strain of maintaining the forward-defence posture in Eastern Europe. In short, maintaining the foreign-policy status quo in Eastern Europe was becoming very expensive in economic terms, and the Soviets wanted drastically to cut back those costs. As Jacques Lévesque notes, under Gorbachev 'Moscow was much more demanding and stingy in its economic relations with its allies than it had been in the past'.<sup>85</sup>

An obvious way for the Soviets to cut costs was to demand less obedience from their allies. When policy-makers such as Shevardnadze and Ligachev recall 'renouncing the Brezhnev Doctrine' in 1985, what they probably have in mind is the resolve to reduce Moscow's interference in its allies' domestic choices. This self-restraint is understandable when one considers how very expensive it is to induce obedience from balky allies—as the Soviets discovered in the Polish crisis of 1980–81. Reducing costs and interference is very different, of course, from saying that the Soviets had a plan to jettison Eastern Europe. Had the citizens of communist states in Eastern Europe not

organized to overthrow the existing regimes, the Soviet leadership—Gorbachev included—would have been quite happy to hold on. In the end, the only thing that had changed was the Soviet willingness to pay high costs in order to prevent this from happening.

While there is no evidence that Moscow made a proactive, advance decision to exit Eastern Europe, there is abundant evidence that Soviet leaders weighed the growing costs of using force in Europe prior to 1989. Following the Polish crisis in 1980–81, the Soviet leadership pondered this very question at length. The evidence that has emerged here indicates that the Soviet leadership ruled out direct intervention in Poland as being beyond Soviet capabilities. According to KGB veteran Nikolai Leonov, Yuri Andropov opined in 1980 that ‘The quota for our interventions abroad has been exhausted... The Soviet Union already lacked the power for such operations.’<sup>86</sup> Available documents on the Polish crisis reveal that the Politburo was deeply reluctant to enforce the Brezhnev Doctrine and was acutely aware of the punishing costs of doing so.<sup>87</sup> In reviewing the classified documents of the Politburo commission on the Polish crisis, Georgy Shakhnazarov notes that there was ‘total unanimity...that the use of our military contingent in Poland should be excluded from our arsenal’.<sup>88</sup>

The key point here is that if the Soviets already felt in 1981 that military intervention in Eastern Europe had become too costly, then the logical expectation is that the willingness to use force in 1989 would be even lower after a further decade of decline, after the Western debt burdens of the allied governments had radically increased, and, most important, when the Soviet economy was in a complete free fall. For by the time the question of continued Soviet suzerainty over central Europe was posed in stark terms, the Soviet economy was in a deep crisis, as Table 4.1 shows.

Indeed, it is clear that once the depth of economic distress was understood, the punishingly high costs of using force were apparent—and not just to Gorbachev and the new thinkers, but to most ‘old thinkers’ in the Soviet Union as well.<sup>89</sup> The use of force in these circumstances would have ended the emerging détente with the West, increased the West’s allocations for defence, closed off all credits to a Soviet economy in desperate need, and shut down all hopes of technology transfers or joint ventures. Moreover, intervention would imply the assumption of direct responsibility for Eastern Europe’s growing foreign debt, whose servicing would have added massive burdens to the Soviet economy; or, of course, a default, which would have further closed Western markets. As Chernyaev recalls, Gorbachev’s resigned response to worries that Poland was moving away from the Soviet alliance owed much to his awareness of these economic constraints: ‘What can we do? Poland has a \$56 billion debt. Can we take Poland on our balance sheet in our current economic situation? No. And if we cannot—then we have no influence.’<sup>90</sup>

To carry the counterfactual further, had Moscow intervened militarily, it would then have had to establish new client regimes whose obvious dependence on the Soviet Union would have implied even higher governance costs for the Soviet budget than the old Soviet empire. The use of force would, in short, have entailed a new Soviet isolation unseen since the 1950s, and it would have required Moscow to extract 1950s-level sacrifices from its own population. But in the 1950s, the Soviet economy was growing at 8 per cent yearly, and Soviet leaders consequently had some confidence in their system’s ability to deliver growth. Some 15 years of decline had sapped that confidence, and with

it the willingness to die, kill and impose material hardship in the name of socialism. Given these trends, it is not surprising that no old thinker advocated the use of force in 1989, and none has since suggested that such a decision would have served Soviet interests.<sup>91</sup>

To summarize, the key security benefits of the empire had long ago faded; the economic burdens of the East European empire were rapidly rising; Soviet policy-makers across the political spectrum wanted to scale back these growing costs of empire; the costs of using force in Eastern Europe had been deemed unacceptably high as early as 1981; and all decision-makers were aware of the prohibitive costs of using force in 1989. In short, there were powerful incentives against the major use of force. Knowledge of these incentives would lead us to expect policy-makers to try hard to avoid armed confrontations. Soviet behaviour is consistent with this expectation. As Andrew Bennett points out, 'thus far no evidence has come to light that any top Soviet leader argued for using force in Europe in 1989, or that the military or security bureaucracies were asked for or volunteered operational plans for using force'.<sup>92</sup> In fact, Gorbachev took active measures to avert an inadvertent 'Kent State' kind of confrontation between armed soldiers and demonstrating civilians.<sup>93</sup> Of course, there was never a guarantee that policy-makers would be successful in their efforts to avoid armed confrontation. There is nothing in our analysis that rules out the possibility of policy-makers or commanders losing control in a tense situation.

### *Phase III: Settling the Cold War Asymmetrically: German Unification*

Conceding to US positions on INF (Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces) was difficult in 1987. Making large unilateral cuts was a challenge in 1988. Standing by and watching allied regimes in Eastern Europe being swept aside was dramatic for all, and traumatic for most Soviet policy-makers in 1989. Still, even after the direction of change was clear in central Europe, it was possible to believe that Moscow might retain some alliance relations in Europe for a time, and that it might have a major voice in shaping a new post-Cold War pan-European security structure—long a treasured Soviet goal. Internal documents show that this hope was alive and well in late 1989.<sup>94</sup> Under severe and mounting economic constraints, the Soviets, fitful and resistant all the way, came eventually to abandon their hope of grasping victory from the jaws of defeat and ending the Cold War symmetrically as equal partners with the United States.

Soviet decisions to submit to Western terms in negotiations over German reunification clarified, as no previous event had, the reduced scope of Moscow's ability to elicit deference from other states. It was clearly an undesired outcome that the Soviets acquiesced in once events conspired to leave them with no better alternative. The key question that needs to be resolved in is why the Soviets eventually faced no better policy alternatives. The expectation derived from our analysis is that Moscow opted to capitulate to Western terms on German reunification in large part because doing otherwise would have been unacceptably costly. Once Moscow opted for retrenchment, each passing year would make a reversal of course less likely. This would be true even if the various trends we have documented facing Moscow in the 1980s had not accelerated. But, of course, these problems did accelerate. By 1990, the Soviet economic crisis had

reached a new and dramatically worse level. Taking a hard negotiating line on this issue would have created an environment in which it would have been impossible sharply to cut back Soviet defence expenditures at a time when the Soviet economy was spiralling out of control. In addition, taking this route would have threatened the Soviets' efforts to increase access to the international economy.

For many scholars, it is axiomatic that the Soviets had a number of viable potential alternatives concerning German reunification. Thomas Risse, for example, notes:

Although Moscow could no longer influence events or bargaining outcomes in its desired direction, it still could make life quite miserable for the West and for Germany in particular. First, Moscow could have forced the German people to choose between unification and NATO membership, thereby triggering a major domestic dispute in the country during an election year. Second, the Soviet Union could have provoked an international crisis and confrontation with Bonn and Washington by fully insisting on its legal rights over Germany as an allied power. The price to be paid by both sides would have been to start another Cold War just as the first one was about to end peacefully. Third, in the absence of a cooperative agreement with the West, the Soviet Union could have decided to leave its 300,000 troops in East Germany.<sup>95</sup>

Given the extent to which the Soviet economy spiralled out of control after 1989, there is little reason to think that the second option Risse lists above actually was on the table. To the extent that the Cold War was too costly in the 1980s, this economic burden was exponentially higher in the early 1990s—by which time there was a complete loss of control over the state budget (a deficit of 12–14 per cent of GDP in 1989 and over 20 per cent in 1990), severe recession (a 5 per cent contraction in 1990, 10–15 per cent in 1991), hyperinflation (2–5 per cent a week in 1991); an overpowering foreign exchange crisis; and a chaotic, empire-wide grab for resources and power by various sub-elites.<sup>96</sup> Given these circumstances, few, if any, policy-makers in Moscow thought the Soviet Union had the capacity to start a new Cold War at this time.

With regard to the third option Risse notes above, the opportunity cost of taking a firm stance and leaving Soviet troops in East Germany would have been punishingly high. We need more evidence on this period, but there are indications that once the Soviet economy went into a severe tailspin, Gorbachev, Shevardnadze and a few other top new-thinking officials realized quickly that they were simply not in a position to make strong demands of the West. Given that the GDR's economy was collapsing even faster than the Soviet one, it was clear that, whoever took responsibility for maintaining order, there was a massive financial burden far beyond Moscow's means.<sup>97</sup> Publicly, Gorbachev and his aides stuck to the old definition of Soviet interests—no NATO expansion to the GDR—but privately they appear to have concluded that dragging out the negotiations and sticking to the old position would gain less than it would cost in terms of bad faith, fewer loans and grants from the West to ease the foreign-exchange crisis, and slower integration into Western political, security and financial institutions—all of which would serve to impede their efforts to put the Soviet economy back on track. As Chernyaev put it, had the Soviets continued to stall the negotiations, 'Germany would have been united

anyway—without us and against us. And we would not have received the compensation that the Germans gave us—both material and political.’<sup>98</sup>

Thus, of the counterfactual Soviet policy options Risse mentions, it is the first—a cleverer diplomatic strategy for dividing the US-German alliance—that is plausible. Gorbachev might well have forced Helmut Kohl’s hand by agreeing to unification on easy terms in exchange for the new Germany’s exit from NATO’s security structures, packaged with an appropriate upgrading of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)—the broad security organization Moscow had long favoured. Oleg Grinevsky did, in fact, forward the idea in February that Moscow should immediately support unification but insist on a neutral, demilitarized Germany.<sup>99</sup> In this scenario, the Germans would have been forced to confront a trade-off between unity and loyalty to the United States and NATO.

What would have happened if the Soviets had adopted such a tougher bargaining stance? The Western powers did discuss this scenario and resolved to stick to their position if it led to a showdown with Moscow.<sup>100</sup> According to Western officials, Washington and Bonn had contingency plans in case the Soviets balked and asserted their residual four-power rights from World War II. The Western three would simply have unilaterally withdrawn their rights, leaving Moscow alone against the Germans. The resulting formula would have been neither ‘2+4’ nor ‘4+2’ but rather 5 (the two Germanys, and the other three Allied World War II powers) versus 1 (Moscow). If the West was truly willing to risk a return of Cold War confrontation rather than acquiesce to German neutrality, then there were few policy-makers in Moscow who thought the Soviet Union could prevail. If negotiations broke down, the likelihood was that the Soviets’ bargaining position would only deteriorate with time as the Soviet and Eastern German economies continued their precipitous decline. Meanwhile, the West German government was busy creating facts on the ground; in effect, beginning to provide governance for the Eastern German territory.<sup>101</sup> Moscow simply lacked the resources to counter this influence—unless it was truly willing to crack down forcefully and assume full responsibility, something no one in Moscow wanted to contemplate.

In the end, it thus appears that the new thinkers were probably right to concede on an issue they would lose after a costly diplomatic struggle. But contingency plans do not a policy make. It is conceivable that Kohl would have been faced with intolerable public pressure to accept the Soviet deal, which could have led to a break with Washington. Or it is possible that Kohl and Bush, seeing the trend, would have countered with offers of more restrictions on Germany’s role in NATO. While these outcomes were certainly possible, it is not surprising that the Gorbachev team decided not to gamble on them given the collapse of the GDR, the rapid deterioration of the Soviet economy, and the immense costs to Moscow of actually using its military muscle in central Europe. Had the Soviets risked an assertion of their power or their residual rights over Germany, in all likelihood they would have had to face an overwhelming diplomatic counter-coalition.

Rational expectations of which side would prevail if negotiations broke down—as well as which side could offer more material rewards in return for concessions—help explain Gorbachev’s sudden acquiescence to Western terms in the spring of 1990. Gorbachev was reluctant to endorse any diplomatic ploy that banked on the GDR, which by January he had concluded was doomed.<sup>102</sup> He seems to have concluded that as much as he opposed the inclusion of Germany within NATO, a concession on this issue would

pay off in the future in terms of better relations with the new Germany. Various factors appear to have been factored into his thinking on this score. For one thing, in 1990, West Germany ranked first as provider of capital investment to the Soviet Union, as well as being the number one source of joint ventures in the country.<sup>103</sup> In short, West Germany was a very lucrative economic partner—and had the potential to become an even more important one in the future. Moreover, the growing economic crisis facing the Soviet Union made joint ventures and capital all the more necessary; Gorbachev specifically noted in 1990 that it was exactly at this moment that Western economic involvement was most urgently needed.<sup>104</sup> For these reasons, the risks of spoiling the emerging relationship with Germany seemed high indeed. Of course, beyond these potential costs of adopting an intransigent position in the negotiations, moving forward on German reunification also had very substantial, direct economic benefits for the Soviets, most notably DM 20 billion to offset the costs of repositioning Soviet troops as well as new grants and loans on favourable terms.<sup>105</sup>

It is here, ironically, that we find the most likely potential alternative to Gorbachev's policy. In contemporary debates, many old thinkers castigate Gorbachev not for allowing German reunification, but rather for not receiving enough financial compensation from the West in return.<sup>106</sup> Thus, the old thinkers' great alternative on German reunification seems to boil down to a claim that they would have been sharper economic bargainers with the West. Adopting a tougher bargaining strategy in this instance may or may not have meant a larger inflow of financial capital into the Soviet Union. While adopting such a ploy might have resulted in a momentarily less cash-strapped Soviet Union, it would not have changed the course of the Cold War's resolution to any meaningful degree.

The main objection to this line of analysis is that superpower cooperation at the Cold War's end was really premised upon mutual concessions rather than the Soviets caving in to the West. While acknowledging Soviet economic decline, many scholars and former Bush administration officials contend that the accommodating Soviet stance during the Cold War endgame—and particularly in the negotiations over German unification—were prompted by a general US strategy of engaging in concessions and other forms of reassurance, which allowed Gorbachev to trust the United States to a remarkable degree.<sup>107</sup> This objection raises a simple empirical question: as the Soviets revamped their foreign-policy practices and engaged in one concession after another in the late 1980s and early 1990s, did the United States reciprocate? More specifically, did the Soviets submit to Western terms on German reunification and other issues due to the cumulative effect of a cooperative pattern of interaction characterized by mutual concessions and assurances in the late 1980s and early 1990s? Scholars who advance this form of argument are certainly right that Gorbachev desperately wanted his Western partners to match Soviet concessions, and that he tried through appeals and gestures to get them to do so.<sup>108</sup> However, the evidence overwhelmingly shows that the Cold War's end simply ratified pre-existing foreign policy interests in the West.<sup>109</sup>

As far as Western decision-making elites were concerned, the end of the Cold War was the wholesale collapse of one worldview and the triumph of the other. The general pattern that emerges from the evidence is clear: Washington was slow to respond to Gorbachev's concessions, never reciprocated them in kind, and never compromised its basic approach to international security.<sup>110</sup> US decision-makers rebuffed Gorbachev's

nuclear weapons testing moratorium; they insisted on the SDI (Strategic Defense Initiative), despite a ceaseless campaign by Gorbachev; they held an Afghan settlement hostage to their right to arm the mujahedin rebels to the end; they engaged in a prolonged 'strategic review' to assess Soviet intentions even after Gorbachev had made a series of spectacular unilateral concessions; they would not alter their policy on the Baltic states even in 1990, the year in which US-Soviet relations were the closest they had ever been; and the United States—together with its West German ally—forced through German unification within NATO against Gorbachev's and Shevardnadze's insistent, near-hysterical, pleading.

The most striking evidence concerning US policy is what is absent from the policy-making record: that is, any serious argument for doing what Gorbachev wanted, which was to treat the ending of the Cold War symmetrically, as if the Warsaw Pact and NATO were equals. The major debate concerns whether President Bush and Secretary of State Baker, who did change their rhetoric but never significantly altered any basic Western security institution or practice, went too far in 'coddling' Gorbachev. The general alternatives within US policy circles were strongly weighted towards even less willingness to bend for Moscow's benefit.<sup>111</sup> The actions of US officials, if not their words, bespoke confidence that Soviet relative decline had left Gorbachev with few realistic options other than to make concession after concession to Western views. The Bush administration's policy towards Moscow, as formulated in National Security Directive (NSD) 23 (September 1989), called for 'the integration of the Soviet Union into the existing international system', which required 'fundamental alterations in Soviet military force structure, institutions, and practices that can only be reversed at great costs, economically and politically, to the Soviet Union'.<sup>112</sup>

If the Gorbachev team balked at US terms, the Americans were apparently ready to revert to a Cold War confrontation in which they knew they held the upper hand.<sup>113</sup> To be sure, President Bush was extremely careful to say nothing to humiliate Gorbachev publicly. At Malta, he even agreed to cease talking about uniting Europe on the basis of 'Western values', agreeing to use the more neutral 'democratic values'.<sup>114</sup> But privately the president and his aides believed the United States had won the Cold War. As Bush told Kohl at the Camp David summit in February, 'the Soviets are not in a position to dictate Germany's relationship with NATO. What worries me is talk that Germany must not stay in NATO. To hell with that! We prevailed, they didn't. We can't let the Soviets clutch victory from the jaws of defeat.'<sup>115</sup>

This was neither the attitude nor the behaviour of people who believed that the Soviet change of heart was in any way contingent upon any foreign-policy concessions on their part. Such basic confidence led the Western powers to be extraordinarily tough bargainers with the Soviets. Regarding German unification, in particular, former West German and US officials and others argue the West sought successfully to exploit Soviet weakness to achieve German unification 'utterly and unequivocally on western terms'.<sup>116</sup>

In sum, the evidence indicates that the United States simply did not adjust its foreign-policy practices to any meaningful degree during the Cold War endgame, and that this was in large part because the Soviets were in no material position to push Washington in that direction. It is true that personal relationships of trust did evolve among key leaders in the three main governments concerned—the Soviet, West German and US, but these relationships were quite slow in developing. Indeed, the process of the dissolution of

communism in central Europe was well advanced before relations of trust appeared to take hold among Kohl, Gorbachev and Bush. In other words, trust emerged when the economic fortunes of the Soviets collapsed, and they agreed to Western terms. It is thus difficult to disentangle the importance of interpersonal synergy from the dictates of dire necessity, in the case of Gorbachev, and the delights of getting exactly what one wants, in the case of Bush and Kohl.

Of course, in any particular negotiation, one can find instances of US-Soviet give-and-take, and indeed, some concessions on the part of the United States. In the final analysis, however, there is no way to avoid the overall conclusion that the United States was extraordinarily firm in the positions it adopted, and that the emergence of cooperation during the Cold War's end was largely the product of an often reluctant, resisted and anguished shift by the Soviets toward longstanding US positions. For this reason, it is hard to place much weight on the importance of an overall atmosphere of trust and reassurance generated by mutual concessions as an influence on the outcome of the negotiations over German reunification, or the Cold War more generally.

### *Conclusion*

In March 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev took the helm of an overstretched superpower with an inefficient economy that was declining alarmingly in relative terms. Existing policies of maintaining the Cold War status quo demanded increased expenditures, which increased the imperial burden as a share of the economy. A more vigorous prosecution of the Cold War rivalry was unlikely to relieve the economic burdens on the Soviet Union. On the contrary, there was every reason to conclude that a renewed assault on US positions internationally would invite an escalatory response from a stronger rival. As a result, a general strategy of reducing Cold War tensions and scaling back the imperial burdens on the Soviet economy gained numerous adherents in Soviet ruling echelons. In significant part because the Soviet Union's economic fortunes were rapidly declining, Gorbachev's efforts to engage the United States in security negotiations while initiating economic reform were supported or at least tolerated by a critical mass of the Soviet policy-making elite. Each subsequent step towards greater cooperation with the West was premised upon further Soviet concessions, which were made easier to swallow by increased economic constraints. Cooperation emerged, in short, because the weaker side began to decline and opted to capitulate to the stronger side. Not surprisingly, therefore, the transformation of identity occurred in the state that was weaker and weakening further, not the stronger and strengthening state.

The concept of identity remains ambiguous, but it is nevertheless clear that the basic process that scholars commonly call 'identity change' is important. The most significant theoretical implication of our analysis is that we should not necessarily be too quick to endorse a 'staged' method of enquiry—whereby, as many scholars have recently suggested, constructivists can first explain why shifts in foreign policy identities occur and then 'pass the baton' to theorists who focus largely on material incentives.<sup>17</sup> Although it is true that scholars who highlight material incentives typically assume fixed preferences, there is no reason to think that changing material incentives cannot at least sometimes help explain shifts in identities. When analyzing specific cases, constructivists



themselves sometimes make brief throwaway arguments along these lines, but have so far been unwilling to explore this point in any depth.<sup>118</sup> If the current approach to examining how identities change were optimal, it is highly unlikely that the basic model we presented here would do so well in this case. We therefore conclude that researchers interested in identity change need to be sensitive to the possibility that changing material incentives may be an important part of the story. In advancing this general point and in clarifying the role that changing economic incentives played in the reorientation of Soviet foreign policy, we hope that this analysis will make it possible to further the dialogue concerning the role of ideas in the end of Cold War, and in international relations more generally.

## NOTES

- 1 As Alexander Wendt notes, 'The revival of constructivist thinking about international politics was accelerated by the end of the Cold War... Mainstream IR theory simply had difficulty explaining the end of the Cold War, or systemic change more generally. It seemed to many that these difficulties stemmed from IR's materialist and individualist orientation, such that a more ideational, and holistic view of international politics might do better.' A.Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 4. See also, for example, Peter J.Katzenstein, Robert O.Keohane and Stephen D.Krasner, 'International Organization at its Golden Anniversary', *International Organization*, vol. 52, no. 4 (Autumn 1998), p. 670; and Peter J.Katzenstein, 'Introduction: Alternative Perspectives on National Security', in P.J.Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 2.
- 2 For an overview of constructivist theory, see Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*.
- 3 Stephen G.Brooks and William C.Wohlforth, 'Power, Globalization and the End of the Cold War: Reevaluating a Landmark Case for Ideas', *International Security*, vol. 25, no. 3 (Winter 2000/01), pp. 5–53; idem, 'Economic Constraints and the End of the Cold War', in Wohlforth (ed.), *Cold War Endgame: Oral History, Analysis, Debates*, (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002); and idem, 'From Old Thinking to New Thinking in Qualitative Research', *International Security* vol. 26, no. 4 (Spring 2002), pp. 93–113.
- 4 For example, one prominent critic of our earlier work, Robert English, agrees that 'Economic decline was clearly a necessary factor in the inception of Soviet reform.' R.D.English, 'Power, Ideas and new Evidence on the Cold War's End: A Reply to Brooks and Wohlforth', *International Security*, vol. 26, no. 4 (Spring, 2002), p. 92.
- 5 English, *ibid.*, is a recent example. Also see Robert D.English, *Russia and the Idea of the West: Gorbachev, Intellectuals and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
- 6 John A.Hall, 'Ideas and the Social Sciences', in Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane (eds), *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).
- 7 George Stigler and Gary Becker, 'De Gustibus non est Disputandum', *American Economic Review*, vol. 67 (1977), pp. 76–90.
- 8 See Gary Becker, *Accounting for Tastes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); other notable exceptions include James Fearon 'What is Identity (As We Now Use the Word)', unpub. MS, University of Chicago, 1997, and David Laitin, *Identity in Transformation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).
- 9 Kenneth N.Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979).
- 10 For a further discussion of these theoretical issues, see Stephen G.Brooks, 'The Globalization of Production and International Security', (PhD dissertation, Yale University, 2001), Ch. 3.

- 11 See the discussion in Stephen G. Brooks, 'Dueling Realisms', *International Organization*, vol. 51, no. 3 (Summer 1997), esp. pp. 450–3.
- 12 As William Odom notes, it is important to recognize the 'symbiosis of economic policies and military considerations in the Soviet Union'. Odom, 'The Soviet Military in Transition', *Problems of Communism*, vol. 39 (May–June 1990), p. 62.
- 13 On this point, see Jack L. Snyder, 'Anarchy and Culture', *International Organization*, vol. 56, no. 1 (Winter 2002), pp. 7–45.
- 14 Alexander Wendt, 'Constructing International Politics', *International Security*, vol. 20, no. 1 (Summer 1995), p. 74.
- 15 While what exactly constitutes the 'radical' constructivist position is debatable, Ronald Jepperson, Alexander Wendt and Peter Katzenstein, 'Norms, Identity and Culture in National Security', in Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security*, identify the work of Richard Ashley, David Campbell, R.B.J. Walker and Cynthia Weber as being representative of this branch of constructivism.
- 16 Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, pp. 109–13.
- 17 Wendt stresses that a key tenet of constructivism is that 'the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces'. Wendt, *ibid.*, p. 1. Ted Hopf, 'The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory', *International Security*, vol. 23, no. 1 (Spring 1998), pp. 171–200.
- 18 For more on how to define identities, see Fearon, 'What is Identity?'; (As We Now Use the Word)?'; and Wendt *Social Theory of International Politics*, pp. 224–33.
- 19 See, for example, Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics', *International Organization*, vol. 46 (1992), pp. 335–92; Mlada Bukovansky, 'American Identity and Neutral Rights From Independence to the War of 1812', *International Organization*, vol. 51, no. 2 (1997), pp. 209–43; and Thomas Banchoff, 'German Identity and European Integration', *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 5, no. 3 (1999), pp. 259–89.
- 20 Some of these other potential causes are reviewed in Paul Kowert and Jeffrey Legro, 'Norms, Identity and Their Limits: A Theoretical Reprise', in Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security*, and Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Ch. 7.
- 21 George Tsebelis, 'Decision-Making in Political Systems', *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 25, no. 3 (July 1995), pp. 289–325.
- 22 See, for example, Charles Kegley, 'The Neoidealist Moment in International Studies? Realist Myths and the New International Realities', *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 2 (June 1993), pp. 131–47.
- 23 See, for example, Coit D. Blacker, *Hostage to Revolution: Gorbachev and Soviet Security Policy, 1985–1991* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1993); and William Wohlforth, 'Realism and the End of the Cold War', *International Security*, vol. 19, no. 3 (Winter 1994/95), pp. 91–129.
- 24 For a thorough analysis of these constraints, see See Brooks and Wohlforth, 'Power, Globalization and the End of the Cold War'.
- 25 See *ibid.*, pp. 14–20, and sources cited therein.
- 26 1 per cent is the CIA's calculation, reported in Joint Economic Committee, US Congress, *Measures of Soviet Gross National Product in 1982 Prices* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1990). Two per cent is the estimate of Russian economist G.I. Khanin, in 'Ekonomicheskii rost: Alternativnaia otsenka' [Economic growth: An alternative estimate], *Kommunist*, no. 17 (November 1988), pp. 83–90. Analysts agree that official data vastly overstated Soviet economic performance. Most now also agree that the CIA's estimates, which were based on a complex reworking of official data, significantly overstated Soviet output. Most importantly, CIA estimates dramatically under-reported the severity of the decline that preceded Gorbachev and accelerated during his leadership. See Vladimir

- Kontorovich, 'Economists, Soviet Growth Slowdown and the Collapse', *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 53, no. 5 (July 2001), pp. 675–95.
- 27 See Vladimir Kontorovich, 'Technological Progress and Research and Development', in Michael Ellman and Vladimir Kontorovich (eds), *The Disintegration of the Soviet Economic System* (New York: Routledge, 1992). A good assessment of the military implications of this technological lag is, Central Intelligence Agency, Directorate of Intelligence, 'The Soviet Defense Industry: Coping With the Military-Technological Challenge', SOV-87–10035DX (July 1987), declassified and made available on CD-ROM by the CIA's Center for the Study of Intelligence.
- 28 Ellman and Kontorovich, *The Disintegration of the Soviet Economic System*, p. 9.
- 29 See Noel E. Firth and James H. Noren, *Soviet Defense Spending: A History of CIA Estimates, 1950–1990* (Houston, TX: Texas A & M Press, 1998), for the CIA estimate of around 15 per cent in 1980. Using a different methodology (percentage of the workforce in the defence sector), Clifford Gaddy estimates 20 per cent; see C. Gaddy, *The Price of the Past* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1997), Ch. 1.
- 30 See Brooks and Wohlforth, 'Power, Globalization and the End of the Cold War', p. 24.
- 31 As Gorbachev notes, 'Of 25 billion rubles in total expenditure on science, 20 billion went to the military for technical research and development.' Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, p. 215.
- 32 Firth and Noren, *Soviet Defense Spending*, p. 134.
- 33 Ellman and Kontorovich, *Destruction of the Soviet Economic System*, p. 293.
- 34 For thorough reviews of these changes in the structure of global production, and the role of technological shifts in producing them, see Brooks, 'The Globalization of Production and International Security', PhD dissertation, Yale University, 2001, Ch.4.
- 35 The overwhelming majority (more than 90 per cent, by many estimates) of inter-firm alliances during the 1980s were located within the triad of western Europe, Japan and North America; see Stephen Kobrin, 'The Architecture of Globalization: State Sovereignty in a Networked Global Economy', in J. Dunning (ed.), *Governments, Globalization and International Business* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 150.
- 36 During the 1980s, the 'annual average growth rate for FDI outflows reached 14 per cent'. Geoffrey Jones, *The Evolution of International Business* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 52. As the absolute level of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) rose dramatically in the 1980s, the Soviets remained isolated from these flows, while the share of FDI based in western Europe, the United States and Canada increased from 62 per cent of the world total in 1980 to 70 per cent in 1993. See *ibid.*, pp. 48, 54.
- 37 In combination, these five Western countries accounted for 74 per cent of the total world FDI stock in 1980. See *ibid.*, p. 47. One reflection of the enhanced degree to which the production of US MNCs became strongly integrated internationally during this period is that 'the value of United States intra-firm exports increased by nearly two-thirds between 1977 and 1982 and by over 70 per cent between 1982 and 1989'. UNCTAD, *World Investment Report 1994*, p. 143. Another reflection of this trend is that the value of offshore outsourcing by the US increased from US\$ 48.8 billion in 1972 to US\$ 356 billion in 1987; see World Bank, *Global Economic Prospects and the Developing Countries* (Washington: World Bank, 1997), p. 42.
- 38 On the changing nature of technological development, see Stephen Kobrin, 'The Architecture of Globalization', pp. 149–50.
- 39 See, for example, Peter Dicken, *Global Shift: Transforming the World Economy* (New York: Guilford, 1998), p. 229; and Kobrin, 'Architecture of Globalization', p. 150.
- 40 See World Bank, *Global Economic Prospects*, p. 42.
- 41 For a detailed analysis of this point, see Brooks, 'The Globalization of Production and International Security', Ch. 5.
- 42 See Mark Kramer, 'Ideology and the Cold War', *Review of International Studies*, vol. 25, no. 4 (October 1999), pp. 539–76.

- 43 This is the general finding reported in Michael Ellman and Vladimir Kontorovich, 'The Collapse of the Soviet System and the Memoir Literature', *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 49, no. 2 (March 1997), pp. 259–79. More specific recollections include: Michael Ellman and Vladimir Kontorovich (eds), *The Destruction of the Soviet Economic System: An Insider's Account* (Armonk, NY: M.E.Sharpe, 1998); Gorbachev, *Memoirs*; Vitaliy Ivanovich Vorotnikov, *A bylo eto tak... Iz dnevnika chelna Politburo TsK KPSS* [That's How it Really Was... From the Diary of a Member of the CC-CPSH Politburo] (Moscow: Sovet Veteranov Knigoizdaniia, 1995); Yegor Gaidar, *Days of Defeat and Victory*, trans. Jane Ann Miller (Seattle, WA, and London: University of Washington Press, 1999); Stanislav Shatalin, "'500 dnei" i drugie dni moei zhizni' ("Five hundred days" and other days of my life'), *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 31 March and 2 April, 1992; Nikolai Ryzhkov, *Perestroika—Istoriia Predatl'tsv* [Perestroika: A History of Betrayals] (Moscow: Novosti, 1992).
- 44 According to Firth and Noren, *Soviet Defense Spending*, they succeeded in capping budgetary growth, but because the economy actually declined in 1980–82, defence outlays as a percentage of GDP probably rose.
- 45 General analyses that demonstrate this point include: Aleksandr Shubin, *Istoki perestroiki: 1978–1984 gg.* [The Origins of Perestroika] (Moscow: [s.n.], 1997); Paul Hollander, *Political Will and Personal Belief: The Decline and Fall of Soviet Communism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999). Particular memoirs that are especially telling on this score are Nikolai Leonov, *Likholet'e* [Cursed Years] (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1994); Sergei Fëdorovich Akhromeev and G.M.Kornienko, *Glazami marshala i diplomata: kriticheskii vzgliad na vneshniiu politiku SSSR do i posle 1985 goda* [Through the Eyes of a Marshal and a Diplomat: A Critical View of USSR Foreign Policy before and after 1985] (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1992); Anatoly S.Cherniaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, ed. and trans. Robert D.English and Elizabeth Tucker (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000); Vorotnikov, *A bylo eto tak*; and Georgii Khosroevich Shakhnazarov, *Tsena svobody: reformatsiia Gorbacheva glazami ego pomoshchnika* [The Price of Freedom: Gorbachev's Reformation through the Eyes of his Aide] (Moscow: Rossika-Zevs, 1993).
- 46 Two salient examples of this dynamic are the unilateral conventional force reductions in November–December 1988 (see the accounts in Cherniaev, *My Six Years*; Akhromeev and Kornienko, *Glazami*; and Vorotnikov, *A bylo eto tak*) and the twin decisions to demand hard currency for energy exports to the East European allies while reducing interference in their domestic policy choices (see the accounts in Ryzhkov, *Perestroika*; and Shakhnazarov, *Tsena svobody*).
- 47 Rhetoric aside, Gorbachev made no effort to increase outlays for consumer welfare in this period. See Sergei Germanovich Sinel'nikov (-Murylev), *Biudzhetyi krisis v rossii, 1985–1995 gody* [Budget Crisis in Russia, 1985–95] (Moscow: Evraziia, 1995), p. 36. Aleksandr Lyakhovskiy, *Tragediia i Doblest' Afgana* [The Tragedy and Valour of the Afghan] (Moscow: GPI Iskona, 1995), documents the early escalatory policy on Afghanistan. For Gorbachev's own contemporary description of these policy moves in Politburo settings, see, for example, National Security Archive, 'Understanding the End of the Cold War: The Reagan/Gorbachev Years' (Providence, RI: Brown University, 1998), esp. Doc. Nos 44, 52. For an analysis of the competitive impulse behind 'acceleration', see Vladimir Shlapentokh, *A Normal Totalitarian Country: How the Soviet Union Functioned and How it Collapsed* (Armonk, NY: M.E.Sharpe, 2001).
- 48 See, for example, the discussions in Jerry Hough, *Opening up the Soviet Economy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1985); idem, *Russia and the West: Gorbachev and the Politics of Reform* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988); Ed Hewett, *Reforming the Soviet Economy: Equality versus Efficiency* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1988); Hewett and Gaddy, *Open for Business*; Leonard Geron, *Soviet Foreign Economic Policy*

*under Perestroika* (London: Pinter, 1990); and NIE 11–18–85, ‘Domestic Stresses on the Soviet System’, in NSA, ‘Understanding the End of the Cold War’.

- 49 While few went so far as to say that ‘International integration is the chief strength of the Western economy’—as the economist Grigorii Khanin argued—by the 1980s, there was a general recognition that the ability of the West to exploit international linkages had become an important relative advantage over the Soviets, and one of ever-increasing saliency; Khanin as cited in Philip Hanson, ‘The Internationalization of the Soviet Economy’, in Alan Sherr *et al.* (eds), *International Joint Ventures: Soviet and Western Perspectives* (New York: Quorum Books, 1991), p. 119. As the 1980s progressed, economic analysts and scholars—liberals and conservatives alike—increasingly began openly to challenge the long-accepted orthodoxy of Soviet autarky. As Jerry Hough points out, ‘From a policy point of view, the important thing was not that such statements passed censorship, but that they won such wide support among specialists. They were seldom challenged directly... The scholars who made these strong statements... were fairly high members of a policy-oriented world, and were looking to their future careers. It is hard to believe that the community would have swung so far to one side in criticizing current Soviet policy if it had not had a sense that its views were shared by the successor generation of high officialdom.’ Hough, *Opening Up the Soviet Economy*, p. 59.
- 50 See Hough, *Russia and the West*. For the distinction between passive and active technology transfers in the Soviet context, see Philip Hanson, *Trade and Technology in Soviet-Western Relations* (London: Macmillan Press, 1981), pp. 6–29.
- 51 ‘An Interview with Gorbachev’, *Time*, 9 September 1985, p. 25.
- 52 Gorbachev, *Izbraannye rechi i stat'i* [Selected Speeches and Articles] (Moscow: izdatl'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1990), vol. VII, p. 288; Gaddy, *The Price of the Past*, pp. 47–61.
- 53 Speech by Nikolai Ryzhkov to CMEA in December 1986, as cited in Deborah Anne Palmieri (ed.), *The USSR and the World Economy: Challenges for the Global Integration of Soviet Markets under Perestroika* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1992), p. 170.
- 54 Gaddy, *The Price of the Past*, p. 56.
- 55 Geron, *Soviet Foreign Economic Policy under Perestroika*, p. 43.
- 56 In 1988, when Soviet exports totaled \$108 billion by official reckoning, the GDR, with about one-fifteenth of the population, exported just under \$48 billion; Charles Maier, *Dissolution: The Crisis of Communism and the End of East Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 66–7.
- 57 Maier, *Dissolution*, pp. 76–7, and especially informative on the international sources of these East German reforms, see Ronald Rogowski, ‘Adaptation to the World Economy in the Former German Democratic Republic’, unpublished manuscript.
- 58 Hough, *Russia and the West*, p. 199.
- 59 See, for example, Hewett and Gaddy, *Open For Business*, Ch. 2; and Robert Cutler, ‘International Relations Theory and Soviet Conduct Toward the Multilateral Global-Economic Organizations: GATT, IMF, and the World Bank’, in Palmieri (ed.), *The USSR and the World Economy*, p. 171.
- 60 See Hough, *Opening up the Soviet Economy*, pp. 56–7.
- 61 Geron, *Soviet Foreign Economic Policy Under Perestroika*, p. 47; and Palmieri (ed.), *The USSR and the World Economy*, p. 172.
- 62 Hewett and Gaddy, *Open for Business*, p. 77.
- 63 *Ibid.*, pp. 58–68.
- 64 For more on this critical reversal see Chernyaev, *My Six Years*, pp. 193–5; Akhromeev and Kornienko, *Glazami*, p. 55; Ryzhkov *Perestroika*, pp. 232–3; Eduard Amvrosievich Shevardnadze, *Moi vybor: v zashchitu demokratii i svobody* [My Choice: In Defence of Democracy and Liberty] (Moscow: Novosti, 1991), pp. 110–11; and Vorotnikov, *A bylo eto tak*, p. 223.

- 65 Transcript of interview by Oleg Skvortsov, director of the Oral History Project at the Institute of General History, with S.P.Tarasenko, 19 March 1999 (on file at the National Security Archive, Washington DC, and the Institute of General History, Moscow, 1999). Hereafter cited as 'Skvortsov interviews'.
- 66 William E.Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 225.
- 67 Based on Skvortsov interviews with Kryuchkov, Boldin and Yazov. See also Vladimir Kryuchkov, *Lichnoe delo* (Personal file) (Moscow: Olymp, 1996), pp. 273, 282); Akhromeev and Kornienko, *Glazami*; and Aleksandr' G.Savel'yev and Nikolai N.Detinov, *The Big Five: Arms Control Decision-Making in the Soviet Union* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995). Odom also documents Soviet military concern over the technological gap: 'It was becoming clear to Soviet military leaders that they were facing a third wave of new military technologies. The developments in microelectronics, the semiconductor revolution and its impact on computers, distributed processing, and digital communications were affecting many aspects of military equipment and weaponry...[The] new revolution in military affairs was demanding forces and weapons that the Soviet scientific-technological and industrial bases could not provide.' Odom, 'The Soviet Military in Transition', pp. 52–3, 63–4. For more, see also Thomas M.Nichols, *The Sacred Cause: Civil-Military Conflict over Soviet National Security* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 115, 116.
- 68 Akhromeev and Kornienko, *Glazami*, pp. 314–15.
- 69 Skvortsov interview with Yazov, 11 March 1999.
- 70 See L.G.Ivashov, *Marshal Iazov (Rokovoi Avgust 91-go): Pravda o 'putche'* [Marshal Yazov (That Fateful August 1991): The Truth about the 'Putsch'] (Moscow: Biblioteka Zhurnala 'Muzhestvo', 1992), Ch. 2, esp. p. 27.
- 71 For a discussion of the evidence on this point, see Brooks and Wohlforth, 'From Old Thinking to New Thinking in Qualitative Research'.
- 72 For a brilliant demonstration of this effect, see Jacques Lévesque, *The Enigma of 1989: The USSR and the Liberation of Eastern Europe* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).
- 73 Randall Stone, *Satellites and Commissars: Strategy and Conflict in the Politics of Soviet-Bloc Trade* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 134. More evidence for Stone's central conclusion is presented in Hannes Adomeit, *Imperial Overstretch: Germany in Soviet Policy from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Baden Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1998). For an analysis based on earlier data that reaches this same general conclusion, see Valerie Bunce, 'The Empire Strikes Back: The Evolution of the Eastern Bloc from Soviet Asset to Liability', *International Organization*, vol. 39, no. 1 (Winter 1985), pp. 1–46.
- 74 J.F.Brown, *Eastern Europe and Communist Rule* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1988), pp. 129, 138. As Brown reports, 'in the winter of 1980–81, Soviet money almost literally poured into Poland. Some Western observers even put the total of Soviet assistance as high as nearly \$5 billion' (p. 54).
- 75 Smith notes, for example, that Soviet analysts 'complained that Soviet imports from Eastern Europe largely consisted of poor quality machinery and equipment that were obsolete on world markets but which were priced at prices equivalent to or even higher than the world market price for higher quality goods'. Alan Smith, 'Economic Relations', in Alex Pravda (ed.), *The End of Outer Empire: Soviet-East European Relations in Transition, 1985–1990* (London: Sage, 1992), p. 82. See also Mark Kramer, 'The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe: Spheres of Influence', in Ngaire Woods (ed.), *Explaining International Relations since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 112, who reports that most of these East European exports to the Soviet Union were of such poor quality that they 'would have been unmarketable, or saleable only at highly disadvantageous prices, outside the Soviet bloc'.
- 76 Stone, *Satellites and Commissars*, p. 37.

- 77 See Thane Gustafson, *Crisis amid Plenty: The Politics of Soviet Energy under Brezhnev and Gorbachev* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).
- 78 Carol Clark, 'Relative Backwardness in Eastern Europe: An Application of the Technological Gap Hypothesis', *Economic Systems*, vol. 17, no. 3 (September 1993), pp. 167–93, is a good source on declining technological competitiveness. Growth figures are calculated from data in *ibid.*, p. 170.
- 79 Brown, *Eastern Europe and Communist Rule*, p. 155.
- 80 *Ibid.*, p. 154.
- 81 As Brown points out, 'The directness of the above-quoted passage, which was, after all, part of an *agreed* document, gives some idea of what the debates over the issue must have been like and of what the Soviets' *original* suggestions might have been.' *Ibid.*, p. 155 (emphasis in original).
- 82 Smith, 'Economic Relations', p. 77.
- 83 Mark Chafetz, *Gorbachev, Reform, and the Brezhnev Doctrine: Soviet Policy Toward Eastern Europe, 1985–1990* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993), p. 63.
- 84 Vladislav Zubok, 'New Evidence on the "Soviet Factor" in the Peaceful Revolutions of 1989', *Cold War International History Bulletin*, Issue 12/13 (Winter 2001), p. 7. On security matters, Zubok stresses, 'Gorbachev and Shevardnadze had no coherent policy at all for the Warsaw Pact', p. 8. For another exhaustive review of documentary evidence on this point, see Adomeit, *Imperial Overstretch*, Ch. 4.
- 85 Lévesque, 'Soviet Approaches to Eastern Europe at the Beginning of 1989', *Cold War International History Bulletin*, Issue 12/13 (Winter 2001), p. 49.
- 86 Quoted in Leonov, *Likholet'e*, p. 281.
- 87 See Vojtech Mastny, 'The Soviet Non-Invasion of Poland in 1980–81 and the End of the Cold War', Working Paper No. 23 (Washington, DC: Cold War International History Project, 1998).
- 88 Shakhnazarov, *Tsena svobody*, p. 115.
- 89 See Andrew O.Bennett, 'Ideas and the Non-Use of Force in the End of the Cold War', paper prepared for the Conference on 'Ideas and the End of the Cold War', Dickey Center, Dartmouth College, June 2001, pp. 17–18, and sources cited therein.
- 90 Cited in Zubok, 'New Evidence on the "Soviet Factor"', pp. 10–11.
- 91 Andrew O.Bennett, 'Trust Bursting out all Over: The Soviet Side of German Unification', in Wohlforth (ed.), *Cold War Endgame: Oral History, Analysis, Debates* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2003).
- 92 *Ibid.*
- 93 Gorbachev's preventive actions are discussed in Kramer, 'Ideology and the Cold War;' and Lévesque, *Enigma of 1989*.
- 94 See, for example, 'Ob obstanovke v Pol'she, vozmozhnykh variantakh ee razvitiia, perspektivakh sovetsko-pol'skikh otnoshenii' [On the situation in Poland, possible directions in its development, prospects for Soviet-Polish relations], and attached note of 29/09/89. Protokol No. P166/23 of CC-CPSU Politburo session of 28/09/89.
- 95 T.Risse, 'Let's Argue! Communicative Action in World Politics', *International Organization*: vol. 54, no. 1 (2000), pp. 1–40.
- 96 Data are from sources in Table 4.1.
- 97 For an insider's contemporary assessment of the GDR's economy at this time, see Hans Hermann Hertle, 'Staatsbankrott: Der ökonomische Untergang des SED-Staates', *Deutschland Archiv*, vol. 25, no. 10 (October 1992), pp. 1019–30. For scholarly treatments that document the economic crisis and the lack of viable options, see, in particular, Maier, *Dissolution*; and Jeffrey Kopstein, *The Politics of Economic Decline in East Germany, 1945–1989* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).
- 98 Aleksandr Galkin and Anatoly S.Chernyaev, 'Pravdu, i tol'ko pravdu' [The truth, and nothing but the truth], *Svobodnaia Mysl'*, Nos 2–3 (1994), p. 28. For reconstructing Soviet

- thinking in this period, the authors are grateful to Anatoly Cherniaev, Sergei Tarasenko, Andrei Grachev and Oleg Grinevskiy for discussions on this subject conducted at the Conference on 'German Reunification and the End of the Cold War', Wildbad Kreuth Germany, 21–24 October 1999. Excellent published sources include Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Angela E. Stent, *Russia and Germany Reborn: Unification, the Soviet Collapse, and the New Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); and Adomeit, *Imperial Overstretch*.
- 99 Oleg Grinevsky, 'Kak nachilos' ob'edninenie Germanii' [How German unification began], unpublished MS, courtesy of Ambassador Grinevsky. Other alternative diplomatic strategies very roughly along these lines—but vetted later in the endgame—are detailed in Julij A Kwizinskij, *Vor dem Sturm: Erinnerungen eines Diplomaten* (Berlin: Siedler, 1993); and Valentin Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen* (Munich: Droemer Knaur, 1993).
- 100 Zelikow and Rice, *Germany*, Ch. 5.
- 101 These measures are detailed in Doris G. Wolfgramm, *The Kohl Government and German Reunification: Crisis and Foreign Policy* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997). They were part of Bonn's larger policy of using economic incentives in the diplomacy of reunification, which is brilliantly documented in Randall E. Newnham, *Deutsche Mark Diplomacy* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001).
- 102 The 27 January 1990 Politburo meeting at which Gorbachev formally decided to bank on the FRG is recounted in Chernyaev, *My Six years with Gorbachev*, Ch. 7.
- 103 In March 1990, West Germany provided 13.7 per cent of the total number of joint ventures in the Soviet Union and 12.5 per cent of the initial capital investment in the country. See Alan B. Sherr, 'Foreign Direct Investment in the Soviet Union: Status and Trends', Briefing Paper No.5, Center for Foreign Policy Development, Brown University (May 1991), p. 33.
- 104 Ibid., p. 16. Gorbachev described Bonn's willingness to agree to assume financial responsibility for the GDR and offer Moscow new credits 'oxygen' for *perestroika*. Quoted in Stent, *Russia and Germany Reborn*, p. 126.
- 105 Newnham, *Deutsche Mark Diplomacy*, is the best source here.
- 106 Thus, at a conference in Moscow organized by Russia's Institute of General History and the Mershon Center at Ohio State University, Yazov responded to the question of what he would have done differently regarding German unification by stating, 'I would have demanded more money from the Germans!'
- 107 The most recent articulation of this popular argument is Andrew Kydd, 'Trust, Reassurance, and Cooperation', *International Organization*, vol. 54, no. 2 (2000), pp. 325–57, esp. p. 350.
- 108 In his introductory remarks at the Princeton conference on the Cold War endgame, Anatoly Cherniaev noted his surprise that it was the ideologically steeped Soviets rather than the pragmatic Westerners who were first to trust their old adversaries. See Wohlforth (ed.), *Cold War Endgame*, Ch. 1.
- 109 See Shoon Murray, *Anchors Against Change: American Opinion Leaders' Beliefs After the Cold War* (Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan University Press, 1996).
- 110 This is the basic theme of Raymond L. Garthoff's magisterial *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1994).
- 111 See Robert M. Gates, *In from the Shadows* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996); Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*; Robert L. Hutchings, *American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center, 1997); Jack F. Matlock, Jr, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: Random House, 1995).
- 112 NSD 23 (9/22/89) 'United States Relations with the Soviet Union', from National Security Archive's Briefing Book for its oral history conference 'The End of the Cold War in Europe,



- 1989: New Thinking and New Evidence', Musgrove, St Simon's Island, Georgia, 1–3 May 1998.
- 113 Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, report that Washington was ready to insist on German unification in NATO even at the risk of a crisis in the relationship. In the spring of 1988, the CIA predicted that Moscow would embark on unilateral arms reductions out of economic necessity: Doc. no. 59 in National Security Archive, 'Understanding the End of the Cold War'. In September 1989, the Agency asserted that Soviet domestic instability would 'prevent a return to the arsenal state economy that generated the fundamental military threat to the West ...since World War II', whether or not Gorbachev retained power. 'Gorbachev's Domestic Gambles and Instability in the USSR', declassified, in National Security Archive.
- 114 The memorandum of conversation is excerpted in Mikhail S. Gorbachev, *Gody Trudnykh Reshenii* [Years of Difficult Decisions] (Moscow: Tortuga, 1993), pp. 172–97.
- 115 George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Norton, 1998)
- 116 Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*; Robert L. Hutchings, *American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War: An Insider's Account of US Policy in Europe, 1989–1992* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center, 1997); Horst Teltschik, *329 Tage: Innenansichten der Einigung* (Berlin: Siedler, 1991).
- 117 Numerous scholars have endorsed this staged approach in recent years. See, for example, Jeffrey Checkel, 'The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory', *World Politics*, vol. 50, no. 2 (January 1998), p. 346; Katzenstein, Keohane and Krasner, 'International Organization at Its Golden Anniversary', p. 682; John G. Ruggie, 'What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-Utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge', *International Organization*, vol. 52, no. 4 (Autumn 1998), pp. 866–7; and Alan Lamborn, 'Theory and the Politics in World Politics', *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 41, no. 1 (June 1997), p. 205.
- 118 See, for example, Wendt, *Social Theory*, p. 129; Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It', p. 420; Robert G. Herman, 'Identity, Norms, and National Security: The Soviet Foreign Policy Revolution and the End of the Cold War', in Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996', p. 277; and Bukovansky, 'American Identity and Neutral Rights from Independence to the War of 1812', p. 217.

## Explaining the End of the Cold War: Turning Points in Soviet Security Policy

*Matthew Evangelista*

The decade of the 1980s witnessed some of the most dangerous and antagonistic events of the East-West conflict known as the Cold War, but also a series of dramatic changes that ultimately brought the conflict to an end. The causes of the Cold War are manifold, as it represented the competition of ideological, economic and geopolitical rivals. The most tangible manifestation of the Cold War, as the preceding chapters make clear, came in the realm of security policy. In particular, each side came to perceive the other as a grave threat to its national security. This was especially so of the Western side, where the perception of a Soviet threat led to the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the peacetime mobilization of enormous economic and industrial resources to produce large standing armies, equipped with the latest conventional and nuclear armaments. They were matched or exceeded on the Soviet side, in quantitative if not always qualitative terms.<sup>1</sup> The end of the Cold War thus required dealing with this legacy of mutual security threats, even if other factors, such as the widespread disillusionment with communist rule and aspirations for independence of members of the Soviet bloc and national groups within the USSR itself, must be considered in any comprehensive account. The history of the 1980s is in part the history of the reversal of the legacy of Cold War as manifested in the US-Soviet arms race.

A main cause of the Cold War was a Western perception of a Soviet military threat at the end of World War II. Concerns were initially focused on areas contingent to the Soviet Union, particularly in Europe, where the Red Army had defeated the forces of Nazi Germany and occupied the territories of neighbouring countries. Later, following the first test of a Soviet atomic bomb in 1949, the threat of a Soviet nuclear attack against the United States and its allies began to loom large in Western fears. A key factor in ending the Cold War was the Soviet effort, launched by Mikhail Gorbachev, to reduce such fears of Soviet military aggression. The effort consisted of new initiatives in the realm of arms control and unilateral reductions of Soviet military capability. These actions constituted significant turning points in the end of the Cold War because they represented major departures from past practice and precedents that would be difficult to reverse.

This chapter examines four key turning points in the realm of security policy to evaluate some of the main explanations for the end of the Cold War: (1) the Soviet unilateral moratorium on nuclear tests, initiated in 1985, and the subsequent provisions for on-site seismic monitoring by foreign scientists; (2) the Treaty on Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) of 1987, with its removal of entire categories of nuclear weapons from Europe and intrusive measures of verification; (3) the unilateral reduction and

restructuring of Soviet conventional forces, announced by Gorbachev in December 1988, and the concomitant pledge to allow 'freedom of choice' for the member countries of the Soviet bloc; and (4) the substantial reduction in US and Soviet strategic nuclear forces represented by the START (Strategic Arms Reduction Talks) Treaty, and carried out despite the challenge posed by the US Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). In examining these four turning points, I find that the material factors—particularly military and economic—associated with realist theories of international relations, and highlighted in William Wohlforth's chapter in this volume, provide a general context for understanding what happened. To understand the sources and nature of Soviet policy initiatives, however, we must look to the ideas promoted by Soviet reformers and their transnational allies and the general worldviews and values of Soviet leaders, factors emphasized in the contributions to this collection particularly by Jacques Lévesque and Raymond Garthoff.

### *The Unilateral Test Moratorium and On-Site Monitoring*

In July 1985, the Soviet Union announced a unilateral halt of its testing of nuclear weapons to begin on 6 August. The initiative represented nothing particularly new in Soviet policy, and the propagandistic element of starting the moratorium on the fortieth anniversary of the US atomic bombing of Hiroshima was well within the standard Soviet diplomatic repertoire. Yet this initiative marked the beginning of a turning point. The Soviet unilateral test moratorium continued for 19 months without US reciprocation, making the point (especially to Soviet domestic critics) that it was not necessary for the USSR to keep pace with the United States in every dimension of their security competition. Even when Gorbachev, under pressure from representatives of the armed forces and nuclear-weapons industry, ended the moratorium, he did not allow resumption of Soviet nuclear testing at anything like the previous rate. Gorbachev clearly hoped that the test moratorium would contribute to ending the nuclear arms race. When US resistance thwarted that goal, he still sought to use the initiative to set a precedent. The Soviet Union would not match every US step in the arms race.

More important than setting a precedent for the new policy idea of 'reasonable security', the test ban provided an opportunity for the first on-site monitoring of a Soviet arms-control initiative. The proposal to install seismic monitoring equipment on Soviet soil to verify the moratorium arose from informal discussions among US and Soviet scientists during 1985. The US side of the project was run by a non-governmental organization called the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). Soviet participation was brokered by Evgenii Velikhov, a vice-president of the USSR Academy of Sciences and an informal adviser to Gorbachev. In approving measures for on-site verification, Gorbachev bypassed the Foreign Ministry. Thus many observers, including former Soviet officials who participated in oral-history conferences on the end of the Cold War, tend not to recognize this precedent-setting quality of the test moratorium.<sup>2</sup>

The NRDC project did not fully resolve the internal Soviet debate on the merits of on-site verification. Gorbachev faced opposition from Marshal Sergei Akhromeev, chief of the general staff, to the provisions of the Stockholm agreement of September 1986, allowing for challenge inspections and overflight of Soviet territory to verify compliance with the confidence-building measures of that accord. The intrusive verification

provisions of the INF Treaty engendered even more concern within the Soviet security community. But Gorbachev had made the point that secrecy was more harmful to Soviet security than transparency and he had backed it up by allowing foreigners access to sensitive Soviet sites to set up seismic monitoring equipment. The precedent was important for the success of his subsequent arms-control initiatives.

### *Explaining the moratorium*

Realist accounts of the test moratorium could take a number of forms. The most plausible version would point to the impetus for the initiative provided by the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), a programme to develop a US anti-ballistic missile system, announced by President Ronald Reagan in March 1983. Clearly, the Soviet side sought to forestall development of US strategic defences by securing a bilateral moratorium on nuclear tests. The SDI programme at that point envisioned nuclear-pumped lasers shooting Soviet missiles out of the sky. Despite the anti-nuclear tenor of Reagan's remarks about the programme, its success would depend on extensive testing and use of nuclear explosions—as the current US administration of George W. Bush has recently discovered about its own plans for ballistic-missile defence.<sup>3</sup> A realist account of Soviet security interest of the mid-1980s might explain that a bilateral halt in nuclear testing would provide a setback to the SDI programme which would be worth whatever degradation of Soviet nuclear technology it would entail.

A less plausible explanation, compatible with some variants of realism, would view the Soviet initiative as a response to US 'negotiation from strength'—one of Ronald Reagan's favourite slogans, and a longstanding US approach to arms control dating back at least to the Eisenhower administration. In fact, it is difficult to argue that the United States was pursuing a policy of negotiation from strength that in turn induced Soviet restraint in the form of a test moratorium. On the contrary, the United States had withdrawn from negotiations with the USSR on a comprehensive test ban in 1982, and rejected the idea of a complete halt to testing as anything but a very long-term goal. The United States was not negotiating from strength because it was not negotiating at all. The Soviet initiative put the US government in an awkward position because it thrust the comprehensive test ban back on to the arms-control agenda.

The decision to launch the unilateral moratorium did not apparently involve much domestic political debate—not least because diplomats and military leaders viewed it, at least at first, mainly as a propaganda gesture. The fact that the Soviet side extended the moratorium several times beyond the original period, even in the face of US refusal to go along, did elicit complaints within the military and nuclear-weapons communities, and even among some foreign-policy traditionalists, such as First Deputy Foreign Minister Georgii Kornienko.<sup>4</sup> But domestic politics did not play a prominent role in this initiative. Allowing foreigners to set up seismic monitoring equipment near the Soviet nuclear test ranges was a more controversial decision, but one taken within such a small group that it does not make much sense to speak of domestic politics as an important influence on the decision.

What if Gorbachev had not pursued the unilateral moratorium? The initiative served as an important focal point for Western peace movements and for Soviet reformers alike. In its absence, perhaps some other initiative would have played the same role and not much

else would have changed. On the other hand, the test moratorium exhibited features that made it an especially valuable opening wedge of Gorbachev's disarmament offensive—particularly in dealing with potential domestic opposition to his broader security reforms. A halt in testing would not in the near term affect the Soviet Union's core security, so criticism from the armed forces could be deflected for some time. The technical aspects of nuclear testing and monitoring a test ban invited participation by reform-minded scientists and their Western counterparts—an important Gorbachev constituency. Without their success in influencing Soviet policy on the test ban the scientists might not have been emboldened to pursue more ambitious security-policy reforms, including ones that more obviously challenged the prerogatives of the military authorities.

Finally, the acceptance of on-site inspections of arms-control treaties might have been harder to achieve, without the precedent of the NRDC project. If Gorbachev could make the case that on-site monitoring by foreign specialists served Soviet interests, even in the case of a unilateral initiative, it would be that much easier to advocate such measures for a bilateral treaty that imposed restraints on both sides. The negotiation of measures of verification for the subsequent nuclear-arms treaties would have been rendered much more difficult in the absence of foreign monitoring of the test moratorium.

### *The Treaty on Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces*

The Treaty on Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces, signed in Washington in December 1987, was a key turning point in arms control for two reasons. First, it entailed a highly disproportionate reduction in Soviet missiles—something that Soviet leaders before Gorbachev would never countenance, given their fixation on the need to maintain 'parity' with the United States and 'equal security' with all the other Soviet adversaries (NATO allies and China, in particular). Second, the Soviet side essentially accepted the US 'zero-option' position, requiring outright destruction of all of the missiles of a certain class, including current-generation models, such as the SS-20. The treaty provided for extensive, intrusive verification provisions, including observation of the actual destruction of the weapons. Thus the INF Treaty easily meets the 'difficult-to-undo' criterion for a turning point.

### *Explaining the INF Treaty*

At first blush, the INF Treaty constitutes a strong case for material factors and a negotiation-from-strength argument. Although the Soviet leaders had for years favoured negotiations on intermediate forces as a follow-on and complement to the strategic-arms treaties, they had been reluctant to make any significant gestures of restraint to signal their interest. Only following the NATO deployment of new US Pershing II and cruise missiles in the autumn of 1983 would the Soviet side negotiate seriously. So goes the standard story. It usually includes some reference to the confidence that Soviet leaders held in Moscow-directed European peace movements to block the deployment of the US missiles. When peace activists failed to stop the deployment, Moscow saw no choice but to capitulate to US terms.

As Leopoldo Nuti's chapter in this volume describes, the conventional explanation of the NATO deployment as a reaction to the Soviet SS-20 is an oversimplification that fails to take account of longstanding European-American discussions about nuclear weapons on the continent, not to mention the domestic politics of particular countries, such as Italy. How well does the conventional account of the Soviet side hold up? Evidence from the archives, memoirs and oral history is not as extensive as one would like on the question of Soviet views and motivations regarding the INF debate. There is enough, however, to cast doubt on the standard story. Of particular interest is a declassified transcript of a Politburo meeting held on 31 May 1983.<sup>5</sup> The meeting was intended to determine the appropriate reaction to the planned deployment of new US cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe later that year. The scheduled deployment of the missiles was months away, and European peace activists were regularly organizing mass demonstrations against them. Nevertheless, every member of the Politburo who participated in the discussion voiced a firm conviction that the missiles would be deployed, despite the protests. This fact undermines arguments, common at the time and since, that the Soviet side was counting on the peace movement to prevent the deployment and only got serious about arms control once the weapons were in place.

It is true that in the early 1980s the Politburo had trouble advancing arms-control proposals that could lead to an agreement. But the problem lay mainly in a failure of imagination and excessive caution, not in any sense of optimism that the Reagan buildup could be halted without Soviet concessions. Even assuming the missile deployment as a *fait accompli*, for example, the Soviet leaders could hardly think of anything worth changing in their approach to arms control. General Secretary Yuri Andropov, chairing the session, asked early on whether there was a point in even continuing any arms negotiations with the United States after the deployment. (In the event, the Soviets broke off all negotiations for over a year.) Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko thought that it would not be useful to continue them in the current form. 'It's necessary to introduce something fresher', he ventured. But the best he could come up with was a proposal to unite the talks on intermediate-range nuclear forces (including Pershing II, cruise, and Soviet SS-20 missiles) with the talks on strategic nuclear weapons ('and tactical nuclear weapons', added Andropov). Gromyko offered no changes in the Soviet negotiating position, let alone unilateral reductions of the sort that Gorbachev would later carry out.<sup>6</sup>

Defence Minister Dmitrii Ustinov flatly declared that 'everything that we are doing in relation to defence we should continue doing. All of the missiles that we've planned should be delivered, all of the airplanes put in those places where we've designated.' So much for a conciliatory response to 'peace through strength'. Ustinov did, however, make a suggestion for arms control. The exchange that followed between Ustinov and Gromyko indicates just how out of touch some of the leaders responsible for Soviet security policy were. Ustinov started by suggesting that the Soviet Union propose that both sides reduce their missiles by 50 per cent.

Gromyko: 'Reduce what?'

Ustinov: 'We could reduce all the missiles.'

Gromyko: 'We have proposed that.'

Ustinov: 'Yes, proposed, but we have to make the proposal again.'

That was the extent of the discussion on arms control.<sup>7</sup>

Not a great deal had changed in the realm of material factors (economic conditions or the military balance) between 1983, when the US missiles were deployed, and 1986, when Moscow made a series of concessions culminating in acceptance of the zero option: cancellation of the new US missile deployment in return for destruction of all existing Soviet intermediate forces. The main difference was a change in the top Soviet leadership—with Gorbachev as general secretary and his close ally Eduard Shevardnadze replacing Andrei Gromyko as foreign minister. A realist perspective might argue that Gorbachev and Shevardnadze had better information about the state of the Soviet economy or the degree of US resolve than their predecessors possessed, and that this clearer recognition of material forces informed their policy decisions. Certainly, Gorbachev and his allies were less sanguine than the Brezhnev-era leaders about the impact of military spending and a confrontational foreign policy on Soviet economic well-being. But that was more a question of values than of information. Compared with the previous cohort, the Gorbachev leadership simply held a different view of the world and the USSR's role in it, and a different set of priorities for Soviet domestic development.<sup>8</sup>

Even within the post-Brezhnev foreign-policy community, not everyone accepted the 'new thinking', as Shevardnadze and Gorbachev articulated it. Serious differences arose in the negotiation of the INF Treaty, in particular. Some of Shevardnadze's colleagues in the Foreign Ministry and the Central Committee's International Department charged him with lack of professionalism. Valentin Falin, a senior specialist on Germany and former Soviet ambassador to the Federal Republic, accused Shevardnadze of representing the 'Capitulationist Line' in arms-control negotiations and of exceeding his mandate.<sup>9</sup> The 'veterans' of Soviet foreign policy reserve their harshest criticism for Shevardnadze's agreement to give up the SS-23 'Oka' missile, even though, according to Soviet specifications, it did not even fall within the range provisions of the treaty.<sup>10</sup> Marshal Sergei Akhromeev felt so betrayed by Gorbachev and Shevardnadze on the SS-23 issue that he nearly resigned his post as chief of the general staff.<sup>11</sup>

In the context of the new thinkers' vision of a united, nuclear-free 'common European home', the question of which side achieved a temporary advantage in the petty wrangling over medium-range missiles seems trivial. The Cold War did not, however, end with the mutual dissolution of military blocs, as Shevardnadze and Gorbachev had expected, but with the Eastern expansion of a still nuclear-capable NATO alliance—contrary to what Soviet officials took to be firm Western commitments not to enlarge the alliance and to forswear the further deployment of nuclear weapons.<sup>12</sup> In retrospect, a number of former Soviet officials believe that the INF controversy could have been resolved much earlier with far fewer Soviet concessions, if the Soviet leadership under Leonid Brezhnev had shown a little more imagination and flexibility. Falin, for example, presents considerable evidence concerning the efforts that then West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt made to persuade Brezhnev to show some restraint in the late 1970s.<sup>13</sup> Falin, Kornienko and others believe that some minor concessions on Brezhnev's part might have undermined NATO support for the 'counterdeployment' of Pershing and cruise missiles.<sup>14</sup> Such counterfactual reasoning produces a plausible alternative history,<sup>15</sup> but one that would not have constituted a turning point of any significance.

We see, then, by comparing the actual history with the counterfactual one that the nature of the top Soviet leadership, along with its ideas and worldview, were crucial for transforming the INF controversy into a turning point that contributed significantly to ending the Cold War. An INF Treaty codifying the status quo or *status quo ante* of the late 1970s would not have represented an important turning point.

### *Unilateral Conventional-Force Reductions*

Perhaps the key turning point in the realm of arms control—and, indeed, a major turning point for the end of the Cold War as a whole—came with Gorbachev's speech to the United Nations in December 1988. In it he announced a dramatic unilateral reduction in Soviet conventional forces and equipment and a commitment to allow political 'freedom of choice' for the Soviet Union's allies in Eastern Europe. This initiative marked the end of the Cold War in Europe to the extent that it rendered Soviet forces incapable of either a standing-start invasion of the West or a major intervention to maintain control of the fraternal allies. Even diehard sceptics of past Soviet 'peace offensives' recognized that Gorbachev's plan represented a significant reduction in Soviet military capability, even if they did not fully grasp the implications for the Soviet alliance system.

### *Explaining the December 1988 initiative*

There is much to puzzle over when considering competing explanations. Conventional forces were a heavy drain on the Soviet military budget and reducing them would serve obvious material ends. On the other hand, the demobilized troops and officers would put a strain on a reforming economy that was supposed to be shedding excess labour in favour of market efficiency. The role of a US policy of negotiation from strength seems doubtful in this case. In conventional forces the West always credited the Soviet side with superiority in most major indices of military strength—particularly personnel, tanks and other armoured vehicles, and artillery.

The West did arguably pose a challenge in one respect: the threat of a longer-term competition in advanced military technology. But here the Soviet security-policy elite was divided over the degree and nature of the threat, with some leading figures expressing considerable complacency about relative Soviet military-technical prowess. In any case, no prominent military leader sought to meet the challenge by counselling major unilateral reductions of the sort that Gorbachev announced in December 1988.<sup>16</sup> By the same token, Gorbachev and the other supporters of the unilateral reductions were not driven by the desire for a temporary 'breathing space', in order to prepare to triumph in some future high-tech arms race. For them, reducing military tensions in Europe served another goal—the promotion of a new system of common security under which East-West political and economic relations would flourish.

Two key aspects of the December 1988 announcement reveal origins associated mainly with the realm of ideas. The first is Gorbachev's emphasis on the restructuring of conventional forces to emphasize their defensive orientation and reduce their offensive potential. The second is the political commitment to 'freedom of choice' for the Warsaw Pact allies in east-central Europe. The two issues are clearly linked in the respect that



Moscow had always imposed limits to the freedom of choice of its allies primarily through the threat or use of offensive military force.

The role of ideas in generating the December 1988 announcement suggests that Gorbachev's initiative was not simply the capitulation of a declining power to the demands of its stronger adversary. The ideas behind 'nonoffensive defence' were not endorsed by the US or NATO. They were never part of the West's negotiating position on conventional forces, and indeed NATO itself had during the 1980s increasingly adopted a more offensive posture known under the rubrics AirLand (*sic*) Battle and Follow-On Forces Attack.<sup>17</sup> Non-offensive defence was promoted mainly by the peace movement and peace-research networks in western Europe and their influence on the formulation of Soviet policy on conventional forces is apparent from a wide range of evidence.<sup>18</sup>

Nor was the idea of 'freedom of choice' for Eastern Europe, although congenial to Western values, a main goal of NATO. The major European powers and the United States all seemed willing to grant the Soviet Union its sphere of influence while accepting the military reductions. So where did Gorbachev's ideological embrace of freedom of choice come from? The main sources appear to be: (1) his affinity for west European-style social democracy and Eurocommunism and their commitment to a democratic, parliamentary route to socialism; (2) his liberal advisers' long-standing contacts with reformists in Eastern Europe; and (3) his consequent (misplaced) confidence in reform communism as a model for Eastern Europe.<sup>19</sup>

In retrospect, the ideas and ideological underpinnings of Gorbachev's December 1988 speech seem somewhat naive. His expectations—of a new European security regime made up of friendly reform-communist allies and NATO members who would transform their military alliance into a political club—were quickly dashed. East European citizens overthrew their communist governments, reformist or otherwise, and NATO expanded eastward and fought a war on Russia's doorstep (Yugoslavia) and despite Moscow's protestations. Russia itself seemed hardly welcome as a member of the European community of states. If the outcome at this point seems compatible with theories of long-term geopolitical shifts in the balance of power, that should not obscure the key role that ideas and politics played in bringing about the peaceful Soviet withdrawal from Europe.

### *START and the SDI Connection*

The Reagan administration's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) was a proposal for a space-based system of anti-missile defences, dubbed 'Star Wars' by its critics. Reagan's supporters view SDI as the linchpin in a strategy to end the Cold War and many of them—most notably former national security adviser Robert McFarlane—explicitly credit the programme with bringing down the Soviet Union.<sup>20</sup> An alternative interpretation would portray Star Wars as a major stumbling block on the road to improving US-Soviet relations, an ill-considered programme that threatened to undermine Mikhail Gorbachev's efforts to demilitarize Soviet society and international relations. This was certainly Gorbachev's own view, echoed by a range of Soviet participants in the SDI debates: from younger academic researchers (*institutchiki*) such as Aleksei Arbatov and Andrei Kokoshin to older foreign-policy professionals such as

Georgii Kornienko and Aleksandr Yakovlev, to the dissident physicist and human rights activist Andrei Sakharov.<sup>21</sup>

Undoubtedly, Gorbachev and his allies viewed SDI as, at best, a hindrance to their reformist efforts overall. In the realm of arms control, SDI directly threatened the goal of nuclear disarmament. By the traditional logic of nuclear deterrence, the Soviet Union needed to maintain a force of nuclear weapons adequate to absorb a US nuclear attack and still be able to threaten retaliation. The deployment by the United States of a defensive 'shield', however rudimentary, would increase the requirements for Soviet offensive nuclear forces.

Reducing Soviet nuclear forces in the face of the SDI challenge was virtually unthinkable. Yet Gorbachev managed to negotiate a strategic arms reduction treaty (START I) with the United States while essentially finessing the Star Wars issue. His accomplishment marks a key turning point in the Cold War endgame because it removed SDI as a stumbling block to internal and external demilitarization and achieved the first significant reductions in the arsenals of strategic nuclear weapons of Russia and the United States.

### *Explaining the role of Star Wars*

How, then, did Gorbachev do it? Proponents of the negotiation-from-strength position would hold that he was simply responding to a tough bargaining position on the part of the United States. Given the poor state of the Soviet economy, Gorbachev could afford neither to match SDI nor to maintain the expensive nuclear arsenal necessary to defeat it. His only alternative was to agree to nuclear reductions and hope that the United States would never use its Star Wars shield in combination with its offensive nuclear sword.

Undoubtedly Gorbachev did not relish the prospect of spending billions of rubles competing with the United States to build strategic defences, especially given his commitment to improving the consumer economy. Playing up the Star Wars threat to Soviet economic reform had its drawbacks, however, because some leading officials refused to accept the argument. Gorbachev's defence minister Dmitrii Iazov, for example, railed against the US attempt 'to attain military superiority over the USSR' and use 'SDI to exhaust it economically'. But, argued Iazov, such efforts were doomed to failure: 'Only a blind person does not see that our possibilities to support a strong defense and simultaneously resolve social and other tasks have repeatedly grown.'<sup>22</sup> Gorbachev feared that the Defence Ministry's willingness to spend money in a race for strategic defences would undermine his programme of domestic reforms.

Not that all Soviet military officials were big fans of strategic defence. Many of them had long since embraced the logic that underpinned the 1972 treaty limiting anti-ballistic missile (ABM) systems: it was cheaper 'at the margin' to build offensive weapons to overwhelm a defence than it was to build a reliable ABM system. In fact, the most cost-effective counter-measure to the proposed US strategic defence system was the existing force of Soviet intercontinental ballistic missiles with multiple warheads. The argument that the Soviet Union needed to reduce its nuclear forces for economic reasons is false. The cheapest, most effective way for the USSR to beat Star Wars was to do nothing—neither build its own defences, nor reduce its existing offensive weapons.

Gorbachev did not choose this cost-effective route to security, however. His commitment to nuclear disarmament is not easily explained by rationalist arguments based on material factors. It has roots in his student days at Moscow University, where in June 1955 he met Jawaharlal Nehru, the prime minister of India, and the first proponent of a comprehensive nuclear test ban.<sup>23</sup> It was reinforced by his contacts with prominent Western supporters of disarmament such as Olof Palme of Sweden and West Germany's Willy Brandt and Egon Bahr; and by his association with transnational organizations of scientists and physicians, whose membership included Gorbachev's own science adviser and the head Kremlin physician.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the transnational diffusion of ideas and the politics of transnational coalitions played a key role in Gorbachev's approach to nuclear disarmament and SDI.

The gist of the solution to Gorbachev's Star Wars dilemma was put forward at a conference in Moscow in April 1985, just a month after Gorbachev came into office. Jeremy Stone, president of the Federation of American Scientists, and a leading transnational disarmament activist since the 1960s, made the case to an audience of 40 scientists:

You people are saying that if we go ahead with Star Wars, there can be no disarmament. I agree, but you should turn it around. You should see that if both sides go ahead with disarmament, there can be no Star Wars. Disarmament in and of itself might be the answer to Star Wars. With offensive reductions underway, there would be no political support for Star Wars [in the United States]. On the other hand, if there are no offensive reductions in prospect, there will be all the more support for Star Wars. You need political restraints, not further legal assurances concerning the ABM treaty.<sup>25</sup>

This was an ingenious suggestion—not surprising from the person who two decades earlier had launched the seemingly quixotic but ultimately successful campaign to persuade the Soviet Union to forsake defences against nuclear attack in favour of an ABM treaty. Stone and his US colleagues worked with Velikhov, Sakharov and other prominent Soviet scientists and officials to bring Gorbachev around to this position.

Thus, the major strategic nuclear disarmament agreement that contributed to the end of the Cold War was not a response to Star Wars, as Robert McFarlane and others would have it. It was, rather, a goal that Soviet reformers pursued despite Star Wars. Their successful achievement of the START treaty, which entailed deep reductions in both sides' arsenals, then undermined the SDI programme to such an extent that the prospect of a US 'space shield' faded into irrelevance. In 1990, the US Congress passed legislation cutting the SDI budget by a quarter from the previous year and reorienting research away from any programmes that would promote early deployment of a strategic defence system. Even the Clinton administration's efforts, a decade later, to promote a limited National Missile Defense (NMD) system, did not envision anything like the grandiose Star Wars system of the Reagan years. And even if, as seems likely, the current US pursuit of strategic defences slows or halts progress in nuclear disarmament, we are unlikely to see a return to the high levels of strategic nuclear weapons that characterized the late Cold War. Mikhail Gorbachev's ability to overcome the obstacles posed by SDI

to achieve substantial nuclear disarmament thus fits well the definition of a Cold War turning point: unprecedented, significant and difficult to undo.

What if Gorbachev had not been able to ignore SDI in his pursuit of strategic reductions? Because nuclear weapons were such a potent symbol of the Cold War and East-West conflict, it might have been more difficult for Western leaders and publics to recognize the end of the Cold War without some substantial reductions in nuclear arsenals. Given the extent to which Gorbachev and his advisers came to see an important link between the nuclear-arms race and the perception of a Soviet conventional threat to Europe, a stalemate in the nuclear talks might have hindered pursuit of reform of the army as well.

What if a major strategic arms agreement had come earlier, say at the summit meeting in Reykjavik in October 1986? It was there that Gorbachev and Reagan came close to an agreement to eliminate all of the offensive nuclear missiles on both sides. Only Gorbachev's insistence that Reagan drop his Star Wars plans—and Reagan's refusal to do so—seemed to stand in the way. What if Reagan had agreed to give up Star Wars? After all, the threat of offensive missile attack, which it was intended to meet, would be eliminated. One could imagine that an agreement on such widescale nuclear disarmament as early as the end of 1986 would have accelerated the process of rapprochement and brought the Cold War to end all the sooner.

Perhaps more likely, however, is the prospect that such a dramatic initiative would have galvanized opposition—within the United States, within the NATO alliance and within the Soviet Union. As it was, the Reykjavik summit and its near achievement of a nuclear-missile disarmament led to outspoken criticism within the Reagan administration, from close allies such as Margaret Thatcher, and among Soviet security officials. Paradoxically, a too-early achievement of success in nuclear disarmament might have derailed much of the subsequent movement towards ending the Cold War.

### *The Role of Arms Control in the End of the Cold War*

If the perceived threat of Soviet military aggression contributed to the onset and perpetuation of the Cold War, Gorbachev's initiatives in arms control and unilateral military restraint surely helped end it. The importance of the changes in Soviet security policy have been somewhat obscured, however, by the dramatic political transformations that followed in their wake: the peaceful liberation of Eastern Europe from communist rule, the demise of Soviet communism, and the disintegration of the USSR itself.

Russia and the Soviet successor states are no longer considered a military threat to the West, even though their economic and political instability raise concerns about security. When the North Atlantic Treaty Organization expanded to include former members of the Warsaw Pact, it did not do so to thwart a Russian military invasion. Even as relations between the West and Russia worsened—not least as a consequence of NATO's expansion and its war against Yugoslavia—the prospect for a revival of the Cold War and an East-West arms race remained out of the question. Gorbachev's security-policy initiatives buried the Soviet military threat, making the revival of a militarized Cold War unlikely for decades to come.

Of course, in the most literal sense, one cannot have a 'Soviet threat' without a Soviet Union. In that respect we might be tempted to view both the end of the Soviet military threat and the end of the Cold War as consequences of the end of the Soviet Union. This interpretation does not do justice to the history of the late 1980s. Most observers recognized that the Cold War was over well before the end of the decade. In the context of security policy, the 'turning point of turning points' came in December 1988, when Gorbachev announced the unilateral withdrawal of the most offensively oriented Soviet troops and weapons from Eastern Europe and renounced the 'Brezhnev Doctrine' of military intervention to prop up pro-Soviet regimes. The new Soviet approach emphasized 'freedom of choice' (what one Soviet official termed the 'Sinatra Doctrine', after the line in the famous song, 'I did it my way').

The absence of the Soviet military threat, if not fully obvious when the anti-communist demonstrations began in Eastern Europe in autumn 1989, became apparent as Soviet authorities stood by and allowed the peaceful overthrow of communist regimes. Without the ideological transformation that led to Gorbachev's renunciation of force, and his public decision to reconfigure the Soviet army to comply with the new policy, the demonstrations in Eastern Europe—if they took place at all—would likely have resulted in bloodshed. Violent repression of peaceful demonstrators would have easily revived the image of a Soviet military threat, even if Gorbachev's other initiatives in nuclear arms control had still gone forward.

Instead of the spill-over effect that peaceful overthrow of East European communism had on the constituent republics of the Soviet Union, we might have seen a dampening effect on separatist tendencies there. The breakup of the USSR might have been forestalled or carried forth with considerable violence. In that case, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, resisted militarily by Moscow-based Russian authorities, would hardly have contributed to the peaceful end of the Cold War. The East-West conflict would have continued or even been transformed into something more dangerous. It was Gorbachev's decision to transform Soviet security policy through arms control and unilateral initiatives that made the peaceful end of the Cold War possible.

### *Conclusion*

The realists' focus on material factors is difficult to gainsay when the topic is arms races and arms control. Weapons and military forces are the instruments of power politics. They are expensive and dangerous. Over the long haul, changes in states' military and economic capabilities explain a great deal about international politics.<sup>26</sup> Yet the only social scientist who can credibly claim to have predicted the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union a decade before they happened—for more or less the right reasons—was still surprised by the timing. Randall Collins' geopolitical theory (sociology's version of realism) did not expect the demise of the USSR for another 30 to 50 years.<sup>27</sup> Nor did he anticipate the generally peaceful form that it took. A more comprehensive understanding of the timing and nature of the end of the Cold War, as reflected in one of its main arenas—the US-Soviet arms race—requires serious consideration of the transnational and domestic politics behind the promotion of new ideas during the 1980s and why certain Soviet leaders were particularly open to them.<sup>28</sup>

## NOTES

- 1 For an interpretation of this process, see Matthew Evangelista, *Innovation and the Arms Race: How the United States and the Soviet Union Develop New Military Technologies* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988).
- 2 The background to the NRDC initiative is detailed in Matthew Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces: The Transnational Movement to End the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), Ch. 13.
- 3 Bradley Graham, 'US Shows New Interest in Nuclear-Armed Missile Interceptors', *International Herald Tribune*, 12 April 2002.
- 4 S.F.Akhromeev and G.M.Kornienko, *Glazami marshala i diplomata* [Through the Eyes of a Marshal and a Diplomat] (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1992), pp. 56, 95–6.
- 5 The transcript is located in F. 89, op. 42, d. 53, Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv noveishei istorii), the former Central Committee archive, Moscow.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- 8 The most comprehensive discussion of the origins of the new thinking among Gorbachev and his advisers is Robert D.English, *Russia and the Idea of the West: Gorbachev, Intellectuals, and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).
- 9 Valentin Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen* [Political Memoirs] (Munich: Droemer Knaur, 1993), pp. 476–7; Mikhail Gorbachev, 'Kak eto bylo: K 10-letiiu ob'edineniia Germanii' [How it was: Towards the tenth anniversary of the unification of Germany], *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 9 July 1999 (electronic version).
- 10 G.M.Kornienko, *Kholodnaia voina: svidetel; stvo ee uchastnika* [The Cold War: Testimony of a Participant] (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1992), pp. 251–6.
- 11 Akhromeev and Kornienko, *Glazami marshala i diplomata*, p. 109.
- 12 Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen*, pp. 493–7.
- 13 *Ibid.*, pp. 274–83.
- 14 On this point see also Kornienko, *Kholodnaia voina*, Ch. 10.
- 15 There still, however, would have been strong domestic US pressures for deploying something. On US motives for deploying nuclear weapons in Europe, see Matthew Evangelista, 'Case Studies and Theories of the Arms Race', *Bulletin of Peace Proposals*, vol. 17, no. 2 (June 1986), pp. 197–206. For a critique, see Olav Njølstad, 'Learning from History? Case Studies and the Limits to Theory Building', in Nils Petter Gleditsch and Olav Njølstad, eds, *Arms Races: Technological and Political Dynamics* (London: Sage, 1990).
- 16 Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces*, Chs 9 and 14, esp. pp. 291–305.
- 17 For an overview and critique of these strategies see Matthew Evangelista, 'Offense or Defense: A Tale of Two Commissions', *World Policy Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Fall 1983), pp. 45–69; on the Soviet strategy, see Richard Ned Lebow, 'The Soviet Offensive in Europe: The Schlieffen Plan Revisited?', *International Security*, vol. 9, no. 4 (Spring 1985), pp. 44–78.
- 18 For an extensive discussion, see Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces*, Chs 9 and 14.
- 19 On the influence of the social democratic model, see Jacques Lévesque, *The Enigma of 1989: The USSR and the Liberation of Eastern Europe* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997); on his advisers' East European contacts, see A.S. Cherniaev, *Moia zhizn' i moe vremia* [My Life and My Time] (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1995), and Georgii Shakhnazarov, *Tsena svobody: Reformatsiia Gorbacheva glazami ego pomoshchnika* [The Price of Freedom: Gorbachev's Reformation through the Eyes of his Aide]; on Gorbachev's sympathy for Eurocommunism and the Italian Communist Party, in particular, see Antonio Rubbi, *Incontri con Gorbaciov: I colloqui di Natta e Occhetto con il leader sovietico* [Meetings with Gorbachev: The Discussions of Natta and Occhetto with the Soviet leader] (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1990).

- 20 For a recent reiteration of this view from its main proponent, see Robert C. McFarlane 'Missile Defense, Then and Now', *New York Times*, 4 May 2000.
- 21 For the relevant quotations and citations, see Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces*, pp. 334–8.
- 22 D.T.Iazov, *Verny Otchizne* [True to the Fatherland] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1988), p. 350.
- 23 M.S.Gorbachev, *Zhizn' i reformy* [Life and Reforms] (Moscow: Novosti, 1995), vol. I, p. 73.
- 24 Evidence for this argument is found in Part IV of Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces*.
- 25 Quoted in Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces*, p. 333.
- 26 Randall Collins, *Macrohistory: Essays in Sociology of the Long Run* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999). For an evaluation of Collins' theory, see Matthew Evangelista, 'Geopolitika i budushchee Rossiiskoi Federatsii' [Geopolitics and the future of the Russian Federation], *Polis: Politicheskie issledovaniia*, no. 2 (April) 2002.
- 27 Ibid. Among political scientists, Robert Gilpin, with his realist theory of hegemonic decline, probably contributes the most to understanding the end of the Cold War. His theory was, however, indeterminate on a key point—whether or not decline would trigger a major hegemonic war—and, like, the historian Paul Kennedy, Gilpin focused most of his attention on the prospects for decline of the United States, not the Soviet Union. For a sympathetic account of Gilpin's contribution, see William C. Wohlforth, 'Realism and the End of the Cold War', *International Security*, vol. 19, no. 3 (1994/95), pp. 91–129, and Wohlforth's chapter in this volume.
- 28 This chapter did not consider the question of the importance of particular US leaders. For a discussion of this subject, including the use of counterfactual analysis, see George W. Breslauer and Richard Ned Lebow, 'Leadership and the End of the Cold War: A Counterfactual Thought Experiment', MS. June 1999. For the importance of Ronald Reagan, see Beth Fischer's chapter in this volume.

## 6

# The Sources of 'New Thinking' in Soviet Politics

*William E. Odom*

The search for 'the socio-political roots and economic and military causes of New Thinking'<sup>1</sup> in Soviet foreign policy and military affairs has already produced a deluge of literature, employing a variety of approaches.<sup>2</sup> Many works find the sociopolitical roots of 'New Thinking' in 'ideas' developed by the Soviet intelligentsia.<sup>3</sup> Hagiographies of Gorbachev focus on the role of leadership.<sup>4</sup> Others emphasize external causes, insisting either that personal contacts between Soviet and Western scholars, officials and leaders planted the seeds of 'New Thinking',<sup>5</sup> or that the comparative growth of US and Soviet power created strong incentives for Soviet leaders to admit defeat in the Cold War.<sup>6</sup> Finally, there are structural interpretations that find the sources of 'New Thinking' in the perverse performance of Soviet economic, military and political institutions.<sup>7</sup>

The scheme here is to select and integrate aspects of several of these approaches. It starts with the last one—structure and institutions—employing both the totalitarian model of Soviet politics and more recent concepts for understanding the connection between political institutions and economic performance. The result is an explanation of the institutional dynamics of the Soviet regime. Next, it considers the role of leaders, especially Gorbachev, acting within that institutional context. Finally, it addresses the question of leaders' understanding of the consequences of their policies.

The sources of 'New Thinking', the chapter concludes, are to be found in declining institutional performance and in Gorbachev's policy choices, choices apparently based on his misunderstandings of changes that *glasnost* and *perestroika* would inexorably bring.

### *The Institutional Context for 'New Thinking'*

No leader starts with a completely free hand; he inherits constraints within which he must act. The Soviet Union became locked in a matrix of both formal and informal institutions<sup>8</sup> by the mid-1930s that would last right down through 1991. Justified by an ideology (Marxism-Leninism), it involved a massive reallocation of property rights (nationalization of industry and collectivization of agriculture), a new system of state revenues (the State Planning Commission and the Five-Year Plans), a new elite recruitment system (the Communist Party), and a commitment to transform the economy and society in order to build sufficient domestic power to ensure the eventual destruction of all market economies in the world (the final victory of the international class struggle). These key components of the Soviet political system have been best defined as a 'syndrome' in Western scholarship by the totalitarian model.<sup>9</sup>



In retrospect, we can see four fundamental characteristics of this institutional context. First, it defined the rest of world as irreconcilably hostile, putting the Soviet Union on a collision course with the major states of Europe and North America. To avoid war until the Soviet military was better prepared, the strategy of 'peaceful coexistence' was devised, a 'specific form of the international class struggle', in the vocabulary of the official ideology.

The second characteristic was a consequence of the first: the overarching priority was placed on producing more and more military power.<sup>10</sup> Social wellbeing became merely an instrumental goal until the final victory of the international class struggle. The ideology allowed no way around this prioritization, because the 'scientific' conditions it dictated for world peace included the destruction of all the 'private ownership of the means of production'. Bourgeois governments might promise peace, according to this view, but the material relationships in their economies caused 'class struggle', which inevitably propelled them into wars. The 'military threat' for which the Red Army had to prepare, therefore, included all of the world's states with market economies, justifying a virtual blank cheque on the Soviet state budget to the military.<sup>11</sup>

Third, the transaction costs for economic activity were extremely high. The success of Soviet industrialization in the 1930s was real, but many of the costs were concealed, not just by censorship and security measures but also by the absence of 'scarcity prices' generated by genuine market competition.<sup>12</sup>

Lastly, the Communist Party, based on a sound reading of Marx, dismissed bourgeois judicial institutions as instruments of exploitation, reserving for itself the final say on all legal issues. Thus there was no way to provide for 'third-party enforcement' of contracts and other legal norms.<sup>13</sup> Acting instead as a 'discriminating monopolist', the party-state regime unavoidably imposed much higher transaction costs on the economy.

If we consider the dynamic behaviour of this system, a number of things become apparent.

First, extraction of revenues by the party-state apparatus required high levels of costly coercion. The degree of the public's internalization of the formal norms (the ideology) in almost all countries relates inversely to the state's costs for extracting revenues. If citizens comply voluntarily, collection of taxes is relatively cheap.<sup>14</sup> Voluntary compliance in the Soviet Union, however, was low, but the regime had unparalleled coercive capacities, manifest in a collective farm system, forced labour camps, public mass organizations, repressed wages for industrial workers, and a number of other mechanisms. Thus, the state could extract revenues apparently with no limits, but the costs were immense.<sup>15</sup>

Second, lacking corrective feedback information from 'scarcity prices' normally available in market economies, Soviet central planners had no basis for making more efficient investments of the massive capital the system extracted from the population. Inexorably, every new Five-Year Plan directed less and less effective capital investments. The accumulation of relative inefficiencies over the post-war decades became difficult to imagine, much less calculate. Not only were CIA estimates of the Soviet GDP (gross domestic product) grossly exaggerated, but Soviet leaders also had no accurate measure of their economy's actual performance.

Third, the economic system soon began to suffer from an information overload. The State Planning Commission (GOSPLAN) simply could not handle the rapidly increasing

demands for specific directives for economic activity and reports on performance. While such a system worked impressively during World War II and in initial post-war reconstruction, it had caused a downturn in growth by the late 1950s.<sup>16</sup>

Fourth, the military industrial sector (the VPK, Military Industrial Commission) flourished because the Politburo gave it first priority claim on the state budget. The Soviet Armed Forces (the MoD and parts of the MVD, Ministry of Internal Affairs, and KGB), of course, also stood near the head of the queue for funds, but Stalin cut them severely right after World War II for reasons similar to the heavy cuts in the Red Army in the early 1920s, in order to shift funds into military modernization programmes, funds had to be cut from contemporary operational capabilities. Nikita Khrushchev did this again in the late 1950s in order to expedite the modernization of key sectors of Soviet force structure. Under Leonid Brezhnev, the military experienced sustained growth for nearly two decades. Not surprisingly, dissident economists and scientists estimated in samizdat material in the early 1970s that the percentage of Soviet GDP going to the military was in the 40–50 per cent range.<sup>17</sup> Although Western analysts dismissed such estimates, insisting that the level was in the 6–9 per cent range, by the late 1970s, it was noticed in the West that GOSPLAN had to cut consumption to protect the defence sector, something that had not been done for a long time.<sup>18</sup> Over the next decade, CIA estimates would rise to the 12–14 per cent range, while private analysts would put the figure as high as 18 per cent.<sup>19</sup>

This system not only squandered capital massively, but it was also afflicted with a bureaucratic malady that endangered the system's stability. A widely observed phenomenon in organizational behaviour is 'goal displacement'.<sup>20</sup> Subunits within a hierarchical organization develop their own goals to support the overall organization goal, but, as time passes, their goals begin to diverge from the parent organization's goals in their decision-making, displacing the larger goals as their measure of success. This, of course, occurred regularly on a large scale in the Soviet system. Leaders of subunits of the party, the economy, the police and the military had to cheat to meet state-set goals because they were almost never given sufficient resources to reach them otherwise. Thus, their own survival depended on putting subunit goals ahead of state goals.

Lenin had already developed an antidote for 'goal displacement' in the party—the periodic purge of wayward members. Stalin intensified its use. About every three or four years from 1924 until Stalin's death in 1953, the party and state bureaucracies were purged. Some were very bloody, and none was bloodless. Survivors and younger party members advanced up the ranks during such purges by proving their 'ideological hardness', that is, total commitment to the formal values and institutional norms of the party. Soon thereafter, of course, they found themselves in the same predicament as their predecessors, forced to violate those norms by cheating and deception, which prompted the next purge.<sup>21</sup> As time passed, the purges became larger and bloodier, but they had the effect of temporarily reversing much of the 'goal displacement'. Thus, Stalin was able to restore the system's coercive capabilities after periods of their decline.

Nikita Khrushchev's de-Stalinization marks the beginning of irreversible decay in the system in that it renounced the 'blood' purge as an instrument of rule over the party. Khrushchev, however, did not entirely abandon purges for system revitalization, substituting periodic 'administrative' purges for bloody ones. After Leonid Brezhnev and Alexei Kosygin ousted him in 1964, they not only reaffirmed the policy of no more blood

purges of the party but also promised to end administrative purges as well. That was the substance of their policy of 'stability of cadres'. In reality, it was a policy of de-Khrushchevization. Thus, Brezhnev surrendered the remaining device for restraining, if not reversing, the inevitable diffusion of power to the second, third and lower levels of the vast Soviet bureaucracy. The consequence was not the end of the totalitarian system and a move on to a path of transformation from authoritarianism to political pluralism, as so many Western scholars claimed in the 1960s and after. Rather, it was the unimpeded decay of totalitarian institutional performance.<sup>22</sup>

The official ideology remained essentially intact, except for a few ambiguous revisions concerning 'peaceful coexistence' and the 'inevitability of war' between the socialist and capitalist camps. Another four features of the regime—a single revolutionary party, a command economy, a monopoly of the media and a monopoly of the means of violence—remained unchanged in any fundamental way. The only feature dropped was the use of mass terror. Thus, five of the six characteristics of the totalitarian regime-type survived de-Stalinization and Brezhnev's 'stagnation' period.<sup>23</sup>

Goal displacement did not occur evenly throughout the Soviet Union. Party secretaries in union republics proved especially skilled at taking advantage of it, initially in Central Asia and the Caucasus, later in Ukraine and Moldova. KGB cadres also exploited their bureaucratic discretion with great creativity. They used every liberalization policy, for example, looser currency controls, more cultural exchanges, more foreign business activity to widen their own activities at the expense of the political system.<sup>24</sup> The military industrial sector (VPK) and the armed forces took advantage of the Soviet Union's international insecurity to gain more resources.<sup>25</sup> Many senior officers and military industrialists remained among the most orthodox defenders of the official ideology, not least because it justified first priority for allocations to the military.

These internal developments make the impact of US containment strategy, especially US military programmes, easier to appreciate. The United States' dramatically better economic performance allowed it to spend heavily for defence (an average of 7.28 per cent of GDP during the Cold War decades<sup>26</sup>), and at the same time to achieve unparalleled prosperity and technological innovation. The US economy's much lower transaction costs made the classical 'guns versus butter' trade-off essentially irrelevant as long as defence spending remained so low. As the Soviet military and VPK tried to 'catch and overtake' their US counterparts, they had to absorb ever higher transaction costs both for raising state funds and for covering inefficient capital investments.

The Soviet Union had no prospect of winning the Cold War competition unless the United States, as the hare did in his race with the tortoise, decided to take a nap. The Nixon détente policy convinced the Politburo that indeed the United States could be lulled into a slumber. When the United States voluntarily dropped out of the ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missile) race, it allowed the VPK to avoid severe cuts in its ICBM (Intercontinental Ballistic Missile) programmes in order to pursue a more robust ABM programme. A treaty to limit strategic nuclear forces helped the VPK put Soviet strategic nuclear forces on a rough parity with US strategic forces by the end of the 1970s.<sup>27</sup> The United States, however, did not slumber for long. A broad modernization of US conventional forces, based on the new technologies using micro-circuitry and directed energy, began in the late 1970s and gained momentum in the 1980s. As Soviet force developers and military industrialists watched it and then saw President Reagan add his

Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) to it, they realized that the American hare was back to a full gallop, leaving the Soviet tortoise in the dust.

Unlike the command economy, which provided little or no corrective feedback to Soviet planners, military competition with the United States did. US behaviour was more conspicuous and, therefore, had a more corrective impact on Soviet thinking. Moreover, the official ideology encouraged attention to the behaviour of the class enemy. By the 1970s and early 1980s, attentive party elites must have had a growing awareness, based on impressionistic observations and experiences, that Soviet economic performance could not sustain the competition. Moreover, the ideology had lost virtually all of its power to inspire voluntary compliance that would lower the monitoring costs for bureaucrats' and workers' behaviour. Little stood in the way of cheating, corruption and other kinds of organizational decay—what would soon be called 'stagnation'.

The Soviet system was locked in 'path dependence', where a less efficient activity produces 'increasing returns' that create incentives to continue on the path without a correction. In an increasing returns process, 'the probability of further steps along the same path increases with each move down the path. This is so because the relative benefits of current activity compared to other possible options increase over time.'<sup>28</sup> In other words, institutions do not generate 'negative feedback', which is error correcting, but 'positive feedback' that is error exacerbating.

The Nobelist economist, Douglass North, speaking about countries in general, not specifically the Soviet Union, explained the phenomenon thus:

The increasing returns characteristic of an initial set of institutions that provide disincentives to productive activity will create organizations and interest groups with a stake in the existing constraints. They will shape the polity in their interests. Such institutions provide incentives that may encourage military domination of the polity and economy, religious fanaticism, or plain, simple redistributive organizations, but they provide few rewards from the increases in the stock and dissemination of economically useful knowledge. The subjective mental constructs of the participants will evolve an ideology that not only rationalizes the society's structure but accounts for its poor performance.<sup>29</sup>

This, of course, is a remarkably accurate picture of the Soviet case after Bolshevik institutions were firmly in place, sometime in the 1930s.

In summary, the Soviet institutional matrix created a dynamic that was initially effective, though highly inefficient, in industrializing the Soviet Union, but then changed from generating growth to fostering economic and social decay.

### *Leaders' Choice-Making in the Soviet Institutional Matrix*

The foregoing analysis is what might be called a 'rational-choice' explanation of the political-economic behaviour of both leaders and followers in the Soviet Union. Institutional conditions created a pay-off matrix in which individuals behaved rationally in the sense of trying to maximize their own gains. Or it might be claimed that there was

a paramechanistic logic to the structural arrangements compelling individuals to behave in certain ways. If we assume that individuals have a degree of free will, we must also admit that they could choose not to behave in those ways, producing behaviour not in line with the logic of the structures or with the pay-off matrix. In accounting for the behaviour of large numbers of Soviet citizens, this is not a problem. Although many of them failed to behave as the pay-off matrix suggests they would, most did. In the case of leaders, however, the probabilities are radically different. The dictator himself conceivably could exercise his free will to upset the entire system.

This is precisely what Gorbachev did by introducing 'New Thinking'. If we want to explain his decision to act in such a way, we must make assumptions. We can assume that he was mentally deranged, or intellectually limited or somehow ill-informed about the Soviet institutional pay-off matrix and, therefore, acted in an irrational way. Or we can assume that he was very well informed, that he noticed the more rewarding pay-off matrix in Western countries with market economies, and that he wanted to borrow their policies in order to obtain the same economic performance for the Soviet Union. If we are to believe the memoir literature of Chernayev, Shakhnazarov, Shevardnadze, Yakovlev and several others who assisted Gorbachev, and probably contributed more to the intellectual framing of 'New Thinking' than he did, then the latter assumption is valid for our search for the roots of 'New Thinking'.<sup>30</sup>

Let us accept these accounts as entirely honest reports of what they thought they were doing, which I personally believe they are. In that case, the search for the military, economic and social roots of 'New Thinking' is easy and straightforward. The Soviet institutional matrix created enormous transaction costs. They were not all that difficult to see by the 1950s, and by the 1970s, they were imposing decay in nearly all sectors of society and the economy. Heavy reliance on coercion was conspicuous to all, not just Kremlin insiders. Excessive spending on the military and military industries was less obvious to ordinary people, but to wide circles of the intelligentsia, and certainly the top party circles, it was apparent. The absence of corrective feedback information for economic decision-making, for example, the lack of a competitive interest rate for capital, was publicly debated during Khrushchev's last years in power in connection with 'Liberianism'—a much-touted reform concept that was purported to be able to introduce some market forces in Soviet firms. Corruption and cheating were widely recognized. The inability of the courts and law-enforcement agencies to play a genuine 'third-party enforcement' role was obvious to the man in the street, not to mention political elites.

Most of these perverse realities were convincingly justified by the official ideology, but as time passed, certainly by the 1970s, a growing number of Soviet citizens, especially in highly educated circles, knew enough about the rest of the world to wonder if they were actually unavoidable. Because they were slowly destroying the Soviet Union, these realities could no longer be explained away as necessary for making the country strong and prosperous. Moreover, Soviet elites could see that alternative policies in other countries were producing far better results, while avoiding the perversities of the Soviet system. In searching for the roots of 'New Thinking', therefore, the objective grounds for the consciousness that it reflected are so vast that cataloguing them all is impossible.<sup>31</sup> Once we understand the pay-off matrix of Soviet institutions, we should not be puzzled about the ground in which the roots of 'New Thinking' germinated. Our puzzlement

should be over: (1) why 'New Thinking' did not arise earlier; (2) why it arose in the 1980s; and (3) whether its proponents appreciated its full policy implications.

*Why did 'New Thinking' not arise earlier?*

Our analysis of the Soviet institutional matrix provides an answer to this question: 'path dependence' based on an increasing returns process. We can make the answer clearer by explaining 'path dependence' with simpler cases than economies. The concept seems to have first been used in connection with technologies. The typewriter keyboard provides a well-known example,<sup>32</sup> and Microsoft Windows™ offers another. In both cases, deploying a particular technology required very large initial capital investment—a keyboard layout designed to be inefficient, slowing down typists so the keys would not pile up, and a computer operating system that was successfully marketed on a very large scale before users realized that more efficient operating systems were available. Investment in training of users of both technologies was also large. Managers who made these investments soon found themselves in an 'increasing-returns' process, whereby the near-term gains from continuing on that path were preferable to paying huge start-up costs for changing to more efficient alternative technologies.

North chose the 'path dependence' concept because it provided an answer to a question that long puzzled him: 'Why wouldn't the political entrepreneurs in stagnant economies emulate the policies of the more successful ones?'<sup>33</sup> That, of course, is the very question we are asking about the Soviet Union. North's answer can explain the Soviet case until 1985: locked into an increasing-returns process, its leaders had strong incentives not to emulate other countries' policies. Not only would the costs be large, but political instability would also accompany the changes, especially in the national minority republics.

Our confidence in this kind of answer may be strengthened if we realize that another line of analysis leads to the same answer. Looking at the Soviet Union as a 'totalitarian' regime-type, as we did above, offers that possibility. Totalitarianism involves a lock-in to a set of institutions that stimulates decay but also provides for revitalization. Failure to revitalize it periodically with blood purges, however, will lead to regime decay and instability. Without a constitutional basis, collective leadership is inherently unstable, producing competition among a small elite until a single party dictator emerges. The winner would seem to have no incentive to pursue regime transformation (to pluralism, that is, constitutionalism), because it would undermine his own power. That leaves the leader with only two courses for incremental change: periodic purges to revitalize the system, or political and economic decay. In the long run, both courses promise economic decline, but the second course also results in systemic decay and political instability. In the short run, however, even the second is far less risky than trying to transform the system.

Many Western scholars have criticized the totalitarian regime-type as misleading and irrelevant for understanding the Soviet system, which they assured us in the 1970s that its leaders were transforming.<sup>34</sup> Since we now have memoir literature and Russian scholarly research offering new evidence and insights into the decision-making of Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev and Andropov, we can check the validity of such criticism. Why did these leaders act as they did?

Aleksandr Yakovlev concludes, after reviewing thousand of documents from the party archives for public disclosure, that Stalin maintained a dual-power system. He used the party and the NKVD/KGB alternately to bloody the ranks of the other, always withdrawing his support as one or the other prevailed. Thus, he maintained his own supreme power and the system's vitality. Yakovlev explains the decay of the system under Brezhnev and Andropov as permitting the gradual ascendancy of the KGB over the party. Again and again in his memoir, he paints a picture of the system as beyond repair, one that has to be replaced. In other words, it cannot be transformed. Thus, his observations are fully consistent with the institutional matrix elucidated above and the totalitarian model of Soviet politics.<sup>35</sup>

Sergei Khrushchev's biography of his father understandably offers a sympathetic and human picture of Nikita Khrushchev, but the most important consequence of Khrushchev's de-Stalinization becomes clear from his description of his father's removal from the top party post.<sup>36</sup> During the 1957 leadership crisis, Khrushchev had used most of Stalin's techniques for undercutting and destroying his opponents, but, unlike Stalin, he did not kill them. Thus, some of them survived to participate in the plot that ousted him in 1964. Having surrendered the blood purge as an instrument of rule, Khrushchev's struggles to make radical changes in military force structure and in the VPK mostly became bogged down in face of the 'goal displacement' phenomenon.

Irina Bystrova's history of the VPK during World War II and after<sup>37</sup> also describes what amounts to emerging 'path dependence' and 'goal displacement' in the VPK. She concludes that a 'specific type of military-political leader' emerged, beginning with Stalin, including Beria, Bulganin, Malenkov and eventually Marshal Dmitri Ustinov. 'The key issues of domestic and foreign policy were decided in the narrow circle of these top managers.' Ustinov's rise to the Politburo as minister of defence, she argues, marked the zenith of VPK influence, rising above the armed forces.

Bystrova confirms not only the earlier point about the primacy of military power for the Soviet system but also puts a third and fourth leg on Yakovlev's two-legged stool image (the party and KGB) of the system, namely the VPK and the military. Bystrova's monograph allows one to understand more clearly Shakhnazarov's chapter, 'Curbing the Moloch', in which he describes the enormous obstacle that the VPK and military presented to *perestroika*.<sup>38</sup> His metaphorical Moloch was the logical consequence of the dynamics and programme priorities of the totalitarian regime. His account of a debate with the chief of the general staff, Marshal Akhromeev, over military spending ends with Akhromeev falling back on the ideology to justify his preferred allocation of resources—no military or VPK reductions. Yakovlev's description of Andropov as a true-believer Bolshevik also shows the role of the ideology in sustaining the totalitarian regime.

The answer as to why there was no 'New Thinking' much earlier, notwithstanding massive evidence that the Soviet system was in decline, is the same whether one seeks it through North's version of institutional path dependence or through the expected dynamic behaviour of a totalitarian regime: the structure of incentives within the system was against systemic change. Both the costs and the risks of system change were awesome.

*Why did 'New Thinking' emerge in the 1980s?*

This question merits some clarification. It is akin to the questions of why Khrushchev chose to denounce Stalin and why Brezhnev promised 'stability of cadres'. In each case, it was a matter of the leader's *choice*. 'New Thinking' arose when it did because Gorbachev, exercising his free will, decided to introduce it. Any of the three party general secretaries could have chosen differently.

The *reasons* why Khrushchev, Brezhnev and Gorbachev made these decisions obviously differ. Each had a very different calculation for acting as he did, but no model or theory of decision-making could have predicted their decisions to implement de-Stalinization, 'stability of cadres', and 'New Thinking', respectively, unless we abandon the idea that individuals have a degree of free will.

If we try to explain the emergence of 'New Thinking' as a product of its economic and military roots, we can find them in the early 1980s without difficulty. My own investigation, through interviews with Soviet officers, VKP officials and a few senior party leaders, revealed unanimity on the judgement that the Soviet economy could not indefinitely sustain the military competition with the United States.<sup>39</sup> Initially, samizdat and then official journals began publishing analyses showing that radical change was necessary to reverse economic and social stagnation.

We can find similar roots for 'New Thinking' in the 1970s, but it did not emerge then. I recall several chance conversations while serving in Moscow in 1972–74 in which middle-level bureaucrats and officers expressed deep concern over the state of the economy and the military burdens it carried. We can also find roots for 'New Thinking' in 'the thaw' following the XX Party Congress in 1956. Sergei Khrushchev describes his father as determined to cut the military burden dramatically, which he did in some areas. Military and economic reasons for 'New Thinking' were neither in short supply nor unnoticed during the 1950s and 1960s.

We must conclude, therefore, that the introduction of 'New Thinking' in the 1980s was an act of free will by the Communist Party's general secretary. Its roots alone do not explain it; they only make it more understandable after the event. Poor economic performance, owing to institutional arrangements, had been sufficient to justify 'New Thinking' decades earlier, but Gorbachev's predecessors did not introduce it. Moreover, other totalitarian regimes of the Soviet variety—North Korea, Cuba and Vietnam—have performance records so terrible that they cry out for 'New Thinking' and *perestroika*, but their leaders have chosen not to emulate Gorbachev.<sup>40</sup> All of these cases suggest that had Gorbachev chosen some other policy, the Soviet Union could be with us today. The roots of 'New Thinking', therefore, tell us less about why the policy emerged when it did than the factor of voluntarism in leadership.

This may seem to be an over-fine academic point, but it is not. Confusion about it sustains a nonsense debate in the United States as to why no one predicted the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>41</sup> Gorbachev, exercising his free will, ended the Cold War. How can anyone be expected to have predicted that he would? Someone might have guessed that he would, but that is not what those demanding such a prediction accept as an answer. They want certainty, not just good luck.



To see the leadership factor as a matter of free will, of course, is neither to exhaust the subject nor to dismiss the role of military and economic roots in producing 'New Thinking'. Personality, education, experience, turn of intellect and other such characteristics have long interested political scientists and historians alike in explaining the role of leadership. Khrushchev, as his son describes him, had some of the same leadership inclinations as Gorbachev, but he also had a fundamental belief in the official ideology and the Soviet economic system. Brezhnev's personality inclined him in the opposite direction, closer to Stalin's, as one who understood most of the requirements for maintaining the system and, therefore, acted to perpetuate its 'path dependence'. At the same time, Khrushchev and Brezhnev made key policy decisions that undercut the regime's restorative mechanism. The 'unintended consequences' of their decisions, it turns out in retrospect, were their most important legacies.

Most of the attempts to use Gorbachev's personality to explain 'New Thinking' and *perestroika* paint him as a humanist with extraordinary vision, trying to reach a feasible goal but undercut by ill-intentioned people.<sup>42</sup> A few, especially Gorbachev's closest aides and supporters, share much of this view, but they fault him for indecision and hesitation at critical times. Sometimes, too, they doubted his understanding of the implications of his policies.<sup>43</sup>

My own research suggests a quite different interpretation, putting it much more in the tradition of Khrushchev and Brezhnev but with a fundamental difference. Like their decisions to step back from purges, Gorbachev's decision to act on 'New Thinking' is most important for its unintended consequences. Perhaps Khrushchev and Brezhnev would have decided differently if they had understood the implications of their decisions, but it is less likely than in Gorbachev's case. They both used their decisions to hold on to power, although in Khrushchev's case, his decision would eventually produce his own overthrow. Gorbachev's decision led not only to his loss of power but also to the destruction of the USSR. That outcome encourages us to ask another question.

### *Did Gorbachev Understand the Implications of 'New Thinking'?*

It seems highly improbable that Gorbachev did understand the implications of 'New Thinking' unless he was bent on the destruction of the Soviet state. The institutional matrix elaborated above to explain Soviet 'path dependence' suggests very strongly that policies based on 'New Thinking' would destroy the regime. Radical institutional changes were required, not marginal and gradual ones. Moreover, the old informal institutions, that is, beliefs and values internalized from the official ideology, would have to undergo equally dramatic changes. There are no historical examples of such great changes that have not been accompanied by traumatic political struggles such as civil wars and revolutions.

If we use the totalitarian model of Soviet politics for addressing the same issue—could the goals of 'New Thinking' be achieved without destroying the Soviet regime?—we arrive at the same conclusion. It has a dynamic logic that can explain why some policies endanger the system and others are essential for its maintenance. Stalin understood the system's dynamic and made his choices accordingly. What he apparently did not appreciate was the eventual impact of the astronomically high transaction costs inherent

in the system's maintenance. Those party leaders who opposed de-Stalinization—Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich, Voroshilov and a few others—understood the revitalization role that blood purges played and the implications of abandoning them.<sup>44</sup> Khrushchev either did not recognize them, or perhaps he simply ignored them, using de-Stalinization as a tactic to destroy those who wanted to oust him.

The Brezhnev deal, 'stability of cadres', which galvanized support for him while consolidating power after his coup against Khrushchev, also had predictable consequences. Brezhnev initially agreed with those like Molotov who insisted that a return to some kind of Stalinism was essential for maintaining the system, but his version, neo-Stalinism, excluded both blood and administrative purges. Eighteen years of unintended 'stagnation' ensued, vindicating several Western observers' predictions in the late 1960s, one of whom was co-designer of the totalitarian model in 1956.<sup>45</sup> Major change, either systemic reform or a return to revitalizing purges, required strong central control, but the period of 'stagnation' had dangerously weakened that control. To attempt major change, as Stalin, Molotov, Malenkov and probably Khrushchev recognized, required the kind of centralized power that no longer existed. To attempt major change, therefore, was to risk letting the system collapse out of its own weakness, the danger cited in several of those predictions made in the 1960s.

Gorbachev's 'New Thinking', and the *glasnost* and *perestroika* it entailed, initially created puzzlement, not only in the West but also among his fellow Politburo members. Clarity about what he meant and the policies he would pursue was lacking at first and never fully provided. During the first two years of his rule, he and Yegor Ligachev carried out the largest party purge of *obkom* (*oblast* party committee) and *kraikom* (*krai* party committee—*krai* is an administrative region, as is an *oblast*) first secretaries since the early 1960s.<sup>46</sup> This made *perestroika* (reconstruction) look like a neo-Stalinist revitalization effort designed to overcome the 'stagnation'. At the same time, his *glasnost* (open-ness) policy was widening public awareness of the system's ills, inviting more people to complain openly against the entrenched party and state bureaucrats. Such genuine political participation, of course, would inevitably weaken the coercive capacities of the regime that were critical for its resource extraction and preferred allocation policies. Gorbachev's economic policies, at first very orthodox command direction, then limited steps toward a market system, began to threaten chaos by mid-1988. Even modest increases in private enterprise were bound to create serious problems for the state plan by drawing off resources and labour. Moreover, the Soviet white-collar class did not have the skills essential for managing a market economy, for example, legal, accounting, market research, advertising and corporate governance. Finally, his book, *Perestroika* (1987),<sup>47</sup> radically revised Marxism-Leninism, relegating Marx's concept of 'class interests' to a status below 'human kind interests', calling 'the international class struggle' and 'the inevitability of war' between socialism and imperialism outdated ideas. Ligachev complained in September 1988 that this was endangering the system, but by then it was too late. What Gorbachev did to the official ideology was no less dramatic than if the Pope dismissed the virgin birth and the resurrection of Christ as outdated myths. Gorbachev's revisions, of course, were purposeful in that they removed the ideological justification for the military's priority claim on economic resources, necessary for serious economic reform. But they also removed the ideological restraints on nationalism, the Achilles' heel for the multinational empire, something Gorbachev

surely did not desire, and something that would eventually allow Yeltsin to outflank him politically in 1990–91.<sup>48</sup>

It was possible to review Gorbachev's 'New Thinking' policies in 1987 and conclude that if he meant what he said and continued with his policies, he would lose

power to forces that could undercut the political authority of the regime to a degree that could lead to the breakup of the empire. The risks and uncertainties of such a course make one wonder if Gorbachev really has this in mind. He must, if he wants systemic change; if he does not, he cannot get systemic change.<sup>49</sup>

That Gorbachev would 'choose' to continue could not be predicted. The consequences of his choice, however, were predictable. Whether or not he understood the implications of his choice is another matter.

Apparently, he did not. Virtually everything Gorbachev has written and said reinforces the testimony of his aides who insist that he did not. Valery Boldin says that his understanding of economics remained primitive even after hours of expert tutoring.<sup>50</sup> The most compelling evidence I have found that he did not comes from Shevardnadze and Yakovlev.<sup>51</sup> Both insisted in separate conversations that Gorbachev had no notion that *perestroika* would break-up the Soviet Union; both also insisted that they did foresee this outcome as the logical development of *perestroika*. Shevardnadze, however, believed that the breakup would take several years longer and would be accomplished with a 'soft landing'. Moreover, when asked if any other Politburo member understood this, each pondered for a moment and named the other. Yakovlev has since vigorously denied being responsible for the Soviet Union's demise, but his numerous analyses of the regime in his long memoir all support the conclusion that the regime could not be reformed.<sup>52</sup>

Although Shakhnazarov's memoir provides some of the more profound insights into the obstacles to *perestroika* and the shallowness of Gorbachev's reform policies, it also reveals an imperfect understanding of the dynamics of the regime: he did not realize that it could not be transformed.<sup>53</sup>

I am inclined to believe that if Gorbachev and most of his aides had correctly understood the implications of 'New Thinking' for policy-making, they would not have persevered. If so, those people in the former Soviet Union and the West who are glad to see the passing of the Cold War and the Soviet Union should probably be grateful that Gorbachev did not understand the consequences of his policies.<sup>54</sup>

Gorbachev alone, of course, is not responsible for the regime's collapse. Khrushchev's de-Stalinization was the first serious blow to the system. Brezhnev dealt the next blow, allowing stagnation to accelerate. Gorbachev's policies were the third in this series of leaders' choices that destroyed the Soviet regime. The survival of other Soviet-type regimes, for example, North Korea, Cuba and Vietnam, strongly suggests that the USSR could have survived if its leaders had rejected policies based on 'New Thinking'.<sup>55</sup>

At the same time, no set of policies in such regimes can both maintain them and achieve effective economic performance. North's theories of political institutions and economic performance makes this assertion difficult, if not impossible, to refute. Likewise, endless debates over whether there was some less traumatic alternative to Yeltsin's economic policies are pointless. There may be policies that would have allowed

more progress toward an effective market economic system, but it seems highly improbable that there was a painless way.<sup>56</sup>

A final point about the role of leadership in a totalitarian regime is important. It requires a dictator who can carry out party-wide bloody purges, not once but repeatedly. That requires the ability to manipulate party and police cadres so that they will do the bloody work of a purge. No two purges can be implemented the same way because party members catch on and devise ways to defeat them. The necessary creativity is rare among leaders. So, too, is the emotional and psychological capacity to endure the spilling of so much blood. North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba still have such leaders. Khrushchev, who had proven his ability to scheme and endure the blood as one of Stalin's agents, apparently lost his willingness to continue that style of leadership. Brezhnev also was experienced with blood purges, but, although he remained a supreme schemer, he too lost the stomach for large amounts of party blood. Gorbachev showed great skill at scheming, and he shed no tears over repressions in Alma Ata, Tbilisi and Baku, but all were relatively small by Stalin's standards. In Vilnius, however, either he lost his nerve, or he decided that the risks to his popularity in the West made retreat advisable.

Much more revealing, however, is Gorbachev's behaviour in the three months before the crisis of 19–21 August 1991. Many signs of coup plotting were visible. Yet Gorbachev left Moscow when he had to know that doing so could invite a coup. The behavior of the members of the GKChP (State Emergency Committee), senior KGB officials and the generals during these three days is especially instructive. They all lost their nerve when asked to authorize violence against Yeltsin's supporters around the White House. Some of the generals refused to be party to such actions while others tried to keep their options open, allowing them a last minute jump to the winning side. Marshal Yazov demanded that the GKChP give him orders to use violence against the White House but no GKChP member would agree to it; then they complained bitterly when he did not start the shooting on his own, leaving them the option blaming him if things went badly.

The behaviour of all of these high officials, especially Gorbachev, who shared the GKChP members' dislike of the new union treaty, indicates both the criticality of the leadership factor and the absence of the necessary personal qualities to prevent the regime's collapse.<sup>57</sup> Considerable evidence indicates that Gorbachev wanted the blood spilled necessary to save the regime but that he was not willing to take the responsibility for it. Moreover, he offered the minister of defence the chance to carry out a military coup in November 1991. His offer rejected, he may have next made it to the chief of the general staff, General Vladimir Lobov.<sup>58</sup> Finally, Yakovlev's account (see above) suggests that Gorbachev was allowing himself to be manipulated by the KGB chairman, Vladimir Kryuchkov, in 1990–91, becoming a victim of scheming rather than its master.

Actually, Gorbachev's leadership traits—he was an inveterate schemer, a loquacious obfuscator, unable to anticipate the likely consequences of policies, vulnerable to Western flattery, and unwilling to spill blood massively—were precisely the ones needed to decide to implement *perestroika*, persevere until the regime was beyond rescue without bloody repressions, and then refuse to carry them out. Breaking the country's lock-in to its 'path dependence' was no small feat: it required dismantling the regime. Gorbachev came very close, but drew back in fright, allowing Yeltsin to step in and finish it off with no more understanding of what he was doing than Gorbachev.

Such a description of Gorbachev is not meant to be derogatory, because I personally think that he liberated Russia, giving it a chance it has never had before to do what Peter Chaadeev hoped for long ago, to complete its destiny to 'teach' a painful lesson to the world and then to 'rejoin the rest of mankind'.<sup>59</sup>

*The Impoverished Soil Nourishing the Roots of 'New Thinking'*

Samuel Huntington observed many years ago, in advising on reform in South Africa, that successful political reform movements, be they led by incumbent rulers or revolutionaries, for example, the Meiji Restoration or the Russian revolutionaries, have had three components in one form or another:<sup>60</sup>

- An analytical component that diagnoses the ills of the society to be changed.
- A prescriptive component that sets the goals and images of change.
- A strategic component that sets a design for implementation.

The analytical components of all three examples varied in length and complexity, the longest being in Russia, where it lasted nearly a half-century before 1917. Eighteen years of self-analysis occurred in Japan, stimulated by Western threats of violence from 1850 onwards if Japan did not create Western legal institutions for managing commerce and the presence of foreigners in Japan. In South Africa, social scientists produced much analysis over several decades before apartheid was ended.

The prescriptive component occasioned intense debate and struggle within all of these movements, but a fairly clear definition of goals emerged, at least in the minds of the leaders who would carry through the reforms. Again, this was not achieved overnight.

The strategic component for each one required an exceptionally gifted political leader backed by disciplined followers. Keeping the movement focused, maintaining a strategic vision while devising short-term tactics, proved difficult. As with the other components, successful implementation required decades.

'New Thinking' was, presumably, the label of such a reform movement. Comparatively speaking, its analytic component was both short in duration and shallow in its diagnosis. Understandably so; critical discussion of the system was personally dangerous. Those who trace 'New Thinking's' roots back to the freer climate after de-Stalinization have yet to show that a sustained and coherent analytic effort continued from that time into the 1980s. What thought it received was tentative and based on inadequate information, especially where it concerned the economy. Nor was there a consensus. The initial *glasnost* literature by scholars and other analysts in 1986–88 shows how much disagreement there was and how shallow even the best analysis could be. Brilliant in some regards, it was patchy in others. The memoir literature reveals how isolated many of Gorbachev's aides felt in 1984–86, and how they could only obliquely articulate their own diagnoses. For example, Cherniaev reports<sup>61</sup> that Gorbachev's January 1986 speech, calling for destruction of all nuclear weapons by 2000, made him believe the general secretary must realize that Soviet Union could safely risk unilateral disarmament, but he had to keep such thoughts to himself. Shakhnazarov (see above) explains how careful one had to be about pointing out that military expenditures were wrecking the economy and how Andropov's small 'brain trust' was encouraged to think

broadly but rejected when it did. Gorbachev and most of his team, however, did recognize that the military's priority claim on the economy was the key ill. They also knew that the official ideology kept it from being treated.

The prescriptive component in 'New Thinking' was even less developed. Initially, a supporter of Gorbachev and *perestroika*, Ligachev parted company with him when he realized that Gorbachev's variant required large unilateral Soviet military reductions. Gorbachev often confused his closest aides about his tactics and goals. Yakovlev became extremely frustrated with him on several occasions. His staff aides were sometimes equally confused. No one but Shevardnadze realized that *perestroika* would unleash separatist movements in the national republics; or if they did, they did not awaken Gorbachev to the danger. Nor did they realize that a market economy would radically redistribute power within the Soviet Union, strengthening regional leaders.

The strategic component was the least developed of all. Ligachev and Gorbachev agreed that implementation of *perestroika* required a party purge, but after that they began to disagree on more and more issues. Gorbachev apparently believed that arms control agreements would produce large reductions in military spending. By the time the INF (Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces) Treaty was signed, however, he apparently recognized that they would not. Equally naïve was his confidence that 'conversion' of military industries to civilian production could provide great economic relief.

Gorbachev rightly saw that ending the confrontation with the West was the essential precondition for major military reductions, and he proved more skilful at ending the Cold War than at anything else he attempted. He was also right to see that economic improvement was impossible without ending the military's priority claim on resources. Yet he failed to see that weakening the military would be fatal for his control over separatist political movements sprouting up in the Baltic republics and the Caucasus, and later in Ukraine. The same was true for the implications of installing a market economy in the national republics. As a puzzled observer noted at the time, 'the paradox remains that great central control is required to achieve a major decentralization of economic control and power'. Gorbachev conspicuously ignored it.

This brief comparison with other reform movements suggests that very poor soil nourished the roots of 'New Thinking', leaving them small and scrawny.

### Conclusion

The sources of 'New Thinking' are found in leaders' exercise of free will in policy-making in the context of decades of Soviet institutional decay and wretched economic performance. Stalin locked the Soviet Union into costly path dependence; Khrushchev and Brezhnev took decisions that ensured social, economic and military decay. With *perestroika*, Gorbachev intended to restore Soviet economic performance but failed to anticipate its unintended consequences.

Could 'New Thinking' have been given analytic and prescriptive components that would have supported a successful strategic component? Possibly, but not without the dissolution of the union. 'New Thinking' had to deal with three major structural problems that could not be solved simultaneously—the economy, the military and the nationalities. In what sequence to tackle them was the key question. Since the economy could not be

dealt with first, the choice was either the military or the nationality question. In principle, if Gorbachev had first dissolved the Soviet Union, then he would have been better placed to deal with the military issue. It is instructive to recall that Kemal Atatürk's strategy began with abandoning the Ottoman Empire in favour of a much smaller and predominantly Turkish state. In practice, however, Gorbachev had neither the desire and strategic vision nor a unified party behind him willing to carry through such a radical change. This was fortunate, however, because it led him to break Russia's Soviet path dependence inadvertently. Had he understood that this would require the breakup of the Soviet Union, it is most doubtful that he would have persevered.

## NOTES

- 1 The Norwegian Nobel Institute used this wording in specifying the mandate for this chapter.
- 2 For a few examples of the scores of works in English, see Z.K.Brzezinski, *The Grand Failure: The Birth and Death of Communism in the 20th Century* (New York: Scribners, 1989); John B.Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Union* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); Philip Roeder, *Red Sunset: The Failure of Soviet Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Steven L.Solnick, *Stealing of the State: Control and Collapse in Soviet Institutions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); William E.Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); Stephen G.Brooks and William C.Wohlforth, 'Power, Globalization, and the End of the Cold War: Reevaluating a Landmark Case for Ideas', *International Security*, vol. 25, no. 3 (2000/01):5–53. For a few examples in Russian, see Georgii Shakhnazarov, *Tsena svobody: reformatsiia Gorbacheva glazami ego pomoshchnika* [The Price of Freedom: Gorbachev's Reformation through the Eyes of his Aide] (Moscow: Rossika-Zevs, 1993); Anatoly S.Chernyaev, *Shest' let s Gorbachevym* [My Six Years with Gorbachev] (Moscow: Izdatel'skaya gruppa Progress-Kultura, 1993); I.V.Bystrova, *Voenno-promyshlennyi kompleks SSSR v gody kholodnoi voiny. (Vtoraya polovina 40-kh—nachalo 60-kh godov)* [The Military-Industrial Complex of the USSR in the Cold War (Second Half of the 1940s–Beginning of the 1960s)] (Moscow: Institut rossiyskoi istorii RAN, 2000); Aleksandr Yakovlev, *Omut pamyati* [Whirlpool of Memories] (Moscow: Vagrius, 2000).
- 3 Among dozens who abuse this approach, Robert English, *Russia and the Idea of the West: Gorbachev, Intellectuals, and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), is particularly egregious in that he treats virtually all 'ideas' as effective, constructive and desirable, drawing no significant distinctions or tying a particular idea as the cause of a particular effect. Andrew Bennett, *Condemned to Repetition?: The Rise, Fall, and Reprise of Soviet-Russian Military Intervention 1973–1996* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), tries unsuccessfully to link ideas as causes and to policy effects.
- 4 Brown, *Gorbachev Factor*, is the leading but by no means the only hagiographer.
- 5 See Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), for this so-called 'constructivist thinking' in international relations theory.
- 6 For example, Brooks and Wohlforth, 'Power, Globalization, and the End of the Cold War.'
- 7 Roeder, *Red Sunset*, offers one the earliest examples.
- 8 I am using 'institutional matrix' in the same sense as Douglass North uses it in his two books, *Structure and Change in Economic History* (New York: W.W.Norton, 1981), and *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

- 9 See W.E.Odom, 'Soviet Politics and After', *World Politics*, vol. 45, no. 1 (1992): 66–98, for my explanation as to why this is true.
- 10 The issue of whether to forgo near-term military power in order to have more modern and better military forces in the future, of course, remained a thorny question for Soviet policy-makers, but the overall priority they put on military power in the First Five-Year Plan has been grossly overlooked in the literature on Soviet economic history. See David R.Stone, *Hammer and Rifle: The Militarization of the Soviet Union, 1926–1933* (Lawrence, KS: Kansas University Press, 2000), for a revisionist view.
- 11 This did not mean, however, that immediate priority went to production of weaponry and mobilizing forces. Soviet party and military leaders understood well that they needed modern military forces to defeat Western militaries, and that required forgoing near-term military capabilities while industrialization proceeded to a point where very modern military capabilities could be provided. On this point, see William E.Odom, 'Soviet Military Force Posture', *Problems of Communism*, vol. 34, no. 4 (July/August 1985):2–4.
- 12 See Janos Kornai, *The Socialist System: The Political Economy of Communism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), and Mancur Olson, *Power and Prosperity: Outgrowing Communist and Capitalist Dictatorships* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), for general theories of why this was true.
- 13 See North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance*, Ch. 7. Capturing major gains from trade and commerce, North demonstrates, requires that the state play a neutral third-party enforcement role. Most often it behaves as a 'discriminating monopolist', exchanging property rights and advantages for the best revenue deals it can get, producing inefficient property rights and higher transaction costs. The latter role, which may be called 'first-party enforcement', yields poor economic performance.
- 14 See Margaret Levi, *Of Rule and Revenue* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), especially Ch. 6, on why the costs of tax collection vary in this way.
- 15 Olson, *Power and Prosperity*, pp. 111–35.
- 16 After several years of overestimating Soviet economic performance, the CIA published a shocking report in 1962 to the effect that the growth rate could not be more than 2 per cent. In fact, that was still probably too high.
- 17 See William E.Odom, 'The Riddle of Soviet Military Spending', *Russia*, vol. 2 (1981):53–7, in which I explain that Andrei Sakharov put it at about 40 per cent and two analysts using pseudonyms, Aleksandr Gol'tz and Sergei Ozerov, put the figure between 41 per cent and 51 per cent. The absence of market prices in the Soviet economy, of course, made a precise estimate impossible, even for the state. These observers, therefore, were using rough estimates based on evidence that they did not fully clarify.
- 18 Ibid. Also see Myron Rush, 'Guns over Butters in Soviet Policy', *International Security*, vol. 7, no. 3 (Winter, 1982/83):167–97, who argues that consumption was cut to keep the military budget rising in the late 1970s.
- 19 William T.Lee, *The Estimation of Soviet Defense Expenditures, 1955–75: An Unconventional Approach* (New York: Praeger, 1977), a former employee of the CIA and DIA, insisted that 18 per cent was the most accurate estimate. For subsequent rethinking of the size of Soviet military outlays, see Henry S.Rowen and Charles Wolf, Jr (eds), *The Impoverished Superpower* (San Francisco, CA: ICS Press, 1990). Clifford G.Gaddy, *The Price of the Past: Russia's Struggle with the Legacy of Militarized Economy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1996), is an excellent post-mortem on the larger issues of the Soviet military burden.
- 20 Robert K.Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: The Free Press, 1968), p. 253, explains goal displacement; Philip Selznick, *TVA and the Grass Roots* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1953), pp. 21–4, declares it to be the central paradox of bureaucracy.



- 21 For an elaboration on the purge phenomenon, see Z.K.Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge—Politics in Soviet Totalitarianism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956).
- 22 See Z.K.Brzezinski (ed.), *Dilemmas of Change in Soviet Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), for a group of essays debating ‘transformation’ versus ‘degeneration’, originally published in the journal *Problems of Communism*. Of 18 authors, four forecast ‘collapse’, and four others forecast ‘degeneration’ but were less certain that ‘collapse’ would occur. Also see Odom, ‘Soviet Politics and After’, for a reflection on the record of models of Soviet politics.
- 23 See C.J.Friedrich and Z.K.Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (New York, Praeger, 1961), for the classic definition of this regime-type. Yakovlev, *Omut pamyati*, pp. 357–80, explains the system’s dynamic as ‘dual power’, meaning that the leader played off the party against the KGB and vice-versa. This thesis is entirely compatible with the Friedrich-Brzezinski analysis of party leadership struggles and the role of purges for system revitalization.
- 24 Yakovlev, *Omut pamyati*, Ch. 11, is particularly insightful about this point.
- 25 I.V.Bystrova, *Voенно-promyshlennyy kompleks SSSR* and Sergei Khrushchev, *Nikita Krushchev and the Creation of a Superpower* (State Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), offer several examples of this practice.
- 26 Historical Tables, Budget of the US Government, Executive Office of the President, Office of Management and Budget.
- 27 See Odom, *Collapse of the Soviet Military*, pp. 66–71. Both points, on ABMs and ICBMs, were made to the author by former senior Soviet officers.
- 28 Paul Pierson, ‘Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics’, *American Political Science Review*, vol. 94, no. 2 (2000):251–67.
- 29 North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance*, p. 99.
- 30 Chernyaev, *Shest’ let s Gorbachevym*; Shakhnazarov, *Tsena svobody*; Eduard Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom*, trans. Catherine A.Fitzpatrick (New York: The Free Press, 1991); Yakovlev, *Omut pamyati*.
- 31 A large literature on the ills of the Soviet economy existed by the mid-1980s. Less was known about the military ills, but a long literature known to specialists also existed. Both issues, of course, were politicized in the United States because how they were assessed affected US foreign and military policy-making. Social ills also had also been exposed by the 1980s, especially demographic and health problems.
- 32 Paul David, ‘Clio and the Economics of QWERTY’, *American Economic Review*, vol. 75, no. 3 (1985):332–7. Although doubt has been cast on David’s claim as to why the QWERTY keyboard was laid out as it is, the logic of his argument still holds: after large investments in typewriters with this keyboard had been made and equally large investments in training typists, the costs of starting over with a more efficient keyboard layout would cause most all business organizations and individuals to reject it.
- 33 North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance*, p. 7.
- 34 For a sample of such analysis, see H.Gordon Skilling and Franklyn Griffiths (eds), *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971). For a critique, see W.E.Odom. ‘Dissenting View on the Group Approach to Soviet Politics’, *World Politics*, vol. 28, no. 4 (1976):542–67.
- 35 Yakovlev, *Omut pamyati*.
- 36 Khrushchev, *Khrushchev and the Creation of a Superpower*, Ch. 7.
- 37 Bystrova, *Voенно-promyshlennyy kompleks SSSR*.
- 38 Shakhnazarov, *Tsena svobody*, pp. 80–95.
- 39 Odom, *Collapse of the Soviet Military*, pp. 88–94.
- 40 China is an exception, but its ‘New Thinking’ is different, and it has not yet extracted the regime for its lock-in to communist institutional path dependence. The Chinese leaders have

not forsworn violence or single-party rule or party discipline. If they do, the communist regime will likely fall, not transform.

- 41 See John Lewis Gaddis, 'International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War', *International Security*, vol. 17, no. 3 (Winter 1992/93), who began the debate in academic circles. Senator Moynihan publicly chided the CIA for failing to predict the collapse of the Soviet Union, prompting nonsensical answers.
- 42 Brown, *Gorbachev Factor*, and especially Stephen F. Cohen, *The Failed Crusade* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), fall into this category.
- 43 Chernyaev, Shakhnazarov and Yakovlev share, in different degrees, an ambivalence about Gorbachev, because at certain times he refused to take actions they believed would allow him to succeed with *perestroika*, but they are not always clear about what 'success' meant.
- 44 Molotov's critique of Khrushchev's Third Party Programme at the XXII Party Congress in 1961 sounded valid alarms about the implications of de-Stalinization. He clearly understood. The others listed here left no solid evidence of their comprehension, but their opposition to de-Stalinization suggests they might have.
- 45 See Brzezinski, *Dilemmas of Change in Soviet Politics*, p. 157. From a group of 18 observers, four predicted degeneration and collapse, four predicted degeneration without collapse, and ten anticipated some kind of muddling through. Strangely, Brzezinski was hesitant about collapse although very strong in his prediction of degeneration, but he later anticipated collapse by two years in his *The Grand Failure*.
- 46 Thane Gustafson and Dawn Mann, 'Gorbachev's First Year', *Problems of Communism* vol. 35 (No. 5, 1986):1-18.
- 47 Mikhail S. Gorbachev, *Perestroika I novoe myshlenie dlya nashei strany is dlya vsego mira* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1987), pp. 149-51. Exact quote on p. 150. Also in English translation: M.S. Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), pp. 144-9. Exact quote on p. 146.
- 48 See Shakhnazarov, *Tsena svobody*, p. 94, who reports Gorbachev's rejection of both his advice and Chernyaev's to let the Baltic republics leave the USSR. 'I can't concede to them...that will have to be without me', he told them. That position, of course, provided the opening for Yeltsin to destroy Gorbachev by becoming the leader of the national independence movements throughout the USSR.
- 49 W.E. Odom, 'How Far Can Soviet Reform Go?', *Problems of Communism*, vol. 36, no. 6 (1987):28. At the time I wrote this, I was not yet convinced that Gorbachev was suicidal enough to continue on his course.
- 50 Valery Boldin, *Ten Years that Shook the World* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), p. 23.
- 51 Odom, *Collapse of the Soviet Military*, pp. 90, 439. These conversations occurred six months apart.
- 52 Yakovlev, *Omut pamyati*. Such analysis, of course, does not prove that he was to blame for the actions that led to the Soviet Union's demise. Thought and action are not the same, and 'guilt' before a court of Western law requires actions, not just thoughts about an alleged crime.
- 53 Shakhnazarov, *Tsena svobody*.
- 54 Gorbachev's uncritical admirer Stephen F. Cohen cannot deal with this prospect because it destroys much of his analysis of the Soviet system. See *The Failed Crusade*.
- 55 To be sure, there are big differences among all of these countries and the Soviet Union, but they share the Soviet regime-type. I have made the argument elsewhere that a major reason for most Western Sovietologists being surprised at the collapse of the Soviet Union was the popular assumption that it was 'transforming' into a more liberal type when actually it was decaying, see Odom, 'Soviet Politics and After'. Regime-types have their own internal dynamics, and they seldom transform. They more often continue to muddle along indefinitely or decay and are replaced either by revolutions or collapse. We have no example of a country with the Soviet regime-type that has successfully transformed, including China,

which may prove to be the exception but has not yet. Recently, it has been showing signs of facing an internal political crisis that could produce major turmoil. See Minxin Pei, 'China's Governance Crisis', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 81, no. 5 (2002):96–121. We also can see that every one that collapsed did so from the top down, not from broad political forces upsetting it from below. Poland may seem an exception, but its Solidarity trade-union movement arose after it was clear that the Polish Communist Party leaders were not willing to spill the blood necessary to smash it. In the other Warsaw Pact states, Gorbachev unhinged the leadership by opposing crackdowns against political opposition and mass resistance.

56 Cohen, *Failed Crusade*, is among the more vocal believers in a painless alternative. His description of it, however, is too vague to assess. This is typical of most others who share his view.

57 See Odom, *Collapse of the Soviet Military*, Ch. 14, for much more detail on the behaviour of those involved in the August crisis.

58 Ibid., pp. 353–5. Marshal Shaposhnikov describes a meeting in early November with Gorbachev alone, where he invited the military to take power. The chief of the general staff, General Lobov, who was ousted by Yeltsin in early December, may well have been invited to do the same after Shaposhnikov declined.

59 Peter Chaadaev, 'First Philosophical Letter', in Marc Raeff (ed.), *Russian Intellectual History: An Anthology* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1966), p. 160.

60 Samuel P. Huntington, 'Reform and Stability in South Africa', *International Security*, vol. 6, no. 4 (1982):11. Writing before South African leaders ended apartheid, Huntington was explaining why and how they should do it.

61 Odom, 'How Far Can Soviet Reform Go?'

## The Messianic Character of 'New Thinking': Why and What For?

*Jacques Lévesque*

Here are the basic arguments that will be developed in this chapter:

(1) Soviet 'New Thinking' and the leading ideas of *perestroika* must be understood as an ideology of transition, driving and legitimizing a process of social democratization that was never completed.

(2) To be sure, that process was not intended and understood as such by its proponents, and above all not by Gorbachev. For them, it was meant to lead to a totally new form of socialism, qualitatively superior to Western social democracy, and to bring about a fundamentally new world order.

(3) This process was not a new phenomenon in the history of the world communist movement. There are other cases which bear similar features; so strikingly similar in fact that it is possible to speak of a systemic pattern of change for Marxist-Leninist parties.

(4) The momentum of such a process of ideological and political change is always characterized by a very high degree of messianism and idealism, which are necessary components.

(5) This idealism and its basic tenets are crucial to understanding foreign-policy orientations that were unprecedented in a great power. These basic foreign-policy orientations defied many expectations based on the realist theories of international relations and that is why they consistently surprised the world.

(6) Clarifying the sources of this unexpected behaviour from a great power is of course essential to understanding why the Cold War ended so peacefully.

Let me now try to develop these ideas in a broader and more articulated perspective.

### *The Limited Explanatory Power of Realist Theories*

Even though I will stress here the decisive role of ideas in shaping the Soviet foreign policy that led to the end of the Cold War, I certainly do not consider realist theories of international relations to be irrelevant for explaining the end of the East-West confrontation. Indeed, the general structure of material capabilities on both sides of the East-West relationship was also a decisive factor for a change in Soviet foreign policy. I would say that it was the most basic factor. There is no doubt that the shift in Soviet foreign policy was determined and impelled by the growing gap between the Soviet Union's economic performance and its foreign and defence commitments. This argument can be put in very simple and compelling terms: if the Soviet economy had been performing well (in comparative terms) and if the USSR had been catching up with the

United States in the global competition for power, it is inconceivable that the ideas and policies of Gorbachev's team and the reformist think tanks would have prevailed in a political system based on the USSR's ideology and traditions. As a matter of fact, Gorbachev and all the members of his entourage explicitly recognized at the time that their foreign policy was a quest for a way out of the logjam in which the USSR was trapped.<sup>1</sup>

Let us guard against simplifications. For example, we know that many Reagan supporters claim that his Third World and armament policies played a decisive role in bringing about the 'New Thinking' in Soviet foreign policy. While those policies did play a role, it was a limited and mixed one. They may have heightened the reformers' awareness of the deadlock in which the USSR was caught. But in 1986, for instance, when Gorbachev's concessions for an INF (Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces) treaty were met by escalating US demands, Reagan's policy fed traditional Soviet views of the enemy and made it more difficult for Gorbachev to prevail. In this context, Gorbachev already needed to have a keen awareness of the USSR's predicament. Ultimately, it is in the internal conditions of the Soviet system that one finds the most compelling reason for *perestroika*: the slowly but constantly declining performance of the Soviet economy since the mid-1960s. For this, the Reagan administration can claim little credit.

If the USSR's predicament did call for a change in Soviet foreign policy, it in no way determined the specific change that took place. It did not even make necessary a fundamental change of course. Many sorts and degrees of adjustment could have been opted for. Some Western observers had predicted a more aggressive and dangerous foreign policy as a result of the weakening of the USSR's international positions.<sup>2</sup>

What is remarkable about the end of the Cold War is not so much that it took place. Rather, it is its entirely peaceful character that makes it such an extraordinary phenomenon in modern history. It is the ideas and the ideological assumptions that guided and shaped Soviet foreign policy under Gorbachev that made this outcome possible. That is why it is both important and useful to try to understand their underlying meaning and their operative power. I think, therefore, that realist theories of international relations are largely irrelevant in accounting for the tenets and the meaning of the so-called 'New Thinking'.

### *An Ideology of Transition: The Critical Function of the Vestiges of Leninism*

'New Thinking' was the vision of the world, or the international component, of what I propose to call an ideology of transition. As such, it could not suddenly spring up as the dominant ideology of the Soviet Union. But this did happen quite rapidly, three years after the decisive event of Gorbachev's accession to power. By 1988, he had succeeded in fully consolidating his power, relying more and more on the intellectual think tanks where 'New Thinking' had been brewing for years.<sup>3</sup> So, by 1988, its basic features were identifiable as inspiring and driving the foreign-policy orientations of the Soviet Union.

As part of an ideology of transition, the new Soviet vision of the world and of the USSR's role and capacities still had very distinctive Leninist characteristics. The basic thrust of Soviet foreign policy bore the stamp of a Promethean and messianic ambition to

reshape the world order. Gorbachev and his team were convinced that they had understood, if not discovered, basic new 'objective' processes and trends emerging in the world, which allowed for the construction of an entirely new international order more advantageous to the USSR. In typically Leninist and voluntaristic fashion, they then overestimated the USSR's ability to shape and channel the course of international events. This Leninist sense of historical necessity and of messianic mission is important for explaining the depth of Gorbachev's commitment, and his determination to hold his course when, shortly before 1990, his policies led to dramatic setbacks and to open accusations of pursuing illusions.

If 'New Thinking' had a distinct Leninist tint and impulse, its contents and the goals it promoted departed from Leninism. The general or 'programmatic' thesis that the world was becoming ever more integrated acted as a framework or base for most of the conceptual changes and new policies. Soviet theoreticians and political leaders thereby echoed an established school of thought in international relations in the West. This school had, for years, argued against the tenets of the so-called 'realist' paradigm, pointing to the process of internationalization in economic and technological development, the formation of a world political culture and the evolution of international institutions and organizations. All of these factors, they held, were replacing the traditional power of nations in the international balance of power as the fundamental principle of the world order.<sup>4</sup> In the new Soviet approach, this trend was bound to moderate and supersede class struggle and the traditional antagonisms between social and political systems.

Before we turn to more specific aspects of the new Soviet vision of the world and to the USSR's role that derived from that general assumption, it must be stressed that this assumption and its broader implications were a direct reflection of the goals the new leadership of the USSR had adopted in terms of transforming Soviet society. This is not simply to say that the needs of domestic politics were dictating the approach and content of foreign policy. I mean that the Soviet view of world processes was a mirror image of what Gorbachev and his team intended to achieve within the USSR. By incrementally transforming the Soviet economic and political system through the introduction of market mechanisms leading to a mixed economy, and by ushering in a strong degree of democratization, they wanted to bring about a fundamentally new form of socialism that would keep the best features of the Soviet social system and take the best of Western liberal democracies. In short, Gorbachev and those around him were searching for a new synthesis between socialism and democracy, with the conviction that it could be found. For Gorbachev, this new socialism was to be qualitatively different and superior to the Western social-democratic variant of capitalism. Though Western social democracy was considered a closer kin than ever before, Gorbachev certainly did not see himself as a social democrat. I would characterize Gorbachev at the peak of his power as a mutant: no longer a Leninist but not yet a social democrat. The trend and the process of his search were, however, leading him in that direction. In searching for a qualitatively new socialism, the forms and contents of that socialism became more elastic, eclectic and elusive. That is why I speak of *perestroika* and 'New Thinking' as an ideology of transition, even though many Soviet reformers, and above all Gorbachev, did not see it that way. Gorbachev was convinced that his undertaking was giving new life and a new attraction to the ideals of the October Revolution, and salvaging its legacy. It is clear that he was not simply paying lip service to Lenin when he constantly referred to

*perestroika*'s kinship with the October Revolution.<sup>5</sup> This is important for understanding the messianic character of Soviet foreign policy, which explains much of its dynamics and the difficulty of reversing it, once it had gained momentum.

*An Ideology of Transition: The Growing Social-Democratic Orientation*

Let us turn back to the contents of 'New Thinking' and what it means for understanding the basic orientations of Soviet foreign policy, with the purpose of emphasizing not only its ambitious agenda but also some of its incredibly idealistic expectations. To put it in a nutshell, the Soviet programme for international affairs was one of universal reconciliation. In Gorbachev's own words, this reconciliation would stem from the trend towards an increasingly 'interdependent, interconnected and integrated' world,<sup>6</sup> which called for 'mutual security' through disarmament based on 'reasonable sufficiency', and a renunciation of the use of force in international affairs. A new international order was to be built through the strengthening of international organizations and gradual transfers of national sovereignty.

For Europe, the following scenario was contemplated. The division of Europe was to be gradually overcome through a controlled rapprochement of its two parts, at three distinct but inter-related levels: military, economic and societal.<sup>7</sup> At the first two levels, the rapprochement was to be conducted through bloc-to-bloc negotiations between the Warsaw Pact and NATO and between the CMEA (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) and the EEC (European Economic Community). The Warsaw Pact and NATO would not disappear, but rather would be 'de-antagonized' through disarmament and serve as an infrastructure for the construction of a new pan-European security system built on a strengthened and institutionalized CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe).<sup>8</sup>

The third level was obviously not a matter for negotiation. But Gorbachev's reformist advisers believed that a significant degree of democratization in the Soviet Union and East European societies was a crucial ingredient for overcoming the division of Europe and building the so-called 'Common European Home'. At the same time, with the disappearance of global confrontation and a resulting erosion of anti-communism, the democratic left in the West would make headway towards greater socialization, yielding a new, more convergent and more integrated world.

Bringing the two parts of Europe together was seen by Soviet reformers as involving a symbiotic relationship between the two adversaries. In other words, from the Soviet point of view, the West would have itself to undergo an evolution, even if its scope was not expected to be as great. While communist parties were losing ground throughout western Europe, Gorbachev and his advisers believed that a much broader left, going well beyond those parties, would definitely gain greater influence, in large measure as a result of the changes transforming the USSR's domestic and foreign policies. The Soviet leaders counted on such consequences, especially in West Germany.

The experience of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and its evolution from the mid-1970s is extremely useful for understanding what I would call the genetic code of the Soviet ideological transformation. I will return to this point at greater length, but I want to use it here only to illustrate what Soviet reformers wanted to see happen in Europe. At

the time of the 'Historic Compromise', the PCI had already renounced the idea of triumphing over the capitalist enemy. In a balance of power that appeared to be more advantageous than that in the USSR of the 1920s, it proposed a new relationship with its adversary, through which the PCI expected to be able to transform its opponent, while also accepting transformation itself. The PCI was convinced that, in the process, it could keep the best of itself.

What the most reformist Soviet officials envisaged at the end of 1988 was somewhat similar to the old Western idea of convergence that had currency in the 1960s. One Soviet analyst, for example, wrote that the future pan-European security system 'will not be socially or politically homogeneous despite a growing similarity' between its constituent parts. In this regard, he invoked the 'socialization' of capitalism in western Europe and the 'growth of political democracy in East Europe'.<sup>9</sup>

### *Beyond the Economic Needs of Disarmament*

This view of the world was not disconnected from the pursuit of concrete Soviet interests and needs. It provided the framework and the ultimate goals by which the Soviet leaders believed these interests would be better served; and it definitely shaped the way they were actually pursued.

Let me give one major example concerning disarmament. Gorbachev and his reformist entourage had fully realized the growing costs and burden of Soviet military power and the limits of what it could achieve. They sought to disengage the USSR from the arms race and from confrontation with the West. This is both true and trivial. What is important for understanding the course of events is the way these goals were pursued and the expected results which made it possible to pursue them in a Soviet context.

In order to be acceptable to the new Soviet leaders themselves, disarmament had to engage the United States. (In a similar way, Soviet disengagement from Third World conflicts had to strengthen the United Nations and multilateralism, not leave the field to the United States.)

To set in motion a process of arms reduction, Gorbachev made a series of unilateral concessions, the size of which was unprecedented in the history of arms control. One can speak of a controlled avalanche of concessions, which were meant to press and draw the United States into a process of disarmament. This unprecedented behaviour by what was still a stable superpower was also meant to make a strong and powerful impression on world public opinion. And it did—very much so.<sup>10</sup> It also succeeded in putting the United States on the defensive. In making unilateral concessions, Gorbachev planned to recoup on the political playing field the military ground he was surrendering. He was convinced that by paying a concrete price to capture the mind of a world obsessed by the fear of nuclear destruction, he could give the USSR a new role of political and moral leadership in world affairs.<sup>11</sup> One could say that, in typically Leninist fashion, Gorbachev was trying to transform a relative weakness into a source of power. The new USSR's political capital was to be used to help bring about a world order, seen as already in the making, which would better serve its interests and influence.



*A Communist Legitimation of the Power of Ideas (and Intellectuals)*

Astounding as it may be, it is quite clear that Gorbachev, his advisers and the intellectuals who supported and nourished his policies, ascribed great power to the role of ideas. In this respect, two analysts of Soviet foreign policy in the Gorbachev era have demonstrated convincingly how it was influenced by the theoretical legacy of Antonio Gramsci, one of the founders of the Italian Communist Party.<sup>12</sup> The strategy Gramsci suggested to his party was based on an analysis of the causes of the socialist revolution's defeat in Italy and the West in the early 1920s, as opposed to the Bolshevik victory in Russia. He began by stating that a fundamental difference existed between East and West. The weak development of civil society in Russia, he noted, meant that the state 'was everything' and conquering it was sufficient for carrying out the revolution. The situation was completely different in the West, where civil society formed an even stronger line of defence for the established order than the state. As a result, the party had to concentrate its efforts on gaining positions of power throughout civil society. In order to establish its position in the areas of culture and ideas, and in social organizations, it had to take into account the great aspirations of the largest segments of society, beyond the realm of merely economic interests. Gramsci paid particular attention to intellectuals, who would have a central role to play in creating the new 'historical bloc'.<sup>13</sup>

The worldview of many of those who influenced Gorbachev was indeed inspired by Gramscian teachings.<sup>14</sup> In order to reinforce the tendencies towards global integration, the basis for consensus in the emerging global political culture needed to be enlarged. This was the source of the qualitatively new importance that was given to international public opinion, to ideas and to intellectuals.

In their search for the foundations of a consensus, the Soviets borrowed extensively from currents of Western thinking to formulate the most central elements of their 'New Thinking'. Even the very term 'New Thinking' was attributed by numerous Soviet authors to Albert Einstein.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the concepts of 'reasonable sufficiency' (justifying unilateral concessions for disarmament), 'non-offensive defence', and 'common security' were borrowed from recommendations made by the Palme commission (headed by Olof Palme, former Social Democrat prime minister of Sweden) to the United Nations at the beginning of the 1980s. Other elements came from the North-South programme developed under the leadership of Willy Brandt, ex-Chancellor of Germany and a fellow Social Democrat. The Soviets did not try to hide their sources of inspiration; on the contrary, they used them to support their point that 'New Thinking' was an approach and programme which transcended the two state systems. By drawing upon the ideas of Europe's social democrats and liberal thinkers in the United States and Europe, the Soviets believed that they were contributing to the emergence of a new 'historical bloc' at the international level. It might be added that it was not only for heuristic reasons that Antonio Gramsci was a major inspiration for Soviet reformers. He considered the role of intellectuals and the mobilization of ideas to be very important; since the majority of Soviet reformers were intellectuals, Gramsci legitimated and comforted them, both socially and politically.

*The Use of Force as a Taboo*

The most remarkable departure from Leninism in the Gorbachev years is to be found in Soviet practice rather than in the realm of ideas, though it is related to them. It is the refusal to use force directly or indirectly to maintain Soviet positions in Eastern Europe in 1989. Given past Soviet practice, the whole world was holding its breath when the Berlin Wall fell and in the following weeks.

When one thinks of the weighty tradition of violence in the Soviet system and the enormous size of the repressive apparatus, the refusal to use force in domestic politics as well is even more startling. In this case, balance-of-power considerations cannot provide even the beginning of an explanation.

Of course, in domestic politics the non-use of force was not as clear a rule as in foreign affairs. One could mention, for instance, the bloody repression in Lithuania and Latvia at the beginning of 1991. But given the importance of what was at stake, these incidents were so minor that they actually tend to confirm the rule. Even Western democracies are willing to resort to violence to preserve their territorial integrity or the existence of the state. The reluctance of Gorbachev and his entourage to use violence and repression is so striking that it reveals a fundamental option and a clear will to break with the worst aspects of the Soviet past. It was so strong that it did weigh on the behaviour of the putschists of August 1991. These were not genuine Stalinists. They emerged from the right wing of Gorbachev's circle of associates and blinked when they realized that significant bloodshed would be necessary for their coup to succeed.

In the realm of foreign policy, when the world socialist system was at stake in Eastern Europe, not only was force not used, but not even the most veiled threat to use force was issued. The Soviet leaders again believed they were buying political capital by this deliberate choice. They not only thought that, by this show of good will, they would strengthen confidence in their foreign policy goals in the West, but they believed it would also help the USSR retain some influence in Eastern Europe.<sup>16</sup>

I like to cite a small fact that is very striking and tells much about the Soviet approach at that time. Before the Malta summit of 3 December, which took place while the East German regime was unravelling, a post-summit meeting had been planned between Gorbachev and the other Warsaw Pact leaders, so that he could report to them. Through confidential diplomatic channels, Egon Krenz and Hans Modrow proposed holding the meeting in Berlin. In a note to Gorbachev, Georgi Shakhnazarov advised him to decline the invitation, claiming that, under the circumstances of events in Berlin, a Warsaw Pact summit there 'would be seen as a type of show of force'.<sup>17</sup>

The desire to avoid even such a muted display of force is rather extraordinary. It shows how the ideological taboo and assumptions concerning the use of force had become an operative political instrument. It flies in the face of expectations based on realist theories of international relations. Considered from the point of view of power relationships, if a state considers the use of force to be too costly, the least it can be expected to do to protect its interests is to impress opponents or would-be opponents with the forces at its disposal.

The dominance of realist theories has led many observers, including major East European actors, to believe that Gorbachev had decided to give up Eastern Europe, as a costly and cumbersome burden, in favour of a strategic retrenchment on the USSR itself.<sup>18</sup> All the evidence shows that this explanation is way off the mark.<sup>19</sup>

Giving too much or exclusive explanatory weight to power relationships may lead us to believe that the Soviet view of the world and of the role of the USSR under Gorbachev was simply a vast exercise in making a virtue of necessity, or a rationalization for policies that were simply a pragmatic adjustment to the USSR's declining power and capacities. This would be a one-dimensional and reductionist interpretation obscuring rather than clarifying many important aspects of Soviet behaviour. Soviet policies cannot be simply characterized as pragmatic. Pragmatism can mean too many different things at the same time. As for the pursuit of its interests, much depends on the way these interests are perceived. If the reformist Soviet leaders' perceptions of the USSR's interests influenced their reading of the international environment and trends, with much wishful thinking, the reverse is also true to a considerable extent. In other words, their view of the world also shaped the redefinition of their interests and, above all, of the best way to pursue those interests.

How, then, can we better account for the extraordinary degree of idealism that helped shape the foreign policy which led to the end of the Cold War?

### *Social Democratization as a Historical Pattern*

In characterizing 'New Thinking' as part of an ideology of transition going along with a process of social democratization, I wanted to stress that it is not merely a product of chance in modern history.

There are historical precedents for the social democratization of Marxist and Leninist parties and these precedents illuminate many attributes of Soviet 'New Thinking' and foreign-policy directions. So much so, that it is tempting to speak of a systemic pattern of change. Let us turn to some of these precedents.

At the beginning of the twentieth century reformism had already begun to make headway in the Marxist mass parties that advocated proletarian revolution. The polarization that resulted from the split in the world socialist movement promoted by Lenin accelerated the reformist transformation of those parties that refused to follow the Bolshevik lead. Since one of the main *raison d'être* of the Marxist-Leninist parties was precisely the struggle against reformism and what had become social democracy, the process of social democratization was much slower to reach them. It did, however, and took specific forms in their case. In western Europe, it reached the Spanish and the Italian Communist Parties, for instance, in the 1970s. In Eastern Europe, it first reached the most European of the ruling communist parties, the Polish party in 1956 and the Czechoslovak party in 1968. In both of these cases, it was interrupted by Soviet pressure and threats, or direct repression.

Historical experience shows that the critical phase of the social democratization of a Leninist party is always characterized by a high degree of political idealism and a grand vision of the world to come. This is clearly not a matter of chance. Having been shaped by a global, articulated vision of the world and social processes, and also imbued with an

heroic mission, Leninist parties cannot abandon their old standards without pursuing new, even more promising, objectives that are as galvanizing as those which have become out of reach or largely discredited. Therefore, what is sought is not a banal social-democratic approach or model.

In this respect and many others, the experience of the biggest Western communist party, the Italian party, which was the chief proponent of Eurocommunism, is most telling. Berlinguer and the PCI wanted to bring about a fundamentally new model of socialism, as did the Soviet party under Gorbachev. The PCI called it 'la terza via', a third way between the Soviet model and the modest goals of the standard Western social-democratic parties. It was supposed to be a creative synthesis of the social merits of socialism and the virtues of Western democracy, which was epitomized in the very word 'Eurocommunism'. In a similar vein, Alexander Dubček, during the Prague Spring of 1968, claimed he was developing a brand new socialism, which was to be a synthesis of plan and market. As his supporters used to say, what the West lacks is socialism and what the East lacks is democracy.

Like Gorbachev and Dubček, Berlinguer did not perceive himself as a social democrat, even though his policies were leading in that direction. He was annoyed when some Italian newspapers described him as a closet social democrat and even saw it as something of an insult.<sup>20</sup> Some of his advisors had fewer problems with being branded as social democrats. The same could be said of some of the intellectual reformers around Gorbachev, though many of them did think of themselves as communists.<sup>21</sup>

The highly ambitious and idealistic project that serves as a vehicle for the social-democratization process fulfils a functional need. It is extremely useful, if not necessary, to disarm or neutralize the opponents of change. At the same time, it galvanizes the will and energy of its proponents for the momentous and risky transformation they undertake.

### *A Soviet 'Historic Compromise'*

The Soviet vision of the future of the world order in Europe and of the ways to achieve it is so strikingly similar to what the PCI was advocating by the end of the 1970s that it seems like a carbon copy. The PCI insisted that, if it became part of the government with the Christian Democrats under the 'Historic Compromise', Italy would remain in NATO. The basic security interests of the United States had to be respected for it to accept a significant advance of the left in western Europe.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, the USSR had to accept advances towards democratization in Eastern Europe within the Warsaw Pact. In this way, the two alliances were to be preserved but incrementally 'de-antagonized', and would not be obstacles to convergent political and social transformations. That is why the PCI so vehemently condemned Soviet support for General Jaruzelski's coup and the suppression of the *Solidarnosc* (Solidarity) movement in Poland in 1981. Some very strong accusations were made. The USSR was accused of blocking social progress not only in the East but also in the West by increasing East-West tensions. It was even argued that there was something threatening in the political structure of the Soviet and East European regimes, which not only impeded the implementation of adequate solutions but were a recurrent source of more and more severe crises and therefore a threat to peace in Europe.<sup>23</sup>

As in the case of the Soviet Union under Gorbachev, the Italian Communist Party under Berlinguer expected and promoted a growing osmosis between the forces of the left in Europe. Though he did not see his party as social democratic, Berlinguer had proclaimed that the split between the two major components of the European left had been historically transcended. The West German Social Democratic Party (SPD) was its main partner in creating a so-called 'Euro-Left'.<sup>24</sup>

The Soviet messianic conviction that a new synthesis between socialism and democracy as well as between plan and market would be a fresh start not only for the USSR but for socialism in Europe was also shared by the Czechoslovak Communist Party in 1968. The leaders of the Prague Spring claimed that their course of action was greatly increasing socialism's power of attraction in western Europe. The claim was by no means devoid of foundation. That is why the PCI loudly denounced the Soviet military intervention and afterwards maintained much closer relations with the repressed proponents of the Prague Spring than with the pro-Soviet Czechoslovak regime.

How, then, can we better explain why the Soviet leadership under Gorbachev adopted core ideas so similar to those of Eurocommunism and the Prague Spring? One explanation lies in the networks through which these ideas circulate and gain influence. Gorbachev himself declared: 'This project of Eurocommunism has been a very important stage and played an unquestionable role in our passing over to reforms, democracy and freedom.'<sup>25</sup>

Among Gorbachev's advisers, there was what Soviet observers themselves have called a 'Czechoslovak lobby' or a 'Prague Club', which had a very favourable view of Dubček's policies and those of the Italian party. This circle was made up of intellectuals and cadres who had served in Prague at the headquarters of the international communist movement's journal, *Problems of Peace and Socialism*, between the mid-1960s and early 1970s. There they had been in frequent contact with the intellectual leaders of the Italian Communist Party. Among its members were Anatolii Chernyaev, Gorbachev's first assistant for international affairs, Gennadi Gerasimov, his official spokesman, and other key advisers like Georgi Shakhnazarov and Vadim Zagladin.

I have tried to research the direct influence and importance of the PCI and Eurocommunism on Gorbachev's entourage. I got different answers from different actors. Cherniyaev acknowledges a network of relations between Italian communists and Soviet reformers, while Shakhnazarov says that the importance of this factor on the course of Soviet foreign policy should not be exaggerated. He insists more on the *sui generis* character of the Soviet reformist course, as a matter of objective necessity.<sup>26</sup>

I do believe that Shakhnazarov's view complements rather than contradicts the importance of the influence of ideas and other examples of social-democratization processes. That is why I think one can speak of this process of departing from the goals and practice of Leninism as a pattern having systemic characteristics, aside from imitation.

Of course, this is not to say that it is the only path a Leninist party can take in order to adapt to compelling necessities. It is an exclusively European one, and that is why the European idea of democracy plays such a crucial role in its development. Marxism was born in western Europe as a product of its search for democracy. What became the European core ideas and practice of democracy did catch up with Marxism, and later with Leninism. They ultimately reached the heartland of Leninism, Russia itself. It may be

seen as a significant milestone in Russia's long and tortuous quest for Europe, and as a vindication of its recurrent claim to be a part of Europe.

### *Socialism and Democracy*

Gorbachev and his team were convinced that a reformed and more democratic socialism was possible not only in the USSR but also in Eastern Europe, even though they knew it involved much greater risk there. However, they thought that an injection of democracy could redeem the influence of the communist parties. That is why they advised them against repressive measures even when their power was challenged.

Soviet tolerance of the dramatic changes that took place in Eastern Europe in 1989, such as the opening of the Berlin Wall, was the most decisive landmark in the process leading to the end of the Cold War. In my research on the explanations for Soviet tolerance, I found that the expectation of a reformed socialism was important for understanding Soviet acceptance of and even encouragement for the momentous changes that took place in Poland and Hungary in the first part of 1989. While those communist parties were transforming themselves, they still had a real possibility of keeping the key role and influence in the political life of their countries. But in September, the Polish communists had lost their dominant place in the government. In the weeks that followed the opening of the Berlin Wall, not only did the Communist Party not regain the initiative, but the regime was unravelling. At the end of November the Czechoslovak Communist Party was clearly losing power. Therefore, I wondered when Gorbachev and his advisers had realized that the prospect of a reformed socialism in Eastern Europe was doomed. I was struck and puzzled when reading a sentence (in italics) Gorbachev had written in his memoirs referring to a meeting that took place after all the events mentioned above. A long quote is warranted here:

The last time I met Ceaușescu was on December 4, 1989. The representatives of the Warsaw Pact had gathered on my initiative... There were many new faces... I said [to Ceaușescu] that the process we were living through at the moment had a clearly democratic character, despite all of its contradictions and the pain it was engendering. *Due to this fact, there was no reason to fear the collapse or the end of socialism.*<sup>27</sup>

I had the opportunity to ask Gorbachev if this had been *a propos de circonstance* to appease Ceaușescu, or if he really believed at that point that reformed socialism still had a chance in Eastern Europe. He answered: 'Yes, at that moment, we believed that the guarantee of real freedom of choice and of real sovereignty in Central and East Europe would play in favour of socialism.' He added, rather defensively, referring to the situation in 1995: 'The objective course of events, including the most recent elections in a whole series of East European countries, fully confirms this conclusion.'<sup>28</sup>

One can see here the degree of elasticity that reformed socialism had acquired at that point: everything that was good for freedom and democracy was deemed to be good for socialism! As if socialism and democracy were bound to converge ultimately.<sup>29</sup> Quite clearly, at that stage, reformed socialism was much more a defensive than an offensive

weapon. It was certainly ineffectual for convincing sceptics, not to mention Ceauşescu, but it was crucial to Gorbachev as a way of rationalizing the unexpected turn of events. It helped him keep the bearings that had guided him up to that point. It was essential to enable him to continue along the path on which he had embarked. At the same time (and this is obvious from other sources) he largely failed or refused to understand the magnitude and direction of the changes that were then taking place in Eastern Europe.<sup>30</sup>

We have here a very forceful case of what Ned Lebow has called 'cognitive closure' or 'motivated bias' in explaining puzzling aspects of misperception in foreign-policy behaviour.<sup>31</sup> This refers to the psychological and cognitive mechanism by which 'when confronted with critical information' leaders may 'twist its meaning to make it consistent, explain it away, deny it or simply ignore it'. 'Cognitive closure' has generally been prevalent in the Soviet political system, which called for strong ideological consistency and made a virtue of it. But it was made particularly acute by the intense 'ideological battle' that was needed to bring about the momentous changes that Gorbachev's team was determined to force on a reluctant party apparatus. It is consistent with the observation that 'resistance to critical information increases in proportion' to a policy-maker's commitment to his course of action.<sup>32</sup>

### *The Failure of a Utopia Yields a Utopian Outcome*

As we have seen, the social democratization of a Leninist party and the accompanying ideas were not a new historical phenomenon. What was new was to have a superpower, armed to the teeth, pursuing such a utopian world order while making disarmament a key instrument to achieve it. Indeed, rarely in history have we seen the policy of a great power continue, throughout so many difficulties and reversals, to be guided by a such an idealistic view of the world, based on universal reconciliation, in which the image of the enemy was constantly blurring, to the point of making it practically disappear as the enemy. That is how the Cold War ended; and that is why no one predicted it would end that way.

Of course, I am not arguing that the basic ideas of 'New Thinking' that I have discussed here are the only or even the chief factor that shaped the Soviet foreign policy that led to end of the Cold War. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the balance of power and the economic and other impasses in which the USSR found itself drove it to change its foreign policy and persist in the course that was chosen. In many respects, domestic needs and politics and Gorbachev's idiosyncrasies also contributed to shaping other aspects of the USSR's foreign policy.

My claim is simply that the ideas, the goals and the dynamics built into the process of transformation that was taking place at the top of the Soviet leadership are indispensable for explaining the most remarkable and astounding aspect of the end of the Cold War: its entirely peaceful character.

The messianic character of Soviet foreign policy was not in vain. It provided for a redeeming outcome to the Cold War.

## NOTES

1 In an important internal speech to his ministry's officials, Eduard Shevardnadze said:

If the thesis that the goal of diplomacy is to create a favourable environment for domestic development is accurate—and, without a doubt, it is—we must recognize that our straggling behind and the constant decline of our stature is also partially our fault.

Outside of the borders of the USSR, you and I represent a country which, in the last 15 years, has constantly lost ground compared to other industrialized nations... We have frequently encouraged, and sometimes even caused, massive material investments in hopeless foreign policy projects, and we recommended actions which, either directly or indirectly, cost the people dearly, even up to now. Our principal duty is to ensure that our state does not incur additional expenses for the maintenance of its defence capabilities... This means that we must search for ways to limit and reduce the military rivalry, to eliminate elements of confrontation in our relations with other states, and to suppress conflicts and crisis situations... We must increase the profitability of our foreign policy and attempt to reach a situation where our interrelations with other states put the least possible burden on our economy.

See *Vestnik Ministerstva Inostrannykh Del SSSR*, 2, pp. 30–4 Moscow.

2 See, for instance, Edward Luttwak, *La stratégie de l'impérialisme soviétique* (Paris: Anthropos, 1985).

3 On the origins and development of 'New Thinking' in Soviet think tanks, see: Robert D. English, *Russia and the Idea of the West: Gorbachev, Intellectuals, and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

4 See V. Kubalkova and A. A. Cruickshank, *Thinking New about Soviet 'New Thinking'* (Berkeley, CA: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1989), pp. 63–70. On the emergence of a 'world community' and the meaning of this concept, see G. Morozov, 'Mirovoe soobshchestvo i sud'by mira' [The world community and the destiny of the world], *Mirovaia Ekonomika i Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniia*, vol. 10 (1986), pp. 3–16.

5 As recently as 1998, Gorbachev wrote: 'At the beginning, we, including myself, were saying that *perestroika* was a continuation of the October Revolution. This assertion was partly right and partly wrong. The truth is that we wanted to put into practice the ideas advanced by the October Revolution and never implemented: overcome the people's alienation from power and ownership, give power to the people and take it away from the nomenklatura, anchor democracy, realize a genuine social justice. The illusion was that I thought, as the majority of us, that this could be accomplished through perfecting the existing system.' 'Razmyshleniia o proshlom i budushtchem' [Thinking on Past and Future], quoted by Andrei Gratchev, *Le mystère Gorbatchev: La terre et le destin* (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 2001), p. 109.

6 Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika: vues nouvelles sur notre pays et le monde* (Paris: Flammarion, 1987), p. 197.

7 See Jacques Lévesque, *The Enigma of 1989: The USSR and the Liberation of Eastern Europe* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 40–5.

8 For a consistent exposition of the tenets of the 'Common Home', see the article by the director of the Institute of Europe of the Academy of Sciences, V. Zhurkin, 'Obshtchii dom dlia Evropy' [A Common House for Europe], *Pravda*, 17 May 1989.

9 Sergei Karaganov, 'Towards a New Security System in Europe', in V. Harle and J. Livonen (eds), *Gorbachev and Europe* (New York: St Martins Press, 1990).

10 A comparative study of opinion polls shows a particularly striking and revealing evolution in Germany, where the 'Gorbachev factor' was at its strongest. In 1984, 47 per cent of the population saw the Soviet military menace as important, while 52 per cent felt it was not serious. In 1987, only 29 per cent still saw it as important, and 69 per cent believed it to be



negligible. The following year, the perception of an important menace had dropped even further, to 19 per cent. See Klaus Wittmann, 'The Challenge of Conventional Arms Control', *Adelphi Papers*, Summer (1989).

In the fall of 1987, a Soviet leader ranked, for the first time in the history of the Gallup polls, as one of the ten people most admired by Americans. The next year, at the end of 1988, Gorbachev was placed second on that same list. In 1987, 76 per cent of Americans believed that chances for peace with the USSR had considerably improved. See George Gallup, Jr, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1988* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1989), pp. 5 and 263; *ibid.*, p. 3.

In France, where the negative image of the USSR had been far stronger than in the rest of the Western world for several years, the number of those assessing 'the Soviet Union's policy in the world' as positive went from 18 per cent in 1986 to 42 per cent in 1989. In the fall of 1988, Mikhail Gorbachev was placed second behind François Mitterand in response to the question, 'Among great heads of state and government of the 1980s, which two are the most significant?' See 'Le choc Gorbatchev', in SOFRES, *L'état de l'opinion 1990* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1990), p. 63; and SOFRES, *L'état de l'opinion 1988* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1989), p. 217.

11 Of course many Soviet military figures and 'old thinkers' thought it was complete illusion and certainly not the way to make the US more acquiescent. For them, this could be achieved only from 'positions of strength'.

12 Kubalkova and Cruickshank, *Thinking New about Soviet 'New Thinking'*, pp. 86–90.

13 Jean-Marc Piotte, *La pensée politique de Gramsci* (Paris: Anthropos, 1970), pp. 161–92.

14 The rediscovery and use of Gramsci during the Gorbachev period was not limited to foreign policy. One of the ideologists of *perestroika*, the political analyst Andranik Migranian, inspired by Gramsci, insisted that one of the basic tasks at the domestic level was the development of a civil society outside of the Soviet state, through the creation of autonomous organizations, which would be better able to support a true socialist culture. See P. Flaherty, 'Perestroika Radicals: The Origins and Ideology of the Soviet New Left', *Monthly Review*, vol. 40, no. 4 (September 1988), pp. 19–33.

15 See Kubalkova and Cruickshank, *Thinking New about Soviet 'New Thinking'*, p. 27.

16 See Lévesque, *Enigma*, p. 99.

17 See the text of the note in Georgi Shakhnazarov, *Tsena svobody: reformatsiia Gorbacheva glazami ego pomoshchnika* [The Price of Freedom: Gorbachev's Reformist Undertaking through the Eyes of his Aide] (Moscow: Rossika Zevs, 1993), p. 440.

18 Among East European politicians, Karoly Grosz, the Hungarian Communist Party chief in 1989, gave this writer an explanation along these lines. (Interview with Karoly Grosz, Gödöllő, 1 May 1992.) This is also the view of the political assistant to Vladislav Adamec, Czechoslovakia's prime minister in 1989 (*Krejci, Oskar, Proc to prasklo?* [Why did it Blow Up?], Prague: Ucho, 1993).

19 See Lévesque, *Enigma*.

20 Of course, given the ambiguities of his policies, he was also branded as an unrepentant communist in new guise.

21 In the present context, numerous Russian intellectuals have found it opportune to portray themselves as 'always' having been democrats who could not come out of the closet before. Georgi Arbatov, one of the chief proponents of both the ideology and practice of *perestroika*, has no such pretence. In his 1993 *Memoirs*, he writes: 'In the spring of 1985, I was a Communist, with doubts and disappointments, but still a convinced Communist. Why? How could I keep my faith in socialism, Marxism and even the Party?... I still have not lost my faith in the core of a socialist ideal that is much closer to the social-democratic variant than to the Bolshevik one.' Georgi Arbatov, *The System: An Insider's Life In Soviet Politics* (New York: Random House, 1993), pp. 352, 358.

22 See Jacques Lévesque, *Italian Communists versus the Soviet Union: The PCI Charts a New Foreign Policy* (Berkeley, CA: Institute of International Studies, University of California, Policy Papers in International Affairs, no. 34, 1987).

- 23 See the editorial in *l'Unità*, 'Le riflessioni deve andare fino a fondo', *l'Unità* (15 December 1981).
  - 24 As a matter of fact, the PCI had much closer relations with the West German SPD (Social Democratic Party) than with the East German SED (United Socialist Party of Germany, the official name of the communist party).
  - 25 Interview with Lilly Marcou for the French television channel 1, June 2001. In the same interview in which he speaks of his admiration for Carrillo and Berlinguer, he claimed he had about 150 books on Eurocommunism. He also adds: 'My meetings with the Italians, and my very attentive study of Eurocommunism, had of course its importance at the beginning. Afterwards, this thinking, adapted to our reality, took its place in our ideology of *perestroika*. The Italians, by the way, were enthusiastic supporters of *perestroika*...enthusiastic supporters.'
- Gorbachev's former spokesman, Andreï Gratchev writes: 'From his own assertions, he was particularly influenced by the leaders of the Italian Communist Party, who were preaching the heretical 'Eurocommunism'. Gorbachev had met them when he went to Rome for Berlinguer's funeral. Before that, on the advice of Vadim Zagladin [one of the main officials responsible for relations with Western communist parties in the International Department] he had studied the *Prison Diaries* of Antonio Gramsci, as well as Togliatti's testament written at Yalta.' Gratchev, *Le mystère Gorbatchev*, p. 80.
- 26 See 'The End of the Cold War in Europe, 1989: "New Thinking" and New Evidence', Transcript of proceedings of the Musgrove Conference (St Simon's Island, GA, 1-3 May 1998), pp. 36 and 38 (National Security Archive, Washington).
  - 27 Mikhail Gorbachev, *Erinnerungen* [Memoirs], trans. Laure Castin (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1995), pp. 925-6; (emphasis added).
  - 28 M.S.Gorbachev, *Otveti na voprosy professora J.Leveka* [Responses to Questions from Professor J.Lévesque], (Moscow, 12 July 1995), unpublished document.
  - 29 In 1991, when he was marginalized in Gorbachev's entourage and had nearly lost contact with him, Aleksandr Yakovlev predicted as 'unavoidable, in the medium term, a great work of revalorization of what has been rejected' in Eastern Europe. See Aleksandr Yakovlev with Lilly Marcou, *Ce que nous voulons faire de l'Union Soviétique*, (Paris: Le Seuil, 1991), p. 104. Today, in order to stay afloat politically, Yakovlev, unlike Gorbachev (or Arbatov, as quoted above) has reneged on much of what he said at the time of *perestroika*. When I asked him at what point in time in 1989 he had ceased to think that reformed socialism could hold on in Eastern Europe, he answered that he had never really believed in reformed socialism... He claims that his main concern for Eastern Europe was that it should be free. *Interview with Alexandr Yakovlev* (Moscow, 8 November 1994).
  - 30 See, for instance, the transcripts of his conversations with Petar Mladenov (December 5) and George Bush at Malta (3 December). Given the situation that prevailed at the time, much of his discourse sounds surrealistic and quite disconnected from what was going on. For transcripts, see Mikhail Gorbachev, *Avant Mémoires* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1993), pp. 129-45 and 95-128.
  - 31 Richard Ned Lebow, *Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crisis* (Baltimore, MD and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), Ch. 5, pp. 101-19.
  - 32 *Ibid.*, p. 114.

PART III:  
THE UNITED STATES AND  
THE ENDING OF THE  
COLD WAR

# The US Role in Winding Down the Cold War, 1980–90

*Raymond L. Garthoff*

The role of the United States in winding down the Cold War requires consideration of the part played by US leaders in terms of initiative and response, action and reaction to changing circumstances and to the actions of others, in this case in particular of the leaders of the Soviet Union.

Historical periodization is rarely possible on a neat calendar basis. Insofar as one can define a moment of initiative of ‘the ending of the Cold War’, I will argue that it was Mikhail Gorbachev’s assumption of the reins of power as general secretary of the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) in March 1985. Much of the discussion here will focus on the years 1985–90. Nonetheless, I think it may be useful to launch the discussion with the beginning of the 1980s.

## *US Policy and Soviet Reaction, 1980–85*

In January 1980, President Jimmy Carter abandoned détente and inaugurated a new phase of confrontation. He did so reluctantly, in response to what he saw as significant escalation of a growing Soviet threat since the late 1970s, climaxed by their military intervention in Afghanistan in 1979, and portending further expansionist aggression. This Soviet action was seen to call for a firm rebuff. In short, containment, the traditional US strategy in conducting the Cold War, was deemed to require a sharp turn seeking to reduce tension with the adversary to confronting and defeating perceived Soviet ambitions and efforts to expand their domain and influence, and to weaken the standing of the United States and the security of the Western world.

In just a year, a new US administration came into office with a more deeply grounded scepticism about détente and a more consistent dedication to confrontation of the adversary. The new administration of President Ronald Reagan was also more alarmed about what it saw as US military weakness and an adverse balance of power, further undergirding the new turn to confronting and seeking to weaken the Soviet Union while rebuilding US military and political power. President Reagan, if not all members of his administration, was deeply confident that the fundamental superiority of the US system would triumph over the communist system. Contrary to some retro-vision ascribed by others a decade later, he and his colleagues did not, however, anticipate the early collapse of the Soviet system or an even earlier end to the Cold War.

In evaluating the role of the United States in winding down the Cold War—as in considering any single factor in a complex major evolutionary historical development—it is necessary to guard against exaggerating the role of that factor. The most basic considerations underlying the decline and fall of the Cold War stemmed ineluctably from the causative elements in the origin and generation of that conflict. But before turning to

that dimension of the subject, it is necessary to place in its contemporary context the US role in the 1980s.

As noted, in the United States the hardening of its policy at the outset of the decade was seen as a reaction to hostile Soviet actions with threatening implications. Consequently, Soviet actions constituted a critical element in forming US policy at that time. So, too, did American perceptions of these actions and of Soviet objectives, which imputed greater deliberate offensive aims than actually underlay Soviet motivation.

History is, however, not limited to actions by states, or even to actions by one or another state and reactions by others. Relations among states, not least between adversaries, are also marked by complex interactions, involving many developments in the world not initiated or controlled by either superpower. The Cold War as a whole, including the episode of renewed tensions in the early 1980s, was part of a continuing dynamic interaction of the two sides within a proactive world political context.

The Soviet leaders did not regard their actions in the late 1970s, including their direct military intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979, as an offensive initiative threatening the West. Consequently, they did not believe that US actions were in fact undertaken as a defensive reaction to their own. Instead, they saw US charges of Soviet aggression as contrived hostile propaganda, and US policy as an offensive initiative, not as a defensive reaction. Moreover, they did not, in fact, have the aggressive expansionist designs in south-west Asia and the Persian Gulf attributed by US policy-makers (not only in public utterances but in internal policy deliberations). The Soviet armed intervention and concurrent assassination of Afghan leader Hafizullah Amin was unwarranted and deserving of international condemnation. It was not, however, part of a pattern of continuing expansion, as it was seen and portrayed in the United States. Consequently, it is not surprising that the Soviet leaders believed that the United States was intentionally distorting its depiction of Soviet aims in order to justify at home and in the world a new confrontational policy towards the Soviet Union, abandonment of arms control, and a major buildup of US military power at home and around the globe (including placing intermediate-range missiles in Europe).

Both sides thus entered the 1980s with the belief that the other was intent upon a new, hard line of confrontation. The prevailing American view was not only that the Soviet Union had failed to live up to *détente*, but that *détente* in the 1970s had proven to be bankrupt and a failure. The expressed Soviet view was that *détente* remained the preferable policy for both countries, but that it had been wilfully abandoned by leaders of the United States, intent on provoking a line of intimidation. The level of tension had, again, risen. No leaders on either side, however, looked beyond an indefinitely continuing ideological, political, military, geopolitical and geostrategic competition on the pattern of the preceding third of a century.

The Soviet leaders of the first half of the 1980s had long ago lost the ebullient confidence of Nikita Khrushchev in the 1950s and early 1960s, and although their ideological worldview remained by definition optimistic as to the predestined ultimate future, their policy horizon was for indefinite continuation for decades of a stalemate.

US leaders of the first half of the 1980s, with the important partial exception of Ronald Reagan, also saw the future in terms of an indefinite prolonged stalemate, based above all on the existence of a strategic nuclear standoff. The new administration purported to believe, and many in it did believe, that the United States had been lax in

keeping up its side of the strategic balance, and a major increase in military spending (to a much lesser extent resulting in a buildup in forces) was undertaken. By the mid-1980s, the military buildup levelled off at a high level. By then, there was no longer concern over maintaining at least a balance with the Soviet Union.

The United States in the first half of the 1980s had also provided extensive military support to local adversaries of a number of new leftist revolutionary regimes in the Third World to which the Soviet Union was giving support. Most important was Afghanistan, where Soviet military forces remained engaged, while Soviet arms were provided to Angola, Ethiopia and Nicaragua (and in Angola and Ethiopia support was also given to Cuban military expeditionary forces). In all these places, the United States now provided arms and assistance to counter-revolutionaries. Although these were all civil-war situations, arising from indigenous causes and political rivalries, they were seen by leaders in the Soviet Union and, especially, by leaders in the United States as also constituting surrogates of the rival Cold War superpowers. To be sure, the Soviets saw and depicted those they aided as a new revolutionary wave of socialist inclination in the post-colonial Third World, while the US leaders saw and championed 'freedom fighters' against communist totalitarianism. The Soviet leaders also saw potential advantages to their own world political and geostrategic situation, and a need to combat US extension of its global reach, and US leaders saw a need to contain and roll back aligned clients of the Soviet Union. The local adversaries were not agents or mere cats-paws of the two superpowers, but they did become Cold War 'proxies' by virtue of the Soviet and US involvement, at least in the eyes of the other superpower.

The new US policy of confrontation and efforts to weaken the Soviet bloc and the Soviet Union itself came to involve more than strident rhetoric, discarding cooperative endeavours such as arms control and détente, building US and NATO military power, and challenging Soviet client states in the Third World. This included aggressive air and naval reconnaissance and manoeuvres encircling and impinging on the airspace and territorial waters of the Soviet Union itself. It also included covert assistance to anti-communist opposition elements in Eastern Europe, in particular in Poland. In addition, it had come to include (since 1979) closer anti-Soviet support for China, with collaborative intelligence-monitoring stations in China and discreet encouragement for direct Chinese military action against Vietnam. Afghan mujahedin, armed by the United States and its allies, even made raids into the territory of the USSR. Although strategic mutual deterrence was robust, Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) and the bipartisan US and NATO alliance programme to deploy Pershing II IRBMs (Intermediate-range Ballistic Missiles) in Europe seemed to Moscow to reflect a US interest in tipping, if indeed not in overturning, the strategic balance. Moreover, the Reagan administration continued publicly to sound alarms about a Soviet military buildup and threat, which may have been intended largely to mobilize public support for US and NATO military programmes, but also alarmed Soviet leaders well aware that it greatly exaggerated real Soviet capabilities and programmes.

In fact, while the United States did intentionally sound an alarm over the Soviet military threat for such purposes, intelligence estimates throughout the 1980s also considerably exaggerated the scale of expected Soviet military capabilities and imputed intentions. In 1983, when the US intelligence community finally acknowledged that it had been greatly overstating the rate of growth of Soviet military expenditures since

1976, this altered estimate was 'buried' and the only public change was to stop citing the earlier trumpeted statements about a higher rate of increase. Other attempts by senior intelligence analysts in CIA in the mid-1980s to reduce the continuing overstatement of future Soviet military programmes and forces were suppressed by the top leaders of the Agency.

The rise in tensions that had begun in the late 1970s, and came to predominate by 1980 and thereafter, reached a peak in late 1983. The most dramatic episode, although not the only one, was the 'war scare' of November 1983. Although unintended and unexpected, the background of ascending tensions throughout the early 1980s permitted a serious misunderstanding to arise. The fact that the mindset of the leadership of the Soviet intelligence services, including KGB Chairman Yuri Andropov, had led them to institute an intelligence alerting system as early as 1981, contributed greatly to now sounding the alarm when Andropov was general secretary of the CPSU, and moreover in seriously impaired health—in fact, on his death bed—in November 1983. The Soviet intelligence services instituted an unprecedented and extraordinary intelligence alert to a possible US and NATO attack on the Soviet Union. Available evidence suggests that there was no comparable political alarm, or even discussion in the Politburo (a discrepancy that is, if accurate, both surprising and itself noteworthy). Nonetheless, the Soviet leadership was shaken. A new harder line had been set when Andropov issued a statement in late September 1983 that ruled out any possibility of serious negotiation with the Reagan administration, and this line was reiterated in November. This hard line did not bind his successors, but it raised the degree of tension in US-Soviet relations.

President Reagan was astonished and disturbed when he learned soon after about the Soviet intelligence assessment and alert to a possible US attack. (He learned of this Soviet reaction from the reporting of a British spy in the KGB, Oleg Gordievsky.) This incident contributed to Reagan's decision to tone down the intensity of the rhetoric and political level of confrontation, marked by his speech of 16 January 1984. There were, of course, other considerations at play in that decision. One was the opening of the presidential election campaign year. Another was his own belief that he had in the preceding three years 'halted America's decline' with economic, military and political 'recovery' (as he stated in his speech 16 January 1984, in *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, vol. 20 (26 January 1984), pp. 41–5). Yet another was a new note in Reagan's speech humanizing the Russians and distinguishing the Russian people from the Soviet regime. Finally, most important, during 1983 Secretary of State George Shultz had engaged Reagan in a process of thinking about developing a more serious dialogue with the Soviet leadership. Changes of personnel in the administration had also begun to bring more realist and less ideological perspectives to bear, a change which would become increasingly important over the next two years.

Konstantin Chernenko was a colourless bureaucrat, and also in less than vibrant health; indeed, he would survive for a little over a year. Nonetheless, he was less alarmist than Andropov, and more inclined to continue trying to revive the détente line of his patron, the late Leonid Brezhnev. He was not, however, a suitable partner for a useful dialogue and negotiation. The most that can be said is that he was prepared to see an amelioration of tensions, and participated in a process of cautiously preparing for renewed negotiations on arms control and other issues, just as the United States was also doing. He was not, however, inclined to make any substantial changes in Soviet foreign

policy, and the Reagan administration sought changes in Soviet policy as a basis for negotiations.

During the summer of 1984, the Reagan administration reached a consensus that the United States had indeed recovered its strength sufficiently to be able to enter into negotiations with the Soviet Union with confidence. In fact, the United States had not been so weak as Reagan and others in his administration had believed in 1981, nor had the country become that much stronger by 1984, but the belief that it had provided a basis (and a rationale) for a shift to embrace negotiations.

The main subject of a renewed dialogue was arms control (in abeyance after a Soviet withdrawal from both strategic and intermediate-range missile talks in late 1983), and the negotiation was complicated by both Soviet and US efforts to load the agenda in terms furthering their respective negotiating positions. Finally, at the very end of the Chernenko administration, an ambiguous formulation permitted the two sides to agree that negotiations would commence in March 1985.

### *The Role of Gorbachev and Reagan's Response*

It was at that juncture that Chernenko died and was succeeded by Mikhail Gorbachev. It was widely believed, both in the Soviet Union and in Washington, that Gorbachev would be a more alert, active and flexible Soviet leader. Some in Washington hoped that he might introduce moderate reforms at home and be prepared for some renewal of détente in foreign relations. Others feared that he would be a more agile and clever competitor in world politics, and hence a more dangerous adversary. No one in Washington (or among the Politburo colleagues who selected him) expected that he would prove to be ready to discard the Marxist-Leninist worldview that underlay Soviet foreign policy and the Cold War, and ultimately to abandon the Brezhnev Doctrine and countenance the liberation of the Soviet empire in central and Eastern Europe. Gorbachev himself believed that the socialist countries of Eastern Europe, as well as the Soviet Union itself, could reform and revitalize themselves. His greatest illusion was to believe the Soviet Union could successfully transform itself into a politically and economically viable entity, and his greatest error was to dismantle the foundations of the existing Soviet political and economic system without having been able to put in place an alternative. From the standpoint of our present subject, however, the ending of the Cold War, Gorbachev did have a clearer picture of his aims, and negotiation with the West from 1985 through 1990 successfully yielded an end to the Cold War.

There were many contributing sources to the dynamics of competition of the Cold War—geopolitical (in the sense of *realpolitik*), political (inter-national and domestic), economic, ideological, cultural and even psychological (including notably Stalin's paranoia)—on both sides. There is need for continuing research and analysis of the interplay of these factors, especially but not only in the policies of the two principal protagonists, the Soviet Union and the United States. Nonetheless, there remains one distinctive feature that defines the Cold War and that contributed uniquely to its emergence, duration and ultimately its sudden and peaceful ending, and that was the influence of a particular ideologically stimulated procrustean crucible into which these multiple sources of international interaction flowed. This was a belief engendered by the



Marxist-Leninist conviction of successive Soviet leaders that their actions and those of their adversaries in a world 'class struggle' were destined by history to inevitable mortal conflict, and the reciprocated belief of successive US and, more generally, Western leaders and publics that such an ideological conviction drove Soviet policy and must be countered with a resolute containment of Soviet expansionism and deterrence (above all, in the nuclear age) of Soviet inclination to use all expedient means of its furtherance.

What was distinctive and defining of the Cold War, in short, was not merely ideological divergence or geopolitical competition (nor any or all of the other driving and conflicting ambitions, objectives and constraints of policy) but a determined mindset on both sides that world politics and history had become an inescapable zero-sum game to the finish. It was only when a Soviet leadership was able to see the fallacy in Lenin's injunction that the core of politics was *Kto kogo?*, 'Who shall prevail over whom?', and to break that ideological crucible of world politics that the Cold War could be brought to an end. This required, of course, a significant practical change of Soviet policy by that leadership to make clear to the adversary (and to the Soviet political establishment as well) that this ideologically imbued foundation of the Cold War had indeed been abandoned. This was the course taken by Gorbachev from 1985 to 1990. This crucial change was, gradually and cautiously, recognized and reciprocated by the US and other Western leaders during those fateful six years. The end of the Cold War brought not 'an end to History' or the global triumph of democracy, but an abandonment by its protagonists of a flawed conception of a 'closed' course of history and a return to the traditional (but always changing) open reality of world politics, with all the opportunities and challenges that entailed.

I believe that Gorbachev's intention to end the Cold War was clear in his own mind when he entered office, and there are many indications of this from the open record of 1984–86, as well as from the testimony of his closest aides. His strategy to achieve that end was, of course, less clear even to him at the outset and required development over the next few years. Still more uncertain, of course, was the Western understanding of his aims and course of policy action. As noted, Western observers, analysts and, above all, political leaders were understandably wary, and wanted to see concrete evidence of significant change before they were prepared to accept the transformation in ideological outlook, policy aims and actions as genuine, significant and irreversible. Accordingly, the years 1985–89 saw the gradual acceptance by more and more of the Western leaders as well as political publics of the fact that Soviet foreign policy was undergoing fundamental and not merely tactical change.

Western, and above all US (and at a critical juncture in 1990, German), policy was thus in a sense reacting to Soviet change, but also interacting with initiatives—and, sometimes, their absence—in turn affecting Soviet policy. It is from this perspective that the US role from 1985 to 1990 was of critical importance in winding down the Cold War. By the end of 1990, the Cold War was over, as was (surprisingly) virtually universally recognized, even though a transformed and still changing Soviet Union remained for another eventful year until processes in the unsuccessful internal transformation caused the Soviet Union to implode.

The Cold War ended, so clearly Western (as well as Soviet) actions contributed to a successful denouement of that drama. But what role did US and other Western policy

play in the 1980s, and could it have facilitated a more rapid end to the Cold War, or an end with better consequences?

As we address this question, it is necessary not only to examine US-Soviet interactions in that decade, but also to bear in mind that the whole history of the Cold War is an important underlying consideration. Gorbachev's 'New Thinking' as a crucial ingredient of Soviet policy was new in the latter half of the 1980s, but it was an amalgam of experience and modified perceptions—in short, the result of a gradual process of learning that led ultimately to radically revised perceptions of US policy, and more generally of the world, and to discarding the traditional Marxist-Leninist worldview.

The learning process was long and uneven, extending through several generations and a mixed record of historical experiences ever since 1917, and in particular during the global Cold War after 1945. US and Western policy and action was one important element. Containment and deterrence helped to ensure that Soviet actions during the Cold War did not become so aggressive and far-reaching as to threaten vital Western interests and precipitate a nuclear war. (Deterrence, and containment, were of course mutual, and also helped keep Western policy from directly challenging Soviet vital interests and risking precipitation of a hot war.) But the most significant consideration underlying the eventual abandonment of the Marxist-Leninist worldview positing irreconcilable conflict of two systems was the failure of that conception to correspond to the reality of the world. To be sure, the historical record could be construed, and for decades was, as reflecting and sustaining that ideological conception, but eventually reality was bound to prevail.

Although Western policies of containment and deterrence, and specific counter-Soviet and anti-Soviet applications of these strategic conceptions, long tended to be construed in Moscow as confirming the Marxist-Leninist mindset, these were not the only aspects of world reality. Moreover, Western motivations were complex and had many sources that did not derive from these Soviet ideological presuppositions. Also important were the many facets of life in the West that gradually became visible to Soviet observers (and finally to some Soviet leaders) as Stalinist isolation gave way to increasing contact between East and West, especially in the periods of reduced tension and *détente* in the mid-1950s, mid-1960s and most of the 1970s.

As we have noted, the early to mid-1980s was, however, a period of renewed confrontation and even heightened alarm for Soviet leaders still in the thrall of the Marxist-Leninist worldview, especially Yuri Andropov. It is difficult to evaluate the extent of real concern by Soviet leaders, but it is clear that there were serious anxieties within the Soviet leadership over the course of the US policy of confrontation in the late Carter administration and especially throughout the first Reagan administration.

It is difficult to judge the impact on Soviet leadership thinking of the Carter-Reagan military buildup of 1980–85 (all the more since it was bipartisan), the Carter-Reagan programme of 1979–87 to deploy what were seen as potentially strategically decapitating Pershing II missiles in Germany, Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) after 1983, sabrerattling and aggressive maritime and aerial reconnaissance and patrolling (1981–86), US covert support to Solidarity in Poland (1980–81), and the Reagan Doctrine and large-scale 'covert' military support for the mujahedin in Afghanistan and other 'freedom fighters' in Nicaragua, Angola, Cambodia and several other places in the Third World.

Some observers have argued that these hard-line measures played a major positive role in inducing Gorbachev and his colleagues to seek a *détente* with the West, mainly by greatly increasing the economic burden of military expenditures and of maintaining the extended Soviet 'empire'. The evidence does not, however, support this conclusion. Moreover, even apart from any added pressures on Soviet resources, the undoubted economic burden of the arms competition, although a contributory consideration in Soviet policy since the 1950s, was not a principal factor in leading Gorbachev after 1985 to pursue disarmament, retraction from Afghanistan, an end to the military division of Europe, disengagement from Third World conflicts, and, above all, to ending the Cold War. Economic pressures, and incentives for change, were stronger in leading Gorbachev to pursue his internal *perestroika*, although there were also other considerations. But most important, although they were interrelated in some aspects, the pursuit of domestic reformation and the quest for ending the Cold War were independent aims. The 'New Thinking' about the world, the nature of the global system, and the folly of what was now recognized to be an unnecessary as well as dangerous zero-sum political-military competition and confrontation were the primary incentives for ending the Cold War.

An 'old thinking' Soviet leadership in the latter 1980s might well have sought to conclude reciprocal arms-control agreements, would probably have retrenched from some costly Third World involvements, and might have withdrawn from Afghanistan. Indeed, Brezhnev and his Politburo would probably have taken such a course. But a Brezhnev, Andropov, Chernenko or Romanov leadership would never have taken initiatives to dismantle unilaterally the Soviet bloc's military preponderance in Europe, to make disproportionate reductions in missiles and conventional forces, to withdraw from all Third World military commitments, or to encourage political pluralism in Eastern Europe and then live with unexpectedly far-reaching consequences. Nor did such measures alleviate the economic burden in the critical short and medium term; indeed, heavy new expenditures were often required to carry them out. Such initiatives were not compelled either by the Reagan hard line or by internal Soviet economic stagnation.

The US and NATO military buildup from the late 1970s through the 1980s did not in fact lead successive Soviet leaders from Brezhnev to Gorbachev to undertake new military programmes in an effort to match or to blunt those programmes. The two Five-Year Plans carried out in the early and mid-1980s contained only a modest growth of military spending set in 1976 (although this was not recognized by US intelligence analysts until 1982–83). Studies reassured Soviet leaders of their ability to counter possible SDI systems at feasible cost with much less expensive offensive system countermeasures, and there was no need to emulate the US attempt to devise an effective defence. Even such reactive programmes were held in abeyance for the contingency of a US deployment, which never occurred. The SDI, while troubling to Soviet leaders from 1983 until 1986 mainly because of its implications for US policy direction, never developed sufficiently towards a concretely defined deployable system even to permit Soviet expenditure on appropriate countermeasures. As a measure to stress the Soviet economy and affect Soviet policy, SDI never got off the ground.

Although Gorbachev did not cut back Soviet military spending during his first years in office, he was actively pursuing ambitious reciprocal disarmament proposals and preparing for significant unilateral arms reductions announced at the end of 1988. In the next three years, as these were progressively implemented, although military procurement

fell substantially, other expenses in military retrenchment more than offset that reduction. These important developments were not undertaken to reduce military spending in the near term, but to add impetus to a dismantling of the East-West military confrontation.

Soviet leaders had long before come to realize that under mutual deterrence the United States was not likely to attack. Nonetheless, still holding the traditional ideological worldview, as earlier noted, as recently as 1983 Andropov had believed US hostility and confrontation posed a real danger of war, and ruled out any attempt substantially to mitigate, much less to end, the Cold War. Gorbachev, with a radically different worldview, believed that it was both possible, and necessary, to end the military competition and the Cold War. Only by doing so could the inherent dangers, as well as other serious disadvantages of mutual deterrence, mutual containment, and mutual distrust be removed. The Reagan policy of confrontation in the first half of the 1980s in fact made the task of ending the Cold War harder, but to Gorbachev it did not diminish the need, and even underlined the importance of the task. The Reagan line certainly did not contribute to Gorbachev's 'New Thinking', and indeed it made more difficult his task of persuading his less enlightened colleagues. But it did not prevent his pursuit of the goal, and Gorbachev was determined not to permit it to become an insurmountable obstacle. In only one way did the US military buildup and global flexing of muscle, perversely, probably help Gorbachev: in the judgement of the Soviet leaders, it showed that not even the wealthy United States could advance its interests by a profligate pursuit of military power.

As earlier noted, by the time Gorbachev came into office, President Reagan had modified his confrontational stance. By November 1985, Reagan and Gorbachev met in Geneva for the first US-Soviet presidential summit meeting in over six years. Reagan was widely credited with having 'won' the summit encounter, having made no concessions on SDI (the main matter at issue), or anything else. Gorbachev, who had gambled on obtaining some concession from Reagan on arms control, had not been able to do so, but he had succeeded in restoring a dialogue between the two countries, and in establishing an important personal rapport with Reagan. No one at the time could have expected that during the remaining three years of the Reagan administration four more summit meetings would be held, and that the most far-reaching agreement to date on arms reduction would be concluded. The progress toward a new *détente* (though not so labelled) over that three years was uneven, but nonetheless phenomenal in its achievement.

The new shift from confrontation to *détente* in the second Reagan administration did not of itself lead beyond to an ending of the Cold War, but it contributed importantly to permitting Gorbachev to set in train policies that would be decisive in soon winding down the Cold War. In the first instance, the new Reagan line helped to offset the hard-line confrontational policy of the first Reagan administration, although as we shall note the US posture in negotiations remained tough and the burden of concession was left almost wholly to the Soviet side.

The rapid movement to *détente* and beyond was not entirely owing to Gorbachev's strategic design and Reagan's (and then George Bush's) receptiveness. Developments undertaken by Gorbachev escaped his control, in particular the consequences of the liberation of the countries of eastern and central Europe from Moscow's hegemonic authority. (Events in the attempt to manage internal reformation of the Soviet Union itself

also soon slipped out of his control, with even more far-reaching consequences.) This meant that Gorbachev was reacting to a situation he could only partly influence, not simply acting to achieve his aims. It also meant that the leaders of the United States had to react not only to Soviet actions, but also to other developments not subject to either Soviet or US control.

*President Bush, Gorbachev and the End of the Cold War*

The critical final stage in the winding down of the Cold War occurred shortly after the succession of a new American leader. President George Bush, notwithstanding the fact that he had served as President Reagan's vice-president, as he entered office in January 1989 had his own view of Gorbachev's policy objectives, one that differed from that of Reagan. Bush and his principal foreign-policy advisers believed that Reagan had become too enthusiastic in accepting the conclusion that Gorbachev was pursuing a policy based on new thinking. (This is not surprising, inasmuch as 'New Thinking' was new to them, as well). While not excluding that possibility, they decided to pursue a more cautious approach while assessing Soviet policy. The Bush administration did not, however, advance initiatives that would test the limits of Gorbachev's 'New Thinking'; for virtually the entire year of 1989—a climactic year—the Bush administration reacted, cautiously, to the course of events. Inasmuch as this was the year that developments in Eastern Europe escaped Soviet control and forced the pace of unwinding the Cold War, this meant that the United States was reacting mainly to the course of events, rather than taking the initiative or even reacting to Soviet initiatives. Gorbachev as well was largely reacting to events, although with significant decisions. Gorbachev had not been bluffing when ever since 1985 he had repeatedly affirmed acceptance of the principle of freedom of choice for each country, and he had understood that this would involve a voluntary abdication of Soviet hegemonic political control, and military domination, of a 'Soviet bloc' in eastern and central Europe. He had, however, hoped and expected that socialist ideals and fraternal association with a renascent Soviet Union would remain and flourish in a reformed socialist commonwealth in Eastern Europe. When, instead, the peoples of the region overthrew communist rule and broke their alliance with the Soviet Union, Gorbachev (and the Soviet leadership as a whole) accepted this different outcome. They readily agreed to withdraw Soviet troops, and then to disestablish the Warsaw Pact as a military and political alliance, and the Council on Mutual Economic Cooperation.

By the end of 1989, in the first summit meeting between Bush and Gorbachev, even Bush recognized that Gorbachev's policies were 'for real'. And as Gorbachev (if not quite yet Bush) remarked at the Malta summit, 'The world is leaving one epoch, the "Cold War", and entering a new one' (cited in Oberdorfer, *The Turn*), and 'we don't consider you an enemy any more' (*Pravda*, 5 December 1989).

While the end of the Cold War was virtually assured by the end of 1989, there remained the very important and difficult task of negotiating the terms of the liquidation of the division of Germany, and thereby of Europe. This was the 'endgame' in winding down the Cold War.

Before we turn to the final stage in the ending of the Cold War in 1990, it is appropriate to look a little more closely at the US role in winding down the Cold War in

the latter half of the 1980s. President Reagan, from 1985 to 1988, and President Bush in 1989, were prepared to accept and sometimes to welcome steps by Gorbachev to meet or to move towards positions the United States had called for. They were not, however, inclined to move very far, if at all, to make mutual concessions or to take steps themselves that would encourage or facilitate Soviet movement toward US positions. Moreover, suspicions remained and were voiced by members of the Reagan and Bush administrations about Gorbachev's aims even in making unilateral concessions. That some US doubts and suspicions should have arisen was not surprising, but the effect was again to make it more difficult for Gorbachev and his aides, mainly Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, to continue making disproportionate or unmatched concessions—not least because of the even more deeply ingrained reciprocal suspicions and fears of the United States held by most Soviet officials.

Negotiations on arms reductions was a central feature of diplomatic relations and most directly associated with the Cold War competition. President Reagan himself, and most of his administration, had held the view that in the past the United States had made too many concessions in such negotiations, and that the earlier strategic arms limitation agreements (SALT I and II) had given the Soviet Union advantages. This view was not shared by many American (and other Western) observers, but it coloured the approach of the Reagan and Bush administrations. In order to ensure, and demonstrate, that US strategic interests were protected and advanced by any new negotiations, tendencies to press for and insist upon provisions clearly in the US interest were reinforced—which meant that Soviet defence and other officials in turn were increasingly concerned that the outcome was unbalanced to Soviet disadvantage.

Gorbachev and Shevardnadze were, however, determined to reach agreements that would decisively turn down the arms competition, and saw more important Soviet-shared common interests that justified greater Soviet sacrifices, if necessary, at the military-technical level. A particularly important example, in terms of its negative effects within the Soviet military and diplomatic establishment, was a last minute end-run by Shevardnadze in the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) negotiation conceding a US demand for inclusion in the provisions banning all INF missiles of a Soviet system (the SS-23) with a range less than the 500km specified as the lower limit of the INF missile category. The US argued that by its missile-design criteria the missile could be fired to a 500km range, although the missile had never been test-fired to more than 400km. Soviet experts bitterly denied that it had the greater range. Shevardnadze ignored proposals by his military colleagues for redefining the INF category at 400km, or at least obtaining a US commitment not to deploy missiles of the range of the SS-23 (as it in fact did propose to do with the enhanced Lance missile two years later, before that idea was abandoned). This may seem a minor matter, but it was not to Soviet military experts or negotiators at the time. One additional example of the continuing pattern of US pressure to maximize Soviet concessions in arms-control negotiations under Reagan, and Bush, will suffice. At Malta, in December 1989, Gorbachev proposed eliminating all naval nuclear weapons except strategic missiles on submarines. Bush brusquely dismissed the idea. The Soviet side had earlier proposed, and been rebuffed, in calling for a ban on sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs). As late as May 1990, the United States insisted on keeping the right to deploy 880 nuclear-armed SLCMs, even though at that time the US Navy had only 350 and the US programme goal for SLCMs was for only 758. Why?

When the Soviet side finally conceded a limit of 760, to accommodate the full planned US programme, the US side would not just accept the Soviet capitulation. The US negotiators instead insisted on a strict mathematical median between its own earlier arbitrary figure of 1,000 SLCMs and the Soviet concession of 760. The Soviet negotiators were exasperated, but Moscow told them to agree to whatever the United States insisted upon. Hence, a limit of 880 nuclear-armed SLCMs was established. That the United States was simply flexing its muscles in negotiating gamesmanship became very clear when, in September 1991, President Bush himself announced that the United States would unilaterally eliminate all nuclear-armed SLCMs and other naval tactical nuclear weapons (promptly leading Gorbachev to announce that the Soviet Union would follow suit).

In other arms-control and European security negotiations, after long pressing the Soviet Union to agree to more extensive verification measures, including on-site inspection, the United States suddenly found itself, after 1986, in the position of being less ready than the Soviet Union to actually accept and apply such measures. In the talks on European security confidence and security-building measures (CSBMs), and later in the negotiations on a chemical weapons ban, the United States in fact decided to step back from its own earlier positions and agreed only to less intrusive measures than the Soviet Union was prepared to accept.

In other negotiations than arms control in the 1985–90 period the United States also displayed very little interest in reciprocating Soviet concessions or otherwise facilitating Soviet moves to wind down the Cold War. For example, in the discussions on steps to end superpower participation in Third World conflicts, time and again after Gorbachev and Shevardnadze told US leaders privately of their desire and intention to withdraw from involvement, for example in Nicaragua and Afghanistan, the US leaders displayed scepticism or worse by reiterating public statements berating the Soviets for not doing what they had already privately indicated they intended to do. It often seemed the United States was more intent on publicly badmouthing the Soviet Union than in encouraging or facilitating its disengagement. The worst case was repudiation of an earlier US commitment in the UN-sponsored negotiations for a settlement in Afghanistan. In February 1988, Gorbachev publicly announced Soviet readiness to withdraw all Soviet forces from Afghanistan within ten months of the expected early signature of the UN-sponsored settlement talks. Only then did it become clear that the United States would repudiate its earlier agreement (in December 1985) that the United States and its allies would cease military supply to the opposition forces when all Soviet troops were withdrawn. Reagan had been unaware of the earlier US commitment, although it had been approved in Washington, and was not willing to give up aid to the mujahedin. So the Soviet Union had to give in to continued US and other external assistance to the opposition (and Pakistan had to violate its commitments in the agreement, as it frankly reassured the United States it would do).

In sum, the United States under both President Reagan and President Bush did little to encourage, facilitate, or reward Gorbachev for his politically costly and difficult unilateral policies of arms reduction, withdrawal from regional conflicts in the Third World, and other actions to wind down the Cold War. President Reagan, to be sure, did reach agreement with Gorbachev on the INF Treaty and lay the foundations for the START I Treaty, despite opposition from a number of members of his own constituency

and administration. President Bush's cautious approach, while falling short of fuller cooperation with Gorbachev in some respects, was far preferable to a gung ho 'rollback' policy of confrontation when it came to reacting to the rapid developments in Eastern Europe in 1989, and in the Baltic states in 1990–91.

President Reagan was personally receptive to Gorbachev's initiatives in winding down the Cold War for three reasons: first, Gorbachev was prepared to make the major concessions in largely ending the Cold War on US terms; second, Reagan recognized Gorbachev's sincerity and genuine interest in ending the Cold War, long before most of his more (perhaps, too) experienced advisers and officials; and, finally, Reagan shared Gorbachev's nuclear abolitionism, again much less favoured by most of Reagan's, and perhaps some of Gorbachev's, colleagues. In short, the winding down of the Cold War during 1986–88 would have been much slower if, for example, Bush had been president.

President Bush was more sceptical and cautious when it came to judging Gorbachev's aims, more influenced by advisers such as Brent Scowcroft, Robert Gates and Richard Cheney, in contrast to Reagan's disregard of his far more cautious advisers. As noted, this led Bush to be less forthcoming in some ways that could have assisted Gorbachev in winding down the Cold War, but also to avoid unwise US engagement in the self-generated East European revolution initially encouraged by Gorbachev. The main policy issue on which the Bush-Baker team did engage was the key question in 1990 of German reunification and its relationship to NATO (and the related, if unasked, question of the future of NATO).

Chancellor Helmut Kohl played a key role in posing and then resolving the issue of German reunification, but it is probably correct to assign the crucial role to Bush and Baker in shaping the outcome, especially in terms of incorporating a reunified Germany into NATO (and thereby giving NATO a new lease of life, just as the Warsaw Pact was dissolving). This was also in many respects the most difficult issue for Gorbachev and Shevardnadze, and the one which generated the most doubt and dissatisfaction in the Soviet political establishment. The outcome is rightly celebrated in the United States and Germany as a cardinal diplomatic and political achievement in the endgame of winding down of the Cold War.

I am tempted to say that this was a pivotal achievement, 'for better or worse'. It is not easy to fault an outcome that marked the central feature of a peaceful reunification not only of Germany, but of Europe. It was a resounding success from the standpoint of its authors, Bush, Baker and Kohl. But revalidating NATO was not the only course of action that could have yielded that favourable outcome. The counterfactual alternative that should also be considered would have been one in which the occasion had been used not only to secure the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from central Europe, reunification of Germany, and dismantling of the military lines of confrontation of the Cold War, which this solution did achieve, but one that also laid the foundation for a comprehensive pan-European security framework truly encompassing Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals, and by extension from Vancouver to Vladivostok. But that is a question that transcends the scope of this commentary on the historical question of the US role in the winding down of the Cold War.



*NOTE IN LIEU OF ENDNOTES*

This analysis is not a research study, and there seems no need for source references. The events relating to this period are discussed fully in the author's *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1994) and other works. Additional informative sources on the period published since that study include:

James A. Baker, III, with Thomas M. DeFrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War and Peace, 1989–1992* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995).

George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998).

Jack A. Matlock, Jr, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: Random House, 1995).

Dan Oberdorfer, *The Turn: From the Cold War to a New Era. The United States and the Soviet Union, 1983–1990* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1991).

Odd Arne Westad (ed.), *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations, Theory* (London: Frank Cass, 2000).

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## The Carter Legacy: Entering the Second Era of the Cold War

*Olav Njølstad*

Shortly before the US presidential election of 1980, National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski sent a secret report to President Jimmy Carter outlining the ‘very disturbing’ foreign-policy consequences of a (yet unthinkable) defeat against Republican challenger Ronald Reagan. In Brzezinski’s view, a Reagan victory would likely precipitate a series of setbacks for the United States, and he volunteered a list of worst-case scenarios for almost any part of the globe. The overall result, he predicted, would be a United States that ‘would find itself alone in a more hostile world’.<sup>1</sup>

Brzezinski did not, at this point, offer any further explanation why all of this was bound to happen. Obviously, he had done that many times in the past, and Carter was perfectly aware of his reasoning. Nine weeks earlier, to cite just one example, Brzezinski had provided Carter with another secret report in which he spelled out the inherent dangers of Reagan’s foreign-policy platform. Here, he accused Reagan’s approach to international affairs of being ‘both escapist and dangerous’. It represented an escape from reality in the sense that it seemed to view the world ‘only in terms of the US-Soviet struggle and by over-simplifying virtually every world problem’. It was dangerous in its ‘hankering for strategic superiority’ as well as in its ‘nostalgia for the world of the 1950s, when American military and economic preponderance were the consequences of the collapse of Europe and Japan in World War II’.<sup>2</sup>

One may wonder, however, how justified Brzezinski’s concerns really were. Not only did Reagan fare considerably better than predicted, in terms of both domestic and international support of his foreign policies. More importantly, Brzezinski’s analysis glossed over what in retrospect clearly is a lot easier to detect: the many similarities between the Reagan platform and the policies of the Carter administration. True enough, Brzezinski admitted that the ‘positive parts’ of Reagan’s approach could be seen as an ‘endorsement for what Carter has been doing’ on three major issues: the Middle East; the buildup of US as well as NATO defence capabilities; and, not least, Carter’s ‘tough response to the Soviets on Afghanistan’.<sup>3</sup> Besides these issues, however, Brzezinski feared that the United States would be in deep trouble should Reagan win.

The present chapter disputes the notion of a great political divide between the outgoing Carter and the incoming Reagan administrations as far as US policy towards the Soviet Union is concerned. Rather, I will argue that the two last years of the Carter presidency in important aspects paved the ground for the more assertive and confrontational policy towards Moscow that was to characterize US policy under Reagan, at least until Mikhail Gorbachev’s rise to power in the mid-1980s. To the extent that US policy in those years mattered for the subsequent reversal of Soviet positions, a clear

understanding of the ideological, political and military-strategic legacy of the Carter years is crucial for evaluating the US role in the last decade of the Cold War.

More specifically, I will argue that the Carter administration, especially in its last two years, brought about four important long-term changes in US policy that helped to make life more complicated for the leadership in Moscow long after Carter himself had stepped down, thereby undermining the Soviet Union's ability to prevail in the increasingly multi-faceted competition with the West known as the 'new' Cold War. I will examine each of these policy changes in light of a memorandum prepared two months prior to the 1980 presidential election by General Bill Odom, Brzezinski's personal adviser on military-strategic issues. Entitled 'East-West Relations: A Formula for US Policy in 1981 and Beyond', the memo offered a blueprint for how the United States ought to conduct its relations with Moscow in the 1980s.

Odom's analysis was deeply influenced by the thinking of Samuel Huntington, whom had served with Odom on the NSC (National Security Council) staff in 1977–78 as Brzezinski's personal assistant for national security planning. Their main thesis was that US-Soviet relations were in a transitional stage, somewhere in between the First and Second Era of the Cold War. The First Era, lasting from 1945 to the mid-1970s, had been characterized by US dominance and Pax Americana. The Second Era, the 1980s and 1990s, was still to be defined. It might or might not be dominated by the United States, depending on how well the Soviet leadership would cope with the many challenges they were facing as well as on what strategy US decision-makers would adopt towards the Soviet Union. In Odom's view, neither containment nor détente alone was adequate to deal effectively with the new level of Soviet power. Instead, he recommended a strategy of competitive engagement that would make Moscow face the full military, economic, political and ideological power of the United States.<sup>4</sup>

The Odom memo is particularly interesting in the context of our conference for three main reasons. First, it was prepared in early September 1980; that is, at a time when most Carter officials still felt confident they would win the election. Thus, the policy recommendations presented in the memorandum were very much intended as a set of strategic guidelines for Carter's second term. Second, we know that both Brzezinski and Carter read the document very carefully and that the latter was full of praise ('Very interesting' went his message back to Brzezinski).<sup>5</sup> Carter's enthusiasm is all the more intriguing, since many of Odom's recommendations were later adopted and implemented by the Reagan team, something which gives further weight to the educated guess that, in terms of policy towards Moscow, a second Carter term might not have been all that different from 'Reagan one'. Finally, the Odom memorandum is remarkable in the sense that it contains a very rare early prediction of the coming collapse of the Soviet empire.

### *Maintenance of Deterrence through Military Pre-Eminence*

In his memorandum of 3 September 1980, Odom made the case for a three-pronged attack in order to address the United States' military deficiencies: a more expansive defence budget; improved cost-effectiveness in all defence, intelligence and military-assistance programmes; and a return to the draft in order to solve the military manpower problem.<sup>6</sup>

These recommendations are interesting, since the Carter years had already seen substantial changes in US strategy, defence programmes and force deployments aimed at improving the military balance vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. The steady US force buildup in 1977–80 clearly increased the pressure on the Soviets in order to maintain the strategic and conventional military balance they had been working so hard to achieve. As the Carter administration started to prepare for its second term, however, many of its key members seem to have wanted to increase that pressure even further. Thus, even without Reagan, there would probably have been strong and influential forces in Washington pressing for a more assertive US military buildup. Before elaborating any further, however, it may be useful to take a brief look at the Carter administration's record in this field.

As a natural point of departure, we may start with Presidential Review Memorandum no. 10 (hereafter, PRM-10), the Carter administration's mid-1977 assessment of the overall power relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. One of the main conclusions coming out of this report was to judge the existing military-strategic balance as 'essential equivalence' and most trends as adverse. Determined to reverse those trends, Carter directed a cautious but persistent effort to improve the combined strength of the United States and NATO, in terms of weapons systems, force-projection capability and combat readiness.

First of all, the long relative decline in defence spending on the Western side was reversed, beginning in 1978 with the common allied commitment to increase their national defence budgets with no less than 3 per cent annually—a figure Carter unilaterally raised to 5 per cent shortly before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.<sup>7</sup>

Second, Carter continued and stepped up important new weapons modernization programmes initiated by his predecessors—notably, the Trident submarine, the cruise missile, the Pershing II, the Trident II and MX missiles, and the Mk-12A deep-penetration warhead; he also started a few new programmes on his own, including the 'Stealth' bomber (B-2). The result was a significant modernization of all three legs of the strategic triad. In this way, the United States was able both to maintain an assured destruction capability, and—thanks to the MX and Trident II programmes—to prepare the ground for a substantially enhanced counterforce capability. Together, this impressive nuclear force buildup was estimated by the Department of Defense (DOD) and the CIA to give the United States a strategic edge sometimes in the mid- or late 1980s.<sup>8</sup>

Third, the Carter years witnessed a series of doctrinal changes, which in sum provided authoritative guidance as to how US military procurement programmes, force postures and targeting plans should be defined and coordinated in order to maintain deterrence in the 1980s. The process began with Presidential Directive (PD)-18 of August 1977, which confirmed that US nuclear strategy would continue to stress such crucial elements of the current Schlesinger doctrine as selective strike options, escalation control and intra-war deterrence. This general guideline was thereafter elaborated upon in PD-53 of November 1979, which committed the government to develop telecommunication facilities adequate for maintaining effective political control 'during and after any national emergency'; in PD-58 of June 1980 on 'Continuity of Government' in a nuclear war; and, most important, in PD-59 of July 1980, which defined the administration's nuclear weapons employment policy.<sup>9</sup> Even if PD-59, in the words of Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, did not represent 'a radical departure from US strategic policy over the past decade', it

still contained some important novelties, such as making centres of political and military decision-making as well as forward-based Soviet conventional forces primary targets for the initial US offensive in case of nuclear war. The directive asked that improvements be made 'to our forces, their supporting C3 and intelligence, and their employment plans and planning apparatus, to achieve a high degree of flexibility, enduring survivability, and adequate performance in the face of enemy actions'.<sup>10</sup> The overall rationale was to convince the Soviet leadership that the United States was likely to stall or defeat their military forces, and destroy the domestic institutions and power networks of the communist regime in all conceivable types of military conflict, including large-scale nuclear war.<sup>11</sup>

All of the above-mentioned doctrinal changes were later adopted by the Reagan administration. Despite their vociferous criticism of Carter's defence policies during the 1980 presidential campaign, Ronald Reagan and his advisers soon discovered that they had few disagreements with their predecessor on nuclear policy matters. Thus, in October 1981, President Reagan approved two important National Security Decision Directives, NSDD-12 and NSDD-13, that confirmed the principal tasks, priorities and doctrinal conclusions of PD-53 and PD-59. There was a notable difference, however, with respect to how the leading defence spokesmen of the two administrations talked about the possibility of winning a nuclear war. According to PD-59, there was no way to ensure victory in an all-out nuclear war 'on any plausible definition of victory'.<sup>12</sup> The main task, therefore, really was to convince the Soviets that they, too, were deprived of that possibility. By contrast, the official position of the Reagan administration was that the United States must obtain the capability of prevailing in a nuclear war—that is, of winning. Closely related to this, the Reagan administration endorsed the possibility of a protracted nuclear conflict between the superpowers, asking Congress for money to build strategic forces and C<sup>3</sup> (Command, Control, Communications) networks that could be trusted to function in a prolonged nuclear war of up to 180 days.<sup>13</sup>

Since we cannot know for sure whether Reagan's military advisers really believed in the possibility of prevailing in a nuclear war (later developments suggest they did not), it is difficult to judge the true significance of this doctrinal adjustment. Moreover, in its last two years in office, the Carter administration made several strategic decisions, which, implicitly, pointed in much the same direction. PD-53 and PD-58 have already been mentioned. Also important in this context was PD-41, of 29 September 1978, on civil defence. In the MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction)-era of the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s, the United States had put very little emphasis on civil and strategic defence. Once again, important new developments took place in the Carter years. Clearly, the possibility of strategic defence was only contemplated strictly within the limits of the ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missile) Treaty, with the focus mainly on passive defensive measures like fallout and blast shelters. But the implications of PD-41 were much wider than that. As explained by Bill Odom, 'once you say, as we did in PD-41, that civil defense, like any type of strategic defense, is part of the overall strategic balance—once you say that, you implicitly have abandoned MAD as a your guiding principle in life'.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, the 'multiple protective shelter' (MPS) basing mode for the MX missile proposed by the Carter administration can be seen as an attempt to obtain by passive defence measures the kind of strategic force protection that the ABM Treaty made it impossible to obtain by active defence. Reagan, of course, preferred a much more radical

solution: he dropped MPS in favour of SDI (Strategic Defense Initiative), thereby threatening to break out of the ABM Treaty. Even here, however, there were important links back to the Carter years, since the late 1970s saw the first dedicated attempts at redirecting US military-civilian research programmes towards so-called 'exotic' or 'futuristic' technologies, such as directed-beams weapons, which many experts were beginning to see as a promising new avenue in the search for an effective ballistic missile defence (BMD) system.<sup>15</sup> This effort was eventually lifted to international fame by President Reagan's 'Star Wars' speech in March 1983.<sup>16</sup>

This brings us to the related issue of nuclear arms control. Here, the main difference was that Carter, even after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, upheld a strong support of the SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks) II agreement, whereas Reagan from the very outset made it clear that he found the agreement totally inadequate and would not ask Congress to ratify it. Behind this discrepancy, however, there were far more similarities than differences between Carter's and Reagan's approach to strategic arms control. For example, Carter's initial priority, as witnessed by the abortive 'deep cut' proposal of March 1977, pointed directly towards the START (Strategic Arms Reduction Talks) I and II agreements successfully negotiated by Reagan and Bush. Not only did the two START agreements impose deep cuts of their own, leading to successive reductions in the total number of strategic warheads on each side, and a cut in the aggregate number of strategic delivery vehicles to no more than 1,600 (a 30 per cent reduction from the SALT II limit). They also resembled Carter's 'deep cuts' proposal in insisting on radical reductions in the number of MIRV (Multiple Independently-targeted Re-entry Vehicles)-ed Soviet heavy missiles.<sup>17</sup>

The common rationale behind the Carter, Reagan and Bush proposals was to move away from the quantitative 'arms race' stability of the SALT I Treaty and the Vladivostok agreement towards 'first-strike' or 'crisis' stability—that is, radical reductions in those weapons systems that, in times of crisis, were the most suited for conducting a decapitating surprise attack on the adversary's strategic forces. Without such weapons at hand, Carter and his successors reasoned, the Soviet temptation to opt for preemption or a preventive first strike would be reduced to a minimum, even in times of intense crisis. Thus, it became a standing goal for all US presidents from Carter to Bush to seek substantial reductions in the first-strike capabilities of the Soviet Union, particularly the SS-18 missile.<sup>18</sup>

The US quest for 'first-strike' stability would probably have been equally strong had Carter remained in the White House after January 1981. It is well known that Carter intended, as soon as SALT II had been ratified, to push hard for a SALT III Treaty based on the notion of deep cuts. In addition, PD-50 made it clear that he wanted to ensure 'that all arms control proposals are fully supportive of our national security'. To further that objective, Carter directed that any new US arms-control proposal should (1) contribute to US defence and force posture goals; (2) help in deterring and restraining the Soviet Union and its allies; and (3) promise to limit arms competition and reduce the likelihood of military conflict.<sup>19</sup> In retrospect, this was as close to a recipe for 'first-strike' stability as you could possibly ask for in the Cold War world.

Putting SDI aside, the two most significant differences between the defence policies of the Carter and Reagan administrations were, first, the latter's far more explicit ambition

of regaining some kind of superiority, and, second, its corresponding willingness to spend more taxpayers' money on defence.

It may well be, however, that Carter would have come a long way to match Reagan on both scores had he remained in office. It is noteworthy that, during the last six months of his term, influential voices within the national security apparatus urged him to do more in terms of improving the strategic balance. Thus, the Odom memorandum, which Carter found so interesting, made the case for a more assertive and ambitious defence policy. The objective 'may not be "military superiority"', Odom wrote, 'but it should be "military pre-eminence" for the US and its allies'. Moreover, he argued strongly in favour of increasing the defence budget.<sup>20</sup>

Brzezinski and others followed up this view even after the election. Referring to recent defence budget analyses made by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Department of Defense and the National Security Council (NSC) staff, Brzezinski informed Carter that the common 'distressing conclusion' was that the Department of Defense was facing 'valid demands for real growth across most sectors of the budget'. The dangerous situation in the Persian Gulf was the main reason but Brzezinski also argued strongly in favour of allocating more resources for military R&D. Consequently, in order to be 'on a reasonable track', he called for an additional \$10 billion plus for the FY-82 defence budget, including more funds for production of 'smart weapons' (Brzezinski's phrase) as well as a 12 per cent real growth in military research, development, testing and evaluation (RDT&E) programmes. 'I fully understand this amount is large', Brzezinski concluded, 'but that is what it takes to continue modernization at a pace consistent with maintaining our current force structure and to meet the urgent requirements occasioned by our neglect of readiness over the recent past and the new demands of Southwest Asia.' Apparently, Brown and Ed Muskie (who meanwhile had replaced Vance as Secretary of State) both concurred in this view.<sup>21</sup>

In short, even if Carter had ultimately decided to stick to the 5 per cent annual real growth for defence that he had announced in January that year, it is evident from the sources that there was a strong and building pressure within his administration in favour of substantially increased defence spending.<sup>22</sup> In fact, the Reagan administration's revised defence budget for 1981 only added US \$6.8 billion,<sup>23</sup> far less than the increase advocated by Brzezinski. Seen in this light, the Reagan buildup of the early 1980s looks more like a logical next step than a dramatic turn of events.

### *More Assertive Containment of Soviet Expansionism*

The second point on Odom's list of recommendations for US Cold War policy in the 1980s was to do more in order to contain 'Soviet expansion where deterrence fails'. The United States had to devote special attention to the three inter-related strategic regions of Europe, east Asia and the Persian Gulf. There was major work to do in each, Odom concluded, 'not-withstanding much that has already been accomplished'.<sup>24</sup>

Let us start by looking at the accomplishments.

After almost three years of internal debate and personal doubts, by the end of 1979 Carter had finally decided to challenge what he, reluctantly, had come to see as increasing Soviet expansionism in the Third World. So far, his preferred containment

strategy had been one of US self-restraint. Thus, he had persistently refused to give military support to Somalia in its war against the Soviet- and Cuban-backed Marxist-Leninist regime of Ethiopia on the grounds that Somali President Siad Barre was a dictator and an aggressor. Likewise, up until mid-1979 he had refused to provide military support to the anti-communist mujahedin guerillas in Afghanistan. Most important, he had consistently refrained from taking advantage of the improved political relationship with China in order to transform it into an anti-Soviet strategic alliance.

In the second half of 1979, this balanced approach became increasingly difficult to uphold for a number of international and domestic reasons. The crucial event was the fall of the Shah of Iran and the subsequent stunning collapse of the pro-Western government of Shahpur Bakhtiar on 11 February 1979. The sudden loss of Iran as a key ally in the Persian Gulf region, a development which had very little, if anything, to do with Soviet expansionism, had a tremendous impact on Carter's worldview and strategic perceptions. Since Iran had already been identified by the authors of PRM-10 as the most likely spot for a military conflict that might lead to the use of US forces, the rapid disintegration of the pro-American regime in Tehran made Carter increasingly obsessed with the vulnerability of Western interests in the Persian Gulf region. On top of that, US intelligence provided him with disturbing evidence of growing Soviet and/or Cuban military involvement in various countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the Horn, the Arabian Peninsula and even Latin America.

It was against this backdrop that the Carter administration began in mid-1979 to reconsider many of its basic assumptions about how Soviet expansion should be contained. While confident that the Soviet model was becoming less and less attractive for most peoples and governments in the world, Carter and his advisers also feared that the growing force projection capability of the Soviet military would make it increasingly more tempting for Moscow to interfere in local and regional conflicts wherever they saw the possibility for some kind of ideological or geopolitical gain. This conclusion led to three major changes in US policy, all of which had important long-term implications.

First of all, and mainly because of the lessons drawn from the Iran turmoil, the Carter administration implemented a shift in strategic priority away from Europe and in favour of the Persian Gulf/Middle East region. In March 1979, Carter was presented with an updated summary of Comprehensive Net Assessment 1978, which called for increasing US military presence in the Persian Gulf area.<sup>25</sup> After some initial concern that this would appear 'to downplay an emphasis on NATO',<sup>26</sup> the State Department accepted the general conclusion, and work began to implement the shift.<sup>27</sup> The most urgent task was to transform the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF), which Carter had first called for in PD-18 of August 1977, from a paper tiger into a real military factor. Owing to other and more urgent defence priorities as well as a considerable lack of enthusiasm about the RDF within the armed forces, very little progress had been made since then, and it was only after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan that the many unsolved questions relating to funding, allocation of resources, manpower shortages and command structures were fully addressed. Then things started happening fast. The first RDF units started to exercise in the region (together with local forces) in the second half of 1980. At the same time, forward-based heavy equipment was being moved to the area, some of it stored on especially acquired support and RoRo (roll-on-roll-off) ships.



In tandem with the RDF build-up, steps were taken to enhance the long-term US military presence in the Persian Gulf region through the establishment of a much-advertised 'regional security framework'. Again, this effort was well under way prior to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, with decisions already being made to seek military access and bases facilities rights in countries close to region (such as Kenya, Somalia and Sudan). However, the invasion gave the effort a new urgency—symbolized by the Carter Doctrine of January 1980—as well as improved prospects for success. In the following months, a series of agreements were made with individual countries in the region, many of which traded US security assistance with transit and access rights for US forces.

In his memorandum, Odom insisted that 'the Persian Gulf Security Framework effort must be kept on track'. It was. Shortly before leaving office, Carter issued his last two presidential directives: PD-62 on 'Modifications in US National Security' and PD-63 on 'Persian Gulf Security Framework'. Both confirmed the new emphasis placed by the US government on defending American interests in that region. According to PD-63, the United States would meet its new commitments by (a) building up its capabilities to project military force into the region; (b) developing 'a broad range of military and related response options in and outside the region...against the Soviet Union to compensate for the current Soviet regional advantage in conventional forces'; and (c) assisting countries in the region in 'deterring and resisting Soviet penetration—political, economic, or military'.<sup>28</sup> In short, if the Soviet leadership had felt compelled to do something radical in order to defend their position in Afghanistan, Washington had now definitely decided to defend their positions in the rest of the region, if necessary with military means.

A second significant departure from past policies that took place in the last 18 months of the Carter presidency was the emergence of a strategic relationship with China. Even if Carter in late 1979 had been brought around by Brzezinski and Brown to accept the idea of loosening up the strict regulations on technology transfers to China, thereby accepting a more favourable economic treatment for China than for the Soviet Union, he still refused to sell military equipment. However, as Cyrus Vance explains in his memoirs, the Soviet action against Afghanistan 'changed the picture'.<sup>29</sup> Brzezinski immediately told Carter that the Soviet invasion ought to result in a new US policy towards China.<sup>30</sup> Then, on 4 January, Carter empowered Brown to offer Beijing non-lethal military equipment and also confirmed his earlier decision to seek special treatment for China on high-technology transfers.<sup>31</sup> As summarized in a later report, Carter declared 'we are now prepared to consider sale of military equipment, but not arms, to China on a carefully selected case-by-case basis'.<sup>32</sup> Upon his return from China two weeks later, Brown reported with satisfaction that in the course of his trip 'we have taken a significant step in our strategic relationship with the Chinese'. The State Department next liberalized regulations for some 30 types of support equipment that could be licensed for export to China by the Office of Munitions Control, including air defence radar, tropospheric communications equipment, transport helicopters, truck tractors and electronic countermeasure devices.<sup>33</sup>

In April, as Vance was preparing his resignation, the Department of Commerce officially transferred China from the Warsaw Pact country group category 'Y' to a new country group category 'P'. That made China eligible for wide exports in sensitive areas such as transport aircraft, long-distance communication equipment and military

helicopters.<sup>34</sup> Three months later, the administration carried out a further liberalization of licensing criteria for high-technology transfers and sensitive hardware exports to China.<sup>35</sup>

One important aspect of the emerging US-Chinese security relationship was that it offered the United States the possibility of replacing some of the military intelligence facilities that had been lost in Iran with similar facilities on Chinese soil. China thus emerged as a key partner to the United States in the task of containing Soviet expansionism. As summarized in PD-62, the normalization of relations with China had already improved the United States' strategic position in east Asia.<sup>36</sup> The emergence of a strategic partnership between the United States and China altered the Cold War game, and may be part of the explanation for the acute military-strategic paranoia in Moscow in the early 1980s. It is thinkable, and perhaps likely, that the US-Chinese relationship would have expanded further and played an even more important role in the 1980s had there been a second Carter administration.

The Chinese also played a role in the third important step taken by Carter in order to contain Soviet expansion; namely, the secret financial and military aid to the mujahedin after the Soviet invasion in late December 1979. The decision to provide the mujahedin with weapons and military equipment was based on two main assessments. First, Brzezinski stressed that, in order to make the Soviets pay the highest possible price for their mistake, it was essential that Afghani resistance continued unimpeded. That, however, would be impossible without substantial external support. Thus, in order to punish Moscow, it would be necessary to send 'more money as well as arms shipments to the rebels, and some technical advice'. Brzezinski also argued in favour of encouraging China to help the mujahedin and concerting with Islamic countries 'both in a propaganda campaign and in a covert action program to help the rebels'.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, when the NSC met on 2 January to put together the first package of countermeasures, the president had already given the CIA the necessary go-ahead to provide the mujahedin with Soviet-made weapons, thereby making it harder for Moscow to put the blame on the West.<sup>38</sup> Thus, rather than being asked to discuss whether or not to help arm the mujahedin, the NSC was simply informed that the United States would cooperate with its regional partners on this matter.

As Carter left office, the United States thus seemed better equipped than in many years to contain Soviet expansion. Reagan adopted most of the measures taken by his predecessor, although he was more cautious with regard to China and much less patient with the so-called 'revolutionaries' in Central America. On the latter point, however, a second Carter term could possibly have resulted in a somewhat similar development of US policy. As Odom argued in his September 1980 memo, the Caribbean region was 'overdue for our security concerns'. In the 1980s, therefore, it would not suffice only to press the new Persian Gulf strategy forward at full speed; establishing a similar security framework for the Caribbean would be equally necessary.<sup>39</sup>

### *A More Assertive Economic Diplomacy*

The third element of the new 'competitive engagement' strategy recommended by Odom for the 1980s was an economic diplomacy that took more advantage of the superior economic and technological power of the United States. 'The Soviet Union and East

Europe will continue to look to the West as a source of reprieve from their economic plight', Odom wrote. In the 1980s, therefore, the West ought to 'exploit that need with offers of economic assistance based on rigorous and measurable political conditions'.<sup>40</sup>

Carter was well accustomed to this argument. Indeed, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, he had already moved a long way in the same direction. Thus, when the NSC began to discuss possible US counter-measures, it was decided almost without debate to tighten US export controls on a case-by-case basis. Moreover, it was also decided to accompany this step with a request to COCOM (Cordination Committee), the anti-communist export control organization of the Western countries, to 'tightening up on trade with the Soviet Union'. In accordance with the explicit wishes of President Carter, it was decided also that the United States should be prepared to restrict export licences to an even greater degree than its allies as long as it did 'not disadvantage US business'.<sup>41</sup>

The ease with which this decision was taken was remarkable when seen in light of how fiercely the US State Department and the Department of Commerce had fought all such proposals in the recent past. As I have shown in a previous study,<sup>42</sup> Brzezinski and his staff had in fact started to press for more biting export controls in the spring of 1978. Essentially adopting a strategy outlined by Samuel Huntington, who served at the NSC at the time, Brzezinski in particular called for tighter controls on two types of high-tech equipment that were expected to be of critical importance to Soviet economic performance in the 1980s; namely, state-of-the-art computers and oil-drilling equipment (the latter because of a forecasted Soviet shortage in oil and gas unless new petroleum resources were found and successfully exploited). Defense Secretary Harold Brown, CIA Director Stansfield Turner and Secretary of Energy James Schlesinger supported Brzezinski in this effort. Their advice had been partly approved by Carter in the summer of 1978, when he was looking for some way to punish Moscow after the mock trials against Soviet dissidents Alexandr Ginzburg and Yuri Orlov.

Thus, on 18 July 1978, Carter decided to withhold approval for a controversial Sperry Univac computer sale to Tass and to defer any action on two pending Dresser Industries applications for export of oil drill-bits production machinery. Moreover, he issued a directive to the Commerce Department to put oil-production technology and related equipment on the Commodity Control List. As Brzezinski saw it, the president's actions meant that the United States' 'highly permissive attitude towards technology transfer to the Soviet Union was now being reversed'.<sup>43</sup> In Moscow, Deputy Foreign Minister Anatoly Kovalev claimed that the United States was now trying to use trade 'as an instrument for political pressure on the Soviet Union'.<sup>44</sup> Carter also tried to enroll allied support for his new export-control measures. In the end, however, not very much came out of these initiatives, mostly due to the persistent non-compliance of the State and Commerce Departments but also because the European allies refused to go along.<sup>45</sup>

A year later, in September 1979, Brzezinski had become so frustrated by the lack of achievement that he complained to Carter that technology transfer to the Soviet Union 'continues unimpeded because of State/Commerce reluctance to control it'.<sup>46</sup> The president seems to have been ambivalent on the issue. When relations with Moscow were bad, he favoured tighter export controls and more sanctions; when relations were good, such as in Vienna, he called for more trade. In the wake of the Cuban brigade debacle in August-September 1979, his preferences once again shifted in favour of tighter controls. Brzezinski, at least, felt that he had Carter's blessing as he now joined forces with

Secretary Brown in an attempt to quell further State and Commerce Department obstruction.<sup>47</sup>

Apparently, the mounting pressure now began to have some impact on Vance. On 30 November 1979, the matter was brought up at the weekly Vance-Brown-Brzezinski luncheon meeting. Afterwards, Brzezinski informed Carter that Vance had conceded 'it would be a mistake to discontinue controls on petroleum equipment and to discontinue "random uses of security export controls for foreign policy purposes"'.<sup>48</sup> In other words, it looks as if the Secretary of State had decided to accept a more rigorous export-controls regime against the Soviet Union well before the administration knew that an invasion of Afghanistan would take place.<sup>49</sup> The reason for this sudden accommodation to the Brown-Brzezinski line is not clear, as the relevant State Department papers remain classified. The most likely explanation is that Vance had decided to give up his long-standing fight against tighter export controls against the Soviet Union in order to prevent what he considered to be an even more damaging move to loosen up such controls against China. However, thanks to the unforeseen events in Afghanistan a few weeks later, even that battle would soon be lost.

In the following months, the United States was able to enlist considerable allied support for its more assertive exports-control policy. Thus, as Odom observed in September 1980, 'with the new COCOM policies, we have begun to control more effectively the strategic technology transfers'.<sup>50</sup> Before we move on to his recommendations for the 1980s, we must take a closer look at the rationale behind the policy changes that had already taken place.

Carter, it ought to be remembered, had come to office with a strong wish to improve US-Soviet relations, provided that Moscow proved more willing to respect human rights, international agreements and borders. If these preconditions were in place, he would also like to see an expansion of trade, technology transfers and credits. 'As a general feeling', he said later, 'I was in favor of increasing trade with the Soviet Union as an avenue to open up a closed system'.<sup>51</sup> However, the Soviet response to the human-rights campaign and the many signs of a more assertive Soviet role in regional conflicts, soon made him start looking for ways of using trade as a strategic tool. With the issuing of PD-18 on 24 August 1977, Carter directed that the national strategy of his administration should be to take advantage of the United States' 'relative advantages in economic strength, technological superiority and popular political support'—a policy based on the premise that 'the Soviet Union continues to face major internal economic and national difficulties'.<sup>52</sup>

As it soon turned out, however, behind this consensus there existed two strong fractions with very different understandings of the proposed strategy. The first group, with Vance and Secretary of Treasury Michael Blumenthal as their main spokesmen, were in favour of expanding US/Soviet economic relations, and therefore gave priority to removing legislation that blocked trade. This being done, they would begin more actively to encourage Soviet cooperation through positive economic incentives ('carrots'). The second group, led by Brzezinski and Secretary of Energy James R. Schlesinger, wanted to supply the president with a full range of economic tools, positive and negative, by which to influence Soviet decisions in ways favourable to the United States—regardless of whether the overall character of the relationship were one of cooperation or competition.

More precisely, the Brzezinski-Schlesinger group argued that the Soviet Union might be facing a severe economic crisis sometime in the mid-1980s—the outcome of which might hinge on its access to Western goods, capital, technology and know-how. According to Samuel Huntington, who had conducted a major analysis of the mid- and long-term prognoses for the Soviet economy as part of his work on PRM-10 and PD-18, the Soviet Union would soon be confronted by ‘a growing labor shortage, probable further declines in productivity, and an increasing energy crunch’. In theory, these problems could be solved in one of three ways: by structural reforms of the entire economic system; by a shift towards autarky, or by a ‘quick fix’ of the basic structural flaws of the Soviet command economy by means of massive imports of Western equipment and technology. As Huntington saw it, the first alternative could be ruled out because of the ageing leadership’s deep-rooted fear of change, the second because of its immense social and economic costs. Thus, chances were good that Moscow would eventually go for a ‘quick fix’. From a US perspective, this meant that the rapidly deepening economic problems of the Soviet Union would increase both the value of the economic benefits that the West could offer and the price which Soviet leaders would be willing to pay to get those benefits.<sup>53</sup>

Summarizing the argument, Brzezinski noted that in the 1980s US economic leverage ‘may be much stronger than now, and we may have a unique opportunity to use it’. When spokesmen of the Vance-Blumenthal group protested that it was difficult to see ‘where an economic crisis, or more likely, a slowdown in the Soviet economy, would necessarily be to our advantage’,<sup>54</sup> Huntington was assigned the task of spelling out his argument in more detail. He now came up with a proposal for what he called a ‘new economic diplomacy’, which would require movement in four areas: first, the president should be enabled to retain more effective centralized control over all aspects of the US-Soviet economic relationship, since he would otherwise not be able ‘to open or close the economic door’ as dictated by US long-term security interests and short-term political objectives.<sup>55</sup> Second, all items of machinery and technology for which the Soviets had a critical need, and for which they were largely dependent upon US supply, should be put on the list of embargoed goods and their exports controlled, regardless of the extent to which they were likely to add anything to Soviet military capability. Thus, no longer was the fear of war and Soviet expansionism the sole legitimate justification for putting a particular item on the embargo list. From now on, a third criterion would be added: Soviet dependence upon US-controlled goods or technologies.<sup>56</sup> Third, in order to maximize the ability of the United States to employ its economic advantages, new and more flexible arrangements should be provided with regard to the provision of US government credits to the Soviet Union—the obvious implication being that something had to be done with the Jackson-Vanik, Byrd and Stevenson Amendments. Fourth, and finally, the United States should try to enlist the support of other leading Western economic powers so that its new economic diplomacy towards the Soviet Union would not be undermined by more liberal export controls elsewhere.<sup>57</sup>

In the short term, Huntington’s proposals resulted in something close to ‘bureaucratic warfare’ over US export-control policy.<sup>58</sup> But as we have seen, most of his recommendations were eventually adopted by the Carter administration, either in the summer of 1978 or in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Odom had worked closely with Huntington on these matters, and his recommendations for the 1980s were

fully consistent with Huntington's views, only slightly more ambitious in terms of allied unity. 'The next step is East-West trade coordination', he argued. 'Credits and trade must be coordinated on an alliance basis... Otherwise, the "alternative supplier" problem will continue to deny us the political advantages of our greatest edge over the Soviets—economic advantage.'<sup>59</sup> While acknowledging that the COCOM countries had already moved slightly towards trade coordination in certain high-tech and industry fields, Odom readily admitted that this had triggered strong European resistance. There was no reason for the United States to ease the pressure, however. 'We have strong laws that allow the President to force Europe to choose between the US as a trading partner and the Soviet bloc as a market. Once the allies are whipped into a line, we can dictate the political terms of East-West trade.'<sup>60</sup>

In the Reagan years, such pressure was indeed heavily applied on several Western countries, including France, Germany, Japan and Norway (the two latter cases due to the Toshiba-Kongsberg sales of advanced computers to a Soviet nuclear-submarine shipyard). But again, the mental preparations started earlier. Thus, Odom strongly called for tough measures against the German firm Kloeckner for trying to take over an important export deal with Moscow from a US company. 'If the Germans believe that Soviet markets are critical for their machine exports', Odom argued, 'then we can retaliate by denying them our import market.'<sup>61</sup> That was exactly the formula to be used a few years later by the Reagan administration in the Toshiba-Kongsberg case, except that Republican congressmen did not only call for tighter import restrictions but 'more dead Norwegian bodies' as well.<sup>62</sup>

Odom also recommended that Carter, in his second term, should use the post-Afghanistan policy with its European allies 'to lay the basis for East-West trade coordination at the Economic Summit in Canada next summer'.<sup>63</sup> Interestingly, even if Carter, by popular vote, was denied the opportunity to follow this advice, it was very much carried through by his successor. Thus, a year later a leading Reagan official told a subcommittee of the Foreign Relations Committee of the US Senate that at the Ottawa summit in July 1981 it was agreed to hold 'a high-level meeting of COCOM to discuss how to improve the effectiveness of controls on trade with the East'.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, the economic diplomacy towards the USSR and Eastern Europe as spelled out in the statement by Under-Secretary of State for Economic Affairs Myer Rashis was remarkably consistent with Odom's recommendations. This included Odom's call for a united Western economic front. Once the Soviets saw the emergence of such a front, Odom claimed, 'we will have important opportunities for our economic diplomacy'.<sup>65</sup>

A main objective of the economic diplomacy, therefore, was to obtain political concessions from Moscow. Or as the same Reagan official would put it a year later: 'we are seeking to develop a prudent and careful approach which would at the same time improve our ability to deny the Soviet Union equipment and technology to further its military objectives while allowing us to broaden certain economic ties that will permit us to exercise greater leverage and influence on Soviet behavior'.<sup>66</sup> As we can see, this was exactly in line with the ideas promoted previously by Huntington, Odom and Brzezinski.

In this context, it is noteworthy that US policy towards the Soviet Union changed dramatically after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in that, for the first time since the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, Washington made a return to business as usual dependent on a major political concession from Moscow. In January 1980, Carter declared that there

could be no more détente, and thereby no lift on economic sanctions, until the Soviets started to withdraw their forces from Afghanistan. Except for the grain embargo, which Reagan ended without ever asking for Soviet concessions, this policy remained intact long after Carter had left the White House. Eventually, the US ultimatum created a dynamic of its own. Thus, when in February 1988 Gorbachev finally announced that the last Soviet soldier would be out of Afghanistan in 15 months, it was commonly regarded as a crucial step to end the Cold War.

*Reduction of Soviet Influence Within and Outside its Own Territory*

As the fourth part of his formula for a US policy in the 1980s, Odom argued that it was time 'to reduce the spheres of Soviet influence'. Opportunities were large, he continued: 'We have the beginnings of a policy for the three non-Russian areas of Soviet influence.'<sup>67</sup>

Beginning with the first category—Soviet 'client states' in South-west and South-east Asia, in the Horn of Africa, in southern Africa, in Yemen and the Caribbean—Odom argued that 'we can and should bring some reverses to the Soviet projection of power'. This, he continued, would involve more vigorous support 'for anti-Soviet movements afoot in all areas'. When this recommendation was being made, Carter had already tacitly tolerated the Chinese 'punishment' of Vietnam in February 1979; had approved in the autumn of that year that weapons be sold to Said Barre and that military equipment be secretly forwarded to the mujahedin. In light of what would later follow under Reagan in Grenada, Nicaragua, Libya and elsewhere, it is noteworthy that neither Brzezinski nor Carter expressed any reservation with respect to Odom's call for a more vigorous effort in support of anti-revolutionary groups and forces.<sup>68</sup>

The next category was 'the Bloc states' in Eastern Europe. Here, Odom could simply take notice of the fact that 'we already have a policy for East Europe of encouraging its autonomy vis-à-vis the USSR'. To be sure, the so-called 'differentiation policy' towards Eastern Europe had been in place since 1977, and was slowly beginning to have some impact. In addition to favouring countries that proved less independent of Moscow, the 'differentiation policy' also favoured countries that were more democratic and demonstrated more respect for human rights.<sup>69</sup> Combining these two criteria, the Carter administration concluded that Hungary, Poland and Romania should be singled out as the most-favoured nations in US diplomacy towards Eastern Europe.<sup>70</sup> Reagan continued this policy, and adopted both the criteria used by the Carter administration in order to differentiate between the various countries and its conclusion with respect to what countries actually deserved the better treatment.<sup>71</sup> Odom also stressed that the United States had to help the democratic forces in Poland 'consolidate recent gains'.<sup>72</sup> As we now know, the Carter administration did so by open as well as clandestine means.<sup>73</sup> On Poland, Reagan would essentially follow in Carter's footsteps.

Finally, Odom argued in favour of doing more on the nationality question within the USSR. 'In an age of nationalism, there is nothing permanent about Soviet 'internationalism' and Soviet borders', he claimed, adding that this was something the US government could imply and encourage others to say in more explicit terms.<sup>74</sup>

Odom was, for obvious reasons, well aware of the things that had been done on this front in the last few years, and especially after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. As early as March 1977, Carter had been asking Congress to appropriate funds that would allow the Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty (RFE-RL) network to double its propaganda efforts against Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Carter justified the budget proposal with the argument that the US-sponsored international broadcasts represented the only substitute for a free press in the Soviet Bloc countries and therefore were invaluable instruments in the administration's commitment 'to the free flow of information and ideas'.<sup>75</sup> While the 'free flow' was meant primarily to serve Carter's human-rights campaign—which I will return to in a moment—it is quite clear that Brzezinski and his staff also hoped to advance pluralism and diversity within the Soviet sphere of influence, thereby increasing the pressure on the power centre in Moscow, and that they were already looking at the national minorities as a particularly interesting target group in this respect.<sup>76</sup>

The focus on ethnic and religious minorities became much stronger in the months immediately before and after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Thus, in September 1979 called for expanded broadcasts to the Muslims and Ukrainians in the USSR about Moscow's bad treatment of national and religious minorities.<sup>77</sup> A week later, Carter instructed Vance and Brzezinski to ensure that greater publicity be given to the growing Soviet involvement in south-western Asia. Brzezinski, in turn, told the International Communication Agency to make sure the president's decision was followed up by the US radio networks.<sup>78</sup> Not surprisingly, these efforts were stepped up even further in the wake of the Soviet invasion. Thus, on 2 January 1980, the NSC decided to step up broadcasts by Radio Liberty, Radio Free Europe and Voice of America in order to inform the Soviet public of the political and economic risks to which it was being subjected by its government. Other programmes would focus on how small nationalities, especially in Central Asia, had repeatedly been overrun by tsarist and Soviet imperialism.<sup>79</sup>

It was against this backdrop that Odom, nine months later, argued that, whereas a passive containment approach would permit Soviet consolidation of recent gains and facilitate new efforts to expand further, the recommended 'competitive approach to spheres and areas of Soviet influence will make further Soviet projection of power more difficult'.<sup>80</sup>

According to Odom, the United States disposed a major asset in this struggle, since the issue of human rights was 'already a weapon in our arsenal'.<sup>81</sup> This brings us, finally, to the role of ideology in the 'new' Cold War, and, more specifically, to the question of whether Carter's human-rights campaign should be seen as an instrument of political-ideological warfare against Moscow. If so, the element of continuity between the Carter and Reagan administrations will appear strong indeed.

Indisputably, the first three months of the Carter administration witnessed a dramatic increase in the level of official US criticism of the human-rights record of the Soviet Union and some of its East European satellites.<sup>82</sup> Even if Carter later admitted that, initially, he 'did not fully grasp all the ramifications of our new [human-rights] policy', particularly not how it would be perceived by Moscow,<sup>83</sup> it was he who marked out the course in this early, and very vigorously anti-Soviet, phase of the human-rights campaign. By mid-March, US media began to describe the campaign as the 'Carter Doctrine' in US-Soviet relations.<sup>84</sup>



Carter rejected this notion, complaining that his policy had been 'improperly' interpreted 'to deal exclusively with the Soviet Union'.<sup>85</sup> His own actions, however, suggest that even if the HR (human rights) campaign was not only directed against Moscow, he was still paying much more attention to Soviet human-rights violations than to those of other authoritarian regimes. There simply was no parallel to his outspoken personal support of noted Soviet dissidents such as Alexandr Ginzburg, Yuri Orlov and Andrej Sakharov, nor to his secret messages to the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev on the same matter. In Brezhnev's reply of 25 February, the Soviet leader described Carter's open letter to Sakharov as 'correspondence with a renegade who proclaimed himself an enemy of the Soviet state'. He warned that the Kremlin 'would not allow interference in our internal affairs, whatever pseudo-humanitarian slogans are used to present it'.<sup>86</sup>

Carter did not back down. On the contrary, he continued to confront the Soviet leadership in ways that he by now must have known would be interpreted as deliberate provocations. Thus, on 1 March, Carter invited Vladimir Bukovsky, the most prominent Soviet dissident in exile after Solzhenitsyn, to a meeting in the White House. This was a controversial decision even among his senior advisers.<sup>87</sup> Bukovsky had recently appeared before the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations) executive council, where he described the Soviet Union as one vast prison camp. Its 250 million prisoners, he claimed, could only be free if the West took up a firm moral position with regard to violations of human rights by the Soviet government.<sup>88</sup> It went without saying that Carter could not invite a person who spoke about the Soviet system in such harsh and bitter language without confirming Moscow's worst suspicions about the anti-Soviet bias of the human-rights campaign. When news of the upcoming meeting reached Moscow, the Soviet press immediately denounced Bukovsky as 'a criminal' and 'scum'.<sup>89</sup>

Throughout March, Soviet newspapers issued articles showing that Brezhnev and his colleagues were preparing themselves for a renewed ideological confrontation with the West. Calling attention to the alleged imperfect social, racial and civil rights situation in the United States, Tass and other CPSU mouthpieces charged the Carter administration with hypocrisy in the human-rights field, and warned that its one-sided criticism of the Soviet Union was putting détente in jeopardy.<sup>90</sup> Brezhnev's Trade Union speech represented the climax of this counteroffensive. 'Washington's claims to teach others how to live cannot be accepted by any sovereign state', the Soviet leader protested. 'I will repeat again: We will not tolerate interference in our internal affairs by anyone and under any pretext'.<sup>91</sup>

Carter's response was to invite the Soviet government to prove the moral and ideological merits of their political system in an open contest with the Western democracies:

There is an ideological struggle that has been in progress for decades between the Communist nations on the one hand and the democratic nations on the other. Mr Brezhnev and his predecessors have never refrained from expressing their view when they disagreed with some aspect of social or political life in the free world. And I think we have a right to speak out openly when we have a concern about human rights wherever those abuses occur.<sup>92</sup>

What, then, was the ultimate aim of the human-rights campaign?

Starting with Carter, we have reason to trust his word that the human-rights campaign was universal in scope and not aimed at any particular government. It is probably also true that he was less inclined than some of his advisers to use the human-rights campaign as a deliberate instrument of political-ideological warfare against the Soviet Union. That is not to say, however, that he was unaware of the anti-Soviet potential of the campaign, or that he ever considered treating the Soviet leaders more leniently than he treated other human-rights violators.

Equally important in this context were the views and objectives of Brzezinski and his staff. As early as 1975–76, Brzezinski had argued that the issue of human rights represented ‘an opportunity to put the Soviet Union ideologically on the defensive’.<sup>93</sup> Other members of his staff, like Huntington, Odom and Paul B. Henze, clearly looked upon the matter in the same way. Odom, for instance, recalled later that he saw human rights as a ‘brilliant’ policy that was ‘the obverse to the Soviet’s support of the international class struggle’. In his words, it ‘was a very pragmatic tactic, to really beat up morally on the Soviets’.<sup>94</sup>

Similar views, albeit expressed in more neutral language, can be found in PRM-10, PD-18, and other key national security documents of the Carter administration. As described by Odom, who was heavily involved in the preparation of these documents, a major conclusion coming out of the NSC staff’s analysis of the US-Soviet rivalry was that in the next stage of the Cold War (the Second Era), the United States should make more assertive use of its economic, technological and other non-military advantages.<sup>95</sup> The sanitized version of PD-18 available at this time shows that human rights were very much part of this scheme. According to the directive, it should be an important task for the current administration to ‘compete politically with the Soviet Union by pursuing the basic American commitment to human rights and national independence’.<sup>96</sup>

It was totally in line with this view when Ambassador Arthur Goldberg, head of the US delegation to the CSCE Conference in Belgrade, in his final message to the conference, claimed that the activity of men like Orlov and Ginzburg represented the true spirit of the Helsinki Final Act, and thus needed to be protected by the signatories, not punished. In the words of Goldberg:

We cannot pretend that such questions [that is, the suppression of Orlov, Ginzburg, and their likes] are irrelevant to the implementation of the Final Act, intrusive at this meeting and injurious—if discussed—to the development of détente. We live in the real world, not one of make-believe. We cannot make the world a better one if we turn a blind eye to its fault... Efforts to squelch the truth at Belgrade or at home will not change the truth.<sup>97</sup>

Goldberg’s speech came at a time when the US administration was again stepping up its utilization of the human-rights issue in its struggle with Moscow. Three months later, in the important Annapolis speech of 6 June 1978, Carter brought together the various themes and facets of the human-rights campaign with unprecedented clarity. First, Carter pointed out that the Soviet leaders abuse of basic human rights in their own country had ‘earned them the condemnation of people everywhere who love freedom’. He also

warned other governments not to involve themselves too heavily with the Soviet regime, since it was attempting 'to export a totalitarian and repressive form of government, resulting in a closed society'. Because of this, freedom-loving peoples were increasingly giving Moscow a cold shoulder. 'Outside a tightly controlled bloc', the president said, 'the Soviet Union has difficult political relations with other nations.' This had to do with the lack of common cultural bonds, but most of all with the fact that 'their form of government is becoming increasingly unattractive to other nations, so that even Marxist-Leninist groups no longer look on the Soviet Union as a model to be imitated'. Finally, Carter maintained, in its competition with the Soviet Union, the United States had the great advantage of being in the forefront in a great revolutionary struggle: 'Our philosophy is based on personal freedom, the most powerful of all ideas... Our work for human rights makes us part of an international tide, growing in force. We are strengthened by being part of it'.<sup>98</sup> Carter returned to same theme in his first commentary to the Ginzburg-Shcharansky trials, which opened less than a week after the Annapolis speech. Clearly upset, Carter expressed his feelings in a way that not only revealed his disgust for the Soviet regime, but also indicated that its days were already numbered. 'We are all sobered by this reminder that, so late in the twentieth century, a person has been sent to jail simply for asserting his basic human rights', the president said. However, the occasion was saddest of all for the Soviet people, 'who in this time have known war and oppression; who yearns like all others for peace and liberty; who have seen their government pledge two years ago to respect these human rights and desires; and who now have seen that pledge broken once again.' Fortunately, this sad situation would not last. In Carter's words, 'the struggle for human liberties is long and difficult, but will be won. There is no power on earth that can long delay its progress.'<sup>99</sup>

Thus, the Carter administration not only stepped up the ideological competition with Moscow but increasingly also expressed confidence that the Soviet Union was bound for defeat in its struggle with the West. Keeping this in mind, it is noteworthy that Odom, in his September 1980 memorandum, recommended an even more assertive use of the human-rights campaign in the Cold War of the 1980s. Moreover, he was not alone in doing so. A few months earlier, Brzezinski had received a secret memorandum from Paul B. Henze, another senior NSC analyst, entitled 'Dissidence in Eastern Europe and the USSR—Are We Doing Enough?' On the declaratory level, Henze argued, the Carter administration's record in terms of supporting and encouraging dissidence within the Soviet bloc was 'second to none'. Unfortunately, allocation of resources—both manpower and money—to these programmes had not 'been proportionate to the high level of attention the Administration has given this field in statements and demonstrative actions'. Thus, Henze called for, and outlined, a much more ambitious programme which would take fully into account the new opportunities provided by the growing national self-assertion among the Muslim peoples of the USSR. In addition, 'the potential of persistent Orthodox tradition in the Ukraine and among Russians as a focal point for anti-Communist nationalism (or nationalism that regards Communism as irrelevant) needs to be examined'. Brzezinski agreed, and directed Henze to organize a Soviet Working Group meeting to discuss possible ways of implementing his proposals. As Henze told the Working Group, 'ZB [Brzezinski] obviously wants us to stir up what action we can.'<sup>100</sup>

The kind of 'action' which Henze had in mind would clearly fit well with the strategy of competitive engagement recommended by Odom in order to reduce Soviet influence over client states, bloc states and national minorities within the Soviet Union itself. The end result of such an effort could, potentially, be very dramatic, Odom argued:

The Soviet Union, however militarily strong it is becoming, suffers enormous centrifugal political forces. A shock could bring surprising developments within the USSR, just as we have seen occurring in Poland. The dissolution of the Soviet empire is not a wholly fanciful prediction for later in this century.<sup>101</sup>

Summing up, Carter's human-rights campaign had a universal character but also served as an effective anti-Soviet instrument in the Cold War. With his controversial description of the Soviet Union as an 'evil empire', Ronald Reagan would go much further than his predecessor in singling out Kremlin as the centre of evil and the number-one enemy of the West. Nevertheless, by regularly accusing the Soviet leadership of human-rights abuses, domestic repression and external aggression, Carter and his advisers had prepared the moral ground for Reagan's confrontational positions and harsh characterizations.

### *The 'Long' Last Decade of the Cold War*

In pointing out these four important policy changes during the Carter presidency I am not at all trying to play down the many distinct and important features of the first Reagan administration. As pointed out in other chapters of this book, some of Reagan's policies were truly different from those of his most recent Cold War predecessors, Carter included. My argument is rather that, in certain important policy areas—such as defence, containment of Soviet regional expansion, economic diplomacy and ideological warfare—the changes in US Cold War policy that were to characterize the first half of the 1980s, really began, or had their roots, in the late Carter years. In this sense, the last decade of the Cold War was really a 'long decade', beginning perhaps in December 1978 with the normalization of relations between the United States and Communist China and ending, 13 years later, in December 1991 with the rapid dissolution of a Soviet Union ripped apart by enormous centrifugal political forces (to borrow Odom's very accurate phrase).

As we have seen, there were actually those within the Carter administration who were arguing that this was exactly how the Cold War might one day come to an end. More than that: they had designed a strategy of 'competitive engagement', which they believed would allow Carter, in his still anticipated second term, 'to define the nature of Era II in East-West relations'. More specifically, the recommended policy would help the United States regain military pre-eminence vis-à-vis the USSR ('We shall acquire it and maintain it with our allies'); to contain further Soviet power projection through coordinated efforts within three inter-related security zones; to build a united Western economic front against the Soviet Union that would make it easier to extract political concessions from Moscow; and, finally, to reduce Soviet influence over client states, bloc states and non-Russian minorities in the USSR by way of encouraging 'resistance to

Soviet internationalism' wherever states, nations and dissident groups found it oppressive and unwanted.<sup>102</sup> Could all of this be achieved, the argument went, the Soviet empire might very well fall apart. 'US policy should sight on that strategic goal for the longer run', Odom argued in the concluding section of his September 1980 memorandum: 'When it comes, Era II will be at an end, and we can anticipate Era III.'<sup>103</sup> Amazingly, it took only a long decade to get there.

# NOTES

- 1 Brzezinski (ZB) to Carter, NSC Weekly Report #158, 17 October 1980, JCL, ZB Collection—Weekly Reports, Box 42, 151–161 folder.
- 2 Brzezinski to Carter, NSC Weekly Report #149, August 7, 1980, JCL, ZB Collection—Weekly Reports, Box 42, 151–161 folder.
- 3 Ibid., p. 5.
- 4 Memo, Odom to Brzezinski, 3 September 1980, attachment to Brzezinski to Carter, 12 September 1980, Weekly Report #153, JCL, ZB Collection—Weekly Reports, Box 42, 151–161 folder.
- 5 Memo, Odom to Brzezinski, 3 September 1980, attachment to Brzezinski to Carter, 12 September 1980, Weekly Report #153, JCL, ZB Collection—Weekly Reports, Box 42, 151–161 folder. Carter's handwritten appraisal is on the front page.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 OMB, FY 1981 Presidential Review: Department of Defense, 16 November 1979, JCL, Staff Office: Press, Powell, 'Budget 1981—Presidential Review (DoD)' folder.
- 8 This was one of the main conclusions of NIE 11–2/8–80, 'Soviet Capabilities for Strategic Nuclear Conflict Through the Late 1980s', see pp. 429–65, in Donald P. Steury (ed.), *Intentions and Capabilities: Estimates on Soviet Strategic Forces, 1950–1983* (Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Intelligence, 1996).
- 9 PD-18, 'US National Strategy', 24 August 1977; PD-53, 'National Security Telecommunications Policy', 15 November 1979; PD-58, 'Continuity of Government', June 1980; PD-59, 'Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy', 25 July 1980; all available in partly declassified versions in JCL, Presidential Directives collection.
- 10 PD-59, 'Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy', July 25, 1980, JCL, Presidential Directives collection.
- 11 For a more thorough description of these developments, see Raymond Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1988), pp. 785–91; Olav Njølstad, *In Search of Superiority: US Nuclear Policy in the Cold War* (Oslo: Institute for Defence Studies, 1994), pp. 48–50. A detailed description of the planning and decision-making process leading up to the issuing of PD-59 is found in Brzezinski to Carter, 22 August 1980, NSC Weekly Report #150, JCL, ZB Collection—Weekly Reports, Box 42, 136–150 folder.
- 12 PD-59, 'Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy', July 25, 1980, JCL, Presidential Directives collection.
- 13 Desmond Ball and Robert C. Toth, 'Revising the SIOP: Taking War-Fighting to Dangerous Extremes', *International Security*, vol. 14, no. 4 (Spring 1990), p. 68; Loren B. Thompson, *The Emergence of American Central Nuclear Strategy 1945–1984*, vol. II (Washington, DC: UMI Dissertation Service, 1984), pp. 530–1.
- 14 Interview with General (Ret.) William Odom, Washington, DC, 21 November 1993. Odom was referring to Presidential Directive-41, 'Civil Defense', 29 September 1978. The directive was preceded by PRM-32 on the same subject. Brzezinski's formal request for that study defined its purpose as 'to analyze the strategic implications of civil defense programs in the United States and the Soviet Union, and to determine what changes, if any, should be

- made in current US policies related to civil defense questions'. PRM-32, 'Civil Defense', 30 September 1977, JCL, Presidential Review Memoranda collection.
- 15 Michio Kaku and Daniel Axelrod, *To Win a Nuclear War: The Pentagon's Secret War Plans* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1986), pp. 244–8; Dietrich Schroeer, *Science, Technology and the Nuclear Arms Race* (New York: John Wiley, 1984), pp. 248–9; Strobe Talbott, *The Master of the Game: Paul Nitze and the Nuclear Peace* (New York: Vintage, 1988), p. 239.
  - 16 Address by the President (Reagan), 23 March 1983, *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1983* (Washington, DC: Department of State, 1985), pp. 56–62.
  - 17 In 1991, after eight years of hard bargaining, Moscow finally agreed to reduce the SS-18 force by 50 per cent (START I). Eighteen months later, the START II Agreement committed Russia, which in the meantime had replaced the Soviet Union at the negotiation table, to giving up even the remaining 154 SS-18s over a ten-year period. According to START II, the parties would reduce the number of warheads on MIRV-ed ICBMs to 1,200 by the year 2000, and then move on to eliminate this category of weapons completely within the next three years. Besides the enormous cost of maintaining the ageing SS-18 force, this development was probably caused by the troublesome facts that a large portion of the missiles were deployed outside Russian territory (in Kazakhstan) and that the only production plant was situated outside Russia (in Ukraine). Douglas Clark, 'The Impact of START II on the Russian Strategic Forces', *FRE/RL Research Report*, vol. 2, no. 8 (19 February 1993), pp. 65–70.
  - 18 Talbott, *The Master of the Game*, pp. 142–7; David W. Tarr, *Nuclear Deterrence and International Security: Alternative Nuclear Regimes* (New York: Longman, 1991), pp. 60–3.
  - 19 PD-50, 'Arms Control Decision Paper', 14 August 1979, JCL, Presidential Directives collection.
  - 20 Memo, Odom to Brzezinski, 3 September 1980, attachment to Brzezinski to Carter, 12 September 1980, Weekly Report #153, JCL, ZB Collection—Weekly Reports, Box 42, 151–161 folder.
  - 21 Brzezinski to Carter, 21 November 1980, NSC Weekly Report #159, JCL, ZB Collection—Weekly Reports, Box 42, 151–161 folder.
  - 22 This pressure was felt most intensely by OMB Director Jim McIntyre. On numerous occasions, he complained to Carter about the difficulties it created for him in the budget process. He also warned Carter about the negative implications it would have for his domestic programmes and for the overall budget balance should he give in to the pressure from the DOD and the military. Memoranda, McIntyre to Carter, 4 March, 5 April, 18 November, 2 December, 1980, JCL, McIntyre Collection, Box 39 and 40, Memoranda to the President folders.
  - 23 Press briefing by Caspas Weinberger, 4 March 1981, Doc. 29, *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents 1981* (Washington, DC: Department of State, 1984).
  - 24 Memo, Odom to Brzezinski, 3 September 1980, attachment to Brzezinski to Carter, 12 September 1980, Weekly Report #153, JCL, ZB Collection—Weekly Reports, Box 42, 151–161 folder.
  - 25 'Comprehensive Nest Assessment 1978—Overview', enclosure to Brzezinski to Carter, NSC Weekly Report #92, 30 March 1979, JCL, ZB Collection—Weekly Reports, Box 42, 91–101 folder.
  - 26 Memo, Tarnoff to Brzezinski, 1 May 1979, JCL, ZB Collection—Alpha Channel, Box 20, 'Alpha Channel 5/79–8/79' folder.
  - 27 Brzezinski to Carter, NSC Weekly Report #105, 3 August, 1979, JCL, ZB Collection—Weekly Report, Box 42, 102–120 folder.
  - 28 PD-63, 'Persian Gulf Security Framework', 15 January 1981, JCL, Presidential Directives collection. See also PD-62, 'Modifications in US National Strategy', same date and archival reference.

- 29 Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Four Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983), p. 390.
- 30 Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, 26 December 1979, JCL, Handwriting file, Carter-Brezhnev Project Collection.
- 31 Vance, *Hard Choices*, pp. 390–1; Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Advisor, 1977–1981* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Gironse), p. 424.
- 32 Memo, Holbrooke, Platt and Oksenberg to V-B-B [Vance-Brown-Brzezinski], 22 January 1980, JCL, ZB Collection, Box 34, 'Meetings VBB 1–2/80' folder.
- 33 Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 424.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 According to a NSC staff memo, the new guidelines were as follows: '1. Licensing will no longer be automatically disapproved merely because the end use is military or because the end user is engaged in military activity. 2. Licensing may be approved even if the equipment or data could be used in the design, development or manufacture of tactical military items. Licenses will *not* be approved for equipment and technical data intended for the design, development or manufacture of nuclear weapons or delivery systems, electronic warfare or intelligence-gathering equipment. 3. Licensing will no longer be disapproved merely because the equipment incorporates certain advanced technology. Items and data not previously approvable to controlled countries may therefore be approved for the PRC if the level of technology is assessed as appropriate to a stated and acceptable end use.' Memo, Sullivan and Huberman to Brzezinski, 15 July 1980, JCL, ZB Collection—Subject File, 'Meetings—MBB 5/80–6/80'.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Brezhnev to Carter, 26 December 1979, Handwriting files, Carter-Brezhnev Project Collection.
- 38 For a detailed account of this operation, see Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows* (New York: Touchstone, 1966), pp. 131–49. See also Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), p. 475.
- 39 Memo, Odom to Brzezinski, 3 September 1980, attachment to Brzezinski to Carter, 12 September 1980, Weekly Report #153, JCL, ZB Collection—Weekly Reports, Box 42, 151–161 folder.
- 40 Memo, Odom to Brzezinski, 3 September 1980, attachment to Brzezinski to Carter, 12 September 1980, Weekly Report #153, JCL, ZB Collection—Weekly Reports, Box 42, 151–161 folder.
- 41 Minutes of NSC meeting, 2 January 1980; Memo, Brzezinski to Mondale, Vance, Brown, Jones and Turner, 'Results of the NSC Meeting, 2 January 1980', 2 January 1980; both Carter-Brezhnev Project Collection, National Security Archive.
- 42 Olav Njølstad, *Peacekeeper and Troublemaker: The Containment Policy of Jimmy Carter, 1977–1978* (Oslo: IFS, 1994), pp. 257–78.
- 43 Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 323.
- 44 Cited in Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, p. 611.
- 45 Njølstad, *Peacekeeper and Troublemaker*, pp. 265–78.
- 46 Brzezinski to Carter, NSC Weekly Report #109, 13 September 1979, JCL, ZB Collection—Weekly Reports, Box 42, 102–120 folder.
- 47 Brzezinski to Carter, NSC Weekly Report #112, 12 October 1979, JCL, ZB Collection—Weekly Reports, Box 42, 102–120 folder.
- 48 Brzezinski to Carter, NSC Weekly Report #119, 30 November 1979, JCL, ZB Collection—Weekly Report, Box 42, 102–120 folder.
- 49 Another two-and-a-half weeks would pass before the CIA changed its estimate of Soviet intentions and advised Carter that Moscow had probably 'made a political decision to keep a pro-Soviet regime in power and to use military force to that end if necessary'. Still, however, the CIA did not foresee an imminent introduction of major military force but, rather, 'a

- steady, planned buildup, perhaps related to Soviet perceptions of a deterioration of the Afghani military forces and the need to beef them up at some point'. Special Coordination Committee meeting, 17 December 1979, JCL, Vertical File: Afghanistan.
- 50 Memo, Odom to Brzezinski, 3 September 1980, attachment to Brzezinski to Carter, 12 September 1980, Weekly Report #153, JCL, ZB Collection—Weekly Reports, Box 42, 151–161 folder.
- 51 Interview with Jimmy Carter, 20 October 1993, Atlanta, GA.
- 52 PD-18, 'US National Strategy', 24 August 1977, JCL, Presidential Directives collection.
- 53 Samuel P. Huntington, 'Trade, Technology, and Leverage: Economic Diplomacy', *Foreign Policy*, no. 32 (Fall 1978), pp. 68–73. This article was based on a lecture on US economic diplomacy towards the Soviet Union which Huntington gave at West Point in June 1978. At that time he was still chief coordinator of security planning at the National Security Council; the same position he held at the time of the PRC meeting of 31 August 1977.
- 54 Memo, Brzezinski to the vice-president (and other members of the PRC), 'Summary of Conclusions of the PRC Meeting on US-Soviet Economic Relations, August 31, 1977', 13 September 1977, JCL, Domestic Policy Staff-Eizenstat, Box 298, 'US-Soviet Rel. CF, O/A 725 [2]' folder.
- 55 Huntington, 'Trade, Technology, and Leverage', p. 71.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 Ibid., pp. 74–8.
- 58 Interview with William Odom, *Miller Center Interviews*, vol. XV, Jimmy Carter Library, Oral History Collection, p. 36.
- 59 Memo, Odom to Brzezinski, 3 September 1980, attachment to Brzezinski to Carter, 12 September 1980, Weekly Report #153, JCL, ZB Collection—Weekly Reports, Box 42, 151–161 folder.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 For a detailed account, see Tor Egil Førland, *Vi sier intet: Norge i COCOM 1948–52* [We Say Nothing: Norway in COCOM, 1948–52] (Oslo: Pax, 1988), pp. 14–19.
- 63 Memo, Odom to Brzezinski, 3 September 1980, attachment to Brzezinski to Carter, 12 September 1980, Weekly Report #153, JCL, ZB Collection—Weekly Reports, Box 42, 151–161 folder.
- 64 Statement by Under-Secretary of State for Economic Affairs (Rashis) before a Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 16 September 1981, *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents 1981*, (Washington, DC: Department of State, 1984) p. 214.
- 65 Memo, Odom to Brzezinski, 3 September, 1980, attachment to Brzezinski to Carter, 12 September, 1980, Weekly Report #153, JCL, ZB Collection—Weekly Reports, Box 42, 151–161 folder.
- 66 Statement by Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs (Rashis) before a Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 16 September, 1981, *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents 1981*, p. 214.
- 67 Memo, Odom to Brzezinski, 3 September 1980.
- 68 Ibid.
- 69 PRM-9, 'Comprehensive Review of European Issues', 1 February 1977, JCL, Presidential Review Memoranda collection; PD-21, 'Eastern Europe', of September 1977 has not yet been made public. For a good discussion of its likely content and significance, see Raymond Garthoff, 'Eastern Europe in the Context of US-Soviet Relations', in Sarah M. Terry (ed.), *Soviet Policy in Eastern Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), pp. 320–32.
- 70 Yugoslavia was in a separate category since it was not a Warsaw Pact member. In the Carter years, Hungary was singled out for 'positive discrimination' whereas Poland and Romania were given most-favoured nation (MFN) treatment. All three nations were thus granted MFN status and were eventually also, on a year-by-year basis, offered CCC (Commodity Credit



Corporation) credits. For a more thorough account, see Njølstad, *Peacekeeper and Troublemaker*, Ch. 6.

- 71 '...in developing US policy toward the countries of Eastern Europe, we must take into account the distinctive character of each country in the area and the fact that each of nations has its own internal dynamic. Our goal is to encourage evolutionary change, increased assertion of national self-interest, and greater respect for the rights of individual citizens by East European governments.' Statement by Under-Secretary of State for Economic Affairs (Rashis) before a Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 16 September 1981, *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents 1981*, p. 214. Rashis identified Yugoslavia, Poland, Romania and Hungary as the countries receiving non-discriminatory treatment.
- 72 Memo, Odom to Brzezinski, 3 September 1980, attachment to Brzezinski to Carter, 12 September 1980, Weekly Report #153, JCL, ZB Collection—Weekly Reports, Box 42, 151–161 folder.
- 73 For a recent account on US policy towards Poland in the crisis of 1980–81, see Douglas MacEachin, *US Intelligence and the Polish Crisis 1980–1981* (Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2000).
- 74 Memo, Odom to Brzezinski, 3 September 1980, attachment to Brzezinski to Carter, 12 September 1980, Weekly Report #153, JCL, ZB Collection—Weekly Reports, Box 42, 151–161 folder.
- 75 Press release by the White House, 22 March 1977, University of Washington Library, Henry M. Jackson Papers, Accession no. 3560–6, Box 39, folder 4.
- 76 Interview with Brzezinski, 19 October 1993; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, pp. 300–301; PRM-28 on 'Human Rights', 7 July 1977, JCL, Presidential Review Memoranda collection.
- 77 Brzezinski to Carter, 13 September 1979, NSC Weekly Report #109, JCL, ZB Collection—Weekly Report, Box 42, 102–120 folder.
- 78 Brzezinski to Director, ICA, 4 October 1979, JCL, Vertical File: Afghanistan. The ICA responded six days later, see Charles W. Bray III to Brzezinski, 10 October 1979, JCL, Vertical File: Afghanistan. Brzezinski was not satisfied, however, and called for further action on the matter. Funk to Brzezinski, 11 October 1979, w/attachment, JCL, Vertical File: Afghanistan. The memo to the ICA was actually sent on 12 October 1979.
- 79 Minutes of NSC meeting, 2 January, 1980; Memo, Brzezinski to Mondale, Vance, Brown, Jones and Turner, 'Results of the NSC Meeting, 2 January 1980', 2 January 1980; both Carter-Brezhnev Project Collection, National Security Archive; untitled attachment to Agenda for NSC Meeting, 2 January 1980, JCL, Brzezinski Collection—Geographical File, Box 17, 'Southwest Asia/Persian Gulf 12/79–1/80' folder.
- 80 Memo, Odom to Brzezinski, 3 September 1980, attachment to Brzezinski to Carter, 12 September 1980, Weekly Report #153, JCL, ZB Collection—Weekly Reports, Box 42, 151–161 folder.
- 81 Ibid.
- 82 'Department Comments on Subject of Human Rights in Czechoslovakia', statement read to news correspondents on 26 January 1977 by F.Z. Brown, Director, Office of Press Relations, *Department of State Bulletin*, vol. 76, no. 1965, p. 154; Joshua Muravchik, *The Uncertain Crusade: Jimmy Carter and the Dilemmas of Human Rights Policy* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Press, 1986), p. 24; 'Daring to Talk About Human Rights', *Time*, 7 February 1977, p. 38; John Howell, 'The Carter Human Rights Policy as Applied to the Soviet Union', *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 2 (Spring 1983), p. 286.
- 83 Carter, *Keeping Faith*, p. 144.
- 84 For a typical example, see the President's News Conference, 23 February 1977, *Public Papers of the Presidents [PPP]: 1977, Book I* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1977), p. 220.
- 85 'The President's News Conference of March 9, 1977', *PPP: 1977, Book I*, p. 341.
- 86 Cited in Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 155.

- 87 After Jody Powell had advised that Bukovsky should only be invited to meet the vice-president, Stu Eizenstat warned the NSC staff that such a move would be 'interpreted by many as a form of snub'. Brzezinski, Lance and Mondale apparently shared this view. Eizenstat to Hutcheson, 10 February 1977; Lance to Eizenstat, 10 February 1977, JCL, WHCF, Countries, CO-57, 'CO 165 Executive 1/20/77-2/28/77' folder.
- 88 'Carter's Morality Play', *Time*, 7 March 1977, p. 11; Vladimir Bukovsky, 'How a Dissident Describes "Human Rights" in Russia', *US News and World Report*, 14 March 1977, p. 22.
- 89 See 'Tough Talk on Human Rights—Will it Scuttle Détente?', *US News and World Report*, 7 March, 1977, p. 30; 'Moral Policeman of the World?', *US News and World Report*, 14 March 1977, p. 18.
- 90 Karl Helicher, 'The Response of the Soviet Government and Press to Carter's Human Rights Policies', *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 2 (Spring 1983), pp. 296–7. In the words of Tass, the Soviet Union had nothing to be ashamed of in comparison with the United States, where 'millions of unemployed have to drag out a miserable existence without a piece of bread, where the segregation of blacks, an unbridled racism, desecration of synagogues and assassinations of political figures prevail, and where card indexes on millions of dissenters are being compiled'. Quoted in 'Tough Talk on Human Rights—Will it Scuttle Détente?', *US News and World Report*, 7 March 1977, p. 30.
- 91 As quoted in Donald S. Spencer, *The Carter Implosion: Jimmy Carter and the Amateur Style of Diplomacy* (New York: Praeger, 1983) pp. 41–2.
- 92 The President's News Conference of 24 March 1977, *PPP: 1977, Book I*, p. 503.
- 93 Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 149.
- 94 Interview with William Odom, Miller Center Interviews, JCL, Carter Presidency Project, vol. XV, 18 February 1982, p. 49.
- 95 *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- 96 PD-18, 'US National Strategy', 24 August 1977, JCL, Presidential Directives collection. Figuring in second place on a list of five major strategic tasks, preceded only by the overarching task of counterbalancing Soviet military power and adverse influence in the traditional core areas of containment, there is little doubt that the human-rights campaign was given a prominent role in Carter's strategy towards the Soviet Union. This is confirmed also by the fact that the Presidential Review Memorandum on human rights (PRM-28), which Carter issued in May 1977, explicitly called for a review of the 'national security aspects of US policies on human rights', and in particular an analysis 'of their impact on US-Soviet relations.' PRM-28, 'Human Rights', 20 May 1977, JCL, Presidential Review Memoranda collection
- 97 'Assessment of the Belgrade Review Meeting', Statement by Ambassador A. Goldberg before the Final Plenary Meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Belgrade, 8 March 1978; *American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents: 1977–1980* (Washington, DC: Department of State, 1983), p. 450.
- 98 Annapolis speech, 7 June 1978, *PPP: 1978, Book I* (Washington, DC: Department of State, 1983), pp. 1054–5.
- 99 Statement by Carter in Bonn, Germany; 14 July 1978, JCL, WHCF, Subject File, Executive CO 165, Box CO-59.
- 100 Henze to Bremen, 21 April 1980, w/attached Memo, Henze to Brzezinski, 17 April 1980, JCL, National Security Affairs—Staff Material/Horn, Box 4, '4/80' folder.
- 101 Memo, Odom to Brzezinski, 3 September 1980, attachment to Brzezinski to Carter, 12 September 1980, Weekly Report #153, JCL, ZB Collection—Weekly Reports, Box 42, 151–161 folder.
- 102 *Ibid.*
- 103 *Ibid.*

# The United States and the Transformation of the Cold War

*Beth A. Fischer*

What role did the United States play in transforming the Cold War? A comprehensive analysis of how and why the Cold War ended is beyond the scope of a single essay. Consequently, this chapter seeks to understand one aspect of the ending of the Cold War: what role did the Reagan administration play in improving superpower relations during the 1980s? This is the source of considerable debate, particularly within the United States. There are multitudes of opinions regarding the Reagan administration's role, but three perspectives in particular have dominated the discussion.

## *The Reagan Administration was Irrelevant*

The first perspective suggests that the Reagan White House played virtually no role in improving superpower relations. Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev ended the Cold War, practically single-handedly. 'In just less than seven years, Mikhail Gorbachev transformed the world', historian Robert C. Kaiser writes, in an example of this perspective. 'He turned his own country upside down... He tossed away the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe with no more than a fare-thee-well. He ended the Cold War that had dominated world politics and consumed the wealth of nations for nearly half a century...'.<sup>1</sup>

According to this school, Gorbachev came to power seeking to reform the Soviet economy. He sought to devote more resources to domestic goods and infrastructure, and fewer resources to the Soviet military industrial complex. Consequently, Gorbachev wanted to end the costly arms race, and the Cold War that had spawned it. He therefore introduced his policy of 'New Thinking', which entailed a more conciliatory posture toward the West and a host of unilateral confidence-building gestures, such as a moratorium on the deployment of new intermediate-range nuclear missiles, and a moratorium on nuclear weapons tests. Rather than focus on a bipolar world and its attendant competition, Gorbachev emphasized 'common human values', and the manner in which all civilizations were threatened by the nuclear-arms race, environmental degradation and global disparities in wealth.<sup>2</sup>

In this view, Gorbachev's desire for domestic reform led to the end of the Cold War. Gorbachev brought about the end of the Cold War through his policy of 'New Thinking'. The Kremlin's decision to end the arms race led first to improved relations between western Europe and Moscow, and, ultimately, to an end to the hostility between the superpowers. President Reagan just happened to be the person occupying the White House at the time that the Soviet Union was going through this period of reform. Soviet expert Strobe Talbott expressed this view when asked during a talk show why the Cold War ended. 'The Soviet Union collapsed', he exclaimed. 'The Cold War ended almost

overwhelmingly because of internal contradictions or pressures within the Soviet Union and the Soviet system itself. And even if Jimmy Carter had been reelected and been followed by Walter Mondale, something like what we have now seen probably would have happened.’<sup>3</sup>

This perspective was particularly common in the United States during the 1980s and early 1990s. Scholars and journalists in the United States tended to focus on the monumental changes within the Eastern bloc and the Soviet Union rather than on US foreign policy. The result was a ‘Gorby-centred’ view of the world. Moreover, during that time it was also fashionable for American academics and journalists to dismiss Reagan as, at best, a lucky bumbler, and at worst, an intellectually challenged puppet of the right. Notions that Reagan had little to do with improving relations were based in part on these assumptions.

### *The Reagan Victory School*

On the other end of the spectrum are those who contend that the Reagan administration brought about the end of the Cold War, by hastening, (if not causing), the collapse of the Soviet Union. Sometimes called the ‘Reagan victory school’, this group asserts that President Reagan’s unprecedented military buildup and demonstrations of resolve forced the Soviets to capitulate in the Cold War.<sup>4</sup> The Soviets could not keep up with the Reagan administration’s military expenditures, or match US technology. Consequently, Gorbachev was forced to become more conciliatory towards Washington. From this perspective, Gorbachev’s unilateral efforts at disarmament were demonstrations of Soviet weakness, not, as Gorbachev argued, confidence-building measures intended to prove Moscow’s benign intentions. The Soviet moratoria were acts of desperation, not determination. Moreover, in this view, Gorbachev’s ‘New Thinking’ in foreign policy was not a response to domestic needs but, rather, an example of Moscow ‘knuckling under’ to US pressure.

Another variant of this school of thought contends that the Reagan administration was keenly aware of the fragile state of the Soviet economy during the 1980s and intended to push the USSR into bankruptcy. In this view, the White House pursued the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) primarily to drain Soviet resources. SDI became the jewel in the crown of US Soviet policy not because the administration really thought it would work, but because it wanted to goad Moscow into devoting massive amounts of resources into an SDI programme of its own. According to this view, these policies and others forced the Kremlin to conclude that it could no longer afford the Cold War. Moscow had no option but to surrender.

Not surprisingly, this view is espoused primarily by conservative Republicans in the United States who supported Reagan’s military buildup, and who favoured a hard-line posture towards the Soviet Union. Interestingly, a shifting group of former Soviet officials also concur with part of this perspective. Some Soviets believed that the only reason the Reagan administration was pursuing its military buildup and SDI was because it was trying to lure the USSR into an expensive arms race. They vehemently deny, however, that such a plan was successful. Gorbachev expressed these views to the Politburo during the spring of 1986. ‘Maybe we should just stop being afraid of SDI!’,

the Soviet leader exclaimed. 'Of course, we cannot be indifferent to this dangerous program. But still—can we get rid of this dangerous complex? They are betting precisely on the fact that the USSR is afraid of the SDI—in a moral, economic, political and military sense. That is why they are putting pressure on us—to exhaust us.'<sup>5</sup> During a July 1986 meeting with French President François Mitterrand, Gorbachev explained his views in greater detail:

The SDI will not be able to defend either the US or Western Europe. If we deploy similar systems we will not be able to defend the Soviet Union either...it would speed up the arms race... The real threat to the US, and to the Western world, according to [the Reagan administration], would arise if the Soviet Union successfully carries out its plans of acceleration of socio-economic development, if it can demonstrate its new economic and political capabilities. That is why [the White House is] betting on exhausting the Soviet Union in the economic sphere, by using some kind—as the US believes—of Western technological superiority. Of course, this calculation is mistaken... It seems they start from the assumption that the Soviet Union is in a difficult situation, and it needs a breathing spell. Therefore, as Americans believe, they have only to press a little harder and they would be able to squeeze everything that the West, primarily the US itself, wants, out of the Soviet Union. Nothing will come of these plans.<sup>6</sup>

*The Reagan Administration was an Impediment to Improving Relations*

Finally, some who are knowledgeable about Soviet foreign policy-making contend that President Reagan's approach to the Soviet Union was an impediment to improving relations, and may, in fact, have prolonged the conflict. Reagan's hard-line anti-communism, his belligerent rhetoric and the military buildup that he initiated combined to make it more difficult for Gorbachev to pursue improved relations with the West. These scholars and policy-makers point out that Gorbachev faced a hard-line contingent within the Politburo that was deeply wedded to traditional Soviet policy towards the United States. The Soviet hard-liners saw the United States as an imperialist enemy that sought to weaken the USSR. Consequently, they were initially opposed to Gorbachev's policy of 'New Thinking', believing that Washington would perceive it as a sign of weakness, and attempt to take advantage of the Soviet Union. The more belligerently Reagan acted, the more these Soviet hard-liners were convinced that Gorbachev was on the wrong course. Thus, they pressured him to abandon his reforms. 'Reagan's tough policy...made life for [Soviet] reformers, for all who yearned for democratic changes in their life, much more difficult', explained Georgi Arbatov, the director of the Soviet Institute for the Study of the United States and Canada. 'In such tense international situations the conservatives and reactionaries were given predominant influence [in the USSR]. That is why... Reagan made it practically impossible to start reforms after Brezhnev's death, (Andropov had such plans) and made things more difficult for Gorbachev to cut military expenditures.'<sup>7</sup>

From this perspective, then, Reagan's 'get tough' posture had the unintended effect of supporting those Soviet hard-liners who favoured a more antagonistic approach towards Washington. If Reagan had not been so belligerent, Gorbachev would have had more domestic support for his foreign-policy reforms, and the Cold War would have ended earlier.

### *Mistaken Assumptions, Common Goals*

To a certain extent, each of these three perspectives rests upon the assumption that the Reagan administration pursued a hard-line policy towards the Soviet Union for the bulk of its two terms in office. For example, the Reagan victory school asserts that it was precisely this hard-line policy that forced the Soviet Union to its knees, and brought victory for the West. Those who assert that the Reagan administration was an impediment to improving relations also suggest that Reagan's hard line made life difficult for Soviet reformers into the late 1980s. Those who think the Reagan administration was irrelevant to the ending of the Cold War focus primarily upon what was happening within the USSR and, consequently, gloss over the intricacies of US foreign policy. However, the implication is that the Reagan administration continued to plod along the same well-worn path of hostility while Gorbachev revolutionized world affairs.

These assumptions about the Reagan administration's policy are overstated. During Reagan's second term in office the administration was much less antagonistic than it had been during its first term. In fact, beginning in January 1984, the Reagan administration introduced important changes in US-Soviet policy that sought to pave the way towards a more constructive relationship. Emphasizing the need for 'cooperation, dialogue, and understanding', the White House sought to reassure Moscow of its benign intentions. The administration toned down its rhetoric—with a few notable exceptions—and shifted its focus to emphasize the superpowers' common interests. Although the Soviets were initially sceptical of this change in rhetoric, Gorbachev became increasingly convinced of Reagan's sincerity.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, these three perspectives tend to overlook the extent to which Gorbachev and Reagan shared common goals. Most importantly, both were deeply committed to eliminating nuclear weapons. Gorbachev and Reagan both rejected the concept of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD), which contended that there would be stability and peace as long as the two sides had enough nuclear weapons to withstand a nuclear attack and to retaliate in kind. Reagan derided this doctrine as the equivalent of 'two westerners standing in a saloon aiming their guns at each other's head—permanently'.<sup>9</sup> Reagan had deeply held beliefs about the immorality of nuclear weapons and the strategic doctrines formed around them. 'To rely on the specter of retaliation, on mutual threat...[is] a sad commentary on the human condition', he lamented in 1983.<sup>10</sup> By the time Gorbachev was admitted to the Politburo he, too, had become opposed to the conventional nuclear doctrine. 'When I saw the monster that we and the United States had created as a result of the arms race, with all its mistakes and accidents with nuclear weapons and nuclear power, when I saw the terrible amount of force that had been amassed, I finally understood what the consequences, including global winter, would be', Gorbachev has reflected.<sup>11</sup>

Reagan and Gorbachev both feared the possibility of an accidental nuclear exchange. 'I was quite sure...that the people in the White House were not idiots [and would not intentionally launch a nuclear attack on the Soviet Union]', Gorbachev has recalled. 'More likely, I thought, was that nuclear weapons might be used without the political leadership actually wanting this, or deciding on it, owing to some failure in the command and control systems. They say that if there is a gun, some day it will shoot. That fear motivated me to seek an end to the arms race...'.<sup>12</sup> Reagan felt the same. The president repeatedly spoke to his advisers about his fears of an unintended nuclear 'Armageddon', and believed that the presence of vast stockpiles of nuclear arms raised the probability of an accident. The war scare of November 1983 played on Reagan's fears about such an accidental nuclear exchange. Although the president's advisers assured him that Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and General Secretary Yuri Andropov knew the United States would not attack the Soviet Union, and that the Soviets would not launch a nuclear strike either, Reagan was not placated. 'Gromyko and Andropov are just two players sitting on top of a large military machine', the president reasoned.<sup>13</sup> Much could happen that would be beyond the control of political leaders.

Consequently, both the president and the general secretary sought to eliminate nuclear weapons. 'I believe there can only be one policy for preserving our precious civilization in this modern age: a nuclear war can never be won and must never be fought', Reagan declared to the Japanese Diet on 11 November 1983. 'I know I speak for people everywhere when I say our dream is to see the day when nuclear weapons will be banished from the earth.'<sup>14</sup> Gorbachev shared this desire and sought to make it reality. In January 1986, the Soviet leader proposed a plan for abolishing nuclear weapons worldwide by the year 2000.

Both Gorbachev and Reagan confronted domestic experts who resisted the elimination of nuclear weapons, on the grounds that such actions would be seriously destabilizing. Perhaps owing to this resistance, both leaders became frustrated with their advisers and with the ongoing Geneva arms-control talks. Both were eager to jump-start the process. For example, according to Reagan's aides, the president was uncharacteristically hostile to his advisers during a February 1987 National Security Planning Group (NSPG) meeting on arms-control policy. Reagan wanted to focus on ways to share SDI technology with the Soviets, while at the same time beginning the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Most of Reagan's advisers argued against both ideas. 'We're just fiddling around in Geneva!', the president reportedly exploded to his aides. 'Nothing ever happens there, with all these numbers going back and forth and all that. Our fellows over there should change what they're doing and present this scheme.'<sup>15</sup>

Gorbachev had also become frustrated with the routine of arms-control talks. After reviewing the draft of a letter to President Reagan that the Soviet bureaucracy had drafted during the summer of 1986, Gorbachev 'suddenly realized that I was gradually being forced into accepting a logic that was alien to me—a logic that was in open contradiction to our new policy and to the hopes of ordinary people... In the end, I decided to take a strong stand, suggesting an immediate summit meeting with President Reagan to unblock the strategic talks in Geneva, which were in danger of becoming an empty rite.'<sup>16</sup>

Although both leaders had repeatedly called for the elimination of nuclear weapons, it was only during the October 1986 Reykjavik summit meeting that they came to understand the depth of each other's conviction on the matter. To the consternation of

most of his advisers, President Reagan revealed at Reykjavik that he was prepared to accept Gorbachev's plan to eliminate all strategic nuclear arms within ten years. As Gorbachev's interpreter, Pavel Palazchenko, observed in 1993, 'the most impressive thing [about Reykjavik] was the fact that the two leaders were discussing...in an operational setting, the elimination of nuclear weapons. This is something that really impressed me at the time, and the interaction between [Gorbachev and Reagan on these issues] was a difficult one, obviously. That was not yet the time when they really had become friends.'<sup>17</sup> Although such an agreement never came about owing to disagreements over SDI, the meeting was crucial, in that it proved to Gorbachev that despite Reagan's sometimes antagonist rhetoric, the president sincerely sought to eliminate nuclear weapons. 'It was a real watershed', Gorbachev has explained.<sup>18</sup> Such understanding gave Gorbachev more confidence to pursue his reforms at home. 'After Reykjavik it was perfectly clear to Gorbachev that there was not going to be a war, and that neither side was going to attack the other', Gorbachev's foreign affairs adviser, Anatoly Chernyaev, has explained. 'He became less concerned about this. I remember multiple discussions of military and budgetary issues, and whenever [the military] mentioned any kind of figures with requests for military spending, Gorbachev always bristled and said, "Are you planning on going to war? I'm not going to war. So all of your suggestions are unacceptable." All of the Politburo supported him.'<sup>19</sup>

Gorbachev and Reagan shared another important goal: each believed that superpower dialogue was imperative, owing to the nuclear threat. During a January 1984 address to the nation, Reagan declared, 'We must establish a better working relationship [with the Soviet Union], one marked by greater cooperation and understanding.' Reagan asserted that Washington 'must and will' enter into talks with the Kremlin. 'The fact that neither side likes the other's system is no reason not to talk', he reasoned. 'Living in the nuclear age makes it imperative that we do talk.'<sup>20</sup> Gorbachev used strikingly similar language during a July 1986 private conversation with French President François Mitterrand. 'The nuclear era requires new thinking from everybody', the general secretary explained. 'We all depend upon each other. That is why it is very important to understand each other better. In essence, we have no alternative other than to learn to live in the real world.'<sup>21</sup>

The Kremlin and the White House also both sought to build a more trusting relationship between the superpowers, although they employed different tactics for doing so. Both sides sensed that a genuine improvement in relations depended upon the establishment of a modicum of trust. 'The problem of the Cold War was a problem of trust, and of differences in how we understood each other's efforts in the area of security and defense', Chernyaev observed in 1998. 'It was this absence of understanding, or incorrect understanding, or lack of desire to understand that was the root of the problem.'<sup>22</sup>

Gorbachev and his colleagues sought to build trust through a series of unilateral arms reductions and moratoria, intended to prove that the Soviet Union sincerely sought to end the arms race. The Reagan administration took a different approach. It sought to broaden the agenda of bilateral relations, and to shift the focus away from arms control. 'By broadening the agenda to include not just arms control but other issues we hoped to relieve some of [the Soviet] leaders' fears that we would attack', National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane explained in 1998.<sup>23</sup> In this view, the superpowers needed to engage in meaningful dialogue on a range of issues in order to break down enemy images



and to clarify intentions. Such dialogue would build understanding, which would lead to trust. And trust, in turn would allow the adversaries to make progress in specific issues, such as arms control. 'We don't fear each other because we're armed', Reagan was fond of saying, 'we're armed because we fear each other.' The Reagan administration's aim was to eliminate this fear.

A final point of agreement, of course, was that President Reagan shared Gorbachev's view that the Soviet system was deeply flawed and in need of reform. For decades, Reagan had spoken about the need to bring market reform, civil liberties and democracy to the Soviet Union. He was therefore receptive to Gorbachev's attempts to restructure the Soviet Union, and did not seek to exploit the Soviet leader's reforms.<sup>24</sup>

### *SDI as Impediment to Improved Relations*

Although the Reagan administration and the Kremlin agreed on the necessity of reducing the nuclear threat, they disagreed vehemently on the US Strategic Defense Initiative. If anything was an impediment to improving superpower relations, it was SDI. The programme was the main thorn in superpower relations between 1983 and 1987, and it dominated the agenda during both the Geneva and Reykjavik summit meetings.

President Reagan unveiled SDI in March 1983. Although it was nothing more than a research programme in the earliest stages of development, the president hoped that it would lead to a comprehensive defensive system that would protect the American people from the spectre of nuclear annihilation. Most of Reagan's aides doubted that such a defensive system was possible, but supported it because it was clear that the president was deeply wedded to his vision of the programme.<sup>25</sup>

Internally, Soviet opinion on SDI appears to have been divided, confused, and ever-changing. Soviet reactions to the president's programme were similar to American reactions: few, if any, experts thought a comprehensive shield was possible, some thought a more limited defensive system was probable, and others thought it most useful as bargaining chip to be used to extract concessions from the Soviet Union. The degree of Soviet concern over the project varied from bureaucracy to bureaucracy, and, over time, Gorbachev himself seemed most concerned about SDI during his first year in office, but grew increasingly less so.

Publicly, however, the Soviets remained adamantly opposed to SDI through October 1986. For one thing, SDI violated the ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missile) Treaty, which the Soviets considered to be the foundation of all subsequent arms accords. Second, and more important, some were concerned that the United States would use SDI to blackmail the USSR and to extract concessions on a host of other issues. Others feared that research on the programme could lead to the development and deployment of space-based offensive weapons that could strike Soviet targets from space. Some also feared that even a limited shield would allow the United States to launch a nuclear first strike at the Soviet Union without fear of a devastating retaliatory strike. Of course, the probability that any of these potential threats would come to fruition was the source of great debate.<sup>26</sup>

Gorbachev initially opposed SDI because it threatened to obstruct his foreign-policy agenda, which centred on arms reduction. It would be more difficult for Gorbachev to pursue arms reductions if some of his Soviet colleagues believed the United States to be

launching a new arms race in space. Additionally, some Soviet military experts were advising that one of the most effective ways to respond to SDI was to overwhelm the system; that is, if SDI could defend against 1,000 missiles, then the Soviets should produce 1,500 missiles.<sup>27</sup> Such advice made it even more difficult to pursue arms reductions. Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko explained the Soviet position to Secretary Shultz during their January 1985 meeting in Geneva. 'The United States reasons that the Soviet Union could also develop its own strategic defense. Then there would be two such systems, a Soviet one and a US one', Gromyko reasoned. 'But why have these systems at all? After all, one side has nuclear arms and the other side has them too, so although it is possible to...neutralize these weapons, why create a system to do so? Isn't it simpler just to eliminate nuclear weapons themselves?'<sup>28</sup> Gorbachev wanted to avoid the costly charade of SDI, and to focus on reducing existing nuclear arsenals.

Despite all these objections to SDI, President Reagan would not budge on his pet project. He repeatedly refused Soviet attempts to keep SDI in the laboratory. The president offered to share SDI technology with the Soviets on several occasions, but the Kremlin found these arguments unconvincing and increasingly irritating.<sup>29</sup>

The impasse over SDI ended in late 1986, after Gorbachev decided to shift emphasis away from the programme and towards reaching an agreement on arms reduction. There were three main reasons for this shift in Soviet strategy.<sup>30</sup> For one thing, Gorbachev's advisers became increasingly convinced that the American vision of SDI was unrealizable. The Soviets conducted at least two studies to determine the feasibility of the Reagan administration's SDI programme, and both concluded that a comprehensive shield was virtually impossible. One study concluded that even if the United States could build a shield that was 99 per cent effective, 60 Soviet warheads would still be able to reach their targets. Since one nuclear explosion alone would cause unacceptable damage, the Soviets concluded that SDI was a 'chimera'.<sup>31</sup> They also determined that it would be considerably less costly to try to counter SDI than to match it. 'We found over 200 alternative solutions [to SDI]', Soviet military scientist Vladimir Slipchenko has recalled.

We chose 20 to 30 of them to look at more closely. We evaluated our anti-SDI measures against a realistic SDI of the United States and found out that it would cost us about 10 per cent of what the Americans would have to spend on SDI. Then we were happy. Actually, we would have been quite glad if the Americans continued building SDI...because we realized that SDI could be fought very successfully—not by means of creating a similar system, but by way of creating means to overcome the system.<sup>32</sup>

Second, Soviet officials also suspected that SDI was a hoax of sorts—a large-scale disinformation campaign aimed at goading the Soviets into wasting their resources. According to Aleksandr Yakovlev, Gorbachev's adviser and ally, some Soviet scientists advised the general secretary that SDI 'was a fuss about nothing'. 'We suspect that this SDI is nothing but a bluff', they concluded.<sup>33</sup> (In September 1993, then-Secretary of Defense Les Aspin acknowledged that while SDI had been a legitimate research programme, there had been an accompanying 'deception programme' aimed at misleading the Soviets into massive defence outlays.<sup>34</sup>)

Finally, Gorbachev became significantly less concerned about SDI following the October 1986 summit meeting in Reykjavik. According to Chernyaev, after this meeting 'it became perfectly clear to Gorbachev that there was not going to be a war and that neither side was going to attack the other'.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, the argument that SDI would allow the United States to launch a nuclear first strike without having to fear a reprisal no longer seemed credible. By 1987, the Politburo's concerns about SDI had dissipated to the extent that it sought to shift the focus of arms talks away from the defence project, and towards the conclusion of a treaty eliminating intermediate-range missiles. This shift paved the way for significant progress in arms control, and the landmark INF (Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces) Treaty of 1987.

*Conclusions: The Reagan Administration as a Critical, Yet Secondary Actor*

The three perspectives considered earlier in this chapter all overstate the extent to which the second Reagan administration was antagonistic to the Soviet Union, and overlook the degree to which the White House and the Kremlin shared important goals. Moscow and Washington engaged in critical ways in helping to bring about an improvement in superpower relations. While the president's obstinance regarding SDI impeded progress in arms reduction, his more conciliatory rhetoric, and the fact that he shared Gorbachev's vision for the abolition of nuclear weapons were important factors in reducing superpower hostility. 'Reagan's commitment to anti-nuclearism and its potential for transforming the US-Soviet confrontation was...graphically demonstrated at the October 1986 Reykjavik summit', Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry have observed. 'Reagan's anomalous anti-nuclearism provided the crucial signal to Gorbachev that bold initiatives would be reciprocated rather than exploited. Reagan's anti-nuclearism was more important than his administration's military build up in catalyzing the end of the Cold War'.<sup>36</sup>

Additionally, two of the three schools cited earlier overlook the dynamic quality of the Cold War. Both those who believe the Reagan administration won the Cold War, and those who believe Reagan was irrelevant, focus predominantly on one side of the Cold War equation. But such myopia is mistaken. The US posture towards the Soviet Union created the context within which the Kremlin formulated its policy, just as Soviet policies created the context within which the White House made policy. The fact that in 1984 the administration began calling for dialogue, cooperation and the elimination of nuclear weapons was important, because such policies created an environment that was receptive to the dramatic changes that were eventually introduced to Soviet policy. Moreover, the two leaders and their closest associates developed personal relationships that further facilitated peaceful change. '[Gorbachev and Reagan] were very idealistic', Soviet Foreign Minister Aleksandr Bessmertnykh reflected in 1993.

The ideals were not similar, but the dedication to the ideals was similar ...[T]his is what they immediately sensed in each other and this is why they made great partners... And if it were not for Reagan, I don't think we would have been able to reach the agreements in arms control that we

later reached: because of Reagan, because of his idealism, because he really thought that we should do away with nuclear weapons. Gorbachev believed in that. Reagan believed in that. The experts didn't believe, but they did.<sup>37</sup>

Bessmertnykh continued, 'I think the Cold War ended for several reasons, for reasons maybe which we have not completely comprehended yet, also by deeper trends. But basically, it was done by human beings, by people who were dedicated to eradicating this part of history... It was an enormously difficult task [and it] was successful because both sides tried to reach the same goal.'

Thus, the Reagan administration played an important role in bringing about improved relations. This role, however, was clearly secondary. Reagan became more conciliatory, but Gorbachev revolutionized his country's foreign policy. The changes in Soviet foreign policy were of a much greater magnitude—and more painful—than were the changes in US policy. The Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan, let go of their grip on Eastern Europe, reached out to their 'common home' in western Europe, and allowed the emancipation of Soviet republics. Moreover, the Soviets made disproportionate concessions in their quest to end the arms race. For example, during the Reykjavik summit meeting US negotiators were stunned as Gorbachev introduced concession after concession, accepting most of the administration's earlier 'zero-zero' proposal.<sup>38</sup> 'We came [to Reykjavik] with nothing to offer and had offered nothing', US arms negotiator Kenneth Adelman has recalled, '[We] sat there while they unwrapped their gifts.'<sup>39</sup> Such gestures were in striking contrast to the president's inflexibility on SDI. While the Reagan administration sought to improve superpower relations, it certainly did not meet Gorbachev half way.

Perhaps it was impossible for the Reagan administration to play anything other than a secondary role in ending the Cold War. For, as Raymond Garthoff has pointed out, only the Soviets could abandon the Manichaean ideology that had initially led to the division of the world into two opposing ideological camps. 'What was a matter of historical determination was that only a Soviet leader could have taken the decisive step in ending the Cold War', Garthoff poignantly observes.

Why? Because the Cold War rested squarely on the belief, on both sides, that two ideological and geopolitical world systems were locked in an inescapable struggle to the finish. And that belief in turn rested on the Marxist-Leninist worldview positing an inevitable struggle for world hegemony between two irreconcilable...systems... The guiding US Cold War conception of containment of the Soviet and communist threat was derivative of and dependent on the Soviet belief in inescapable conflict between the systems.<sup>40</sup>

## NOTES

- 1 Robert G.Kaiser, *Why Gorbachev Happened: His Triumph, His Failure, and His Fall* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), pp. 11, 13.

- 2 William D. Jackson, 'Soviet Reassessment of Ronald Reagan, 1985–1988', *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 113, no. 4 (Winter 1998–99): 623–4.
- 3 Strobe Talbott, on 'Inside Washington', as quoted in Peter Schweizer, *Victory: The Reagan Administration's Secret Strategy that Hastened the Collapse of the Cold War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1994), p. xii. Note that Talbott is conflating the end of the Cold War with the collapse of the Soviet Union.
- 4 Authors who subscribe to this view include Schweizer, *Victory*, Richard Pipes, 'Misinterpreting the Cold War', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 74 (January/February 1995): 154–61; Caspar Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace* (New York: Warner Books, 1990); and Robert Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Inside Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).
- 5 Anatoly Chernyaev's notes of Gorbachev's remarks during 24 March 1986 Politburo meeting. Conference on Understanding the Ending of the Cold War, 7–10 May 1998, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, accompanying document book, document number 19. (Henceforth, 'Brown Conference'.)
- 6 Anatoly Chernyaev's notes on Gorbachev's 7 July 1986 meeting with François Mitterrand. Brown Conference document book, number 25. Of course, the Soviets were right: in September 1993 then-Secretary of Defense Les Aspin acknowledged that, while SDI had been a legitimate research programme, there had been an accompanying 'deception programme' aimed at misleading the Soviets into massive defence outlays.
- 7 Georgi Arbatov memorandum to Charles W. Kegley, Jr, 1991, as quoted in Kegley, 'How did the Cold War Die? Principles for an Autopsy', *Merston International Studies Review*, vol. 38 (1994): 14–15.
- 8 For more on the change in policy see Beth A. Fischer, *The Reagan Reversal: Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1997); Don Oberdorfer, *The Turn: From Cold War to a New Era* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1991); George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993); and Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1994). For Gorbachev's changing perception of the new US policy see Jackson, 'Soviet Reassessment of Reagan, 1985–1988.'
- 9 Ronald Reagan, *Ronald Reagan: An American Life* (New York: Pocket Books, 1990), p. 547.
- 10 Ronald Reagan, Address to the Nation, 23 March 1983, *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, 19:447.
- 11 Gorbachev, as quoted in Jonathan Schell, 'The Gift of Time: The Case for Abolishing Nuclear Weapons', *The Nation* (2–9 February 1998). Accessible at [www.gci.ch/GreenCrossFamily/gorby/newspeeches/interviews/thenation.html](http://www.gci.ch/GreenCrossFamily/gorby/newspeeches/interviews/thenation.html). Gorbachev also abhorred the cost of the arms race, something that was not as much of a concern for Reagan.
- 12 Gorbachev, quoted in Schell, 'The Gift of Time'.
- 13 Author's interview with Robert McFarlane, July 1995. On Reagan's fears about nuclear war, see Fischer, *Reagan Reversal*, pp. 102–9.
- 14 Quoted in Lou Cannon, 'President Hails Japan as Partner', *Washington Post*, 11 November 1983. See also Fischer, *Reagan Reversal*, p. 135.
- 15 As quoted in Frances FitzGerald, *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), p. 416.
- 16 Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (London: Doubleday, 1996), p. 414.
- 17 Pavel Palazchenko, Princeton Conference on the Ending of the Cold War, Session VI (26–27 February 1993), p. 138. (Henceforth, 'Princeton Conference'.)
- 18 Gorbachev, quoted in Schell, 'The Gift of Time'.
- 19 Chernyaev, Brown Conference, pp. 44–5.

- 20 Ronald Reagan, 'The US-Soviet Relationship', 16 January 1984, *Department of State Bulletin* 84:2083:1–4.
- 21 Transcript of Conversation between M.S.Gorbachev and F.Mitterrand, 7 July 1986. Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Moscow. Brown Document number 25.
- 22 Chernyaev, Brown Conference, p. 64.
- 23 McFarlane, Brown Conference, p. 67.
- 24 On Reagan's ideas about Soviet reform see his radio addresses during the 1970s, reprinted in Kiron Skinner, Annelise Anderson and Martin Anderson, *Reagan: In His Own Hand* (New York: The Free Press, 2001). Although some have claimed that Reagan sought to bankrupt, or vanquish, the Soviet Union, there is little evidence to support such a view. See Beth A.Fischer, 'Reagan's Triumph? The US and the Ending of the Cold War', paper presented to the Norwegian Nobel Institute, 16 May 2002. Moreover, Reagan was more receptive to, and supportive of, Gorbachev's reforms than was his successor, George Bush.
- 25 Some of Reagan's aides also thought it would be a useful bargaining chip to use against the Soviets. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a detailed account of the politics of SDI. For one critical interpretation see FitzGerald, *In the Blue*. See also Brown Conference on the Ending of the Cold War, 8 May 1998, session two, and Princeton Conference on the ending of the Cold War, 26–27 February 1993, Session II.
- 26 See remarks of Andrei Gromyko, 7 January 1985 second meeting in Geneva with George Shultz. Despite all the Soviet protestations about SDI, there are indications that there was a highly secretive research programme on space-based weapons hidden within the Soviet military, and that the Reagan administration knew about this project. See Steven J.Zagola, 'Red Star Wars', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, vol. 9, no. 5 (May 1, 1997):205–8, and Memorandum of Conversation, Secretary of State George P.Shultz meeting with Foreign Minister Andrei A.Gromyko, Geneva, Switzerland, 7 January 1985, 3:35 to 6:55 p.m., pp. 4, 7.
- 27 According to Oleg Grinevsky, this was Marshal Akhromeev's preferred option. Brown Conference, pp. 41–2.
- 28 Memorandum of Conversation, second Shultz-Gromyko meeting, Geneva, 7 January 1985.
- 29 George Shultz notes that Reagan sent a letter to Gorbachev in July 1986 proposing a seven-and-a-half year delay of any potential deployment of SDI. Princeton Conference, p. 46. According to Reagan officials, the president was sincere in his desire to share SDI technology with the Soviets, although US arms-control experts repeatedly tried to convince him that such sharing was not feasible. For example, see the remarks of Frank Carlucci and Jack Matlock, Princeton Conference, pp. 54, 82, 83.
- 30 FitzGerald contends that Andrei Sakharov's 28 December 1986 speech criticizing Gorbachev for linking offensive arms reductions to SDI was also pivotal. See FitzGerald, *In the Blue*, p. 409.
- 31 One study was conducted by the Velikhov Committee, and the other study, which is quoted here, was conducted by 'the military institutions of the USSR'. Slipchenko, Brown Conference, pp. 51–2. Grinevsky relates that Marshall Akhromeev called SDI 'a chimera'. *Ibid.*, p. 41. US analysts had reached similar conclusions about the possibility of building a defence system that was 99 per cent effective. See FitzGerald, *In the Blue*.
- 32 Slipchenko, Brown Conference, pp. 51–2.
- 33 Yakovlev, as cited in FitzGerald, *In the Blue*, p. 411.
- 34 Garthoff, *Great Transition*, p. 516n., R.Jeffrey Smith, '3 "Star Wars" Tests Rigged, Aspin Says; Scheme to Mislead Soviets Went Awry', *Washington Post*, 10 September 1993, p. A19; and Transcript of Secretary of Defense Les Aspin's press conference of 9 September 1993.
- 35 Chernyaev, Brown Conference, pp. 44–5.

- 36 Daniel Deudney and G.John Ikenberry, 'Who Won the Cold War?', in G.John Ikenberry, ed., *American Foreign Policy: Theoretical Essays*, 2nd edn (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1996), p. 628.
- 37 Aleksandr Bessmertnykh, Princeton Conference, pp. 125–7, 160.
- 38 At Reykjavik, Gorbachev did not, however, accept the elimination of intermediate-range nuclear forces in Asia, something the United States and its Asian allies had insisted upon.
- 39 As quoted in FitzGerald, *In the Blue*, p. 360.
- 40 Raymond L.Garthoff, *A Journey through the Cold War: A Memoir of Containment and Coexistence*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2001), p. 377.

## Reagan's Anti-Revolutionary Offensive in the Third World

*Odd Arne Westad*

The election of Ronald Reagan to the presidency of the United States in 1980 signified a change in method rather than aims in US Third World policies. Jimmy Carter's last two years in office, especially, had pointed directly to the key priorities of the new administration—stepping up the pressure against radical regimes and gaining new allies among indigenous anti-communist movements. But while Carter—a hands-on president if ever there was one—had at first been held back by moral reservations and disagreements among his advisers, Reagan from the outset gladly left both policy implications and policy execution to others. The result was a host of new and sometimes contradictory initiatives, all carried out with the blessing of the president, that sought to target Third World regimes seen as closely allied to the Soviet Union, such as Nicaragua, Afghanistan and Angola. The president wanted to see Soviet defeats and an internal change of political direction in these countries, because such changes would confirm Reagan's own conviction that his country was on the side of history and that socialism was a thing of the past. But even as he strove to overcome the effects of the Vietnam War, Reagan was aware that he had to do so without risking the US losses that conflict had hitherto produced. This renewed dedication to interventionism thus implied finding allies who were willing to do the fighting. Reagan was not looking for regional policemen of the Kissingerian type—he, or rather his ideologically driven advisers, were looking for revolutionary movements of the inverse kind, those that for their own reasons were willing to let left-wing regimes bleed.<sup>1</sup>

The Reagan approach was in many ways a continuation of the policies and methods developed by Carter's National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and his staff. Already well before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Brzezinski had—with Carter's consent—begun implementing what some referred to as a 'counter-force strategy' in the Third World, meaning an emphasis on supporting whatever opposition could be mustered to Soviet allies in Africa and Asia. The aid to Siad Barre's regime in Somalia—characterized by one of Brzezinski's assistants as 'remarkably unsavory and untrustworthy'—was a turning point in that respect: a US administration that in its first months had been agonizing over arms supplies to long-term allies with blemishes on their human-rights record by 1978 was willing to launch a major operation of support for one of the bloodiest dictators in Africa, in order to bail him out of a war he himself had started.<sup>2</sup> By 1980, Barre was in the company of the Cambodian Khmer Rouge and the Afghan mujahedin as recipients of US aid to fight pro-Moscow regimes.

This remarkable turning away from even the mildest form of scepticism with regard to the qualities of the movements that directly or indirectly received US backing can only be



explained by the great concern that US elites by the late 1970s had begun attaching to the new wave of revolutionary change in the Third World and to Soviet interventionism. While in part connected to the domestic rise of the New Right and the critique of liberalism in the United States, the emphasis on a Third World challenge was also related to seeing revolutions as the result of Soviet involvement rather than a cause of it. The concept of 'totalitarianism'—promoted by Brzezinski and other social scientists in the early 1960s—developed the Rostowian theories of modernization by postulating that as soon as a country's 'natural' development had been perverted by a socialist revolution then only outside support could re-launch that country's trajectory towards democracy and capitalism.<sup>3</sup> In other words, it was dependent on the United States to re-establish order in the natural development of 'newly independent states', which the Soviet Union had been perverting at will during the détente era. If unsuccessful, not only would these countries' fate be sealed, but the United States itself would, in time, be in mortal danger.<sup>4</sup>

While impervious to any of its theoretical underpinnings, Ronald Reagan had from the mid-1970s on become one of the main critics of US 'inaction' in the Third World, and by far the most eloquent spokesman for US interventionism. During the 1976 campaign, running for the Republican nomination against the incumbent president, Gerald Ford, Reagan took aim at the whole concept of détente:

'Wandering without aim' describes United States' foreign policy. Angola is a case in point. We gave just enough support to one side to encourage it to fight and die, but too little to give them a chance of winning. And [mean] while we are disliked by the winner, distrusted by the loser, and viewed by the world as weak and unsure. If détente were the two-way street it is supposed to be, we could have told the Soviet Union to stop its troublemaking and leave Angola to the Angolans. But it didn't work out that way.<sup>5</sup>

By 1980—with the Carter administration's slow debilitation in a battle against revolutionary Islam handing him the presidency—Reagan had happily conflated all threats to US security under a common heading: 'Let's not delude ourselves, the Soviet Union underlies all the unrest that is going on. If they weren't engaged in this game of dominoes, there wouldn't be any hot spots in the world.'<sup>6</sup> There was, Reagan firmly believed, a grand design in Soviet foreign policy that was diametrically opposite to all that the United States stood for—its antithesis, the evil version of empire.

### *Third World Fragmentation and the origins of the Reagan offensive*

Outside the United States, by the early 1980s the very concept of a 'Third World'—united by similar historical memories of imperialist oppression and similar challenges in building a new state and a new economy—was beginning to fragment. Although, in straightforward political terms, there had always been more that divided than united them, as late as the mid-1970s many Third World regimes had still been ready in the UN and through the Non-Aligned Movement to project a semblance of unity. The oil boycott after the 1973 Middle Eastern war and the African support for the MPLA (Movimento

Popular de Libertação de Angola) regime in Angola had been two cases in point. The turn in the late 1970s towards emphasizing economic demands through a so-called New International Economic Order (NIEO)—first passed as a UN General Assembly resolution in 1974—can be seen as a sign of the increasing lack of political identification among Third World countries. Even though NIEO included many demands that were political as well as economic—for instance, compensation for damage done during colonial rule—the main message was to underline a Third World primary identity as producers of raw materials. That message did little to stem the return to diversity in the self-images of Third World elites. On the contrary, the economic demands sharpened the distinction between industrializing and non-industrializing Third World countries.

During the 1970s, economic growth in some Third World countries in Asia and Latin America intensified. South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Brazil and Mexico had had an average economic growth per year of about 7.5 per cent during the decade.<sup>7</sup> The growth of their manufactured exports was even more impressive, increasing by an average of more than 13 per cent per year in a period when the economies of most Western countries seemed to stagnate. By 1979, these six newly industrializing countries supplied the West with almost 40 per cent of its clothing imports and were beginning to compete for market shares in car- and ship-building as well as in consumer electronics. Even though large areas of poverty remained, especially in Latin America, and the exploitation of workers and the environment was rampant, the successes of the export-led model of development posed a direct challenge to the collectivist orientation of many Third World regimes. When China, in the early 1980s, quickened its ideological transition from socialism to market-driven reform, an increasing number of Third World elites began questioning whether collectivist ideologies could deliver the economic progress they so desperately needed.

For many of the left-wing revolutionary states that had come into being in the 1960s and 1970s, the early 1980s proved a time of disappointments and severe setbacks. None of them could present a comprehensive alternative to capitalism in their internal policies, relying in most cases on models imported from Eastern Europe that were badly suited to their own social and economic conditions. Except where an infrastructure existed to bring valuable raw materials to international markets, the programmes of nationalization proved economically unsuccessful, and usually led to an exodus of those parts of the local bourgeoisie which possessed the most important knowledge and technical skills. In Ethiopia, for instance, two-thirds of the educated elite left between 1974 and 1980.

The lack of an integrated, nationally based economic model led to increasing political friction within the regimes themselves, and intensification of the conflict between them and their domestic enemies. When a state using a newly coined national identity as its main legitimacy notably failed to deliver in economic terms, it is rather obvious that some groups would begin opposing both state policies and the identity that these policies represented. In many Third World countries, beginning in the early 1980s, local pre-national identities gained ground at the expense of the post-colonial nation. This conflict was most intense in countries of a socialist orientation, because these regimes ideologically refused to recognize the existence of domestic identities beyond their own, thereby precluding negotiations, and because local rebels could count on foreign support, thereby stirring up civil wars. By the mid-1980s, most of the non-Islamist internal

challenges to leftist Third World regimes came from movements with an ethnic background.

The challenges posed by struggles over policies and identities were exacerbated by the sharp economic downturn at the end of the 1970s. Already cut off from Western official aid and of little interest to private trade and investment, both because of their policies and the attraction of east Asia, the recession put enormous pressure on left-wing regimes in the Third World. With over 90 per cent of their exports being raw materials, countries like Angola, Ethiopia, South Yemen and Nicaragua were hard hit by declining prices, which in some cases the state's income halved between 1979 and 1982/83. The lack of flexibility in their economic models made the crisis worse, leading to severe drops in living standards and an inability to handle the consequences of natural disasters, such as the 1983 drought and mass starvation in Ethiopia.

Many of the same global trends that caused a series of crises within its Third World allies also contributed to stagnation within the Soviet Union itself. From 1979 on, there was a significant drop in growth for the Soviet GDP (gross domestic product), from a projected increase of more than 3 per cent for that year to a real result of around 0.7 per cent growth, according to CIA figures. The Soviet economy, US intelligence said in a report for the president, had 'slowed to a crawl'.<sup>8</sup> While the overall causes of the Soviet economic stagnation are beyond the scope of this book, it is important to note that the drop in the international price of oil—the commodity on which a large part of Soviet foreign exports depended—contributed significantly to the problems in the economy and sharply reduced Moscow's room for manoeuvre in economic terms both at home and abroad. The global role that the Soviets had taken on meant that both military expenditure—already in the late 1970s just slightly less than 25 per cent of GDP—and support for socialist states continued to increase into the 1980s, although it was clear to the leadership that the additional shortages this created at home were socially harmful and unpopular.

The increasing discrepancy between Moscow's international aims and the means available to achieve them would have been easier to adjust if there had been a younger and more energetic leadership. As it was, the median age in the Politburo in 1981 was almost 70, and the top level of the Communist Party consisted mostly of the same leaders who had initiated the new Third World offensive in the early 1970s. Both factors conspired to make any adjustment more difficult, even where individual members of the leadership realized ('objectively', as they would have said) that policy changes would be useful or even necessary. Yuri Andropov, who took over as general secretary after Leonid Brezhnev's death in November 1982, sensed the dangers of 'overstretch' in part because he as KGB Chairman had had unique access to intelligence information.<sup>9</sup> Facing the anti-Sovietism of the Reagan administration, Andropov was particularly preoccupied with reducing Soviet enmity with other countries, especially China and western Europe, but also Japan and South-east Asia.

But the leadership had no solutions to offer for the Soviet predicament. The discussion at the Politburo meeting on 31 May 1983 is typical for the times. After informing members of yet another funeral in the inner circle, the general secretary went on to complain about the overall Soviet position in the world.

If you look at the events that are taking place in the Western countries, you can say that an anti-Soviet coalition is being formed out there. Of course, that's not accidental, and it's highly dangerous... We should consider some sort of compromise in our relations with Japan. For example: we could think about joint exploitation of those small islands [which] have no strategic importance. Maybe there will be other suggestions. I, personally, think that Japan could initiate more active cooperation with the Soviet Union in the economic sphere...<sup>10</sup>

Similar high-flying ideas were broached in 1983/84 with regard to a number of countries, but they all came to nothing, since Moscow was unwilling to touch the key issues that had led them into conflict with these countries in the first place. Japanese Premier Nakasone Yasuhiro, for instance, had no incentive to arouse Washington's wrath by cooperating with Moscow in any area, including trade, as long as any discussion of sovereignty over the northern islands was anathema to the Soviets.

Andropov had no remedy for an international environment that had turned increasingly hostile to the Soviet Union, except extolling prudence among Soviet foreign beneficiaries and hard work at home. The same ideologically based interventionist mindset that had led the Soviet Union into conflict with so many of the newly developed countries that it could have developed a closer economic relationship with—for instance, South Korea or the countries of South-east Asia—now prevented the adjustments that were needed to overcome its international isolation. While its Third World allies proved the Soviet role as a superpower, they were more like millstones when the Soviet aim was to reduce tension with capitalist states.

While Ronald Reagan and some of his advisers were convinced that the Soviet Union by necessity was on the losing side of history, no-one in the new administration understood how dramatically perspectives had changed within the Soviet leadership itself. Moreover, while united in its rhetorical condemnation of Soviet behaviour, the administration was divided between moderates and radicals in the debate over how far the United States could go in confronting the Soviet Union without the risk of war. But to those in the United States and in Europe who believed that any incoming US administration would have to moderate its rhetoric when coming into power, the first months of the Reagan administration came as a bit of a shock: from day one it was the radicals—for instance, those who believed in a strict monetarist agenda in the economy or the need to roll back Soviet influence in the Third World—who created the administration's agenda, even though they were mostly dependent on establishment figures such as Reagan's two secretaries of state, Alexander Haig (1981–82) and George P. Shultz (1982–89), to implement it. The radicals' strength was their sense of mission and their firm belief that they were fulfilling the mandate the president had been given in the election. Reagan's own occasional involvement with policy-making also seemed to confirm that he supported the radical options over the more moderate ones that came from the bureaucracy in the Pentagon and the State Department.

The main reasons why it still took most of the president's first election period to work out some basic principles for a more interventionist US Third World policy were the policy inexperience of the radicals, disagreements between Reagan's top advisers, and resistance from well-established officials. Looking back, some of the radicals refer to

1981–82 as ‘the lost years’, because so little concrete action was taken to join battle against Soviet-supported Third World regimes.<sup>11</sup> Radicals—such as Richard Perle and Fred Iklé at the Department of Defense, and Richard Pipes in the NSC (National Security Council)—were frustrated by finding their ideas ridiculed by more experienced officials even when these same ideas in only slightly more moderate forms found their way into the administration’s key policy statements. For some of the radicals, memories of happier times criticizing the government from the outside led them to resign in disgust. Richard Pipes—the flamboyant history professor who had been made the NSC’s top Soviet specialist—left the administration to return to Harvard in 1982.<sup>12</sup>

Meanwhile, moderates such as the secretary of state, Alexander Haig, attempted to use the Reagan rhetoric to instill fear into the United States’ Third World opponents and get them to change their behaviour. His approach was similar to the one he had recommended as Richard Nixon’s chief of staff back in the early 1970s: make the opponent think the US president a ‘madman’, who is capable of using extreme force to settle international conflicts. At the end of November 1981, Haig met secretly with the Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, in Mexico City to put pressure on Havana.

In 1975 we were witnesses to a situation which subjectively led us to conclude that the Soviet leadership assessed the changes which took place in our country as changes of a geo-political character—I am talking about Watergate and the war in Vietnam. This was abundantly clear in the widening of activity in Africa, Southeast Asia and in Northwest and Western Asia. In this manner, there exists a tendency—correct or mistaken—to believe that an agreement exists between Moscow and Havana in connection with various international activities, at least a tacit one, if not expressed. All this has created a mood in the United States which brought Mr Reagan to power.<sup>13</sup>

To the radicals, it was also important to point to the dangers the Caribbean and Central American revolutions posed to the United States, since they knew that the president himself saw that region as a stepping-stone for communist attacks against the United States. Six weeks after coming to power, Reagan was already talking about what

we’ve learned of the actual involvement of the Soviet Union, of Cuba, of the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization], of, even Qadhafi in Libya, and others in the Communist bloc nations to bring about this terrorism down there [in El Salvador]... And I think it is significant that the terrorists, the guerrilla activity in El Salvador, was supposed to cause an uprising, that the government would fall because the people would join this aggressive force and support them. The people are totally against that and have not reacted in that way.<sup>14</sup>

The problem with a widening US involvement in Central America was the president’s political fear that the public would see it as the prelude to another Vietnam. From the very beginning, therefore, the US intervention would have to be primarily covert, relying

on local forces to do the fighting. In the case of Nicaragua, the CIA created a counter-revolutionary fighting force—the ‘Contras’—supplied and trained by the United States and supported by conservative governments in Central America. To begin with, its military successes were minor, although problems created by the aggressive US intervention did make both the Nicaraguan and Cuban leaders conclude that major support for other revolutionary movements in the region—such as in El Salvador—was premature. When the Reagan administration went further and mined Nicaraguan harbours, the US Congress—never keen on funding major foreign interventions over which it had no control—refused to go along, creating a major problem for the White House in its determination to continue the war against the Nicaraguan Sandinista regime.

The breakthrough for a more offensive strategy against revolutionary regimes was therefore not so much Central America as the 1983 US invasion of the small island republic of Grenada, under left-wing control since March 1979. As the revolutionary leadership on the island self-destructed in an orgy of factional infighting in early October 1983, the radicals within the Reagan administration saw a golden opportunity finally to score a victory in the Third World. On 25 October, US troops invaded and within days secured control of Grenada's 100,000 inhabitants. While not even the most dedicated Cold Warrior would see the island as a major prize in the global contest, the success of the intervention was at the time a major boost for the radicals. To them, Grenada proved that boldness and determination could defeat the communists. Grenada therefore contributed to the development of a counter-revolutionary strategy that was global in reach.

### *The War in Afghanistan*

For the Soviet Union, the invasion of Afghanistan was politically problematic and militarily knotty from the very beginning. Even with the purges of the Amin-wing of the Khalq faction, the PDPA (People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan) was far from a united party—on the contrary, the senior Soviet Communist Party advisers who had moved in with the Red Army witnessed with apprehension how the increased potential for Soviet support invigorated the Afghan jockeying for position within the government. By early February 1980, a group of visiting Soviet dignitaries had already had to ‘speak sternly to’ PDPA General Secretary Babrak Karmal to force him to get to grips with factionalism by finding some kind of balance in the leadership between the different ‘tendencies’.<sup>15</sup> Also, Soviet advisers were working overtime to find ways to ‘broaden’ the regime by including non-communist members in the government, but found very few candidates whom Karmal could accept. Several of those proposed by the Soviets had already fled Kabul for mujahedin bases in Pakistan or gone into exile elsewhere. As their work proved more difficult than first assumed, the number of Soviet civilian advisers kept growing, numbering at least 8,000 by mid-1980.

In the months following the invasion, the Afghan opposition to the PDPA regime was still dominated by supporters of the deposed king, Zahir Shah, and by ethnic or clan-based groups. But this picture soon changed. For the Islamist organizations, the Soviet invasion proved a golden opportunity to gain hegemony within the opposition by making use of their military potential—largely supplied by Pakistan—and by popular appeals for

an Islamic and national jihad against the invaders. The hundreds of thousands of refugees who started crossing the border into Pakistan's Northwest Frontier and Baluchistan provinces were required to register with one of the seven exile groups headquartered in Peshawar in order to get relief supplies. By the summer of 1980, the Pakistan-based Islamist parties had begun to grow spectacularly, fuelled by the recruitment of angry and desperate young men in the refugee camps and by supplies coming in from Pakistan, conservative Arab regimes, and from the United States.

In 1981 and 1982, a strange pattern emerged within the Afghan opposition. While local groups—fuelled more by the defence of their territory than by the hope of an Islamic revolution—carried out most of the fighting against the PDPA and the Soviets inside Afghanistan, these fighters gradually had to enter into some kind of subservient relationship with one of the Peshawar-based parties in order to get the supplies they needed. As a result, the supporters of Zahir Shah were increasingly marginalized. But, on the other hand, the relationship between the Islamist mujahedin groups in exile was far from easy, with most of them having their background in some form of split or schism within the two main Pakistani-sponsored Afghan Islamist parties of the mid-1970s: Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's extremist Hezb-i-Islami (Islamic Party) and Burhanuddin Rabbani's Jamiat-i-Islami (Islamic Society). It took much pressure from General Zia ul-Haq, the Pakistani dictator, and the head of Saudi intelligence, Prince Turki, to force them into an uneasy cohabitation. The alliance relationship between the seven was not formalized until 1984, and was even then as conflictual as it was cooperative.<sup>16</sup>

The 'limited military contingent' that the Soviet Union had sent in to Afghanistan in December 1979 had originally been intended primarily as back-up troops to the special forces that got rid of Amin and installed Babrak Karmal as Afghan leader. By early February 1980, however, Moscow—under pressure from Kabul—had given the Red Army units two main military objectives, in addition to securing a change in the PDPA leadership. The first was to cut off foreign supplies to the mujahedin and infiltrations from abroad during the interval in which Kabul's policies were being 'rectified'. The second was to cooperate with Afghan forces in securing the perimeters of main cities, roads, airports and military training areas. Both objectives turned out to be difficult to achieve for the Soviet military even after reinforcements were sent in during the two first months of 1980, bringing in the main part of the 40th Army—two motorized rifle divisions, an airborne division, an air assault brigade and two separate motorized rifle regiments: 52,000 men in all.<sup>17</sup>

The two main military problems that the Soviets encountered were the rapid disintegration of the Afghan army after the invasion and the readiness of villagers across Afghanistan to give food, shelter and information to the mujahedin. While Hafizullah Amin had been a ruthless but competent commander-in-chief, Babrak Karmal had no interest in and little understanding of military affairs. In the crucial first weeks after the Soviets came in, almost nothing was done to shore up support among the lower ranks of the army, and, as a result, desertion was rife and morale among those who remained was low. 'Therefore', the official Russian history of the war concludes, 'Soviet forces bore the brunt of the combat with the detachments of the armed enemy opposition.'<sup>18</sup> Still, the badly equipped and poorly organized resistance could not have made a serious impact in the first years of the war if it had not been for the willingness of Afghan tribal society to support it. This was especially important for the main Islamist parties, which had few, if

any, roots in the Afghan countryside. To many Afghans, what mattered after December 1979 was that the explanation for what was wrong with the PDPA government had arrived: the regime was a tool of infidel foreign invaders; and the only way of destroying the regime was by killing as many Soviets as possible.

Seen in light of the massive resistance within Afghan society to the Soviet presence, Moscow's attempts at emphasizing civilian assistance to Afghanistan may seem misplaced. But the documents we now have on the war show such plans for the betterment of the Afghans—and thereby for the strengthening of the Afghan regime—to have been of major importance to the Soviet mission. Of the roughly \$3 billion that was transferred in non-military aid between 1980 and 1989, more than 30 per cent was supposed to go to different forms of education, to create a new elite that would support the party and who could replace the many educated Afghans who had been killed or fled since the Saur revolution. Compulsory Russian replaced English in secondary schools, Soviet textbooks were used, and the teaching of Marxism constituted about 25 per cent of the curriculum. With Soviet support, the regime introduced a massive literacy programme and set up mass organizations at all levels, according to the East European model. Karmal particularly emphasized the participation of women in society as one of the government's aims. But most of these plans were stymied by the lack of trained personnel, and by the opposition's deliberate targeting of school teachers and educated women for intimidation or assassination.

From the very beginning of the Afghan operation, the Soviet leadership was in doubt both with regard to strategy and with regard to overall aims. Many Politburo members believed that what the general secretary had sanctioned in December 1979 was a quick intervention to facilitate a change in regime. The troops were not intended to take part in direct combat against the Afghan opposition. On the contrary, even Brezhnev himself thought, as late as early February 1980, that troop withdrawals could start in spring 1980 and be completed by late autumn. The arguments the defence minister, Dmitri Ustinov, and the head of the KGB, Yuri Andropov, used to get sanction for a deeper Soviet involvement were the weakness of the Afghan regime and the opposition's deliberate targeting of Soviets, including civilians. The revolt in Kandahar over New Year, when more than 50 Soviet soldiers and civilians were killed—the KGB did not miss the opportunity to send the general secretary the gruesome details of their deaths—was used as a reason to expand operations. While the pro-interventionists had to be more careful with the argument concerning Afghan weakness, it could still be used in terms of the Soviet presence in effect being a slightly expanded holding operation, until the Afghan communists had reorganized and could fend for themselves.

Given these uncertainties, it is understandable that from 1980 on Moscow tried to find an international solution to the presence of its troops in Afghanistan. By March 1980, the Politburo Afghanistan Commission had already suggested a Soviet withdrawal in return for a bilateral Afghan-Pakistani non-interference agreement guaranteed by the USSR and the United States. The problem was—as many Soviet policy advisers who privately were sceptical about the invasion realized—that both Moscow and Kabul clung to the definition of all anti-regime activity inside Afghanistan as foreign inspired. In other words, for such a solution to work, it would not only require Pakistan to stop supplying the mujahedin—something they were clearly unwilling to do—but also an end to guerrilla activity inside Afghanistan, something neither Pakistan nor anyone else could



deliver even if they had wanted to. As could be expected, the Soviet proposals had absolutely no political impact, even though they ultimately helped pave the way for UN-sponsored proximity talks to begin in Geneva in 1982. In the Cold War climate of the early 1980s, Afghanistan had become a signal issue: to many governments around the world the message it reflected was one of Soviet expansionism and the willingness of others to resist.

For Pakistan's military leader General Zia ul-Haq the Soviet invasion implied both an opportunity and a threat, though the former far outweighed the latter. Zia believed from very early on that the intervention meant a chance to let the Islamist movements that he sponsored become the internationally supported Afghan opposition. It also meant that Pakistan, in the eyes of the United States and Britain, could shed the stigma it had obtained with Zia's coup, the execution of his civilian predecessor Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and the burning of the US embassy in Islamabad by local Islamists in 1979. In other words, Zia could have it both ways: he could fulfil his dream of directing a jihad and receive Western support while doing so. Zia's plans were greatly helped by the Third World condemnation of the Soviet invasion. The Islamic Conference denounced the invasion, as did the Non-Aligned Movement during its foreign ministers' meeting in New Delhi in February 1981, at which a Pakistani-sponsored resolution was passed over a much milder Indian version. Within the Muslim world, Iran and even Libya—not generally considered friendly to Zia's regime—were willing to cooperate with him in support of the Afghan mujahedin.

Within Pakistan, Zia left the organization of the support for the Afghan Islamists, and for the more than 1.5 million refugees who lived in camps on the Pakistani side of the border, to the head of the military Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), General Akhtar Abdur Rahman. General Akhtar, an old class-mate of Zia's, graduating with him in the last class of the British India Military Academy before independence, was known for his hatred of India and for his dedication to the concept of jihad. The system of supplies and political control that General Akhtar built put his own organization at the centre, with Saudi Arabia and the United States as the main funders, and Egypt and China as the main deliverers, of Soviet-type weapons. Akhtar also organized training camps for the mujahedin, giving pride of place to recruits from Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami. The instructors in these camps were Pakistanis, though American and British personnel were in place to train Pakistani officers in the use of the newly acquired weapons. From 1984, the CIA helped run training centres for Afghan and foreign mujahedin in Egypt and probably also in at least one of the Gulf states. Reportedly, General Akhtar visited the latter, but did not generally approve of these camps, since they took recruitment and training away from his immediate supervision.

Up to 1983, the United States kept within the framework of aid to the mujahedin established by the Carter administration. This meant that Washington paid for small amounts of weapons and other supplies that came to the Afghan resistance through third countries. The US aid—distributed through Pakistani agencies—was considerably less in total during the first two years of the conflict than that paid for by Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries. The State Department and the CIA both still considered relations with Pakistan to be too cool to envisage a major US effort through that country. There was also considerable resistance in the departments, especially at the State Department, against confronting the Soviets too directly, especially since nobody seemed able to come

up with a concrete plan of how any more extensive US involvement would figure out. But, most important of all was the firm belief in the CIA and in intelligence organizations across the Western world that the mujahedin could not, over time, inflict serious casualties on the Soviets. Investing in the Afghan resistance would therefore be a losing proposition. Far better it would be to spend money and effort in re-establishing a relationship with Pakistan, and thereby shoring up the struggle against further Soviet encroachments in the region.

Getting closer to the general and what the administration called his 'largely benign authoritarian regime' took a lot of money and effort.<sup>19</sup> In 1981, the United States provided Islamabad with a six-year, \$3.2 billion economic and military assistance programme, including the delivery of 40 F-16 jet fighters.<sup>20</sup> A US National Security Intelligence Estimate passed in November 1982 found, with a certain understatement, that '[the] US-Pakistani deal on economic aid and weapons' sales undoubtedly has strengthened the Pakistani international position and restored some of its self-confidence'. During his visit to Washington the following month, General Zia pushed for more, including tacit US acceptance of the Pakistani nuclear-weapons programme. Even though both Reagan and Shultz warned against the development of nuclear weapons, the secretary of state noted to the president that they 'must also recognize that how we handle the nuclear issue can have a profound effect on our ability to continue to cooperate with Pakistan in supporting the Afghan freedom fighters'.<sup>21</sup> In pursuit of further US aid, Zia also not too subtly stressed his 'strong attachment to China', and hinted that the Chinese 'remain faithful to their policies and agreements'.<sup>22</sup>

### *The United States and the Jihad*

By 1983, a number of circumstances had begun to come together to form a more activist US approach to Afghanistan. Not only were relations with Pakistan improving, but a political alliance began to form at home on the Afghanistan issue between administration radicals and activist members of Congress, both pushing for further US involvement in arming and supplying the guerrillas. Some of the key advisers at the Department of Defense—Iklé, Perle and Perle's deputy Elie Krakowski—and two of the assistant secretaries of state—Elliot Abrams and Paul Wolfowitz—used the pressure for further aid coming from, among others, senators Paul Tsongas (D-MA) and Gordon Humphrey (R-NH) and congressmen Charles Wilson (D-TX) and Don Ritter (R-PA) to argue for more advanced weapons and further US training to be given to the 'Afghan freedom fighters', i.e. the mujahedin.<sup>23</sup> Even US diplomats in Islamabad, who, together with Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs Nicholas Veliotis had been sceptical of increased US aid, now began to change their views. 'It would be appropriate at this time to review our policies on Afghanistan', the ambassador wrote to Shultz in June 1983.

There is a good chance that our current set of policies will not take us where we want to go—bringing about the complete withdrawal of Soviet troops... The Soviets can afford to take casualties at the present rate interminably... We have yet to demonstrate that we can increase the costs they have to pay... The mujahideen may have fought the Soviets to a

stalemate in Afghanistan, but over the long run the decisive factor will be [the] Soviets staying power and the limited mujahideen resources.<sup>24</sup>

Both the declining Soviet threat to Pakistan and the interventionist enthusiasm created by the Grenada operation contributed to the victory of the radicals in the policy debate on Afghanistan in the autumn of 1983. Still, the main reasons for the new approach were the fighting capability of the mujahedin and the development—by White House and Pentagon staffers and the CIA—of a plan for how to increase funding, arms shipments and recruitment for the guerrillas. By 1983, three years after the war started, it was clear that the mujahedin had not only survived, but in some areas was gaining ground on the Soviets and their allies. As the Reagan administration radicals were fond of pointing out, Afghanistan was not Hungary or Czechoslovakia; the Soviets could not achieve a political settlement after the invasion and military resistance would continue. A series of daring raids near Kabul in 1983, organized by the non-Islamist resistance leader Abdul Haq, got wide coverage and strengthened the sense that the Soviets were in trouble.

It was the intervention of the Director of Central Intelligence, William Casey, that tipped the balance in Washington. Casey had always been convinced of the need to 'make the Soviets bleed' in Afghanistan. But in late 1983, he began believing that the Soviets could not only be contained but actually defeated in Afghanistan. To Casey—an archetypal Cold Warrior—such a victory would have momentous consequences. In early 1984, he told one of his assistants that 'the Soviet union is tremendously overextended and they're vulnerable. If America challenges the Soviets at every turn and ultimately defeats them in one place, that will shatter the mythology [of communism as the future], and it will start to unravel.'<sup>25</sup> Casey's first candidate for such a place was Nicaragua, but by 1983/84 Afghanistan stood out as maybe a better opportunity, given the domestic opposition to the US Central American interventions and the doubtful fighting capabilities of the Contras. Sometime in January 1984, the CIA's Afghan Task Force, set up in late 1982, was charged with developing a new and more aggressive US strategy, including increased arms supplies, training and more money for the Afghan resistance.

For the first two years of the invigorated US assistance programme, most of the arms that the mujahedin received came from the so-called 'SOVMAT' (Soviet material) project, which relied on Soviet equipment captured elsewhere in the world and on supplies through former Soviet allies, especially Egypt. When, in early 1985, these forms of supplies began to run low, the CIA began buying weapons through Third World front companies directly from Eastern Bloc countries (especially Bulgaria). In late 1985, the organization helped set up a complete factory in Egypt designed to produce Soviet weapons for the mujahedin. In 1984 a special training programme had been organized for Pakistani ISI personnel and Aghan mujahedin in the United States, run by the CIA at two US Army special training camps in Virginia, Camp Peary and Fort Pickett. The CIA also began channelling funds to Islamic charitable organizations that provided assistance to the mujahedin. At least two of these organizations also recruited Muslim volunteers—mostly from North Africa—to fight in Afghanistan.<sup>26</sup>

By 1985, a very complex web of foreign support for the mujahedin was in place, in which the United States cooperated closely with conservative Arab governments and voluntary organizations jointly to fund and operate key initiatives. Rapidly increasing amounts of money were available—not only were there major Arab donations, but

Congress, pushed by the indomitable Charles Wilson (who, according to Bob Woodward, 'wheeled the whole system') began appropriating extra money for the jihad.<sup>27</sup> By late 1985, there was also Iran-Contra money that was earmarked for Afghanistan, although the overflow of Afghan funding by then made Casey want to divert some of these funds to 'freedom fighters' in Cambodia and Ethiopia. The CIA's favoured bank for these operations was the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), headed by the Pakistani Aga Hassan Abedi and with a number of prominent Saudis on the board.<sup>28</sup> Sometimes, the contributions that came in could fill more than one purpose—money given by the Sultan of Brunei, for instance, was used for Nicaragua, Cambodia and Afghanistan.

In spite of the substantial increase in support for Afghanistan in 1984/85, some of the radicals in the administration and in Congress kept arguing that without high-tech Western weapons the mujahedin would always be militarily inferior to the Soviets and their Afghan allies. As early as 1984, some officials, such as George Clair of the CIA, were arguing in favour of supplying the resistance with light-weight ground-to-air Stinger missiles, which—although untested in combat—were believed would give the mujahedin a chance to hit back more effectively when attacked from the air.<sup>29</sup> The majority within the administration opposed sending the Stingers, mostly out of fear of the Soviet reaction and of what would happen if the advanced missiles fell into the 'wrong hands'. The Joint Chiefs of Staff opposed the move vigorously, as did most of Casey's advisers at the CIA. What tipped the balance was probably that George Shultz surprisingly sided with the radicals and argued in favour of the Stingers. Shultz was swayed primarily by the reports of a Soviet escalation up of the war in 1985, after Gorbachev came to office.<sup>30</sup> Reagan decided in April 1986 to send Stingers both to the mujahedin and to the Angolan UNITA (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola)—in Africa, they were used that very month against Cuban aircraft; in Afghanistan, they were first used on 26 September, when, in one raid, three out of four Soviet helicopters approaching Jalalabad airport where shot down.

For Pakistan and the ISI the increase in aid to the mujahedin was a godsend. Since the great majority of the aid was distributed by Islamabad, it meant that Zia could claim credit for it and thereby form the political shape of the Afghan opposition almost at will. As General Youssaf, the head of the ISI Afghan Bureau, put it, 'the CIA would arrange and pay for shipment to Karachi, notifying us of arrival dates. Once the vessel docked the ISI took over storage and distribution.'<sup>31</sup> The ISI made sure that it was the Islamist movements—and especially Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami—that received most of the aid, especially the new weapons.<sup>32</sup> By 1986, Zia had already begun believing that the Soviets would have to withdraw sooner rather than later, and that the battle for control of post-communist Afghanistan was already on. He was determined to keep the United States out of that equation as far as possible. Meanwhile, Hekmatyar and other extreme Islamists began a campaign of terror both inside Afghanistan and in the camps against the more moderate mujahedin groups.<sup>33</sup>

For the Soviet Union, Afghanistan proved very difficult to hold. From 1981 on, the war turned into a bloody stalemate, in which more than 1 million Afghans died and at least 25,000 Soviets. In spite of well-planned efforts, the Red Army simply could not control the areas that were within their operational zones—they advanced into rebel strongholds, kept them occupied for weeks or months, and then had to withdraw as the

mujahedin concentrated its forces or, more often, because its opponents attacked elsewhere. By 1985, for instance, the Soviets had already launched no less than nine offensives against Ahmad Shah Masud's bases in the Pansjir Valley, all without notable success. The Red Army was poorly equipped for such a limited and protracted war. Its operations were hampered by inadequate intelligence and by the need to defend its activities within a Marxist-Leninist framework. The 90,000–120,000 troops that the Soviet contingent consisted of by the mid-1980s were often severely demoralized by the time they were rotated back home, bearing witness both to the inability of the army to succeed in Afghanistan and to the brutal way in which it treated its own recruits.<sup>34</sup>

The PDPA never re-established itself as a political force in Afghanistan after the Soviet invasion. Even with a much better leader than the insecure and dreary Babrak Karmal it would have taken a miracle to resurrect Afghan communism—not, as is often believed, primarily because of a 'nationalist' reaction within the party against the Soviet intervention, but because the last round of factional infighting simply had done away with most party members' belief in the building of a communist party as a viable project. There certainly remained dedicated communists, but they tended to define themselves as helping the Soviets holding the fort against the onslaught of 'reactionary' Islam rather than carrying out revolutionary changes. By 1985, a large number of former communists—whether they remained within the PDPA or without—had taken refuge in pre-Islamic ethnic identities, which they hoped would form the framework for politics in a post-Soviet Afghanistan.

### *Third World Interventions and the Reagan Cold War*

The Reagan offensive in the Third World—although shaped by a definite ideological framework that was in place from the very beginning—was still slow moving into action. There were both domestic and international reasons for this delay, as shown in the case of Afghanistan. At the domestic level, conflicts with officials who still preferred the détente framework for dealing with the Soviet Union took time to be resolved. The president's unwillingness to get involved with day-to-day policy-making delayed the process, as did a genuine fear—shared by some of the radicals—of what the Soviet Union would do if pushed too far on Third World issues. The uncertainties about the fighting capabilities of the 'freedom fighters' also took some time to resolve (since it inevitably varied enormously, from Nicaragua to Angola to Afghanistan). Finally, there were practical difficulties that had to be worked out—relating to such issues as weapons, funding and training.

By 1984/85, the ideological urges, political initiatives and practical solutions had come together to form both what the conservative commentator Charles Krauthammer dubbed 'the Reagan Doctrine' and its 'bastard child', the Iran-Contra model of funding. While National Security Decision Directive (NSSD) 32 (May 1982) and NSDD 75 (January 1983) had set out the strategic rationale of a policy of confrontation in the Third World, it was NSDD 166, signed on 27 March 1985, that set new and immediate aims for such a strategy, at least as far as Afghanistan was concerned.<sup>35</sup> In his State of the Union address that year, Reagan had underlined that the 'United States must not break faith with those who are risking their lives—on every continent, from Afghanistan to Nicaragua—to

defy Soviet-supported aggression and secure rights that have been ours from birth.'<sup>36</sup> His Secretary of State George P. Shultz followed up the same month in an article in *Foreign Affairs*, outlining the United States' 'long and noble tradition of supporting the struggle of other peoples for freedom, democracy, and independence'.<sup>37</sup> While NSDD 166 is unfortunately not yet declassified, Reagan's message to Congress a year later on 'Freedom, Regional Security, and Global Peace' sets out much of the direction of the earlier document: 'Our help should give the freedom fighters the chance to rally the people to their side... American interests will be best served if we can keep the details of our help—in particular, how it is provided—out of view.'<sup>38</sup>

What needs to be explained is why the United States, in this continuing crusade, ended up with such strange bedfellows. In spite of later denials by some of those involved, it is clear that the great majority of arms, supplies and money donated through a US-controlled network to Afghanistan went to the most extreme of its Islamist factions, the Hezb-i-Islami headed by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (a leader the United States at the time of writing is doing its best to kill).<sup>39</sup> Explaining it by the need to placate the Pakistani dictator Zia ul-Haq is far too simplistic—Washington could, if it had wanted, have set conditions for the use of the aid it provided. Also, the often repeated version that it had to go to Hezb because the radical Islamists were the most efficient fighters against the Soviets does not hold up. It was simply untrue. As Kurt Lohbeck of CBS News recounts in his memoir of one of the most successful resistance commanders:

While in Washington, Abdul Haq always asked why the US directed the vast majority of its support to Gulbaddin [*sic*] Hekmatyar, given Gulbaddin's virulent anti-Americanism. The answers always boiled down to the statement that Gulbaddin had the most efficient fighting force. Blank stares greeted Abdul's recital of facts: Gulbaddin had no significant fighting force inside Afghanistan; Gulbaddin had never taken part in a major confrontation with either the Soviet or regime forces; Gulbaddin had not a single commander of any renown in his outfit. But these people knew what they knew...<sup>40</sup>

Based on later evidence, the knowledge that favoured the Islamists seems to be an outgrowth of the US ideological dedication to seeing the mujahedin (or any ally) as freedom fighters seeking an ultimate outcome similar to the United States' own. If that was so, then the more extreme would be the right people to get the job done (Goldwater's 1964 'extremism in defense of liberty is no vice' comes to mind, only partly tongue-in-cheek). In the Cold War, extreme anti-communism—even of the Islamist kind—could be seen as an instrument of the long-term mission of liberty, simply by resisting a Soviet-supported collectivist project.<sup>41</sup> While Islamism of Hekmatyar's kind may see itself as anti-American, it was 'objectively', in the view of some of the Reagan radicals, helping to do the United States' work. In this way, the apotheosis of the Cold War also became its conclusion, as one side confirmed its principles just when the other side began to doubt.

In Moscow, Brezhnev's successors (or should one rather say those who survived him) realized to a surprising degree that their position in Afghanistan was untenable, but could not break out of it without reframing the whole Cold War context. Only when Gorbachev had begun to see the interaction between 'East' and West less as a zero-sum game than as

(historically) normal and (potentially) mutually advantageous, could a withdrawal from Afghanistan become possible. Until then, the Soviet leadership's discourse on the topic was laden with fears of betrayal: of Afghan socialism, the Soviet global role and of previous decisions in the Politburo. To many leaders, Afghanistan especially, and the Soviet Third World engagement in general, had become a last-ditch defence against oblivion for their own system. Even when rational opinion within the regime's own context forespoke a withdrawal, it could not be done, because of the common realization that there was so little else to fall back on.

When one considers the many new meanings Afghanistan has taken on both in Russia and in the West over the past decade, the hold that Cold War ideologies had on leaders in the 1980s seems nothing less than extraordinary. But, however easy it is under present circumstances—both in Moscow and Washington—to claim that the superpowers of yesteryear lost the plot and overlooked the real enemies, political Islam among them, such criticism would probably not only be ahistorical, but also indeterminant: Islamism, and other challenges to Cold War ideologies, originated to a large extent outside the Cold War framework and came into conflict with Russia and the United States because of superpower interventions in the Third World. Both during and after the Cold War, enemy images sometimes work as mirrors—the frenzied features of the other represent another version of oneself (lightly disguised).

#### NOTES

- 1 There is a substantial literature on Reagan's Third World policies; by far the best overview is James M. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene: the Reagan Doctrine and American Foreign Policy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), but see also Peter W. Rodman, *More Precious Than Peace: The Cold War and the Struggle for the Third World* (New York: Scribner's, 1994), Robert A. Kagan, *A Twilight Struggle: American Power and Nicaragua, 1977–1990* (New York: Free Press, 1996), and Chester Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa: Making Peace in a Rough Neighborhood* (New York: Norton, 1992). The last three are all written by State Department officials in the Reagan administration.
- 2 Gary Sick, conversation with author, 18 September 1995, Lysebu.
- 3 The parallel to the defeat of Nazi Germany and Japan is obvious, as is the inspiration from the writings of Hannah Arendt.
- 4 There is in Brzezinski's thinking a curious contradiction between his apocalyptic vision of the United States' role and his Kissingerian emphasis on Soviet learning through US actions.
- 5 Radio address, 31 March 1976.
- 6 June 1980 interview.
- 7 See *The Penguin Dictionary of Third World Terms*, p. 223.
- 8 CIA, 'The Soviet Economy in 1978–79 and Prospects for 1980: A Research Paper'. June 1980. Recent Russian figures confirm the downward trend in growth in the 1970s and also point to 1979 as a particularly difficult year; see V. A. Inogradov (chief ed.), *Ekonomicheskaya istoriya Rossii XIX–XX vv: sovremennyy vzgliad* [The Economic History of Russia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century: A Contemporary View] (Moscow: Rosspen, 2000).
- 9 Andropov himself began using a similar term in 1983—*perekhitrit*; literally 'overreached'—on Soviet foreign engagements (interview with former Soviet vice-foreign minister Mikhail Kapitsa, Moscow, April 1992).
- 10 Record of CPSU CC (Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Central Committee) Politburo meeting 31 May 1983.

- 11 Elie Krakowski at CUIHP (Cold War International History Project) Afghanistan conference, Washington, DC, April 2002.
- 12 Author's interview with Richard Pipes, Oslo, May 1993.
- 13 V.Vorotnikov to CPSU CC, 15 Dec 81. Record of conversation Rodriguez-A. Haig, 23 Nov. 81 in Mexico City TsKhSD, f5, op. 84, d. 584, pp. 1–27. Rodriguez's response to Haig's charges on Central America is equally interesting: 'The Soviet Union in no way wants to be entangled in anything which is seen to be a revolutionary process in which it does not desire to participate.'
- 14 Interview with Walter Cronkite of CBS News, 3 March 1981.
- 15 This, one may assume, was easier said than done. As Bradsher points out, Karmal's new cabinet included, as first deputy premier, Sarwari, who had been publicly accused of personally torturing the second deputy premier, Keshtmand, while the latter spent time in prison in 1978 (Henry S.Bradsher, *Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999] p. 121).
- 16 According to General Mohammed Youssaf, the deputy head of Pakistani military intelligence, by 1984, 'Zia's patience [had] snapped, and he issued a directive at 2.00 a.m. the Parties were to form a Seven-Party Alliance and issue a joint announcement to that effect within 72 hours. He did not say what he would do if they declined. The Leaders were well aware that without Pakistan's, and that meant Zia's, backing, everything was finished. (Mohammed Youssaf with Mark Adkin, *Afghanistan: The Bear Trap: The Defeat of a Superpower* [Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers and Book Distributors, 2001], p. 35). General Youssaf's book provides an excellent over view of Pakistani intelligence's involvement with the Afghan resistance.
- 17 Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost*, trans. and ed. L.Grau and M.A.Gress (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2002).
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- 19 Secretary of State to US Embassy Islamabad, for Under-Secretary Eagleburger and Ambassador Spiers, n.d. (November 1982).
- 20 Veliotis to Secretary of State, 29 Nov. 1982.
- 21 Shultz to Reagan, 29 Nov. 1982.
- 22 Memorandum of Conversation, Shultz-Zia, 6 Dec. 1982.
- 23 Tsongas and Ritter had already proposed a resolution on providing more effective material aid to the mujahedin in 1982, but it was not passed until 1984 because of the administration's attempts at linking support for the Afghans to support for 'freedom fighters' elsewhere (Nicaragua—a policy that a majority in Congress opposed) and doubts in Congress about where to find the money for the Afghan venture.
- 24 US Embassy Islamabad to Secretary of State, June 1983.
- 25 Jay Winik, *On the Brink: The Dramatic Behind-the-Scenes Saga of the Reagan Era and the Men and Women Who Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 447. See also McFarlane to Shultz, 24 Feb. 1984, 'US-Soviet Relations: A Framework for the Future', where the National Security Adviser argues that it is the Third World that will be most difficult for the Soviet Union to find grounds for accommodation with the United States, for reasons of doctrine.
- 26 CIA's then station chief in Islamabad, Milton Bearden, estimates a total of 2–3,000 foreign Muslims fighting in Afghanistan in 1986 (interview, Washington, DC, April 2002). It is still very difficult to determine the full extent of this network. In addition to the training camps in Pakistan, there was one such camp in Egypt and probably one in one of the Gulf states, both operated locally, but with CIA assistance. The Chinese trained some Afghans and possibly also foreigners in a camp in south-western China. The Thatcher government—true to style—'privatized' its Afghan military assistance, using public money to pay for mercenaries training ISI (Pakistan Secret Intelligence) specialists (information gathered in Peshawar by author in 1985 and 1986; interviews with Charles Coogan and Milton Bearden, Washington,



- DC, April 2002). Unfortunately, one of the main sources of information, John K. Cooley's *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America, and International Terrorism* (2nd edn; London: Pluto Press, 2000), is unreliable; some of the information Cooley uses obviously originates in Soviet disinformation from the 1980s (interview with 'Vasiliy Mitrokhin', London, October 2001; see also V. Mitrokhin's *The KGB in Afghanistan*, ed. Christian Ostermann and Odd Arne Westad [Washington, DC: Cold War International History Project, 2002]).
- 27 According to General Youssaf, Congressman Wilson went to Afghanistan with the ISI several times in the mid-1980s, where 'he enjoyed himself, being photographed on a white pony dressed as a Mujahideen, with a bandolier of bullets across his chest. He was most excited when he came under spasmodic shellfire... Because we had several Stingers with us we tried to tempt a helicopter to come within range, as the Mujahideen wanted to show off their skill, and Wilson was equally enthusiastic to see one brought down. Unfortunately, they kept well away (Youssaf and Adkin, *Afghanistan*, pp. 54–5).' Bob Woodward, *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981–1987* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1987), p. 318.
- 28 BCCI (Bank of Commerce Credit International), which collapsed in 1991, for a time held some of the accounts of the Saudi royal family as well as the accounts of the bin Laden family—one of the bin Laden brothers served on its board. Woodward, *Secret Wars of the CIA*, pp. 372–3.
- 29 The mujahedin had had British-made 'Blowpipe' ground-to-air missiles and some light-weight Soviet-designed SA-7 missiles since late 1983, but, although effective at first, these weapons were far too easy to avoid for both helicopters and fighter-bombers.
- 30 According to one of his assistants, Shultz had been looking for a way to put more pressure on the Soviets since 1983, when he was deeply moved by the plight of the Afghan refugees after a visit to one of the camps in Pakistan (Nicholas Veliotis, interview, Washington, DC, April 2002).
- 31 Youssaf and Adkins, *Afghanistan*, p. 73.
- 32 The head of the ISI Afghan Bureau, General Youssaf, sees Hekmatyar as 'a staunch believer in an Islamic government for Afghanistan, an excellent administrator and, as far as I could discover, scrupulously honest. Despite his comparative wealth, he lives a frugal life. He is also ruthless, arrogant, inflexible, a stern disciplinarian, and he does not get on with Americans.' (ibid. p. 36.)
- 33 Hekmatyar's group singled out moderate religious leaders and the Afghan intelligentsia in exile for intimidation or assassination. Their murder of the main independent Afghan writer on the war, Sayed Bahaouddin Majrooh, in Peshawar on 11 February 1988 stands out as particularly gruesome.
- 34 Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War*, esp. Chs. 7 ('Combat Support') and 9 ('Morale').
- 35 All declassified or partially declassified NSDDs from the Reagan Administration are on [www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/](http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/)
- 36 Address before a Joint Session of Congress on the State of the Union, 6 February 1985.
- 37 'Shaping American Foreign Policy: New Realities and New Ways of Thinking', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 64 (1985), p. 3. Shultz's article was first presented as a address to the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco 22 February 1985. Its principal drafter was Robert W. Kagan, then working for Peter Rodman at the State Department.
- 38 Message to Congress, 14 March 1986.
- 39 Added to recent reports of US intelligence involvement in the killing of Jonas Savimbi in Angola, the 8 May firing of drone missiles at Hekmatyar (*New York Times*, 9 May 2002) gives further credence to the caveat spelled out in the Cambridge painting of the sixteenth-century spy Christopher Marlowe: 'Ouoed me nutrit me destruit.' The painting is now in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

- 40 Kurt Lohbeck, *Holy War, Unholy Victory: Eyewitness to the CIA's Secret War in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway, 1993), pp. 125–6. Abdul Haq and several other commanders repeated the same argument to the author in Peshawar in 1985/86.
- 41 Though we still do not have records of Reagan's meeting with the head of Jamiat, Burhanuddin Rabbani, and other resistance leaders on 16 June 1986, the president's public statement on the same day speaks of freedom as a common goal for the United States and the mujahedin, and compliments the Islamists on their dedication to religion and tradition.

PART IV:  
EUROPE IN THE LAST  
DECADE OF THE COLD  
WAR

## Germany in the Last Decade of the Cold War

*Hans-Hermann Hertle*

German leadership celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) on 7 October 1989. The leaders of socialist brother nations were invited, including Mikhail Gorbachev. General Secretary Erich Honecker proudly declared in his speech that the GDR 'would approach the year 2000 feeling confident that the future will belong to socialism'.<sup>1</sup> Eleven days later, Honecker was ousted in the Politburo; the Berlin Wall came down one month later, and the revolutions in central European countries took their well-known course. Less than a year later, the GDR had disappeared from the map and Germany was unified. Another year later, the Soviet Union had ceased to exist.

Historians often tend to regard the outcome of these events as 'inevitable' simply because they just happened that way. But, even at that late hour, none of the actors on the world political stage and none of the professional observers managed to predict the course which history was about to take. Therefore, I want to warn against an approach which Reinhard Bendix has called 'retrospective determinism': that is, viewing events 'as if everything had to happen as it ultimately did happen'.<sup>2</sup>

Using the German example, I want to demonstrate that even if structural reasons caused the crisis of the GDR, the actual course of the events can only be understood as 'the result of an unpredictable linking of contingent events'.<sup>3</sup> Structural causes of the crisis—the economic decline of East Germany and the exhaustion of the Soviet global strategy—restricted the range of possible options for action available to the SED (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, or Socialist Unity Party) leadership in the fall of 1989, but they did not predetermine the actual course of events. If ever there was a 'master plan' or a conspiracy, it was overtaken unrelentingly by events and thrown under the wheels of history.

### *German-German Détente*

From the German point of view, the beginning of the last decade of the Cold War can be described as an attempt by both German states to retreat from the deteriorating climate in East-West relations starting in the winter of 1979/80, so as to safeguard against growing international tension and to pursue undisturbed intra-German relations. Both sides gained from the positive results of détente achieved during the previous ten years, the goals and benefits of which, nevertheless, were defined and estimated differently on each side.

The interest in continuing the policy of détente was propelled by at least one common motive. As the Soviets deployed SS-20 missiles and NATO decided to follow suit, politicians and people in both East and West Germany felt increasing anxiety about a

nuclear confrontation which threatened the utter devastation of both German states as the major battlefield, independent of their different political systems.

In addition, there were different motives. The Berlin Wall had crushed West German hopes in 1961 that the SED government could be toppled soon. In the course of détente policy, Bonn gave up claiming exclusive diplomatic representation of Germany, an important doctrine in the 1950s and 1960s. The German-German Basic Treaty of 1972 contained the West German recognition of the GDR as an independent state and accepted the integrity of its borders.<sup>4</sup> Basic differences of opinion continued to divide both countries. In 1974, East Berlin cancelled all references to a common German nation from the GDR constitution and ordered party ideologists to design a new nation—the ‘socialist nation of workers and farmers’. Bonn, nevertheless, continued to be committed to reunification, maintaining a common citizenship for all Germans. While the realization of state unity had moved into the far-distant future, the 1972 Basic Treaty aimed at developing ‘good neighbourly relations’. West German policy now followed the leitmotif of recognizing the division in order to alleviate its consequences for the people. ‘Policy for the people therefore had to be made not with the people but with the rulers. There, with the rulers, lay the key not just to short-term alleviations but also to medium-term reforms’, observed Timothy Garton Ash critically, because this ‘realistic principle’ of West German policy prevailing until 1989 ignored the citizens’ protest movements in the GDR and considered them as interfering.<sup>5</sup> In a number of follow-up accords to the Basic Treaty, Bonn and East Berlin agreed to improve travel conditions from West to East, to modernize road and railroad connections, to open new border checkpoints, and to facilitate mail, parcel service and telephone connections. After years of separation, family and personal ties improved between East and West Germans, and particularly between West and East Berliners. The GDR, furthermore, agreed to allow more families separated by the Wall to unite in the West. Intra-German trade doubled between 1970 and 1975. At the beginning of 1980, the Federal government, therefore, acknowledged a positive record of ten years of détente: this policy ‘has given us advantages which we Germans do not want to miss’. No politician would dare to ‘put these achievements at risk’.<sup>6</sup>

The SED leadership had different motives. On the one hand, from the beginning of détente it was seriously worried about the destabilizing effects of the partial rapprochement with the West. The East Germans reacted by massively bloating the state security system, which became an all-encompassing organization of surveillance: the number of officials in the Ministry of State Security (MfS) doubled between 1970 and 1980, from 40,000 to 80,000.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, the GDR enjoyed financial compensation received for ‘humanitarian relief’: annual transfer payments for the GDR rose from DM 599.5 million in 1975 to DM 1.556 million in 1979 (for which the GDR was envied by its socialist brother countries).<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, détente ended the political isolation of the GDR and led to its international recognition. The SED leadership gained at least three advantages: (1) external recognition helped play down lack of acceptance of the regime by the population; (2) foreign trade (and the credit line) increased in the wake of diplomatic relations opening with more than a hundred nations (this grew threefold between 1973 and 1980); and (3) the GDR gained more leeway in its dealings with the Soviet Union, so its self-assurance grew.

The 'special path' of the Germans induced disagreements between the Social Democratic Federal Government and the United States, as well as between the SED and the Soviet leadership. For the West Germans, this was no surprise. To cite the examples of the poor relationship between Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and US Presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, much has been written about this conflict.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, when the conservative-liberal government under Chancellor Helmut Kohl assumed power at the end of 1982, German-American relations improved, and a consensus was re-established on political objectives.

The particular problems of the East German leadership were revealed when new documents became accessible for research after the collapse of the GDR:

- the real extent of the economic crisis of the GDR at the beginning of the 1980s; and
- the level of tension and growing differences of interests between the communist leaders in East Berlin and Moscow.

The following will concentrate on these two less well-known aspects of the Cold War and their consequences within the power triangle formed by East Berlin, Bonn and Moscow, in the periods 1979–84 and 1985–88, before touching on the *annus mirabilis* of 1989/90.

### *The German-German 'Coalition of Reason', 1979–84*

For a long time, both East and West considered the GDR to be the industrially most developed country in the socialist system, with the highest standard of living. Surprising archival evidence has revealed that consumer socialism in the GDR, initiated in 1971 to 'compensate for the lack of legitimacy by providing consumer goods and social security',<sup>10</sup> the so-called 'unity of economic and social policy', was not based on the productivity of the East German economy but was made possible by reduction of the investment quota and growing indebtedness in the West. The Soviets had repeatedly warned the East German leadership not to continue this policy. An angry Leonid Brezhnev pounded the table in front of the entire Politburo during his visit in October 1979,<sup>11</sup> and reminded the SED leadership to boost productivity: 'You can only consume what you have produced. Nobody can live at the expense of somebody else by wanting to declare bankruptcy.'<sup>12</sup> But boosting productivity was a tough challenge. Instead, in the autumn of 1979 price hikes were discussed but rejected because of fear of political instability. At the end of November 1979, Honecker told the Politburo that increasing prices would 'force the Politburo and also the government to resign'.<sup>13</sup> As a consequence, expanding political and economic relations with the West was obviously the most comfortable way of compensating for the deficits of the socialist economy for the Politburo. But this policy merely continued the spiral of indebtedness.

Even after NATO's dual-track decision to deploy intermediate-range missiles in December 1979, the GDR continued business as usual with the Federal Republic during the first half of 1980.<sup>14</sup> In August 1980, Brezhnev increased pressure on Honecker to punish the West Germans for their active role in the debate on missile deployment. Honecker pretended to comply, increasing the obligatory foreign currency conversion amount for visitors to the GDR from DM 10 to DM 25, and thereby causing a temporary steep drop in visits of some 30 per cent. He delivered a harsh speech and demanded the

recognition of GDR citizenship as precondition for further normalization of relations. At the same time, however, Honecker let Bonn know confidentially that he did not plan any change of course for German-German relations.

On 13 December 1981, General Jaruzelski declared martial law in Poland. Thousands of *Solidarnosc* (Solidarity) trade-union activists were imprisoned.<sup>15</sup> Coincidentally, this was also the third day of a summit meeting between Erich Honecker and Helmut Schmidt in the GDR. It was a typical indication of the special intra-German relationship during this confrontation that the German-German tête-à-tête continued as if nothing had happened.

As we have learned from documents made accessible in recent years and from the account of Ivan Kuzmin,<sup>16</sup> the 'Western policy' advocated by Honecker and his Central Committee Economic Secretary Guenter Mittag met clandestine resistance from a small group of conservative Moscow-oriented Politburo members. They were afraid of the 'GDR committing treason towards the Soviet Union'. Behind Honecker's back, they denounced his secret Western dealings to the Moscow leadership as an 'irresponsible, double-faced, double-crossing policy'.<sup>17</sup> Honecker's and Mittag's relationship with the Soviet Union would become 'bad, hypocritical and demagogic'.<sup>18</sup> Using Stasi chief Erich Mielke's assessment, Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers Werner Krolikowski warned the Kremlin that 'EH [Erich Honecker] will strike more political deals with the FRG [Federal Republic of Germany]'.<sup>18</sup>

In order to prevent this, Mielke requested several secret reports from the Ministry of State Security about the economic condition of the GDR. Leading economic cadres were secretly consulted as 'experts'. The conclusion of one of the secret reports of 25 January 1982 was that 'we have to understand that the GDR is no longer able to change the situation through its own economic means and to permanently solve the problems of the balance of payments with the West'.<sup>20</sup> At this time, the GDR owed VM 30.5 billion to the West.<sup>21</sup> The debt service amounted to 160 per cent in 1981. Poland and Romania had been technically insolvent since the middle of 1981, and Western banks were refusing to extend new loans to socialist countries. According to the State Security's top-secret report, the GDR was threatened with insolvency in the first quarter of 1982. The Soviet Union, the report suggested, should be asked to take over VM 20 billion of GDR debt. As compensation, the GDR would decrease its trade with the West and redirect its Western exports to the Soviet Union. Was this a serious alternative to Honecker's orientation towards the West? The Soviet Union had decided to leave Poland and Romania in the lurch. As it was close to bankruptcy itself, the Soviet Union had cut crude oil deliveries to the GDR, agreed upon in the export trade plan, so as to be able to sell more oil against freely convertible foreign currency. Given this situation, how could the Soviet Union assume liability for the GDR's indebtedness? We do not know whether Mielke's secret plan ever reached Moscow or whether the Kremlin leadership ever heard about it.

As Honecker and Mittag did not expect economic aid from the Soviet Union, they refused to accept the policy of total rejection of the West demanded by the ailing Brezhnev in the summer of 1982 in the Crimea. When, in 1983, the condition of the GDR deteriorated to a question of 'to be or not to be' (Guenter Mittag), the conservative Federal government stepped in with a spectacular loan of 1 billion marks. The international credit standing of the GDR was thereby re-established. The SED leadership had, however, to pay a political price for this attempt to achieve economic stability,

which revealed how hard the country had been hit by the credit boycott. The SED removed the land mines along the intra-German border. Restrictions on travel to the West were eased for GDR citizens in the following years, and, in a surprising move in 1984, all applications for emigration to West Germany were granted at a stroke.

On 22 November 1983, the German Bundestag (Parliament) sanctioned the deployment of new US medium-range missiles. The following day, the Soviet Union discontinued INF (Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces) talks in Geneva. 'Nations endorsing the deployment of the missiles must now feel the political consequences of their decision', the CPSU informed the SED Politburo on 28 November 1983, and announced an 'action plan' as a guideline with negative consequences for the relations between the FRG and the USSR and the other socialist countries.<sup>22</sup> 'The German friends' were 'requested' to 'explain to the FRG how the situation has changed after the missile deployment by mentioning political problems such as the border issue, citizenship etc., by tightening controls of West Germans visiting the GDR etc.'<sup>23</sup>

But Honecker did the exact opposite: instead of declaring a new ice age, he continued to steer an independent course, speaking about a 'policy of damage control' and a 'coalition of reason'.<sup>24</sup> In July 1984, in the coldest period of the second Cold War, the GDR received another loan of DM950 million from West German banks, which again was guaranteed by the Federal government. When Honecker informed Moscow in August that, contrary to all previous Soviet advice, he intended to pay an official state visit to the Federal Republic in 1984, he was called to Moscow immediately. Honecker and his small Politburo delegation had to face Constantin Chernenko, Mikhail Gorbachev, who then was Agricultural Secretary of the Central Committee (CC) of the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union), Defence Minister Dimitrij Ustinov and KGB chief Victor Chebrikov. Chernenko fiercely attacked the loosening of travel restrictions in return for the billions in loans granted to the GDR. These loans would be 'questionable from the point of view of internal GDR security and would constitute one-sided concessions to Bonn. You [Honecker and his delegation] receive financial benefits which, in reality, are only illusory advantages. They will constitute future additional liabilities of the GDR to the FRG. Events in Poland teach a serious lesson from which conclusions have to be drawn.'<sup>25</sup> He strongly 'requested' the East German comrades to cancel the state visit to the Federal Republic: 'If a rapprochement is achieved by weakening the socialist positions by way of unintended encouragement of Bonn's demands against the GDR, all this would inflict great damage on all of us.'<sup>26</sup> This time Honecker gave in, and his visit to Bonn was cancelled.

### *Reshaping the Power Triangle of East Berlin-Bonn-Moscow, 1985–88*

When Mikhail Gorbachev assumed office in March 1985, dramatic changes started in the Soviet Union and the East-West relationship. The triangular relationship among East Berlin, Bonn and Moscow, however, remained untouched in the beginning. The SED leadership watched the changes in the Soviet Union from a distance and without much interest, but soon the irritations turned into clandestine and open opposition. Though differences of opinion about international security policies were overcome at a meeting between Honecker and Gorbachev during the XI SED party convention in April 1986 in



Berlin, there were still Soviet objections against the SED's independent German-German policy and the growing economic dependency of the GDR on the Federal Republic. At that time, Gorbachev considered Kohl, as he told Honecker, 'only a lackey of the United States'.<sup>27</sup> Talking to the chancellor on the occasion of Chernenko's funeral, he had criticized Kohl for 'standing to attention whenever he was called to do so from the other side of the Atlantic'.<sup>28</sup> Kohl responded later to this insult by saying in a *Newsweek* article (15 October 1986) that Gorbachev would use 'Joseph Goebbels' propaganda methods'.

'Why go to the FRG when all you hear there is what you are told directly in Washington?', Gorbachev asked Honecker, and made him cancel his visit to Bonn scheduled for July 1986.<sup>29</sup> Gorbachev hoped to get rid of Kohl through an SPD victory in the German elections in January 1987, but in fact Kohl won the election.

Now the Bonn-East Berlin-Moscow triangular relationship started to change. Kohl sent Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker and Foreign Minister Genscher as 'icebreakers' to Moscow. After this visit, Honecker was allowed to travel to the Federal Republic. Honecker enjoyed being received as a state visitor with (almost) all the honours. He considered this reception as a personal triumph and the peak of the political recognition of the GDR. But, seen in retrospect, the German-German summit marked an important turning point in the relations between Moscow, East Berlin and Bonn. The Soviet-West German relationship began to flourish. The German-German relationship, on the other hand, stagnated.<sup>30</sup>

The SED was suddenly faced with a confusing mix of contradictory statements by leading CPSU functionaries regarding the further course of Soviet relations with the Federal Republic and the resulting role of the GDR. On the one hand, Moscow declared that the Federal Republic was the most important country in western Europe, 'the Number One country' (Vadim Zagladin, 24 April 1987).<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, half a year later, East Berlin was told that the SED could 'firmly' trust that, contrary to rumours about an alleged Soviet change of course in policy towards Germany, 'relations with the GDR would have absolute priority' (Vadim Medvedev, 20 January 1988).<sup>32</sup> Six days later, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnaze announced that his upcoming visit to Bonn would be 'part of a plan to increase work with the FRG'.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, three months later he confirmed that 'the Soviet Union would do everything to further strengthen the brotherly alliance with the GDR. This would be an unchangeable position'.<sup>34</sup>

Honecker was becoming increasingly annoyed about this confusing game being played by the Soviet comrades. Soviet-West German relations picked up momentum, as simultaneously a standstill in German-German negotiations became increasingly noticeable. One last device that still worked in the intra-German arena was the SED's policy of using human rights as bargaining chips. In May 1988, easing travel restrictions for GDR citizens visiting the West was rewarded by the Federal Republic by an increase of the transit lump sum from DM 525 million to DM 860 million for the period 1990-99. In all other respects, however, Bonn restricted its relations with East Berlin to the minimum that was diplomatically necessary and, above all, non-binding. Rather than increasing, German-German trade in fact decreased in both 1987 and 1988.<sup>35</sup> The wide-ranging declaration of intent in the German-German 'Joint Communiqué' of September 1987, particularly the creation of a mixed commission for further development of economic relations, proved to be a farce within a few months.<sup>36</sup>

This happened when economic aid was becoming increasingly important for Honecker. During the first half of the 1980s, the GDR had advanced to being one of the most important exporters of oil products among the non-drilling oil countries: oil products amounted to 30 per cent of total trade revenues with the West. But the fall of crude oil prices on the world market at the turn of 1985/86 hit the GDR almost as hard as it did the Soviet Union. The spiral of indebtedness with the West started to turn faster and faster. In 1986, this predicament had made the SED leadership decide to develop a vision of the GDR as 'a Japan of the East'. Huge sums were invested in microelectronics. Neither by making this effort nor by applying espionage did the GDR succeed in catching up with the technological superiority of the leading global chip producers.

Instead of becoming an economic engine, microelectronics turned into a deficit business devouring subsidies, ripping an additional deficit of half a billion marks for price subsidies into the state budget. 'We must prevent the [economic] collapse', Honecker warned the Politburo in the summer of 1988.<sup>37</sup> In November 1988 Mittag told a small group of economic experts that: 'The way we are driving now, we'll crash into a tree and cause total breakdown.'<sup>38</sup>

### *Mass Exodus and Mass Protest, 1989*

These domestic and foreign political symptoms of the crisis intensified in the first half of 1989. At the conclusion of the CSCE (Council for Security and Cooperation in Europe) follow-up meeting in Vienna in January 1989, the signatory states pledged to observe the right of every individual 'to travel from any country, including his own, and to return to his country without restrictions'. The GDR had signed similar international agreements many times before without ever putting them into effect domestically. But, in Vienna, initially under steady pressure from the Soviets, it agreed to guarantee this right in law and to allow observation of its implementation.<sup>39</sup> Soviet foreign policy forced domestic political obligations on East Berlin that, if implemented, would threaten at least the stability, if not the existence, of the GDR by softening its rigid isolation from the outside world.

On 16 May 1989, Gerhard Schuerer, the head of the GDR State Planning Commission, told a small circle of SED leaders that the GDR's debt to the West was increasing by VM500 million a month, and that, if things continued along these lines, the GDR would be insolvent by 1991.

At the Bucharest summit of the Warsaw Pact in July 1989, the Soviet Union officially revoked the 'Brezhnev Doctrine' of limited sovereignty for the alliance's members.<sup>40</sup> The Soviet guarantee of existence for the communist governments was thereby placed in question—Soviets allies could no longer count on military support in the event of internal unrest.

In the meantime, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party had started to focus on democratic reforms. It felt increasingly that the Iron Curtain was superfluous. After learning from media reports that the barbed wire along the Hungarian-Austrian border was being removed in early May 1989, growing numbers of GDR citizens, above all youths, began to travel to Hungary at the beginning of the summer vacation in the hope of fleeing across the Hungarian-Austrian border to the Federal Republic. East Germans

seeking to leave the GDR occupied the West German embassies in Prague and Budapest, as well as the FRG's permanent representation in East Berlin.

Effective on 12 June 1989, Hungary agreed to abide by the Geneva Convention on Refugees. Three months later, the Hungarian government decided to give priority to its international agreements and treaties over solidarity with the GDR. Following a secret deal with Bonn, it opened the border to Austria for GDR citizens on 10 September. In return, the Federal Republic gave Hungary credit in the amount of DM500 million and promised to make up any losses that Hungary might suffer from retaliatory measures by the GDR.<sup>41</sup> Tens of thousands of East Germans travelled to the Federal Republic via Austria in the days and weeks that followed. The GDR experienced its largest wave of departures since the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961.

This mass exodus demonstrated the weakness of the SED leadership on this issue and undermined the regime's authority in an unprecedented manner. The exodus was a necessary precondition for the founding of new opposition groups and, ultimately, the mass demonstrations. This dual movement of mass exodus and mass protest started the process of collapse in the GDR.

The SED leadership's options were increasingly reduced to the alternatives of either introducing—with uncertain results—political reforms, or constructing a 'second Wall' between the GDR and its socialist neighbours Czechoslovakia and Poland as well as putting down the demonstrations by force.<sup>42</sup> The closing of the border to Czechoslovakia to those without visas on 3 October 1989, the use of violence against demonstrators before and after the state celebrations for the fortieth anniversary of the GDR on 7 October, and the preparations for forcibly preventing the Monday demonstration in Leipzig on 9 October pointed to the leadership's preference for the second alternative. But, in the end, too many people took to the streets, and the heavily armed forces of the state capitulated to the 70,000 peaceful demonstrators.<sup>43</sup> After 9 October, the strategy of employing violence moved from the forefront to the background, although the possibility of announcing a state of martial law remained an unspoken option among members of the Politburo. Hence, the non-violent resolution of the crisis in the aftermath of 9 October was not self-evident.

As the protests put the GDR party and state leadership under enormous pressure, it had to respond directly through far-reaching personnel changes. The ousting of General Secretary Honecker and CC Secretary Mittag on 17 October was followed by the 7 November resignation of the Council of Ministers and the 8 November resignation of the entire Politburo. But the change at the top of the party at a time when it had already lost control of the masses only accelerated the decay of power. SED members lost their faith in the ability of the party leadership to control the situation—and this was yet another factor in the crisis, adding to the problems that resulted from the party's loss of authority over the population.

On 31 October, the SED Politburo was again faced with the dramatic increase in the GDR's debts. The party's leading economists considered drastic changes in economic and social policies necessary, accompanied by a reduction in the standard of living by 25–30 per cent. However, out of fear of a further loss of power, they thought such an austerity policy impossible. On 1 November, Egon Krenz reported in Moscow on the desolate situation in the GDR to USSR General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev. But

Gorbachev made it clear to Krenz that he could not count on economic help from Moscow, due to the Soviet Union's own economic crisis.<sup>44</sup>

Therefore, on 6 November, the SED leadership negotiated informally with FRG representatives a comprehensive expansion of German-German relations. The central issue was the GDR's hope for loans totalling DM12–13 billion. The most pressing request was that the FRG government should participate, in the short-term run, in the financing of the tourist traffic expected with the adoption of the upcoming travel law. The aid requested amounted to an additional DM3.8 billion, based on estimates of DM300 for some 12.5 million tourists per year. The FRG government wanted to negotiate but made increased economic cooperation contingent upon political conditions: if the SED relinquished its monopoly of power, allowed independent parties and guaranteed free elections, Chancellor Helmut Kohl was prepared 'to speak about a completely new dimension of our economic assistance'. But, owing to the chancellor's forthcoming state visit to Poland, the negotiation channels in Bonn were blocked until 14 November.

By the beginning of November, opposition protests had swept the entire GDR. From 30 October to 4 November, some 1,400,000 people marched in 210 demonstrations. They demanded free elections, the admission of opposition groups, and freedom of travel. In addition, applications to leave the GDR increased by 1,000 per week, reaching a total of 188,180 by 29 October.

### *The Fall of the Wall*

At the beginning of November 1989, the issue of travel and 'permanent exit' (i.e. emigration) connected the GDR's foreign, domestic and economic problems.<sup>45</sup> When he assumed power on 18 October 1989, SED General Secretary Egon Krenz had promised increased travel opportunities; the promised draft travel law was published on 6 November and was due to take effect in December. Fearing a 'haemorrhaging of the GDR', the party and ministerial bureaucracy limited the amount of travel to 30 days a year. The draft provided for denial clauses that were not clearly defined and therefore left room for arbitrary judgement by the authorities. The announcement that people travelling would be given only 15 DM once a year in exchange for 15 GDR marks revealed the GDR's chronic shortage of Western currency. Instead of reducing the political pressure, the draft legislation spurred more criticism and mass demonstrations in many cities.

As early as 1 November, the threat of strikes in southern districts had forced the SED to remove the ban on travel to Czechoslovakia (CSSR). Immediately, the Prague embassy of the Federal Republic filled with a new crowd of GDR citizens eager to depart for West Germany. Under pressure from the CSSR, the SED leadership decided to allow its citizens to travel to the FRG via the CSSR as of 4 November. The Wall was cracked open now not only via the detour through Hungary, but also through East Germany's direct neighbour, the CSSR. Within the first few days, 50,000 GDR citizens used this path to leave the country. The CSSR objected forcefully to the mass migration through its country and gave the SED an ultimatum to solve its own problems without recourse to the CSSR, or it would close its border with the GDR.

On the morning of 7 November, a majority of the SED Politburo still considered immediate implementation of the entire travel law to be inappropriate, given the ongoing

negotiations with the FRG about financial assistance. As a result, the ministerial bureaucracy was given the task of drafting a bill for the early promulgation of only that provision of the travel law dealing with permanent exit.

On the morning of 9 November, four officials from the Interior Ministry and the State Security charged with redrafting the travel bill felt that their assignment would privilege people seeking permanent exit as opposed to those interested only in short visits and wanting to return to the GDR. The proposal would have forced everybody interested just in travelling to the West to apply for permanent exit. The officials revised the draft accordingly, providing for shorter visits to the West as well.

At no time did the officials intend to grant complete freedom to travel. Applications for private trips were still required, as had been the case before, and visas would only be granted to people holding passports. Only four million GDR citizens had passports; all the rest, it was calculated, would have to apply for a passport first and then would have to wait at least another four weeks for a visa. These regulations thus effectively blocked the immediate departure of the majority of GDR citizens.

The officials decided to place a media ban on the release of the information until 4:00 a.m. on 10 November. Before then, the local offices of the Interior Ministry, State Security and border patrols were to be instructed about the new regulations to prepare them for the likely crowds.

The officials' draft, including the press release, was approved by their superiors and then submitted to the Council of Ministers by a 'fast-track procedure' (*Umlaufverfahren*), which was to guarantee a decision by 6:00 p.m.

A copy of the draft was passed to Egon Krenz. At 4:00 p.m., he read the draft to 216 Central Committee members and added: 'No matter what we do in this situation, we'll be making the wrong move.' The Central Committee approved the measure none the less. At this point, the travel regulation was no more than a 'proposal' or a draft, as Krenz emphasized. The Council of Ministers had not yet made a formal decision. Krenz, however, told the government spokesman to release the news 'immediately', thereby cancelling the gagging order in passing. He handed the draft and the press release to Politburo member Guenter Schabowski, who was serving as party spokesman on that day, and told him to release the information during an international press conference scheduled for 6:00 p.m. that evening. This interference by the party in the government's procedures led to the collapse of all the new travel regulations carefully prepared by the State Security and the Interior Ministry.

Schabowski was not familiar with the draft of the new regulation. By 7:00 p.m., during the press conference carried live by GDR television, Schabowski announced that it was possible to apply for permanent exit and private travel to the West 'without presenting [the heretofore necessary] requirements', and GDR officials would issue approval certificates 'on short notice'.<sup>46</sup>

Journalists asked when this regulation would go into effect. Schabowski appeared lost, since 'this issue had never been discussed with me before', as he later said. He scratched his head and glanced at the announcement again, his eyes missing the final sentence saying that the press release should be made public not before 10 November. Instead, he caught the words 'immediately' and 'without delay' at the beginning of the document. Thus, he responded concisely: 'Immediately, without delay!'<sup>47</sup>

Initially, the press conference aroused the curiosity of only a small number of Berliners. Only 80 East Berliners had arrived at the border crossings by 8:15 p.m. The actual mobilization started after the media had reported on the press conference.

Schabowski's announcement was the lead story in both the East and West German news broadcasts that aired after the press conference, between 7:00 p.m. and 8:15 p.m. Western press services—including West German television—interpreted the contradiction-laden statements from Schabowski to mean an immediate 'opening of the border'. The Associated Press headline from 7:05 p.m. read 'GDR opens borders', and the German Press Agency released the 'sensational information' at 7:41 p.m. that 'the GDR border is open'. First German Television (ARD) anchorman Hanns Joachim Friedrichs announced on the late-night news at 10.40 p.m. that 'the gates in the Berlin Wall are standing wide open', while a live shot immediately following the announcement showed the still-closed border, a picture that was quickly declared an exception. The media suggested to an audience of millions in East and West a reality which had yet to come about. The distribution of this false impression contributed significantly to turning the announced events into reality. The television reports mobilized ever greater numbers of Berliners to border-crossing points.

Without any information on the new policy or orders from the military leadership, the GDR border patrols stationed at the Berlin border crossings faced growing crowds that wanted to test the alleged immediate freedom to travel. Initial questions by the border patrols to their superiors did not yield any results, since during the evening only deputies, or deputies of deputies, were available. They, in turn, could not reach their superiors, because the meeting of the Central Committee had been extended to 8:45 p.m. without notice. The highest echelons of the party and the government were therefore unaware of the press conference, the media reaction it had engendered, and the gathering storm at the border crossings.

When the Central Committee meeting finally ended, its members were shocked by the news, but they had already missed the opportunity to take corrective action. The room for manoeuvre without risking bloodshed had been reduced to a minimum.

The SED leadership decided not to use force but to wait and see—hoping that the situation would calm down during the night. 'As I know my Berliners', a leading Stasi general tried to console his colleagues—and also himself, 'they go to bed at 11:00 p.m.'<sup>48</sup>

But the Berliners postponed their good night's sleep that evening. Many thousands were, for instance, at the Bornholmer Street border crossing wondering why—contrary to what they had learned from television—the border was still closed.

When the pressure of the crowd rose to boiling point, passport controllers and border soldiers at Bornholmer Street crossing, fearing for their lives and still without orders, decided on their own to end all controls at 11:30 p.m. 'We're opening the floodgates now!', announced the chief officer of passport control, and the barriers were raised.

Once Berliners started to dance on the Wall next to the Brandenburg Gate, the political and military leadership were utterly disconcerted. The fiction that the 'GDR is opening its borders' spread by the media had not only exceeded their intentions and had become reality—with the fall of the Wall, the reality had surpassed even the fiction.

An historical reconstruction of the political decisions and actions that led to the fall of the Wall must exclude explanations that portray the event as a planned or somehow strategic action by the SED leadership, as leading Politburo members claimed shortly

after the fact,<sup>49</sup> and some academics still argue today.<sup>50</sup> It was not an 'opus magnum' of the state security apparatus, as supporters of conspiracy theories want us to believe, and it was not ordered by Moscow, as other scholars suppose.<sup>51</sup>

The fall of the Wall can be analyzed as a classic case of an unintentional consequence of social action, a concept developed by Robert Merton.<sup>52</sup> In particular, Merton's category of a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' can be applied to the circumstances surrounding the fall of the Wall.<sup>53</sup> Merton made use of the well-known 'Thomas theory': 'When people define situations as real, they become real in their consequences.' People do not react only to the objective aspects of a situation, Merton explained, 'but also, and often primarily, they react to the meaning that the situation has for them.' Once they have given a situation a meaning, he continued, it determined 'their subsequent actions, and some results of these actions'.<sup>53</sup>

On the evening of 9 November, the media decisively influenced the 'definition of the situation'. The interpretations published by the Western media ('GDR opens border'), incorrect assumptions ('The border is open'), and false' images of reality ('The gates of the Wall stand wide open!') caused the action that allowed an assumed event and a 'false' image of reality to become fact. Television viewers wanting to be part of the event at the border crossings and the Brandenburg Gate actually brought about the event they thought had already happened. A 'fiction' published by the media took hold of the masses and thereby became reality.

The fall of the Wall on 9 November 1989 did not only mean an 'opening of the border'. Had the travel regulations of the Council of Ministers come into force on the morning of 10 November as intended, the SED regime would have maintained control over its border. Overnight, the power of the event, its form and symbolism, knocked the control out of their hands and initiated the end of the regime and the GDR as a state. First, the citizens no longer respected the borders of 'their' state—and then they no longer respected their state. Moreover, during his first confidential talks after 9 November with the FRG government, newly appointed Prime Minister Hans Modrow had to realize that he was deprived of the GDR's most important negotiating tool for the billion-mark loans needed to stabilize its economy—the people had destroyed the last real collateral in the GDR by breaking through the Wall. The Federal government now demanded free elections as a precondition for financial aid and openly questioned the legitimacy of the SED leadership as an equal partner at the negotiating table.

After the Wall had fallen, pressure increased on the party and the state. Emigration to the Federal Republic rose dramatically, the mass demonstrations continued through the second half of November and forced the SED to renounce the leading role of the party under the GDR constitution and to grant free elections. The central party structures collapsed within a few weeks. The Politburo, the Central Committee's Secretariat and the Central Committee dissolved themselves on 3 December. The party's ability to direct the mass organizations also collapsed, as did the cadre nomenclature system. Without the guiding hand of the party, the state government structures crumbled.

*The Road to German Unification*

Once the Wall had fallen and the former party structures were dissolved, the Soviet Union became the last guarantor of the existence of the GDR. Almost nobody in Moscow understood what had happened during the night of 9–10 November. On 1 November, Gorbachev had agreed that 'the GDR had to take the initiative into its own hands' and that 'it was certainly necessary to take some concrete steps', but he had also reminded Krenz that 'they had to be linked constantly with certain obligations and actions on the other side'.<sup>55</sup> Did the Soviet Union not have reason to feel betrayed by its junior partner? German experts on the Central Committee of the CPSU regarded permitting the fall of the Wall without any compensation being offered by the FRG as one of the greatest blunders in the history of the Soviet empire. Surprised and baffled, they noticed that the street choruses had changed quickly: instead of 'We are the people', demonstrators now chanted 'We are one people'. Banners with 'Germany—united fatherland', as well as black-red-golden flags without the GDR emblem, were soon the prevalent image of demonstrations throughout the country.

For weeks, Gorbachev refused to acknowledge the consequences of the developments in the GDR. He rejected vigorously all tendencies toward unification and lost much time refusing to develop his own plans.<sup>56</sup> Instead, Moscow was hoping that Hans Modrow would succeed as the chairman of the Council of Ministers. Modrow's contribution to the peaceful transition until the first free 'Volkskammer' elections on 18 March is still underestimated, but his attempts to reform and save the GDR came too late. The economic substance was depleted, and, with an open border, the GDR could not survive.

In January 1990, the domestic problems of the Soviet Union grew worse. Moscow faced growing ethnic conflicts, economic weakness, supply shortages, the threat of bankruptcy vis-à-vis the West and the growing dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. This and the loss of SED power accelerated Moscow's awareness in January 1990 that the GDR could not be kept alive. At the end of January, Modrow explained the catastrophic condition of the GDR to the Soviet Secretary General in Moscow—the drastic loss of government authority, the threatening economic collapse and the increasing number of people moving to the West. Modrow submitted a proposal of a gradual rapprochement of both states which would maintain military neutrality. Gorbachev questioned the possibility of rapprochement, because the GDR was in full decline, as Modrow had outlined in detail. After this meeting, Gorbachev concluded that reunification had become inevitable and that his main partners would be US President George Bush and Chancellor Helmut Kohl.<sup>57</sup> French State President François Mitterrand and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher tried to slow down the process of unification, but a 'Triple Alliance' was inconceivable, as France and Britain wanted to use the Soviet Union without offering anything in return—such as economic aid.<sup>58</sup>

On 9 February 1990, one day before Chancellor Kohl's arrival, US Secretary of State James Baker met Gorbachev in Moscow. According to an adviser to the Bush administration, the visit was scheduled to prevent Kohl and Gorbachev from agreeing on a 'One-plus-One-deal' behind the back of the United States.<sup>59</sup> Baker and Gorbachev agreed on a 'Two-plus-Four mechanism'. The interest of the Cold War powers in



regulating the framework of German unity had thus been cast into an institutionalized form. On 10 February, Gorbachev gave the chancellor his official approval of German unity. It was up to the Germans, Gorbachev said, to solve the problem of their unification. At that moment, everybody was still thinking of a time frame of a number of years. Gorbachev envisioned a status of 'independence' and 'non-alliance' for the Federal Republic. Both statesmen agreed that the military status of a unified Germany was to be discussed within the context of the Two-plus-Four negotiations.

But the dynamics of German reunification increased dramatically. The Christian Democrat (CDU) victory in the People's Chamber elections in March shocked Moscow, which, concurring with all predictions, had expected a future SPD government. Now Moscow had to deal with an increasing number of new facts: the decision to allow the GDR to join the Federal Republic under article 23 of the Basic Law, the launching of the economic and monetary union on 1 July, and the scheduling of all German elections in December 1990. Simultaneously, the internal situation of the Soviet Union deteriorated: in March, Lithuania became the first Soviet republic to vote for independence, an event which challenged the future of the Soviet Union. This event was caused by the catastrophic economic condition of the country, and the government expected serious social unrest. The Soviet Union was facing insolvency vis-à-vis the West. Sergei Tarasenko, an adviser to Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, later recalled: 'We felt that the Soviet Union was in free fall, that our superpower status would go up in smoke unless it was reaffirmed by the Americans.'<sup>60</sup> Within certain limits, President Bush was indeed willing to do so. By offering a number of remarkable diplomatic initiatives, the Bush administration tried to help the Soviet Union accept NATO membership for a unified Germany, the principal issue of disagreement during the Two-plus-Four negotiations. These initiatives included, above all, disarmament proposals to accommodate Soviet security interests and, furthermore, a solemn declaration at the July 1990 NATO summit that the Warsaw Pact states would no longer be considered enemies, as well as a commitment to an all-European declaration of non-aggression.

The membership status of a united Germany in NATO is said to have been negotiated primarily between Gorbachev and Kohl in July 1990 in Archys in the Caucasus. Six weeks prior to this, however, Gorbachev had already indicated at a summit with Bush, between 30 May and 2 June, that NATO membership was an issue the Germans themselves had to deal with on the basis of the Helsinki Final Act. The meeting in the Caucasus resulted in an agreement between Gorbachev and Kohl about Germany's NATO membership and the cancellation of Four-Power responsibility without a transition period. As codified in the Two-plus-Four agreement, the Germans confirmed the final status of their borders and agreed to a reduction of military personnel to 370,000 men in the Bundeswehr (German Army). They agreed to cover substantial economic compensation and aid to facilitate the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the GDR. Furthermore, both sides agreed to sign a treaty on good neighbourly relations. Gorbachev reasoned that the Germans had learned the lessons of history and, therefore, the Soviet Union could not deny to the German nation what it would grant to any other people—the right of self-determination.

However, Bonn and Moscow still bargained intensively two days before the signing of the Two-plus-Four agreement on 12 September 1990. Moscow demanded financial compensation, and Chancellor Kohl agreed to DM11–12 billion for the redeployment,

withdrawal and housing of the Soviet forces. But Gorbachev asked for DM15–16 billion. If the Federal government did not agree to the Soviet demands, the CPSU chief threatened ‘to renegotiate everything from the very beginning’. Fearing a breakdown of the Two-plus-Four negotiations, Kohl put in an additional DM3 billion as a no-interest loan. The last hurdle was overcome, and the Soviet signature under the Two-plus-Four agreement was guaranteed.<sup>61</sup>

A breathtaking development had led to the peaceful unification of Germany, embedded in the framework of the political integration of Europe and the North Atlantic Alliance. As a result of the Two-plus-Four negotiations, the Allies relinquished any rights in and responsibilities for Berlin and Germany as a whole gained during and after World War II. Now Germany truly recovered its sovereign right to manage its own external affairs.

Talking about the ‘sale’ or ‘giveaway’ of the GDR, or of treason committed by the Soviet Union, misses the central issue. After it had lost the Wall, the GDR was merely a ‘walking shadow’. Nevertheless, it was not predetermined that the Cold War would not end with an inferno but with a joyful party on the Wall in front of the Berlin Reichstag. The diplomatic process resulting in German unification would have been inconceivable without US backing for unification, without decisive US influence on the reluctant British and French positions, and, most of all, without the recognition of new realities by Gorbachev, Shevardnadze and their close liberal advisers. History will judge whether this was a ‘diplomatic masterpiece’. Chancellor Kohl recognized the historic window of opportunity which had opened for a short moment, and he exploited this opportunity convincingly. This is his lasting accomplishment in German history. The course of events, nevertheless, and their speed were primarily determined by the East German people themselves.

## NOTES

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## Before the Wall: French Diplomacy and the Last Decade of the Cold War, 1979–89

*Frédéric Bozo*

France's entry into the Cold War was a reluctant process.<sup>1</sup> The upsurge of the conflict deprived France of its role as a 'bridge' between the East and the West, forced it to align itself within the US-led Western bloc and thus deprived French diplomacy of its margin of manoeuvre as it was striving to regain a great power status. By the mid-1960s however, General de Gaulle's diplomacy had, in many ways, made the Cold War environment more comfortable for France: by redefining the country's role and position within the Western alliance, by restoring an assertive, independent French foreign and security policy, and by assigning it the ambitious task of fostering the overcoming of the blocs, de Gaulle had in essence reconciled France's national interest with the constraints of the international system.<sup>2</sup> Yet de Gaulle's legacy was an ambivalent one; while the General's successors essentially maintained the Gaullist 'revisionist' design and, not least, the aspiration to overcome 'Yalta', there were also signs of France's accommodation with the very East-West status quo which French diplomacy denounced.

Because it marked the high point of confrontation in its early part and the beginning of its end in its latter part, the last decade of the East-West conflict provides a unique perspective from which to analyze France's Cold War policies and dilemmas. While France only belatedly acknowledged the deterioration of East-West relations and—in spite of sometimes Cold War-like postures after 1981—proved to be a reluctant new Cold Warrior, French diplomacy, after having taken the lead in trying to promote a new détente after Gorbachev's coming to power in 1985, soon proved cautious in dealing with the East and gave the impression of reluctantly envisaging the overcoming of the East-West stalemate. Only after 1988 did French diplomacy again implement a dynamic policy and harbour an ambitious design in East-West relations; yet on the eve of the European upheavals of the summer and autumn of 1989, as the 'end of the Cold War' was looming, the limits of this new dynamism were already appearing.

This analysis deliberately avoids covering the momentous events that led from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the breakdown of the Soviet Union. First, because the very density and bearing of these events, as well as the controversies they have been associated with, would have made it impossible to address them in this chapter.<sup>3</sup> Second, and more importantly, because analyzing the last decade of the Cold War without addressing its actual end helps avoiding the pitfalls of retrospective determinism: all too often, the knowledge of the endpoint indeed influences the interpretation of the process that led there. The reverse, however, is in order: analyzing the last decade of the Cold War is key to understanding the events of 1989–91 and France's role therein. The purpose of this chapter, accordingly, is to help provide a preliminary answer to this crucial question: had

France become, as many argue, a status-quo power by the time of the 1989 European revolutions, thus accounting for its allegedly reluctant acceptance of these changes and, first and foremost, of Germany's unification?

*The Reluctant Convert: France and the New Cold War*

As in the case of the Cold War proper three decades earlier, France's entry into the 'new' Cold War in the late 1970s was a reluctant process. While by the end of 1979 the East-West context had irremediably deteriorated, not until François Mitterrand's election in May 1981 did French diplomacy break with past détente policies. Yet although France was now—to a large extent for domestic reasons—seemingly harbouring a staunch posture in East-West relations with the zeal of a Cold War convert, there was far more continuity in its policies before and after 1981 than meets the eye. The upsurge in East-West tension, which culminated during the 'year of the Euromissiles' in 1983, indeed reawakened old dilemmas and diminished France's margin of manoeuvre; French diplomacy—as reflected in Mitterrand's landmark speech in the German Bundestag (Parliament) in January—was on a tightrope. By 1984, however, the context was beginning to show itself more favourable to the search for a more balanced approach in East-West relations, thus allowing France to return to its traditional emphasis on the need to overcome the Cold War.

*From Giscard to Mitterrand*

As the 1970s drew to a close, the international climate was rapidly deteriorating. Yet in both major issues at stake in East-West relations by late 1979—the Euromissiles and Afghanistan—French diplomacy seemed primarily concerned with damage limitation. While President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing shared West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt's concern with regard to the shift in the strategic balance in Europe after the deployment of Soviet SS-20s and, indeed, played an instrumental role in the process that led to the December 1979 NATO dual-track decision, he was careful not to associate France officially with the latter.<sup>4</sup> While recognizing that the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan was serious enough to entail 'a risk of war', he was reluctant—like Schmidt—to interpret it as signalling a return to the Cold War in Europe.<sup>5</sup>

Giscard's foremost motivation was to shelter East-West relations on the old continent from the spillover effects of the return to global superpower confrontation. For France, as for other west European nations—the FRG (Federal Republic of Germany) most notably—détente, by the end of the decade, had become a key orientation of diplomacy and a structural component of security. There was also a significant West-West dimension in this policy: the French president, like Schmidt—with whom he had developed an especially close relationship—had become increasingly distrustful of US policies under President Jimmy Carter; he feared that after having been too 'soft' on the Soviet Union, Washington would turn to an exceedingly confrontational approach. A stronger Franco-German, and eventually west European, security cooperation was therefore needed in order to balance US policy—an objective which, by the turn of the decade, Giscard and Schmidt had decided to revive. Finally, there was a national



motivation behind the French reluctance to give up détente, since de Gaulle, maintaining a high profile in relations with Moscow, was key to France's international ambition. By the end of his term, the first non-Gaullist president of the Fifth Republic was—even in the eyes of formerly critical Gaullists—waging a diplomacy in line with the General's.<sup>6</sup>

François Mitterrand's victory over Giscard entailed an apparent and somewhat paradoxical shift: while his conservative predecessor had maintained a seemingly lenient attitude in East-West relations—sometimes at the risk of being (unfairly) seen or depicted as an appeaser—the new Socialist president now appeared determined to adopt a much stancher posture—sometimes at the risk of passing for a 'new' Cold Warrior.<sup>7</sup> The 'founding act'<sup>8</sup> of this new stance was Mitterrand's explicit endorsement of the dual-track decision and—as negotiation was soon to be deadlocked—his support for deployment of US intermediate range nuclear forces (INF), a shift which culminated in his January 1983 Bundestag speech, for which US President Ronald Reagan extended his 'admiration'.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, French diplomacy prescribed itself a 'disintoxication cure' for French relations with Moscow, meaning a break with the pattern—almost that of a 'special' relationship—which had developed under Giscard (and before him Georges Pompidou) and which was now being heavily criticized.<sup>10</sup> This led to the interruption of regular bilateral summit meetings and, most spectacularly, to the expulsion of 47 Soviet 'diplomats' from Paris in April 1983. Yet Mitterrand's new Cold War stance was not limited to a hardening of attitudes towards the East: it also involved rapprochement with France's Western partners, leading Secretary General Joseph Luns to remark that the new president was showing himself 'more positive toward NATO than his predecessor ever was' and eliciting Reagan's thankfulness for Mitterrand's 'crucial role' in resisting the Soviet Union.<sup>11</sup> (This staunch East-West and West-West posture also had a strong national component, as Mitterrand quickly proved eager to maintain a credible defence—most notably in the nuclear realm, to which he was eager to give 'absolute priority'.<sup>12</sup>)

By late 1981, France, under Mitterrand, had thus apparently entered the new Cold War with the zeal of a convert. The reasons for this seemingly dramatic change stemmed, first and foremost, from the deterioration of the East-West situation itself. By then, Soviet conduct—from Afghanistan to Poland—had made it impossible for French diplomacy to continue its former course without playing objectively in the hands of Moscow while entertaining but an 'illusion of influence'.<sup>13</sup> This held particularly true with regard to the deployment of SS-20s, which the new US president saw as 'a Soviet aggression' and 'a deliberate break of the [strategic] equilibrium' in order to 'weigh politically as well as militarily on West European opinions and government decisions'.<sup>14</sup> Maintaining Western cohesion and solidarity in face of Soviet intimidation was, indeed, a strong motivation behind Mitterrand's uncompromising posture: while keeping its specific, non-integrated status, France, in the words of its NATO representative, was keen to demonstrate its 'fidelity toward the Alliance'.<sup>15</sup> (This was no heretic behaviour: as Henry Kissinger remarked—with Mitterrand's blessing—in the summer 1981, such a stance was in line with de Gaulle's during the 1962 Cuba crisis.<sup>16</sup>) Finally, there was a strong domestic underpinning to the shift; while this was by no means a key consideration, Mitterrand—having appointed four communists in his government—may have been tempted to adopt an all the more uncompromising posture toward the East in order to reassure his Western allies.<sup>17</sup> More importantly, Mitterrand understood that French public opinion, and especially the intellectuals, because of a tardy but strong 'Solzhenitsyn effect' which led

to a rejection of past leniency towards the Soviet Union, was now in the mood for such a posture.<sup>18</sup>

*France's new Cold War dilemmas*

Yet it would be wrong to depict France's East-West policies after 1981 as entailing a major rupture with past attitudes. The domestic as well as the international context in fact magnified the perception of change from Giscard's allegedly pro-détente posture to Mitterrand's apparent Cold War-like attitude. The shift, indeed, had far more to do with declaratory than with actual policy—as was especially clear with regard to the dual-track decision, where the change was from tacit to open support.<sup>19</sup> In fact, France did not light-heartedly embrace the new Cold War, and French decision-makers had many reasons to resent the deterioration of East-West relations, which not only diminished the country's international margin of manoeuvre and influence but confronted it with a series of all too familiar problems and dilemmas.

This was especially true on the level of transatlantic relations. To be sure, the French, by 1981–82, were prone to stress the fact that they had ironically become the best pupil in the NATO class.<sup>20</sup> Because its autonomous defence was strong, 'France', many believed—with some exaggeration—was, in the eyes of the Americans, 'the only country in Europe which didn't go wobbly', the only 'solid bulwark on which one could lean in order to thwart "Finlandization"'.<sup>21</sup> Yet the French were soon to realize that the return to a 'Cold War logic' left little room for the maintenance of an independent posture and that over-stressing French solidarity with the United States only backfired into more US heavy-handedness within the Alliance. Hence, while Mitterrand had expressed his support for the dual-track decision, he soon deplored the fact that the Reagan administration understood this as meaning support for its own interpretation of the decision—one which favoured deployment over negotiation—and quickly began stressing a more balanced view.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the French were soon weary of the American propensity to widen the scope of the Atlantic alliance to non-military issues such as East-West economic relations and, just like the British and the Germans, were eager to oppose what—with the issue of sanctions and the Euro-Siberian pipeline affair looming in the background—they saw as an attempt to wage, and enroll the Western allies in, an 'economic Cold War'.<sup>23</sup> As a result, French diplomats soon returned to their usual frustration when dealing with NATO and US leadership, noting that 'whereas Western cohesion [was] indispensable...the [Atlantic] Alliance [should not be] a bloc at the service of the United States'.<sup>24</sup> As Mitterrand put it less bluntly in a letter to Reagan in the fall of 1982: 'respecting national personalities' within the Alliance, while 'profoundly compatible with the necessary solidarity', was a precondition for maintaining a strong common defence.<sup>25</sup>

Further to France's American and Atlantic dilemmas, the new Cold War in the early 1980s also revived its 'German' problem. The issue, to be sure, was not reunification, which—with East-West confrontation at its peak—obviously was probably not seen by the French—and in fact not by the Germans either—as an actual possibility and thus as a real concern under the prevailing circumstances.<sup>26</sup> Yet the French were wary of the FRG's 'vulnerability' to pressure from the East. Throughout 1982, the rise of the peace movement in Germany—and especially within the SPD (Social Democratic Party)—was

a major concern in the Elysée and the Quai d'Orsay, where the victory of supporters of a 'neutralist' line in Germany was not ruled out.<sup>27</sup> To be sure, the October 1982 coalition change in Bonn was seen with some relief: while Schmidt, increasingly iso-lated in his own party, was now fatally weakened, Helmut Kohl would likely maintain his predecessor's line of implementing the dual-track decision, but with more firmness and more chances of success.<sup>28</sup> Yet in the early days of 1983, the feeling in the Elysée was still one of uncertainty; Germany was seen as 'undergoing a major and multiform test', and, in this context, 'France's responsibility was as great as [its] partner's confusion' -an analysis which led to the Bundestag speech a few days later.<sup>29</sup> Kohl's success in the general elections in March—which the French believed the Bundestag speech had helped—was, needless to say, a welcome development; for Mitterrand, this meant the confirmation—expressed in somewhat lyrical terms—that it would be 'the Rhine before the Elbe, Roman Germany rather than the German Empire, Adenauer and not Bismarck'.<sup>30</sup> By the end of 1983, the beginning of INF deployment could only further reassure French decision-makers; while they would remain keenly aware of the FRG's exposure to Soviet pressure as long as Cold War tensions remained, the fear of a 'German drift' (*les dérives allemandes*)—towards neutrality or toward the East—would remain limited to a minority of intellectuals and politicians.

Finally, the 'new' Cold War revived the French dilemma itself: what was the proper balance to be struck between national independence and Western solidarity? On the one hand, ignoring NATO's and Germany's strategic ordeal—in other words, not taking sides in the Euromissile crisis—as some Gaullist purists advocated, entailed the risk of leaving the FRG on its own, that is, of fostering German neutralism if not its 'drift' eastward, which, in turn, would leave France exposed. '[A] German "slide"', French decision-makers were fully aware, 'would lead to a French slide', so that 'we must, in our own interest, support the FRG in the coming trial'; French neutrality—even a nuclear one—was simply not an option in political, let alone military terms.<sup>31</sup> Yet, on the other hand, taking a clear-cut, pro-NATO position in the looming East-West confrontation, especially on the INF issue, would not only lead to French realignment in the Alliance, if not *de facto* reintegration: it would make it all the more difficult to repel France's worse strategic nightmare: the inclusion of French nuclear forces in US-Soviet arms control. Thwarting Soviet attempts—but also, at times, the US temptation—to include the *force de frappe* (strike force) in any negotiation indeed remained an absolute priority for French policy; this, in turn, required 'caution' in expressing France's stance so as to avoid a 'boomerang effect'.<sup>32</sup>

French diplomacy was thus walking on a tightrope; against the backdrop of the upsurge of East-West tension, there was a need to avoid both the pitfalls of neutrality and alignment, of Gaullism and Atlanticism. More than anything else, Mitterrand's Bundestag speech—while too often wrongly interpreted as an abandonment of Gaullism in favour of Atlanticism—was an exercise in striking the right balance: it was about supporting the deployment of US missiles without returning to the NATO fold; and it was about comforting the Federal Republic's pro-Western orientation while not relinquishing France's own autonomous posture.<sup>33</sup> So, fundamentally, it was also about protecting France's long-term national interest: by adopting what was, essentially, a defensive posture under the guise of a major initiative, the speech was rightly seen as a diplomatic

masterpiece—yet it reflected, first and foremost, the narrow constraints in which the new Cold War placed French security policy.

*'All that will help leaving Yalta is good'*

In spite of symbolic gestures, which had the effect of seemingly making it a champion of the new Cold War for a brief period in the early 1980s, France thus did not relish this posture. In fact, 'while past détente policies were criticized', it was rightly remarked, its 'long-term effects...were still hoped for'.<sup>34</sup> Like other Europeans and, above all, the Germans, the French, as mentioned, had come to see détente as an integral part of security; they were thus keen on maintaining its *acquis* through contacts and exchanges with the East—hence, their staunch rejection of what they saw as Reagan's temptation to globalize the Cold War. Moreover, it was believed in the Elysée that, while détente may have been overly cherished in the past, one should not underestimate its harmful effects on the USSR and the potential for destabilization that it had in Eastern Europe.<sup>35</sup> 'It [was] a matter', it was argued in the Elysée, 'of fostering the progressive opening up of [Eastern] nations in their diversity', of bringing about, through the Helsinki process, an 'exit from Yalta'.<sup>36</sup>

With hindsight, French decision-makers' views of the Soviet bloc—and its weaknesses—early in the decade were indeed fairly lucid. Most did not share the postulate of the 'irreversibility' of communist societies which Cold Warriors—especially in the US—typically indulged in. Analyses of the Soviet Union and its evolution, to be sure, were not over-optimistic, ranging from the view of a USSR both 'immobile' and 'rigid', yet essentially defensive, to one where change existed, albeit an 'infinitely slow' one.<sup>37</sup> Evaluations of Eastern Europe left more hope; détente, as noted, was seen as a factor which could lead to a loosening of Soviet domination and, indeed, to 'Finlandize the Western margins of the empire'.<sup>38</sup> One could even foresee the possibility for Eastern Europe to come back to a 'pre-Kominform' (i.e. pre-Soviet bloc) situation, to 'national-communist' models which would evolve according to their own historical experiences and situations.<sup>39</sup> This especially applied to Poland, where 'the Soviet system of domination in Eastern Europe will progressively be called into question', hence the need for the French to be 'prudent, but not absent nor indifferent'<sup>40</sup>—a posture which Mitterrand maintained in spite of the December 1981 coup in Warsaw.

Mitterrand, as a matter of fact, was quick to revert publicly to this traditional Gaullist line: 'all that will help leaving Yalta is good', he declared on New Year's Eve 1982.<sup>41</sup> Of course, little could be done by way of French initiatives as long as East-West confrontation was at its peak; there was a long way from maintaining the *acquis* of détente to actually restoring it—hence the usual French frustration with the East-West security deadlock. This showed itself especially during the 1982 Madrid CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) conference, where, in spite of tensions, French diplomacy 'wished to negotiate actively'; indeed, 'there was no reason to grant the Americans a monopoly over discussions with the USSR on European security'.<sup>42</sup> French frustration continued well into 1983: 'a confrontational attitude dominates East-West relations' in Washington just as in Moscow, the Quai d'Orsay's political director complained.<sup>43</sup> Yet by the end of 1983, the context was seen as more favourable for a more active East-West policy: the deployment of US missiles confirmed

that the West had essentially prevailed in the trial of strength against the Soviet Union. Of course, the crisis was not over; it was expected that Moscow would try to limit the deployment and to postpone serious negotiations. Yet France was now in a position to 're-establish contact' with Moscow—all the more so because 'nobody could doubt [Mitterrand's] determination vis-à-vis the Soviet Union nor the moderation of [his] firmness'; France, in other words, could now capitalize on the 'disintoxication cure' and balance his seemingly Atlanticist initiatives with an initiative to the East.<sup>44</sup>

This analysis opened the way to Mitterrand's June 1984 visit to the Soviet Union. 'We are indisputably moving toward détente with the USSR', he told Reagan in March; 'We will probably receive an invitation. Of course, I will keep our friends informed.' The Americans had shown themselves sceptical, but the French president was not to be deterred; things were changing in the Soviet Union, and a 'national liberal' stream was developing in Eastern Europe.<sup>45</sup> The visit—which was not confirmed until the last minute—was controversial in France and in the rest of the Alliance; would it not be considered as a 'gift' to Soviet leaders?<sup>46</sup> Yet Mitterrand managed to avoid this pitfall; by daringly mentioning dissident Andrei Sakharov during a toast in the Kremlin, he conveyed the idea that firmness was not incompatible with dialogue. Of course, the visit did not achieve much in bilateral terms, let alone at the East-West level: it was essentially an opportunity for French diplomacy to take stock.

As long as the new Cold War was not over, France's privileged terrain of manoeuvre was therefore on the West-West level. Ever since de Gaulle, the assertion of a united strategic Europe was seen as a long-term necessity and—eventually—as a contribution to the loosening of the bloc system. Mitterrand quickly espoused this scheme; in early 1982, he had already agreed with Schmidt to relaunch Franco-German security and defence cooperation, a decision which was subsequently confirmed with Kohl.<sup>47</sup> The Bundestag speech only confirmed this logic: Franco-German politico-military rapprochement was needed both in order to support the Federal Republic in the present crisis and to prepare the ground for a more autonomous Europe in the longer run. It was about 'comforting Germany in the present battle and preparing with it a fall-back position if the battle were to be lost'—that is, in case of a loss of US protection—a process that could only be carried out 'with multiple precautions', in order to avoid a clash with US interests.<sup>48</sup> Subsequent decisions throughout 1983—such as the revival of the 1963 Elysée Treaty or the creation of the French Army's Force d'Action Rapide (FAR) to give credibility to France's military commitment to defend German soil on the Elbe—were meant to give credence to Franco-German rapprochement, but longer-term projects were dependent on the implementation of the dual-track decision.<sup>49</sup> Here also, the beginning of INF deployment was a defining moment; the policy of 'strengthening Europe's autonomy in security' could be intensified starting in 1984—especially through a revival of the Western European Union (WEU)—in parallel with France's initiatives toward the USSR and eastern Europe.<sup>50</sup> To be sure, the persistence of East-West confrontation put limits on French ambitions for Europe's strategic assertion; yet these decisions did lay the ground for future developments and were seen, at least in French eyes—and in accordance with Gaullist thinking—as a way to prepare, in the long term, for the vanishing of the logic of blocs, France's stated objective.

*From Confrontation to Caution: France and the New Détente*

By the mid-1980s, Gorbachev's coming to power seemed to make a return to normalcy in East-West relations a possibility. Yet while France initially appeared willing to take the lead in what soon turned into a new détente, by 1986, French diplomacy was showing growing signs of caution, if not reluctance. To some extent, this resulted from the specificity of the period of 'cohabitation', which, after the victory of the right in the March legislative elections, fostered a rivalry between the socialist president and the conservative government—the latter being more guarded vis-à-vis the new course in East-West relations than the former. Yet this reflected, first and foremost, the exacerbation of France's familiar security dilemmas—not unlike what had happened in the early 1970s during the previous détente period. Whether in relations with the Soviet Union, in arms-control issues or in perceptions of the FRG's new role in East-West relations, the French, until 1988, appeared wary of moving beyond the East-West stalemate.

*France and the Gorbachev revolution*

In line with Mitterrand's early willingness to re-establish contact with Moscow, French diplomacy initially played an active role in bringing about the 'new détente' that Gorbachev's accession to power in March 1985 ushered in. Gorbachev's choice of France for his first official visit as secretary general in October 1985 reflected a convergence of mutual interests. Mitterrand, on the one hand, was willing to use the generational change in Moscow to give substance to his diplomatic ambitions toward the East and—in line with the Gaullist tradition—to reassert the 'historic' nature of French-Soviet relations.<sup>51</sup> Gorbachev, on the other hand, was interested in demonstrating Moscow's readiness for a new détente and in playing on Mitterrand's vocal disapproval of Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), which, in the past few months, had again pitted France against the United States. In truth, the visit did not achieve much, in spite of Gorbachev's assertion that—especially given the US administration's staunch opposition to a return to détente—it was 'an event of world importance'.<sup>52</sup> Yet Mitterrand commented after the visit that 'Gorbachev is here to stay', and he wrote to Reagan that there was a 'large part of sincerity' in him.<sup>53</sup> His July 1986 Moscow visit was arguably more significant. As Gorbachev's adviser Anatoly Chernyaev recalls, 'the two leaders held strikingly similar views of world developments'.<sup>54</sup> The visit indeed highlighted the French president's balanced promotion of a new détente. Mitterrand told Gorbachev that, during a meeting with Reagan in New York a few days earlier, he had cautioned the US president against trying to exhaust the Soviet Union with an arms race—which 'meant war'—instead of helping Gorbachev—which 'meant peace'—but now he was cautioning Gorbachev against underestimating Reagan's peaceful intentions, stressing that the US president was a 'human being'—a revelation which, according to Chernyaev, 'played a major role in eroding the remaining stereotypes in Gorbachev's "new thinking"'.<sup>55</sup> Mitterrand could pride himself with 'saying the same thing in New York and in Moscow'.<sup>56</sup>

France's role as the USSR's privileged partner in shaping the new détente did not last long, however. As Gorbachev recalls, French-Soviet relations went downhill after the

Reagan-Gorbachev Reykjavik summit in the fall of 1986.<sup>57</sup> This showed itself particularly during Prime Minister Jacques Chirac's visit to Moscow in May 1987, which, in contrast with Mitterrand's a year earlier, was disappointing for both sides. Chirac—in trying to rival Mitterrand—was dissatisfied with the Soviets' unwillingness to give the visit a high profile on a par with Margaret Thatcher's earlier in the year.<sup>58</sup> On the Soviet side, there was discontent with the French government's perceived reluctance to acknowledge the change in Moscow's foreign policy.<sup>59</sup> The result was a difficult visit, during which Gorbachev recalls having had a 'frank' exchange with Chirac.<sup>60</sup> The Soviet leader bluntly initiated the meeting with the neo-Gaullist leader by deploring that 'Franco-Soviet relations had lost their privileged status and no longer were what they were at the time of general de Gaulle' in spite of Soviet 'goodwill'. Chirac responded in kind, recalling the series of Soviet moves which, from Prague to Warsaw, had 'traumatized Western opinion, notably in France, thereby eliciting defiance and criticism' of Soviet policy.<sup>61</sup> Even though both leaders ended the meeting on a note of optimism, they had achieved little by way of political rapprochement. Not until Mitterrand's re-election in 1988 would Paris and Moscow manage to move beyond this stalemate.

French as well as international factors explain this period of low ebb in French-Soviet relations. Chirac and his government held a tougher view of Gorbachev and the Soviet Union than President Mitterrand did.<sup>62</sup> The Quai d'Orsay remained especially guarded vis-à-vis Gorbachev's intentions; diplomats cautioned against Moscow's attempt to use Mitterrand's 1986 visit in order to foster the false impression of a return to the 'illusions' of détente—a word they were reluctant to use.<sup>63</sup> Public opinion also seemed to be on the defensive during that period; in a July 1987 poll, only a slim majority of the French believed in Gorbachev's willingness to change his country, whose image in France remained predominantly negative in spite of recent progress; in a nutshell—according to the Quai d'Orsay's policy planning staff—France was 'the country in Europe least concerned with the Gorbachev effect'.<sup>64</sup> Even Mitterrand, while an early Gorbachev enthusiast, then believed that the Soviet leader's aim was to modernize the system, not overcome it.<sup>65</sup>

International factors loomed larger, however. The intensification of US-Soviet rapprochement after Reykjavik obviously left little room for France; this was all the more so because other European countries—Italy, Britain and, starting in 1987, the FRG—were now increasing their visibility as Moscow's partners. French diplomats understood that, in this context, Moscow no longer saw their country 'as the privileged partner in political dialogue with the West'.<sup>66</sup> France, in other words, was playing second fiddle and running the risk of being marginalized. At the same time, the French were, classically (the same pattern had emerged during the 'first' détente, after 1968–69), wary of the potential—and contradictory—risks of a new détente. The latter, it was feared, could lead to a return to superpower condominium and/or bring about a decoupling between the United States and western Europe—which remained, in French eyes, Moscow's 'ultimate objective'.<sup>67</sup> France thus mostly saw the new Soviet foreign policy as a challenge to its political and security interests rather than as an opportunity to move beyond the Cold War stalemate. This was especially clear when it came to assessing the centrepiece of Moscow's new diplomacy towards western Europe, the 'European Common Home' which Gorbachev had popularized during his October 1985 visit—a concept in which

French diplomacy, well into 1988, remained keen 'to see the continuation, under a new guise, of the traditional designs of Soviet diplomacy'.<sup>68</sup>

### *France's disarmament dilemmas*

After Gorbachev's rise to power, arms control and disarmament—especially nuclear—quickly became the spearhead of Soviet 'New Thinking'. Moscow's new, aggressive policy in that realm not only exposed the contradictions of Western powers, as Hubert Védrine recalls,<sup>69</sup> but exacerbated France's own security dilemmas. Throughout the 'new détente' period, France could hardly dissimulate its hesitancy and indeed—against the backdrop of cohabitation—its internal divisions on this matter.

To be sure, initial French reactions to Soviet arms-control initiatives were forthcoming. 'In spite of traditional Soviet objectives', Mitterrand wrote to Reagan in February 1986, 'there were interesting elements in Gorbachev's proposals'; hence, there was need for a 'serious [Western] response'.<sup>70</sup> The record of Mitterrand's 1986 meetings with US and Soviet leaders shows the French president trying to act as an honest broker in arms control between the United States and the Soviet Union. In New York, in July, he tried to convince Reagan that Gorbachev was 'more serious' than his predecessors on these matters, while cautioning the US president against the potentially destabilizing effects of SDI on the arms balance. In Moscow a few days later, he denied that Reagan was hostage to the military-industrial complex and observed to Gorbachev that the Soviets still opposed verification of arms-control agreements.<sup>71</sup> The Soviet leader had concluded the meeting with the hope that France and the Soviet Union 'would continue to act together...towards the lowering of tensions, away from the arms race, and toward disarmament'.<sup>72</sup> Mitterrand and Gorbachev were then 'in agreement on a number of practical arms control issues', Chernyaev recalls.<sup>73</sup>

Such harmony was not to last. By the end of 1986, Soviet leaders were denouncing France's negative role in arms control. The French ambassador reported that Gorbachev had 'jokingly' told him that Paris' reactions after Reykjavik 'had led some [in Moscow] to ask whether [the French] were against nuclear disarmament'.<sup>74</sup> As Chirac's May 1987 visit approached, the Soviet TASS news agency deplored that some French politicians had 'taken the lead in NATO conservative circles against disarmament in Europe'.<sup>75</sup> Gorbachev was quite harsh during his meeting with the French premier: whereas the Soviet position on INF was not very far away from the United States' and whereas Mrs Thatcher had taken a position in favour of the 'double zero' option, he deplored that France, with its 'negative' reactions, 'was trying to put a spoke in his wheel'.<sup>76</sup> The polemic subsequently decreased, but it did not immediately recede; 'because we are for the first time on the threshold of real disarmament', Egor Ligachev said during a Paris visit just days before the signing of the INF Treaty, there was a need for more narrow Franco-Soviet cooperation.<sup>77</sup> Not until Mitterrand's November 1988 Moscow visit would the misunderstanding be overcome.<sup>78</sup>

To be sure, the Soviet characterization of France's arms-control and disarmament policy in these years as simply negative was excessive. France, after all, showed strong support for strategic, chemical and especially conventional arms control—the latter became its foremost disarmament objective in 1986–89.<sup>79</sup> Yet the dominant issue on the disarmament agenda in those years was the INF (and subsequently the SNF, short-range



nuclear forces) issue, about which France had strong reservations, thus explaining its foot-dragging reputation. Domestic factors loomed large in this context. From 1986 to 1988, security issues quickly became a major bone of contention between the two heads of the French executive in their struggle for political preeminence. The Reykjavik summit triggered an 18-month war between the president and the government, thus transposing the arms-control controversy, which pervaded the Western alliance, into France's own decision-making process.<sup>80</sup> Whereas Mitterrand encouraged a 'zero option' and stuck to his formula of the early 1980s, 'neither SS-20s nor Pershings', Chirac, by contrast, expressed his 'reservations' and heralded a guarded, if not hawkish, stance on these matters.<sup>81</sup> While this feud continued until the signing of the Washington Treaty in December 1987, it reached a peak in the spring. In reaction to a February 1987 Quai d'Orsay communiqué cautioning against the denuclearization of Europe, which the Elysée found to be 'grotesque', Mitterrand told visiting Soviet Vice-Foreign Minister Vorontsov that only he was in charge of expressing France's position; the next day, an Elysée communiqué described the forthcoming INF agreement as conforming to 'the interests of France and of peace'.<sup>82</sup> The controversy was all the more heated because it evolved into a fierce debate over France's own strategy and its relation with NATO's, with the Gaullist government paradoxically defending a more Atlanticist approach and the Socialist president sticking to a more purist, Gaullist conception. With foreign and security policy playing an unusually large role in the 1988 presidential campaign, Mitterrand skilfully capitalized on this situation, and his re-election put an end to this divisive era.<sup>83</sup>

Yet rather than a fight between hawks and doves—it was more about nuances and political presentation than major divergences between Mitterrand and Chirac—the disarmament debate in those years reflected the magnitude of France's security dilemmas in the 'new détente'. International considerations, in other words, loomed larger than domestic ones. At the East-West level, French misgivings vis-à-vis the new Soviet 'peace offensive'—as in the rest of the Western alliance—mirrored if not the pessimism, then at least the prudence which dominated analyses of change in the USSR and its foreign policy. Gorbachev's disarmament offers, many thought, remained just words until they were actually implemented—which, given the Soviet Union's huge military apparatus, would take years. Meanwhile, Gorbachev's skilful use of these offers gave Moscow a tremendous propaganda capability, which Soviet diplomacy could mobilize at the service of its traditional objective of weakening the West's defences and cohesion. Hence, the considerations at the West-West level: the dominant interpretation of these objectives in Paris—as in Washington or London—pointed to the old Soviet goal of strategic decoupling between the United States and Europe, which removing US nuclear weapons from Europe could precipitate.<sup>84</sup> More importantly, the French were wary of a wider, but no less traditional, Soviet objective: denuclearization—a prospect they considered to be especially dangerous, since nuclear weapons had assured international peace, Western defence and, of course, French security for decades.<sup>85</sup> As a result, national concerns were the key to explaining France's extreme caution, if not all-out reluctance in matters of nuclear arms control—at the risk of passing for the last bastion of Cold War thinking in Europe. First, there was the usual anxiousness to keep French nuclear forces away from US-Soviet arms-control negotiations, a concern which loomed quite large in Franco-Soviet disagreements until Moscow clearly gave up on this in 1987.<sup>86</sup> Second, the

prospect for removing US intermediate nuclear forces inevitably raised again the delicate issue of extending French deterrence to the FRG in order to compensate for the possible loss of US nuclear protection—a question the French were not ready to face.

*France's German problem—and the European response*

Much as the 'new' Cold War had revived France's German problem early in the decade, so did the 'new' détente in the late 1980s. In a diametrically opposed configuration—while earlier the French were wary of Germany's weaknesses, they now feared its assertiveness—but for essentially the same reasons, the fate of France's eastern neighbour and key European partner was again raising concern. French preoccupations in those years had to do, first and foremost, with the evolution of German-Soviet relations. Until 1986, the prospect of a closer Bonn-Moscow connection appeared unlikely; as Mitterrand and Kohl met a few weeks before the President's July 1986 Soviet trip, the Chancellor was still 'holding back' vis-à-vis Gorbachev.<sup>87</sup> Yet French diplomacy fully understood that the Soviet-German standstill was not to last.<sup>88</sup> The year 1987—which started with Hans-Dietrich Genscher's much-criticized phrase on the need to take Gorbachev 'at his word'—confirmed this: the intensification of German-Soviet contacts, which was confirmed with the visit of President Richard von Weizsäcker to Moscow in July, showed a clear trend towards rapprochement. By mid-1988, French diplomacy could not escape the fact that the USSR considered Germany as 'a historic partner with no equivalent'.<sup>89</sup> Behind the Soviet-German rapprochement, the French were especially preoccupied with Bonn's increasing understanding for Soviet arms-control and disarmament proposals. In mid-1986, the Quai d'Orsay had already remarked that the FRG showed signs of 'availability' and that German leaders saw their country as the 'motor' of Western policy in that realm; the Soviet Union, they feared, was hoping to capitalize on domestic pressure for results in negotiations in order to extract concessions from the Federal Republic.<sup>90</sup> By 1987, the opposite character of reactions in Germany and France towards Gorbachev's peace offensive had become obvious—and both countries would remain 'out of sync' with each other on these issues at least until 1988.<sup>91</sup> As Ingo Kolboom rightly remarked, 'the French contradiction between deterrence and disarmament was affecting the security dialogue between Bonn and Paris'.<sup>92</sup>

Just as earlier in the decade, France's growing concern vis-à-vis Germany was not about a looming reunification. To be sure, starting in 1987, this perspective was increasingly debated in the FRG as a result of East-West détente, and the German leadership, under Helmut Kohl, was more and more keen to emphasize it as the FRG's foremost goal and to reaffirm the openness of the German question, as demonstrated during Weizsäcker's 1987 and Kohl's 1988 Moscow visits. Yet French leaders were likely no more obsessed by it than German ones were hopeful of it: the question of unification, while not definitively closed—which French decision-makers mostly recognized—was not considered as a salient issue.<sup>93</sup> What was in question for the French—and for that matter the British and the Americans—rather, was the impact of the new East-West context on German policies.<sup>94</sup> Would the Federal Republic not be increasingly tempted to look eastward in order to pursue its own interests and, to begin with, establish, in accordance with Moscow, a European security context favourable to an assuagement of the consequences of Germany's division? Would this not entail the risk

of the FRG being less interested in maintaining Western—and especially west European—political and strategic cohesion and in taking into consideration France's own interests, especially its nuclear status? In other words, would the politics of 'Genscherism' not prevail over Kohl's more Atlanticist and European policies?<sup>95</sup> All these concerns—again, widely shared in other Western capitals—were, in many ways, reminiscent of French perceptions at the beginning of *Ostpolitik* in the early 1970s.<sup>96</sup> As Dominique Moïsi remarked in 1987: 'France and the Federal Republic [could] only react to [the Gorbachev challenge] in different ways; France is fundamentally attached to the status quo [whereas] the FRG can only be torn apart between status quo instincts and revisionist instincts.'<sup>97</sup>

In spite—or perhaps because—of French misgivings about the evolution of the FRG, the years 1985–88 were crucial in France's search for a European response to its German problem. Both leaders were especially candid about the need for a strong Franco-German relationship in order to help anchor the FRG in the West. 'The Russians will do their best to seduce us. Before we get closer to them, we need to strengthen our relations with you', Kohl told Mitterrand in October 1986, adding in March 1987: 'The best way to thwart the pacifist temptation will be a French-German accord.'<sup>98</sup> A few weeks before, Mitterrand had replied to Defence Minister André Giraud's harsh critique of Genscher's *Ostpolitik* by saying: 'it is obvious that the Germans have a special game with the Russians... Are we in a position to offer the Germans a great power's perspective? Only the European construction can achieve this. Otherwise, Germany will play between the East and the West.'<sup>99</sup> Starting in the mid-1980s, Franco-German relations thus went through a phase of remarkable intensification, both on the level of the EC (European Community), where both nations played a leading role in pushing for political unification, and, first and foremost, economic integration through the project of a European Monetary Union (EMU), launched at the Hanover summit in June 1988, and on the level of bilateral military cooperation, where the 1982–83 initiative on strategic cooperation culminated in the decisions made at the January 1988 summit—on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Elysée Treaty—and, most notably, the creation of a Franco-German Defence and Security Council and a joint brigade.<sup>100</sup>

At the time of Mitterrand's re-election in May 1988, Franco-German relations, in Védérine's words, had become 'organic'.<sup>101</sup> Just as had been the case during the 'new Cold War' in the first part of the decade, strong relations with the Federal Republic and the common quest for a more united Western Europe were indeed, for France, the foremost response to the challenges of the 'new détente' in the second part of the decade. Politico-strategic cooperation with Bonn and the prospects for further European unification were seen as the best antidote to the risks of a German *Sonderweg* ('special way') in relations with the East. Moreover, Franco-German cooperation opened for France a potential way out of its usual dilemmas and offered the possibility to reconcile the imperative of Atlantic solidarity with the requirements of national independence. Finally, the prospect for European unification remained Paris's best claim to great-power status at a time of rapidly shifting power trends. By the end of the decade, it had become France's preferred avenue to overcome the bloc system.

*Before the Wall: The New French Ostpolitik and its Limits*

Mitterrand's re-election against Jacques Chirac in May 1988 put an end to the divisive experience of cohabitation; at the same time, it marked the victory of the president's more balanced line in foreign affairs and especially East-West relations. By mid-1988, the Gorbachev experience had led to indisputable changes in Soviet policy, and the 'sincerity' of the Soviet leader could no longer be questioned. The beginning of Mitterrand's second term thus coincided with a turn in France's approach to East-West relations. After having reluctantly entered the new Cold War early in the decade, after having cautiously envisaged a new détente after 1985, French diplomacy was now in search of a reasonably dynamic approach to East-West change. Starting in mid-1988, an ambitious new French *Ostpolitik* was devised and implemented, leading to increased relations with Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, close cooperation with the FRG, and a more forthcoming approach to arms-control issues. By mid-1989, however, as talk of overcoming the Cold War intensified, the limits of this new dynamic were already clear, and the German and European upheavals of the summer and the autumn would confirm them.

*A new French Ostpolitik*

By the spring 1988, French diplomacy was clearly starting to hold a more positive and optimistic view of changes in the East and the Soviet Union—one which was more in line with Mitterrand's own than with the scepticism of the conservative government of 1986–88. The balance sheet of Gorbachev's domestic reforms was now considered to be 'remarkable'.<sup>102</sup> French evaluation of Moscow's foreign policy, accordingly, also became more favourable throughout 1988. Gorbachev's speech at the UN General Assembly on 7 December 1988 was seen as a turning point; far from being interpreted as yet another dangerous propaganda operation—as had been the case with most Soviet disarmament initiatives over the previous three years or so—Gorbachev's proposals were seen as encouraging, above all because they entailed, for the first time, unilateral reductions on the part of the Warsaw Pact. Moscow, the Quai d'Orsay believed, 'seems to have realized that a nation's influence on the international scene is no longer to be measured only by its military power'.<sup>103</sup> French diplomacy was thus not far from the assessment made within the Soviet leadership, where the speech was considered to have 'brought us to a new level in world politics', leaving no room for 'concessions to the policies of the past'.<sup>104</sup>

To be sure, this shift in French official perceptions did not mean a blank cheque for the Soviet Union. While Gorbachev's willingness to transform the Soviet model was no longer questioned, there remained uncertainties as to his ability to carry out these changes, whether because of economic and social difficulties or because of the re-emergence of the national question in the Soviet republics.<sup>105</sup> Moreover, while there was no denying that the Soviet 'New Thinking' in foreign policy did entail a radical departure from the old one, the French, by the summer of 1989, were not yet ready to acknowledge that the Kremlin had fully abandoned its fundamental international goals, starting with the maintenance of Soviet control—granted, without the use of force—over Eastern

Europe and an increase of Soviet influence over Europe at large.<sup>106</sup> Yet in the first half of 1989 there was, unquestionably, a willingness to strike a middle course between the Bush administration's guarded approach of relations with the Soviet Union and the East and the FRG's perhaps excessive enthusiasm.

Starting with Mitterrand's re-election, French diplomacy was no longer willing to take a back seat in East-West relations, especially in relations with Moscow. There was even a feeling of urgency; at a time of increased US-Soviet and Soviet-German relations, there was a strong need to restore a narrow Franco-Soviet connection: 'as the Soviet Union opens up, France must take this into account', the Quai d'Orsay now insisted.<sup>107</sup> Although short and 'less passionate' than the one two years earlier, Mitterrand's Moscow visit in November 1988 was thus seen as a new departure in Franco-Soviet relations and as a sign that past disagreements had been overcome.<sup>108</sup> Gorbachev's reciprocal visit to Paris in July 1989 confirmed this and led, in the Soviet leader's words, to 'exceptionally frank and profound' exchanges.<sup>109</sup> In this new phase of French-Soviet relations, Mitterrand was especially keen on developing a close, personal relationship with Gorbachev and to act as the advocate of Western help to the Soviet Union, a role he would keep until the breakdown of the USSR in 1991, and one which helps explain some of his gestures in the crucial period of late 1989-early 1990.<sup>110</sup> Meanwhile, Mitterrand—as he had done with Reagan and Gorbachev earlier—apparently played a significant role in breaking the ice between Bush and Gorbachev, thus opening the way to the Malta summit in December 1989.<sup>111</sup>

The new departure in Franco-Soviet relations was part of a wider scheme to launch a new 'French *Ostpolitik*'. Before Mitterrand's reelection, Roland Dumas had been convinced by his former (and future) colleague Genscher of the need for an increased French role in Eastern Europe. The president himself believed, according to Védérine, that 'everything [there] would accelerate'.<sup>112</sup> Early in Mitterrand's second term, an audacious French policy towards the countries of the Soviet bloc—one that would support political change there and not leave the FRG on its own—thus quickly emerged as a priority. During the summer 1988, a vast programme of presidential visits to Eastern Europe—all 'people's democracies', except Ceaușescu's Romania, were to be visited in 1988–89—was set up.<sup>113</sup> Here, too, the feeling was one of urgency; at a time when Soviet domination was receding, France needed to intensify its economic, cultural and political ties after a long absence in a region where French influence had once been significant.

Mitterrand's willingness to start his second term with a more dynamic diplomacy and a more aggressive policy towards the East had another important feature: the awareness of the importance of a closer Franco-German collaboration in that realm. The realization that Bonn and Paris were on potentially diverging courses in that respect—as was clear in 1986–88 in matters of arms control or relations with the Soviet Union—obviously played an important role. As French policies in these domains were reassessed after Mitterrand's re-election (Gorbachev recalls that, during his July 1989 visit, he had perceived a clear change in the French approach to arms control<sup>114</sup>), French-German divergences became less acute. More importantly, Bonn and Paris were now willing to coordinate their approaches. The Germans were particularly interested in such a move; throughout 1987, Bonn's diplomacy had insisted on the need for a closer Franco-German coordination—which, on Kohl's suggestion, led, during the January 1988 Franco-German summit, to the setting up of a common Franco-German working group on policy towards the East. At

the next summit, in November 1988, it was announced that both diplomacies would coordinate their leaders' programme of visits to the East.<sup>115</sup> Mitterrand's Moscow visit in November, coming shortly after Kohl's, elicited positive comments in Bonn, where decision-makers were hoping for an effective coordination of both nations' *Ostpolitiks*.<sup>116</sup> By the end of 1988, previous Franco-German misunderstandings in that regard were apparently being overcome. Moreover, as one analyst remarked, French perceptions—at least in the public opinion at large—showed an unprecedented sympathy for Germany, away from past fantasies on the *dérives allemandes*. Thus, at a time when the political and strategic partnership was being intensified, domestic and international conditions 'had never been as fit in order to determine in concert a common approach to the East'.<sup>117</sup>

*...and its limits*

By the summer of 1989, French diplomacy had regained some East-West momentum. The French could pride themselves with having successfully restored their country's role as a player in the game. Relations with the Soviet Union, in particular, gave way to a 'renewed and ambitious cooperation';<sup>118</sup> relations with Eastern Europe were being reactivated; previous French misgivings with regard to the new dynamics of East-West relations—especially in matters of disarmament—had been set aside. Yet on the eve of the 1989 'revolutions', the limits of France's new ambitions in East-West relations were already appearing in all these regards: the Quai d'Orsay was aware that—unlike in Germany a few weeks earlier—Gorbachev's July 1989 visit entailed 'no major stakes'; Mitterrand—as he told Bush at Kennebunkport earlier in the spring—was cautious not to move too fast in Eastern Europe in order not to destabilize Gorbachev.<sup>119</sup> In sum, if France was again a major player in East-West relations, it was by no means the central one: by all accounts—as demonstrated by the near coincidence of Bush's and Gorbachev's visits to Germany in May–June 1989—the Federal Republic was.

French diplomacy was aware of this lost centrality. To be sure, Germany's pivotal role was not acknowledged light-heartedly: the Quai d'Orsay had a tendency to downplay the significance of Gorbachev's Bonn visit and to harbour some scepticism vis-à-vis the German claim that—coming only days after Bush's own visit and especially his offer in Mainz of a German-US 'partnership in leadership'—the visit 'underline[d] Bonn's role in the development of East-West relations'.<sup>120</sup> Yet despite conscious or unconscious efforts at self-reassurance, the comparison between Gorbachev's Bonn and Paris visits left little room for illusions: the former had been a 'unique' event, whereby both countries had 'written off the post-war period', whereas the latter was but the consecration of the return of Franco-Soviet relations to the right level.<sup>121</sup> A reflection of this realization of France's playing second fiddle to Germany in East-West relations and European security may be found in the Quai d'Orsay's insistence that Gorbachev's July 1989 visit was 'an opportunity to recall that France and the Soviet Union are two powers with world interests', thereby implying that Germany was only a *European* power.<sup>122</sup> By early summer 1989, French diplomacy was busy preparing for the French Revolution bicentennial, which—thanks to a unique but well-prepared coincidence of foreign leaders' visits and summits in Paris—was seen as an occasion to reaffirm the country's global radiance—as if its pre-eminent European role were no longer self-evident.

By mid-1989, against the backdrop of the new dynamics in East-West relations, the new momentum in Franco-German relations also showed its limits. To be sure, the willingness of both countries to set up a joint *Ostpolitik*—on Kohl and Genscher's suggestion—was useful inasmuch as it helped prevent a 'beauty contest' between Paris and Bonn in their relations with the Soviet Union. Yet things did not go much beyond this; by the end of 1988, the lack of a real common dynamic in relations toward the East was apparent in spite of Bonn's insistence on the need for a joint approach—with Horst Teltschik, Kohl's adviser, suggesting a meeting between Kohl, Mitterrand and Gorbachev.<sup>123</sup> Why the French did not take this chance remains unclear, but the fundamental problem was, evidently, the imbalance of influence between both countries in Eastern Europe: French diplomacy wanted to 'catch up' with the FRG before a truly shared *Ostpolitik* became viable; meanwhile, the French rejected any notion of division of labour between Paris and Bonn in Eastern Europe.<sup>124</sup> Teltschik again pleaded for a common *Ostpolitik* in early 1989, but in vain<sup>125</sup>—which, as Teltschik later remarked, would be detrimental to Franco-German relations after the fall of the Berlin Wall.<sup>126</sup> By mid-1989, Franco-German cooperation was also seemingly levelling off in defence and strategic matters; at the April summit, Mitterrand rejected a German request for an intensification of procedures of consultation between Bonn and Paris in nuclear matters, thus signalling that French nuclear strategy left no room for decision-sharing, even with the closest of France's allies—and that the Franco-German 'alliance within the alliance' was no substitute for the Atlantic Alliance itself.<sup>127</sup> Finally, by summer 1989, the European integration process itself was also becoming more problematic from the standpoint of Franco-German relations as Bonn—as a result of a difficult domestic political context for Kohl before the 1990 election year—was showing signs of reluctance to make decisive moves in the direction of a European economic and monetary union, which, down the road, meant the end of the *Deutschemark*.<sup>128</sup>

On the eve of the European and German upheavals of autumn 1989, European integration had in fact become the main focus of French international policy—and a key factor in accounting for its policy at the Cold War's end. As France took over the rotating presidency of the European Community on 1 July 1989, Mitterrand was determined to make the one-semester French chair a decisive moment in European construction, in political and, especially, in economic terms. Even though no one in France—as elsewhere—anticipated how quickly the unification of Germany and the collapse of the Soviet empire would come about, the indefinite notion that the Cold War could soon be over—as everywhere—was inescapable, and it translated into the conviction that a strengthening of the European integration process was needed more than ever; in the case of Mitterrand, this conviction had become, in Attali's words, his 'unique ambition'.<sup>129</sup> While the consequences of this 'grand design' would appear fully after the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, the significance of this west European preference for overcoming the Cold War and its impact on the country's policies were already palpable in the summer, whether in France's still cautious approach to Gorbachev's 'common European home', in its insistence on an EC leading role in managing aid for the emerging east and central European democracies (Poland and Hungary to begin with), in its relations—as seen above—with the FRG, and, needless to say, in its relations with the United States whose ambivalence—as always—had much to do with the contradiction

between France's European strategic ambitions and the United States' preference for the Atlantic status quo.

### *Conclusion*

The 1989 revolutions were, by all accounts, unforeseen events. It is therefore methodologically wrong to reinterpret the years 1979–89 in light of these events—a frequent bias in analyses of France's role. The reverse interrogation, however, is legitimate: to what extent does France's record in the last ten years of the East-West conflict account for French perceptions, attitudes and policies at the end of the Cold War? Answering this question would obviously far exceed the scope of this chapter. Three issues, however, may briefly be tackled as concluding remarks.

The first issue concerns the French mindset at the Cold War's end. French diplomacy in the 1980s—as in the 1970s—had proved cautious and at times guarded in East-West relations, especially when compared with de Gaulle's rhetoric and policies. To be sure, this reflects the degree of France's accommodation with East-West realities, which its diplomacy denounced. Yet, had France become a status quo power by 1989? The answer needs to be qualified. With the obvious exception of the FRG, accommodation with Cold War realities was not a French specialty: until the fall of the Wall, the other major players—the United States, Britain and the USSR—were no more uncomfortable with the East-West stalemate than was France. Moreover, like its Western partners—the United States to begin with—France's reluctance fully to engage in a new era of East-West relations in the second half of the 1980s had more to do with the fear of giving up what constituted the West's strength and cohesion, while the Soviet Union retained its old objectives, than with the fear of ending the Cold War—a prospect which, again, was not really seen as likely until 1989. Finally, France's attitude was not one of all-out refusal of change: rather, it stemmed from preferences for making change possible, starting with the emergence of a strong and cohesive west European entity which would eventually challenge the superpower domination, detach East European nations from Moscow and provide a solid framework in which to solve the German question. To be sure, this west European priority—even obsession—undoubtedly accounts, to a large extent, for France's shortcomings in dealing with a rapidly evolving Eastern bloc and for its cautiousness in East-West relations at the end of the decade; but it was, at the same time, France's own avenue for overcoming the Cold War in the long term.

The second issue has to do with France's attitude with regard to the German question. Here also, the record of the last decade of the Cold War may help understand French policy after the fall of the Wall. Because, until 1989, the issue of German reunification was not really salient—although the German question did remain open—it is illusory to infer France's behaviour starting in the autumn of that year from its attitude heretofore, whether in order to demonstrate, as his supporters do, that Mitterrand had an early understanding of the inevitability of German unification and that he readily accepted it in 1989, or, as critics have it, that French diplomacy did all it could to prevent it, in line with what supposedly had been its obsession throughout the Cold War. In fact, the preceding analysis invalidates both interpretations: the relationship—indeed, the reconciliation—between France and Germany had gone so far, by 1989, and its importance for the



European construction was so central, that the notion of France's trying to impede reunification appears fanciful; yet it is also true that, in many ways, that same relationship had not reached its full maturity by 1989 and that difficulties, second thoughts and contradictions remained built into the Franco-German couple, thus accounting for the misunderstandings which pervaded the relationship from the autumn of 1989 to the spring of 1990.

Rather than for French diplomacy to impede the process of German unification, it was about trying to reconcile it with France's own vision of change in European security—hence, its foremost insistence that German unity should not call into question European integration, but rather confirm it. Hence, the third issue: the survey of France's policies in the last decade of the Cold War offers a better chance to understand what its vision of European security architecture was at the Cold War's end and after. The primacy of the European construction, the need for a continued, albeit more balanced, transatlantic relationship, the importance of a pan-European security framework which would not hamper western Europe's cohesion and assertiveness as a politico-strategic entity—all these preferences, already quite present before the defining events of 1989–91, do explain France's choices and dilemmas after the East-West conflict was over. Far from expressing its refusal to move beyond the Cold War, France's role in the Maastricht process, its ambivalent participation in the renovation of the Atlantic Alliance, and its attempt to promote a European confederation that would both keep the Soviet Union engaged in the European framework and protect European construction from being diluted into a wider pan-European institutions all reflect a vision for after the Cold War which had been developed well before—in fact since de Gaulle—and, especially, in the last decade of the East-West conflict.

## NOTES

- 1 On France's entry into the 'first' Cold War, see Georges-Henri Soutou, 'Les dirigeants français et l'entrée en guerre froide: un processus hésitant', *Le Trimestre du monde*, vol. 3 (1993), pp. 135–49. For an overview of French foreign policy during the whole post-war period, see Frédéric Bozo, *La Politique étrangère de la France depuis 1945* (Paris: La Découverte, 1997).
- 2 On de Gaulle's policies and the Cold War, see in particular Frédéric Bozo, *Two Strategies for Europe: De Gaulle, the United States and the Atlantic Alliance* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000); Marie-Pierre Rey, *La Tentation du rapprochement France et URSS à l'heure de la détente, 1964–1974* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1991); Georges-Henri Soutou, *L'Alliance incertaine: Les rapports politico-stratégiques franco-allemands depuis 1954* (Paris: Fayard, 1997); and Maurice Vaisse, *La Grandeur: Politique étrangère du général de Gaulle* (Paris: Fayard, 1997).
- 3 There is little scholarly literature so far on France's role in these events; one exception is Samy Cohen (ed.), *Mitterrand et la sortie de la guerre froide* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998); while it usefully provides transcripts of oral testimonies from actors (and sometimes heated debates between the latter and contributors to the 1997 conference from which it stems), this book does not rely on archival material and is too often prone to judging rather than analyzing. As to the abundant German and US literature on these events, this usually neglects the French (and the British) role and/or reflects a systematically negative bias, with the partial exception of Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

- 4 The December 1979 compromise (between Schmidt's preference for negotiation and Carter's insistence on deployment) was indeed sketched out during the January 1979 Guadeloupe summit of France, Germany, the UK and the US, which Giscard had convened and hosted; see Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, *Le Pouvoir et la Vie*, vol. II, *L'affrontement* (Paris: Compagnie, 1991), pp. 263ff., and Helga Haftendorn, *Deutsche Außenpolitik zwischen Selbstbeschränkung und Selbstbehauptung* (Munich: DVA, 2001), p. 281.
- 5 Like Schmidt, Giscard resisted the US tendency to 'globalize' East-West relations and insisted on decoupling European from 'out-of-area' issues. Moreover, he believed the Soviet decision to invade Afghanistan to be a *faux-pas* from which the Moscow leadership would soon look for an exit; hence his trip to Warsaw in May 1980, where he attempted to convince Brezhnev of the need for a Soviet withdrawal. While Giscard was far from indulging in appeasement, and was apparently harsh on the Soviet leader, this ill-advised gesture was widely interpreted as such. On this controversial episode, see the memoirs of the then French ambassador in Moscow: Henri Froment-Meurice, *Vu du Quai. Mémoires 1945–1983* (Paris: Fayard, 1998), pp. 560ff.
- 6 See Froment-Meurice, *Vu du Quai*, p. 559. Domestic politics indeed also loomed in the background; as the 1981 presidential election was approaching, Giscard's attitude could help distract some communist voters from his socialist challenger.
- 7 The scholarly literature on Mitterrand's diplomacy is still scarce. The best account is to be found in the work of two AFP journalists, Pierre Favier and Michel Martin-Roland, *La Décennie Mitterrand* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1990–99), 4 vols. Another valuable source is the memoirs of Mitterrand's diplomatic and strategic adviser (later foreign minister) Hubert Védrine, *Les Mondes de François Mitterrand. A l'Élysée, 1981–1995* (Paris: Fayard, 1996).
- 8 In the words of Védrine, see *Les Mondes*, p. 90.
- 9 Teletyped message from Reagan to Mitterrand, Archives Nationales (AN), 5AG4 6523. Reagan obviously overestimated the 'Atlanticist' inspiration of the speech, whereas Mitterrand's purpose was a far more balanced one: see below, note 11.
- 10 Barely four days after Mitterrand's election, a memorandum issued by the policy-planning staff in the Foreign Ministry castigated Giscard's détente policy as having led to 'a kind of moral disarmament' and advocated a French Soviet policy devoid of 'illusions' and 'complacency': Ministère des affaires étrangères, Centre d'analyse et de prévision, 'La carte française dans la politique soviétique', 14 May 1981, AN, 5AG4 11385.
- 11 Quoted in Frédéric Bozo, 'La politique atlantique de François Mitterrand 1981–1984: la France, fille aînée de l'Alliance?', in Serge Bernstein, Pierre Milza and Jean-Louis Bianco (eds), *François Mitterrand: Les Années du changement 1981–1984* (Paris: Perrin, 2001), pp. 200 and 218.
- 12 See Favier and Martin-Roland, *La Décennie Mitterrand*, vol. I, pp. 3861ff.
- 13 'La carte française dans la politique soviétique', 14 May 1981, AN, 5AG4 11385.
- 14 See Védrine, *Les Mondes*, pp. 112 and 116.
- 15 Memorandum by Ambassador Jean-Marie Mérillon, 'Sommet de Bonn', 1 June 1982, AN, 5AG4 2627.
- 16 Védrine, *Les Mondes*, p. 184.
- 17 The reverse was probably more true: Mitterrand deliberately, and successfully, sought to weaken the French communists—long his objective—by placing before them an agonizing choice between government solidarity and their relationship with the CPSU.
- 18 Mitterrand skilfully utilized Giscard's seemingly 'soft' attitude toward the Soviet Union in order to discredit him during the presidential campaign; Védrine, *Les Mondes*, pp. 107–8.
- 19 See for example Bozo, 'La politique atlantique de François Mitterrand'.
- 20 Memorandum by Ambassador Jean-Marie Mérillon, 'Sommet de Bonn', 1 June 1982.
- 21 Ministère des Affaires étrangères, Centre d'analyse et de prévision, Memorandum, 'Relations franco-américaines: le contexte psychologique et politique après le 10 mai 1981', 21 July 1982, AN, 5AG4 11437.

- 22 He thus angrily noted on a December 1982 memorandum from Védérine that the French were not 'doomed to act as Mr Reagan's parrots'; quoted in Bozo, 'La politique atlantique...', pp. 210–11.
- 23 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 203.
- 24 Pierre Morel, Memorandum for the President, 1 June 1982, AN, 5AG4 2266.
- 25 Letter, Mitterrand to Reagan, 20 November 1982, AN, 5AG4 11437.
- 26 Schmidt himself had seemed more sceptical than Mitterrand on the subject when they met in October 1982; see Froment-Meurice (then ambassador in Bonn), *Vu du Quai*, pp. 618 and 659.
- 27 See Hélène Miard-Delacroix, 'Les relations franco-allemandes', in Berstein, Milza and Bianco (eds), *François Mitterrand. Les Années du changement*, p. 304.
- 28 Ministère des Relations extérieures, Services des Affaires stratégiques et des Pactes, Memorandum, 'Sommet franco-allemand. Questions stratégiques', 8 October 1982, AN, 5AG4 2627.
- 29 Memorandum by Pierre Morel for Jean-Louis Bianco, 'Discours au Bundestag: nécessité et modalités d'une grande initiative', 17 January 1983, AN, 5AG4 11240.
- 30 Handwritten notes by Mitterrand after a meeting with Kohl, Williamsburg, 29 May 1983, AN, 5AG 11240.
- 31 Morel Memorandum for Bianco, 'Discours au Bundestag', 17 January 1983.
- 32 Hubert Védérine, Memorandum for the President, 'Perspectives des relations est-ouest en 1984 après le commencement du déploiement. Rôle de la France', AN, 5AG4 4066.
- 33 For analysis of the Bundestag speech, see Bozo, 'La France, fille aînée de l'Alliance?'
- 34 Pierre Grosser, 'Serrer le jeu sans le fermer: l'Elysée et les relations franco-soviétiques, 1981–1984', in Berstein, Milza and Bianco (eds), *François Mitterrand. Les Années du changement*.
- 35 Handwritten note from Jean-Michel Gaillard for Védérine on the 14 May 1981 policy planning staff memorandum, 'La carte française'. In the following years, Quai views of the Soviet bloc would often remain harsher than those in the Elysée.
- 36 Memorandum from Pierre Morel for the President, 'Le sommet de Versailles, le sommet de Bonn et les relations est-ouest', 1 June 1982, AN, 5AG4 2266.
- 37 See Grosser, 'Serrer le jeu', pp. 260–1, 264, 270.
- 38 Handwritten note from Jean-Michel Gaillard to Védérine, 14 May 1981.
- 39 Grosser, 'Serrer le jeu', pp. 257–8.
- 40 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 258; on Mitterrand's attitude towards Poland after the imposition of martial law in December 1981, see note 53 below.
- 41 Mitterrand's New Year's Eve televised speech, 31 December 1981.
- 42 Ministère des Affaires étrangères, Direction d'Europe, Memorandum, 'La CSCE et la réunion de Madrid', 29 September 1982, AN, 5AG4 2527; the key French objective at the time was the opening of a negotiation on conventional disarmament in Europe (CDE) in the CSCE framework, an idea which dated back to Giscard's 1978 UN speech, which relaunched France's active disarmament policy.
- 43 Memorandum by Jacques Andréani, 'Relations Est-Ouest', 26 May 1983, AN, 5AG4 4329.
- 44 Memorandum by Hubert Védérine for the President, 'Perspective des relations Est-Ouest en 1984, après le commencement du déploiement', 1 December 1983, 5AG4 4066.
- 45 Favier and Martin-Roland, *La Décennie Mitterrand*, vol. II, pp. 221ff.
- 46 See Grosser, 'Serrer le jeu', pp. 275ff.
- 47 For a comprehensive account of Franco-German security and defence cooperation in the 1980s, see Urs Leimbacher, *Die unverzichtbare Allianz: Deutsch-französische sicherheitspolitische Zusammenarbeit, 1982–1989* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1992); see also Georges-Henri Soutou, *L'Alliance incertaine. La coopération politico-militaire franco-allemande depuis 1954* (Paris: Fayard, 1996), pp. 371ff.
- 48 Morel Memorandum for Bianco, 'Discours au Bundestag', 17 January 1983.

- 49 Védérine, *Les Mondes*, p. 235.
- 50 Védérine Memorandum, 'Perspective des relations Est-Ouest en 1984', 1 December 1983. Of course, overcoming the EC deadlock—which was achieved at the June 1984 Fontainebleau European Council thanks to Franco-German unity in the face of Mrs Thatcher's demands regarding the UK financial contribution—was a precondition for a European initiative on strategic cooperation.
- 51 Védérine, *Les Mondes*, pp. 369ff; Mikhail Gorbachev, *Mémoires* (Monaco: Editions du Rocher, 1997), pp. 537–9.
- 52 24 March 1986 meeting between Gorbachev and French ambassador in Moscow Jean-Bernard Raimond upon his departure to Paris to become minister of foreign affairs, Paris outgoing telegram # 7798, 27 March 1986, Ministère des Affaires étrangères, archives diplomatiques (AD), série Europe 1986–1990, URSS, box 6673.
- 53 Quoted in Favier and Martin-Roland, *La Décennie Mitterrand*, vol. II, p. 253. In December 1985, Mitterrand received General Jaruzelski in the Elysée, a controversial move even for Prime Minister Laurent Fabius, whose criticism the president dismissed: 'I have state duties, and communist countries exist'; *ibid.*, p. 363.
- 54 Anatoly S. Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 2000), pp. 75–6.
- 55 *Ibid.*, pp. 75–6; the exchange with Reagan is confirmed by Jacques Attali, *Verbatim*, vol. II (Paris: Fayard, 1995), pp. 109–10.
- 56 As he told Gromyko: 'Entretien de M. le Président de la République avec M. Gromyko, 8 juillet 1986 16h30', AD, Europe 1986–1990, USSR, box 6676.
- 57 Gorbachev, *Mémoires*, p. 542.
- 58 Moscow telegram # 1347, April 20, 1987, AD, Europe 1986–1990, URSS, box 6678.
- 59 Moscow telegram # 1687, May 11, 1987, AD, Europe 1986–1990, URSS, box 6675.
- 60 Gorbachev, *Mémoires*, p. 543.
- 61 Telegram Moscow # 1830–32, May 19, 1987, AD, Europe 1986–1990, URSS, box 6678.
- 62 See the meeting of Mitterrand, Kohl and Chirac in October 1986, where the latter expressed scepticism at Kohl's comparing of Gorbachev with Hungarian reformist leader Janos Kadar; Jacques Attali, *Verbatim*, vol. II, p. 191.
- 63 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European directorate, Memorandum for the Minister, '20ème anniversaire de la visite en URSS du général de Gaulle', 20 May 1986, AD, Europe 1986–1990, URSS, box 6670.
- 64 Centre d'Analyse et de prévision, Memorandum, 'L'opinion française, l'URSS et l'option zéro', 9 July 1987, AD, Europe 1986–1990, URSS, box 6670.
- 65 Védérine, *Les Mondes*, p. 380; this assessment is confirmed by Chernyaev, *My Six Years*, p. 94: in 1987, Gorbachev still understood *perestroika* 'within the framework of the existing socio-economic system'.
- 66 Memorandum by the deputy chief of policy planning, 'Quel langage tenir à Moscou? Eléments de réflexion', 22 April 1987, AD, Europe 1986–1990, URSS, box 6678.
- 67 Moscow telegram # 1586, 9 May 1986, AD, Europe 1986–1990, URSS, box 6649.
- 68 Moscow telegram # 5211–12, 17 November, 1988, AD, Europe 1986–1990, URSS, box 6680.
- 69 Védérine, *Les Mondes*, p. 386.
- 70 Quoted in Attali, *Verbatim*, vol. I, p. 931.
- 71 Minutes of the meetings in Attali, *Verbatim*, vol. II, pp. 109 and 114.
- 72 Minutes of the meeting of the President with the Secretary General, enlarged session, 9 July 1986, AD, Europe 1986–1990, URSS, box 6684.
- 73 Chernyaev, *My Six Years*, p. 75.
- 74 Moscow telegram # 3757, 8 November 1986, AD, Europe 1986–1990, URSS, 6670.
- 75 TASS, 28 April 1987, quoted in Ewa Kulesza, 'Les relations Paris-Moscou de Yalta à la Perestroika', *Regards sur l'actualité*, no. 147, January (1989), pp. 3–12.

- 76 Moscow telegram # 1830, 19 May 1987. Gorbachev's own recollection confirms this, *Mémoires*, p. 543.
- 77 Memorandum for the Prime Minister, 'Compte-rendu d'entretien de la visite Ligatchev', n.d. (December 1987), AD, Europe 1986–1990, URSS, 6684.
- 78 Védérine, *Les Mondes*, p. 389.
- 79 French diplomacy strongly believed that the negotiation on conventional disarmament—especially through limitations on stationed forces—could be used as a way to weaken Moscow's grip over Eastern Europe and thus to loosen the bloc system.
- 80 For a good account, see Favier and Martin-Roland, *La Décennie Mitterrand*, vol. II, pp. 632ff.
- 81 Ibid., p. 647.
- 82 During a cabinet meeting, Defence Minister André Giraud had gone as far as to describe the West's acceptance of an INF agreement after Gorbachev's dropping of the SDI prerequisite as a new 'Munich', but Mitterrand had prevailed: 'it would be untenable to purely and simply reject Mr Gorbachev's propositions'; on this episode see Attali, *Verbatim*, vol. II, pp. 265ff.
- 83 On this see Bozo, *La Politique étrangère*, pp. 90ff.
- 84 Mitterrand himself recognized that this was Moscow's goal; see Attali, *Verbatim*, vol. I, p. 914. The president, however, was sceptical that removal of USINF would really make a difference: for him, US extended deterrence was questionable irrespective of US nuclear weapons deployment in Europe; see *Verbatim*, vol. II, p. 209. On this he differed with Chirac according to a familiar Gaullist vs. Atlanticist pattern—except that the roles were reversed.
- 85 France's, and especially Mitterrand's, harsh criticism of Reagan's SDI, in fact, had as much to do with the logic of denuclearization which it conveyed as with its impact on the arms race. More than Gorbachev's disarmament offers, Mitterrand said in March 1987 that the real problem when it comes to denuclearization is 'Mr Reagan's dream and folly', which the Reykjavik summit had exposed; Attali, *Verbatim*, vol. II, p. 271.
- 86 Memorandum, 'Entretiens du Premier ministre avec M. Gorbachev', 7 May 1987, AD, Europe 1986–1990, URSS, box 6678. However, avoiding the inclusion of tactical nuclear forces in the forthcoming negotiations on conventional forces became a major French concern from then on, explaining a sometime very guarded if not reluctant French approach in that realm: see the analysis of the principal Quai d'Orsay disarmament official, Benoît d'Aboville, 'The French Approach to Conventional Arms Control', in Uwe Nerlich and James A. Thomson (eds), *Conventional Arms Control and the Security of Europe* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), pp. 154–7.
- 87 Védérine, *Les Mondes*, p. 408.
- 88 Eastern Europe Division, Memorandum, 'L'URSS, la RFA et l'Ostpolitik', 20 June 1986, AD, Europe 1986–1990, URSS, box 6677.
- 89 Moscow telegram # 2989, 14 July 1988.
- 90 Eastern European Division, Memorandum, 'L'URSS, la RFA et l'Ostpolitik', 20 June 1986.
- 91 On this see Leimbacher, *Die unverzichtbare Allianz*, pp. 240ff. All this did not go unnoticed by the Soviets: when Kohl came to Moscow in October 1988, Chernyaev recalls, the French press kept asking him what concessions he had made to Gorbachev.
- 92 Ingo Kolboom, 'L'histoire et l'avenir des politiques respectives à l'égard des pays de l'Est', in André Brigot, Peter Schmidt and Walter Schütze (eds), *Défense, désarmement et politiques à l'est. Perspectives franco-allemandes* (Paris: FEDN, 1988), p. 129.
- 93 Except for a minority of intellectuals or politicians who continued to broach on the theme of 'les incertitudes allemandes' as earlier in the decade; see Jean Hohwart, *Nécessités franco-allemandes et défense en Europe* (Paris: FEDN, 1988). As regards official thinking on the German question in that period, one may share Védérine's comment that 'Reunification has been a key preoccupation among German leaders since the beginning of Ostpolitik... François Mitterrand understands it [although] he does not believe that he will see it happen';

- see Védérine, *Les Mondes*, p. 406. Just like the Americans, the Germans or the Soviets, the French just likely did *not* see reunification as a possibility until the fall of 1989; see Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, pp. 20ff.
- 94 This was also clearly the case as seen from Washington well into the spring 1989; see Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, pp. 28ff.
- 95 French concerns vis-à-vis 'Genscherism' were equally shared in other Western capitals: see Christian Hacke, *Die Außenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Weltmacht wider Willen?* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1997), p. 352.
- 96 Here, also, domestic politics did play a role, with Mitterrand appearing to be more relaxed than Chirac and his government with regard to the evolution of the FRG; see Védérine, *Les Mondes*, p. 406; and Kolboom, 'L'histoire et l'avenir', pp. 136ff.
- 97 Quoted in Ingo Kolboom (ed.), *Arbeitspapiere zur Internationalen Politik*, no. 46, XIII. Deutsch-Französische Konferenz, Hamburg, 3–5.6.1987, p. 82.
- 98 Quoted in Védérine, *Les Mondes*, p. 409.
- 99 Quoted in Attali, *Verbatim*, vol. II, p. 255.
- 100 For details, see Leimbacher, *Die unverzichtbare Allianz*, pp. 95ff.
- 101 Védérine, *Les Mondes*, p. 416.
- 102 European Directorate, Memorandum, 'L'URSS, fin mai 1988 et les relations franco-soviétiques', 31 May 1988, AD, Europe 1986–1990, URSS, box 6670.
- 103 European Directorate, Memorandum, 'Discours de M.Gorbatchev devant l'Assemblée générale des Nations unies (7 décembre 1988)', AD, Europe 1986–1990, URSS, box 6649.
- 104 In the words of Chernyaev, *My Six Years*, p. 148.
- 105 'L'URSS fin mai 1988', 3 May 1988.
- 106 See, e.g., Moscow telegram #5673, 13 Sept. 1989, AD, Europe 1986–1990, URSS, box 6650. As to Germany, there was still considerable scepticism at the time that the Soviets were anywhere near accepting the prospect of reunification, whatever its guise.
- 107 'L'URSS fin mai 1988', 3 May 1988.
- 108 Védérine, *Les Mondes*, p. 389.
- 109 Gorbachev, *Mémoires*, p. 631.
- 110 Védérine, *Les Mondes*, pp. 483ff.
- 111 According to Gorbachev, *Mémoires*, p. 634, confirmed by Védérine, *Les Mondes*, pp. 483–4.
- 112 Quoted in Jean Lacouture and Patrick Rotman, *Mitterrand: le Roman du pouvoir* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), p. 208.
- 113 See Attali, *Verbatim*, vol. II, p. 22, and Favier and Martin-Roland, *La Décennie Mitterrand*, vol. 3, pp. 167ff.
- 114 Gorbachev, *Mémoires*, p. 631.
- 115 On this see Leimbacher, *Unverzichtbare Allianz*, pp. 264ff.
- 116 Bonn telegram # 2431, 28 November 1988, AD, Europe 1986–1990, URSS, box 6680.
- 117 Kolboom, 'L'histoire', p. 142. As Kolboom rightly remarks, public opinion showed more understanding for the FRG's concern to keep the German question open than did sections of the political class or the media. Mitterrand, he argues, was thus more in sync with French opinion at large than with the Parisian political establishment—a feature which would appear clearly after the fall of the Wall.
- 118 Paris telegram # 14103, 7 July 1989, AD, Europe 1986–1990, URSS, box 6685.
- 119 Attali, *Verbatim*, vol. III, pp. 241–4.
- 120 Memorandum, 'Bilan de la visite de M.Gorbatchev en RFA (12–15 juin 1989)', 27 June 1989, AD, Europe 1986–1990, URSS, box 6684. French diplomats were especially sceptical that Gorbachev had significantly changed the Soviet approach to the German question, in spite of the language of the joint communiqué.

- 121 Memorandum, European Directorate, 'Elements de comparaison entre les visites de M.Gorbatchev en France et en RFA', 18 July 1989, European Directorate, USSR, AD, Europe 1986–1990, URSS, box 6684.
- 122 Memorandum by the Director of Europe (Jacques Blot), 'Visite de M. Gorbatchev en France', 30 June 1989, AD, Europe 1986–1990, URSS, box 6685.
- 123 See Attali, *Verbatim*, vol. III, pp. 90–2.
- 124 In such a division of labour, the French strongly suspected the Germans of planning to deal with the most promising Eastern countries (like Hungary), while leaving the lacklustre ones (like Romania) to France; see Favier and Martin-Roland, *La Décennie Mitterrand*, vol. III, pp. 167ff.
- 125 Attali, *Verbatim*, vol. III, p. 159.
- 126 Horst Teltschik, *329 Tage. Innenansichten der Einigung* (Berlin: Siedler, 1991), pp. 31, 106, 369.
- 127 Attali, *Verbatim*, vol. III, pp. 217ff.
- 128 On this see Favier and Martin-Roland, *La Décennie Mitterrand*, vol. IV, pp. 160ff.
- 129 Attali, *Verbatim*, vol. III, pp. 8ff.

## Helping to Open the Door? Britain in the Last Decade of the Cold War

*Sean Greenwood*

For a fleeting period, the Cold War seemed to be, almost as much as the Falklands episode, Margaret Thatcher's war. Certainly, she was the dominating British presence in the last decade of the Cold War and there are those, none more assertively, than Thatcher herself, who profess to her crucial role in bringing that conflict to an end.<sup>1</sup> Before examining that claim or the wider question of Thatcher's attitude to the Cold War, it would be profitable briefly to examine her inheritance in terms of Britain's conduct of the Cold War; first, generally from 1945 and then, more specifically, during the 1970s, the decade preceding her accession to power.

There are patterns to this legacy of 45 years or so. The obvious one is that, after playing a leading role in defining the parameters of this contest during its very early years, Britain's persisting economic weakness was matched by a declining world influence, leading to a tendency to found its own conduct vis-à-vis the communist world on its relationship with the United States. There are other contours. For most of the Cold War period the mainspring of British policy tended to be pragmatic rather than ideological. In the period 1945–48, for instance, Britain was slow to accept that the wartime alliance with the Soviet Union had completely disintegrated and demonstrated a proclivity to consider that, after the two major conflicts which had riven the world in the first half of the twentieth century, Germany remained the most likely potential aggressor. By 1950, even after this perception had been transformed, a characteristic of Britain's conduct of the Cold War was to pursue negotiation with Moscow as a means of securing some *modus vivendi* which would bring acute antagonism to a close. This was the case well before the possession of nuclear arsenals on both sides of the East-West fissure, though that fact added an additional incentive to the British approach. A frequent adjunct of this pressure for dialogue was a recurrent perception of a need to restrain its sometimes special friend, the United States, from immoderate, precipitate action against the forces of communism. These same facets of British policy are evident right up to the close of the Cold War.<sup>2</sup>

Something of an exception to the penultimate distinguishing feature mentioned above—the emphasis on East-West dialogue—manifested itself during the period of general attempts at *détente* in the 1970s. In a noteworthy reversal of the previous model, and at a time when the major participants in their various ways were seeking forms of accommodation with each other's positions, Britain put on its most consistently solemn face in dealing with the Soviet Union—obdurate and ideological—and thus was often out of step with its major allies. This was a mode which foreshadowed the sombre Thatcherite attitude to East-West relations. In this sense, we might say that Thatcher was



a child of the 1970s. She was also, of course, subject to earlier influences and was a victim of the illusion that Churchill, her mentor in matters foreign political, was an unwavering and unvarnished opponent of the Soviet Union. Although, she was, as we shall see, for a time, to detach herself from her rather cheerless course, wariness of the Soviet Union remained the path to which she was bound to revert. What is interesting about Thatcher and what, perhaps, gave an inconsistent edge to her Cold War diplomacy which may have diminished its overall impact, is that she embraced not only the robust 1970s posture of British diplomacy, but most of the principal traditions associated with Britain's responses to the Cold War too.

It is worth looking a little closer at British Cold War attitudes in the 1970s. This was, after all the decade in which Margaret Thatcher first sat on the government front benches as minister for education, from 1970 to 1974. In this capacity, she attended Cabinet, received those papers on foreign affairs which were circulated in that forum, heard the debates and, no doubt, participated in them too. It was during this period that she made an official visit behind the Iron Curtain and honed her Manichaean view of the capitalist-communist struggle.<sup>3</sup> A flavour of Britain's conduct of its relations with Moscow at this juncture is provided by a Soviet comment made shortly after Sir Alec Douglas-Home became foreign secretary in the summer of 1970. This expressed a wish that 'the fruitless back-biting which had characterised [Anglo-Soviet] relations all too often in the past could now be dispensed with'.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, a year later, Russian representatives in both London and Washington were still complaining that 'Britain is "more difficult" than other countries of Western Europe'.<sup>5</sup> In the early part of 1972, Douglas-Home was forced to admit that 'by comparison with our continental partners, the British relationship with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as a whole seems cool and politically negative'.<sup>6</sup> This had much to do with 'Operation FOOT', which resulted in the expulsion from Britain of 105 Soviet representatives accused of espionage in September 1971. Behind this action lay a British instinct that the Soviet leadership 'still seem to regard the foreign policy of the Soviet Government as only one part...of a world-wide historical and political process which follows the laws of the class struggle as formulated by Marxism-Leninism...'.<sup>7</sup> In similar vein, the Joint Intelligence Committee asserted that

the threat arises from the fact that the Soviet Union is a State committed to world change of a particular kind. In many respects it appears as a great conservative State, concerned to maintain the status quo, cautious in its leadership, pursuing national interests more or less as any other great Power. Its present leaders, however, and any leaders likely to emerge in the foreseeable future, have a view of the world which is dogmatic, dynamic and confident. They see the course of history as charted, the world as divided into two camps and the relationship between these two camps as one of struggle. They consider that history is on their side but that they have a duty to assist the course of history. It is this philosophy and sense of mission which, reinforcing Soviet national ambitions and supported by Soviet military and industrial strength, give an underlying consistency and menace to Soviet external policy.<sup>8</sup>

This British sense of unease was compounded by the imbalance of NATO's conventional forces in Europe vis-à-vis the USSR, and perhaps more so by the expansion of the Soviet Navy and the launching—one every three-and-a-half weeks it was estimated in 1971—of a new breed of exceptionally fast and highly manoeuvrable nuclear submarines. This meant, according to the Chiefs of Staff that Britain 'faced a weapon gap over the next ten years of a grave nature'.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, there existed alongside such concerns a quirky sense of self-satisfaction over Britain's isolation and misgivings over the instruments of détente. Douglas-Home was inclined to be irritated by supposed contrasts between British responses to the Soviet Union and those of its Western partners, whom he considered to be in a more advantageous position than was Britain. Douglas-Home noted that

the United Kingdom, lacking the status of the USA, geographically more remote than [the Europeans], cold-shouldered at present by the USSR on account of the expulsion of Soviet spies, a source of growing anxiety to Eastern European sellers of agricultural produce as admission to the Common Market comes nearer, a sober and steady member of the North Atlantic Alliance, a sceptical commentator on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions and the proposed Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, neither courts the Warsaw Pact Governments nor is courted by them.<sup>10</sup>

Such an aloof and semi-detached demeanour went against the grain of the preceding approaches of successive British governments since 1945, whether under Attlee, Churchill, Eden, Macmillan or Wilson, whose inclination had been for dialogue with Moscow in the hope of finding a form of, to use the Soviet term, peaceful co-existence between the two systems. In a peculiar way, the British approach was a throwback to attitudes to be found in earlier periods of Cold War tension under the Truman and Eisenhower administrations, and was now rather incongruous in a period where the buzz-words were détente and *Ostpolitik*. Even Richard Nixon was in favour of direct approaches to Moscow—and to Beijing too.

There were, indeed, those who considered the British approach to be 'out of date'. The most eloquent and perceptive critique was supplied by the British ambassador in Moscow, Sir Duncan Wilson. From his vantage point in the Soviet capital, he judged that Douglas-Home and his advisers back in Whitehall were acting as though 'we were confronted with essentially the mixture as before...the past projected into the future'. Wilson and his staff did not see it that way. Rather, 'in spite of too much continuity in some aspects of policy, the Soviet Union is undergoing changes which may in the long or even medium term produce a different mixture—and different in some potentially very important respects'.<sup>11</sup> As Wilson pointed out, 'the differences of analysis...between your advisers in London and this Embassy are large and important'. He found it 'hard to think that the CPSU does not by now include its fair share of pious agnostics' towards Marxism amongst Soviet leaders and that

it seems at least possible that as Communist ideology is pushed further into the background of their minds, some radical questions will begin to

emerge both about the validity of the concept that the world is divided into imperialist 'baddies' and popular democratic 'goodies', and even about its usefulness for the national interest of the Soviet Union.

Wilson considered it now to be misleading to concentrate on Marxist doctrine as the main key to an assessment of Soviet policy. He argued not for a fundamental change in policy towards the USSR, but rather for a change in emphasis based on increased contacts, for 'compared with the French, German and even American efforts in the field of political, parliamentary and official relations, we have been and remain inactive'. Commercial contacts were especially important; partly as a benefit to the British economy but also to assist Soviet technological backwardness, which in turn would support the emergence of 'new men' in charge of a reformist Soviet system. As if he had in his mind's eye a still unknown local party boss in Stavropol on the point of emerging from obscurity, Wilson predicted that 'it seems likely that in ten years or so the younger party leaders, many of whom will be technocrats by education, will see the need further to modify in practice a whole range of doctrines if party and state are not to petrify'.<sup>12</sup>

These remarkable prognostications were given careful consideration in the Foreign Office but were politely rejected as 'rather too optimistic'. Sir Denis Greenhill, the permanent under-secretary, considered it was 'useful to remind the Embassy in Moscow of some of the unpleasant realities'.<sup>13</sup> Douglas-Home was plainly unconvinced by Wilson's hypotheses. While he felt that both Bonn and Paris had concrete political advantage to offer the Soviets in the shape of the German question and partial retreat from NATO, Britain had nothing equivalent to put forward. Except, he noted, the promise of less political and defence cooperation with the EEC (European Economic Community). But as this involved a key policy of the Heath Conservative government, 'this suggests that, apart from other considerations, the coming period may not be a suitable one for establishing or maintaining any new kind of relationship with the Soviet Union'.<sup>14</sup> Wilson left the Moscow Embassy in August 1971 with a feeling that 'Anglo-Soviet relations, political and economic, are in a poor shape and may well get worse before they get better'.<sup>15</sup> This was one of his less striking predictions for plans, for 'Operation FOOT' were maturing and the date for its implementation was being advanced. Wilson's successor, Sir John Killick, had the misfortune immediately to have to deal with the fallout from this episode. Killick, nevertheless, demonstrated a closer correspondence with the predominating cautious approach to Anglo-Soviet relations than had his predecessor. Attempts were made to improve contacts with Moscow once the dust from 'FOOT' had settled and, more especially, after the successful negotiation of British entry into the EEC in early 1972. The leitmotif, both in the embassy and in Whitehall, was that it was 'important that we should not appear to be running after [the Russians]'.<sup>16</sup> In this climate, the Soviet foreign minister, Andrei Gromyko, claimed, with some justification, to be at a loss to understand British intentions. 'If one wants to talk of improving relations', he commented to Killick, 'and if both sides are serious, improvement is possible, though it is hard to forget what has happened. We do not consider improvement impossible, but it is very difficult if one side approaches the matter seriously and the other says it is serious but engages in gymnastics'.<sup>17</sup>

The stance of the Labour government in the mid-to-late 1970s, faced with Soviet attempts to spread their influence in the Middle East and East Africa, was to adopt a

guarded approach towards détente similar to that which had characterised the Heath government.<sup>18</sup> When she came to power in May 1979, Margaret Thatcher, like her immediate predecessors, Edward Heath and James Callaghan, had plenty to preoccupy her on the domestic scene. Her focus was not on the Soviet threat but on a range of distractions—Britain's poor economic performance, conflict with the EEC over Britain's budget contributions, Ireland, Rhodesia and then the Falklands—each of which ensured that, while there were plenty of rhetorical fireworks launched against the dangers of Soviet communism, activity to match it was restrained. This was the case following the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan, for example, and after the declaration of martial law in Poland in December 1981. Over the latter, she successfully opposed—alongside other west European leaders—President Reagan's plan to include technology for a gas pipeline from Siberia to the West, which meant jobs for British technicians, as part of a sanctions package against the USSR. This was characteristic of a prime minister who, at this point, was not prepared to permit the struggle against totalitarian communism to impose self-inflicted damage on a faltering domestic economy.

Thus the profound domestic impact of Thatcher's premiership was not, at first, accompanied by any analogous transformation in Britain's relations with the Soviet Union. For example, the Cabinet decision in December 1979 to replace the aging Polaris nuclear weapons system with Trident (again to be supplied by the United States) was consistent with the hopes of the preceding Labour government. Good relations between President Carter and the previous Labour prime minister, James Callaghan, had resulted, during a meeting of Western heads of state at Guadeloupe in February 1979, in an unofficial nod that the United States would look favourably upon the replacement of Polaris with Trident.<sup>19</sup> Thatcher's determination to reduce the Soviets' strategic advantage gained by their deployment from 1977 of SS-20 IRBMs (intermediate-range ballistic missiles) targeting western Europe was real enough. Yet, here too, there was an interconnection between economic and strategic considerations. Thatcher's decision in December 1979 to permit the Americans to station Cruise missiles in England and to go along with the US-devised 'zero option'—removal of SS-20s, no Cruise (or Pershing short-range missiles) in western Europe—is a case in point. If there was to be a realistic notion of a gradation in response to attack before Polaris was used, with the Vulcan, the last in the line of Britain's V-bombers, in need of replacement, it seemed a good bargain to buy extra Cruise missiles on top of those required by NATO to serve as a stop-gap until an alternative to the Vulcan had been produced. In sum, during Thatcher's first government, 'Britain was in no sense an initiator, still less an architect, of Western policy in the way that the Attlee government had been with respect to the first Cold War in the late 1940s.'<sup>20</sup>

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the end of 1979, which brought détente to an abrupt termination and inaugurated the 'new' or 'second' Cold War, merely reinforced the instincts of the new prime minister, determined on the extinction of socialism at home and already designated the 'Iron Lady' abroad, to stand up to the Russians, because, as she later put it, 'ultimately, our two opposing systems were incompatible'.<sup>21</sup> Paradoxically, her own blunt approach was closer to that of the Foreign Office—which she persistently distrusted—than to that of many of her Conservative colleagues. 'Détente', she asserted, 'sounds a fine word. And to the extent that there really has been a relaxation in international tension, it is a fine thing. But the fact remains that throughout

this decade of *détente*, the armed forces of the Soviet Union have increased, are increasing and show no signs of diminishing.<sup>22</sup> This closely matched the prevailing sceptical Foreign Office view represented by Sir John Killick who had earlier denounced the Soviet use of the term 'peaceful co-existence' as 'a fraud' which required re-definition. 'Instead', he advised, 'of being defensive and running scared, let us mount a counter-offensive.'<sup>23</sup> With the possible exception of Sir Duncan Wilson and his colleagues in the Moscow Embassy in the early 1970s, the idea of *détente* as a means of attracting the Soviet leadership from the remnants of suspicious Stalinism was one with which the Foreign Office seems to have had a problem, divining in it a recipe for volatility rather than a method of permanently easing international tension. 'I have never', commented one senior official, 'been convinced that instability within the Soviet empire would necessarily work out to the advantage of the West: and I have never thought that attempts actively to promote instability added up to a prudent long term policy for the West.'<sup>24</sup>

But it was not, of course, the emergence of Thatcher but the election of Ronald Reagan as US president in November 1980 which further ratcheted up East-West tension. Within the year, the new president's Cold Warrior rhetoric and his increase in military spending by almost 10 per cent had convinced Yuri Andropov, then head of the KGB, that the Americans would risk a pre-emptive nuclear strike. Soviet foreboding reached a climax during a NATO exercise in November 1983, which Moscow seems to have seriously believed was intended as a cover for a first strike by the West. Less apocalyptically, the KGB also made inept attempts to influence the British general election of that year against Thatcher, seen by this time as Reagan's most constant ally.<sup>25</sup>

As it turned out, Thatcher's second electoral contest in June 1983 resulted in a decisive victory. Ironically, following this triumph, her approach towards the Soviet Union began to moderate, with her interventions into East-West relations demonstrating less confrontational and abrasive postures, and stressing the need to 'do more talking'.<sup>26</sup> As has been suggested, up to now, her relations with the Soviets had been grounded on suspicion and the refurbishment of the Western armoury of deterrence—consistent with the British line throughout the 1970s. Thatcher's 'new course,' as it might be labelled, was a reversal of this, involving dialogue and arms limitation. What prompted this U-turn is open to debate. Some of the troubles of her first term of office had subsided. Indeed, the Falklands episode may have enhanced her sense of what Britain was still capable of on the world stage, as well as the prospect of an international rôle and reputation for herself.<sup>27</sup> Geoffrey Howe, her new foreign secretary, claims to have steered her along the long-neglected path of talking to the Soviet Union and its satellites following an important seminar held at Chequers (the official residence) in the autumn of 1983. Others suggest that it was his predecessor, Francis Pym, who had first sown these seeds.<sup>28</sup> Neither seem likely generators of such a notable about face. Howe she considered not much more than a dull, if efficient, negotiator. Pym had been sacked as a 'wet'. Both she believed to have come 'under the spell' of the blurred vision of the despised Foreign Office.<sup>29</sup> More prosaically, there are those who suppose her to have been persuaded by some of her political associates that a softer approach to the Soviet Union might help take the steam out of significant domestic opposition to the deployment of Cruise missiles and exploit the already evident indications of Moscow's loosening grip on its European satellites. Perhaps the awakening was self-induced, prompted by the internal weaknesses

in the Soviet bloc that she had begun to notice three years earlier with the rise of the Solidarity trade-union movement in Poland.<sup>30</sup> Maybe most telling of all, Reagan and his secretary of state, George Shultz, were from early 1984 both publicly pushing for improved relations with the Soviets. In any case, the conversion turned out to be—incongruously for one who prided herself on her consistency—an aberrant, temporary affair.

According to Howe, Thatcher's change of tack was 'crucial in turning President Reagan away from the "evil empire" rhetoric' and encouraging him towards developing a working relationship with Mikhail Gorbachev.<sup>31</sup> Here we reach the nub of the issue, the question of influence. There is no doubt about how firm Thatcher's friendship was with Reagan, comparable with the close associations between Churchill and Roosevelt or Macmillan and Kennedy—though, in the end, it was to be less productive than either of those. Perhaps the similarity stimulated a desire to emulate her predecessors' enthusiasm for developing links with the Soviets. Be that as it may, after a successful visit to London in December 1984 of Mikhail Gorbachev, the rising personality in the Soviet Union, she had not only Reagan's confidence, but Gorbachev's too. As if she were privy to Sir Duncan Wilson's 14-year-old dispatches from Moscow, she insisted that she 'spotted him [Gorbachev] because I was searching for someone like him', that is, 'the most likely person in the rising generation of Soviet leaders', who 'could challenge even the system which he had used to attain power' and whom she would 'cultivate and sustain'.<sup>32</sup> For a while she had edged towards becoming one of 'the optimists, in search of light at the end of even the longest tunnel, confident that, somehow, somewhere, within the Soviet totalitarian system rationality and compromise were about to break out'.<sup>33</sup> This was a group she usually derided as unrealistic. In fact, the experts in the Moscow Embassy had already recognized, without requiring assistance from Thatcher, that talking to Gorbachev was unlike anything they had experienced in their communications with the older generation of Soviet leaders. The Foreign Office too, aided by information from Oleg Gordievsky, a senior KGB officer at the Soviet Embassy in London (which information was also passed on to the United States), homed in on Gorbachev as the coming man.

The question was how effectively Thatcher would be able to use her connection with Gorbachev. One thing she could do was to communicate Soviet, and her own, anxieties over Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), which Gorbachev had expressed while in London. In the president's mind, SDI would end the nuclear threat by the development of a laser anti-ballistic system in space. Considering herself, as a scientist, 'in my element' with the concepts involved, and with an understanding of them that would enable the 'right policy decisions to be made', which 'laid back generalists from the Foreign Office' and 'the ministerial muddlers in charge of them' would fail to see, Thatcher offered a qualified support to SDI.<sup>34</sup> In this respect, she seemed to offer an intermediate position between the views of the west Europeans and the Soviets that it would rob the world of a deterrent that had helped preserve peace for 40 years and Reagan, who saw SDI as an overture to the abolition of nuclear weapons. She did not, in fact, believe that lasers in space could provide a perfect defence, took her own and Gorbachev's anxieties to Reagan at Camp David in December 1984, and famously persuaded the president to limit his SDI ambitions, in the first instance, to research rather than deployment. Participation in this research, it was understood, could have economic spin-offs for Britain.

But the British had no intention of being a conduit for expressing Soviet anxieties.<sup>35</sup> Nor did Thatcher propose to be an intermediary for west European concerns. She had not the temperament for such a role and, after all, Trident and the Falklands underscored to the British that in the Cold War they must be firmly in the American camp. Thus, for all her new-found enthusiasm for East-West discourse, Thatcher's instincts remained essentially Atlanticist and, until the unification of Germany had altered the political geography of Europe in favour of the West, she remained suspicious of Soviet wedge-driving.<sup>36</sup> In any case, as was made abundantly clear, the Reagan administration was not looking for a go-between and, perhaps spurred by the resentment of some in Washington (including Shultz), that she had pushed Reagan too far, Thatcher soon began to detect advantages in 'Star Wars' (SDI) beyond the pragmatism of British involvement in its research and development. It would, she argued, enhance the Americans' 'second-strike' position and, therefore, the deterrent itself. On top of this, 'science is unstoppable' and 'we had to be the first to get it'.<sup>37</sup>

Given the close Thatcher-Reagan friendship, it is likely that the fact that she had 'found' him added to Gorbachev's acceptability in Washington and served to accelerate the improvement in Soviet-American relations which had already begun to take place. The most substantial examination of Thatcher's diplomacy has judged her rôle at this juncture to be 'considerable'.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, most non-British analyses of the end of the Cold War, including most of the papers presented at the Oslo Symposium in June 2002, frequently fail to mention Thatcher at all—though this may simply provide a variant on the partiality of historical debate rather than offering an accurate reflection of Thatcher's significance. What, surely, is significant is that Reagan's own belligerently anti-Soviet vociferousness had never precluded negotiation and, like the prime minister, he had, for a variety of reasons, begun to adopt a more accommodating approach to Moscow even before Gorbachev had been installed as general secretary in March 1985.<sup>39</sup> Within this changing environment, Gorbachev was sufficiently politically and socially adept to gain the ears of Reagan and his entourage without needing to be Thatcher's protégé. This was even more the case after June 1985, when Eduard Shevardnadze, who was to develop a cooperative relationship with Shultz, replaced Andrei Gromyko as foreign minister. In other words, Thatcher's own claims to have been a prime mover in the events which were to bring about the collapse of the Soviet system in Eastern Europe and the end of the Cold War itself are exaggerated.

Signs of improved US-Soviet relations were evident at Reagan's first meeting with Gorbachev at Geneva in November 1985, where Reagan attempted to deflect Soviet concern over SDI with assurances that it was entirely defensive. Their meeting a year later at Reykjavik caused Thatcher's recently found commitment to détente and nuclear disarmament to recoil. To her, Reykjavik was a Soviet trap for the Americans set by offering sweeping concessions in the deployment of strategic nuclear weapons in the hope of bringing an effective end to SDI. Relieved by Reagan's refusal to go along with this, she was nevertheless disturbed by the apparent willingness of the two leaders to suddenly become converts to the peace movement and abolish all nuclear weapons—though Reagan's immovable obstacle was an illogical refusal to abandon SDI, which would be the defence against the weapons he now seemed prepared to outlaw. To Thatcher, total abolition represented a double jeopardy; Soviet predominance in conventional forces plus the dashing of Britain's international prestige by the loss of

Trident (and which, though bought on the cheap, was estimated to cost between £7.5 and £10.5 billion). To counter both possibilities, she felt compelled to rush to Washington to remonstrate with the president. The satisfactory outcome she put down to her influence upon Reagan, which, according to her own account, Gorbachev also acknowledged.<sup>40</sup> Yet, unsurprisingly, Thatcher was not alone in her remonstrations. Even before being got at by the British prime minister, some of Reagan's senior advisers, including the chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had already advised that the offer to eliminate all nuclear weapons was too dangerous to be repeated.<sup>41</sup> Thatcher's warnings may have had some impact, but the heed that the Americans took of British, and the other west Europeans, would have been more impressive had their likely objections been taken into account before the Reykjavik discussions had taken an abolitionist turn.

Though a disappointment at the time, the Reykjavik summit proved to be a breakthrough. In succeeding talks, which were never far from the danger of breakdown, SDI and notions of total abolition of nuclear weapons were surreptitiously dropped, permitting agreement to be reached over the reduction of intermediate-range weapons and the signing of an Intermediate-range Nuclear Force (INF) Treaty in December 1987. This, the most significant disarmament agreement for over 50 years, legislating for the removal of US Cruise and Pershing missiles and Soviet IRBMs—the 'zero option'—was initially a source of some concern to the west Europeans, who looked askance at its potential for decoupling the defence of Europe from that of the United States. It was particularly disconcerting to Thatcher who later admitted, 'I had gone along with it [the 'zero option'] in the hope that the Soviets would never accept.'<sup>42</sup>

This development, on the public-relations level at least, coincided with what seemed like a new high for Thatcher's profile as a world leader. She visited Moscow on March 1987, he (briefly) stopped over at RAF Brize Norton in December on his way to wrap up the INF Treaty in Washington. If, however, suggestions made at the time that Britain under Thatcher might become part of an international 'troika', fashioned in the warm glow of public admiration from the president and, less so, from the general secretary, now seem greatly over-stated, they, no doubt, played their part in colouring her view of her own significance.<sup>43</sup> Yet, inevitably, once the two principals had begun to deal with each other directly, Britain's input began to decline. Added to this, there were those in Washington who considered the Thatcher-Gorbachev relationship to be rather too cosy, though, in fact, at this point she had alienated Gorbachev by her carping over the INF agreement. After 1989, when George Bush replaced Reagan as president (and, almost as important, James Baker took the place of Shultz) the transatlantic link between London and Washington, and therefore British influence on Cold War events, dwindled. As Moscow's hold on its Eastern European satellites loosened, Thatcher's reaction was to recloth herself in the garb of the Cold Warrior, an outfit in which she had always been more comfortable, by resisting further post-INF disarmament and insisting that the West keep up its guard by modernising its short-range land-based nuclear capacity in Europe. This put her out of harmony not only with the majority of her NATO allies, but also with her own Defence Ministry. Under the growing influence of the West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl (who in a series of difficult meetings with Thatcher during 1988 and 1999 resisted modernisation on the reasonable ground that failure to disarm further was bound to put his country in the front line in a future nuclear war), the west Europeans began to contemplate a 'third zero' to eliminate short-range missiles. Meanwhile, as those East



European states targeted by short-range weapons extricated themselves from Soviet control—by the end of the summer of 1989 Poland had a non-communist government and Hungary a reformist regime—Thatcher's position became increasingly unsound. Even so, she asserted that the Cold War would 'last until 2000'.<sup>44</sup> In November the checkpoints in the Berlin Wall were opened.

The fear expressed by Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin nearly 40 years earlier, that Britain was, in American eyes, 'merely another European country' seemed to be being realised.<sup>45</sup> The centre of political gravity had moved to the middle of the continent and, to Thatcher's disquiet, Bush was soon publicly referring to the United States and Germany as 'partners in leadership'. Thatcher's uncharacteristic and fleeting flirtation with détente, and the unsavoury upshot of this in the form of a disconcerting collapse of the familiar order, caused her once again to backpedal. In particular, she was fearful that a united Germany, which looked increasingly likely as the Wall was pulled down in November 1989, would probably join and dominate a European Community which at that point seemed bent on moving towards a federal Europe. Within a federal Europe, Germany would dominate—the resurrection of a long-standing British nightmare. Her objective became to persuade Bush and the French leader, François Mitterrand, to slow the process down by backing her idea of a democratized East Germany prior to reunification. Even were they interested, and they demonstrated little, their control over this outcome—like Gorbachev's and her own—was minimal. Her plea that the West 'must not succumb to euphoria' went quite unheeded by Chancellor Kohl, who, after the emotional scenes in Berlin of November 1989, bowed to the inevitable and began to push for unification.<sup>46</sup> On 3 October 1990, this came about and the Cold War ended where it had begun, in Germany.

By this time, Britain's part in that whole story from 1945 to 1990 had completed an almost perfect circle: apprehension of Germany; non-ideological containment of the USSR, negotiation for a *modus vivendi*; ideological wariness towards détente, return to dialogue; resistance to arms reduction; fear of Germany. All of this was performed against a backdrop of increased dependency on the United States and in which Margaret Thatcher played the traditional British rôle—successfully at the two famous Camp David meetings in 1984 and 1986, and unsuccessfully over German reunification—of putting a brake on US policies that went against perceived British interests.

Margaret Thatcher has continued to propound the notion of herself as a controlling force in the events leading to the collapse of Soviet communism. The popular enthusiasm which greeted her on her visits to Hungary, Poland and the Soviet Union as she was 'doing business with' Gorbachev left her with an impression of what seemed to be a real thirst for Western-style liberty and, rather less accurately, that she—with Reagan—'personified' these freedoms.<sup>47</sup> In reality, Britain's input in either producing or preventing the final *dénouement* was peripheral, though even Thatcher's modest part in these events as the leader of a middle-ranking power—'helping to open the door', as Howe puts it—is a testimony to her extraordinary personality.<sup>48</sup> Her relationship with Reagan and with Gorbachev provided the image of Britain as an intermediary between East and West in a way which Churchill, Eden and Macmillan might have envied. It was, nevertheless, a likeness which was more apparent than real. If one tries to contemplate the last decade of the Cold War either without Thatcher at all or with Thatcher sidelined, because she had never embarked upon her short-lived turn towards cooperating with

Moscow, and then to ask oneself what difference her (or Britain's) absence would have made, the answer must surely be: not much. The first-division players, who made the running, were Gorbachev, Shultz, Sheverdnadze and Reagan. Thatcher, providing points of acceleration during the mid-1980s and inspiration to the people of Eastern Europe, was top of a second division in which one might include, at the end of the process, Kohl, and, at the beginning, Pope John Paul II.

Ultimately, of course, they were all working in the dark. Gorbachev clearly did not envisage the collapse of the USSR and its empire but a somehow modernized version of what was already there. The pressures released in attempting to achieve this uncertain objective sapped his authority at home and in December 1991, just over a year after Germany had returned to being a unitary state, the Soviet Union was consigned to the dustheap of History. No Western leader anticipated this outcome, or, still less, worked systematically towards it by aiming to outspend the Soviet Union. This is the implication in Thatcher's statement in her memoirs that 'Ronald Reagan's original decision on SDI was the single most important of his presidency', though behind the assertion lay her own conviction that only she in the British government fully grasped its significance and her 'good day's work' in persuading the president to adopt a more limited approach to it.<sup>49</sup> Thatcher was not alone in her apprehension that Gorbachev's aim could be to split the West and his failure would be followed by a return to a more uncompromising administration. Best, therefore to remain on guard. Yet, as I have attempted to demonstrate, indications were available from the 1970s of the deepening technological fissure between the Soviet Union and the West. The general disposition of most supposed expert opinion, however, was to see this as a threat rather than an opportunity. The Cold War was part of the political landscape and it was preferable to continue with the lazy supposition that the USSR was an indomitable and wily opponent, because it was easier to conduct affairs on that basis. Most Western leaders experienced this mindset, though they did not allow it to dominate their actions, as, arguably, Margaret Thatcher did.

## NOTES

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- 2 S.Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War 1945–91* (London: Macmillan, 2000), *passim*.
- 3 H.Young, *One of Us* (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 169–70.
- 4 *Documents on British Policy Overseas (DBPO), Series III, vol. I, Britain and the Soviet Union, 1968–72* (London: HMSO, 1997), p. 250, minute by Walden, 22 July 1970.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 351, note from Bullard to Brimelow, 12 July 1971.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 438, memorandum by Douglas-Home, 29 February 1972.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 287, Douglas-Home to Wilson (Moscow), 1 December 1970.
- 8 *Ibid.*, pp. 526–7, Report by Joint Intelligence Committee A, 14 September 1972. See also JIC(A) report of 15 December 1969, *ibid.*, pp. 200–5.
- 9 Public Record Office, Kew, DEFE 4/253/3: COS 3/71, minutes of the meeting of 12 January 1971. See also CAB 129/155/8: CP(71)8, Statement on Defence Estimates, 26 January 1971.
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- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 291, Wilson to Sir Denis Greenhill, 31 December 1970.
- 12 *Ibid.*, pp. 299–301, dispatch from Wilson, 8 February 1971.
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- 14 Ibid., pp. 309–10, Douglas-Home to Wilson, 6 April 1971.
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- 21 Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, pp. 450–1.
- 22 Young, *One of Us*, p. 170.
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- 45 See, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947* (Washington, DC: US GPO, 1972), p. 271.
- 46 Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, pp. 796 and 794.
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## Italy and the Battle of the Euromissiles: The Deployment of the US BGM-109 G 'Gryphon', 1979–83<sup>1</sup>

*Leopoldo Nuti*

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the dual Italian choice: (1) to support NATO's decision to modernize its theatre nuclear forces, agreed upon by the North Atlantic Council on 12 December 1979; and (2) actually to implement that decision by deploying on Italian territory 112 US cruise missiles BGM-109 G 'Gryphon' in 1984. It is important to underline from the very beginning that the Italian decision must be analyzed in its two separate phases; namely, the initial step, when the cabinet led by Francesco Cossiga declared its intention to host the new NATO Long-Range Theatre Nuclear Forces (LRTNF) in December 1979, and the one of November 1983, when the new Craxi government confirmed the Italian willingness to implement the previous commitment.

The Italian decision must be understood as the result of three separate but interlocking processes: (1) the evolution of the international system by the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s; (2) the contemporary transformation of the internal political scenario in Italy; and (3) the reformulation of Italian foreign policy which the new Italian governments of this period intended to implement. Accordingly, this chapter is divided into three sections. The first is a general survey of the main interpretations with which historians and political scientists have tried to explain both NATO's dual-track decision and the overall importance of the issue of the LRTNF for the evolution of the international system. In a second section, the chapter briefly describes the evolution of the Italian political system and discusses the foreign policy that the new political coalition intended to carry out after the end of a protracted period of cooperation between the moderate political forces and the Communist Party. In the third section, the chapter looks in detail at the twin decisions of 1979 and 1983, while a concluding paragraph offers some interpretations about the rationale of the Italian choice and presents an explicative paradigm to clarify the significance of the Italian case in the overall history of the Euromissiles.

The chapter is based on a variety of sources, but unfortunately the only primary ones are the papers of Senator Acquaviva—Craxi's chef de cabinet for the whole period of his government—the memoirs of Defence Minister Lagorio, who also granted me a long interview, and some newly declassified US material from the NSA (National Security Archive) collections. This dearth of sources is further compounded by the lack of any major secondary study on the Italian decision. On NATO's dual-track decision the situation is obviously much brighter, but even in this case one should keep in mind that after a rather promising start international historians have sorely neglected the study of this issue.

*Interpretations of the Dual-Track Decision of December 1979**Origins of the decision*

The issue of the modernization of NATO's LRTNF is almost a textbook example of the intricacies of the Cold War relationship between the United States and its west European allies, which has customarily been interpreted either emphasizing the west Europeans' determination to involve the United States in their own affairs or underlining Washington's resolution to retain a foothold in western Europe regardless of the Europeans' own desires.<sup>2</sup>

Most of the scholarly interpretations of NATO's dual-track decision reflect either one of these interpretative paradigms, since they rotate around the issue of whether the actual origins of the decision can be explained as the result of a European proposal spurred by the deployment of the new Soviet SS-20 missiles, or whether it was the consequence of a unilateral US choice cunningly sold to the gullible Europeans, and with no real connection to the Soviet initiative. As this chapter will try to demonstrate, neither of these explanations is entirely satisfactory, since the dual-track decision—as with many other examples in the history of the transatlantic relationship—can be best explained as the result of a complex Euro-American negotiation, in the course of which a number of actors tried to protect and affirm their own national interests.

In collective memory, the 1979 dual-track decision is usually remembered as the NATO reaction to the gradual deployment of the new Soviet IRBM SS-20, which had begun in 1976 and continued without interruption in the following years. As is well known, the SS-20s were a more modern version of their predecessors, the SS-4 and SS-5 theatre nuclear missiles, but their very sophisticated and modern features made them a much more formidable weapon than the older models they were meant to replace.<sup>3</sup> The 1979 dual-track decision, however, was above all the result of an internal debate in the Atlantic alliance between the United States and its European allies. The Soviet deployment of the SS-20s, therefore, must be seen as a powerful external accelerator of this process, and one which perhaps played a crucial role in determining its final outcome; but it definitely imposed itself on the attention of the NATO allies only after the Atlantic debate on the modernization of the alliance's LRTNF had already begun.

Most of the research on this topic, as a matter of fact, agrees that the root of the 1979 decision must be located in the NATO disputes of the mid-1970s, when both the United States and the west European allies began to question the efficacy of NATO's nuclear systems and to discuss the opportunity to carry out a modernization in order to improve their effectiveness as a deterrent against a Soviet attack. In the United States, in particular, a crucial turning point was the appointment by President Nixon of the new Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger in July 1973. A former RAND analyst, Schlesinger was a real expert on the growing intricacies of nuclear strategy and one of the leading exponents of the so-called 'nuclear warfighting school'. This group of strategists firmly believed that it was absolutely necessary that NATO be equipped with a credible nuclear deterrent if it was to apply the doctrine of flexible response, adopted by the alliance in 1967, and graduate an escalation towards a full-blown nuclear war in case of attack by the Warsaw Pact. As secretary of defense, Schlesinger found a receptive audience for his theories and in 1975, after a protracted intimate discussion of his ideas

with some relevant members of Congress, such as Senator Sam Nunn, he presented a report which included a set of measures to alter the structure of NATO's nuclear forces in Europe.<sup>4</sup> The Schlesinger report advocated a modernization of the alliance's LRTNF by taking advantage of a number of technological breakthroughs, in order to deploy forces that could (1) be both a deterrent and an instrument of defence against a nuclear attack; (2) play a similar dual role against a conventional attack; and (3) be a deterrent against a possible nuclear escalation of the conflict.<sup>5</sup> When Schlesinger was replaced by Donald Rumsfeld shortly after the presentation of his report, the new secretary of defense turned the document into an actual project for the modernization of NATO forces, 'Improving the Effectiveness of NATO's Nuclear force Posture'. The project was presented to the NATO Nuclear Planning Group in 1976.<sup>6</sup> In short, it aimed at (1) increasing the capacity of the alliance's TNF (Theatre Nuclear Forces) to survive an enemy nuclear strike; (2) developing new weapon systems that could produce less collateral damage; and (3) amplify their range of action.<sup>7</sup>

Some scholars have presented this project as an all-American effort, emphasizing in particular the fact that the report was the outcome of an internal debate inside the US 'nuclear community'. Others, however, have pointed out that even in this preliminary phase of the elaboration of a new strategic approach it is impossible to neglect the contribution of the west Europeans. Susanne Peters, in particular, concludes that in the early 1970s the British and German representatives inside NATO's nuclear planning bodies were trying to push the alliance in a direction very similar to the one advocated by the Schlesinger report.<sup>8</sup> According to Peters, the new strategic approach suggested by the Federal Republic of Germany aimed at achieving the same results as the Schlesinger report, as in the case of the Guidelines adopted by the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) in 1976. That document insisted that NATO should try to improve the capabilities of its TNF in order to match its own strategic outlook, that it should pay more attention to the growing threat represented by the modernization of the Warsaw Pact's own TNF, and that it should study the deployment of new weapon systems that might enable the alliance to rely on a variety of options and guarantee the utmost flexibility of choice in case of an escalation.<sup>9</sup> While accepting that both documents tried to address the same set of problems, on the other hand, Christoph Bluth believes that the rationale behind the NATO guidelines was based on a different conceptual premise from the one which formed the core of the Schlesinger/Rumsfeld report. He concludes that it was not the work done in the NPG, but the 'developments in American strategic thinking and weapons development, as well as political pressures' that 'created the opportunity to rationalize NATO's TNF posture and restructure TNF deployment to bring it into line with strategy'.<sup>10</sup>

Be that as it may, almost all the studies on this subject agree that, until a certain point, NATO's discussion about the modernization of its LRTNF had not been influenced by the existence of an increasing Soviet threat. The plot, however, began to thicken after the mid-1970s, in particular after the arrival of the Carter administration. The new president and his staff displayed from the very beginning a limited enthusiasm for a programme of modernization of NATO's nuclear arsenal. They seemed to prefer that the European allies revert to a strategy of strengthening NATO's conventional forces. The new administration also seemed inclined to continue arms-control talks with the Soviets, even if the so-called 'deep cuts' initiative seemed to call into question the temporary SALT

(Strategic Arms Limitation Talks) II Vladivostok agreement. It was not clear, moreover, whether any new agreement with the Soviet Union would apply to theatre nuclear forces as well. This led to a complex relationship among Soviet strategic choices, the SALT II negotiations, and NATO's internal debate.

It should be emphasized that it was only at this stage that the European allies, which until then had paid very little attention to the efforts of the Ford administration to persuade them of the virtues of a modernization of NATO's TNF, began to display a growing interest in such a project. This U-turn was probably influenced by two parallel developments. On the one hand, the west Europeans began to fear that the Carter administration might turn out to be too weak and vacillating in its transatlantic policies, perhaps even willing to reach a compromise with the Soviets at their own expense. On the other, the Europeans showed a growing uneasiness towards the superpowers' strategic parity, whose consequence might have been the much-feared decoupling between US security and their own.<sup>11</sup> West Germany, for instance, was probably the strongest opponent of the possibility that a future SALT II might also cover US nuclear bases in Europe—the so-called Forward Basing Systems (FBS)—which the Soviet Union was on the contrary trying to include in the treaty.<sup>12</sup> Finally, by late 1976, a serious concern began to spread about the new missiles that the Soviets had begun to deploy, the SS-20s: the new weapons formally entered the NATO debate in September of that year, when the Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Fred Iklé, publicly stressed their dangerousness for the first time.<sup>13</sup>

Two well-known events acted as catalysts of this new phase. In October 1977, the German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt gave a famous lecture at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London, in which he emphasized that the new strategic parity between the superpowers magnified the differences between the forces of the two blocs at the European level. It was necessary therefore, Schmidt stressed, that the Vienna negotiation for a mutual balanced force reduction in Europe proceed accordingly with the superpower strategic negotiations.<sup>14</sup> The second critical event was the debate over the deployment of the so-called 'neutron bomb' (technically, the enhanced radiation weapon, or ERW), which led to a very sharp debate between Schmidt and Carter. After Carter cancelled the project in April 1978, the feeling spread that the new US president was not capable of restoring a firm US leadership inside the alliance.<sup>15</sup>

It is in the interconnection between these issues—the NATO debate about the modernization of the alliance's TNF, the growing perception of the need to strengthen the US leadership after the ERW debacle, the fear of a possible decoupling reinforced by the new Soviet military posture—that one finds the roots of the subsequent NATO dual-track decision of December 1979. In October 1977, even before the ERW controversy exacerbated the relationship between Carter and Schmidt, NATO's Nuclear Planning Group had already decided to set up a special committee, the so-called High Level Group (HLG), which, under the leadership of US Assistant Secretary of Defense David McGiffert, was given the task of discussing the modernization of the alliance's LRTNF. In February 1978, the group had already formed a consensus, actually anticipating the results of the decision-making process of the Carter administration, and advocated an 'upward evolutionary adjustment' of the alliance's TNF.<sup>16</sup> When the ERW controversy seriously shook the allies' trust in the Carter administration, the work of the HLG seemed one of the best possible tools to reinvigorate NATO and restore some optimism to the

transatlantic relationship. In the following months, the Carter administration came openly to support the proposals of the HLG, which in the autumn were defined as advocating the deployment of (1) sea- or land-based cruise missiles (SLCM, or GLCM); (2) Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missiles (IRBMs) with a range of a 1,000–1,500 miles (Pershing II and Longbow); and (3) the creation of new bases for the US FB 111H aircraft. These proposals were then discussed by President Carter with the British Prime Minister Callaghan, the French President Giscard d'Estaing and the German Chancellor Schmidt, in a meeting at the island of Guadeloupe in January 1979. The four statesmen still held widely diverging views: Carter, who found the LRTNF less morally repulsive than the neutron bomb, favoured deployment; Callaghan supported negotiations with the Soviets; Giscard suggested a combined approach of negotiations and deployment; and Schmidt, who was still reluctant to support the idea of new weapons, only gradually came round to Giscard's idea.<sup>17</sup> In his memoirs, the French president clearly states that he personally developed the eventual dual-track decision in an effort to reconcile the opposing views of the participants, and, in particular, to overcome Schmidt's doubts.<sup>18</sup> Eventually, all four agreed that NATO should go ahead with the modernization of its TNF.

During the rest of 1979 the Guadeloupe decision was further fine-tuned. A new NATO working group, the Special Group, was given the task of reconciling the TNF modernization with the US-Soviet arms-control negotiations. Besides, the range of weapon systems that NATO could deploy was reduced to two: by July 1979, an agreement had been reached on the deployment of 108 Pershing II missiles and 464 GLCM BGM-109 G 'Gryphon' missiles. The Special Group also worked out a special clause which made clear that if the Soviets dismantled their SS-20s, NATO would be willing to reconsider its own project of modernization. The High Level Group's final report was formally adopted by the Atlantic Council at a meeting of the foreign ministers on 12 December 1979, with the so-called 'dual-track' decision, which ushered in an entirely new phase of the Cold War.

This brief survey of the main steps that led to the dual-track decision should make clear that the causal connection between the deployment of the SS-20s and the NATO choice is not as clear-cut as some would have it. This does not mean, however, that NATO would have gone ahead with its own programme of modernization in any case, as some scholars seem to believe.<sup>19</sup> It was a very difficult and unpopular choice at a time when a large part of public opinion in the West had become accustomed to seeing détente as a more or less permanent feature of the international system. Few governments were ready to go ahead with a project which was likely to alienate large sections of their electorate. Thus, as happened in many other instances during the Cold War, Soviet foreign policy paradoxically ended up facilitating the implementation of a NATO policy which the Western allies were willing to adopt but also afraid of translating into practice. The deployment of the SS-20s, in other words, provided the West with the necessary leverage to implement a project which might well have remained in limbo had it not been for the emotional impulse generated by the appearance of the new Soviet weapons systems.

Such an interpretation also helps clarify whether the dual-track decision had a European or a US origin. Without the original input of the Schlesinger report and the affirmation of a new strategic culture in the United States in the early 1970s, NATO



could not have proceeded with the modernization of its TNF at the same speed. It is also true, however, that the project of TNF modernization might well have remained just that—a project—had it not been for the pressures generated by the Europeans in reaction to the vacillations of the Carter administration and without the concern generated by the new Soviet policies. Significantly, whole sections of the Schlesinger report were never implemented and on 12 December 1979, the North Atlantic Council chose to adopt only a few of the many recommendations originally tabled by the US Secretary of Defense. Such was the difference between the original design and its later implementation that some of those who had contributed to the elaboration of the report uttered some sharp criticism of the 1979 decision, which in their opinion completely altered their original project: ‘the 1979 solution for the LRTNF...was not the result of a strategic analysis but of an internal dispute inside the Alliance about how much the “political traffic” would be capable to tolerate about the modernization of nuclear forces in Europe.’<sup>20</sup>

To try and define the dual-track decision either as a simple expression of US hegemony or as the result of a concerted European effort to obtain a new US security guarantee seems therefore to contain a strong element of oversimplification in both cases. Even less plausible seems the thesis put forward by Diana Johnstone who, in a book published in 1985, described the deployment of the Euromissiles as part of a manoeuvre conceived of in Washington to tie western Europe to a new US global strategy whose real aim would be to keep the Soviets in check under the threat of the new weapons while the United States prepared to hit Soviet interests elsewhere, shifting the centre of gravity of their new strategy towards the Persian Gulf.<sup>21</sup>

### *The weapon that won the Cold War?*

What was the political importance of the deployment of the Euromissiles? There seems to be a growing consensus that the new weapons played an important role in persuading the Kremlin of the firmness of the West, pushing the Soviet Union to search for new arms-control agreements. With a certain stretch of the imagination, a group of US veterans from a Cruise base nicknamed their former missiles ‘the weapon that won the Cold War’, while the US Air Force Museum more modestly explains on its website dedicated to Cruise missiles how their deployment, controversial as it might have been, made possible the subsequent successful negotiations between Reagan and Gorbachev, ‘thus marking the first nuclear forces reduction in history’.<sup>22</sup> An imaginative Italian ambassador, Ludovico Incisa di Camerana, has titled his pamphlet on the story of the Euromissiles ‘the third world war’ and stressed the importance of the Italian contribution to the final victory by defining the deployment of the missiles at the Comiso Air Station as ‘the battle of Vittorio Veneto’ of this particular war, with reference to the final World War I battle on the Italian front, which led to the collapse of Austria-Hungary.<sup>23</sup>

Paradoxes and exaggerations aside, such a thesis also finds some support in the scholarly literature. There is substantial agreement that from 1979 to the end of 1983 the deployment of the new weapons lay at the core of one of the strongest and harshest contests of the whole Cold War. Difficult as it may be to reconstruct the Soviet decision-making process, there are some bits of documentary evidence which seem to indicate how the Soviet leadership was confident that they could still exploit Western pacifist movements and prevent installation of the missiles almost up to the very last minute. The

blatant fiasco of the neutron bomb, from the Soviet point of view, created an extremely interesting precedent, which they hoped could be repeated again, as Brezhnev supposedly stated to the Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact in November.<sup>24</sup>

Soviet success in halting the deployment would have almost certainly provoked serious tensions inside the Atlantic alliance and an unprecedented crisis in the relationship between the United States and its European allies. Nevertheless, this does not imply that the Soviets had started the deployment of the SS-20s with the perspective of forcing a decoupling between the United States and western Europe in the back of their minds. Raymond Garthoff, for instance, has written that it was much more likely that the initial Soviet decision was substantially motivated by a willingness to modernize its arsenal.<sup>25</sup> Jonathan Haslam adds that perhaps they were meant to bolster the ageing Soviet arsenal in view of a possible SALT III, in which they could be used as a bargaining chip to negotiate the removal of the US FBS.<sup>26</sup> Once the political propaganda battle against installation of the new weapons was engaged, however, it seems entirely plausible that the Soviet leaders—from Brezhnev to Andropov—were all perfectly aware that a reversal of the NATO decision would mean a great strategic victory for the USSR. Some evidence of this calculation can be found in the former East German archives: in December 1983, for instance, the GDR leader, Erich Honecker, told the secretary of the Italian Communist Party, Enrico Berlinguer, that the Soviet-led ‘peace offensive’ aimed predominantly at undermining Western support for NATO’s nuclear deterrent. In February 1984, Honecker emphasized to the leader of the French Communist Party, Georges Marchais, that the battle against the Euromissiles had changed the political and cultural climate of West Germany, and moved the SPD (Social Democratic Party) from its former strong anti-communist stance to one which advocated the search for an improvement in German security through the strengthening of its relations with Eastern Europe. In such a context, Honecker believed, the SS-20s turned out to be ‘useful tools of psychological intimidation which demonstrated to Bonn how wrong it was to expect that its own security could be strengthened by the new US nuclear forces’.<sup>27</sup>

Yet another demonstration of the importance the Kremlin attached to the deployment of the new NATO weapons might also be found in the revelations disclosed by Soviet defector Oleg Gordievsky. According to Gordievsky, after the election of Ronald Reagan the Soviet leadership persuaded itself that the West was actively preparing a nuclear war and that the installation of the Euromissiles was but a phase of a larger plan to wage nuclear conflict with the Soviet Union. In May 1981, Brezhnev and Andropov, then still head of the KGB, asked the Soviet secret services to dedicate a large part of their activities to the collection of all possible evidence related to such an attack under the codename ‘RYAN’ (*Raketno-Yadernoe Napadenie*: nuclear missile attack).<sup>28</sup> In the following years, the fear of a surprise nuclear attack contributed to giving absolute priority to operation RYAN, thereby creating in the Soviet leadership a climate of growing fear that Gordievsky defines as simply ‘paranoid’. The climax of this campaign, as is well known, came at the time of a NATO HQ training exercise codenamed ‘Able Archer’, meant to simulate the procedures for a nuclear attack, which took place in November 1983 shortly before the deployment of the Euromissiles.<sup>29</sup>

Mounting Soviet concern and their repeated expression of interest in preventing the installation of the new weapons, therefore, seem to support the thesis of all those who saw in the ‘battle of the Euromissiles’ a crucial phase of the Cold War. The harsh

confrontation demonstrated to the Kremlin how, in spite of some military defeats and a prolonged economic stagnation, both the United States and the west Europeans could still muster the political willingness to strengthen the cohesion of the alliance and close its ranks—thus reversing a process which until then had seen an unprecedented consolidation of the Soviet position. The choice of December 1979 and its subsequent confirmation in 1983, moreover, reversed the growing neutralism that had influenced the political culture of many west European countries, and created a clear reluctance to emphasize the differences between the Western democracies and the communist countries for the sake of détente and the preservation of good relations with Eastern Europe.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps the Euromissiles were not the ‘weapon that won the Cold War’, but their deployment certainly contributed to the rebalancing of the relations between the two blocs and to the acceleration of the process of change inside the USSR.

### *Foreign and Domestic Policy in Italy at the End of the 1970s*

While the West was bracing itself for this new round of confrontation with the Soviet Union, Italian domestic politics were undergoing a new phase of change. By 1979, the long search for an entente between the Italian Communist Party (PCI), on the one hand, and the centre and moderate left, on the other, had apparently come to an end. The 1979 political elections seemed to confirm the end of this experiment, and, by inflicting the first defeat on the PCI in many years (the party suffered an unprecedented loss of 4 per cent of the national vote), it set the stage for the creation of a new majority based on the cooperation of the centre with the moderate left and the exclusion of the PCI. The biggest innovation of this new phase was certainly the fact that for the first time since 1945 the leadership of the cabinet was not assigned to a Christian Democrat but to Giovanni Spadolini, a member of the tiny Republican Party, from June 1981 to December 1982, and then to Bettino Craxi, a Socialist, from August 1983 to June 1987. The creation of the new coalition also went together with a gradual economic recovery and a successful turn in the struggle against terrorism, which, after the liberation of US General Dozier in December 1981 from the Red Brigades, seemed finally bound into progressive decline.<sup>31</sup>

This new phase of Italian domestic politics was matched by a parallel attempt to reintroduce some dynamism in Italian foreign policy. The foremost aim of the new activism was to compensate for the loss of prestige which Italy had suffered throughout the 1970s, when the combination of economic weakness, terrorism and political instability all contributed to create an image of Italy as an extremely fragile country and unreliable partner. On the one hand, the new activism sought to give a higher profile to Italian foreign policy by making some important choices; on the other, the foreign-policy-making elite started an unprecedented debate on the meaning of Italian security policy. For the first time in many years, there was an attempt at working out a national strategic vision which clearly tried to combine Italy’s national interests with those of the alliance to which the country belonged. The foreign policy of the new coalition, based on the exclusion of the PCI, in particular, seemed to be centred on the ‘rediscovery’ that NATO did not always defend Italy’s national interests in an adequate fashion, and therefore called for a more dynamic policy in the Mediterranean and for a stronger military component to support it.<sup>32</sup>

Between the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s, therefore, one can find much evidence of an unprecedented Italian willingness to engage in a more active Mediterranean policy and to practise a more incisive foreign policy than in the past. In 1979, Italy decided to participate in the UNIFIL (UN Interim Force in Lebanon) mission along the Lebanese-Israeli border; in 1980, it signed a treaty of military, economic and technical assistance with Malta; and in 1982, it sent an Italian contingent to participate in the Multinational Force of Observers (MFO) in the Sinai peninsula. Similar signals can also be detected in the declarations of the defence ministers of the time, Lagorio and Spadolini, as well as in the White Book (*Libro Bianco*) published by the Ministry of Defence.<sup>33</sup> These steps should not be interpreted, however, as leading to a foreign-policy alternative to the previous reliance on NATO, but as an attempt to strengthen Italy's role inside the alliance, while at the same time preparing to face those threats that NATO might not be willing to deal with.

The two crucial steps of the new Italian foreign policy were the decision to deploy the Cruise missiles and the agreement to participate in the two multinational forces sent to Beirut between 1982 and 1984. The latter, in particular, was a real watershed in the use of the Italian armed forces. For the first time since the end of World War II, Italy sent a large expeditionary force abroad. Until then only very small groups of Italian soldiers had taken part in international peacekeeping operations. Now Italy participated in the Lebanese expedition with a sizeable number of troops, which for the first time included not only professional soldiers but a significant number of draftees as well.<sup>34</sup>

One should also hasten to add, however, that what today seems like the development of a rather coherent and logical design looked very different in the eyes of the protagonists of the time. Most of these choices took place in a convulsed and fragmented political climate, and each step of the new foreign and domestic policies was the result of interminable disputes and protracted mediations between very different positions. The temptation to reopen dialogue with the Communist Party hung like a cloud over the parties that formed the new coalition. It constantly influenced, in one sense or another, most of the choices that were made at the time. Nor was it clear what—if any—consensus could be found for the renewed aspirations of Italian foreign policy: the Italian public had developed a remarkable lack of interest in foreign-policy matters and above all it was not used to seeing Italy assume major international responsibilities. Finally, no one could predict what would be the course of the evolution of an international system which, after many years of détente, had suddenly returned to a climate of tense confrontation between the blocs. Italian foreign policy, therefore, was being formulated at a time when both the internal and the international systems were undergoing a phase of deep transformation—without knowing exactly where the two parallel processes might lead.

### *Italy's Decisions, 1979 and 1983*

The twin choices of 1979 and 1983 must be analyzed against this background. Both decisions were clearly affected by internal as well as international motivations to such an extent that it does not seem useful to try and separate the two facets of the problem.

*The decision of 1979*

The first decision to deploy the missiles was made by the government led by the Christian Democrat Francesco Cossiga in 1979. Its remote origins can be traced back to the interest that military and diplomats had expressed towards the deployment of US nuclear weapons on Italian soil since the 1950s.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, while détente had found a number of supporters among the moderate centre-left and those economic forces which were interested in exploring the potential markets of Eastern Europe, it had also aroused a number of perplexities. Many among the Italian military and the diplomatic corps had emphasized the risks of a process which would end either in a superpower condominium created at the Europeans' expense or in a gradual weakening of the ties between Washington and its allies.<sup>36</sup>

The interest in playing a larger role in the modernization of NATO's nuclear forces was strengthened by the sequence of events of the first months of 1979, and in particular by the conspicuous absence of the Italian prime minister at the Guadeloupe summit of January 1979, where, as we have seen, Carter, Callaghan, Giscard and Schmidt agreed to take the opportunity to ask NATO to deploy the new weapon systems. When the meeting was announced, the Italian ambassador in Washington promptly expressed his government's concern about the exclusion, only to receive a brief lecture from Brzezinski about the virtues of domestic stability if a country wanted to be represented at this kind of international meeting.<sup>37</sup> The well-known Italian hostility to the creation of formal or informal NATO directorates (especially whenever Italy was not invited to be a part of them) can therefore be seen as the contingent reason which started the decision-making process that led to the parliamentary approval of the modernization of NATO's TNF in December 1979. The favourable Italian disposition to the deployment of the new missiles was already apparent a few months after the Guadeloupe summit. In the spring of 1979, in fact, David Aaron (the special envoy sent by President Carter to discuss the deployment of the new missiles with the European allies) noticed a remarkable difference between the attitude in Rome and that of some of the other west European capitals—Brussels, The Hague and Bonn—where he perceived a clear concern for the possible domestic opposition which the introduction of the new weapons might stimulate. None of that was apparent in Rome.<sup>38</sup> A reliable source inside one of the Italian ministries confirmed to the US Embassy in Rome that, if there were no dramatic left-wing shifts at the impending elections, the next Italian government would accept basing of the LRTNF.<sup>39</sup> Shortly thereafter, Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs Battaglia and Minister of Defence Ruffini repeated to a US Congress delegation the general Italian support of the principle of TNF modernization, while sounding slightly more non-committal about the specific role that Italy could play in that process. The latter, in particular, made clear that it was above all mandatory to avoid a repetition of the neutron-bomb debacle.<sup>40</sup>

After the political elections of June 1979, on 4 August a new coalition government was formed, based on a rather fragile formula, which included the cooperation of three centre parties (the DC [Democrazia Cristiana] and the two tiny Liberal and Social Democratic Republican Parties), the external support of the Republican Party, and the abstention of the Socialist Party. This delicate balancing act, led by Francesco Cossiga, was bound to take some of the most difficult foreign-policy decisions of Italy's post-war

history. While the composition of the government was still being negotiated, the German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt made a quick trip to Rome. According to the recollection of Defence Minister Lagorio, Schmidt clearly expressed to the president of the republic, the ageing but very influential Socialist Sandro Pertini, the dilemma that the German government was facing, namely that it could not afford to be the only continental European country to deploy the new weapons. Pertini promptly reassured the German chancellor and promised him that Italy would not shun its responsibilities and would also accept the missiles. Once the new Cossiga government was formally established, the new prime minister was informed of the content of the Pertini-Schmidt conversation and, after expressing his own agreement, immediately started to explore the attitudes of the other political parties.<sup>41</sup> The German-Italian dialogue was resumed a few weeks later when Pertini returned the visit to the German chancellor, accompanied by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malfatti: both expressed Italian support for a NATO decision to modernize its TNF, and found themselves very much in agreement with Schmidt's position.<sup>42</sup>

According to the reconstruction of the Italian journalist, Claudio Gatti, the US Embassy in Rome had already begun to exert some psychological pressure on Cossiga as well as on Craxi, the new strong man of the Socialist Party, who was perceived by the United States as the key personality to prevent tough left-wing opposition to the installation of the missiles.<sup>43</sup> A few days after the formation of the new government, according to Gatti, Cossiga received an invitation by US Ambassador Richard Gardner, who intended to make him fully aware of the importance of a firm Italian commitment. Shortly thereafter the US ambassador, who was known for his personal leaning towards the re-establishment of full cooperation between the Italian socialists and the Christian Democrats, met with Craxi to persuade him that the PSI (Partito Socialista Italiano) should support the government if it decided to accept the deployment of the missiles. As a matter of fact, the Italian decision hung on whatever choice the Socialist Party might make: the Communist Party expressed strong opposition towards the new weapons from the very beginning, and without PSI support the government coalition could not muster enough votes to have the necessary parliamentary approval for the deployment. Clearly, a simple Socialist abstention would not be enough, and Craxi had to cajole his unruly Socialist bunch to express their formal approval of the deployment. Gatti writes that Craxi agreed with Gardner about the importance of the decision to deploy, but also asked for some time to discuss the issue with his closest collaborators and foreign-policy experts, in particular, with the director of the Institute of International Affairs (IAI), Stefano Silvestri. Lagorio also adds that Craxi charged him with the task of preparing a report for the party's directorate, which he did in close cooperation with Silvestri.<sup>44</sup> On 18 October, a selected group of PSI leaders (Craxi, Signorile, Lombardi, Lagorio and Accame) met to discuss the issue with Silvestri and decided to submit a formal proposal to the party, which recommended approving the installation of the cruise missiles.<sup>45</sup> The following week, the PSI directorate met to discuss the proposal and, after a protracted debate, which, according to Lagorio, lasted for several hours, was concluded with a masterpiece of ambiguous wording, which shrouded the substantial decision to approve the deployment.<sup>46</sup> In the following weeks, the leader of the left-wing fraction of the party, Signorile, tried to dilute this decision. He insisted that the party should also make clear that it favoured the decision to deploy only if it also supported a strong effort for an arms-

control agreement, which would make the installation of the new missiles unnecessary. Craxi, however, watered down this internal opposition and eventually asked the party to support the government unconditionally.

The Socialist determination to support the government allowed Prime Minister Cossiga to clearly express his government's backing of the modernization of the alliance's TNF when David Aaron made a second trip to Rome.<sup>47</sup> By the end of the month, Brzezinski could report to President Carter that the UK, West Germany and Italy had all taken 'firm internal government decisions' to support deployment.<sup>48</sup> A last-minute attempt to modify the Italian position was carried out by the President of the Supreme Soviet's Foreign Policy Commission, Boris Ponomarev, but to no avail.<sup>49</sup> During the following parliamentary debate in early December, the PSI expressed its support for deployment of the new weapons, even if some members of the party made clear their dissent. The Chamber of Deputies authorized the government to approve the modernization of the TNF with a large majority, 328 votes against 230.<sup>50</sup> A few days later, Italy expressed its support for the Alliance's dual-track decision at the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels.

A CIA report written a few weeks after the vote of the Italian parliament clearly shows how uncertain was the Italian political situation, and how vague were the perspectives of an actual Italian implementation of the dual-track decision. According to the CIA, the parliamentary vote had unleashed a process which called into question the previous political arrangements by 'precipitating first the re-emergence of factional squabbling among the Socialists and then the party's threat to withdraw its essential prop for the government'.<sup>51</sup> Both Cossiga and Craxi now found themselves in a weaker positions—against the internal oppositions inside their respective political parties and against the PCI as well. The CIA expected the PSI to be the first victim of the new situation, and feared that the party would be torn apart by a renewal of the old debate about the opportunity to work together with the Communists. This, in turn, would make it impossible for Craxi to continue his support for the government, for the Cossiga government to survive, and for the dual-track decision to be implemented.<sup>52</sup> The CIA's scepticism about Craxi's ability to carry his party along is confirmed by the memoirs of the head of the CIA station in Rome, Duane Clarridge, who was so frustrated with the perennial instability of the Italian political system that he went so far as to suggest a CIA project to detach the PCI from Moscow and involve it in government activities, in order to stabilize the Italian political system once and for all. Gardner, who was persuaded that Craxi might still be able to pull it off, was instrumental in derailing Clarridge's project.<sup>53</sup>

Leaving aside the intricacies of domestic Italian politics, the importance of the Italian decision should not be underestimated. At the Guadeloupe summit, Schmidt had clearly stated that his government could not proceed to the deployment if no other continental country matched the German commitment. Since both Belgium and the Netherlands seemed much more hesitant about a possible deployment, for a while Rome's decision became the key to a German favourable pronouncement and to the whole implementation of the modernization project.<sup>54</sup> There is simply not enough evidence available on this matter to support the Italian Socialists' claim that the whole project hinged on their determination to carry out the NATO decision, but clearly the situation placed Italy in a crucial position.

*The second choice: December 1983*

During the four years that separated the first decision from the second one, the climate of the international system took a clear turn for the worse, and the debate about the dual-track decision became so bitter that its implementation seemed to be hanging on a very thin thread indeed. Many European governments met with strong domestic criticism and began to look for alternative solutions that would allow them not to deploy the Euromissiles. Spurred on by the requests of his allies, in March 1981 the new US President Ronald Reagan informed the Atlantic council of his intention to enact the second track of the 1979 NATO decision and to open a negotiation with the Soviet Union within the year before proceeding to the actual deployment of the weapons. In the following months, however, the Reagan administration was torn between very contrasting views of what goal should be achieved by the possible resumption of arms control negotiations.<sup>55</sup> It was only in his speech of 18 November 1981 that Reagan announced his support for the famous 'zero-zero' option, that is the total elimination of all Soviet SS-4, SS-5 and SS-20s, in return for a NATO renunciation to deploy its new weapons.

Negotiations began in November 1981 in Geneva.<sup>56</sup> They went on for the next two years without reaching a solution, even if there were a few moments when an agreement seemed just around the corner. When the Soviets made clear their intention to include British and French nuclear forces in any future agreement, however, the negotiations stalled, because the United States refused to meet a demand which would have had an extremely disruptive impact on the Alliance.

NATO had decided that if the negotiations failed to reach an agreement the allies would proceed to the installation of the missiles by December 1983, and as that deadline approached there was a remarkable deterioration of an already very tense international situation. Most west European countries were hit by an unprecedented wave of pacifist demonstrations, which built up a strong opposition to the deployment of the missiles. West Germany was probably the crucial element in this struggle, and in order to steady the nerves of an increasingly distraught German public, the French President François Mitterrand took the unprecedented step of encouraging the Bonn government to go ahead with the deployment in a public speech in the Bundestag.<sup>57</sup>

In Italy the problem was compounded by the decision of the PCI to give its full support to the pacifist movement. After an initial phase of moderate criticism of the missiles, the PCI had drawn increasingly nearer to the pacifist groups, perhaps hoping to recover some of the votes lost in the 1979 elections. This choice gave to the Italian protest movement a political legitimization which forced the government to move very cautiously indeed, all the more so because the new coalition supporting the cabinet continued to be torn between contradictory aspirations.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, most Italian political forces felt that the 1979 decision was irrevocable. Many also felt that Italy had a great opportunity to capitalize on its previous commitment, since the Italian assent had taken on increasing importance for the success of the whole deployment across western Europe. This led to a protracted Italian insistence on obtaining from Washington a greater degree of control over the future missiles than the one which all the other western Europeans were ready to accept. The West German government, in particular, was quite aware of how the Soviets would perceive the deployment of new missiles on German territory, and from the very beginning stated that it would accept the weapons only if was clear that this was going to be an all-American show, with no German finger on the



nuclear trigger. In contrast, Italy tried to obtain a joint US-Italian control of the missiles under a dual-key system, following the pattern established by the deployment of the Jupiter missiles in southern Italy between 1960 and 1963: the memoirs of Defence Minister Lagorio tell this story in some detail. The United States displayed some flexibility towards the Italian request, but at the same time they were quite aware of the troublesome consequences that its acceptance would have had on the other allies and on the Soviets.<sup>59</sup> As late as January 1983, when the bilateral talks about the drafting of a Memorandum of Understanding for the deployment were entering their final stage, Italy was still proposing the establishment of a joint working group to re-examine the possibilities for a dual-key arrangement.<sup>60</sup> The United States replied that it would prefer to discuss the issue not as part of the final agreement but through a separate channel, a suggestion that the Italians did not find entirely persuasive. On the US side, however, there was a firm intention to disabuse the Italians that 'a physical dual key, or Italian actual participation in the command system, [was] either feasible or desirable'.<sup>61</sup> Eventually, President Reagan displayed his own personal hostility towards this formula in a letter to the Italian prime minister in March 1983.<sup>62</sup> It was clear that accepting the Italian request would reopen the can of worms of the NATO debate about nuclear sharing, which had been sealed only with great difficulty at the end of the 1960s with the creation of the alliance's nuclear planning group. On the other hand, part of the Italian military and diplomatic establishment had never been entirely persuaded of the wisdom of that solution, nor had it been particularly enthusiastic about US support for the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The deployment of the cruise missiles, therefore, seemed to offer an opportunity to reverse a trend which in certain Italian quarters had been accepted with some uneasiness. In this context, one should not be surprised that at the time of the negotiations with the United States over the dual-key formula the Italian Chief of General Staff, Admiral Torrisi, suggested to Defence Minister Lagorio that Italy should reconsider its non-nuclear status.<sup>63</sup> Lagorio's memoirs do not help clarify how the story ended: his term as defence minister expired before the actual deployment of the cruise missiles, and he plainly declares that he does not know whether eventually the United States approved the Italian request to obtain a dual-key arrangement, but he seems to believe that eventually the Italian demands were turned down. After the deployment, however, a number of Italian politicians publicly repeated the mantra that the missiles could not be launched without the approval of the Italian government, but they did not clarify whether this entailed only a US commitment to preventive consultation or a more substantial arrangement.

Throughout the period from 1979 to 1983, however, Italy conducted its own version of a dual-track diplomacy: the covert pressure to extract a favourable arrangement from Washington was accompanied by a concerted public effort to sponsor a negotiated solution at the Geneva talks. Faced with the mounting protests of the pacifist movement, the coalition that supported the government wavered in its resolution to proceed with the deployment, and found it necessary to prove to the electorate that it was trying hard to facilitate an international agreement that would make the deployment unnecessary. A step in one direction, therefore, would often be accompanied by one in the other: on 7 August 1981, for example, Lagorio publicly announced that the government had selected the area of Comiso, in Sicily, for the future deployment of the missiles, but at the same time also stated that Italy fully backed the hypothesis of a negotiated solution—a position that was

reiterated shortly afterwards in a Joint Session of the Senate Defense and Foreign Affairs Committee.<sup>64</sup> In October 1981, moreover, the Italian government expressed its public support for the so-called 'zero-zero option', which was to be formally launched by Reagan the following month and which eventually found its way into the 1987 INF treaty.<sup>65</sup>

Italian endorsement for a compromise solution, however, neither facilitated a negotiated solution in Geneva, nor shielded Italy from some rather heavy-handed Soviet pressure, which tried to encourage a rethinking of the previous decision, or from the strident criticism of the pacifist movements. This very tense context was made all the more alarming by a dramatic chain of events which turned the summer and autumn of 1983 into one of the most dangerous periods of the whole Cold War—from the shooting down of the Korean civil airliner KAL 007 by Soviet military aircraft in August, the terrorist attacks against the US marines' barracks in Beirut in October, to the US invasion of the island of Grenada two days later.

Against this ominous background, the first Socialist prime minister in Italian history was called upon to honour the previous commitment to deploy the missiles if the Geneva negotiations failed. In the weeks immediately before his appointment, Bettino Craxi's commitment to the deployment had begun to be perceived as less staunch than in 1979.<sup>66</sup> The PSI leader, however, was fully aware of the growing importance of the Italian decision and tried to reassure the allies that his party and himself would honour the previous decision—even if behind the scenes he repeatedly hinted at the fact that if the new cabinet were not led by a Socialist it might have been necessary to work out a deal with the Communists and perhaps attract them once again into the government coalition. At the end of a meeting of the PSI Executive Committee, for instance, Craxi's right-hand man, Gennaro Acquaviva, made explicitly clear to a member of the US Embassy that, if he did not obtain the leadership of the new government, Craxi might be forced to look for an agreement with the PCI—a proposal that the US diplomat interpreted as an undisguised attempt to blackmail the US Embassy into supporting Craxi's nomination to the prime ministership.<sup>67</sup>

Once he was appointed, however, Craxi made clear from his first formal speech as prime minister that his government would not waver from the decisions taken in 1979, and that if the Geneva negotiations failed the missiles would be installed according to schedule. Following what had become a customary pattern, he then invited the superpowers to come up with some new proposals which might help put the negotiations back on track.

In the first months of his government, Craxi was at the centre of intense diplomatic activity. He visited the main European capitals (London, Paris, Bonn and The Hague) as well as Washington, and corresponded both with President Reagan and with the CPSU Secretary Yuri Andropov. The latter wrote to Craxi right after his appointment in order to get his approval for the proposal that the USSR was about to submit in Geneva, which called for a reduction of the Soviet medium-range forces (including some, but not all, of their SS-20s) in return for the inclusion of the British and French nuclear forces and an agreement not to deploy the new US missiles.<sup>68</sup> The Soviet leader was clearly hoping gradually to push the Italian government towards a more accommodating stance and perhaps even to persuade Craxi to postpone the deployment by playing on the vague opening made by Craxi in his first speech as prime minister. The Soviet position,

moreover, might also have been reinforced by the conciliatory tone used by the new Italian foreign minister, Giulio Andreotti, during his first meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko.

While still pondering the content of Andropov's proposal, Craxi also received another letter from Reagan, in which the US president expressed his approval for the 'timely' support that the Italian government had expressed for the dual-track decision. Reagan also criticized Andropov's approach and asked Craxi whether he had any new suggestions to offer for the next round of the Geneva negotiations. In this regard, the US president himself suggested that it might be necessary to make a last effort to present to Geneva a new concerted Western position—at the very least, in order to place the United States and its allies in a position where they could tell their public that they had made a global effort to reach an agreement before the deployment began.<sup>69</sup>

In the following weeks, the Italian government worked out a reply to the Andropov letter. The tone of the answer was quite firm, even if it did not close the door completely to continuation of the negotiations. What was more important, however, was the fact that Craxi plainly told Andropov that his government could not accept a status quo which was tantamount to a legitimization of 'global Soviet superiority'.<sup>70</sup> US Secretary of State George Shultz explicitly praised the content of the Italian letter to the Italian ambassador in Washington, Petrigiani.<sup>71</sup>

Craxi replied to Reagan, inviting the United States to advance new proposals and, eventually, to continue the negotiations even after the beginning of the deployment.<sup>72</sup> Shortly thereafter, Foreign Minister Andreotti restated the firm intention of his government to go ahead with the deployment even if the Geneva negotiations failed—and this at the very time when the head of the US delegation in Geneva, Paul Nitze, had made clear at a NATO meeting that the Soviets were likely to leave the negotiations when the first missiles arrived on European soil.<sup>73</sup> From the scanty primary evidence available, it seems possible to evince a close Italian cooperation with the preparation of the new negotiating proposals tabled by the United States in the last round of discussions in Geneva.<sup>74</sup> It is also likely that there was an intimate cooperation between the Italian and the German delegations inside the NATO Special Group, which closely monitored the evolution of the Geneva talks. In a preparatory brief for Craxi's meeting with the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Antonio Badini, the diplomatic adviser to the Italian prime minister, wrote:

Quite often the Italian and the Germans have found themselves defending the same position and pushing towards a serious negotiation, conducted in good faith, with a clear perception not only of the goal of European security but also of the legitimate Soviet concerns. Without being presumptuous, we can state that it was us who—more than anybody else—gave a real meaning to the famous formula 'firmness and flexibility' that, over time, has become the hallmark of the Western position.<sup>75</sup>

Ultimately, Craxi might have been willing to explore some additional channel for keeping the negotiations open, since he gave the impression to Mitterrand and his staff that he was not hostile to the idea of including the French nuclear forces in the Geneva

talks—something which his French interlocutors obviously did not have the slightest intention of doing.<sup>76</sup> Craxi's defence minister, the former prime minister Spadolini, warned his US counterpart Caspar Weinberger that late October and early November would be crucial, particularly because he feared a renewed PCI manoeuvre to undermine the Craxi cabinet by exploiting opposition to the missiles within the Socialist Party.<sup>77</sup> Eventually, even if some other European governments were worried that his government might be inclined to postpone the installation of the missiles in order to prevent a breakdown of the Geneva talks, Craxi managed to find a delicate balance between the necessity to demonstrate his reliability to the Western partners and the search for an increasingly difficult negotiating position. His trip to Washington between 18 and 22 October closed Craxi's round of consultations with the other NATO governments, and fully met US expectations by demonstrating—in the words of the official communiqué—'a broad and significant agreement' between the positions of the two governments.

At the end of October, NATO strengthened its negotiating position by reaching an important agreement on a crucial issue. In a meeting held at Montebello, Canada, the Nuclear Planning Group decided to cut 1,400 warheads from its nuclear arsenal, as long as this reduction was accompanied by a modernization of the nuclear forces that were not to be dismantled.<sup>78</sup> In the following days the parliaments of the member states began formally to approve the beginning of the deployment, and the Italian parliament followed suit after a long debate in the middle of November. The final vote was 315 for and 219 against. Shortly afterwards, the delivery of the GLCM (ground-launched Cruise missiles) began, and between the end of March and early April 1984 the first Cruise missiles in the Comiso bases became fully operational.<sup>79</sup>

After the installation of the first missiles, Craxi's firmness seemed to vacillate a little. In an unexpected move that drew some sharp criticism, in May 1984 the Italian prime minister offered a moratorium on the deployment if the Soviets would return to the negotiating table—which the Soviet delegation had left when the first missiles reached the European soil, just as Nitze had foreseen.<sup>80</sup> In spite of this belated and unusual step, however, Craxi successfully confirmed and implemented the 1979 decision at a time when international tension was running much higher than in 1979, and the confrontation between domestic political forces was much sharper and more dramatic.

### *Conclusions*

The Italian decision to deploy the cruise missiles has often been explained by referring to the theory of the primacy of domestic politics. Undoubtedly, the themes of Western solidarity and the need for Italy to fulfil its duties as a responsible NATO partner were thoroughly exploited by those political forces who wanted to steer Italian domestic politics away from the previous course of cooperation with the PCI. Faced with the challenge of accepting the new missiles, the PCI would either risk complete isolation or complete its transformation into a thoroughly Westernized political force and abandon what was left of its old ties to the Soviet Union.

From this perspective, the 1979 decision fulfilled the dual goal of testifying to the renewed dynamism of Italian foreign policy and also of putting the PCI in a very difficult position. After some initial hesitations, the PCI played the role of 'loyal opposition',

defending its right to criticize the deployment of the missiles, while also claiming to remain entirely supportive of NATO as such. For the new coalition, and above all for those political parties which wanted to hinder or entirely prevent a possible comeback of the Communists into the government, it was easy to accuse the PCI of playing a double game and therefore to keep it at bay. Considerable help was given to these parties by the PCI itself after its leadership decided to try to ride the wave of the growing mass demonstrations against the new weapons.

The shrewdest calculation in this game was probably displayed by Craxi, the newcomer on the Italian political scene. The Socialist politician benefited from his support of the deployment by demonstrating to Washington that he could be as reliable a partner as any previous Christian Democratic leader. He could then use the test of his Atlantic firmness against both the PCI and the DC. As one analyst wrote shortly afterwards 'the domestic and international importance of the Euromissiles could help the PSI to build up its image as a leftwing Italian party which was capable of taking its own responsibilities in the defence field without being ideologically conditioned.'<sup>81</sup>

In order to have a better understanding of the Italian decision, however, one should add that similar choices, based on a mix of domestic and international considerations, had been made by Italian leaders throughout the Cold War. In the context of the Cold War, in fact, it was very difficult to separate domestic and international motivations, and it was inevitable that any decision that confirmed that Italy belonged to one of the two blocs would have strong domestic repercussions. From the decision to enter the Atlantic Pact in 1949, to the deployment of SETAF (South European Task Force) in 1955 and of the Jupiter missiles in 1960, these choices served a twofold (if not threefold) purpose: namely, to enhance Italy's international status, and to demonstrate to the PCI that the country's Western choice was irrevocable and should not be tampered with—as well as to bolster the personal political career of the politician in charge at the time, who would become a reliable partner in the eyes of his US interlocutors. Thus, even in the 1980s, the test of Atlantic loyalty remained an important feature of Italian politics, to be used not only when there was a perception that Italy might be left on the margins of some important new development but also firmly to anchor to the West a political system which was still regarded as potentially subject to dangerous shifts. The only major difference between the 1983 decision and the previous ones was that this was the first time that the decision had been made by a Socialist and not by a Christian Democrat politician.

These reflections could be probably broadened to cover the overall relationship between domestic and foreign policy in the history of post-war Italy. The debate about this relationship has been particularly influenced by the work of the US political scientist Norman Kogan,<sup>82</sup> who in the late 1950s assessed Italian foreign policy after World War II as a real *quantité négligeable*, basically an insignificant appendix of Italian domestic politics and an entirely dependent variable of its vagaries. Even if such an interpretation contains some obvious oversimplifications, it has become part of the stereotypes that surround post-war Italian foreign policy, and has seriously affected its perception both domestically and internationally.

The scenario that I have tried to describe in this chapter, however, is a bit more complicated. Italy's decisions related to NATO and security policies were based upon a close interconnection between domestic and international motives that needs to be

explained by a different paradigm from those that try to establish a hierarchy between foreign and domestic motivations. It seems to me that in order to grasp the essence of Italian security choices during the Cold War one should not use the conceptual category of what Raymond Aron defined as 'pure diplomacy' (according to Aron, a diplomacy that ignores what happens inside the borders of neighbouring countries and is only concerned with their foreign policies); on the contrary, one should resort to the paradigm of 'international civil war', which Aron applied to those periods where the traditional confrontation based on power politics is strengthened by an ideological or a religious one.<sup>83</sup>

If one follows this latter paradigm, it becomes somewhat easier to assess some of the main critical decisions of Italian foreign and security policies. Instead of trying to assess the primacy of domestic over foreign policy (as if one kind of primacy were nobler or baser than the other) it seems more productive to conclude that the Italian politicians who made those choices allowed them to maximize their advantages both from the domestic and from the international point of view. This does not mean that the Italian post-war leadership always exploited the country's foreign and security policies in order to pursue its own domestic goals; nor does it mean that each decision can be justified as the result of some sophisticated assessment of the country's *raison d'état* unaffected by unprincipled calculations of the possible domestic repercussions of such a choice.

This line of investigation also helps interpret the whole story of deployment of the Euromissiles as an important episode of the overall East-West confrontation of the early 1980s. What was at stake in Italy was not only the deployment of the new weapons, but the political orientation of the forces that would rule the country in the near future. Coming from a period where the once firm pro-Western commitment had been severely weathered by a number of circumstances, Italian political forces were faced with the choice of continuing the previous trend of a low-profile foreign policy for the sake of domestic cooperation between the communist left and the other centre and centre-left parties, or of trying to reassert the country's previous pro-Western orientation at the almost certain risk of a serious breakdown in their relationship with the PCI. Choosing the latter course inevitably entailed a period of serious domestic confrontation.

This interpretation can be strengthened by a comparison with the very similar debate that took place in West Germany. In his study of the West German political debate about the Euromissiles, *War by Other Means*, Jeffery Herf<sup>84</sup> has tried to explain how the real issue at stake was the future of West German politics itself, especially after the swing of the SPD away from its previous anti-communist stance. In both the German and Italian cases, the decision to deploy the missiles meant therefore not only that both countries would continue to follow a more assertive pro-Western foreign policy, but that those political forces that advocated a somewhat different course would be gradually marginalized from the political mainstream. This domestic political shift was in itself one of the prizes of the Western victory in the battle of the Euromissiles, since it signalled to the Soviet Union that it could not calculate on Western willingness to pay an increasingly higher price for the sake of pursuing a policy of détente at all costs.

## NOTES

- 1 I would like to thank some good friends for their precious help in the development of this essay: Mike Yaffe for discussing it with me for a long time and providing me with a copy of

- his PhD dissertation, Frédéric Bozo and Olav Njølstad for their comments and suggestions on a previous version of this chapter, and Bill Burr for providing me with some newly declassified documents from the NSA's invaluable and ever-growing collection.
- 2 The obvious reference for understanding this debate is of course Geir Lundestad, *The American 'Empire' and Other Studies of US Foreign Policy in a Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).
- 3 Jonathan Haslam, *The Soviet Union and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons in Europe, 1969–1987* (London: Macmillan, 1989).
- 4 The Schlesinger report has been discussed in a number of studies. A very detailed analysis can be found in Michael J. Yaffe, 'Origins of the Tactical Nuclear Weapons Modernization Program, 1969–1979', PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1991. The work of Ivo H. Daalder and Catherine McArdle Kelleher, 'The United States and Theater Nuclear Modernization since 1970', paper prepared for the Second Nuclear History Program Study Review conference, 1991, focuses more on the *application* of the report than on its origins. See also Ivo Daalder, *The Nature and Practice of Flexible Response. NATO Strategy and Theater Nuclear Forces since 1967* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991): on the 'warfighting school', pp. 58–63, and on the Schlesinger report, pp. 128–36 and 140–3.
- 5 Daalder and Kelleher, 'The United States and Theater Nuclear Modernization', pp. 22–6.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- 8 Susanne Peters, 'West German Doctrines and their Predominance in the Evolution of the NATO Dual-Track Decision of 1979', PhD dissertation, European University Institute, 1989; on the Healey-Schröder paper see also. Daalder, *The Nature and Practice*, pp. 73–8; Christoph Bluth, *Britain, Germany and Western Nuclear Strategy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 187–93; Beatrice Heuser, *NATO, Britain, France and the FRG: Nuclear Strategies and Forces for Europe, 1949–2000* (London: Macmillan, 1997), pp. 54–7; Michael J. Legge, *Theater Nuclear Weapons and the NATO Strategy of Flexible Response* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1983).
- 9 Peters, 'West German Doctrines', p. 117.
- 10 Bluth, *Britain, Germany*, p. 235.
- 11 On this issue, and in particular on the role of the US and European strategic analysts in spreading these perceptions, see Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1984), pp. 855–6.
- 12 Peters, 'West German Doctrines', pp. 130–3. On the European opposition to SALT, see Daalder, *The Nature and Practice*, pp. 166–70. A sample of the European perplexities in Memorandum for the President by the Secretary of Defense, 10 June 1977, in Declassified Documents Research System (DDRS), 1996, doc. n. 103.
- 13 Diana Johnstone, *The Politics of the Euromissiles: Europe's Role in America's World* (London: Verso, 1984), p. 9.
- 14 Helmut Schmidt, 'The 1977 Alastair Buchan Memorial Lecture', 28 October 1977, *Survival*, vol. 20 (January–February 1978). David Schwartz, *NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1983), pp. 214–16; Daalder, *The Nature and Practice*, pp. 169–70. Less well known, but arguably as important as the Schmidt speech, was a letter from the British Secretary of Defence, Fred Mulley, to his US counterpart, Harold Brown, in which the former emphasized the need for new theatre nuclear forces to make credible every step in the 'ladder of deterrence': Bluth, *Britain, Germany*, p. 230.
- 15 On the ERW controversy see, in particular, Olav Njølstad, *Peacekeeper and Troublemaker. The Containment Policy of Jimmy Carter, 1977–1978* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies, 1995), Ch. 3, 'Extended Deterrence in Europe. The Neutron Bomb Controversy'.

- 16 Schwartz, *NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas*, pp. 216–19; Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, p. 858.
- 17 Bluth, *Britain, Germany*, pp. 234–5.
- 18 Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, *Le pouvoir et la vie*, vol. II, *L'affrontement* (Paris: Compagnie 12, 1991), pp. 363–85. I would like to thank Frédéric Bozo for pointing out to me the importance of Giscard's role at the summit.
- 19 In particular, Johnstone, *The Politics of the Euromissiles*.
- 20 The quotation by Cotter, one of the original authors of the Schlesinger report, is in Yaffe, 'Origins of the Tactical Nuclear Weapons', p. 640.
- 21 Johnstone, *The Politics of the Euromissiles*.
- 22 See, for instance, the USAF Museum webpage at <[http://www.wpafb.af.mil/museum/modern\\_flight/mf42.htm](http://www.wpafb.af.mil/museum/modern_flight/mf42.htm)>
- 23 Ludovico Incisa di Camerana, *La vittoria dell' Italia nella terza guerra mondiale* (Roma: Laterza, 1997), pp. 54–57.
- 24 Michael Ploetz, 'NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organization at the Time of the Euromissile Crisis, 1975 to 1985', in Gustav Schmidt (ed.), *A History of NATO: The First Fifty Years* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2001), p. 218.
- 25 Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, pp. 870–86.
- 26 Haslam, *The Soviet Union*, p. 175.
- 27 Ploetz, 'NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organization', pp. 215–16.
- 28 Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *KGB: The Inside History of its Foreign Operations From Lenin to Gorbachev* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990). On RYAN see also Benjamin B. Fischer, *A Cold War Conundrum* (Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Intelligence, 1997); B. Fischer, 'Intelligence and Disaster Avoidance: The Soviet War Scare and US-Soviet Relations', in Stephen J. Cimbala (ed.), *Mysteries of the Cold War* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 89–104.
- 29 Andrew and Gordievsky, *KGB*, pp. 632–4.
- 30 Jeffrey Herf, *War by Other Means: Soviet Power, West German Resistance, and the Battle of the Euromissiles* (New York: Free Press, 1991), p. 230. On the new political climate in West Germany see also Bluth, *Britain and Germany*, p. 243.
- 31 On the evolution of the Italian political system by the late 1970s and the early 1980s, the most detailed analysis can be found in Piero Craveri, *La repubblica dal 1958 al 1992* (Turin: UTET, 1995), Ch. 7. For some contemporary evaluations of the instability of Italian politics before and after the elections of 1979 see the memoranda of the CIA National Foreign Assessment Center dated 2 February, 8 March, 15 May and 6 September 1979, all in DDRS, 1992, doc. nos. 2462, 2463, 2466 and 2468.
- 32 Maurizio Cremasco, 'Italy: A New Role in the Mediterranean?', in J. Chipman (ed.), *NATO's Southern Allies: Internal and External Challenges* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 218.
- 33 *La difesa: libro bianco* (Rome: Ministero della Difesa, 1985). Vittorio Luigi Ferraris, *Manuale della politica estera italiana 1947–1993* (Rome: Laterza, 1993), p. 346 n. 95.
- 34 On the political importance of this mission, see Lelio Lagorio, *L'ultima sfida. Gli euromissili* (Florence: Loggia de' Lanzi, 1998), pp. 114–15. Other texts include Franco Angioni, *Un soldato italiano in Libano* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1984); Luigi Caligaris, 'Western Peacekeeping in Lebanon: lessons of MLF', *Survival*, vol. 6 (1984), pp. 262–8; 'Libano: missione compiuta', *Rivista Militare*, vol. 5 (1984), p. 164; Giuseppe Lundari, *Gli Italiani in Libano, 1979–1985* (Milan: Editrice Militare Italiana, 1986); Gino Nebiolo, *Gli Italiani a Beirut* (Milan: Bompiani, 1984); Angelo Sion, 'Libano. Il contingente militare italiano', *Rivista Militare*, vol. 1 (1984), pp. 23–31. For an overall assessment, see Kjell Skjelsbaek, *The Multinational Force in Lebanon* (Oslo: NUPI, 1988); Ramesh Chandra Thakur, *International Peacekeeping in Lebanon: United Nations Authority and Multinational Force* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1987).



- 35 L.Nuti, “‘Me too, please’: Italy and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons, 1945–1975”, *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, vol. 4, no. 1 (March 1993), pp. 114–48. On Italy’s NATO nuclear tasks see Daalder, *The Nature and Practice*, pp. 109–10.
- 36 For a contemporary evaluation of the Italian perplexities see for instance the assessment of US ambassador to Rome G.Frederick Reinhardt in Airgram A-47 from Rome (Reinhardt) to the Department of State, ‘Annual Policy Assessment’, 14 July 1967, in National Archives Washington (hereafter, NAW), Central Foreign Policy Files (CFPF) 1967–1969, Political and Defense, b. 2238.
- 37 Olav Njølstad, ‘The Carter Administration and Italy: Keeping the Communists Out of Power without Interfering’, *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol. 4, no. 3 (Summer 2002).
- 38 Schwartz, *NATO’s Nuclear Dilemmas*, pp. 229–30. John Newhouse, *War and Peace in the Nuclear Age* (New York: Vintage, 1990), p. 328.
- 39 Tel. 9628 from US Mission to NATO to SecState, 7 May 1979, in NSA, FOIA Collection.
- 40 Tel. 17450 from Rome to SecState, 2 July 1979, in NSA, FOIA Collection.
- 41 Lagorio, *L’ultima sfida*, pp. 27–31. In his memoirs Schmidt does not mention his meeting with Pertini, but clearly explains how at the Guadeloupe summit he had already stressed what NATO later defined as the German ‘non-singularity’ clause, namely the German opposition to be the only continental country to accept the new missiles: H.Schmidt, *Menschen und Mächte* (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1987), p. 232.
- 42 Tel. 26522 from Rome to SecState, 26 September 1979, in NSA, FOIA collection. The only remarkable difference was that Schmidt made clear that Germany preferred that the LRTNF to be deployed in German territory be kept under US control only, while Italy, as we will see, was to take a rather different position.
- 43 Claudio Gatti, *Rimanga tra noi L’America, l’Italia, la ‘questione comunista’: i segreti di cinquant’ anni di storia* (Milan: Leonardo, 1990), pp. 183–9. Gatti’s work is based on an extensive use of the Freedom of Information Act, but his archival references are somewhat unclear.
- 44 Lagorio, *L’ultima sfida*, pp. 33–4.
- 45 Gatti, *Rimanga tra noi*, p. 186.
- 46 Lagorio, *L’ultima sfida*, p. 38. The directorate ‘took note’ of the existence of a ‘document of orientation’ (!), which cautiously authorized the party to explore the possibility of supporting the government in its decision to deploy. While this was certainly an egregious example, such Byzantine verbiage was quite common in the vernacular of the Italian political system during the Cold War.
- 47 Gatti, *Rimanga tra noi*, p. 188.
- 48 Njølstad, ‘The Carter Administration and Italy’.
- 49 Camerana, *La vittoria dell’ Italia nella terza guerra mondiale*, p. 56.
- 50 Ferraris, *Manuale*, p. 256. Lagorio, *L’ultima sfida*, pp. 43–4.
- 51 Central Intelligence Agency, National Foreign Assessment Center, 31 January 1980. *Memorandum: Italy: Tnf-An Update*, DDRS 1992, *fiche* 158, doc. no. 2470.
- 52 A new government crisis in March 1980 seemed to confirm the CIA’s worst expectations, but eventually the problem was solved by the formation of a new Cossiga cabinet based on an even closer cooperation among the DC, the PRI and the PSI.
- 53 Duane R.Clarridge, *A Spy for All Seasons. My Life in the CIA* (New York: Scribner’s, 1997), Ch. 10.
- 54 Schwartz, *NATO’s Nuclear Dilemmas*, p. 232.
- 55 There are several accounts of this protracted debate. See, for instance, Strobe Talbott, *Deadly Gambits* (London: Picador, 1985).
- 56 Paul Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost: At the Centre of Decisions—a Memoir* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989).
- 57 Frédéric Bozo, ‘La France, fille aînée de l’Alliance? La politique atlantique de François Mitterrand, 1981–1984’.

- 58 For a contemporary assessment of the impact of pacifist movements, see Directorate of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, 'Peace Group and Leaders in INF Basing Countries', 1 November 1982, in DDRS, 1992, doc. no. 2489.
- 59 In October 1979, Brzezinski wrote to President Carter that the Italians had given up their initial request on some 'kind of physical veto', but the arrival of the new Reagan administration probably spurred on the Italian government to try again, since Lagorio mentions several discussions with Weinberger on this subject. On Brzezinski's memo, see Njølstad, 'The Carter Administration'.
- 60 Tel. 2617 from Rome to SecState, 1 February 1983, in NSA FOIA Collection.
- 61 Tel. 2618 from Rome to SecState, 1 February 1983, in NSA FOIA Collection.
- 62 Lagorio, *L'ultima sfida*, pp. 84–91. In his memoirs, US Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger does not mention the Italian request: *Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years at the Pentagon* (London: Michael Joseph, 1990). On the Jupiter missiles see L.Nuti, 'Dall'operazione *Deep Rock* all'operazione *Pot Pie*: una storia documentata dei missili SM 78 Jupiter in Italia', *Storia delle Relazioni Internazionali*, vol. 11/12, no. 1 (1996/97) and no. 2 (1996/97), pp. 95–138, 105–49.
- 63 Lagorio, *L'ultima sfida*, pp. 59–60.
- 64 For the August declarations, see Tel. 18981 and 20025 from Rome to the SecState, 7 August and 21 August 1981, in NSA, FOIA Collection. Aside from Comiso, four other bases eventually hosted the GLCMs—RAF Greenham Common, UK (established 1983), Florennes AB, Belgium (1984), Wüschheim AB, West Germany (1986), and RAF Molesworth, UK (1987).
- 65 On the Italian diplomatic position, see Lagorio, *L'ultima sfida*, pp. 92–8.
- 66 Lagorio, *L'ultima sfida*, pp. 130–1.
- 67 See the paper presented by Bruna Bagnato at the conference 'La politica estera italiana negli anni '80', pp. 22–3.
- 68 Letter from Y.Andropov to B.Craxi, 27 August 1983, in Fondazione Turati, Carte Acquaviva, scatola 31, busta1, fasc.3, sottof. 'Viaggio in USA'.
- 69 Letter from R.Reagan to B.Craxi, 12 September 1983, in Fondazione Turati, Carte Acquaviva, scatola 31, b.1, fasc.3, sottof. 'Viaggio in USA'.
- 70 Lagorio, *L'ultima sfida*, p. 149.
- 71 Ambassador Petrigiani to Foreign Minister G.Andreotti, 15 October 1983, in Fondazione Turati, Carte Acquaviva, scatola 31, b.1, fasc.3, sottof. 'Scott's'.
- 72 See the paper presented by Bruna Bagnato at the conference 'La politica estera italiana negli anni '80', p. 28.
- 73 George P.Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: Diplomacy, Power and the Victory of the American Ideal* (New York: Scribner's, 1993), p. 369.
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 Note, 'Negozio FNI di Ginevra', prepared for a meeting between Prime Minister Craxi and Chancellor Helmut Kohl, 23 September 1983, in Fondazione Turati, Carte Acquaviva, scatola 31, b.1, fasc.1.2, Viaggio nei Paesi Bassi and in Federal Germany.
- 76 Jacques Attali, *Verbatim*, vol. I, 1981–1986 (Paris: Fayard, 1993), pp. 502, 519.
- 77 Tel. 23425 from Rome to the SecState, 4 October 1983, in NSA, FOIA collection.
- 78 Daalder and Kelleher, 'The US and Theater Nuclear Modernization', p. 133.
- 79 Tel. 329421 from the SecState to Rome, 18 November 1983, in NSA, FOIA collection.
- 80 See two different interpretations of this episode in. Ferraris, *Manuale*, pp. 352–3, and Virgilio Ilari, *Storia militare della prima repubblica, 1943–1993* (Ancona: Casa Editrice Nuove Ricerche, 1993), pp. 66–7. For Schultz's own assessment, see Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 475.
- 81 M.Cremasco, 'Italy: A New Role in the Mediterranean?', in John Chipman (ed.), *NATO's Southern Allies: Internal and External Challenges* (London: Routledge, 1988) pp. 206–7; see also Ilari, *Storia militare della seconda repubblica*, pp. 404–5.

82 Norman Kogan, *The Politics of Italian Foreign Policy* (New York: Praeger, 1963).

83 Raymond Aron, *Gli ultimi anni del secolo* (Milan: Mondadori, 1984), p. 201.

84 Jeffrey Herf, *War by Other Means: Soviet Power, West German Resistance and the Battle of the Euromissiles* (New York: Free Press, 1991).

## NATO's Northern Frontline in the 1980s

*Olav Riste*

Let me start with the seemingly banal question: What is—or should we now use the past tense, was?—the northern flank? A terse answer would be that it was a vulnerable frontline area on the north-eastern edge of the Atlantic Alliance, composed of two militarily weak states, Norway and Denmark, linked in alliance with one superpower and several middle or smaller powers. Such an alliance relationship has to be considered from strategic as well as political perspectives. The role of the northern flank in NATO strategy was in the last resort determined by two parameters: could the northern flank be defended? Or was it expendable? In the political context, relations between the northern flank countries and the rest of the alliance have had two main determinants. First, the obvious one—the need for these countries to obtain security and protection through reliance on external sources of strength. Second, the timeless caveat for weak states allied to great powers—the fear of becoming pawns in a great power game over which they have little or no influence. To borrow a term from a Danish political scientist, it comes down to a balance between ‘security’ and ‘entrapment’.<sup>1</sup> It is useful to have those two determinants in mind when reviewing the role of the northern flank countries during what we in retrospect can see was the most turbulent period of their relationship with the Atlantic Alliance.

### *Strategic Perspectives*

In terms of strategy, during much of the Cold War period the northern flank kept being referred to as the forgotten flank.<sup>2</sup> NATO's attention remained focused on the central front, as the most likely arena if armed conflict should break out between the two blocs in Europe. Strategic analyses remained fixed on a scenario in which the massive strength of Warsaw Pact armies would break through the Fulda Gap and invest most of the European continent. Any action on the flanks would be ancillary to the main battlefield.<sup>3</sup>

Gradually, however, the Alliance acquired some stakes in the defence of the northern flank. Allied commands were established; the area—and particularly north Norway—became important for forward intelligence-gathering purposes,<sup>4</sup> and bases and facilities for wartime use by allied forces were constructed. Although both Denmark and Norway refused the stationing of nuclear weapons on their territory in peacetime, special arrangements were made ‘sub rosa’ for bombers carrying nuclear bombs to use airfields on the Danish territory of Greenland. Norway also showed a far-reaching willingness to cooperate in the secret establishment of intelligence-collection facilities, provided they were under Norwegian control and manned by Norwegian personnel. The purpose of those facilities was partly to provide early warning of any Soviet moves with hostile

intent, partly to map out Soviet air defences for the purposes of route planning for US bombers, and, from the late 1960s, to identify and locate Soviet submarines that might threaten the United States or the Atlantic sea lanes. Even so, and for a long time, the defence efforts of the Alliance stressed the central front. Threats to the flanks were a secondary consideration—any spill-over from a conflict on the central front would be treated as a sideshow.

The gradual emergence of the northern flank as a high-risk area began in the 1960s. The initial reason for this was a combination of the stalemate situation on the central front and NATO's 'flexible response' strategy: the improbability of a successful Soviet assault in central Europe might lead to 'probing' for soft spots in the south or in the north. The second—and major—factor behind the growing importance of the northern flank was, of course, the Soviet naval build-up on the Kola Peninsula. The growth of the Soviet Northern Fleet caused concern in Norway several years before the Alliance as such took much notice. Official judgements about the significance of this development were studiously moderate, however. With an almost liturgical quality about it, the assessment drew a distinction between the great mass of that build-up, which was seen 'in a global perspective...directly connected to the superpower balance'. Yet there were elements of that build-up that 'could be used in ways that give us cause for concern, since that enormous military power is located in our immediate neighbourhood'.<sup>5</sup>

As the Northern Fleet continued to expand during the 1970s, Norwegian military circles began to fear its effect on allied reinforcement plans. Large-scale Soviet naval exercises, with ships of the Northern Fleet and the Baltic Fleet joining forces in the Norwegian Sea in a vast pincer movement, suggested that NATO warships and supply vessels could enter the area only at their peril. Was the Norwegian Sea becoming a 'mare sovieticum', effectively barring the passage of allied seaborne assistance for Norway's defence? Towards the end of the 1970s, NATO began to show a greater willingness to designate forces, with the defence of Norway as a high priority. In particular, measures were taken to pre-position heavy equipment and supplies for forces—mainly US, but also some British and Canadian air and ground forces—that could then be brought in during a crisis. The air defence of the northern flank was significantly improved through the so-called COB (Collocated Operations Bases) programme, which ensured that most of the Norwegian air bases—themselves built through massive infusions of NATO funds—were organized and equipped for joint operations by Norwegian and earmarked US Air Force units. Facilities were also arranged for planes from the US Navy's aircraft carriers to transfer their operations to Norwegian airfields.

This development continued apace in the 1980s, most noticeably through the arrangement whereby all the heavy equipment needed for a US marine amphibious brigade of about 13,000 men was pre-positioned in central Norway. Although the need for operational flexibility dictated that most of the forces thus designated for Norway might also have to be deployed to crisis situations elsewhere, Norway remained a high priority for a maximum of four brigades and 14–16 air squadrons.

The most significant change in the situation for the northern flank was heralded by the advent of the Reagan administration, and its announcement of the new US maritime strategy. As the new secretary of the navy, John F. Lehman, described it, what was needed was a 'forward strategy, since our allies, such as Norway, Turkey, and Japan, are themselves forward in waters adjacent to the Soviet Union. To defend them successfully

in the initial stages of a conflict requires a forward strategy.’<sup>6</sup> That strategy, backed by plans for a 600-ship US Navy, presaged a decisive turn towards a strong and continued presence of heavy US naval units in the North Atlantic and Norwegian Seas. This contrasted sharply with the previous decade’s gradual retreat of the allied maritime defence line to behind the Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom barrier. In his memoirs, Secretary Lehman contemptuously refers to that barrier as ‘a watery Maginot line’, and as indicative of ‘a passive reactive policy’ which also had ‘the atrocious result of implicitly turning over the Norwegian Sea and hence Norway itself to the Soviet Union in any NATO conflict’.<sup>7</sup> The new maritime strategy, which in 1982 materialized in NATO’s new concept of maritime operations (CONMAROPS), changed Norway’s strategic situation. In relation to the questions asked at the outset, the answer, in the light of the new maritime strategy, was that the northern flank—perhaps for the first time—was not only not expendable, but could and would be defended.

### *Political Developments I: Norway*

During the 1980s, therefore, while the arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union intensified, and the war in Afghanistan exacerbated East-West relations, the outlook for Norway’s defence was better than at any time before the Cold War. Most of those developments had been welcomed and indeed encouraged by the Norwegian government, and supported by the public. Norwegian perceptions of the Soviet threat had been sharpened by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, another neighbouring country of the USSR. Relations with the Soviet Union also took a turn for the worse in 1984 after the arrest of a young and politically ambitious Norwegian diplomat, Arne Treholt, on charges of spying for the Soviets. He was sentenced to 20 years in prison, and it was suggested at the trial that his betrayal had caused almost irreparable damage to Norway’s defences. Treholt had also played a role in the 1977 negotiations, whereby Norway had agreed to operate a ‘grey zone’ arrangement with the Soviet Union in the Barents Sea, pending a solution of the dispute over the borders of their respective continental shelves and economic zones. That arrangement, which is still in force due to Russian intransigence, was heavily criticized from the start as being too much in favour of the Soviets, and also as a dangerous concession to Soviet desires for bilateral deals with its small neighbour. Moreover, 1983 brought another in a long series of incidents of suspected Soviet submarine incursions into Norwegian coastal waters. As usual in those cases the culprit—if indeed there was one—was not identified, but suspicions remained, reinforced by Sweden’s ‘whisky on the rocks’ episode in 1981, when a Soviet ‘Whisky’-class submarine got stuck on a skerry deep inside Swedish waters.

Even so, public opinion in Norway, while remarkably consistent in its support of NATO and Norway’s membership of the Alliance, was beginning to show a certain Cold War weariness. Was all this defence build-up and military spending really necessary? Would not the arms race, with its thousands of nuclear weapons, increase the danger of war by accident or otherwise? Was not the Cold War becoming an exclusively bilateral contest between the two superpowers, in which their allies were playing the role of mere pawns? Such questions had periodically been aired earlier in the Cold War, only to be submerged by Soviet actions such as the invasion of Hungary in 1956 and that of

Czechoslovakia in 1968. By the early 1980s, however, the mood of disengagement seemed stronger than ever. The heavy Soviet concentration of forces on the Kola Peninsula, 50–100 kilometres from the Norwegian border, together with the spectre of a forward deployment of major US naval forces, suggested that the northern flank was on the way to becoming the central front for a confrontation between the two principal powers. Was this the end of Norway's longstanding hope to keep the high north as a low-tension area?

Norway's reluctance towards direct involvement in great-power politics, notwithstanding its membership of NATO, had been clear from the beginning of the Cold War. The so-called 'bases policy' was a 1949 unilateral declaration that no foreign forces would be stationed in the country unless Norway was attacked or threatened with attack. In the radicalized atmosphere of the 1970s, every sign that the Norwegian government was moving towards closer cooperation and greater integration with NATO was met with accusations that the bases policy was being undermined. The other element of Norway's disengagement from the more unpleasant aspects of Cold War politics—the refusal to have nuclear weapons on Norwegian soil—was even more deeply entrenched in public opinion, and became official policy from the late 1950s. Coupled with the realization that nuclear weapons were a mainstay of NATO's defences, this clearly posed a dilemma for successive Norwegian governments.

The nuclear issue came back with a vengeance at the end of the 1970s. After the government in 1961 had confirmed the ban against nuclear weapons on Norwegian soil, it had been a more or less tacit assumption that allied forces coming to assist Norway in a crisis might have nuclear weapons in their arsenals. Certain secret preparations that might eventually enable Norwegian forces to handle such weapons had also been made. But as arms control came to dominate the international security agenda during the 1970s, propelled by huge increases in the nuclear arsenals of the two superpowers, public opinion erupted in a series of anti-nuclear demonstrations everywhere in the West. Elements on the left wing of the Norwegian Labour Party then decided to reopen discussion about NATO's nuclear strategy. Campaigns were launched against proposals such as the 'neutron bomb', which would kill people without causing material damage, or the installation of a multitude of mid-range nuclear missiles in Europe to counter similar Soviet installations, and in favour of establishing a Nordic zone free from nuclear weapons. This time women's organizations and religious groups were also mobilized, and the movement had the support of many voters in the centre of the political spectrum. In 1979, a well-organized campaign began under the slogan 'No to nuclear weapons', which in a short time acquired 100,000 members. The petition in support of a Nordic nuclear-free zone and against nuclear weapons on Norwegian soil even in wartime gathered half a million signatures—about one-eighth of the population.

The Norwegian Labour government in power at the time was in a quandary, particularly over the proposal to equip NATO forces in Europe with cruise missiles and intermediate-range ballistic missiles (INF). The purpose was to counter the proliferation in the Warsaw Pact countries of the intermediate-range SS-20 missile, and NATO's decision in favour of the proposal was accompanied by an offer to the Soviet Union of negotiations, with a view to simultaneous and parallel cuts in the number of such missiles. Since there was no question of installing such missiles in Norway, the government decided to go for such a combined or 'dual-track' decision, while stressing

the negotiation element. But this time the rank and file of the Labour Party revolted, and several of their parliamentarians as well as some government ministers joined in the protest.

A hastily composed compromise proposal was worked out, parts of which—such as the prospect of an eventual ‘zero solution’—the prime minister Odvar Nordli managed to persuade the Americans and then the NATO council to accept. On that basis, the government weathered the storm, but the wear and tear caused by the ‘dual-track decision’ and the parallel debate on a Nordic nuclear-free zone contributed to Labour’s fall from power in the autumn of 1981. The Conservative government, which then took over, put the question of a nuclear-free zone on ice, and Labour in opposition toned down their advocacy—in part because the Americans had uttered slightly veiled threats to suspend plans for reinforcement forces for Norway if such a zone was established.

The Conservative government, with Kåre Willoch as prime minister, soon managed to restore Norway’s position as a dependable ally. President Ronald Reagan’s ‘Star Wars’, or the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), which came to dominate the agenda during the mid-1980s, was strongly disliked by most European NATO members, but Norway muted its public criticism of the programme in order not to disturb the US-Norwegian security relationship. That changed as the Willoch government fell in May 1986, and Labour returned to power. At a meeting of NATO defence ministers shortly afterwards, Norway’s Johan Jørgen Holst refused to sign a communiqué expressing general support for US postures as regards defence and space weapons. Norway thereby for the first time joined Denmark and Greece as a so-called ‘footnote country’—countries that from time to time appended reservations to otherwise agreed NATO declarations and communiqués.

The Americans reacted sharply. The work of a joint US-Norwegian study group on security and defence affairs, which for a decade had served as an additional channel to heighten US awareness of the problems of the northern flank, was temporarily suspended. The United States also withdrew an offer to finance the upgrading of Norway’s anti-aircraft defence. The crisis blew over, but relations remained cool, since the Labour government also decided to sharpen the ban against visiting allied ships carrying nuclear weapons. As New Zealand had just made a decree of that nature, the United States was clearly determined to stop the contagion from spreading, and Norway again had to back down.

The noisiest dispute, however, was over the export to the Soviet ship-building industry, by the Norwegian firm Kongsberg Våpenfabrikk and the Japanese Toshiba Company, of equipment that had the effect of reducing the propeller noise from submarines. Ever since the beginning of the Cold War the Americans had been pushing for strict export controls of strategic material. Norway and the other European countries generally followed the American lead on the issue, albeit often with some reluctance. In this and other fields the Reagan administration, goaded by Senate conservatives, was determined to enforce a hard line, and the KV/Toshiba affair that erupted in 1987 touched an especially raw nerve, since the expanding submarine fleet was a central feature of the Soviet threat. The Americans demanded satisfaction in a number of ways, and the Norwegian government had to employ a varied arsenal of concessions and diplomatic appeals to prevent the dispute from creating a long-term rift. Of particular interest was Norway’s warning against giving public opinion the impression that the superpower was



resorting to bullying tactics towards a small ally, instead of seeking accommodation based on common interests.

The rifts, discords and disputes that arose during the last ten years of the Cold War between Norway and NATO, or between Norway and the United States, were deeply troubling at the time. Seen in retrospect we may conclude that although the points at issue were important enough, the sound level that they generated was out of all proportion. The actions and rhetoric of hardliners such as Alexander Haig and Richard Perle are perhaps best explained by a fear that, if Norway was allowed to slide down the slippery slope towards appeasement of the Soviet Union, others might follow. In the longer perspective, the disputes that did occur were not of sufficient importance to dent the general image of Norway as a cooperative and loyal ally, doing its best to contribute to Western security in the ways and with the means available to a small nation on NATO's northern frontline.

On the whole, Norway's governments during the Cold War tended to keep to the security policy line set out by the government-in-exile during World War II: cooperation first, limits to cooperation thereafter. The two main features that set Norway apart from the mainstream of alliance policy were its self-imposed restraints on allied military presence and activities on Norwegian soil, and its anti-nuclear stance in its various permutations. Both those sets of policies could be and were explained as rational and sensible measures to avoid fomenting Soviet feelings of insecurity in a sensitive border region. They were also important as elements in what was sometimes referred to as 'the Nordic balance': a term suggesting a linkage between Norway's self-imposed restraints and restraints on Soviet policy toward Finland.

Even so, Norway's reservations were in their origins at least partly motivated by what I call 'the isolationist impulse': the desire to seek refuge from the threatening realities of power politics—the wish not to have to share the commitments and responsibilities inherent in an alliance based on 'all for one and one for all'. Paired with that came the old conviction of 'automatic protection', as when one of the leaders of the 'No to Nuclear Weapons' in 1983 wrote that NATO 'in its own interest will make every effort to hold Norwegian territory'.<sup>8</sup> It is this ambivalence between loyalty and separateness that lies behind two contrasting characterizations of Norway's role in the Cold War that have been current in public debate. One has seen Norway—often somewhat contemptuously—as 'the most diligent boy in the NATO school'. The other one has called Norway's posture in the Alliance—also somewhat contemptuously—as nothing better than 'semi-alignment'. Both are clearly wide of the mark. But, in a backhanded way, they attest to Norway's success in combining a cooperative posture with an astute defence of special interests, concealing neutralist nostalgia behind a set of perfectly rational arguments.

### *Political developments II: Denmark*

Denmark's relationship with NATO in the 1980s developed in markedly similar ways, leading a Danish expert to characterize the period 1979–87 as 'The Policies of Strife'.<sup>9</sup> There also it began with the efforts of a Social Democratic government to tackle the difficult issues of NATO's dual-track decision. Those efforts revealed deep fissures within the Social Democratic Party, as well as a profound schism between that party and the non-socialist opposition, after the latter took over the government as a minority

coalition of four parties in 1982. In the rather more complex composition of the Danish parliament, the situation during the 1980s has been described as one of

three different security policy majorities...in addition to the basic working majority of the government: 1) a broad coalition consisting of the government parties, the Progress Party, the Social Democrats, and the Radicals, which supports NATO membership in general; 2) a coalition of the same parties minus the Radicals which also underwrites defence policy; and 3) a new majority coalition consisting of Social Democrats, Radicals, and the two left-wing parties, which has largely determined Danish nuclear weapons policy since late 1982.<sup>10</sup>

As a result, this third majority was able to engineer the adoption of a series of parliamentary resolutions on matters of defence, security and nuclear policies, against the votes of the government parties. The government decided to live with this in order to carry through its domestic policy programme. Consequently, in the councils of NATO the government might speak as a loyal ally, while at the same time appending to decisions and communiqués the reservations required by the parliamentary resolutions. In that way, during the 1980s, Denmark came to figure prominently next to Greece as a 'footnote member of NATO'. For all that, Danish public opinion continued in fairly solid support of NATO membership. Denmark's military integration with the Alliance continued apace, within the framework—since 1962—of the Baltic Approaches (BALTAP) Command. Thus, from 1976 Denmark had its own COB programme. Denmark also accepted SACEUR's (Supreme Allied Commander Europe's) Rapid Reinforcement Plan, but left-wing opposition to pre-positioning of equipment for US marines may explain why this was omitted from the plan.

The one issue on which Denmark, much more strongly than Norway, marked its dissent from NATO policy and strategy was that of nuclear weapons. It opposed from the beginning the decision to deploy intermediate-range nuclear missiles (INF) in Europe; refused to contribute to NATO's infrastructure programme; and only accepted the compromise 'zero solution' when it was made part of the 1987 INF Treaty. On the issue of a Nordic nuclear-free zone, while Denmark for a long time shared Norway's scepticism towards the idea, it became part and parcel of Danish policy from 1984.

On the whole, the similarities between Norwegian and Danish approaches to security and defence issues during the 1980s are striking. Yet there are interesting differences. Norway's much more exposed strategic situation, as an immediate neighbour to the greatest concentration of naval and nuclear weapon systems anywhere, lay at the bottom of a clearer awareness of the need for deterrence. At the same time, that exposed strategic position nurtured a lingering desire to escape from the harsh realities of the arms race and the balance of terror—what I have called 'a neutralist nostalgia'.<sup>11</sup> In Denmark, on the other hand, the country's security and defence policy was determined less by the need for deterrence than by the vagaries of a complex domestic policy equation. In Norwegian threat perceptions, the nearness of Soviet power in the north weighed heavily. In Denmark, it was the general threat of nuclear war that dominated the security policy agenda.

*Norwegian reactions to Gorbachev*

Given the 'neutralist nostalgia' referred to above, one might expect Norway to have been in the forefront of Western countries eager to respond to the desire for better East-West relations signalled by the new Soviet leadership after 1985. Factors such as the common border in the north, and a tradition of reasonably good working relations in matters of economics and trade, pointed in the same direction. On the face of it, the two countries would also benefit from cooperation in the exploitation of the resources of the Barents Sea; in the short term, as regards fisheries, and in the long term over oil and natural gas.

There were nevertheless major obstacles to be overcome. The Soviet economic system, heavily centralized under state control and bogged down in a massive bureaucracy, was not a promising partner for the Norwegian market-oriented economy. Any idea of cooperation was also overlaid with a justified fear that in bilateral affairs between the Soviet juggernaut and little Norway, the junior partner would inevitably lose out. Another major problem in regard to the resources of the Barents Sea was the unsolved dispute about the border between their respective economic zones.

Extreme caution therefore marked the first Norwegian efforts towards regional cooperation. Early initiatives went in the direction of neighbourly emergency aid towards alleviating the economic distress of the population in the Murmansk district in the late 1980s, providing food and medical assistance. Private firms that tried to involve themselves on Soviet territory made little progress in their struggles with Soviet red tape and endless referrals to Moscow. Norwegian firms interested in purchasing relatively cheap Russian raw materials, principally products of the mining industry, fared better. Russian fishermen's interest in hard Western currency also led to large-scale deliveries of fish directly from their trawlers to Norwegian filleting and freezing plants, after the regulations preventing such trade were lifted at the end of the 1980s.<sup>12</sup>

At the political level, Gorbachev's 1987 'Murmansk Initiative' engendered much interest. In a widely publicized speech during a visit to Murmansk in October of that year, Gorbachev made a strong appeal for expansion of international cooperation in the north and in the Arctic. Widely understood as the opening of a diplomatic offensive directed towards the Arctic and Nordic states, the speech covered such different fields as security issues, economic development, scientific research and environmental concerns. It was followed by the visit of Soviet Prime Minister Ryzhkov to Sweden and Norway in January 1988, and the offensive reached its high point in an Arctic science conference in Leningrad later that year.<sup>13</sup>

Western and Norwegian interest in the initiatives were focused on the possibilities of access for investment in the exploitation of the energy and mineral resources of the Soviet Arctic, and on cooperation in limiting the threats to the environment caused by industries such as the Nikel combine near the Norwegian border. During Ryzhkov's visit to Oslo several bilateral agreements were signed, covering such diverse fields as search and rescue cooperation in the Barents Sea, prompt notification of nuclear accidents, and cooperation in environmental protection.

Although elements of the cooperation envisaged in the 'Murmansk Initiative' would in due course become reality, little came of them in the short lifetime that remained for the Soviet Union. The failure of the 'Murmansk Initiative' in producing more of a breakthrough for cross-border cooperation in the north, at least in the short term, was due

to many factors, some of which had their roots in the political turmoil of the final years in the existence of the Soviet Union. Optimists were fascinated or at least intrigued by the political changes implied in the Soviet 'New Thinking', *glasnost* and *perestroika*, whereas others called attention to new threats in the shape of Victor Suvorov's recent revelations about the Soviet Union's 'Spetznaz' special forces. Both trends found expression in publications from the Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies in the late 1980s.<sup>14</sup>

One major impediment to a widespread embrace of the new signals from the Soviet leadership was of a bilateral nature, however. Gorbachev's speech completely sidestepped the outstanding maritime border dispute between Norway and the Soviet Union in the Barents Sea. This was an issue that was bound to encroach upon every cooperative effort in those waters, whether it concerned fisheries, oil and natural gas exploration and exploitation, or oceanographic research. Norway therefore remained sceptical about any bilateral arrangement in the absence of clearly defined borders. Ryzhkov, during his visit to Oslo, proposed as an interim arrangement the establishment of a 'special zone' on both sides of the disputed area. But to the Norwegian authorities this was nothing but a resurrection of the old ghost of bilateralism, and hence completely unacceptable. So, while there has been some progress and many setbacks for practical cooperation in the Barents region during the 1990s, the boundary dispute in the Barents Sea has remained unresolved to this day.

#### NOTES

- 1 Nikolaj Petersen, 'The Dilemmas of Alliance: Denmark's Fifty Years with NATO', in G.Schmidt (ed.), *A History of NATO: The First Fifty Years* (London and New York: Palgrave, 2001), vol. III, p. 276.
- 2 The most thorough analysis of Norway's relations with NATO and the United States in the Cold War is Rolf Tamnes, *The United States and the Cold War in the High North* (Oslo: ad Notam, 1991). Shorter surveys may be found in his chapter 'The Strategic Importance of the High North', in G.Schmidt (ed.), *A History of NATO*, vol. III, p. 257–74, and, in more general terms, in my chapter in the same book 'NATO, the Northern Flank, and the Neutrals', pp. 241–55.
- 3 In such a land war scenario Denmark was of course part of the central front.
- 4 On this topic see Riste, *The Norwegian Intelligence Service, 1945–1970* (London: Frank Cass, 1999).
- 5 *Stortingstidende* (Proceedings in Parliament), 1968, pp. 4429–30. Statement by Defence Minister Otto Grieg Tidemand.
- 6 John F. Lehman, Jr, *Command of the Seas* (New York: Scribner's, 1988), pp. 137–8.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 147.
- 8 Tove Pihl, in her article 'Sikkerhet og nedrustning' [Security and Disarmament], *Aftenposten*, 18 January 1983.
- 9 Nikolaj Petersen, 'The Policies of Strife', in Gustav Schmidt (ed.), *A History of NATO*, vol. III, p. 286.
- 10 Nikolaj Petersen, *Denmark and NATO, 1949–1987* (Oslo: Forsvarshistorisk Forskningssenter, 1987, no. 2 in the series *Forsvarsstudier*), p. 34.
- 11 Olav Riste, *Norway's Foreign Relations: A History* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2001), p. 227.
- 12 See Rune Castberg's 1990 monograph, *Økonomiske endringer i Sovjetunionen og implikasjoner for Norge* [Economic Changes in the Soviet Union and Implications for

Norway], in the Norwegian Foreign Ministry's series Aktuelle utenriksspørsmål [Current Foreign Policy], no. 3, 90 (March 1990).

- 13 See David Scrivener's monograph *Gorbachev's Murmansk Speech: The Soviet Initiative and Western Response*, in the Norwegian Atlantic Committee's series Security Policy Library, no. 4, 1989.
- 14 See, Pål Kolstø, *An Appeal to the People: Glasnost—Aims and Means* (Oslo: Forsvarshistorisk Forskringsssenter, 1988); idem, *På vei mot avlenisering? Sovjetisk historierevisjon under Gorbatsjov* (On the Road to de-Leninization? Soviet Historical Revisionism under Gorbachev) (Forsvarsstudier 4, 1989); Sven Holtsmark, *The Demise of the Brezhnev Doctrine* (Forsvarsstudier 2, 1990); Hjalmar Sunde, Sverre Diesen, Tønne Huitfeldt, *Spetznaz og Norge* (including [Spetzaazland/Norway] a futuristic scenario on how World War III began by a Spetznaz attack in central Norway) (Forsvarsstudier 6, 1989). All published by Institutt for forsvarsstudier.

## Playground of Superpowers, Poland 1980–89: A View from Inside<sup>1</sup>

*Andrzej Paczkowski*

I intend to describe essentially a *sui generis* opposite—or rather a supplementation—of the term ‘playground’. I am concerned less with depicting the policy pursued by the superpowers in relation to Poland—or their mutual relations within the Polish context—and more with deliberating on the manner in which Polish leaders perceived those policies, and the impact upon their decisions of such a perception of the activity—or statements by the representatives—of the two superpowers and their allies.

The literature concerning the Polish policy pursued by Moscow and Washington is copious and extensive. Nevertheless, two prominent features should be accentuated. First, a predominant part of the publications treats Poland as a fragment of central-eastern Europe; thus, by the very force of things, assorted analyses dealing with Poland alone are not suitably detailed or in depth. The almost sole exception from this rule is the 1980–82 period, when, owing to the dramatic nature of events and their international repercussions, Poland is frequently treated as a separate topic. Second, a large part of these publications consists of current political analyses, albeit, as a rule, with a solid historical background. Without delving into the question of whether this fact influences their credibility, most of these publications possess all the traits of ‘histories written much too early’, in other words, at a time when the discussed process was still taking place. Nevertheless, it would be impolite towards our predecessors and at odds with standards of research to pretend that nothing of importance had been issued prior to the collapse of communism. As far as I have been able to determine, only a single publication corresponds to the topic of my paper chronologically: *In Search of Poland: The Superpowers’ Response to Solidarity, 1980–1989* by Arthur R. Rachwald.<sup>2</sup> This study discloses all the flaws and virtues of Sovietological literature. Above all, it contains a thorough analysis of statements that appeared in the Polish and Soviet press, but the author was interested more in the attitudes of Moscow and Washington towards Poland (and their mutual relations) than in their Polish reception.

The new perspective that arose after 1989 facilitates investigations primarily because the historical process has ended, and whole series of events, decisions and motivations, once analyzed upon the basis of outward symptoms, can be examined using ‘strictly secret’ documents. A specific type of source, which could come into being, is accounts by participants of events, both those produced as interviews and those which are the outcome of group discussions (confrontations implicating persons).<sup>3</sup> Although at present not all the archives are open, the documentation base is incomparably more extensive than at any other time, given that it also encompasses all the ‘old’ sources at our disposal. I have investigated chiefly the acts of the former Central Committee of the Polish United

Workers' Party (PUWP), especially material from the Chancery of the Central Committee, the Political Bureau and the Secretariat.

*Pressure from the East, Expectation in the West, 1980–81*

At the end of 1970s, the Polish political scene—aside from the Communist Party—was composed of a relatively strong opposition, an entirely independent church, and a supreme national authority in the person of Pope John Paul II. Just then a highly unsatisfactory economic situation emerged that the government was obviously incapable of improving. Nonetheless, the scale of social dissatisfaction, conspicuous since the beginning of July 1980 in the form of strikes, came as a surprise to everyone, as much in Warsaw and Moscow as in Washington. During the second half of August, it became clear to all that events were already out of the control of the authorities, and that a possible general strike could paralyze the entire country, including railway lines supplying the half million-strong Soviet Army stationed in East Germany.

Polish communist leaders started preparing for a confrontation with the strikers, but were conscious that the scope of the strikes would make this operation both bloody and hazardous. The last large wave of strikes, in December 1970, had imposed a far-reaching sense of caution; a striking feature of the documents analyzed is the frequency of 'black prognoses' (including those predicting a loss of power) about what might follow an acceptance of the strikers' demands.<sup>4</sup> Although some members of the communist leadership were ready to begin pacification, the majority, including First Secretary Edward Gierek and the heads of the 'force ministries', feared a confrontation and wished to avoid it. Another prominent element taken into consideration at all the Political Bureau debates was the attitude of Moscow. Attention to this factor was paid predominantly by the supporters of pacification, who regarded the stand of the Kremlin as their alpha and omega. On 21 August, Brezhnev presented Gierek with a personal letter expressing his anxiety about the course of events and the absence of an adequate reaction by the authorities. A week later, when almost 700,000 workers were on strike, Boris Aristov, the Soviet ambassador in Warsaw, submitted another letter to Gierek. In a report on the contents of the letter and the course of the talk, Gierek unambiguously declared that he was 'shocked by the tone of the announcement'.<sup>5</sup> Probably, none of the Poles was aware that the Kremlin had already established a special Political Bureau Commission to deal with Poland (known as the 'Suslov Commission' after its chairman); its first step was to prepare for battle-readiness about ten army divisions in order to invade Poland.<sup>6</sup> Quite possibly, had Gierek known about this, he would have been more conciliatory towards the Soviets, although we cannot exclude the possibility that he would have not altered his conduct. The Kremlin did not agree to a summit meeting proposed by the Poles, and another talk with Aristov was held on 29 August: Gierek convinced the Soviet side that there was no other solution than to concede to 'Postulate no. 1' (see note 4), the source of greatest controversy and fears. Moscow remained silent, which was interpreted as an absence of reservations about a decision which Gierek described as the 'lesser evil'.<sup>7</sup>

The scheme applied in the second half of August 1980—i.e. pressure exerted by Moscow, on the one hand, and the reserve of the Polish leadership, on the other—became a constant element of Polish-Soviet relations during the following months. At the same

time, attention should be drawn to the fact that Soviet policy, albeit invariable as regards strategy (the liquidation of the Solidarity trade union), remained flexible, and passed through several different stages.

Documents, memoirs and numerous post-factum personal statements made post factum show unambiguously that Polish party leaders endured assorted forms of pressure from Moscow, and that this was one of the most important elements shaping their decision-making process and influencing the timing of planned or implemented activity. The ruling team showed distinct divisions, which the Kremlin's policy stimulated to a considerable degree. However, even if Poland had been a sovereign communist island—such as, for example, North Korea—the emergence of a social movement independent of the authorities would certainly have produced divergences over strategy and tactics. It would be difficult to say, therefore, that the adherents of a rapid and radical attack against Solidarity, and the latter's subsequent quashing, appeared only upon the initiative of Moscow. Nevertheless, Soviet activities—usually in the form of public speeches, press articles, letters or spoken admonitions,<sup>8</sup> rather than concrete, 'physical' activity—aimed at moulding the Polish leadership so that it could effectively realize the strategic aim. As a result, pressure exerted by Moscow was regarded as 'shocking' by some, while enticing others to proclaim the necessity of liquidating the independent trade union by resorting to force.<sup>9</sup>

Personal memoirs of Polish leaders usually portray meetings with the Soviet leaders as veritable 'horror shows'. Unquestionably, the Poles found such encounters highly unpleasant: for all practical purposes, they took place in order to make the Polish side aware of the need to embark on radical steps, and to express consternation at the passivity of the Poles. Not everyone, however, reacted to these contacts so dramatically. It is interesting to compare the reminiscences of Stanisław Kania and Kazimierz Barcikowski, a member of the top leadership and a supporter of 'political solutions', about a meeting held in Moscow on 5 December 1980 and attended by all the Warsaw Pact leaders. For Kania, the event was an almost traumatic experience, whereas Barcikowski emphasized that at the airport Konstantin Rusakov (a Central Committee secretary responsible for relations with other communist states) had greeted them by saying that 'there is nothing to worry about because everything will turn out alright [*blogopoluchno*]'.<sup>10</sup> Both Kania and Jaruzelski described as particularly startling their meeting with Yuri Andropov, head of the KGB, and Dmitri Ustinov, the minister of defence, which took place during the night of 3/4 April 1981 in Brest, although it was at this meeting that the Kremlin agreed to resolve the situation by using 'Polish forces' and without the participation of Warsaw Pact troops. Quite possibly, the dramatic ambience resulted from the circumstances of the meeting (representatives of the Polish side were flown from Warsaw at night in a Soviet military plane, accompanied by only one other Pole, the personal aide-de-camp of General Jaruzelski) and uncertainty as regards the Soviet position. Nevertheless, everything, so to speak, ended well.

The finale of the Soviet technique of fomenting Polish divisions came in June 1981, when a 'palace coup d'état' was conducted on the initiative of Moscow, intent upon the dismissal of Kania and Jaruzelski (at the time, prime minister). For months, Soviet leaders had been trying to determine which of the Polish leaders supported taking radical steps and, at the same time, were sufficiently ambitious and influential to seize power if the current authorities were unable (or did not wish) to make a suitable decision. On 23



April 1981, the Political Bureau accepted the paper prepared by the 'Suslov Commission' entitled 'The Development of the Situation in Poland and Certain Steps Taken by Our Side'.<sup>11</sup> These arrangements were followed by a campaign initiated by an open letter from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, which severely criticized Kania and Jaruzelski for not demonstrating enough 'revolutionary determination'. Both Kania and Jaruzelski were vehemently attacked at a Central Committee session (9–10 June), but thanks to their skilful defence of their position, a tactical error—that of challenging both men simultaneously—and the absence of unanimity among the 'adherents of the putsch', the Moscow supporters were defeated in a secret ballot (24:89).<sup>12</sup> This outcome taught the Kremlin a lesson. Four months later, the Soviet side behaved more cautiously: it persuaded Jaruzelski to 'part company' with Kania, who was then discharged from his post and doomed to political limbo; this was also a farewell to the temporization tactic towards Solidarity.

The June 'putsch' produced ambiguous conclusions. Moscow was apparently far from capable of ruling the Polish political scene indivisibly, and doing whatever it wished to. At the same time, the course of events had proved that the Kremlin was able to create a team, recruited from among Polish communists, ready to carry out its orders (or suggestions). In other words, it could exert pressure from the inside. As a result, party liberals were aware of pressure from more radical competitors, and could not be certain that they would not be attacked again if they insisted on pushing their points (further compromises with Solidarity, stalled decisions to proclaim martial law, and so on).<sup>13</sup>

At this stage, I shall not delve into the frequently considered dilemma of 'will they [the Soviet armed forces] invade—or not', since what is essential for our reflections is the fact that such a possibility could not be excluded. Naturally, intervention could not have been conducted in such a crude way as the one considered by the 'Suslov Commission' at the end of August 1980, that is, as a direct and purely military invasion without any political hinterland.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, up to this point, there are no traces of political preparations; however, the Soviet army needed very little time to become capable of initiating a campaign of this sort.<sup>15</sup> In a certain sense, the Kremlin was 'doomed' to deal with Jaruzelski, since there was no alternative candidate with similar prestige in the army, a crucial section of the state apparatus from the viewpoint of proclaiming martial law. It is just as certain that the timing of the decision to introduce martial law was made exclusively by the Polish side (and by General Jaruzelski personally). The Soviet leadership was informed about this choice first through the intermediary of Marshal Kulikov, who arrived in Warsaw to observe (control) the events, and then on 12 December in personal telephone conversations between General Jaruzelski, Suslov and Marshal Ustinov. Marshal Kulikov left Poland on the evening of 16 December, when it became clear that the first Solidarity resistance had been overcome. In his last coded wire to Moscow he wrote: 'Heretofore results...confirm the existence of sufficient forces for dispersing [the counter-revolution] by resorting to [Poland's] own forces and without any sort of military help from the outside.'<sup>16</sup>

Polish communist leaders lived in a state of ambivalence typical where vassal-type relations of dependence occur. Much has been written on the subject, but perhaps one of the most apt expressions is the one used by Stefan Olszowski. In the course of the June 'putsch', this politician, considered to be one of the more intelligent and shrewd

hardliners, declared that 'the fate of Poland is sealed by the Soviet Union, but the fate of the [communist] party—by the nation'.<sup>17</sup> He probably exaggerated in mentioning the 'nation', but one might agree with his reasoning if he had in mind that fragment of the nation that belonged to the party. It follows from Olszowski's argument that those who accepted the role of the Soviet Union as the sole guarantor of the state and the system should themselves decide whom to elect to conduct a given policy within this geopolitical and, simultaneously, ideological axiom. In this manner, the communists themselves perceived the Soviet Union in a dual role, as a force securing systemic order and, at the same time, as a centre that aimed at influencing—directly or indirectly—the political line pursued by the Polish leadership, as well as the latter's composition. In the first role, the Soviet Union was approved of by all the communist leaders in Poland, but when it performed the second role it basically enjoyed the support only of those who benefited from Moscow's backing or counted on winning it. It seems indubitable that an extremely important feeling shared by a considerable part of the ruling team was a fear of 'Big Brother'. This emotion possessed an existential dimension, and stemmed from apprehension about one's own fate and the possibility that the moment the hardliners seized power they would conduct a purge and select scapegoats. On the other hand, such a feeling also had a certain political dimension: fear of Soviet intervention, which would render the fate of Poland extremely complicated and could lead to bloodshed on an unforeseeable scale. Finally, there was a fear that the ascent to power of the hardliners could lead to a far-reaching re-Stalinization of the system. All these anxieties were consciously sustained and even generated by Moscow.

Those communist leaders who feared Moscow could say that in this respect they were by no means alone in Poland. At present, it is impossible to present any sort of empirical proof, since suitable research has not yet been undertaken, but we may accept as highly probable that fear of the Soviet Union was one of the foremost factors stabilizing the system. Just as the Kremlin frightened the Polish communists, so they in turn used the Kremlin to intimidate Polish society. Naturally, this was not done openly, but by deploying assorted allusions and hints. By way of example, at the peak of the August strikes, Ryszard Wojna, a well-known party journalist, outlined on television news a vision of a 'fourth partition' of Poland.<sup>18</sup> The message was unequivocal, although it was not quite clear what precisely this partition was to consist of. When studying Solidarity materials, one is struck by how the speakers and writers curbed themselves, so as not to violate the taboo surrounding the Kremlin. Trade-union leaders often tried to restrain its anti-Soviet declarations or activities; for instance, Wałęsa himself cleaned a monument commemorating the Red Army, which someone had smeared with red paint.

Up to now, the problem has not been systematically examined, but apparently, in time, fear of the Soviet Union decreased, probably due to the fact that, despite frequently repeated public warnings, the Kremlin did not embark upon any sort of visible military steps. This is not to say that the 'Soviet factor' had disappeared from the perspective of the Solidarity leaders or ceased to moderate the stand of at least some of them. 'Posłanie do ludzi pracy Europy Wschodniej' (Message to the Working People of Eastern Europe), issued by the First Solidarity Congress on 8 September 1981, which outright incited the people of Eastern Europe to emulate the example of the Polish workers, is usually cited as an example of an impudent attitude against the Soviet Union. Moscow treated the declaration as utterly aggressive. There came into being a specific ambivalence on the

part of Solidarity: on the one hand, all anti-Soviet opinions were muffled and the trade-union programme made no mention of the great Eastern neighbour; in other words, the Kremlin was still feared. On the other hand, however, the anti-Soviet attitude of the trade-union leaders and rank-and-file members usually remained covert, although at times it was displayed quite vividly. With the exception of several statements made by intellectuals, who were regarded as eccentrics anyway, there were no initiatives to establish contacts with representatives of the Soviet Union.

To a certain degree, all Poles—communist leaders and anti-communists alike—shared the same source of fear. On the other hand, there was no such common fount of hope. It is quite striking that the reflections pursued by the communist leaders for all practical purposes did not take into consideration US policy, although it is known that Washington warned Moscow against intervention on at least three occasions (the end of August and the beginning of December in 1980, and in March 1981), and urged its allies to take similar steps. Actually, the only trace of the political existence of the West in documents issued at the supreme political level is a letter written by the French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing to Gierek, expressing the conviction that 'Poland is capable of discovering her own solutions to the problems, in accordance with the wish of the nation'.<sup>19</sup> The political activity of the United States was actually directed at the Soviet Union and not Poland. It is difficult to say anything definite about its effectiveness—the fact that in December 1980 the prepared manoeuvres did not take place, or that in March 1981 Solidarity was not attacked despite the holding of manoeuvres (albeit limited), does not signify that Moscow withdrew as a result of the warnings issued by two successive United States presidents. Soviet documents, examined up to now, do not contain any clear-cut premises permitting the formulation of such a conclusion.

One way or another, warnings of this sort were not addressed to Polish communist leaders, who tried to exploit the unrest in Washington and amongst NATO states—particularly in West Germany—caused by progressive destabilization in the very centre of Europe. Although Soviet intervention in Afghanistan put an end to détente, the West tried to maintain stability on the continent. Polish communist leaders endeavoured to make use of those anxieties, and by persuading the West that a solution to the economic crisis would be the best measure for ensuring social peace in Poland, they attempted to obtain credit and other types of economic assistance. The United States complied, albeit without excessive extravagance, but apart from economic (and financial) contacts no other forms of cooperation were deployed. During the final weeks prior to the proclamation of martial law, Washington prepared a more extensive package of economic aid, clearly fearing that a total collapse of the Polish economy could lead to violence; this turnabout, however, did not alter political relations one iota. For Kania and Jaruzelski, both Carter and Reagan would have been excessively troublesome partners to make it worth thinking about any sort of rapprochement. Additionally, there remained the problem of the attitude towards Solidarity. The US administration tried to avoid being charged with helping Lech Wałęsa's trade union, but it did not restrain either American trade unions or such quasi-non-governmental agendas as Radio Free Europe, which launched a rather extensive campaign. Rightly or not, Polish officials and, more distinctly, government propaganda, accused the US administration of supporting 'anti-socialist forces'. As had frequently been the case in the past, Warsaw, on the one hand, expected loans, food credits and postponed payments of debts from the United States; on

the other hand, it attacked Washington for 'sowing chaos', and the CIA remained its favourite whipping boy.

On the basis of investigated documents, it is still impossible to assess the extent to which such anti-Americanism was a sincere conviction shared by Polish communists, and to what degree it stemmed from the necessity of adapting to Soviet policy. It appears, however, that it was an authentic stance. At any rate, there are no clear-cut traces of the ruling team searching for any sort of political contacts with the US administration; all official government delegations to the United States were composed of those responsible only for the economy and finances. The new Polish leaders were unfamiliar with the West, and had not held any functions that involved travelling to Western capitals. Their chief range of foreign acquaintances, and personal and official contacts, comprised exclusively politicians from the Eastern side of the Iron Curtain; this was also a consequence of their careers—Jaruzelski was a professional soldier, while for many years Kania had been an apparatchik responsible for the security service.

Better relations were maintained with West Germany, at the time ruled by a pro-détente centre-leftist coalition (Helmut Schmidt-Hans Dietrich Genscher) concerned, basically due to its relations with East Germany, with stabilization, good contacts with the East, and rapprochement. The Poles could not have treated West Germany as an eventual counterweight vis-à-vis Moscow, because Bonn would have probably opposed such a conception. Polish communists did not even foster such a conception: they regarded the dogma of 'inviolable alliance' with the Soviet Union as a cornerstone for all relations with the outside world. Poland did not conduct its own foreign policy towards the West, with the exception of the maintenance of diplomatic relations and efforts to obtain loans.

Solidarity certainly benefited from the assistance rendered by trade unions, both American and European; nonetheless, it remained extremely cautious about involving itself into any sort of contacts with governments. Although Wałęsa made several triumphant trips abroad (for example, to Italy and Japan), all contacts outside trade unions remained secondary. Apparently, Solidarity was well aware of the approving attitude of the US administration,<sup>20</sup> but no one relied on Washington to embark upon activity in favour of Solidarity or its defence. Similarly to the majority of the Poles, Solidarity cultivated sympathy for the United States, but the trade union itself did not, and could not, conduct its own foreign policy as such. Closer contacts with American diplomats were not maintained even in Poland, although they were by no means avoided. As far as I have been able to determine, Ambassador Francis J. Meehan met Wałęsa only once, at the end of November 1981, prior to his departure for consultations in Washington (from which he never returned to Warsaw).<sup>21</sup> The church, which by the very nature of things did not conduct diplomatic activity transcending the range of religion, behaved in a vein similar to Solidarity; it too feared accusations of 'conspiring with the imperialists'. From the anti-communist side of the barricade, the only perpetually cultivated international contact was John Paul II, whose opinions—which at this stage of events were voiced rarely and sparingly—comprised sacrosanct dogmas, to which everyone made reference. When the Soviet Union and its allies pressured the authorities to opt for radical measures, the Americans, their allies and the Pope unanimously suggested the necessity of reducing tension in Poland and for both sides to search for a

compromise. At any rate, there is no evidence that Western governments, including the Vatican, embarked upon any sort of manoeuvres intent on encouraging a confrontation.

To put it in slightly exaggerated terms, there emerged a tangle of mutual intimidation: Moscow harassed the Polish party leaders by claiming that it would ultimately establish order or perhaps even act without their knowledge and consent; the communists intimidated Solidarity by saying that Soviet tanks would cross Polish borders at any moment; and the Americans threatened the Russians by declaring that Soviet intervention in Poland would have 'a grave effect on the whole course of East-West relations'.<sup>22</sup> Only Solidarity had no one to intimidate.

*Pressure from the West, Expectation in the East, 1982–85*

The proclamation of martial law in Poland was a turning point for the US administration policy toward Poland. In spite of the fact that the American response to the proclamation of martial law was met with reserve—or actually resentment—by west European allies,<sup>23</sup> the West as a whole treated the post-13 December events in Poland with gravity. This could be also said about the Reagan administration, although we will probably never be quite certain about whether Washington did not approach the stifling of Solidarity by the Polish army and the police as a convenient pretext for justifying a policy that would have been conducted anyhow. True, the United States did not gain an opportunity to directly initiate events, but launched a decidedly more active policy in relation to Poland (and the Poles) by applying all the instruments at their disposal. Now it was Washington which put pressure on Warsaw, and, although it did not generate the same sort of anxiety as was yielded by Soviet pressure, it too was palpable.

Although during a Political Bureau session held on the afternoon of 13 December, Józef Czyrek, the Polish minister of foreign affairs, had already noted that a wire from the Polish ambassador in Washington showed that the Americans would suspend all credit negotiations and that the situation in Poland 'would effect trade relations',<sup>24</sup> Polish leaders appeared to be surprised by the force of the US reaction. After 1989, General Jaruzelski underlined that the fact that Washington did not send any signals despite knowing about the preparations for martial law (from Colonel Ryszard Kukliński, an officer of the Polish General Staff and a CIA agent) indicated that the Americans were flashing a 'green light'.<sup>25</sup> Obviously, there was no such US consent, although US politicians—similarly to almost the entire world—heaved a sigh of relief once it became apparent that the information provided by Colonel Kukliński was accurate: the Soviet Army kept its distance from factories and mines on strike. The eventuality of a mass-scale intervention of Warsaw Pact troops in the Polish turmoil continued to be a source of anxiety. In the wake of short-lived chaos, which only partially resulted from circumstances,<sup>26</sup> and was actually induced by the total unpreparedness of the administration, the first on-the-spot decisions concerning, among other things, the suspension of food aid and grain credit, which had been granted as recently as 11 December, were finally made. On 23 December, President Reagan announced in his Christmas address to the nation a whole series of economic sanctions against Poland, and new sanctions against the Soviet Union, recognized as the 'true cause of the repression in Poland', were set in motion on 29 December.

The Communist Party leadership recognized the imposition of sanctions as economic war and far-reaching intervention into Polish domestic issues. The communist elites, which were never kindly disposed towards the United States, now became radically anti-American, an attitude that became marked not only in public statements, but also in the course of confidential talks and debates. Furthermore, such a stance was not concealed, even in rare cases of direct contact. By way of example, in the summer of 1983, during a meeting attended by General Jaruzelski and four US congressmen, the first such event to take place after the proclamation of martial law, the Polish general, although he was 'aware that a great power can take many liberties', accused the United States of 'violating the principles of morality in politics', 'committing glaring errors', and of 'ridiculing themselves'.<sup>27</sup> Jaruzelski frequently underlined that Polish-American relations were worse than ever before: even during the 1950s, he said to Honecker, 'they were not as bad as they are now'.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, he did not believe that it was possible to change the US policy, which he regarded as totally responsible for the existing state of affairs. The general did not shy away even from using ideological slogans, in which he himself probably believed: 'The Polish example', he explained to Nicolae Ceauşescu in June 1984, 'has demonstrated the mechanisms of class warfare on a global scale'.<sup>29</sup> In October 1985, Jaruzelski participated in a session of the Advisory Political Committee of the Warsaw Pact, taking this opportunity to reprove 'American imperialism'.<sup>30</sup> He explained to the Nicaraguan leader Daniel Ortega that Poland 'has become the object of a gigantic diversion',<sup>31</sup> and tried to convince José dos Santos, the President of Angola, that US conduct 'is not holding back from armed intervention and open interference in the domestic affairs of sovereign states'.<sup>32</sup> Jaruzelski's official and public statements were characterized by an unyielding and openly aggressive tone.

This deterioration in relations with the United States is the reason why such great importance was attached to the maintenance of good relations with western Europe. Minister Czyrek explained to Husak that 'we do not expand [the anti-American line] on to other countries because we do not intend to widen this front. It is our wish to isolate American policy, and not to multiply opponents'.<sup>33</sup> After the proclamation of martial law, particular concern was shown for good relations with West Germany, which remained tongue-tied towards Poland not only due to current political interests, but also to the uncomfortable baggage of the recent past. The first—and, for a long time, only—international success enjoyed by General Jaruzelski was the visit paid to Poland in February 1982 by Herbert Wehner, chairman of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) faction in the Bundestag. The Poles 'shamefully manipulated the disoriented, elderly politician and censored his statements'.<sup>34</sup> Attempts were made to overcome international isolation almost entirely via contacts with leftist circles; some achieved the level of formal international contacts (e.g. with Andreas Papandreu, the socialist Prime Minister of Greece), while others remained at a party level (as in the case of the above-mentioned Wehner, and of Bettino Craxi, Willi Brandt and Helmut Schmidt, once he ceased being chancellor). This state of affairs was portrayed by General Jaruzelski in a highly picturesque albeit embittered way to Genscher, when in March 1985 an officiating Western leader finally paid a first visit to Poland: 'We have been treated like a loose woman, with whom one wishes to maintain an acquaintance, but whom one does not want to display'.<sup>35</sup> All told, after 13 December 1981, the Americans faced an entirely different problem with their political partners than the one experienced by the Soviet side

with its allies prior to that date. Brezhnev was forced to impede his supporters, while Reagan was compelled to urge them—even Margaret Thatcher—to support sanctions and tighten Poland's isolation. Anti-American rhetoric and a more lenient attitude towards the European members of NATO were entirely concurrent with the political line of the Kremlin. I shall cite a small fragment from a statement made by Mikhail Gorbachev at a closed meeting of Warsaw Pact leaders in October 1985. This was perhaps the last occasion when the new Soviet leader spoke in such a manner; nevertheless, on the eve of the first meeting with Reagan, which initiated a breakthrough in East-West relations, he mentioned 'mass-scale pressure on the part of imperialism, which strives towards economic exhaustion and political debilitation, and ultimately towards social reprisals'.<sup>36</sup> I am not sure what the author of *perestroika* had in mind when he talked about 'social reprisals', but he certainly did not intend to praise the imperialists.

The response to economic war assumed the form of a propaganda contest, which could have been conducted only on Polish terrain. Although it was granted considerable impetus, it is impossible to judge its impact on the attitudes of the Poles in general. Nevertheless, it is certain that a considerable part of Polish public opinion—not only among supporters of martial law—was won over by an explanation which put the blame for all the economic problems on the chaos intentionally created by the (CIA-inspired) anarchic Solidarity trade-union and American sanctions. Only mild sanctions could be applied by Poland against the United States: militiamen checked people entering American libraries; journalists or diplomats accused of espionage were expelled; the exchange of ambassadors was blocked, in other words, 'below-standard' relations were sustained; Radio Free Europe and the Voice of America were jammed once again, and so on.

Polish-American relations, however, were not one-dimensional. In fact, almost the entire period witnessed a type of game or barter: Washington reacted to each liberalization by the General Jaruzelski team either by alleviating sanctions or promising eventual loans. Naturally, it also reacted to every deterioration of the situation: for instance, when in October 1982 Solidarity was formally delegatized, President Reagan withdrew most-favoured nation status for Poland. Contacts were never severed, and, regardless of the rhetoric, Poland was well aware of the political prices to be paid. This is the reason why it expected that the Americans would gradually come to terms with the existing state of affairs, and in order to encourage them to do so, at least from the end of 1982, Poland much more frequently opted for 'unbridled' activity than for a rigid approach. This is precisely what Washington has in mind, because obviously sanctions as such are meaningful only when they force the other side to concede. On the other hand, it is not quite clear to what degree the assorted liberalization steps (such as the release of Wałęsa in November 1982, yearly amnesties since 1983, consent to papal visits, negotiations conducted with the church) were made with the US policy in mind or whether these stemmed from an appraisal of the domestic situation. Attempts at obtaining stronger social legitimization had to be linked with reducing the repressiveness of the system. Anti-Americanism and overcrowded prisons could have come together, but in a longer perspective did not bode well. Hitherto examined documents attest that both those factors—external and internal—were equally seriously taken into consideration, and debates focused either on one or the other. Many of these issues remain beyond our grasp, even more so since General Jaruzelski was concerned not only with sanctions but

also with the isolation of Poland, initiated by Washington, which denoted not only a loss of international prestige, but also that Warsaw was becoming a less prominent member of the Soviet bloc.<sup>37</sup>

As can be surmised, the reaction of Solidarity towards the stand taken by the United States after the proclamation of martial law was totally different from that of the Communist Party. Martial law was directed against the trade unions, but US sanctions were obviously supposed to protect the latter, considering that President Reagan's announcement listed conditions to be met in order for the sanctions to be withdrawn. Successive stands of assorted NATO groups, pronounced soon after 13 December, encompassed the same conditions. Underground activists expounded even more radical ideas (such as severing diplomatic relations with Poland), which were never approved either by Wałęsa or any formal representation of underground Solidarity. Sanctions imposed upon the Soviet Union were accepted with satisfaction, if one may use this term. In fact, the attitude of the underground did not differ from that of the United States, which is not to say that Solidarity activists carried out orders issued on the other side of the Atlantic. This was simply a case of a far-reaching community of interests and a similar way of viewing communism and the Soviet Union. In time, however, when the situation no longer fluctuated and it became obvious that it was impossible to expect swift solutions, US policy and the sanctions themselves ceased to inspire underground analysts and commentators. Moreover, attention was drawn to the necessity of opposing government propaganda and official statements, which accused Solidarity of endorsing a policy of the 'the worse, the better' variety. The first occasion for publicizing this changed attitude was the presentation of the 1983 Nobel Peace Prize to Lech Wałęsa. The newly nominated laureate appealed for aid, without which the level of social life in Poland would decline dangerously. I have been unable to determine whether, and if so then to what extent, this initiative was coordinated with the Americans. At the time, Wałęsa enjoyed considerable opportunities for manoeuvre, similar to those of some of his advisers and Solidarity activists, but contacts with foreigners, even journalists, not to mention diplomats, were hampered and relatively infrequent. At any rate, in the middle of January 1984, Polish vessels were once again granted the right to fish in US coastal waters, and consent was given for Polish airline charter flights to the United States. Successive, albeit still secondary, restrictions were lifted in the middle of 1984. Regardless of whether the initiative of withdrawing them belonged to Reagan or Wałęsa, it was proof that both sides needed each other. Contacts consisting of financial assistance to Solidarity, without which chances for further activity would have been considerably reduced, are still surrounded (unaccountably) by an aura of secrecy. Since I have been unable to access reliable documents, and do not know of a thorough study on the subject, I shall limit myself to the general view that this aid was meaningful, although in absolute figures it remained relatively slender: up to 1989, it probably never exceeded \$10 million. I am unaware of any details concerning CIA operations in Poland, but it seems that they were limited to gathering information and supplying printing equipment, which proved to be a highly effective (and safe) weapon. Unquestionably, sustaining Solidarity was an important element of global US policy towards the East, although, naturally, it was only one of many instruments. Its side effects included an intensification of the anti-American stand among Polish communist leaders.



The Kremlin approved of the proclamation of martial law. In a telephone conversation, Leonid Brezhnev congratulated Jaruzelski and promised economic assistance. Moreover, he immediately sent a message addressed to the leaders of 'fraternal countries', in which he declared that 'the operation is running a satisfactory course' and that 'we are guided by the fact that our Polish friends will resolve these questions with the help of domestic forces'.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, in the already cited wire, Marshal Kulikov drew attention to the fact that 'counter-revolutionary ideas are still very much alive among the wide masses' and that 'only a determined dispersion of the counter-revolution will hinder the still unquashed part of its leaders in crossing to an illegal path'.<sup>39</sup> At a Political Bureau session held on 14 January, Brezhnev recognized that General Jaruzelski 'had matured as a political activist', although he added that 'at times he appears to be overly cautious'. Nonetheless, the Soviet leader acknowledged that 'in the present situation, frontal attacks could only bring about a downfall'.<sup>40</sup> This is not to say that the Soviet leadership did not harbour any reservations or claims. Konstantin Chernenko, the short-lived Soviet general secretary, formulated them outright in a conversation held with General Jaruzelski in May 1985, listing assorted strategic aims to be realized by the Polish leaders: 'the uprooting of anti-socialist forces', 'limiting Church intervention in political life', 'liquidating the multi-sector aspect of the national economy', 'shifting the villages onto a socialist course', and, even more interesting, 'paying back debts to the West'.<sup>41</sup> The opinions of the Soviet leaders concerning Jaruzelski were distinctly critical. In fact, the only point recognized as positive was that 'comrade Jaruzelski...remains supportive of the international policy line of the Soviet Union'. All the remaining elements were assessed negatively, and Gorbachev worried about whether Jaruzelski 'was not interested in a pluralistic system of rule in Poland'. Nevertheless, Chernenko's conclusions were ambiguous: 'we believe him', 'we support him', although it is 'necessary to continue influencing him and helping him to discover the most suitable decisions'.<sup>42</sup> Obviously, this pressure was not as great as before the introduction of martial law, and the complaints about the role of the church or private ownership in agriculture had already been heard by Gomułka and Gierek. The Soviets could not come to terms with Polish distinctness, but were compelled to accept it as part and parcel of the general situation.

All told, Moscow's attitude towards Warsaw during the first years after the proclamation of martial law can be described as a 'wait and see' tactic, in spite of the Kremlin being ready to support a policy calling for a radical overcoming of Solidarity rather than the sundry peaceful gestures which General Jaruzelski performed in order to improve his image at home and in the West.

### *Along a Common Path?, 1986–89*

In the second half of 1985, the General Jaruzelski team felt quite secure. In a study, party analysts ascertained that 'the political opponent has ceased being a subject co-shaping the social situation'.<sup>43</sup> General Jaruzelski no longer held the post of prime minister, which freed him from resolving many current issues and from a portion of responsibility for the economic situation. He remained first secretary and assumed the function of chairman of the Council of State, which offered him formal opportunities for participating in

international life. Furthermore, he carried out a final purge, ousting from the top leadership a large number of the hardliners, whom Moscow no longer protected. Solidarity was firmly entrenched, but it had lost its former power to mobilize society or launch new ideas. Those who remain in the trenches do not win battles. Victory must be preceded by an attack. Nothing much was happening on the international scene, though it witnessed preparations for the first summit meeting to be held for a long time, and the new Soviet first secretary was not as encumbered as his predecessors, although at least to outsiders he did not appear to possess any distinctive political features. His long speech, given at the above-mentioned closed session attended by Warsaw Pact leaders, lacked new elements. True, he drew attention to the 'complexity of the situation', but urged 'not to allow any symptoms of panic', since 'we have at our disposal enormous capital that enables us to act calmly'. He also recalled that 'we constitute a single ship with one crew; the target is clear-cut, but the crew must act in concert'. He could have added that there was only one captain. Others appraised the situation more critically: Kadar said that 'the socialist system is incapable of unhampered development'; Ceaușescu drew attention to the fact that imperialist attempts at 'instigating difficulties' cannot be regarded as the actual source of problems, and even Zhivkov, considered to be a timeworn Stalinist, admitted that 'we have been erring for the past fifteen years—development has been extensive, and should have been intensive'. Against this background, the speech made by Jaruzelski did not distinguish itself, with the exception of copious argumentation about the historical roots of Polish specificity (starting with the anarchy of the gentry). He too believed that 'we are experiencing a special historical moment, which in a certain sense is a breakthrough'.<sup>44</sup>

The first steps taken by Jaruzelski, enabling him to make use of his new post, did not prove satisfactory. The occasion was a session of the United Nations General Assembly, which he attended as a head of state. Jaruzelski did not win over the public, nor did he meet any US, French or British officials. True, he spoke with Felipe Gonzales (Spain), Giulio Andreotti (Italy) and Genscher, but these were merely formal meetings, which did not comprise 'a new quality'. Talks with Rockefeller about the creation of an American foundation for Polish farmers did not produce any inferences. Lawrence Eagleburger, the former under-secretary of state, who took part in the talks, declared that it was necessary to contemplate a 'calm re-evaluation of stances, leading towards a gradual taking of... "silent steps"', an opinion supported by Zbigniew Brzezinski.<sup>45</sup> But Jaruzelski did not pursue the theme. Ambivalent conclusions could have also been drawn from a meeting with President Mitterand, although the invitation to the Elysée Palace was a significant step towards overcoming isolation, not only of Poland but also of Jaruzelski himself. The general, however, did not benefit much from alerting to the threat of 'Great German aspirations', which 'can be satisfied only at the cost of France and Poland'. Mitterand preferred to speak about imprisoned trade unionists and the dismissal of opposition scholars.<sup>46</sup>

The course of a meeting held by Reagan and Gorbachev in Geneva undoubtedly fostered the pursuit of further efforts by Jaruzelski to break the isolation of Poland and his regime. After the summit, the Soviet leader performed an unexpected gesture towards his allies: on his way from Geneva to Moscow, he stopped in Prague, where everyone gathered to hear 'fresh' information about the talks. A note from the Prague meeting recorded that the conclusions drawn in Geneva 'incline towards a review, to be

undertaken at a suitable moment, of the current state of Polish-American relations'.<sup>47</sup> A few days later, during a conversation with Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, Marian Orzechowski, the new Polish minister of foreign affairs, declared that 'we are interested in an improvement [of relations with the US], but we still do not see any signals of a change in the American stand', adding that 'we are expecting that a normalization of relations between the Soviet Union and the USA will ultimately lead to a betterment of Polish-American relations'.<sup>48</sup> In this way, probably for the first time ever, the Soviet Union was to pave a path for Poland towards the United States.

In truth, Polish preparations for such an improvement were rather peculiar. A 'team dealing with a complex co-ordination of undertakings aiming at compensation for losses and injuries incurred by the Polish economy as a result of the application of restrictions by the USA and other states', established in 1983, was preparing to print a report which contained an extensive attack on US policy—an odd way to begin a 'review of the situation'. In June 1986, at a session of the Advisory Political Committee of the Warsaw Pact, General Jaruzelski resorted to an ideological language identical to that used in bygone days: 'the turbulent stage of imperialism' was being continued, the congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union 'has outlined gigantic tasks', "the spectre" of the 27th Congress is haunting the capitalist world, and the vision of its embodying its historical program frightens and aggravates'. Furthermore, he recognized that Reagan's aggressive policy 'is not incidental...and one should not count on it changing significantly, at least prior to the end of this term in office'.<sup>49</sup> But shortly after this speech, he received a report made by Longin Pastusiak, head of the government-run Polish Institute of International Affairs, containing an account of a talk held with David Schwartz, from the US Embassy in Warsaw. Schwartz admitted that his report about the just completed 10th Congress of the PUWP sent to Washington 'contained a positive assessment of the programme paper read by General Jaruzelski'. He added that the range of amendment of Polish-American relations would depend on the extent of the planned amnesty (announced a week after this talk). By way of example, if the authorities were to release Zbigniew Bujak<sup>50</sup> then Washington would 'abolish the embargo on credits for Poland'.<sup>51</sup> Other reports show that Schwartz had simultaneously conducted extensive polls pertaining to the proposal, and that the scope of the amnesty was the topic of debate among party leaders. On 6 August, General Jaruzelski sent a note to all the members of the leadership 'concerning the implication of our situation for the relations between Poland and West European states'.<sup>52</sup> This document announced, among other things, that 'the exclusion from the amnesty of the most active members of the opposition' would 'have an unfavourable impact upon our potential to conduct an active and effective policy towards western Europe'; it would also affect negatively 'the development of [Poland's] economic and solvency situation', as well as the negotiations on refinancing the Polish debt. Consequently, it was deemed necessary to 'consider such an exploitation of' the amnesty in order to 'deprive the Western states of pretexts for hampering the normalization of relations with us'.

Some weeks later, members of the leadership received an extensive document written jointly by specialists from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Central Committee.<sup>53</sup> This stated: 'The prospect of improving relations between both great powers, increasingly visible during the recent months, has produced a considerable growth of activity as regards the East-West dialogue... This, however, did not involve Poland', because 'the

West employs towards our country a tactic of rendering progress in the normalization of relations dependent on an assessment of the development of our [domestic] situation'. Further on, it was announced that there exists a 'need to overcome the impasse', which could be served by extending the range of the amnesty. Naturally, the justification also listed other reasons: the disintegration of the opposition and confirmation of 'progressing destabilization', as well as 'favourable transformations within social consciousness'. A Political Bureau session held on 9 September accepted these conclusions, and two days later General Czesław Kiszczak, minister of internal affairs, announced on the main evening television news the release of all political prisoners, including Bujak. On 30 October, John R. Davis, the US chargé d'affaires, recognized in a talk with Józef Czyrek, a member of the Political Bureau, that steps taken by the Polish authorities 'had produced in Washington extensive and favourable interest', and proposed negotiations at the level of junior ministers. At the same time, Wałęsa and a group of opposition intellectuals addressed an open letter to President Reagan, requesting the abolition of the last remaining sanctions (a restitution of the most-favoured nation clause). As was to be expected, the response from Washington was positive.

General Jaruzelski was even more pleased with what was happening inside the communist bloc: he said to former Chancellor Schmidt, on a visit in Poland, that 'the Soviet leaders are following with great interest, and applying, Polish experiences as regards economic reform', and that Poland could conduct an independent policy within the frame of the alliance'.<sup>54</sup> Ideological changes more important than the inter-bloc relations of détente also occurred within the communist world, although, naturally, it was not obvious just how profound or permanent they were at the time. During a council attended by leaders of COMECON (Council for Mutual Economic Cooperation) member states (10–11 November 1986), Gorbachev stated that relations between fraternal parties 'should be constructed upon the principles of equality', and that the 'independence of each party and responsibility to one's society is an absolute premise'; but at the same time, he added that 'each party should remember their joint interests', that it was necessary to strive towards 'an organic co-ordination of the activity pursued by socialist countries on the international arena', and that 'we must assume a closer link between our states'.<sup>55</sup> I shall not consider the 'Brezhnev doctrine', which has been the topic of multiple studies and produces assorted controversies, and will probably continue to do so for a long time. I witnessed such discord at a conference about the downfall of the communist system in Poland. Georgii Shakhnazarov, close adviser of Gorbachev and secretary of the 'Suslov Commission', maintained that during a meeting of central European leaders gathered for the Chernenko funeral (March 1985), Gorbachev had already said that each party 'decides what to do and is held responsible for the domestic situation'.<sup>56</sup> Marian Orzechowski replied: 'It is not so simple and obvious that the Gorbachev declaration, made within a narrow circle of leaders, signified an actual end of the Brezhnev doctrine. Such an end is not marked only by a declaration...but also by a concrete policy, in other words, the reaction of those to whom it is addressed.'<sup>57</sup> Polish politicians took notice of the rivals of the general secretary, and were by no means certain whether he would hold on to his post or just how far he would be able to go. One thing appears certain: the above-cited opinion voiced by Gorbachev did not mean that each party could in fact act on its own, for example, by abandoning the COMECON or the Warsaw Pact. As late as 1989, Gorbachev did not assume the dissolution of the bloc, but

as Alexandr A. Bessmertnykh, the well-informed vice-minister of foreign affairs said, he 'believed that the East Europeans would go through with the reforms...although this did not necessarily mean that there would be a very deep breakdown in Soviet-East European relations'.<sup>58</sup>

From the viewpoint of my argument, it is essential that just as Jaruzelski accepted the changes taking place in the Soviet Union and Gorbachev's proposals to tighten economic relations within COMECON, so the Kremlin leader increasingly markedly favoured Polish steps as regards reforms, and recognized 'Polish specificity'. Here are several examples. At the beginning of 1987, it was decided to establish a Polish-Soviet commission of party historians to jointly examine so-called 'blank spots' in history. The moment pertinent negotiations were initiated, Aleksandr Yakovlev, Gorbachev's ideological right-hand man, admonished the commission to act 'without undue haste', to prepare 'a suitable ideological interpretation', and 'to avoid spectacular activity',<sup>59</sup> but such issues, particularly painful for the Poles, as the Soviet aggression of 17 September 1939 and the Katyń massacre, were finally broached. In the summer of 1987, a delegation of Soviet Central Committee functionaries dealing with agriculture visited Warsaw. In a note from the meeting, the Polish side noted that the Soviet representatives recognized that the fact that 'our agriculture is dominated by private ownership cannot and should not, neither today nor in the future, constitute an obstacle to developing bilaterally favourable co-operation'.<sup>60</sup> In March 1988, the Polish ambassador in Moscow was invited to 'share his experiences' with the chairman of the Government Council for Religion, who was interested in how Poland approached relations with the church.<sup>61</sup> In June, Józef Glemp, the Primate of Poland, attended lavish celebrations of the thousandth anniversary of the baptism of Rus'; a special interview was published in many Soviet periodicals (including the official *Izvestia* and the Polish-language *Czerwony Sztandar*). Examples of Polish deviations from the principles of socialism—privately owned farms and an independent church—were becoming quite normal for the Kremlin. Polish society—or at least the communist leadership—became aware of the new situation no later than the middle of 1987. In July of that year, Kazimierz Barcikowski said at a meeting with representatives of the church that 'it is necessary to make use of the period of transformations undergone by our neighbour, and to aim at putting our domestic problems in order by observing practical-theoretical principles'.<sup>62</sup> It could be said that Gorbachev had performed something akin to an amputation on part of the 'Brezhnev doctrine', which was losing its ideological sense and increasingly becoming a geopolitical principle.

The situation as regards Western pressure, and, in particular, the perception of US policy by the Polish leadership, assumed an entirely different form in view of a marked 'détente in the East'. It is quite striking to note how long General Jaruzelski continued to apply anti-American rhetoric. Almost a year after the lifting of sanctions, he complained to Honecker that 'it does not yield any more bread' and that 'an economic war is being waged against Poland'.<sup>63</sup> At a session of the Advisory Political Committee of the Warsaw Pact (May 1987), Jaruzelski argued that 'nothing seems to indicate that the centres of American imperialism have changed their primary, anti-communist goals', and then attacked West Germany for speaking about 'the restitution of Great German claims to a position of a European power' and for its attempts at 'annulling the outcome of the Second World War'.<sup>64</sup> In June 1988, he again explained to Honecker that Poland was

'increasingly becoming a practice range for anti-communist forces'.<sup>65</sup> Jaruzelski did not conceal his aggravation in his talks with Western politicians. In January 1988, he said to Minister Genscher in his highly emotional but unique style: 'The greater the pressure from the outside, the larger our determination.'<sup>66</sup> The meetings held by Jaruzelski with representatives of the US administration took place in a composed atmosphere, though they too frequently contained allusions and reproaches. Talking to John C. Whitehead in January 1987, Jaruzelski returned to the same assessments which he had presented to US congressmen four years earlier, and enumerated the errors committed by Washington in its conduct, making himself the object of ridicule.<sup>67</sup> In a talk with Vice-President Bush, held in September, Jaruzelski vividly underlined that the stance held by the United States comprised simply a 'form of pressure', described Congress's decision to grant Solidarity \$1 million for social purposes as inadmissible 'outside intervention',<sup>68</sup> and portrayed trade-union members as 'the mercenaries of a foreign power'. Jaruzelski did not shy from using exalted tones: 'If someone has both money and dignity then even if he loses his dignity, he will still possess money', he declared in the above-cited conversation with Whitehead. 'We do not have any money, but only our dignity, which we do not want to lose. We attach enormous significance to dignity'.

In fact, Jaruzelski's irritation is not surprising. Although he had made numerous concessions, which, at least to a certain degree, negated the justification for martial law, the anticipated money from the West did not seem to be coming in on the scale he had envisaged. Certain markets were irrevocably lost, and although they had not been a source of great profit, their absence was palpable. No one wished to talk seriously about a reduction of debts, which as a result of unpaid installments grew constantly; problems with obtaining new credits, even for servicing current commodity exchanges, were perennial, and Moscow was no longer capable of providing significant assistance. On the contrary, it was Moscow which now required an increasing dose of 'capitalism' in mutual economic relations. The country found itself in an extremely poor situation—the absence of products on the market, rationing and inflation which already exceeded 15 per cent. The ruling group was threatened by an outbreak of social unrest. Although the West did not spare its praise, it obstinately demanded yet further concessions; no longer satisfied with the release of prisoners or regular negotiations with the church, the West now called for the legalisation of Solidarity and the recognition of trade-union pluralism. The hopes cherished by Jaruzelski were not met either by the Americans or by the main economic powers of western Europe, including West Germany, to which the greatest expectations were attached, but which, rather startlingly, started to focus on the German minority in Poland. It became obvious that a country so indebted and undergoing a long economic crisis could win new credits only thanks to a political decision, without which no banker would be willing to take the risk. Meanwhile, such a decision had still not been made. As Ambassador Davis put it: 'We control the situation by not granting Poland any sort of new credits from the International Monetary Fund.'<sup>69</sup>

Not only was money withheld, but the Americans made it difficult to 'keep up appearances'. During his conversation with Whitehead, Jaruzelski was supposed to have said that Solidarity no longer existed, and that there remained only 'a group of people whom Davis invites to dinner while on the other side of the street I eat alone with my wife'.<sup>70</sup> One cannot deny the general's sense of humour, but this joke was very bitter. It was true that the moment police surveillance was lifted, and all the leading union activists

and advisers were released, they maintained almost daily contacts with numerous Western diplomats, gave dozens of interviews, and met government officials on visits in Poland. 'Each of Wałęsa's sneezes is proclaimed to the world as a great event', Jaruzelski commented facetiously in a conversation with Honecker.<sup>71</sup> Naturally, the primary destination of Western pilgrimages was the Nobel Prize winner, but the entire Solidarity leadership and the opposition, at least in Warsaw, met journalists, diplomats, politicians and union activists, producing great anxiety, and initially even protests, on the part of the authorities. The authorities were forced to endure extremely uncomfortable moments whenever official state holidays (4 July, 14 July, etc.) became occasions for representatives of the government and members of a 'non-existent organization' to rub shoulders in the ambassadorial gardens. An essential component of the resultant situation was the placing of flowers upon the grave of Reverend Jerzy Popiełuszko, universally recognized as the 'Solidarity saint'. After numerous forms of resistance and attempts at blocking contact, it became necessary to regulate them. On 19 October 1987, high-level party authorities accepted the application of the so-called 'tripartite model', which meant that official visits were to take place within a triangle composed of the guest, official representatives of the authorities and Solidarity, with only the guest meeting the other two pinnacles of the triangle. A document declared that although this model was not a 'sufficient condition', 'it is necessary' for developing relations with the West, and that the positive aspects dominated over the negative ones. In order to discourage Western diplomats, it was proposed that the meetings with the radical opposition should be arranged for Polish officials on visits to the West. Jaruzelski even suggested that during their stays abroad they should 'pay their respect to the victims of genocide (the French in Algeria) and political assassinations (Sacco-Vanzetti, Kennedy, Palme)' and to 'see the slums'.<sup>72</sup>

Solidarity and the opposition did not initiate attempts at establishing contacts with Soviet politicians. As a rule, the underground press voiced opinions favourable towards *perestroika* and especially *glasnost*; on certain occasions, it also contrasted changes within the Soviet Union and the impasse in Poland, although the Poles were far from experiencing the 'Gorbymania' which was starting to rage in the West. By way of example, the declarations made by Gorbachev during his visit to Poland in July 1988 were greeted with great scepticism, even greater considering that it was universally expected that Moscow would officially confess to the Katyń massacre. Furthermore, I have not come across any traces of Soviet initiatives, although an analysis of the situation in Eastern Europe, prepared for Yakovlev in February 1989 by the Foreign Department in the Central Committee of the CPSU, suggested that 'contact with all forces in socialist countries which claim to take part in governance should be sought'; furthermore, it was declared that 'new significance is assumed by contacts with the Churches whose influence in socialist countries is distinctly growing'.<sup>73</sup> The existence of an opposition was a Polish specificity long unrecognized by the Kremlin—an interview with Primate Glemp was published in the Soviet press in the summer of 1988; an interview with Wałęsa did not appear until the Round Table talks. From this perspective, Moscow truly did not interfere in Polish domestic issues, leaving the difficulties—and risk—of negotiations with Solidarity to the Jaruzelski team.

Previously, I cited with a certain dose of irony the sentence from the book by Arthur R. Rachwald, mentioning the 'peaceful Finlandization of Poland'; naturally, the author

was right in believing that this expectation was shared by the two superpowers and western Europe. Let us avoid being ahistorical: at the time of the Round Table negotiations in Poland and in the wake of the elections of 4 June, the world surrounding Poland was concerned with retaining geopolitical stability. Solidarity also feared destabilization, and even greater caution was demonstrated by the Catholic Church, which persistently fulfilled the functions of a mediator, but incessantly warned Solidarity against radicalization. In spring 1989, certain Polish cities became the scene of street demonstrations organized by radical opposition groups; favourite sites were Soviet consulates or monuments to the Red Army. The economic situation, which entailed empty shop shelves, long queues and a rising rate of inflation, could have led to patriotic-political contestation being replaced by social revolt. After all, it was fear of an uncontrolled outburst that had been one of the main reasons why the Jaruzelski team had decided to join the negotiations.

Communist Party leaders were uncertain as to how the main core of Solidarity would react to their election success, and whether they would wish to 'accelerate the events' and go further than the Round Table decisions. A session held a day after the elections by the Secretariat of the Central Committee deliberated whether the eventual triumphant attitude of the victors would not evoke assorted reactions of the party apparatus and the opponents of conciliation within the 'force ministries'.<sup>74</sup> General Jaruzelski and his closest co-worker, General Kiszczak, personally engaged themselves in soothing such anxieties. Despite certain doubts,<sup>75</sup> both recognized that it was impossible to question the outcome of the elections, and came to terms with the *fait accompli*. It would be difficult to determine on the basis of examined documents whether General Jaruzelski took into consideration the eventuality of a negative Soviet reaction. Gorbachev and the entire Soviet leadership—in fact, the whole Soviet Union—were absorbed with domestic issues and increasingly acute national tensions. The events in Poland won Moscow's approval, and the May issue of the monthly *Kommunist* published an article recognizing the 'Polish variant' as an excellent example for others to follow. The aforementioned studies prepared for Yakovlev indicate that the Soviet leadership was prepared to take a passive stance, similar to the one which it had followed since 1986, in accordance with the premise that 'each party is held responsible for its society', which could be translated as: every man for himself! Polish leaders could be sure of only one thing: Soviet tanks, which had just returned from Afghanistan, would not invade Poland. When Solidarity, in an article by Adam Michnik, 'Your President, Our Prime Minister',<sup>76</sup> began publicly to consider the possibility of a coalition government based on the principle of partnership and not co-optation, Gorbachev, when asked his opinion, replied via his spokesman that this was an internal Polish issue. Nor did Moscow express its view about the Polish presidential elections, which turned out to be an extremely delicate operation; only thanks to several Solidarity deputies did General Jaruzelski manage to get elected by a single vote.

There are no documents dealing with contacts with Moscow at the time, but it seems impossible that they were not maintained, even if only through the intermediary of the two ambassadors. Such contacts certainly took place in August 1989, when Solidarity initiated energetic efforts to create a government. When on 8 August the Political Bureau, already under the new leadership of Mieczysław F. Rakowski, debated the situation, one of the participants drew attention to the need for 'consultations with the Communist Party



of the Soviet Union and perhaps also with the Hungarian comrades';<sup>77</sup> nonetheless, the first secretary's summary did not return to this topic. A considerable section of the party apparatus (not to mention the security apparatus) was incapable of coming to terms with the emergence of a coalition government—even though it was accepted by Jaruzelski in his capacity as president—in which not only was the Communist Party in the minority, but the prime minister was a Solidarity candidate (Tadeusz Mazowiecki). Rakowski and the Political Bureau prepared a project for a resolution bidding party members to 'gather around the leaders' and 'to conduct an independent, mass-scale battle against the hazard of a sudden turnabout...which poses a threat to the sovereignty and integration of Poland'.<sup>78</sup> The language of this document brings to mind the martial law period rather than the *perestroika* epoch. On 22 August, before the letter was published, Rakowski received a telephone call from Gorbachev, who advised him to approve Mazowiecki and the already negotiated conception of a coalition.<sup>79</sup> I do not exclude the possibility that Gorbachev made the call at the request of Jaruzelski, who was determined to continue the previous policy, involving not only conciliation but also co-operation with Solidarity. The fact that the PUWP became 'an ordinary member of a coalition' signified its end as a ruling party. By persuading Rakowski to abandon the struggle, Gorbachev dealt a *coup de grâce* to the Polish Communist Party. Soon afterwards, the Kremlin announced that it was necessary to shift to a form of relations similar to those maintained with communist parties that did not govern. This conclusion stemmed not only from a general assessment of the situation, but also from the fact that PUWP representatives began arriving in Moscow as pleading supplicants. At the time when the Mazowiecki government was being established, one of the high-ranking Polish apparatchiks staying in Moscow discussed, inter alia, 'the granting of material and financial aid by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union', a proposal which 'met with understanding'.<sup>80</sup> He added that Soviet comrades were 'particularly profoundly interested in the organization of party work within the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Polish Army, [and] appreciating the necessity of changing the style and form of PUWP impact upon those ministries they accentuated the need for introducing such solutions which would make it possible to maintain party influence'. The Soviets must have found it very difficult to part ways with their long-term and important ally. One way or another, Moscow—or its personification, Gorbachev—became the midwife of the Polish transformation.

A similar role was performed by Washington, albeit using different measures. The new, or rather refurbished administration, persistently—to use an expression coined by Ambassador Davis—'controlled the situation' by maintaining its grip on credits. From the autumn of 1988 to the spring of 1989, that is, during months of crucial significance for events in Poland, the Americans, like the Soviets, decided to wait and see. Actually, the only active partner was Ambassador Davis, who moderated Solidarity's demands and warned against formulating excessively far-reaching demands, and especially against aggravating the Soviet Union. This current was particularly discernible in connection with the candidature of General Jaruzelski for the presidential office. On 22 June, Davis went as far as to invite to dinner a group of leading Solidarity deputies in order to convince them to support Jaruzelski for president.<sup>81</sup> His wires show that he was clearly worried that the winners could prove to be too radical. Not waiting for a solution to Solidarity participation in the cabinet, Washington prepared its 'carrot' without

formulating any new conditions. On the contrary, President Bush almost personally agitated in favour of Jaruzelski. During his triumphant visit to Poland on 9–11 July, a week prior to the presidential election, he not only gave an ardent speech addressed to both parliamentary chambers, copiously praising the ‘Polish leaders’, but also presented a programme of economic aid, including postponement of the repayment of debts to the United States and Western creditors in general (a total sum of more than \$6 billion). In a conversation with Jaruzelski, Bush persuaded the general not to withdraw his candidature: ‘I told him’, Bush wrote in his memoirs, ‘that his refusal to run might inadvertently lead to serious instability and I urged him to reconsider.’<sup>82</sup>

At this time, the US administration attached the greatest importance to stability, although, as it proved, it did not have in mind stability guaranteed by bayonets. General Jaruzelski appreciated this benevolence, but, unless we take into account official or outright ritual words addressed to his guest, it would be rather difficult to discern a distinct reevaluation of his attitude towards the United States. Possibly, Jaruzelski no longer regarded them as ‘aggressive imperialists’ who had designs on Poland, although nothing indicates that he had turned into an admirer or even a friend of America. Omitting all the doctrinal-ideological aspects, Jaruzelski—like a considerable majority of his comrades—was probably affected by the recent past, when Washington had blatantly forced him to agree to concession after concession, offering almost nothing in return.

### *An Attempted Conclusion*

In truth, I am not certain whether I can assess which factors—the dynamic of internal events or the great powers—essentially affected the course of events in Poland during 1980–89. For many years, I researched mainly domestic issues, and was of the impression that the fate of the country was determined mainly by the Polish ‘flywheel’. Once I examined more closely the way in which Polish political forces perceived the international situation, I started to ponder whether it was not the latter that dictated all the key decisions. As is often the case, it would be probably safer to opt for a partial (or, rather, dual) answer.

If we were to omit the more general—systemic, geopolitical or cultural—determinants, it would become apparent that the entire cycle of events was inaugurated by an inner mechanism. The fact that after 1 July 1980 the workers decided to strike and the authorities did not immediately deploy the militia against the rebels, had little in common with aggression in Afghanistan or the speeches of American presidential candidates. The matter becomes more complicated once we analyze the proclamation of martial law. I can only say that the authorities would still have attempted to crush an independent social movement without Soviet pressure. It is highly probable that this would have been a similar, or even identical, police-military operation. We may say that in this case there took place a direct concurrence (accord) of the inner dynamic with external impact: the longer Solidarity lasted, the more important the need to suppress it became for Polish and Soviet communists. The situation in the following years appears to have been even more complicated. Indubitably, an essential causal factor was the necessity of seeking an effective and permanent solution to the impasse in which the regime found itself after winning the battle against Solidarity. In my opinion, the Soviet

Union was incapable of either indicating or facilitating such a solution. First (1982–85), it was unable to suggest a satisfactory remedy because it merely counselled a return to the status quo *ante bellum*, although the war broke out precisely due to the prevalent state of affairs prior to August 1980. Later Moscow was unable to help because it itself was experiencing economic difficulties, and was fervently looking for some sort of a cure. Fortunately, Poland possessed the potential for change, chiefly in the form of Solidarity, but also in the mood shared by a considerable part of the Polish people, and the ambitions cherished by some of the communist activists to fulfil their leadership aspirations and complete their patriotic mission, as they envisaged it. This potential was set gradually into motion the moment Moscow was compelled to agree to concessions towards its prime rival. Solidarity proposed a solution to the impasse by resorting to a new social contract, which would assume a profound reform of the system. Neither the Jaruzelski team nor Gorbachev and his men had any good arguments for rejecting such a proposition. Naturally, the Americans endorsed the outlined solution. Nonetheless, neither Moscow nor Washington suggested or even controlled the course of the negotiations, which had a dynamic of their own. The turnabout performed by Wałęsa at the beginning of August came as a shock to the Americans. ‘The reality of the situation’, Domber wrote, took ‘the Ambassador by surprise’, who clearly saw it as a ‘brilliant political maneuver’.<sup>83</sup>

If we were to accept such reasoning then we might say that the year 1989 witnessed a new configuration of the old elements: although the targets differed, for some time the path leading towards them remained common for all—Wałęsa and Jaruzelski, Gorbachev and Reagan.

## NOTES

- 1 This title is a paraphrase of Norman Davies’ well-known *God’s Playground: A History of Poland* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981).
- 2 Arthur R. Rachwald *In Search of Poland: The Superpowers’ Response to Solidarity* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1990).
- 3 For example, the conference ‘Poland 1980–1982: Domestic Crisis, International Conditions’, held in November 1997, attended among others, by Victor Kulikov, Wojciech Jaruzelski, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Zbigniew Brzezinski and William Odom.
- 4 Note that the ‘no. 1’ demand (postulate) was the legalization of independent trade unions.
- 5 Quoted in *PZPR a ‘Solidarność’ 1980–1981. Tajne dokumenty Biura Politycznego* (The Polish United Workers’ Party and Solidarity 1980–1981: Secret Documents of the Political Bureau) (London: ‘Aneks’, 1992), p. 78.
- 6 This document was published together with in-depth comments by Mark Kramer in *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, vol. 11 (1998), pp. 102–9.
- 7 Quoted in *PZPR a ‘Solidarność’*, p. 91.
- 8 From September 1980 to October 1981, Kania alone had about 20–25 telephone conversations with Brezhnev.
- 9 Naturally, these divisions existed not only at the highest levels of the authorities, but on all rungs of the party hierarchy. The tendencies among the security apparatus and the officer corps were unanimous—both opted for a ‘force’ solution.
- 10 K. Barcikowski, *U szczytów władzy* (At the Pinnacle of Power) (Warsaw: Projekt, 1998), p. 205.
- 11 For the whole text see: *Dokumenty. Teczka Susłowa* (Documents: The Suslov File), (Warsaw: Interpress, 1993), pp. 31–43.

- 12 For details of the operation see: A.Paczkowski, *Droga do 'mniejszego zła': strategia i taktyka obozu władzy, lipiec 1980-styczeń 1982* (The Road to the 'Lesser Evil': Strategy and Tactics of the Ruling Establishment, July 1980-January 1982) (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2001), pp. 188–94.
- 13 Numerous East German documents demonstrate the active role played in relation to the hardliners by Erich Honecker. On several occasions at least (November 1980, May and September 1981), he proposed to Brezhnev changes within the Polish leadership. A more moderate stand was represented by Gustav Husak.
- 14 All previous Soviet interventions (Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968, Afghanistan 1979) took place after the preparation of a hinterland in the form of 'requests for fraternal help'. In Czechoslovakia, this plan broke down at the last moment, causing considerable complications and the necessity of discovering a (temporary) compromise with Dubček.
- 15 Marshal Kulikov confirmed that special units had at their disposal 'outlines of activity' in case of an invasion of Poland, while two divisions stationed permanently in Poland 'were in a constant state of readiness'. See *Wejść nie wejść* (Will They Invade or Not) (London: 'Aneks', 1999), pp. 140–1.
- 16 *Zeszyt roboczy generała Anoszkina, 9–16 grudnia 1981 r.* (The Draft File of General Anoshkin, 9–16 December 1981) (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 1998), p. 35 (Victor Anoshkin, head of the cabinet of Marshal Kulikov, made daily notes).
- 17 Quoted in *PZPR a 'Solidarność'*, p. 402.
- 18 Paczkowski, *Droga do*, p. 44.
- 19 Quoted in *PZPR a 'Solidarność'*, p. 83. Gierek, who had spent his youth as a miner in France, maintained cordial relations with the conservative—albeit greatly engaged in détente—French politician.
- 20 A part was certainly played by the fact that in the Carter administration both the secretary of state (Edmund Muskie) and the national security adviser (Zbigniew Brzezinski) were of Polish descent. Marshal Ustinov was supposed to have said that the world was ruled by a 'Polish mafia': the above-mentioned officials were accompanied by the French minister of internal affairs (Michel Poniatowski), the Pope, and even the prime minister of Israel (Menachem Begin, born in Poland and during 1941–43 a soldier in the Polish Army).
- 21 F.J.Meehan 'Reflection on the Polish Crisis', *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, vol. 11 (1998), pp. 43–6.
- 22 Quoted in Rachwald, *In Search of Poland*, p. 57.
- 23 The main object of the controversy consisted of sanctions against the Soviet Union, and especially the blocking of the construction of a gas pipeline to western Europe.
- 24 Paczkowski, *Droga do*, p. 279.
- 25 See *Wejść nie wejść*, p. 233.
- 26 The president was spending the weekend in Camp David, Secretary of State Alexander Haig was staying in Brussels, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger was flying from London to Washington, and the post of Chief of the National Security Council had been empty for some time.
- 27 Archiwum Akt Nowych (Archive of New Acts, hereafter: AAN), KC PZPR, V/203.
- 28 AAN, KC PZPR, XIA/1488.
- 29 AAN, KC PZPR, XIA/1405.
- 30 AAN, KC PZPR, XIA/1398.
- 31 AAN, KC PZPR, XIA/1405.
- 32 Quoted in Rachwald, *In Search of Poland*, p. 35.
- 33 AAN, KC PZPR, XIA/1403.
- 34 Dieter Bingen, *Polityka Republiki Bońskiej wobec Polski: od Adenauera do Kohla* (The Policy of the Bonn Republic towards Poland: From Adenauer to Kohl) (Cracow: Kwadrat, 1997), p. 208.
- 35 AAN, KC PZPR, V/257.

- 36 AAN, KC PZPR, XIA/1482.
- 37 Not until the second half of 1983 did Honecker, Husak and Kadar pay official visits, which could be treated as proof of a restoration of normal relations.
- 38 *Dokumenty. Teczka Susłowa*, pp. 96–9.
- 39 *Zeszyt roboczy*, p. 35.
- 40 *General Pawłow: byłem rezydentem KGB w Polsce* (General Pavlov: I was a KGB Resident in Poland), (Warsaw: BGW, 1994), p. 370.
- 41 AAN, KC PZPR, V/228.
- 42 For the whole protocol see: *General Pawłow: byłem rezydentem*, pp. 382–7.
- 43 AAN, KC PZPR, p. 412, vol. XIII.
- 44 AAN, KC PZPR, XI/A, 1482.
- 45 AAN, KC PZPR, V/278.
- 46 AAN, KC PZPR, V/286.
- 47 AAN, KC PZPR, V/285.
- 48 AAN, KC PZPR, V/286.
- 49 AAN, KC PZPR, XIA/1502.
- 50 Next to Wałęsa, who acted openly, Bujak was the leader of Solidarity in conspiracy. Tracked since 13 December 1981, he was detained in May 1986.
- 51 AAN, KC PZPR, XIA/1422.
- 52 AAN, KC PZPR, V/314.
- 53 For the whole document see: *Polska 1986–1989: koniec systemu* (Poland 1986–1989: The End of a System), ed. A.Dudek and A.Friszke, vol. III, *Dokumenty* (Documents) (Warsaw: 'Trio' and ISP PAN, 2001), pp. 13–19.
- 54 Institute of Political Studies, Document Collection, M/15/18.
- 55 AAN, KC PZPR, XIA/1484. This is an extensive, almost 100-page-long record of the course of the debate.
- 56 Quoted in *Polska 1986–1989: koniec systemu* (Poland 1986–1989: The End of the System), ed. A.Paczkowski, vol. II, *Dyskusja* (Discussion) (Warsaw: 'Trio' and ISP PAN, 2001), p. 255.
- 57 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 304.
- 58 Quoted in William C.Wohlforth (ed.), *Witnesses to the End of the Cold War* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 97.
- 59 AAN, KC PZPR, XI/400.
- 60 *Ibid.*
- 61 AAN, KC PZPR, XI/401.
- 62 Quoted in P.Raina, *Rozmowy z władzami PRL* (Talks with the Authorities of the PPL), vol. II (Warsaw: Książka Polska, 1995), p. 157.
- 63 AAN, KC PZPR, XIA/1489.
- 64 AAN, KC PZPR, XIA/1503.
- 65 AAN, KC PZPR, V/416.
- 66 AAN, KC PZPR, XI/401.
- 67 Institute of Political Studies, Document Collection, M/16/3.
- 68 *Ibid.*, M/16/10.
- 69 Quoted in *Polska 1986–1989*, vol. II, p. 45.
- 70 This statement was cited by Davis (cited in *ibid.*, p. 238). The Jaruzelski family in fact resided only several hundred metres from the US ambassador.
- 71 AAN, KC PZPR, XIA/1489.
- 72 AAN, KC PZPR, VII/85.
- 73 This and two other similar documents were published by Jacques Lévesque in 'Soviet Approaches to Eastern Europe at the Beginning of 1989', *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, vols 12/13 (2001), pp. 49–72.
- 74 For the protocol of this session see: *Ostatni rok władzy*, pp. 390–8.

75 Expressed at a session of the Secretariat on 16 June (*ibid.*, p. 409).

76 *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 3 July 1989.

77 AAN, KC PZPR, XIA/1514.

78 For the whole document see: *Ostatni rok władzy*, pp. 462–8.

79 The course of this conversation is known only from the imprecise account of Rakowski's memoirs, *Jak to się stało* (How It Happened) (Warsaw: BGW, 1991), pp. 243–5.

80 AAN, KC PZPR, XI/473. The assistance was rendered.

81 Gregory F. Domber, 'Solidarity's Coming Victory: Big or Too Big? Poland's Revolution as Seen from the US Embassy', <http://www.nsarchive.org/>, p. 5.

82 George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Knopf, 1998), p. 117.

83 Domber, 'Solidarity's Coming Victory', p. 7.

## Did Gorbachev Liberate Eastern Europe?

*Vojtech Mastny*

Mikhail S. Gorbachev deserves credit for having been the destroyer, albeit unintentionally, of the hard core of the evil Soviet empire—the Soviet Union; was he, then, also the liberator of its soft extension—Eastern Europe?<sup>1</sup> Others have been claiming the laurel: the Reagan administration for having challenged Moscow into an arms race that would make its control over the area unaffordable; left-wing critics of this policy for having implanted in Soviet minds alternative notions of security; human-rights activists for having undermined the edifice of repression that sustained communist rule. There are also theories that the outcome was inevitable or—on the contrary—accidental. They are less rewarding analytically, although accidents do happen, even inevitably, and the belief in the inevitability of events can be an important incentive for action as well as inaction.

Without necessarily detracting from the importance of other factors, this chapter will focus on the thinking and resulting political behaviour of not only the extraordinary Soviet leader but also his more ordinary local clients. It will examine their inter-relationship in the light of records, many of them not used before, from the countries of the former Warsaw Pact. Since military force was, according to conventional wisdom, the Soviet empire's glue of last resort, the importance of the Moscow-led alliance in coping with the unexpected challenges that the Kremlin and its junior partners were facing will receive particular attention.

### *The Brezhnev Doctrine and the Polish Solution*

Soon after Gorbachev came to power, he reportedly made it clear to the East European leaders that they were now on their own.<sup>2</sup> It is not clear, however, when and how this seemingly momentous renunciation of the 'Brezhnev doctrine', by which the Soviet Union reserved the right to intervene in their countries to prevent a change of the status quo, took place. The difficulty of identifying the turning point indicates that nothing momentous actually happened. Former Polish foreign minister Marian Orzechowski has retrospectively suggested that the end of the doctrine was not a matter of declarations but of policies.<sup>3</sup>

Moscow had always verbally pledged its readiness to abstain from interference in the internal affairs of its allies, encouraging them to be more self-reliant. Although on important occasions Soviet leaders honoured the pledge in its breach, on less important occasions they observed it. And the East European communists, though sometimes opposing or annoying their 'Big Brother' on important issues, more often tried, with variable skill and daring, to harmonize their interests with Soviet preferences. The

meaning of what was important was subject to ad hoc definition rather than determined in advance.

The Soviet non-invasion of Poland during the Solidarity crisis of 1980–81 was a case in point.<sup>4</sup> Having originally been poised to invade but later ruling out invasion as a viable option, the Kremlin instead pressed the Polish military themselves to put their house in order. Abhorring the democratic opposition, the generals had been itching to do so anyway, but lacked confidence in their ability to succeed.<sup>5</sup> General Wojciech Jaruzelski sought Soviet military backing should his attempt to impose martial law falter. Although he received no promises he went ahead, and the imposition proved remarkably easy. None of the troops involved, including conscripts sympathetic to the opposition, disobeyed orders.

The significance of the Polish case as a precedent was ambivalent. In trying to maintain the integrity of its empire, Moscow demonstrated its capacity to induce its clients to do their dirty work but betrayed at the same time its own dependence on their willingness to perform the task. The success in Poland attested to the emergence in Eastern Europe of a caste of high-ranking officers, most of them alumni of Soviet military academies, who were unswervingly loyal to the Warsaw Pact. Their effectiveness in a country where the army as an institution enjoyed unique popularity and prestige, however, was a local phenomenon. The experience showed the strength of military discipline in ensuring that the troops would follow orders even in profoundly anti-Soviet Poland, but left open the question of how they would behave in other countries under other circumstances.

Assessing the reliability of the communist armies in different situations used to challenge the imagination of Western experts. The East German Army invariably received the highest ratings; even after its collapse, an American specialist marvelled that 'no other military in the world—East or West—could have accomplished what the East Germans were capable of doing so quickly and so efficiently'.<sup>6</sup> The scenarios that were considered included offensive or defensive war against NATO, defence against invasion by Soviet or other Warsaw Pact forces, and domestic use of force directed by Moscow.<sup>7</sup> None of these scenarios came to pass; the one that eventually did—domestic use of force not directed or even desired by Moscow—was never seriously considered.

When Gorbachev came to power, the sovietologist Myron Rush has perceptively observed, the USSR was still a viable society, 'but deeply flawed, it was vulnerable to adverse chance events. Viable but vulnerable, the Soviet Union was hostage to bad fortune. That the invalid did not live, but died at the hands of an unlikely doctor employing untried medicine owed much to chance.'<sup>8</sup> Eastern Europe's communist regimes, while also deeply flawed and vulnerable, were no such hostages to chance. Although the world-famous Moscow school of surgery was in decline, its new head physician having turned to a search for miracle drugs, throughout Eastern Europe there were established general practitioners—apart from the specialist in military medicine installed recently in Warsaw. They ranged from experienced professionals in East Berlin and Sofia to more mediocre types in Prague, and those with symptoms of incipient senility or madness who were in charge in Budapest and Bucharest, respectively. These were the sort of people whose ability to keep their ailing regimes alive was to be tested, separately from the treatment accorded by Gorbachev to the Soviet invalid.



Moscow's East European clients did not regard its ambiguous renunciation of the 'Brezhnev doctrine' with any sense of foreboding, much less alarm. Whatever Gorbachev may have said and left unsaid gave no reliable clues to what the Kremlin would do if the stability of any of their countries were again to be threatened by domestic unrest, as had recurrently happened before. As late as the mid-1980s, however, this was not a pressing issue, as none of regimes in question was in an acute crisis and some of them even appeared to have achieved a new level of stability. If Gorbachev may retrospectively be faulted for neglecting Eastern Europe, there were reasons not to worry about it as much as about his own country.

As far as the Polish solution was concerned, Jaruzelski's military mind was not rife in generating the necessary political incentives, much less a workable design for the country's economic recovery, that would have been needed to achieve his avowed goal of national reconciliation. At least by the mid-1980s, the Solidarity opposition had become sufficiently discouraged to enable the regime to lift martial law and proclaim an amnesty. The loosening of the reins allowed Poles, in Adam Michnik's memorable phrase, to live 'as if they were free' and let the regime grapple with the consequences of its own incompetence. By 1987–88, its chickens had come home to roost when massive strikes rocked the country, spearheaded by workers too young to be inhibited by the memory of the their elders' defeat six years earlier. Scurrying for mediation by the Catholic Church as a presumably congenial hierarchical institution, Poland's military rulers reluctantly opened negotiations with their nemesis, Solidarity.

The process of give and take that started in February 1989, with the opening of the 'round table' talks, broadly representative of the main forces in the Polish society,<sup>9</sup> and ended six months later with the communists surrendering their monopoly of power, has been likened to a 'miracle.' It certainly stood out for the extraordinary richness of its political discourse and the political maturity of its participants, the communist representatives included. Jaruzelski proved capable of learning, even against his will, eliciting effusive praise from Gorbachev. Congratulating the Poles on their good fortune of having as their leader a person of 'such stature and importance at this stage of history',<sup>10</sup> the Soviet general secretary came to regard the country as a 'laboratory' where his ideas on reforming 'socialism' could be tested.<sup>11</sup> What was in fact being tested there were the meaning of power and the fundamentals of government.

Poland was a nation of advanced political culture with abundant experience in the misuse of power and bad government. The communists were both products and producers of that experience. They had been, on the whole, more supple than their comrades elsewhere in the region; since 1956, they had been presiding over the Soviet bloc's most lively polity. They and their Moscow supervisors learned to tolerate a degree of pluralism that, though exceedingly modest by Western standards, was nevertheless significantly greater than in any other country that called itself communist. As a result, Poland had the best prospects for a relatively smooth transition to genuine pluralism.

The political education of Poland's top generals still left much to be desired. Following the Communist Party's debacle in the June 1989 parliamentary elections, which Jaruzelski had expected it to win, he could remain the head of state only thanks to Solidarity representatives, who gave him the necessary margin of a single vote to comply with the agreed formula of 'your president, our prime minister'. Suspicions persist that if he had not squeaked in because of the good will of his adversaries the military would

have attempted to stage a repetition of the 1981 coup.<sup>12</sup> Had they tried, the earlier tragedy would have almost certainly been re-enacted as a farce, as this time not even a flicker of the spectre of Soviet intervention, which had been suspected to loom eight years earlier, appeared on the horizon. Still, Jaruzelski's expeditious appointment of loyalists to key army posts, before these could be filled with Solidarity supporters, was suggestive of a desire to keep the option of force open.<sup>13</sup>

### *The East German Model and its Admirers*

Compared with Poland, East Germany (GDR) was a model of political and economic stability. The model was not only the envy of communist leaders elsewhere in the region but many Western observers also viewed it with respect, not to mention the conceit and complacency that its chief architect, Erich Honecker, displayed at its creation. Gorbachev was among the admirers. He attributed East Germany's success to timely reforms that supposedly incorporated the results of the 'scientific-technical revolution' without compromising the fundamentals of 'socialism'. He contrasted the GDR's accomplishments with the Soviet Union's own failures, which he blamed on the policies of 'stagnation' identified with his predecessor, Leonid I. Brezhnev.<sup>14</sup>

Honecker further prided himself the extent of international recognition his upstart state had been able to attain and the special relationship it had established with the other German state—a relationship he believed himself capable of manipulating to his regime's advantage. Indeed, the resulting benefits included not only tangible economic subsidies by West Germany's capitalists but also less tangible ideological subsidization by its Social Democratic Party, SPD, whose 'second *Ostpolitik*' undertook treating the GDR's ruling party as a congenial 'socialist' partner.<sup>15</sup> During his triumphant visit to China in October 1986, Honecker described the SPD as 'a very strong progressive force', speaking of its leaders, Willy Brandt and Oskar Lafontaine, as if they were his puppets.<sup>16</sup> He saw West German politicians as being increasingly dependent on his goodwill.

East Berlin's management of its relations with Bonn did not impress Konstantin Chernenko, Gorbachev's immediate predecessor. Chernenko warned the visiting East German leader that the dependency rather worked the other way and Marshal Dmitrii Ustinov, the Soviet defence minister, chastised him for a 'lack of firmness'. Honecker snapped back that 'we know well enough what we are doing' and told the marshal, in effect, to shut up.<sup>17</sup> He was vindicated when Gorbachev agreed with his opinion that much had indeed changed in West Germany that benefited the Soviet Union, too, adding the compliment that 'this is due to you, Erich'.<sup>18</sup>

Later on, Gorbachev grew understandably tired of Honecker's *Besserwisserei* ('all-knowingness'), although he kept his respect for East German policies. Before departing for the celebrations of the GDR's fiftieth anniversary in October 1989, Gorbachev confided in his aide Anatoly S. Chernyaev his intention not to say anything in support of Honecker, only of his country and its 'revolution'.<sup>19</sup> Once in Berlin, however, the Soviet guest did not differentiate between the man and his works. Gorbachev's celebrated phrase, 'If we stay behind, life will immediately punish us',<sup>20</sup> was taken out of context and badly misrepresented in contemporary press reports as well as in retrospective renditions by him and his acolytes.

The Soviet leader uttered his remark not as criticism of East German practices but as criticism of his own country's predicament. Three weeks later, he supplied this clarification to Honecker's successor, Egon Krenz, who suggested that Gorbachev had correctly diagnosed in advance the root cause of Honecker's recent downfall. Cutting short the flattery, Gorbachev explained 'that he had actually been speaking about himself'.<sup>21</sup> In another month, however, after Krenz had in turn disappeared into the proverbial dustbin of history, Gorbachev offered a different version to the soon-to-be-outgoing Romanian dictator, Nicolae Ceaușescu.

Now the Soviet general secretary spoke about the obvious flaws of the East German model and criticized its custodians' reluctance to adapt to the requirements of modern times. He avoided any suggestion, however, that the Romanian despot should mend his ways before life might punish him, too. Gorbachev reassured him that 'whether or not we like the methods employed by Comrade Ceaușescu, we know that a lot has been done in Romania, and, in an objective manner, all are free to choose their own methods to accomplish progress and the construction of socialism'.<sup>22</sup> Not only in deed but also in word, Gorbachev's attitude toward reform in Eastern Europe was opportunistic.

If not even the strategically crucial Poland and East Germany failed to engage the Soviet reformer, hardly more could be expected elsewhere in the region. Hungary, less free than Poland and less affluent than East Germany, was on balance reputed to be the most livable part of the Soviet empire. The Hungarians were far from being the happiest, however, as growing disparities between wealth and poverty appeared to contemporary observers as having created by the mid-1980s a pre-revolutionary situation, much like in 1956.<sup>23</sup> The Hungarian communists handled the situation deftly. They eased the superannuated party chief János Kádár from power but continued the reforms he had started. These had already benefited the country by introducing a rudimentary pluralism second only to Poland's, including competition among government-approved candidates for elective offices and elements of market economy unmatched elsewhere in the Soviet bloc. If Foreign Minister Péter Várkonyi meant what he said on his visit to in East Berlin, Hungary still regarded the GDR as a model,<sup>24</sup> but in practice did not follow it.

When Gorbachev came to Prague—the seat of a regime whose resistance to change made it East Berlin's closest ally—the enthusiastic populace greeted him as a champion of reform. The visitor nevertheless studiously avoided embarrassing his habitually deferential hosts, whose eagerness to emulate the Soviet example was proverbial, by pressing them to emulate it also when the example no longer suited their preferences. Nor did he do anything to embarrass the far from deferential Ceaușescu on a visit to Romania, where no crowds spontaneously greeted Gorbachev. For several years, the Bucharest regime had been seeking relief from its penury by moving closer to Moscow economically, expanding trade. Once Moscow began experimenting with reform, however, the regime tried even harder than before to protect itself from Soviet interference.

The famously Russophile and obsequious Bulgaria became, ironically, the only country that elicited Gorbachev's rebuke for its policies—not for their being too old-fashioned but rather the opposite. Its long-serving leader Todor Zhivkov was reported as having disparaged the Soviet Union as his country's 'first colony'—its supplier of cheap raw materials and importer of its shoddy finished goods.<sup>25</sup> He made no bones about telling Gorbachev that Bulgaria had no intention to imitate Soviet mistakes, prompting

him to grumble about the alleged presence in the Sofia government of pro-Western officials and enquire what was meant by Bulgaria's wanting to become another West Germany or Japan. Without attempting to provide the admittedly difficult explanation, Zhivkov wondered about the 'impartiality' of the information Gorbachev had been receiving, and the altercation passed.<sup>26</sup>

### *Dismantling the Strategic Shield*

If Gorbachev hardly seemed to be perturbed by either reformist or anti-reformist proclivities of his East European clients, they in turn took in their stride his progressive dismantling of Soviet military might and even encouraged it. Praising him as 'the hope of the world',<sup>27</sup> Honecker supported most vocally the reduction of nuclear weapons championed by Gorbachev. This was not because the East German leader had been habitually toeing the Soviet line but, on the contrary, because he had broken the habit under Gorbachev's weak predecessors.<sup>28</sup> He had deplored the installation in his country of additional Soviet missiles in response to NATO's incipient deployment of its 'Euromissiles', lamenting both developments as damaging to détente. Having proclaimed both German states' special historical responsibility for limiting the damage, he had reasons to feel vindicated by Gorbachev's commitment to disarmament. Indeed, Gorbachev further elaborated on Honecker's idea by announcing Soviet readiness to join the German two states in a 'triangle' that would bear a special responsibility for demilitarizing the Cold War.<sup>29</sup>

East Germany was ahead of the Soviet Union in promoting disarmament. While supporting wholeheartedly Gorbachev's successive arms-reduction schemes, Honecker regarded the proposal for a 50 per cent cut in strategic offensive weapons that was on the table by mid-1988 as much too little.<sup>30</sup> He had been advocating the creation of a nuclear-free zone in central Europe—a project Czechoslovakia supplemented with a plan for a zone free of chemical weapons. Poland added, reportedly without prior consultation with Moscow,<sup>31</sup> its own 'Jaruzelski Plan', which envisaged not only the removal of all nuclear weapons from the area but also a substantial reduction of conventional armaments there. Once the superpowers in December 1987 agreed to dismantle their intermediate-range nuclear missiles, some of which were located in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, Moscow's allies cooperated readily. They greeted enthusiastically Gorbachev's upbeat report about his agreement with President Ronald Reagan, expressing hopes for still more radical cuts of both nuclear and conventional forces.<sup>32</sup>

Honecker felt safe enough to welcome withdrawals of Soviet forces stationed in his country, on whose presence his regime was so critically dependent. In October 1987, the East German Politburo decided to pursue a revision of the 1957 agreement on their stationing in order to increase its own control over their activities<sup>33</sup>—an astounding indication of how much the Kremlin's authority in the strategically critical area had been eroded. Both the East Germans and their Soviet patrons, however, could take solace from their extensive knowledge of the assessments of the situation by their Western military adversaries and the resulting NATO plans.

Among the abundance of top-secret Western documents that were being channelled by the GDR's proficient intelligence services into East Berlin and on to Moscow was, for

example, an advanced draft of West German 'Defence Policy Guidelines' from April 1987.<sup>34</sup> The guidelines assumed that international stability would be maintained as a result of the basic continuity of the Soviet system in the foreseeable future, the preservation of strategic balance between the superpowers resting on their offensive nuclear arsenals, and the inadequacy of high technology in altering the conventional balance between the two rival alliances in NATO's favour. Although all the assumptions were false, their knowledge was bound to be reassuring for the Soviet advocates of a new 'defensive military doctrine' of the Warsaw Pact.

Moscow introduced the doctrine, which called for a radical restructuring of forces, at the Berlin meeting of the alliance's political consultative committee in May 1987.<sup>35</sup> The new course met with no opposition from the East European ruling parties. Only their military, as well as the Soviet military, grumbled about undertaking a task that spelled the end of the Warsaw Pact's established structure without its replacement with a new one, but they went along anyway. The interpenetration of the party and the army, with the former asserting its primacy, ensured there would be no independent way of the military.

Unlike Gorbachev's attitude toward East European reform, his approach to disarmament was principled to the point of dogmatism. He was admirable, as Reagan was, in his sincere belief in a nuclear-free world and the end of military confrontation in Europe. On 7 December 1988, he delivered his sensational speech at the United Nations in which he announced deep unilateral cuts of the Soviet troops and armaments and also finally made it crystal clear in public that the Brezhnev doctrine was dead. He had no plan, however, for dealing with the political consequences of the precipitous dismantling of the Soviet Union's allegedly indispensable strategic shield in Eastern Europe. When Gorbachev met with other Politburo members to grapple with the implications of the speech they proved astonishingly unprepared.

The general secretary ruminated that he had 'pulled the rug [out] from under the feet of those who have been prattling...that new political thinking is just about words'. He saw the progressing demolition of Soviet military power as filling US reactionaries with 'concern, anxiety, and even fear'.<sup>36</sup> He cited them to testify that the Soviet Union was going to 'seize the initiative and lead the entire world'—a theme that had been reverberating in his encounters with his East European allies as well.<sup>37</sup> Convinced of the fundamental superiority of the Soviet system, much like Khrushchev had been before him, Gorbachev refused to acknowledge, even to himself, that he was making concessions from weakness.

Gorbachev admitted to his entourage that there was no 'longer-term plan of practical measures to implement the...concept' he had enunciated at the UN. He proposed that 'we should pull our heads together and give it time'. Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze warned there was little time to clarify the meaning of the defensive posture that was about to be implemented in Eastern Europe and that 'we will be caught...on every...detail'. In the end, however, nothing was clarified as the debate, full of platitudes and inanities, never addressed the big issues, much less the details. Gorbachev nevertheless pronounced the session a 'really a grand-scale policy-making'.<sup>38</sup> The scale, which he had determined, testified to the terminal decay of the Soviet political class.

Soviet policy analysts analyzed the future of East Europe more thoughtfully in two secret memoranda prepared subsequently for the Kremlin leaders. The more perceptive of the two concluded that communism in the region was finished, and advocated its

'Finlandization'—transformation into a grouping of non-communist states whose deference to Moscow would follow the Finnish model but, unlike in the case of Finland, would be safeguarded through their membership in the Warsaw Pact.<sup>39</sup> Whether or not these documents were actually read by the policy-makers, they did not make a difference for policy. In using the Warsaw Pact framework to implement the new arms-control measures, the Soviet Union sought to forge new relations with the countries of western Europe rather than Eastern Europe. As Moscow's interest in the region kept declining, however, the more conservative East European regimes came to regard the alliance as a vehicle of their salvation.

### *The Warsaw Pact to the Rescue*

Leaving the Warsaw Pact's military direction in Soviet hands, as it had always been, Eastern Europe's communist regimes tried to enhance the alliance's political dimensions in order to adapt to the sweeping changes that were taking place. The enhancement conformed to Soviet preferences, and Moscow condoned it without actively promoting it. Hungary favoured the transformation of the Warsaw Pact's committee of foreign ministers into a truly consultative body that would allow its members' input into common policy but also enable them to share their mutual concerns and expectations, much as was the case within NATO.<sup>40</sup> At the foreign ministers' meeting in March 1988, all except the Romanian representative favoured building up the alliance's institutions by creating a permanent secretariat with a strong secretary-general, likewise along the NATO model.<sup>41</sup> It was a sign of the changing times that none other than the East German foreign minister Oskar Fischer pleaded for institutionalization as a way of giving not only the governments but also their citizens a sense of belonging.<sup>42</sup>

By 1989, however, the reforming Hungarian communists no longer regarded the Warsaw Pact as a suitable vehicle for their interests. They proceeded to distance themselves from it while promoting their country's integration into the 'Helsinki process' of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). This meant subscribing to the CSCE's Western-inspired concepts of security, which included respect for human rights. The reorientation subsequently inspired the historic opening of Hungary's western borders to masses of East German refugees trying to reach West Germany. Defying alliance obligations to the GDR, the opening of the floodgates would seal the fate of communist East Germany even before the Berlin Wall came tumbling down.

Reading the writing on the wall, East Berlin had taken the lead in efforts at transforming the Warsaw Pact into a barrier against the CSCE's subversive influences. The conference's lengthy deliberations in Vienna, which reviewed compliance with its human-rights provisions, coincided with the mounting crisis of communism in Eastern Europe and its eventual dénouement. Alluding to compliance with those provisions, Fischer, in a speech prepared for the April 1989 meeting of foreign ministers, raised alarm at 'systemic amputations and wholesale surgeries of socialism'.<sup>43</sup> His government's anti-human rights offensive, however, failed to win support not only from Hungary but also from the Soviet Union, Poland and even Bulgaria. They all had already concluded that their 'human-rights deficit' needed to be reduced unilaterally in order to

meet Western standards.<sup>44</sup> Moscow particularly wished to expedite the Vienna talks on the reduction of conventional forces that were being conducted within the framework of the Helsinki process.

Because of its deplorable human-rights record, the Czechoslovak regime was as vulnerable as the East German one to pressures generated by the process but less determined to resist them. The Prague officials seemed confused about what was happening. The party chief, Miloš Jakeš, lamented that repression alone no longer worked.<sup>45</sup> Seeking Honecker's succour, the prominent hard-liner Vasil Bil'ak confessed he had never experienced so 'complicated' a period. He had been surprised to see that the recent experiment with elections of factory managers had resulted in 'good communists' being voted out.<sup>46</sup> Having hitched their wagon to the Moscow star, the Czechoslovak communists were the least prepared or deserving to keep their power.

Ceaușescu shared Honecker's alarm about creeping subversion of 'socialism'—a convergence of interests leading to an eleventh-hour rapprochement between the two reactionaries, who had often been at odds because of their disagreements about Soviet leadership of the Warsaw Pact. At their Berlin meeting in November 1988, they exchanged compliments about the their two countries' accomplishments. To Ceaușescu's opinion that 'from the social and political point of view, both Romania and your country are far ahead of the most developed capitalist countries', Honecker responded that 'the standard of living of GDR citizens, compared with the standard of living of the Federal Republic of Germany, is higher'.<sup>47</sup>

In July 1988, Romania acted on the mounting disarray within the communist alliance by submitting a formal proposal for its reorganization and 'democratization'.<sup>48</sup> The gist of the proposal was separation of the political and military functions of the Warsaw Pact. Its political consultative committee was to be upgraded to become a supervisory body for both political and economic cooperation, thus making its members' deviations from the established standards more difficult. Membership of the alliance was to be made open to additional 'socialist' countries. These would have included North Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, perhaps China, besides the inactive member Albania, all of which could be expected to support steering the Warsaw Pact in accordance with the wishes of its most conservative constituents.

The Romanian proposal further envisaged the creation of a military committee consisting of the ministers of defence, with a rotating presidency and the power to appoint the supreme commander for no more than a two-year term. The chief of staff of the military grouping, who would serve for a longer period, could be a Soviet officer but his appointment would be subject to unanimous approval by all its members. As Romania had been trying to do ever since the 1960s, its goal was to loosen Moscow's grip on the alliance—an objective added urgency by Gorbachev's reformist turn. Separating the Warsaw Pact's military functions from its political ones was calculated to make it more resistant to the disruptive restructuring masterminded by the Kremlin. Ceaușescu's ambition to redefine the alliance as a mutual rescue association was revealed in his calling it into action to ensure the Polish communists' grip on power after their 1989 electoral defeat.<sup>49</sup>

With his eyes cast on Western economic models, Zhivkov did not suffer from the delusion that his or any other communist country was ahead of the rest of the world. He nagged his East European peers by asking them 'how did it happen that in Western

countries there is free movement of labour, capital, and goods, while we are still at the feudal stage of development? Do we realize what all this means?’<sup>50</sup> He later became especially worried that Hungary was on a slippery slope, and vainly urged its party chief, Károly Grosz, to do something about it.<sup>51</sup> As the Polish communists had already slipped down the slope, Bulgaria in June 1989 prepared its own plan to reform the Warsaw Pact, in response to the one submitted by Romania a year ago, which had not been acted upon.

The Bulgarian project rejected the radical reorganization the Romanians wanted.<sup>52</sup> Instead of separating the alliance’s political and military functions while weakening the latter, the Bulgarians wanted to strengthen the Warsaw Pact overall and build up its institutions. They called for the establishment of a permanent secretariat and other institutional improvements along the familiar NATO model—improvements Moscow had been seeking for years but never achieved. Showing which way the wind was blowing, both proposals dwelt on the need for close political consultation and addressing non-military aspects of security. In the Bulgarian version, however, the Warsaw Pact was to serve its mutual rescue function with the Soviet Union, whereas the Romanians wanted to do without it.

Zhivkov responded to the communist fiasco in Poland by imploring Gorbachev to include on the agenda of the Warsaw Pact’s next meeting reaffirmation of its members’ ‘internationalist duties’ and a pledge to keep their political systems intact. Gorbachev replied that this was everyone’s own business, and acted accordingly.<sup>53</sup> Such ‘meticulous non-interference’ by the Kremlin in the internal affairs of its dependencies was, indeed, ‘a lucky chance for the anti-communist reformers there, but a gross miscalculation from the viewpoint of traditional Soviet political interests’.<sup>54</sup>

The July 1989 meeting of the Warsaw Pact’s political consultative committee struck East Germany’s defence minister, Heinz Kessler, as ‘frighteningly different’ from all previous ones. It appeared to him as an ‘assembly of ghosts’.<sup>55</sup> Honecker confided in the assembly his sombre estimate that ‘if we look at international affairs as they are now, we cannot speak of any fundamental change for the better’. He particularly deplored a lack of results in resisting the West’s ‘human rights demagoguery’ and, in a revealing reversal of his previous enthusiasm for disarmament, warned against taking ‘soft positions’ at the Vienna talks on conventional forces.<sup>56</sup> Gorbachev conceded that the prospective force reductions would complicate matters for his East European allies, and invited their opinion about how to deal with this ‘serious’ question. He did not express his own opinion other than stating the obvious, namely, that the impression of ‘socialism’ being in full retreat should be avoided.<sup>57</sup>

Gorbachev noted that the Warsaw Pact’s improvement and democratization had thus far been hampered by the ‘novelty and complexity’ of the task.<sup>58</sup> Nor had the project for its revitalization as a mutual rescue association made progress. Having shelved the Romanian reform proposal, Ceauşescu reverted to his vintage call for dissolving the alliance together with NATO.<sup>59</sup> More to the point, the participants in the July meeting left in disagreement about the desirability or necessity of reforming their countries’ political systems. The Hungarian insistence on applying Western standards on human rights, now endorsed by the Soviet Union, heralded a radical transformation of the systems. The East German, Czechoslovak, Romanian and Bulgarian calls for a common stand against Western interference ruled out such a transformation.<sup>60</sup> Portending the future, the ‘ghosts’



dispersed without taking common action on the political issues, while affirming their intent to implement the Warsaw Pact's self-destructive military doctrine.

### *The Reckoning*

From then on, the East European regimes were truly on their own, behaving true to form at their respective moments of truth. The Polish communists, having wrestled respectably if unsuccessfully with the challenge to their power, reconciled themselves to its loss. Their Hungarian comrades, having concluded that the loss was inevitable for them as well, chose to cooperate in their own demise, thus making their hour of reckoning less painful. Of the remaining four regimes, the East German one was the next to be tested. The qualities of the leaders, in contrast to their Polish and Hungarian counterparts, were found badly wanting, as were Gorbachev's.

Honecker reportedly disparaged Gorbachev as 'the man either knows nothing about politics, or else he is doing someone else's bidding, whoever that might be'.<sup>61</sup> Whatever the authenticity of this remark, its apocryphal author himself proved to be a poor politician, too susceptible to the flattery of his regime's admirers and the superficial foreign estimates of its stability. The misreading of the regime's fundamental brittleness, however, was systemic rather than personal. It was shared by the rank and file of the country's officialdom, whose ineptitude at the critical time of trial lent substance to the popular wit about the GDR being the preserve of the incompetent, who chose to stay there rather than move westward.<sup>62</sup>

As the exodus of those East Germans who knew better continued through Hungary's open borders, threatening to destabilize the walled-off country, the top official in charge of its defence, Kessler, summoned high-ranking military officers for a briefing. He offered the original explanation that the high incidence of young men among the defectors suggested their having gotten into trouble with their girlfriends and trying to escape the consequences. The minister also warned that some of the defectors might later return as spies, and urged vigilance.<sup>63</sup> Nor did Honecker's inept successor, Krenz, probe the causes of the crisis, much less propose a remedy, when he visited Gorbachev on 1 November. He rather implored his host to do something, as the GDR was 'a child of the Soviet Union' and 'one had to acknowledge one's paternity with regard to one's children'. He left it up to the Kremlin to answer East Germany's existential question of 'what role the USSR ascribed' to each of the German states in the future 'all-European house'.<sup>64</sup>

Gorbachev's answer to the question was pathetic. He did not invoke vital Soviet interests or the interests of socialism, much less the interests of the people. Instead, he maintained that the future of the East German state was safe because all the foreign leaders he had spoken to had told him so. Great Britain's Margaret Thatcher, France's François Mitterrand, Italy's Giulio Andreotti, not to mention Poland's Wojciech Jaruzelski—'all these politicians presumed the preservation of the post-war realities, including the existence of two German states'. Gorbachev professed to know that, in the opinion of former chancellor Willy Brandt, 'the disappearance of the GDR would be a spectacular defeat for Social Democracy since it considered the GDR as a great achievement of socialism'. Brandt's confidant Egon Bahr had supposedly 'expressed this

openly and with much clarity'.<sup>65</sup> In the Marxist Soviet leader's perception of the German question, the regard for the power of the people was striking.

Gorbachev regarded closer contacts between the two German states as both inevitable and desirable, while noting the need to 'keep them under control and steer them in the right direction'. He saw the need for 'certain changes...to prevent the ideological enemy from gaining positions'. As an example, he cited nothing less than 'the gradual achievement of the convertibility of the GDR mark'—a currency trading for less than a tenth of its official exchange rate and falling. He maintained that it was nevertheless essential 'to continue the current policy, which had brought about success', and that there was 'no reason to speculate on how the German question would eventually be resolved'. While disparaging the West German chancellor Helmut Kohl as no 'intellectual heavyweight, but rather a petit-bourgeois type', Gorbachev obviously had no conception of what, if anything, should be done about Germany.<sup>66</sup>

In view of Gorbachev's grasp of the German question, the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November could have hardly energized him into action. He did not seem even to realize that a turning point had been reached. His refusal to use force to prevent the people from taking events into their hands was instinctive rather than deliberate, lacking a deeper consideration of alternatives. There was no emergency session of the leadership to debate alternative policies and their likely consequences; nor was such a procedure required under the authoritarian Soviet system, which left overwhelming power in the hands of the general secretary. Gorbachev limited himself to pleading with the Western leaders not to take advantage of the situation, and was relieved to learn that they had no intention of doing so anyway.<sup>67</sup>

Once the Wall had been breached, rumours spread that the East German Army was getting ready to re-seal the border and prop up the tottering regime by force. This was, after all, the army that had been consistently rated as the Warsaw Pact's most reliable. Its failure to move can hardly be attributed to the personal qualities of its commanders but rather, paradoxically, to what was regarded its major strength—the thorough interpenetration of its chain of command with that of the party. Once the party was paralyzed, so was the army.<sup>68</sup> It is therefore idle to speculate that in the hypothetical case the East German military would have set the example by suppressing the popular revolution 'a hard-line coup could well have succeeded in the USSR—with all the implications such an action would have had for Europe and the world'.<sup>69</sup>

Using force to save the regime was not an option in Czechoslovakia either, regardless of how much its defence minister, General Milan Václavík, boasted that his men stood ready to defend socialism against its domestic enemies.<sup>70</sup> Neither the army nor the party was in a condition to do so. On 24 November, Premier Ladislav Adamec admitted to a special session of the party central committee that 'we don't have much choice' and was left to rely on what he fancied was 'the fact that most of our people, including young people, have no reason to be against socialism'.<sup>71</sup> The Prague leaders, too, were products of an inverted natural selection that led to the survival of the unfittest. No other ruling communist party had gone through more debilitating a succession of internal purges than the Czechoslovak one; and none had become more transfixed on its Moscow lodestar, thus ensuring that once the star ceased guiding, the party was lost.

The rulers of the Soviet bloc's reputedly most quiescent nation were ironically swept away by what came closest in the region to a true revolution—the most radical shift of

the power on the top under pressure from below within the shortest span of time. The former dissident Václav Havel moved triumphantly into the Prague Castle as president only a few weeks after he had been officially regarded as an enemy of the state. The scion of a bourgeois family in Eastern Europe's most egalitarian country, he was an improbable revolutionary leader. He was nevertheless confirmed in office by a parliament consisting of a minority of his followers and a majority of intimidated holdovers from the old regime. The upheaval marginalized the remnants of the communist reformers who in 1968 had vainly tried to give socialism a 'human face'. Their hero, Alexander Dubček, was honoured as a person, while the 'third way' he epitomized no longer had a chance.<sup>72</sup>

The defence of the old regime was no longer topical in Hungary either, albeit for other reasons. The Communist Party had already abdicated its power and started reinventing itself as a Western-style social democracy. The availability within its ranks of competent and far-sighted politicians, products of Hungary's previous period of relative pluralism, facilitated the transformation. The resulting competition for power by means of a roundtable discussion resembled the Polish rather than the Czechoslovak pattern, but was by then more straightforward and predictable in its consequences.<sup>73</sup> Among them was Hungary's taking the lead in pressing for the transformation of the still existing Warsaw Pact into a primarily political alliance of equals and an accelerated withdrawal of Soviet forces from the region.

Despite rising popular discontent in Bulgaria as well as Romania, the transfer of power occurred there as a result of palace coups rather than of interaction around tables or direct action in the streets. Unlike the countries further west, these were nations steeped in conspiratorial traditions that had never experienced genuine democracy. More than historical legacies, however, the specific circumstances of the time accounted for the particular ways in which power was transferred in each country and the outcomes that followed.

The plot by Zhivkov's associates that forced the change of government in Sofia was a model of moderation. The plotters cajoled the old man to step down before ratifying his removal at a party politburo meeting, where he was allowed to resign.<sup>74</sup> The army kept its promise neither to support him nor to take any other action on its own. The extent to which the conspirators may have sought and obtained support from the Soviet Embassy remains a subject of speculation. At the very least, sympathetic acquiescence could be expected from a Kremlin leadership interested in, though not capable of bringing about, a peaceful transformation of the discredited ruling parties into more credible political actors. And although the Bulgarian communists hardly qualified as credible promoters of democracy at the moment they at least did not hamper progress toward democratization.

The Romanian case was starkly different. Unlike Bulgaria, Ceauşescu's Romania remained until the end the maverick in the Soviet empire. Its indigenous tyranny of 'communism in one family' kept Moscow at bay while grinding the country to destitution. On his own turf, the despot was more powerful than any of his counterparts in the region. He neither looked for support to Moscow nor did Moscow offer any. True to form, once warned by spreading riots that the bell might be tolling for him, too, Ceauşescu chose to fight back, spilling blood.

Ceauşescu accused the Kremlin of having fomented the riots 'within the framework of the Warsaw Treaty Organization'.<sup>75</sup> Moscow rejected the accusations, as it did the US prodding to intervene in Romania should it become necessary to prevent its dictator from

staying in power. In turning down a probe by US Ambassador Jack F. Matlock, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister I.P. Aboimov could not resist commenting sarcastically that 'the American side may consider that the "Brezhnev doctrine" is now theirs as our gift'.<sup>76</sup>

The circumstances under which Ceaușescu's own minions conspired against him and eventually had him judicially murdered along with his wife are still murky. The motives of the conspirators remain all the more suspect because of the continued inaccessibility of most of the archival documents. According to historian Mihai Retegan, who has seen some of the files, 'everybody was shooting at everybody else',<sup>77</sup> thus suggesting that the plot was hastily improvised. Whatever else the plotters may have wished to accomplish, the nascent popular revolution was effectively 'confiscated'<sup>78</sup> by those who had reasons to feel threatened by it. Their political survival along with the survival of the old power structures ensured the least successful advance toward democracy and prosperity of a country that had previously been the most successful in escaping the Soviet grip.

### *Conclusion*

If Gorbachev did not liberate Eastern Europe, whether deliberately or inadvertently, neither did its communist regimes collapse on their own. The credit properly belongs to its people, who turned them out when the time was ripe. This was a remarkable accomplishment, but its causes and consequences were neither simple nor uniform; and the universal validity of the experience is open to questions.

The downfall of communism in Eastern Europe was a stirring triumph of freedom over tyranny. In terms of power, however, its significance was local rather than European or global. The shift in the balance of power brought about by the radical reversal of Soviet security policy had antedated the revolutions in the region. It occurred independently of the internal political developments in the area, which merely accelerated the military draw-down that had already become irreversible for reasons of Kremlin's own making. The Soviet armed forces would have been entirely capable of extinguishing the revolutions if ordered to do so. Moscow's incipient dismantling of its strategic shield in Eastern Europe proved irrelevant to the downfall of the communist regimes there, nor did the downfall predetermine the subsequent collapse of Soviet military power and eventually the Soviet Union itself.

This outcome, immensely fortunate as it was for the world at large, provides a commentary on the decline of the political class that had come to dominate the Soviet state 70 years after its revolutionary birth. It may be said that its plight could have been averted had the country been led by statesmen of the calibre of Kemal Atatürk rather than Mikhail Gorbachev. Yet the failure of the system to produce statesmen of such calibre was not accidental. It was but one symptom of communism's paralyzing effects on the body politic, particularly devastating for Russia.

In Eastern Europe, the different impact in each country of the manner in which the communists lost their power confirms the truism that brains and guts matter, especially in politics. There has been a correlation between the personal qualities the losers displayed at their moment of truth and the subsequent capacity of their more or less reformed successor parties to survive their debacle. In Poland and Hungary, where the communists demonstrated the greatest skill in managing their political retreat, those parties have

become most effectively integrated into the democratic systems, taking part in the periodic transfers of power between the government and the opposition.

The East German and Czechoslovak communists, who in 1989 paid the price of their incompetence, have not been able to recover from their downfall. In both united Germany and the Czech Republic, they have remained marginalized. By contrast, the Romanian conspirators who used devious means to ensure the survival of the old power structures largely succeeded, making democracy pay the price of their competence. The cleaner Bulgarian coup had less detrimental effects, allowing the successor party to gain enough respectability to become part of a democratic system though not to acquire as much power and influence as its Polish or Hungarian counterparts have been able to achieve.

Despite its creating the so-called 'vacuum of power', the liberation of Eastern Europe preserved international stability, thus exposing the simplicities of the 'realist' paradigm. It did not suck in competing outside states in a bloody conflict; when ex-communist Yugoslavia imploded in such a conflict, the problem with outsiders was their reluctance rather than eagerness to rush in. In Europe, though not so much elsewhere in the world, the times when stability flowed from balance of power had passed. Not only did the Eastern European revolutions prevail despite the overwhelming power they were facing but they also ensured stability in the region without having to rely on any external balancing act. The demonstration that crude power no longer counts as much as it used to was a heartening, if also inadvertent, accomplishment of the people who had liberated themselves.

## NOTES

- 1 For the sake of simplicity, the term 'eastern Europe', instead of the politically correct but cumbersome 'east-central Europe', is used here to designate the member countries of the Warsaw Pact other than the Soviet Union. For an example of an encomium of Gorbachev as Eastern Europe's liberator, see Anthony R. DeLuca, 'The Impact of Gorbachev's "New Thinking" on Eastern Europe', in Anthony R. DeLuca and Paul D. Quinlan (eds), *Romania, Culture and Nationalism: A Tribute to Radu Florescu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).
- 2 See Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1994), pp. 571–2.
- 3 Andrzej Paczkowski (ed.), *Polska 1986–1989: Koniec Systemu* (Poland 1986–1989: The End of the System), vol. II (Warsaw: Trio, 2002), p. 304.
- 4 Vojtech Mastny, 'The Soviet Non-Invasion of Poland in 1980–1981 and the End of the Cold War', *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 51, no. 2 (1999): 189–211.
- 5 Andrzej Paczkowski, *Droga do 'mniejszego zła': Strategia i taktyka obozu władzy, lipiec 1980-styczeń 1982* [The Road to the 'Lesser Evil': Strategy and Tactics of the Ruling Establishment, July 1980-January 1982] (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2002).
- 6 Dale R. Herspring, *Requiem for an Army: The Demise of the East German Military* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), pp. 28–9.
- 7 Daniel N. Nelson (ed.), *Soviet Allies: The Warsaw Pact and the Issue of Reliability* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1984), See also Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone *et al.* (eds), *Warsaw Pact: The Question of Cohesion*, 3 vols (Ottawa: Operational Research and Analysis Establishment, 1984–86).
- 8 Myron Rush, 'Fortune and Fate', *National Interest*, vol. 31 (1993): 19–25, at p. 19.
- 9 Krzysztof Dubiński, *Okrągły stół* [The Round Table] (Warsaw: Krajowa Agencja Promocyjna, 1999).

- 10 Quoted in Andrew A. Michta, *Red Eagle: The Army in Polish Politics, 1944–1988* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1990), p. 200.
- 11 According to the chief of the Soviet Communist Party international department, Vadim Zagladin, in Paczkowski, *Polska 1986–1989*, vol. II, pp. 96–7.
- 12 Ibid., pp. 182–4.
- 13 As reported by the East German minister of defence, Kessler, to Honecker, 12 September 1989, AZN 32666, 89–90, Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg (hereafter BA-MA).
- 14 Records of Gorbachev's meetings with Honecker and East German politburo, 7 October 1989, Daniel Küchenmeister and Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan (eds), *Honecker-Gorbatschow: Vieraugengespräche* (Berlin: Dietz, 1993), pp. 240–66.
- 15 Timothy Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent* (New York: Random House, 1993), pp. 312–42.
- 16 Record of Honecker-Hu Yaobang conversation, 22 October 1986, in Werner Meissner and Anja Feege (eds), *Die DDR und China, 1949 bis 1990: Politik—Wirtschaft—Kultur: Eine Quellsammlung* (Berlin: Akademie, 1995), pp. 369–73, at p. 372.
- 17 Record of Honecker-Chernenko conversation, 17 August 1984, vorl. SED 41669, Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv, Berlin (hereafter SAPMO).
- 18 Record of Honecker-Gorbachev conversation, 2 October 1986, Küchenmeister and Stephan, *Honecker-Gorbatschow*, pp. 113–35.
- 19 Entry for 5 October 1989, Anatoly S. Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev: Notes from a Diary* (State College, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).
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- 21 Memorandum of Krenz-Gorbachev conversation, 1 November 1989, *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, vols 12–13 (Fall/Winter 2001), pp. 140–51, at p. 141.
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- 26 Notes of Zhivkov-Gorbachev conversation, 11 May 1987, 35/387–87, Central State Archives, Sofia (hereafter: TsDA), facsimile in 'Bulgaria in the Warsaw Pact', ed. Jordan Baev, Parallel History Project on NATO and the Warsaw Pact [PHP] website, <[http://www.isn.ethz.ch/php/documents/collection\\_2/docs/870511.pdf](http://www.isn.ethz.ch/php/documents/collection_2/docs/870511.pdf)>
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- 31 According to former Polish foreign minister Marian Orzechowski, in Paczkowski, *Polska 1986–1989*, vol. 2, p. 252.
- 32 'Stenografische Niederschrift des Treffens führender Repräsentanten der Staaten des Warschauer Vertrages', 11 December 1987, DC/20/I/3/2581, SAPMO.

- 33 'Information über die Analyse des Abkommens', undated, VO-01/39592, 16–52, at p. 16; Streletz to Smetkov, 17 March 1989, DVW1/44535, BA-MA
- 34 'Wörtliche Auszüge aus dem Entwurf der "Verteidigungspolitischen Richtlinien" der BRD', 19 August 1987, AZN 32651, 78–86, BA-MA.
- 35 'Bericht über die turnusmäßige Tagung des Politischen Beratenden Ausschusses der Teilnehmerstaaten des Warschauer Vertrages', 28–29 May 1987, DC/20/1/3/2477, SAPMO; 'О военной доктрине государств—участников Варшавского Договора' [The Military Doctrine of the Member States of the Warsaw Treaty], 29 May 1967, VA-01/40373, BA-MA.
- 36 Minutes of Soviet party politburo meeting, 27–28 December 1988, *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, vols 12–13 (2001):24–9, at p. 24.
- 37 'Stenografische Niederschrift des Treffens führender Repräsentanten der Staaten des Warschauer Vertrages', 11 December 1987, DC/20/1/3/2581, SAPMO.
- 38 Minutes of the Soviet party politburo meeting, 27–28 December 1988, *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, vols 12–13 (2001):24–9.
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- 40 See Vojtech Mastny, 'Learning from the Enemy: NATO as a Model for the Warsaw Pact', in Gustav Schmidt (ed.), *A History of NATO—The First Fifty Years*, vol. II (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 157–77 and 393–401.
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- 42 Speech by Fischer at Sofia meeting of foreign ministers, 29–30 March 1988, DC/20/1/3/2640, SAPMO.
- 43 Draft of speech by Fischer, 10 April 1989, DC-20/1/3–2800/ 212–17, p. 212, SAPMO.
- 44 'Bericht über die 18. Tagung des Komitees der Außenminister der Teilnehmerstaaten des Warschauer Vertrages', 11–12 April 1989, DC/20/1/3/2800, 183–90, at p. 187, SAPMO; facsimile in Locher, 'Records of the Committee of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs', PHPwebsite, <[www.isn.ethz.ch/php/documents/collection\\_3/CMFA\\_docs/CMFA\\_1989\\_I/Report\\_0489.pdf](http://www.isn.ethz.ch/php/documents/collection_3/CMFA_docs/CMFA_1989_I/Report_0489.pdf)>.
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- 49 Summary of statement by Stoian to Czechoslovak ambassador to Bucharest, 20 August 1989, Paczkowski, *Polska 1986–1989*, vol. III, pp. 320–1.
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