

# **The Cold War and the Change in the Nature of Military Power**

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## **Abstract**

The fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989 was called by many observers of international affairs the end of the Cold War. However, fifteen years earlier, commentators such as Alistair Buchan had also declared the end of the Cold War. Was this just an premature error on Buchan's part or is there a link between the events of the early 1970s, which is referred to as the era of détente and those leading up to the collapse of the Berlin Wall?

It is the intention of this thesis to argue that these periods are integrally related mainly by the fact that they were each periods when one of the two superpowers was forced to re-evaluate their foreign policies. The re-evaluations were brought about by changes in the international arena, most importantly a change in the nature of military power. Because the two superpowers were to recognize the change in the nature of military power at different times, it was not until both the United States and the Soviet Union had re-evaluated and altered their foreign policies was the Cold War really over.

This thesis will firstly discuss the theoretical approaches to International Relations and the issue of power. It will then identify and define this change in the nature of military power by tracing the evolution of war and conflict in the past century. The thesis then trace the development of both US and Soviet foreign policy from the origin of the Cold War, through its various stages until the fall of the Berlin Wall. Through materials obtained from both US and Soviet archives, as well as interviews, this thesis will argue that this change in the nature of power was a central factor in altering the thinking of American and Soviet leaders at the time they brought drastic change to their foreign policies. Finally, this thesis will briefly look at the future role of military power as the world moves into the twenty-first century.



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**This is dedicated to the Memory of C.B. McLeod.  
'Hey McLeod, here I am!'**

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# Chapter 1

The fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989 was heralded by many observers of international relations as the end of the Cold War and the post-war era. However, it is interesting to note that there were commentators on international relations who had already proclaimed the end of the Cold War fifteen years earlier. In 1973 for example, Alistair Buchan suggested such an end to the Cold War in his book entitled The End of The Postwar Era.

Writers, such as Buchan, who heralded the end of the Cold War in the early 1970s had been dismissed for being premature in their declaration. However the rejection of these writers over their timing of the ending of the Cold War failed to recognize a far greater contribution they made in identifying a fundamental change that has taken place in international relations. The sudden collapse of the Cold War showed not only that mainstream International Relations was at a loss to predict the demise of the Cold War, but also to explain it. This research will examine the Cold War, by focusing on this phenomenon of the post-war period, namely; the change in the nature of military power and the impact it has had on transforming the international system. It will approach the Cold War from the perspective of the two main protagonists, the United States and the Soviet Union. This thesis will trace the respective themes in the foreign policy of the two powers since 1945 and examine how their changing perception of military power affected policy.

## **Military Power and Its Changing Nature**

Although power has been a central concept in debate on international relations, there has been little agreement on a common definition of power. In the absence of a universally accepted definition of power, Robert Dahl's definition serves as a starting point. Dahl's definition of power states: 'A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do'.<sup>1</sup> However, this definition of power is a rather wide one. Partridge, in an article in Political Studies, distinguishes two poles within which the concept of power lies, 'influence' and 'domination'. He argues that if A affects the behaviour of B in a planned way, though B is not required to subordinate his wishes, beliefs, etc. to A's and a conflict situation does not appear, this is influence. Alternatively, when domination is

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<sup>1</sup> Dahl, R., 'The Concept of Power', found in Shapiro, I., and Reeher, S., (ed.) Power, Inequality and Democratic Politics; essays in honor of Robert Dahl, Westview Press, Boulder, 1988, p.80.

involved, *A* controls the behaviour of *B*, where *A*'s wishes prevail over *B*, and *B* acts that way only because he is compelled by *A* and would not act that way if it were not for *A*'s ability to make *B* act in ways that he would normally not want to do.<sup>2</sup>

Partridge then goes on to say that between these two poles there are various forms of 'bases' and 'mechanisms' by which power is exercised.<sup>3</sup> It is at this end of the scale of the forms of power that one finds military means as a mechanism of power. And that in international affairs domination which has been maintained by military power for most of history has begun to lose its effectiveness.

As mentioned above, one of the first exponents of this idea that conflicts and military power has changed was Alistair Buchan. In his book Changes Without War, he points out this change in power, 'The calculus of military power is changing. Of the three traditional functions that it has served, to promote the economic power of a nation, to promote the ideological objectives and to protect the security of itself and its allies, only the third is now accepted as legitimate'.<sup>4</sup> The loss of legitimacy of two functions of military power, securing economic and ideological objectives, has greatly reduced the scope of military power as a means of statecraft.

Evan Luard takes this even further and argues that since 1945, the nature of conflict in international relations has developed in such a way that no longer is it the side with the greatest military power which prevails but rather the side with the greatest political power.<sup>5</sup> Luard goes on to say that because of this decline in the effectiveness of military power, the outcome of recent conflicts has been contrary to what traditional military balance would suggest. He then suggests that a gap has developed between what is thought of as power in traditional means and the true means of power. It therefore follows in Luard's analysis that much of the power potential that states possess has become conditional and often times can not

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<sup>2</sup> Partridge, P., 'Some Notes on the Concept of Power', Political Studies, Vol. XI, No.2, 1963, pp.106-107.

<sup>3</sup> Partridge, P., 1963, p.112.

<sup>4</sup> Buchan, A., Change Without War: Shifting Structures of World Power: The BBC Reith Lectures 1973, Chatto & Windus, London, 1974, p.104.

<sup>5</sup> Luard, Evan, The Blunted Sword: The Erosion of Military Power in Modern World Politics, I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, London, 1988, p.15.

be used to influence the outcome of many situations, which is the true nature of power.<sup>6</sup>

Critics of this view often argue that the restraint placed on war as a legitimate means of statecraft has been the potential horror of a thermonuclear exchange and not a more fundamental change in the nature of power and conflict. This criticism does go some way in explaining the relative decline in the numbers of trans-national conflicts, however it still fails to address the core issue of why in many of the conflicts in the nuclear era, the militarily superior combatant has failed to obtain their objective. Writing on this subject, Ambassador Francis T. Underhill accepts there has been a technological barrier to the utility of war, but he argues that these changes in war are more deeply rooted in the structure of modern society.<sup>7</sup> Where some of the writers in this area have been open for fair criticism is in their prediction of the obsolescence of war. Their position is that once certain societies (generally referring to Third World societies) cross the threshold to modernisation, the necessity for war and conflict will be lost. Events in Yugoslavia, which before the outbreak of conflict was considered a relatively advanced society, would suggest war has not become obsolete. Rather the acceptable reasons for engaging in war has just been severely restricted.

The transformation in international politics that has taken place in this century is not just the decline of one nation or nations relative to other nations. The change that has taken place is much more fundamental to the nature of power. Those factors which previously had determined what was meant by a powerful nation were no longer the determining factors in the resolution of a dispute between two peoples, states or nations. In the latter half of the twentieth century other forms of power, such as economic and 'civilian' (public opinion) power became more evident in resolving conflicts.

The origin of this change in the nature of conflict and military power can be traced to events earlier in the century, that begin with the end of the First World War and the Russian Revolution. The carnage of the First World War was particularly influential in changing perceptions toward power and conflict. What has been called 'Social Darwinism', which had been at the root of the European imperial expansion since the time of Columbus, was cast aside. No longer was war viewed as a romantic and chivalrous crusade, rather as an evil

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<sup>6</sup> Luard, 1988, pp.15-16.

<sup>7</sup> Ambassador Francis T. Underhill, 'Modernized Societies and the Uses of War', p.2, found in; The Future of Conflict: The Seminar Series of the National Security Affairs Institute 1978-1979.

aberration.<sup>8</sup>

In the aftermath of World War I, the governments of Europe were no longer able to justify their actions as an exercise to balance the power of rival states. It can be argued that both the First and Second World Wars were fought to counter the power of Germany. However, once the illusions for glory had been so rudely smashed in the trenches, a new means of rallying support, both from the troops and the nation as a whole was needed. This was to first appear in 1917 with the injection of Wilsonian and Leninist rhetoric.<sup>9</sup>

Like so many of the changes wrought by the First World War, the full impact of the introduction of political rhetoric into the conflict equation was not to be felt in its totality for many years. '... the mere passage of time makes it clear that the Great War also inaugurated a new epoch in World affairs, an epoch in which we, in the 1980's, still find ourselves floundering'.<sup>10</sup> The use of political rhetoric, as a means to justify the actions of a government, was to have a far more profound effect on conflict and the nature of power than could have been imagined. This effect was to expand the political conflict. Since that time, military conflicts have only taken place in a wider context of a larger political conflict. No longer were the opposing parties engaged in combat on the battlefield, they were also fighting for the political hearts and minds of societies.

In Evan Luard's conception of power and the change in conflict, he describes the development of international relations since the end of the Second World War. Power had changed in such a way that foreign policy was no longer determined by strictly military factors, rather nations now had to set politically obtainable policy objectives.

With the mass destruction and the loss of life suffered by all the nations involved in the war, questions were raised as to the legitimacy of regimes and especially in this context of power, their conduct of carrying out foreign policy. In Russia, the clearest example of a challenge to the legitimacy of a government was the discontent of both the unfolding events of the war and the deprivation at home that led to the Bolshevik Revolution. Unlike many political upheavals that had preceded it, this was a revolution built upon a political philosophy.

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<sup>8</sup> Underhill, F.T., 1978-1979, p.5,

<sup>9</sup> McNeill, W.H., The Pursuit of Power, Basil Blackwell Publisher Ltd., Oxford, 1983, p.308.

<sup>10</sup> McNeill, W.H., 1983, p.308.



For those nations engaged on the Western Front, the horror of trench warfare was to lead them to re-assess many of their basic assumptions about how they engaged in war and conducted their foreign policy. Throughout these countries, one of the most important issues was whether society would be capable of withstanding the demands of any future war.

As viewed by society the origin of these changes in conflict and power were mainly the result of technological changes that altered modern warfare. Three of the most significant changes were the increased destructive capability of weaponry, the development of mass transportation, and the increased sophistication of communications. These new technologies changed war in several ways. Increasing the destructive capability of weaponry quite simply increased both the death and ruin wrought by war. The main impact of transportation was twofold: with the use of the train, armies were able to mobilize a far larger number of forces to the battlefield in a shorter period of time. With the use of the train and the development of aircraft for military purposes, the geographical dimensions of the battlefield were expanded to a far greater area. The Western Front extended from the North Sea to the Swiss frontier and London suffered its first aerial bombings. Advances in communication technology were most strongly felt by the ability of the general public to be informed of the events in the war. No longer was there a delay in terms of weeks, of a story reaching the home country rather through the use of wire services, the news could be flashed the same day.

In the aftermath of the First World War the impact of these changes was recognised and a great deal of controversy arose in how to best deal with issues related to military strategy and the development of new technologies. Most of the writings on strategy from the inter-war period were dedicated to avoiding the bloodletting which had occurred in the last war. Both French and British plans were based on the expectation of a repeat of a long war. The Allies planned to withstand a German offensive, behind carefully constructed defence and wait for the naval blockade to strangle the German economy. This strategy was to become immortalized by the construction of the Maginot Line in France. As history was to bear out, the strategy was correct, but was employed for the wrong war.

The planning staffs of both the British and the French Armies were to greatly underestimate the impact of several new technologies, most notably that of the tank. In Britain there was little excuse for this error, for not only was Britain the first country to deploy the tank in battle, but there was also a group of military writers, among them General J.F.C.

Fuller and B.H. Liddell-Hart who were attempting to incorporate this new technology and reintroduce mobility into military doctrine. The use of the tank in World War I had been limited as a means of reinforcing the infantry. Fuller and Liddell-Hart argued for a more fluid strategy using tanks at the forefront of the attack, breaking the stalemate of trench warfare and thus limiting the casualties.

The use of air power in the First World War, although very much in its infancy, had made many post-war writers aware of its great potential. Through the works of such writers as Giulio Douhet and General Billy Mitchell the potential of expanding the battlefield from its strictly defined area of the striking distance of a surface weapon, to the much less restricted range of aircraft was explored. These men saw the future of war to be determined not on the ground, where they expected a continuation of the stalemate seen in the First World War, but in the air where a nation's air force would fly over the deadlock of ground warfare and strike at the civilian and industrial targets. With a nation's war-making potential under threat, the possibility of a nation surviving a long drawn out conflict was seen as impossible.

With the changes that were brought about by new technologies, especially the introduction of aerial bombings of civilian targets in the First World War, the long held division between combatants and non-combatants was beginning to be blurred. Throughout much of history, wars were a collections of battles fought away from civilian populations in uninhabited or slightly inhabited areas. At the battle of Gettysburg, on 3 July 1863, only one civilian was killed (by a stray bullet), while Confederate and Union Armies suffered 48,000 casualties.<sup>11</sup>

Pre-WWI fighting was also limited mainly to the summer months as spring and autumn were needed to sow and harvest crops and winter was just too inhospitable for a campaign. Although some of these wars were long in duration, such as the 'Thirty Years War' or the 'Hundred Years War', the actual time spent in battle was quite limited.

The demands placed on the society by the length and intensity of the 1914-1918 war also ushered in a new era in the organisation of society. No longer was the government of a nation at war solely interested in the mobilisation of its army and navy, but the need to allocate raw materials, labour and industrial capability in the most efficient way became a major factor

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<sup>11</sup> Underhill, F.T., 1978-1979, p.7.

in a nation's war effort. The once diverse and autonomous bureaucratic organisations, such as businesses, labour unions, government ministries, the army and the navy were compelled to come together to form a unified organisation for mass war mobilization that was to affect most aspects of civilian life in such a way never before seen.

The introduction of conscription brought millions of men into the armed services. No longer were the forces made up of the roughest class of society (and foreigners), but rather the fathers, husbands and sons from every corner of the land. The large intake of male conscripts into military service had the knock on effect of causing severe shortages in the available male work force in some countries. The affected countries responded to this problem in two ways. Firstly, large numbers of women and children were brought in to work the armaments factories and secondly, mass production techniques were introduced for the manufacturing of armaments. Although these methods had been available for some time, they had been resisted in many industries. However the urgency and scale of the war made their implementation vital.

Rationing, which was used to redress the inequalities in food and consumable goods, was to deprive money incomes the prestige they had in peacetime. The demands of taxation and inflation were also to serve as a leveller in the inequalities of society. Status was no longer ascribed to the land one owned, rather from the position one held either in the military or civilian hierarchy.<sup>12</sup>

With the increased demand on the society also came a larger and stronger voice of dissent. It was just after World War I that the 'Peace Movement' began to take shape. Governments were now faced with a situation whereby the old rallying point of 'King and Country' was no longer sufficient to ensure the support of the nation. A new means of gaining the support of the people was needed. It is then, after World War I, that governments began using ideological arguments to legitimize their actions in foreign policy.

This change became apparent in one of the first international disputes of the inter war period, the Spanish Civil War. For those nations which aided and supported the two factions fighting for control of Spain, it was no longer the traditional terms of the 'Balance of Power', but the political affiliation which was of paramount importance.

The political creed of a nation was also the major theme of the Second World War. It

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<sup>12</sup> McNeill, W.H., 1983, p.330.

was the first major conflict in which departments or ministries dedicated strictly to distributing propaganda had existed from the beginning. Such ministries had begun operating in the final days of World War I, for example Lord Northcliffe's 'Enemy Propaganda Department', which was started in March 1918.<sup>13</sup> But the full impact of these Ministries were not to be felt until the late 1930's, when the influence of the radio was at its height and the storm clouds of war began to gather over Europe.

There was also a change in the type of propaganda that was employed from the First to the Second World War. Whereas in the First World War, the tendency was to stress nationalism, in World War II the central thrust of the propaganda message was directed at the threat of an opposing political philosophy, such as defending the democratic way of life from the scourge of fascism.

This Twentieth century change in the nature of power is Clausewitzian in its perspective. As is often quoted, Clausewitz argued that, 'War is a continuation of political activity by other means'.<sup>14</sup> Although in Clausewitz's time the battlefield was the ultimate arbitrator when political activity turned into conflict. But as war and conflict in the Twentieth century grew both in terms of its geographical size and its demand on society, it also expanded beyond the bounds of the battlefield. However, now as the discussion turns to the two protagonist in the Post-War era it will be made clear that they initially chose to maximise their military power. From 1945 both the United States and the Soviet Union viewed their status in international politics to be the result of their ability to maximise their military power. It was not until the late 60s for the US and the mid-80s for the Soviet Union, that the two realised that this policy was not helping them achieve their objectives.

### **Defining American Foreign Policy and Its Perception of Power**

Samuel Huntington points out, unlike the European nations, which had several competing philosophies, that in the United States Liberalism has always been the dominant ideology. In terms of foreign policy, Liberalism has two main problems, one general and one specific to the US. Firstly, Liberalism is not always comfortable in dealing with some of the major functions of foreign policy, mainly the distribution of power and national security. It

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<sup>13</sup> Balfour, M., Propaganda in War, 1939-1945, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1979.

<sup>14</sup> Clausewitz, C., von, On War, Howard, M., and Paret, P., ed., Princeton University Press, Guilford, 1976, p.87.

is often hostile to the main instruments of these functions, military institutions and the military function. Secondly, the dominance of Liberalism in the US is not due to any inheritance of Lockeian ideals, but the success of its economic growth and international isolation. Due to the steady economic growth, American awareness of the role of power in domestic politics was dulled by the absence of class conflict. Due to its international isolation, American awareness of the role of power in foreign politics was dulled by the absence of external threats.<sup>15</sup>

An aspect of liberalism, especially in regards to the American form, is that in its involvements in international relations, it tends to apply domestic policies to these problems. As noted above, the issue of foreign policy involves the distribution of power among nations. Liberalism is unable to tackle this problem directly, so it attempts to apply domestic terms to foreign and defence policy issues. This has led the US to continually urge the adoptions of a whole series of domestic reforms, like the adoption of a republican form of democracy, international free trade, industrialization of undeveloped areas and the outlawing of war.<sup>16</sup>

With this dominance of Liberalism in American thinking, there has been limited range within which decisions on US foreign policy are made. In his book, Reflections on American Foreign Policy Since 1945 Christopher Coker argues that there are three central themes derived from the United States' past that have formed the American conception of itself and that of the rest of the world. These themes are *Exceptionalism*, a central belief that the success of the United States is unique and therefore it is impossible to duplicate this success elsewhere. Secondly, *Redemptionism*, a tradition whose origins can be traced to the Puritan beliefs of the founding fathers. This redemptionist theme in American thinking has led many to believe that the United States was chosen by Providence to redeem a sinful world. Finally, the third version of the past, what Coker called 'a secular version of redemptionism', *Exemplarism*, the belief that the United States can lead other nations by its example and save mankind.<sup>17</sup>

American foreign policy has mainly swung between the first two themes, *Exceptionalism* and *Redemptionism*. In the nineteenth century and even through the inter-war

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<sup>15</sup> Huntington S., The Soldier and the State: the theory and politics of civil-military relations, Harvard University Press, 1957, pp.143-149.

<sup>16</sup> Huntington S., 1957, pp.149-150.

<sup>17</sup> Coker, C., Reflections on American Foreign Policy Since 1945, Pinter Publishers, London, 1989, pp.5-20.

years, exceptionalism led the United States to stay clear of any outside entanglement that may taint unique nature of the American experience. However the supremacy of one theme over the other did not mean it was at the complete exclusion of the other. Although the United States remained fairly isolated from international affairs throughout most of this period, the US did involve itself in attempts at redeeming countries of Central America. In the aftermath of the Second World War, most Americans believed that the exceptionalism of the US policy of isolationism in the inter-war period no longer was a legitimate response to the situation of the post-war world.<sup>18</sup> It was at this point in time that the redemptionist tendency began to be more prominent in US foreign policy making.

However, since the Second World War, there has been a tendency that when the redemptionist policies draw the US too deeply into foreign entanglements, policy makers have sought a new approach. With the exceptionalist theme in disgrace since the inter-war experience, the exemplarist theme would give rise to calls for the US to lead by example and avoid entanglements.

#### *The American Conception of War*

Equally important to defining US foreign policy is an understanding of the American conception of warfare. As with the main themes of US foreign policy which run between total isolation from international affairs to a policy bent on redeeming the world, the American conception of war also tends to run between two extremes. As Samuel Huntington notes, 'The American tends to be an extremist on the subject of war: he either embraces war wholeheartedly or rejects it completely'. The pacifist current, which totally rejects war, accords with the liberal view that men are rational and therefore should be able to arrive at a peaceable solution of differences, has been strong in American thought. On the other hand, once the American people are called upon to fight, war becomes a crusade, fought, not to obtain specific objectives, like national security, but on behalf of universal principles such as democracy and self-determination.<sup>19</sup>

In Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin, George Kennan describes the Western democratic, but arguably very American, concept of war:

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<sup>18</sup> Coker, C., 1989, p.8.

<sup>19</sup> Huntington S., 1957, p.151.

'It tends to attach to its own cause an absolute value which distorts its own vision on everything else. Its enemy becomes the embodiment of all evil. Its own side, on the other hand, is the center of all virtue. The contest comes to be viewed as having a final apocalyptic quality. If we lose, all is lost; life will no longer be worth living; there will be nothing to be salvaged. If we win, then everything will be possible; all problems will become soluble; the great source of evil- our enemy- will have been crushed; the forces of good will then sweep forward unimpeded; all worthy aspirations will be satisfied'.<sup>20</sup>

### *US Foreign Policy in the Post-War Era*

It was with this very American perception of history and its place in that history that the US began fashioning a foreign policy after the Second World War. Throughout the Cold War period, United States foreign policy's main objective was to manage Soviet relations on the nuclear level, while using non-nuclear means to contain the threat.<sup>21</sup> The policy of Containment has taken many different forms and gone under many different names; the Truman Doctrine, the Nixon Doctrine and the Carter Doctrine. The changes that took place in the policy of Containment coincided with the changes in the understanding of military power. To best understand the interplay of the change in the understanding of military power and its effect on US foreign policy, it is necessary to identify the various phases that American foreign policy has gone through since the end of World War II.

The first phase of American foreign policy was the period of the introduction of the policy of Containment in 1948. The policy emerged when the Truman Administration became increasingly disillusioned with the US foreign policy based on Wilsonian internationalism which seemed incapable of explaining the behaviour of the Soviet Union. Containment was first introduced in the now famous 'X' article by George Kennan published in Foreign Affairs.<sup>22</sup> Kennan, one of the few people in the State Department who had a knowledge of the Soviet Union and understood Marxist-Leninism, not only reoriented US policy thinking about the Soviet threat, but also their view of the international system.

It is interesting to note that the debate over the adoption of the policy of Containment by the Truman Administration coincided with what was called the 'great debate' about

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<sup>20</sup> Kennan, G., Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1961, pp.5-6.

<sup>21</sup> Coker, C., 1989, p.54

<sup>22</sup> X, 'The sources of Soviet conduct', Foreign Affairs, 1947.

'political realism' in American political science. This debate was between the mainstream of American political science that was dominated by the behaviouralist movement, which attempted to study political behaviour through the political philosophy of liberalism (The theoretical underpinning of Wilsonian internationalism) and a transplanted European social scientist Hans Morgenthau, whose political realism greatly influenced Kennan. The debate began with the publication of Morgenthau's, Scientific Man versus Power Politics. The book takes a far more European approach to international affairs, rejecting the liberal conception of the importance of international law, and introduces the idea of power politics.<sup>23</sup>

Historically, in international politics the most important material factor in determining the power of a nation was the threat or potential threat of force. To American behaviourists the terms power politics and the balance of power had been the cause of war and upheaval in the international arena. Hans Morgenthau, whose book Politics Among Nations was extremely influential on American thinking in international affairs, said, 'International politics like all politics, is a struggle for power. Whatever the ultimate aim of international politics, power is always the immediate aim'.<sup>24</sup>

Since 1945 the field of international relations has been dominated by the 'realist paradigm' and its concept of power. Realists, such as Morgenthau and Martin Wight argue that international politics is by definition 'power politics' and that the objective of every nation is to maximize its power in the international system.<sup>25</sup> In this case, power is defined as the threat or potential threat of force one state can use against another to influence its policies. For the most part, realist writers have concentrated on the military aspects of power to determine the ability to threaten force.

It follows that according to Morgenthau the aspiration to power is the core factor in international politics. He refutes the Marxist claim that this struggle for power is temporary and once historic conditions such as capitalism are removed, international discord and war will cease. 'It cannot be denied that throughout historic time, regardless of social, economic and

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<sup>23</sup> Söllner, A., 'German Conservatism in America: Morgenthau's Political Realism', Telos, no.72, 1987, pp.163-165.

<sup>24</sup> Morgenthau, H., Politics Among Nations, Random House, New York, 1985, p.26.

<sup>25</sup> See Morgenthau, H., Politics Among Nations, Random House, New York, 1985 and Wight, M., Power Politics, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1946.



political conditions, states have met each other in contests of power'.<sup>26</sup>

Morgenthau points out that there are three typical patterns that nations follow in their foreign policy, in an attempt to maintain the balance of power. A nation will either use its power to maintain the status-quo, gain more power to challenge the status-quo or use the power that it has to create the most prestigious position possible.<sup>27</sup> The United States conduct in international affairs from the Second World War until 1968 can be described as that of a 'status-quo' power. Its direct military involvement in Korea and Vietnam and its support for other countries facing civil war was generally to back the existing régime.

The Soviet Union, on the other hand, can be described as the challenger to the status-quo. With the advent of nuclear deterrents, the Soviet Union could ill afford a direct military confrontation with the United States or what was recognized as America's vital interest in Western Europe and Japan. Due to the Soviet Union's position it was limited to supplying arms shipments, technical advisors and political support to movements that challenged existing governments. Although this strategy served the Soviet Union very well, the basic motivation of Soviet defence and foreign policy, especially after the Cuban missile crisis, was to challenge American preponderance in both strategic and naval capabilities.

But like many realist writers, Morgenthau's definition becomes clouded when he fails to distinguish between power as a resource (based on both real and perceived assets) and power as a means of influencing the actions of others.<sup>28</sup> This failure to distinguish between the two different concepts of power has led many writers to concentrate on the resources of nations, such as geography, population, industrial infrastructure and most often military capability. 'Two of the most important weaknesses on the traditional theorizing about international politics have been the tendency to exaggerate the effectiveness of military power resources and the tendency to treat military power as the ultimate measuring rod to which other forms of power should be compared'.<sup>29</sup> It is not difficult to find examples where military power has become

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<sup>26</sup> Morgenthau, 1985, p.29-30.

<sup>27</sup> Morgenthau, 1985, p.36-37.

<sup>28</sup> Keohane, R. ed., Neorealism and Its Critics, Columbia University Press, New York, 1986, p.11.

<sup>29</sup> Baldwin, D. A., 'Power analysis and World Politics: New Trends Versus Old Tendencies', World Politics, 31, 1979, p.180.

the central theme of some writers' theory. I.L. Claude defines power in his book Power and International Relations in this manner: 'I use the term *power* to denote what is essentially military capability-the elements which contribute directly to the capacity to coerce, kill and destroy'.<sup>30</sup>

Realist writers like Claude tend to concentrate on the military aspects of power for two reasons. First, military power is the easiest form of power to quantify and compare. The number of tanks or men in uniform, for example, are two factors that are much easier to compare between two nations than the relative power they possess in terms of diplomatic influence. Secondly, military power has been the central feature of foreign policy since the creation of the nation-state.

The second stage of US foreign policy follows on the American experience in the Korean War. Drawing lessons from the war the Eisenhower Administration attempted to escape the open-ended commitment of Containment which called for defending a divided Germany, a divided Korea and a divided China. Writing in 1950, the soon to be Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles had argued that it was time to think no longer in terms of containing the Soviet Union, but in taking the offensive against it in a struggle for freedom and of rolling back its power.<sup>31</sup>

However, by the mid-50s, when the Eisenhower Administration entered office, there had been a decline in the relative power of the United States, making Dulles' calls for roll-back dangerously outdated. Until 1953, the United States had been the sole power in international affairs, but the Soviet Union's first explosion of a thermonuclear weapon, and the introduction of deterrence brought a radical change to the nature of war and to international security.<sup>32</sup>

The emergence of the Soviet Union as a nuclear superpower had a major impact on the nature of international security. Central to the maintenance of the balance of power is the ability of powers to change alliances to permit adjustment in the balance. The creation of the bi-polar system, along with the Soviet Union gaining the ability to strike the United States with

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<sup>30</sup> Claude, I.L. Power and International Relations, Random House, New York, 1962, p.6.

<sup>31</sup> Dulles, J.F., War or Peace, Macmillian, London, 1950, p.175.

<sup>32</sup> Arendt, H., On Revolution, Penguin Books, London, 1965, p.15.

thermonuclear weapons, nullified the possibility for adjustment of the balance, because any slight change could lead to a nuclear exchange. As Kenneth Waltz pointed, out the problem with Dulles' liberation policy was not that it was impossible to attain, but rather that to implement it successfully could potentially lead the world to a nuclear holocaust.<sup>33</sup>

The third stage of US foreign policy was the return to Containment during the Presidency of John F. Kennedy. The young charismatic President entered office under a great deal of expectation to carry out an activist foreign policy. However, in his enthusiasm, Kennedy's called for the American people to 'pay any price', which during his Administration they very nearly did. The Cuban Missile Crisis, the Berlin Crisis, and the US involvement in Vietnam not only threatened US foreign policy, but also put severe strain on international security.

The early 1960s was a very unstable period in international affairs and this instability raised many questions about theory in international relations. The main criticism in the international relations literature of the realist paradigm came from a group of scholars who challenged the realist assumption that the nation-state was the only actor in international politics.<sup>34</sup> Among the leading critics were Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye who focused on two emerging factors in international relations: the growth of independent transnational actors and the presence of areas that do not conform to power politics.<sup>35</sup> The Transnationalist writers have concentrated on the influence of non-state actors such as international organisations and multinational corporations and their ability to penetrate the realm of the nation-state.

Transnationalism has been a successful means of analysis that can explain the increase in trans-national economic affairs in the 20th century or the extraordinary international influence of propaganda and public opinion, in forcing changes in the way governments conduct foreign policy. However, Transnationalism has mostly been applied to low politics, and while this is not to say that Transnationalism is of no benefit when analysing government-to-government relations or the high end of politics such as security, it tends to be limited in

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<sup>33</sup> Waltz, K., Man, the State and War, Columbia University Press, New York, 1959, p.223.

<sup>34</sup> Vasquez, J., The Power of Power Politics: A Critique, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, N.J., 1983, p.117.

<sup>35</sup> Keohane, R., and Nye, J., eds., Transnational Relations and World Politics, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1972, p.28.

its ability to explain the actions of nations when core values are challenged. As history shows American dependence on Middle East oil creates influence for the Arab states. But within a 'policy-contingent framework',<sup>36</sup> the potential influence of Arab nations extends only to the point where the United States is willing to forego the benefit of oil imports. Transnationalism works much better as a tool in explaining why two nations of similar cultural backgrounds and economic links don't go to war than why two nations do go to war.

The criticism of realism, brought mainly by advocates of Transnationalism, forced a reappraisal of realist thinking on power. As Richard Ashely writes in Neorealism and Its Critics; 'In a period of world economic crisis, welling transnational outcries against limits of the realist vision, and evidently politicized developments that realism could not comprehend, the classical realist tradition and its key concepts suffered a crisis of legitimacy, especially in the United States. Sensing this crisis, a number of American scholars, most of whom are relatively young and very few of whom are steeped in the classical tradition, more or less independently undertook to respond in a distinctly American fashion; that is, *scientifically*. They set out to develop and to corroborate historically scientific theories that would portray or assume a fixed structure of international anarchy'.<sup>37</sup>

The neorealist accepts the basic assumptions of what has become known as 'classical realism', which are that the state is the most important actor in international affairs, that these states can be seen as unitary rational actors, and that they seek to maximize their power. However, the neorealist also adds a few more assumptions, that the international system is anarchic and that it is characterized by the interaction of units with similar functions.<sup>38</sup>

They also assume what Robert Keohane calls the 'fungibility of power'.<sup>39</sup> To the purest neorealist this would mean that power resources are homogeneous and fungible, they can be used in a variety of ways. Keohane compares power in politics to money in economics.<sup>40</sup> But,

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<sup>36</sup> Baldwin D.A., 1979, p.176.

<sup>37</sup> Ashely, R., from Keohane, R. ed., Neorealism and Its Critics, Columbia University Press, New York, 1986, p.262.

<sup>38</sup> Keohane, R., from Keohane, R. ed., Neorealism and Its Critics, Columbia University Press, New York, 1986, pp.164-167.

<sup>39</sup> Keohane, R., 1986, p.184.

<sup>40</sup> Keohane, R., 1986, p.167.

under close examination this notion of the homogenous nature of power fails to meet the realities of the international system and suggest that there are different capabilities that qualify as 'power resources' under varying conditions.<sup>41</sup>

What many Realists fail to consider is the importance of other forms of power. As Merriman was quoted in Power and Society, 'In short, power entails only effective control over policy; the means by which the control is made effective are many and varied'.<sup>42</sup> It is also imperative to consider the context and the relative importance of one's power resources. 'For example, prior to the 19th century, neither oil nor uranium were power resources, since no one had any use for them'.<sup>43</sup> It goes without saying that oil and uranium are two resources that have been the centre of power struggles in this century and the control of which has granted the possessor both economic and military power. However, the Ottoman Empire was unable to translate its vast oil reserves into a source of power, as the oil producing nations of that region have been able to do today. The transfer of power to the Arab countries was due to the Western nations increased consumption of oil and the reduction of their own resources.

The United States entered the fourth period under the weight of a twofold dilemma. In the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis there was a great sense of urgency to limit the risk of nuclear war. Secondly there was a recognition in the US, brought on by its experience in Vietnam, that relatively powerful military nations were increasingly unable to influence the policies of weaker nations. This impotency led to the questioning of the primacy of power in international politics.<sup>44</sup> These two dilemmas had created a highly cynical American public, who began to question the legitimacy of its foreign policy. The newly elected Richard Nixon had to recast American foreign policy away from the anti-communist crusade of the 1950s, into a workable policy in the post-Vietnam world.

The most looming problem that the Nixon Administration had to face in reshaping American foreign policy was the change in the international political system. This change had been brought about mainly by the emergence of a paradox, which was that although the US

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<sup>41</sup> Keohane, R., 1986, p.184.

<sup>42</sup> Lasswell, H. and Kaplan, A. Power and Society, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1950, p.76.

<sup>43</sup> Baldwin D.A., 1979, p.165.

<sup>44</sup> See Litwak R., 1984.

continued to maintain a preponderance of military power, its was suffering from a decline in political influence.<sup>45</sup> The paradox that the US was facing forced both diplomats and academics alike to begin to question the relationship between the nature and the utility of military power.

This paradox had caused a diffusion of power, which increased the number of actors and fragmented the hierarchy of inter-state power. This situation was compounded with the Soviet Union's attainment of strategic parity with the US. What the Nixon Administration needed to do was to create a foreign policy that would permit the US to adjust to the emerging multipolar international system while maintaining a stable relationship with the Soviet Union.

The United States entered the fifth stage when its unreal expectations of détente led to yet another attempt at Containment. Begun in the latter stages of the Carter Administration, it did not gain full speed until Ronald Reagan entered the White House. Although in his first two years in office Carter adhered to a policy of détente, he had difficulty setting a coherent and discernible conception of US interests throughout the world.<sup>46</sup> Carter did attempt to regain the moral high ground in the international arena, lost by the United States after its experience in Vietnam and then again as a result of the Watergate cover-up. He attempted to regain the high ground by creating a consensus at home for the application of US power. The introduction of human rights as a key aspect of Carter's foreign policy was generally considered a failure<sup>47</sup>, but it did prove to be effective in a longer term way. During this period, for example, the Soviet Union found itself increasingly under pressure to adhere to the human rights conditions of the Helsinki Accords. Human rights increasingly became a means by which a nation could influence the policies and actions of other nations (ie. a means of power).

When the Carter Administration decided to increase defence spending, it marked a clear return to power politics. However, it was not until the election of Ronald Reagan that this policy truly found an advocate. Reagan came to office with a solid mandate to reassert US military power and to re-engage the Soviet Union by means of a policy of Containment. This reassertion of US military power was seen by some as an attempt by the US to return to the

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<sup>45</sup> Litwak R., 1984, p.75.

<sup>46</sup> Coker, C., 1989, p.75.

<sup>47</sup> see Mollenhof, C.R., The President Who Failed; Carter Out of Control, Macmillian Publishing Co. Inc., New York, 1980, p.225.

verities of the past. While others saw it as an admission of weakness, a loss of confidence in the non-military means of influence. Whatever the interpretation, as Coker points out, it can be argued that the Reagan Administration happened upon a successful formula for Containment, a means of using force at no cost to the body politic, or the national treasury. Rather than intervening himself, Reagan preferred to place the Soviet Union on the defensive. By using proxy forces (eg. South Africa and Israel), which were far less expensive, he was able to destabilise Soviet client states in Africa and the Middle East.<sup>48</sup>

The final stage in American foreign policy came about as a result of several factors, which convinced the President to look at a more accommodating view of the Soviet Union. First, domestically, the rising budget deficit and the scandal of the Iran-Contra affair had caused the Reagan Administration to reappraise its foreign policy. Secondly, during the mid-80s the United States began to see a replay of a similar situation that occurred in the late 60s. That being a superpower that continued to maintain its preponderance of military power, but was suffering from overstretch in its commitments and was seeing its political influence decline. However, this time it was not the US but the Soviet Union and its leader that recognized the need for change and was seeking US cooperation. Where, unlike détente of the 1970s, in the 1980s version the United States was dealing from a position of strength.

### **Defining the Soviet Perception of Power**

Central to any discussion on the nature of Soviet foreign policy is the question of the influence of Marxist-Leninist ideology versus the traditional influence of power. It is clear that unlike the West, where politicians have tended to refute the usefulness of theory and leave the discussion on its utility to the academic community, in the Soviet Union theory (or ideology, terms which are used as synonyms by Soviet scholars) played a much larger role in the political process. However what is at issue throughout most of the debate was whether Soviet foreign policy was based on a Marxist-Leninist theory or whether it had become as George Kennan described Soviet theory as ‘infinitely flexible rationalization for anything whatever the régime finds it advantageous to do’.<sup>49</sup>

To Soviet thinkers and politicians alike it would have been unconscionable to consider

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<sup>48</sup> Coker, C., 1989, p.77.

<sup>49</sup> Kennan, 1961, p.258, from Light, M., The Soviet Theory of International Relations, Wheatsheaf Books, Brighton, 1988, p.8.

it possible to separate theory from practice in the making of foreign policy. Marxist-Leninist theory is based on dialectical and historical materialism. As Joseph Stalin wrote, 'Dialectical and historical materialism constitute the theoretical basis of Communism, the theoretical foundations of the Marxist party'.<sup>50</sup> But according to Soviet thinking, Marxist-Leninism is more than a philosophical theory: it is scientifically based. As taken from the Soviet manual of Marxism-Leninism, 'The Marxist science of the laws of social development enables us not only to chart a correct path through the labyrinth of social contradictions, but to predict the course events will take, the direction of historical progress and the next stages of social advance...'.<sup>51</sup>

The importance of this theory has been a central theme in writings by Western academics on Soviet foreign policy during the Cold War as well. As Margot Light writes: 'The question is considered important because if Soviet foreign policy is based on an explicit theory, accurate interpretation of past and present and reliable prediction of future Soviet policy would perhaps be possible'.<sup>52</sup>

However, as Light notes, Soviet theorists become infuriated when Western scholars attempt to explain the political behaviour of the Soviet Union in terms of power. But it is quite clear in the literature since 1945 and even to some extent since the Revolution that Soviet theorists have placed a lot of emphasis on the efficacy of power.<sup>53</sup> In Marxist-Leninist theory the term 'correlation of forces' is used in place of the Western term of power. The phrase 'correlation of forces' is used 'to mean a correlation of all the socio-economic, political and military forces of the two antagonistic world-wide camps'.<sup>54</sup>

As in Western thinking on power, Soviet theorists draw a distinction between various forms of the correlation of forces. The socio-economic form of the correlation of forces tends

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<sup>50</sup> Stalin, J., 'Dialectical and Historical Materialism', from Goldwin, R., ed., Readings in Russian Foreign Policy, Oxford university Press, New York, 1959, p.133.

<sup>51</sup> Knusinen, O.W., *et al.*, Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism, Foreign Language Publishing House, Moscow, 1960, pp.16-19.

<sup>52</sup> Light, M., 1988, p.2.

<sup>53</sup> Light, M., 1988, p.249.

<sup>54</sup> Lider, J., Correlation of Forces: an analysis of Marxist-Leninist concepts, Gower, Aldershot, 1986, p.1.



to be centred in social groups (classes) as they interact in the national society. The correlation of political forces is used to describe the activities undertaken by social groups to promote their interests both in the domestic and the international sphere. In the international sphere the objective is to gain influence for the governing group and strengthen the power of the state. Finally the correlation of military forces, that between armed forces of states or classes springs from the fact that armed violence is the pillar socio-political rule.<sup>55</sup>

Soviet theorists regularly criticised Western scholars for concentrating on the foreign policy influence and potential of a state, and developing methods for assessing the balance of power. They felt that Westerners ignore the role of class structures in the forming of a states' foreign policy and in trends in international affairs.<sup>56</sup> The Soviet Union's claim that their theory of the correlation of forces differs from the balance of power theory in that it is more scientific and can be computed more precisely.<sup>57</sup>

One reason that the correlation of forces is meant to be more scientific is that it draws on far more factors in its compilation. As Vernon Aspaturian writes, 'Soviet leaders have long recognized that social conflicts, tensions, frustrations, and resentments, particularity between classes, conceal tremendous reserves of pent-up social power, which can be detected by dialectical analysis and then tapped, mobilized and transmuted into concrete political power subject to the manipulation of Soviet policy'.<sup>58</sup>

Soviet theorists also fault the Western approach for its tendency to overlook non-military instruments of power and influence only available to the Soviet Union. A Marxist-Leninist theory and a democratically centralised government has allowed the Soviet Union the luxury to take a more long-term view than their Western opponents. The Soviet Union has made other forms of non-tangible power as much a part of any East-West contest as any other visible forms of power projection, such as its experience and organisational skills in areas of

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<sup>55</sup> Lider, J., 1986, pp.1-2.

<sup>56</sup> See Sergiyev, A., 'Leninism on the Correlation of Forces as a Factor of International Relations', International Affairs, May 1975, p.100.

<sup>57</sup> Light, M., 1988, pp.250-251.

<sup>58</sup> Aspaturian, V., 'Soviet Global Power and the Correlation of Forces', Problems of Communism, XXIX, May-June 1980, p.10.

propaganda and mass mobilisation.<sup>59</sup>

However, if the correlation of military power is only a minor factor in the calculation of the correlation of forces, why in the post-war era has the Soviet Union devoted a larger share of its resources to military developments than the United States? Miller argues that the maximization of the military power has been a distinct characteristic of the Soviet political order. Since the Bolshevik revolution, Soviet leaders have faced the difficulty of how to match the technically more advanced capitalist powers in the production of military power. By relying on the centralized economy to direct the necessary resources to the high priority of developing military power, they have dealt with their economic and technical inferiority.<sup>60</sup> Richard Pipes goes even further to argue that military demands and the sense of inferiority have been the driving engine behind the great social and political outbursts of both Russian and Soviet history.<sup>61</sup>

Despite protestations from Soviet writers<sup>62</sup>, the importance of military power on Soviet foreign policy is quite clear. Why this is so can be found in a paradox that exists in the two main themes that have dominated Soviet thinking on foreign policy since the Revolution. First there is the Soviet Union's commitment to Communist expansion and the eventual elimination of capitalism. The second theme of Soviet foreign policy is the 'defensive complex'<sup>63</sup> which has been brought about by the memory of recurrent foreign invasions that have befallen Russia throughout its history. Like the United States, the Soviet Union's emphasis in foreign policy has shifted between these dominant themes.

The aspect of Soviet foreign policy making that was motivated by the theme of Communist expansion was expressed as a utopian vision of a classless society in the future. This belief in this historical imperative usually manifested itself in what was referred to earlier as forms of non-tangible power, but the Soviet Union always reserved the right to use

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<sup>59</sup> Sherr, J., Soviet Power: The Continuing Challenge, Macmillian Press, 1991, p.4.

<sup>60</sup> Miller, M., Soviet Strategic Power and Doctrine: The Quest for Superiority, Monograph in International Affairs, Advanced International Studies Institute, Miami, 1982, p.124.

<sup>61</sup> See Pipes, R., Russian Under the Old Regime, Charles Scribner's, New York, 1974.

<sup>62</sup> See Light, M., 1988, p.249.

<sup>63</sup> Mastny, V., Russia's Road to the Cold War, Columbia University Press, New York, 1979, p.2.

whatever action deemed necessary to achieve that end, which included military power. So as Ken Booth wrote: 'The military instrument, therefore, was just one of the means of furthering the class struggle, to be used when expedient'.<sup>64</sup> The Soviet Union used military force on several occasions to 'further the class struggle', such as the invasion of Poland in 1920 and the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

One way that the theme of Soviet vulnerability was expressed in foreign policy was a reluctance by the Soviet Union to acknowledge its relationship with more powerful countries was, for fear of the consequences. Throughout history weaker nations have applied a policy of appeasement to more powerful nations. The lesson that Russian vulnerability had taught more clearly than most, was that countries that admit their weakness usually suffer the consequences; more powerful and self-confident neighbours will exploit or abuse a nation that questions its power. This streak of diffidence in which the Soviet Union refused to venture down the road of appeasement often times led to disastrous results. Two of the more famous examples of the Soviet Union resistance to appeasement were carried out by Stalin's Foreign Minister, Molotov. The Ribbentrop-Molotov talks in 1940 broke down because the Russians insisted on rewriting certain clauses of the Nazi-Soviet Pact. Instead of appeasing Germany, as Hitler expected, these changes gave the Russians considerably greater freedom of action in Eastern Europe than the Germans, who were clearly the strongest power in the region. During the Marshall talks in Paris in 1947, Molotov displayed the same truculence and boorishness when he came over with an 89-man delegation to discuss whether or not the Soviet Union would accept Marshall Aid. In demanding more than the United States could or would concede, the Soviet Union caused the talks to break down. As Coker notes, 'It was Stalin's greatest blunder'.<sup>65</sup> In both cases the Soviet Union was fearful that any sign of conciliation may be seen as an admission of weakness and may have tempted Germany or the US to try to exploit that weakness.

### *The Soviet Conception of War*

As in Soviet foreign policy any attempt to fathom the Soviet view of war runs into the same paradoxical themes. As James Sherr notes, the Soviet Union's commitment to

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<sup>64</sup> Booth, K., The Military Instrument in Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-1972, Royal United Services Institute, London, 1973, p.31.

<sup>65</sup> Coker, C., 1989, p.49.

Communist expansion seems to exist at the same time with a psychology of threat and a view of itself as the victim. This vulnerability, noted above, is a legacy of Russian history, which has left an indelible mark; even in the new found era of Soviet military boldness and "operational confidence", there is a constant perception that adversaries are always on the verge of undoing gains and military planners face "harrowing choices and uncertainties". In the Soviet understanding of security, it means defence against all comers and contingencies; which as such, could only materialise when the world is purged of uncertainty. Therefore, this is unachievable for there is never enough: military power is to be developed not just for security of the homeland, but for restraining Imperialism throughout the world. As a consequence of this need for security, Soviet military power becomes a vital factor in the "world correlation of forces": as the Soviet Union grows stronger, progressive mankind benefits; as "progress" advances, the Soviet Union becomes safer.<sup>66</sup>

To a certain extent war is an alien concept to Marxist-Leninism. Lenin argued that war existed because of the exploitation of man by man as a product of imperialism. It follows that Marxist-Leninists see war only from the point of view of the socialist proletariat and its struggle for emancipation.<sup>67</sup> This is why, as Sherr notes, even as the Soviet Armed Forces acquired real importance in terms of their "external functions", the USSR's principal means upon which it relies to influence change are what are often called by Westerners "other means": moral, political and material support furnished at a level below outright intervention, designed at least to influence and infiltrate, if not to encourage and revolutionise.<sup>68</sup>

On the other hand, both the Soviet Union and Marxist ideology has a long association with war. The Soviet Union was the resulting side effect of the First World War. The war had accelerated social development and allowed self-determination for the Russian people.<sup>69</sup> Marx and especially Engels, made war - interstate and civil - a central aspect of study and the raw

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<sup>66</sup> Sherr, J., 1991, p.95.

<sup>67</sup> Przetacznik, F., The Philosophical and Legal Concept of War, The Edwin Mellen Press, Lampeter, UK, 1994, p.100.

<sup>68</sup> Sherr, J., 1991, p.96.

<sup>69</sup> Przetacznik, F., 1994, p.101.

material of their theories and insights.<sup>70</sup>

However the October Revolution served as a watershed in defining Soviet thinking of war. Prior to that date, no Communist leader had ever commanded an army. Therefore, it was during this time that a Soviet view, which differs distinctly from that of the Western 'bourgeois' view, which sees war as a terrible disaster and not as a political act, was developed. The Soviet perception of war, mainly taken from Lenin, is rather Clausewitzian. According to Lenin, a given government's underlying policy will remain unchanged: whether in peacetime or wartime, it pursues the same aims. Therefore, war will be declared or peace will be made according to which policy best suits the circumstances of advancing Soviet policy.<sup>71</sup>

The Soviet view of war did continue to maintain one of the centrepieces of Marx and Engels view, that war was regarded as a product of class society and class antagonisms. Specifically this meant that war remained a political act, as well as a revolutionising act. Finally, this view of war made it possible to achieve absolute war and thus, absolute victory, which means the destruction of capitalism.<sup>72</sup>

#### *Soviet Foreign Policy in the Post-War Era*

As in the case of the United States, Soviet foreign policy went through various stages of development throughout the Cold War. However, during this period, it was the two themes of the expansion of Communism and the fear of attack from hostile forces that dominated Soviet foreign policy.

The first stage of Soviet foreign policy in the post-war era was the period in which the Soviet Empire was established. James Sherr defines the Soviet Empire of comprising of Russia and the 14 non-Russian Soviet Republics along with Mongolia and the six Eastern European members of the Warsaw Pact (East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Rumania). There are several other states that have either relations of friendship or alliances with the Soviet Union, and others that are dependent on the USSR, but it is only those nations

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<sup>70</sup> Sherr, J., 1991, p.99.

<sup>71</sup> Vigor, P., The Soviet View of War Peace and Neutrality, Routledge & Keagan Paul, London, 1975, pp.8-12.

<sup>72</sup> Sherr, J., 1991, p.101.

and states that make up the core of the Soviet Empire.<sup>73</sup>

As the Soviet Union emerged from the Second World War, the defeat of the Axis powers seemed to signal a less troubled era. Its two main rivals, Nazi Germany in the West and Japan in the East had been defeated, while its democratic allies were quickly demobilizing their armies, leaving the Soviet Union the strongest military power in Europe and the second strongest in the world.<sup>74</sup> Stalin had the option to impose a 'Finnish' solution in Eastern Europe, but for various reasons chose instead a security formula based on ideological conformity and the maintenance of control over both the internal and external polices of these countries. As Sherr notes, Stalin's decision was a 'fateful one'.<sup>75</sup>

The first reason, it has been suggested, that the decision to impose Communist rule over Eastern Europe that it reflects on the traditional Russian view of it being a vulnerable nation. Stalin believed the threat of capitalist encirclement would continue while the distribution of power remained weighted in favour of the capitalist. Therefore Stalin deemed it necessary to establish buffer states in Eastern Europe.<sup>76</sup> The second reason for the expansion of the Soviet frontier is that it coincides with their objective of expanding the bounds of Communism. Whatever the reason, be it Soviet insecurity or a sense of historic destiny, Stalin's determination to dominate Eastern Europe was unwavering. One thing that is very clear about this policy of creating an empire was the primary importance of military power, especially when Stalin did not receive local political support. Although Stalin had no blueprint for Eastern Europe in 1945, the important consideration from his point of view was that the military occupation by the Red Army gave him options and some degree of control over this politically vacuumous region, as well as providing the basic factor for the communist takeover. As Stalin wrote at that time:

'The reason why there is now no communist government in Paris is because in the circumstances of 1945, the Soviet Army was not able to reach French soil'.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Sherr, J., 1991, pp.53-55.

<sup>74</sup> Booth, K.; 1973, p.12.

<sup>75</sup> Sherr, J., 1991, p.55.

<sup>76</sup> Light, M., 1988, p.265.

<sup>77</sup> In a letter to the Yugoslav Central Committee, 1948, from Booth, K., 1973, p.25.

The extension of Soviet power into Eastern Europe came at a rather low risk for Stalin. Soviet forces only had to continue to occupy territory already liberated from Germany.<sup>78</sup>

Post-War Soviet theory reflected the emergence of the Soviet Union as a military power. The Soviet theorists argued that as a result of the Second World War there had been a profound change in the correlation of forces, which had led to a change in the international system in favour of socialism and a new role for the Soviet Union. This change was attributed above all to the growth in the power of the Soviet state which had emerged from the war, not only as the victor, but stronger in all respects. It had regained those territories lost when it was weaker and had acquired great sea power. Two distinct changes in the international system were directly linked to the increase in power of the Soviet Union. The crisis in capitalism caused by the withdrawal of the Eastern European nations from the capitalist system is the first. Secondly, the strengthening of socialism with the development of the new socialist régimes and the success of the anti-colonial movement.<sup>79</sup> It can be seen that the zero-sum nature of the Cold War was beginning to emerge in Soviet thinking in the late 40s.

The second stage of Soviet policy in the post-war era was the establishment of Peaceful Coexistence as the new approach to foreign policy. Khrushchev introduced the theory of 'peaceful coexistence' at the Twentieth Party Congress. Taken from Lenin's theory of coexisting with the capitalist world, peaceful coexistence was meant to address the problem of nuclear weapons. Khrushchev felt that nuclear weapons had altered the correlation of forces in international relations. Khrushchev introduced two changes to communist doctrine to take into account the change brought about by nuclear weapons. He rejected the inevitability of war and he argued that the communist revolution could be achieved by peaceful means.<sup>80</sup>

As has been noted above the policy was originally proposed by Lenin himself, who argued that two opposing social systems could exist simultaneously. He argued that the Soviet state would in the short term live together with the imperialist states, but that in the long term this was unthinkable. With the defeat of the Red Army in Warsaw in 1920 and the general economic breakdown which followed, the Soviet leadership came to the realisation that the

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<sup>78</sup> Booth, K., 1973, p.37.

<sup>79</sup> Light, M., 1988, pp.264-267.

<sup>80</sup> Noguee and Donaldson, 1988, p.28.

capitalist world was going to survive, and a serious effort was needed to develop a policy of coexistence with the West. While the Soviet Union sought to become a regular member of the international community, it continued to claim the right to challenge the status quo dominated by the West.<sup>81</sup>

In Khrushchev's version, Peaceful Coexistence was described as a specific form of class struggle between socialism and capitalism. It concerned itself with relations between states and not with relations within states or the struggle for the transformation of society. Although like Lenin's version of coexistence of two opposing social systems, Khrushchev's Peaceful Coexistence did not signify the rejection of the class struggle, or the idea of the inevitability of the victory of communism over capitalism.<sup>82</sup>

Soviet theory under Khrushchev went through somewhat of a radical change, not in the actual content, but in the origin of that theory. Previously, theory had been the domain of the Party ideologist, but after the death of Stalin, there emerged in the Soviet Union an academic discipline along the lines of Western political science and international relations. From this period, the discussion on power and the correlation of forces grew dramatically.<sup>83</sup>

The Soviet theorists agreed with the Party ideologist that one of the main causes of the shift in the correlation of forces was the crisis in the capitalist world. But they also pointed to the geographical enlargement and population increase of the Socialist world, especially after the successful socialist revolution in China. They also pointed to the fact that it was inevitable that socialism would win the economic competition between the two systems. They did not completely ignore military factors, noting the breaking of the American atomic monopoly, the Soviet explosion of the H-bomb and the launch of *Sputnik* as having had a great impact on the correlation of forces.<sup>84</sup>

There were two main effects of the shift in the correlation of forces in the mid-1950s.

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<sup>81</sup> Gurian, W., ed., Soviet Imperialism: Its Origins and Tactics, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, 1953, p.4.

<sup>82</sup> 'Mirnoesosushchestvovanie' [Peaceful Coexistence], Diplomaticheskii slovar' [Diplomatic Dictionary], Vol.II (Moscow: Politizdat, 1961), p.299, from Rubinstein, A.Z., Soviet Foreign Policy Since World War II: imperial and global, Winthrop, Cambridge MA.,1981, p.269.

<sup>83</sup> Light, M., 1988, p.268.

<sup>84</sup> Light, M., 1988, p.270.



One was that the growth in socialist power had made the Soviet Union sufficiently strong to be in a position where no other nation could dictate to it. Secondly, the growth in socialist power had prevented the possibility of thermonuclear war. What was unique about this shift in the correlation of forces was that unlike the previous changes that were caused by the two world wars, this change was the result of peaceful competition and struggle between the two systems.<sup>85</sup>

The next stage of Soviet foreign policy in the post-war era coincides with the tenure of Leonid Brezhnev as leader of the Soviet Union. Although Brezhnev, Kosygin and Podgorny ousted Khrushchev for his adventurism in foreign policy, they did not totally repudiate his policy of Peaceful Coexistence. Initially they took a far more conservative approach to their relations with both the socialist and capitalist worlds. However, after the effects of the military build up, begun after the Cuban Missile Crisis, started to make an impact on the military balance between the US and the USSR, Soviet foreign policy took on a more militant and activist tone.<sup>86</sup>

Then in the early 1970s, the Soviet Union reached a rough parity with the US, which caused a further shift in the correlation of forces, to the advantage of the USSR and socialism, and against the US.<sup>87</sup> This achievement of parity by the Soviet Union brought about the potential of détente with the United States, which would allow the transition of the world, from one no longer marked by American predominance, to a political structure of the Soviet Union with the United States that matched their military parity.<sup>88</sup>

While Soviet foreign policy began to rely more and more on military potential, Soviet theory also began to have a similar reliance. One of the main theoretical questions posed during this stage of Soviet foreign policy was why détente had become possible with the United States. The most common response to this question was that the capitalist states had been forced into détente by the shift in the correlation of forces brought about by the

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<sup>85</sup> Light, M., 1988, p.270.

<sup>86</sup> Sonnenfeldt, H., and Hyland, W., 'Soviet Perspectives on Security', Adelphi Papers, no. 150, IISS, Spring 1979, p.15.

<sup>87</sup> Shenfield, S., The Nuclear Predicament, Chatham House Paper 37, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, p.24.

<sup>88</sup> Garthoff, R., Détente and Confrontation, Brookings Institution, Washington DC, 1985, p.38.

achievement of nuclear parity.<sup>89</sup>

The final stage of Soviet foreign policy came in the mid-80s, as a new generation of Soviet leaders, led by Mikhail Gorbachev, began to question the underlying assumptions of the foreign policy inherited from its predecessors. That policy had led the Soviet Union into a costly arms race, various entanglements in the Third World and international isolation. However, the difficulties faced by the new leadership were not simply the result of an outmoded foreign policy. They faced what was described as, 'a crisis of performance of the Soviet system'.<sup>90</sup>

Gorbachev introduced 'New Political Thinking' to address a whole range of issues confronting the Soviet Union. He proposed a restructuring (*Perestroika*) to address the need for urgent reform in the social, political and economic spheres of the Soviet system. Another area of major concern for Gorbachev's reforms was foreign policy. A fundamental concern to Gorbachev's new approach to foreign policy was the avoidance of nuclear war. He believed that the system of nuclear deterrence was no longer stable and therefore proposed a new approach to security.<sup>91</sup> Fundamental to his new approach to security was the concept of reasonable sufficiency. At first reasonable sufficiency served as an indication to the West of a new approach to arms control, away from the restraints of zero-sum calculations, however over time the idea was refined to be a cornerstone of Soviet military doctrine.

Allen Lynch argues that much of the conceptual framework of Gorbachev and his close advisors' (many who had links to foreign policy intellectuals) 'New Political Thinking' was drawn from work done during the Brezhnev and Andropov periods.<sup>92</sup> Many of these people had been involved in middle level positions at the height of US-Soviet détente, and must have been made aware of the dilemma facing American policy makers and the decline in the influence of military power. Three of the more prominent advisors of Gorbachev, Zhurkin, Karganov and Kortunov wrote an influential article on reasonable sufficiency that echoes the

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<sup>89</sup> Light, M., 1988, p.55.

<sup>90</sup> Lynch, A., Gorbachev's International Outlook: Intellectual Origins and Political Consequences, Occasional Paper Series #9, Institute for East-West Security Studies, New York, 1989, p.1.

<sup>91</sup> Gorbachev, M., Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World, Harper & Row Publisher, New York, 1988, p.127.

<sup>92</sup> Lynch, A., 1989, p.29.

work done in the West in the 70s by such people as Buchan and Luard:

‘The history of the last decades shows that in none of the regional conflicts has the aggressor succeeded in achieving a military victory not to speak of a political one. Judging by everything conflicts of the scale of the U.S. invasion of Grenada can be regarded as the upper limit of effective use of armed force in modern conditions. Any conflict of major dimensions can drag out for years and even decades, now waning, now flaring up again. While the political and military losses involved outweigh any advantages that might be gained’.<sup>93</sup>

## Conclusion

It has been argued, from the evidence presented, that there has been a major shift in the nature of military power. There has also been evidence presented that since 1945 the dominant themes in the foreign policies of both the United States and the Soviet Union were interlinked with the various perceptions of military power.

This research will now attempt to argue that the changing nature of military power was the major factor in the changes that took place in the foreign policies of the United States and the Soviet Union. That the two superpowers possessed different views on power at various times throughout the Cold War has been discussed. It is the objective of this research to put forward the hypothesis that the varying perceptions of the two superpowers on the nature of power led to the periods of intense confrontation and the failure of the first attempt to bring an end to the Cold War in the early 70s. At that time, the United States had recognized the shift in international politics away from a reliance on military power to that of a greater importance on political power. However as the evidence will show, the Soviet Union did not come to this same realization until much later, therefore extending the Cold War until the late 80s.

In concluding this introduction of the thesis, a short outline of the structure would prove useful. Chapter 2 deals with US foreign policy through the first three stages of the Cold War, from the Truman Administration through the Johnson Administration. Chapter 3 looks at the rise and fall of détente and US foreign policy under the stewardship of Nixon and Kissinger. Chapter 4 will cover the periods of Carter and Reagan’s terms of office, which can be described as the decline and then the rise of détente. Chapter 5 will focus on the period of

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<sup>93</sup> Zhurkin, V., Karganov, S., and Kortunov, A., ‘Reasonable Sufficiency-or how to break the vicious circle’, New Times, no.40, October 12, 1987, p.15.

the development of the Soviet Empire under Stalin and then the introduction of the policy of Peaceful Coexistence by Khrushchev. Chapter 6 deals with the leadership of Leonid Brezhnev and the emergence of the Soviet Union as a superpower. The seventh chapter addresses the coming to power of Gorbachev and the implication that this had on the Soviet conception of power and Soviet foreign policy. Finally this thesis will briefly look at the future role of military power as the world moves into the twenty-first century.

## Chapter 2

### Introduction

As noted in the previous chapter<sup>1</sup>, the main objective of US foreign policy was to manage Soviet relations on a nuclear level, while containing the threat by non-nuclear means and that as the nature of military power changed, the policy of containment also changed. However, in the first three stages, there was a strong correlation between the different approaches, as Robert Litwak noted in Détente and the Nixon Doctrine, ‘... despite the changes in rhetoric from the Truman Doctrine to "massive retaliation" to "flexible response", the American framework of analyses remained much the same: a bipolar, zero sum image of the international system still prevailed and strategic thinking continued to focus almost exclusively on the instrumentalities of power’.<sup>2</sup>

### Containment

The origin of US Cold War foreign policy is often dated from 1945, but this view fails to recognize that for three years after the war, the United States government was trying to save the grand alliance. However, when Soviet actions became more hostile to the West as the USSR attempted to enhance its security, even the most ardent supporters of the universalist approach in Washington had to admit that their goals, such as a collective security régime, would be impossible to implement in the foreseeable future and a new approach to US foreign policy was needed.

George Kennan introduced a new approach to foreign policy while stationed in Moscow with a 8,000 word telegram, which outlined Soviet foreign policy as hostile to the United States. Kennan expanded his ideas in his now famous ‘X’ article published in Foreign Affairs magazine, July 1947.<sup>3</sup> It was the first time that the term ‘Containment’ was used to describe the new approach to American foreign policy. Kennan was one of the few experts in the State Department that had an understanding of the Soviet Union and the role that the Marxist-Leninist creed played. Marxist ideology, the article argued, may have been important, but the Soviet Union was using the ideology to justify policy decisions after they had been taken.

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<sup>1</sup> See page 16

<sup>2</sup> Litwak, R., 1984, p.140.

<sup>3</sup> X, 1947.

Kennan also argued that Soviet leaders would prove to be more pragmatic than Nazi Germany, because unlike the Nazis the Soviet Union had national interests that in themselves were important. This pragmatism made it possible to contain Soviet power, so the article called for the drawing a ring of power - political, economic and military - around the area controlled by the Soviet Union.<sup>4</sup>

Kennan also pointed out that Soviet leaders were confident that history would favour communism in their struggle with capitalism, so that any possible search for accommodation with them would be fruitless. It then followed that there would either be some form of conflict that would endure for an indefinite period of time, or the Soviet Union was brought to a point where it was forced to adjust.<sup>5</sup> Kennan believed that the threat was only a psychological phenomenon, that a relatively small infusion of capital would suffice to overcome the exhaustion and disillusionment that had swept across many parts of Europe and Asia.<sup>6</sup>

The real significance of Kennan's approach was that it began a genuine rearrangement of values and priorities and marked the victory of the realist over the Wilsonian internationalist in the inner circle of government. As Reitzel, Kaplan and Coblenz noted, it was accepted that a world community of law did not exist nor was it likely to emerge either from the Grand Alliance or the United Nations. The result of this shift was that the United States, in framing its policies and objectives, became more a participant in a conventional system of nation-states, where national interests were to be gained by 'the well-tested processes of power'. From then on, the main US objective, as reflected in its policy, was the containment of Soviet-Communism, through the building of an alliance.<sup>7</sup>

This new view of the international system, which was to dominate American thinking on international affairs throughout the Cold War, was influenced heavily by realist thinking. It was also during this time that the term 'bipolar' came into use, a world split into two opposing power groupings, with the United States and the Soviet Union the leading members

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<sup>4</sup> X, p.861.

<sup>5</sup> Reitzel, Kaplan and Coblenz, United States Foreign Policy 1945-1955, Brookings Institution, Washington DC, 1956, p.106.

<sup>6</sup> X, 1947, p.890.

<sup>7</sup> Reitzel et al, 1956, p.115.

of their respective groupings. Unlike the situation in the pre-First World War era, where there were two opposing alliances with members of equal power capability and relatively free to affect policy or change the balance, in the post-Second World War era the United States and the Soviet Union dominated their respective power centres and attracted other states which gave both their allegiance and allowed their policy to be determined by the power centre. Although neutral and independent states continued to exist, their number and potential to influence were greatly restricted. There was also the recognition of irreconcilable philosophical and ideological differences between the United States and its political community and the Soviet Union and its community.<sup>8</sup>

#### *The Truman Doctrine and Aid to Greece and Turkey*

The application of this new approach to foreign policy came when the British government informed the United States that it was no longer in a position to support the Greek government in early 1947. On February 21, 1947, President Truman went before Congress to request aid for Turkey and Greece to help defeat communist backed rebels. However, presented in very redemptionist tones, the package not only included aid for the two Mediterranean countries, it was also offered on a global scale. Truman expanded the aid package (which became known as the Truman Doctrine) to cover the rest of the world in order to gain quick support in Congress.<sup>9</sup> Although there was much debate as to the scope, means and purpose of the Truman Doctrine, it was clear that the new doctrine marked a watershed in American foreign policy, setting a new direction, leaving little doubt that a fundamental change had taken place.<sup>10</sup>

The Truman Doctrine and the policy of containment in general both came under criticism for the open - ended nature of the commitment. One critic, Walter Lippmann, argued that if the Soviet Union was to be confronted by the United States at every point in the world, the Soviet Union would have the initiative to choose the time, place and nature of the conflict,

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<sup>8</sup> Reitzel et al., 1956, p.104.

<sup>9</sup> Kuniholm, B., The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East: great power conflict and diplomacy in Iran, Turkey, and Greece, Princeton University Press, Princeton N.J., 1980, p.412

<sup>10</sup> Reitzel et al, 1956, p. 114.

sometimes forcing the US to support less than respectable allies.<sup>11</sup> The X article did advocate the countering of the Soviet threat on a worldwide scale, but even before publication of the article, Kennan had retreated to a position of distinguishing between vital and peripheral threats. Kennan assumed that if threats were to be serious, they had to combine hostility with capability, by which he meant industrial war making potential. He argued that communist régimes in the non-industrial Asian mainland may not have been a pleasant prospect, but it was not grave enough to require preventive action, considering the cost involved.<sup>12</sup>

#### *The Marshall Plan, The Brussels Pact and NATO*

This strategy set forward by the Truman Doctrine now needed to be formulated into a policy. The Truman Administration had already recognized that part of the threat in Europe was of a psychological nature and that once confidence and stability had returned to these societies there would be less of a threat. The policy that was proposed was economic assistance. Until that time economic assistance had been on an *ad hoc* basis. The United States had furnished Great Britain, France and Italy with various amounts of money in the form of grants and loans. The success of this assistance had been generally disappointing, it had become clear that a more coordinated programme on a larger scale was needed.

This needed economic assistance was to come with the creation of the Economic Recovery Program, more commonly known as the Marshall Plan. The United States offered assistance to all European nations including the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, because if it had only offered aid to Western Europe (as was intended), it would have placed itself in the position of being blamed for the division of Europe. Instead, the US Congress wrote into the Marshall Plan that any participating nation had to disclose full information about its economy and allow the US certain input into the nations' economic decisions, which were thought to be unacceptable terms for the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union did reject the proposals on the grounds that they were a violation of Soviet sovereignty. It was not, however, before some tense moments at the Paris conference at which time Molotov, the Foreign Minister, gave lip

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<sup>11</sup> Coker, 1989, p.57.

<sup>12</sup> Gaddis, J.L., Strategies of Containment, Oxford University Press, London, 1982, p.60-61.



service to the idea of accepting.<sup>13</sup>

The plan called for the European nations to present the United States with an outline of their common needs. This resulted in the forming of the Organization for European Economic Co-operation, whose 17 member states plus Trieste, pledged to work toward co-operation and the elimination of trade barriers. The OEEC estimated the cost of Europe's recovery at \$22 billion, the actual amount used was \$12 billion. Although not as successful as many Americans had hoped, generally due to the lack of integration of long time enemies, the infusion of the money was able to help raise European industrial outputs to exceed pre-war figures by 25% in 1950.<sup>14</sup>

The success of the Marshall Plan was to show up in a rather strange way. Even before the ending of hostilities in Europe the Soviet Union had maintained the pretence that they were willing to collaborate with non-Communists, both internally and internationally. By late 1947, the Soviet Union had discarded this pretence and begun to eliminate any political opposition in its orbit. Strikes and civil disorder were prompted in France and Italy and guerrillas in Greece began a new offensive. All countries under Soviet control were forbidden to partake in the European Recovery Plan and the Cominform was created to combat it. However, none of these actions by the Soviet Union was to have a more profound influence on US thinking than the Soviet supported *coup d'etat* in Czechoslovakia and the blockade of Berlin by Soviet forces in an attempt to dislodge Western forces from the city. The impact of these overt acts of hostility by the USSR were to force the United States to again re-evaluate their plans for European re-construction and security, and thus conclude that economic recovery would have been impossible, unless it was augmented with military security.<sup>15</sup>

There had been various moves to provide mutual defence by the Western Europeans themselves, the signing of the Treaty of Dunkirk between France and England in 1947 and the formation a year later of the Brussels Pact, aligning the Dunkirk signatories with the Benelux countries. Established as a military counterpart to the OEEC, an organization dedicated to

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<sup>13</sup> Spanier, J., American Foreign Policy Since World War II, CQ Press, Washington DC, 1981, p.52.

<sup>14</sup> Spanier, 1981, pp.52-53.

<sup>15</sup> Spanier, 1981, p.60.

economic co-operation, the Brussels Pact signatories expected to attract American support.<sup>16</sup>

In April 1949, the United States along with Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Portugal signed the North Atlantic Treaty. The implications of the NATO commitment was quite profound for the United States. For the first time in its history, the US had committed itself to an alliance in a time of peace and the NATO agreement also served to politically institutionalize the Elbe river as the US first line of defence. It was this commitment on the part of the United States that was meant to deter any Soviet military advancement into Western Europe<sup>17</sup>.

One notable critic of the US decision to introduce the military aspect to the policy of containment was George Kennan. It was Kennan's view that the Europeans had mistaken what was essentially a political threat for a military one and that forming an alliance in the West would reinforce Soviet suspicions and insecurity, thus reducing any chance of removing both Soviet and American troops from Central Europe.<sup>18</sup>

Kennan's criticism, however, failed to recognize the nature of the threat perceived by the Europeans. As has been previously stated, Kennan saw the threat as a psychological phenomenon that was the result of the political situation in Europe and the USSR. He felt, and it is most likely so, that the Soviet Union was in no position to start a war, but the Soviet Union was willing to use a psychological military threat to thwart Western European and especially German recovery by blockading Berlin. The Berlin Crisis was more than a test of US commitment to Berlin, it was also a test of US resolve in regards to Europe. Had the US been forced out of Berlin, German as well as French and British confidence in the US would have been undermined and possibly forced the Europeans to choose another foreign policy posture such as neutral or even pro-Soviet. If the United States had not responded, firstly to Berlin and then by making a formal military commitment to Europe, any attempt at economic recovery would have been impossible.

There were three other factors that Kennan failed to recognize that led to the

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<sup>16</sup> Spanier, 1981, p.55.

<sup>17</sup> Osgoode, R., Alliances and American Foreign Policy, Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1968, p.118.

<sup>18</sup> Gaddis, 1982, p.72.

militarisation of containment. First, the Truman Administration never drew the distinction between Soviet expansion and international communism in selling the Marshall Aid package to Congress. Although the failure to make this distinction led to the 'Red Scare' and the McCarthy hearings, Truman would not have been able to get his military and economic aid packages through Congress without exaggerating the nature of the Soviet threat. Secondly, the growth in the American economy, which was mainly the result of the post-Korean War boom, allowed the US to ignore the decision between commitments and costs. Finally, Kennan could not foresee the increased power of the Presidency, which was used to defend domestic criticism of the policy of containment.<sup>19</sup>

All these factors led the US government into a reinterpretation of the policy of containment. The biggest criticism that can be levelled against Kennan, as he steadfastly held to the position that containment was being misinterpreted, was that the world had changed. It had changed from the one in which he wrote the X article in 1947 to the world of 1949, a world where the US needed to and was capable of applying a militarised version of the policy of containment.

### *The Korean War*

Although the creation of NATO was a step toward the militarisation of containment, it was the Korean War which shifted relations between the US and the USSR into a competition of military superpowers. Prior to the US military build up for the Korean War, NATO was a shell organisation, incapable of defending its continental members from a Soviet attack. In the case of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe, NATO planners envisaged a D-Day style invasion against a far more superior enemy than Nazi Germany. It was for this reason that American military planners relied heavily on nuclear deterrence and believed that any conflict between the superpowers would be an all out war.

In his famous statement on US security interests in Asia, Secretary of State Acheson echoed this United States government belief that both Soviet leaders and themselves, planned only for all out war. It was the American preoccupation with total war that caused them to leave Korea outside its Pacific defence perimeter that ran from the Aleutians through Japan to the Philippines. Soviet occupation of the whole peninsula could be neutralized by US air and

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<sup>19</sup> Coker, 1989, p.61.

sea power. US ground forces had been removed from Korea for fear they may have been trapped by superior Soviet ground forces. In the view of American military planners, Korea was militarily expendable in the event of a global war. This lack of military commitment by the United States left South Korea terribly vulnerable to attack from the North.

American perception of the strategic importance of South Korea was to make a complete turn around with the invasion of the South by the North Korean Army. Within hours of learning of the invasion, Truman requested a meeting of the UN Security Council. During this meeting a resolution introduced by the US declaring North Korea in violation of the peace and calling for all members to support the UN in its execution of this resolution and to deny North Korea any assistance was adopted. The absence of the Soviet delegate allowed the US to get the resolution through the Security Council unhindered.

The US was able to respond quickly to the events on the Korean peninsula, even though the attack took them by surprise, the US had no general plan, rather they responded as the situation developed. The hostilities did serve to highlight the implications of a Communist occupation of South Korea and the potential impact this would have on the policy of containment. If the purpose of containment was to thwart further Soviet expansion, failure to respond to overt aggression may encourage future actions. Concurrently, if the United States intended to carry out their policy of containment through a system of alliances, then American failure to come to the assistance of South Korea would undermine this policy. Concern was also expressed that this aggression, being committed counter to a UN Security Council order and against a state under United Nations protection, would be a blow for the principle of collective security. To American policy makers the attack on South Korea by the North quickly became linked to vital US security interests, and the US had no choice but to oppose these actions with force, if it wished to prevent an upset of the bi-polar world and its own strategic situation.<sup>20</sup>

The war in Korea led to a change in US priorities both in terms of its policy in the Far East and in a more general way. In the Far East, the Truman Administration reversed its policy on Formosa and announced its intention to defend the government of Chiang Kai-shek and the refusal to recognize the PRC or to permit it to take its seat in the United Nations became

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<sup>20</sup> Spanier, 1981, p.64.

established policy. The United States also stepped up support for anti-communist forces both in the Philippines and Indochina.<sup>21</sup>

The Korean War was to have a profound effect on the United States and its strategy toward countering Soviet power. As a result of the military build up the United States emerged from the Korean War as a legitimate military superpower. Military spending rose by \$33 billion between 1950 and 1953. The war also convinced the Americans of the necessity to base troops in Germany and to deploy the Strategic Air Command.<sup>22</sup> Containment, which was designed mainly to meet a psychological-political threat in Western Europe, was completely converted into a strategy for exercising US military power against the Soviet threat world-wide.

#### *Consolidation of Containment and the Nuclearization of the Cold War*

In the immediate aftermath of war breaking out in Korea, there was what may best be described as a period of consolidation. The United States had accepted the existence of a Communist bloc and turned its attention toward building its own military strength as well as its alliances. This was not however, a period without tension. The Communist Chinese challenge to the status quo in the Far East was still a concern for the United States, as was the US intention of rearming West Germany a concern to Soviet policy makers.

Also resulting from the Korean War was the end of attempts by the United States government to maintain diplomatic contact and a process of negotiation with the USSR. From the earliest policy statements of the Truman Administration, one major objective of the United States was to keep some form of communication open, but by the end of 1950, the view in the United States was that this was no longer an option.

The implications of this period of consolidation and the closing off of diplomatic contact was to shift the emphasis of the policy of containment. From its inception, containment had been founded on diplomatic and economic initiatives, backed up with some military potential. With the polarization that had been taking place through-out most of the post-war period all but complete, this led to a shift in priorities to military objectives. The US government was preoccupied in this period with extending alliances, establishing overseas air

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<sup>21</sup> Pratt, J., A History of United States Foreign Policy, Prentice-Hall Inc. Englewood Cliffs N.J., 1955, p.494.

<sup>22</sup> Coker, 1989, p.39.

and naval bases and building up the military capability of its allies. Many of these new alliances lacked the political cohesion that was found in NATO, but the change from a strategy based on political concern to one based on a military concern helps to explain the large increase in US responsibility and commitments after 1950.

One other factor that must be considered as influencing the change in the American perception to move toward a strategy based on military concern rather than political, was the Soviet explosion of an atomic bomb in 1949. The breaking of the nuclear monopoly by the Soviet Union convinced American policy makers that the West could only deal with the Soviet Union if it were to build what Secretary of State Acheson called 'situations of strength'.<sup>23</sup> It was argued that when faced by an impressive show of Western power, the Soviet Union would have no alternative, but to cease its aggressive policies for fear of upsetting the international balance. The most important situation where the United States wanted to build a situation of strength was in Western Europe. There had been steps taken toward the creation of an integrated defence in Western Europe before the attack on Korea. The Mutual Defense Assistance Act, passed by the United States Congress in 1949, allowed for military aid to be made available when agreement on an integrated defence had been made by NATO. Lurking behind all these discussion was the role that Germany may play in any NATO plans. Korea changed all that.

In the United States, people such as Acheson had hoped to delay the question of German rearmament until after the groundwork for European rearmament had been laid.<sup>24</sup> However, there was a parallel that was being drawn by many in the West between South Korea and West Germany: a undefended country, divided, with one government aligned with either side of the US-Soviet dispute and on the Communist side of the political demarcation sat a heavily armed military force. The need to bolster Western forces was painfully clear in the United States. The European members of NATO had shown reluctance in stepping up their rearmament without substantial increases in US ground forces stationed in Europe. But the Truman Administration was in the difficult position of needing to convince the American people, Congress and even his own Defense Department that the Europeans were doing more

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<sup>23</sup> Nietzsche, P.H., From Hiroshima to Glastnost, Grove Weidenfeld, London, 1989, p.117.

<sup>24</sup> McLellan, D.S., Dean Acheson, The State Department Years, Dodd, Mead & Co., New York, 1979, p.327.

for their own defence. So the decision was taken in the US to move toward rearming West Germany.

The initial reaction of the European allies was generally acceptable to the plan except for the notable exceptions of Britain and France. The British objections to this plan proved surmountable when the United States proposal included the appointment of General Eisenhower as Supreme Allied Commander and assurances of massive reinforcements of US Army stationed in Germany.<sup>25</sup> France's support for the plan however, proved far more difficult to secure. A deadlock ensued over the question of German rearmament, which at certain points threatened to destroy the Western alliance. The question became tied to the a range of issues from European unification and European defence to German sovereignty. When the debate was finally settled after almost five years, it was along much the same lines of the original US proposal of a German national army composed of conventional armed division sized units, with little exterior control.<sup>26</sup>

### **Eisenhower and Massive Retaliation**

The land-slide victory for the Republican presidential candidate, Dwight Eisenhower, and the Republican party victories in both the House and the Senate, emphasises the discontent of the American electorate and its demand for change. The Korean war had dragged on for two years with little likelihood of a settlement. The defeat of the Nationalists in China and the Communist takeover of Eastern Europe had left the American public in an unsettled mood. The disillusion of the American electorate also stemmed from a traditional perception of foreign affairs as 'merely an annoying but temporary diversion',<sup>27</sup> and a disaffection with the ambiguous nature of foreign policy based on the 'balance of power'.

As the United States entered the second stage of Cold War foreign policy, the Eisenhower Administration was attempting to end the open-ended commitment to containment. Writing two years before he was to become Secretary of State under Eisenhower, John Foster Dulles said, 'It is time to think in terms of taking the offensive in the world struggle for

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<sup>25</sup> McGeehan, R., The German Rearmament Question, University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 1971, p.65.

<sup>26</sup> McGeehan, R., 1971, p.236.

<sup>27</sup> Spanier, 1981, p.68.

freedom and of rolling back and engulfing tide of despotism. It is time to think less of fission bombs and more of establishing justice and ending terrorism in the world'.<sup>28</sup>

The 1952 Republican campaign was full of the language of redemption. During the campaign, Eisenhower, linking the policy of containment to the Democratic party, condemned it for being negative, futile and immoral and called to 'again make liberty into a beacon light of hope that will penetrate the dark places'.<sup>29</sup> Although they had included roll-back and liberation as part of the party platform, how the Eisenhower Administration planned to implement this policy was questionable. Dulles did not call for the use of military means to liberate Eastern Europe from Communism, rather he intended to use propaganda and subversion as the main weapons. The country wanted a vigorous and forthright anti-Communist policy that promised the end of the Cold War, however, they were unwilling to take the risk of all-out war with the Soviet Union for the sake of Communist satellite countries.

In effect the Eisenhower foreign policy did not turn out to be particularly different from his predecessor's, retaining the predominantly military definition of the balance of power adopted by Truman, but it simplified the process further.<sup>30</sup> During his two terms in office, Eisenhower extended the line of containment to cover the Middle and Far East. The pronouncement of 'massive retaliation' concentrated US security back on nuclear weapons, which fulfilled two requirements of being less costly and was meant to avoid the recurrence of another Korea. The only difference with Truman's nuclear policy was that Eisenhower expected to not only deter all-out war with the Soviet Union, but he also expected to extend this to regional conflicts. Unlike Truman, Eisenhower would not fight local ground conflicts, but rather threaten to strike either China or the Soviet Union directly. This policy, that was to become known as 'brinkmanship', was first used in an attempt to bring an end to the conflict in Korea.

#### *The East German and Hungarian Uprisings*

That the policy of liberation was nothing more than a 'paper tiger' was painfully demonstrated during the East German uprisings in 1953. The only material support offered by

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<sup>28</sup> Dulles, 1950, p.175.

<sup>29</sup> Pratt, 1955.

<sup>30</sup> Brown, S., The Faces of Power, Columbia University Press, New York, 1983, p.65.



the United States during the crisis was the distribution of extra food in West Berlin to the Eastern refugees. There was a great debate within the Administration as to whether or not the United States should prepare itself to intervene in any future contingencies, grand-strategy task forces were appointed by the White House to explore the implications of possible alternative strategies. When the full report was presented to the President for approval, no part of the liberation group's recommendations was included.<sup>31</sup>

After the Berlin uprising, the Eisenhower Administration abandoned the liberation aspect of their foreign policy, and the liberation alternative was never to appear again in grand-strategy planning during Eisenhower's presidency. However this change in policy did not seem to have been passed on to the propaganda agencies, most notably Voice of America and Radio Free Europe. They were crucial during the period between 1953 and 1956 for keeping alive the expectations of the Eastern Europeans that the United States was going to somehow intervene against the Soviet Union in the event of a major uprising.

The Eisenhower Administration had neither the intention nor the means to intervene in Poland or Hungary in the autumn of 1956. US restraint may have allowed the Gomulka régime in Poland to strike an agreement with the Soviet Union over greater independence for the Polish régime. The same can not be said for the situation in Hungary. The Administration made a series of statements that indicated that they had no intention in intervening in the Hungarian situation between the 27 October and the 30 October. The Soviet Union took this statement as a clear signal that they had a free hand to act and entered Hungary on 4 November with 200,000 troops and 4,000 tanks to crush the revolt. This was a reversal of a previous decision taken by the Soviet Union on 30 October to compromise.<sup>32</sup>

The effect that the Hungarian revolt had on the Eisenhower Administration was to change the tone of their policy and statements regarding Eastern Europe. They ended talk of encouraging stresses and strains in Eastern Europe and began opening up economic relations on a selective basis with some Eastern European countries. Using Yugoslavia as a model, trade and aid were used to encourage less subservience to the Soviet Union in the short term and greater economic independence in the long term.

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<sup>31</sup> Brown, 1983, p.110.

<sup>32</sup> Brown, 1983, p.110.

### *Further Expansion of the Cold War and the Suez Crisis*

As the liberation portion of the Eisenhower foreign policy was to prove unviable, the reliance on the strictly military option in maintaining the balance of power was also to prove impossible to maintain. Prior to 1955, the US had refused to engage in an economic cooperation contest with the USSR because of the Administration's budgetary austerity and the belief that most of the nations accepting Soviet assistance were countries with socialist leanings. However the growing evidence of Soviet penetration through economic cooperation was quite alarming to the Eisenhower Administration. It became clear by 1956 that the trade and credit agreements of the Communist bloc had moved into practically every nonaligned country and even to a few countries who were meant to be part of the US alliance system.

The United States first saw the Soviet Union gain influence in non-socialist countries in the Middle East. In an effort to limit Soviet influence there, the United States had been a signatory to the Baghdad Pact, also known as the Middle East Treaty Organization. However, according to Ambassador Parker Hart, who was serving at the American Embassy in Cairo at the time, the United States was not terribly committed to the Pact for fear of the affect it may have had on Israel. The main advocates of the Baghdad Pact were the leaders of Iraq, Nari Said, and Turkey, Adnan Menderes, who each hoped to gain favour from the United States with the alliance.<sup>33</sup>

However, rather than having a negative effect on relations with Israel, it was American relations with Egypt that were to suffer. The Egyptians would not believe the United States, when they claimed it was not their affair. As Hart stated, 'they saw us choosing Egypt's rival Iraq and giving it the leadership role'.<sup>34</sup> The Soviet Union was able to exploit the worsening relations between the US and Egypt by arranging the sale of Czech arms and creating a dependency relationship (similar to that the United States would develop) on the part of the local Egyptian régime toward the Soviet Union. The United States was loath to change its policy orientation, but it began to be concerned that its policy was creating anti-Western sentiment by ignoring local nationalism and easing the way for Soviet penetration.

This concern was expressed in the United States' handling of the Suez Crisis. The

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<sup>33</sup> Ambassador Parker Hart, Oral History Program, Georgetown University Library, 1-27-89.

<sup>34</sup> Ambassador Parker Hart, 1-27-89.

United States and Great Britain had both been partially funding the Aswan Dam project in an attempt to coax Nasser away from the Soviet Union's influence. However, when Nasser objected to the provisions for the storage of water between Egypt and the Sudan, which came on the heels of the Egyptian-Czech arms agreement, Dulles decided to withdraw from the project. Nasser attempted to amend his position by sending his Ambassador Ahmed Hussein to Washington DC, however Dulles had made up his mind not to give US support.<sup>35</sup> When the Secretary of State attempted to humiliate Nasser by abruptly cancelling US support for the dam project, the Egyptian President responded by nationalizing the Suez Canal.

The Suez Crisis showed the inherent difficulty that the general US policy of containment was going to face in the various regions of the world. The policy of denying Soviet penetration into the remaining nonaligned areas through military assistance agreements had reached a point of diminishing returns. It required a willingness to back 'nationalist development efforts' of unpredictable leaders who tended to lead these former colonial countries, which tended to weaken the value of links with countries the US had genuine containment concerns.<sup>36</sup>

Almost as an afterthought, the Eisenhower Administration attempted to recoup the damage to American foreign policy caused by the Suez Crisis. The US intervention to stop the British-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt had severely strained American relations both in Europe and the Middle East. Eisenhower requested and was given authority from Congress to use American armed forces to defend the Middle East. This was to become known as the Eisenhower Doctrine.<sup>37</sup>

The period between 1955 and 1957 which was highlighted by the events in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, forced United States' policy makers to take into account the military and political stalemate in Europe and the new self-assertive nationalist régimes that were emerging in the ex-colonial areas. Several events, mainly the integration of Germany into NATO, the 1955 Geneva summit and the Soviet invasion of Hungary, reaffirmed the Acheson-

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<sup>35</sup> Ambassador Parker Hart, 1-27-89.

<sup>36</sup> Brown, 1983, p.103-104.

<sup>37</sup> Hammond, P., Cold War and Détente: the American foreign policy process since 1945, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1975, p.124.

Dulles premise that negotiation with the Soviet Union was useless. These events also reinforced the hypothesis that henceforth neither the United States nor the Soviet Union would interfere in one another's sphere of influence in Europe. The shift from coercion to courtship by the Communist bloc in relations with Third World nations and the United States' deference to Middle Eastern nationalism shown by US opposition to the efforts by Israel, Britain and France to crush Nasser, also registered a mutual movement by the two superpowers toward the acceptance of a mutual military standoff. This standoff was away from strategies of coercive confrontation and replaced using non-military modes of competition to gain favour in the Third World.<sup>38</sup>

### *The End of the Eisenhower Administration*

The initial calls to escape the open-ended commitment of containment with a new radical approach to foreign policy by the Eisenhower Administration, a policy that was intended to liberate East Europe from Communist rule, proved impossible to carry out. The reason it proved impossible was due mainly to a change in the nature of the Cold War and a decline in the relative power of the United States. Three events, the Soviet Union's first explosion of a thermonuclear weapon, the United States introduction of the B-52 bomber and the Soviet launch of the first man-made satellite, Sputnik I, gave both the United States and the Soviet Union assured destruction (MAD).

The impact that MAD had on relations between the superpowers was to create a very unstable situation. As was stated in the first chapter, a central feature of the balance of power is the ability of powers to change alliances to permit adjustment in the balance. Under MAD, any adjustment could lead to a nuclear exchange. An attempt to roll-back communism in Eastern Europe, although possible, would most likely have led to a nuclear war. President Eisenhower's foreign policy was criticized, especially during the 1960 presidential campaign, for being all rhetoric and no action. However as John Spanier notes it was Liberal Democrats, that once advocated an energetic containment policy, who praised Eisenhower for his caution and avoidance of the use of military power.<sup>39</sup> With hindsight, the Eisenhower Administration's inactivity made for a far more stable foreign policy than that of his successor John Kennedy.

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<sup>38</sup> Brown, 1983, pp.113-114.

<sup>39</sup> Spanier, 1981, p.83.

## Kennedy and the Crisis Years

John F. Kennedy's inauguration as President of the United States marked the third stage of US foreign policy, which was the return to what one author called *containment à outrance*.<sup>40</sup> This new excess in the policy of containment stemmed from both the new administration's attitude toward foreign policy and the state of affairs in the international scene as a whole. This period was characterised by great instability. It moved one writer to describe the Kennedy years in the White House as the 'Crisis Years'.<sup>41</sup>

Part of the difficulty for the Kennedy Administration lay in the expectations of the American public. After eight years of a low key, reactive administration, the American electorate seemed eager for an activist foreign policy with a sense of idealism. Although narrowly elected, John Kennedy brought the image of an idealist to the presidency, he also sought to be seen taking the initiative in foreign policy.

The years spent in Congress had a great influence on President Kennedy's approach to the Cold War. His generation in Congress, which has been called the 'containment generation',<sup>42</sup> maintained the view of the international system as based on two major power centres, dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>43</sup> The Kennedy Administration as well as most other members of this generation believed in the 'zero-sum' nature of the Cold War. They perceived that they had defeated the Soviet Union in Greece and Iran, had prevented other Western states such as Italy and France from falling to the Communists through the Marshall Plan and created NATO to defend Western Europe. Also prevalent in his thinking was the failure of the Truman Administration to support the nationalists in China and the frustration of the limitation of the Korean War. This experience especially played heavily on the Kennedy Administration's attitude toward Vietnam.

Compounding the experience of Kennedy's generation was the President's own personality and style, particularly his insatiable competitiveness. Every issue that the President

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<sup>40</sup> Coker, 1989, p.55.

<sup>41</sup> Beschloss, M.R., The Crisis Years: Kennedy and Khrushchev 1960-1963, Faber and Faber, London, 1991.

<sup>42</sup> Paterson, T., p.10. from Paterson, T., ed., Kennedy's Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961-1963, Oxford University Press, New York, 1989.

<sup>43</sup> See Reitzel et al, 1956, p.86.

faced was turned into a test of will. This approach was demonstrated when Kennedy asked the American people to pay any cost to defend the freedom of others. As a result, superpower relations were elevated to competitions with incredible zeal, such areas as the space race, the arms race and Southeast Asia took on a sense of national emergency.

With this attitude toward the Cold War, the Kennedy Administration attempted to increase its range of options in foreign policy by rejecting the Eisenhower Administration policy of 'massive retaliation' and opting for 'flexible response'. A former assistant to Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, Adam Yarmolinsky, pointed out that the unfortunate result of shifting to a policy of 'flexible response' was that it made military solutions more available and more attractive in solving US foreign policy difficulties.<sup>44</sup>

The beginning of a new decade also ushered in a new era in international politics, an era when military power options were less useful in the resolution of conflicts and economic power began to play a more important role. It had been fifteen years since the end of hostilities and the economic hegemonic position that the United States had found itself in after the war was now beginning to erode. At the conclusion of the war the United States possessed something in the range of half the world's industrial output, however this figure is deceiving, as most of the industrial output of Europe and the Far East had been destroyed during the war.

By 1960, most countries of Europe, and Japan, had reached if not surpassed their prewar industrial output. They had also achieved full convertibility of their currencies, which had been the objective of US foreign economic policy from 1945. However to achieve convertibility, Western Europe and the rest of the world needed sufficient monetary reserves to cover any possible balance of payments deficits. In order to cover the short fall in reserves, the US provided dollars in the form of foreign aid and by purchasing military hardware from its trading partners. The European nations had enough reserves by 1960 to make their currencies convertible, but the United States continued to make large foreign military expenditures, causing a world wide glut in dollars. John Kennedy was to be the first President of the United States to take the oath of office while the American economy was in decline relative to the rest of the world.

### *The Intensification of Bi-lateral Relations*

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<sup>44</sup> Paterson, 1989, p.5.

The new Kennedy Administration also faced a change in the nature of the Cold War. As noted earlier, with the advent of MAD, the strategic relationship between the US and the USSR was far more unstable. The development of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), which began to be deployed in greater numbers by the early 60s, intensified the fear of a miscalculation by either side. Once launched, the ICBMs were impossible to recall.

The competition between the United States and the Soviet Union was even further intensified by the final collapse of several Third World empires. Two weeks prior to John Kennedy's inauguration, Nikita Khrushchev gave what has become known as the 'national liberation speech' which called for the ultimate communist victory to come from wars of liberation in Asia, Africa and Latin America.<sup>45</sup> The two superpowers were drawn into these conflicts in an attempt to gain the support of these new nations as Cold War partners. This announcement had the effect of pushing the Cold War competition further into the periphery to areas not of security importance to either superpower.

The Kennedy Administration attempted to follow a policy that prevented the Soviet Union from establishing its presence in the emerging nations of Africa and Asia. They did this by taking the Eisenhower Doctrine which had originally been applied only to the Middle East and Northern Africa and expanding the doctrine on a wider scale. Kennedy not only wanted to pre-empt Soviet involvement in political upheavals in the Third World to enhance US security, but also to decrease the likelihood of a direct confrontation between the superpowers. As Anthony Hartley argues, there was a severe drawback with this policy, it was too far-reaching. It desired to deny Communism a chance to establish itself by creating stability in new states, but it quickly became a policy of regarding instability as in itself evidence of Communist activity.<sup>46</sup>

### *The Second Berlin Crisis*

The new Kennedy Administration was denied any sort of 'honeymoon' to ease itself into the demands of international affairs. It inherited several situations which at the time had the potential to escalate into a crisis, one of the first addressed by the new President was the issue of Berlin. For several years the Soviet Union, along with its Warsaw Pact allies, had

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<sup>45</sup> Giglio, J.N., The Presidency of John F. Kennedy, University Press of Kansas, Lawrence KS, 1991, p.123.

<sup>46</sup> Hartley, A., 'JFK's Foreign Policy', Foreign Policy, Fall 1971.

been threatening to sign a separate peace treaty with the East German Government that would include in its provisions that the rights exercised by the Allied powers in accordance with their agreements with the Soviet Government regarding access and rights in Berlin would from then on have to be negotiated with the East German régime (GDR).

Kennedy and First Secretary Khrushchev met in June 1961 in Vienna to discuss among other issues, Berlin. Although the new President had tried to prepare himself for the summit by reading about and meeting with those who had encountered Khrushchev, he was not prepared for Khrushchev's belligerent tone or his harsh and uncompromising stance on Berlin. He handed Kennedy an *aide-memoir* in which he proposed a conference to conclude a peace treaty between the two Germanies and an agreement to make Berlin a free city, but what shocked the American President was a new ultimatum. When the West replied to Khrushchev's *aide-memoir*, on the 17th July 1961, there was little reaction from the Soviet Union. What did serve to grab the attention of the Soviet Union was the President's national television address on the 25th July during which he outlined the steps which the United States would take to meet the Soviet challenge not only in Berlin, but throughout the world. The main thrust of this response was to increase the American defence budget and military manpower.

By choosing to respond to Khrushchev's pressure in such a way, Kennedy put the initiative of altering the situation in Berlin back in the hands of the Soviet Union.<sup>47</sup> When the American President increased the stakes over Berlin to a level which the Soviet Union could not afford to match, Khrushchev decided to settle for the minimum objective of dealing with the refugee problem and the stability of East Germany. The Soviet leader was also coming under intense pressure from the GDR to respond to their plight.<sup>48</sup>

The dispute over Berlin was set on two levels. Firstly there was the problem faced by East Germany of the loss of 30,000 people a month by July 1961 through West Berlin, most of whom were under the age of twenty-five and trained by the GDR. If this situation were to continue the GDR would end up losing a whole generation. The second issue upon which the crisis was based was the importance of the prestige of both superpowers. The Soviet Union and the United States were well aware that this crisis could escalate into a nuclear exchange, but

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<sup>47</sup> Slusser, R., The Berlin Crisis of 1961: Soviet American relations and the struggle for power in the Kremlin, June-November 1961, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1973, p.79.

<sup>48</sup> Slusser, R., 1973, p.124.



neither was able to be seen to back down. Negotiation seemed possible only after each side had been able to demonstrate their military resolve and commitment to their respective alliance partners.

The Soviet Union had three objectives during the Berlin Crisis: to stem the flow of refugees, gain diplomatic recognition of East Germany and if possible remove the West from Berlin. The United States' presence in West Berlin was not vital to its security, but there was a consensus in the US leadership since the first Berlin Crisis that any perception that the United States was abandoning Berlin may bring into question the Federal Republics place in the Western alliance.

The erection of the wall, which at first was nothing more than a barbed-wired obstacle, was how the Soviet Union achieved its lesser objective of stemming the flow of refugees to the Western sector of Berlin. When the wall was constructed just after midnight on Sunday the 13th August, the West was taken completely by surprise. The Western response to the closing off of West Berlin from East Berlin was limited to diplomatic protest. It quickly became clear to the West that if they wanted to interfere with the construction of the wall, military force would be necessary. Military action would risk confronting a far superior Soviet force in and around Berlin and may even escalate into a nuclear confrontation.<sup>49</sup> As long as neither a peace treaty was signed with the GDR nor was there any threat to the Western access routes, the Western governments were unwilling to challenge the Soviet move, and the crisis dissipated very quickly after the construction of the wall. Except for a confrontation in October of 1961 over Western access to East Berlin, there was little tension over Berlin thereafter.

#### *The Bay of Pigs and the Cuban Missile Crisis*

There is no issue that dominated US foreign policy under Kennedy more than Cuba. The issue of the tiny island republic, only 90 miles off the coast of Florida, was to become an obsession to the President. The situation in US-Cuban relations had increasingly deteriorated throughout 1960. It was a major foreign policy issue in the November Presidential election. As the Democratic candidate, Kennedy had seized on the Republican Administration's inability to solve the problem of an increasingly hostile Fidel Castro.

The original CIA invasion plan had centred on the southern coast near the town of

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<sup>49</sup> Slusser, 1973, p.135.

Trinidad, but when Kennedy raised objections to the plan a less conspicuous alternative was put forward to invade 40 miles West of Trinidad on the almost roadless Zapata peninsula near the obscure Bay of Pigs. The plan was given the go ahead mainly because of the misconceptions of many of the leading actors. Kennedy and some of his close advisors had assumed and been misled by the CIA to believe that the rebels would be able to retreat to a swamp and become guerilla fighters. These areas were hardly suited for an insurgent force, and for which the Cuban's were never trained. Bissell and Dulles had felt that Kennedy would not allow the operation to fail and would therefore intervene with US military forces to insure success. Everyone had failed to recognize the effectiveness of the Cuban military and the political support Castro enjoyed.<sup>50</sup> The invasion was a failure from the beginning. The President refused to send US fighters to give air support to the rebels, saying that it would provoke a response from the Soviet Union, mostly likely in Berlin. In the end 1,200 of the 1,400 rebels were taken prisoner and the remainder were killed.<sup>51</sup>

The fall-out from the failed invasion was quite severe. Both Dulles and Bissell were replaced at the CIA. Several other advisors were replaced and afterwards, the President relied less on the various departments for foreign policy advice and more on those he was close to like his brother and Theodore Sorensen. The Crisis also had a residual effect on US-Soviet relations. By failing to react to the rebels plight, Kennedy gave Khrushchev the impression that the new inexperienced President lacked backbone and could be bullied. This was an impression that Kennedy had to displace in the Soviet leader at least twice by taking the world to the brink of nuclear annihilation.

When the Kennedy Administration discovered that the Soviet Union had started to construct a missile base in Cuba, it was seen as an offensive threat by the Soviet Union and a step towards escalating the nuclear arms race. The link between the failed invasion at the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban Missile Crisis was not considered a contributing factor in the placement of the missiles.<sup>52</sup>

Reconnaissance photographs were presented to the President on 16th October 1962 that

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<sup>50</sup> Giglio, 1991, pp.57-58.

<sup>51</sup> Giglio, 1991, p.59.

<sup>52</sup> See Giglio, 1991, pp.191-92.

the Soviets had indeed begun to construct missile sites in Cuba and that they would be completed shortly. On the same day Kennedy called the first meeting of ExComm<sup>53</sup> (Executive Committee of the National Security Council) to advise the President on how to proceed. All present were in agreement that the missiles must be removed, but how and at what cost was debated. The alternatives split ExComm into two groups between the 'hawks' that called for an immediate air strike (which ran the risk of escalation), and the 'doves' who supported diplomatic means to resolve the crisis. The division between these two groups remained throughout the crisis and led to some very heated discussions.<sup>54</sup>

When ExComm met again on the 22nd October, they decided on a middle course which consisted of a naval blockade of the island and a process of negotiation with Moscow. The first moment of great tension was two days after the blockade was announced on the 24th October. Soviet ships, loaded with missiles and bound for Cuba approached the blockade line as if they were going to attempt to break the cordon before they cut their engines. They sat dead in the water for some time, but then turned around and headed for the Soviet Union.<sup>55</sup>

Other ships however, not carrying missiles, continued to head for the quarantined area. The tanker *Bucharest* was allowed to pass through unhindered on the President's orders. He did not want to stop a Soviet owned ship but rather chose a Panamanian-owned, Russian chartered *Marcula* as the ship to stop. Kennedy's intention in stopping the *Marcula* was to send the message to the Soviet leadership that he intended to enforce the quarantine, but not in such a way as to embarrass the Soviet Union. The President hoped that by showing restraint, it would encourage Khrushchev to act responsibly.<sup>56</sup>

Khrushchev's response, which arrived on Friday the 26th October, came in the form of a rambling letter which made an emotional appeal for reason and responsibility in dealing with the crisis. He reiterated his position that the missiles had been placed in Cuba to defend

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<sup>53</sup> The meeting was not strictly ExComm members, but due to the experience of Bay Pigs, Kennedy felt more assured by having his closest advisors, such as his brother Bobby and Theodore Sorensen present at the meeting.

<sup>54</sup> Blight, J.G. The Shattered Crystal Ball, Rowan and Littlefield Publishers Inc., Savage, Maryland, 1990, pp. 16-17.

<sup>55</sup> Blight, 1990, p.18.

<sup>56</sup> Giglio, 1991, p.208.

against the constant threat of attack by the United States. After condemning the blockade as illegal, Khrushchev offered to remove the missiles if the United States undertook a pledge never to invade Cuba. When the President adjourned the meeting of ExComm there was a sense that they were finally gaining control of the crisis.

However two events the next day, the 27th October, shattered any hope that the crisis was over. Firstly the arrival of a second note from the Soviet leader, which was harsher and more formal in its tone. The second event was the shooting down of an American U2 reconnaissance plane over Cuba. Taken separately either incident would have been a grave setback in the process of resolving the crisis, but both coming on the same day sent the crisis into its most dangerous phase.<sup>57</sup>

Kennedy decided to respond to First Secretary Khrushchev's initial letter. He promised that the United States would lift the blockade of Cuba and not invade its island neighbour to the South. In return the US expected the Soviet Union to dismantle the missile site and remove all other offensive weapons based on the island. The only mention of the second message from the Soviet leader in Kennedy's response was to say that the United States would be willing at a later date to discuss other outstanding armaments disputes. The Administration attempted to increase the pressure on the Soviet Union to accept the US response. The Strategic Air Command was placed on 'Defense Condition (DefCon) 2', their highest state of readiness, and Robert Kennedy met with Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin and told him that Khrushchev had 24 hours to respond to Kennedy's letter at which time the US would move militarily, no more shooting down of American reconnaissance planes would be accepted, and any further action would be seen as a provocation and would be most likely met by an air strike.<sup>58</sup>

When Dobrynin asked about the missiles in Turkey, he was told of American plans to remove them in four or five months. The decision to tell Dobrynin of the plans was taken without conferring with ExComm the United States Congress or NATO allies, but the move showed Kennedy's fear of the situation escalating out of control and his determination to leave the Soviet leader a viable avenue of retreat. Both leaders went to bed on the evening of the 27th of October fearing that the onrush of events was carrying them down the slope towards

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<sup>57</sup> Giglio, 1991, p.209.

<sup>58</sup> Detzer, D. The Brink, J.M. Dent and Sons, London, 1979, p.164

war and that they were unable to manage it.<sup>59</sup>

The crisis was resolved, to the surprise of many on ExComm, on the 28th of October, when Nikita Khrushchev accepted the President's proposal of the night before. There was no mention of the Turkish missile or the secret deal offered by Kennedy in the Soviet leaders reply. However it seems Khrushchev was motivated to accept the deal by a similar sense of fear that had struck the American President, especially after Fidel Castro had called on the Soviet Union to fire the missile against the United States in order to break the blockade of Cuba.

In the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis both the United States and the Soviet Union realized how closely they both came to plunging the world into the nuclear abyss. Relations between the United States and the Soviet Union also improved in the years just following the crisis. Examples of the warming relations was the signing of the 'test ban treaty' in August 1963 and the sale of American wheat to the Soviet Union.

#### *Southeast Asia*

Apart from Cuba, other conflicts in the Third World began to take a more central role in US foreign policy. Another early foreign policy issues dealt with by the Kennedy Administration was the situation in Southeast Asia. Outgoing President Eisenhower had told President Kennedy that Laos was the key to all of Southeast Asia and that if it fell the US would have to write off the whole area. Because of its strategic location in the centre of the Southeast Asian peninsula, its fall would threaten both Thailand and South Vietnam.<sup>60</sup>

However, Kennedy, in his very first press conference, announced that Laos should be independent and free from outside interference. This position may have set the stage for trouble later, as John Newman pointed out 'Eventually, communist domination of key Laotian terrain would open the door wide for infiltration into South Vietnam'.<sup>61</sup>

The President's attention was immediately shifted away from Southeast Asia by events in the Bay of Pigs. When Kennedy was able to return to the issue, the situation had changed

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<sup>59</sup> Blight, 1990, p.20.

<sup>60</sup> Newman, J., JFK and Vietnam: deception, intrigue, and the struggle for power, Warner Books, New York, 1992, p.9.

<sup>61</sup> Newman, 1992.

in two ways. In Southeast Asia the Pathet Lao (the Laotian Communist), had made substantial gains and secondly, in the United States President Kennedy was still suffering the humiliation of the debacle in Cuba. After several hurried meetings Kennedy made the decision not to intervene in Laos. However the line had been drawn in Vietnam.<sup>62</sup>

Although there was a very wide divergence between the situation in Cuba and the one in Southeast Asia, they were linked in the view of the Kennedy Administration. Cuba was described as an example of 'offensive containment' where the United States was attempting to overthrow an existing communist régime, and Vietnam was an example of 'defensive containment' where the United States was trying to counter an attempt to overthrow an existing régime, Kennedy began to shape his policy for Vietnam the day after the Bay of Pigs disaster. The link between Cuba and Vietnam was that they became the focal points of American credibility of its policy of containment.<sup>63</sup> As the Bay of Pigs served to increase American interest in Vietnam, it also served to temper US involvement. With the failure just 90 miles off the coast of Florida, Kennedy could hardly now make a substantial commitment to a government 10,000 miles away. The effect of the Bay of Pigs on restraining US policy in Vietnam seemed to remain upon Kennedy throughout his administration.

Vietnam was to have just the opposite effect on containment. Leslie Gelb and Richard Betts wrote that the commitment in Vietnam was to become 'the child that devoured its parents', an outgrowth of containment, it discredited containment.<sup>64</sup> At the time the Kennedy Administration was developing its policy for Vietnam, the containment of communism was paramount in US thinking. Gelb and Betts noted that Vietnam was a direct descendent of Greece in 1947 and Korea in 1950, an issue that touched the consciousness of decision makers.<sup>65</sup>

United States policy was to enter a new phase with the Buddhist revolt in May 1963. The whole Buddhist revolt wrong footed the Kennedy Administration. The United States began

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<sup>62</sup> Newman, 1992, p.18.

<sup>63</sup> Hannah, N., The Key to Failure; Laos and the Vietnam War, Madison Books New York, 1987, pp.10-11.

<sup>64</sup> Gelb, L. and Betts, R., The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked, Brookings Institute, Washington DC, 1979, p.79.

<sup>65</sup> Gelb, and Betts, 1979, p.79.

to make suggestions to President Diem that the crisis needed to be handled with more flexibility, but Diem resisted making any concessions for fear of loss of face. When Diem exacerbated the problem by having his brother Nhu carry out raids against 12 pagodas and arrested 1,400 Buddhists, policy makers in Washington began to discuss the possibility of replacing Diem.<sup>66</sup> However there was another reason that added to Diem falling out of favour with the United States. Ambassador Robert Miller (who served as first secretary, political section in Saigon at the time of the revolt) noted, 'one of the reasons the decision was taken in the Kennedy Administration to pull the rug out from under Diem, in addition to his apparent inability to deal with his Buddhist crisis, was information that his brother Nhu was putting out feelers to Hanoi'.<sup>67</sup>

It has become popular in recent years to advocate the position that Kennedy planned to pull out of Vietnam in 1963 or in 1964 after the election.<sup>68</sup> Gelb and Betts back this view, 'Undoubtedly the possibility lingered in Kennedy's mind; it would have been consistent with the elbow room on commitment he had sought in the 1961 decisions. But as an intention it could hardly have been more than a contingency plan'.<sup>69</sup>

If the President had seriously intended to pull the United States out of Vietnam, he would have had the perfect pretext with the assassination of Diem. Ambassador Miller argues that support for a withdrawal did exist within the government at the time of Diem's death, but that the President was still fearful of showing weakness in his commitments. 'There was some feeling that if we felt that we couldn't achieve our policy objective with Diem, maybe we should liquidate our involvement there. But that, from a political standpoint at home didn't seem to be possible. I think Kennedy probably felt that after the Bay of Pigs fiasco, he didn't also want criticism that he had pulled out of Vietnam which was under such communist threat'.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Lewy, G., America in Vietnam, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1978, p.27.

<sup>67</sup> Ambassador Robert Miller, The Oral History Program, Georgetown University Library, 10-10-91.

<sup>68</sup> For example see Oliver Stone's film JFK.

<sup>69</sup> Gelb and Betts, 1979, p.93.

<sup>70</sup> Ambassador Robert Miller.

## LBJ

With the assassination of President Kennedy, the burden of US involvement in Vietnam fell on the shoulders of Lyndon Johnson. Although much maligned today, President Johnson in his view attempted to carry out the policies and maintain the staff of his predecessor. In a statement made just after the announcement that Johnson would not seek re-election in 1968, it gives insight into his feelings when he replaced the assassinated JFK: "I had a partnership with Jack Kennedy and when he died I felt it was my duty to look after the family and the stockholders and the employees of my partner. I did not fire anyone".<sup>71</sup> However, Johnson did not dedicate a great deal of time to Vietnam, except for the Gulf of Tonkin situation, in his first year in office. His effort was taken up with securing the 'Great Society' legislation and his re-election, so he left the situation of Vietnam to his Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara.<sup>72</sup>

McNamara had volunteered to be Kennedy's 'point-man' on Vietnam, and had been the man orchestrating the American build up. The evolution of McNamara's position with regards to Vietnam was central to the stages which US policy progressed in both the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations. In the early 1960s, he was one of the most enthusiastic supporters of an aggressive policy. After the first year of escalation, his advocacy of a levelling-off strategy indicated a growing disillusionment with the hard line of such people as General Westmoreland. McNamara's position finally evolved to the point where he was one of the most ardent doves in the administration.<sup>73</sup> Because of his early success in overwhelming all opposition to Vietnam by being more efficient and articulate, his disillusionment with Vietnam was to have a greater impact on Johnson. Lawrence Eagleburger noted that '...when he (McNamara) finally decided that Vietnam was a lost cause, it virtually destroyed Lyndon Johnson'.<sup>74</sup>

In August 1964, the United States took a large step toward full military involvement

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<sup>71</sup> Califano, J.A., The Triumph & Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1991, p.271.

<sup>72</sup> Gelb and Betts, 1979, p.97.

<sup>73</sup> Gelb and Betts, 1979, p.147.

<sup>74</sup> Ambassador Lawrence Eagleburger, The Oral History Program, Georgetown University Library, 8-13-88.



with the Gulf of Tonkin crisis. The crisis developed over an attack by a North Vietnamese torpedo boat against the destroyer USS Maddox in the Gulf of Tonkin. The Maddox received minimal damage and Johnson decided not to retaliate because the attack was most likely due to a misjudgment by a boat commander and not a provoked attack from Hanoi. The President did however add another destroyer, air cover and ordered that the patrol continue.<sup>75</sup>

Two days later, the Maddox and its supporting ship, the USS C Turner Joy reported that they had been attacked a second time.<sup>76</sup> Johnson quickly ordered retaliatory air strikes on torpedo bases and on an oil depot in the North. The President also sought Congressional support. The reasoning behind seeking a Congressional resolution was not constitutional, but rather political. Johnson was eager to avoid the mistake made by President Truman when he neglected to ask Congress for their support when he sent troops to defend South Korea. Johnson said, 'I believe that President Truman's one mistake in courageously going to the defense of South Korea in 1950 had been his failure to ask Congress for an expression of its backing. He could have had it easily, and it would have strengthened his hand'.<sup>77</sup>

The House passed what became known as the Gulf of Tonkin resolution unanimously, while the Senate passed it by a vote of 88 to 2.<sup>78</sup> However, even with Congressional support, Johnson was reluctant to be drawn into the wider war. One main reason for this hesitation was the election in November 1964. There were still doubts in Johnson's mind that sending US combat troops was the necessary solution to the problems in Vietnam. A consensus did begin to develop in the administration for the use of air strikes against the North. These had become a major issue in the campaign, with the Republican candidate Senator Barry Goldwater advocating massive bombing of North Vietnam.<sup>79</sup>

Townsend Hoopes wrote in The Limits of Intervention about the incident that hardened

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<sup>75</sup> Johnson, L., The Vantage Point; Perspectives of the Presidency, Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, New York, 1971, p.113.

<sup>76</sup> It was not learned until several years later that the alleged attack may have never taken place, rather the result of poor visibility and a nervous technician. See Gelb and Betts, 1979, p.101.

<sup>77</sup> Johnson, 1971.

<sup>78</sup> Lewy, 1978, p.33.

<sup>79</sup> Sheehan, N., Smith, H., Kenworth, E.W. and Butterfield, F., The Pentagon Papers, Bantam Books Inc., New York, 1971, p.307.

the doubters in the Johnson Administration for the need for air strikes. They felt that the doctrine of deterrence, which had been successful against the Russians in Europe, had not inhibited the North Vietnamese. In order to reach a negotiated settlement with the Communists, the US needed to create a strong bargaining position, which meant changing the military balance in South Vietnam.<sup>80</sup>

Even with the provocation of the attack on American forces, Johnson refrained from intervening immediately, due mainly to the 1964 Presidential election. However, within days of the election, Johnson ordered a complete policy review, which marked a shift toward his increased involvement on the issue.<sup>81</sup> In January 1965, Robert McNamara and McGeorge Bundy sent a memorandum to Johnson urging him to make the decision to boost the American commitment in Vietnam. Fearful of the alternative of complete withdrawal and being labelled the first US President to lose a war, Johnson accepted the need for increased involvement. The Johnson Administration was reluctant to ask Congress for a declaration of War, rather it positioned itself so that it could seize upon the enemies' actions and use those as a pretext for greater involvement.<sup>82</sup>

This pretext arose in early February 1965, when the Viet Cong attacked an American installation at Pleiku, killing seven and wounding 109. The United States began bombing within twelve hours of the Viet Cong attack, which leads to the conclusion that Pleiku was only the mechanism to and not the reason for deepened US involvement.<sup>83</sup> When another attack on an American billet came three days later, another air strike was carried out. From then on these air strikes transformed into a systematic bombing programme of the North.<sup>84</sup>

The introduction of ground forces into Vietnam came almost as an afterthought, with little discussion and no regard for their significance. Throughout the year prior to the air strikes, the Joint Chiefs had backed a strong air campaign in order to avoid committing ground

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<sup>80</sup> Hoopes, T. The Limits of Intervention, David McKay Co., Inc. New York, 1969, p.28.

<sup>81</sup> Lewy, 1978, p.47.

<sup>82</sup> Hoopes, 1969, p.30.

<sup>83</sup> Schurman, F. Scott, P.D. and Zelnik, R., The Politics of Escalation in Vietnam, Beacon Press, Boston, 1966, p.55.

<sup>84</sup> Hoopes, 1969, p.30.

troops. Once the air campaign had begun in earnest, General Westmoreland deemed it necessary to have American troops on hand to protect US air bases in Vietnam from retaliatory attacks. On March 8, 1965, 3,500 Marines landed at Da Nang air force base. That force grew to over 200,000 troops in less than a year.<sup>85</sup>

By June 1965 with the Viet Cong's summer offensive in full stride, it was clear that the enclave strategy was insufficient to prevent the total defeat of the Army of the Republic of Viet Nam (ARVN).<sup>86</sup> At the end of June, General Westmoreland was given permission to commit US forces either independently or in conjunction with the ARVN. When Johnson went to the American people in a televised news conference he commented on this increased involvement:

'I have asked the commanding general General Westmoreland, what more he needs to meet this mounting aggression. He has told me. We will meet his needs.. Additional troops will be needed later, and they will be sent as requested...'.<sup>87</sup>

The President's comment in his memoirs regarding this statement to the American public was 'Now we were committed to a major combat in Vietnam'.<sup>88</sup> By the end of 1967 the enclave strategy had given way to a strategy of attrition, American casualties increased from a six year total of 6,500 through 1966 to 15,500 the following year.<sup>89</sup>

The objective of the strategy of attrition in conjunction with the air strikes was to lead to the progressive destruction of the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese main battalions. This strategy had several key flaws, it failed by underestimating the enemies' ability to increase its forces in response to the US build up. It also did nothing to ensure the security of the local population, which was necessary if the society was to achieve the political and economic stability needed to stop the insurgency.<sup>90</sup>

The Administration ended the year in 1967 in a mood of mild optimism. General

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<sup>85</sup> Gelb and Betts, 1979, p.129.

<sup>86</sup> Lewy, 1978, p.49.

<sup>87</sup> Johnson, 1971, p.153.

<sup>88</sup> Johnson, 1971.

<sup>89</sup> Hoopes, 1969, p.57.

<sup>90</sup> Hoopes, 1969, pp.51-52.

Westmoreland and Ambassador Bunker were summoned back to the United States to stress to the media that progress was being made in Vietnam. The two made several public appearances in the face of growing scepticism in Congress and they both stressed that the end of the war may be in sight.<sup>91</sup>

The optimism was also shared throughout the Johnson Administration. The most notable person in the administration who did not share in the optimism was Robert McNamara. Throughout the year the Secretary of Defense had grown increasingly concerned that even with the huge increase in American forces, no progress had been made in pacifying the insurgents and if anything there may have been a reversal in the American position. He noted an increase in terrorism and sabotage by regional full-time and part-time guerilla forces and a greater portion of the countryside was coming under Viet Cong political control.<sup>92</sup>

Any optimism enjoyed by the rest of the administration in late 1967 and early 1968 was dashed when the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong launched a series of co-ordinated attacks throughout South Vietnam, which became known as the Tet Offensive. From a strictly military stand point, the Tet Offensive was a defeat for the Viet Cong, but from a political standpoint it was a great victory. The Viet Cong had demonstrated that claims by the US and the government of South Vietnam that they were able to protect an increasing portion of the South Vietnamese population were false. The American public, who had been given assurances by both the administration and the military, for several years, that victory was possible, witnessed the US embassy in Saigon being over-run on television.<sup>93</sup>

The Johnson Administration began a policy reappraisal in late February 1968. The reappraisal mainly resulted from the fallout of the Tet Offensive, but it was also partially due to the resignation of Robert McNamara as Secretary of Defense and his replacement by Clark Clifford. However before the reassessment was completed, the New Hampshire primary, on March 12, changed the whole nature of US policy in Vietnam.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Schandler, H., The unmaking of a president: Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam, Princeton University Press, Princeton Guildford, 1977, p.65.

<sup>92</sup> Lewy, 1978, p.77.

<sup>93</sup> Lewy, 1978, p.76.

<sup>94</sup> Hoopes, 1969, p.176.

Although Johnson won as a write-in candidate 49.4% to Senator Eugene McCarthy's 42.2%<sup>95</sup>, the shock to the President and his supporters was profound. The growing domestic dissatisfaction with the War in Vietnam, which until then had only been voiced in news reports by journalist, proved to be true. From that point on public opinion became a crucial factor in US policy decisions in Vietnam.

On the 26th and 27th of March, Johnson held a meeting of the Senior Advisory Group on Vietnam, or what had become known as the 'Wise Men'. This group, which consisted of people such as the former Secretary of State Dean Acheson and five star General Omar Bradley, met occasionally to discuss administration policy in Vietnam. The position of the group had shifted drastically from that of the previous meeting in October 1967. They had moved from a unanimous position supporting the military strategy of the President in October, to a position where the majority felt that a military solution was impossible without an unlimited commitment of men and material, an option that was politically unviable.<sup>96</sup> By the end of March, Johnson had come to believe that the continued commitment in Vietnam was crippling the United States.<sup>97</sup>

The President made a televised speech from the White House on the 31st of March. The speech reflected the views of the majority of his 'Wise Men'. In the speech, Johnson declared a halt to the bombing in North Vietnam, above the 20th parallel. He designated Ambassador Harriman as his personal representative to go to any forum that would discuss the means of bringing the war to an end. Johnson ended his speech with a statement that stunned the American people, when he declared that he would not be seeking re-election.<sup>98</sup>

To the United States surprise the government of North Vietnam accepted the offer of negotiations. The optimism however soon evaporated as disputes arose between Hanoi and Washington. The problem of a site for the talks became something of an embarrassment. The United States rejected several sites proposed by Hanoi, even after Johnson had said that he

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<sup>95</sup> Johnson, 1971, p.537.

<sup>96</sup> Hoopes, 1969, pp.216-217.

<sup>97</sup> Small, M., Johnson, Nixon and the Doves, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, N.J., 1988, pp.129-132.

<sup>98</sup> Spector, R., After Tet: The Bloodiest year in Vietnam, The Free Press, New York, 1993, pp.22-23.

would negotiate anywhere in his March 31 speech.

There were several reasons for the Johnson Administration's failure to give their negotiators the room necessary to negotiate freely. One major problem was the discord within the administration, between the hardliners and the doves. The hardliners led by Dean Rusk and William Rostow saw no benefit in the partial halt in bombing and vigorously opposed a complete stoppage.<sup>99</sup> Secondly there is the issue raised by Johnson's announcement that he would not seek re-election, making him a lame duck president for 10 months. He may have wished to have left the negotiations to his predecessor as long as the domestic protest remained minimal.

### **Conclusion**

The first three stages of US foreign policy in the post-war era were dominated by containment as a means to manage Soviet relations. The policy was often couched in the redemptionist theme that was forever present during this period. The policy was clearly successful in Western Europe with the economic rejuvenation brought about by the Marshall Plan. Although not initially intended by Kennan to take on military commitments, the US, under a policy of containment, was able to develop NATO, the most integrated security alliance in history. The policy was also flexible enough to survive through the unstable early stages of MAD.

However, by the late 60s, the American people began to realize what Walter Lippmann had recognized twenty years earlier, that containment would involve the US in an endless series of foreign entanglements, often in support of allies of dubious moral character. The unpopularity of US actions in Vietnam, which forced Johnson into his decision to stand aside for the 1968 presidential election in the hope that someone new could 'heal the wounds separating the country',<sup>100</sup> was an obvious indication that the American people were becoming increasingly reluctant to unquestionably support this policy. In the eyes of most Americans the defence of non-democratic societies was becoming increasingly costly, especially in terms of US casualties.

It is generally considered that in democracies, foreign policy is rarely a contributing

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<sup>99</sup> Hoopes, 1969, p.227.

<sup>100</sup> Califano, 1991, p.269.

factor to the outcome of elections. However as the United States went to the polls in November 1968, it is not surprising that the future course of US foreign policy in general and Vietnam war in particular played a very large part in the campaign. Although, strangely, the two men seeking the office of the President hardly seemed like the ideal candidates to change the course of US foreign policy. Hubert Humphrey was Johnson's hand picked successor, while Richard Nixon, though a remade version, was still best known as one of the most ardent Cold Warriors of the 1950s. But it was becoming increasingly clear, with the growing numbers of protests, such as the one at the Democratic National Convention, that the American people were demanding change.

## Chapter 3

### Introduction

When Richard Nixon became President of the United States, American foreign policy was in the midst of one of the most severe crises in US history. The crisis in US foreign policy stemmed from two separate issues. As a result of the Cuban Missile Crisis a great sense of urgency had developed for the need to limit the risk of nuclear war. Secondly, the debacle of Vietnam had brought on a recognition in the US that relatively powerful military nations were increasingly unable to influence the policies of weaker nations. Because of this impotency it led the new American leadership to question the primacy of power in international politics.<sup>1</sup> Domestically, the experience in Vietnam had immobilized American foreign policy by separating it from the public opinion by which it is maintained. Nixon had to reforge American foreign policy away from the anti-communist crusade of the 1950s in order to produce a workable policy for the post-Vietnam world. He also had to find a way to guard American interest, while managing the military retrenchment that he rightly expected to take place after Vietnam.

It was the change in the international political system that posed the Nixon Administration its most threatening problem in the reshaping American foreign policy. Historically, in international politics, there had been a correlation between the decline in a power's political influence and its decline in military capability. However, the emerging international political system seemed to be founded on a paradox. This paradox was that although the system's strongest power, the US, continued to maintain a preponderance of military power, it had begun to suffer a relative decline in its political influence.<sup>2</sup> The paradox forced many in the field of International Relations (both diplomats and academics) to begin to question the relationship between the nature and the utility of military power.

From the early 1960s there had been a diffusion of power which increased the number of actors and fragmented the hierarchy of inter-state power. The Soviet Union's attainment of strategic parity with the US had complicated the situation even more. What was required of the new American Administration was to create a foreign policy that would allow for an

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<sup>1</sup> See Litwak, 1984.

<sup>2</sup> Litwak 1984, p.75



adjustment to the emerging multipolar international system while at the same time maintaining a stable relationship with the Soviet Union.

Recognizing the difficulties that he faced upon entering office Richard Nixon hoped to bring about radical reform in American foreign policy. However, due to his many years in public life Nixon feared that if he attempted to conduct foreign policy through the normal bureaucratic channels, his policy initiatives would grind to a halt by inertia. Therefore Nixon required tight control on the reigns of foreign policy, something he did by creating one of the most unusual relationships between the President and an advisor in the history of the United States. Foreign policy in the Nixon Administration was held firmly in the hands of the President and his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger.

### **Nixon-Kissinger Relationship**

Although there had been several instances of a close working relationship between an American President and his chief foreign policy advisor, (the FDR-Harry Hopkins pairing is such an example in the 20th century), the relationship between Richard Nixon and his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger is a special case. Robert Litwak notes, the Nixon-Kissinger relationship was an exceptional one: 'remarkably, in which the power and influence of the aide increased even as that of the patron diminished'.<sup>3</sup>

Because this relationship was so exceptional and the respective egos of both Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger were so great it is difficult to differentiate the substantive role each played in creating their policy. Former Kissinger Press Secretary, George Vest discussed this issue:

'I think at any rate it is very hard because Kissinger will want to take credit for everything. And Nixon of course, likes to take a lot of credit for what he feels he did. There is no question that Nixon was a profoundly intelligent person in foreign policy affairs and largely had his own point of view and had worked at it before he took over as President. There is no question he found in Mr. Kissinger a correspondent mind and a correspondent point of view and gave him free play and I think it will always be futile to what percentage was one and what percentage was the other'.<sup>4</sup> There have been few Presidents in this century, possibly in the history of the United States, who had such a clear foreign policy strategy as Richard Nixon. His influence over the direction and nature of foreign policy during his administration was at its

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<sup>3</sup> Litwak, 1984, p.48.

<sup>4</sup> Interview Ambassador George Vest, 12-9-93.

peak during the first year of his presidency. From the 'Nixon Project' a document dated January 20 and 21 1969, which were Inauguration Day and the second day of the Nixon Administration was found. Written in the President's hand and on yellow note pad<sup>5</sup>, the document outlines the President's views on issues in foreign policy, which ranged from strategic weapons to Biafra.<sup>6</sup> Although hardly a policy paper, the outline closely resembles that which was to become the Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy.

Another reason to suggest that President Nixon exerted the greatest amount of influence over foreign policy in the early stages of the administration has to do with the timing and the circumstances of the selection of Henry Kissinger as National Security Advisor. The announcement that Kissinger would be staff director of the National Security Council surprised many observers.<sup>7</sup> The surprise was the result of two things. First, Kissinger had been a long time supporter of Nelson Rockefeller, Nixon's chief rival for many years from within the Republican party. Kissinger was barely acquainted with Richard Nixon at the time of his appointment having only met him once at cocktail party arranged by Clare Boothe Luce in New York City. Kissinger gave the impression to some close associates that he actually disdained Nixon.<sup>8</sup>

The second aspect of the Kissinger appointment that raised the eyebrows of a few observers was that the announcement was made for Kissinger's position prior to those for the Secretary of State and of Defense. In so doing, the President-elect signalled that the White House and not the bureaucratic agencies would be pre-eminent in the formulation of foreign policy. This set up a direct conflict between Kissinger and Secretary of State William Rogers. When Kissinger began what Ambassador Vest described as a 'power grab', which created a large dispute between the two.<sup>9</sup> Walter Isaacson argues that Nixon did not discourage this competition and feuding, Nixon would even needle Kissinger by inviting Rogers and his wife

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<sup>5</sup> See Nixon, R., RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon, Grosset & Dunlap, New York, 1978.

<sup>6</sup> Outline, Richard Nixon, Nixon Presidential Materials, File Co 21, 1-20-69 to 2-15-69, Box 10, WHSF, Nixon Presidential Material Staff, hereafter cited Nixon Outline.

<sup>7</sup> Sample, R., 'Kissinger Called Nixon Choice For Advisor on Foreign Policy' New York Times, November 30, 1968.

<sup>8</sup> Isaacson, W., Kissinger: a biography, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1992, pp. 131-134.

<sup>9</sup> Ambassador Vest Interview, December 9, 1993.

to dinner on a social basis, something he never did with Kissinger.<sup>10</sup> The issue of which of these two men controlled foreign policy was settled when Henry Kissinger had wrested control of most areas of policy decision making by the end of 1969.

It is clear that Henry Kissinger's influence on US foreign policy relative to the President increased over the life of the Administration, especially as Watergate began to consume the President. Ambassador Lawrence Eagleburger commented on Dr. Kissinger and the Watergate effect on foreign policy, saying 'because the President was so weak, we had a Secretary of State, who probably was able to exercise more authority on his own than any Secretary of State in memory. There is no question that during that period of time, Henry did not, on many occasions, really go to the President and ask for authority; he just did!'.<sup>11</sup>

Although the rise of Henry Kissinger to the position as a central advisor in foreign policy issues to President Nixon had taken place at a meteoric pace, from his appointment in late November 1968 until his victory over Secretary Rogers at the end of 1969, it must be pointed out that much of the philosophical framework of what was to become the 'Nixon-Kissinger' foreign policy had been established. This is not to argue that Henry Kissinger had no influence on foreign policy, rather that it would have been almost impossible to imagine that Henry Kissinger was able to map out a whole new approach to foreign policy, based on a view that there had been underlying changes in the nature of power and convince someone as intellectually astute as Richard Nixon, let alone a 'mad man', which Kissinger often portrayed Nixon to his colleagues.<sup>12</sup> Walter Isaacson notes that it took Kissinger some time to define his own role with the President 'A month or so into the job, he had not yet formed a personal relationship with the president. They communicated mainly in memos and stilted meetings'.<sup>13</sup>

### *The Nixon-Kissinger Approach to Foreign Policy*

Despite the main foreign policy advisor struggling to define his role, the Nixon Administration had a flying start in its attempt to restructure US foreign policy. One of the

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<sup>10</sup> Isaacson, 1992, p. 197.

<sup>11</sup> Ambassador Lawrence Eagleburger, 8-13-88.

<sup>12</sup> See Isaacson, 1992, p.145 and p.170.

<sup>13</sup> Isaacson, 1992, p.169.

first areas which the new Administration moved to reconstitute relations was with the Soviet Union. Writing in his outline on inauguration day, under the heading of 'Strategic Arms Talks', President Nixon noted that he favoured talks, but that they must avoid the two extremes of settling all outstanding issues before talks could begin or divorcing the talks completely from the political context. He notes that the 'question is whether the Soviet desire is to proceed toward political settlement.' President Nixon makes two more points, first, 'Arms Control sans political settlement - does not lead to peace'. The second seems to be an after thought as it is scribbled in the corner, 'hope Soviet talks initiate to remove tension'.<sup>14</sup> This idea is a precursor to what eventually developed into the Multi-Balance Force Reduction talks.

A second area of the Nixon-Kissinger approach to foreign policy that marked it as a clear shift away from previous administrations and goes to the core of why the US needed to alter its policy is their recognition of the changes in the nature of power. Writing an article entitled 'The Real Road to Peace', President Nixon addressed this issue by saying that there 'has been a movement away from the rigid bipolarism of the 1940s and 1950s toward a fluid and heterogenous, multipolar international order-one that is more balanced and stable because it rests on broader, more diversified foundations'. He goes on to say 'The fact that simple military superiority was no longer an adequate response to a stronger and more diversified Communist challenge complicated our diplomatic efforts, but it also provided new avenues to progress and peace'.<sup>15</sup>

As Robert Litwak argues, the 'Nixon-Kissinger' approach to the new international environment was predicated on a recognition by the Administration of these various forms of power and its ability to successfully manage them.<sup>16</sup> However Walter Isaacson points out that Kissinger's theoretical position was in the 'realist' tradition, which has a unidimensional approach to power.<sup>17</sup> Vest concurs, and he felt that primary to Kissinger's approach throughout was the question 'How do you deal with weapons... And that was why all through he was

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<sup>14</sup> Nixon Outline.

<sup>15</sup> Nixon, R., 'The Road to Peace', U.S. News & World Report, June 26, 1972, p.32.

<sup>16</sup> Litwak, 1984, p.76.

<sup>17</sup> Isaacson, 1992, p.250.

trying to build down these weapons that were there to leave everyone sitting on edge. That was his (Kissinger's) concept of policy. Deal with what is number one, power. He was a great respecter of power. And power is weapons!'.<sup>18</sup>

With regards to President Nixon's view on power, Vest goes on to say, 'And as far as I know and as far as I could tell Nixon rather shared his (Kissinger's) point of view on that. I have no basis for knowing otherwise'.<sup>19</sup> If this was the case, then where was the intellectual underpinning to create an approach to US policy based on a change in the nature of power? A review of President Nixon's personal papers at the 'Nixon Project' unearthed several articles and papers directly dealing with this issue.<sup>20</sup> The President would often request that these papers and articles be circulated throughout the Administration (Laird, Rogers, Mitchell, Connelly, Kissinger, etc.) and that their comments be returned to the President. It is clear from the number of articles and the notations placed in the margins that this was an issue central to President Nixon's thinking.

An example of this practice of sending around articles for comments received a rather interesting response that demonstrated Henry Kissinger was never able to shed himself of his realist background. There were actually two articles, one from Max Ways entitled 'More Power to Everybody' and a letter from Andrey Sakharov to the Soviet Leaders. On the advice of Helmut Sonnenfelt, Kissinger's assistant, long time colleague and sometime competitor, Kissinger, 'dodged the Max Ways article because it dealt with the diffusion of power and its impact on American domestic problems'. The Sakharov letter addresses the need for democratization of the Soviet Union due to the demands of modern society. Although Sakharov stresses the economic demands he also recognizes that 'This necessity emerges also from internal and external political problems'.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ambassador Vest Interview, December 9, 1993.

<sup>19</sup> Ambassador Vest Interview, December 9, 1993.

<sup>20</sup> found among other articles were 'The Balance of Mutual Weakness; Nixon's Voyage into the World of the 1970s' by Harry Brandon Atlantic. 'The Shifting Balance of Nuclear Power' a speech by Richard Whalen given at Bohemia Grove, 5/24/69. and 'Détente: Western and Soviet Interpretations' a statement by Walter Laqueur for the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, April 17, 1973.

<sup>21</sup> Memo, Henry Kissinger to John Brown, folder 8/1/70-8/31/70, USSR, Box 71, WHSF, Nixon Presidential Material Staff, hereafter cited as Kissinger Memo.

Kissinger's realist tendencies forced a strong reaction to the Sakharov letter. 'Frankly, the Sakharov thesis is naive. I cannot understand why the Soviet party should abandon its monopoly on power. It seems utopian for Sakharov and his colleagues to believe that because the complexities of modern economics the Soviet party will turn to a populist system. If they did, what earthly reason would they have for existing at all?'.<sup>22</sup> With the power of hindsight it is easy to see that Sakharov was not naive, but rather visionary in his recognition for the necessity of change in the Soviet Union. Kissinger does recognize the purpose of Sakharov's request to the leadership to institute the change, 'In a totalitarian system there exist only the "revolution from above", ie. the leaders must institute the change, lest they lose control of the lever of power (eg. Czechoslovakia). Sakharov is making the last desperate call to the leaders to reform themselves, lest they be faced with a demand from the people themselves'.<sup>23</sup>

Whether Kissinger was publicly professing the position that there has been a change in the nature of power, but privately retaining the views of the traditional realist, is unclear. However it is interesting to note that because it was not clear who had requested the submission of comments, Sonnenfeldt, who prepared much of the text for Kissinger, found it necessary to end his memo to Kissinger with what amounts to a rather odd warning, 'It is not clear who wants this'.<sup>24</sup>

Therefore this suggests that the origin of the idea that there had been a change in the nature of power came from the President himself. It may seem odd that Richard Nixon, who had enjoyed a meteoric rise in politics, from being elected to Congress in 1946, to the Senate in 1950, to Vice President of the United States in 1952 on the basis of his staunch anti-communist views, would be the man in the early 70s that instituted a policy of détente with the Soviet Union and opened relations with China. When Nixon ran for President in 1960, he opposed John Kennedy in a contest of two Cold Warriors. What difference would Nixon had made if he and not Kennedy would have been elected in 1960? In terms of foreign policy, probably very little! Both Kennedy and Nixon were believers in the Cold War consensus that dominated American thinking at the time. Nixon may not have suffered the indignity of the

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<sup>22</sup> Kissinger Memo.

<sup>23</sup> Kissinger Memo.

<sup>24</sup> Kissinger Memo.

Bay of Pigs invasion, but most likely there would have been some confrontation with Castro's Cuba.

However, between the time of his defeat in the 1960 Presidential election, as well as the far more embarrassing defeat in the California gubernatorial race of 1962, and his election as president in 1968, Richard Nixon went through an intellectual conversion in his views on foreign policy. During this period Nixon withdrew from public life and travelled a great deal. Travelling as a private citizen offered Richard Nixon a completely new perspective on the world. He notes this in his book RN, 'As a private citizen, I was able to meet with opposition leaders as well as government officials, and my business and legal contacts gave me a much more rounded view of local issues and attitudes than I had gained as an official visitor'.<sup>25</sup>

It was on one of his very first trips in 1964 through Asia that Nixon was to begin to question the Cold War consensus which had dominated US thinking on foreign policy since the late 40s and lay the intellectual ground work for the future shift in US foreign policy. Richard Nixon remarked in his memoirs, 'Everywhere I went I heard about America's declining prestige, and I heard expressions of dismay that the world's strongest nation was showing so little positive leadership. Perhaps most disturbing of all, I saw for myself how dangerously different the reality of the situation in Vietnam was from the version of it being presented to the American people at home'.<sup>26</sup>

In early 1965 Richard Nixon began thinking about making a run for the presidency in 1968. Although many people would have considered Nixon's chances of being elected in 1968 as very unlikely, especially after being a two time loser in 1960 and 1962, there were some points in his favour. Nixon was the most respected potential candidate in foreign affairs in a campaign that was most likely going to have a lot of attention brought on these issues. As he said in his memoirs, 'I was confident that because of my background and experience, particularly in the field of foreign policy, I had the best grasp of the issues and trends that would determine the campaign and the election'.<sup>27</sup>

With this advantage in mind, Richard Nixon set about his approach to gain the

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<sup>25</sup> Nixon, 1978, p.256.

<sup>26</sup> Nixon, 1978, p.256.

<sup>27</sup> Nixon, 1978, p.266.

Republican nomination in 1968. One thing he did was to take what Nixon called 'a series of foreign study trips'.<sup>28</sup> The purpose of these trips were to enhance Nixon's image as an international statesman, but they were also to have an effect on his fundamental attitude toward US foreign policy.

Nixon wrote an article in October 1967 entitled 'Asia After Viet Nam' for Foreign Affairs. What is most striking about this article is the strong shift away from the Cold War rhetoric that he had expressed in an article for Reader's Digest just a few years earlier. In the Reader's Digest article, Nixon argues, 'All signs point to an inescapable conclusion: A great new communist offensive is being launched against the free world, an offensive all the more dangerous because it is without resort to war, difficult to recognize and meet effectively'.<sup>29</sup> By contrast the article for Foreign Affairs discussed the 'gathering disaffection with all the old isms that have so long imprisoned so many minds and so many governments'.<sup>30</sup>

In the Foreign Affairs, article, Richard Nixon laid out two ideas that were to become central to his future foreign policy. Firstly he recognized that the US could no longer maintain its commitments along the lines of Vietnam. It was clear that the US no longer possessed the willingness to support unilateral intervention.<sup>31</sup> It was in this article that the future President laid out his concept of regionalism and the diffusion of power as a means of channelling American influence, thus relieving the United States of much of its active role as world policeman. This idea, although hardly refined at the time is what later became known as the 'Nixon Doctrine'.

The second issue addressed in the Foreign Affairs article was the question of US relations with China. Nixon argued that Asian security could not be ensured until the People's Republic of China changed its imperialist ambitions. As he notes, 'The world cannot be safe until China changes. Thus our aim, to the extent that we can influence events, should be to induce change. The way to do this is to persuade China that it must change: that it cannot satisfy its imperial ambitions, and that its own national interest requires a turning away foreign

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<sup>28</sup> Nixon, 1978, p.279.

<sup>29</sup> Nixon, R., 'Khrushchev's Hidden Weakness', Reader's Digest, January 1964, p.62.

<sup>30</sup> Nixon, R., 'Asia After Viet Nam', Foreign Affairs, October 1967, p.111.

<sup>31</sup> Nixon, October 1967, p.114.



adventuring and turning inward toward the solution of its own domestic problems'.<sup>32</sup>

When Richard Nixon re-entered the political arena to contest the Republican primary in New Hampshire, he had come a long way in remaking his image in the eyes of the American electorate. In carrying out this reshaping, Richard Nixon was forced to rethink his views on foreign policy and the nature of international security and the nature of power.

### **American Conception of Détente**

The Nixon Administration was confronted internationally with a reshaped political system. Perhaps the most profound change was the relationship between the nature and the utility of power, 'At the time of the Nixon inaugural, statesmen and analysts alike were struck by the ostensible paradox of the United States' continuing preponderance of military power, but yet its relative decline in political influence'.<sup>33</sup>

This diffusion of power increased the number of actors and intimated an altered foreign policy agenda (development, North-South dialogue, etc.). These new actors possessed a high sense of nationalism which had the affect of fragmenting the system. The second problem that emerged was that this diversification removed the hierarchy of inter-state power. International relations shifted from the post-war era, dominated by the United States' military power to a multi-hierarchical system of many diverse forms of power.<sup>34</sup>

Another major change in the international system was the emergence of the Soviet Union as a true superpower and its attainment of strategic parity with the US. For most of the post-war period, the US and the Soviet Union had been locked in confrontation just short of war. It was the very existence of this confrontation that was able to ensure stability in Europe. The United States and the Soviet Union were engaged in a confrontation most visibly marked by the willingness of both powers to wage war. This stability was reinforced by the fact that each possessed a war winning strategy. The United States, with its nuclear superiority, could lay waste to the Soviet homeland; the Soviet Union, with its conventional power, was able to

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<sup>32</sup> Nixon, October 1967, p.121.

<sup>33</sup> Litwak, 1984, p.75.

<sup>34</sup> Litwak, 1984, p.76.

win a war fought on the ground and therefore occupy Western Europe.<sup>35</sup> The possibility of winning a war that would result in the destruction of either power's interest was enough to secure peace.

The situation remained stable until the Soviet Union's nuclear power was capable of threatening the United States. No longer was it a confrontation of unequal, but equally unacceptable threats. It had evolved into a relationship of parity where both sides began to rule out war as a means of maintaining peace. The Superpowers were now forced into a situation of re-examining their relationship. What had once been a confrontation most notable for the willingness of both sides to fight, had now become a relationship where the US and the USSR had to co-operate to avoid war. Throughout the later half of the 1960's, the superpowers began to form an ad-hoc code of conduct. Each side maintained their war-fighting capability, but for a war that could not be won.<sup>36</sup>

Although the US and the USSR possessed the shared objective of maintaining the status quo, they had very divergent views of the shape the process (ie. détente). To the Soviet Union, the aim of détente was to manage the nuclear arms race, create a framework to regulate the arms race and arms control agreements and to provide a stimulus to economic growth. However détente did not mean a reduction in the political or ideological conflict between the two blocs or any less support for national liberation in the Third World. As Carter wrote, 'The aim of the Soviet Union's policy of "peaceful coexistence" was still to shift the correlation of forces in favour of the socialist camp'.<sup>37</sup>

For the newly elected Nixon Administration détente had developed into a much more comprehensive means of managing East-West relations. Although often overstated, many writers in the field of international relations stress the view of the National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, who had been influenced by nineteenth-century diplomacy, and particularly the works of Metternich and Castlereagh. They had constructed the post-Napoleonic security

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<sup>35</sup> Windsor, P., 'Europe and the Superpowers', found in Andrén, Nils and Birnbaum, Karl (ed.) Beyond détente: prospects for East-West Co-operation and Security in Europe, Sijthoff, Leyden, 1976, p.38.

<sup>36</sup> Windsor, 1976, p.40.

<sup>37</sup> Carter, A., 'Détente and East-West Relations', found in Dyson, K., (ed.), European Détente: case studies of the politics of East-West Relations, F. Pinter, London, 1986, p.61.

system by a means of balancing powers of equal sizes. In much the same way as the European powers attempted to restrain the revolutionary power of France, Kissinger's policy attempted to induce the Soviet Union to take a responsible role in the maintenance of the international order.<sup>38</sup> Kissinger did not envisage a Superpower condominium, as was so often claimed by certain European powers, but rather a tripolar or pentagonal polar system made up of other centres of power such as China, Japan and Western Europe.

### *Europe*

That there were diverging views of détente was to be most visible in the two superpowers contrasting approaches to Europe. For the United States, the position of Western Europe in its foreign policy was de-emphasised, while US-USSR relations became the central feature. During this time the United States tolerated considerable dissension within NATO, such as France's withdrawal from the Alliance's integrated military command, and was unwilling to supplement the loss of French troops with an increase in American forces stationed in Europe.<sup>39</sup>

The Soviet Union was to take the completely opposite stand regarding her allies in Eastern Europe. 'The invasion of Prague [1968] made it clear that the Kremlin had no intention either of disengaging from Eastern Europe, or of allowing its allies to emulate French attitudes in the West, or of allowing them to conduct an internal evolution or dialogue with the West, least of all with the Federal Republic, which it did not control itself'.<sup>40</sup> To discourage any further deviation by the East European countries, the Soviet Union increased the number of forces stationed in Warsaw Pact countries and pressed for greater integration in both economic and military fields.<sup>41</sup>

The American shift away from Western Europe as its central interest in foreign policy was not however immediate. It came rather as a gradual process as US foreign policy makers worked out the nature of détente. It was the policy of 'linkage' which supplanted Western

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<sup>38</sup> Carter, 1986, p.61.

<sup>39</sup> Windsor, 1976, p.39.

<sup>40</sup> Hassner, P., 'The Politics of Western Europe and East-West Relations', found in Andrén, Nils and Birnbaum, Karl (ed.) Beyond détente: prospects for East-West Co-operation and Security in Europe, Sijthoff, Leyden, 1976, p.24.

<sup>41</sup> Windsor, 1976, p.39.

Europe from its position of primacy in US interest. Linkage was used to judge the actions and conduct of the Soviet Union in areas where such information was not readily available, such as compliance with arms control agreements, by their actions and conduct in areas where information was easily available, for example in the Third World. Also related to the process of linkage was a version of the 'carrot and the stick' to motivate the Soviet Union. The US Administration would use such things as economic agreements as inducements for compromises on arms control negotiations, which for a time proved successful.

If, as has been suggested, the more involved US relations with the Soviet Union became, the less importance Western Europe played in American foreign policy, then Eastern Europe had no role in US foreign policy. The reason for this lack of importance of Eastern Europe was that it was part of the status quo and therefore not a measure of Soviet behaviour and trustworthiness.<sup>42</sup> The interlocking Superpower relations were not, however, carried out completely over the heads of the European governments nor without benefit to them. The Federal Republic of Germany was able to use their proposed treaties with Poland and the Soviet Union respectively to encourage progress on the Four powers settlement of Berlin.<sup>43</sup> There was a more general benefit offered to the European governments beyond greater autonomy and freedom of foreign policy action. As Philip Windsor pointed out:

'The promise lay in the fact that if issues were indeed becoming interdependent as the superpower level, they could also achieve interdependence at the European level: that is, it would be possible to discuss security in terms of co-operation, co-operation in terms of mutual security. Should this prove to be the case, it would mean not only that the re-interpretation of the confrontation was carried over into European relations, but that it would become the basis for a positive programme in which both sides could seek openly to assure each other's security, and that the mutual trust engendered by this programme could find expression in co-operation over a wide range of other issues- economic, technological, cultural. And one could take it even further: such a programme could be developed on a multilateral basis, one involving all the European nations as well as the United States and Canada'.<sup>44</sup>

Because of the multilateral nature of such an exercise the status quo would not be threatened, but through exchanges the status quo could take on a less rigid form to become what Willy

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<sup>42</sup> Windsor, 1976, p.40.

<sup>43</sup> Goetze, B., Security in Europe: A Crisis of Confidence, Prager, New York, 1984, p.70.

<sup>44</sup> Windsor, 1976, p.40.

Brandt described as the 'dynamic *status quo*'.<sup>45</sup>

It is this paradox between military bipolarity and global pluralism that Nixon and Kissinger attempted to reconcile and impose a concept of order. Their strategy was to erect an informal policy link between the centre (US-Soviet relations) and the periphery (Third World). The superpower relations would create stable regional conditions to allow for devolution of power to regional actors, while conversely, regional stability managed by the superpowers would create an atmosphere of trust upon which functional agreements such as the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks and trade agreement between the US and the USSR could be based.<sup>46</sup> The two policies would then be monitored by a feedback between the two to maintain the atmosphere of trust.

### *Soviet Union*

Operationally, this new US foreign policy was to take the form of three distinct policies, but as stated above, each would serve as the instrumentality of the others, weaving a web of restrictions, benefits, rules and consequences that would prevent the Soviet Union from compartmentalizing US-Soviet relations on military preponderance.

The first policy of negotiations with the Soviet Union was in the form of SALT. The exact role the negotiations were to play in Nixon's foreign policy soon became clear. In his first press conference (27/1/69), President Nixon discussed a Soviet offer for SALT negotiations. He outlined two possibilities for a course of action, the first was to begin negotiations completely separate from political climate, the second was to postpone the talks until progress was made on outstanding political issues. Both of these options he rejected, he then proposed a third course, a middle ground, 'to see to it that we have strategic arms talks in a way and at a time that will promote, if possible, progress on [resolving] outstanding political problems at the same time'.<sup>47</sup> Nixon, while proposing a policy of SALT, was also initiating a policy of linkage politics. An example he often used to illustrate an 'outstanding political problem' was the Middle East, but Vietnam was the most pressing problem.<sup>48</sup> This

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<sup>45</sup> Windsor, 1976.

<sup>46</sup> Litwak, 1984, p.78

<sup>47</sup> Richard Nixon Press Conference, January 27, 1969, from Garthoff, 1985, p.129.

<sup>48</sup> Garthoff, 1985, p.131.

was Nixon's first public statement as President to link this close relationship between the centre and the periphery.

In the first official meeting between President Nixon and the Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin on February 17, 1969, they discussed both government's desire to conduct negotiations. Ambassador Dobrynin expressed his government's wish to begin talks on arms limitation. But Nixon reiterated his position from his first press conference, 'that progress in one area must logically be linked to progress in other areas'. Just before leaving, Dobrynin handed Nixon an official message from Moscow that indicated Moscow's willingness to consider discussions on a whole range of topics including the Middle East, Vietnam and arms control.<sup>49</sup>

Although having shown interest bordering on eagerness to enter into Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) and their commitment to include other areas into the talks, the Soviet Union was wary of the new administration's approach of linking SALT to progress in other areas. Because they were aware of the Soviet Union's reluctance to condition progress in one area against results in another, the Nixon Administration hesitated over an early commitment to SALT. Nixon and Kissinger sought to use Soviet eagerness to extract Soviet concessions before the US committed to SALT talks.<sup>50</sup> They felt that they may lose this advantage had they committed too early, the Soviet Union would have had no interest in negotiating on other areas such as the Middle East or Vietnam.

Henry Kissinger points out in his memoirs that the relationship between the Nixon Administration and the Kremlin took time to develop.<sup>51</sup> Michael Wygant, who served as Political Officer in Moscow from 1968-70 discussed the Soviet Union's view of Richard Nixon in the early days of the administration. 'He was somebody the Soviets didn't much care for. They felt that he was a hard-line anti-communist and they had been highly critical of him at earlier phases of his political career'.<sup>52</sup>

Kissinger, however, feels that this initial dislike by the Soviet leadership of Richard

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<sup>49</sup> Nixon, 1978, p.370.

<sup>50</sup> Garthoff, 1985, pp.127-128.

<sup>51</sup> Kissinger, H.A., White House Years, Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1979, p.126.

<sup>52</sup> Michael Wygant, The Oral History Program, Georgetown University Library, 8-14-90.

Nixon had little impact on their mutual relations. He notes:

‘The Kremlin tends to approach new American Administrations with acute wariness. Bureaucracies crave predictability, and the Soviet leaders operate in a Byzantine bureaucratic environment of uncompromising standards. They can adjust to steady firmness; they grow nervous in the face of rapid changes, which undermine the confidence of their colleagues in their judgement and their mastery of events. It was pointless, we concluded, to try to overcome this uneasiness at the start of a new Administration by appeals to a sense of moral community, for the Soviet leaders’ entire training and ideology deny this possibility’.<sup>53</sup>

After several months of manoeuvring for position, it was finally announced that exploratory SALT talks would begin on November 17, 1969. The SALT talks opened the way for various other areas (grain sales, exchange programmes, etc.) to be negotiated over the next several years which became known as the ‘era of negotiations’.

The negotiating process was long and arduous. One of the main points of contention was the Soviet desire to have an Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty (ABM) outside of the limitation talks. Another reason these talks were so difficult was linked to the residual effect left after twenty years of Cold War. An example of this tension and mistrust that led to a deadlock in negotiations was the choice of locations for the talks. Raymond Garthoff, a Senior State Department Advisor to the SALT I delegation recalls the situation, ‘We had a preference for Vienna, the Soviet Union had a preference for Helsinki. At one point, Secretary Rogers had indicated in a general way that Helsinki was acceptable and that led the Soviets to dig in a little bit for their preference...’ What followed was a situation where the meetings were held for a month, possibly two, and then a gap of a month or so for consultation at each respective capital. The location of the talks would change alternatively between Helsinki and Vienna each time they would reconvene.<sup>54</sup>

A deadlock remained in the negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union for two related reasons. First, the Soviet Union remained wary of the American policy of linkage. The Soviet Union was reluctant to enter into a range of agreements with the US. Second, the United States lacked any credible threat (implied or real) to encourage the Soviet Union to re-examine its position and agree to negotiate, thereby reaping some of the benefits on offer. This deadlock was not to change until it was announced that Henry Kissinger had

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<sup>53</sup> Kissinger, 1979, pp.125-126.

<sup>54</sup> Ambassador Raymond Garthoff, The Oral History Program, Georgetown University Library, 6-22-89.

visited Peking and that President Nixon would be making an official visit himself. As Michael Wygant suggested, 'It wasn't really until the "China card" was played that the Brezhnev government decided that it needed to take another look at relations with the United States, and particularly with President Nixon'.<sup>55</sup>

Wygant's use of the term 'China card' is a good example of how the Nixon Administration saw the link between the policy in one area affecting the policy in another. The opening of relations with China was an end in itself, but it also served as a means or an instrumentality of policy in another area that could be played as a trump card. In an interview given by Ambassador Robert Ellsworth, he discussed the question of linkage and the feedback process of the Nixon-Kissinger strategy:

'...Nixon's maneuver with his opening to China diminished Moscow's room for maneuver on the international political scene. I mean they hated it because it diminished their room for maneuver. So he set the Soviets up with his opening to China, and then he came in and got this treaty with them, which eased the United States' position in the World. Remember, this was a strategic arms limitation agreement, not a reduction agreement, just a limitation agreement. And it was a very kind of mechanical bean counting thing. It said nothing at all about qualitative improvements. It really limited missile launchers as compared with what is going on now (START). So it wasn't much but it did reduce tensions. It didn't reduce technical qualitative nature of the Soviet threat, but it eased, if you will, the political psychological strain in the world. I mean the whole Nixon maneuver of the opening to China, and the agreement with the Russians kind of eased the burden on the United States. It really transformed in some substantial way the structure of the international system'.<sup>56</sup>

By October 1971, sufficient progress had been made for Nixon to announce that he would be going to Moscow in May 1972. It was vital, in the President's view, that the bulk of negotiations be completed prior to any summit between superpowers. In an article for U.S. News and World Report, Nixon described his position on the prerequisites for a summit, 'any worth while summit conference must correspondingly have concrete prospects for settlements on some of the really tough issues'. The President wanted to avoid what he called 'Summit atmospheric', which results from a false sense of euphoria during the summit only to return to the status quo afterwards.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Michael Wygant, 8-14-90.

<sup>56</sup> Ambassador Robert Ellsworth, The Oral History Program, Georgetown University Library, 6-4-91.

<sup>57</sup> Nixon, R., 'The Road to Peace', U.S. News & World Report, June 26, 1972, p.34.



The President also wanted to create sufficient momentum in negotiations with the Soviet Union so as to avoid a situation similar to 1960 and 1968 where those two summits were derailed by the U-2 incident and the Czechoslovakian invasion respectively. This was a genuine fear in the Nixon Administration, that the Soviet Union may cancel the summit due to the renewed bombing of North Vietnam and the mining of Hiaphong harbour.

On May 22, 1972, Richard Nixon began the first visit by an American President to the Soviet Union. A wide variety of agreements were concluded. Ray Klein noted that they had agreed on 'more significant agreements than the two powers had concluded since the end of World War II: agreements to co-operate in health, in science, and in environmental protection; an agreement to prevent naval incidents at sea; and most importantly, a treaty placing mutual limits on ABM deployment and an agreement freezing the levels of offensive systems'.<sup>58</sup>

One agreement that was signed that escaped mention in Klein's draft was the declaration of 'Basic Principles of US-Soviet Relations'. The agreement had originally been reached at a pre-summit meeting held in Moscow by Brezhnev, Gromyko and Kissinger. Kissinger said, 'It emphasized the necessity of restraint and of calming in conflicts in the world's trouble spots. Both sides renounced any claim for special privileges in any part of the world (which we, at least, interpreted as a repudiation of the Brezhnev Doctrine).' However when the Soviet Union pressed for this type of co-operation in the Middle East at the meeting, Kissinger detached his position saying, 'a Middle East condominium was a card that we had no interest in playing at all. My objectives here were modest: gain time to use the prospect of future US-Soviet consultations for whatever effect it might have as an incentive for Soviet restraint'.<sup>59</sup> Obviously Kissinger had little intention in holding the United States to the letter of the agreement let alone the spirit. As will be discussed later in this chapter, when the Middle East is covered, the failure to abide by the spirit of the agreement seriously damaged the process of détente.

The period between the Moscow Summit in May 1972 and the Washington Summit in June 1973, was the period when US-Soviet détente reached its height of success. But as Robert Litwak said, the summit diplomacy between 1972 and 1973 created a, 'sense of euphoria that

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<sup>58</sup> Draft Article, Ray Klein, 'Richard Nixon's First Four Years: Change That Works', Box 66, December 14, 1972, WHCF, Nixon Presidential Materials Staff.

<sup>59</sup> Kissinger, 1979, pp.1150-1151.

was to be short lived partly due to overly high expectations between the American public of the ability of détente to limit confrontations between the US and the Soviet Union'.<sup>60</sup> A portion of the blame for this euphoria and expectations needs to be placed on Nixon and to some extent Kissinger who over sold their policy during Nixon's re-election campaign.

Although the Nixon-Kissinger policy of détente failed to take US-Soviet relations beyond the Cold War, this policy was to have a long lasting effect on the nations' relations. The introduction of linkage became a mainstay of US-Soviet relations even after both Nixon and Kissinger had left their respective offices. As will be discussed in the next chapter, although the Soviet Union was initially reluctant to link relations with the US to relations in other areas, when the Carter Administration attempt to decouple these relations the Soviet Union refused.

### **The Nixon Doctrine**

In the article in Foreign Affairs in 1967, Richard Nixon recognized that the US could no longer maintain commitments along the lines of Vietnam. It was clear the US no longer possessed the willingness to support unilateral interventions.<sup>61</sup> It was in this article that the future President first laid out his concept of regionalism and the diffusion of power as his means of channelling American influence, thus relieving the US of much of its active role as world policeman. Subsequently, in a speech made on the island of Guam, the then President officially introduced the three points of his doctrine:

- '1. The United States will keep all its treaty commitments.
2. We shall provide a shield, if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation allied with us, or of a nation whose survival we consider vital to our security and the security of the region as a whole.
3. In cases involving other types of aggression we shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested and as appropriate. But we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defence'.<sup>62</sup>

What President Nixon was attempting to do was allow military disengagement to a policy of retrenchment while continuing political engagements. Also, by being ambiguous he hoped to return flexibility to foreign policy which had been lost in the presumed certainties of the Cold

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<sup>60</sup> Litwak, 1984, p.146.

<sup>61</sup> Nixon, 1978, p.114.

<sup>62</sup> Litwak, 1984, p.122.

War.<sup>63</sup>

### *Vietnam*

The most pressing foreign policy issue facing the new Nixon Administration was of course the Vietnam War. During the 1968 presidential campaign candidate Richard Nixon gave no clear indication of how he intended to fulfil his campaign promise of extricating the US from the war in Vietnam. As Richard Nixon noted 'As a candidate it would have been foolhardy, and as a prospective President, improper, for me to outline specific plans in detail... And even if I had been able to formulate specific "plans", it would have been absurd to make them public. In the field of diplomacy, premature disclosure can often doom even the best-laid plans'.<sup>64</sup>

One of the first signals of what the new Administration's position on Vietnam was taken from an article by Henry Kissinger entitled 'The Viet Nam Negotiations' for Foreign Affairs, in January 1969. That President Nixon and his National Security Advisor may have been planning to disentangle the United States from Vietnam in much the same way that Charles de Gaulle had done for France in Algeria was dispelled. Kissinger argued that because the United States had committed over 500,000 troops it 'settled' the issue of the importance of Vietnam, not in terms of geopolitics, rather in terms of American credibility:

'However fashionable it is to ridicule the terms "credibility" or "prestige," they are not empty phrases; other nations can gear their actions to ours only if they can count on our steadiness. The collapse of the American effort in Viet Nam would not mollify many critics; most of them would simply add the charge of unreliability to the accusations of bad judgement. Those whose safety or national goals depend on American commitments could only be dismayed. In many parts of the world- the Middle East, Europe, Latin America, even Japan- stability depends on confidence in American promises. Unilateral withdrawal, or a settlement which unintentionally amounts to the same thing, could therefore lead to the erosion of restraints and to an even more dangerous international situation. No American policy maker can simply dismiss these dangers'.<sup>65</sup>

This may sound similar to the reasons put forward by the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations for involvement in the conflict. However there is a subtle difference, where early commitments to Vietnam were justified in terms of maintaining the credibility of the

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<sup>63</sup> Litwak, 1984, p.123.

<sup>64</sup> Nixon, 1978, p.298.

<sup>65</sup> Kissinger, H.A., 'The Viet Nam Negotiations', Foreign Affairs, vol.47, January 1969, p.219.

policy of Containment, the Nixon Administration's approach was predicated on the notion that US policy toward Saigon would have a cumulative influence on the development of US-Soviet relations. This is a concrete example of the linkage between the periphery (activity in the Third World) and the centre (US-Soviet relations).

The United States had the delicate task of extricating itself from Vietnam and abrogating 35 years of the policy of containment, while maintaining major commitments elsewhere. Unlike France, which was able to divest itself of its commitments in Algeria with little fanfare, the United States remained a superpower. Throughout history shifting commitments had been destabilizing for the international order, and in the nuclear era that kind of instability could be catastrophic. Paul Seabury and Alvin Drischler discuss one way to assist a smooth transition is to enlist the assistance of the adversary, 'When a commitment is challenged, particularly in high risk situations, it may be in the interest of the challenger to release the committed opponent from his commitment. Withdrawing from a dangerous commitment is made easier if one's opponent allows one to back down gracefully. That this requires tacit co-operation from the antagonist is obvious'.<sup>66</sup>

That the United States could enlist support from the Soviet Union in extracting itself from Vietnam was an expectation of both Nixon and Kissinger.<sup>67</sup> Kissinger was optimistic that a settlement could be reached quickly, he told a group of Quaker anti-war activists, 'Give us six months and if we haven't ended the war by then, you can come back and tear down the White House fence'.<sup>68</sup> This was one of the first cases where the Nixon Administration attempted to link Soviet actions in influencing North Vietnam and with possible trade and arms negotiations. These initial efforts proved unsuccessful because, as Kissinger argues, relations between the Soviet Union and the United States had not been developed enough for the Soviet Union to see the benefit in assisting the United States.<sup>69</sup>

The United States also wanted to signal to China its intent to end the war in Vietnam.

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<sup>66</sup> Seabury, P. and Drischler, A., 'How to Decommit Without Withdrawal Symptoms' Foreign Policy, Number 1, Winter 1970-71, p.55.

<sup>67</sup> There is some debate as to what degree each expected assistance, See Garthoff, 1985, p.249.

<sup>68</sup> Kalb, M. and Kalb, B., Kissinger, Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1972, p.120.

<sup>69</sup> Kissinger, 1979, p.160.

Richard Thorten suggested that through secret channels of communication by way of Pakistan, the US was informed that the Chinese were willing to cooperate in ending the conflict in Vietnam.<sup>70</sup> Unlike the situation with the Soviet Union, the United States had very little to offer the Chinese, beyond vague assurances of a diplomatic opening sometime in the future. Thorten believes that the initial contact was made in May of 1969 and that this influenced the timing of the hastily arranged meeting between President Nixon and South Vietnamese President Thieu at which time President Nixon announced the first withdrawal of US combat troops.<sup>71</sup>

The withdrawal of troops along with the announcement that the South Vietnamese Army would take over an increased amount of the combat role were strong signals by the United States of its intention to end the conflict. This policy of a reduced role of American forces became known as 'vietnamization'. The policy was championed in the Administration by Secretary of Defence Melvin Laird, while Kissinger was the Administration's severest critic of the policy. Troop withdrawals and vietnamization were the cornerstone of the Nixon Administration's policy inside Vietnam until the peace accords in January 1973.

Attempts to conduct constructive negotiations with the North Vietnamese became hampered by two factors. The first was the growing opposition to the Vietnam War by the American public. The second, which was increasingly exacerbated by the first, was the intransigence of the North Vietnamese government. For the negotiations in Paris, Kissinger had said in Foreign Affairs that American interest in Vietnam was based on two propositions: first that the US could not accept defeat or a change in the political structure of South Vietnam brought about by external military force; and secondly that once the forces of North Vietnam were removed, the responsibility of the United States to maintain the government of South Vietnam by force no longer applied. What Kissinger proposed was to separate the military and the political disputes, saying, 'American objectives should therefore be (1) to bring about a staged withdrawal of external forces, North Vietnamese and American (2) thereby to create a maximum incentive for the contending forces in South Viet Nam to work out a political agreement'.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Thorten, R., The Nixon Kissinger Years, Paragon House Publishers, New York, 1989, p.18.

<sup>71</sup> Thorten, R., 1989, p.18.

<sup>72</sup> Kissinger, January 1967, pp. 230-231.

When the Nixon Administration came to office, it had great hopes of uniting the country around the Administration's Vietnam policy, but in the words of Henry Kissinger 'This turned out to be a naive illusion'.<sup>73</sup> Hanoi became rather skilful at using the proposals of the protest movement and the 'doves' in the United States to undermine support for the President's policy and force the Administration to alter its policy. As Kissinger noted in his memoirs, 'the best strategy for us would have been to formulate a very generous proposal and then to stand on it without further concessions until there was reciprocity. But to the extent that we maintained a firm position we were subject to domestic... pressures that gave Hanoi even more incentive to persevere in its intransigence'.<sup>74</sup> At the Paris Peace talks, the North Vietnamese would put forward vague platitudes that were almost riddles and when the US would fail to answer properly, the North Vietnamese would accuse the United States of failing to grasp an opportunity to settle, which would be quickly picked up by critics of the Administration to bash their policy.

The President began to feel that the protests were undercutting his efforts to negotiate an 'honourable peace'. In order to get what he needed most, time to negotiate a settlement on the President's terms, he made a patriotic appeal to the American public to support him. On November 3, Richard Nixon took a gamble and made a speech directly to the American people laying out his policy: that the US would continue to fight until the Communists were willing to negotiate a 'fair and honourable peace' or the South Vietnamese were able to defend themselves. Because expectations of a major shift in policy had been raised to such a level by the media, public interest in the speech was immense. The speech did not deliver any such policy shift, but there was one line that had a great deal of impact in the United States. That line was 'And so tonight - tonight - to you, the great silent majority of my fellow Americans - I ask for your support!'.<sup>75</sup>

Although the initial reaction of the media was scathing criticism of the President's speech, it soon became clear that Nixon had struck a chord with the American public. A

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<sup>73</sup> Kissinger, 1979, p.255.

<sup>74</sup> Kissinger, 1979, p.261.

<sup>75</sup> Nixon, 1978, p.409.

Gallup poll taken just after the speech showed 77% approval rate.<sup>76</sup> Even though sporadic protests continued throughout the next two years until the cease-fire was signed, Richard Nixon's political instincts had been correct, the vast majority of Americans supported his Vietnam policy. His 'Silent Majority' speech gave the President the needed time to force the North Vietnamese to the negotiating table.

The negotiations with the United States was not a means of ending the war for the North Vietnamese, but a part of the political warfare they were conducting. Their intention, as Henry Kissinger noted, was to use the Paris talks to wear down US resolve.<sup>77</sup> What the United States needed to find was a way to pressure the North Vietnamese to legitimately negotiate a settlement. Up until then the Nixon Administration had taken steps to lessen American involvement in South Vietnam. They had begun the unilateral withdrawal of US troops and the process of Vietnamization of the war, signs taken by the Communists that the US was losing heart for the battle. The assessment of the situation in 1969 by the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN), which was the Communist Party Headquarters in the South was that, 'This is a *new opportunity* which demands that we make greater efforts in all fields of operations in order to win a great victory'. Kissinger, in discussing the stalemate posed by the North's intransigence wrote, 'The North Vietnamese were cocksure; it was our duty to prove them wrong. We had the duty to see it through in a manner that best served its chances for success-because a defeat would not affect our destiny alone; the future of other peoples depended on their confidence in America. We would have to fight on - however reluctantly - until Hanoi's perception of its possibilities changed'.<sup>78</sup>

The difficulty that the Nixon Administration faced was finding a means of applying pressure on the North Vietnamese without stirring up anti-war protests in the United States. The US had been considering for some time the possibility of bombing Viet Cong sanctuaries in Cambodia. In February 1969, information from a Viet Cong deserter had given the location of COSVN headquarters to the United States. The bombing raid was meant to be a one-off exercise, with heavy condemnation expected from the Soviet Union, Cambodia and North

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<sup>76</sup> Nixon, 1978, p.410.

<sup>77</sup> Kissinger, 1979, p.260.

<sup>78</sup> Kissinger, 1979, pp.310-311.

Vietnam, and would ignite a public outcry in the United States. However, to the surprise of the Nixon Administration, there was no response from any of the concerned parties, so what began as a single bombing sortie turned into a year long secret bombing campaign along the Cambodian border.<sup>79</sup>

The bombing raids had not destroyed the Viet Cong sanctuaries, nor had they brought about any great breakthrough at the secret Paris talks, between Kissinger and the North Vietnamese Politburo member Le Duc Tho. These secret talks, which had begun early in the Nixon Administration, had been broken off in April 1970. When they finally reopened in September of that year, the face of the war had changed dramatically, most notably in Cambodia. Prince Sihanouk had balanced the affairs of his nation for close to thirty years with the skill of a high wire walker. In the Spring of 1970, while he was away in Europe, Prince Sihanouk was deposed by his Prime Minister Lon Nol. There was immediate suspicion that the CIA had orchestrated the *coup d'etat*, but they had been surprised by the events as much as anyone else. After receiving news of the *coup*, Richard Nixon quipped, 'What the hell do those clowns do out there in Langley?'.<sup>80</sup> However, at the time of the ouster of Prince Sihanouk, the CIA had no operatives in Phnom Penn, so it was unlikely they had been involved.

The United States refrained from becoming involved in the situation in Cambodia. Kissinger did attempt to negotiate the neutrality of Cambodia with Le Duc Tho, but Tho rejected the American proposal saying Hanoi would only be satisfied with the overthrow of the Lon Nol régime and the return of a Sihanouk led government. However, by the end of April 1970 the prospects for Lon Nol looked bleak, the Communists had gained control of a quarter of Cambodia and were closing on Phnom Penh. In a memo from Nixon to Kissinger, the President summed up his view of the situation in Cambodia, 'I do not believe he (Lon Nol) is going to survive. There is, however some chance that he might, and in any event we must do something symbolic to help him survive'.<sup>81</sup> The decision was taken to attack Communist sanctuaries in Cambodia.

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<sup>79</sup> Isaacson, 1992, p.256.

<sup>80</sup> Isaacson, 1992, p.257.

<sup>81</sup> Nixon, 1978, p.448.



The incursion in Cambodia had two opposing effects on US policy in Southeast Asia. Firstly the raids on Communist sanctuaries had netted large amounts of Communist supplies that made it impossible for the North Vietnamese to launch an offensive in 1970. However the push into Cambodia also reignited the domestic anti-war protests that had been moderately subdued since the President's 'Silent Majority' speech. The worst of these demonstrations resulted in the deaths of four students at Kent State University in Ohio. This dichotomy of needing to pressure the North Vietnamese militarily in order to make progress in negotiations, but stirring up the anti-war movement was a problem that plagued the Nixon Administration throughout the war.

The cat and mouse game continued through 1972. The United States would make an offer at the secret session between Dr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho, which would either be ignored or rejected by the North Vietnamese, who would then berate the United States in the public forum for not negotiating in good faith. The secret negotiations broke down after two years in September 1971 with little success in obtaining peace.<sup>82</sup>

With the secret negotiations broken down and the North Vietnamese continuing their public relations ploy of blaming the US for any failure to negotiate a settlement, the Nixon Administration found itself under increased pressure from domestic critics. It was decided that President Nixon would go on television and give a full account of the United States' negotiations record through the secret talks. The speech had two effects, it removed the Vietnam War as an issue in the 1972 Presidential campaign and it placed, for the first time, the North Vietnamese government on the defensive. No longer could they adhere to their tactic of being obstructionist in secret negotiations, and blame the United States in the public talks.

Although the negotiations had made virtually no progress, the US position remained unchanged from 1969; that is that at some point in time the North Vietnamese would be forced to negotiate a settlement due to American military pressure. However, the North Vietnamese held that a breakthrough in the stalemate was to come militarily and not at the negotiation table.

By mounting a large military offensive the North Vietnamese conceded the possibility that Vietnamization had a chance of succeeding. To the North Vietnamese any chance

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<sup>82</sup> Szulc, T., The Illusion of Peace, The Viking Press, New York, 1978, p.493.

whatever that a Thieu government may survive was completely unacceptable. As Ambassador Robert Miller notes in his interview the Thieu government had been the main sticking point in the Paris Peace Talks, 'The basic negotiating issue which kept agreement from being reached for so long was that the North Vietnamese insisted that the Thieu government be dismantled before they would withdraw their troops'.<sup>83</sup>

The North Vietnamese may also have been influenced by the relaxation of tension between the United States and both China and the Soviet Union. As Tad Szulc points out, 'it cannot be excluded that the parallel Politburo decision to mount a do-or-die offensive early in 1972 was motivated to an important degree by fear that Hanoi might be sold down the river by its Chinese and Russian fellow Communists in the name of détente. A successful blow against the ARVN would preempt whatever accommodation the Chinese or the Russians might have otherwise wished to work out with the United States over Vietnam'.<sup>84</sup>

As much as the Nixon Administration had miscalculated the North Vietnamese willingness to change the scope and nature of the war by going to an all-out invasion, the North Vietnamese also miscalculated the ability of Richard Nixon to do the same. As Henry Brandon wrote, 'He (RN) had threatened *ad nauseam* that if they changed the ground rules, so would he, but quite obviously they did not believe him'.<sup>85</sup> President Nixon not only renewed the bombing raids in North Vietnam (which had been halted since the summer of 1968), but he was also willing to take the chance of mining the Hiaphong Harbour on the eve of the Moscow Summit.

At this point, Kissinger began stepping up pressure on the Soviet Union and to a lesser extent on China. This was accomplished principally by slowing down the ongoing negotiations between the two Superpowers. However, Kissinger also contacted the West Germans, who had been negotiating treaties with some of the Eastern European nations, saying 'that the US was questioning the viability of détente while the fighting in Vietnam continued'.<sup>86</sup> This message was no doubt passed on to the Soviet Union. President Nixon wanted to threaten the

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<sup>83</sup> Ambassador Robert Miller, 10-10-91.

<sup>84</sup> Szulc, 1978, p.496.

<sup>85</sup> Brandon, H., The Retreat of American Power, Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1973, p.334.

<sup>86</sup> Kissinger, 1979, p.1117.

cancellation of the upcoming summit in order to force a shift in Soviet policy in Vietnam. Kissinger, however, wanted the onus placed on the Soviet Union for calling the cancellation of the summit they so desperately wanted. If they failed to do so, it would publicly separate Moscow from Hanoi, the course which the Soviet Union chose.<sup>87</sup>

By June 1972, the North Vietnamese offensive had run out of steam. The unfamiliarity of a large scale offensive greatly hampered the effectiveness of the North Vietnamese forces and greatly benefited American air superiority in a way not possible in guerilla warfare. The Hanoi government had also found itself isolated diplomatically, especially from its Communist patrons China and the Soviet Union. The Nixon Administration in general and Kissinger in particular had expended a great deal of effort internationally explaining the US position and its willingness to negotiate.

From July 19, 1972, when the talks between Kissinger and Le Duc Tho reconvened and until just before the US Presidential election, the negotiations progressed at such a quick pace that Kissinger was prompted to make his often quoted remark that 'peace is at hand'.<sup>88</sup> However, reluctance to agree upon a settlement began to arise, surprisingly not from Hanoi, but from the South Vietnamese President Thieu and President Nixon. An agreement in principle had been worked out between Tho and Kissinger as early as October. The South Vietnamese President's main objection to the plan lay in the fact that the North Vietnamese were not required to withdraw their forces from areas gained in the Spring offensive. President Nixon's objections were that he did not want it to appear that a settlement was being imposed on the South Vietnamese government and also with it having been so close to the US Presidential election, he did not want the accord to appear as politically expedient to assist his re-election campaign.<sup>89</sup>

After the US Presidential election, Kissinger found himself in the position of having agreed to the accord with the North personally, but not having the support of either the ally for which he was negotiating or his President. When Kissinger returned to the Paris negotiations in an attempt to extract some compromises from the North Vietnamese, they, not

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<sup>87</sup> Kissinger, 1979, p.1154.

<sup>88</sup> Kissinger, 1979, p.1399.

<sup>89</sup> Isaacson, 1992, pp.450-455.

surprisingly, refused to make any amendment to the accords.

When it became clear that there was no possible way to break the impasse, the United States broke-off the negotiations and President Nixon ordered a large-scale bombing of Hanoi and the rest of Vietnam. The twelve days of bombing became known as the 'Christmas bombing'. Although the bombing was an attempt to shift the intransigence more in Saigon than Hanoi, the North Vietnamese were willing to sit down and hammer out a new settlement. On January 9, 1973, only eleven days after 'the Christmas bombing' was halted, an accord was reached.

There has been a great deal of criticism of the accords, that there was little difference between the final accord and the draft that had been accepted prior to Christmas bombing. Other critics, such as Richard Holbrooke, an aide to Ambassador Harriman, argued that the US could have made the same deal anytime after the bombing halt in 1968. Was it worth spending four more years at war, at the cost of an additional 20,000 lives to get a document very similar to a proposal that was being discussed by the North Vietnamese in 1969? As Isaacson points there was one significant difference between the 1973 accord and Hanoi's 1969 programme: there was no longer the provision that the Thieu government had to be replaced by a communist-approved coalition before there could be a cease-fire.<sup>90</sup> If the United States had any hope of preserving its ally in Saigon, the Communist demand had to be rejected. Michael Wygant, who served as a Political Officer in Saigon during this period, believed that when he left Vietnam in 1973, the South Vietnamese government had a far better chance of survival than when the Nixon Administration took over. He felt that the decline in the government began in 1974 to such a point that the North decided to try again and overrun the South. A big factor in the decline Wygant feels was the lack of support from the American public and Congress which led to the demoralization of the South Vietnamese government.<sup>91</sup> Wygant's point, although one of those hypothetical 'what if's' of history, does raise an interesting issue. Kissinger had promised assistance to both the North and the South Vietnamese. Would the government of South Vietnam [have] been demoralized and would the North Vietnamese [have] been so apt to invade the South had the promised aid been

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<sup>90</sup> Isaacson, 1992, pp.483-4.

<sup>91</sup> Michael Wygant, 8-14-90.

forthcoming?

### *China*

Also addressed in Nixon's Foreign Affairs article was the question of US relations with China. Nixon argued that Asian security could not be ensured until the Peoples Republic of China changed her imperialist ambitions. It was therefore the aim of the United States to induce change as much as they were capable. The anti-communist Nixon of the 1950's may have been seen as the unlikely choice to undertake Chinese rapprochement, but to Richard Nixon writing in 1967, China was vital to his foreign policy objectives in two respects. First to achieve devolution of American power in Asia, China had to be contained, which he planned to do through a web of agreements, recognition of China's great power status and an indigenous security system in Asia. Secondly, Nixon hoped to exploit Sino-Soviet differences. He intended to temper the actions of the two communist powers by establishing a triangular diplomatic structure.<sup>92</sup>

Richard Nixon also argued in the article that, 'We cannot afford to leave China forever outside the family of nations, there to nurture its fantasies, cherish its hates and threaten its neighbours. There is no place on this small planet for a billion of its potentially most able people to live in angry isolation'. However, he argued that this was the long term goal of American policy. If the US were to rush in and grant recognition to Peking, admit it to the United Nations and offer trade concessions, it would confirm the Communist position even further with no encouragement to change.<sup>93</sup>

In the outline drawn up on the first two days of his administration, President Nixon draws this distinction between short range and long range goals of American policy. He said that he had no intention of adhering to the principles that had bound Sino-American relations in the past and that the Nixon Administration wanted contact with Communist China and that they would be initiating contact in the Warsaw meetings.<sup>94</sup>

However these professions of the long and short term nature of US policy toward China seemed to cover up a more wistful side to the Presidents views and hopes for China that

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<sup>92</sup> Nixon, October 1967, p.120

<sup>93</sup> Nixon, October 1967, p.121.

<sup>94</sup> Nixon Outline.

seemed to emerge in casual conversation. Isaacson noted one in early 1969, when Haldeman talked to Nixon while on a plane and then went to sit next to Kissinger. Haldeman said; "You know he actually seriously intends to visit China before the end of the second term". To which Kissinger smiled and replied. "Fat chance"<sup>95</sup>.

Long before being elected President, Richard Nixon was laying the ground for future contact with the Chinese. During one of his 'foreign study trips' in 1967 to Romania, he met with the Communist Party Secretary General Nicolae Ceausescu who had continuously sided with Peking in the Sino-Soviet split. In his memoirs, Richard Nixon discussed the meeting, 'I said that I thought the United States could do little to establish effective communications with China until the Vietnam war was ended. After that however, I thought we could take steps to normalize relations with Peking. Ceausescu was guarded in his reaction, but I could tell that he was interested to hear me talking in this way, and that he agreed with what I said'.<sup>96</sup> It is highly unlikely that this information was not forwarded on to Peking immediately.

To Kissinger, US policy toward China had less to do with the post-Vietnam security of Asia than to exploit the Sino-Soviet differences. He intended to temper the actions of the two communist powers by establishing a triangular diplomatic structure, noting in his memoirs:

'We did not consider our opening to China as inherently anti-Soviet. Our objective was to purge our foreign policy of all sentimentality. There was no reason for us to confine our contacts with major Communist countries to the Soviet Union. We moved toward China not to expiate liberal guilt over our China policy of the late 1940s, but to shape a global equilibrium. It was not to collude against the Soviet Union but to give us a balancing position to use for constructive ends-to give each Communist power a stake in better relations with us'.<sup>97</sup>

Although the Administration intended to open up contacts with China, that did not overcome all obstacles to a rapprochement between the two countries. Ambassador Marshall Green, in an interview, noted that the United States attempted to thaw relations with China between 1961 and 1964. The US made several initial gestures toward China by relaxing certain travel restrictions on American travel to and trade with China. However there was social and

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<sup>95</sup> Isaacson, 1992, p.336.

<sup>96</sup> Nixon, 1978, p.281-282.

<sup>97</sup> Kissinger., 1979, p.191-193.

economic unrest in China at that time and the Chinese showed no willingness to relax the tension.<sup>98</sup> Ambassador Green feels the reversal in the Chinese position to engage the US in dialogue in the late 60s was brought about by three main factors: the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, the declaration of the Brezhnev Doctrine in 1968, and Soviet build up along their frontier and the border clashes between the Chinese and the Soviet Union.<sup>99</sup>

The first overture between the two countries to discuss their bilateral relations came from the Chinese. It was an offer to reconvene the ambassadorial level talks in Warsaw. These talks convened in the mid-1950s, but had produced little in the way of agreement. Although there were still many bilateral issues that precluded the possibility of any major breakthrough (most notably Taiwan), the Chinese hoped to use the Warsaw talks to assess whether President Nixon's statements made during the 1968 Presidential campaign of reducing US involvement in Asia had any merit.<sup>100</sup>

No matter how advantageous and desirable better relations would prove to be, the resistance, mainly institutional, in both Washington and Peking, made any progress almost impossible. The initial meeting in Warsaw between the US and China scheduled for February 20, 1969 was cancelled by the Chinese due to an incident involving the defection of a Chinese diplomat in the Netherlands, which Peking protested that the US had incited. There were signs, however, of a growing dispute among the Chinese leadership over policy toward the United States. Robert Sutter argued this divergence of opinion within China's leadership over its policy toward the United States led Peking to firstly moderate its posture toward Washington in November and December 1968, but then reverse its position and cancel the proposed meeting in Warsaw and return to a rigid anti-American approach by late February 1969.<sup>101</sup>

Kissinger also faced some institutional resistance in his attempt to shift US policy to a more sympathetic position toward China. He initiated an inter-agency policy review of US policy toward China. The response was heavily weighed to address the traditional bilateral

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<sup>98</sup> Ambassador Marshall Green, Oral History Program, Georgetown University Library, 3-3-89.

<sup>99</sup> Ambassador Marshall Green, 3-3-89.

<sup>100</sup> Sutter, R., China-Watch: Toward Sino-American Reconciliation, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1978, p.74.

<sup>101</sup> Sutter, 1978, p.78.

grievances such as Taiwan and admission of the People's Republic into the UN. As Kissinger writes in his memoirs, 'The interagency paper assumed that American policy had essentially a psychological goal of changing the minds of the Chinese leadership, to turn Chinese minds from militancy toward conciliation. This ignored China's role in the power equation. A nation of 800 million surrounded by weaker states was a geopolitical problem no matter who governed it'. He challenged these notions, laying out a new set of criteria in which the situation should be addressed.<sup>102</sup>

Because of the resistance, President Nixon attempted to establish a back channel with the Chinese throughout 1969. Due to the clashes between themselves and the Soviet Union, the Chinese were unable to give full attention to their policy towards the US through the Summer and into Autumn 1969. The United States had difficulties of its own in proceeding in opening contacts with China. The Nixon Administration went to great efforts to assure the Soviet Union that the US was not attempting to profit from Sino-Soviet tensions. The remainder of the year was a series of signals and counter signals as to each parties interest in re-establishing contact. Among the American actions to signal a change in policy were lessening of travel and trade restrictions, the ending of US Naval patrols in the Taiwan straits and the implied message for the Chinese in the announcement of the Nixon Doctrine that the US would no longer intervene in peripheral wars in Asia.<sup>103</sup>

The bilateral talks were finally reconvened in January 1970, but were hardly successful. Ambassador Green who was involved with these talks for the State Department, saw them as fruitless, even though Kissinger tried to make a breakthrough, 'All during 1970 and early 1971 we continued to pursue our talks with the Chinese-in Warsaw-to no avail. Kissinger raised with the State Department the possibility of sending a higher level emissary to Peking, but we questioned whether the Warsaw talks could ever produce such a result. Furthermore, in the absence of any clear signal from Peking, that it would react favorably on any of the issues we had raised in Warsaw over the years, it was doubtful that any emissary would accomplish much'.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Kissinger, 1979, p.178.

<sup>103</sup> Kalb & Kalb, 1972, p.224.

<sup>104</sup> Ambassador Marshall Green, 3-3-89.



The State Department's reluctance to make such a bold move as sending an envoy to Peking attests to how little information they were receiving as to the Nixon Administration's intentions regarding China. Ambassador Green acknowledged this by saying, 'It never entered our minds in the State Department how far the President would be willing to go in personally involving himself in this politically sensitive issue'.<sup>105</sup> They were also not privy, including the Assistant Secretary of State for Pacific and East Asian Affairs (Marshall Green), to the private contacts being made by the President and his National Security Advisor, 'All the back channel soundings that the President and Dr. Kissinger were making to Peking through third countries and various intermediaries in early 1971 were carried out under the strictest security precaution-leaving us completely in the dark, except the Secretary of State who was kept informed'.<sup>106</sup> Ambassador Harry Thayer makes the point as to the level of secrecy in the Nixon Administration regarding China that it wasn't until the Carter Administration came to power that the State Department was able to gain access to the many hours of conversation between Henry Kissinger, Zhou En Lai and Mao dating back to 1971.<sup>107</sup>

The lack of information available to the Chinese Foreign Ministry may also have been linked to the disagreement, mentioned above, going on among the Chinese leadership. The moderate forces led by Zhou En-lai were pitted against some of the more hard-line leaders. That these disputes were finally settled and that Peking was willing to take a more flexible position vis-à-vis the United States was signalled by Mao himself. The first indication that the Chinese leadership had resolved their dispute came on China's National Day, October 1, 1970. During the requisite parade for the National Day, Chairman Mao stood in the reviewing stand in Tienaman Square with his friend, the American writer Edgar Snow at his side. Marvin and Bernard Kalb noted that this was a clear message that Mao had settled the dispute and given his blessing to a move toward Washington.<sup>108</sup>

Throughout the Autumn of 1970 until the Spring of the following year, a rather intense

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<sup>105</sup> Ambassador Marshall Green, 3-3-89.

<sup>106</sup> Ambassador Marshall Green, 3-3-89.

<sup>107</sup> Ambassador Harry Thayer, The Oral History Program, Georgetown University Library, 12-17-90.

<sup>108</sup> Kalb & Kalb, 1972, p.232.

form of diplomacy was carried out between Peking and Washington. This included a combination of secret messages and diplomatic gestures which signalled a shift in policy. One of the more important changes in US policy was hinted at in the announcement by a White House official that the US opposed the admission to the UN of the People's Republic of China at the expense of the expulsion of the Taiwanese. Although a rather subtle distinction, the US had moved to a two-China policy as opposed to the previous position which recognized the government in Taipei as the sole representation of China.<sup>109</sup>

Relations between the two leaderships warmed greatly during this period, with only a minor hic-up caused by the South Vietnamese invasion of Laos in January 1971. When the Chinese were satisfied that the American backed incursion was not an attempt to expand the war in Indochina, Peking was prepared to take the necessary steps in order to launch US-Sino relations into a new era. Ambassador Green commented on one of these steps, 'The first indication of a shift in policy came in April 1971 when the Chinese ping-pong team invited the US team to visit China'.<sup>110</sup> The invitation was announced by the Chinese as a gesture of sportsmanship, but the veiled diplomatic message was clear to the world.

What the Chinese had communicated through the overture of inviting the US ping-pong team to visit China was soon followed up by a written message that the Chinese were willing to talk face-to-face. A message was received by Kissinger through the Pakistani channel that the Chinese had accepted an earlier proposition by President Nixon to send a high level envoy to Peking for talks. There was some discussion between Nixon and Kissinger as to whom to send<sup>111</sup>, but it is interesting to note who the Chinese were pushing for. In their message they strongly hint at Kissinger, "...the Chinese Government reaffirms its willingness to receive publicly in Peking a special envoy of the President of the US (for instance, Mr. Kissinger) or the US Sec. of State or even the President of the US himself...".<sup>112</sup>

In their response to the Chinese leadership, President Nixon and his National Security Advisor accepted the invitation for the President to go to China to discuss the normalization

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<sup>109</sup> Kalb & Kalb, 1972, p.233.

<sup>110</sup> Ambassador Marshall Green, 3-3-89.

<sup>111</sup> See Kissinger, 1979, p.715.

<sup>112</sup> Kissinger, 1979, p.715.

of relations. In preparation of such a meeting, the American response proposed a secret meeting between Kissinger and Zhou En-lai or another high ranking official. Also contained in the reply was a sentence stating that at this secret meeting each side would be free to discuss those issues of greatest concern to them.<sup>113</sup> The importance of this sentence was that Kissinger was fearful that had the US not made such a demand, the meeting would founder on the issue of Taiwan and not allowed allow a broader discussion of global issues such as Vietnam, Sino-Soviet tensions and the emerging US-Soviet détente.

Nixon went before the television cameras on July 15, 1971, to announce that Kissinger had just returned from having talks with Premier Zhou En-lai in Peking and that he, President Nixon, had accepted an invitation to visit China.<sup>114</sup> The Kissinger trip had been carried out under such secrecy that the whole world, even parts of the US government, was taken by surprise. Ambassador Harry Thayer, who was assigned to the US mission to the UN at the time and a Chinese specialist, said, 'Kissinger's first visit to China was a surprise to the China desk. It was a surprise to everybody. I remember the night Kissinger's first visit became news, I telephoned from my New York apartment to Bill Brown, who was their deputy director of the China desk, my old job, called Bill and asked him what the hell was going on. Bill's answer on the phone that night, "Harry I don't know whats going on. Its news to us'.'<sup>115</sup>

Marshall Green commented that the announcement sent shock waves around the world, 'the announcement... left Prime Minister Sato in a most embarrassing political position. For years we had been urging restraint on other countries about opening relations with Peking; and the Japanese, largely out of deference to us, had continued to vote in the UN against the seating of Peking's representation in China's UN seat. And now we had secretly reached Peking before Japan (Known as Sato's nightmare), exposing the Japanese government to the first of what were to be several "Nixon Shocks" that rocked US-Japanese relations'.<sup>116</sup>

Although Kissinger did not want the summit to founder on the issue of Taiwan, it still remained the largest obstacle to improved Sino-American relations. The Administration and

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<sup>113</sup> A full account of the message is found in; Kissinger, 1979, p.724.

<sup>114</sup> Kissinger, 1979, p.759.

<sup>115</sup> Ambassador Harry Thayer, 11-19-90.

<sup>116</sup> Ambassador Marshall Green, 3-3-89.

Kissinger in particular were concerned that had the summit begun under such conditions they would have been forced to publicly support Taiwan. The Administration preferred to quietly step away from the policies that had dominated Sino-American relations for over twenty years.

An example of this shift in policy was the US position on Communist Chinese representation to the UN. For twenty years the United States had supported the Nationalist claim to be the government of all China and opposed the seating of the Communists at the UN. Seymore Hersh commented that Kissinger's approach to the problem was that the US would no longer actively campaign against China's admission to the General Assembly and its replacement of Taiwan on the Security Council. Hersh described this policy as a 'de-facto one-China policy'<sup>117</sup>, but the Administration did go to some length to appear to be supporting a 'two-China' policy. In a memo from Alexander Haig to the pro-Taiwanese 'China Lobby', General Haig refers to this issue 'The President's Annual Review of Foreign Policy will reiterate the Administration's desire to improve relations with Peking. However, the report also explicitly reaffirms our defense commitment to Taiwan under the Mutual Security treaty and reiterates that we will continue to oppose the admission of Communist China into the United Nations at the expense of the expulsion of Taipei's representatives'<sup>118</sup>.

The task of implementing this 'two-China' policy fell most heavily on the UN Ambassador George Bush who had been told to hold the line against Taiwanese expulsion. However, the Administration's conviction, especially Kissinger's, to resisting Taiwanese expulsion from the UN was questionable. As the vote approached in the autumn of 1971, Kissinger announced he would be making a second visit to Peking. He had to be delayed in Alaska for a day, so as not to return from Peking the day of the vote. Whether or not this was intentional is not clear, but the signal that was taken by the General Assembly was clear, and Taiwan was expelled by a vote of 59 to 55 with 15 abstentions.<sup>119</sup>

President Nixon's visit to China in February 1972 was a truly bold and historic event. Bold in that even as Air Force One was landing in Peking, it was unclear to the American

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<sup>117</sup> Hersh, S., The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House, Summit Books, New York, 1983, p.378.

<sup>118</sup> Memo from Alexander Haig, 'U.S. Policy Toward Communist China', February 25, 1971, China Box 60, WHCF, Nixon Presidential Materials Staff.

<sup>119</sup> Bush, G., with Gold, V., Looking Forward, Doubleday, New York, 1987, p.64.

delegation whether or not President Nixon would meet with Chairman Mao. Kissinger noted in his memoirs, 'Nobody ever had a scheduled appointment (with Mao); one was admitted to his presence, not invited to a governmental authority. I saw Mao five times. On each occasion I was summoned suddenly, just as Nixon was'.<sup>120</sup> It was bold also from President Nixon's standpoint that unlike the subsequent summits with the Soviet Union, the outcome was hardly preordained and some serious negotiating needed to be undertaken during the visit to reach some form of understanding.

The historic nature of President Nixon's visit to China was symbolized by the initial handshake between President Nixon and Premier Zhou En-lai. Not only did this set right a personal snub to Zhou by the then US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in refusing to shake hands at the 1954 Geneva Convention, but it closed the chapter on twenty years of hostility and isolation between the Chinese and American peoples. The visit also demonstrated the final break in terms of US foreign policy of the Communist monolith of the Soviet Union and China and replaced it with a policy of more even-handed approach between Washington, Peking and Moscow. Finally the extensive coverage on television emphasised to the world that the US and China were forging a new relationship.

### **The End of Détente, Yom Kippur War and the 'Step-by-step' Approach**

A crisis brought the differences in the American perception and the Soviet perception of détente into the open and caused a serious setback to the progress being made. It was the Yom Kippur War that was the first international crisis after the signing of the Moscow Communique. The process of détente was never able to fully recover from the shock of the Yom Kippur War.<sup>121</sup>

During the first weeks of the hostilities, the United States pursued a policy to limit the war's impact. It was widely expected in Washington that Israel would be able to defeat the Egyptians and the Syrians. Kissinger was also of this opinion, so when an emergency request for military supplies was made by Israel to the United States, Kissinger was opposed to giving major support for fear of making the Israeli victory too one-sided. His strategy was to prevent Israel from humiliating the Egyptians by showing US restraint, which may possibly lead to an

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<sup>120</sup> Kissinger, 1979, p.1057.

<sup>121</sup> Litwak, 1984, p.168.

opening with Egypt to demonstrate to Israel the benefits of negotiation, and still preserve détente with the Soviet Union.<sup>122</sup>

Kissinger also took diplomatic steps to obtain a cease-fire. He proposed a *status quo ante* cease-fire, returning both sides to the pre-war lines. The importance of these moves, however, were not to bring an end to the hostilities, but to safeguard détente. Kissinger's intention was to delay the agreement on the cease-fire and have Israel demand the cease-fire publicly. It was clear to Kissinger that there was no way to get the Arabs to return territory that they had just regained. However, once Israel reached the pre-war boundaries, the US and Israel could settle on a simple cease-fire. If Israel went beyond the boundaries, the Security Council could be convinced to adopt the *status quo ante*, thus saving face for the Arab Armies. Kissinger explained his position in Years of Upheaval, 'It was in our interest, or so it seemed, to keep everything as calm as possible lest the impending Israeli victory inflamed Arab nations against us or tempt the Soviets into a grandstand play'<sup>123</sup>.

Dr. Kissinger also had the objective, in attempting to limit the war, to put the United States in a good position to play a major role in negotiations after the war. As he notes, 'It was becoming apparent even at this early stage that we were the only government in contact with both sides. If we could preserve this position, we were likely to emerge in a central role in the peace process'.<sup>124</sup>

However by October 9th it had become clear that the basic assumptions of this policy were being overtaken by events. The Israeli Army had been dealt a setback of several days by the sheer size of the Arab attack. In the first days of the war Israel had suffered heavy casualties and lost large quantities of equipment. It was becoming clear that it was not going to be a short war and that Israel was going to need a rapid infusion of arms.

The Soviet Union had placed their proposal on the table for an in place cease-fire, which had it been accepted would have spelled disaster for the United States and Israel. It would have meant a clear cut victory for the Soviet armed Arab forces. Also it would mean for the Arab nations to break a diplomatic deadlock with Israel, they needed only to attack.

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<sup>122</sup> Isaacson, 1992, pp.514-515.

<sup>123</sup> Kissinger, H. A., Years of Upheaval, Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1982, p.486.

<sup>124</sup> Kissinger, 1982, p.487.

And the American position of being the sole superpower able to achieve a settlement would have been shattered.

Kissinger was however able to delay the Soviet Union when word had reached Washington that the Soviet Union had begun a resupply of their own. This, coupled with their failure to forewarn the United States of the initial attack and further intelligence reports that the Soviet Union was encouraging other Arab nations, namely Algeria and Jordan, to join the battle, meant that Kissinger set aside his concerns for détente and the massive airlift began on October 13th.<sup>125</sup>

Kissinger had abandoned his earlier position for a cease-fire *status quo ante* and had accepted the Soviet plan of a cease-fire in place. However as with most things involving Henry Kissinger, his reasons for the shift were not clear cut. Walter Isaacson points out Kissinger's true motivation in accepting the Soviet proposal, 'His goal was to stall until just the proper moment when Israel had regained enough territory without completely humiliating its Arab enemies'.<sup>126</sup>

By the end of the second week of fighting, the Israelis had turned the tables on the military situation. In the North they had pushed the Arab forces off most of the Golan Heights and were within twenty miles of Damascus. In the South, although the Egyptian Third Army still held territory on the east bank of Suez, the Israeli Army had crossed the canal and had begun to establish a bridgehead.<sup>127</sup>

The time seemed right to negotiate a cease-fire. For several days the Soviet Union had been trying to convince President Sadat to accept an in place cease-fire, but he continued to demand that any cease-fire be accompanied by a pledge from Israel to return to the pre-1967 borders in accordance with UN resolution 242. Finally an invitation arrived for Kissinger to travel to Moscow to meet with Brezhnev, Kosygin and Gromyko. The invitation suited him: 'I felt it (the invitation) solved most of our problems. It would keep the issue out of the United Nations until we had shaped an acceptable outcome. It would discourage Soviet bluster while I was in transit and negotiating. It would gain at least another seventy-two hours for military

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<sup>125</sup> Isaacson, 1992, p.522.

<sup>126</sup> Isaacson, 1992, p.522.

<sup>127</sup> AlRoy, G., The Kissinger Experience, Horizon Press, New York, 1975, p.79.

pressures to build.’<sup>128</sup>.

After a four hour meeting, Kissinger and Brezhnev were able to hammer out an in place cease-fire that also called for the first time for direct negotiations between Israel and Egypt. Although he knew that the Israelis would not be pleased with the in place cease-fire, needing only a few more days to destroy its enemies’ forces, Kissinger was quite sure that the Israelis would be very happy for the opportunity to meet with Egypt face to face.<sup>129</sup> Kissinger also placated the Israelis by suggesting that a bit of slippage would be acceptable in the cease-fire line. For US policy it was a quite satisfying agreement. The Egyptian Third Army was still intact, the Israelis, using US weaponry had defeated the Soviet armed Arab forces, and US-Soviet détente had not been ruined.

The timing of the cease-fire was somewhat unfortunate, in that shortly after taking effect, the Egyptian Third Army fearing that they would be trapped on the East side of the canal, attempted to break out. When they did, the Israeli Army took advantage of the opportunity and closed the noose around the Third Army. On the verge of a military disaster, President Sadat sent an urgent appeal to the United States and the Soviet Union, requesting that the United States send troops in conjunction with Soviet troops to Egypt to enforce the cease-fire. The Soviet Union, which was anxious to avoid the defeat of the Egyptian Army and take the opportunity to have a military presence in the area, accepted. However, the Soviet Union went a step further and declared that if the United States did not wish to send troops in a joint venture, the Soviet Union would send troops on their own.

The Soviet position had effectively put the United States and the Soviet Union on a collision course. As Walter Isaacson wrote, a primary goal of US policy in the Middle East had been to eliminate Moscow’s military presence there. Sadat had unexpectedly accomplished that policy in Egypt in 1972, and Kissinger was not about to let the Soviet Union get back in that easily, “We were determined” he (Kissinger) recalled, ‘to resist by force if necessary the introduction of Soviet troops in the Middle East regardless of the pretext’.<sup>130</sup>

The Americans responded to the Soviet proposal firstly with the decision to increase

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<sup>128</sup> Kissinger, 1982, p.542.

<sup>129</sup> Kalb & Kalb, 1972, p.485.

<sup>130</sup> Isaacson, 1992, p.529.



the readiness of its forces to DefCon III, which is the highest level of readiness in peacetime conditions. This was mainly an attempt to signal Moscow the United States' determination to resist any unilateral action by the Soviet Union. They also attempted to remove the pretext for the introduction of Soviet troops into the Middle East by pressuring Egypt to withdraw the invitation to the Soviet Union to send the troops.<sup>131</sup> The Egyptians did send word the following day that they had decided to request a UN force, which by tradition the Superpowers do not partake. The Soviet Union accepted the US proposal for non-military observers be sent in place of soldiers and the crisis had been abated.

In the immediate aftermath of the Superpower crisis brought about by the global military alert, both the United States and the Soviet Union attempted to play down that either side failed to live up to the agreements of the Moscow Communiqué. Instead both the Soviet and American leadership praised détente for being a major factor in defusing the crisis before it became a much more dangerous confrontation.

However, most of the criticism of the policy of détente (mainly in the United States) argued that the failure of détente was not in conducting the resolution of the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, but in its failure to prevent the confrontation in the first place. The War in the Middle East shattered the expectation (that were unfoundedly high) of the American public as to what extent détente could remove the spectre of nuclear war. Without the support of the American public, détente seemed to have less of a chance of success.

With the threat of unilateral action by the Soviet Union now passed, the United States was in the unenviable position of suffering the Chinese curse of having all its wishes come true. The Israelis had defeated the Arab forces, but not at the cost of a total humiliation of the Egyptians. The Soviet Union had been shut out of influencing events in the Middle East and the United States was in the central position to act as the sole arbiter of the peace process. However, now that the US found itself in the position that it had sought, it now needed to be able to make some progress toward a peace settlement.

The immediate desire in a situation such as that which existed in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War is for a comprehensive peace. However as Kissinger wrote it would have

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<sup>131</sup> Kissinger, 1982, pp.587-588.

been impossible to achieve, 'I have been criticized for not seizing this "opportunity" for such a solution (comprehensive settlement). But it was a mirage. We knew that Israel adamantly rejected a return to the 1967 borders, including relinquishment of the Old City Jerusalem... As for the Arabs, in a comprehensive approach all concerned parties would have to agree, and radical element in the Arab world would have a veto. Egypt would lose control over its own decisions. And the Soviet Union would act as lawyer of the Arab side, putting forth a maximum program that years of experience had taught us was unfulfillable'.<sup>132</sup>

What Kissinger needed was a new approach in an attempt to garner peace. Such an approach had been proposed to him and more precisely, President Nixon, two years earlier by Dr. Alford Carelton. Dr. Carelton had served for many years as the head of 'The American Friends of the Middle East', which conducted student exchanges in the area. Although retired in 1972, Dr. Carelton was well acquainted with the personalities and the barriers to peace on both sides of the dispute.<sup>133</sup>

Dr. Carelton had talked briefly with President Nixon about the situation in the Middle East at a dinner honouring King Hussein in March 1972. In subsequent correspondence, Carelton argued that the proper conditions may be a generation away in order to achieve real peace. So what the US needed to encourage in the interim was a 'step-by-step' process that knitted the two sides together where their interests coincided. Carelton suggested that the interim canal settlement in 1971 could be used as the framework for future talks.<sup>134</sup>

Under the provision of the UN cease-fire an all parties talk did convene in Geneva chaired jointly by the US and the Soviet Union. However the thrust of US policy toward the Middle East for the end of the war was a step-by-step approach. Instead of addressing fundamental issues such as the Palestinian problem or the status of Jerusalem, the emphasis was on concrete bilateral agreements between Israel and firstly Egypt, and then subsequently other frontline states. Kissinger also established the maxim that only by dealing through

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<sup>132</sup> Kissinger, 1982, p.615.

<sup>133</sup> Correspondence with Dr. Alford Carleton, Nixon Project, Subject File, File co. 1-7, Middle-Near East, 1-1-71, Box 6, hereafter cited as Carelton Memo.

<sup>134</sup> Carelton Memo.

Washington would Arab nations be able to get their land returned.<sup>135</sup>

As Sadat and Kissinger recognized in the very first meeting in Cairo in November 1973, the problem of peace in the Middle East was not a diplomatic one, but a psychological one. This posed much more difficulty for the Israeli government than it did for President Sadat. Where the Egyptian President was a master of making bold strokes that would secure the interests of his nation, the Israelis felt that their safety demanded constant vigilance.<sup>136</sup> US Ambassador to Israel from 1975 to 1976 Malcolm Toon remarked about the problems faced by the US, 'What we were doing was trying to work out an arrangement so that Israel's survival could be assured, not militarily, but politically, by a different set of relationships in the Middle East'.<sup>137</sup>

An out-growth of the step-by-step approach was 'shuttle diplomacy'. This was partially due to Kissinger's vanity, but also borne of the necessity to maintain momentum of the step-by-step approach. The US Secretary of State embarked upon a two year junket that would require eleven visits to the Middle East. These trips produced the military disengagement on the Egyptian front, the Syrian disengagement accord, and eventually laid the groundwork for President Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and the 'Camp David' accords. The key to success of shuttle diplomacy is found in the bonds that were formed during these high pressure negotiations. As Edward Sheehan points out, negotiating in the Middle East is much akin to haggling in the market, 'each party must know that the other side knows also. But in the midst of the bargaining there must develop as well a personal bond between buyer and seller - a covenant and trust that excites the sentiment of friendship'<sup>138</sup>.

Kissinger also used unusual tactics in order to apply pressure on the various parties. One such example was the appointment of Toon as Ambassador to Israel in 1975. Although he was being groomed as a Soviet specialist, Toon was chosen for the Ambassadorship because of his reputation for being hard nosed. Kissinger was upset at the time, because he felt that the

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<sup>135</sup> Isaacson, 1992, pp.538-539.

<sup>136</sup> Isaacson, 1992, pp.540-541.

<sup>137</sup> Ambassador Malcolm Toon.

<sup>138</sup> Sheehan, E., The Arabs, Israelis and Kissinger: A Secret History of American Diplomacy in the Middle East, Reader's Digest Press, New York, 1976, p.120.

Israelis were trying to sabotage his efforts. In a discussion between the Secretary of State and the new Ambassador just before taking up his posting, Kissinger explained what he wanted. He wanted Toon to get out on the street, meet people, hold press conferences, meet members of the Knesset and, 'if necessary go behind the backs of the government to get the message across that we have a new policy'.<sup>139</sup>

## Conclusion

The Yom Kippur War and especially the DEFCON alert had far reaching effects on the spirit of détente. Although the Yom Kippur War may not have been directly linked with the deterioration of SALT II, it did contribute to the changing political climate in the United States. As has been mentioned above, the American conception of détente was based on the feedback between Soviet actions on the periphery and the ability to 'trust' the Soviet Union's compliance to SALT. The negotiations on the SALT II agreement began to experience difficulties soon after the Arab-Israeli hostilities. There were several reasons other than the political deterioration in the US-Soviet relations caused by the Yom Kippur War. Mostly these problems were related to certain technical advances, such as the Cruise Missile, which had brought certain areas of the SALT I agreement into question, but the state of political relations vis-à-vis the superpowers only served to exacerbate the already difficult negotiations.<sup>140</sup>

There were also domestic factors in the United States, though not directly related to détente, which nonetheless had an adverse effect on US-Soviet relations, such as Watergate. From Franklin Roosevelt to Richard Nixon, the primacy of the President in foreign policy had for the most part been unchallenged. However the two factors of the post-Vietnam retrenchment and the backlash of Watergate propelled Congress to re-establish its role in foreign policy. Congress attempted to do this by linking Soviet domestic policy with détente. The Jackson-Vanik amendment to the 'Most Favored Nations' trade bill is an example. The amendment tied trade with the United States to the number of Jews the Soviet Union permitted to emigrate each year. The introduction of the human rights issue to US-Soviet relations did nothing but aggravate an already tenuous situation.

Then all attention turned to Southern Africa. Neither of the superpowers was the

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<sup>139</sup> Ambassador Malcolm Toon.

<sup>140</sup> Litwak, 1984, p.166.

instigator of the Angolan Civil War, nor did either wish to have it become an issue in US-Soviet relations, but with Cuban support changing from military instructors to combat forces the United States began to become concerned and started a covert aid program to supply arms to the FNLA and UNITA. When this covert aid became known to Congress, legislation was brought forward to end it. Supporters of this bill argued that this would lead the US into a Vietnam type involvement, and that the correct response would be to apply pressure on the Soviet Union through either SALT negotiations or the sale of grain. The Ford Administration felt that to apply pressure in the Soviet Union, the US must first display its commitment to the anti-Soviet forces. Kissinger also argued that adventurism must not go unchecked, because it may serve to encourage the Soviet Union, and that the greatest concern was that American failure to respond would send a signal to both allies and enemies that the US no longer possesses great power resolve.<sup>141</sup>

It was clear in 1976 US-USSR relations had reached a turning-point. To the United States, Soviet actions in both the Yom Kippur War and Angola had caused domestic support to wane. Garthoff noted, 'as the election year began, the coalition against détente now included some former members of the Nixon and Ford Administrations - James Schlesinger, his one-time deputy David Packard, Paul Nitze... and others'.<sup>142</sup> The Ford Administration came under increasingly heavy criticism from both his own party and the Democrats. The election became a choice between the establishment candidate represented by Gerald Ford and the anti-establishment candidate Jimmy Carter. The election of Carter was not so much support for him, but rather the voicing of dissatisfaction by the voters against the status quo and an end of public support for détente. Carter had no foreign policy experience and lacked coherent ideas among his advisors to take over the central role of the White House created by Nixon's and Kissinger's model of détente.

The process of US-Soviet détente went through two stages. The construction stage, which dates from President Nixon's election to the Moscow communique of June 1973 and the trial stage which eventually led to its failure, October 1973 (Yom Kippur War) to Autumn 1975 (Angolan Civil War). The first stage was characterised by the signing of various US-

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<sup>141</sup> Litwak, 1984, p.189.

<sup>142</sup> Garthoff, 1985, p.539.

Soviet agreements in an attempt to build the linkage between both superpowers. Among these agreements were SALT I, the ABM treaty and the Grain Sales agreement, but the Moscow Communique was the most important in establishing the Nixon-Kissinger concept of détente. It set up a structure by which the superpowers would consult and act accordingly together in regards to tension in the Third World, thus avoiding escalation that could lead to confrontation.<sup>143</sup> In the summer of 1973 détente had gained public support to the level of euphoria, but little did the Nixon Administration realize how fleeting that euphoria would be.

President Nixon and his Secretary of State Henry Kissinger developed détente to permit the alterations in the international order. They recognized that military power was no longer the central feature in determining the outcome of international conflicts. They attempted to build a structure that would link the relations between the superpowers that would eliminate the potential for these conflicts to escalate into military conflict, but when put to the test, this structure could not succeed. The mixed conceptions and the respective roles were theoretical reasons for the collapse, the Soviet leadership of this period failed to recognise of the change in the nature of military power. It was not until a new leadership had taken over in Moscow that this recognition was made. However, by that time Soviet actions in the Third World had hardened thinking in the United States to such an extent that the American electorate had voted in a far harder line President in Ronald Reagan, and this process of ending the Cold War was extended another 13 years.

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<sup>143</sup> Bell, C., The Diplomacy of Détente: the Kissinger era, St Martin's Press, New York, 1977, p.105.

## Chapter 4

### Introduction

When the United States entered the post-détente period it was faced with a far more adventurous and powerful Soviet Union. This was demonstrated to the US by the Soviet decision to intervene in the war between Somalia and Ethiopia. The use of 225 transport planes during the peak of the crisis from bases in Transcaucasia displayed the projection capability of Soviet military power beyond the Soviet Union or its satellites on a scale never before seen by the West. This force projection capability added a new element to the East-West balance.<sup>1</sup>

### The Carter Administration

The Carter Administration took the United States into its fifth stage, another attempt at containment when unreal expectations forced the abandonment of détente. However Carter did attempt to adhere to a policy of détente in his first two years in office. The policy ran into difficulty when the administration could not define US interests throughout the world with a coherent and discernible conception.<sup>2</sup> Much of this difficulty lay with the President himself; Ambassador Arthur Hartman, who served in Washington during most of the Carter Administration, commented in an interview that Jimmy Carter didn't have any natural instincts about involvement in other parts of the world.<sup>3</sup> Ambassador Nicholas Veliotis who was serving as Deputy for Near East Affairs was a bit stronger in his criticism of the new President's position on foreign policy in 1977, 'That was a time when Carter said "Lets be friends with everyone. Aren't we all nice people in this world?'.<sup>4</sup>

The second problem the Carter Administration faced was that the American people believed that they had lost the moral high ground in the international affairs through its involvement in Vietnam and as a result of the Watergate cover-up. Carter attempted to regain the high ground by creating a consensus at home on the application of US power with the introduction of human rights as a key aspect of his foreign policy. However, this initially had

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<sup>1</sup> Coker, 1989, p.76.

<sup>2</sup> Coker, 1989, p.75.

<sup>3</sup> Ambassador Arthur Hartman, The Oral History Program, Georgetown University Library, 5-31-89.

<sup>4</sup> Ambassador Nicholas Veliotis, Oral History Program, Georgetown University Library, 5-1-90.

a very negative effect on US-Soviet relations. Senator George McGovern, who had taken a trip with the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in August 1977, wrote:

'It was disturbing to learn that there were serious doubts in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe about the American position and motives in SALT. Certainly there were variations in perspective in different countries. But both the circumstances and the content of Secretary of State Vance's trip to Moscow last March, coupled with the Carter Administration's emphasis on human rights violations in the Soviet Union, were generally interpreted in Belgrade, Budapest and Warsaw, as well as in Moscow, as signals of a more rigid American line than had been practised during the Nixon-Ford years-perhaps an American return to the Cold War era of confrontation'.<sup>5</sup>

The Carter Administration's use of human rights as a cornerstone of its foreign policy seemed to cause it difficulty not in the policy itself, but in its handling of the policy. While visiting Yugoslavia, McGovern was informed that the US handling of the human rights issue had a negative impact on détente. He wrote, 'Officials in Belgrade told me that the Carter Administration's posture on human rights had been a contributing factor in side-tracking détente.' He continued 'Secretary Minic (Foreign Secretary) thought it was not the human rights itself which had been harmful, but the way it was handled, specifically in President Carter's direct contact with Soviet dissidents. "As long as the issue is raised in a principled manner, there should be no problem,"'.<sup>6</sup>

That the Administration's handling of the policy and not the policy itself was the problem was borne out by how effective in the longer term human rights proved to be. During this period, for example, the Soviet Union found itself increasingly under pressure to adhere to the human rights conditions of the Helsinki Accords. Human rights increasingly became a means by which a nation could influence the policies and actions of other nations (ie. a means of power).

A second area where the administration seemed to run into difficulty with the Soviet Union was over the issue of linkage. Although it had been continually resisted by the Soviet

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<sup>5</sup> 'Détente and a New American Administration', A Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate, by Senator George McGovern, February 1978, US Government Printing Office, Washington, from Department of State Bulletin, February 1978, p.1.

<sup>6</sup> McGovern, 1978, p.12.



Union, they had come to accept linkage as part of the US approach to relations with the Soviet Union. When the Carter Administration attempted a new radical approach on SALT negotiations by removing linkage, the Soviet Union became distrustful of American intentions. President Carter and Secretary Vance had both made attempts to decouple these issues. During an interview with Press correspondents, Secretary Vance was asked about the links between human rights and arms control, trade etc., and he responded by saying, ‘...there is no linkage. I think each of these subjects is an important subject and each should be discussed in its own footing’.<sup>7</sup>

A shift in US policy toward the Soviet Union became apparent with the commencement speech at the US Naval Academy on June 1978. The commencement speech for the Naval Academy contained the same vision of détente that President Carter had professed in earlier speeches, but it differed from previous speeches in both the content and the tone. Among the issues addressed was the growing concern about the continued Soviet military build up, the Soviet Union’s abuse of human rights, and their attempts to export totalitarian and repressive régimes. In winding up his commencement address, the President laid down a challenge to the Soviet Union in its option for future relations with the United States. He said, ‘The Soviet Union can choose either confrontation or cooperation. The United States is adequately prepared to meet either choice’.<sup>8</sup>

The origin of this shift to a tougher line with the Soviet Union was the settlement of a dispute that had been going on within the administration. It was a dispute over Soviet-Cuban action in Africa and was mainly between Brzezinski and Vance. Secretary Vance discussed the disagreement in his book Hard Choices:

‘Zbig was increasingly convinced that Soviet actions were part of a larger, well-defined strategy (This became known as the ‘Arc of Crisis’). He argued that Soviet behavior was incompatible with our policy of balancing competition with cooperation. We and our allies, he thought, should take what I felt were ill defined measures to make Soviet adventurism more costly’. Vance goes on to say, ‘I did not believe Soviet actions in Africa were part of a grand Soviet plan, but rather attempts to exploit targets of opportunity. It was not that Soviet actions

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<sup>7</sup> Vance Interviewed by A.P. and U.P.I. Correspondents, from Department of State Bulletin, February 1977, vol. 77, p.148.

<sup>8</sup> President Carter, ‘Confrontation or Cooperation With the Soviet Union’, US Naval Academy Commencement Exercise, Annapolis, June 7, 1978, American Foreign Policy 1977-1980, Department of State Publication 1983, Doc. 238.

were unimportant, but I felt realism required us to deal with those problems in the local context in which they had their roots'.<sup>9</sup>

The division within the administration over Africa and Soviet-Cuban involvement spread into issues of general US-Soviet relations such as SALT and the question of linkage. This had a negative effect on the President politically and undercut the administration's ability to conduct its foreign policy.<sup>10</sup> Although Secretary Vance was able to convince President Carter not to take any drastic punitive action against the Soviet Union, it became increasingly clear that his influence on the President had decreased greatly. An issue that demonstrated the Secretary of State's declining influence was the diplomatic recognition of the People's Republic of China. Secretary Vance was never against the normalization of Sino-American relations in principle, rather he was opposed to the timing. At the time of the joint announcement in Beijing and Washington on December 15, 1978, negotiations with the Soviet Union over SALT II were at a critical stage. He feared that the announcement of the rapprochement with Beijing before concluding negotiations with the Soviet Union would not only hurt SALT, but also cause anxiety in Moscow and contribute to the downward trend in US-Soviet relations.<sup>11</sup>

Gaddis Smith argues that the National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski felt that anxiety in Moscow over the US use of the 'China Card' may cause the Soviet Union to restrain themselves.<sup>12</sup> However Strobe Talbott believes that Brzezinski was among those who believed that the China Card would have little affect on SALT. This assumption was based on the Soviet Union's long held rejection of the concept of linkage, and that they would not allow outside issues to affect SALT negotiations.<sup>13</sup> This proved to be a fallacious assumption.

During his visit to the United States in early 1979, the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping made several statements claiming that China might have to carry out a military strike against Vietnam, a close Soviet ally. The Chinese wanted to make clear to the Vietnamese their

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<sup>9</sup> Vance, C., Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1983, p.84.

<sup>10</sup> Vance, 1983, p.91.

<sup>11</sup> Smith, G., Morality, Reason and Power, Hill and Wang, New York, 1986, p.87.

<sup>12</sup> Smith, 1986, p.87.

<sup>13</sup> Talbott, S., Endgame, Harper and Row Publishers, New York, 1979, p.230.

displeasure over the invasion of Cambodia and continued clashes on the Sino-Vietnamese border. The Soviet press warned that it would hold the US responsible if Deng carried out his threats against Vietnam.<sup>14</sup>

Within a few weeks of Deng's return to China, he ordered forces across the border. They remained there three weeks, declared the mission a success and withdrew its forces. The casualty rate was high, the Chinese government admitted to losing 20,000 soldiers and estimated 50,000 casualties for Vietnam.<sup>15</sup>

The impact of the Chinese invasion of Vietnam on US-Soviet relations and on the SALT talks was extremely damaging. The Soviet Union accused the United States of tacitly approving the invasion. As Strobe Talbott writes, 'As years of rejecting the concept of US-imposed linkage between SALT and human rights , SALT and Africa, SALT and the Middle East-after years of lecturing Washington that SALT should be nurtured in antiseptic isolation from other issues of dispute between the two countries-the Kremlin now made clearer than ever that from its own standpoint, linkage was very much in order where China was concerned'.<sup>16</sup>

The SALT II negotiations were able to survive the uproar caused by the Chinese invasion of Vietnam. The United States and the Soviet Union signed the agreement on June 18, 1979 in Vienna. However US-Soviet relations seemed less resilient in recovering from their downward slide.

### **The Turn**

The decision by the Carter Administration to increase defence spending represented a clear shift in policy. Although not until the election of Ronald Reagan did this policy truly find an advocate, it was a return to power politics. In 1978 Carter authorised an increase in US military expenditure and called on all NATO countries to implement a 3 percent increase for 1979.<sup>17</sup> The United States and its NATO allies agreed in 1979 to upgrade their intermediate nuclear force with Pershing II and Cruise missiles, though at the same time attempt to broker an agreement with the Soviet Union that would cancel the missiles' deployment for Soviet

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<sup>14</sup> Talbott, 1979, p.250.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, 1986, p.98.

<sup>16</sup> Talbott, 1979, p.251.

<sup>17</sup> Halliday, F., The Making of the Second Cold War, Verso, London, 1983, p.224.

agreement to remove its SS-20s. This became known as the 'two-track' approach.<sup>18</sup> Both of these actions were examples of the United States hardening its policy, which President Carter had warned would happen in his Naval Academy speech.

However the event that clearly cemented the shift in US foreign policy was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the final days of 1979. The Soviet Union's actions in Afghanistan were to have a major impact on the thinking of policy makers in the United States. Strobe Talbott called the Afghan crisis a 'watershed' in Soviet-American relations and a turning point in Carter's thinking about Soviet-American relations. Carter displayed his shock that Brezhnev would lie to him about the invasion (the Soviet leader claimed that his armies had been 'invited' into Afghanistan) when he told a television interviewer, 'My opinion of the Russians has changed most drastically in the last week - [more] than even in the previous two and a half years before that'.<sup>19</sup>

The American public had also become frustrated with US foreign policy. The invasion of Afghanistan as well as the two anti-American revolutions in Iran and Nicaragua had become symbols of the impotency of US foreign policy. The Carter Administration was forced into a position of reshaping foreign policy. President Carter had to concede that the policy of détente was no longer a viable option. In an address to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, he said, 'Neither we nor our allies want to destroy the framework of East-West relations that has yielded concrete benefits to so many people. But ultimately, if we continue to seek the benefit of détente while ignoring the necessity of deference, we would lose the advantage of both'.<sup>20</sup>

January 1980 brought an end to the conduct of US-Soviet relations that had dominated for more than a decade. With the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Iranian hostage crisis and the fact that 1980 was an election year, all these events served to push US policy toward the Soviet Union into a new direction. Raymond Garthoff argues that in many ways the turn in January 1980 was far sharper than the one in January 1981, when Ronald Reagan repudiated

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<sup>18</sup> Dean, J., and Clausen, P., The INF Treaty and the Future of Western Security, A report by the Union of Concerned Scientists, January 1988, p.7.

<sup>19</sup> Talbott, S., 'US-Soviet Relations', Foreign Affairs; America and the World 1979, p.518.

<sup>20</sup> President Carter, 'US Course in a Changing World', Address to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, April 10, 1980, found in Department of State Bulletin, May 1980, p.5.

détente.<sup>21</sup>

The new US approach toward the Soviet Union was introduced over the course of several weeks in early 1980. Zbigniew Brzezinski describes in his memoirs that the new US approach took three forms, '(1) the adoption of sanctions directed at the Soviet Union; (2) the formulation of a doctrine linking the security of the region (Persian Gulf) with that of the United States and a US effort to shape a regional security framework (This became known as the Carter Doctrine); and (3) the acceleration of our strategic renewal, in terms of both doctrine and defense budget'.<sup>22</sup>

Also during this period, President Carter requested that the Senate no longer consider ratifying the SALT II Treaty. Already facing stiff opposition in the Senate, President Carter announced 'I have asked the United States Senate to defer further consideration of the SALT II Treaty so that Congress and I can assess Soviet actions and intentions and devote our primary attention to the legislative and other measures required to respond to this crisis'.<sup>23</sup>

The final year of President Carter's Administration brought an end to the policy set forth by the two previous administrations. Raymond Garthoff noted that the United States had moved from a policy of managing the emergence of Soviet power, advocated by Nixon and Kissinger back to the Truman-Eisenhower-Kennedy policy of containment.<sup>24</sup>

Although Carter was able to bring about a shift in foreign policy that returned it to an era of strict power politics, it was not a position that he seemed to be very comfortable with. Even as late as March 1980, after most of the change in policy had taken place, President Carter's instincts were to continue to support the process of détente. In an article in the Washington Post, he was quoted as saying 'We want to maintain as best as we can the principles of détente... to alleviate tensions between us'.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Garthoff, 1985, p.967.

<sup>22</sup> Brzezinski, Z., Power and Principle, Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, New York, 1983, p.430.

<sup>23</sup> President Carter, 'President's Address', January 4, 1980, from Department of State Bulletin, January 1980.

<sup>24</sup> Garthoff, 1985, p.968.

<sup>25</sup> Washington Post, 'Jimmy Carter Talking About Himself..., His Record, His Campaign', March 29, 1980.

## The Reagan Administration

The election of Ronald Reagan was a solid mandate to return to a policy of containment by reasserting US military power and re-engaging the Soviet Union. This new policy was seen by some as an attempt by the US to return to the past, while others saw it as a rejection of the non-military means of influence. However this was not a recast version of US containment policy from thirty years earlier, rather it was a policy that Joshua Muravich called an evolved version of that policy to fit the present situation.<sup>26</sup>

It had become clear that the Soviet Union was not willing to cease pressing forward and seeking to expand their power, while at the same time the US could not contain them at every point where they were trying to expand, the alternative was for the US to press back at points of its choosing, where the Soviet Union was vulnerable by supporting anti-Communist insurgencies. This proved to be a successful formula for containment, a means of using force with little cost to the body politic, or the national treasury. Rather than intervening with US forces (with the exception of Grenada), Reagan preferred to place the Soviet Union on the defensive by using proxy forces. The US was able to destabilise Soviet client states in Africa and the Middle East with forces that were far less expensive.<sup>27</sup>

The attraction of forcing the Soviet Union on the defensive was due mainly to the fact that the Soviet Union was so over extended. Although the Administration had come across such a cost effective means of putting the Soviet Union on the defensive,<sup>28</sup> the policy was often overshadowed by other aspects of the Reagan foreign policy. An example of this was a speech by Secretary Haig to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, in which he laid out the Reagan Administration foreign policy agenda. He entitled it:

**‘Three Projects of Action:**

**First,** to enlarge our capacity to influence events and to make more effective use of the full range of our moral, political, scientific, economic, and military resources in the pursuit of our interest;

**Second,** to convince our allies, friends, and adversaries-above all the Soviet Union-that

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<sup>26</sup> Muravich, J., Reagan Doctrine and Beyond, AEI Forum, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington D.C., 1988, p.4.

<sup>27</sup> Coker, C., ‘The Last Rally? The Reagan Administration and American Military Intervention in the Third World’, Small Wars & Insurgencies, April 1990, Volume 1, p.6.

<sup>28</sup> For example, it cost only \$250 million in military aid for the US to tie down 100,000 troops in Afghanistan. See Coker, April 1990.

America will act in a manner befitting our responsibilities as a trustee of freedom and peace; and

**Third**, to offer hope and aid to the developing countries in their aspirations for a peaceful and prosperous future'.<sup>29</sup>

The first two actions are those that received the largest amount attention, and are often considered the true legacy of the Reagan Administration foreign policy. Haig's ethereal treatment of the Third action in this speech gave little indication of the real importance that the Third World was going to play in the Reagan foreign policy.

The first action of enlarging the United States' ability to influence events was through a combination of policy changes. One was to revive the economy with inflation free growth, which became known popularly as 'Reaganomics'. The other means of increasing US influence was to increase military spending. Within two weeks of taking office, the Reagan Administration had requested an additional increase, over the \$26.4 thousand million that President Carter had requested in his final week in office, for a total increase of \$58 thousand million over the previous year.<sup>30</sup>

The second action set out in Secretary Haig's address was to convince both allies and adversaries of American commitment to its role as the leader of the free world. This action often took the form of anti-Soviet rhetoric which not only raised concern with American allies but also within the United States government itself. One such person who expressed grave concerns was Arthur Hartman who had been appointed US Ambassador to Moscow. He had reservations about the President's ideological leanings, the 'evil empire' attitude and to whether or not he could carry through the policy. 'As a basic principle, it (Soviet Union) is an evil empire, it does evil things to its own people. I could accept that, what I could not accept was that this would be the sort of language of our discourse with the Soviet Union. I just didn't think, as a practical matter that it was going to get us anywhere'.<sup>31</sup>

However, Reagan's rhetoric never served as the foundation of his administration's

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<sup>29</sup> Haig, A., 'A New Direction in U.S. Foreign Policy', address to American Society of Newspaper Editors, April 24, 1981, from Department of State Bulletin, June 1981, vol. 81, number 2051, p.5.

<sup>30</sup> Garthoff, R., The Great Transition, Brookings Institution, Washington DC, 1994, p.33.

<sup>31</sup> Ambassador Arthur Hartman, 5-31-89.

policy. Phil Williams and Dilys Hill called Reagan a ‘pragmatic ideologue’.<sup>32</sup> Although Reagan’s statements were laden with ideological and anti-Soviet rhetoric, he was not blind to political realities. Also Reagan was not a person interested in the details of policy, leaving most of those decisions to his advisors, and in foreign policy it was the State Department that played the central role.<sup>33</sup>

An illustration of where Reagan proved to be a ‘pragmatic ideologue’ was the rather odd policy the administration had toward the People’s Republic of China. The three previous administrations had been moving Sino-American relations toward strategic alignment against the Soviet Union. This strategic alignment appealed to President Reagan, but it ran counter to his sympathetic views of Taiwan. So the administration’s response was to maintain a polite distance from the PRC, neither embarrassing it as a strategic ally or antagonizing it to such an extent to constitute it as an enemy.

The third of Secretary Haig’s ‘Projects of Action’, was ‘to offer hope and aid to the developing countries’. The policy of the Reagan Administration toward the Third World, which became known as the ‘Reagan Doctrine’, led to an increased involvement in the Third World. Raymond Garthoff described the increased involvement in the Third World as a reversal of roles between the United States and the Soviet Union, ‘The Soviets were supporting insurgencies in the Third World in the 40s 50s 60s and 70s and we were supporting insurgencies in the 80s’.<sup>34</sup>

In a speech before the Heritage Foundation, President Reagan set out the objectives of his policy in the Third World, ‘The goal of the free world must no longer be stated in the negative, that is, resistance to Soviet expansionism. The goal of the free world must instead be stated in the affirmative. We must go on the offensive with a forward strategy for

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<sup>32</sup> Hill, D. M., and Williams, P., ‘The Reagan Presidency: Style and Substance’, p.9. from The Reagan Presidency; An Incomplete Revolution, Hill, Moore and Williams ed., Macmillian Press, London, 1990.

<sup>33</sup> It is interesting to note that Alexander Haig did complain that Meese, Baker and Deaver were not allowing the Secretary of State complete unfettered access to the President, thereby weakening the State Department’s control of policy.

<sup>34</sup> Ambassador Raymond Garthoff, Interview 15-12-93.



freedom'.<sup>35</sup> Central to this forward strategy, as noted earlier was the very controversial practice of supporting proxy forces in the Third World against the Soviet Union. The Reagan Administration chose three areas where they felt the Soviet Union was the most overstretched and attempted to apply pressure, these areas were Central America, the Middle East, and Southern Africa.

### *Central America*

The Reagan Administration was anxious to put the Soviet Union on the defensive in Central America, where they had been supplying military aid to the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and indirectly the Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation (FMLN) in El Salvador. One of the Reagan Administration's first attempts at supporting a proxy force was to the anti-Sandinistas (Contras) through what was called 'La Tripartita'. This was a three sided agreement by which the United States gave money and direction, Argentina provided training and 'cover' and Honduras provided base facilities<sup>36</sup>, but the agreement was to be short lived. In the aftermath of the Falklands War, relations between the United States and Argentina soured, so the Reagan Administration was forced to pay more attention to the situation in Nicaragua.

Certain members of the Reagan cabinet, such as CIA director William Casey, had hopes that the Contras would develop into a force able to invade Nicaragua. Even if the Contras were never able to overthrow the Sandinistas, they were to serve the Reagan Administration's objectives for Nicaragua. The Contras proved to be a weapon that destabilized the Nicaraguan economy and the Sandinista's response to the Contras, gave the United States an opportunity to point to the aggressive nature of the Sandinistas.<sup>37</sup>

The need to show the Sandinistas as aggressive was due mainly to the constant battle that the administration had with Congress to maintain funding to the Contras. By the end of 1982 the illusion that the Contras were an interdiction force began to wear thin with the United States Congress. A bill, which included an amendment proposed by Rep. Edward Boland that

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<sup>35</sup> President Reagan, 'Heritage Foundation, Remarks at a Dinner Marking the Foundation's 10th Anniversary', October 3, 1983, from Department of State Bulletin, December 1983, vol 83, p.2.

<sup>36</sup> Sklar, H., Washington's War on Nicaragua, Between the Lines, Toronto, 1988, p.87.

<sup>37</sup> Kornbluh, P., 'The Covert War', from Reagan Versus the Sandinistas, Walker, T., ed., Westview Press, London, 1987, p.23.

prohibited US assistance to any group operating in Nicaragua with the intention of overthrowing the government or attempting to provoke a military exchange between Nicaragua and Honduras passed Congress. The White House accepted this gladly due to the fact that the alternative that was being debated in Congress called for the complete cutting off of funds.<sup>38</sup>

The support of the Contras led the Reagan Administration into both a diplomatic and political storm when it was made public that the CIA had mined several harbours in Nicaragua. The Soviet Union lodged a diplomatic protest condemning the United States for acts of 'piracy'. In the United States Congress, long time supporters of the Contras like Republican Senator Barry Goldwater denounced the CIA's action.<sup>39</sup> The mining of the Nicaraguan harbours marked a turning point in the US Congress' willingness to support the Contras. In 1984, they cut aid to the Contras, barred the CIA from any involvement with the rebels, and at the same time pressured the Administration into negotiating with the Sandinistas.

With Congress cutting off aid to the Contras, the Reagan Administration's latitude in policy on Nicaragua was severely limited. From this point on the Reagan Administration had to moderate its policy in order not to offend those swing voters in Congress that eventually did reinstate funding to the Contras. Congressional scrutiny restricted the Reagan Administration, especially when it became public that the administration had been skimming off funds from the sale of spare parts to Iran to fund the Contras (the Iran-Contra Affair). However as Coker points out, by the time Congress had cut off aid to the Contras, the Sandinistas had lost popular support in Nicaragua as the economy basically collapsed from trying to support a 70,000 man army.<sup>40</sup>

A second country where the Reagan Administration hoped to push back the Communist threat was in El Salvador. Within months of taking office, Alexander Haig presented the findings of a Department of State White Paper which he claimed had definitive evidence of clandestine military support given to the guerillas fighting to overthrow the Government of El

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<sup>38</sup> Sklar, 1988, p.130.

<sup>39</sup> Kornbluh, 1987, p.31.

<sup>40</sup> Coker, 1989, p.78.

Salvador by the Soviet Union, Cuba and other communist allies.<sup>41</sup> The government in El Salvador had come to power by a *coup d'état* in October 1979, that was backed by the military. A series of *juntas* had been formed with members drawn from both the armed forces and civilians to govern the country, but when abuse and repression which was common in the previous government continued the civilian members of the *junta* would resign and the *junta* would collapse.

The White Paper was a scathing attack against Communist countries who were supporting the FMLN. Haig said, 'It is clear that over the past year the insurgency in El Salvador has been progressively transformed into another case of indirect armed aggression against a small Third World country by Communist powers acting through Cuba'. The Secretary of State went on to say, 'The United States considers it of great importance that the American people and the world community be aware of the gravity of the actions of Cuba, the Soviet Union, and other Communist states who are carrying out what is clearly shown to be a well-coordinated, covert effort to bring about the overthrow of El Salvador's established government and to impose in its place a Communist régime with no popular support'.<sup>42</sup>

The Reagan Administration's interest in El Salvador was greater than just the defeat of the communist insurgence. El Salvador also represented a place where the new administration could draw a 'line in the sand', demonstrating US global power and the administration's willingness to use it in the battle against communism. In order for the US to reassert its global power, the Reagan Administration needed to overcome what had become known as the 'Vietnam Syndrome', which Michael Klare describes as 'the American public's disinclination to engage in military interventions in internal Third World conflicts'.<sup>43</sup>

In attempting to exercise US power in El Salvador the Reagan Administration was accused of leading the United States into another Vietnam type involvement. In an interview with President Reagan given in early March 1981, the CBS News reporter Walter Cronkite charged that El Salvador was the first foreign policy crisis of the President's Administration.

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<sup>41</sup> Haig, A., 'Communist Interference in El Salvador', from Department of State Bulletin, February 1981, vol. 81, number 2047, p.1.

<sup>42</sup> Haig, February 1981, p.1.

<sup>43</sup> Klare, M., Beyond the "Vietnam Syndrome": U.S. Intervention in the 1980s, Institute for Policy Studies, Washington D.C., 1981, p.1.

He argued that the commitment of US military advisors to El Salvador was parallel to the policy that led the United States into involvement in Vietnam.<sup>44</sup>

However the Reagan Administration's choice of El Salvador as the area to 'draw the line' was made exactly because administration officials felt that unlike Vietnam, El Salvador would not need American troops. With the failure of the FMLN's general offensive in January 1981, officials in both the Departments of State and Defense had come to the conclusion that by simply cutting off the rebels supply lines and maintaining sufficient military assistance to the *junta* they could defeat the rebels, thus claiming a quick victory for its anti-communist foreign policy.<sup>45</sup> Although the Departments of State and Defense conclusion was to underestimate the staying power of the FMLN, which continued to fight the Salvadorian government until the early 90s, they were never able to mount a full scale offensive to oust the Duarte government.

The one place that the Reagan Administration did use its own military force to oust a communist-aligned government was on the small Caribbean island of Grenada. This tiny island nation, with a population just over 100,000 inhabitants, had become a concern for the United States during the Carter Administration, when long serving Prime Minister Sir Eric Gairy was replaced by Maurice Bishop and his People's Revolutionary Government (PRG).

Of most concern to the United States was the construction of a new airfield with a 10,000-foot runway. President Reagan, in his address to the nation entitled 'Peace and National Security', used aerial photographs of the new airport to demonstrate Soviet expansion into the Caribbean. He said, 'Grenada doesn't even have an air force. Who is it intended for? The Soviet-Cuban militarization of Grenada, in short, can only be seen as power projection into the region'.<sup>46</sup>

Although there was a great deal of animosity between the Bishop régime and the Reagan Administration, there was little interest on behalf of the United States to invade

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with the President, Walter Cronkite, CBS News, March 3, 1981, Department of State Bulletin, April, 1981, vol. 81. no.2049, p.8.

<sup>45</sup> Arnson, C., El Salvador; A Revolution Confronts the United States, Institute for Policy Studies, Washington D.C., 1982, p.70.

<sup>46</sup> Reagan, R., 'Peace and National Security', address to the Nation, Washington D.C., March 23, 1983, from Department of State Bulletin, April 1983, volume 83, no.2073, pp.11-12.

Grenada as late as the autumn of 1983.<sup>47</sup> The decision to invade was sudden. Predicated on the *coup d'état* which overthrew Prime Minister Bishop and cost him his life, the United States claimed to be concerned for the safety of American students that attended medical school on the island and that the situation may turn more radical threatening neighbouring islands.<sup>48</sup>

The US invasion force of around 7,000 men, along with a token force from some of the other Caribbean islands in the area, invaded Grenada on the 25 October. The invasion was to prove popular, both in the United States and Grenada, but internationally the United States came under heavy criticism for its actions. In the UN Security Council, the United States was forced to veto the resolution condemning its actions when France supported the motion and Britain abstained.<sup>49</sup>

In a television address to the nation on October 27, 1983, President Reagan gave a spirited speech on both the bombing of the US Marines in Lebanon and the invasion of Grenada. In reference to the invasion it seems that the President deemed it necessary to rebut international criticism. He reiterated the earlier justifications of concern for US nationals and regional security problems. But then President Reagan presented a geopolitical justification, attacking the Soviet Union and Cuba for attempting to export revolution into the region. He said, 'Grenada, we were told, was a friendly island paradise for tourism. Well, it wasn't. It was a Soviet-Cuban colony, being readied as a major military bastion to export terror and undermine democracy.' The President went on to say; 'Not only has Moscow assisted and encouraged the violence in [Grenada], but it provides direct support through a network of surrogates and terrorists'.<sup>50</sup> In The Great Transition, Raymond Garthoff argues that these justifications are more likely closer to the truth.<sup>51</sup> It is true that these justifications are more in line with the Reagan Doctrine and the declared policy of the administration.

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<sup>47</sup> Beck, R., The Grenada Invasion, Westview Press, Boulder, 1993, p.31.

<sup>48</sup> Garthoff, 1994, p.704.

<sup>49</sup> Garthoff, 1994, p.706.

<sup>50</sup> President Reagan, 'America's Commitment to Peace', Address to the nation, October 27, 1983, from Department of State Bulletin, December 1983, volume 83, no.2081, p.4.

<sup>51</sup> Garthoff, 1994, p.707.

## *Middle East*

The United States had great success in its Middle East policy during the Nixon/Ford and Carter Administration, most notably the 'Step-by-Step' Process and the Camp David Accords. The key to the success of US policy during this period had been the exclusion of the Soviet Union from the peace process. According to Ambassador Veliotos, upon entering office in 1981 the Reagan Administration had several main priorities in the Middle East. Among these were the implementation of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai and to re-establish relations with Pakistan and to work more closely with the Afghan rebels.<sup>52</sup>

However, these priorities were only a part of sub-context of the Reagan Administration approach to the Middle East. Robert Dillion, who served as US Ambassador to Lebanon in 1981-83 discussed this approach:

'Al Haig as I understand it..., was engaged at the time in pressing an idea for "strategic cooperation". This idea was that the Russians were still the threat and that therefore certain countries like Saudi Arabia and Israel had much in common because they were the ones who would be the biggest losers by Soviet involvement in the Middle East. Therefore, it should have been important to them to become involved in some strategic cooperation with the US. My impression is that the White House and NSC (National Security Council) staffs had this strategic mind-set and therefore were neither interested in nor sensitive to regional issues. I would fault Haig for letting himself be trapped into this White House perception of the world. But seeing the world through the East-West confrontation prism was the way the White House and the NSC saw all events in the Middle East'.<sup>53</sup>

That the Reagan Administration was interested more in the strategic aspects of the Middle East was quite clearly demonstrated with its approach toward the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. It was their objective to implement the peace solely so that Israel would be free from a threat from Egypt. Therefore Israel could play a great role as a strategic guarantor. There was little interest within the administration to make any progress on the outstanding problem of the Palestinian refugees. As Ambassador Veliotos said, 'We went through a charade of seeking to continue the peace talks on the Palestinian issue, the so called second part of Camp David'. At the same time pro-Israeli members of the administration, such as Secretary Haig,

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<sup>52</sup> Ambassador Nicholas Veliotos, 5-1-90.

<sup>53</sup> Ambassador Robert Dillion, Oral History Program, Georgetown University Library, 5-17-90.

were trying to get President Sadat to accept a 'sweetheart' deal to sell out the Palestinians.<sup>54</sup>

Although there was no strategic agreement between Israel and the United States, the US did greatly increase military aid to Israel in the months before the invasion of Lebanon. The US also seemed to tacitly support the drive into the streets of Beirut in the hope that the Israelis could dislodge two of the Soviet Union's main clients in the region, the PLO and Syria. There is some debate whether Secretary Haig gave a green light for the Israelis to invade when he met with General Sharon in Washington in May 1982. Ambassador Dillion does not believe that Secretary Haig did give approval for the invasion. He said, 'According to public records, Haig very carefully told him (Sharon) that Israel couldn't do anything like that on a flimsy for an invasion, the United States would be opposed'.<sup>55</sup>

However, when Ambassador Dillion spoke with one of Haig's aides that was present at the meeting and who had said to Secretary Haig:

"Mr. Secretary, Sharon just left here believing that if he invades Lebanon, the United States will not oppose him". Haig said that was not his intention and had a letter drafted that made clear the US position as being against the invasion. But Sharon already had his answer. Sharon didn't care whether the Americans approved or disapproved of whatever he wanted to do. He just wanted to know whether the US would take any punitive action!'.<sup>56</sup>

The situation in Lebanon had placed the Reagan Administration in a rather difficult position. As Ambassador Dillion noted, 'The White House wished Lebanon had never happened because any actions the US might take would have brought it into conflict with Israel'.<sup>57</sup> Haig's replacement George Schultz, who during his confirmation hearings had been accused of being pro-Arab, went to great lengths not to tread on the Israelis.

An agreement was struck by the US negotiator Philip Habib which allowed the withdrawal of the PLO and Syrian forces. The agreement also called for a multinational force (MNF), which included US Marines to help supervise the withdrawal. Under the terms of the Agreement the MNF was to stay no more than 30 days.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ambassador Nicholas Veliotis, 1-29-90.

<sup>55</sup> Ambassador Robert Dillion, 5-17-90.

<sup>56</sup> Ambassador Robert Dillion, 5-17-90.

<sup>57</sup> Ambassador Robert Dillion, 5-17-90.

<sup>58</sup> 'Lebanon, Plan for the PLO Evacuation from West Beirut', Department of State Bulletin, September, 1982, volume 82, no.2066, p.2.

However, from this point on the situation in Lebanon began to unravel for the United States. Secretary Schultz tried to negotiate a settlement, launched in September 1982 which was called the 'Reagan Plan'. The situation dragged on and the window of opportunity that existed with the withdrawal of the PLO had disappeared by the Spring of 1983. An agreement was signed in May but was dead before the ink had dried.<sup>59</sup>

According to Ambassador Veliotes, as the agreement began to sour, so had the Secretary of States view of the Middle East. The Ambassador noted in his interview that, 'by mid 1983, Secretary Schultz had really had it with our Arab friends. And he saw the Israelis as having negotiated in good faith'. This souring of the Secretary's view had ramifications for American policy in the region. Ambassador Veliotes goes on to say, 'In many respects the Middle East just went off the radar screen for three years or so, until near the end of the Reagan Administration'.<sup>60</sup>

Also having the effect of souring the Administration's view of the Middle East was the attack on the US Marines in Beirut. After having completed their mission of assisting the withdrawal of PLO fighters, the Marines were ordered back to their ships. But within days of their departure, the newly elected President of Lebanon, Bashir Gemayel was assassinated. The Israelis who had promised to stay out of Beirut used this as a pretext to 'restore order' in the city. In restoring order, the Israeli army encouraged the Christian Militia to seek out PLO fighters who had stayed behind after the withdrawal. This led to the massacre at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps.<sup>61</sup>

The US Marines were re-deployed in Beirut to disastrous effect, 263 were killed in a terrorist attack. In a statement before the House Armed Services Committee, Rear Admiral Jonathan Howe gave the administration policy as to the mission for the Marines being re-inserted, 'The mission of the Marines, along with the other MNF contingents, was to help stabilize the situation in Lebanon by their presence and to secure key sectors of Beirut'.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ambassador Robert Dillion, 5-17-90.

<sup>60</sup> Ambassador Nicholas Veliotes, 1-29-90.

<sup>61</sup> Ambassador Robert Dillion, 5-17-90.

<sup>62</sup> Howe, J.T., 'US Marine Presence in Beirut', Statement before the House Armed Services Committee, November 1, 1983, from Department of State Bulletin, December 1983, volume 83, no.2081, p.46.



Ambassador Veliotos feels that after the death of Bashir Gemayel and the reinsertion of the Marines, US policy began to lose focus and the situation in Lebanon began to self-destruct.<sup>63</sup> Syria and Iran were able to gain influence in Lebanon and radicalize the Shi'ia population. The government of Bashir Gemayel's brother Amin was then isolated by a combination of the Shi'ites and other local opponents and rendered useless. When these radical groups mounted a campaign against Western targets the US was eventually left no choice but to withdraw their troops.

The second priority for the Reagan Administration in the Middle East was to improve its relationship with the Pakistani government which was necessary to upgrade aid to the Afghan rebels. There was however a great deal of scepticism within the administration about the ability of the *mujahaddin* to defeat the Soviets. Kurt Lohbeck sums up the attitude in Washington at the time; 'The sheer guts and determination of the Afghan people had earned universal admiration, but as one diplomat said, "It's like being a fan of the Cleveland Indians - why get your hopes up?'.<sup>64</sup>

However there were two reasons why the United States would naturally support the *mujahaddin*. Firstly by supporting the rebels the US was assisting in giving a 'bloody nose' to the Soviet Union. Secondly, Soviet presence in Afghanistan gave the United States a diplomatic whipping stick against the USSR. As Kurt Lohbeck writes about US-Soviet relations at that time, 'No official contact was ever made without the inclusion of American protest over Afghanistan'.<sup>65</sup>

The success of the *mujahaddin*, which mainly was their ability not to be defeated by the Soviet forces, encouraged the Reagan Administration to increase support for the rebels. Throughout the 1980s the United States spent around \$2 billion on material support and also encouraged other nations like Saudi Arabia to support the rebels as well. The Reagan Administration stepped up its support for the rebels in 1986 when the decision was taken to supply them with Stinger anti-aircraft missiles.<sup>66</sup> These missiles allowed the *mujahaddin* to

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<sup>63</sup> Ambassador Nicholas Veliotos, 1-29-90.

<sup>64</sup> Lohbeck, K., Holy War, Unholy Victory, Regnery Gateway, Washington D.C., 1993, p.88.

<sup>65</sup> Lohbeck, 1993.

<sup>66</sup> Garthoff, 1994, pp.713-714.

contend with the Soviet superiority in air power and drastically altered the complexion of the war.

### *Southern Africa*

At the time of the inauguration, most member of President Reagan's staff believed that an understanding between South Africa and the West was necessary to thwart the Soviet presence in the region.<sup>67</sup> The Reagan Administration played up the threat of communism and adopted a more unilateral approach to South Africa, but sought a much lower profile in the region. As was typical in the Reagan Administration, the task of looking after policy in the region was left to a subordinate, in this case Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Chester Crocker. It was Crocker's view the US could best promote reform and stability in the region by following a policy of constructive engagement, which entailed working with the white power structure in South Africa.<sup>68</sup>

Soon after taking office, the Reagan Administration had preliminary discussions with the South African government. At these discussions the Reagan Administration offered Pretoria a strategic partnership, similar to the one offered Israel, but the South Africans declined the offer.<sup>69</sup> However it is interesting to note that while these talks were going on, Pretoria adopted a more aggressive posture towards its neighbours, mainly Mozambique and Angola, which included cross border raids and support for dissident groups in an attempt to destabilize these countries.<sup>70</sup> Pretoria's actions showed the inherent weakness in the US policy of constructive engagement, and much in the same way that the US was unable to prevent Israel from besieging Beirut, they seemed unable to prevent South Africa from attacking Angola. The Reagan Administration found that it had very little leverage over the South Africans and their overstated concern of Soviet involvement in the region led them to give their tacit support to the South Africans actions.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Coker, C., The United States and South Africa, 1968-1985; Constructive Engagement and its Critics, Duke University Press, Durham, 1986, p.217.

<sup>68</sup> Baker, P., The United States and South Africa: The Reagan Years, The South African Update Series, Ford Foundation-Foreign Policy Association, 1989, pp.7-9.

<sup>69</sup> Coker, April 1990, p.7.

<sup>70</sup> Baker, 1989, p.15.

<sup>71</sup> Coker, 1986, pp.228-229.

To what extent the forward strategy in the Third World or as it became known, the Reagan Doctrine was successful in containing its opponent is debatable. However it must be recognized that after 1979 the Soviet Union did not intervene anywhere else. Whether that was due to the Reagan policy or to the realisation by the Soviet Union that they were overstretched is just not clear.

### *Soviet Union*

Initially the administration showed little interest in entering into negotiations with the Soviet Union. From one of his very first news conferences, President Reagan gave clear notice that his administration had little time for the structure of détente, ‘So far détente’s been a one-way street that the Soviet Union has used to pursue its own aims’.<sup>72</sup>

The Reagan Administration also distanced itself from the negotiations on Strategic Arms Limitation (SALT). In the same news conference on January 29, 1981, President Reagan spoke about the un-ratified SALT II treaty, ‘The SALT Treaty, first of all, I think, permits a continued build up on both sides of strategic nuclear weapons but, in the main thing authorizes an immediate increase in large numbers of Soviet warheads. There is no verification as to the number of warheads on the missile, no method for us to do this’.<sup>73</sup>

The condemnation of the instrumentalities of superpower dialogue as well as the Soviet Union was to serve as a larger dynamic of the Reagan foreign policy, put forward by Secretary Haig in a interview given for NBC television in which he described the rhetoric as setting the record straight:

‘So the fact of setting the record straight is, obviously, a desirable aspect of our foreign policy. Does that mean that we want to adopt a mode of total brittleness, confrontation, and isolation of the Soviet Union? Not at all. We want them to be on notice that when they abide by the accepted rules of international law, they will find a willing and welcome partner here in the United States and they will enjoy the benefits of trade and credit and technology transfer and perhaps some reduction in levels of armaments that both sides feel compelled to maintain today’.<sup>74</sup>

In the Reagan Administration conception of policy, in order to convince the Soviet

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<sup>72</sup> Excerpts from News Conference of January 29, 1981, from Department of State Bulletin, March 1981, volume 81, no.2046, p.12.

<sup>73</sup> Excerpts from News Conference of January 29, 1981.

<sup>74</sup> Haig, A., ‘Interview for NBC Television’ by Marvin Kalb, April 14, 1981, from Department of State Bulletin, June, 1981, volume 81, no.2051, p.27.

Union of their resolve, the United States needed to develop a position of strength. This would entail allowing time for the defence build up to be implemented before negotiations could be undertaken with the Soviets. Therefore in the first couple years the Administration made very few serious efforts at negotiations with the Soviet Union.

One area where the Reagan Administration saw a chance to show Western resolve and gain a position of strength was on the issue of deployment of intermediate-range nuclear weapons (INF) in Europe. The original NATO agreement, made in 1979, committed the NATO allies to a 'dual-tracked' policy of negotiating the withdrawal of Soviet ss-20s, while at the same time moving towards the deployment of Pershing II and Cruise Missiles.

The deployment of these missiles had become a very contentious issue in most of the Western European countries that were meant to deploy them. The Soviet Union had been assisting the 'Ban the Bomb' movement in an attempt to drive a wedge between the Western Alliance partners in a hope to put off the deployment of the missiles. The Reagan Administration attempted to encourage continued support in Western European capitals for the NATO agreement.<sup>75</sup> However the Reagan Administration was mainly interested in the deployment and only payed lip-service to the possibility of a negotiated settlement.

Pressure began to build in the United States for the administration to make an offer to the Soviet Union to commence arms control talks. The President and the Secretary of State were pressed throughout 1981<sup>76</sup> when meeting journalists on when to expect talks between the US and the Soviet Union. In Europe, Western leaders were also pressing the United States to enter into negotiations. The Europeans wanted the United States to enter into negotiations on intermediate-range nuclear missiles, because they did not want declining superpower relations to upset European détente.<sup>77</sup> However, the Reagan Administration strongly resisted entering into substantive negotiations, hoping to impress on the Soviet Union their determination to

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<sup>75</sup> Richard Burt and Lawrence Eagleburger are just two examples of Administration officials which made speeches in the autumn of 1981 in support of deploying the missiles in Europe, see 'NATO and Nuclear Deterrence' by Richard Burt in Department of State Bulletin, November 1981, p.56 and 'Preserving Western Independence and Security' by Lawrence Eagleburger in Department of State Bulletin, January 1982, volume 82, no.2058, p.36.

<sup>76</sup> See excerpts from News Conferences January 29, 1981, from Department of State Bulletin, March 1981, volume 81, no.2046, p.12.

<sup>77</sup> Osgoode, 1968, p.474.

continue with the military build up.

The Soviet Union itself was keen to negotiate with the new administration. In the first meeting between Secretary Haig and Ambassador Dobrynin, the Soviet Ambassador delivered a letter from Gromyko conveying Moscow's desire for talks. In his book Caveat, Secretary Haig explains why the Reagan Administration was not interested, '... at this early stage there was nothing substantive to talk about, nothing to negotiate, until the USSR began to demonstrate its willingness to behave like a responsible power. That was the basis of our early policy toward Moscow'.<sup>78</sup>

The first real concession the Reagan Administration did make was to agree to INF talks (November 1981), though this was mainly due to the growing peace movement in Europe. But as Raymond Garthoff points out, 'Arms control negotiations resumed, without much enthusiasm in Washington, but at the urging of the State Department that at least the United States should go through the motions'.<sup>79</sup> In a letter to Leonid Brezhnev, President Reagan set out his proposal for the Geneva talks on INF. The proposal was that the United States would not deploy Cruise or Pershing II missiles if the Soviet Union dismantled all its SS-5, SS-4 and SS-20 missiles. This policy became known as the 'zero option'.<sup>80</sup> Whether the Administration expected to truly negotiate such a deal is not clear but they did maintain this position throughout the negotiations.

When domestic pressure began to build, the United States also agreed to hold strategic arms talks. The President also covered this in the Brezhnev letter, committing his Administration to a new format of talks renaming SALT, START (Strategic Arms Reduction Talks). By merely changing the name hardly seems to show a lack of zeal, but by shifting the talks from that of limitation to reduction of nuclear weapons, the Reagan Administration could hardly expect any progress in negotiations while US-Soviet relations were at their worst level in over a decade. The Administration barred any great breakthrough in the talks when as opposed to negotiations in the Nixon and Carter years, the START negotiations had no high-

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<sup>78</sup> Haig, A., Caveat: realism, Reagan and foreign policy, Macmillian, London, 1984, p.105.

<sup>79</sup> Garthoff, 1994, p.50.

<sup>80</sup> Rice, C., 'US-Soviet Relations', from Berman, L., ed., Looking Back on the Reagan Presidency, The Johns Hopkins University Press, London, 1990, p.78.

level channel to deal with the deadlocks caused over certain issues in the Geneva talks. In previous Administrations when these deadlocks would occur they were either dealt with through secret back-channel talks as in Kissinger's time or by second track negotiations conducted by Cyrus Vance.<sup>81</sup>

Through the latter half of 1982 the confrontational aspect of the Reagan policy toward the Soviet Union began to show signs of inconsistency. In June of 1982 the Administration had expanded the economic sanctions on the Soviet Union (imposed in 1981 after martial law had been declared in Poland) to include the export of oil and gas equipment and technology. At roughly the same time President Reagan made a controversial move of lifting the grain embargo on the Soviet Union. The lifting of the grain embargo, which was most likely done to win support in mid-western states in the run up to the 1982 mid-term election, came without the United States extracting any concessions from the USSR. While on the other hand, the ban on the export of gas and oil technology continued, which came as a blow to US European allies and for the efforts to build a consensus among the alliance toward Soviet policy.<sup>82</sup>

By the end of the year it appeared that the Reagan Administration was easing the tensions on the Soviet Union. Various problems in US foreign policy were influencing this shift. The failure of its Middle East policy of building strategic cooperation between the Arabs and the Israelis, which led to a fifth Arab-Israeli war. In Central America, the inability to gain a decisive victory over Soviet backed insurgents and the seemingly intractable situation in Afghanistan are among a few of these problems.

Finally, with the death of Brezhnev, a debate emerged within the Reagan Administration on how best to respond to the impending change of leadership. The President's hard line advisors argued that this was the ideal time to increase pressure on the Soviet Union. Those more on the left among the President's advisors urged a demonstration of goodwill in an attempt to shift the negative direction of US-Soviet relations. Neither of these two options were chosen, rather a third course was taken. The Reagan Administration chose to stand back and wait for the Soviet Union to demonstrate its willingness to improve superpower relations.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Garthoff, 1994, p.51.

<sup>82</sup> Garthoff, 1994.

<sup>83</sup> Garthoff, 1994, p.52.

## George Schultz

One change within the administration that had an impact on the change in direction in US foreign policy was the replacement of Alexander Haig by George Schultz as Secretary of State. Although Alexander Haig was the least ideological member of the Reagan Administration on foreign policy issues, his constant battles with the White House seriously affected his ability to communicate and convince the president of his policy position. Ambassador Veliotis noted that Haig, 'had virtually declared war on the White House. And then refused to seek allies'.<sup>84</sup> This meant that people like Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger, National Security Advisor Bill Clark and Director of the CIA Bill Casey had the ear of the president. Haig's replacement, George Schultz, was able to restore channels between the State Department and the White House, and he also gained allies within the White House such as James Baker and George Bush. Therefore the influence of the State Department was to increase over time.<sup>85</sup>

One of the first public indications of the affect of a change in Secretaries of State came with a radio address to the nation by President Reagan. George Schultz argues that this speech 'amounted to a message to Moscow'.<sup>86</sup> The tone and content of this speech is a major shift from Ronald Reagan's 'evil empire' speech:

'A new leader has to come to power in Moscow. There has been much speculation about whether this change could mean a chance to reduce tensions and solve some of the problems between us. No one hopes more than I do that the future will bring improvement in our relations with the Soviets and an era of genuine stability'.<sup>87</sup>

The president also expressed a new found enthusiasm for the nuclear arms talks. He said, 'America will negotiate energetically and in good faith to achieve early agreements providing for reduced and equal levels of forces'.<sup>88</sup>

This speech did contain a message for Moscow, it also was an important signal for

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<sup>84</sup> Ambassador Nicholas Veliotis, 1-29-90.

<sup>85</sup> Rosenfeld, S., 'Testing the Hard Line', Foreign Affairs, America and the World 1982, p.490.

<sup>86</sup> Schultz, G., Turmoil and Triumph, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1993, p.161.

<sup>87</sup> President Reagan, 'US Relations With the Soviet Union', Radio broadcast to the nation, Camp David, January 8, 1983, from Department of State Bulletin, February 1983, volume 83, no.2071, p.1.

<sup>88</sup> President Reagan, January 8, 1983, p.2.

NATO allies. In the president's address he announced that Vice President Bush would be making a trip to European capitals.<sup>89</sup> Bush was given the task of convincing European allies of a genuine desire by the US to negotiate while at the same time garner European support for the deployment of the Pershing II and Cruise missiles. This trip was important for the US policy position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and arms control because as George Schultz writes in Turmoil and Triumph, the United States was under pressure from its allies for not having negotiated a settlement on INF. However, Secretary Schultz still held to the position that the West needed to continue its policy of firmness. He was certain that the Soviet Union was not going to be willing to negotiate in earnest until they were sure the West was going to deploy the missiles.<sup>90</sup>

Under George Schultz, the United States also attempted to move toward a less confrontational relationship with the Soviet Union by means of diplomatic gestures. One such example was the agreement to permit seven Pentecostal Christians to emigrate from the Soviet Union. After having been refused the right to leave the Soviet Union, these seven Pentecostals had sought refuge in the United States embassy in Moscow. They had been living in the embassy for five years and had become a minor point of contention between the superpowers. President Reagan had raised the issue at his first meeting with Ambassador Dobrynin, arraigned by Secretary Schultz in February 1983. The President had asked if something could be done about the Pentecostals or another human rights issue. He promised not to embarrass the Soviets by giving their gesture undue publicity.<sup>91</sup>

By July 1983 all seven of the Pentecostals had left the Soviet Union. The US and the Soviet Union had succeeded in resolving this sensitive issue. This situation demonstrated the desire of both superpowers to move toward better relations, however several factors precluded any further relaxation and actually heightened tensions between the US and the USSR until 1985. Among these factors were the US announcement that it would begin research on the 'Strategic Defense Initiative' (SDI), the deployment of Cruise and Pershing II missiles, the shooting down of Korean airliner by the Soviet Union and the leadership vacuum that the

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<sup>89</sup> President Reagan, January 8, 1983, p.2.

<sup>90</sup> Schultz, 1993, p.161.

<sup>91</sup> Schultz, 1993, p.164.



Soviet Union experienced between 1982 and 1985.

The Reagan Administration made the pronouncement that it would seek funding in the defence budget for SDI in March 1983. The effect of this pronouncement was to challenge the doctrine of nuclear deterrence<sup>92</sup> and replace it with space based strategic defence. The speech by President Reagan which outlined SDI came as a great shock to American adversaries and allies alike, and it was also a shock to some within the Reagan Administration itself. The proposal for SDI and the speech that was to introduce the project were held in secret by a small group in the National Security Council and the President.

To the Soviet Union and the rest of Europe SDI would have more aptly been described in Raymond Garthoff's words as the 'strategic destabilization initiative'.<sup>93</sup> Publicly the Soviet Union was arguing that SDI was counter to the ABM Treaty and was not a defensive weapon but a means of pursuing a first strike capability. The Soviet Union spent a great deal of effort trying to kill political support for SDI. They attempted to maintain the moral high ground and blame the United States for provoking another round of the strategic arms race.<sup>94</sup> SDI was to remain a point of contention in US-Soviet relations even after the new era of détente was well established.

The Soviet Union announcement that it would discontinue the INF negotiations after NATO governments had agreed to begin deployment of the Cruise and Pershing II in November 1983 also demonstrated the worsening of US-Soviet relations. When the missiles began to be deployed the Soviets broke off negotiations in the hope that it would shock Western public opinion and force a change in US arms strategy. However this strategy backfired on the Soviet Union as the Reagan Administration was successfully able to place blame on the Soviet Union for the failure of the INF negotiations. Moreover, the failure to block the deployment of Cruise and Pershing II missiles at the expense of so much political capital was a major embarrassment for Soviet diplomacy.

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<sup>92</sup> This had governed US-Soviet relations since just after the Second World War

<sup>93</sup> Garthoff, R., 'Strategic Defense and US-USSR Relations', from Holdren J. and Rotblat, J., Strategic Defences and the Future of the Arms Race, MacMillian Press, 1987, p.109.

<sup>94</sup> Lambeth, B., 'Soviet Perspectives on the SDI', from, Wells, S. and Litwak, R. ed., Strategic Defense and Soviet -American Relations, Ballinger Publishing Co., Cambridge, Mass., 1987, p.59.

Two final factors that served to hinder a rapprochement in US-Soviet relations were the power vacuum that developed in the Soviet Union between 1983-1985 and the shooting down of KAL 007 by the Soviet Union in September 1983. The leadership change from Brezhnev, to Andropov, to Chernenko, to Gorbachev delayed any possibility of improving relations between the superpowers. The two superpowers exchanged political barbs over the KAL 007 incident in which all 269 passengers were killed.

### **The Return of Détente**

By the end of its first term, the Reagan Administration began to look at a more accommodating stance toward the Soviet Union. Domestically, a combination of the Iran-Contra scandal and the rising budget deficit was placing mounting pressure on the administration to alter its foreign policy. There was also a recognition by the Reagan Administration that, similar to the situation in the US in the late 60s, they were witnessing the Soviet Union suffering many of the same problems in the mid-80s. They saw the Soviet Union suffering from overstretch in its commitments and losing its political influence, while at the same time maintaining its military preponderance. However, unlike the late 60s, this time the US found itself dealing from a position of strength and was able to wait for the Soviet Union to come to them.

The first real breakthrough in US-Soviet relations came with the announcement on September 11, 1984 that the Foreign Minister Gromyko would be meeting President Reagan in Washington. This would be the Foreign Minister's first visit to the White House since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and this would also be President Reagan's first meeting with a member of the Soviet Politburo since becoming President.<sup>95</sup>

It may have been an omen of the future of US-Soviet relations that on the morning of the first session of the second round of INF talks the Soviet leader Konstantin Chernenko died.<sup>96</sup> Unlike the previous leadership changeovers, by the time of Chernenko's death, Mikhail Gorbachev had emerged as a clear favourite to become the next leader of the Communist party. He had also become something of a darling of the West after a visit to London in which Margaret Thatcher commented that Gorbachev was someone with whom the West could 'do

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<sup>95</sup> Schultz, 1993, p.481.

<sup>96</sup> Rice, 1990, p.80.

business’.

The coming to power of Mikhail Gorbachev was the most important factor in changing US-Soviet relations. It is possible to argue that without Gorbachev relations between the two superpowers may not have improved. In Turmoil and Triumph, George Schultz states that he believed that the shift in US policy toward engagement of the two superpowers began in 1983.<sup>97</sup> However during those two years, 1983 and 1985 the new Reagan policy was getting nowhere. It was Gorbachev who accepted the Reagan position on, among other things, arms control and conventional force reductions that moved US-Soviet relations into a new era.<sup>98</sup>

The Soviet Union’s first substantive move in policy toward a position similar to that of the United States came in a meeting between President Reagan and the new Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze. The meeting which took place just after the opening of the UN in October 1985, had taken on significance as a preliminary to the Geneva Summit. Shevardnadze presented the President with a letter from Gorbachev which laid out the Soviet position of proposed reductions of 50% of strategic offensive arms to a level of 6,000 and a proposed second agreement that neither side would ‘develop, test or deploy "space-strike weapons"’.<sup>99</sup>

The Soviet proposal was unacceptable to the Reagan Administration for two main reasons. The first was related to the Soviet definition of what constituted a ‘strategic delivery system’. Paul Nitze who served as special advisor to the President and the Secretary of State on arms control set out the administrations objection to this proposal in a speech to the American Defense Preparedness Association:

‘The effect of the Soviet definition would be to include within "strategic" limits three categories of US systems while excluding comparable Soviet systems. The first of these is US longer range INF missiles in Europe. Second, the Soviet definition would include as "strategic" US dual-capable aircraft located both in Europe and Asia. Finally, the Soviet definition would include all the attack aircraft on 14 US aircraft carriers, one which is still

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<sup>97</sup> Schultz, 1993, p.160.

<sup>98</sup> The motivations for Gorbachev to accept U.S positions on most international issue will be discussed in Chapter 6.

<sup>99</sup> Garthoff, 1994, p.228.

under construction'.<sup>100</sup>

The second issue which was to prove a far more intractable problem was that of the development, testing and deployment of space weapons. The Reagan Administration and most importantly President Reagan himself was adamant that the US would not give up SDI. The administration's determination to proceed with the development of SDI led to something of a political firestorm when it was announced that the United States would no longer abide by the strict interpretation of the ABM treaty which did not permit the development testing or deployment of space weapons. This brought condemnation not only from the Soviet Union, but Western allies such as Britain and West Germany. SDI was an issue that continued to dog US-Soviet relations throughout the 1980s.

### *The Return of US-Soviet Summits*

The summit in Geneva was the first US-Soviet Summit in more than six years and was the first for both Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev. Unlike the summit strategy of the Nixon Administration in which substantive progress should be made prior to the actual meeting, the Geneva summit turned out to be more an occasion for the two leaders to get to know each other and explore their positions on various issues.

What objectives each leader had in terms of what substantive issues they wished to cover at the summit was quite different. Gorbachev had gone to Geneva wanting to focus on arms control and most importantly SDI. For Ronald Reagan, he was intent on not allowing the agenda to be completely dominated by arms control, wanting to cover bilateral relations, regional trouble spots and human rights.<sup>101</sup>

Those substantive issues which were agreed upon were covered in a 'Joint Statement'. One issue that had seemed intractable before the summit was the invitation to hold a summit in Washington and then in Moscow. President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev also agreed to the 'the principle of 50 percent reductions in the nuclear arms...' of both the US and the Soviet Union. They discussed the possibility of an interim INF agreement. Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and for a ban on chemical weapons.

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<sup>100</sup> Nitze, P., 'The Soviet Arms Control Counterproposal', Address before the American Defense Preparedness Association on October 24, 1985, from , Department of State Bulletin, December, 1985, volume 85, no. 2105, pp.35-36.

<sup>101</sup> Garthoff, 1994, p.238.

There was also a joint commitment to secure a document from the Stockholm Conference on Disarmament in Europe that, 'would include mutually acceptable confidence-and security-building measures and give concrete expression and effect to the principle of non-use of force'. Only cursory encouragement was made to the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction Talks in Vienna. Most importantly the two leaders committed themselves to increase dialogue not only among themselves but also at various levels.<sup>102</sup>

Although the US claimed that the Geneva summit had been a major step toward better superpower relations, there was little change in terms of policy from the United States. The Reagan Administration and most importantly Ronald Reagan himself, had concluded that the Soviet Union under Gorbachev was coming around to the American position on many of these issues. This shift was a result of its policy of strength and confrontation and there seemed therefore, no reason to change policy. In some respect events throughout much of 1986 suggested that the Reagan Administration was actually attempting to 'flex its muscle' in support of US activities in the Third World. It was made public in March 1986 that the United States would supply Afghan rebels with stinger missiles and that the ten year ban on US assistance to the UNITA rebels in Angola would be lifted. The United States also bombed Libya whom the US Administration blamed for a terrorist bombing of a Berlin disco.

Reagan was in the enviable position of either holding a second summit on his terms or being able to claim in the event that the summit did not take place that it was Gorbachev who had refused President Reagan's open invitation to a summit. Gorbachev on the other hand truly needed a second summit in order to justify his changes in both foreign and security policy. However he could not go to a second summit without gaining some form of a breakthrough on arms control which had to happen at the Geneva Summit. Because there had been almost no progress made at the arms control negotiations, Gorbachev proposed a working summit be held in Reykjavik.

The Reykjavik summit was something of a gamble for Gorbachev. He needed the breakthrough, and saw the only way to get it was through direct negotiations with President Reagan. The Reagan Administration had gone to Reykjavik in a far less urgent mood. Although as George Schultz noted, 'We heard rumours that Gorbachev would come to

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<sup>102</sup> 'President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev Meet in Geneva', from Department of State Bulletin, January 1986, volume 86, no.2106, pp.7-10.

Reykjavik with a blitz of proposals',<sup>103</sup> the United States came with very little in terms of new initiatives. What they expected was Soviet movement toward the US position most likely in areas such as INF negotiations. What they received was almost a complete acceptance of the United States' position by the Soviet Union.

During the negotiations the two sides agreed to cut their strategic nuclear offensive force by 50%. They agreed to a formula of how different systems would apply against that ceiling. On INF, the Soviet Union accepted the US category of intermediate weapons by the distance they travel as opposed to the Soviet Union's position based on their presumed targets. The Soviet Union also dropped its demand that British and French forces be included in the American calculations. From this change in position by the Soviets, the two superpowers were able to agree to reduce these weapons down to a level of 100 warheads for each side.<sup>104</sup>

However the proposal collapsed over the issue of space weapons and the terms of observing the ABM treaty. In the Soviet proposal on space and defence weapons, they proposed a ten year nonwithdrawal from the ABM treaty (in early negotiations the Soviet had proposed 15 years, while the US had countered with 7 1/2 years) and dropped their demand that research on SDI be banned, accepting it in the laboratory. President Reagan accepted the ten year nonwithdrawal from the ABM, but demanded that this be linked to reductions of ballistic missiles and that each party reserved the right to deploy advanced defences unless the two agreed otherwise. The US President also proposed that both sides observe the strict definition of the ABM Treaty, which allowed for research, development and testing. President Reagan would not accept Gorbachev's position because in the words of George Schultz, 'Mr. Gorbachev proposed, in effect, to amend the ABM Treaty'.<sup>105</sup>

Was the Reykjavik Summit a disaster? It was a disaster to US allies especially in Europe. They felt betrayed by President Reagan's willingness to give up the nuclear umbrella without any advance consultation. The Europeans also feared that an agreement to eliminate

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<sup>103</sup> Schultz, 1993, pp.754-755.

<sup>104</sup> Schultz, G., 'Reykjavik: Watershed in US-Soviet Relations', address to the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, October 31, 1986, found in The Department of State Bulletin, December 1986, volume 86, no.2117, p.22.

<sup>105</sup> Schultz, December 1986, p.22.

all nuclear weapons would decouple the US commitment to European security.<sup>106</sup>

The summit was successful in that it was a breakthrough in terms of US-Soviet arms control. Condoleezza Rice describes a change in attitude in aftermath of the summit, ‘...this time, instead of stormily denouncing the talks, the Soviets, like the (Reagan) administration, sought to put a positive "spin" in the Reykjavik talks. What could have been viewed as disastrous suddenly became the point of departure for the next round of talks at Geneva’.<sup>107</sup>

Although the Reykjavik Summit was to become the point of departure for future arms control negotiations between the superpowers, in the months immediately following the summit there was little progress made toward an agreement, and once again it was left to Gorbachev to make an attempt at breaking the deadlock in arms control. On February 28, 1987, the General Secretary restated his offer on INF to eliminate all of these weapons in Europe and limit Soviet deployment in Asia to 100 warheads and US continental deployments to the same level. He also for the first time expressed his willingness to separate INF negotiations from the debate on SDI.<sup>108</sup>

Through much of 1987, just as in the year previous, relations between the United States and the Soviet Union seemed to have made very little progress. Much of the difficulty in making headway was related to the United States. Certain members of the Administration were attempting to derail any progress in US-Soviet relations. Among the most ardent people trying to interfere with these developments was the Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger. In January and February 1987, he mounted a campaign to begin deployment of SDI and for the US to adopt the broad interpretation of the ABM treaty.<sup>109</sup> Whether or not President Reagan was attempting to obstruct progress in US-Soviet relations is not clear, but he continued to make speeches that attacked ‘Soviet expansionism’.<sup>110</sup> One thing that is clear is that this

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<sup>106</sup> Thompson, K., ed., Foreign Policy in the Reagan Presidency, University Press of America, London, 1993, p.83.

<sup>107</sup> Rice, 1990, p.81.

<sup>108</sup> Schultz, 1993, p.876.

<sup>109</sup> Garthoff, 1994, p.311.

<sup>110</sup> See Reagan, R., ‘The Current State of Soviet-American Relations, address before the World Affairs Council in Los Angeles, April 10, 1987 found in The Department of State Bulletin, June 1987, volume 87, no.2123, p.10.

approach really did put a strain on the relationship.

There were also areas where the two sides had come to tentative agreement and the United States was now forced to make new demands due to pressure from its allies. On the issue of INF, President Reagan challenged the Soviets to move ahead toward an agreement. However he did add two qualifications, 'The issues of verification and shorter range INF systems must be resolved in a way that protects allied security'.<sup>111</sup> The issue of verification had been a long term concern both in the United States and Europe, but concerns with shorter range INF<sup>112</sup> (SRINF) systems had arisen in Europe after the Reykjavik summit. In an effort to break through these objections, Gorbachev offered on sight inspections and the elimination of all SRINF. The proposal on SRINF became known as the double-zero option (reduction to zero missiles between 500-1000 km (SRINF) and reduction to zero of missiles between 1000-5000).

Even with the agreement on the double zero levels for both classes of missiles and the likelihood of an INF treaty in the near future, there was little movement toward a third summit to be held in Washington. The main delay in giving the go-ahead for the summit was a demand by Gorbachev that significant progress be made on the issues of strategic and space weapons before setting a date.<sup>113</sup>

Interestingly enough just after Mikhail Gorbachev gave in and accepted to hold the summit in the US in December 1988, progress began to be made on the START negotiations. This had less to do with the change of heart from the Soviet leader on the summit and rather more from the changes going on in the Reagan Administration. Casper Weinberger, a long time opponent of any form of engagement with the Soviet Union, had retired and was replaced by Frank Carlucci as Secretary of Defense. Also the hard-line director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Kenneth Adelman, resigned. In the meetings in Geneva between Secretary Schultz and Foreign Minister Shevardnadze just two weeks before the Washington Summit began all the outstanding issues on INF were finally resolved and major progress was

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<sup>111</sup> Reagan, June 1987, p.11.

<sup>112</sup> shorter range INF systems are generally defined as those missile with a range of 500-1000 km.

<sup>113</sup> Schultz, 1993, p.999.



made on START.<sup>114</sup>

The centrepiece of the Washington Summit was the signing of the INF Treaty, however the summit covered the four-part agenda that the United States had made the requisite framework for US-Soviet relations. The INF Treaty was a really significant event in US-Soviet relations. It was criticized by detractors of the treaty for only covering 5% of the total nuclear arsenal of the two sides. In the Soviet Union there was also criticism of the treaty because the Soviet Union had to cut a far larger number (1000) of missiles. But as the Joint Summit Statement noted, 'This treaty is historic both for its objective-the complete elimination of an entire class of US and Soviet nuclear arms-and for the innovative character and scope of its verification provisions'.<sup>115</sup>

Progress was also made at the summit in many other areas. In terms of strategic weapons overall ceilings on offensive weapons, and warheads, as well as counting rules for the various types of ballistic missiles were agreed. The framework for verification of the future START Treaty was set out along the same lines as agreed to in the INF Treaty. The Joint Statement noted all areas of the four-part agenda, but the most heated discussions were over regional conflicts, namely Afghanistan and Nicaragua. The major dispute in both conflicts was over arm shipments to the governments (in the Soviet case) and the insurgents (in the American case).

The Washington Summit and the signing of the INF Treaty was a personal success for Ronald Reagan. As Raymond Garthoff noted, 'he alone may have believed in his proposal for a zero option for INF in 1981. It was unrealistic then. But with Gorbachev's new thinking, the option became possible'.<sup>116</sup> In many ways however it was the last major accomplishment of the Reagan Administration, even though the two leaders were to meet twice more in 1988.

## Conclusion

By 1988 any initiative the Reagan Administration had demonstrated in improving US-Soviet relations had completely passed. The only initiative that President Reagan himself had

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<sup>114</sup> Garthoff, 1994, pp.324-325.

<sup>115</sup> Joint Summit Statement, December 10, 1987, from Department of State Bulletin, February 1988, volume 88, no.2131, p.12.

<sup>116</sup> Garthoff, 1994, pp.327-328.

shown was his willingness to deal with Gorbachev on the President's own terms. Raymond Garthoff notes this when he said, 'The rapprochement that developed from 1985 through 1988 stemmed from the fact that Gorbachev had been prepared to change Soviet positions and accept American ones.' He continues to say, 'Reagan could and did, in effect stand pat and wait for Gorbachev to come to him'.<sup>117</sup>

With the exception of the START Treaty, which was later signed under President Bush, there were very few issues outstanding which had been initially proposed by the United States. There was very little in terms of a proactive approach to US-Soviet relations coming out of Washington through most of President Reagan's second term and into the first year of the Bush Administration. From this point on it was Moscow and not Washington which drove US-Soviet relations and lead to the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. Therefore this thesis will now turn its attention to the development of Soviet foreign policy through the Cold War.

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<sup>117</sup> Garthoff, 1994, pp.338-339.

## Chapter 5

### Introduction

The end of the Second World War and the defeat of the Axis powers left the Soviet Union as the strongest military power in Europe and second strongest in the world.<sup>1</sup> The difficulty that the Soviet Union faced was how to transform this shift in the correlation of forces into an advantageous situation in the post-war period. As noted in the first chapter, throughout the post-war period, Soviet foreign policy was dominated by two themes, the expansion of Communism and the fear of attack from hostile forces. These two objectives were mainly due to the sense of inferiority and vulnerability that are the hallmarks of both Soviet and Russian history. It is not surprising then that the engine of this foreign policy was the changing nature of military power. In the early part of the post-war period, the Soviet Union perceived its main threat to come from the United States via Western Europe. Under Stalin, the Soviet Union looked to increase its security by capitalizing on the strength of the Red Army as an occupying force in order to expand its power. However, by the mid-50s, the Soviet Union had expanded its military power, especially in the areas of nuclear weapons and sea power, and the military threat was no longer strictly on its borders<sup>2</sup>, the form and the focus of the policy that was to change to one of projecting that power to various region of the world.

### Josef Stalin and the Early Post-War Period

In the first stage of Soviet foreign policy in the post-war period, Stalin combined these two themes in the establishment of the Soviet Empire as the main priority. In the aftermath of the war, Stalin was left with either the option of imposing Communist rule over Eastern Europe, or a solution similar to that imposed on Finland. Stalin's decision to choose the first option, which placed a greater emphasis on the military aspects of power, coincided with his belief in the threat of capitalist encirclement.

Stalin's fears reflect a traditional Russian view of the country being a vulnerable nation. It is not surprising then that at the end of the Second World War the objectives and goals of Soviet foreign policy were almost indistinguishable from Tsarist Russia. In an article that was

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<sup>1</sup> Booth, K., The Military Instrument in Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-1972, Royal United Services Institute, London, 1973, p.12.

<sup>2</sup> For example NATO was beginning to deploy long range bombers and submarine launch missiles.

published in Foreign Affairs in January 1934, Karl Radek, who was Stalin's chief publicist on international affairs, was condemning Western critics who described Soviet foreign policy as a continuation of Tsarist foreign policy. Radek writes:

'It used to be an axiom of Tsarist policy that it should strive by every available means to gain possession of the Dardanelles and of an ice-free port on the Pacific. Not only have the Soviets not attempted to seize the Dardanelles, but from the very beginning they have tried to establish the most friendly relations with Turkey; nor has Soviet policy ever had as one of its aims the conquest of Port Arthur or of Dairen. Again, Tsarism, or any other bourgeois régime in Russia, would necessarily resume the struggle for the conquest of Poland and of the Baltic states as is doubtless clear to any thoughtful bourgeois politician in those countries'.<sup>3</sup>

Although several of these Tsarist territorial objectives had not been obtained, Soviet foreign policy under Stalin had gone much further in securing Tsarist political objectives. By 1945, the Tsars' successors had brought eastern Europe under the full domination of Russia. The ethnic frontiers of Germany had been pushed back to where they were in the Middle Ages. Just as Nicholas I's government had done in the empire's western domains in the 1830's and 1840's, Stalin's government, although committed atheists, repressed the Greek Catholic rite in eastern Galicia and extended its efforts on behalf of the Orthodox Church. When all the Ukrainians and Byelorussians were included in the USSR, the potential sources of irredentism were removed. These facts demonstrate the strong continuity between the old and new régime.<sup>4</sup>

The decision to create a Soviet Empire by extending communist rule over Eastern European was taken more for the purpose of securing Soviet domination over the region than any ideological compunction to expand the communist community. This did not mean that Stalin had no use at all for ideology. George Kennan, in Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin noted that Stalin was not a doctrinaire ideologist. He knew that theoretical ideas meant things to other people; no one was more sensitive than Stalin to the understanding of what it was that ideology meant, or was more skilful at exploiting the political-emotional impulses to which ideas gave rise. However, Stalin did not share these impulses.<sup>5</sup> Alvin Rubinstein notes that Stalin viewed power in military terms, which was demonstrated by his deprecation of the

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<sup>3</sup> Radek, K., 'The Bases of Soviet Foreign Policy', Foreign Affairs, January 1934, p.76.

<sup>4</sup> Ulam, A., Expansion and Coexistence: the History of Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-1973, Prager, New York, 1974, p.12.

<sup>5</sup> Kennan G., Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin, Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1960, pp.253-254.

Vatican's role in world affairs with the query, 'how many divisions does the Pope have?'.<sup>6</sup>

So if Stalin had so little time for ideological dogma, why did he want to create communist régimes in Eastern Europe at the risk of alienating the West? Stalin was not in principle predisposed to having communist governments in Eastern Europe, he had other concerns, mainly Soviet security which could only be obtained by subordinate governments in the region. Whether they were communist or democratic was probably not a great concern to him at the time.<sup>7</sup> What many, especially, Western governments failed to recognize was that most freely elected governments would reflect an anti-Russian bias of the majority in those countries.

Stalin did continue to profess the dictums that a world revolution is a historic certainty and should be assisted by the successors of Marx, Engels and Lenin, but that the Soviet Union would have to coexist with the capitalist world until their imminent clash. However his main concern in foreign policy was not with fermenting communist revolution abroad, but with securing the Soviet Union's geopolitical position. In order to achieve security, the Soviet leader, especially around the close of the Second World War, co-opted many of the policy objectives of the Tsars' realpolitik. By 1945, as Robert Warth points out, 'Stalin was in no mood for revolutionary adventurism. His whole career, in fact, demonstrated an erratic but steady retreat from the original goals of international Communism toward the verities of Russian nationalism'.<sup>8</sup>

In the aftermath of the Second World War the Soviet Union saw itself in a very vulnerable position. They had a large land based army, but their economy had been devastated by five years of war. The Soviet Union also saw the industrial power of the United States as overwhelming. The United States had an uncertain number of atomic weapons, scores of long range bombers and the strongest navy in the world, all areas where the Soviet Union was severely lacking in capability.

That Stalin recognized these weaknesses and set out almost immediately to remedy

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<sup>6</sup> Rubinstein, A.Z., Soviet Foreign Policy Since World War II: imperial and global, Winthrop, Cambridge MA.,1981, p.39.

<sup>7</sup> Warth, R.D., Soviet Russia in World Politics, Twayne Publishers Inc., New York, 1963, p.295.

<sup>8</sup> Warth, 1963, p.284.

them was set out in his election speech of 1946 when he announced in the Fourth Five-Year Plan that special attention would be given to research and development of new weapon systems. However, in the interim, the Soviet Union was going to get as much deterrent effect of the one military weapon in which it was superior to the United States, its land army.<sup>9</sup> This meant that the Soviet Union had to flex its muscle in the region where that superiority of land forces was most prevalent, Europe.

For Western Europe, the Soviet Union deployed and trained their forces as a direct military threat. The Red army trained to execute a swift strike across the Northern Plain in Germany and to the Atlantic. Although this was not a direct blow against their main enemy the United States, Soviet strategists thought that it would be such a devastating blow to the United States and its political and economic interest that the US would be unable to respond. However these measures were no more than stopgaps to reduce the potential threat during a period of military weakness.<sup>10</sup>

In Eastern Europe, Soviet policy was motivated by several factors. Zbigniew Brzezinski broke these factors down to five areas of Soviet interest. First among these areas was to exert influence west of the Russian frontier in order to deny the area to Germany. Secondly was the motivation to ensure that the countries of Eastern Europe would not only be hostile to a possible resurgent Germany, but that these countries would collaborate with the Soviet Union. Thirdly to use Eastern Europe to assist in the economic recovery of the Soviet Union by removing resources and enterprises. Fourth was to deny the capitalist countries access to the region because they were likely to prove hostile toward the USSR. And finally was to expand the socialist revolution to these areas. The first two factors had been quite clear in the Soviet position at the Big Three negotiation at Tehran, Yalta and Potsdam. The other three areas of Soviet interests, which Brzezinski notes, were interests that the West felt it was not in a position to oppose.<sup>11</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the end of hostilities the Soviet policy in Eastern Europe

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<sup>9</sup> Shulman, M., Stalin's Foreign Policy Reappraised, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA., 1963, pp.23-24.

<sup>10</sup> Shulman, 1963, pp.23-24.

<sup>11</sup> Brzezinski, Z., The Soviet Bloc; Unity and Conflict, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1967, p.4.

was intended to achieve these objectives by consolidating and defining their position in their sphere of influence. Consolidation was done by establishing Communist governments in Poland, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria and the Soviet sector of Germany, supporting local Communist in Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia and drawing them into the Soviet Union's orbit of influence.<sup>12</sup>

That the Soviet Union was able extend its influence and create its empire was not due to mass support of the local communist movements, but rather by the role played by the Red Army in first liberating and then occupying these countries. As Stephen Kaplan writes, the occupation of these territories was central not only to establishing Communist governments, but maintaining them. Therefore with the purges of Eastern European Communists whom Moscow did not consider loyal in the late 1940s and the continued deployment of the Soviet army in Eastern Europe, the Sovietization of Eastern Europe was guaranteed. As many as one million Soviet troops remained in Eastern Europe after the war.<sup>13</sup>

Stalin also attempted to define the outer boundaries of the Soviet Union's sphere of influence. Vyacheslav Molotov recounts, in his dairies, Stalin's appraisal of the new post-war boundaries:

'During a meeting at one of his dachas in the summer of 1945, Stalin pinned a map showing the new frontiers to a wall, stepped back, pointed to the north, said he liked what he saw. Same in the northwest: "The Baltic area-Russian from time immemorial!" He then looked to the east, now under the Soviet flag: "all of Sakhalin, the Kuriles, Port Arthur, and Dalny are ours-Well done! China, Mongolia, the Chinese Eastern Railway-all under control." Then stabbing a finger at the southern Caucasus, he exclaimed "But *here* is where I don't like our frontiers!"'<sup>14</sup>.

The Soviet Union had stationed troops in the northern half of Iran during the war as the British had done in the southern half to protect arms shipments coming through the Persian Gulf and then by truck overland. Under the Anglo-Iranian-Soviet agreement, troops were to be withdrawn by March 2, 1946. The British troops and some American that had been stationed there during the war were removed by the agreed date, while Soviet troops were still

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<sup>12</sup> Kaplan, S., ed., Diplomacy of Power, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C.1981, p.64

<sup>13</sup> Kaplan, 1981, p.66.

<sup>14</sup> McClellan, W., 'Molotov Remembers', from Cold War International History Project Bulletin, hereafter cited as CWIHP, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington D.C., Issue 1, Spring 1992, p.17.

in evidence after the deadline. They were blocking the way to northern part of the country for Iranian troops and assisting the Tudeh party establish an autonomous Azerbaijan. What the Kremlin hoped to gain was a foothold in the region and possibly oil concessions similar to those given to Britain and the United States.

The Iranian government made an official protest to the United Nations against Soviet interference in what Tehran saw as an internal affair. Under international pressure the Soviet Union agreed to the final removal of its troops by May, but Moscow was also able to gain the agreement to create a joint oil company (this was later rejected by the Iranian Parliament as US-Soviet relations chilled in 1947).<sup>15</sup>

The Iranian situation was not the only area where the Soviet Union chose not to expand its influence, rather after initial probes they decided to retrench their position. Stephen Kaplan notes that the Soviet army did not support local Communists in all circumstances, 'Soviet troops withdrew from China, Iran, and Czechoslovakia; a Communist régime was not established in Austria; and a *coup* was not attempted in Finland. Stalin was also willing to back off after probing weakness in Turkey'.<sup>16</sup>

The effect of the Soviet Union's consolidation and defining of its sphere of influence was to increase suspicions in the West. These suspicions were prevalent in both the American and British governments, but by 1947 this had crossed into public view. Marshall Shulman writes, 'As the probing became sharper in Central and Eastern Europe and in the eastern Mediterranean area, the Western nations were pricked into an awareness that a new balance of power was in the making, and it was clear that no fundamental stabilization of relations with the Soviet Union was likely until the power relationships in Europe had been defined a fresh'.<sup>17</sup>

With growing suspicion of Soviet intentions, the West began to undertake efforts to strengthen and stabilize its position in Europe mainly through the Greek-Turkish Aid Program and the European Recovery Program (Marshall Plan). The Soviet Union viewed the shift in Western policy and most notably the Marshall Plan as an American attempt to secure hegemony over Western Europe and deemed it necessary to speed up its consolidation in

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<sup>15</sup> Warth, 1963, pp.323-324.

<sup>16</sup> Kaplan, 1981, p.64.

<sup>17</sup> Shulman, 1963, p.14.



Eastern Europe. This change in policy was marked in a speech by Stalin's chief lieutenant, Andrei Zhdanov at the founding conference of the Cominform (Communist Information Bureau) in Poland in the autumn of 1947. The speech recognized the trend of a growing divide of the world into two camps and signalled a move toward ideological rigidity within the Soviet sphere of influence and more militant foreign policy.<sup>18</sup>

After Zhdanov's speech the Soviet Union no longer felt compelled to exercised any restraint in their dealings with Eastern Europe for fear of offending the West. The creation of the Cominform and Comecon (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) were moves by the Soviet Union to bring uniformity to the 'informational sphere' in the former and the economies in the later of Soviet -Eastern European relations. The most stunning case of the Soviet Union bringing the countries of Eastern Europe into political uniformity from the Western viewpoint was the *coup d'etat* in Czechoslovakia. As Rubinstein notes, 'The disappearance of Czechoslovakia as a middle ground in which democratic socialist and Communist groups could coexist symbolized the end of possible cooperation between East and West'.<sup>19</sup>

Ironically as this trend toward conformity was bringing most of the governments of Eastern Europe into a tighter orbit with the Soviet Union, it also caused the first major split in the Communist bloc between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. The main disputes between the two countries were Yugoslav involvement in the Greek civil war and their attempts to unify with Albania.<sup>20</sup> However the underlying difficulty in their relations was caused by the Yugoslav refusal to follow strictly the Soviet model of socialism, or as Rubinstein argues 'In a word they were unwilling to turn their country into a colony of the Soviet Union'.<sup>21</sup>

Stalin refused to accept Tito as his equal, he wanted to have unchallenged political and economic control from Moscow and a privileged position for Soviet diplomats and advisors in Yugoslavia. When he could not get it, Rubinstein points out that, 'Stalin invoked the ultimate weapon, excommunication, against his former protégé'.<sup>22</sup> Using everything short of

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<sup>18</sup> Shulman, 1963, p.15.

<sup>19</sup> Rubinstein, 1981, p.56.

<sup>20</sup> Djilas, M., Conversations With Stalin, Penguin Books, London, 1963, pp.110-112.

<sup>21</sup> Rubinstein, 1981, p.57.

<sup>22</sup> Rubinstein, 1981, p.58.

a military intervention, Stalin hoped to overthrow Tito, however Stalin underestimated the popularity of the Yugoslav leader and failed in his attempts. After his experience with Tito, Stalin initiated a series of purges of possible imitators of the Yugoslav leader and intensified the pace of Sovietization in Eastern Europe. Leaders such as Gomulka in Poland, Rajk in Hungary, Kostov in Bulgaria and Slansky in Czechoslovakia were all swept away.

The defection of Yugoslavia had left only one area in Europe where Soviet control was not complete, Germany. The break between Stalin and Tito had heightened Soviet fears of a united Germany firmly rooted to the Western camp. Although the Western powers saw the Berlin blockade as an attempt by the Soviet Union to gain total control over Germany, Stalin's intentions were less ambitious. He sought either to reunite Germany as a demilitarized neutral or barring that to secure control of the Soviet sector. The blockade attempted to serve the dual purpose for the Soviet Union of removing Berlin, the one weak link among its new satellites and a means of forcing the Western Allies to retreat from its strategy in Germany.

The Soviet Union expected that the United States would not wish to engage in a direct confrontation over Berlin and would therefore withdraw. The attempt failed when the United States turned the tables on the Soviet Union by using an airlift to break the blockade and place the initiative back on the Soviet Union. Although the blockade lasted over a year, when it was finally lifted in 1949 a rough status quo had been established. Both the Soviet Union and the Western Allies had set up their own German states and the frontiers of the two competing blocs had been established, for the next few years Superpower relations were to shift their attention elsewhere.

### *China*

Even in an area where the Soviet Union found a rather strong indigenous revolutionary movement, namely China, they initially refrained from encouraging it to attempt a revolutionary overthrow of the government. In the Summer of 1945 the Soviet Union and the nationalist government in Chungking signed a Sino-Soviet Pact in which the Soviet Union recognized the Nationalist régime as the central government of China including their sovereignty over Manchuria and pledged both aid and support to the Chungking government. This pact was not really a diplomatic necessity as the main Soviet interest in the area at the time (mainly the wresting of control of Manchuria from the Japanese and the recognition of the Mongolian People's Republic as a Soviet protectorate) were in no way affected by the

signing of the pact. Once again as Warth writes, 'the Kremlin preferred to legalize its relations with the Nationalist régime, for the dazzling vision of a Communist China, so natural to the Bolshevik elite in the mid-twenties, was a utopian pipe dream to the hard-bitten leaders of the mid-forties. As in Europe, Stalin was concerned with the traditional by-play of diplomacy and power politics – too much the "realist" to perceive the revolutionary currents which more than two decades of disappointment had taught him were mere figments of overwrought Marxist imaginations'.<sup>23</sup>

Stalin only began to alter his position on China when he became dissatisfied with US direct involvement in Chinese domestic affairs. The US troops in China at that time were initially there to demobilize Japanese troops and the Kremlin felt that they were becoming increasingly involved in domestic affairs. Stalin was equally dissatisfied with the Soviet Union's virtual exclusion from Japanese affairs. Although he was not prepared to intervene directly with the Red Army along similar lines as the US, Stalin did prolong the occupation of Manchuria. Obstacles were also found to impede Nationalist troop movements in the southern part of Manchuria while communist forces were able to move freely in the region.<sup>24</sup>

However throughout most of the Chinese Civil War the Soviet Union was reluctant to fully support the Communist forces against the Nationalist. When Chaing Kai-shek was forced to move his government from Nanking to Canton in the Spring of 1949, Stalin instructed his ambassador to make the move to Canton as well.<sup>25</sup> Even when the communist forces were finally able to secure victory and force the Kuomintang government to flee to Formosa, the Soviet Union's response was rather tepid.

Relations between the Soviet Union and the newly formed People Republic of China remained strained during Mao Tse-tung's first visit to Moscow after the defeat of the Nationalists. Rather than being a celebration of the victory of a fellow revolutionary comrade, it became a period of tense negotiations between two nation-states. The visit, which lasted 9 weeks, resulted in a treaty of friendship and co-operation, but hardly left either side feeling

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<sup>23</sup> Warth, 1963, p.313.

<sup>24</sup> Warth, 1963, p.315.

<sup>25</sup> Nogee, J.L., and Donaldson R.H., Soviet Foreign Policy Since World War II, Pergamon policy studies on international politics, Pergamon, Oxford, 3rd edition, 1988, p.92.

friendly or cooperative. The Soviet Union, who had secured in the previous treaty with the Kuomintang government access to the ports of Darien and Port Arthur, agreed to return them along with the Manchurian railway to the People's Republic of China's (PRC) control. The PRC for their part had hoped to gain a credit arrangement with the Soviet Union, but when the treaty was signed a separate publication reported that the Chinese had gained only a paltry sum of \$300 million. Adam Ulam wrote that when the photograph of the official signing was carried in *Pravda* it looked as if, 'the photographer forgot to tell the assembled dignitaries to smile'.<sup>26</sup>

Another event that is often cited to have strained Sino-Soviet relations was the North Korean invasion of the South. It has long been thought that the decision to invade South Korea was made between Kim Il Sung and Stalin and without the knowledge of Mao Tse-tung.<sup>27</sup> Nogee and Donaldson for example argue that in no way would Mao have wanted the invasion before he had been able to defeat the Nationalist on Formosa. By such an overtly aggressive move Mao would fear that the United States would get involved in the Chinese Civil War, something that the United States did after the invasion by sending the 7th fleet into the Straits of Formosa.<sup>28</sup>

However according to an article in Cold War International History Project Bulletin, based on documents recently released from the Soviet archives, when Stalin finally gave his assent to the invasion of the South he made the prerequisite that Kim secured Mao's support for the reunification plan.<sup>29</sup> That Stalin made the link between the invasion and Mao's support and that Mao actually did support the plan with the possibility that the United States may get involved, points to the strange nature of the relationship between Stalin and Mao. Stalin was obviously fearful of a potential challenge in the Chemisette bloc from the Chinese victory and questioned the Chinese leaders loyalty to the Soviet Union. Kathryn Weatherby argues that Stalin considered that the Korean War could be beneficial to the Soviet Union as a means of

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<sup>26</sup> Ulam, 1974, p.495.

<sup>27</sup> See Ulam, 1974, p.495 and Nogee and Donaldson, 1988.

<sup>28</sup> Nogee and Donaldson, 1988, p.132.

<sup>29</sup> 'New Findings on the Korean War', Translation and commentary by K. Weatherby, CWIHP, Bulletin 3, Fall 1993, p.16.

tying the People's Republic closer to Moscow.<sup>30</sup>

Mao's position is equally complicated. As one article put it:

'As for Mao, the sequence of events (perhaps by Stalin's design) clearly put him on the spot. Though exhausted by the decades-long civil war, and still gearing up for an assault on the Nationalist redoubt on Taiwan, Mao and his comrades in Beijing may well have felt compelled to endorse Pyongyang's action in order to demonstrate to Stalin their revolutionary mettle, zeal, and worthiness to spearhead the communist movement in Asia-especially given the rather cool and sceptical welcome Mao had received when he had visited Moscow the previous December'.<sup>31</sup>

### *Korean War*

As noted above, recently released information suggests that relations between the Soviet Union and China played a very large role in the decision making process of the two communist leaders to support the invasion of South Korea. However, from documents that have been made available through the Soviet archives, it is clear that the instigator of the Korean War was Kim Il Sung. According to Kathryn Weatherby, 48 telegrams were sent by Kim Il Sung appealing to Stalin to allow the invasion of the South before Stalin consented.<sup>32</sup> The fact that Kim had made so many appeals to Stalin may explain the famous comment from Khrushchev that 'the war wasn't Stalin's idea, but Kim Il Sung's'.<sup>33</sup>

When the two leaders of the Soviet Union and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea met in Moscow in March 1949, Stalin still seemed to be pushing the idea that reunification could be reached by means other than an invasion of the South. Although the meeting mainly concerned economic aspect of North Korean-Soviet relations, Stalin was interested to know whether the North Koreans had been penetrating the South Korean Army.<sup>34</sup> When Kim Il Sung asked about the possibility of an invasion, Stalin said that it was not needed, if however there was an attack from the South, then a counteroffensive could be

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<sup>30</sup> Weatherby, Spring 1995, p.4.

<sup>31</sup> 'Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War, 1950-'Clarifications'', CWIHP, Bulletin 4, Fall 1994, p.60.

<sup>32</sup> Weatherby, K., CWIHP, Bulletin 3, Fall 1993, p.13.

<sup>33</sup> Talbott, S., *Khrushchev Remembers*, Little, Brown, Boston, 1970, pp.367-8.

<sup>34</sup> Document I: Stalin's Meeting with Kim Il Sung, Moscow, 5 March 1949, from CWIHP, Bulletin 5, Spring 1995, p.4.

mounted.<sup>35</sup>

Stalin's initial rejection of the invasion plan is linked mainly to two aspects of the situation in Asia at the time. Firstly the fact that American troops were still in South Korea in March 1949 clearly kept Stalin from supporting an invasion plan. Secondly, the Chinese Communists had yet to secure completely the mainland. As late as the 24 September 1949, the Politburo was sending instructions to the Soviet Ambassador in North Korea to inform Kim Il Sung why the Soviet Union was rejecting his most recent request to invade the South.<sup>36</sup>

It is however interesting to note that the Politburo had rejected the latest plan not on the grounds of international factors, but based on their evaluation of the situation on the Korean Peninsula in both military and political terms. From the military side, the Politburo argued that the Korean People's Army was simply not prepared, 'If not prepared for in the necessary manner, the attack can turn into a prolonged military operation, which not only will not lead to the defeat of the enemy but will also create significant political and economic difficulties for North Korea, which finally, cannot be permitted'.<sup>37</sup>

On the political side, the Politburo cited that little had been done in preparation of an attack:

'We, of course, agree with you (the North Korean government) that the people are waiting for the unification of the country and in the south they, moreover, are waiting for liberation from the yoke of the reactionary régime. However, until now very little has been done to raise the broad masses of South Korea to an active struggle, to develop the partisan movement in all of South Korea, to create there liberated regions and to organize forces for a general uprising. Meanwhile, only in conditions of a peoples' uprising which has begun and is truly developing, which is undermining the foundations of the reactionary régime, could a military attack on the south play a decisive role in the overthrow of the South Korean reactionaries and provide the realization of the task of the unification of all Korea into a single democratic state'.<sup>38</sup>

That Stalin began to shift his position on invading the South by the autumn of 1949 seems to relate to what Stalin referred to in his telegram to Mao in May 1950, that is his

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<sup>35</sup> Document VI: Cyphered Telegram from Shtykov to Vyshinsky, 19 January 1950, from CWIHP, Bulletin 5, Spring 1995, p.8.

<sup>36</sup> Document V: Politburo decision to confirm the following directive to the Soviet ambassador in Korea, 24 September 1949, from CWIHP, Bulletin 5, Spring 1995, p.7.

<sup>37</sup> Document V, 24 September 1949, from CWIHP, Bulletin 5, Spring 1995, p.7.

<sup>38</sup> Document V, 24 September 1949, from CWIHP, Bulletin 5, Spring 1995, pp.7-8.

reason for supporting Kim Il Sung's plan as, 'the changed international situation'.<sup>39</sup> The changes referred to seem to be that in September 1949 all US forces had been withdrawn from South Korea and in October of that year the People's Republic of China had been formed. Stalin may have been persuaded further that the United States no longer posed a threat to become embroiled in military action to defend South Korea when in early January 1950, Secretary of State Dean Acheson made his famous address to the National Press Club which excluded Korea from US defence interest in Asia. The creation of the PRC and, as noted earlier, the complicated relationship between Stalin and Mao were all factors in the Soviet leader's change in position.

Following the defeat of the Nationalists and the creation of the PRC, the fact that Korean communist had not been granted the same opportunity to liberate the South became a great irritant to Kim Il Sung. In a meeting between Kim and the Soviet Ambassador Shtykov, the North Korean leader pleaded to have an opportunity to visit Stalin to gain permission to begin an offensive against the South. Kim's reliance on the Soviet Union in order to carry out the attack was demonstrated when he said with some self-mocking, 'that he himself cannot begin an attack, because he is a communist, a disciplined person and for him the order of Comrade Stalin is law'.<sup>40</sup> It is in reply to this request to meet on January 30 1950 that Stalin gives his first indication that he would be willing to consider the plan.

Kim Il Sung travelled to Moscow in late March, early April 1950 and then to Beijing in May for Mao's support. The North Korean plan was to evolve in three stages:

- '1) concentration of troops near the 38th parallel
- 2) issuing an appeal to the South for peaceful unification
- 3) initiating military activity after the South's rejection of the proposal for peaceful unification'.<sup>41</sup>

According to a report drawn up by the Soviet archivist on the events of the Korean War in August 1966, the Soviet Union and the PRC both actively assisted the North Koreans

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<sup>39</sup> 'Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War, 1950-'Clarifications'', May 14, 1945, CWIHP, Bulletin 4, Fall 1994, p.61.

<sup>40</sup> Document VI: Cyphered Telegram from Shtykov to Vyshinsky, 19 January 1950, from CWIHP, Bulletin 5, Spring 1995, p.8.

<sup>41</sup> 'On the Korean War, 1950-53, and the Armistice Negotiations', from Materials of the Foreign Ministry of the USSR, found in CWIHP, Bulletin 3, Fall 1993, p.16.

intentions:

'At Stalin's order, all requests of the North Koreans for delivery of arms and equipment for the formation of additional units of the KPA [Korean People's Army] were quickly met. The Chinese leadership sent to Korea a division formed from Koreans who had been serving in the Chinese army, and promised to send food aid'.

In the build up to the invasion the possibility of US involvement was not seen as a great risk. The Soviet archivist point out that in preparation the Chinese government was going to move an army closer to the Korean frontier "in case the Japanese enter on the side of South Korea".<sup>42</sup>

The entrance into the Korean War by the United States after the outbreak of hostilities came as a complete surprise and caused internal dissension among the three communist leaders. As the fortunes of the North Korean Army seemed bleak, Stalin attempted to distance the Soviet Union from the fighting while at the same time blaming his fellow conspirators, Kim Il Sung and Mao, for the failure of the invasion. According to the report by the Soviet archivist, after the American intervention Stalin blamed Kim for having badly misjudged the situation, not having devoted the necessary attention to exploring ways of gaining a peaceful unification through the development of a 'democratic movement' in South Korea. The report also claims that there was tension between Beijing and Moscow as Stalin had to put pressure on the PRC to intervene in the Korean War.<sup>43</sup>

However the aspect of the invasion of the South that was most damaging to the communist position was not Kim Il Sung's miscalculation or the necessity for Stalin to pressure the PRC to intervene on behalf of North Korea, rather the Soviet demand that the war must be won quickly. As Kathryn Weatherby notes, 'It is tragically ironic that Soviet insistence on a quick victory led them to devise a strategy which, by giving the appearance of the kind of massive tank-led assault the Western allies so feared would happen in Europe, prompted the United States to respond with precisely the intervention in Korea that Moscow wanted above all to avoid'.<sup>44</sup>

The archivist's report claims that by the middle of 1951, both the Chinese and North

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<sup>42</sup> 'On the Korean War, 1950-53, and the Armistice Negotiations', found in CWIHP, Bulletin 3, Fall 1993, p.16.

<sup>43</sup> 'On the Korean War, 1950-53, and the Armistice Negotiations', found in CWIHP, Bulletin 3, Fall 1993, p.16.

<sup>44</sup> Weatherby, K., 'Korea, 1949-50', CWIHP, Bulletin 5, Spring 1995, p.3.



Korean leaderships had reached the conclusion that it would be impossible to bring about the unification of Korea by military means. The Soviet Union, after consultations with the governments of North Korea and China, put forward a plan on June 23, 1951 to end the conflict on the Korean peninsula. The negotiations carried on for several years and an armistice was not signed until July 27, 1953.

An interesting note to the report by the Soviet archivist seems to suggest that the death of Stalin was the most important event leading up to the signing of an armistice:

‘Measures undertaken by the Soviet government after the death of Stalin in many ways facilitated the conclusion of the agreement. While in Moscow for Stalin’s funeral, Zhou Enlai had conversations with Soviet leaders regarding the situation in Korea. During these conversations, Zhou Enlai, in the name of the government of the PRC, urgently proposed that the Soviet side assist the speeding up of the negotiations and the conclusion of an armistice. Such a position by the Chinese coincided with our position’.<sup>45</sup>

The death of Josef Stalin brought a change to the foreign policy of the Soviet Union on several levels. Firstly it brought to light a deep divide which existed in the Soviet leadership. Secondly it started a process, which became known as De-Stalinization, of lessening the restraints on Eastern Europe. And finally with the death of Stalin, the new Soviet leadership was to expand the foreign policy interests of the Soviet Union beyond those of the Socialist bloc, into areas such as Africa, the Middle East and Central America.

### **The Khrushchev Era**

The introduction of Peaceful Coexistence, which marked the second stage of Soviet foreign policy in the post-war period was initially highlighted by a serious division within the Soviet leadership. That they waited six hours before announcing Stalin’s death to the public gives testimony to the division. During that six hours a new relationship was struck in order for a small group made up of the opposing factions to govern in a collective leadership.<sup>46</sup> The nature of the divide within the leadership was between two factions. As Isaac Deutscher notes: ‘The disagreement was logically premised on two opposite views about the prospects of war and peace. One group held that war between a united capitalist world and the communist bloc was "inevitable"; and that it was probably inevitable in the near future. The other group took the view that accommodation between the two camps was still possible and even probable,

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<sup>45</sup> ‘On the Korean War, 1950-53, and the Armistice Negotiations’, found in CWIHP, Bulletin 3, Fall 1993, p.17.

<sup>46</sup> Embree, G., The Soviet Union between the 19th and 20th Party Congresses, 1952–1956, Martinus Nijhoff, the Hague, 1959, p.1.

despite mounting tension'.<sup>47</sup>

Throughout the next year both Malenkov and Khrushchev struggled to build their support within the leadership. It was during this period that Khrushchev, who had until that time been concerned mainly with domestic issues, began to exert himself much more in the area of foreign policy. Khrushchev's first major foray into the foreign policy arena and a sign of his increase power within the Soviet leadership was his approach to the Austrian treaty. The other members of the Presidium, such as Molotov, Bulganin and Kaganovich had advocated a far more hard line approach to the situation in Austria. Oleg Troyanovsky, a Soviet diplomat and aide to Khrushchev said that among the hardliners, 'there was talk of why retreat when we have our armies standing [in Austria]'.<sup>48</sup> Khrushchev summoned the Austrian Chancellor to Moscow in mid-April 1955 for negotiations, and within a month the Austrian State Treaty was signed. The treaty called for the withdrawal of both Soviet and Western troops from their zones of occupation and the state of Austria became neutral.<sup>49</sup>

That Khrushchev was able to successfully champion the policy shift on Austria, as opposed to Malenkov, stems from Khrushchev's ability to gain the support of the military. A major power struggle within the collective leadership had developed between coalitions headed by Malenkov and Khrushchev respectively over budgetary priorities and military spending. Malenkov had supported an economic shift away from the concentration on defence and heavy industry and toward consumer goods and light industry. Khrushchev and several of the other members of the Presidium, such as Bulganin and Molotov made speeches calling for a strengthening of Soviet armed forces.<sup>50</sup>

The issue came to a head at a special meeting of the Supreme Soviet in February 1955. This special meeting, which was arranged at short notice, was for the purpose of legitimizing decisions already taken by the Presidium. At this meeting the New Course, which had been the central feature of Malenkov's policy, was repudiated in favour of increased capital investment and military expenditure. This shift in economic policy and the removal of

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<sup>47</sup> Deutscher, I., Russia After Stalin, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1953, pp. 143–44.

<sup>48</sup> Oleg Troyanovsky, BBC Interview.

<sup>49</sup> Noguee and Donaldson, 1988, p.112.

<sup>50</sup> Noguee and Donaldson, 1988, p.110.

Malenkov as Premier signalled the emergence of a new active player in the Soviet government, the armed forces. That Khrushchev had garnered the military's support granted him the ability to forge a new ruling coalition.<sup>51</sup>

### *Peaceful Coexistence*

Khrushchev's commanding position within the party was demonstrated at the Twentieth Party Congress. It was at the conference that Khrushchev publicly announced the new policy of Peaceful Coexistence which, contrary to the old Soviet doctrine, rejected the inevitability of war and argued that the communist revolution could be achieved peacefully. In a report to the Congress Khrushchev explained his theory of 'peaceful coexistence'. The announcement of peaceful coexistence coincided with a theoretical crisis in Soviet thinking. The crisis was caused by the impact that nuclear weapons had in fundamentally altering international relations. Stalin, during his lifetime, had refused to accept that nuclear weapons had altered the class struggle and that war as a means to bring about a change in the class struggle was no longer inevitable. After his death a dispute raged for several years as to whether nuclear weapons had actually altered class struggle and war.

The reason that this issue was so important to Soviet thinking is that it challenged the one consistent theoretical theme of their ideology, the inevitability of the transition from Capitalism to Communism. The early writing on this issue through the Stalinist period and into the Khrushchev era tended to argue along the lines of the Kommunist editorial which stated; "Weaponry has never abolished the laws of social development. There is and can be no reason to think that atomic weaponry is an exception in this regard".<sup>52</sup> When the possibility of the destruction of civilisation by nuclear weapons was accepted, Soviet writers tended to characterise nuclear war as an anomaly outside the purview of Marxist social theory, similar to an alien body falling to earth.<sup>53</sup>

By viewing nuclear war as an anomaly, the Soviet Union was able to deny the inevitability of war and thus separate it from the necessary class struggle that would ensure the

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<sup>51</sup> Embree, 1959, p.169.

<sup>52</sup> Kommunist, 1955, no.4, p.12, from Shenfield, S., The Nuclear Predicament, Chatham House Paper 37, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1987, p.18.

<sup>53</sup> Shenfield, 1987, p.18.

victory of Communism over Capitalism. However the Soviet leadership needed a means by which the class struggle would not spill over into a nuclear confrontation.

According to Kohler, Harvey, Gouré and Soll that was the role of peaceful coexistence as practised by Khrushchev:

‘the focus (of peaceful coexistence) was on eliminating, or at least minimizing, policies and activities on the part of either East or West that might lead to armed conflict between major antagonists. Khrushchev was consequently willing to accept constraints on the ways in which the communist side prosecuted its struggle against the capitalists. Under his formula for peaceful coexistence, not only would the USSR seek relative stability between itself and capitalist states, especially the US, but would also seek to so control other members of the socialist camp and the world communist movement as a whole as to prevent actions and developments that might lead to dangerous reactions by the capitalist enemy. Hence Khrushchev’s emphasis on avoiding violence and little wars out of which big wars might grow, and on the peaceful as against the revolutionary way for attaining power’.<sup>54</sup>

This did not, as mentioned earlier, mean that Moscow was above attempting to exploit a favourable opportunity to gain an advantage, as they tried in Berlin and Cuba, but especially after the Cuban missile crisis, risk taking was to be decided by Moscow and everyone else was to go along quietly. Alexi Adzhubei’s point, noted in chapter 2, that the situation in Cuba became critical in Moscow’s eyes when it was no longer dependent upon the actions or decisions of either Khrushchev or Kennedy<sup>55</sup>, raised a fear in Moscow that they could be drawn into a show down with the US over the actions of others.

Kohler et al., argue that the key to the communist victory over capitalism in Khrushchev’s view would be the demonstration of the superiority of the socialist system by the USSR in winning the economic competition in such areas as per capita production, supremacy in science and technology, and a dominance in the military balance. By winning this competition an increasing number of countries would be attracted peacefully to the Soviet camp.<sup>56</sup> This was an interpretation of peaceful coexistence that was not shared by Khrushchev’s successors.

The most important issue that peaceful coexistence was meant to address was the

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<sup>54</sup> Kohler, F., Harvey, M., Gouré, L. and Soll, R., Soviet Strategy for the Seventies; From Cold War to Peaceful Coexistence, Monographs in International Affairs, Center for Advanced International Studies, University of Miami, 1973, p.39.

<sup>55</sup> Alexi Adzhubei, BBC Interview.

<sup>56</sup> Kohler, Harvey, Gouré and Soll, 1973, pp.39-40.

problem of nuclear weapons. Unlike Stalin, Khrushchev recognized that nuclear weapons had fundamentally altered international relations. Stalin refused to accept that nuclear weapons had altered the class struggle and that war as a means to bring about a change in the class struggle was no longer inevitable. Khrushchev attempted to reformulate Soviet policy in order to take into account the change brought about by nuclear weapons by introducing two major changes to communist doctrine. Firstly, he rejected the inevitability of war and secondly he asserted that communist revolution could be achieved by peaceful means.<sup>57</sup>

By venturing into new territory of foreign policy and rejecting old doctrines and dogma, Khrushchev found it necessary to cite examples that the new policies were well grounded in tradition. In an attempt to jettison the practices of Stalin, Khrushchev turned to the works of the only person more revered than Stalin, Lenin. However, the attempt by Khrushchev to raise Lenin's concept of peaceful coexistence to a core feature of his thinking was just hyperbole. As Margot Light remarked, 'Soviet Writers are correct in attributing the use of the term (peaceful coexistence) to him (Lenin), but their insistence that it was one of his important theories is rather exaggerated'.<sup>58</sup>

However this shift in foreign policy was somewhat overshadowed by a second speech made by Khrushchev at the Twentieth Party Congress, his famous condemnation of Stalin and the cult of the personality. When Khrushchev had first proposed making the speech to the Congress, he was overruled by the other members of the Presidium. He persisted and finally a compromise was reached whereby the speech would be given after the election for the new Central Committee and that it would take place before a special closed session of the Congress.<sup>59</sup>

The speech detailed the atrocities and the massacres of the Stalinist period. By closing the session of the Congress it was hoped by certain members of the Presidium that its content would remain secret. But as Khrushchev comments in his memoirs, that was not his intention, 'It was supposed to have been secret, but in fact it was far from being secret. We took measures to make sure that copies of it circulated to the fraternal Communist Parties, so that

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<sup>57</sup> Noguee and Donaldson, 1988, p.28.

<sup>58</sup> Light, 1988, p.28.

<sup>59</sup> Medvedev, R., Khrushchev, Anchor Press, Garden City, N.Y. 1983, pp.86–87.

they could familiarize themselves with it'. That the speech gained wider exposure was explained by Khrushchev as an accident of circumstances. Around the time of the Party Congress, the Secretary of the Polish Central Committee, Beirut, died in Poland. Beirut's death caused a great deal of turmoil in Poland and the report fell into the hands of some anti-Soviet Poles, who made copies and sold them.<sup>60</sup> Intelligence agents and journalists from around the world were able to purchase the speech on the streets of Warsaw.

The main effect of the speech was to shake the Communist World,<sup>61</sup> most notably in Eastern Europe, drawing Khrushchev's attention away from his new foreign policy. The first sign of the effect of the denunciation of Stalin were the riots that broke out in Poland, in June 1956. The riots were quelled by the Polish troops, but the tension within the country remained high and the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers Party (PUWP) was divided as to how to respond through to the autumn. The situation came to a head in October when a three part compromise was struck between the PUWP and the leadership of the Soviet Communist Party. First Wladyslaw Gomulka, who had been jailed as a Trotskyite during the Stalinist purges, was elected First Secretary of the PUWP. Second, the Soviet Union agreed not to intervene militarily, and that most of the Soviet 'cadre' who were serving in the Polish Army, especially Marshal Rokossowski, who was installed as 'Poland's national defense minister', were withdrawn to the Soviet Union. Thirdly, the PUWP was able to rally a significant amount of support for Gomulka and therefore itself at a time when there was growing animosity against the Party and the Government.<sup>62</sup>

Where a political solution could be found in the case of Poland, in the second instance of turmoil resulting from Khrushchev's speech, a political solution was not possible. From the riots and massacre in Pozen in June, Khrushchev had concentrated his attention on the situation in Poland. Just when the situation in Poland seemed to be improving, events in Hungary took an unexpected turn for the worse. On the 23 October, the day before Gomulka was to give a conciliatory speech in Warsaw that paved the way for a *modus vivendi* between the Soviet

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<sup>60</sup> Talbott, 1970, p.182.

<sup>61</sup> Medvedev, 1983, pp.88-89.

<sup>62</sup> Kramer, M., 'Hungary and Poland, 1956, Khrushchev's CPSU CC Presidium Meeting on East European Crises, 24 October 1956, CWIHP, Bulletin 5, Spring 1995, p.50.

Union and Poland, a huge demonstration was organized by students in Budapest to express their approval of events in Poland and to demand similar changes in Hungary. The rally quickly degenerated into violence as the Hungarian security forces and the protesters exchanged fire near the main radio station in the city.<sup>63</sup>

When the Hungarian Communist party leader Ernő Gero spoke to Khrushchev, who had summoned Gero to Moscow, on the 23 October, he declined saying that the situation in Budapest was bad. Gero caused a bit of confusion among the Soviet leadership when he made no mention of the need for Soviet troops to help quell the revolt. However, Gero had made such a request through the Soviet ambassador Yuri Andropov, which arrived at the Kremlin after the Khrushchev–Gero telephone conversation. When the CPSU Presidium did receive the request they did not grant their approval because it had not been requested, ‘by the highest Hungarian officials, even when Comrade Gero had been speaking earlier with Comrade Khrushchev’.<sup>64</sup>

That the Presidium refused to give their approval to send Soviet troops seemed to reflect the position of Khrushchev who was very reluctant to send troops. As Khrushchev’s son-in-law Adzhubei stated in an interview, Khrushchev was overcome by doubt in regards to the crisis. On the one hand he wanted to avoid bloodshed and he knew very well that if he sent the troops in there would be bloodshed. On the other hand he didn’t want to be the man that caused the collapse of the Soviet empire.<sup>65</sup>

A key role in changing the view of the Soviet leadership and especially Khrushchev, was the Soviet ambassador Yuri Andropov. This point is stressed in a report of a meeting between Communist Bloc leadership on the 24 October, the day after the outbreak of violence.<sup>66</sup> Khrushchev’s son-in-law Alexi Adzhubei confirmed this when he said, ‘...the one person who influenced him greatly in this was Andropov. Andropov who was then an

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<sup>63</sup> Kramer, Spring 1995, p.51.

<sup>64</sup> ‘Account of a meeting at the CPSU CC, 24 October 1956, on the Situation in Poland and Hungary’, CWIHP, Bulletin 5, Spring 1995, p.54.

<sup>65</sup> Alexi Adzhubei, BBC Interview.

<sup>66</sup> Békés, C., ‘New Findings on the 1956 Hungarian Revolution’, CWIHP, Bulletin 2, Fall 1992, p.2.

Ambassador and he exerted the pressure on Khrushchev'.<sup>67</sup>

Soviet forces were made up of four mechanized division taken from troops stationed in Hungary and Rumania. The impact of these troops was almost counter-productive to their intention. Having sent tanks and armoured vehicles in the clogged streets of Budapest, the Soviet commanders found their forces sitting ducks for students and youths wielding Molotov cocktails and grenades.<sup>68</sup> Imre Nagy, who replaced Ernő Gero as the communist leader of Hungary, was, after four days of fighting, able to negotiate a cease-fire and have Soviet troops withdraw from Hungary on the 28 October.

By the time of the cease-fire however the situation in Hungary had changed dramatically. Throughout the country unofficial workers' councils had been formed and had begun to demand the end of one party rule and the withdrawal of Hungary from the Warsaw Pact. Nagy, recognizing the pace of the revolutionary change, restored a multiparty system on the 30 October. The Hungarian leader committed what some authors have described as the 'ultimate treason'<sup>69</sup> when he announced Hungary's withdraw from the Warsaw Pact and proclaimed his country neutral. There has been much speculation as to whether or not the announcement to withdraw Hungary from the Warsaw Pact was the main reason the Soviet Union decided to intervene.<sup>70</sup> However in an interview Béla Király, who was the commander of the Hungarian National Guard in 1956, said that the decision to invade Hungary was made on the 30 October, the day that Suslav and Mikoyan (who had been in Budapest for several days) left Budapest. When Hungary declared neutrality on 1 November, the Soviet Union was already informing its allies of the invasion.<sup>71</sup>

With the Soviet invasion of Hungary, Mussakov argues, the process of de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union came to a grinding halt.<sup>72</sup> When the death sentence was announced for Imre Nagy and three of his closest associates this also marked the end of de-Stalinization in

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<sup>67</sup> Alexi Adzhubei, BBC Interview.

<sup>68</sup> Kramer, Spring 1995, p.52.

<sup>69</sup> Noguee and Donaldson, 1988, p.221.

<sup>70</sup> See Ulam, A., 1974, p.597.

<sup>71</sup> Béla Király, BBC Interview.

<sup>72</sup> Mussakov, BBC Interview.



Eastern Europe. Adam Ulam pointed out that the sentence reflected the mood at the time about "revisionism" and was meant as a warning to anyone else planning a possible repetition of the Hungarian October.<sup>73</sup>

The Hungarian revolt also placed a great deal of pressure on Nikita Khrushchev and his position in the Soviet leadership. When asked about Khrushchev's position after the uprising, Mussakov said that he didn't feel that it was by sheer coincidence that Khrushchev went to see Tito with Malenkov and Gomulka with Molotov. This was done to show his position as a hardliner.<sup>74</sup> Troyanovsky concurs that Khrushchev was under great pressure regarding the Hungarian situation. However Troyanovsky points out that not only was pressure coming from the hardliners such as Molotov, Kagonovich and Malenkov, but also from the Chinese, who were in Moscow at the time, 'There were very strong pressures and he had to do something, in fact the next year there was a strong attempt to depose Khrushchev, in 1957. And one of the things that were [sic] used against him were [sic] that his foreign policy has been leading to all this, he was too lenient with the West'.<sup>75</sup>

The challenge to Khrushchev's leadership was to have a rather strong influence on the nature of Soviet foreign policy between 1957-62. Even though his opponents failed to unseat him and assume the position of chairman of the Council of Ministers, Khrushchev's position at the top remained precarious. Khrushchev's reaction to his uneasy position was to fall back on his own natural instincts which made him take more chances. Sergo Mikoyan notes this when he said 'Khrushchev was a gambler, both domestically and foreign policy, that was his nature'.<sup>76</sup> With the events of the Hungarian revolt, Khrushchev's ability to gamble in domestic and bloc policy was extremely limited, this left only the area of foreign policy which during this period was one of the most, if not the most volatile period of the cold war.

#### *Expansion of Soviet Foreign Policy*

For most of the Stalinist post-war period, Soviet foreign policy was almost exclusively dominated by the development of the Soviet control over Eastern Europe and relations along

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<sup>73</sup> Ulam, 1974, p.600.

<sup>74</sup> Mussakov, BBC Interview.

<sup>75</sup> Oleg Troyanovsky, BBC Interview.

<sup>76</sup> Sergo Mikoyan, BBC Interview.

the Soviet periphery. From the Foreign Ministers Conference in London in 1948, the Soviet Union had been completely isolated from the West. The Soviet Union had also not been very active in the Third World. Stalin saw most the leaders of the nations that emerged from colonialism as non-orthodox communist dependencies or stooges of their colonial rulers.<sup>77</sup> Khrushchev, as well as many Soviet theorists, felt that by the mid-50s there had been a major shift in the correlation of forces which favoured the Soviet Union. It was with this new found power, both in military and economic terms, that Khrushchev wanted to extend their influence beyond the Soviet Empire. He made relations with the West a high priority, but also he intended to expand Soviet influence into the Third World.

The first issue that Khrushchev attempted to address from a more expanded outlook than just the Soviet sphere of influence was the question of West German rearmament. Although this was an issue that was intricately involved with the question of German reunification, an issue that dominated Soviet thinking in late 40s and early 50s, the Soviet leadership, under Khrushchev, took a different approach to the problem. This new approach was the Soviet offer to convene an all-European security conference. The first proposal for a European security conference was made at the Foreign Ministers meeting of the Berlin Four Powers Conference in 1954 by the Soviet Union.<sup>78</sup>

The offer of a security conference was publicly met in the West with a great deal of scepticism and suspicion. They feared the conference was an attempt by the Soviet Union to separate the United States and its political and military interests in Europe from its Western Allies. The NATO line was that they opposed the Soviet proposal because it lacked any clear objective on possible concrete measures which could reduce the tension in Europe and may have threatened the security of the Federal Republic. However the Soviet timing for proposing the European security conference came at a time of disunity in the West over the formation of the European Defence Community. The French government was plagued with domestic difficulty over the whole question of the creation of the Community and the broader question

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<sup>77</sup> Fukuyama, F., 'Moscow's Post-Brezhnev Reassessment of the Third World', The Rand Publication Series, Rand, February 1986, p.28.

<sup>78</sup> Dyson, K., 'The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe: Europe before and after the Helsinki Final Act', found in Dyson, K., (ed.), European Détente; case studies of the politics of East-West Relations, F. Pinter, London, 1986, p.86

of German rearmament. As G.D. Embree, notes to what extent the Soviet offer of a conference, which the Soviet Union characterized as an 'instrument of peace', coupled with their warning on the implications of the German rearmament played into the debate, is hard to discern. Nevertheless the European Defence Community was never passed, marking a clear victory for Soviet foreign policy.<sup>79</sup>

When the dust had finally settled over the German rearmament question, the Paris Agreements and the European security conference issue, the way had been cleared for the first meeting of the heads of the major-powers at the Geneva Summit. To Khrushchev, the chance to meet the heads of the other great powers was a chance for the Soviet Union to break the period of Soviet isolation stemming from the last meeting of the great powers in Potsdam, 1945. However Khrushchev also saw the summit as what he described as 'a crucial test' of his and the Soviet leadership's competence.<sup>80</sup>

In the Third World, Khrushchev turned away from the Stalinist position of only supporting orthodox communist régimes. From 1955, the Soviet Union began a period of expanding its ties with newly independent non-communist states. Khrushchev argued that these states were natural allies of the Soviet Union due to their colonial legacy, which had left them embittered toward the West and willing to share a common anti-imperialist foreign policy with the Soviet bloc. As a result of this policy the Soviet Union found itself supporting states that professed a whole range of ideological doctrines that included pan-Arabism, African Socialism and Islamic Marxism.<sup>81</sup>

Along with the theoretical reasoning for expanding ties with these newly independent states there was also a substantive reason. From the early 1950s the Soviet Union began to become concerned with the change in the military balance. As noted earlier, in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War the main military threat to the Soviet Union was in the form of a group of strategic military pacts along the periphery of the Soviet frontier. The military rationale behind these pacts was based on the limited ranges of the strategic delivery systems (such as the medium ranged B-47 bombers). These parameter bases declined in

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<sup>79</sup> Embree, 1959, pp.144-45.

<sup>80</sup> Talbott, 1970, p.393.

<sup>81</sup> Fukuyama, F., February 1986, p.29.

importance with the development of ICBM and long range bombers and the threat now came from further afield. A change in naval technology which allowed the US the ability to strike the USSR from carrier based aircraft staged as far away as the Mediterranean and also the Soviet Union's own development of SSBNs created the need for an extended naval capability. Fukuyama points out that the deployment in the Mediterranean of a permanent naval squadron by the Soviet Union in 1964 was a result of this need to project naval power and created the need for extensive overseas basing facilities. Therefore such nations as Egypt and Algeria increased in importance to Soviet thinking.<sup>82</sup>

During this period the Soviet Union downplayed the importance of ideological orthodoxy, for example turning a blind eye when local communist parties were the targets of persecution by countries like Egypt and Iraq in order to maintain good state to state relations. However it was hoped that over a period of time, what Fukuyama called 'Bourgeois Nationalist' régimes would adopt the Soviet model. But the success Soviet Union's policy was disappointing, their ability to influence these Bourgeois Nationalist régimes proved difficult as they were neither stable nor predictable and the Soviet Union suffered many setbacks as several leaders were overthrown by military *coups*.

In pursuing this new policy of increased activity throughout the world the Soviet leadership also experienced trouble within the Communist bloc, mainly with the People's Republic of China. The official cause of the dispute between the two communist powers was the issue of Soviet Union's agreement with the PRC to supply of nuclear know-how. The Chinese argued that the Soviet Union reneged on this agreement, while the Soviet Union argued that they had held back giving China the technology in the hope that they could get a similar pledge from the United States about German acquisition of nuclear weapons.<sup>83</sup> Oleg Troyanovsky, who served as an aide to Khrushchev, felt that the split, 'would have occurred under any circumstance because after a while, playing second fiddle which is what the Chinese had to do with any alliance with the Soviet Union, became intolerable for them being a great power and a very proud power'. Troyanosky does agree that the process of the split was accelerated under Khrushchev's leadership, especially after the denunciation of Stalin at the

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<sup>82</sup> Fukuyama, F., 'The Military Dimension of Soviet Policy in the Third World', The Rand Paper Series, February 1984, p.4.

<sup>83</sup> Ulam, 1974, p.623.

20th Party Congress, something which Troyanosky thinks Mao took as an indirect threat against himself.<sup>84</sup>

Khrushchev, who was under pressure both within the power structure of the Kremlin and from the challenge posed by the Sino-Soviet dispute, needed to prove that his vision of the future of Communism was superior. It was with the new theoretical underpinning of peaceful coexistence along with some technological breakthroughs that the Soviet leader hoped to prove the superiority of his form of Communism. The launch of the world's first man-made satellite, Sputnik I and certain success in nuclear submarine technology were breakthroughs that in the words of Alexi Adzhubei, Khrushchev wanted to exploit 'this new Russia that was emerging'.<sup>85</sup>

The effect of the Soviet Union's accomplishments on world public opinion was quite dramatic. Khrushchev was anxious to utilise these technological advancements by undertaking a new direction in policy. This new policy consisted of two paradoxical aspects. Adam Ulam points this out when he wrote, 'between 1957 and 1962 Khrushchev's régime pursued two apparently contradictory policies: one of militant Communist expansion designed to weaken the West's position or to push it out of Berlin, the Middle East, Africa, and even Latin America; and the other a strenuous search for accommodation (or more) with the United States'.<sup>86</sup>

### *Berlin*

Khrushchev attempted to capitalise on this new position of strength in the spring of 1958, with his announcement that the Soviet Union was to end the four-power occupation and hand control of East Berlin and the routes into West Berlin over to the GDR. By handing control of the access to West Berlin to the East Germans, the Soviets hoped to gain Western recognition of the Eastern German government. Khrushchev saw greater chance for success in 1958, unlike the first Berlin Crisis in which Stalin backed down for fear of a possible US nuclear response, because his challenge was supported by the new Soviet Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile capability.

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<sup>84</sup> Oleg Troyanovsky, BBC Interview.

<sup>85</sup> Alexi Adzhubei, BBC Interview.

<sup>86</sup> Ulam, 1974, p.606.

Khrushchev's announcement on the 27 November that he viewed the Four-Powers agreement 'null and void' was viewed by the West as an ultimatum. He insisted that if a peace treaty was not signed with Germany and that West Berlin did not become a 'free and demilitarized city' in six months time, the Soviet Union would sign a separate peace with East Germany and transfer the control of the access routes to West Berlin to the GDR.<sup>87</sup>

To the Soviet Union, the situation in Berlin represented a local problem, the flow of refugees through West Berlin. In July 1961, the number of people exiting through West Berlin had increased to 30,000, most of those heading for the Federal Republic. Of most concern to the East Germans was that more than 50% of those leaving were under the age of twenty-five and many of them educated by the East German government. The flow of the best trained and most educated of the East German work force placed a great strain on the East German economy.

The second area which the Soviet Union sought to achieve its objective through the crisis was to change the orientation of West Germany and ensure that the Federal Republic never gained access to nuclear weapons.<sup>88</sup> Both superpowers had placed great importance on their prestige in their relations to Germany and in particular to Berlin. Although Khrushchev was well aware that this crisis could escalate into a nuclear exchange, he attempted to influence Western thinking by engaging in what William Burr called 'nuclear sabre rattling'.<sup>89</sup>

If the West could be coerced into agreeing to negotiate the status of Berlin, the Soviet Union could resolve both the local refugee problem and the larger issue of the status of Berlin by showing their resolve by increasing their forces in the area. However Khrushchev's gambit was a rather risky affair, his strategy was based on exploiting the perception in the West that the Soviet Union was superior in terms of Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles to achieve his objectives. Although Khrushchev believed that the United States would not initiate the war, the stakes in Berlin were such that neither the United States nor the Soviet Union could be allowed to be seen as backing down because this would suggest weakness and a lack of

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<sup>87</sup> Harrison, H., 'New Evidence on Khrushchev's 1958 Berlin Ultimatum', CWIHP, Bulletin 4, Fall 1994, p.36.

<sup>88</sup> Noguee and Donaldson, 1988, p.128.

<sup>89</sup> Burr, W., 'New Sources on the Berlin Crisis, 1958-1962', CWIHP, Bulletin 2, Fall 1992, p.21.

commitment to their respective alliance partners. The possibility of negotiations seemed possible only after each side had been able to demonstrate their military resolve.<sup>90</sup>

That Khrushchev's ultimatum and therefore his strategy was based on a bluff was confirmed in a interview by the Soviet academic Professor Dasichev.<sup>91</sup> However something that Khrushchev did not take into consideration in undertaking a policy of brinkmanship was the potential for misperception and miscalculation. A recent article by Raymond Garthoff argues that the tank standoff at Checkpoint Charlie in October 1961 was far more threatening than had been thought. The Soviet Union feared that the United States was preparing to push through the Wall, because they had been seen practising such a manoeuvre by Soviet intelligence. This was clearly not the United States' intention, but the cost of such a misperception was very high.<sup>92</sup>

For Khrushchev, confirmation that his strategy was having the desired effect came when he received an invitation to visit the United States in September 1959. Khrushchev felt that this was not only a major achievement for himself, but the invitation also verified the Soviet Union's status as a great power. Khrushchev's son-in-law Alexi Adzhubei noted the importance that Khrushchev placed on this summit meeting and relations with the United States when he said, '... this was his dream, that the close contact with America would indeed be the very path that would let peace triumph and also allow us using America's experience, [to] get on in the world'.<sup>93</sup>

Although the visit was short on substance, the Soviet leader conducted an exercise in public relations while in the United States . The two areas where agreement was reached was that the Soviet leader did agree to remove the fixed time limit for agreement on Berlin and the American President agreed to a return visit to the Soviet Union the following year. These two agreements gave an air of cordiality to the summit meeting which became known as 'the spirit of Camp David' which seemed to suggest a possible settlement on the German question and

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<sup>90</sup> Noguee and Donaldson, 1988, p.126.

<sup>91</sup> Professor Dasichev, BBC Interview.

<sup>92</sup> Garthoff, R., 'Berlin 1961: The Record Corrected,' Foreign Policy, Fall 1991, p.148.

<sup>93</sup> Alexi Adzhubei, BBC Interview.

the possibility of better East-West relations.<sup>94</sup>

For all its perceived potential the spirit of Camp David was rather short lived. The event that conspired most to harpoon the air of cordiality was the shooting down of an American U2 spy plane and the capture of its pilot Gary Powers by the Soviet Union. Alexi Adzhubei noted the incident was a serious blow to Khrushchev, as his opposition, who were displeased that he had visited the United States, seized upon the Powers incident as a means to discredit Khrushchev's policy. Adzhubei goes on to say that the whole Powers incident pushed Khrushchev toward a more hardline policy with the West, mainly through the building military equality with the United States.<sup>95</sup>

The whole Powers affair pushed back the possibility of any form of a breakthrough over Berlin or in East-West relations at least until after the Presidential elections that were scheduled for November 1960. It was not until after the new Kennedy Administration had taken office that the Soviet leadership agreed to meet the American President in Vienna in June 1961. Khrushchev's earlier experience of dealing with the United States, along with the questions raised about the toughness of the young American President due to his handling of the Bay of Pigs invasion, put the Soviet leader in a very aggressive mood. For two years Khrushchev had not been aggressive, but at the Vienna Summit he took a more belligerent tone. His stance on Berlin was harsh and uncompromising. He proposed a conference to conclude a peace treaty between the two Germanies and an agreement to make Berlin a free city, but the most belligerent aspect of his stance was the setting of a new ultimatum.<sup>96</sup>

Nikita Khrushchev maintained the pressure on the US administration throughout July and early August of 1961. In a speech to graduates of the Soviet military academies, on the 18th July 1961, Khrushchev announced that the planned demobilisation of 1.2 million men would be halted.<sup>97</sup> After his perceived success in pushing around the President of the United States in Vienna, Khrushchev continued to use intimidation and threats in his foreign policy

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<sup>94</sup> Ulam, 1974, p.627.

<sup>95</sup> Alexi Adzhubei, BBC Interview.

<sup>96</sup> Slusser, 1973, p.77.

<sup>97</sup> Catudal, H.M., Soviet Nuclear Strategy from Stalin to Gorbachev, Humanities Press International, Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey, 1989, p.163.



statements.<sup>98</sup> However the stakes were raised by the Soviet leader when he mentioned the possibility of nuclear attacks on Western alliance member states. The first threat was directed against the British, when Khrushchev had an interview with the British Ambassador Sir Frank Roberts.<sup>99</sup> There were several other direct and veiled threats against West Germany and the United States, although his most searing threats were directed against some of the smaller members of the NATO alliance, Italy and Greece in particular. In two speeches made between the 7th and the 9th August, Khrushchev made clear that not only were his threats directed toward the removal of Western forces from Berlin, but also suggested the dismantling of NATO was an objective.<sup>100</sup>

When the United States responded to Khrushchev's threat by announcing a defence spending increase of their own, the Soviet leader decided to deal with the refugee problem and the stability of East Germany and leave the question of Germany for another time. The idea to actually build the wall most likely did not come from Khrushchev himself. Oleg Troyanovsky commented, 'I can't tell you whether the idea was Ulbricht's idea or whether it was from someone on our side. I really don't know and I have not read anywhere as to where it originated'.<sup>101</sup> Alexi Adzhubei actually argues that his father-in-law was against the building of the wall.<sup>102</sup>

The construction of the wall on the 13 August 1961 effectively brought an end to the crisis in Berlin. The flow of refugees to the West was stopped and as Troyanovsky noted 'Kennedy heaved a sigh of relief when the wall was put up because he realised that was the end of the Berlin Crisis'.<sup>103</sup> The lack of Western response to the wall going up clearly supports Troyanovsky's point of view.

### *Cuba*

In the aftermath of the Berlin Crisis, Khrushchev once again found himself under

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<sup>98</sup> Slusser, 1973, p.76.

<sup>99</sup> Slusser, 1973, p.44.

<sup>100</sup> Slusser, 1973, p.124-125.

<sup>101</sup> Oleg Troyanovsky, BBC Interview.

<sup>102</sup> Alexi Adzhubei, BBC Interview.

<sup>103</sup> Alexi Adzhubei, BBC Interview.

pressure from within the Soviet leadership and his Chinese critics. The hollowness of Khrushchev's claims of military superiority over the United States was demonstrated by his climb down over his latest Berlin deadline and the building of the wall. The Soviet leader recognized that Soviet prestige had suffered as a result of the Berlin Crisis and that the Soviet strategic position was worsening at a time when domestic demands were increasing.

Khrushchev needed to increase Soviet deterrence capability and had already proposed a far-reaching reform of the Soviet military away from reliance on conventional forces (which would have helped to end labour shortages) and toward nuclear-armed missiles in January 1960<sup>104</sup>, but these reforms would take several years to bear fruit and Khrushchev's precarious position required an immediate remedy that would give the Soviet Union a better chance of negotiating a settlement to issues such as the German question.

The remedy that Khrushchev seized on was to install Intermediate Ranged Ballistic Missiles (IRBM) and Medium Range Ballistic Missiles (MRBM) in Cuba. Alexander Alexeyev who served as counsellor in the Soviet embassy in Cuba in the early 1960s often heard Khrushchev say, 'We are installing missiles there not to start a nuclear war - any fool can start a nuclear war. We should do everything we could to use those missiles as a sort of threat. As a threatening remedy.' Alexeyev goes on to say, 'It was not a question of nuclear war. He (Khrushchev) was almost sure that this was a remedy of threat. Sort of a remedy for negotiating on the same scale. In order to negotiate with Americans on the equal level we should put them in the same position [as we are in]'<sup>105</sup>. The position that Khrushchev was referring to was the threat American missiles in Turkey posed to the Soviet Union. Alexeyev depicts Khrushchev's logic as, 'if Americans don't feel anything at the moment and we are having this missile umbrella over us, lets give them the same remedy. Lets open the umbrella over the United States from Cuba'<sup>106</sup>.

Before leaving Moscow for Cuba with plans for the missiles, Alexeyev had been instructed by Khrushchev not to tell Castro that they wanted to install missiles. Rather Alexeyev was to ask Castro what he needed to defend Cuba and then say that the Soviet Union

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<sup>104</sup> Rubinstein, 1981, p.168.

<sup>105</sup> Alexander Alexeyev, BBC Interview.

<sup>106</sup> Alexander Alexeyev, BBC Interview.

was willing to install nuclear weapons. However it must be pointed out that Alexeyev's opinion on Khrushchev's objective for installing the missiles is not shared by everyone. Sergo Mikoyan, the son of the former president of the USSR, argues that Khrushchev was convinced after the Bay of Pigs that Kennedy was certain to attempt another invasion, so the missiles were for the defence of Cuba and not for a strategic advantage. Interestingly enough, Mikoyan travelled to Cuba with his father in November 1962 to get Castro to agree to the deal worked out by Kennedy and Khrushchev.<sup>107</sup> A central feature of that agreement was Kennedy's assurances not to invade Cuba which gave Khrushchev reason to remove the missiles.

When Alexeyev proposed the idea that the Soviet Union was willing to deploy nuclear missiles in Cuba, he claims that Castro immediately recognized that the missiles were not for the protection of Cuba.<sup>108</sup> Why then did Castro actually accept the missiles? Speaking at the 'Havana Conference, On the Cuban Missile Crisis' in 1992, Castro stated that he accepted the Soviet offer to deploy the missiles not to defend Cuba, but to strengthen the Socialist Camp.<sup>109</sup>

An agreement, not only regarding the missiles, but a general military agreement was signed between the two countries in July 1962. The plan was for the missiles to be installed by November, with Khrushchev going to Cuba for 1 January, at which time everything would have been publicized. The importance of November as a completion date was most likely that the announcement of the deployment was to follow the US elections, when it was assumed by all that the issue of Berlin was going to be raised again.

The missiles that were to be installed were a combination of SS-4s and SS-5s, which have a range between 1000 and 2000 nautical miles (placing the continent well within range of the missiles). General Garbuz, who was stationed in Cuba during the crisis, claims that forty-two missiles were installed by the 19 October. Garbuz also points out that the warheads for these missiles were never deployed during the crisis.<sup>110</sup>

According to Alexeyev, no one on Cuba or in Moscow knew that the US was aware

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<sup>107</sup> Sergo Mikoyan, BBC Interview.

<sup>108</sup> Alexander Alexeyev, BBC Interview.

<sup>109</sup> Garthoff, R., 'The Havana Conference, On the Cuban Missile Crisis', CWIHP, Bulletin 1, Spring 1992, p.2.

<sup>110</sup> General Garbuz, BBC Interview.

of the missiles from the 14th until the 22nd when President Kennedy made his televised speech announcing the naval blockade of Cuba.<sup>111</sup> This would suggest then that the crisis for the Soviet Union began with President Kennedy's announcement. For Victor Karpov in the Soviet embassy in Washington, the crisis was to last until the 26 October when Khrushchev's first letter arrived. Karpov notes, 'it was at that time, the 26th October, that was decisive in fact, after that the tension was already less and we managed to agree in [sic] the resolution'.<sup>112</sup> Karpov's depiction of events, that at least at the Soviet embassy in Washington the occurrences on the 27 October, namely the shooting down of an American U2 spy plane and Khrushchev's second and more belligerent letter, had little effect on the crisis from their point of view. However Sergo Mikoyan commented that the level of fear was far higher among the leadership in Moscow in the final days of the crisis; 'Well I think confusion, and at the very last hour panic even, I mean Khrushchev actually became very much afraid that he led the country to a catastrophe'.<sup>113</sup>

### **Conclusion**

In the first two stages of the post-war period the Soviet Union attempted to transform the shift in the correlation of forces after the Second World War, which left them as the strongest military power in Europe and second only to the United States in the world.<sup>114</sup> During Stalin's leadership, Soviet foreign policy was dominated by the building of the Soviet Empire which advanced the two major themes of that policy, the expansion of Communism and the fear of attack from hostile forces, but continued to define the Soviet Union as a continental power. By the mid-50s, however, the Soviet Union had expanded its military power in both nuclear weapons and sea power, allowing Khrushchev to begin a policy of projecting power to various region of the world. This policy also attempted to expand Communism and defend the Soviet Union from hostile attack. However as this chapter has shown, that policy was successful in neither expanding communism in the Third World nor, most importantly, in defending the Soviet Union from the possibility of attack, as Khrushchev

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<sup>111</sup> Alexander Alexeyev, BBC Interview.

<sup>112</sup> Victor Karpov, BBC Interview.

<sup>113</sup> Sergo Mikoyan, BBC Interview.

<sup>114</sup> Booth, 1973, p.12.

took them to the brink of nuclear war with the US. The lesson taken from this period by Khrushchev's successors was quite different from that taken by the US,<sup>115</sup> as will be discussed in the next chapter; they felt that the Soviet Union's military power was not sufficient for the Soviet Union to be considered an equal superpower with the United States and therefore undertook a military build up on an unprecedented scale.

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<sup>115</sup> See chapter 3

## Chapter 6

### Introduction

From the ousting of Khrushchev in 1964 by the troika of Brezhnev, Kosygin and Podgorny, Soviet foreign policy seemed to be geared towards gaining confirmation from the international community, especially the US, that the Soviet Union be recognised as a superpower with global influence. Although they did not repudiate peaceful coexistence, the new leadership shifted emphasis from the strengths in the ideological and economic spheres to an increasing reliance on the military aspects, especially the nuclear component, which eventually led to greater activism in foreign policy. Sonnenfeldt and Hyland draw the distinction in the two forms of peaceful coexistence:

‘The late 1960s (and the period since then) differed from the optimistic phase of Khrushchev’s term of office. While he was fascinated by modern weaponry, he had, like others before him, seen as the most potent sources of growing Soviet influence the nature of the Soviet system and the supposed confluence of revolutionary currents. His successors seemed less sanguine on these counts and relied more on the (by then) cumulative impact of raw power. It was not so much that they intended to use this power directly, although they plainly did not exclude that possibility; they believed, rather, that power would pay dividends; that she was entitled to be treated and respected as a super-power; and that this role should be given formal recognition through treaties and understandings, above all with the United States’.<sup>1</sup>

The emphasis on military power and the activism in the new leadership’s approach to peaceful coexistence was demonstrated in three main areas of Soviet policy, détente with the West, the Soviet military build up and their policy toward the Third World. While all three areas were emphasised under the Khrushchev version of peaceful coexistence, the form which these policies took firstly under Brezhnev, Kosygin and Podgorny, and then under Brezhnev alone, reflected the reliance on the impact of military power.

As the leading force of the communist movement, the new leadership saw it as the Soviet Union’s responsibility to take positions, assist and support conflicts which Khrushchev wished to avoid. They strongly rejected the idea set out by Khrushchev that the opposing systems could conduct a ‘peaceful competition’,<sup>2</sup> rather peaceful coexistence as they saw it was a continuation and possibly an intensification of the class struggle by every means short of

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<sup>1</sup> Sonnenfeldt, H., and Hyland, W., ‘Soviet Perspectives on Security’, Adelphi Papers, no. 150, IISS, Spring 1979, p.15.

<sup>2</sup> see Rubinstein, 1981, p.269.

general war.<sup>3</sup>

By the late 60s there had been a fundamental shift in the correlation of forces, in terms of both military and economic power to the advantage of the USSR and socialism, and against the US.<sup>4</sup> The shift in the correlation of forces was the result of two factors, firstly by the rough parity in strategic nuclear weapons achieved by the Soviet Union and secondly the Soviet view that the United States was a country in decline. Therefore the consequence of this shift allowed the Soviet Union to apply more and more pressure to the US throughout the world while incurring reduced levels of risk.

This interpretation of the situation in the late 60s highly influenced Soviet thinking. The definition of détente given by Alexander Bessmertnykh reflects this conception, 'Détente was the product of the new situation in the world, when parity in nuclear strategic weaponry had been achieved'.<sup>5</sup> The rough parity had long been sought by the Soviet leadership. After the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Soviet Union embarked on a massive strategic build up. Bessmertnykh noted that, 'The Soviets at the time realised that, without parity, the Soviet Union would always be suffering in the same way they had suffered in the 60s, during the Cuban crisis'.<sup>6</sup> The advantage of military parity in the Soviet view was that their new military power could be transformed into political influence. Raymond Garthoff argued that détente in the eyes of the Soviet leadership was a means to help manage the transition of the United States into a changing world no longer dominated by American power, but by a political structure of the Soviet Union and the United States that reflected their military parity.<sup>7</sup>

Unlike the American perception, which saw détente as a means for reducing the military confrontation and then by extension the importance of military power, the Soviet perception increased the need for military power. Although war was no longer inevitable, it still remained a possibility because the class struggle that exists in the world remains. The traditional Marxist-Leninist view was that Western imperialists would resist the class struggle

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<sup>3</sup> Kohler, Harvey, Gouré and Soll, 1973, p.40.

<sup>4</sup> Shenfield, 1987, p.24.

<sup>5</sup> Alexander Bessmertnykh, BBC Interview.

<sup>6</sup> Alexander Bessmertnykh, BBC Interview.

<sup>7</sup> Garthoff, 1985, p.38.

through armed conflict, but because of the nuclear stalemate, this option became less attractive, therefore there must be continued emphasis on the military potential of the Soviet Union.<sup>8</sup>

The shift in emphasis to the military dimension of Soviet power was brought about by several events that had a critical affect on peaceful coexistence in the Brezhnev era. Along with the Cuban Missile Crisis<sup>9</sup> that was mentioned above, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and the Sino-Soviet dispute were vital in causing this shift in Soviet foreign policy. Not only were these events important to Soviet thinking on foreign policy at the time of each crisis, but as will be shown below, the lessons drawn from these events seemed to leave an indelible mark on Soviet foreign policy making.

#### *The Aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis*

The Cuban Missile Crisis not only had a great influence on Soviet foreign policy makers, but was also a turning point in the Cold War. There is a general agreement that the crisis in Cuba was the point of greatest danger of escalation to nuclear war during the Cold War period.<sup>10</sup> When Oleg Troyanovsky described how close the world came to nuclear confrontation he said, 'John Foster Dulles, when he was Secretary of State, used to say that the leaders of countries concerned should be able to reach the brink and look into the abyss to conduct foreign policy. But when Kennedy and Khrushchev did reach the brink and looked into the abyss I think both sides got scared, really and truly scared'.<sup>11</sup>

The Cuban Missile Crisis had a far greater impact on the thinking of the leadership in both the Soviet Union and the United States then for example the Berlin Crisis or the Korean War was due to the nature of the crisis. Alexei Adzhubei pointed this out when he said, 'The reason this crisis is so important and is talked about so much is because for the first time we faced a situation which was getting to be uncontrollable. The most dangerous thing was that the situation was not really dependent upon either Khrushchev or Kennedy. And that is where

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<sup>8</sup> Sherr, 1987, p.15.

<sup>9</sup> Often referred to as the Caribbean Crisis by Soviet writers.

<sup>10</sup> See Victor Karpov and Raymond Garthoff BBC Interviews.

<sup>11</sup> Oleg Troyanovsky, BBC Interview.



the danger lies'.<sup>12</sup>

That the Soviet Union and the United States were able to step away from the brink of nuclear war and co-operate in diffusing the crisis was in the words of Raymond Garthoff, 'a positive factor' that came out of Cuba.<sup>13</sup> Adzhubei agreed with Garthoff when discussing how Cuba should be viewed, he described the settlement as, 'the great compromise'.<sup>14</sup> The realisation that both had gone to the brink of nuclear war before pulling back may have had a sobering effect on many from both sides. In the immediate aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the United States and the Soviet Union attempted to lessen tensions by agreeing to the instalment of the 'hot-line', direct telephone communication between Moscow and Washington and to ban nuclear weapons in space.<sup>15</sup> Also the first sale of grain (a hallmark of the Nixon-Brezhnev era) to the Soviet Union was agreed to in 1963.<sup>16</sup>

There were also attempts at greater co-operation between the two adversaries, such as the meeting in Glassboro, New Jersey in June 1967 between Prime Minister Kosygin and President Johnson. Many authors viewed these meetings as failures due to direct US involvement in Vietnam which had cast a shadow over superpower relations since 1964.<sup>17</sup> However, Mike Bowker and Phil Williams point out that although Glassboro had little immediate effect, there were some long term implications for this meeting. They believe that the Glassboro Summit was to lay the groundwork for the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the SALT One agreement on offensive arms. It also symbolised the desire of the two superpowers to avoid confrontation both in Vietnam and in the Middle East.<sup>18</sup>

### *Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia*

Then in 1968, East-West relations suffered serious repercussions from the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, to overthrow what has become known as the 'Prague Spring'. The

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<sup>12</sup> Alexei Adzhubei, BBC Interview.

<sup>13</sup> Raymond Garthoff, BBC Interview.

<sup>14</sup> Alexei Adzhubei, BBC Interview.

<sup>15</sup> Garthoff, 1985, p.7.

<sup>16</sup> Bowker and Williams, 1988, p.24.

<sup>17</sup> Garthoff, 1985 p.7.

<sup>18</sup> Bowker and Williams, 1988, p.26.

effect of the invasion was to slow down détente and increase the tension in superpower relations, but the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia can also be seen as a necessary brake on Soviet détente, which had raised doubts over the viability of an Eastern Bloc, ‘...the reassertion of Soviet control over the bloc made possible the further development of Soviet détente policy’.<sup>19</sup>

That the events in Czechoslovakia would confront the Soviet leadership of Brezhnev with such a serious challenge was hardly clear from the outset. As Jiri Hajek, Czech Foreign Minister in 1968, said, the reforms when initiated by the Dubcek government were nothing more than, ‘a re-establishment of the truly socialist model’ of Czech society.<sup>20</sup> Unlike the Hungarian uprising in 1956 which lasted only a few months, the developments in Czechoslovakia took place over several years. Brought on by economic stagnation, liberalization reforms had been taking place at a very basic level from 1963, however the pace of change did quicken in 1968 when the liberals actually took power.<sup>21</sup>

The Soviet Union’s initial response to the events in Czechoslovakia was rather sedate. According to Professor Mencil, a Czech academic who has been assigned the task of investigating archival materials relating to the Czech crisis, ‘The Soviet Union though upset, really saw no need to interfere with the reforms’.<sup>22</sup> The main reason for the Soviet restraint through much of the period of reform was due to Alexander Dubcek’s adherence to Moscow’s two cardinal conditions, to maintain the dominance of the Communist party in Czech politics and continued membership in the Warsaw Pact.<sup>23</sup>

The Soviet indifference towards the reforms in Czechoslovakia began to change in February 1968, when the government, although maintaining its power to censor, ceased to exercise that right. The Soviet Union at first tried simple criticism to alter the course of the reforms, when this failed the Soviet Union attempted to create a split within the Czechoslovak

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<sup>19</sup> Bowker and Williams, 1988, p.27.

<sup>20</sup> Jiri Hajek, BBC Interview.

<sup>21</sup> Golan, G., ‘The Road to Reform’, Problems of Communism, May-June, 1971, p.15.

<sup>22</sup> Professor Mencil, BBC Interview.

<sup>23</sup> Noguee and Donaldson 1988, p.236.

Communist Party.<sup>24</sup> The final factor which pushed the Soviet Union to accept the need for an invasion was the publication of the "Draft Statues of the Czechoslovak Communist Party". These statues would have protected the right of minority dissent, placed term limits on the office of Party leader and permitted secret voting for Party activities.<sup>25</sup>

The Soviet Union, along with troops from Poland, East Germany, Hungary and Bulgaria, invaded Czechoslovakia on the 21 August. As in the invasion of Hungary in 1956, the Soviet Union used overwhelming force to quell a perceived threat, however the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia had far greater implications on European affairs than the invasion of Hungary twelve years earlier.<sup>26</sup> Unlike the Hungarian uprising, which consisted mostly of student activists and some members of the 'intellectual community', the 'Prague Spring' was a much supported grass-roots movement. One author wrote that the 'Prague Spring' was, 'the aspiration of the Czechoslovak people for "Socialism with a human face'.'<sup>27</sup>

The ensuing justification of the Soviet actions was published in Pravda the following September and quickly became known as the Brezhnev Doctrine. The doctrine proclaimed that the interests of international communism were indivisible and that although separate paths to socialism were acceptable it was the Soviet Union that had the final say as to the limits of those paths. The Brezhnev Doctrine showed to what extent the Soviet Union was willing to act in order to ensure the maintenance of Soviet-style governments considered vital to Soviet interest, regardless of any political or economic advantages that may have been sacrificed.<sup>28</sup>

Yet even while the dust was still clearing from the Soviet invasion, steps were being taken to restore any damage that had been caused by recent events to the budding process of détente in Europe. It is clear that one reason why the Soviet Union was so anxious to resume the process of détente was to push aside any ill effect their invasion of Czechoslovakia had in their relations with Western Europe and the United States.

There were also other motives behind the Soviet Union's quick attempt at jump-starting

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<sup>24</sup> Professor Mencil, BBC Interview.

<sup>25</sup> Golan, May-June, 1971, p.19.

<sup>26</sup> Rubinstein, 1981, p.82.

<sup>27</sup> Carter, 1986, p.58.

<sup>28</sup> Rubinstein, 1981, p.83.

the process. The first of these reasons is linked to the large scale military build-up the Soviet Union had undergone after the Cuban Missile Crisis to achieve parity with the United States. This equal level of military power with the United States gave the Soviet Union a great deal of confidence and gave them an interest in maintaining this balance. The Soviet Union was quite anxious to reach agreement with the US that would limit the need for any further military build-up that would strain the Soviet economy. Secondly the Soviet Union wanted to strengthen its ties to the West at a time when Sino-Soviet relations had deteriorated to the worst level since the communist takeover in 1949.

### *The Sino-Soviet Dispute*

Relations between the PRC and the Soviet Union had been deteriorating since Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin at the Twentieth Party Conference. Although there was a short-lived warming of relations after the fall of Khrushchev, the two Communist powers continued to differ over such things as relations with the Third World and relations with the capitalist world. However, it was clashes on the Sino-Soviet border, along the Ussuri river, in March 1969, which allowed the world and most notably the United States to realize the depth of hostility between the PRC and the USSR.

The root cause of the open hostility is found in events of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. The Chinese leadership was clearly troubled by the possibility that the Soviet leadership would find justification to apply the Brezhnev Doctrine by intervening in China to protect true socialism from counterrevolutionary threats. However, their immediate concern was further Soviet military intervention into Eastern Europe. Soon after the invasion of Czechoslovakia, Zhou En-lai, attending a celebration at the Rumanian embassy, made a point of assuring the Rumanians of Chinese support.<sup>29</sup>

When hostilities broke out, both the Soviet Union and the PRC gave a great deal of public attention to the clashes. Rosemary Quested suggested that both countries were using the incident for domestic political considerations, mainly to prepare their population for closer relations with the United States. It is interesting to note that the PRC had just reopened ambassadorial talks with the United States one month before the clashes with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union and the Chinese were also likely trying to discredit each other to the rest of

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<sup>29</sup> Garthoff, 1985, p.200.

the world.<sup>30</sup> Sino-Soviet relations remained strained throughout the 1970s. There were various feelers sent out by both sides throughout this period, however various events, such as the Soviet interventions in Angola and Afghanistan, kept the relations acrimonious.

Like the situation in the United States, where the crises of the 1960s forced a re-examination of foreign policy, the Soviet Union went through much the same process with its foreign policy. After the Cuban Missile Crisis, the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the dispute with China, the Soviet Union began to re-examine its policy toward the United States, Europe and the Third World. They too, began to discuss the possibility of détente, however, the Soviet Union's conclusion drawn from the experience in the 1960s left a far different conception of détente than the United States.

### **Soviet Conception of Détente**

There were two main areas of consideration in the Soviet policy of détente. The first area was an acceptance of the need to stabilize relations with the United States and therefore by extension stabilize the arms race. The Soviet Union hoped to do this without undermining those areas in which they had an advantage in strategic delivery systems by extending arms control beyond the early forms of agreements such as the Partial Test Ban Treaty (1963), Non-Proliferation Treaty (1968) and Outer Space Treaty (1969), to central strategic systems and anti-ballistic missile (ABM) systems. Secondly, the Soviet leadership emphasised resolving the German questions and other related European problems, in such a way that would formalize the status of East Germany (GDR) and the frontiers of central Europe. These were first formalized as part of Soviet foreign policy in the peace programme of the 24th Party Congress in March 1971.<sup>31</sup>

### *Soviet Policy toward the United States*

A crucial aspect of the Soviet conception of détente was the military aspect. As noted above, the Soviet Union was intent on limiting the arms race and reducing the potential of nuclear war breaking out with the United States. The intent to limit the arms race found expression in the SALT I agreement that was signed at the Moscow summit in 1972. The SALT I treaty was considered a major breakthrough by the Soviet Union. It was for the first

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<sup>30</sup> Quedsted, R., Sino-Soviet Relations, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1984, p.139.

<sup>31</sup> Barston, R., 'Soviet foreign policy in the Brezhnev years', The World Today, March, 1983, p.81.

time, in the eyes of the Soviet leadership, a real step in limiting the nuclear arms race.<sup>32</sup>

However, according to Andrei Alexandrov-Agentov, who was an influential foreign policy advisor to Brezhnev, the decision within the Soviet leadership and especially with the military as to whether or not to sign the treaty was hotly contested:

'I remember once, he (Brezhnev) sat in his study in the Central Committee for about five hours talking to the Minister of Defence, Chief of general staff, Commanders-in-Chief of Naval Forces and of Air Force. Striving to convince them that the compromise proposal, already worked out by the negotiators should be accepted. (Brezhnev said) "How often I wait for them to deprive us of the possibility of developing our best means of defence. Well, tell me one thing " he said "If we just put a cross about this draft treaty and do not sign anything, are you sure that America will not be possible to reach us where we are in advance of us, no he cannot guarantee that. Are sure our economy will win on (the) continuation of the arms race, of course not". And after these five hours they had all agreed that SALT I should be accepted'.<sup>33</sup>

Also signed at the Moscow Summit was 'The Basic Principles of US-Soviet Relations'. Among 'The Basic Principles', were three principles that were the most significant. In the first principle, the United States and the Soviet Union agreed to conduct their relations on the basis of peaceful coexistence (the use of the word peaceful coexistence and not *détente* was to prove a source of contention). The second principle contained the provision that both the US and the Soviet Union make efforts to prevent the development of situations that could exacerbate their relations. The third principle recognised the 'special responsibility' of the two countries to do everything in their power not to allow conflicts or situations to escalate international tensions.<sup>34</sup>

The signing of the two agreement (SALT I and 'The Basic Principles') between the United States and the Soviet Union marked the height of cooperation in this period of US-Soviet *détente*. As mentioned in chapter 3 the United States was describing the resulting documents of the Moscow summit in euphoric terms.<sup>35</sup> In the Soviet Union, the leadership also described these agreements in glowing terms, suggesting that the world was entering a new era of negotiation in Soviet-American relations.

### *Soviet Policy in Europe*

The second consideration, as noted earlier, of the Soviet conception of *détente* was its

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<sup>32</sup> Andrei Alexandrov-Agentov, BBC Interview.

<sup>33</sup> Andrei Alexandrov-Agentov, BBC Interview.

<sup>34</sup> Garthoff, 1985, pp.290-291.

<sup>35</sup> See chapter 3.

policy toward Europe. From the end of the Second World War, Soviet European policy had been dominated by the German question. The two crises over Berlin, in 1948 and 1961, and the building of the Berlin Wall attest to the underlying difficulty for Soviet policy in dealing with the two Germanies. However, by 1969 Soviet policy on Germany had been modified partially to take into account the growing economic and diplomatic ties between Eastern Europe and the FRG, but also it was a new approach to European political détente.<sup>36</sup>

Rumania was the first to open diplomatic relations with the FRG in January 1967. When several other countries, namely Hungary and Bulgaria, also began to show interest, the Soviet Union was spurred into action. The Soviet Union called a Warsaw Pact meeting at which they extracted a pledge from all the other member countries not to recognize West Germany, until it recognized East Germany.<sup>37</sup>

The Soviet Union revised its approach to Germany by promoting Soviet-West German bilateral relations and relations between the GDR and FRG. By encouraging these relations the Soviet Union hoped to reduce the level of confrontation in Europe, but according to Vadim Zagladin, a member of the Supreme Soviet foreign affairs committee, 'the Soviet leadership saw in this *Ostpolitik*, another opportunity to maintain the status quo in Europe'.<sup>38</sup> The Soviet Union also hoped to continue its long aim of detaching the FRG from its close ties with the United States. What resulted from this change in approach were several treaties. First a Non-Aggression Pact was signed between the Soviet Union and West Germany in August 1970. Then in December, a treaty was concluded between Poland and the FRG, which recognized the postwar Oder-Neisse border. Finally, the FRG and GDR signed a treaty which called for reciprocal recognition in December 1972.<sup>39</sup>

Along with the bilateral negotiations with the Federal Republic of Germany, the Soviet Union attempted to affect a change in its European policy by proposing a European Security Conference (ESC). The idea to hold a security conference was hardly new, as mentioned in chapter 5, it was first proposed around the time of the German rearmament question, but the

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<sup>36</sup> Barston, 1983, pp.82-83.

<sup>37</sup> Garthoff, 1985, p.108.

<sup>38</sup> Vadim Zagladin, BBC Interview.

<sup>39</sup> Garthoff, 1985, p.109.

idea began to gain popularity after the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact states in Budapest in March 1969.

The Soviet Union had several objectives in calling for a security conference at the Budapest meeting. Among these objectives was to address outstanding issues which remained from the Second World War. The leading issue was a multilateral recognition of the status quo and the Soviet position in Eastern Europe. Other issues included were the, 'inviolability of existing frontiers, recognition of the existence of two German states, and West German renunciation of possession of nuclear arms in any form'.<sup>40</sup>

The Soviet proposal for a multi-lateral ESC was not initially well received in the West. The West viewed the multi-lateral nature of the talks and the early attempts to exclude the United States as signs of the Soviet intention of splitting the NATO allies. After a great deal of manoeuvring to meet the necessary conditions set out by either side and progress on both the bilateral negotiations between the FRG and the Soviet Union and its allies, and the signing of the four powers agreement on Berlin, the two blocs were on the verge of conducting preparatory talks on a European security conference.

There was however one problem that still remained unresolved, the issue of conventional force reduction talks (MBFR). Although the United States had agreed to remove the MBFR talks from the agenda of the ESC, there had still been no progress on the issue. Having recognized that the ESC format would be far too broad to discuss the specific issues of bloc to bloc conventional force reductions, the United States was looking for an alternative forum to carry out negotiations. The Soviet Union had shown little inclination toward such a proposal, but Henry Kissinger was able to break the deadlock by linking US acceptance of the opening of the ESC to Soviet acceptance to convening MBFR talks.<sup>41</sup>

The final obstacle had been removed, on November 15, 1972, the NATO allies sent out invitations to the members of the Warsaw Pact countries to participate in MBFR talks to be held in Vienna. The following day, the United States accepted the Finnish invitation to commence preparatory talks on November 22nd in Helsinki. The preparatory talks for MBFR

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<sup>40</sup> Maresca, John To Helsinki: the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe 1973-1975, Duke University Press, Durham, 1987, p.5.

<sup>41</sup> Maresca, 1987, p.11.



began in January 1973.<sup>42</sup>

The negotiations in Vienna made no progress throughout their 15 years existence, however the European security talks, which became known as the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) had success in Helsinki and Geneva with the final act of the negotiations signed on August 1, 1975. The final act was broken down into four 'baskets'. Basket One covered problems of security in Europe, Basket Two dealt with cooperation in the fields of economics, science and technology and of the environment, Basket Three was cooperation in humanitarian and other fields and Basket Four was regarding the follow-up to the conference.<sup>43</sup>

Alexandrov-Agentov pointed out that to Brezhnev, the combination of the policies toward the United States and Western Europe, were his greatest achievement in foreign policy: 'Leonid Brezhnev considered his most important achievements in foreign policy, the Moscow Treaty with Western Germany, that as you know drove the line under the results of the Second World War. Then the treaties he concluded and signed with Nixon in 1972. Among them SALT I and ABM, and then the document that contained the main (Basic Principles) principles of political relations between the two countries. If we put these two papers, the Moscow treaty with Germany and the treaties with Nixon, together we practically have a model of the concluding document of the West European, All-European Conference. The main thing already there, and the third achievement was that conference, the Helsinki Conference'.<sup>44</sup>

As has been stated, the possibility for the Soviet Union to make these breakthroughs in foreign policy and to be recognized as an equal superpower with the United States was brought about by the change in the correlation of forces. Central to this shift was the change in the military balance which was mainly caused by the Soviet military build up. However it is interesting to note that even once the Soviet Union had reached a rough parity with the US and recognition as a full fledged superpower, this build up continued unabated.

### **The Soviet Military Build Up**

The main component of the changed correlation of forces in the late 1960s and early 1970s was a long, steady expansion of Soviet military strength. The first stage of the build up is when Khrushchev began to abandon his effort to save money on the military in the mid-

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<sup>42</sup> Maresca, 1987, p.11.

<sup>43</sup> Höll, O., 'The CSCE Process: Basic Facts', from Neuhold, H., ed., CSCE: N&N Perspectives, Austrian Institute of International Relations, Vienna, 1987, p.10.

<sup>44</sup> Andrei Alexandrov-Agentov, BBC Interview.

1950s, after a big Korean War-era weapons program.<sup>45</sup> The second stage of the Soviet military build up post dates the removal of Khrushchev as Soviet leader, at a time when the Soviet Union expanded greatly the scope of their build up.

It was as various weapons came in to use and the capability of Soviet forces increased there was a change in Soviet military doctrine. As the Scotts point out, one example of a major change in Soviet military doctrine, brought about by the development of nuclear weapons, was the creation of a fifth service of the Armed Forces - the Strategic Rocket Force.<sup>46</sup>

Prior to 1964, Khrushchev had emphasised the need to build up the Strategic Rocket Force and the air defence forces. However after he was ousted from office, other areas, such as conventional theatre forces and the navy also received priority attention.<sup>47</sup> The reason for this expansion of the build up were two unconnected crises in the 1960s, the Sino-Soviet split and the embarrassment at the hands of the US over the Cuban Missile Crisis, convinced Moscow that they needed to expand the scope of the Soviet Union's military build up.<sup>48</sup>

After the Sino-Soviet split the Soviet Union had until that time planned for a single front war, now prepared for a two front war. Although both sides took great pains to defuse the situation, the need for increased troop levels along the border remained high. An example of the Soviet build up in the East was caused by several incidents of border skirmishes between frontier troops the Soviet Union increased the number of combat aircraft along the border fivefold between 1967 and 1972.<sup>49</sup>

The Cuban Missile Crisis was a great public humiliation for the Soviet leadership. The Deputy Foreign Minister V. V. Kuznetsov predicted in his often quoted line that the Soviet Union, 'never will be caught like this again'.<sup>50</sup> The post Cuba stage of the Soviet military build

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<sup>45</sup> Bradsher, H., Afghanistan and the Soviet Union, Duke University Press, Durham, 1985, p.130.

<sup>46</sup> Scott, W. F. and Scott, H.F., Soviet Military Doctrine, Westview Press, London, 1988, pp.24-25.

<sup>47</sup> Hansen, J., Correlation of Forces, Praeger, New York, 1987, p.57.

<sup>48</sup> Collins, J., US-Soviet Military Balance: Concepts and Capabilities 1960-1980, McGraw-Hill Publications Co., New York, 1980, pp.44-45.

<sup>49</sup> Hansen, 1987, p.62.

<sup>50</sup> Collins, 1980, pp.45-46.

up coincided with a change in military doctrine of the development of a 'Controlled Conflict Capability: 1969-1973'. The major new theme of this new doctrine was the idea that Soviet forces had to be prepared to fight with or without nuclear weapons. This new doctrine was the result of the adoption of Flexible Response by NATO.<sup>51</sup>

A second development in Soviet Military Doctrine that resulted from the humiliation of the Soviet Union at the hands of the United States during the Cuban Missile Crisis was the call from Admiral Gorshkov for the Soviet Navy to 'enter the wider oceans'. Up until that time, the Soviet Fleets range extended only as far as the Norwegian Sea. The change in the navy from 1964 was quite staggering. From 1964 to 1976 the number of ship-days of the navy in distant water increased by 14 fold. It was in 1964 that, for the first time Soviet ships operated in the Eastern Mediterranean, during the Cyprus crisis.<sup>52</sup>

The third stage of Soviet military build up coincided again with a shift in Soviet military doctrine, 'Opening Era of Power Projection: 1974-1982.' The shift in doctrine called for a change away from the traditional defence of the motherland and other socialist countries; the new military doctrine called for the defence of movements of national liberation and opposition to counter-revolutionary movements and imperialist intervention wherever it appears on the planet.<sup>53</sup> The change in Soviet military doctrine was first noted in an article by Marshal A. A. Grechko, who wrote of the ability of the Soviet Union to project military power over great distances in 1974. Grechko writing in 1975, said, 'The external function of the Soviet Armed Forces is inseparably linked with other most important directions of the foreign policy activities of the Soviet state'. This change in Soviet Military Doctrine was brought about by the build up in the Soviet Navy which had begun just after Cuba.<sup>54</sup>

As noted earlier, the core motivation for the long Soviet military build up was the predominant concern of developing strategic nuclear forces to attain strategic parity with the United States, which at that time had a superior capability to deliver nuclear weapons at long

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<sup>51</sup> Scott, W. F. and Scott, H.F. Armed Forces of the USSR, Arms and Armour Press, London, 1984, pp.54-55.

<sup>52</sup> Hansen, 1987, p.57-60.

<sup>53</sup> Scott and Scott, 1984, p.57.

<sup>54</sup> Scott and Scott, 1988,p.71.

range. However, once launched, the intensive Soviet development of strategic nuclear power continued virtually unchecked so that by the early 1980s it was in some ways superior to United States' capabilities and in other ways catching up rapidly. Victor Karpov argues that this tendency to build beyond parity was caused by the nature of the bureaucratic system in the Soviet Union, mainly the military complex, (the industries, the research institutes and the army) were engaged in the development of weapons system, competed for resources and each one tried to sell the government their own idea. Karpov used the analogy that the government was like the bureaucratic ass that couldn't see a pile of hay to eat because it was standing in between two piles. So often, when a decision was made, it was decided to take both competing systems. This meant that unlike the US, where there was one system for a certain task, in the Soviet Union there were several, which of course made the cost go up.<sup>55</sup>

Alexei Arbatov argues that this led to a lot of irrational decision making in weapons procurement. For example, two weapons systems, the ss-18 and the ss-19 basically had the same military capability, but were supported by separate interests and both were deployed. Until 1987 the USSR was developing and deploying 13 new offensive weapons systems to the US' 6. A two for one build up of Soviet submarines also existed.<sup>56</sup>

Karpov argues that there was a lack of political control in the procurement and development of weapons systems in the Soviet Union. The industries were given a 'green light' for all programmes and all the resources that they needed. They also received additional privileges such as premium salaries. However by granting these concessions to the industrial complex on the types of missiles, aircraft, etc., higher levels of the government were sometimes at pains to determine what purpose each weapons programme was meant to serve: 'We always thought that at that time, if we built more missiles, it would be safer for us because the United States, having that arsenal that they had at the time, could not deprive us of a retaliatory force. That was the dominating factor and it was the guideline for all the arms race that took place at the time'.<sup>57</sup>

The lack of political control stemmed from the state of party-military relations throughout the Brezhnev leadership. During the Khrushchev period relations between the

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<sup>55</sup> Victor Karpov, BBC Interview,

<sup>56</sup> Alexei Arbatov, BBC Interview.

<sup>57</sup> Victor Karpov, BBC Interview,

CPSU and the military had been very cold and was one of the factors that led to his downfall. In late 1966 a conference was held between the two to iron out their differences. In return for the military's acceptance of the primacy of the Communist party's leadership, the party agreed to fund all major programmes the military said they needed.<sup>58</sup> This situation was not challenged until Mikael Gorbachev became the leader of the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s.

This unchallenged domain of the military to determine weapons procurement was to prove a dominant factor in the Soviet political leadership's conduct of foreign policy, especially in the area of US-Soviet détente. When Alexei Arbatov was asked if détente, as the United States had hoped, made a difference in Soviet arms spending, he responded by saying:

'Not in the beginning of the 70s. Rather it was probably to the contrary. Some artificial limitations that were achieved at arms control negotiations were compensated for by increased defence spending. In order to support SALT I and ABM treaty and some small peripheral changes in foreign policy and ideology, the military industrial complex was provided with very solid compensation in resources for a quickly expanded build up. So at that time, détente was, I would say, détente went parallel to the expansion of the military build up. And that was probably one of the most important reasons for the collapse of the first détente in the mid-70s'.<sup>59</sup>

Although it may have looked so in the West, Arbatov makes the point that there was no direct intention of exploiting détente, but was caused by competing forces within the Soviet government. One was genuinely looking to get better relations with the US, while the other was intent on a military build up. It was the second group that proved to be predominant:

'The combination of these forces produced a policy that might be construed in the West as a major strategic deception. In reality it was not like that, but it was a fact that due to Soviet internal political structure and traditions of the society and the peculiarities of the decision making mechanism, certainly those who were in favour of a power build up were more influential, predominant, then those who were in favour of détente, and sometimes against a power build up'.<sup>60</sup>

### **Soviet Policy in the Third World**

There are quite a few differences between détente and peaceful co-existence, but the most fundamental is in the differing view towards relations with the Third World. The United States perceived the SALT I agreement as an instrument designed to domesticate and contain

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<sup>58</sup> Hansen, 1987, p.60.

<sup>59</sup> Victor Karpov, BBC Interview,

<sup>60</sup> Victor Karpov, BBC Interview,

Soviet power, not unleash it. Moscow was well aware of this fact. To Washington's criticism that Soviet behaviour in the Third World and particularly in Africa is incompatible with détente, for instance, Moscow complained defensively that the United States was refusing to treat the USSR as an equal, attempting to deny its global credentials in practice while recognizing them symbolically.<sup>61</sup> The Soviet Union view was that peaceful coexistence established definite constraints on Western freedom of action and especially on Western responses to Soviet challenges. The Soviet Union insisted that it retained the freedom to determine where peaceful coexistence does not apply to its own policies and activities and where it can choose the modes of its prosecution of the anti-imperialist struggle.<sup>62</sup>

The American expectation that the Soviet Union would forego chances to take advantage of opportunities in the Third World may have been disingenuous. With the correlations of forces which had brought about détente, having shifted to the Soviet Union, is exactly the sort of reason they would take advantage of upheavals in the Third World to alter what the Soviet Union regarded as an order created by Western/US military and economic power. Furthermore détente did not entail a commitment or obligation on their part to accept the status quo in the Third World. Détente could, in the Soviet view, prevent the dangers of confrontation between the superpowers in the Third World, but not the inevitable confrontation.<sup>63</sup>

The Soviet Union also objected to the usage of 'linkage', arguing that détente should not be tied to other issues. The Soviet conception of détente relied mainly on negotiating specific issues, especially security matters.<sup>64</sup> In short, Soviet leaders' expectations in the early 70s were to gain influence in international affairs and enhance their position vis-à-vis the Third World as a result of their military power.

Many writers including Margot Light consider Khrushchev the architect of Soviet policy in the Third World. With the exception of China, North Korea and North Vietnam,

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<sup>61</sup> Aspaturian, V., 'Soviet Global Power and the Correlation of Forces', Problems of Communism, XXIX, May-June 1980, V.,p.4.

<sup>62</sup> Kohler, Harvey, Gouré, and Soll, 1973, p.71

<sup>63</sup> Menon, R., Soviet Power and the Third World, Yale University Press, London, 1986, p.11.

<sup>64</sup> Garthoff, 1985, p.49.

which were considered like the countries of Eastern Europe as "people's democracies" (in other words, nascent socialist states), the USSR had few diplomatic ties with the colonial countries and ex-colonies before Khrushchev became first secretary of the Communist Party. By 1964, when Khrushchev was ousted, the Soviet Union had diplomatic relations with more than twenty developing countries.<sup>65</sup>

The change in Soviet foreign policy was not only the extending of that policy in the Third World, but also a change in the content of the policy. Khrushchev made a major shift in Soviet policy in the Third World away from the orthodox Marxist-Leninist ideal of supporting movements of national liberation on the basis of their ideological leanings. The Soviet Union began to support newly independent nations that eschewed Marxist-Leninism, but adopted anti-imperialist policies.<sup>66</sup>

Though there were some successes in gaining footholds in various regions, the policy had some major weaknesses. Mainly Soviet allies proved highly unstable and vulnerable to shifts in political fortunes. The clients tended to be unpredictable and often uncooperative to Soviet aims. And assistance through arms transfers and economic aid proved to be a poor source of leverage with intractable clients.<sup>67</sup>

However by the 1970s, Soviet foreign policy in the Third World had gone through a notable expansion. Along with the lessening in tension in superpower relations, there were several other factors that led to this shift. First, the Soviet Union had reached a rough parity with the US in nuclear weapons, reducing American freedom of action in the Third World. It is often argued that nuclear parity with the United States indicated that the US could no longer brandish the nuclear threat as they had done in the past. The relevance of nuclear parity was not so much military as it was psychological in much the same way as *détente*, in that now the Soviet Union viewed themselves as equals with the US. It signified for the Soviet Union the equal ability to do what the United States had been doing since the late 40s, shaping a

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<sup>65</sup> Light, M. (ed.), Troubled Friendships: Moscow's Third World Policy, Royal Institute of International Affairs, British Academic Press, London, 1993, p.2.

<sup>66</sup> Fukuyama, F., 'Soviet Strategy in the Third World' from Korbonaski, A., and Fukuyama, F., (ed.) The Soviet Union and the Third World; The Last Three Decades, Cornell University Press, London, 1987, p.26.

<sup>67</sup> Fukuyama, 1987, p.29.

congenial order in the Third World.<sup>68</sup>

Second, Soviet conventional military capabilities (such as airlift capacity and naval power) had grown substantially since the early 60s. By the early 70s, this increase in power projection capability began to be reflected in a shift in Soviet Military Doctrine. Soviet writers began to stress the offensive character of their military doctrine.<sup>69</sup> The 24th Party Congress of the CPSU (1971) incorporated the shift in Soviet military doctrine into the foreign policy by adopting a more global orientation for the future. Part of this orientation was an increased emphasis on the Pacific rim. Internal party debates were concerned with the build up of military capability in order for Moscow to be capable of expanding those horizons.<sup>70</sup> Third, was the emergence of Brezhnev as the undisputed leader of the Soviet Union in the mid-70s and the rise of the International Department which was greatly linked to Brezhnev.<sup>71</sup>

There is one other factor that is often overlooked when discussing the increased activity in the Third World by the Soviet Union. Not only had Soviet activity increased quantitatively in the Third World but also qualitatively. The biggest change in Soviet strategy in the 1970s was Moscow's promotion of Marxist-Leninist vanguard parties (MLVPs).<sup>72</sup> This had the affect of increasing the role of ideology in Soviet foreign policy in the Third World. The design of the intervention into Southern Africa, for example, was driven by the idea of promoting MLVPs as a means of establishing the Soviet model of development. When the Angolan rebels made early contacts with the Soviet Union, they went to great effort to convince the Soviet Union that they had transformed themselves into a MLVP. When things became difficult for the Angolans, the Soviet leadership used opportunity, capability and strategic interests as rationalizations for supporting a régime that wanted to adhere to the Soviet model.<sup>73</sup>

Under Brezhnev, in order to get better financial return, there was also a shift in policy

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<sup>68</sup> Menon, 1986, pp.10-11.

<sup>69</sup> Scott and Scott, 1988, p.73.

<sup>70</sup> Hansen, 1987, p.103.

<sup>71</sup> Westad, O.A. 'Moscow and the Angolan Crisis: A New Pattern of Intervention', from CWIHP Issue 8-9, Winter 1996-97, p.21.

<sup>72</sup> Fukuyama, 1986, p.27.

<sup>73</sup> Westad, Winter 1996-97.



away from economic aid to military aid and trade. Between 1971 and 1989 the Soviet Union signed fourteen treaties of friendship and cooperation with less developed countries (LDCs).<sup>74</sup> Transfers of Soviet arms from 1970 to 1980 rose to more than \$30 billion: between the years 1954 and 1969 Soviet arms transfer only amounted to \$4 billion. The Soviet Union also began to become more involved in regional wars, sometimes resorting to military intervention. In Egypt during the 'War of Attrition' 69-70, thousands of Soviet personnel were used, and in the 73 war, it was the first time where the Soviet Union attempted, on so vast a scale, to supply a client in the Third World with arms during a war. The other unprecedented act was the threat by the Soviet Union to intervene unless Israeli military operations ceased.<sup>75</sup>

In the Autumn of 1975 the Soviet Union embarked upon a policy of greater adventurism in the Third World and thereby altered the calculations on Soviet-American relations. The first area that the Soviet Union turned its attention to was Southern Africa. The decision to become involved in Angola may have made sense in terms of Soviet political doctrine of assisting developing countries, or in the context of the Sino-Soviet rivalry, but in geopolitical terms, on the assumption that US-Soviet relations were still the first priority for the Soviet leadership, the sending of Soviet arms and the transporting of Cuban troops to Angola was a disaster.<sup>76</sup>

Where Angola proved to be a disaster for Soviet policy was that by giving logistical support to Cuba, this was the first demonstration of the Soviet Union's ability to project conventional power across the world. This coincided with a growing perception in the West that they had grossly underestimated Soviet military spending. The fact that Cuban troops were used may have played into the background of US-Cuban animosity. All these factors seemed to come together, not all at the same time, to create a watershed in US-Soviet relations.<sup>77</sup>

If the Soviet leadership miscalculated the effect on Washington or did not bother to

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<sup>74</sup> Light, M., 'The Evolution of Soviet Policy in the Third World'. from Light, M.(ed.), Troubled Friendships; Moscow's Third World Policy, Royal Institute of International Affairs, British Academic Press, London, 1993, pp.11-12.

<sup>75</sup> Menon, 1986, p.9.

<sup>76</sup> Edmonds, R., Soviet Foreign Policy, The Brezhnev Years, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1983, p.151.

<sup>77</sup> Edmonds, 1983, p.153.

calculate the effect on US-Soviet relations, either way they seemed to attach little value to warnings given to them by Dobrynin and Arbatov regarding developments in American domestic politics. George Arbatov claims that he warned Brezhnev, Kosygin and Andropov not to participate in Angola, and that if the Soviet Union went in it would only be the beginning. The Soviet Union was then drawn into conflicts in Ethiopia, Yemen and finally Afghanistan.<sup>78</sup>

There has been some debate among former Soviet officials as whether or not there was actually increased adventurism in Soviet Third World policy in the 70s. When Andrei Alexandrov-Agentov was asked if Soviet policy in the latter 70s was more expansionist, he replied, 'No I don't think that at all. Our examples just proving that we had no egoistic interests, what the hell did we want to gain in Ethiopia or in Angola or in Ghana, or if it comes to it, even in Cuba. That was the influence of the ideological side of our policy, the Socialist Internationalism, [a] people takes power, proclaims its intention of building a new society based on socialist principle. It is our moral duty to be on its side'<sup>79</sup>.

George Arbatov argues that Soviet policy in the Third World was adventurist and that there were several reasons for this adventurism after 1974. Arbatov feels that the illness of Brezhnev (1974) had a great deal to do with the adventurism of the Soviet Union. Brezhnev's instincts were with détente, but after his illness was persuaded to go in. The other reason for increased Soviet activity was that the United States was weakened from Watergate and Vietnam and would not interfere. Asked if the Soviet Union made a conscious attempt to exploit détente and American weakness, Arbatov responded, 'Yes, but you know politicians with greater vision would never do it, because you cannot play such games with a great power. A great power will recover, and then it will take its revenge'.<sup>80</sup>

### *Angola*

When all attention turned to Southern Africa neither superpower wished to have the Angolan Civil War become an issue in US-Soviet relations, but the competition between the

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<sup>78</sup> George Arbatov, BBC Interview.

<sup>79</sup> Andrei Alexandrov-Agentov, BBC Interview.

<sup>80</sup> George Arbatov, BBC Interview.

US and the Soviet Union for influence (as well as the Sino-Soviet competition) led to increased involvement and then to friction over the interpretation of the rules for superpower competition under détente.<sup>81</sup> Westad argues that the Soviet Union's main objective in Southern Africa was to secure a series of inexpensive victories in what was seen as a global contest with the United States for influence in the Third World.<sup>82</sup> There was no reason in the view of the Soviet leadership that this involvement in the Southern Africa should have an effect on Soviet-American relations.

However, according to Anatoly Dobrynin, Soviet Ambassador to the United States, of all regional conflicts, the one point of controversy that soured Americans on détente was Angola. The Angolan conflict gradually became one of the most acute points of confrontation between Moscow and Washington, even though it was very far removed from the genuine national interests of both countries. Moreover, it aggravated the central issues of Soviet-American relations and raised the question of whether détente had any general application outside the mutual behaviour toward each other, and if so, what those applications were.<sup>83</sup>

The situation in Angola became a battleground for superfluous concerns to the actual situation within the country. It became an ante in the superpower sweepstakes.<sup>84</sup> Prior to this escalation, the US had viewed Soviet support to the MPLA as a means of maintaining parity with anti-Soviet forces. When the Cuban forces changed from military instructors to combat forces in Angola, the United States began a covert aid programme to supply arms to the FNLA and UNITA. When this covert aid became known to Congress, legislation was brought forward to end the aid. Supporters of this bill argued that this would lead the US into a Vietnam type involvement, and that the correct response would be to apply pressure on the Soviet Union through either SALT negotiations or the sale of grain. The Ford Administration felt that to apply pressure to the Soviet Union, the US must first display its commitment to the anti-Soviet forces. Kissinger also argued that adventurism must not go unchecked, because it may serve

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<sup>81</sup> Garthoff, 1985, p.533.

<sup>82</sup> Westad, Winter 1996-97, p.21.

<sup>83</sup> Dobrynin, A., In Confidence: Moscow's ambassador to America's six Cold War presidents, Random House, New York, 1995, p.360.

<sup>84</sup> Klinghoffer, A., The Angolan War: A Study in Soviet policy in the Third World, Westview Press, 1980, pp.1-2.

to encourage the Soviet Union and that the greatest concern was American failure to respond would send a signal to both allies and enemies that the US no longer possessed great power resolve.<sup>85</sup>

President Ford complained to Moscow through Ambassador Dobrynin that if the Soviet Union continued to participate in military operations in Angola that it would damage relations between Moscow and Washington. Brezhnev responded that what was happening in Angola was not a civil war but a foreign military intervention (ie. South Africa) and that Moscow was not interested in viewing this situation in terms of an East-West confrontation and a test of détente.<sup>86</sup> The Soviet leadership saw the situation in 1974-75 quite differently from the Ford Administration. Firstly, under détente the United States had been competing successfully in the Middle East, most notably in turning Egypt from a Soviet ally into an anti-Soviet American ally, and in excluding the Soviet Union from the Arab-Israeli peace diplomacy after the Yom Kippur War.<sup>87</sup>

It is clear that the leaders believed the course they undertook in Angola was a quid-pro-quo with the United States over its handling of the Middle East and fully consonant with détente and the tacit rules of competition as practised by the United States. One of the leading voices in the Soviet leadership that argued this position was that of Boris Ponomarev who was head of the International Department of the Central Committee.<sup>88</sup> Secondly, from Moscow's point of view, the war was seen as an opportunity to maintain the global momentum, both strategically and diplomatically, that had been gained with the Communist victory in Vietnam.<sup>89</sup>

There was, however, dissent to the position argued above (which was the dominant viewpoint in the Politburo), mainly from Anatoly Dobrynin and the Soviet embassy in Washington. Dobrynin pointed out that even though Moscow did not view the situation in

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<sup>85</sup> Litwak, 1984, p.189.

<sup>86</sup> Dobrynin, 1995, p.361.

<sup>87</sup> Garthoff, 1985, pp.530-531.

<sup>88</sup> Dobrynin, 1995, p.362.

<sup>89</sup> Porter, B., The USSR in Third World Conflicts: Soviet arms and diplomacy in local wars 1945-1980, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984, p.147.

Angola as damaging to US-Soviet relations this was exactly how the Ford Administration and the American public were viewing events and it had the effect of worsening relations. Dobrynin noted in his memoirs that, 'Our embassy in Washington repeatedly warned Moscow of this. [However] Our reports and arguments fell on deaf ears of the morally self-righteous'. Although Angola was primarily viewed by the Kremlin as an ideological conflict with the United States, the Soviet leadership clearly underestimated the psychological effect of Cuban involvement in Angola on the Ford Administration and on American public opinion as a whole. The myth of Cuba as a Soviet proxy was especially damaging for the Soviet Union in the United States.<sup>90</sup>

An additional factor which influenced decision making in the Soviet Union regarding Southern Africa was the American rapprochement with China. The rivalry between the Soviet Union and China for influence in the Third World had grown quite intense by the mid-70s. Several Chinese successes in Southern Africa, most significantly, the building of the Freedom Railway, between Tanzania and Zambia and its support of FRELIMO in Mozambique, led the Soviet Union to embark on a far more vigorous policy in the region. That both the United States and China were both giving support to the FNLA really affected the Soviet Union's response. Colin Legum pointed out that if it were just the United States supporting the FNLA, the Soviet Union would most likely have invoked the agreement of 'Basic Principles' to prevent the situation from escalating into a superpower confrontation, but this would have left the Chinese with a free hand in Angola.<sup>91</sup>

However in late 1975, China began to scale back its involvement in Angola. The reasons for this withdrawal were twofold. Firstly China most likely did not want to be collaborating with South Africa, who invaded from the South in October 1975.<sup>92</sup> Secondly, they were probably counting on the fact that the United States not allow itself to be ousted from an area of traditional Western influence.<sup>93</sup> By withdrawing and declaring themselves

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<sup>90</sup> Dobrynin, 1995, pp.361-362.

<sup>91</sup> Legum, C., 'Great Powers in Southern Africa', Foreign Affairs, vol 54, no.4, July 1976, pp.748-750.

<sup>92</sup> Klinghoffer, 1980, p.107.

<sup>93</sup> Legum, July 1976, p.751.

strictly neutral and counting on the Americans to continue to supply the FNLA and UNITA, the Chinese hoped to both endear themselves to the Organization of African Unity, who were calling for a government of national unity, and have the Soviet backed MPLA defeated.

When the 'mystery column' entered Angola from the South in late October 1975, the whole complexion of the situation in Angola changed. Led by white South Africans, it pushed the MPLA out of the southern half of the country. The South Africans reason for intervening in Angola was based on the desperate straits of UNITA.<sup>94</sup> As the 'mystery column' moved to within 100 miles of the Angolan capital Luanda, Cuba began to increase its military build up of the MPLA and for the first time introduced large numbers of Cuban troops.<sup>95</sup>

Raymond Garthoff suggested that Havana came to the decision to intervene 'presumably' after consultation with Moscow.<sup>96</sup> However Sergo Mikoyan argues that the Soviet leadership's involvement in Africa was not of its own making but that they had been drawn in by their allies. In Angola, Castro's intervention (sending troops) was without any consultation with Moscow, Moscow was a pawn to get aid to the Angolan régime.<sup>97</sup>

The initial airlift of troops were supplied by the Soviet Union, but was carried out by Cuban aircraft. When the MPLA established its own government in late November 1975 and after the United States pressed several islands that were serving as transfer points to deny the Cuban's access, the Soviet General Staff took direct control, supplying long range aircraft to deploy additional Cuban troops and armed these troops with advanced weaponry. As of February 1976 there were 11,000 Cuban combat forces and the Soviet Union had supplied military material, including T-54 tanks, SAM-7s and MIG-21 fighters estimated in the range of \$300 million.<sup>98</sup>

By early 1976 the MPLA/Cuban troops began to get the upper hand in Angola. The apparent ties between the United States and South Africa had the effect of undermining the anti-Soviet sentiment among other Southern African nations. This link destroyed the possibility

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<sup>94</sup> Marcum, J., 'Lessons of Angola', *Foreign Affairs*, April 1976, p.417.

<sup>95</sup> Garthoff, 1985, p.512.

<sup>96</sup> Garthoff, 1985, p.511.

<sup>97</sup> Sergo Mikoyan, BBC Interview.

<sup>98</sup> Marcum, April 1976, p.417.

of collective African support for a compromise solution. The anti-South African sentiment not only made a collective compromise impossible, but all hope of a unified African response against outside intervention disappeared, as some states which had been critical of Soviet intervention, such as Nigeria and Tanzania, rallied to support the MPLA.<sup>99</sup>

While the Cuban/MPLA forces were gaining the upper hand on the battlefield, the Soviet Union launched a major diplomatic campaign on behalf of the MPLA. They capitalized greatly on South African support for UNITA and the South African intervention into Southern Angola. Where the Soviet Union met with reluctance by other African nations to recognize the MPLA as the government of Angola, they were not above applying pressure, or using other means to influence the respective government leaders.<sup>100</sup> An example of this was a 15,000-ruble gift presented in Addis Ababa to the OAU secretary-general on May 28, 1975.<sup>101</sup>

When Angolan independence was declared on November 11, the competing factions had formed rival governments. The MPLA in Luanda, and UNITA/FNLA in Huambo. Most states, including many African, withheld recognition of either government at the time.<sup>102</sup> However, the combination of the Cuban/MPLA military victory against the FNLA and UNITA forces and the Soviet diplomatic offensive paid great dividends when on February 11, 1976, after some hesitation, the Organisation of African Unity recognized the MPLA régime as the legitimate government of Angola.<sup>103</sup>

The Soviet leadership took great satisfaction that they had won the war in Angola. They were encouraged by the fact that they had been able to conduct a campaign of support for an ally at such a great distance. Personally for Brezhnev, Angola became his benchmark for solidarity with the Third World and that Socialism could be advanced under détente with the US. The situation in Angola was to serve as the textbook case for the Soviet Union on how it hoped to influence situations on the Third World in the future.

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<sup>99</sup> Marcum, April 1976, p.418.

<sup>100</sup> Valenta, J., 'Soviet Decision-Making on the Intervention in Angola', from Albright, D. ed., Africa and International Communism, MacMillan Press, London, 1980, p.114.

<sup>101</sup> Porter, 1984, p.158.

<sup>102</sup> Garthoff, 1985, p.516.

<sup>103</sup> Valenta, 1980, p.116.

## *The Horn of Africa*

The Soviet Union found itself with a dilemma in its policy toward the Third World, which resulted from the volatility of politics in the area. It often found itself supporting both sides in a bitter conflict. The largest example of a conflict between antagonists in the Third World, in which each was equipped with Soviet arms, was the war between Ethiopia and Somalia in 1977-1978.<sup>104</sup>

Since the end of the Second World War, Ethiopia had been an ally of the West. That relationship began to change when the emperor, Haile Selassie, was overthrown by the Provisional Military Administration Committee or Dergue as it was called.<sup>105</sup> Initially the Soviet Union seemed hesitant to become involved with the military takeover in Ethiopia. This may partly be explained by the Soviet Union's reluctance to antagonize their ally Somalia, who were in a territorial dispute with Ethiopia. The Soviet Union was especially sensitive in light of the recent setbacks they had suffered in Egypt and the Sudan, where the USSR had lost influence despite large scale investments of military and economic aid.<sup>106</sup>

However, when Colonel Mengistu emerged as the new leader of Ethiopia after a struggle for power within the Dergue and then pushed the government toward a Marxist-Leninist revolution and ended its military ties with the United States the Soviet Union became interested in giving assistance.<sup>107</sup> With the breakdown of US-Ethiopian relations, the Dergue was in desperate need of a foreign benefactor. Ethiopia had internal strife from both Eritrea and the Somali invasion of Ogaden.<sup>108</sup> Ironically, prior to the *coup* in Ethiopia, the Soviet Union's involvement in the Horn of Africa had been aimed at fermenting the strife. They had a treaty of Friendship with Somalia, providing the Somalian régime with arms and military advisors which the Somalis used in their incursion into the Ogaden province. The Soviet Union

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<sup>104</sup> Noguee and Donaldson, 1988, pp.290-291.

<sup>105</sup> Legum, 1981, p.605.

<sup>106</sup> Abebe, E., 'The Horn, The Cold War, and Documents from the Former Eastern-Bloc: An Ethiopian View', CWIHP, p.40.

<sup>107</sup> Menon, 1986, pp.138-139.

<sup>108</sup> Menon, 1986, p.140.



was also supporting Eritrean separatists within Ethiopia.<sup>109</sup>

According to Sergo Mikoyan, as in the case of Angola, the idea of giving assistance to Ethiopia came from Cuba.<sup>110</sup> Menigistu's emergence did bring swift congratulations from the Cuban government, followed by the arrival of Cuban military advisors and then a visit from Fidel Castro himself.<sup>111</sup> Castro attempted to mediate between the Ethiopian and Somali (Marxist) governments over the Somali incursions into the Ogaden province of Ethiopia. The Somali government was uninterested in such a solution and started making overtures to the United States.<sup>112</sup> Whether or not Mikoyan's statement is true, it is unlikely that the Cubans would have been so deeply involved without Soviet assent and support.

When the conflict initially broke out the USSR seemed to believe that by supplying arms to both sides it could act as the sole mediator in the dispute;<sup>113</sup> the role that the Soviet Union was looking to play was much the same as the United States had played in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Soviet Union hoped that the replacement of the pro-Western Selassie government by the Marxist-Leninist Dergue, coupled with the revolutionary government of Somalia, would give them a foot in both camps and allow the Soviet Union to bring peace to the area.<sup>114</sup>

What the Soviet Union offered was a regional federation of Marxist nations or as Colin Legum called it, a '*Pax Sovietica*' between the two countries. The Soviet Union was supplying arms to both and serving as the guarantor of the redrawn boundaries. The Soviet Union had delegations from both Somalia and Ethiopia in Moscow for several weeks in July 1977, in an attempt to negotiate a settlement. However this attempt proved fruitless as the archive suggests that the two parties never met face to face in Moscow. The reason they failed to meet was due

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<sup>109</sup> Legum, 1981, p.606.

<sup>110</sup> Sergo Mikoyan, BBC Interview.

<sup>111</sup> Garthoff, 1985, pp.630-631.

<sup>112</sup> Garthoff, 1985, pp.630-631.

<sup>113</sup> Porter, 1984, p.183.

<sup>114</sup> Legum, July 1976, p.610.

to the fact that written statements given to the Soviet Union by each delegation gave no room for negotiation.<sup>115</sup>

When the mediation failed, the Soviet Union was forced to choose between the two. The USSR seemed to have little trouble choosing Ethiopia, which although not as firmly established as a Marxist partner, was the larger, more populated of the two countries.<sup>116</sup> There also seems to be another reason why the Soviet Union chose Ethiopia, which was suggested by Fidel Castro in a conversation with the East German leader Erich Honecker, 'Ethiopia has a great revolutionary potential. So there is a great counterweight to Sadat's Egypt'.<sup>117</sup>

Throughout this period, the Somalian government had been making overtures directly to the United States and through Saudi Arabia that they were hoping to gain American 'friendship' and thus an alternative source of arms. However, after several months of negotiations between the US and Somalia, in which the United States even made an agreement 'in principle' to supply arms, the Carter Administration announced that it would not be supplying arms to Somalia. Even though the Carter Administration refused to supply arms to the Somali government, their forces were able by October 77 to capture 90% of the Ogaden province.<sup>118</sup>

With the US decision not to supply arms to Somalia, the Soviet Union became fairly confident that within the political context in the Horn, the United States was unlikely to become involved directly. Having regarded Somalia as a Soviet client state since the early 1970s, the United States was unlikely to intervene on their behalf if they were not about to sell them arms.<sup>119</sup> The Soviet assumption was to prove correct because from the point at which the United States cut off military aid to Ethiopia, neither the United States nor any other major

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<sup>115</sup> Henze, P., 'Moscow, Mengistu, and the Horn: Difficult Choices for the Kremlin', CWIHP, Winter 1996-97, p.45.

<sup>116</sup> Legum, July 1976, pp.610-611.

<sup>117</sup> Transcript of Honecker-Castro, Meeting, 3, April 1977, Excerpts found in CWIHP, Winter 1996-97, p.20.

<sup>118</sup> Garthoff, 1985, pp.637-638.

<sup>119</sup> Menon, 1986, p.143.

Western power played a significant role in the conflict on the Horn of Africa.<sup>120</sup>

In November, the Soviet Union and Cuba began a far more coordinated effort than they had at the beginning of the Angolan civil war to airlift Cuban troops (between 12,000 and 17,000) and Soviet supplies (est. at over \$1 billion).<sup>121</sup> This mass supply of Cuban troops and Soviet arms, as in the case of Angola, proved to be the decisive factor in the conflict. In March 1978, Soviet armed Ethiopian forces backed by Cuban combat forces ousted Somali troops from Ogaden.

The Soviet-Cuban collaboration in Ethiopia had far broader consequences than their collaboration in Angola. As in Angola, the success in Ethiopia of a Soviet armed force backed by Cuban troops helped bolster the prestige of the Soviet Union and of Cuba throughout the Third World.<sup>122</sup> However, the major airlift and sea-lift operations in late 1977 and early 1978 had a strong effect on the perception of the West in terms of Soviet policy, not only in the Horn of Africa, but also in the rest of the Third World. The Soviet projection of military power to Ethiopia graphically demonstrated to the West the increased ability of the Soviet Union to project its power and a greater willingness on the part of the Soviet Union to use that power in the Third World.

### *Afghanistan*

In the final days of the old decade, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan appeared to many as a flash of lightning that suddenly illuminated the political landscape.<sup>123</sup> For some time there had been debate in the West to indicate as to whether Moscow was executing a "grand design" or "global strategy" or merely responding to "targets of opportunity" in the Third World.<sup>124</sup>

In the cases of Angola and Ethiopia, the Soviet Union had argued that they were assisting movements of national liberation. However, the full-fledged invasion of Afghanistan

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<sup>120</sup> Legum, July 1976, p.609.

<sup>121</sup> Garthoff, 1985, pp.637-638.

<sup>122</sup> Noguee and Donaldson, 1988, p.291.

<sup>123</sup> Tucker, R., 'America in Decline: The Foreign Policy of "Maturity"', Foreign Affairs: America and the World 1979, p.480.

<sup>124</sup> Aspaturian, May-June 1980, p.1.

was taken by many in the West, that the Soviet Union was an aggressive military power bent on expanding that power. As one author put it, the Soviet Union was not satisfied with the recognition of its sphere of influence in Afghanistan, which made it the Asian Finland, rather it had to make it the Asian Czechoslovakia for fear that it would leave that sphere.<sup>125</sup>

However, from the Soviet Union's position events leading up to the invasion suggests that they initially were responding to an opportunity. In April 1978 there was a *coup d'état* in which left-wing Afghan military forces attacked Mohammed Daoud's presidential palace, killing him and most of his ministers and his clan. According to Dobrynin, the *coup* took the Soviet Embassy completely by surprise. After the *coup*, members of the two leading factions of the Afghan Communist Party ('Khalq' and 'Parcham') were installed as the new government, but within a couple of months the Parchamite faction and military leaders that supported them were pushed out. Once the Khalq faction had been able to consolidate its control over the Afghan government, they attempted to impose radical reforms in land tenure, education and even dowries on an almost medieval peasantry. These reforms enraged local mullahs and by the autumn of 1979 armed rebellion had broken out in most provinces.<sup>126</sup>

In March 1979, an uprising occurred in the city of Herat that included the desertion of the whole 17th Infantry division of the Afghan Army.<sup>127</sup> The Soviet leadership became concerned with these events and they arraigned for President Nur Mohammed Taraki to visit Moscow. In a meeting held between Kosygin, Gromyko, Ustinov, Ponomarev and Taraki, just before the latter was meant to meet Brezhnev, the Soviet Union spelled out what they were willing to give the Afghani régime in terms of aid and support. They promised to provide the Afghan government with arms, war material, military and domestic advisors, military specialists, etc. However they were unwilling to provide combat assistance through the deployment of Soviet armed forces in Afghanistan. Kosygin gave the reason for their refusal to intervene, saying:

'This, in effect, would be a conflict not only with imperialist countries, but also a conflict with one's own people... [I]f our troops were introduced, the situation in your country would not only not improve, but would worsen. One cannot deny that our troops would have to fight not

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<sup>125</sup> Tucker, R., 1979, p.481

<sup>126</sup> Dobrynin, 1995, p.435.

<sup>127</sup> Garthoff, 1985, p.900.

only with foreign aggressors, but also with certain number of your people. And people do not forgive such things. Besides, as soon as our troops cross the border, China and all other aggressors will be vindicated'.<sup>128</sup>

Kosygin also suggested to Taraki that he needed to broaden the political support for the Khalqi régime within the country and that Afghanistan needed to work towards better relations with Iran, Pakistan and India by eliminating any pretexts they may have for meddling in Afghan affairs. Kosygin informed Taraki that the Soviet Union was sending two documents to the leaders of Iran and Pakistan, in which they warned them, with all seriousness, not to meddle in the affairs of Afghanistan. Taraki didn't seem terribly convinced that Pakistan and Iran wanted good ties with the Kabul régime, claiming they were creating camps to train insurgents.<sup>129</sup>

Even after the Soviet leadership had clearly spelled out in the meeting that they were unwilling to send Soviet troops, Taraki still attempted to gain Soviet troop involvement in a round about way. He made a request to receive armoured helicopters, tanks, additional armoured transports and military vehicles, maintenance personnel, as well as communication equipment. The key to the request were the armoured helicopters and tanks, in which he hoped the Soviet Union send together with pilots and tank crews. When Kosygin and Ustinov told Taraki that they would not provide the pilots or tank crews and that his government would have to supply them, he suggested that they may be able to get pilots and tank crews from other socialist countries, such as Vietnam or Cuba. When Taraki continued to push for these crews Kosygin began to get a bit annoyed, saying:

'I cannot understand why the question of pilots and tank operators keeps coming up. This is completely unexpected question for us. And I believe that it is unlikely that socialist countries will agree to this. The question of sending people who would sit in your tanks and shoot at your people this is a very pointed political question'.<sup>130</sup>

In the subsequent meeting that followed between Brezhnev and Taraki, the Soviet leader echoed the points made by Kosygin earlier. Brezhnev encouraged Taraki to create a single national front. He claimed that:

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<sup>128</sup> Record of Meeting of A.N. KOSYGIN, A.A. GROMYKO, D.F. USTINOV and B.N. PONOMAREV with N.M. TARAKI, 20 March 1979, pp.2-3, hereafter cited as KOSYGIN et.al.

<sup>129</sup> KOSYGIN et.al, 20 March 1979, p.3.

<sup>130</sup> KOSYGIN et.al, 20 March 1979, p.12.

‘Such a front could include already existing socio-political organizations and be supported by groups of workers, peasants, petty and middle bourgeoisie, the intelligentsia and students, youth, and progressive women. Its purpose would be to consolidate anti-imperialist and national patriotic forces against domestic and foreign reactionaries. It could also serve in the political upbringing of the population’.<sup>131</sup>

The Soviet leaders request that the Khalqi régime create a single national front to confront the problems that the government was facing, suggests that the primary concern of the Soviet Union in regards to Afghanistan was the ability of the régime to maintain stability and not whether the revolutionary communist government kept to a certain ideological path. By broadening their support, the Soviet leadership hoped that the Khalqi régime could limit the number of hostile groups and then split those groups ill disposed to the government. One such group that Brezhnev was eager to divide was the clergy:

‘Fitting work must be done with the clergy in order to split their ranks; this could well be achieved by getting at least a part of the clergy, if not to actually support the government openly, then to at least not speak out against it. This could be best of all achieved by showing that the new government is not trying to persecute the leaders and representatives of the clergy, but only those who speak out against the revolutionary government’.<sup>132</sup>

Taraki’s response to Brezhnev with regard to creating a single national front in Afghanistan was to say that it essentially existed in the shape of party, komsomol, trade union and other mass public organizations, which function under the leadership of the People’s democratic party of Afghanistan. However, he argued that it could not firmly establish itself in the socio-political life of Afghanistan because of its economic backwardness and as yet insufficient level of political development in a certain part of the population. Taraki then legitimized, under the current situation of the country, the need to use extreme measures when dealing with ‘accomplices of international imperialism and reactionism’. Taraki goes on to say: ‘The repressive measures taken against ranks of representatives of the clergy, Maoists and other persons partaking in open combat against the new people’s government are completely in accordance with the law and no one turns to persecution without lawfully establishing the guilt of the accused’.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Record of Conversation of L.I. Brezhnev with N.M. Taraki, Also present: comrs. A.N. Kosygin, A.A. Gromyko, D.F. Ustinov and B.N. Ponomarev, 20 March 1979, p.2, hereafter cited as Brezhnev et. al.

<sup>132</sup> Brezhnev et. al., 20 March 1979, p.3.

<sup>133</sup> Brezhnev et. al., 20 March 1979, pp.5-7.

It is clear from the archival record that there were notable similarities between the situation faced by the Soviet Union as it became more involved in Afghanistan in the 80s and the United States' increasing involvement in South Vietnam in the early and mid-1960s. Both Moscow and Washington had attempted to assist a government that was considered to be ideologically compatible, standing on a frontier against the hostile rival ideology. Both provided aid and advice, but both saw this aid absorbed without much visible change and although the client appeared to be listening to the advice, he would not change his ways. Both tried to build up the client's base of popular support, but both saw those efforts undermined by a seemingly self-destructive urge to continue with narrowly rigid and repressive controls instead of broadening Taraki's appeal.<sup>134</sup>

After the Herat uprising, the Soviet leaders found their connection with Hafizullah Amin increasingly agonizing. Soviet control had not increased to the degree commensurate with the personnel, material, and prestige that Moscow had invested. Even with their ability to dominate day-to-day operations of Afghan ministries and the armed forces through the advisers who had filled the roles, similar to that of colonial administrators, Soviet officials were unable to affect the essential policies of the régime. They had no control over the direction that Afghanistan was going, whether it was heading for a breakup of the Khalqi régime or that it might abandon pro-Soviet Communism altogether. As one author put it, 'They were being taken for a ride by Amin'.<sup>135</sup>

At this point Moscow's political and military support for the Kabul régime began to dwindle. The Soviet Union's response was to search for a means of stabilizing and if necessary salvaging a deteriorating situation, while keeping the friendly and cooperative PDPA government in power at the least costly means in terms of direct Soviet involvement and provoking a response from either the Afghan population or the international community. A delegation headed by General of the Army Aleksei Yepishev, who had made a similar visit to Czechoslovakia just prior to the 1968 invasion, found the Afghan Army weakened and divide due to defections, Khalq-Parcham infighting and purges of non-Communist officers. For the first time the Soviet Union began to consider the possibility of a greater military role. However

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<sup>134</sup> Bradsher, 1985, p.126.

<sup>135</sup> Bradsher, 1985, pp.126-127.

the Soviet Union sought to correct the political situation before attempting a military solution.<sup>136</sup>

The possibility of a political solution in Afghanistan collapsed with the Soviet failure to remove Amin. Once again the Soviet Union sent a mission to Kabul to find out what could be done. This second mission was headed by General Ivan Pavlovskiy, who had commanded the Soviet troops that intervened in Czechoslovakia. Pavlovskiy's mission was probably decisive in determining the Soviet Union's decision to invade. When Pavlovskiy's mission returned from Kabul in October it was most likely that it had come to the conclusion that unless Amin was removed the present régime would disintegrate.<sup>137</sup>

The Soviet politburo had to make a choice. It could abandon its support for Amin and a régime that was proving to be intractable and unsuccessful, cut its losses to prevent the disgrace of going down with him, thus avoiding the possible loss of thousands of Soviet lives if the guerrillas were to overrun Kabul. Or it could plunge deeper into the developing quagmire. In Eastern Europe and Mongolia, the Soviet Union had chosen to tighten up controls rather than withdraw. To the Soviet Union, the idea of quitting, letting a Communist position once seized be relinquished, was against the whole activist history of Soviet involvements abroad.<sup>138</sup>

Material obtained from the Soviet archives seems to suggest that the decision to intervene was made by Yuri Andropov, who was then head of the KGB, the Defence Minister Dimitri Ustinov and the Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko in early December 1979. From the handwritten minutes of a meeting entitled 'Concerning the situation in "A"', which was chaired by Brezhnev and attended by Suslov, Grishin, Kirilenko, Pel'she, Ustinov, Chernenko, Andropov, Gromyko, Tikhonov and Ponomarev, the Politburo agreed to ratify the evaluations and measures taken by Andropov, Ustinov and Gromyko and it entrusted them to execute these measures.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Garthoff, 1985, pp.900-901.

<sup>137</sup> Bradsher, 1985, pp.152-153.

<sup>138</sup> Bradsher, 1985, p.154.

<sup>139</sup> Resolution of the CC CPSU, Concerning the situation in "A", December 12, 1979.



That the minutes do not refer to Afghanistan directly may raise doubts as to what "A" is. However, Artem Borovik, who as a journalist covered Afghanistan, concurs with the hypothesis that Andropov, Ustinov and Gromyko made the decision to invade. He said:

'The decision was made by 3 people. As you understand, Brezhnev was too old, he could not participate in any serious decision making, he could hardly talk by the end of 1979 when the decision was made. The decision was made by a triumvirate consisting of Andropov, head of the KGB, Gromyko, Foreign Minister, known in the West as Mr. No, and by Ustinov, the former Defence Minister in the Soviet Union. Basically this was a politburo inside the politburo. These three men were governing the country by the early 70s, they used to meet, the three of them independently from anyone else, to make decisions, and when these decisions were given on paper to Brezhnev, he usually signed it because the key ministers were involved'.<sup>140</sup>

According to Borovik, Andropov, Gromyko and Ustinov each had a reason for wanting to send in troops to Afghanistan. Andropov feared US involvement, he had been receiving cables from Kabul (General Ivanov) that Afghan leader Amin was flirting with the US. He was also getting cables from Washington, reporting that the Carter Administration was meeting with the mujhadeen and that the US was arming Pakistan in order to assist the setting up of a US listening post for Central Asian Soviet Union.

Gromyko hated Amin, who had killed the Soviet favourite Taraki, he felt that Amin had betrayed Brezhnev and Gromyko and was to blame for the massacres in Afghanistan. Gromyko also feared that China might be trying to strengthen its base along the Soviet Union's southern border. Ustinov wanted to test all his weapon systems which had been built up through the 70s. He also wanted to show the West (especially the US) in a muscle flexing demonstration, how quickly they could win the war and the quality of Soviet weapons.<sup>141</sup>

On December 27, 1979 Soviet airborne divisions captured key installations in Kabul, removed the Amin government and installed Babrak Karmal as the new leader. The following day motorized rifle divisions began to cross into Afghanistan from the Soviet Union heading for the major cities of Herat, Kabul and Qandahar. Within a month Soviet forces in Afghanistan numbered in the range of 85,000 troops.<sup>142</sup> According to Andrei Alexandrov-Agentov, the Soviet leadership, especially Andropov, was hoping that along with unseating

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<sup>140</sup> Artem Borovik, BBC Interview.

<sup>141</sup> Artem Borovik, BBC Interview.

<sup>142</sup> Garthoff, 1985, p.913.

Amin and installing a new Khalq-Parcham coalition, headed by Babrak Karmal, the sudden military action would have a psychologically damaging effect on the rebels . This was meant to frighten them and force them to cease their resistance or to be more lenient in their position.<sup>143</sup>

After the first six months the Soviet Union's original plan was in tatters. While they were able to maintain a foothold in Afghanistan, the Karmal government proved ineffective and the military situation turned into a lesson in counter-insurgency. By June 1980, the Soviet Union had modified their force structure in an attempt to adapt to the conditions in Afghanistan. They brought in regulars to replace the reservist troops (this was most likely due to the fact that as many as 90% of the reservist were Central Asian, mainly Tajiks or Uzbeks, some of whom were guilty of fraternization and others even defected). The Soviet Union also began to seek a favourable peace settlement.<sup>144</sup>

For the Soviet Union, the most surprising aspect of their intervention into Afghanistan was the severity of the international reaction. To the United States, the intervention into Afghanistan was the final straw that convinced the Carter Administration that it needed to take a stronger stand against the Soviet Union. Following on the heels of Angola, Ethiopia, South Yemen as well as a growing Soviet presence in Southeast Asia, the invasion of Afghanistan seemed to settle the argument in the Administration in favour of those, like Brzezinski, who believed that the Soviet Union was an aggressive expansionist power that was ignoring the restraints of détente and only understood counterforce. In Washington, this became known as the 'trigger theory'.<sup>145</sup>

One of the Soviet Union's most vocal critics was China. The Chinese railed against Moscow for expanding the Brezhnev Doctrine of limited sovereignty from their bloc of nations to include the Islamic and non-aligned world.<sup>146</sup> What the Chinese feared was that the invasion of Afghanistan had cut it off from its old ally Pakistan through the occupation of the Wakhan

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<sup>143</sup> Andrei Alexandrov-Agentov BBC Interview.

<sup>144</sup> Collins, J., The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, D.C. Heath and Co., Lexington, KT, 1986, p.77.

<sup>145</sup> Bradsher, 1985, p.191.

<sup>146</sup> Bradsher, 1985, p.201.

corridor and possibly this was a harbinger of a move against Pakistan.<sup>147</sup>

Western European governments were generally critical of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, but were far more restrained in their reaction than the United States. In a period of economic recession few European nations were willing to restrict trade with the USSR and therefore the sanctions imposed by the US against the Soviet Union were not terribly successful. Most European governments wished to continue arms control talks in a hope to maintain détente than punish the USSR for breaking the spirit of détente.<sup>148</sup>

Throughout the Islamic world there was a wave of protest against the invasion of Afghanistan. This was to subside over time, but the Islamic world remained critical of Soviet actions. The Soviet Union also found itself being criticised by other Third World countries. For many years, the Soviet Union had tried to claim similar interests and sympathetic understanding for these countries, but organizations like the Nonaligned Movement were strongly critical of the Soviet invasion.<sup>149</sup> The biggest blow to the Soviet Union in terms of international reaction to the invasion was in the vote by the General Assembly in which more than two-thirds of the nonaligned states voted against the Soviet action.<sup>150</sup>

There is no doubt that the severity of the international reaction, which left the Soviet Union diplomatically isolated, pushed them into revising their policy in Afghanistan. Soon after the invasion, moves were made both militarily and diplomatically at damage-limitation. On the propaganda front, the Soviet machine kicked into high gear to counter the adverse effects of the invasion. On January 4, 1980, Gromyko met with the new Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, Sh. M. Dost to discuss Dost's upcoming visit to the UN. Gromyko's defiant tone in the meeting was typical of the Soviet line. He said:

'I would like to share a few thoughts about the current situation in the Security Council as well as the character of your appearance at the upcoming session. You, comrade minister, have every reason to appear as the accuser - not as the accused. It seems there are enough facts for this.

It is necessary to emphasize that the deployment of a limited military contingent in Afghanistan had been undertaken by the Soviet Union as a response to repeated appeals by the

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<sup>147</sup> Collins, 1986, p.87.

<sup>148</sup> Bradsher, 1985, p.199.

<sup>149</sup> Bradsher, 1985, p.200.

<sup>150</sup> Collins, 1986, p.86.

DRA to the government of USSR. These requests have been voiced earlier by Taraki during his visit to Moscow and by Amin. It would also be useful to remind the participants at the Security Council of article 51 of the UN Charter.

The change in leadership of Afghanistan is solely the internal matter of Afghanistan. The representatives of western countries, Thatcher in particular, are trying to draw parallels between the change in the Afghan leadership and the deployment of the soviet military contingent in Afghanistan. However, one should emphasize that there is no relationship here. This is purely coincidental'.<sup>151</sup>

Gromyko also stressed to Dost when assaulted (with questions) concerning the deployment of a Soviet military contingent in Afghanistan, the need to expose aggressive politics of the US, such as Guantanamo Bay, in Cuba, as an example of open interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign nation. When Dost asked how to respond to accusations from the Chinese, Gromyko said:

'In the case that rude accusations and various kinds of insinuations are levelled in the direction of Afghanistan, it will be necessary to respond with a decisive rebuff. However, in the course of the Security Council session it is hardly necessary to dwell on China, as in such an event the Chinese representative would be happy to hear it. Do not create and advertisement for the Chinese, but certainly do give a rebuff'.<sup>152</sup>

Militarily the Soviet Union quickly realized they were not an army of occupation. The Soviet Army, lacking ground forces, adopted a strategy of holding the major centres of communications, limiting infiltration and striking at local resistance strongholds at the lowest cost to their own troops. The Soviet Army attempted with superior technology, tactical mobility and firepower to make up for too few troops and limit friendly casualties. However, by the simple fact of their presence in Afghanistan, the Soviet forces had transformed what had been a civil war between competing factions into a struggle of national liberation, pitting the Soviet invaders and their puppets against Afghans of all classes. The military situation in Afghanistan soon became a stalemate, with Soviet and Afghan forces restricted to the major cities, while the rebels operated almost unhindered in the rest of the country.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Record of Principle Contents of the Meeting of A.A. Gromyko with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the DRA, Sh.M. Dost, 4 January 1980, hereafter cited as Gromyko et.al.

<sup>152</sup> Gromyko et.al., 4 January 1980.

<sup>153</sup> Hammond, 1975, p.155 and p.161.

## Conclusion

As a result of the impressive foreign policy successes in Vietnam and Angola, the Soviet Union began 1976 atop a crest of euphoria. The yield for the Soviet Union from its investment, especially in the Angolan civil war, had a rather high return. The victory in Angola, following on from the victory in Vietnam, fostered a diplomatic climate in the Third World that was highly conducive to Soviet political and military initiatives. This created the impression, not only in Africa but elsewhere, that Soviet military power was eclipsing the United States and that the world's future lay with Moscow and not Washington. The war proved that Moscow could project its military power and deliver a victory for liberation movements and thereby strengthen its claim as the genuine ally of the Third World.<sup>154</sup>

However what Moscow didn't seem to recognize was how damaging these successes were to relations with the United States. The visible breakdown of relations began soon after Kissinger's return from a trip to Moscow in January 1976, where he wanted to discuss the impasse on SALT, he tried to raise the issue of Angola, but this was in vain. After his return to the US, the Ford Administration began cancelling government level meetings and decided not to ask Congress to normalize trade and economic relations with the Soviet Union.<sup>155</sup>

While positions in Washington were hardening toward détente, a similar process was taking place in Moscow. At the 25th Congress of the Communist Party, Brezhnev said that the foundation for cooperation between the superpowers had been laid, but he refused to accept any connection between the worsening relationship with the US and the situation in Angola. That things were changing was quite clear to the Soviet leadership, but no one in the Kremlin was extremely worried about this decline because they thought it was a temporary trend.<sup>156</sup>

A second factor that seemed to worsen relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, especially from the standpoint that it created a great deal of suspicion in Moscow, was the election of Jimmy Carter as President in November 1976. Alexander Bessmertnykh, who at the time was an aide to Andrei Gromyko, argues that the Carter Administration made two errors in its policy that made the Soviet Union suspicious. The first

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<sup>154</sup> Porter, 1984, p.179.

<sup>155</sup> Dobrynin, 1995, p.363.

<sup>156</sup> Dobrynin, 1995, p.364.

was human rights, which made the Soviet leadership very uncomfortable. When the American Secretary of State would hold talks with Andrei Gromyko the talks would go smoothly until the subject of human rights was raised. Then there would either be an explosion or dead silence from the Soviet side. This was mainly due to Gromyko's conviction that the US was raising the human rights issue as a calculated insult to the Soviet system and also an interference in Soviet domestic policy. Bessmertnykh said, 'He [Gromyko] was so sure about it that he wouldn't even take the list of the persons that the US administration would be talking about - like political prisoners or refuseniks - he would never touch the list. If the Secretary presented that list, it would drop on the table, and then one of Gromyko's assistants would pick it up'<sup>157</sup>.

The second error made by the Carter Administration was their attempt to alter the course of the arms control negotiations, especially in the strategic area. When Cyrus Vance visited Moscow in early 1977 he brought new proposals, but according to Bessmertnykh, 'It was so surprisingly new, and it had little connection with the things that were achieved with Kissinger that the Soviet leadership didn't even try to consider those new proposals that the Secretary brought. Looking back, I think that was not actually a very bad idea - just to have a fresh look at the situation in the arms control talks. But at that time again, because the suspicions was so strong, the atmosphere was spoiled by the human rights; and the pretty innovative programme that Secretary Vance brought was rejected and was not even discussed when he was in Moscow'<sup>158</sup>. Victor Karpov who was the main Soviet arms negotiator agreed with Alexander Bessmertnykh's point that the change in administration in the United States brought about an instability in US-Soviet relations, especially in the area of arms control negotiations.<sup>159</sup>

If Soviet involvement in Angola and the Horn of Africa were seen as indications of the decline of détente, and the change in the US Administration raised a great many suspicions in Moscow, one event served as the end of the era of détente. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was seen as clean break from an era of cooperation to one of confrontation.

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<sup>157</sup> Alexander Bessmertnykh, BBC Interview.

<sup>158</sup> Alexander Bessmertnykh, BBC Interview.

<sup>159</sup> Victor Karpov, BBC Interview.

# Chapter 7

## Introduction

Like Richard Nixon in 1968, when a new generation of Soviet leaders, led by Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in Moscow in the mid-80s, they faced a crisis in their foreign policy. The Soviet Union found itself supporting régimes in the Third World that were embroiled in counter-insurgency operations against indigenous forces. They were beginning to feel over-stretch from these commitments and also had become internationally isolated due to their aggressive involvement in the Third World. Equally, the Soviet Union was beginning to be perceived by most of the world as the main threat to peace for its aggressive policy of building up an excessive level of military power, while at the same time they were recognizing that these weapons were not very effective in translating it into political influence. However, the crisis faced by the Soviet Union went beyond what the US faced in the late 60s in that the crisis was not only in foreign but domestic policy as well.<sup>1</sup> In his book, *Perestroika*, Gorbachev argues that the signs of the Soviet Union's difficulties were first recognized in the mid-70s as the country's economy began to lose momentum and suffered stagnation. In an attempt to rectify this crisis the new leadership began to question the underlying assumptions of the policy inherited from its predecessors.

As noted in the first chapter, Miller argued that the maximization of military power was a distinct characteristic of the Soviet military order.<sup>2</sup> It was this importance of military power combined with the Soviet sense of inferiority to the technologically more superior capitalist powers that caused the Soviet Union to integrate both foreign and domestic policy toward its maximization. Therefore, because of this link, any reform would have to cover a whole range of issues both domestic and foreign.

## New Political Thinking

Upon taking over the leadership, Gorbachev began to introduce concepts for radical reform which he called 'New Political Thinking' to address a whole range of issues confronting the Soviet Union. *Perestroika* (restructuring) was intended to address domestic

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<sup>1</sup> Lynch, A., *Gorbachev's International Outlook: Intellectual Origins and Political Consequences*, Occasional Paper Series #9, Institute for East-West Security Studies, New York, 1989, p.1.

<sup>2</sup> See p.27.

reforms in the social, political and economic areas. However the area of most pressing concern for Gorbachev was foreign policy. What Gorbachev needed was a means to withdraw the Soviet Union from its over extension, but like Richard Nixon, his thinking on foreign policy stressed the belief that superpower relations and the system of nuclear deterrence was the most vital aspect of Soviet foreign policy. It was Gorbachev's contention that the system of deterrence could no longer ensure the avoidance of nuclear war, therefore in order to bring change in foreign policy, firstly a new approach to security was needed.<sup>3</sup> At the centre of this new approach to security was the concept of reasonable sufficiency. Originally reasonable sufficiency was used to indicate to the West the Soviet Union's shift away from the restraints of the zero-sum calculations of arms control to a new approach. However over time the idea took on much greater importance to become a cornerstone of Soviet military doctrine.

Many of the ideas that went into Gorbachev and his close advisors' (many who had links to foreign policy intellectuals) 'New Political Thinking' find their origin in the Brezhnev and Andropov periods.<sup>4</sup> Raymond Garthoff observed that many of these people had been in middle level positions in the Soviet Foreign Ministry during US-Soviet détente and the CSCE process.<sup>5</sup> As noted in the first chapter, three of the more influential advisors, Zhurkin, Karganov and Kortunov, seemed to have been influenced by the dilemma facing American policy makers and the decline in the influence of military power. They wrote in an article on reasonable sufficiency that over the last few decades aggressors in regional conflicts have been unable to secure a military let alone a political victory.<sup>6</sup> These remarks clearly echo the work done in the 70s by such Western academics as Buchan and Luard.

There is also the possibility that many of Gorbachev's generation were influenced by a protest letter about the policy of peaceful coexistence from Andrey Sakharov, Roy Medvedev and Valentin Turchin to the Soviet Leaders, written in the mid-70s. The letter does not directly address the issue of foreign policy, the main criticism deals with the domestic implications of

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<sup>3</sup> Gorbachev, 1988, p.127.

<sup>4</sup> Lynch, 1989, p.29.

<sup>5</sup> Ambassador Garthoff, interview.

<sup>6</sup> Zhurkin, Karganov and Kortunov, October 12, 1987, p.15.



a foreign policy based on peaceful coexistence.<sup>7</sup> Sakharov, Medvedev and Turchin argued that there was an urgent need for measures to be taken toward democratizing public life in the Soviet Union. They claimed, 'This necessity emerges from the existence of a close link between problems of technical-economic progress, scientific methods of management and questions of information, publicity and competition'. It was their contention that the world was moving into the second industrial revolution, which was going to require a wide exchange of information and ideas and that the 'anti-democratic tradition and norms' in Soviet socialism which restricted intellectual freedom was beginning to cause an economic standstill and restrict development.<sup>8</sup>

The consequence of the restriction of information and failing to democratize on foreign policy was to cause disquiet with the public. They noted, 'In the past there occurred certain negative manifestations in Soviet foreign policy characterized by excessive messianic ambition which force one to the conclusion that not only the imperialists bear responsibility for international tension'. They concluded with a statement which at the time may have seemed outrageous, but today in light of the collapse of the Soviet Union seems prophetic, 'Thus economic standstill and a slow rate of development in combination with an insufficiently realistic and sometimes too ambitious foreign policy on all continents may lead our country to catastrophic consequences'.<sup>9</sup>

However by the mid-1980s, when Gorbachev came to power, the problems of over stretch and the Soviet economy were not the only difficulties facing the new leader. Another problem facing the Soviet Union was the impact of 'Emerging Technology' on military planning and military operations. This problem first surfaced in the Soviet Union when in the early 1980s a group of Soviet observers, led by Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, then chief of the general staff, put forward the idea that an imminent technical revolution was about to take place that would blur the effectiveness of conventional weapons in terms of accuracy and firepower comparable to that of small tactical nuclear weapons.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Nixon Project, WHCF USSR, File [ex] co 158, Box 71, 8/1/70-8/31/70.

<sup>8</sup> Nixon Project, 8/1/70-8/31/70.

<sup>9</sup> Nixon Project, 8/1/70-8/31/70.

<sup>10</sup> Cohen, E., 'A Revolution in Warfare', Foreign Affairs, March/April 1996, p.39.

The Soviet Union found their reading of the military future profoundly disheartening, the developments in Emerging Technology did not fit well with traditional Soviet plans for offensive operations in Western Europe, which rested on the orderly forward movement of massed echelons of tanks and armoured vehicles. As Gorbachev came to power, the country's military strategy was at risk of becoming outdated and ineffectual.<sup>11</sup> They realized, moreover, that their country, unable to produce a satisfactory personal computer, would surely fall behind in an arms race driven by the information technologies.<sup>12</sup>

Along with the problems discussed above, two other problems, the deterioration of the international climate and the growing acceptance by the Soviet Union of the disutility of nuclear weapons were the main issues behind the need for reform in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev was confronted with more than purely military tasks in order to maintain the military competitiveness of the Soviet Union, what was needed was a far more radical approach to reform.

Gorbachev first put forward his ideas for reform in 1985. He introduced a whole new set of concepts and a new language of reform, New Political Thinking, *Perestroika* (restructuring), *Glasnost* (openness), Reasonable Sufficiency and Common European Home not only became part of the new Russian speaking vocabulary, it also began to be used in the regular parlance of East-West relations.<sup>13</sup> It is interesting to point out that the vocabulary that Gorbachev introduced was not really that new, but rather were terms that had been used by early Russian reformers. Alexander I used the term *perestroika* to describe his failed attempt to reform the power of the autocrats. Catherine II and Alexander II both used the term *glasnost*.<sup>14</sup>

According to Karganov, 'New Political Thinking' was the opening up of the Soviet Union, culturally, politically, socially and militarily to European civilisation including

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<sup>11</sup> Holoboff, E., *The Soviet Concept of Reasonable Sufficiency and Conventional Arms Control in Europe*, Ph.D. King's College, University of London, 1992, p.93.

<sup>12</sup> Cohen, March/April 1996, p.39.

<sup>13</sup> Holoboff, 1992, p.15.

<sup>14</sup> Miner, S., M., 'Military Crisis and Social Change', found in Hudson, G., ed., Soviet National Security Policy Under Perestroika, Mershon Center Series on International Security and Foreign Policy, Vol. IV, Unwin Hyman, Boston, 1990, p.31.

European social-oriented capitalism.<sup>15</sup> The concept was to be used to reform almost every aspect of Soviet life, but according to Alexi Arbatov, upon coming to power Gorbachev actually started with foreign policy.<sup>16</sup> Why Gorbachev began with foreign policy may have something to do with his perception of the international situation:

‘We all worried at the time that [what] was happening was dangerous. A lot of people were worried about the future. As the Secretary of the local Stavropol Committee I travelled all over the region and I was asked "Mikhail Sergeevich will there be war or not?", it was the main question then’.<sup>17</sup>

The avoidance of nuclear war was a fundamental concern to Gorbachev’s new approach to foreign policy. He wrote, ‘A new dialectic of strength and security follows from the impossibility of a military-that is, nuclear-solution to international differences. Security can no longer be assured by military means-neither by the use of deterrence, nor by continued perfection of the "sword" and the "shield." Attempts to achieve military superiority are preposterous. Now such attempts are being made in space’.<sup>18</sup>

With the military confrontation and the system of deterrence that had existed since the beginning of the Cold War no longer an acceptable means of ensuring his country’s security, Gorbachev attempted, under New Thinking, to develop a system of mutual security. He expressed this view in Perestroika, ‘The only way to security is through political decisions and disarmament. In our age genuine and equal security can be guaranteed by constantly lowering the level of the strategic balance from which nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction should be completely eliminated’.<sup>19</sup> This is clearly a recognition by Gorbachev, similar to that made by Nixon in the late 60s, that the nature of military power had changed and was no longer a sufficient means of securing stable bilateral relations with the West.

So, when Gorbachev came to power in 1985, the centrepiece of foreign and security policy for the Soviet Union switched from a reliance on military power to the idea of

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<sup>15</sup> Karganov, BBC Interview

<sup>16</sup> Alexi Arbatov, BBC Interview.

<sup>17</sup> Mikhail Gorbachev, BBC Interview.

<sup>18</sup> Gorbachev, 1988, p.127.

<sup>19</sup> Gorbachev, 1988, p.127.

interdependence.<sup>20</sup> Gorbachev emphasised the importance of interdependence in Perestroika, 'The new political outlook calls for the recognition of [a] simple axiom: security is indivisible. It is either equal security for all or none at all'.<sup>21</sup>

The introduction of interdependence into Soviet thinking caused a change in approach on issues of foreign and security policy. No longer could they define security simply as a military problem, but rather they framed it in terms of economic, political and ecological concerns.<sup>22</sup>

Also introduced at this time was the idea of reasonable sufficiency. A key problem in any attempt to reduce the tensions in international affairs was the question of how best not only to bring an end to the nuclear arms race, but also reduce the levels of weapons held by each side. When the idea of reasonable sufficiency was first introduced it was rather vague and ill-defined. The original concept of reasonable sufficiency was an attempt to escape the restraints of the zero-sum calculations and to serve as an indication to the West of a new conciliatory approach to arms control. It began as a political concept, however over time the idea was refined to be a cornerstone of Soviet military doctrine.

There was a split in the interpretation of reasonable sufficiency between the military writers and the civilian writers. The military writers tended to define it as the level of military force needed to rebuff an enemy attack. Civilian writers tended to define it in a rather broader sense. Following the lead given by Gorbachev, security began to include not only military strength, but also political, economic, ideological and even humanitarian factors. Political factors were the area that seemed to have the most stress placed upon them.<sup>23</sup>

One of the most definitive articles written on reasonable sufficiency from civilian writers was done by Zhurkin, Karganov and Kortunov. They defined reasonable sufficiency in the following way, 'The basic premise of the concept (Reasonable Sufficiency) is that security is primarily a political problem. In our time reliable security of a country can be ensured only through a strategy representing an integral rational combination of the political,

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<sup>20</sup> Holoboff, 1992, p.95.

<sup>21</sup> Gorbachev, 1988, p.128.

<sup>22</sup> Sakwa, R., Gorbachev and his Reforms, 1985-1990, Philip Allan, London, 1990, p.319.

<sup>23</sup> Holoboff, 1992, pp.102-104

military, economic, ideological, humanitarian and other factors involved. The dominant role in this complex is played by political factors'<sup>24</sup>.

From its origins as a political idea, reasonable sufficiency began to be interpreted as a military idea with the announcement by the Warsaw Pact that they had changed their doctrine from offensive to defensive. This announcement was made at a session of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation in Berlin in May 1987. At the Berlin session, the member states of the Warsaw Treaty declared that their military doctrine was strictly defensive in nature. It was based on the concept that recourse to military means, under the then present-day conditions was inadmissible to resolve any dispute.<sup>25</sup>

In the communiqué, the socialist alliance states also accepted the concept of reasonable sufficiency as part of the military doctrine:

'The States parties to the Warsaw Treaty consider it their paramount duty to provide effective security for their peoples. The allied socialist countries do not seek to have a higher degree of security than other countries, but will not settle for a lesser degree. The state of military-strategic parity which currently exists remains a decisive factor for preventing war. Experience has shown, however, that parity at ever increasing levels does not lead to greater security. For this reason they will continue to make efforts in order to maintain the military equilibrium at progressively lower levels. Under these circumstances, the cessation of the arms race and measures geared towards real disarmament are assuming truly historic significance. In this day and age, States have no option but to seek agreements that would radically scale down military confrontation'.<sup>26</sup>

In adopting reasonable sufficiency as part of its military doctrine, the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries were placing a greater emphasis on solving international disputes through political, not military methods. Zhurkin et. al. argued that reasonable sufficiency presupposed that to prevent aggression it was necessary not only to achieve a balance of forces and to evaluate the hypothetical military potential of the other side, but more importantly to restrain its leaders from unleashing war by taking into account its real intentions, and most importantly its interests. They described these interests as being generally constant, changing only slowly and determined by stable factors including geographical, economic, historical,

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<sup>24</sup> Zhurkin, Karganov and Kortunov, October 12, 1987, p.13.

<sup>25</sup> 'Session of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Treaty states', Berlin, 28-29 May 1987, hereafter cited as Berlin.

<sup>26</sup> Berlin, 28-29 May 1987, p.17.

socio-psychological, and last but not least political.<sup>27</sup>

Over time reasonable sufficiency developed four characteristics. Reasonable sufficiency was linked to political means, such as a policy of engagement and cooperation with the West, rather than isolation and no cooperation. A clear line of demarcation was drawn between the policy of reasonable sufficiency and the pursuit of superiority and then parity. Crucial to the understanding of reasonable sufficiency was the concept of asymmetrical responses. The principle of unilateral action, especially regarding unilateral arms reductions were identified with the policy.<sup>28</sup>

In Perestroika, Gorbachev expressed his intent to establish a new form of foreign policy, which he called 'honest and open'. Among those things that he wished to do was open a true dialogue with the West.<sup>29</sup> According to Anatoli Chernyayev, the main component of any policy of engagement with the West was to be arms control negotiations, 'Initially Mr. Gorbachev had an idea that they should cooperate with the United States only on the disarmament level and to stop the arms race, and to start the process of disarmament, whereas everything else will come later.'<sup>30</sup>

However it became clear that engaging solely in arms control negotiations with the United States was not enough. Alexander Bessmertnykh, who served as a Foreign Ministry Advisor, commented that Gorbachev soon realized that in order to restructure foreign policy he would have to reconstitute all phases of Soviet-American relations:

'I was there when we started to rethink our policy towards the United States. And actually I was on that programme of changing the kind of relations we had been following before that. Basically, it started with the preparation for the first summit (Geneva) between Gorbachev and the US President, in October 1985. So, when we were preparing that summit, we introduced some of the new elements into the thinking about our opponent'.<sup>31</sup>

The Geneva Summit in October 1985 was the first meeting between the leaders of the

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<sup>27</sup> Zhurkin, Karganov, and Kortunov, October 12, 1987, p.13.

<sup>28</sup> Holoboff, 1992, p.235.

<sup>29</sup> Gorbachev, 1988, pp.143-144.

<sup>30</sup> Anatoli Chernyayev, BBC Interview.

<sup>31</sup> Alexander Bessmertnykh, BBC Interview.

two superpowers for almost seven years.<sup>32</sup> The summit was initially described by the Soviet leader as 'completely fruitless'.<sup>33</sup> However Zagladin argues that the first turning point in US-Soviet relations was the summit meeting in Geneva, because although no concrete results were achieved, there was a psychological shift.<sup>34</sup>

The importance of the first summit meeting with Reagan to the Soviet leader's thinking on foreign policy was discussed at some length in an interview by Gorbachev himself:

'We had sharp discussions - I can even describe them as fights - but we did manage to achieve a result during this meeting, the Geneva meeting it was our first summit. There had been a long gap between this summit and the previous USSR-USA summit. We managed to find what became a starting point for later developments, that nuclear war could not be allowed to happen, and it should be rejected. This was a very important political consultation. Being aware of the American arms arsenal and being aware of our arms arsenal-we together possessed 90% of the nuclear weapons in the world-it was quite clear that if we weren't able to change the relations between these two countries we wouldn't be able to change anything. It would be absolutely impossible to acquire any long term perspective if we didn't change US-USSR relations. This was happening of course alongside the European direction in our policy, and the improvement of our relations with our Eastern neighbours-we were searching for ways of improving our relations with other countries. Of course it was a very important period for laying the basis for rethinking relations between America and the Soviet Union. Without this, the Europeans said this and I remember my talks with the Prime Minister of Australia, Hawke, he said "you know its very important for you to improve relations with the United States." Everyone knew how important it was, there was a feeling in the world, in public opinion, amongst politicians but you had to unravel a knot for the two countries and the two nations to move towards each other'.<sup>35</sup>

Gorbachev also viewed the meeting in Geneva as important because it was the first contact that he had with the American President. It is interesting to note that the Soviet leader felt it was as important to develop a working relationship with Reagan the right wing politician as Reagan the American President:

'Reagan represented the right wing and if this man joined the search for a new world order this would be significant. I understood that if Reagan could comprehend us and we could find a common language, the process would start moving. Because, if Reagan reached this opinion,

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<sup>32</sup> see Garthoff, 1994, p.247.

<sup>33</sup> Noguee and Donaldson, 1988, p.341.

<sup>34</sup> Zagladin, BBC Interview.

<sup>35</sup> Mikhail Gorbachev, BBC Interview.

others would reach it more easily'.<sup>36</sup>

The main point of contention at the Geneva Summit and also an issue that carried over into future meetings was the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) or Stars Wars. As noted in chapter 4, the Soviet Union spent a great deal of effort trying to kill political support for SDI. They argued that the United States was provoking another round of the strategic arms race.<sup>37</sup> At the summit, the Soviet leader attempted to press President Reagan into making a concession on SDI. Prior to going to Geneva, Gorbachev had met French President Mitterand in Paris. He offered a concession to American demands on strategic arms control negotiations if the United States would abandon SDI. Whatever hope Gorbachev had of convincing the US President of accepting his offer in Geneva, he was to be disappointed.<sup>38</sup>

Without gaining prior agreement on any of the arms control concessions that he sought, Gorbachev had taken the far greater risk in agreeing to the summit in Geneva. Those in the Soviet leadership who were sceptical of the summit were vindicated and those who had been hopeful were disappointed. However both sides in the end were to benefit despite the lack of success at the summit on concrete issues, by the restoration of a US-Soviet dialogue.<sup>39</sup>

The short term impact of the Geneva Summit on Soviet-American relations was to send them into the doldrums. With Reagan confident that Gorbachev was coming around to his way of thinking, he saw no need to either compromise or put forward new initiatives. Gorbachev was clearly not happy with the state of superpower relations, but was unable to move the Reagan Administration to engage him. In an attempt to maintain what he called the 'spirit of Geneva' Gorbachev set out that the two leaders meet in the autumn at some point halfway between Moscow and Washington to discuss his new nuclear disarmament proposals. Gorbachev proposed to offer the American President deep cuts in strategic arms if the US would abandon Star Wars.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Mikhail Gorbachev, BBC Interview.

<sup>37</sup> Lambeth, B., 'Soviet Perspectives on the SDI', from, Wells, S. and Litwak, R. ed., Strategic Defence and Soviet -American Relations, Ballinger Publishing Co., Cambridge, Mass., 1987, p.59.

<sup>38</sup> Noguee and Donaldson, 1988, p.341.

<sup>39</sup> Garthoff, 1994, p.239.

<sup>40</sup> Dobrynin, 1995, p.621.



The two leaders met again on October 11-12, 1986 in Reykjavik, Iceland. Gorbachev saw Reykjavik as an interim summit where he would present a package with enough contingent concessions and new approaches to attract Reagan's interest. He did not expect to sign an agreement with Reagan, nor even negotiate the terms of one. His intention was for the two leaders to develop guidelines for their negotiators who could use them as a framework for negotiating.<sup>41</sup>

It was a highly dramatic meeting. At one point the two superpowers looked to be on the verge of an agreement to make the first substantial reductions in strategic nuclear weapons. To Gorbachev's surprise, Reagan agreed both to the sizable reductions and the proposal to eliminate strategic weapons completely over the next decade. However once again the main sticking point for the agreement was Reagan's refusal to accept any restriction upon the United States' development of SDI.

For a second time, Gorbachev gambled in a very dramatic fashion and lost. According to Dobrynin, when Gorbachev emerged from the meeting he was furious. After the meeting, Gorbachev announced that he was going to severely criticize Reagan at the press conference. It was only in the ride to the airport, with the help of Gromyko and Dobrynin that he was able to regain his composure. Gorbachev did denounce Reagan at the press conference, but did leave the door open for future meetings.<sup>42</sup>

Although the Reykjavik Summit was a failure in terms of any concrete agreements between the superpowers, it served as a crossroads in Soviet-American relations. Zagladin called Reykjavik the second stage of Soviet-American relations. No concrete results were achieved, but it was from that meeting that all the future arms control agreements stemmed.<sup>43</sup> Nicholai Shishlin concurred with Zagladin saying, 'Reykjavik constructed a frame work for real cuts in military expenditures. It opened doors for [the] START treaty, and I think, a new era was prepared [and] cooked, in Reykjavik. And after that, relations between Gorbachev and Reagan became more and more warm'.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Garthoff, 1994, p.286.

<sup>42</sup> Dobrynin, 1995, pp.621-622.

<sup>43</sup> Zagladin, BBC Interview.

<sup>44</sup> Nicholai Shishlin, BBC Interview.

The effect of the second stage of superpower relations was not however felt immediately after the summit. In early 1987, Gorbachev recognized that President Reagan was not going to initiate any new arms reductions proposals or limit SDI. So after discussions at the 'Moscow International Forum For a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World and the Survival of Humanity' held in February and talks in the Politburo Gorbachev decided to make a compromise offer to the West to untie the Reykjavik package and separate the issue of INF from other issues.<sup>45</sup> To Gorbachev, even though the Soviet Union was giving up more in terms of launchers and missiles, the benefit far outweighed the cost in achieving the INF treaty. By gaining a breakthrough on INF, he was able to reestablish arms control negotiations and give them a new impetus.

The INF agreement was signed to coincide with the third summit in as many years held between the leaders of the two superpowers in Washington. The Washington Summit was a key point in the development of Gorbachev's new thinking in foreign policy. To Anatoli Chernyayev the Washington Summit served as the 'coming out' of this policy, 'It eventually finally and fully emerged during his visit to the United States in December 1987, that was his first visit to the United States and he had an opportunity to meet with a large number of different people, with the elite of the military and industry, with the simple people, with top members in the US administration. And it was at that moment during that visit when he realised that these are quite normal people, who can be dealt with and they can understand all the problems of both sides, and they can settle these problems, and that the settlement of those problems should be done together, at once'.<sup>46</sup>

The Washington Summit was also very important from the standpoint that it was at this time that Gorbachev was finally able to begin to convince the West that the changes being instituted in Soviet foreign policy were real. As Karganov pointed out, it was not a easy task convincing the West, 'That was extremely hard, and in 1988, although the foreign policy and thinking changed already in 85, 86, 87, it was not until 88 or even 89 when the West started to believe that things were real. Also because there was a lot of vested interest involved'.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Gorbachev, 1988, p.139.

<sup>46</sup> Anatoli Chernyayev, BBC Interview.

<sup>47</sup> Karganov, BBC Interview

The irony of the situation was that just at the time that Gorbachev was gaining acceptance of his changes in the West, he began to find his policies under growing pressure at home. Over the first couple of years as General Secretary, Gorbachev had removed most of his opposition from positions of power. However as his policies of reform began to gather pace, some of his own appointees, such as Yegor Ligachev, began to create a conservative opposition to those reforms. At the 1988 Central Committee Plenum, scathing attacks were launched against the excesses of *glasnost*.<sup>48</sup>

Under the pressure of the conservative backlash in the Communist power, Gorbachev was anxious to have a success in international affairs to offset the criticism at home. The General Secretary had already agreed to host a fourth summit with President Reagan in Moscow while at the previous Washington Summit. As noted in chapter 4, where President Reagan had no major negotiating objectives for the Moscow Summit, Gorbachev was keen to secure some agreements.

In the run up to the Moscow Summit, which was to held from May 29 to June 2, the Soviet leadership made a concerted effort to push the negotiating process forward on a variety of issues. Between February and April, the Soviet Foreign Minister, Eduard Shevardnadze met with George Schultz on three occasions to plan the summit and to carry out most of the serious negotiating between the two sides. The main focus of the negotiating was on START treaty issues for the reduction of strategic arms. The Soviet leadership had hope of reaching agreement as late as March, even though President Reagan had already stated in February that there was not enough time before the summit.<sup>49</sup>

The Soviet leadership was also pressing the United States on several other issues such as Afghanistan (which will be dealt with later in this chapter) and the subject of a new mandate for conventional arms reductions in Europe. American reluctance to engage the Soviet Union on these issues stemmed in part from their experience at the MBFR talks in Vienna, which had made little progress since their inception.

In the end the Moscow Summit was long on media hyperbole and short on substantive agreements. Several bilateral cooperation proposals and a couple of bilateral accords were

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<sup>48</sup> Garthoff, 1994, p.347.

<sup>49</sup> Garthoff, 1994, pp.340-341.

signed, but nothing of great importance. That Gorbachev was frustrated with the lack of progress and the general pace of relations was evident by his statement at the closing press conference, saying Soviet-American relations have, 'been moving much more slowly than is called for by the real situation in both our countries and the world. For our part, I can assure you we will do everything in our power to continue moving forward'.<sup>50</sup>

At the end of the Moscow Summit, Gorbachev's frustration at the pace of relations with the West forced him to recognize that any major development would require a bold action by the Soviet Union. As was discussed above, one of the areas that Gorbachev was anxious to make progress was conventional forces and armaments. Gorbachev's need to reduce conventional forces was linked to his desire to recast Soviet military doctrine under the policy of reasonable sufficiency. The Soviet leader had tried unsuccessfully in Moscow to get American agreement to reduce forces on each side by 500,000 men.<sup>51</sup>

Gorbachev had been seeking reduction in conventional forces for several years. At their Budapest meeting of the Political Consultative Committee in June 1986, the Warsaw Treaty Organisation member states proposed a single mutual reduction to cut the troop strength of the opposing military-political alliances by 100,000-150,000 troops.<sup>52</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the Warsaw Treaty Organisation had accepted the policy of reasonable sufficiency and a defensive military doctrine at the Berlin meeting of the Political Consultative Committee in May 1987. In conformity with their defensive military doctrine, the member states of the WTO set out some fundamental objectives they sought to obtain. Although they did not set out specific numbers they proposed the, 'reduction of the armed forces and conventional armaments in Europe to a level where neither side, maintaining its defence capacity, would have the means to stage a surprise attack against the other side or offensive operations in general'.<sup>53</sup>

In autumn 1987, to coincide with the opening of the General Assembly of the United

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<sup>50</sup> Documents and Materials: USSR-USA Summit, Moscow, May 29-June 2, 1988, Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, Moscow, 1988, p.104.

<sup>51</sup> Garthoff, 1994, p.354.

<sup>52</sup> 'New Disarmament Initiative', by the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation member states, taken at its meeting in Budapest on 10 and 11 June 1986, p.7.

<sup>53</sup> Berlin, 28-29 May 1987, p.18.

Nations, Gorbachev published an article entitled 'Realities and Guarantees For A Secure World'. The purpose of the article was to share the Soviet leadership's ideas on a 'comprehensive system of international security'. The article called for a bilateral agreement based on the concept of reasonable sufficiency. Gorbachev wrote, 'An accord on "defence strategy" and "military sufficiency" could impart a powerful impulse in this direction. These notions presuppose a structure for a state's armed forces which these forces would be sufficient for repulsing any possible aggression but inadequate for conducting offensive actions'.<sup>54</sup>

According to Raymond Garthoff, the Reagan Administration was not against making progress in conventional arms negotiations, but there was a great sense of suspicion about the Soviet Union's intention and there had been no high-level coordination with their NATO allies. So when Gorbachev pushed for progress, Reagan was only willing to agree to carry forward the multilateral talks then under way.<sup>55</sup>

In an attempt to speed up the process of reform in foreign policy, Gorbachev chose to take the opportunity to address the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 1988. Firstly, the Soviet leader set out the general approach and outlook of their foreign policy. However the impact of this part of the speech was greatly overshadowed by the second and more tangible part of the speech in which Gorbachev dramatically announced the unilateral reduction of Soviet forces:

'Over the next two years their strength will be reduced by 500,000 men, and substantial cuts will be made in conventional armaments. These cuts will be made **unilaterally**, regardless of the talks on the mandate of the Vienna meeting.

By agreement with our Warsaw Treaty allies, we have decided to withdraw six tank divisions from the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia and Hungary by 1991, and to disband them.

In addition, assault-landing formations and units and some others, including assault - crossing support units with their armaments and combat equipment, will be withdrawn from the Soviet forces stationed in these countries.

The Soviet forces stationed in these countries will be reduced by 50,000 men and 5,000 tanks'.<sup>56</sup>

The announcement of the unilateral reductions of Soviet forces contained both a

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<sup>54</sup> Gorbachev, M., 'Realities and Guarantees For A Secure World', Novosti Press, 1987, pp.7-8.

<sup>55</sup> Garthoff, 1994, p.359.

<sup>56</sup> Gorbachev, M., Address at the United Nations, New York, December 7, 1988, Novosti Press, Moscow, 1988, p.26.

symbolic and substantive gesture from the Soviet Union regarding its new approach to European defence. The fact that Gorbachev specifically earmarked forces in Eastern Europe and those which were the most threatening from NATO's point of view, assault troops, clearly was meant to send the message to the West that the Soviet Union was serious about negotiating real reduction of conventional forces. However the Soviet Union was hoping that the West would reciprocate in those areas, such as Theatre Nuclear Weapons (TNW) and naval forces which were most threatening to them and/or a change in the negotiating atmosphere and new negotiations on military doctrine. Although these steps by the Soviet Union were hailed as a great step forward by the West, the Soviet Union was disappointed by the Western response or lack thereof. By reducing its conventional threat in Europe, it was argued that NATO no longer had a need for flexible response or TNWs. Although these cuts were not conditional on corresponding cuts from the West, calls from the media for such cuts did appear.<sup>57</sup>

That no corresponding response was forthcoming from the West suggested that the extent of Gorbachev's reform was not truly appreciated in the West. The proposed removal of troops from Eastern Europe was far more than just an attempt to reduce conventional arms and remove the perceived threat to the West. With this unilateral withdrawal of forces, Gorbachev was signalling his intention to restructure Soviet relations with Eastern Europe and to break the political division of Europe.<sup>58</sup>

### **Relations with Eastern Europe**

Gorbachev had been hinting at the idea that he intended to restructure relations with his East European allies. In his book Perestroika, Gorbachev set out his belief in the right of each nation to self-determination, 'Every nation is entitled to choose its own way of development, to dispose of its fate, its territory, and its human and natural resources. International relations cannot be normalized if this is not understood in all countries'.<sup>59</sup> These statements could have been viewed as plain rhetoric by the West, but with the announcement of the concrete action of removing troops from Eastern Europe it was clear that Gorbachev intended to redefine those relations.

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<sup>57</sup> Holoboff, 1992, pp.322-324.

<sup>58</sup> Garthoff, 1994, p.367.

<sup>59</sup> Gorbachev, 1988, p.163.

According to the former Soviet Foreign Minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, upon coming to power the new Soviet leadership saw little choice in regards to its position of Eastern Europe:

The question of Eastern Europe, I mean the liberation of Eastern Europe was decided before we arrived on the scene. It was decided by the fact that they didn't send troops into Poland. And in this, a great deal is owed to Jaruzelski. I believe that Jaruzelski played a big role in ensuring that the Soviet army wasn't brought in to establish order. Although there were regiments there, but no order was given to use them. The second thing is that the results of going into Hungary and Czechoslovakia were so severe that it was already difficult for the government at that time, and at the same time we had these problems in Afghanistan. So it was difficult to take the decision to put troops into Poland'.<sup>60</sup>

As Karganov pointed out, there were two elements of 'New Thinking' that bore heavily on Soviet relations with its Eastern European allies. One was that the Soviet Union could no longer afford the Eastern European empire, which was not an asset economically, politically or even militarily, but which was a clear cut liability. The second element comes from a more romantic notion of joining civilisations and embracing common human values. The basic philosophy of the Common European House was opening the Soviet Union up to Europe and vice-à-versa.<sup>61</sup>

Although the concept of a Common European Home was a couple of years away from being clearly defined, Gorbachev was looking to break the traditional pattern of relations with its socialist allies in Eastern Europe:

'Before 1985 there was only one type of relationship. The model of the Soviet Union was simply enforced to be followed by socialist countries. But after 1985, even the first meetings at Cherenko's funeral, in the narrow circles of the first secretaries, I said lets think about new relations. We recognise for you and we hope you recognise for us the right to make the decision and to take responsibility for the decision'.<sup>62</sup>

However in order to allow the restructuring of relations with its Socialist allies, the Soviet Union needed to not only discuss a new form of relations, but it also needed to confirm to its Eastern European allies that it would no longer interfere in their internal affairs as defined in the Brezhnev Doctrine, which had been used to justify the intervention of Czechoslovakia in 1968. As Gorbachev noted in his interview, the problem was not only

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<sup>60</sup> Eduard Shevardnadze, BBC Interview

<sup>61</sup> Karganov, BBC Interview.

<sup>62</sup> Mikhail Gorbachev, BBC Interview.

overcoming the Brezhnev Doctrine, but a pattern of relations that stemmed from the end of World War II:

‘It’s not only a question of it being Brezhnev’s Doctrine because it was enforced under Stalin. This model of socialism was enforced by Stalin first on the Soviet Union and then on other countries. This was the attitude. And so we, at every turn, at every crisis, even with vociferous criticism at home, here in the Soviet Union when they were demanding that measures be taken, when powerful processes had commenced, even then we did nothing. We did not follow the example of Hungary 1956, or Czechoslovakia in 1968 or Berlin or Poland. And of course we didn’t use the Afghan model. Our policies toward the socialist countries were changed decisively and now they are creatures of their own destiny. Of course it doesn’t mean we don’t need them and they don’t need us. On the contrary everyone understands that we are very much in need of each other on a new basis’.<sup>63</sup>

Gorbachev officially rejected the Brezhnev Doctrine in mid-1989, announcing that individual countries have the right to self-determination in their internal affairs. The Brezhnev Doctrine was replaced by what became known as the Sinatra Doctrine (doing it their way). It took the Eastern European nations a couple of years to realise that the Soviet tanks would not come if they undertook radical reforms.<sup>64</sup>

With Gorbachev’s renunciation of the Brezhnev Doctrine and the need for troops stationed in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the GDR to control Eastern Europe dissolved, the Soviet Union’s motives for conducting negotiations on conventional arms reductions took a radical turn. For 16 years, during the MBFR (Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions) talks the Soviet Union’s intent in negotiating was to codify its hegemony in Eastern Europe. The MBFR negotiations had become deadlocked and the Soviet Union needed to find a new forum to negotiate conventional force reductions. Although The Soviet Union had several reasons for seeking these new negotiations there were two main reasons. Firstly they wanted a negotiated structure to allow them to withdraw their forces from Eastern Europe in an orderly, fashion and secondly to show continued progress on creating a defensive military doctrine and reasonable sufficiency. However, if they could engage NATO in a mutual build down, so much the better.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Mikhail Gorbachev, BBC Interview.

<sup>64</sup> Holoboff, 1992, pp.340-341.

<sup>65</sup> Holoboff, 1992, pp.349-350.



## Conventional Force Reductions in Europe

As has been noted both in this chapter and in chapter 4, much of the tension in superpower relations in the early 80s had centred around Europe. Not only the intermediate range missile which has been previously discussed, but also in economic issues such as the US attempt to block the building of the Siberian gas pipeline and the transfer of technology West-East. During this time progress had proved almost impossible to achieve at the MBFR Talks in Vienna. The Soviet Union, which reluctantly had agreed to the negotiations on conventional forces, was then not forthcoming in giving proper data on their force levels. Throughout the late 70s and early 80s the negotiations were hampered by two problems, proper data and the Soviet Union's refusal to accept Western demands for an intrusive system of verification.<sup>66</sup>

The level of the animosity and tension of the two sides over Europe was also demonstrated at the review conferences of the CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe). From the broad framework of European Security and Cooperation developed at Helsinki in 1975, the process had stalled by the late 70s. Both the follow up conferences held in Belgrade 77-78 and in Madrid 80-83 were filled with acrimonious exchanges, mainly over the issue of human rights.<sup>67</sup>

The one bright spot that emerged from this period of negotiation on Europe was the CDE (Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe). Initially agreed to at the Madrid CSCE conference, the Stockholm CDE conference was set up to apply a different approach to the issue of European Security. Confidence Building Measures (CBM's) are unlike arms control measures, because they do not aim at the actual reduction of armaments or manpower. Rather, CBM's attempt to regulate the '*operations*' of military forces and to provide reassurance about military '*intentions*'. Their particular objective is to reduce the possibility of an accidental confrontation through miscalculation or failure of communication, as well as to limit the danger of surprise attack.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Starr, R., Foreign Policies of the Soviet Union, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, Stanford California, 1991, pp.221-223.

<sup>67</sup> Garthoff, 1994, p.591.

<sup>68</sup> Berg, R., and Rotfeld, A., Building Security in Europe: Confidence-Building Measures and the CSCE, East-West Monograph Series, Number Two, Institute for East-West Security Studies, New York, 1986, p.3.

The rationale for developing a confidence-building régime was the fact that in Europe there was a large concentration of conventional military power and a large part of military activities were shrouded in secrecy which gave rise to uncertainty and tension. A major concern in the 1980s was that war in Europe could break out as a result of flawed perceptions, misjudgments or miscalculations stemming from the fear of surprise attack and uncertainty about the intentions of an adversary.<sup>69</sup>

The initial mandate of the Stockholm conference was to build upon the modest CBM's adopted in the Helsinki Final Act in 1975. The main difficulty in hammering out an accord was the fact that the two sides had different and competing philosophies. The West traditionally had taken a military-technical approach to the problem of confidence-building, stressing measures of notification, observation and verification, which they argued would make military activities more predictable, and therefore less threatening. On the other hand, the East took basically a political approach, arguing that measures aimed at openness and transparency were only useful once a broader political understanding had been achieved.<sup>70</sup>

While all parties were helpful in effecting a settlement, the main compromise in the CDE negotiations was made by the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact who moved furthest to meet the Western position. However once the Eastern bloc had moved to a more military-technical position, they sought greater constraints than NATO. When the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries had shifted their position, the differences that still remained were simply bargained through reciprocal compromises. For example NATO had proposed forty-five days advanced notice of military exercises while the Warsaw Pact had suggested thirty days notification. The resulting compromise was forty-three days.<sup>71</sup>

The success of the CDE, coupled with Gorbachev's renunciation of the Brezhnev Doctrine brought two, until then, separated processes (Conventional Force Reduction and Confidence-Building Measures) into one. The Warsaw Pact's proposals (independent of the MBFR negotiations) to make extensive cuts in conventional forces and arms, stimulated a process that by the end of 1986 had cleared the way for a new mandate of European wide arms

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<sup>69</sup> Berg and Rotfeld, 1986, p.15.

<sup>70</sup> Berg and Rotfeld, 1986, p.5.

<sup>71</sup> Garthoff, 1994, p.592.

control talks that would supplant the unsuccessful MBFR talks and succeed CDE. The new negotiations were to be divided into two parts, with renewed Negotiations on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (NCSBM) and the CFE negotiations. Whereas before the NCSBM talks included all thirty-five members of CSCE, the CFE talks comprised the twenty-three members of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, however, unlike MBFR, they participated as individual members and not as members of their respective alliances.<sup>72</sup>

There was a great deal of expectation and commitment placed on the CFE negotiations. There was expectation on what effect the negotiations would have on Soviet structures. There was also a feeling that it was important to keep the momentum of disarmament going after the INF Treaty. The START treaty looked as if it would take some time, so CFE was seen as the most likely success in the short term. The spirit of compromise shown throughout the negotiations showed the level of commitment that existed on both sides to get an agreement.<sup>73</sup> However after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the overthrow of the Communist régimes in Eastern Europe, the process lost momentum and in the end the treaty was eclipsed by history.

### **Policy Toward the Third World**

It may seem surprising that although overstretch in the Third World was a key problem to Soviet foreign policy, in the first couple years of his leadership, Gorbachev gave very little priority to policy in that area. However Gorbachev did, from early on, recognize that a new approach to the Third World was necessary, several times he articulated what he envisioned as the future of Soviet policy in the region. One of his first statements on the subject was when he set out his approach at the 27th Congress of the CPSU.<sup>74</sup> He also made some efforts to lessen the tension in regional conflicts in which the Soviet Union was involved or in areas in which they had influence, but falling short of totally disengaging from these conflicts.

In that speech he put forward the idea of developing a comprehensive system of international security. Gorbachev followed up the speech to the 27th Congress with an article that was timed to coincide with the opening of the session of the General Assembly of the

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<sup>72</sup> Garthoff, 1994, p.596.

<sup>73</sup> Holoboff, 1992, p.351-355.

<sup>74</sup> Garthoff, 1994, pp.733-734.

United Nations in September 1987. In the article entitled 'Realities and Guarantees For A Secure World', he sought to put forward a model that would ensure national security which would not be fraught with the threat of world-wide catastrophe.<sup>75</sup>

Central to the creation of this new international security system was the need to resolve regional conflicts. Gorbachev called for the use of more diplomatic means for conflict resolution, with the United Nations playing a large role. Among his suggestions was setting up a mechanism under the aegis of the United Nations for the monitoring and verification of compliance to agreements on regional conflicts. Gorbachev proposed to expand the role of UN military observers and peace-keeping forces to disengage warring factions and for ensuring that cease-fire and armistice agreements are maintained. He also advanced the idea that permanent members of the Security Council could act as guarantors of regional security (mainly this would be done by the member refraining from using or threatening the use of force). Finally he called for the intensification and expansion of the cooperation between member states in the battle against terrorism.<sup>76</sup>

The new approach to foreign policy in the Third World also shifted the emphasis away from the ideological and power considerations toward greater reliance on economic factors. In his address to the United Nations in December 7, 1988, Gorbachev signalled this shift by making a link between development and international security. He proposed renegotiation of debt to the developing nations and a long-term moratorium (up to one hundred years) on the repayment of debt by the least developed countries.<sup>77</sup> The Soviet Union also began to stress mutual benefit and mutual interest in their relations with Third World countries, which led the Soviet Union to begin reducing subsidies to Vietnam and Cuba. Under Gorbachev the Soviet Union began to seek a role for itself in international economic institutions like the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).<sup>78</sup>

This new approach became known as the Gorbachev Doctrine, which was designed to extract the Soviet Union from the problems of overstretch in its commitments in the Third

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<sup>75</sup> Gorbachev, 1987, p.5.

<sup>76</sup> Gorbachev, 1987, pp.9-10.

<sup>77</sup> Gorbachev, 1988b, p.16.

<sup>78</sup> Garthoff, 1994, pp.734-735.

World while creating a security structure for the new world order. From 1988 Gorbachev was working not only to reduce Soviet involvement in regional conflicts, but to extract the Soviet Union from some of their existing commitments and bring to an end conflicts in areas where the Soviet Union had influence. He brought about, among other things, the Soviet disengagement from Afghanistan, persuaded the Cubans to withdraw from Ethiopia and Angola, the Vietnamese to pull out of Cambodia and the Sandinistas to hold free elections in Nicaragua.<sup>79</sup>

### *Afghanistan*

The most pressing problem for the Soviet Union was obviously Afghanistan. It is clear that Mikhail Gorbachev never really supported Brezhnev's Afghan adventure. According to Eduard Shevardnadze, when he and Gorbachev first heard that troops had gone into Afghanistan, they were in Georgia together. He said that they should have known about this decision beforehand because they were members of the Politburo, and when they heard about it they both thought it was a fundamental mistake. From that day on, he claims that it was clear to them that they had to end the war, but at that stage they didn't have the influence. Even when they gained the leadership, they couldn't act immediately because they needed time to prepare people. And when they finally made the decision, it was not without a struggle.<sup>80</sup>

Shevardnadze claims the decision to withdraw was taken before the 27th Congress of the CPSU in early 1986. It is Shevardnadze's contention that they took the decision when they were preparing the work for the Congress and that the formula for the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan was clearly spelled out in Gorbachev's speech. He makes the point that in making the decision there was a dispute in the Politburo. The first draft of Gorbachev's speech for the 27th Congress of the CPSU, had the formula for withdrawal in it. After the Politburo saw that version, there was a second draft version in which the formula was removed. However Gorbachev overrode the objections of the Politburo and gave the speech with the formula.<sup>81</sup>

That the formula for the withdrawal was clearly contained in Gorbachev's speech is not

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<sup>79</sup> Garthoff, 1994.

<sup>80</sup> Eduard Shevardnadze, BBC Interview

<sup>81</sup> Eduard Shevardnadze, BBC Interview

so evident. However there is evidence to suggest that Gorbachev was from 1985 laying the ground for disengagement of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Only one month after coming to power, Gorbachev ordered a secret review of policy in Afghanistan in April 1985.<sup>82</sup> So it is most likely that when Gorbachev referred to Afghanistan as a 'bleeding wound' in his report to the 27th party congress, his intentions were to withdraw Soviet troops.

Even though Gorbachev and the people around him had decided to withdraw their troops early on, they had a great deal of difficulty arriving at the point where an actual announcement of when the troops would be withdrawn could be made. This was not made until 8 February 1988, at which time the Soviet Union agreed to withdraw their troops ten months after the accords being negotiated in Geneva were signed.<sup>83</sup> The resistance to the withdrawal of troops came not only from within the Politburo as Shevardnadze mentioned, or equally from the Soviet military, there was also resistance from the United States to negotiate a quick withdrawal of the Soviet forces in Afghanistan.<sup>84</sup>

Under pressure from Politburo and military hard-liners, Gorbachev gave the go-ahead for a new military offensive to pacify Afghan resistance and put military pressure on Pakistan in May 1985. Gorbachev also agreed to upgrade the level of Soviet military leadership in Afghanistan with the transfer of the esteemed Soviet Army General Mikhail Zaitsev. Notably, although he gave the new commander a free hand on military tactics, Gorbachev did not authorize any additional troops be sent to Afghanistan (except for several thousand special forces). Now in hindsight, with the failure of this offensive to subdue the Afghan rebels, Gorbachev's intention of granting the hardliners their wish for an new offensive was to discredit them and to strengthen his position to seek a political solution.<sup>85</sup>

While the dispute between Gorbachev and the hard-liners was going in the Kremlin there was at the same time a dispute going on in Washington. The dispute was between what Harrison called the 'bleeders', those who wanted to upgrade US weaponry being sent to the

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<sup>82</sup> Cordovez, D., and Harrison, S., Out of Afghanistan, The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, p.187.

<sup>83</sup> Garthoff, 1994, p.736.

<sup>84</sup> Cordovez and Harrison, 1995, pp.187-188.

<sup>85</sup> Khan, R., Untying the Afghan Knot, Duke University Press, London, 1991, p.168.

Afghan rebels and continue to keep Soviet forces pinned down, and the 'dealers', those who wanted to help Gorbachev facilitate the withdrawal of Soviet forces through negotiations in Geneva.<sup>86</sup>

The agreement in Geneva was finally signed on April 14, 1988. It was scheduled to go into effect on May 15, of that year, with Soviet troops earmarked to be completely withdrawn by February 15, 1989. Even after the accords were signed there was an issue that continued to rankle, especially the Soviet leader that it was unacceptably resolved. This was the US reneging on one of its key commitments, to cease arms shipments to the Afghan rebels once all Soviet troops had been withdrawn. This issue had so incensed Gorbachev that he took an unusual step of condemning the United States without actually mentioning them by name. In his speech to the United Nations, Gorbachev lamented the fact that the Geneva accords had offered the opportunity for completing a settlement before the end of 1988, but that didn't happen. He went on to say, 'This regrettable fact reminds us once again of the political, juridical and moral importance of the ancient Roman maxim: *Pacta sunt servanda!* - agreements must be honoured!'.<sup>87</sup>

That the Soviet Union still signed the agreement, even with the United States backing away from its earlier agreed position to stop arms shipment to the rebels after the withdrawal of Soviet forces, suggests that George Schultz was right in his estimation of the Soviet position. He hinted in his memoirs that he felt that Gorbachev was so committed to the withdrawal of his forces that the USSR was in no position to back away from the agreement.<sup>88</sup>

Although the Soviet Union was very critical of the shift in the United States position regarding the supply of weapons to the Afghan rebels, they were at the same time discussing within the Politburo ways of supporting the Afghan government that were clearly counter to the Geneva agreement. A secret Soviet document, a record of a Politburo meeting of January 23, 1989 entitled, 'On measures pertaining to the impending withdrawal of soviet forces from Afghanistan', confirms that the Soviet leadership was considering several options in which they could assist the Afghan government that would have meant among other things leaving Soviet

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<sup>86</sup> Cordovez and Harrison, 1995, p.188.

<sup>87</sup> Gorbachev, 1988b, p.19.

<sup>88</sup> Schultz, 1993, pp.1087-91.

troops in Afghanistan after the February 15 deadline.<sup>89</sup>

In the run up to the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan there was a great deal of apprehension both in Moscow and in Kabul as to the survivability of the Afghan régime. It is clear from the record of the Politburo meeting that the Afghan régime had been asking the Soviet leadership for assistance:

‘The Afghan comrades express their understanding of the decision to withdraw soviet forces and affirm it once again, but, in conjunction with this, having soberly assessed the situation, point out that they cannot manage completely without our military assistance. Such assistance, in their opinion, could be rendered in forms different from today’s and on a limited scale, but, nevertheless, would be a serious support both practically and psychologically’.<sup>90</sup>

To the Soviet leadership the main concern upon which the future of the régime rested was its ability to maintain control of the larger cities:

‘The chief question on which depends the continuing evolution of the situation boils down to this: will the government be able to maintain Kabul and other large cities in the country, though above all the capital? The situation in Kabul is difficult; indeed, the main problems are not even military, but economic. It is very clear that the opposition plans to organize an economic blockade of Kabul, close off its supply of foodstuffs and petroleum products, and provoke discontent and even direct insurgence of the populace’.<sup>91</sup>

In order to maintain the régime economically this meant delivering large quantities of foodstuffs by ground transport to the various cities. The key means of delivering goods to the Afghan capital was by truck convoy via the Hairaton-Kabul highway. That keeping this road open was key to the existence of the Kabul régime was clear:

‘In the words of comrade Nadzhibullah, if the road remains functionally secured until May, the survival of the régime is guaranteed. Evidently, the Afghan friends will not be able to secure the normal functioning of the government without our help. We must proceed from the fact that a break in the functioning of the Hairaton-Kabul highway cannot be allowed’.<sup>92</sup>

In response to the problem of maintaining access through the Hairaton-Kabul highway, the Politburo meeting discussed several scenarios. As the report states, ‘In all of the four enumerated scenarios it is intended that at least even an insignificant number of Soviet troops

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<sup>89</sup> Eh. Shevardnadze V. Chebrikov A. Yakovlev D. Yazov V. Murakhovskii V. Kryuchkov, On the measures pertaining to the impending withdrawal of soviet forces from Afghanistan, Top Secret, SPECIAL FILE, CC CPSU, January 23, 1989, hereafter cited as Eh. Shevardnadze.

<sup>90</sup> Eh. Shevardnadze, January 23, 1989, p.2.

<sup>91</sup> Eh. Shevardnadze, January 23, 1989, p.4.

<sup>92</sup> Eh. Shevardnadze, January 23, 1989, pp.4-5.



is to be left behind after February 15, 1989'. The first scenario was to leave one division behind to protect the highway. They feared that this would not be acceptable to a majority of nations in the UN under the Geneva accords, recognizing the crux of the problem to most nations were the Soviet forces. The second scenario was to appeal to the UN to provide shipment of foodstuffs and petroleum products and send UN troops to maintain the highway. Until the arrival of the UN forces the Soviet Union would leave a 'military subdivision' to carry out humanitarian functions. They planned in conjunction with these effort to announce that the withdrawal of Soviet forces had taken place, while announcing later that the 'subdivision' would return to the Soviet Union with the arrival of the UN forces. The third scenario called for the complete withdrawal of all Soviet forces, but then under an international request from the Afghan government for assistance to escort civilian convoys, Soviet units would reappear. The fourth scenario was to officially affirm that all Soviet forces had been removed, but then under the pretext of transferring some posts on the Afghan side of the Hairaton-Kabul highway, leave Soviet forces at some of the more important points, including the strategically important Salang Pass.<sup>93</sup>

In the end the Soviet leadership decided against using their troops to keep the Hairaton-Kabul highway open, but the Nadzhibullah régime was able to survive for three years after the withdrawal of Soviet forces. In 1991 the US and the Soviet Union agreed to end all shipments of arms to any Afghans. Although Nadzhibullah's government fell in 1992 armed conflict has continued between various factions.

## **Conclusion**

Gorbachev came to power in 1985 recognizing the need to change the Soviet reliance on the military factors of power, institute radical reform in the Soviet Union and breathe new life into a stagnating economy. In order to undertake such a task the new Soviet leader had to find a means to reduce the military burden, extract the Soviet Union from its entanglements in the Third World and a way of managing East-West relations. This necessity of dealing with the military burden and by extension East-West relations forced Gorbachev to address the issue of foreign policy first. It is in this area that Gorbachev was able to bring about real breakthroughs in East-West relations, such as the INF, START and the CFE agreements, in

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<sup>93</sup> Eh. Shevardnadze, January 23, 1989, p.7.

East-East relationship with the repudiation of the Brezhnev Doctrine and with relations in the Third World, demonstrated most clearly by the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan.

The ironic fact in the whole matter is that once the threat of the Cold War had been removed the Soviet system itself could not survive. As Alexi Arbatov notes the Soviet system was built for the Cold War; he compared the ideology and social structure of the Soviet Union with a besieged fortress. As long as the siege or perception of a siege remained the system could survive, but not once it was removed. Mikhail Gorbachev attempted to take the Soviet Union out of the Cold War but it could not survive a Post-Cold War world.

## Chapter 8

Thus far this thesis has concentrated on the change in the nature of military power and its influence on the Cold War. This final chapter will draw together these arguments, formulate conclusions taken from the analysis and look at the likely implications of the change in military power in the post-Cold War World.

Central to this thesis has been the argument that in international relations since 1945 the nature of conflict has changed in such a way that it is no longer the greatest military power which will prevail, but rather the side with the greatest political power. It is important to stress that the transformation in international politics that has taken place in this century has not just been the result of a decline of one nation or nations relative to others. This change in the nature of power is much more fundamental. In determining the resolution of a dispute between two peoples, states or nations, those factors which previously had defined what was meant by a powerful nation were no longer paramount. In the Post-War era other forms of power, such as economic and 'civilian' (public opinion) power became important factors in resolving conflicts. This has severely restricted the utility of warfare as a means of statecraft and forced the superpowers to re-evaluate the central position of military power, meaning armed strength as a threat or its potential in the making of their foreign policy.

Technological developments were the main origin of these changes in conflict and power which altered modern warfare. Changes in the increased destructive capability of weaponry, the development of mass transportation, and the increased sophistication of communications were three of the most significant. These new technologies changed war in several ways, but most importantly they expanded warfare geographically and increased its demands on society. It was during the First World War that the full impact of these new technologies was felt, and which influenced a change in perceptions toward power and conflict. Social Darwinism, which had dominated European theoretical thinking for over four hundred years, was cast aside. War was now seen as an evil aberration rather than a romantic endeavour.

One of the first recognitions that this change in warfare had placed greater demands on society was the introduction of political rhetoric as new means of rallying support, both from the troops and the nation as a whole. The use of political rhetoric had a profound effect on

conflict and the nature of power. Since that time, political conflict has expanded beyond the confines of military conflict. The outcome of the conflict was no longer determined simply on the battlefield, but now in the hearts and minds of societies.

As was mentioned in the first chapter,<sup>1</sup> this argument regarding a change in the nature of military power is linked to a Clausewitzian perception of war. Clausewitz described war as merely a continuation of political intercourse, with other means added. And that no matter how much war affects the political objective set by a nation, it will never do more than modify those objectives. To Clausewitz, war was only the means of reaching the goal, which was the political object.<sup>2</sup> It was just that throughout most of history, to the victor these other means were usually sufficient to achieve their goal in settling political disputes.

It is quite ironic that just as the two most powerful military nations in the history of mankind emerged, with their capability to project far more power, far faster to anywhere in the world, into their pre-eminent positions in international relations, the ability of military power to have influence on conflicts was diminishing. As has been argued, the initial foreign policy, both theoretically and realistically, of the two main protagonists in the Cold War was to maximise their military power. From 1945 both the United States and the Soviet Union viewed their status in international politics to be a result of their overwhelming military power (both in conventional and nuclear capability) vis-à-vis the rest of the world. However at different times during the Cold War, both the US and the Soviet Union came to realise that their foreign policies had led them into a futile arms race that was putting a great strain on their respective economies and had the potential to lead to a nuclear holocaust. Their foreign policies had also led both to become involved in situations in the Third World that proved to be unwinnable, ended up costing the United States 52,000 American lives and the Soviet Union 14,000, and to which both countries found it very difficult to extract themselves.

The United States was the first to recognize the shift in international politics away from a reliance on military power to that of a greater importance of political power. This change in American perception was not due to any greater foresight by the United States, rather the result of the American experience in South-East Asia. The stages of US foreign policy were firstly

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<sup>1</sup> See page 14.

<sup>2</sup> Clausewitz, p.87.

in the immediate post-war period the US introduced the policy of Containment. After being increasingly disillusioned with a policy based on Wilsonian internationalism, which seemed incapable of explaining Soviet behaviour, the Truman Administration attempted to contain Soviet military power. With the experience of the Korean War, the Eisenhower Administration attempted to escape the open-ended commitment of Containment by introducing a policy of roll-back, but the policy proved to be a paper tiger. President Kennedy continued much of the liberation in which he called upon the American people to 'pay any price'. However his policy was also a return to Containment of the Soviet Union, but his attempts to carry out an activist foreign policy nearly led to a nuclear war.

However after its involvement in Korea and Vietnam, together with several crises which had the potential to lead to nuclear war (most notably Cuba and Berlin), the US, under Richard Nixon, instituted a policy of détente as a means of ending the Cold War confrontation. The Carter Administration tried to adhere to a policy of détente, but in the late 70s, when it was clear to the US that the Soviet Union was going to continue with an aggressive foreign policy, especially after the invasion of Afghanistan, the US re-engaged the Soviet Union in the Cold War. This policy, which is most closely linked to Ronald Reagan, but begun during the Carter Administration, attempted to make the Soviet Union pay the cost of an intensified arms race and for its involvement in the Third World by supporting pro-American insurgents.

The Soviet Union, which emerged from the Second World War as the second strongest military power, spent the early post-war period establishing the Soviet Empire. The Soviet Union believed that its control of Eastern Europe provided a buffer against possible invasion and suited their objective of expanding Communist control. With Khrushchev's coming to power, he argued that nuclear weapons had altered the correlation of forces in international relations and established Peaceful Coexistence as the new approach to foreign policy. Under this policy the Soviet Union's attention turned to expanding its military power to become the World's second superpower in the 1970s. When the Nixon Administration attempted to introduce détente to US-Soviet relations, the Soviet Union viewed the relaxation in tension between the superpowers as a benefit of their achieving a rough strategic parity with the United States and therefore was not interested in relinquishing the competition between capitalism and communism and move into the post-Cold War era, because they expected that their newly

acquired military power would be translatable to more political clout in international politics. As a result it led to the pursuit of several policy objectives that were to rebound against the Soviet Union and have long term consequences, most notably its involvement in Southern Africa and the invasion of Afghanistan. It was not until Mikhail Gorbachev took control in Moscow that the Soviet Union began to realise that its great military power was not granting it the ability to prevail in international conflicts, but was having the effect of bankrupting the country. Gorbachev did attempt to make some of the necessary changes, both in terms of domestic and foreign policy, however while he was able to withdraw troops from Eastern Europe, defence spending in the early 1990s was larger than prior to Gorbachev taking office. When the necessary reforms were not carried out, the system imploded.

The argument that the later half of the twentieth century brought a change in the nature of military power has been established. The link between the change in the nature of power and the ending of the Cold War has been thoroughly discussed. Both the United States and the Soviet Union pursued foreign policies that placed over extended emphasis on military power and nearly led them to nuclear annihilation. When the two superpowers finally accepted the futility of this policy they brought the Cold War to an end. The end of the Cold War brought the end of the bi-polar system and what has emerged is a single superpower with regional multi-polar centres.

What this means for the future of military power and conflict is something that still is not clear. There have been some writers,<sup>3</sup> since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War who have argued that military power is no longer of any importance and that it has been replaced by other forms of power such as economic and political. This argument makes a similar error to that the US and the Soviet Union made during the Cold War only from the opposite perspective. As noted earlier, the Clausewitzian view is that war is the means and political aims the objective. During the Cold War period, the US and the Soviet Union wrongly attempted to achieve their political goals by means of maximizing their military power. This one-dimensional approach severely restrained the superpowers from achieving political objectives by other means.

The post-Cold War view, which claims that military power has become unimportant

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<sup>3</sup> See Maull, H.W. 'Germany and Japan: The New Civilian Powers', Foreign Affairs, 69 (5), 1990-91, pp.91-106.

as a means of statecraft and that it has been supplanted by economic and political forms of power, fails to grasp the Clausewitzian position, that if a military conflict is a suitable means for achieving a political objective it should be employed. This thesis has argued throughout, war as a means of obtaining foreign policy objectives has been strictly limited, but war has not been completely supplanted by other means of power. As Alistair Buchan argued, of the three functions that war has traditionally served, promoting economic power of a nation, promoting ideological objectives and protecting the security of itself and its allies, only the latter is now acceptable as a legitimate use of military power.<sup>4</sup>

There are far too many open conflicts in the world today to suggest that war is no longer considered a means of obtaining political objectives. One only needs to look at the example of the Gulf War to show that military power is still very important. Similarly, other situations that have erupted into open conflict, such as in Bosnia and Rwanda, have required a combination of military and political power be applied to these areas in order for a cease-fire to be imposed.

However, since the end of the Cold War, there has been a notable shift in the way military conflicts are carried out. With the thawing of relations between the US and the Soviet Union in the early 90s it has become possible for international and regional institutions to play a much more prominent role in the resolution of conflicts. The United Nations, the European Union and the Organisation of African States to name a few, have taken up a far greater role in those conflict in which they have become involved. The United Nations was at the centre of the Gulf War after Iraq invaded Kuwait. It was under the auspices of the UN that a coalition of military forces ousted Iraq from Kuwait. The EU and NATO were both instrumental in brokering a settlement in the former Yugoslavia.

That military power will remain a factor in the calculations of international affairs in the post-Cold War era is without doubt. However events in post-Cold War conflicts have equally demonstrated the limitations of military power. The Bush Administration had to build an international coalition through the UN to impose a blockade and eventually dislodge Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Very few nations, and not even the one remaining superpower, the United States, are willing to take military action without an international consensus. That Saddam

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<sup>4</sup> Buchan, p.104.

Hussein's troops were almost completely routed and he was still able to remain in power also attests to the limitations of military power. Had the US military commanders attempted to take Baghdad, political support for the operation would most likely have collapsed.

The EU's attempt to settle the fighting in the former Yugoslavia showed the limitations of an organisation in brokering an agreement when it lacks a military component to its capabilities. It was not until NATO intervened, which by definition brought the United States into the negotiations, that a settlement was reached. Although an agreement has been signed, its longevity is still in question, mainly on the basis of whether politically the warring factions are willing to accept the deal that has been struck. In Bosnia and other republics, NATO has provided a military implementation force to oversee the agreement.

A final example of where an international organization was extremely limited in its ability to resolve a conflict with military power was in Somalia. In the initial stages of the UN operation, a multi-national military force was used to secure major ports in the East African nation so that humanitarian food aid could be delivered. However, once this objective was achieved, the UN attempted to expand its political objectives to the capture of the political warlords, who the UN saw as responsible for the chaos and then the implementation of a series of nation building programmes. This proved to be a far more difficult task, that the multi-national military force was unable to cope with. When Americans saw the corpses of two US military personnel dragged through the streets of Mogadishu, public opinion turned against this mission and President Clinton was forced to withdraw US forces.

For many nations, war in the twenty-first century will be a foreign policy option with limited utility. The most likely recourse to war would be as a member of a multi-national military force that would fight under the flag of an international organisation like the UN. But, as long as actors in international affairs believe that military operations will help them to achieve their political objectives they will engage in conflict. Both nation states and what have been called movements of national liberation will see benefit in taking up arms. However, as recent history has shown, the resolution of these conflict (such as Angola, East Timor, Sri Lanka etc.), have proven extremely difficult while the political conflict remains unresolved.



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