The Reagan Administration: A Reconstruction of American Strength?
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Edited by
Helga Haftendorn and Jakob Schissler

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<tr>
<td>ABM</td>
<td>Anti-Ballistic Missile</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACDA</td>
<td>Arms Control and Disarmament Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFL/CIO</td>
<td>American Federation of Labor/Congress of Industrial Organizations</td>
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<td>ALCM</td>
<td>Air Launched Cruise Missile</td>
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<td>ANC</td>
<td>African National Congress</td>
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<td>ATB</td>
<td>Advanced Technology Bomber</td>
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<td>BMD</td>
<td>Ballistic Missile Defense</td>
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<td>BPA</td>
<td>Bundespressesamt (Federal Press Office)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Central Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCL</td>
<td>Commodity Control List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>COCOM</td>
<td>Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Committee on the Present Danger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPSU</td>
<td>Communist Party of the Soviet Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIC</td>
<td>Command, Control, Communication and Intelligence</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIA</td>
<td>Defense Intelligence Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>DoD</td>
<td>Department of Defense</td>
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<tr>
<td>DTA</td>
<td>Democratic Turnhalle Alliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>EA</td>
<td>Europa-Archiv</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESF</td>
<td>Economic Support Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>GLCM</td>
<td>Ground Launched Cruise Missile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPO</td>
<td>Government Printing Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSFK</td>
<td>Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung (Frankfurt Peace Research Institute)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICBM</td>
<td>Intercontinental Ballistic Missile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IHT</td>
<td>International Herald Tribune</td>
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<tr>
<td>INF</td>
<td>Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>JCS</td>
<td>Joint Chiefs of Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAD</td>
<td>Mutual Assured Destruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCTL</td>
<td>Militarily Critical Technologies List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIRV</td>
<td>Multiple Independently-Targetable Reentry Vehicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPLM</td>
<td>Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MX</td>
<td>Missile Experimental</td>
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<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<td>NCCB</td>
<td>National Conference of Catholic Bishops</td>
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<td>NSC</td>
<td>National Security Council</td>
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Abbreviations

NSDD  National Security Decision Directive
NYT   New York Times
OMB   Office of Management and Budget
PD    Presidential Directive
PPBS  Planning-Programming-Budgeting System
SALT  Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SCC   Standing Consultive Commission
SDI   Strategic Defense Initiative
SIOP  Single Integrated Operational Plan
SLBM  Sea Launched Ballistic Missile
SLCM  Submarine Launched Cruise Missile
SMP   Soviet Military Power
SPD   Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (German Social Democratic Party)
SRAM  Short-Range Attack Missile
SS    Surface-to-Surface Missile
START Strategic Arms Reduction Talks
STEM  Security and Technology Export Meetings
SWAPO South West Africa People's Organization
SWP   Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (Research Institute for International Affairs, Ebenhausen)
SZ    Süddeutsche Zeitung
TASS  Soviet News Agency TASS
UNO   United Nations Organization
UNITA União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola
USIA  United States Information Agency
USS   United States Ship
USWB  U.S. Wireless Bulletin
WashP Washington Post
Introduction

Postwar American foreign policy has sought to strike a balance between proclaimed U.S. security interests and the economic and military capabilities to support them. In effect, it has oscillated between what Robert E. Osgood termed "augmentation and retrenchment". Thus, America's foreign relations have been "punctuated by cycles between efforts to mobilize material and political resources to counter the Communist threat, and efforts to reduce the risks and costs of involvement."¹

In periods of augmentation the United States has used its resources to shape international developments consonant with American interests; when existing means were insufficient, concerted political efforts were made to raise the requisite capabilities. Retrenchment, on the other hand, has meant a paring down of interests to conform to limited means. The projection of American power has been predicated on a strong national economy with high levels of production and consumption, plus a stable dollar recognized world-wide. It has also rested on the military strength of the U.S., including its command over nuclear deterrence.

In a democracy, with its complex interplay of domestic politics and foreign policy, the projection or retraction of power must reflect public support as well as address social expectations as they are articulated through the political system. Augmentation and retrenchment thus constitute specific responses to demands from society.

This volume presents the results of a research project, sponsored by the Volkswagen Foundation, on the domestic foundations of the Reagan Administration's foreign, foreign economic and security policies. The first part examines the international framework and socio-political conditions underlying the Reagan Administration's foreign and security policies. The second describes the "agenda setting" or formulation of basic positions in foreign policy. These studies reveal three types of demands: those which stem from international diplomacy, economic processes or the military balance; those which originate in the U.S. political system and are expressed through elections or via the media and opinion polls; and finally, those inherent in the political culture.

The third and fourth parts of this volume describe processes by which demands are put into effect, i.e., processes of policy formation and decision making, as well as some of their most important outcomes.

The wide range of these studies made it difficult to select the most interesting results and still paint an overall picture of the Reagan Administration. It was not feasible to cover every dimension with any claim to completeness.

The "Reagan Revolution" — the revaluation of the U.S. political system's norms and objectives — has sometimes fascinated, sometimes shocked foreign observers. The rhetoric of President Reagan and his team has elicited sharply divergent reactions, particularly in West Germany. An analysis of these phenomena must therefore first overcome emotional barriers, attempt to identify motives, perceptions and positions within the rhetorical panoply, and then reconstruct the sometimes irrational processes of building consensus and making decisions.

The object of study, the policy of the Reagan Administration, was in a state of continual change during the period of investigation. The first Reagan Administration appeared as a period of power projection in which the United States not only reclaimed a global leadership role, but impressively managed to pull its economy out of recession and build up American military strength.

In the second Reagan Administration, on the other hand, there were increasing signs of a decline in leadership. Towering budget deficits forced cuts even in the defense budget, while the fall of the dollar and a dramatic collapse on the stock exchanges pointed up structural weaknesses in the American economy. A series of summit meetings between President Reagan and Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev indicated that confrontation had abated in American-Soviet relations, giving way to greater compromise. The INF treaty brought progress toward a more constructive relationship with the Soviets, while it also served to defuse domestic crisis. However, it is too early to conclude that the retreat from single-minded self-interest marks the beginning of a new phase of American retrenchment. Nor can we confidently account for the relaxation of American leadership as a transitory consequence of the Iran-contra scandal and its domestic dislocations, the weakness of a lame-duck presidency, a process of structural adaptation to limited economic and military resources, or a shift in American society's political expectations.

The present volume can only assess the basis upon which the Reagan Administration raised its claim of U.S. global leadership and determine whether the United States was ready and able to conduct a global policy from a position of economic and military strength. In the end it depicts a retreat from the leadership so loudly proclaimed in 1981.

A transatlantic study inevitably entails a distanced perspective. This project, however, benefitted from an abundance of material, thanks to the outstanding
library resources of the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies at the Free University of Berlin, the many and varied services provided by the Amerika-Haus in Berlin, as well as interviews with political figures and knowledgable experts during extended research stays in the United States. I would like to extend my gratitude to the American Enterprise Institute, the Brookings Institution, the Carnegie Endowment, Harvard University's Center for Science and International Affairs, the Congressional Research Service, the Government Department at Georgetown University and the Union of Concerned Scientists for opening their doors and allowing the authors to participate in the American discussion on the Reagan Administration.

This book would not have been possible without the dedicated collaboration of all its contributors as well as the other members of the Working Group on U.S. Studies in the Free University's Center on Transatlantic Foreign and Security Policy. In particular, thanks are due to Thomas Koll for his technical advice and Astrid Lübke for her excellent assistance in preparing the manuscript. Dennis Mercer has done an expert job translating the manuscript from the German. In addition to the support of the Volkswagen Foundation, the printing of this English edition was made possible by a grant from the Free University of Berlin. To all these institutions and all the colleagues who have lent their criticism and encouragement, I wish to express my heartfelt thanks.

Berlin, June 1988

Helga Haftendorn
I Domestic and International Setting
Toward a Reconstruction of American Strength: 
A New Era in the Claim to Global Leadership?

To the memory of Robert E. Osgood (1921 – 1986)

In 1981 President Reagan and his team came into office with a promise to halt the decline in American power. With a strong economy and a credible military posture the United States would again assume global leadership.

For the Reagan Administration the claim to leadership had both a domestic and a foreign dimension. At home the nation should again rally around a strong presidency. After the crises and humiliations of the 1970s Ronald Reagan wanted to refurbish the nation’s self-image and restore its faith in America’s “manifest destiny.” A broad national consensus was also imperative for global power projection.

Internationally the United States wanted to reconstruct the hegemonial power with which it had shaped world affairs in the 1950s and 1960s. “Hegemony” here describes a situation in which “one state is powerful enough to maintain the essential rules governing interstate relations and is willing to do so.”

This, then, presupposed a strong economy and a military potential second to none; plus a will to conduct an active foreign policy, supported by a broad domestic consensus. In the Reagan view, previous administrations had failed to muster this will or provide the requisite capabilities for global leadership. The reconstruction of American strength would restore the ability and the will for the United States to exercise power worldwide.

The Reagan Administration’s claim to leadership had three dimensions:

- to contain the adversary, the Soviet Union;
- to reinvigorate U.S. alliances and foster support for American interests and goals;
- to command respect for American hegemony among the nations of the third world.


2 “Power” is understood, with Keohane and Nye, as “control over outcomes.” Cf. *Power and Interdependence*, p. 11.
Has the Reagan Administration achieved its goals? Has it succeeded in projecting its leadership worldwide? Does this administration mark a new phase in the projection of American power?

1. The Vision of America's Manifest Destiny

Whereas most U.S. presidents have come into office with a refined political concept or at least a foreign policy agenda, the Reagan Administration contented itself with a vision and a few simple maxims. The United States was again to become the guarantor of peace and the guardian of freedom; through renewal at home it would assume a moral and political leadership abroad.

Amidst the humiliation from the Iran hostage crisis and the relapse into the Cold War as a result of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, great words and a demonstration of resolution were called for.³ How better to solicit loyalty and win votes than by appealing to the self-respect of each and every American and by promising to restore the nation's power, and hence honor?

Reagan thus appealed to a strain deeply rooted in American political culture, to an awareness of the nation's manifest destiny; America would not be an "ordinary country"⁴ with ordinary successes and setbacks. Here Reagan drew upon the same religious pathos with which the nation had been founded. There is in fact a marked continuity extending from Governor John Winthrop of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, who had apostrophized this community of settlers as a "citty upon a hill" that would command the "eies of all people," to Ronald Reagan, who called upon America to be an "exemplar of freedom and a beacon of hope for those who do not now have freedom"⁵ and to distinguish itself from the "evil empire"⁶ like day from night. Accordingly, leadership meant worldwide recognition of the moral superiority of the United States.

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Self-awareness and self-confidence would be based upon a strong economy and sufficient military strength; these were the prerequisites for the United States to reassert global leadership. Added to that would be a realistic assessment of international conditions, including relations with friends and adversaries.\(^7\)

In the view from Washington the U.S. had lost its ability to control international developments and safeguard its interests. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the hostage taking in Teheran as well as the presence of a Cuban-supported left-wing revolutionary regime in Nicaragua and a strong guerrilla movement in El Salvador seemed to be evidence of its impotence. Moreover, the Soviet Union had initiated an unprecedented military buildup and begun to project its military power into regions of the world, such as the Middle East and Central America, which the United States regarded as its spheres of influence.

In the eyes of the Reagan Administration the Soviet Union was the world's main troublemaker. When totalitarian forces carry out subversion all over the globe and stir up conflicts, the United States and its allies "must not hesitate to declare our ultimate objectives and to take concrete actions to move towards them. We must be staunch in our conviction that freedom is not the sole prerogative of a lucky few but the inalienable and universal right of all human beings."\(^8\) In words harking back to the Cold War of the 1950s, in the image of an essentially bipolar world, President Reagan challenged the Western democracies to wage a "crusade for freedom."

The challenge to the forces of democracy from Soviet totalitarianism and the need for its containment were central themes of the Reagan Administration. Its refusal to recognize the Soviet Union as an equal may have been guided primarily by ideological reasons or by considerations of power politics, but it was well aware that in the nuclear age the antagonism would have to be channeled in such a way as to avoid a common catastrophe. The most promising approach to the Soviet Union, therefore, seemed to be a policy that rested on military strength combined with an offer of negotiations.\(^9\)


The Reagan Administration argued that the West had not countered the increased military strength of the Soviet Union with anything comparable; rather, under the guise of "détente," it had neglected its own defense and hence further narrowed its margin of security. On the other hand, China's break with Moscow and opening toward the West as well as developments in Poland, where the independent trade union Solidarity was demanding major social reforms, indicated that the once monolithic communist bloc was rent with internal divisions and tensions. Added to this were its economic problems. The aim of American policy would therefore be to show the Soviet Union the limits of its power and induce it to exercise restraint.  

In this view Western Europe and Japan represented allies in the struggle for freedom, peace and progress in the world. With common interests foremost, the economic and political disputes that had strained relations in the past should be dispelled. Above all, these relations should be built upon renewed confidence in American leadership.

Yet the Administration took its time in spelling out its foreign policy concept — so long that the President was sometimes asked whether his administration had one at all. His reply, that he did not consider it necessary to formulate in detail and in advance how the U.S. would operate in international affairs, was consistent with Reagan's aversion to details. Besides, for him "renewal of America" had priority. Another reason for the absence of a foreign policy concept was that the various convictions articulated by Reagan and the members of his Administration could not be readily integrated into a coherent structure of ideas. Even less so did they represent a workable guide to action.

It was left to Secretary of State Haig to formulate a coherent concept. In a series of programmatic speeches Haig sketched what he termed a "strategic" foreign policy. This rested on four pillars, or fundamental goals:

- "The first pillar of our foreign policy is the restoration of America's economic and military strength..."
- "The second pillar is the reinvigoration of our alliances and friendships..."
- "The third pillar of our policy is our commitment to progress in the developing countries through peaceful change..."

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“The fourth pillar is a relationship with the Soviet Union marked by greater Soviet restraint and greater Soviet reciprocity.”

This basic orientation of foreign policy did not change a great deal after Haig resigned (in 1982). Its foundation continued to be the striving for economic and military strength, its goal “a more constructive and positive role in world affairs” in the sense of a credible global leadership role.

The Reagan Administration also took its time in translating its maxims into operative policy. One exception was policy on Central America. Here the President authorized as early as May 1981 the first covert operations against the guerrillas in El Salvador. In November 1981 the National Security Council decided on more extensive support for the contras in Nicaragua.

However, the key directive for policy toward the Soviet Union was not formulated until December 1982 — that is, after the Administration had been in office nearly two years. This of course did not mean that the Administration had remained inactive in foreign policy. Somewhat contrary to its rhetoric, the Administration responded to various international challenges in essentially pragmatic ways, which to a large extent reflected internal bureaucratic conflicts or demands from Congress. None of this was altered by the issuing of presidential directives.

2. Economic and Military Strength as Foundations for Leadership in Foreign Affairs

The paramount goal of the Reagan Administration was to develop the capabilities of the United States and the West to match their considerably extended interests. Not only should the Soviet Union’s potential influence be contained, but the United States wanted to again shape international developments.

After just three weeks in office President Reagan presented to Congress his “Program for Economic Recovery.” To eliminate the federal deficit by 1984

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the President called for a reduction in government spending (though the “social safety net for those with true need” would remain untouched). In addition, he proposed to lower income tax rates by 10% in each of the following three years and to stimulate investment by improving terms for write-offs. And finally, the President promised to cut back on government regulation in order to unleash the creative forces in the economy and society. This program of supply-side economics would then usher in a period of stable economic growth.

However, it was two long years before the recession had bottomed out and the U.S. economy found itself again on a course of growth. Also, the upturn fell short of the ambitious growth targets. In the second Reagan Administration economic activity again fell off. This was partly due to restrictive monetary policy by the Federal Reserve, partly a consequence of the strong dollar and the attendant capital and import pulls, which led to one of the largest trade deficits in U.S. history. This was paralleled by the growth of the budget deficit. The lower federal incomes due to tax reductions were not offset by higher revenues as a result of revived economic activity; the increased spending on defense saw no comparable cuts in other budget items. With the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings legislation in 1986 Congress finally took the initiative to bring the budget deficit under control and placed greater financial constraints on the Administration, notably with regard to defense spending.

With its defense programs the Reagan Administration wanted to offset the neglect of its predecessors and re-establish an approximate balance of forces. In his election campaign Reagan had pledged, as his administration’s most important task, “to halt the decline in America’s strength and restore that margin of safety needed for the protection of the American people and the maintenance of peace.” Thus, the buildup of the defense budget took priority. The decision to double the annual rate of increase in defense spending compared with the Carter Administration’s plans (that is, to raise it from 4—5% to 9—10% in real terms) was taken without any prior stocktaking or setting of priorities. As procurement was decentralized and greater authority granted to the four armed services, the defense budget became the sum of individual interests, limited only by the need to keep the budget deficit from exceeding all bounds.

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18 In a high-level talk between President Reagan, Defense Secretary Weinberger and Budget Director Stockman on September 12, 1981, outlay ceilings were established for the
However, a closer look at the budget messages of Defense Secretary Weinberger reveals a distinct discrepancy between full-bodied rhetoric and measures actually taken. The campaign demand for strategic superiority was quickly dropped; instead the U.S. would concentrate on developing a "strategic margin of safety" vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. The strategic weapons program that President Reagan presented to the public on October 2, 1981 essentially continued existing programs, proposing:

- to resume development and production of the B-1 bomber, which had been canceled by President Carter, and in the long run to develop an advanced "stealth" aircraft capable of avoiding detection by traditional radar;
- to deploy more Trident submarines and procure new ballistic and cruise missiles for the Navy. Moreover, the Navy would expand to a 600-ship fleet;
- to further develop and deploy the MX missile;
- to modernize command and control systems (C3I) and improve their survivability.\(^\text{19}\)

Despite its high costs, this program found wide support in Congress and in the public, which was prepared to make sacrifices for the sake of greater defense efforts. Its implementation, however, encountered a number of problems. In Congress there was growing opposition to the MX deployment in Nevada and Utah in the anticipated basing mode. In addition, the campaign of a grass-roots anti-nuclear movement advocating a freeze on nuclear weapons was gaining in political importance and strength.

The Administration tried to answer the military concerns raised in the debate on the MX deployment, first by announcing a new basing mode ("dense pack")\(^\text{20}\) and then appointing an expert commission (the Scowcroft Commission) to review all aspects of the MX program and the deployment of land-based ICBMs.\(^\text{21}\) The commission recommended that strategic arms and arms control be better coordinated and geared to the goal of strategic stability. Concrete measures should include a limited deployment of the MX in existing

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\(^{21}\) Cf. President Reagan's statement on December 17, 1982 announcing the formation of a bipartisan commission to study basing options for the MX system, in *Current Documents*, 1982, pp. 115–116.
but hardened Minuteman silos as a military and negotiating counterweight to the Soviets' heavy ICBMs, plus the development of a small, mobile single-warhead missile. The Reagan Administration interpreted these recommendations as confirmation of its own thinking on strategic weapons. It ignored the report's call to mesh defense and arms control measures conceptually and in practice. For the time being it concentrated on deploying the MX (euphemistically called the "Peacekeeper"), developing a "small" ICBM (the "Midgetman") and improving communications and command systems (C3I). Under pressure from Congress the Administration later incorporated some of the Scowcroft Commission's ideas in its negotiating proposals for START.

The greatest service the Scowcroft Commission did for the Administration was to gainsay the "window of vulnerability" of land-based strategic missiles. The proposed measures would not have been adequate to close one anyway. This confirmed, however, that this warning so often repeated by President Reagan came from the same sort of campaign arsenal as the "missile gap" invoked by President Kennedy twenty years before.

In the first Reagan Administration the modernization of strategic weapons had highest priority, even if expenditures for this accounted for only about 10—12% of the defense budget. Regarding a possible use of nuclear weapons, the Administration adhered to the strategic directive "PD 59" developed under Carter. This document had postulated a limited nuclear war-fighting capability and a broader spectrum of employment options. In the Defense Guidance approved by Defense Secretary Weinberger in early 1982 it was stated that the nuclear forces of the U.S. must be superior to those of the Soviet Union and capable of forcing Moscow to seek earliest termination of hostilities on terms favorable to the United States, even in the event of a prolonged conflict.

Statements by leading members of the Reagan Administration that a demonstrative use of nuclear weapons in Europe was conceivable, that a conflict in Europe might be kept "limited" (i.e., removed from U.S. territory) and that

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22 Cf. the statement by the chairman of the President's Bipartisan Commission on Strategic Forces, Scowcroft, upon presenting the commission report on April 11, 1983, in Current Documents, 1983, pp. 63—65.

23 Cf. the statement by President Reagan on the report of the Scowcroft Commission, his letter to Senator Percy on May 12, 1983 regarding the Scowcroft Commission recommendations as well as the build-down proposal, and his statement of June 8, 1983 on adjusting the U.S. negotiating position on START to reflect the Scowcroft Commission's recommendations, in Current Documents, 1983, pp. 68—71 and 135—139.

the United States could win such a conflict\textsuperscript{25} were thus not uninformed fantasies but rather consistent with prevailing nuclear doctrine. When these provoked alarm both at home and abroad, politicians and military people subsequently expressed themselves more cautiously, especially as the Reagan Administration's view was that a nuclear exchange could only be the very last option when the security and vital interests of the U.S. and its allies could not otherwise be safeguarded. The Administration made great efforts to avoid situations in which it would have no other option but an early recourse to nuclear weapons.

Raising the nuclear threshold, of course, presupposed the modernization of conventional forces. However, the Reagan Administration refused to reinstate the draft. Instead it admonished the Allies to raise their defense spending by at least 3\% in real terms, as agreed in the NATO Long-Term Defense Program of 1978. Washington could of course point to the impressive rise in U.S. defense spending in the first years of the Reagan Administration.

New was the emphasis that the West had to be prepared to meet a Soviet provocation outside the NATO area. This applied worldwide and not just to the Middle East and the Gulf region. Here President Reagan extended the "Carter Doctrine" explicitly to Saudi Arabia.\textsuperscript{26} Yet progress in raising a rapid deployment force\textsuperscript{27} was less impressive than the effort to strengthen U.S. naval forces to the point that the Navy could maintain a presence on all the world's seas. Building the 600-ship Navy was to be realized by the end of 1989. In keeping with the aim of being able to employ American power worldwide, Defense Secretary Weinberger declared that the U.S. could not commit itself to a 1 1/2 or 2 1/2 war strategy. It must be prepared to respond to crises all over the globe as well as be engaged in more than one conflict at a time. Though this could seriously stretch out its military forces, the U.S. must not restrict itself to repulsing an aggressor solely in the immediate theater of war. "If we are forced to war, we must be prepared to launch counter offensives in other regions and try to exploit the aggressor's weaknesses wherever they exist."\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{25} Cf. the statement by President Reagan on October 16 and the declarations of Secretary of State Haig on November 4 and the State Department on November 5, 1981, in \textit{Current Documents}, 1981, pp. 471 – 482.

\textsuperscript{26} Cf. President Reagan's remarks on September 1, 1981 at a press conference in Washington, in \textit{Current Documents}, 1981, p. 816. This announcement has to be seen also in connection with the – controversial – sales of AWACS aircraft to Saudi Arabia.

\textsuperscript{27} The establishment of a Rapid Deployment Force also goes back to a Carter Administration initiative from 1977; cf. Garthoff, \textit{Détente and Confrontation}, p. 974.

This ability to carry a conflict from one region into another was in fact a prerequisite of global projection of power if the U.S. could not be sure of having a regional superiority in every part of the world yet refused to set priorities or quit untenable positions. Under the conditions of U.S. strategic vulnerability the threat to escalate horizontally complemented the doctrine of vertical (nuclear) escalation in case of regional (conventional) inferiority.

However, no development of military strategy in any form promised certain protection against a nuclear counterstrike. Yet the U.S. could think about an effective projection of military power only if its own territory and population were essentially protected from nuclear destruction. This was the object of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), a long-term program to develop a space-based protective shield to defend against and destroy enemy ballistic nuclear missiles.29

The President announced SDI, however — in what was termed the “Star Wars” speech — without prior examination of the technical and political prerequisites or the drastic changes in military strategy it would entail. Should SDI serve primarily to make strategic forces invulnerable, as the strategic logic and the tactical connection with the MX debate seemed to indicate, or should a more grandiose protective shield be erected, one that protected not only one’s own military forces and civilian population but allies as well? With his vision of a future world free of the nuclear threat Reagan leaned toward the latter prospect. But would such a scheme be technically feasible, and at acceptable financial and political costs? Although these and other questions had not been settled, in April 1984 Defense Secretary Weinberger gave the green light for further SDI research and development with the creation of the Strategic Defense Organization.

A further subject of controversy was the extent to which SDI research and development were compatible with the 1972 ABM treaty. Originally the President had stated that the research for SDI would be carried out consistent with U.S. treaty obligations. Subsequently, however, there was a growing inclination to interpret the ABM treaty broadly. The Defense Department’s plan to declare the testing of components of an anti-missile system to be consistent with the treaty was thwarted by opposition from Congress and the Allies. After having abandoned compliance with the unratified SALT II treaty in 1986, this would have further undermined the arms control network

of the 1970s. For the Reagan Administration, military security clearly had priority over arms control. "In the crucial relationship between arms and arms control – we should not put the cart before the horse." Since the Soviets had carried out a steady military buildup in the 1970s while the United States had trusted in the moderating effect of the SALT agreements, the U.S. would now have to make up for the neglect. Only from a position of equal strength could it hope to negotiate successfully with Moscow.

These premises also determined the Reagan Administration's timetable on arms control. Having presented his program for modernization of strategic forces on October 18, 1981, the President announced on November 18, 1981 that the U.S. was prepared to negotiate with the Soviet Union on reductions in nuclear as well as conventional forces. The talks on intermediate-range forces (INF) were to have priority. Thus the Reagan Administration responded to the remonstrances of its West European allies who – themselves under considerable domestic pressure – had long been pressing for a resumption of the negotiations broken off since the Reagan Administration had been in office.

In May 1982 Reagan announced the resumption of the negotiations on strategic nuclear systems. These were now called START, first to set them apart from the discredited SALT negotiations, and second to make it clear that Washington aimed at substantial reductions. Its "deep cuts" proposal for strategic systems followed a philosophy similar to that behind the "zero option" for intermediate-range systems: Washington confronted the Soviet Union with the choice of either agreeing to radical disarmament measures in those systems that appeared especially threatening to the U.S. or else accepting that the United States would undertake a massive arms buildup.

Such a position, however, presupposed that Washington could sustain both domestic and international support for its course in the arms competition. But the announcement of the START proposals prior to the NATO summit

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33 Cf. President Reagan's commencement address at Eureka College, Eureka, Illinois on May 9, 1982, in Current Documents, 1982, pp. 131 – 135, as well as the statement by Secretary of State Haig on May 11, 1982 before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in a hearing on nuclear arms control, ibid., pp. 136 – 142.
in Bonn suggested otherwise. The Reagan Administration would have preferred to wait on resuming the talks until the strategic modernization program had been approved by Congress. But without additional gestures of a willingness to engage in dialogue, it did not appear that the deployment of Pershing II missiles and cruise missiles could begin as planned in the fall of 1983 in West Germany and Great Britain. Domestically the Freeze movement’s criticism of the Administration’s arms program was to be neutralized by holding out the prospect of progress toward a general arms limitation.

By 1982/83 support for a forced arms buildup had already slackened in Congress and in the public. The concern over a Soviet threat gave way to an assurance that enough had already been done for national defense. The large budget deficit further contributed to curtailing growth in the defense budget. In the second Reagan Administration increases even slipped under the real 3% growth agreed upon in NATO. Though at about 6—6.5% the share of defense outlays in the GNP was still higher than in any of the other Western industrialized nations. However, the efforts to improve military capabilities as well as the economic recovery — the results of both were actually less impressive in reality than in rhetoric — produced a striking swing in the mood of the American public. In an opinion poll in 1986, a majority was convinced that the United States was militarily superior to the Soviet Union or at least equal, whereas in 1982 most had seen the U.S. as inferior. The public mind reflected the campaign slogan of 1984: “America is back — and it is standing tall!”

3. Neo-Containment of the Soviet Union

The anti-communist rhetoric cultivated by the Reagan team in the 1980 election campaign was not apt to produce quick results in the negotiations with the Soviet Union. In American eyes Moscow had used the period of détente to achieve unilateral advantages at the expense of the U.S. Previous administrations from Nixon to Carter had looked on passively as their power and prestige were eroded. Hence, the restoration of U.S. military and economic strength would be a precondition for successful negotiations with Moscow.

For Reagan the East-West conflict was nothing less than a battle of good against evil. The Soviet Union not only stirred up conflicts throughout the world, but embodied the absolute “evil empire.” This ideological view was

shared by the civilians heading the Pentagon and by military and Soviet experts in the NSC. On the other hand, Secretary of State Haig and his successor Shultz advocated a "containment" of the Soviet Union not so much on ideological grounds but primarily for power-political and geostrategic reasons.\textsuperscript{36}

The pragmatic view did determine the operative objectives of U.S. policy toward Moscow. In NSDD-75, adopted by the National Security Council in December 1982, the Administration formulated the following long-term goals:

- "to contain Soviet expansion and moderate Soviet international behavior;
- "to encourage by the limited means at the disposal of the United States, change in the Soviet system toward greater liberalism over time; and
- "to negotiate agreements that were in the interests of the United States."\textsuperscript{37}

The Administration thus committed itself to a policy of contention for power through confrontation \textit{and} cooperation.

The competition with the Soviet Union dominated not only the Reagan Administration's foreign policy concept but its timetable for political action. Strengthening U.S. military capabilities and improving relations with its allies both took priority over resuming the dialogue with Moscow. The arms control negotiations came about in the first place solely because Washington wanted to avoid strains in Alliance relations, and the talks did not gain in substance until it was politically imperative in light of the approaching elections in 1986 and then under pressure from the Democrat-dominated Congress.

The Administration had come into office heralding a "strategy of linkage" by which progress in arms control negotiations was contingent on Moscow's "good conduct" in other areas – e.g., in the Polish crisis. However, this approach remained ineffectual and was soon given up since Washington was the \textit{demandeur} and its half-hearted arms control proposals were not particularly attractive to the Soviet Union. Rather, economic sanctions were used as the U.S. "stick" – in particular, to deny the Soviet Union any high-technology products that could directly or indirectly be of value for its military arsenal. The resumption of the plentiful grain shipments cut off by Carter was to serve as the "carrot" to Moscow – and presumably not hurt Reagan's standing among American farmers.

During the Reagan Administration nothing had changed in the basic view that the United States could win the power-political and ideological competition with the Soviet Union only through a policy of realism, strength and


\textsuperscript{37} Cf. Garthoff, \textit{Détente and Confrontation}, p. 1012.
negotiation. What had changed were the forms and means employed. This came about under the pressure of international and domestic constraints. A basically pragmatic disposition facilitated the adaptation.

Bilateral negotiations became a necessity when under Gorbachev a rejuvenated Soviet leadership challenged the United States to take up the dialogue — not least in order to ease the military burden and improve the health of the Soviet economy. The United States had to accept the challenge or be put on the defensive. The domestic situation provided additional impetus. In the 1986 congressional elections the Democrats had regained the majority in both houses; what is more, the Iran-contra scandal undermined the Reagan Administration's credibility and forced it to seek new openings for a foreign policy success. Rhetorically the President justified the turn toward a more cooperative policy as a measure of the very success of his "policy of strength": "America has repaired its strength. We have invigorated our alliances and friendships. We are ready for constructive negotiations with the Soviet Union."

In the summer of 1986 there were already indications of a convergence of negotiating positions between the administration in Washington and the new Soviet leadership under Gorbachev. Yet the summit meeting in Reykjavik failed to produce any agreement on further talks or, as Gorbachev had hoped, on the basic elements for an accord. While the United States was not prepared to give up SDI, the Soviets made this a precondition for an agreement on intermediate- or long-range systems — a position it did not keep to for long, however.

1987 saw new movement in the negotiations. It was becoming increasingly clear that both Reagan and Gorbachev desired an agreement, principally for domestic reasons. An agreement on limiting intermediate-range weapons presented itself as a means to that end. After some tense poker-bargaining, foreign ministers Shevardnadze and Shultz agreed upon a "double zero solution" for land-based nuclear systems with ranges of 500–1000 and 1000–5500 km, which would apply globally and be verified through on-site inspections. In addition they reached agreement in principle that as a next step strategic ballistic missiles would be reduced by 50%. These accords were signed by Reagan and Gorbachev in Washington on December 8, 1987.

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38 Speech by President Reagan on September 24, 1984 to the UN General Assembly in New York, in *Current Documents*, 1984, pp. 221–227.

4. Leadership and the Allies

Also high on the Reagan foreign policy agenda was the need to reinvigorate alliances and work together with friends around the world. It was part of the Administration's credo that America's partners expected strong leadership and that some of the misunderstandings and problems of the past had originated in the very absence of such leadership. Moreover, purposeful and trustful collaboration was seen as a prerequisite for global leadership as well as for a successful struggle with the Soviet Union.

In line with the overall thrust of Reaganist policy, strengthening Western defense stood at the forefront of alliance policy. Besides the implementation of the NATO Long-Term Defense Program of 1978 and the dual-track decision of 1979, the U.S. pressed for further measures to strengthen conventional defense, above all to raise NATO forces' operational readiness and sustainability. To this end, various programs were instituted between 1982 and 1984. Washington also called upon its West European allies and Japan to contribute more to burden sharing. The "Stoessel demarche" of December 1981 led to the conclusion of a "Wartime Host Nation Support" agreement with the Federal Republic of Germany and to other accords. The Administration emphatically opposed any reductions in U.S. troops in Europe, as had from time to time been suggested in Congress. Like its predecessors, it regarded the continued military and political presence of the United States in Europe, especially in the Federal Republic of Germany and Berlin, as an important prerequisite for its role as a world power.

West Germany assumed a special importance in this regard. This was a function of its geopolitical position at the dividing line between East and West, its role as the strongest conventional military power on the European continent and, finally, its position as the world's second-largest trading nation. Hence, Washington cast an especially wary eye on the activities of the West German peace movement; the implementation of the deployment decision became a virtual test of the Federal Republic's alliance solidarity.

During the first Reagan Administration, different attitudes toward the Soviet Union produced tensions in European-American relations. Whereas the United States had adopted a policy of "neo-containment" following the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan (still at the time of the Carter Administration), the West Europeans attempted to continue a policy of limited cooperation with Eastern Europe. They recalled the Harmel Decision of 1967, in which military strength and readiness to negotiate were termed the twin pillars of the Alliance. The U.S., on the other hand, wanted to punish the Soviet Union.

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for its interventionism by denying it strategic and economic cooperation. And it expected its allies to fall in with this policy without contradiction.

Right from the start the Reagan Administration did a great deal of damage to its claim to leadership with overblown remarks about the character of the Soviet threat. The West Europeans — except Great Britain — were not prepared to follow the confrontation course ordained by Carter and accentuated by the Reagan Administration. The Federal Republic in particular did not want to sacrifice the results of détente from the 1970s for a new policy of containment. It took pains to see that neither the stability of the Berlin situation nor the German-German rapprochement were jeopardized; rather, it wanted to deepen intra-German relations.

In security policy, U.S. relations with its allies were strained by a number of developments in which the Europeans saw a weakening of its security guarantee. West Germany in particular anxiously followed the endeavors of the American military to make a nuclear conflict in Europe wageable in case of war, and to gain the offensive quickly. An opposite tendency, which found backing with the President, aimed at avoiding or delaying a use of nuclear weapons as long as possible for fear of U.S. survival. In the event of a massive Soviet attack either approach could lead to the devastation of West Germany.

The Allies’ reaction to the SDI program was also mixed. On the one hand, they feared the emergence of zones of unequal security and a weakening of the existing deterrence system; however, they also wanted to participate in the high-technology spin-off from this ambitious program. Nor was it in their power to prevent SDI. Consequently, a number of agreements were reached on scientific and technological cooperation between the U.S. and Great Britain, West Germany and Japan; this was to give these allies an economic incentive for supporting the Strategic Defense Initiative.

On questions of arms control also, the United States and its West European allies followed different priorities. West Germany and its smaller NATO partners in particular, for primarily domestic political reasons, called upon Washington to resume the negotiations. However, when the dialogue with Moscow developed a dynamic of its own after 1986, they became increasingly concerned that the United States might go over their heads in negotiating with the Soviet Union. After Reykjavik these fears were still quite diffuse — as indeed the summit had not yielded any clear results. But shortly thereafter they became focused on the question of a “double zero option” for intermediate-range weapons in Europe. Some Allies — as well as a number of American experts - expressed political and military misgivings about such a far-reaching proposal. However, after a complicated process of consultations Washington was able to get its ideas accepted, especially as the Europeans themselves did not have a unified position. As with the NATO two-track decision it was
evident that the U.S., despite its position as the leading military power, did have to ensure the participation of its partners. Thus the INF deployment was not assured until Washington had indicated its willingness to enter into arms control negotiations. In the case of the double zero option, however, the Europeans' role was reduced to a veto power. They could encumber the U.S. conduct of negotiations — for instance, by Bonn's demand to exclude the Bundeswehr's Pershing IA missiles — but they could not compel any fundamental changes.

There were substantial differences of opinion on the issue of economic sanctions also. The Europeans had already expressed reservations about the embargo measures taken by the Carter Administration. Their criticism grew sharper when the Reagan Administration, though quickly lifting the Carter grain embargo, banned all shipments for the European-Soviet gas-pipeline deal following the imposition of martial law in Poland in December 1981. This conflict was resolved only with difficulty. In November 1982 the U.S. lifted its sanctions; in return the Europeans agreed to strengthen their controls on the export of strategic goods and to exercise more restraint in granting credits to the Soviet Union. The control of exports of advanced technologies continued to be a bone of contention, though in the U.S. security concerns increasingly gave way to consideration for American export interests.

Other economic conflicts were triggered by the U.S. trade deficit, which elicited stronger demands for protective measures from the industries affected and their advocates in Congress. There was also considerable controversy over monetary policy. Initially the Europeans were dissatisfied with the Reagan Administration's failure to reduce the high interest rates. In their view the resulting attraction of foreign capital to the U.S. crippled investment in Western Europe and hampered any economic upturn. The devaluation of the dollar agreed upon by the Group of Five\(^\text{41}\) in September 1985, which soon turned into a dollar free-fall, became a brake on West European and Japanese exports to the U.S. without as yet showing any appreciable easing of American trade deficits. Although the "cheap dollar" made American products more competitive on world markets, the call for protectionist measures was growing. The foreign trade bill of 1987 also points in this direction, and will hardly contribute to removing trade and investment barriers. Beyond the actions of the G-5 there has yet to materialize any attempt at multilateral crisis management as had been practiced with some success in the 1970s. The international economic summits have degenerated into media spectacles. The Reagan Administration has confined itself to recommending that the other industrialized nations adopt its economic program. It was altogether confident

\(^{41}\) Besides the U.S. the "G-5," the group of leading-currency nations, includes the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan, Great Britain and France.
that the consistent realization of this economic policy domestically and on an international scale would not only best serve the interests of the U.S. but would lead to a new flowering of the world economy.

The Reagan Administration regarded friends and allies as necessary instruments of U.S. leadership. In an interdependent world the U.S. needed them for realizing its interests vis-à-vis its various adversaries — the Soviet Union as well as Libya. But if its allies refused, or if the consultative processes required for joint action were too troublesome or time-consuming, that is, if multilateralism diminished its ability to lead, then the U.S. proceeded unilaterally. Characteristic of this was the statement by Vice-President Bush: "I am sorry. The United States is the leader of the free world and under this administration we are beginning once again to act like it." This tendency toward unilateralism was a product of the Reagan Administration's emphatic claim to leadership, which at the same time it jeopardized. Secretary of State Haig's programmatic statement that "American leadership means cooperation" was thus fraught with problems.

5. Reagan Doctrine and Respect for American Leadership in the Third World

More so than with previous administrations, the countries of the third world were seen as figures in the global balance of power. The Reagan Administration found it easy to set aside reservations about military regimes if they conducted a policy friendly toward the U.S. The ideologically foundation for this was laid by Jeane Kirkpatrick's article "Dictatorships and Double Standards." Kirkpatrick made a fundamental distinction between totalitarian communist regimes and authoritarian but pro-Western states, and recommended cooperation with the latter as a means of containment of international communism. The problems of the third world were set in the context of the East-West conflict and subordinated to it.

Acting from a renewed position of strength implied a greater potential for influencing the countries of the third world. Here too the Reagan Administration came to Washington not with a finished concept but with a number of

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ideological notions and preferences and with the intention in any case of, if not throwing the Carter Administration's human rights policy in the dustbin of history, then at least fundamentally restructuring it and making it serve its own purposes. Foreign aid became an important instrument of foreign and security policy. In a speech before the World Affairs Council in Philadelphia in the fall of 1981 President Reagan outlined the basic elements of his policy toward the developing countries: "U.S. foreign policy proceeds from two important premises: the need to revitalize the United States and world economy as a basis for the social and economic progress of our own and other nations, and the need to provide adequate defenses to remain strong, safe, in a precarious period of world history. In this context, U.S. relations with developing countries play a critical role. These countries are important partners in the world economy and in the quest for world peace."\(^4^5\)

A revitalized economy would stimulate international trade and improve the climate for private investment, initiating a new phase of international development. The "Baker Plan" for resolving the third world debt crisis\(^4^6\) did not go beyond requesting the World Bank and the private banks to grant new loans to the 15 most heavily indebted nations if the latter were prepared to make liberal economic reforms. With its proposal, however, the United States recognized that the debt crisis involved a serious structural crisis in the third world which in the long term threatened the welfare of the industrialized nations as well.

Leading officials of the Reagan Administration argued that the international economy would develop enough regenerative forces to solve the problems of the developing countries. Therefore, all artificial trade barriers had to be removed. Development assistance could only be help toward self-help. Foreign aid ought not to be cut, but rather new priorities set. Military aid especially assumed greater importance, doubling in volume. Before development aid could really take hold, third world countries needed to stabilize their domestic situations, and Washington would assist with arms and training. The Economic Support Fund (ESF) was also expanded considerably, providing an especially flexible instrument. ESF funds were used to provide financial and economic assistance to countries that were of particular importance to the U.S. for political and security reasons. With traditional development aid, emphasis shifted from multilateral to bilateral assistance and more agricultural


projects were promoted. The special programs for the Caribbean, Africa and Central America also reflected new accents at the regional level.\footnote{The Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) comprised a 12-year free-trade zone and additional development aid of $350 million, designed to strengthen the ties of the nations of the Caribbean to the U.S.; cf. President Reagan’s February 24, 1982 address to the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States, in \textit{Current Documents}, 1982, pp. 1381–1387. The Economic Policy Initiative (EPI) for Africa was a five-year program with a volume of $500 million, aimed at politically and economically stabilizing selected African nations; cf. Secretary of State Shultz’s speech on February 15, 1984 to the World Affairs Council in Boston, in \textit{Key Foreign Policy Statements}, pp. 19–22.}

The American engagement in Central America was no invention of the Reagan Administration. In 1980, under Carter, the United States had begun to support the democratic opposition in Nicaragua against the Sandinista regime. This assistance was continued by the new Administration, which at the same time began raising the level of U.S. support for the Duarte government and sending military advisors. Moreover, it launched a massive propaganda offensive. At a press conference Secretary of State Haig went so far as to declare that if the communist guerrilla movement, inspired by the Soviets and actively supported by Cuba, did not cease its activities, the U.S. would “deal with this matter at its source.”\footnote{Cf. Secretary of State Haig’s press conference on February 27, 1981 in Washington, in \textit{Current Documents}, 1981, pp. 1274–1276, also the special report of the State Department “Communist Interference in El Salvador” of February 23, 1981, ibid., pp. 1230–1236.} In Nicaragua the CIA intensified its assistance to the contras. In 1984 the clandestine operations culminated in the mining of Nicaraguan harbors, which supposedly would interrupt the flow of military supplies to the Sandinistas from the Soviet Union. Washington more or less openly admitted that it was working toward the overthrow of the government in Managua.\footnote{The extent of the activities of the CIA and NSC in Central America did not become known until the Iran-Contra scandal broke in the winter of 1987/88. Cf. \textit{The Tower Commission Report. The Full Text of the President’s Special Review Board}, New York: Bantum/Times Books 1987. But there were a number of indications of these beforehand; cf. Aryeh Neier, “The US and the Contras,” \textit{New York Review of Books}, April 10, 1986, pp. 3–6.}

When these actions came to light they provoked heavy criticism in the public and Congress. The fear of a military involvement in Central America continued to be great. The Vietnam trauma had had a lasting impact. Nevertheless, Congress and the White House took only half-hearted steps to bring the CIA’s activities under control. The Boland Amendment was supposed to prohibit any measures beyond a limited “counterinsurgency support.” Cuts in funding for CIA operations, even shutting it off completely in 1984, did nothing to deter the President and his staff from pursuing the
aim of overthrowing the regime in Managua. His staff in the NSC found ways and means of soliciting private monies to support the contras or diverting funds from other security operations. Nor did Congress maintain its reserve for very long. In 1985 it voted to resume “humanitarian” assistance with qualifying conditions. Following upon a wave of terrorist attacks on U.S. citizens, the Administration was able the next year to put through a substantial increase in funding for the various liberation movements.50

Yet the Reagan Administration was very reticent about using military means directly. Together with Great Britain, France and Italy it dispatched a contingent to the peacekeeping force in Lebanon in the fall of 1983, but withdrew it in the spring of 1984 after a devastating attack on the American embassy and marine headquarters in Beirut. A second instance was the invasion of Grenada in October 1983, which was justified as a response to a communist take-over on the island and the threat to U.S. citizens. As it was carried out without bloodshed and terminated within a few days, the invasion was subsequently cited as a model success of resolute use of military force. Finally, with the bombing of Tripoli and Benghazi, Washington responded to terrorist attacks against American installations abroad, behind which it suspected the hand of Colonel Qaddafi. But essentially the Reagan Administration made it clear that though it could give its allies economic and military assistance when necessary and to the best of its ability, it would not as a rule intervene militarily itself.

Sparked by the disaster in Lebanon, an intense discussion developed within the Administration on the conditions under which the United States might intervene militarily. Interestingly enough it was Secretary of State Shultz who took the view that the United States had “to learn to use our power when it can do good, when it can further the cause of freedom and enhance international security and stability. When we act in accordance with our principles and within the realistic limits of our power, we can succeed.”51

Secretary of Defense Weinberger, on the other hand, regarded military power as a means of last resort which would be used only when vital U.S. interests could not be safeguarded otherwise. The United States could not assume other nations’ responsibility for the defense of their sovereign territory if


America's own freedom were not threatened. Weinberger cited six conditions governing possible military action:

- The United States should not commit forces to combat unless its vital national interests or those of its allies are at stake;
- should the U.S. deem it necessary to commit forces to combat, then it should do so in sufficient numbers and with sufficient support to win;
- the commitment of forces to combat must serve clearly defined political and military objectives; the size of the armed forces and their operational strategy must be determined by these objectives;
- the relationship between objectives and the size, composition and disposition of U.S. forces must be continually reassessed and adjusted as necessary;
- before the United States commits its forces to combat there should be reasonable assurance that the American people and the Congress supported this action;
- a commitment of U.S. forces to combat should be a last resort.

In one respect, however, the Reagan Administration went further than its predecessors: it openly avowed its support for rebel movements whose aim it was to overthrow communist governments in the third world. Such support was justified with the argument that these “freedom fighters” would advance the democratic revolution in the third world and check Soviet interventions. Specifically Reagan cited the anti-communist insurgencies in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Ethiopia and Nicaragua. In his view the success of this “democratic revolution” was attested by the return to constitutional government in nine Latin American states during his term in office alone, but above all by the ousting of “Baby Doc” Duvallier in Haiti and Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines. Support for such ousters was said to be lawful as an act of self-defense compatible with the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other nations.

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53 Ibid.

With these maxims, termed the “Reagan Doctrine,” the Administration formulated a claim to global power projection that went far beyond previous assertions. In practice, of course, the United States had not confined itself before to exclusively defensive actions. It had supported the Mujahedeen resistance fighters in Afghanistan as well as the anti-Sandinista forces in Nicaragua since 1979. At the time the Reagan Doctrine was formulated, the principal concern was to move a hesitant Congress to resume aid to the contras. The covert assistance was not sufficient for inflicting on the Sandinistas the defeat desired by Washington.

Hence, the Reagan Doctrine had primarily a tactical foundation; its essential purpose was to legitimate by means of a “doctrine” the assistance requested for the contras in Nicaragua. At the same time an ideological foundation was laid for support of other rebel movements, e.g., in Angola and Kampuchea. However, neither the President nor leading members of his administration termed these principles a “doctrine”; they did not want to tie their hands with rigid prescriptions, but rather relied on the signal effect. In championing anti-communist insurgencies in the third world, the Reagan Administration also wanted to send a message to the Soviet Union. Like George Kennan and Dean Acheson in the early phase of the Cold War, it regarded its supreme task as that of curbing the Soviet Union’s projection of power and restraining Moscow’s influence worldwide. With the “Reagan Doctrine” it affirmed that its policy was not to maintain the status quo but to seek peaceful change. As the state of mutual assured destruction precluded the use or even the threat of military force, there remained support for “freedom fighters”: “This is our dilemma, and it’s a profound one. We must both defend freedom and preserve the peace. We must be true to our principles and our friends while preventing a holocaust.”

6. On Balance

Has the Reagan Administration been able to project global leadership founded on economic and military strength? Has it been able to reconcile its claim to power projection with the means at its disposal? Has it left its imprint on international relations?

The Reagan Administration had set its sights high; it had sought a radical change in the international balance of power: the United States was to become
"No. 1" again in world affairs. Yet in an interdependent world with a plurality of powers, no one country alone can bring about such changes. Only in 1945 had the United States been able to establish a "Pax Americana" whose relative longevity was ensured by the superior economic and military potential with which the U.S. had emerged from the Second World War. However, in the course of postwar development, first the Soviet Union had gradually overcome the U.S. military lead and built a military power equal to that of the United States. And secondly, the European Community and Japan had emerged as serious competitors to the American economy, which itself had become more dependent on international economic developments. A major reversal of this trend was not likely, especially not in the span of one or two administrations.

The limits of the United States claim to leadership were most evident in its relationship with the Soviet Union. In its first term the Reagan Administration had tried to manage this contention for power with a policy of neo-containment. The Soviet Union was denied détente and cooperation; friends and allies were asked to follow the American example. However, this policy was costly domestically and for allied relations, without having moved the Soviets to give up their claim to act as a world power. Rather, Washington's hesitation to work together with Moscow on arms control could be exploited propagandistically in Western Europe and with the opposition in the United States.

In its second term, to sustain its leadership vis-à-vis the Soviet Union as well as the Allies, the Administration had either to make even greater efforts to alter the military balance of power or else take up the negotiating offer put forward so effectively by Moscow, perhaps countering it with dramatic initiatives of its own. The summit meetings of Geneva and Reykjavik and the ensuing disarmament dialogue represented just such initiatives; the INF treaty signed in Washington marked their climax for the time being.

Even the major increases in defense spending during the first Reagan Administration had not produced significant changes in the military balance, measured in terms of arsenals and options. They simply prevented the U.S. from falling further behind the Soviet Union militarily, especially as the rates of increase dropped markedly in the second Reagan Administration.

Of greater, more long-term significance were a number of other developments: the SDI program, the reevaluation of nuclear weapons and the return to serious arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union. Taken together all three marked a "revolutionary evolution" in American defense policy.

SDI was a program for the third millennium, yet its realization would abolish the existing system of deterrence and fundamentally alter the security relations of the U.S. with its European and Asian allies. It raised the question of whether under conditions of unequal security, extended deterrence would remain credible, and thus durable alliance relations possible. But for the time
being the Reagan Administration could argue that its initiative had brought the Soviets back to the negotiating table.

Whereas the improved capability for waging a limited nuclear war strengthened the credibility of flexible response, this strategy was in turn undermined, in the eyes of the Allies, by the tendency to raise the nuclear threshold. This was the implication of the "double zero option" for intermediate-range systems, which for this reason — and for fear of Western Europe's being "decoupled" from the U.S. — the Allies approved only with reservations.

Both domestic and foreign policy considerations prompted Washington to negotiate seriously again with the Soviets on arms limitation. Domestically weakened by the Iran-contra scandal, the Reagan Administration developed a greater interest in achieving a foreign policy success to refurbish its tarnished reputation, rather than finding itself tactically on the defensive vis-à-vis Moscow now as well. And as Congress pressed for cuts in the defense budget in light of the federal deficit, arms limitation presented itself as an alternative to the arms race. If the United States wanted to demonstrate effective leadership toward its allies, then it had to maintain the credibility of its nuclear guarantee, which had been affected by the changes in U.S. defense policy. At the same time it had to demonstrate a willingness to negotiate with the Soviet Union. New agreements on arms control and confidence building had to sustain détente in Europe without, however, allowing the ties of the U.S. to the defense of Western Europe (and Japan) to be seriously weakened. The problem was that the United States and its allies had very different conceptions of how this was to be achieved.

For Washington leadership meant first and foremost vigorous action, if need be with the United States proceeding unilaterally. The Allies, on the other hand, expected thorough consultations. Given the differing security policy priorities, allied coordination frequently led to frustration, be it from discontent over the arduous and time-consuming procedures or from disappointment over the failure to understand the other's problems. This gave rise to the paradoxical situation that those allies who had been loudest in calling for strong American leadership — most notably West Germany — were now least prepared to accept it without grumbling.

The economic revival fell considerably short of expectations, but it did generate strong forces which, together with the drop in petroleum prices, stimulated economic growth in the other industrialized nations. Because the American upswing was financed largely with foreign capital, attracted by the strong dollar and high interest rates, the U.S. within just four years went from being the world's leading creditor nation to the position of greatest debtor. The prospect of reducing the imbalance in current accounts emerged only after the dollar had been drastically devaluated.
The dramatic fall in prices on the New York and Chicago stock exchanges on “black Monday” (October 19, 1987) dealt a blow to faith in the U.S. economy. The United States had not regained its international competitiveness — despite a now undervalued dollar. Rather than becoming more independent of international developments, its economy had become even more intertwined with the world economy; at the same time, it ceded to West Germany and Japan its leading position in the international commodities and capital markets.

The persistence of foreign economic imbalances as well as the uncertainty about the future economic development in the United States posed major problems for industrialized nations and developing countries, especially as the Reagan Administration was very reserved in responding to calls for joint actions to control international economic developments.

Contrary to the assumption that the collapse of a hegemonial system would generate post-hegemonial, multilateral forms of action, the 1980s demonstrated that the United States — as well as the EC countries and Japan — were pursuing essentially national economic policies with only marginal consideration for the interests and problems of partners.

Regarding relations with the third world, the Reagan Doctrine was less a blueprint for active U.S. involvement in third world conflicts than a domestic rationale to justify support for anti-communist insurgencies. In crisis regions this support has been just sufficient to keep the conflicts burning but not bring them to any satisfactory conclusion. The overthrow of the dictatorial regimes in Haiti and the Philippines was primarily the product of developments in these countries themselves. In both cases Washington dropped the hated dictators just in time to claim a part in the change. In the wake of the Iran-contra revelations the Reagan Doctrine lost its credibility in the gap between its moral justification and the illegal means President’s closest associates had used to implement it.

The fact that the Reagan Administration was spared any major international crisis can be interpreted to mean either that it had sent Moscow clear signals in timely fashion and thus induced Soviet restraint, or that it was simply lucky. The marine casualties in Beirut were offset in the eyes of the public by the rapid success in Grenada; the terrorist attacks against American citizens overseas were followed by the air attack on Libya, whose dictator, Colonel Qaddafi, was declared “Public Enemy No. 1.” However, the United States declined to participate in major international peace initiatives. In Central America it distanced itself from the peace plan of the Contadora Group and

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the Guatamala City agreement; in the Gulf War it confined itself to supporting the UN resolution for a cessation of hostilities and to sending its fleet into the Persian Gulf. Both in Central America and in the Gulf the U.S. was coming dangerously close to a military entanglement.

The crisis came to the Reagan Administration on the home front. As details of the illegal machinations in the Iran-contra affair became known, they undermined the ideological foundations upon which the Reagan Administration had built its claim to global leadership. The assertion of American exceptionalism and moral superiority collapsed.

This train of events signified, even more clearly than the limitations of U.S. economic and military strength, that the claim to worldwide leadership was beyond reach. For a limited time the rhetoric of power was successful at home, as it restored the nation's self-respect and self-confidence. But in the long run the United States was able neither to conduct a "moral" foreign policy with any prospect of success nor ethically to elevate its actions with any credibility. The policy of the Reagan Administration was marked less by grand concepts and ideological rigidity than by a pragmatic approach to domestic and foreign opportunities and constraints. Rather than inaugurating a new phase of American power projection, the Reagan Administration had to recognize and respect the limits of global leadership.
1. Changes in Public Opinion in the 1970s

Public opinion does not in itself make a nation’s political culture comprehensible. It does, however, provide an index of the relative importance of a political culture’s diverse elements at particular historical junctures. In a sense, a nation decides, through rather complex processes, which parts of its political culture are emphasized under certain circumstances, which elements set aside. This, then, would suggest that political culture undergoes cyclical change.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, American liberalism with its social welfare agenda, akin to European Social Democracy, was a predominant feature of U.S. political culture. By the end of the 1960s this liberalism was ideologically spent, yet because of the Vietnam War and the widespread criticism it aroused, it remained a major political theme among the university educated middle classes. The protest against the Vietnam War maintained a liberal image in opposition to the “conservative” Nixon Administration, not least because anti-war critics denounced the “waste” of tax dollars and demanded their “rational” use for social welfare programs. Once the Vietnam War had ended, this theme in American politics was very quickly overtaken by political concerns that can be characterized as conservative.

The term “conservative” has no consistent meaning; it is understood first and foremost as the counterpoint to prevailing “liberal” positions. Liberalism may be similarly defined. On social questions “conservative” in the 1970s meant a return to the traditional values of the family, opposition to the equal rights amendment and the right to abortion, and an antagonistic attitude toward homosexuality and pornography. In religion “conservative” meant a turn to greater piety. The fundamentalist churches of the south, in particular, greatly expanded their missionary work as electronic media churches. Relig-

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iosity also meant the revival of an old question, namely, whether a secular commonwealth such as the United States ought to allow mandatory or at least voluntary school prayer.

On economic matters "conservatism" meant, among other things, the rejection of Keynesianism as seemingly incapable of solving the problems of growth, inflation, unemployment and national debt. In its place came neo-liberal economic schools that stressed the efficiency of market forces. In the realm of culture, neo-conservative intellectuals waged a bitter struggle against the "counter-culture" and "alternative life-styles." Classics were called for rather than experimental art. Finally, in the political domain the "GOP" was transformed into a distinctly conservative Republican Party that developed and delivered a powerful rhetoric and symbolism. Its foremost exponent was the winner of the 1980 presidential election, Ronald Reagan. On political matters, then, "conservative" meant: decreasing the role of government, a balanced budget (fiscal conservatism) as well as a bent for power politics in foreign policy, including a preference for military over diplomatic means. Greater efforts would be made to strengthen national defense.

All these themes carried a majority in the "attentive public," because the incumbent Carter Administration could no longer sell the symbolism of its latter-day liberalism and was held accountable for the economic downturn reflected in the country's "misery index." In Ronald Reagan, on the other hand, the conservatives had a symbolic figure who very effectively articulated American conservatism's ideological content.

Table 1: Ideological and Operational Spectrums

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideological Spectrum</th>
<th>Operational Spectrum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completely liberal</td>
<td>4% 16% 44% 65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predominantly liberal</td>
<td>12 34 21 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle of the road</td>
<td>34 34 21 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predominantly conservative</td>
<td>20 50 7 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely conservative</td>
<td>30 100% 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


3 Thus the direction of the neo-conservative journal New Criterion.

In the mid-1960s American public opinion analysts had discovered patterns which explained very well the transition from liberal to conservative beliefs. In this model, liberalism and conservatism are both very strongly held belief systems, but they show different strengths in what analysts identified as "operational" and "ideological" spectrums of beliefs. The operational spectrum represents values concerned with rational and effective action by the state, its responsibility for public welfare. The ideological spectrum, on the other hand, reflects values stemming from the liberal tradition and the folklore of American political culture. These include notions of the self-reliant individual who solves his problems with little support from the government. These ideas bear the marks of the pioneer experience, frontier mythology and basic commercial orientation of the American people. These two contrasting spectrums produce a certain schizophrenia in popular opinion, though not so much in the individual, as individuals are rarely under "cross-pressure."

Figure 1: Ideological Identification 1938 – 1983
(excluding those with no ideological identification)


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The above illustration clearly shows that the strength of liberalism lies in the operational domain, whereas conservatism is dominant in the ideological. This of course has its consequences. If the leading public issues are shaped by operational concerns, then American liberals can expect greater prospects of success. If, however, the nation's political climate is ideologically charged, then conservatives have the advantage.

Since the Second World War these belief spectrums have undergone long cyclical change. After the Kennedy-Johnson “Great Society” programs had been enacted by 1965, the nation's majority has since become ideologically conservative. This change has been statistically corroborated, though the different measures used preclude any definitive statement.

Ronald Reagan, the Republican Party and present-day American conservatism have profited from two complementary trends: one a rise in ideological over operational ways of thinking, the other a substantive rejection of New Deal liberalism and a growing anti-governmentalism.

2. Political Culture in U.S. Foreign Policy

The basic ideals guiding conservative as well as liberal perspectives in U.S. public opinion stem from five historical currents\(^6\) running through the two hundred years' existence of the United States. These are: the liberal tradition, republicanism, the religious tradition, populism and the “can-do” philosophy.

All five of these distinct patterns play a role in foreign policy, though it must be noted that in the U.S., greater importance is attached to domestic than foreign policy, and so political culture plays a greater role in domestic affairs than in foreign relations.\(^7\) Still, its influence must never be ignored. If an administration strays from the prevailing values, then the standards set by the political culture can provide strong sanctions. Thus, the Nixon-Kissinger administration was criticized for having acted “immorally” and having

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\(^6\) In this volume Werner Schmidt distinguishes three dimensions of political culture. As his method of content analysis suggests working with few parameters, he has not singled out populism and the “technological can-do philosophy” but rather subsumed them in the other three dimensions.

\(^7\) This is demonstrated both by the polls in *Public Opinion* and the surveys carried out by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations regarding the relative importance of foreign and domestic policy. This argument is also supported by the institutional structures of American politics, i.e., the strength of the Congress. The isolated development of the U.S. and the size of its domestic market are additional socio-economic factors which help to explain the relationship between domestic and foreign policy.
breached the intimate relation between morality and politics. This "legacy" of the Nixon-Kissinger years continues to weigh upon U.S. policy.

Furthermore, it must be stressed that these five traditions are understood not in the historical sense that they developed only gradually or that their future shape was unforeseeable. Rather, the most important forms of the political culture were already in place when the republic was founded; later they were simply confirmed in their "true content" with reference back to the original circumstances and intentions of the founding fathers. Moreover, these patterns of political culture should not be viewed as isolated currents; they are rather broken down into their components solely for purposes of analysis. In reality they blend together in the unquestioned nationalistic notion of "Americanism." This Americanism was, as historian Daniel Boorstin put it, "given"; it was not developed or invented. Besides the traditions mentioned, Americanism includes the myth of the American experiment and the veneration of the 200-year-old constitution and the founding fathers.

This myth is reaffirmed across the nation every 4th of July in very forceful rituals. Since the U.S. does not have neighbors that might represent an alternative, and since socialist movements were never able to gain a foothold in the United States, Americanism is not a chosen alternative of political culture but rather, in quasi-totalitarian form, "the" political culture of American democracy. Americanism therefore has no critical distance to itself — except when there appears an internal opposition which appeals to and reinterpretst Americanism. This closed unity also explains why critical comments or insults from without very quickly prompt aggressive reactions in American society, as was evident most recently in the case of the hostage-taking in Teheran.

Upon closer examination the ideals of American political culture appear in general strongest in the liberal tradition. This tradition draws upon the political philosophy of John Locke, or rather attempts to reconcile the American experience with it. Liberalism accounts for the primacy of the society over the political system; it conceives of the political institutions not as a state but as a political system. That is, it can be better understood as a system serving individuals and interest groups than by the Central European

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model of a patriarchal authoritarian state which stands above interests, with supreme authority enabling it to best administer the public welfare.\textsuperscript{10}

The liberal tradition also bestows an almost mystical quality on the acquisitive drives of the individual and so regards the commonwealth primarily as a commercial republic. The foreign policy of a commercial republic aims to ensure that international trade is conducted according to rules and regulations, that world affairs are governed by international law, and that both internationally and domestically a community of nations works to protect the individual’s freedom of movement and right to property. It was no accident that democracy or constitutionalism became the political expression of a social and economic system understood in these terms. “To make the world safe for democracy,” as President Wilson put it in his 14 Points at the end of the First World War, also meant making the world safe for free international exchange. A free economy or free trade does not automatically produce democratic freedoms; history shows, however, that when free economies are abolished, independent “free democracy” cannot survive. Thus, ever since the First World War and Wilson’s internationalism, the United States has consistently opposed both withdrawal from the community of nations and systems lacking free trade and democracy, such as the Soviet Union has incarnated since 1917. This opposition did not loom so large as long as the Soviet system was preoccupied with its own affairs and when it had to repel the German invasion in World War II. After 1945, when it became evident that the U.S.S.R. intended to play an international and possibly global role, this adversary relationship moved to the center of American foreign policy: from the liberal perspective, though not just in this tradition, the antagonism between the two systems was irreconcilable.

In contrast and as a complement to the liberal tradition, republicanism\textsuperscript{11} is concerned primarily with the community rather than the propertied individual. This form of republicanism is a functional equivalent of the European state. It reflects the intellectual heritage of the founding fathers, who contemplated the future commercial republic but also drew on the political philoso-


phy of the ancient Greek and Roman republics in determining the extent and distribution of institutional powers as well as the — most problematic — relation of the federal states to the union. Knowing that the ancient republics and the Italian city-states of the early modern period were threatened and brought down by cultural decay, the founding fathers sought models and solutions to keep the American republic from suffering a similar fate. From its inception the republic confronted a question of how to encompass cultural transformation without inducing decline.

To this the founders devised various answers: on the one hand Jefferson’s model agrarian republic, on the other Alexander Hamilton’s bold and cynical “commercial republic,” a maritime power. The folklore of the American republic is still marked by these contradictory visions. But it was Madison who, in his famous Federalist No. 10, showed the remarkable far-sightedness to base the political commonwealth on the interests of individuals and groups and thus place the permanent transformation of values at the center of a morally sound republic. Recognizing the value of renewal through change, Madison resolved the problem posed by the ancient and early modern city-states, whose static value system had generally crumbled in the face of changing social relations. Moreover, the founding fathers were aware that the republic could long postpone any would-be decline: it had an open frontier in the west to transform the nation’s restless energy into territorial movement.

The republican idea signaled the outside world that the United States aspired to a “virtuous policy” but that it was also determined to back up the virtue of the agrarian or commercial republic with authority. In Federalist No. 51 Madison defined the concept of authority for a republic and with that laid down the central ethic of republicanism: “In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: You must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place, oblige it to control itself.”

The founding fathers intended that the republic’s authority and virtue would be worked out in the public domain, amidst social change.

The religious tradition also played an important part in defining what was virtuous or morally correct and good. Despite all the changes, Americans

today still see themselves as a religious people. Given the multitude of churches, the term "religion" does not denote anything uniform. This pluralism, however, is part of a view of America as a commonwealth to which the persecuted from anywhere in the world can come to freely practice their religion. An abstract denominator for the commonwealth's commitment to religion is the "civil religion" which the President articulates in his inaugural addresses, in his State of the Union messages and on memorial occasions. At such times the God invoked has a special relation to the U.S. but is conceived of in sufficiently general terms to embrace the various religions.

"Manifest destiny" is another dimension of the religious tradition, associated with the republican idea and theories of empire-building. Since the mid-19th century this theme has expressed a higher moral commitment of American actions at home and abroad and has embodied a myth of exceptionalism. "Manifest destiny" is not necessarily an activist philosophy; for many Americans it expresses an isolationist impulse and implies a drawing back to American ways.

Populism, the fourth current in American political culture, also bears a connection with religion. Populism is always anti-elitist, an expression of anti-establishment sentiment. Originally it had little to do with foreign policy. Today, however, populism has an anti-communist thrust. Since the McCarthy period, it has had a pro-defense orientation and has been an active purveyor of the symbols of Americanism.

Related to these four traditions is what could be described as a "can-do philosophy." This type of thinking tends to glorify large-scale technological

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projects such as the building of the transcontinental railroad. It views the planning and execution of such grand designs in a context free of interest politics and budgetary constraints. At the end of the 19th century this thinking was given impetus and structure by "progressivism" and the school of "city management." Presidents Teddy Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson were leading exponents of this movement, both known for shaping models of a national or global order.

This "can-do philosophy" has influenced international policy since Wilson: transcending the rule of power states and ultimately establishing an "unpolitical" legal order such as in the League of Nations and the United Nations were among the most important goals. Beyond the civilian and diplomatic spheres, this thinking has played a key role in shaping American armed forces and U.S. defense strategy. Since the First World War, the United States, as a commercial democracy, has been forced to rely on material and technological superiority rather than "manpower." To wage global warfare in World War II the United States adopted large-scale projects planning, the kind of thinking that now animates the Strategic Defense Initiative — and was also central to McNamara's conduct of the Vietnam War.

In this intellectual tradition, strategic operational thinking acts like a surgery on a sick body. The positive side of this tradition is the way it can mobilize the entire nation, with its supreme demand in the creation of "new frontiers." The inherent weakness in this symbiosis of idealism and technological thinking is the naivété with which awkward social and political realities, especially in other cultures, are disregarded. This was evident, for example, in the war in Indochina.

This is not to say, however, that Anglo-Saxon pragmatism ceases to operate in this cultural pattern. While pragmatic thinking does guide the implementation of large-scale technological projects, it also works as a corrective when synoptic grand planners get carried away by their can-do fantasies.

If we look at these five traditions as mapping the overall political culture of the U.S., we must then ask how these patterns have been assimilated, utilized and transmitted during the Reagan Administration. We must also take into account that in reality various combinations of these elements can appear simultaneously and must be analyzed as such.

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21 Cf. Croly, Promise of American Life. Croly's ideas and style exemplify this current of thought.

3. The Reagan Administration and American Political Culture

To understand the relation of the Reagan Administration to the American political culture we must analyze the context or basic conditions of this administration. Like the Carter Administration before it, the Reagan Administration represented an answer to Watergate and the Vietnam War. Both administrations were intent on strengthening the legitimacy of political institutions at home and abroad as well as bringing about a phase of reconstruction. Of course, reconstruction meant something different to each administration. Still, with regard to political culture the Reagan Administration bears a certain continuity with the Carter Administration: the latter's human rights policy was already an attempt to assert and establish basic American values as a way of legitimating the commonwealth at home and abroad.23 Nor did Carter shy away from international confrontation if it served the purpose of compensating for the loss of image from the Vietnam War and reconstructing America's "manifest destiny." The Reagan Administration continued in this vein, albeit often with different means and objectives.

In some way, however, the Reagan Administration altered the style, the content, the linguistic expression of this American tradition: the social liberalism of the Carter Administration had to make way for conservative liberalism, sometimes couched in the rhetoric of the "new right."

Reagan's choice of elements from the liberal tradition conveyed an anti-welfare-state rhetoric. For conservative Republicans the New Deal and its Keynesian philosophy are a red flag they have been charging for over a generation. With Ronald Reagan they were able for the first time in American history to set the terms of public discourse. In this situation it was exceedingly helpful for Reagan that the theory of supply side economics had sufficiently matured as an ideology to be used as a weapon against Keynesianism.24 Republican members of Congress, journalists and conservative intellectuals could furnish Reagan explanations of an alternative economic and social philosophy that fully agreed with his view of free enterprise and the achievements of the individual as well as the evils of government regulation. In the election campaign of 1980 Reagan made effective use of this philosophy.


Conservative politicians and intellectuals have always conceived of their advocacy of "democratic capitalism" as a dimension of international relations, i.e., they have embraced the liberal capitalist model of growth as they see it applied in threshold countries such as Singapore and South Korea. This economic philosophy always had a high-tech component, an anti-trade union undertone and an antipathy toward obsolete corporatist structures. Ronald Reagan has maintained this ideological dimension from his primary campaign right through to his most recent speeches.

His faith in the free market economy remains the core of his rhetorical affirmation of the political culture. In his speech of August 26, 1987 in Los Angeles, he proclaimed the central value of "freedom," with a strong entrepreneural emphasis; in fervent words glowing with optimism, he made this a global imperative, in particular for the totalitarian states of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union under Gorbachev's "glasnost." This speech received a great deal of attention, as it was broadcast simultaneously to Soviet visitors on the east coast of the U.S.

Also committed to this liberal economic philosophy is the so-called "Reagan Doctrine," which was formulated in 1985 to assure U.S. support for revolutionary movements against social-revolutionary "totalitarian" governments in the third world. Whereas Reagan makes use of a simple language with direct moral/religious pathos, Jeane Kirkpatrick, the ideologist of American foreign policy during the Reagan Administration, uses a more rigorous and

25 The concept is used by Louis Hartz in *The Liberal Tradition*. It has been revived by the Catholic commentator Michael Novak, a neo-conservative democrat who works at the rather Republican oriented American Enterprise Institute. Unlike with Hartz, the term is now a more internationalist concept to combat socialist ideas. Cf. also Michael Novak, *The American Vision. An Essay on the Future of Democratic Capitalism*, Washington, D.C.: AEI Studies 222, 1978. In politics Republican Congressman Jack Kemp has emerged as a prominent promoter of this idea; journalist George Gilder has helped shape this renaissance of the old liberal idea.

26 Cf. Ronald Reagan, "Managing the Global Economy," address before a joint meeting of the IMF and World Bank, September 29, 1987, in *U.S. Department of State Bulletin*, November 1987, pp. 5–8. "Our goal was to increase economic activity from the bottom up ... In dealing with a national economy, it means opening opportunity for the people and giving them the incentive to work more efficiently ... and more than anything it means expanding freedom and opportunity for individuals instead of increasing the power of the state." P. 2.

27 Cf. the essay by Werner Schmidt in this volume.

demanding rhetoric to defend the Reagan Doctrine. She rightly remarks that the Reaganist legitimation takes freedom as its point of departure, and that upon this fundamental value the President's edifice of ideas can be presented quite simply. Both his attitude toward totalitarianism and his vision of a Strategic Defense Initiative are attributable to it. It may sound banal that a statesman in a democracy champions "freedom"; Reagan's hallmark is the exclusiveness and emphasis with which he does this. Moreover, his advocacy of freedom is clearly guided by the performance-oriented, pre-social welfare state, free market capitalist outlook which extols the dynamism of the American experiment.

His advocacy of these values in the international arena has not been inconsequential, at least for the rhetoric of this administration. Neither has the value of freedom remained vague and remote, nor has the Reagan Administration left any doubt that this freedom is one of American stamp, though one that can and should have universal application. Though Reagan's rhetoric has not left its mark in all areas of international policy, the thrust of the U.S. position has been clearly expressed, even in the face of a contrary reality.

The commercial republic provided a more or less real or fictitious connection between freedom and international trade and communication. While Reagan firmly established a powerful definition of freedom, he also established a set of international expectations: in the event of conflict American unilaterism had to be reckoned with. Whether it be a matter of protecting the sea lanes in the Persian Gulf or actions such as in Grenada or Libya, the U.S. stands for an "open-door policy." Just how far American power extends is a matter of debate within the U.S.; however, the Reagan Administration's defense programs are a concrete expression of its philosophy. Navy Secretary Lehman's six-hundred ship fleet has been given a more prominent role in conveying images of American power. For this administration it symbolizes an option for the future, i.e., in the commercial republic's control of the seas and thereby the survival of the liberal tradition.

The Reagan Administration has tried to establish the republican tradition in close conformity with the liberal tradition and again with an emphasis on freedom. A direct continuity runs from Jeane Kirkpatrick's essay of 1979 on "Dictatorships and Double Standards" to Reagan's speech of August 26, 1987 in Los Angeles. In both, totalitarianism is seen as the systemic adversary with whom there can be no meaningful compromise. Kirkpatrick/Reagan characterize as totalitarian primarily left social-revolutionary or communist regimes which establish one-party systems under which difference of opinion is allowed only under the euphemism of "democratic centralism." The Reagan

Doctrine promises indirect support for international movements that are working toward the overthrow of social-revolutionary regimes in the third world. The rhetorical and mythical side of the Reagan Doctrine is considerably more developed here than its operational side, i.e., here too it is primarily a matter of linguistic symbols: the Reagan Administration wants to break the will of social-revolutionary movements in the third world and win over intellectual commentators around the globe. It remains uncertain to what extent this has really been achieved; this doctrine has received considerable attention, and in that sense the first phase of this strategy has been successfully implemented.

As "freedom" in the liberal tradition is used to safeguard international communication — all the way to planning for a world information order in the UN system — the republican order is characterized as "free democracy," "totalitarianism" as dictatorship and slavery. For Reagan/Kirkpatrick the language has not changed — it had also been used by some trade unions until the late 1970s. In Reagan's Los Angeles speech in 1987 only the tone has become more moderate, his anti-communist rhetoric now less direct. After his summit meeting with Gorbachev in late 1985 Reagan adopted a more pragmatic approach supportive of change and rapprochement with the Soviet Union. This of course does not prevent him from drawing the line between totalitarian systems and democracy in general terms, without mentioning the Soviet Union:

[Democracy] means the rule of law for the leaders as well as the people. It involves limitations on the power of the state over the people. It means orderly debate and meaningful votes. It means liberation of the captive people from the thralls of a ruling elite that presumes to know the people's good better than the people.

It is obvious for whom this criticism is meant. Reagan and Kirkpatrick belong to the Cold War tradition of the Truman Administration. Reagan's values have not changed in the slightest since the 1950s when, during the Dulles era, conservative Republicans called for liberation of the "captive nations" in Eastern Europe. This battle for Eastern Europe's "captive people" was revived with Carter's human rights campaign. Whether this rhetoric is used aggressively or more indirectly depends on the historical situation. It would be wrong to characterize the Reagan Administration as having wanted to revive the offensive and global side of the containment philosophy; rather, it represents an anti-pluralistic interpretation of values opposed to

30 Cf. on this the essay by Christian Tuschhoff "Perceptions of the Soviet Union" in this volume.
liberal internationalists and their cultural relativism. Once the power of linguistic definition has been well established, then, in the eyes of conservatives, such a rhetorical hegemony can be handled in a most pragmatic way. Thus, the strategy of the Reagan Administration was not to forge an ironclad commitment out of the containment philosophy, but more to follow the example of the Nixon Doctrine and apply it flexibly.33

In a similarly general though forceful way, and at times in colorful language, Reagan has tried to realize the conservative worldview in the religious tradition. As a southern Baptist, Carter combined his personal piety with a commitment to social welfare that followed the tradition of the civil rights movement. In contrast, Reagan’s rhetoric is indebted to the traditional rhetoric of the anti-liberal fundamentalist church of the south, including its notions of charity. Reagan has not emphasized “civil religion” any more than other presidents; in fact, many of his State of the Union messages have contained fewer references to God than the speeches of past presidents. The President did not use the attack on the marines in Lebanon, which killed some 200 soldiers, to demonstrate America’s readiness to make sacrifices, but rather let the incident drop, literally, as a media event. He did not fortify the myth of sacrifice but quickly seemed to grasp that with public opinion divided, raising these events as a cause for national unity could easily turn into its opposite.

America’s mission in the world was another theme treated only in general and rather indirect ways by the Reagan Administration. Restraint was shown toward the Soviet Union, with criticism usually expressed in terms of the liberal tradition.34 However, America’s “manifest destiny” played a significant role in Reagan’s reconstruction policy. It served to buttress America’s increasing unilateralism. During the Reagan Administration “manifest destiny” had very little to do with “making the world safe for democracy,” which was left rather to the liberal and republican traditions. It was, however, evident in the retreat from multilateral relations, especially in the UN system. The U.S. continued to reduce its involvement within the UN and emphatically drew back upon its own values, on the American experiment.35 This interpretation that the “outside world” was no longer worthy of American engagement was also fostered by misunderstandings in the North Atlantic Alliance, or rather in the divergence between European social values and America’s conservative thinking. With the idea of American engagement in retreat, manifest destiny meant that the U.S. went into opposition, as Daniel Patrick Moynihan had

34 Thus the conclusion of Werner Schmidt’s content analysis in this volume.
35 Cf. Hoffmann, Gulliver’s Troubles.
proposed in 1975. In practice the U.S. still attempted to condition the UN majorities by "punitive actions," e.g., by refusing to pay its contributions; for the little success of these actions they blamed the third world nations in league with the Arab states and the socialist camp. One of the most prominent advocates of American withdrawal from the UN is the journalist Charles Krauthammer. In the New Republic — in an issue whose cover depicts a sinking ship with the New York UN building as its smokestack, under the title "Let It Sink" — he proposes:

If the purpose of foreign policy is to advance our ideals and interests in the world, are we more likely to achieve them with or without the U.N.? ... the U.N. has failed in its principal role which is keeping the peace. In fact, it has degenerated to the point where its actions exacerbate the few conflicts it still influences and where its remaining moral authority is used to promote ideas and policies inimical to those of the Western democracies ... One can respect the one-world idealism that attended the founding of the U.N. and still face the facts of today. The U.N. is more than just a failed instrument. We have the power to see it shelved. We should use that power.

Krauthammer's wounded idealism, which prompts his radical rejection of a "bad world," very clearly shows the interplay of Wilsonian "manifest destiny" with power politics and a "can-do philosophy" that is typical of this thinking. American unilateralism only assumes a religious dimension in the perspective of exceptionalism. As moralism it is also anchored in the tradition of republicanism, with the idea that the U.S. must see itself as a global system with a universal political mission. Compared to these far-flung conceptions, Reagan's religiosity cuts a modest figure. Reagan's speech to fundamentalists in Orlando, Florida in 1982, with its references to the "evil empire," had a strong impact, but it was not addressed to the international public or the Soviet Union. Rather, it was meant for America's internal reconstruction, i.e., to rally fundamentalist voters to the Republican party. The emphasis on American religious ideals in the international environment was an indirect consequence and not an intended object of this speech. In any case, the Soviet Union did not attach a great deal of importance to it, commanding as it

38 A good example is his talk to a high school audience following the 1985 summit with Gorbachev; cf. Ronald Reagan, “Remarks to Students and Faculty of Fallston High School, December 4, 1985,” Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, Vol. 21, No. 49 (December 12, 1985), pp. 1451 – 1453.
does a large repertoire of ideological terms to describe "inevitably decaying imperialism." Reagan's former advisor Michael Deaver has very aptly situated Reagan's "evil empire" beliefs in his political attitudes, showing how the President's ideological convictions can co-exist with his pragmatic actions, with the one usually latent and the other manifest:

... he believes religiously in our system, and that all you have to do is tell them and show them [the Soviets, J.S.] and they'll understand. I suppose to some people that's naive, but to him it's that simple ... Reagan has a tremendous faith in human nature and believes that there has to be some impression on Gorbachev of his sincerity. When you take that part of Reagan and mix it with the evil empire part of Reagan, it's a very interesting combination ... though Reagan no longer publicly uses the term evil empire to describe the Soviet Union, he still believes it. If there's a change, it's that Reagan doesn't believe that's an argument to be used now — that it only strengthens their paranoia about us.\(^\text{40}\)

President Reagan's real achievement in the religious dimension in American culture was rather that he made use, as Deaver had correctly recognized, of a naive, simple religiosity that has accounted for a large part of his great popularity among the non-ideological strata of the American population. He has thus remained "one of them," an anti-establishment figure. This constitutes a remarkable political achievement for a politician such as Reagan, who belongs to the California business world and as President to the center of the elitist Republican Party. He was therefore able to halt the decline in legitimacy of political institutions and raise confidence in foreign policy. Of course the burden of Vietnam was not to be overcome in a short space of time.

The President's image as a simple "good shepherd"\(^\text{41}\) was strengthened by the popularity he achieved as a "Westerner." His past as an actor may have been more a hindrance as it impaired his role as President more than it supported it. Certainly his actor's ability to believe in a role had its advantages in office.\(^\text{42}\) His humor, his anti-intellectualism and his attachment to populism in its present form as popular culture promoted this image. Even his decision on SDI was appreciably supported by his attachment to popular culture.\(^\text{43}\) His reputation as a "law and order" man, a cowboy who does not always keep to the letter of the law but does follow a higher ideal of justice\(^\text{44}\) may have publicly shielded his subordinate in the National Security Council, Lt.-Colonel North, following the revelations in the Iran-contra affair. Among


\(^{41}\) Cf. Schissler, *Neokonservatismus in den USA*, p. 81ff.

\(^{42}\) This is examined in detail by Karsten Zimmermann, *Die Entstehung der Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI)*, Staatsexamensarbeit, Berlin, 1986; cf. his essay in this volume.


young people, who have no associations with the social values of the New Deal and who remember Jimmy Carter as the only other President from their childhood, President Reagan is held in the kind of regard enjoyed by popular heros from the Star Trek and Star Wars films - not to mention Rambo. The President is perceived by this generation not as a conservative but as an activist: "He does what he has to do to get it done," is a typical comment.\footnote{Cf. Mary Jordan, David Maraniss, "Move Over, Yuppies. It's a New Generation. American Youth look for guidance to Rambo, Reagan and their Parents," \textit{International Herald Tribune}, June 3, 4, and 5, 1986.}

This form of popular culture blends in perfectly with the worship of high tech and the "technological can-do philosophy" that characterize the Reagan Presidency. With SDI, the epitome of this new eschatological veneration of technology, the Reagan Administration considers that it has opened up a "new frontier," made a breakthrough in the arms control negotiations and provided the "hopeful" vision of a nuclear-free world. "New Right" groups in particular have enthusiastically embraced this connection of American traditions, a new defense philosophy and the new frontier in space.\footnote{Cf. John Tirman, "The Politics of Star Wars," in \textit{The Union of Concerned Scientists} (ed.), \textit{Empty Promise. The Growing Case Against Star Wars}, Boston: 1986, pp. 1 — 33.}

In April of 1981, the Space Shuttle \textit{Columbia} made its dramatic maiden voyage into space and back safely to Earth. This event was not merely another admirable feat of American space technology. It marked the advent of a new era of human activity on the High Frontier of space. It can be viewed as a 'railroad into space' over which will move the men and materials necessary to open broad new fields of human endeavor in space and to free us from the brooding menace of nuclear attack ... the nations which quickly and effectively made use of this new arena for commerce and defense gained great advantages. As Americans we can take pride that the greatest commercial and military successes in aviation have been achieved by our nation.\footnote{Daniel O. Graham, "The High Frontier Study: A Summary," in Terry L. Heyns (ed.), \textit{Understanding U.S. Strategy: A Reader}, Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press 1983, pp. 93 — 117, here p. 113.}

Anticipating future developments, this high tech thinking featured in space and information technology, with ramifications in international trade, and gave the Reagan Administration the image of forging a lead over other countries, particularly its superpower rival, not only in security matters but in economic and trade policy.

4. The Reagan Administration, American Political Culture and the Reconstruction of American Strength

What has the Reagan Administration accomplished in reconstructing the strength of American political culture?
At first sight its accomplishments are considerable. Reagan has credibly revived the ideals of the liberal tradition, skillfully propagating the value of individual freedom in a free market capitalist context. Together with Jeane Kirkpatrick he has uncompromisingly criticized totalitarian systems. He has asserted the simple beliefs of the American people, recalled America's "manifest destiny" in a unilateral vein and tried to strengthen it. As a star of American popular culture he has halted the decline of political authority. With his SDI program Reagan has fired the American imagination with visions of can-do technology and U.S. superiority as no one has since President Kennedy.

But the critical questions pertinent to this assessment are: Has this reconstruction of the old political cultural values been substantial or superficial? Will not the substantial accomplishments be consumed again by the Iran-contra affair? Is the revival of "old" — yet legitimate — meanings in American political culture adequate for resolving the outstanding problems of the U.S. and the international system? Is not American exceptionalism, as this administration has revived it, a hindrance to solving important international and foreign policy problems?

One thing the President has certainly achieved: Just as he credibly embodies an optimistic outlook, like John F. Kennedy, Franklin and Teddy Roosevelt before him, his presidency has helped overcome the malaise of the last Carter years and establish a throughgoing optimism: the decline in unemployment, the rise of the yuppies and the high tech euphoria are all expressions of this. The Olympic Games in Los Angeles, the intervention in Grenada and the retaliatory strikes against Libya brought out this feeling in the form of nationalist Americanism.

Many elements of this "reconstructed" political culture probably express basic long-term orientations of the American people. They are fundamental to the "shift in agenda" toward conservatism. The "liberal" interpretation of U.S. political culture, which draws upon the same basic orientations, though with emphasis on the welfare state, neo-liberal and multilateral elements of this political culture, is at present probably not a majority position. Yet it will become so at sometime after the present cycle swings back again. For the immediate future the conservative perspective will prevail in American political culture, though the neoconservative ideologies as presented by Ronald Reagan will not likely remain predominant.

Yet even a less ideological President than Reagan would not launch any new initiatives in multilateralism. Most likely, the U.S. will take a more unilateralist

approach to international relations, the UN and NATO. But in this respect the present conservative interpretation of American political culture could prove detrimental to working relations in the international system. For a lasting reconstruction of American strength and for the U.S. to play a leading role in global politics, the elements of political culture stressing liberal internationalism might be better suited than the current unilateralist tendency.

Unilateralism stands in danger of absolutizing American values. These elements of the political culture close off the U.S. too much from other perspectives and impede self-critical judgment. In the long run, a flexible U.S. leadership role in the international system would stand to gain more from "liberal" internationalism.
Reconstruction of Economic Strength? The (Foreign) Economic Policy of the Reagan Administration

The first Reagan Administration set forth in 1981 with the aim of guiding the United States to new power in international affairs. It sought a new respect for the U.S. claim to global leadership through a policy of strength — toward the main adversary, the Soviet Union, as well as within its own camp. It was well aware, however, that to achieve its aims it would have to restore the material basis of American power: the economic strength of the U.S. As no other administration of the postwar era it emphasized the connection between economic and political-military strength, or, *ex negativo*, the threat to U.S. "national security" from bouts of economic weakness as had appeared in recent years. In May 1981 President Reagan told the cadets at West Point: "The first step in restoring our margin of safety must be the rejuvenation of our economy."¹

Raising economic problems to a matter of U.S. security was in one sense a promising way of winning public support for the Reagan Administration's economic policy. But stressing these problems' relevance to security also reflected an awareness that the U.S. was confronted with a new external threat. Beside the strategic military challenge from the Soviet Union, which it had learned to handle more or less well over the years, a second challenge to its global leadership had emerged with increasing clarity: the threat to its position as the world's leading economic and technological power. This new challenge, embodied above all in the dynamic strength of the Japanese economy, focused increasing attention on the economic malaise of the U.S.

In fact, at the start of the 1980s there was not a well-founded economic basis for a policy of strength. The economy was marked by stagnation, inflation as well as high government deficits and unemployment. In the global economy, too, the U.S. had lost ground. Consequently, the Reagan Administration attached prime importance to devising an economic policy to remove the crisis and renew the leading role of the U.S. in the world economy.² It is

often, and rightly, said that particularly in foreign and security policy this administration has expressed a great deal of toughness and combativeness, but that the impressive rhetoric has then been followed by rather cautious actions. Its economic policy, however, has been the exception to the rule. Here the Reagan Administration has resolutely implemented its domestically oriented approach to a new beginning. It has also demonstrated “leadership” vis-à-vis its economic partners by seeking to achieve its interests more by “octroi” than cooperation.\textsuperscript{3}

In the process it has been quite successful in combating inflation and stimulating the economy. These successes, however, have been attended by glaring setbacks, notably in what has become an exorbitant U.S. indebtedness and an enormously swollen trade deficit. The Reagan Administration has in large measure created these problems itself through the implementation of its economic policy. The question, then, is whether it has actually come closer to achieving its goal of moving America to renewed economic strength.

1. Claim and Reality of Reaganomics

Ronald Reagan waged — and won — his election campaign against President Carter primarily on issues of economic policy. In Reagan’s view the economic policy of the past had led to high inflation and unemployment as well as a government influence that was crippling economic forces. This had been financed by an exorbitant tax burden and a dangerously accelerating government debt, which in turn had resulted in an ominous weakening of U.S. economic productivity. The economic legacy of the Carter Administration was depressing, and this circumstance fostered broad support for the new Administration to pursue its declared aim of a fundamental new beginning in economic policy. In the recession of 1980 the real gross national product had declined by 2.3%, industrial production was down 8.6% and the unemployment rate had risen to 7.8%; the rate of inflation had reached 13.5%. In the same year the budget deficit had increased to around $74 billion; in 1981 the federal government’s total indebtedness exceeded the $1000 billion mark and had thus more than doubled since 1974.\textsuperscript{4}


The new Administration's scheme of economic policy, "Reaganomics," was, contrary to what the name suggests, not a completely new approach to economic policy. Rather, it stemmed essentially from liberal, neoclassical schools of thought which rejected Keynesian strategies for guiding the economy by influencing demand and opted instead for improving conditions on the supply side (supply-side economics). For the rest they followed the monetarists and attached great importance to combatting inflation through a consistent control over the money supply. In general, the concept called for considerable government restraint in influencing the economy. Government intervention in the free play of market forces was regarded as having been responsible for the misallocation of resources, the high taxes and high government spending in the U.S. This resulted in low rates of saving, which in turn was considered a major obstacle to the formation of capital for increasing private investment.

At the heart of the new Administration's economic policy were three goals: to bring down inflation, to reduce the tax burden on businesses and individuals, and to balance the federal budget. The central problem of this program was the connection between tax reduction and balancing the budget. To achieve both goals would have required substantial spending cuts -- at least until a strong cyclical upswing had raised federal incomes despite the reduced tax rates. Indeed, the Administration did stress the necessity for cuts, especially in transfer payments (i.e., primarily in social welfare expenditures), which was consistent with its call for cutting back on government activity. But at the same time it called for massive increases in the defense budget which more than offset any realistically possible savings. This contradiction would soon manifest itself with serious consequences for the whole of economic policy.

However, not least because of the President's adept handling of Congress, the new Administration was initially able to achieve remarkably rapid success. In 1981 the Economic Recovery Tax Act was passed, resulting in durable tax reductions; the rate of inflation sank rapidly, mainly as a result of the Federal Reserve Board's extremely restrictive monetary policy. Since 1983 inflation has registered just 3–4%, a level unattained since the early 1970s. However, the upswing in business activity developed more slowly than expected, finally

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getting underway in 1982/83 following a strong recession. Since then the American economy has moved continuously upward.\textsuperscript{6}

However, the problem of the federal debt has remained unsolved. The budget deficit, in particular, was compounded by the simultaneous tax reduction and arms buildup. In addition, the hesitant start of the business revival caused government revenues to fall further. As a result, not only was there no progress toward balancing the budget but, on the contrary, the deficit was growing at a breathtaking tempo: between 1980 and 1985 it tripled to more than $210 billion. In the same period the defense budget increased from $133 billion to $252 billion.\textsuperscript{7} The budget deficit (measured in nominal and real terms and in relation to the GNP) assumed unprecedented dimensions for the U.S. in peacetime. The interest charges alone, which since 1950 had always been under 2\% of the GNP, will rise to 4\% by the end of the decade.\textsuperscript{8} And despite greater efforts on the part of Congress, e.g., to institute quasi-automatic deficit reduction through the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act, there is no end in sight.

During the recession phase in 1981/82, these deficits certainly had a positive effect on the development of business activity; yet by the rules of Reaganomics this actually ran "counter to the system." Thus, the de facto economic policy was diametrically opposed to the accepted dogma of rejecting Keynesian deficit-spending. More serious, however, was the fact that the federal government, through its growing deficits, was claiming more and more of the capital market. This caused the already very high interest rates to climb further and led to a squeezing of credit. Thus the prime rate increased from its already quite extreme 15.27\% in 1980 to 18.87\% the following year, and it remained above the 10\% level until 1985.\textsuperscript{9} Ultimately these high interest levels did put a damper on the development of market conditions in these years.

The effects of Reaganomics in practice were thus mixed. Following indisputable successes in combatting inflation and, to a lesser extent, reviving business activity, there remains the unsolved problem of the enormous public debt, which imposes serious burdens on the American economy – and to some extent, the world economy as well. This indebtedness has raised problems which at the start of the Reagan Administration either were simply not on the agenda (such as the high exchange rate of the dollar) or else were far less developed (such as the trade deficit or the declining competitiveness of U.S. industry).

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., p. 82.
2. The Foreign Economic Policy of the Reagan Administration

The will to achieve a new national resurgence aimed at regaining economic and political strength and dynamism, not least as a precondition for successfully asserting America's global leadership, had of course been expressed before the Reagan Presidency. Some of the "new frontier" ideas of President Kennedy sounded astonishingly vogue again at the start of the 1980s. In the intervening twenty years, however, the prerequisites for such national programs had changed substantially. This is especially true of conditions in the world economy. In the course of the 1970s in particular, the U.S. made a transition from dominance to interdependence, as both the importance of the U.S. in the world economy and the earlier large developmental leads of the American economy declined according to all relevant indicators (share of the global GNP and of world trade, development of productivity, etc.). This change was accompanied by the convulsions in international economic structures as a result of OPEC policies and by the emergence of new competitors such as Japan and the Southeast Asian threshold nations, which with remarkable speed are taking away from the U.S. market shares in the international markets and the U.S. domestic market.

In the wake of these developments the regional focal points of American foreign economic relations have shifted also. In the early 1980s the Japan-dominated Southeast Asian region supplanted Western Europe as most important foreign trade partner of the U.S. Since that time the "Pacific Rim" has also been a tough competitor and, at least prospectively, an attractive customer for American goods and services. In capital relations, however, Western Europe and Canada still dominate, and the immediate presence of U.S. firms in these countries makes the intertwining of interests with them closer. The primarily trade-determined relations with Japan and Southeast Asia, on the other hand, are more antagonistic and fraught with conflict.

But not only has the U.S. slipped economically in relation to other countries; it also finds itself much more integrated than before in world economic processes — and hence more dependent on them. This applies both to foreign trade and to the internationalization of production. Thus, the share of imports

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10 The U.S. share in world GNP fell from 26% in 1960 to 21.5% in 1980; in the same period the U.S. share in world trade declined from 16% to 11%. In addition, productivity in the U.S. between 1960 and 1980 rose more slowly than was the case for its important competitors: with an index of 1965 = 100, to 160 by 1980, whereas Japan's productivity rose to about 360, that of West Germany to about 220. Cf. Bruce R. Scott, "U.S. Competitiveness: Concepts, Performance, and Implications" in Bruce R. Scott and George C. Lodge (eds.), *U.S. Competitiveness in the World Economy*, Boston: Harvard Business School Press 1985, pp. 13–70, here p. 19ff.
in the GNP rose from less than 5% in 1960 to over 12% by 1980, that of exports from 8% to over 12% in the same period. In 1979 the proportion of imports and exports in domestic production of industrial goods was 20.1% and 20.9% respectively, as opposed to 4.7% and 8.8% in 1960.\textsuperscript{11} But the sharp increase in direct investments (from $7.6 billion in 1970 to $19.2 billion in 1980) has made the American economy (i.e., the large U.S. firms that undertake the lion’s share of foreign investment) more dependent on economic developments in the host countries. Moreover, these direct investments have long ceased to flow in just one direction; foreign activities in the U.S. itself increased sharply in the 1970s (from $1.5 billion in 1970 to $16.9 billion in 1980).\textsuperscript{12} This means that in the U.S. too, as with U.S. investments in Europe and Canada in the 1960s, investment decisions increasingly are made in foreign corporation headquarters.

In the 1970s, as these developments began to arouse deeper concerns among U.S. policy makers, analysts and the public, this slippage in and growing interdependence with the world economy was widely perceived, and accepted, as part of a normalization following a unique but necessarily transitory phase of dominance brought about by the Second World War. Even as power-conscious an administration as that of President Nixon interpreted these changes as the product of long-term developments and so decided to get rid of the ballast from the phase of dominance (especially by terminating in 1971 the dollar’s convertibility into gold). However, President Reagan’s newly articulated leadership claim reflected a different view: for him the American losses in position were not so much an inevitable consequence of structural developments as a product of bad political decisions by his predecessors. Whether America could be turned around and led to new global economic strength was now a question of the right policy.

2.1 Leadership by Export of Reaganomics

To achieve this ambitious goal the Administration did not have a specific program consonant with either the basic facts of the international economy or the interests of its partners. Instead it chose a much simpler way: in its eyes the essential thing was the thoroughgoing realization of Reaganomics nationally, the results of which would then, quasi-automatically, bear upon the U.S. position in the international economy. This seemed a plausible approach on tactical grounds also. International economic negotiations in the 1970s had shown that the U.S. was far less able than before to make its interests prevail vis-à-vis partners who had become more self-confident —

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{12} Figures cited in Arlene Wilson, \textit{U.S. Trade Deficit}. Congressional Research Service, updated 10/28/86, p. 11.
one need only think of the conflicts between President Carter and German Chancellor Schmidt. To many, therefore, it appeared more sensible to realize American interests and programs directly via the "market," i.e., by way of the economic processes themselves. Here the interests of the U.S., which despite all the losses was still the world's greatest economic power, were realizable much more directly and effectively than via complicated negotiations. It was simpler, e.g., to let the dollar's exchange rate rise on the markets than to engage in long-drawn-out negotiations to work out acceptable parities and then intervene in concert.

Primacy was thus placed squarely on national economic policy; foreign economic policy played a more subordinate role in the first Reagan Administration especially. Yet the claim that Reaganomics would help yield new stability and higher growth was not confined to the U.S. economy. Firmly convinced of the general validity of its policy and bolstered by the initial successes at home, the Administration set out to convert the other industrialized countries to its thinking. Thus, their interests as well as the world economy as a whole would be best served if the other nations, under U.S. leadership, were to adopt Reaganomics.

Consequently, the thrust of the Reagan Administration's international economic policy in the first years was to get its own national economic designs accepted internationally. In the year he came into office President Reagan declared at the annual meeting of the World Bank and IMF: "The most important contribution any country can make to world development is to pursue sound economic policies at home." Naturally he regarded his own economic policies as especially sound. In theory his liberal-conservative concept, which shortly before him Margaret Thatcher had begun to practice in similar form, gained increasing support, particularly after the change of government in Bonn. Among the leading Western governments, only the French remained theoretically opposed.

Nonetheless, the reactions in Western Europe to Reaganist economic policy and its domestic consequences were strongly and unanimously negative. In the eyes of America's European economic partners, two aspects in particular of U.S. economic policy had extremely dangerous consequences for their economies. First, the drastic anti-inflation policy of the U.S. with

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interest rates threatened a dangerous drain of capital from the EC. To counter this the Europeans found themselves compelled to raise interest rates as well, a move that was diametrically opposed to their efforts to overcome the near universal stagnation in business activity. Secondly, this problem was aggravated by the steady rise in the dollar, as it made capital investment in the U.S. attractive simply for speculative purposes.

However, it was the developing countries that suffered most from the high interest rates and the high exchange rate of the dollar. A large portion of their foreign debt was payable in dollars; the higher the dollar's exchange rate, the higher their export earnings had to be in other currencies for them to meet their obligations. Moreover, the interest rates on their loans were usually variable and rose along with the American interest rates. The result was the now unavoidable outbreak in 1982 of the debt crisis that had been latent since the 1970s. With stagnating or declining exports to the U.S., not least because of the U.S. recession of 1982, many developing countries found themselves increasingly unable to meet their payments.

The Reagan Administration sharply rejected all demands for a change of course, particularly in monetary and fiscal policy. With a toughness not seen in years, it argued its position at every available opportunity: at bilateral and multilateral economic meetings, especially at the yearly economic summits. For all the theoretical and often rhetorical recognition of the great importance of stabilizing the economies of its partners, the U.S. was not to be moved to modify its domestic economic policy for the benefit of foreign economic interests. Rather, the Administration countered that the upturn in the U.S. economy since 1983 combined with the dollar's high exchange rate had substantially improved the export conditions for other countries; American economic policy was thus said to have worked not as a brake but as a locomotive for their economies. Finally, the high influx of capital into the U.S. was said to be chiefly a product of the positive economic development in the U.S., which again was attributable to the Administration's successful economic policy.

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15 The total indebtedness of the 21 most important debtor nations of the third world rose from $258 billion in 1978 to $501 billion in 1982; the debt service alone between 1980 and 1982 rose from 47% to 75% of export earnings. Figures from Morgan Guaranty Trust Company, World Financial Markets, February 1983, pp. 6, 8.

16 Cf. on this the descriptions in Putnam, Bayne, Hanging Together.

17 The Reagan Administration's handling of the third world debt crisis provided a later exception to this rule. Primarily because of the deep commitment of American banks in the third world, the Administration declared its readiness to better equip the World Bank and the IMF to defuse the situation.

18 This argumentation is found in a number of official statements, e.g., in the declarations of members of the Administration in the Hearing of the Joint Economic Committee,
These arguments generated an intensive political and academic debate inside and outside the U.S. In it, more and more observers have come around to the view that at least initially, the Reagan Administration's extremely high budget deficits had exerted the dominant influence on world economic development, and that their impact both on the American economy and abroad had been more negative than positive. In this view the "domesticist approach" of the Reagan Administration, i.e., the primacy of pursuing domestic economic objectives without regard for foreign economic consequences, had predominantly negative consequences not just for the world economy but for the U.S. itself.

2.2 Benign Neglect of International Debt and the Dollar

At the heart of the criticism stood the new U.S. dependence on capital imports. The excessive budget deficits had produced a situation where the capital needs of state, economy and individuals could no longer be covered solely by American capital; within a short space of time the U.S. became a net importer of capital. Prior to the 1980s the country had still regularly shown balance of payments surpluses; however, as of 1982 the situation was reversed. The deficit rose from $8.6 billion in that year to $141.3 billion in 1986. As a result, the international financial standing of the U.S. also underwent a reversal. The surplus capital held abroad, accumulated over roughly 70 years and continuously rising until 1981, shrunk with remarkable speed; in 1985, with a negative balance of assets and liabilities of $107 billion, the U.S. became the most heavily indebted country in the world. According to American estimates, in that year nearly 10% of the available capital in the other Western nations flowed into the U.S. In 1986 the deficit balance climbed to $264 billion.

In the U.S. itself this new situation has been compared to that of the debt-ridden developing countries. In fact, the net indebtedness of the U.S. now exceeds that of Argentina, Brazil and Mexico combined. Such a comparison falls short, however, not only on account of the inordinately greater economic

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strength of the U.S. or because of the substantially greater volume of American
exports, but primarily because the U.S., unlike the developing countries, is
indebted in its own currency which, if need be, it can reproduce. Still, the
high debt is a heavy burden for the long-term development of the American
economy. The longer the balance of payments deficits persist — whether
brought about by capital imports or trade deficits — the greater the total
debt becomes and the more funds have to be allocated for debt servicing.
Since the influx of capital to the U.S. is apparently largely immune to trade
deficits and is oriented primarily to the attractive U.S. capital market, a
further increase in the debt is altogether probable in the next few years. Even
reputable estimates regard an increase to $800 billion by 1990 as realistic. Just
meeting the interest in this case would require a trade surplus of at least
$60 billion.

However, it is altogether unclear how long foreign investors will be willing
to keep their funds in the U.S. or transfer new capital. Up to now this
willingness has been explicable mainly by the discrepancy among real interest
rates and by expectations about their development. Hopes for speculative
gains, an appraisal of the U.S. as a “safe haven” for capital, expectations of
higher earnings because of the stronger dynamic of the American economy
compared with Europe, and the element of avoiding U.S. protectionist meas-
ures through direct investment are further reasons for the capital transfer to
the U.S. Should one or more of these cease to apply (as has already happened
with speculative motives), the readiness to transfer capital to the U.S. can
rapidly evaporate.

If this were the case, the U.S. would be forced to manage its debt service on
its own. In the process it might well be forced to come to terms with the
other side of indebtedness: either the money supply would have to be raised —
with a negative impact on inflation; or the demand for capital would have
to be considerably reduced through permanent cuts in the budget, investments
and private consumption; or else exports would have to be increased markedly
or imports curtailed in order to finance the debt service through trade
surpluses. Whatever measures the Administration and the Federal Reserve
Board take, they will negatively influence economic development and entail
the risk of a deep recession. Even if such consequences did not materialize,
the Reagan Administration, which brought about and for years tolerated the
budget and trade deficits, has by no means strengthened the U.S. economy
with this double indebtedness; on the contrary, it has caused the U.S. to
become in no small measure, both in financing the federal budget and in

idem, Reagan’s Leadership, p. 119.
private economic activity, dependent on the willingness of foreign investors to invest their money in the U.S. Thus, in part the decisions on the future economic development of the U.S. rest in their hands.

The immediate and most important consequence of the heavy influx of foreign capital was, however, the sustained upward revaluation of the dollar vis-à-vis the currencies of most of its trade partners. For potential buyers of American goods, prices increased by nearly 50% up to 1985, while exporters to the U.S. were able to lower their prices or increase their profits correspondingly. This development sorely affected the competitiveness of American goods on world markets and at home, and the U.S. trade balance deteriorated accordingly. In 1984 the U.S. Treasury Department estimated that up to $100 billion of the then $123 billion trade deficit was due to the exchange rate of the dollar. Since the Administration could not bring itself to reduce rapidly its budget deficits, it either had to leave the dollar’s fate to market forces or to intervene on the money markets, alone or in conjunction with its trade partners. This decision depended primarily on U.S. monetary policy. Previous administrations had pursued various, in part contrary aims and strategies. Up to the early 1970s the high value of the dollar, as established in 1944 in the Bretton Woods fixed-rate system, had been defended, though less and less because of economic interests and more because it symbolized U.S. economic and political strength. The U.S. finally gave up this strategy by stages in the 1970s — first by terminating the dollar’s convertibility into gold in 1971 and finally abandoning a system of basically fixed exchange rates in 1976. The Carter Administration then went full turn by refusing to influence the direction of the dollar in any way; in the tradition of mercantilism, it regarded the resulting devaluation of the dollar as a positive factor in improving the trade balance. Initially this strategy was successful, but it seriously neglected the dollar’s international reserve function, which became clouded by the strong devaluation. The ensuing “dollar flight” forced the Administration to make concerted interventions with its partners on the foreign exchange markets in order to stabilize the dollar.

The Reagan Administration, guided in its monetary policy by staunch liberals and monetarists in its first years especially, joined the two strategies in what turned out to be an extremely unfortunate way. Thus, on the one hand it returned to the old view that the added prestige of a high exchange rate had

24 The change in parities sometimes differed markedly. Thus, the value of the dollar rose by more than 50% (in real terms) vis-à-vis the German mark and the franc, by only about 20% vis-a-vis the yen. In weighted average its value rose from 1981 = 102 to 1985 = 156 (1973 = 100). Cf. U.S. Department of Commerce, United States Trade, p. 106, as well as Economic Report 1986, p. 373.

to take precedence over economic disadvantages; on the other hand, it shared the liberal conviction of the 1970s that the state had to leave the determination of exchange rates to market forces. Despite the swift and sharp protests from American industry (because of its declining competitiveness) and from U.S. economic partners (because of the consequences for their interest rates and capital markets) the Administration remained unbending. Most of its members saw the soaring of the dollar not as a source of peril for the U.S. economy, but as a symbol that “America was back again.”

Only after prolonged internal debate and as the dollar threatened to topple and plummet did the Reagan Administration depart from its symbolic policy and decide to undertake concerted interventions on the foreign exchange markets. Finally, in September 1985, an agreement was reached among the leading trade partners, the “Group of Five.” The “Plaza Agreement” called for joint interventions aimed at an “orderly dollar decline.” The next step was then, as expected, to check the fall in the exchange rates and stabilize the dollar again. And so in February 1987, with its “Louvre Agreement,” the Group of Five established target zones within which the exchange rates of the currencies were to be kept. With that the Reagan Administration ultimately made the same about-face in its monetary policy as had President Carter.

The long-standing passivity of the Reagan Administration toward the dollar was in many respects representative of the problems the Administration had, or created, in carrying through its “domesticist approach” in the complex reality of interwoven domestic and foreign economic processes. The fixation on simple and general tenets (non-intervention), the idea that an overvalued dollar was symbolic of economic strength, and the tenacious clinging to partial goals (combating inflation) while consistently disregarding counterproductive side effects (trade balance) were not a convincing demonstration of “leadership,” but a costly lesson for all involved.

2.3 Trade Policy

The problems built into the Reagan Administration’s financial policies culminated in the drastic deterioration of the U.S. foreign trade position: the American trade deficit climbed from $25 billion in 1980 to $112 billion in 1984 up to $156 billion in 1986. The essential reason for this explosive rise was the high dollar; cyclical factors, notably the stronger upturn in U.S. business activity compared to that of its trade partners, played a secondary role here, a fact Washington was long reluctant to acknowledge.\(^{26}\)

\(^{26}\) In 1985 Secretary of State Shultz confirmed that more than half the American trade deficit was caused by the high rate of the dollar. Cf. George Shultz, “National Policies and Global Perspectives,” Address at the Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton, 1985.
These deficits have entailed enormous problems for the U.S. economy. On world markets and in the U.S. itself, more and more industries have felt the pressure of foreign competition, losing contracts, sales and jobs. Significantly, these are no longer just the traditionally threatened textile and clothing or iron and steel industries, but highly developed branches such as the machine tool industry and some high-tech industries have been affected as well. The overall economic consequences: lower economic growth and tax revenues, fewer investments and fewer jobs. In addition, the funds needed to finance the U.S. foreign debt are not being generated by export surpluses. And it is illusory to hope that the factories closed due to foreign competition can simply be opened up again after the dollar’s devaluation and can proceed to reconquer lost markets. Both are conceivable in economic models but exceedingly difficult in the hard reality.

Trade policy posed a dilemma for the Reagan Administration: on the one hand, it was unable, or unwilling, to remove the main cause of the problem – the chain of federal debt and dollar exchange rate; on the other, it was coming under strong pressure to take serious remedial action and solve the problems. These demands were addressed primarily to trade policy, yet because the causes of the problems lay elsewhere this policy was overtaxed from the start. Moreover, U.S. trade policy has for decades been geared to free trade and so is not well suited to strong government intervention. The Reagan Administration, like ultimately all its predecessors in the postwar period, has been a champion of free trade. The conviction that government intervention in international trade is in the long run detrimental to all, because it hinders the optimal market-oriented use of available resources, is fully consistent with the basic liberal idea behind Reaganomics.

Traditionally the free-trade doctrine has served not only as a basis for U.S. foreign economic policy, but as a guiding principle of American designs for reshaping the world economy after the Second World War, e.g., in GATT, with its international tariff reduction rounds. In these trade and tariff negotiations previous Administrations repeatedly made unilateral concessions in the belief that this served the long-term U.S. interest in free international trade. Such “leadership by example” and its domestic acceptance were naturally closely related to the American position in the world economy, i.e., to its competitiveness. However, since the 1970s the diminished competitive strength of the U.S. economy has led to growing protectionist demands from interest groups that felt threatened. It has thus endangered domestic political consensus on the basic lines of foreign trade policy, a consensus which made foreign trade the object of “bipartisan policy.”

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To ward off such demands a quite complicated process had taken shape in
the political decision-making process. Its thrust was to keep the Congress out
of the train of decision making as much as possible. While Congress is
actually responsible for the regulation of foreign trade, it is also more
susceptible to particular demands from interest groups than the executive
branch. Hence, the executive asserted its resolute free-trade policy as a
counterweight to the protectionist demands on Congress. At the international
level the administration countered the “defensive” protectionist demands at
home with an “offensive” alternative, insistently calling for the elimination
of trade barriers by its trading partners and thus playing off export interests
against import interests.

In the 1970s this approach was already under increasing strains from the
growing domestic interests around protection and from the intensification of
international competition. Tougher competition prompted more and more
governments to institute active or passive support for their industries and
therefore made it increasingly difficult to effect a multilateral reduction of
trade barriers. Then the massive trade deficits of the 1980s caused the Reagan
Administration, which had come in claiming to defend the principle of free
trade, to take an unprecedented number of de facto protectionist measures:
e.g., the agreement with Japan on restraining auto exports to the U.S.,
punitive tariffs for Japanese chip exporters, restrictions on steel imports from
the EC and the strengthening of the textile agreement. By these measures
alone, 25% of American imports of finished goods were subjected to quantita-
tive limitations.28

Not surprisingly, Congress yielded even more to demands for protection of
the American economy. In the first year of the 99th Congress alone, nearly
900 trade-related bills were introduced, the majority of which were clearly
protectionist.29 Even if most of these bills were more “demonstrative” in
character and had no serious chances of passage, the trend was ominous.
Congressional action was focused on the bills for the new Trade Act, which
were passed by large majorities in both houses in the summer of 1987.
However, the limitations in both versions on the President’s freedom of action
and the various provisions for stronger protectionism prompted President
Reagan to announce his veto.

In its international trade policy the Reagan Administration consistently and
with great toughness sought the offensive solution: to force back the protec-
tionism of other countries and open up foreign markets for the U.S. economy.
The list of American demands was long. It ranged from elimination of

28 Cf. ibid., p. 168.

29 Cf. Raymond J. Ahearn, Congressional Research Service, Protectionist Legislation in
European export subsidies for agricultural products to the raising of import quotas for American agricultural products in Japan and the EC; it called for an end to the allegedly unfair government subsidizing of the Airbus and included the, successful, demand that Japan liberalize its capital market.

More or less of its own accord, the Reagan Administration concentrated on the bilateral level of international trade policy. The U.S. had advocated a new GATT round since 1981, but this was frustrated by the opposition of France, which demanded that priority be given to negotiations on reforming the international monetary system. The opening of a new round of talks, the “Uruguay Round,” was not agreed upon until September 1986 at the GATT Conference of Ministers in Punta del Este. But the bilateral road in trade policy facilitated a more forceful, more one-sided assertion of U.S. interests than would have been possible in a multilateral forum. On the other hand, this was hardly consistent with an overriding interest in a stable international trade system, given the increasing fragmentation and isolation of individual trade currents resulting from bilateral agreements.

Trade policy continues to be concerned primarily with Japan – for the greater part of the American public the adversary par excellence in the struggle for markets that is increasingly perceived as a trade war. This is an understandable view, for in 1986 the American deficit with Japan was about $50 billion greater than the entire U.S. trade deficit had been in 1982. Toughness in trade policy might have been warranted had the barriers to American goods and services likewise been raised by U.S. trade partners. But such was not the case; only U.S. protectionism had greatly increased since 1981. In this light the Reagan Administration’s course has to be judged rather as an unjustified ersatz-policy that wanted to cure symptoms without solving the causes of the problems. Nor did this policy provide constructive leadership of the Western industrial nations. In the past the U.S. had exercised leadership with concessions to other countries for the sake of free trade; now, however, it was a struggle for U.S. advantages in which the risk of open trade wars was accepted.

3. “Self-Restraint” in Policy on Industry and Technology

The competitive setbacks suffered by American industry were attributable not just to the high dollar or cyclical disparities in economic activity. The

losses were too continuous and long-lasting for that. Besides the acute problem of a trade deficit explosion in the early 1980s, there was another, structural and long-term problem the core of which lay not in the price but in the qualitative competitiveness of American products. Nonetheless, the competitive disadvantages in prices between 1982 and 1985, occasioned by the dollar's exchange rate, intensified and first made really manifest this structural problem.

This is well illustrated by the development of U.S. trade in high-technology products, which had traditionally yielded substantial surpluses and thus had not only improved the overall trade balance but confirmed the American self-image as the world's industrial and technological leader. In 1986, however, even the high-tech trade became deficitary.\textsuperscript{32} This fact intensified the debate in the U.S. on the right policy for industry and technology. The problems were also clearly recognized by the Reagan Administration. The commission appointed by President Reagan to examine the competitiveness of American industry concluded:

Our ability to compete internationally faces unprecedented challenge from abroad. Our world leadership is at stake and so is our ability to provide for our people the standard of living and opportunities to which they aspire. Americans must take on the challenge of competitiveness as the economic agenda for the next decade.\textsuperscript{33}

As widespread as the idea of a technological challenge has become, there is as little agreement on the causes for the decline in American competitiveness as on a definition of "competitiveness" itself.\textsuperscript{34} The many factors considered in analyzing the competitiveness of American industry include: the quantity and quality of schooling, the expenditures for research as well as effective scientific "production" (patents, etc.), the development of labor productivity, the quality of management, or rather the frequently decried concentration of corporate goals on the realization of short-term profits. But on the whole the very diverse and increasingly numerous studies confirm that though the U.S. continues to be technologically the most powerful country in the world, its previously big lead is shrinking in more and more fields and in some cases has already been yielded to competitors, above all Japan. Such judgments essentially pertain to the U.S. as an industrial environment and do not


apply automatically to individual American companies. Thus, many U.S. multinationals profit from the prevailing conditions in their foreign production environments in the same way as national companies (for example, from higher research subsidies in West Germany). The greatly increased internationalization of research, development and production within corporations in recent decades has in this respect very two-edged consequences for the U.S. economy. While American companies exploit local advantages abroad and thus improve their balance sheets, the overall economic effects of runaway production are often negative, e.g., as it strains the trade balance.

Alongside specific political measures, the debate on strategies for solving the structural problems of competition has focused more and more attention on the ideological and theoretical premises of liberal economic policy — of Reaganomics at home, free trade internationally — and thus on the relation between government and economy. Much has been made of the success of America’s technological competitors, in particular Japan’s concerted state promotion of industries regarded as being of strategic economic importance, but also the direct promotion of civilian technologies in the EC countries. There has been a growing call for the U.S. to undertake a tough industrial policy of its own. Thus, the loss of international competitiveness and the attendant “trend toward deindustrialization” in the U.S. itself are seen as the result primarily of other countries’ successful strategies for comparative advantage. For too long the global distribution of comparative advantages had been viewed statically in economic theory. In light of the growing interventionism everywhere, the classical liberal conceptions of economy and foreign trade appear increasingly questionable, and a laissez-faire attitude on the part of government becomes increasingly costly for an economy which thereby becomes the object of the strategies of others.

Such considerations have of course provoked a wealth of criticism in the U.S. The objections take aim at the diagnosis, the postulated decline and fall of U.S. technological competitiveness, and raise doubts as to whether the incontestable success of the Japanese economy in particular was really a product of political strategies or rather the result of inherent economic factors (e.g., the high rate of savings). Finally and, it seems, of most immediate political relevance, it is questioned whether such close integration of “govern-


ment” and “economy” as in Japan, even if it were the key to the success, would be at all feasible in the U.S.

In any case, the Reagan Administration gave a clear rebuff to any policy of government intervention in the economy. In line with its basic liberal-conservative principles, it has not provided any consistent policy for modernizing American industry in the 1980s, but at most took specific initiatives in particularly explosive cases. In this administration’s view, government should simply provide a political-economic framework within which “creative potential” can develop unfettered by government. This position is maintained even with the rhetorically very ambitious “Competitiveness Initiative” – the Administration’s response to the public debate at the beginning of 1987. This initiative is not without contradiction, however. The government self-restraint it puts forward is in reality considerably modified by the fact that while the federal government does not itself intervene directly and systematically in the U.S. economy, it does exercise perhaps the greatest influence indirectly, by way of the defense budget with its immense research and demand potential.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the federally-funded programs of military, space and nuclear technology were promoted with enormous resources in the service of “national security.” These had substantial “spill-over” effects in the civilian economy, which gave American industry technological leads and hence competitive advantages on the world markets. Thus, this form of government support, essentially dominated by military interests, suited economic interests very well. However, the state of modern technology and international economic conditions make strategies of indirect industrial policy via the military sector increasingly inefficient. For one thing, civilian processes of innovation in many areas are now more rapid than military, and today, unlike in the 1950s and 1960s, civilian technological progress is often the main source for military innovation. In other words, the “spill-over” effects move in the opposite direction. A policy of direct promotion of civilian innovation as has been pursued in Japan, and up to now in West Germany also, therefore

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38 For a number of programmatic statements cf., e.g., the introduction to the *Economic Report of the President 1986*, which states: “...the best way for government to promote economic growth is to provide a foundation of stable, predictable economic policies and then stand back and let the creative potential of the American people flourish,” p. 6.

39 This has since come to be the prevailing view in the American discussion. Cf. as a salient example of this the observation by Stephan A. Merrill: “In recent years, the commercial market has excelled in new technology development and become a prime source of innovations in weapon system components, manufacturing methods and materials, and military command, communications and intelligence.” “The United States and the New
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appears a much more efficient way of raising economic competitiveness; the indirect road has fewer and fewer commercial benefits. Promoting innovation under the aegis of military security greatly restricts the application of new developments on the world market — to which, of course, the adversary has more or less free access, too — and thus reduces their commercial exploitation. These restrictions for reasons of security prove to be increasingly counterproductive economically in the now highly dynamic international market for technology, where companies live from the rapid exploitation of an edge.

With its sharp increases in the R&D budget for military purposes, the Reagan Administration has responded to the challenge of industrial and technological policy in a way which is consistent with its view of the threat from its global political adversary - and with the American tradition of government intervention solely for furthering interests of military security — but is less compatible with the interests of American industry in the world market. Paradoxically, by largely neglecting the advancement of civilian innovation it risks no longer having direct access to what has become the most important source for military innovation, but instead becoming dependent on foreign sources. In this way a policy staked one-sidedly to the military dimension of government’s “security function” may not only undermine economic competitiveness, but even frustrate its own self-defined goal.

4. Trade Policy toward the Eastern Bloc

The Reagan Administration’s policy on trade with the Eastern-bloc nations has generated open conflicts between economic interests and those of security and power politics. Unlike the civilian technological challenge from Japan, which did not develop into an explosive political issue until Reagan’s second term, the military technological challenge from the Soviet Union was one of the central themes of the Reagan Administration from the start. In accord with its general conceptions of strength and leadership, it undertook sizable efforts to stabilize and expand the technological lead over the Soviet Union, which was widely viewed as having contracted in the period of détente.

Technological Competition” in John N. Yochelson (ed.), The United States and the World Economy, pp. 45 — 76, 52.

Thus, the arms production of the U.S. has become to a considerable degree dependent on imports as a result of declining technological efficiency in the machine tool industry. And in electronic components, there are already signs of what is regarded as a dangerous dependency on foreign sources of supply. Cf. Foreign Production of Electronic Components and Army Systems Vulnerabilities, A Report Prepared by the Committee on Electronic Components, Board on Army Science and Technology, Commission on Engineering and Technical Systems, National Research Council, Washington, D.C.: 1986.
Besides its ambitious strategic arms program, the Reagan Administration focused on impeding the flow of technology to the Eastern bloc. Technological security was to be raised first by making every effort to cut off the illegal transfer of technology and secondly by restricting the legal export of technology through tighter security controls.  

Along with a marked inclination to impose economic sanctions, this orientation to security has been an essential feature of U.S. policy on East-bloc trade since the Cold War began. The export control system created in the 1940s and in its basic structure maintained up to the present was at the time largely a reflection of the experience with the wartime adversary Japan, which had used the advantages of unhindered import of U.S. industrial goods and technology against the United States itself. Toward the new adversary, the Soviet Union, strict government export controls were designed to prevent any transfer of civilian goods that could have strategic significance — not to mention military equipment. It was particularly important to protect high technology from the adversary's grasp.

Technology protectionism in the service of U.S. security interests originated under optimal conditions. The U.S. had emerged from the Second World War as the leading producer and exporter of technology; hence, it was largely left to American discretion whether the Soviet Union would receive strategically relevant goods or not. Moreover, the technological breakthroughs at that time occurred primarily in the military sector, which was clearly superior to the civilian sphere in speed and capacity for innovation and which besides, traditionally knew well enough how to safeguard its acquisitions. Since the civilian sector has replaced the military as the leading motor of technological development in many areas, there has been a steady increase in the number of technologies and products which must be subjected to export controls on security grounds, since more and more genuinely civilian technologies are at least potentially relevant militarily. In the meantime the development and production of new technologies has been greatly internationalized (by multinational enterprises, licensing, joint ventures, and so forth), which has rapidly accelerated the world wide diffusion of technology. Finally, new competitive suppliers of high technology are constantly appearing on the world market, so that there is also a growing number of countries that have to be sworn in to the American control system if it is to be efficient. Multilateral coordination of security controls in COCOM, which besides the NATO countries includes only Japan, is far from adequate any more. And even in this body there have always been constant conflicts between the extensive security thinking of the U.S. and the more liberal views in Western Europe.


42 Cf. the essay by Hanns-Dieter Jacobsen in this volume.
These fundamental problems of American technology protectionism were still partly overshadowed by the political climate of the 1970s, which favored trade with the East. Declaring détente a failure in all respects, including economic, President Reagan set out to revitalize security controls in East-bloc trade. In the process he not only encountered opposing policy interests within the Alliance, but, above all, ran into considerably more complex economic and technological conditions than had prevailed in the period of unrestricted U.S. technological dominance.

This sparked an intense debate in the U.S. on the economic costs of security controls. The Administration was divided into a “security camp” led by the Defense Department and an “economy camp” led by the Commerce Department, while Congress deliberated long and hard over the amending of the Export Administration Act, the legal basis for the controls. U.S. industry had never in principle objected to the need for restrictions on technology transfer to the Eastern-bloc countries, nor had it attached any special importance to this market, given the constant vacillation in the Eastern trade policy of previous administrations. Thus, the opposition to a tightening of the controls was founded, primarily, not on loss of business with the East bloc, but on the consequences that more stringent security over technology transfer had for American high-tech industry in Western markets.

Leading industries in international markets protested especially against government interference in technology relations with subsidiaries and licensees abroad. They criticized as well the interference in “simple” export deals that were both permissible under American law and, according to advocates of security criteria, necessary to counter the danger of third-party export of American technology to the East bloc. Amidst increasing international ties and competition, U.S. firms feared they could be shunned in future as potentially unreliable suppliers and might have to take losses in their true domain: the Western technology market. This perspective became all the more unsettling as the U.S. trade balance in high-technology goods had meanwhile fallen into the red. Even in thoroughly conservative political circles there was therefore a growing chorus of those who demanded a better balance between security and economic interests and who wanted to see a wholesale elimination of U.S. technology export restrictions that went beyond those of other COCOM countries.44

43 Cf. the essay by Jörg Boltersdor in this volume.
In the international arena the Reagan Administration asserted its more radical view of the security risks of East-bloc trade, often with heavy pressure on other countries, but not without success. Thus, it was able to get some neutral countries to adopt the U.S. export controls, Spain joined COCOM, and finally, in COCOM itself the control lists were in some instances revised in accordance with American demands. But the Administration also suffered major setbacks. The most spectacular and most serious case was the "pipeline conflict" in 1982. This arose out of the fourth European-Soviet natural gas and pipeline deal, which involved European purchases of natural gas from the Soviet Union and in return Soviet imports of equipment for building gas pipelines.\footnote{On the background to and development of the pipeline conflict cf. Claudia Wörmann, \textit{Osthandel als Problem der Atlantischen Allianz. Erfahrungen aus dem Erdgas-Röhrengeschäft mit der UdSSR}, Bonn: Europa Union Verlag 1986.} Again it was the Defense Department which regarded this deal as a danger to Western energy security, and therefore sought in every way possible, though in vain, to prevent it.

The conflict with the West European countries escalated when the Reagan Administration tried to torpedo the deal even after it had been concluded. Some West European companies were producing compressor parts for the gas pipeline on the basis of a more than twenty-years-old technology from General Electric. Applying the American export control law extraterritorially, Washington prohibited the West European licensees from exporting to the Soviet Union and then imposed economic sanctions on them when they did not comply with the order. The Reagan Administration was wont to regard its collision course as a sign of strength; however, it could not maintain it for long. It ran into solid opposition not only from West European governments and businesses, but from American industry, which viewed this as a scandalous attack on economic relations within the West. Prompted by miscalculations in the Reagan Administration about its means and capabilities for asserting "leadership" in its own alliance, the pipeline conflict was actually one of this administration's biggest foreign policy setbacks.

5. Conclusions

In light of its record of now more than six years, the Reagan Administration's claim to lead the U.S. to new and stable economic growth, to strengthen its position in the international economy and so to improve the critical precondition for the assertion of America's global leadership has proven more than ambiguous. On the plus side there has been above all a sustained economic upswing brought about without inflation. This, however, has been dearly...
bought. Not only the Americans themselves have paid a great deal for it — and will continue to do so for a long time to come — but U.S. partners have as well.

Thus, economic growth has been achieved in part at the cost of an unparalleled increase in the national debt, price stability (by way of high interest rates) at the expense of the economic growth of trade partners and at the cost of U.S. industry (from the cheap imports due to the high dollar). Of course, the days of the extremely high interest rates and the high dollar are now past. However, the “double debt crisis” with its combination of budget deficit and foreign indebtedness will constrict U.S. freedom of action in the long term — in part because of the heavy interest and repayment burden on the budget, in part because of the need to pursue a policy that enables the U.S. to reverse the deficits and maintain investor confidence in the American economy. This confidence can be undermined by political as well as economic crises. In future the U.S. will quite likely have to show greater regard for foreign capital interests and consider unilateral actions more carefully in the way it handles international political and military conflict. Moreover, the Reagan Administration’s industrial and technological policy, which essentially confines itself to promoting industrial innovation indirectly via the defense sector, will prove increasingly costly and inefficient. For all its undisputed innovative potential, American industry will in the long run be saddled by the effects of this adherence to an outmoded strategy.

The Reagan Administration’s difficulties in credibly realizing its ambitious goal of reconstructing American leadership in the world economy lay in structural shifts in power and, besides wrong tactical political decisions, in a simplistic view of the world. This has been evidenced by the sweeping disregard of what is now the fact of U.S. integration in the world economy; policy geared primarily to national goals now faces much tighter constraints. The tendency to oversimplify has also been shown in the disregard of the interactions between economic and security policy strategies for meeting the “dual” challenge from the new competitors and the Soviet Union. Thus the fundamentally false estimation that the U.S. could afford Reaganomics and an arms buildup simultaneously; likewise the underestimation of economic and political opposition to the extreme fixation on security in trade policy toward the East.

Also, because of the determined and sometimes callous assertion of American ideas and interests vis-à-vis economic partners, who are indeed largely political allies and “friends,” in their eyes the U.S. has yet to become a generally acknowledged leader again. Rather, it is regarded as a strong but difficult competitor with egoistic and, even for its own interests, often problematic ambitions.
Leadership in the world economy presupposes the ability “to take on an undue share of the burdens of the system, and in particular to take on its support in adversity.” With the reordering of the world economy after the Second World War the U.S. could credibly put forward its claim to leadership, in part because its economic strength allowed it to make concessions to the interests of the weaker nations. In the Reagan Administration’s view the U.S. today is rather a victim of its own postwar policy: in seeking to promote the prosperity of its allies and the international economy as a whole, the U.S. let dangerous competitors become powerful. Hence, it can no longer afford to make economic concessions. Rather, it is banking on its market strength which it considers great enough still that it can do without cooperative solutions to conflict. Thus, under the Reagan Administration the “carrot” has frequently given way to the “stick.” Yet the U.S. is no longer so strong, nor will it soon become so again as a result of Reaganomics, that it can follow this road without detriment to itself and others.

II Agenda Setting
Ronald Reagan and his Rhetoric in Foreign Policy

1. On the Concept of “Political Culture”

“Political Culture” refers to a by no means contradistinctory, composite of myths, philosophical ideas and historical experiences from which a society forms its political and historical identity. Political culture is expressed in values, beliefs, norms and symbols that exert a powerful influence in society. Political culture defines legitimacy for a society and thus sets limits on the range of demands on and permissible actions by its constituent political system. Members of society are brought up in the commonplaces of the political culture through the schools and media; most have no more than a rudimentary knowledge of it. Political elites, on the other hand, have to be familiar with the substance of political culture so as to use it for their purposes. They do so primarily through ideologies, which constitute coherent explanatory models of political reality constructed largely from elements of the political culture. This can also entail the manipulation of symbols. Political culture is one of the most important tools for elites to generate both active social support for specific political actions and passive support in the form of social recognition of the elites’ legitimate exercise of authority.

Political culture defines an ideal in that it represents the goals of the political system; it is an ideal political elites find difficult or simply impossible to attain. Hence, there is a yawning gap between a society’s prevailing political culture and the actual political practice of its political elites. Political elites constantly find themselves in danger of failing to meet society’s demands that its ideals be realized. Hence, to avoid political crises that could weaken the legitimacy of elites or the entire political system, political elites must use elements of political culture symbolically, above all in their discourse, or rhetoric. Political culture in this case becomes a means by which the leading political groups seek to prevent the political culture’s implicit demands from becoming active and to ensure legitimacy and support from society for their own political visions, plans and actions. The rhetorical use of political culture thus affords a basis for drawing conclusions about the values, beliefs and ideologies underlying the actions of elites.

2. American Political Culture

In U.S. political culture we can distinguish three main traditions:

2.1 The Religious Tradition

The religious tradition in American politics goes back to the Puritans, who in 17th century New England founded their commonwealth on the basic law of the Bible. The Puritans looked on America as the "promised land," the "new Jerusalem"; it would be a "shining city on a hill." The Puritans lived and acted with the sense of having a covenant of grace with God. Being the elect of God was manifested in their predestined material success. American foreign policy has derived from this tradition a sense of uniqueness, a conviction of being a land of manifest destiny, invested with a higher morality than other nations and hence bound to its mission.

2.2 The Liberal Tradition

In the course of the 18th century the religious tradition lost much of its power to give meaning to life in the North American colonies. As it declined new ideas began to take hold, notably from the philosophy of John Locke. Today the "liberal tradition," can be considered the dominant tradition of American political culture. According to Locke, individuals living freely in the state of nature come together as beings endowed with reason and form a contract to found a democratic government with narrowly circumscribed powers. This government protects the community against external threats and, most important, protects the rights of the individual, especially his right to property, on which, for Locke, all personal freedom rests.

American political culture came to embrace the primacy of the individual's well-being over the good of the community as a whole, capitalism as a prerequisite of individual freedom and democracy, free trade as a precondition for world peace, equality of all nations under international law, and the conviction that liberalism and democracy will inevitably spread throughout the world because they satisfy man's inherent longing for individual freedom and thus are an expression of human reason.

2.3 The Republican Tradition

The republican tradition was conceived by the founding fathers as a counterweight to the liberal tradition's emphasis on individual interests. It goes back

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to the idea of the republican state, transmitted through the city-states of the Italian renaissance. At the heart of this idea stands the concept of the individual's virtue as prerequisite for the functioning of the political system. According to the republican tradition, individuals should in their actions be guided not just by their individual interests, but ought to take into account the concerns of the whole society and be prepared to make sacrifices and compromises for its sake.

The republican tradition has been used by political elites primarily to strengthen the authority of the political system, for example, by fostering patriotism and by wielding the symbols of the political system as well as the myths of American history to engender a willingness to sacrifice.

3. Political Culture and American Foreign Policy

The political system of the U.S. was quite successful in establishing the ideals of American political culture within its own society. It was far less successful in realizing these ideals in international relations.

Until nearly the end of the 19th century American society was absorbed primarily by the opening up of the North American continent, hence the demands on the political system for action abroad were weakly formed and usually satisfied by symbolic gestures such as the Monroe Doctrine. Even after the U.S. had risen to world power following the Second World War, American society showed but little interest in a continuous involvement in foreign affairs. It took as given the realization of the ideals of American political culture by the political system. For the most part, the latter produces foreign policy decisions in an administrative-bureaucratic way. Political culture is thus not a major variable in most foreign policy decisions. Yet there are problems of foreign policy that cannot be decided routinely within the political system, but are matters of controversy among the political elites and in society. In such cases, elements of the political culture are used as arguments. They can be decisive if certain responses are provoked in the public debate. For postwar American foreign policy such "provocatives" have been:

a) fear of being "soft on communism";
b) wounded national pride;
c) undue sacrifice, mainly in the form of "American lives" or economic costs;
d) open breaches of, or attempts to alter, the prevailing forms of political culture.

These provocatives speak to a rudimentary awareness of political culture in American society. As large sectors of the society do not have a foreign policy ideology, this awareness acts as an "ad hoc ideology" which conditions
demands on the political system. What shape these demands take depends on the specific issues and provocations, but in substance society's demands are always derived from the ideals of American political culture.

4. Ronald Reagan and the Foreign Policy Expectations of American Society

Like the entire, largely internationalist, foreign policy elite of the U.S. after World War II, Ronald Reagan regards a return to prewar isolationism as dangerous for national security and economic prosperity. Like all postwar presidents before him, Reagan faces the dilemma of having out of national interest to conduct the policy of a global power yet also satisfy the ideals of American political culture.

Indicative of these public expectations are a number of provocatives that have confronted U.S. political elites since the Vietnam War. In the wake of the U.S. military engagement in Southeast Asia, Americans have decried "intolerable sacrifices in American lives and economic costs." Kissinger's realpolitik of détente has been attacked as immoral, an open breach of the ideals of American political culture. In response elites have placed greater emphasis on the political culture's moral values which rest on the liberal and religious traditions. The readiness to undertake military intervention has weakened. A discussion begun in the "strategic community" during the last years of the Nixon Administration on the danger of the U.S. losing its military superiority in the face of massive Soviet arms buildups has triggered the "soft on communism" impulse at least since the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. At the same time the Teheran hostage crisis greatly injured American pride — yet another provocative.

In 1981 Ronald Reagan immediately confronted the following foreign policy expectations:

a) In the face of the Soviet arms buildup, the U.S. had to secure its military superiority.

b) A communism perceived as expansionist had to be opposed by American values around the world.

c) A wounded national pride had to be healed.

d) American society had to be reassured ideologically with the certainty that its political-cultural values were the proper foundation for a foreign policy

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that safeguarded the position of the U.S. as a global power in a changing, threatening world.
e) At the same time American society had to be spared military interventions and thus sacrifices.

This spectrum of public expectations, which exists in part as a diffuse mood, partly in the form of concrete demands, is reflected in Reagan’s public pronouncements. The President must convince society that by his policy he can meet these expectations (cognitive legitimacy), and that he does this with a policy that conforms to the norms of American political culture (normative legitimacy). Presidential rhetoric thus lays a basis for political action by producing legitimacy which translates into support. Identifying which elements of political culture Reagan uses to do so allows us to draw conclusions about his political convictions. Presidential rhetoric is becoming more and more a substitute for substantive political action, particularly in foreign policy, where society does not perceive the consequences of acting or not acting as clearly as in domestic policy. By analyzing Reagan’s speeches we should be able to elucidate elements of political culture as well as their relative importance. In interpreting the results of our analysis we will have to consider the following:

- Does Ronald Reagan use elements of the American political culture in his public statements in order to secure the cognitive and normative legitimacy of his policy?

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7 See ibid.


9 This content analysis draws upon 150 speeches by and interviews with Ronald Reagan from 1981 to 1985. These statements on policy were expressly addressed to the American public and, in view of their primary audiences and media dissemination, presumably had a broad impact. They were analyzed and classified by the number of paragraphs in which statements appear that could be ascribed to one of the three indicated traditions of American political culture. A second step entailed an examination of the frequency of statements from these various traditions in Reagan’s public pronouncements on selected themes of foreign policy. The frequency of paragraphs with elements of the political culture was calculated relative to the total number of all paragraphs and to the paragraphs in a specific subject area. The speeches and interviews were taken in original transcript from the Wireless Bulletin from Washington published by the U.S. Information Service, years 1981 to 1985.
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— Is this especially so on subjects that are the focus of public expectations?
— Is political culture of particular importance in Reagan’s speeches on themes that are especially provocative?
— What does Reagan’s rhetorical use of elements of American political culture say about his political view of the world and in what tradition does he himself stand?

5. Political Culture in the Rhetoric of Ronald Reagan

Elements of the political culture are found in 17% of the paragraphs of the Reagan speeches and interviews examined. Though data for other presidents are lacking, it can be stated that Reagan obviously does make rhetorical use of elements of political culture.

More illuminating, however, is a classification by the various strains of the political culture. In 9% of all paragraphs Reagan employs elements from the liberal tradition, in 5% from the republican and in 3% from the religious. Thus, in keeping with its dominant role in American society, the liberal tradition plays a prominent part in Reagan’s rhetoric.

As for the frequency with which these elements appear in the various years under study, it is striking that Reagan employed elements of political culture more often in the first two years of his presidency. After that their frequency declines: 1981: 22%, 1982: 22%, 1983: 14%, 1984: 15%, 1985: 16%.

The conspicuously frequent use of elements of political culture in the first two years is apparently attributable to the new administration’s difficulties in getting started. Occupied mainly with reorganization and the replacement of top-level personnel, the Administration was not yet in a position to carry out its political program and in this way meet the demands of society. Reagan’s symbolic actions, including his speeches, thus assumed great importance. Frequent rhetorical use of elements of political culture would ideologically fortify and motivate his socio-political coalition. After two years, once the Reagan Administration had established its organizational basis for carrying out its foreign policy, the frequency of elements of political culture in Reagan’s speeches dropped markedly. Using them too frequently would generate too great a pressure of expectations, or the rhetoric would wear thin and fall into phrasemongering.

Looking at the frequency distribution of the different strains of political culture, we see that the elements of the liberal and the religious traditions showed a fairly parallel distribution over the period of study:


The liberal and religious traditions show similarities in content that make it possible to use them together. Both traditions very strongly emphasize the uniqueness of the U.S. in the world, its exemplariness for the future development of mankind. Both traditions possess a strong missionary impulse, a conviction that the American model ought to be spread. In using elements from these two traditions Reagan takes into account the demand for an aggressive assertion of American values. The liberal and the religious are better suited than the republican tradition to provide an ideological response to communism, to counterpose a liberal world order. The republican tradition, on the other hand, because of its central idea of compatibility between individual and collective interests, is better suited to justifying compromises with opposing powers. Compromise with the U.S.S.R., openly proclaimed by Reagan (it does exist de facto), would, however, contradict major aspects of public expectation.

While in 1984 and 1985 the use of republican elements receded, the frequency of elements from the liberal and religious traditions rose. The more frequent use of liberal and religious elements in the election campaign and afterward, as the heralded “Reagan revolution” was to be consummated, suggests that these two traditions form the foundation of Reagan’s political ideology. His image of the U.S. is that of a chosen nation whose moral actions are in harmony with divine Providence, a nation that cannot compromise with its ideological foe, the U.S.S.R., or other communist states, without infringing its mission to spread its own social system. Accordingly, unilateral action is more likely than concord and compromise with other nations. In these traditions great emphasis is placed on the morality of capitalism. There is no room for government intervention in the economy or international trade, for instance, in the form of protectionism.

6. Political Culture in the Rhetoric of Ronald Reagan on Specific Issues in Foreign Policy

While identifying elements of U.S. political culture is of some interest, only the way they are joined with various political issues will tell us something about the character of Reagan’s policies.

Communism: This topic comprises all statements dealing with communism as an ideology but not with specific communist states. “Communism” shows the highest frequency, 55%, of paragraphs containing elements of the political culture. This comes as no surprise. The charge of being soft on communism is one of the most dangerous provocatives in foreign policy; triggering it
could lead to a rapid loss of popular support for the President's policy and undermine its legitimacy. At the same time Reagan can take no more than symbolic actions against the evoked communist menace. Most Americans are not prepared for a policy of confrontation with the U.S.S.R., as this would raise the danger of a military conflict. They are not about to make the sacrifice this would entail. Thus, Reagan's use of political culture regarding communism serves primarily a symbolic purpose as a substitute for substantive action which is not possible.

It is not surprising that on the subject of "communism" the percentage of liberal elements is far and away the highest (47%). The religious tradition also appears well above average (7%). Elements from the republican tradition are completely absent. The offensive assertion of American values has no basis in that part of American political culture which might legitimate the compromise with communism implicit in a policy of détente.

Eastern Europe: With 34% of all paragraphs, this subject has the second highest frequency in Reagan's public statements. It appears mostly in speeches on the Polish crisis in 1981/82. Here communism is treated not as an abstract ideology, but in conjunction with a specific communist state. The declaration of martial law in December 1981 put an end to Solidarity's strivings for democratization. The communist regime had shattered U.S. hopes that pressure from below might bring change in the communist system toward liberal democracy. Here, again, Reagan faced the danger of provoking the "soft on communism" charge. None of his options were conducive to reversing events in Poland. Trying to do so would have dangerously strained relations with the U.S.S.R. and provoked a confrontation that the American public, for all its sympathy with Solidarity, did not want. Reagan therefore confined his policy to a few symbolic acts and a heavy rhetorical use of elements of political culture in order to counteract any charge of being "weak on communism." His rhetoric displayed an above-average share of liberal elements (25% of the paragraphs dealing with this subject) and religious elements (8%). The percentage of republican elements is far below the average at 1%.

International economic system: On this subject we find the third highest proportion of elements of American political culture (20%), almost exclusively liberal elements (18%). Elements of the religious and republican traditions appear with just 1% each.

This topic has to be seen in the context of the Reagan Administration's economic policy. Reagan has effectively set about replacing the more social democratic Keynesian values of the New Deal coalition with the old liberal values of the pre-New Deal era. In his statements on the world economic system he thus presents himself as an economic liberal. His frequent use of
liberal elements also reflects the traditional endeavors of American presidents since the Second World War to counter protectionist tendencies in Congress.

**Western Europe/NATO:** This subject comes fourth in relative frequency in Reagan's public pronouncements (19%). Here the republican tradition is addressed more often than average, with a share of 11%. Liberal elements appear in only 7%, religious elements but 2%.

The main purpose of drawing on the republican tradition has been to counteract isolationist tendencies in American society in the face of European criticism of the deployment of new U.S. intermediate-range weapons in Western Europe. To this end Reagan stresses the responsibility of the U.S. to defend and hence make sacrifices for the democracies of Western Europe who are committed to the same values. The liberal elements that Reagan employs are meant to show the wide acceptance of American values in postwar Western Europe and the economic success they have made possible there. Above all, the rise of the Federal Republic out of the ruins of Nazi Germany serves as an example of American liberalism's power to democratize totalitarian systems.

**Latin America:** This subject represents the fifth most frequent area in which elements of the political culture are used, with 18%. The liberal share of 9% marks the average, the republican of 7% is over, the religious with 2% under.

Latin America is a precarious topic for Ronald Reagan. On the one hand, he is faced in Nicaragua and El Salvador with leftist, allegedly communist systems or guerilla movements that have to be prevented from making any further advances. Yet within the American public there is also a clear order of priorities: given the risks involved — especially that of endangering "American lives" — the public is not prepared to support a military intervention. Nor is there any consensus on whether the Sandinistas (whose success was in fact facilitated considerably by Carter's human rights policy) are Soviet-type communists or social-revolutionary democrats. In the face of this ambivalence, Reagan uses liberal elements to show how liberal American values are more and more taking root in Latin America, and in contrast paints a negative picture of Nicaragua's evolution into a communist state. On the other hand, he often stresses elements of the republican tradition to generate a willingness in the American public to make sacrifices in support of the contras. Reagan also attempts to raise the "soft on communism" provocative in order to prod Congress to approve increased aid to the contras and back American military activities in Central America.

**National Security:** With 16% this theme ranks sixth. On no other subject does Reagan so often use elements of the republican tradition (11%). The mention of elements from the liberal and religious traditions is slight, with 2% in each case.
In drawing on elements of the republican tradition Reagan stresses the American commitment to make sacrifices for national security. With that he seeks to muster public support for defense spending and to strengthen society's readiness to support U.S. military interventions, which has in fact been low for fear of public sacrifices.

**U.S. foreign trade:** Here Reagan uses elements from political culture in 13% of the paragraphs. As can be expected, these derive almost exclusively from the liberal tradition (11%), with which Reagan promotes a liberal foreign trade policy and argues against protectionism.

**Soviet Union:** In his speeches Reagan deals with the U.S.S.R. in just 12% of the paragraphs containing elements of political culture, which is below average. At first glance this might appear surprising. However, Reagan avoids the charge of being soft on communism by accentuating elements of political culture in direct reference to "communism." Were he to employ these as heavily in his rhetoric on the U.S.S.R., he might arouse public expectations he could not satisfy. Toward the U.S.S.R. Reagan must — whether he wants to or not — practice a realpolitik which is defined by an interest in Soviet restraint in the world's crisis areas and by U.S. security interests. A heavy liberal and religious rhetoric on the U.S.S.R. could provoke a fear in the American public that Reagan was seeking confrontation with the U.S.S.R., which, owing to the potential costs and sacrifices, would not be popular. This points up the great ambivalence of American liberalism: on the one hand, it is geared to the construction of an absolutist ideology with a claim to disseminate its values worldwide; on the other hand, by placing the interests of the individual above those of the political system, it denies the latter the requisite means for a more aggressive, expansionistic spread of liberal values — conceivably by military force.

Reagan is immune to the charge of being weak on Soviet communism also because of his arms policy, with which he satisfies the public demand to keep the U.S. militarily superior to the U.S.S.R.

**Arms control:** This topic appears in only 9% of the paragraphs. Here Reagan does not face the danger of any provocatives, though there are strong public demands for disarmament and arms control (for instance, the freeze movement). These, however, cannot become provocative as long as the costs of the armament are not demanding painful financial sacrifices from the American public.

Liberal and religious elements are weakly represented with 3% and 2%, respectively. More frequent are references to the republican tradition, with 4%; this again illustrates how republican strains are suited to justifying compromises with the political adversary.
7. Toward the Reconstruction of American Strength — What does the Political Culture Contribute?

The strength of the United States is based not just on the country's military and economic power. It rests also on the belief of its citizens in their nation's historical role and their faith that their own political values and convictions are the right foundation for successfully resolving the problems of the U.S. as a global power. However, the strength of the U.S. also rests on the confidence its society has in the ability of its political system to translate these values, convictions and norms into foreign policy. This is the domestic prerequisite for the projection of American strength abroad.

In his rhetoric Reagan meets the public need for confirmation of American values, ideological certainty and moral unambiguousness in foreign policy. He offers a convincing model for interpreting the phenomena of foreign affairs, one that rests primarily on liberal values in an aggressive missionary key and that reduces most problems of foreign policy to the East-West conflict, the opposition of American liberalism and Soviet communism, and ultimately the antagonism between good and evil. In strengthening these beliefs in the higher morality and legitimacy of U.S. conduct in foreign affairs, Reagan has made a contribution to the reconstruction of American strength.

At least until the Iran-contra affair, Reagan had succeeded in strengthening confidence in the possibility of realizing the ideals of American political culture. This too contributed to the reconstruction of American strength, though the effect was then nullified by the involvement of the President and leading members of his Administration in the Iran-contra affair. On the other hand, the "hero worship" that is rampant in large sectors of American society and that makes an anti-communist freedom fighter out of Lt.-Colonel North is evidence of the strength of Reagan's ideologically fortified paradigm for foreign policy.

Can we then summarize by saying that in utilizing American political culture Reagan has strengthened the U.S.? Yes and no. Reagan has surely met public expectations and removed from American society the self-doubts that arose mainly in the period of the Vietnam War. However, he has offered American society an interpretive model which in its ideological crudeness cannot give U.S. foreign policy the fundamental guidance it requires to deal successfully with a changing international environment. While the U.S.S.R. and China are abandoning major elements of their ideology and beginning an ideological modernization of historical significance, Reagan reinforces old, conventional ideological structures with which the political system responds to the changes in the communist world in reflexive and downright clumsy ways. In Reagan's scheme, to cite just another example, the North-South conflict is subordinated to the ideological East-West struggle and not recognized as a problem in its
own right. These two examples show that Reagan has not prepared American society for major changes in international relations.

Ronald Reagan has instead led American society to live once again in the ideological clarity and certainty of the 1950s. In this way he might well have made in the long run more of a contribution to the erosion of American strength.
The Reagan Presidency began in 1981 with a clear repudiation of the American foreign policy of the 1970s. The détente and arms control policies of the Nixon, Ford and Carter Administrations were to give way to a new “policy of strength.” This change of course at the hands of critics and opponents of détente and arms control was preceded by a fundamental change in the security policy agenda, a “conservative revolution.” The policy of the past decade was perceived as by and large a failure; its consequences had to be corrected. The advocates of a revitalized policy of strength aimed to restore the United States to its position as the world’s leading power by exploiting its economic and alliance, but above all military potentialities.\(^1\)

1. From Détente to the New “Policy of Strength”

In the United States the breakdown of détente and return to a policy of strength reflected more than just criticism of the political course of previous administrations; it represented a response to the obvious decline in American power in the 1970s. The Soviet Union had been demanding full equality on the basis of the atomic stalemate reached in the late 1960s. The policy of détente marked an attempt to establish a new structure of American-Soviet relations in recognition of approximate military parity. Rather than asserting the U.S. position as a world power through dangerous military and political confrontation with the Soviet Union, the Republican Nixon Administration had been striving since 1969 for a “limited adversary relationship.”\(^2\) Arms control negotiations and bilateral conflict resolution were to bind the world’s second leading power in a web of relations and commitments designed to contain the spread of its influence and establish greater international stability. In attempting to “reconcile the reality of competition with the imperative of

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1 This essay summarizes the results of a research project carried out as part of a research competition on “Arms Control” conducted by the Volkswagen Foundation. For the full presentation of my conclusions see my *Kurswechsel in Washington. Entspannungsgegner und Rüstungskontrolle unter der Präsidentschaft Ronald Reagan*, Berlin: Quorum 1987.
President Nixon and his national security advisor (as of 1973 also secretary of state) Henry Kissinger sought a new, in their view timely, "civilized" way of handling the East-West conflict. This new course was not meant to recognize political parity. The fundamental power and systems rivalry between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. was as little affected by this as the continued goal of containing Soviet power. The method had changed, but not the motive or objective. "Containment by détente" replaced "containment by confrontation." Détente policy understood in these terms was designed to "resist the expansionism [of the Soviet Union] and simultaneously to keep open the option of historical evolution — in effect, to combine the analysis and strategy of conservatives with the tactics of liberals."\(^4\)

This attempt failed. To its critics and opponents, the policy of détente and arms control was not an answer to the changed international conditions that had produced a relative decline in American power. It was rather the cause of this decline. They claimed that as a result of this policy the United States was in danger of becoming a second-rank power. Détente and arms control had strengthened Soviet influence worldwide, made possible an unparalleled Soviet arms buildup, weakened alliances of the U.S. and permanently damaged its "national security," particularly as a result of arms control agreements.\(^5\)

Opponents and critics of détente regarded Soviet-American relations as strictly a zero-sum game, where a loss for one side always represented a gain for the other and independent third parties had no place. Their advocacy of a policy of strength expressed a refusal to adapt to the altered international realities and reflected a striving to re-order the world in conformity with their own political objectives, if need be by military means.

The American opponents and critics of détente could draw upon attitudes and patterns of behavior that have been anchored in the political culture of the United States at least since 1945. The rise of the U.S. to global power not only resulted in an unprecedented peacetime military potential, but created as well a complex of political, military and industrial interests for whom a high level of arms spending was of vital importance.\(^6\) Military thinking gained

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6 It would be incorrect, however, to assume that the making of foreign policy was dominated by a military-industrial complex. There is not automaticity that regularly realizes these interests. On the contrary, the material interest in high defense spending
great influence in the foreign policy decision-making process. The Cold War confrontation with the Soviet Union cemented an image of the enemy that was attenuated during the brief years of détente but never eliminated. This “structural barrier” to protect the “national security state”\(^7\) favored that part of the political elite that had in the postwar years shaped the U.S. position as a world power on the basis of military and economic superiority and had tried to defend it in the 1970s against what it perceived as the dual challenge from the Soviet claim to parity and the domestic inclination to yield in détente. Initially their criticism received little attention. The more complicated and cumbersome the process of political and military détente became, the stronger their influence grew in American society. Rather than trying to reach cooperative solutions with the Soviet Union to bilateral and global problems they advocated a return to a policy of strength and controlled military, political and economic confrontation. At the latest following the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (December 1979) there ceased to exist a majority for détente within the U.S.

2. Opponents of Détente, Critics of Détente

The critics and opponents of détente and arms control policy do not constitute a homogeneous group sharing all the same assumptions and goals, but rather a social coalition of considerable breadth. This coalition includes public interest groups such as the American Security Council, the Coalition for Peace through Strength and the Committee on the Present Danger; political foundations, e.g., the American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation; publications such as *Commentary*, *The Public Interest* and *The Wall Street Journal*; parts of the churches and, notably, the trade unions.\(^8\) Protestant

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\(^8\) The trade unions federated in the AFL/CIO have traditionally had a very strong foreign policy orientation. They support the capitalist economic system, advocate the spread of the American socio-economic model around the world and are intensely anti-communist. Since the Nixon Administration they have been among the strongest critics of détente and arms control policy. Not until under the Reagan Presidency did the AFL/CIO embrace a more critical line on armament, after the rise in defense spending had necessitated increasing cutbacks in social programs and thus affected the interests of union members.
fundamentalists and the extremely conservative "New Right" are also part of this wide-ranging alliance. Criticism of détente found broad support among both Republicans and Democrats: "The détente policy of the Republican Nixon-Kissinger era created a rift in both parties. A new coalition was formed between Republicans of the Goldwater wing and Democrats who equated détente with 'appeasement'.'\(^9\)

The Committee on the Present Danger (CPD) became the most important organization of critics and opponents of détente. This group\(^{10}\) was founded in 1976 by figures from both parties who had been among the foreign and security policy elite at the time of the Cold War. Conservative and neo-conservative\(^{11}\) Democrats, including security experts Paul Nitze, Richard Perle and Eugene Rostow as well as Georgetown University professor Jeanne Kirkpatrick, had played a major role in forming the CPD. The Committee's influence was a product of the political authority, expertise and government experience of its members, plus the fact that it could bring together representatives of all the currents of détente criticism within the political elite. From its inception the Committee aimed to restore a bipartisan consensus on foreign policy, based on a policy of strength to contain and roll back Soviet power. The goal was to be achieved through concerted political information work, e.g., through publications, discussions with decision makers and statements before congressional committees.

The success of the détente critics and opponents at the end of the 1970s could be attributed essentially to their public influence and activity as well as to the diminished persuasiveness of the "liberal school of arms control." The influence of the conservatives on Congress, Administration and public opinion heightened the perception of a declining importance of the United States in world affairs, a growing military imbalance to its detriment, a failure of arms control and a consequent threat to the security of the nation and its allies. Those critical of détente regained leadership in foreign policy opinion in the U.S. They were more united in rejecting the policy of the 1970s than in designing a new policy.

11 In the U.S. "neo-conservative" refers to a group of former liberals who in the 1960s had supported the social welfare programs and first attempts at cooperation with the Soviet Union but by about the end of the decade had rejected these policies as a failure. Cf. Kurt L. Shell, *Der amerikanische Konservatismus*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 1986, pp. 113–125.
The serious differences on the substance of a new course justify a distinction between opponents and critics of détente and arms control. Both groups assume a bipolar structure of the international system, see communism as the main threat to the “free West,” regard the arms competition as the central dimension of the U.S.-Soviet conflict and advocate “military strength” as the decisive demand for restoring U.S. global leadership. Beyond these basic commonalities the views of the two groups on future foreign policy diverge markedly.

– Whereas the opponents of détente reject virtually any cooperation, unless to prevent an “inadvertent” outbreak of war, the critics of détente propose only to restrict cooperation as a way of applying political sanctions. The critics can conceive of expanded cooperation, e.g., as a trade-off for Soviet “restraint” in its international behavior.

– The opponents of détente demand the roll back of Soviet power and influence (e.g., by support for anti-communist “freedom fighters”), whereas the critics of détente advocate a containment policy that does propose forcing back Soviet influence, but only from beyond the clearly delineated Soviet sphere of influence.

– Contrary to the critics of détente, who have largely resigned themselves to the existence of communist states, the opponents of détente support a political destabilization of the communist states.

– The opponents of détente seek a military superiority of the United States, including in the nuclear sphere, while the critics of détente want only to restore “military strength,” understood as an approximate balance of capabilities with sectoral American advantages (e.g., naval superiority) but with no projected aim of nuclear superiority.

– Whereas the opponents call for a far-reaching trade and technology embargo against the communist states, the critics confine themselves to endorsing economic sanctions without denying East-West trade on principle.

– Détente opponents are given to a unilateral approach that demands of allies that they follow the leading power without prior involvement or consultation in decision making. Critics of détente also call for strong U.S. “leadership” – on economic as well as political matters – but couple this with a greater willingness to consult.

3. From Opposition into the Administration

The differences between opponents and critics of détente were submerged at first under the common opposition to past policy, in particular to the SALT II agreement. When Ronald Reagan won the 1980 presidential election and occupied the White House in January 1981, the opponents and critics of détente had reached their most important goal, namely, the levers of power
in the foreign and security policy of the United States. Thirty-three members of the Committee on the Present Danger, which Reagan himself had joined in 1976, entered into the Administration: Richard Allen, Reagan's main foreign policy advisor in the campaign, became national security advisor, Jeanne Kirkpatrick UN ambassador, Paul Nitze chief negotiator for the U.S.-Soviet negotiations on intermediate-range missiles, Richard Perle assistant secretary in the Pentagon, and Eugene Rostow director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. Détente critic Alexander Haig was called to head the State Department and détente opponent Caspar Weinberger took over the direction of the Defense Department.

Opponents and critics of détente and arms control were initially united on the policy to be pursued. "Rebuilding American strength" was to have absolute priority, particularly in modernizing and expanding U.S. military forces. The Soviet Union was admonished to exercise "restraint" in its actions: henceforth it would have to reckon with American "resolve." For the Reagan Administration the reconstruction of American leadership was a question of decisiveness and will. It was not prepared to recognize possible limits to American power projection as a result of changed international conditions.

The new administration's arms control policy was based on the critique of arms control in the 1970s. Military modernization was to be given clear priority over arms control: "arms before control." While the opponents of détente rejected arms control on principle, because, among other reasons, it could undermine support for defense efforts at home, the critics of détente felt that arms control could very well be an expedient political means, after restoring "American strength," if it rested on strict reciprocity and was advantageous to both sides. Verbally the goal of concluding arms control agreements was supported by many opponents of détente also. However, unlike the majority of détente critics, they were not willing to recognize one essential condition for the success of arms control, namely, that proposals had to be negotiable and subject to compromise.

The Reagan Administration did not agree to resume U.S.-Soviet negotiations on intermediate-range nuclear missiles (November 1981) and strategic nuclear weapons (June 1982) until increasing pressure from the NATO allies, Congress and the political public on both sides of the Atlantic left scarcely any other alternative. The Administration conducted these negotiations not with the aim of achieving a mutually beneficial compromise, but rather the talks had a predominantly domestic political function: they were to encourage congressional and public support for the arms modernization by demonstrating U.S. willingness to talk.12 With the negotiations deadlocked and the

deployment of American intermediate-range missiles in Europe beginning, the Soviet Union broke off the negotiations in late 1983. A period of controlled confrontation gave way to a phase of silence between the world's leading powers. From the perspective of détente critics and opponents this situation was no cause to complain, for the Soviet Union had left the negotiating table and thus taken on itself the responsibility for interrupting the dialogue. Nevertheless, in the American public the demand for the Administration to resume negotiations became increasingly emphatic.

With a whole series of careless as much as provocative statements, expressive in part of technical ignorance, but in part changed strategic thinking as well, the Reagan Administration had already generated a torrent of protest in its first year. The President, his defense secretary and other leading government officials spoke of the "criminal nature" of Soviet policy, of nuclear wars that might be limited (to Europe) and won, and of "nuclear warning shots" in a crisis. Whereas in the latter half of the 1970s the public demand for "strength" had been decisive, now there was a growing call for dialogue. 13 Anxiety over a Soviet threat was qualified by fear of a policy on the part of the Administration that seemed to provide for a nuclear conflict. In the United States a peace movement emerged to demand an immediate bilateral freeze on atomic weapons. This swing in opinion limited the possibilities for carrying through a policy of strength. The opponents and critics of détente continued to determine the course of the Reagan Administration's foreign policy, but they had to take into account the demands for negotiation and arms control.

4. A Resumption of Dialogue

Presidential election year 1984 was marked by the — successful — attempt to portray Ronald Reagan as a politician especially committed to peace, in order to offset the most important flaw marring the public image of this otherwise popular Republican throughout his first term in office. The Administration announced its willingness once again to negotiate with the Soviet Union. President Reagan justified the U.S. readiness to negotiate by claiming that American military, political and economic "strength" had been restored. 14

Just two years before Reagan had argued that militarily the Soviet Union had a "definite margin of superiority."\(^{15}\)

In fact, between 1978 and 1984 the defense budget of the U.S. had nearly doubled and the level of weapons procurements tripled. Even as the rate of increase in military spending went down, the Administration was still able to pursue all its key arms projects. However, the strategic balance of forces between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. had never been as imbalanced as the proponents of a policy of strength had depicted it in the late 1970s. Hence, this balance of forces had not changed as drastically within a short space of time as the Administration claimed.

The new American interest in improving relations met with a corresponding Soviet willingness. The strategy of rejecting talks had limited the Soviets' options in foreign policy.\(^{16}\) Even before President Reagan's landslide re-election in 1984 there were signs indicating a resumption of arms control negotiations between the two powers. In early January 1985 a meeting of foreign ministers was agreed upon and in March carried out. This development was welcomed by détente critics, in the Administration led by George Shultz, the secretary of state since Haig's resignation in 1982; Robert McFarlane, national security advisor; and Paul Nitze, named the President's special advisor for arms control following Reagan's re-election. In their view the U.S. could now negotiate from a "position of strength" and bring the Soviet Union to make concessions.

The situation looked different to the opponents of détente. One group encompassing members of the "New Right", Protestant fundamentalists and neo-conservative Democrats had been criticizing the Reagan Administration's foreign and security policy since 1982. They feared the President — despite his statements to the contrary — might make the achieved military modernization the object of bargaining in the talks. With the Soviet Union, they argued, it was in principle impossible to reach an agreement — the Soviets would always try to gain unilateral advantages, and besides, they did not comply with existing agreements such as SALT II and the ABM treaty. Another group of détente opponents, including the influential Heritage Foundation and the Committee on the Present Danger, reconciled itself with the resumption of the bilateral arms control dialogue and endeavored to have its substantive ideas incorporated in the U.S. negotiating position. For this group the unab-

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ated continuation of the modernization or buildup of the military arsenals took priority over arms control agreements. In the Reagan Administration this stand was taken above all by Defense Secretary Weinberger and his assistants Fred Iklé and Richard Perle.

In the arms control negotiations the Strategic Defense Initiative came very quickly to the fore. President Reagan's surprise announcement of March 23, 1983 on a reasearch and development program of ballistic missile defense (SDI) to make atomic weapons "impotent and obsolete," was followed by the conceptual development of a "new strategic policy." The objective was progressively to supplement or replace offensive nuclear weapons with defensive systems. The SDI program was enthusiastically welcomed by the opponents of a policy of strength. They had long battled against the nuclear deterrence doctrine based on the threat of mutual assured destruction and had come out for the building of a ballistic missile defense system. From the standpoint of many détente opponents, however, SDI represented not just the way to overcome deterrence but beyond that a kind of "Trojan horse" to promote other aims altogether: to thwart arms control, to regain a "margin of safety" vis-a-vis the Soviet Union by mobilizing the economic and technological resources of the U.S., and to destabilize the U.S.S.R. through a forced arms competition.

Opponents and critics of détente agreed that no limitations should be imposed on the SDI program. Yet this short-term agreement did not eliminate fundamental differences over the project's future. The opponents of détente stuck to their goal of realizing a missile defense in space. However, many détente critics sought a negotiated compromise. They were prepared to see the ABM treaty remain in force for an agreed period of time and have certain restrictions placed on the SDI program in exchange for a drastic, asymmetrical reduction in offensive nuclear weapons to the detriment of the Soviet Union. The argument over these two positions following resumption of the U.S.-Soviet talks defined the arms control debate in the Reagan Administration and led to increasingly sharper conflicts between the two political groupings within the Administrations.18

These internal conflicts were also influenced by Soviet policy. The election of Mikhail Gorbachev as General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU in March 1985, just a few days after negotiations had begun, initiated a period of renewal in personnel and reorientation in foreign and domestic policy. Up to that point the Reagan Administration had had to deal with

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three Soviet party leaders — Brezhnev, Andropov, Chernenko — whose political capacities were constrained by health problems and succession debates; now, however, it faced a leadership that was attempting to set the agenda through new initiatives, especially in arms control. Active Soviet policy had set in motion a process that had a dynamic of its own. Even if it had wished otherwise, the Administration was left no alternative but, in deference to Congress, public opinion and allies, to respond to the Soviet initiatives with its own, in some cases also newly defined proposals. Soviet inflexibility in the past had fostered a primarily declaratory, in substance immobile or uncompromising U.S. arms control policy; but now a new course was needed if the political backing for the Reagan Administration's foreign and security policy were not to be jeopardized.

There were also differences between opponents and critics of détente in assessing the new Soviet policy. The opponents regarded the new course as a slick propaganda maneuver aimed at weakening the defense preparedness of the West and again inducing it to make concessions. Most détente critics took a different view. They recognized in the Soviet offers a willingness to make substantive compromises and so supported serious negotiations. In their view the Soviet Union was no longer in a position, for economic reasons, to continue its past arms buildup. In that light American "firmness" could lead to even greater Soviet accommodation. This understanding came to prevail within the Reagan Administration. The President himself considered the new Soviet General Secretary a serious interlocutor and by the summer of 1985 had agreed to a meeting with Gorbachev.

The first American-Soviet summit meeting in six years took place in Geneva on November 19–21, 1985. The encounter served mainly for the two leaders to get to know one another and to intensify bilateral negotiations, but on substantive matters produced no results. Reagan's efforts to convince Gorbachev of the advantages of a joint transition to strategic defense systems remained as unsuccessful as the Soviet proposal to confine the SDI program to laboratory research. Before the meeting the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. had declared their willingness to reduce their nuclear arsenals by half, but there was no progress toward resolving the specific differences and so it remained a matter of purely declaratory intent. Nevertheless, the Geneva summit was a great success for the President domestically. The advocates of a policy of strength, who had regarded the meeting with skepticism for fear of "hasty" arms control agreements, applauded him because he had stuck with SDI and

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made no concessions. Yet many supporters of arms control also responded positively. They considered the summit a step into a new arms control dynamic and saw openings for future agreements. But rather than achieving new accords on arms limitation, the Reagan Administration would first abandon or call into question existing treaties.

5. Arms and Arms Control in Domestic Political Conflict

After the United States had observed the terms of the unratified SALT II treaty for more than six years, President Reagan announced in May 1986 that in carrying out its arms projects the U.S. would no longer abide by this agreement.\textsuperscript{20} The debate had already begun on what was now the last remaining U.S.-Soviet arms control agreement: the ABM treaty. Opponents of détente called upon the President to abrogate this treaty which stood in the way of building a space-based ballistic missile defense. They wanted to bring about such a decision within Reagan’s term in office so as to commit future administrations to the “new strategic policy.” The critics of détente pursued less of a long-range goal. They took the view that any form of research, testing and development of ballistic missile defense systems short of deployment would be allowed within the treaty framework. They were intent on “adapting” the ABM treaty to progress in the SDI program. “For the time being” they were not demanding a fundamental break with this treaty.

On this question the first political consequences arose in the fall of 1985.\textsuperscript{21} On October 6, 1985, National Security Advisor McFarlane stated that not only research but testing and development of all defensive systems “was allowed and supported by the treaty...on the basis of new physical principles.”\textsuperscript{22} Such a treaty interpretation had first been put forward six months earlier by the Heritage Foundation.\textsuperscript{23} After protests from the Soviets, Congress and the Allies, Secretary of State Shultz proclaimed that the “broader interpretation” of the treaty enunciated by the national security advisor was “fully justified,” but that President Reagan had decided to continue the SDI program.

\textsuperscript{20} Cf. on this my essay “Farewell to SALT II” in this volume.


within the context of the past "restrictive interpretation." Even after this clarification the Administration had moved away from an interpretation of the treaty that had underlain the policy of the United States since the agreement was concluded in 1972 and that had been reconfirmed under the Reagan Presidency. With the new interpretation SDI could be carried out in conformity with the ABM agreement until the mid-1990s. After this substantive change of position by the Administration, a complete departure from the past interpretation required simply a decision by the President. Bringing this about then became an important goal of the opponents of détente. They advocated a policy of "faits accomplis" to make the SDI program "irreversible" and to get rid of the ABM treaty by the end of Ronald Reagan's term.

At the beginning of 1987 Defense Secretary Weinberger pressed for an Administration decision in favor of an "early deployment" of a ballistic missile defense system and the "broad interpretation" of the ABM treaty. At the same time, opponents of détente in Congress and the public intensified their campaign for the earliest possible start of deployment. They justified their thrust with the argument, among others, that the Soviet Union was preparing a nationwide system of ballistic missile defense and had already begun to deploy certain components. SDI had to be accelerated in order to make up the Soviet lead. Although President Reagan continued to adhere to SDI without cuts, Secretary of State Shultz was able to prevent early and long-ranging commitments. He managed to ensure that before any final transition to the "broad interpretation" of the ABM treaty, the Congress and the Allies would be consulted. An "early deployment decision" was not taken, and it was, according to Shultz, no longer possible within Reagan's term in office. Those who opposed a policy of "faits accomplis" had gained time. They wanted to avoid hasty commitments that would undermine what they saw as the increased chances for a U.S.-Soviet arms control compromise.

Differing views on the introduction of ballistic missile defense systems and the interpretation of the ABM treaty also marked the U.S.-Soviet arms control negotiations after the November 1985 summit in Geneva. Though there were signs of agreement on large-scale reduction of both sides’ intermediate-range nuclear missiles and on progress toward reducing their strategic arsenals, the Reagan Administration’s adherence to SDI was preventing a compromise on strategic nuclear weapons. At the Reykjavik summit meeting (October 11–12, 1986), which had come about in surprising fashion and over the opposition of détente opponents, Gorbachev linked the concluding of any arms control treaty, including an INF agreement, to an agreement on limiting the SDI project to laboratory research. The summit meeting broke down over this condition, and for a time the arms control negotiations remained deadlocked.

Reagan’s refusal to take up the Soviet proposal was strongly approved by the opponents and critics of détente. Their skepticism toward or rejection of intensive diplomatic dialogue had grown since Geneva — despite the Reagan Administration’s break with SALT II and the President’s uncompromising insistence on pursuing his Strategic Defense Initiative.

6. The Crisis of the Reagan Presidency and the Success of the Détente Critics

In the fall and winter of 1986/87 important developments within the U.S. set limits on the Reagan Administration’s room for maneuver in foreign policy for the remainder of its term:

— The congressional elections of November 1986 not only confirmed the Democratic majority in the House of Representatives but gave the Democrats a majority in the Senate again after six years. Despite Reagan’s as yet unbroken popularity, the Republicans had been unable to gain the ascendancy in Congress. The President had strengthened American conservatism but failed to bring about a “realignment,” i.e., the rise of the Republicans to the “natural” majority party. With the “conservative revolution” of the late 1970s the political agenda had moved to the right for an extended period of time; a Republican majority, however, was of limited duration.

— The uncovering of the “Iran-contra affair” immediately following the elections shook the Reagan Presidency to its foundations. Though Reagan’s personal loss in credibility could be kept within limits because the President had not been involved in illegal actions and had been cooperative with Congress and the Justice Department in clearing up the affair, the “Reagan myth” was gone. The extraordinary, previously seemingly unshakable popularity of the President, across party lines, had come to an end. After his credibility had been shaken, the President’s competence as a leader was called into question by the investigations of Reagan’s own Tower Commission and, following that, of Congress. The reconstruction of a strong Reagan Presidency was no longer possible once the investigating committees had completed their work. For Congress and the public, Reagan’s capacity for leadership, which in the past had helped him over conceptual deficiencies and mistakes, was largely destroyed. Criticism of

25 Presidential leadership in the U.S. political system comprises not just direction of the executive but also the ability to set national goals, raise perspectives and personify the community of national interest above and beyond party differences. Cf. on this James W. Ceaser, “The Rhetorical Presidency Revisited,” in Marc Landy (ed.), Modern Presidents and the Presidency, Lexington, MA: Lexington Books 1985, pp. 15 – 34.
the President came from right and left; in particular, conservatives charged that he had violated the principles of his own foreign policy. This criticism was not directed at the policy of strength per se, but at the Administration's conduct of office. In the wake of the scandal Reagan's ability to take effective action was severely constrained.

For the opponents of détente it became even more difficult to achieve their ends. Once General Secretary Gorbachev had withdrawn his linkage between the limitation of SDI and an INF treaty, an agreement was reached on the complete, global disarmament of both sides' land-based intermediate-range nuclear systems and signed in December 1987 at another summit, in Washington. The opponents of détente rejected this treaty in principle. In their view the accords consolidated Soviet superiority in Europe, gave rise to illusions in the public concerning the prospects for success in arms control and undermined the defense preparedness of the West. Despite these warnings, including from within the Administration, President Reagan was determined to conclude the INF treaty. The President was seeking a foreign policy success.

The more compromising American arms control policy shaped in large measure by Secretary of State Shultz contributed to leading détente opponents' leaving the Administration. In the course of 1987, one after another, the influential Assistant Secretary Perle, ACDA Director Adelman and finally Defense Secretary Weinberger submitted their resignations. Following the appointment of détente critic Carlucci as Weinberger's successor in November 1987, the opponents of détente were no longer represented in key foreign policy positions. In its political practice — though not in its rhetoric and not always willingly, either, and despite the "great stumbling block" of SDI, which prevented any substantial breakthrough in strategic arms control - the Reagan Administration had moved toward the course of "hardheaded détente" in American-Soviet relations, as had been steered by the Republican Nixon and Ford Administrations from 1969 to 1976. By the end of Reagan's term in office the critics of détente had prevailed over the opponents of détente. The primacy of strength remained, but in a pragmatic form.

The alliance of these two tendencies in January 1981, as the Reagan Administration entered into office, had already begun to show differences once it began to determine foreign and security policy. The general consensus against détente and arms control and for a policy of strength did not imply agreement on a coherent alternative but opened up a broad range of controversial issues concerning programmatic goals and political practice.

Those who rejected any cooperation with the Soviet Union confronted pragmatic critics for whom the restoration of "strength" constituted the essential condition for renewed cooperation with the other leading world power. This practical alliance's breaking point, which had become evident at least by
1984, was thus foreseeable. Once “American strength” had been restored, the critics of détente were ready for new, productive negotiations with the Soviet Union. The détente opponents, on the other hand, maintained their rejectionist attitude, for they denied U.S.-Soviet dialogue not in certain situations but on principle. Only President Reagan himself held this heterogeneous alliance together by force of his personality, but also by his ambivalence on substantive matters. His combination of rather “ideological” rhetoric, more “pragmatic” action and the opening toward a “new strategic policy” managed to hold the coalition together despite divergent objectives. However, Reagan’s ability to unify lessened to the extent that he personally promoted an intensive U.S.-Soviet dialogue — especially since 1985. Arguing since 1984 that “American strength” had been restored, the President showed himself a détente critic. In his basic outlook, say on SALT II or SDI, he remained an opponent of détente. Since, however, he normally did not intervene in or try to direct his administration’s conduct of arms control, this substantive position rarely had the effect of defining policy.

The longer the substantive conflict lasted between opponents and critics of détente and arms control, the stronger grew new commonalities of interest between the critics of détente and the advocates of détente and arms control. New political marriages of convenience emerged, putting opponents of détente more and more on the political defensive. Despite the Iran-contra affair the prevailing perception in the U.S. of globally restored strength combined with the absence of what would be felt as threatening international crises — as at the end of the 1970s around Afghanistan and Iran — fortified the readiness to achieve understanding with the Soviet Union from a position of new self-confidence. Although it had originally intended to make a clear break from the arms control policy of the 1970s, the Reagan Administration had initiated a new U.S.-Soviet dialogue and helped prepare the ground for new arms control agreements. After Ronald Reagan’s term in office, the opponents of détente and arms control had scarcely any prospect of regaining a national political majority in the foreseeable future.
Moral Containment of Military Challenge:
The Reagan Administration and the Soviet Union

The Reagan Administration had come into office with the self-appointed mission to restore U.S. leadership in world affairs. This was to encompass greater moral self-confidence and economic growth at home as well as demonstrated military and ideological leadership abroad. With much ceremonial pomp, an unorthodox yet promising program of Reaganomics, and a global military and moral presence, the U.S. was to regain the self-confidence that had gone astray during the late 1960s and 1970s. Vietnam, the breakdown of "realistic" détente — a policy that had deviated from American values — and the humiliating hostage-taking in Iran as well as Watergate and a sluggish economy had contributed to a relative decline in U.S. power. By an old American tradition, mistakes and neglect were attributable not to abstract, international political developments beyond one's control or to a relative decline in economic power and the corresponding rise of allies in Western Europe and Japan. Rather, the nation sought the mistakes in its own behavior. The notion of a "decade of neglect" attracted a strong following in the 1980 election campaign, as did the idea of self-correction.

However, this mission to restore American hegemony had not yet developed into a foreign policy agenda, much less a political concept with which to pursue this comprehensive objective. The Reagan Administration wielded no more than certain values and beliefs for interpreting foreign and domestic situations and orienting its actions. To delineate these beliefs and find explanations for the foreign policy of this government thus constitutes a meaningful and worthwhile task for an outside observer.¹

1. The Reagan Administration's Belief System

1.1 Morality and Politics

The ubiquitous moral arguments raised during great political debates in the U.S. never fail to surprise Europeans. They are, however, a significant

¹ This essay is based on a larger study of Soviet military power from the perspective of the makers of security policy in the first Reagan Administration, prepared by the author as Ph.D. dissertation at the Free University of Berlin.
component of American political culture. What distinguishes the Reagan Administration from its predecessors is not so much the diverse uses of moral arguments in foreign and security policy but rather the specific purposes to which they have been put.

The moral appeal to traditional American values and democratic institutions was meant, first of all, to bolster the American political system and legitimize the Administration's policy. The President and his team justified their policy by linking it with American values and the concept of a just international peace. However, this appeal to American values imposed constraints on the Administration’s foreign policy, which had to reflect respected values if it were to remain legitimate. The Administration has often referred to this type of moral constraint when drawing a contrast to Soviet foreign policy. Secondly, appeals to values were intended to mobilize and consolidate public as well as congressional support for the Administration's political positions and programs. By this “philosophy” the statesman assumed the role of an educator. He had to give a clear-cut account of the situation, harmonizing his interpretation and assessment with fact. The message had to be unambiguous — discriminating arguments and assessments were secondary if it served the moral purpose of defending Western values and democratic institutions.

Thirdly, appealing to the nation's values was to strengthen collective identity and patriotism, to promote unity. Here the use of national symbols as an expression of moral values was especially important. Fourthly, fostering identity also implied drawing clear ideological lines: “we” against “them.” But as moral arguments are by nature not susceptible to compromise, this demarcation led, fifthly, to ideological polarization; Manichaean thinking, i.e., a friend-foe scheme evolved in which there was implacable rivalry between

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the good, legitimate, Western democratic system and the evil, illegitimate, Eastern communist totalitarianism.\textsuperscript{7}

1.2 The Concept of Leadership: Politics over Policy

Like other administrations before it, the Reagan Administration came into office in 1981 without a refined concept of foreign and security policy. This was attributable in part to President Reagan himself, who approached foreign policy largely as a matter of proclamation and devoted most of his thinking to domestic concerns. More importantly, this President's style put less emphasis on programmatic initiatives and concepts, or policy.\textsuperscript{8} Reagan wanted to limit the role of government in shaping American society, to return to "small government." He reacted to political initiatives from the public, Congress or other governments, refashioned them and then worked at the politics of establishing legislative majorities to effect them.\textsuperscript{9} Ironically, the results of the politics have often been diametrically opposed to Reagan's own ideological demands in basic American values.\textsuperscript{10}

"Leadership" in the mind of this President and his administration should therefore not be confused with political initiative or solid political concepts and programs. Reagan's leadership style was rather to appeal first to American values\textsuperscript{11} so as then to respond to initiatives from outside the Administration, providing the management and majorities for the policy. Leadership was not synonymous with consistency and efficiency, but rather has been marked by ideological appeals to values, reactive management and Capitol Hill politicking.

1.3 The East-West Conflict

Thinking in terms of friends and enemies, the Reagan Administration has understood international relations essentially as an arena of conflict.\textsuperscript{12} Thus


\textsuperscript{11} Cf. A Time for Choosing, p. 192.

the East-West conflict was again perceived as the central antagonism. From the Administration's point of view this was first an ideological rivalry between mutually exclusive value systems; second, a competition between diametrically opposed economic and social systems, and third, a conflict between contending powers. In this all-encompassing rivalry one side's gain was necessarily the other's loss, i.e., the East-West conflict was reduced to a zero-sum game. Hence, there was only one "correct" strategy: strengthening one's own economic and military potential and exploiting the other side's weaknesses.13

The Reagan Administration thus implicitly took the view that political influence in international relations was a direct function of military strength at home.14

The Administration's threat analysis combined notions of U.S. moral superiority with a view of the central importance of military power in international relations. The inevitable arguments about a "period of peril" and "window of vulnerability" rested on a rhetorical linkage of basic values with the belief that for every problem there has to be a — generally technical — solution. Accordingly, the Reagan Administration neatly linked the invoked threat from the Soviet Union with an optimism about the outcome of the systemic competition and with a technological determinism: With the argument that a "window of vulnerability" had been opened toward the Soviet Union, the problem of national security was handily reduced to its military dimension, while a solution was offered by appealing to faith in the superiority of American values, military prowess and strength of will.15

The basic values of individual freedom and democratic institutions also served as an ideal for the international order. The U.S. provided a model of the universal and inalienable rights of man.16 Connected with this idea was the view that American values could be safeguarded and further developed only in a democratically structured international environment.17 By linking basic values with the goal of survival the Reagan Administration put forward a positive concept of peace.18


Combining its Manichaean view of international politics and characteristically American idea of world order, the Reagan Administration’s “realistic” analysis of the Soviet Union was concerned predominantly with the nature of the system and less with Soviet foreign policy.\(^1\)

1.4 Learning from History

1.4.1 Lessons from the 1930s: The Failure of Appeasement

In its analysis of the security policy of the 1970s the Reagan Administration drew an historical parallel with the British “appeasement” policy\(^2\) toward Nazi Germany in the 1930s and reiterated Winston Churchill’s criticism of Western policy before the war.\(^3\) In its view the U.S.-Soviet negotiations on SALT II were comparable to Munich in 1938. Consistent with its “arms control philosophy” the U.S. had exercised unilateral restraint and consistently underestimated the Soviet Union’s strategic offensive capabilities, thereby narrowing American foreign policy options. Thus, in the negotiations the U.S. had been repeatedly forced to make new concessions which would eventually lead to total capitulation to the U.S.S.R. Yet this was not the only lesson from the appeasement analogy. More important was the conclusion that military weakness was synonymous with diplomatic weakness. The military balance of power thus became the central feature of U.S.-Soviet relations,\(^4\) quite apart from other factors such as economic potential or technological progress.

Personalities also provided a source of historical inspiration. Thus, Defense Secretary Weinberger’s leadership style and political thought had been greatly influenced by the example of Winston Churchill. Weinberger saw himself as a Churchill of the 1980s.\(^5\) He never tired of warning about the Soviet threat and affirming the advantages of the democratic system of government. This was designed to cement the cohesion of the Western alliance, strengthen the


\(^5\) Background information of the author in Washington, August 7, 1986.
democratic self-confidence of the U.S., create a favorable climate of opinion for arms programs and signal to the adversary a will and determination for self-defense.

The stress on will and determination was characteristic of the Reagan Administration, particularly as it showed what little importance was attached to the effectiveness of defense programs. It has been charged that despite the significant increases in spending, the Defense Department had failed by any standard to strengthen American armed forces — and thus U.S. security; it had simply maintained previous levels. Yet this criticism — however justified it may be in substance — does not come to terms with the Administration’s intent, which was more concerned with symbols, demonstrative acts and signal effects than with efficiency. Increasing the defense budget was regarded as an achievement in itself if it influenced the adversary’s political and military calculation of costs and benefits.

1.4.2 Studies of Military Conflicts: World War II

The Reagan Administration drew other lessons from European history besides those from the 1930s and the National Socialist form of totalitarianism. Contrary to its liberal critics, who pointed to parallels with the outbreak of the First World War, the Reagan Administration preferred to focus on the origins and conduct of the Second World War.

The Reagan Administration adopted the military lessons that Paul Nitze had drawn in 1946 in his strategic bombing survey:

— In future the U.S. had to be prepared for surprise attacks. “Blitzkrieg” entailed great military advantage and constituted an enormous danger.


An overall superiority (military, economic and especially technological) was imperative for achieving even limited military objectives.

Strength, vigilance and preparedness were the essential prerequisites for deterring aggression, i.e., for war prevention. In future the defense of the U.S. had to be based on both defensive and offensive capabilities.

Despite their immense destructive power compared to conventional weapons, atomic weapons did not fundamentally alter the principles of warfare but changed only the context in which certain weapons of war could be used. The existence of nuclear weapons did not make wars less feasible. They were by no means sufficient for deterrence. Consequently, wars had to be prevented through superior U.S. military capabilities.

1.5 Restrictive Use of Force

The use of military force as an instrument of foreign policy was handled with extreme caution and restraint by the Reagan Administration. It was permissible only as a means of last resort and was subject to extremely restrictive criteria. Clearly reflecting the Vietnam experience, these criteria indicated a greater U.S. inhibition about using military force. But the political decisions as to whether, how and with what aims wars were to be waged would have to be made before military force were used. The warfare itself would then be governed by strictly military criteria and not be subjected to political calculations and restrictions. This meant that the political decision to commit U.S. forces to combat was to be guided by the suitability of goals; for the military decisions, however, the operative principle was proportionality of means.

What were the Reagan Administration’s criteria for making its political decision?

29 The idea of American liberals that nuclear weapons had fundamentally changed international relations because of their immense destructive power entailed two dangers: First, it subordinated the American ideals of freedom and human rights to sheer survival. Second, it gave the Soviet Union the possibility of using atomic blackmail on the U.S. Cf. Pipes, “Soviet Global Strategy,” pp. 36, 39, and idem, “How to Cope With the Soviet Threat. A Long-Term Strategy for the West,” Commentary (August 1985), pp. 17, 19.


31 The following criteria were set forth by Defense Secretary Weinberger in a speech before the National Press Club in Washington on November 28, 1984. Cf. also Weinberger, “U.S. Defense Strategy,” pp. 685—690. Weinberger’s view was shared by a number of leading figures within the Administration, except in the State Department, and among the neoconservatives on its fringes. Cf. the answers from leading neoconservatives to the
First, the vital interests\textsuperscript{32} of the U.S. would have to be at stake. The U.S. was prepared to render economic and military assistance to its allies to the best of its ability, "but as a rule our forces or our determination cannot be a substitute for any such deficiencies [troops, C.T.] on the part of our allies."\textsuperscript{33} Second, the U.S. would have to be prepared to use its armed forces in sufficient strength to ensure victory.

Third, the political and military objectives would have to be clearly defined.

Fourth, the force structures would have to be consistent with these objectives and purposes.

Fifth, there would have to be reasonable assurance of the support of the American people and of Congress for the use of military force.

Sixth and finally, the commitment of armed forces to combat should only be a last resort.

It is in these terms that the defense buildup under President Reagan has to be seen: the Reagan Administration relied first and foremost on the political uses and deterrent effects of military power.\textsuperscript{34} It argued that the adversary's self-discipline as a result of deterrence was all the greater the more military means the U.S. had at its disposal.\textsuperscript{35} The Administration's political will to use these means was subject to strong control; but this self-constraint was balanced by the fact that military planning for victory was no longer subject to restrictions. The adversary's risk should thus consciously be made incalculable. In other words, the willingness to run limited risks in using military force should be counterbalanced by deterrence through superior strength. The reticence to commit armed forces to combat had to be offset by greater efforts to build the U.S. defense posture, which should signal determination and strength of will to the adversary.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{32} This term was consciously left vague so as not to give any indication to the Soviet Union of the regions or areas in which the U.S. was not prepared for more than a limited engagement. Cf. Weinberger Statements 1983, Vol. IV, p. 2845.

\textsuperscript{33} By this criterium, the restrictive principles on the use of military force should be seen as the Reagan Administration's response to an American problem that goes back to 1945: the immense gap between U.S. commitments to its allies and its military capabilities – i.e., the relation of ends and means. Cf. Jeffrey Record, "Jousting with Unreality," International Security, Vol. 8, No. 3, pp. 3 – 18.


\textsuperscript{35} Cf. SMP 1986, p. 156; SMP 1987, p. 159; Nitze, "Living with the Soviets," p. 369.

\textsuperscript{36} Weinberger expressed this as follows: "Recognition of our democracy's inherent reluctance about asking our troops to die for their country places an even larger premium on
1.6 Rejecting Incrementalism in Arms Policy

The Reagan Administration worked from an assumption that the U.S. political system did not allow for a continuous development of defense capabilities. The pattern was rather one of cyclical bursts. Therefore, an incrementalist arms policy was out of the question. First, assuming that public support for higher defense spending would not last indefinitely, political leaders had to gauge when the nation was prepared to invest in armament. Provision then had to be made for “slack” periods by rapidly increasing growth rates in the “boom” years. In this way of thinking about political timing, public support for arms spending was a function of a simple cyclical model of economic investment. Consequently, independent of its goals, the Reagan Administration fell into an arms buildup phase of the cycle. After that it intensified this cycle according to its own particular perspective.

U.S. arms policy has followed this cyclical pattern of arms investment since the Second World War; the Reagan Administration carried it on.\textsuperscript{37} The NSC-68 document of 1950, the Gaither Report of 1957, the alleged “missile gap” of 1959 and the “window of vulnerability” of 1980 were meant, among other purposes, to create a favorable public climate for higher rates of growth in defense spending.

2. The Image of the Soviet Union

2.1 The Nature of the System

The nature of the Soviet system assumed special significance in the analysis of the Reagan Administration,\textsuperscript{38} as the fundamental differences of political

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\textsuperscript{38} Cf. \textit{National Security Strategy of the United States}, pp. 6, 17.
systems and values were most readily depicted in Manichaean terms. In the Administration's perspective the differences between the Soviet Union and the U.S. lay in the ideological and power-political motive forces of the two systems. As a result, they had not only differing attitudes toward morality, politics and the use of force, but diametrically opposed conceptions of national and international order. Consequently, the familiar distinctions between free Western democracy (individualism, self-determination, free trade) and totalitarian communist rule (centralized power, oppression, imperialism) were revived and re-accentuated. Constitutive for the U.S. was religion and the transcendent belief in God, for the Soviet Union atheism and the chiliastic faith in the victory of Communism.

The Administration regarded communist ideology as the most important driving force behind Soviet foreign policy. In essence this ideology was militant: it conceived of history as a succession of class struggles, which it proposed to advance. The Soviet Union believed in the superiority of its own system and expected that capitalism would inevitably be defeated. However, the Reagan Administration viewed communism in the U.S.S.R. as more than just a faith. It was the embodiment of a foreign policy program of a powerful secularized state which because of its commitment to communist revolution and its domestic failings was incapable of believing seriously in the possibility of reducing tensions.

Finally, President Reagan and his advisors understood the communist ideology to be a means for the Soviet elite to legitimize its own rule and justify its domestic and foreign policy. Interpreted thus, the appeal to ideology allowed the Soviet government to pursue any policy that served the cause of communism. Whereas appealing to basic American values imposed constraints on the U.S. government, the function of communist ideology was to free the Soviet leadership from precisely such constraints. Nor did the Reagan

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Administration see any chance that Soviet foreign policy might be guided or influenced by world public opinion. Although the Soviet leaders have attempted to manipulate world opinion to their favor, Moscow has paid little heed to international judgments in the conduct of its foreign policy. Moreover, Soviet domestic politics did not inhibit foreign policy since there was neither free speech nor a free press. 46

The Reagan Administration also attached great importance to the cultural heritage of Russia, regarding it as the second source of Soviet intentions in foreign policy. By eliminating the bourgeoisie the communist revolution of 1917 removed from politics the cultural values of this middle stratum and replaced them with those of the Russian peasantry. History had taught these peasants, however, that cunning and coercion were their only sure means of survival. 47 The communist revolutionaries had adopted the norms of the Russian peasants. The communist ideology had used the Russian political culture as a foundation for projecting its revolutionary and expansionist power.

From this analysis of the totalitarian nature of the Soviet system the Reagan Administration concluded that the U.S.S.R. had more or less excluded itself from the community of nations, for it called into question the existing international order and sought to replace it with its alternative model. 48 Hence, the traditional rules and conventions for interstate relations could not be applied to dealings with the U.S.S.R. In fact, to this administration such an approach would pose a danger to national security. "Business as usual" with the Soviet Union was not possible until the U.S.S.R. had demonstrated by its actions a change in its expansionist foreign policy — for example, by abandoning the Brezhnev Doctrine, withdrawing its troops from Afghanistan or tearing down the Berlin Wall. 49 Until then, relations with the Soviet Union

47 Cf. Pipes, "Why the Soviet Union Thinks It Could Fight and Win A Nuclear War," p. 26; with a fuller discussion of Russia's political culture, idem, Survival Is Not Enough, pp. 18-23. This Harvard historian's influence on the Reagan Administration is debatable. As Soviet specialist on the staff of the National Security Advisor from 1981 to 1983, he at least lent academic credibility to the Administration's picture of the Soviet Union. It is questionable, however, whether leading members of the Administration adopted his analysis of Russian political culture. At least some — including the President — seemed to share his conclusions on Soviet behavior.
were to be governed by "realism," that is, the political system of the U.S.S.R. had to be viewed with suspicion.

2.2 The Soviet Leadership

Against this analysis liberal critics of the Administration have argued that communist ideology is in a state of dissolution and at most serves as simply a tool for Soviet leaders to justify their power. This argument of a "withering away" of Soviet ideology has met with extreme skepticism on the part of the Reagan Administration. The latter has on occasion conceded that Marxism-Leninism had to some extent lost its revolutionary vitality for mass mobilization, and yet it had been institutionalized in a powerful bureaucracy which had developed an ideological dynamic of its own. Further, it must not be overlooked that the Soviet elite had been schooled in Marxism-Leninism, which, according to the Administration, formed the prism through which the Soviet elite viewed the world.\(^50\) Thus, its ideology was what held the Soviet elite together. Moreover, the Administration accused the Soviets of conceiving politics in military terms. In the U.S.S.R. "conflict" and "force" were regarded as normal ways of regulating human relations.\(^51\) The Administration denied as unproven assumption the contention of some critics that the immense Soviet arms buildup was the unintended result of bureaucratic rivalries and inertia as well as incremental decision-making.\(^52\)

The Reagan Administration regarded the Soviet elite's interest in maintaining and extending its power monopoly as a second element of cohesion. In its organizational structure the Soviet communist party was thoroughly authoritarian: all power and authority was concentrated in the hands of the oligarchy.\(^53\) Consequently, the party elite shared power interests which determined the general lines of its domestic and foreign policy. This yielded consistency and continuity in Soviet policy.\(^54\)

This line of argumentation the Reagan Administration then carried over into Soviet foreign policy: because the Soviet ruling elite took its legitimacy from history, conceiving of itself as the vanguard of the revolution, it was forever compelled to prove its revolutionary fervor in order to maintain its power.


\(^{53}\) Cf. Pipes, Survival Is Not Enough, p. 22.

It had to change the status quo in international relations and never fail to exploit an opportunity to advance communism. Turning away from this mission would cause the ideological and power-political foundations of the system to collapse.\textsuperscript{55}

The Reagan Administration also identified a militaristic bent in the structure of the U.S.S.R.'s political institutions. The highly centralized decision-making process and the bureaucracy supporting it allowed the Soviet Union a degree of organization and coordination for achieving its ends as could scarcely be attained in Western democracies.\textsuperscript{56} The dominance of the party in state and society served primarily to centralize all available resources and means and harness them to an expansionist foreign and military policy. The central coordinating body was the Soviet Defense Council, in which the General Staff wielded the greatest influence.\textsuperscript{57}

In the eyes of the Reagan Administration, the close connection between civilian and military leadership and the centralization of all Soviet power in the hands of a few decision makers were the necessary prerequisites for winning an armed conflict.\textsuperscript{58} In support of its military power the Soviet Union commanded a complex industrial and logistical system through which the resources of the state were dedicated to sustaining a war-fighting capability. The whole of Soviet life was permeated by a system of mobilization.\textsuperscript{59} Science and technology were likewise devoted first and foremost to military purposes.\textsuperscript{60} The industrial system was fully geared to the production of military goods.\textsuperscript{61}

The Reagan Administration considered the changes and reforms in the Soviet Union under the new leadership of General Secretary Gorbachev to be tactical, not fundamental changes.\textsuperscript{62} In the long run these might spell more harm than

\textsuperscript{57} SMP 1984, pp. 7 – 8; SMP 1985, pp. 16 – 19.
\textsuperscript{58} SMP 1985, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{60} SMP 1984, p. 3; SMP 1986, p. 93.
\textsuperscript{61} SMP 1984, p. 89; SMP 1986, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{62} "Soviet Military Power 1986" marks the first more refined analysis of the Soviet Union. There are several reasons for this major change: First, public opinion seemed to have changed. Second, the Administration found itself under pressure to demonstrate the Soviet threat had abated as a result of its successful arms policy. Third, external pressure increased the interest of policy makers in the experts' more discriminating analysis of the Soviet Union, where they had not shown much interest initially. Thus, fourth, analyses of other Sovietologists diminished the original dominance of the DIA. (Author's background information in Washington, July 24 and August 18, 1986.) Finally, the
good for the United States. Nothing had changed in the nature of the
Soviet system or in the principal objectives of the Soviet Union: superiority,
hegemony, a new world order. The reform process was geared rather to
improving the effectiveness, quality and capacity of industry and military
systems through the application of new technologies. The new element and
the real challenge was perceived solely in the propagandistic style and the
dynamism of Gorbachev.63

In his second term President Reagan responded by toning down his rhetoric.
The anti-Soviet statements about the “evil empire” were not retracted, but
not repeated either. The Administration described the East-West conflict
less and less as a competition between democracy and totalitarianism and
increasingly as a misunderstanding due to mutual mistrust.64 Summit meetings
then emerged as way of possibly bridging the differences between East and
West.

2.3 The Military Posture

The third line of argumentation that the Reagan Administration used to judge
Soviet foreign policy concerned the military potential of the U.S.S.R. Given
the highly developed U.S. intelligence capabilities one would assume that the
facts yield a clear picture. But this is by no means the case. Rather, the
various U.S. intelligence services65 — not least for reasons of bureaucratic
rivalry — provide political decision makers differing interpretations of Soviet
military power. Which interpretation is ultimately accepted depends largely
upon the subjective judgments and the politicized uses that the top policy
makers make of the competing intelligence analyses. At least in the first years
of the Reagan Administration it appears that the analyses of the DIA had
the greatest influence on the decision making process, as its interpretations
of Soviet military power most closely approximated the subjective predisposi-
tions of the political leaders. At first the DIA also took the lead in public

64 Cf. Michael Mandelbaum, Strobe Talbott, Reagan and Gorbachev, New York: Vintage
Books 1987, pp. 43–47.
65 Besides the CIA, the U.S. has an intelligence service in the Department of Defense, the
DIA. In addition, the Office for Net Assessment, attached to the Defense Department,
the intelligence divisions of the armed services, the National Security Agency and the
Policy Support Staff of the Department of Defense are concerned with interpreting Soviet
military power. In the State Department the Bureau of Intelligence and Research is
responsible for the assessment of secret information.
relations work. DIA interpretations formed the basis for the initial issues of the widely disseminated *Soviet Military Power*.\(^6\)

Regarding the objective behind the Soviet military potential there was no doubt in the mind of the Reagan Administration: The Soviet Union's efforts were aimed at increasing and consolidating the economic and military influence of the U.S.S.R. and expanding its geographical sphere of influence.\(^6\)

The Soviet Union was striving for a dominant role in international affairs.\(^6\)

In the 1970s, while the U.S. had essentially maintained its military arsenal at a constant level, the Soviet Union had engaged in a massive arms buildup. This, in the view of the Reagan Administration, had brought about a dangerous change in the global balance of forces. In the past the West had been able to rely on its lead in military technology to offset the East's quantitative superiority. During the 1970s, however, the Soviet Union had, according to the Reagan Administration, succeeded in reducing the U.S. technological lead in alarming fashion.\(^6\)

Since force and intimidation were the key means of Soviet rule, the Soviet Union believed, according to the Reagan Administration, that military strength was the most important condition for changing international relations along the lines of its systemic conceptions.\(^6\)

Consequently, the Soviet's status as superpower rested primarily on its military capabilities.\(^6\)

The Reagan Administration concluded from this that in peacetime the prime objective of the Soviet Union was to amass nuclear forces as a powerful means of coercion, to generate dissent in the free societies and ultimately bring about a new international order on the Soviet model. In time of war the use of these forces was the key to survival and victory.\(^6\)

The increasing boldness of Soviet intervention in international affairs was interpreted as being in direct relation to its growing military capabilities and the value of its armed forces: its enhanced self-confidence in its ability to project power had expanded its foreign policy options.\(^6\)

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\(^6\) Cf. Lemann, *The Peacetime War,* pp. 76 – 77; Background information of the author in Washington, July 27 and August 18, 1986. The greater influence of the DIA also stemmed from the fact that its budget and staff had already been increased substantially under President Carter. Author's background information in Washington, August 5, 1986.


\(^6\) *SMP 1985,* p. 113.


\(^6\) *SMP 1984,* p. 113; *SMP 1986,* p. 105; *SMP 1987,* p. 21.


The fundamental differences between Soviet and U.S. aims of security policy were brought out also by analyses of Soviet thinking on the military significance of atomic weapons. The U.S.S.R. rejected the American deterrence theories of mutual assured destruction and strategic sufficiency. In other words, the existence of nuclear weapons did not fundamentally alter the objectives of Soviet foreign policy or Soviet military thinking.\textsuperscript{74} While the U.S.S.R. gave propagandistic assurances that nuclear war had to be avoided, it was stealthily developing nuclear armed forces and a military doctrine geared to victory so that it could dominate a postwar world.\textsuperscript{75} What is more, the Soviet Union believed that a global nuclear war could be fought and won. As proof of this assessment the Reagan Administration cited Soviet military doctrine and the offensive capability of Soviet nuclear weapons.\textsuperscript{76} In particular, the Soviet strategy for victory was indicated by:

- the emphasis on offensive over defensive missions,\textsuperscript{77}
- the concern with preemptive and first-strike options,\textsuperscript{78}
- the stress on the critical opening stages of a war,\textsuperscript{79}
- the centrality, flexibility, survivability and redundancy of military command and control systems,\textsuperscript{80} and
- the speed with which the command structure and system can be transformed from a peacetime to a war footing.\textsuperscript{81}

The widespread discussion in the West on the process of \textit{glasnost} and \textit{perestroika} in the U.S.S.R. under Gorbachev also influenced the Reagan Administration's analyses of Soviet military potential. First, the dominion of the political leadership and the centralism of the socio-economic system were no longer ascribed solely to an expansionist foreign policy. The Administration seemed prepared to recognize that the political leaders of the U.S.S.R. controlled and limited the authority of the military.\textsuperscript{82} In other words, in the Soviet Union too tensions or even competition were possible between political and military interests and ways of thinking. Second, the weaknesses of the political system and economy of the U.S.S.R. were clearly becoming more important; the Administration now said that the Soviet leaders were also

\textsuperscript{74} Cf. What is the Soviet Union Up To? p. 7.
\textsuperscript{77} \textit{SMP} 1985, p. 12; \textit{SMP} 1986, p. 12; \textit{SMP} 1987, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{78} \textit{SMP} 1983, p. 16; \textit{SMP} 1986, pp. 23, 42; \textit{SMP} 1987, pp. 17, 24.
\textsuperscript{79} \textit{SMP} 1985, p. 12; \textit{SMP} 1986, p. 11; \textit{SMP} 1987, pp. 15, 96.
\textsuperscript{80} \textit{SMP} 1981, p. 18; \textit{SMP} 1986, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{81} \textit{SMP} 1984, pp. 8, 1; \textit{SMP} 1985, p. 19; \textit{SMP} 1986, p. 19; \textit{SMP} 1987, pp. 15–16, 19.
\textsuperscript{82} \textit{SMP} 1986, pp. 10, 14–19; \textit{SMP} 1987, pp. 11–13.
facing problems of resource allocation as a result of declining economic growth rates. The Soviet Union could not achieve economic growth while simultaneously improving military capabilities and raising living standards. Given the high cost of raw materials and the dearth of skilled workers it even seemed highly unlikely that Gorbachev's economic reforms were apt to solve the Soviets' problems. Moreover, the weaknesses in implementing technological innovations and effective management were grounded in fairly intractable systemic deficiencies.

Third, the Reagan Administration qualified its argument that the Soviet Union would trigger a nuclear war. The U.S.S.R. recognized the catastrophic consequences of a general nuclear war and shared with the U.S. an interest in avoiding it. Furthermore, the Administration conceded that in the Second World War the Soviet Union had experienced the devastation of war and hence could not be denied a certain security need. Nevertheless, the Reagan Administration maintained that the Soviet Union still believed in the decisive importance of military power as a means of coercing change in international relations and deterring an opponent. Moreover, the Soviet Union’s offensive capabilities were now seen more in conjunction with its defensive capacities. Fourth and finally, the argument was dropped that the Soviet Union had reached a virtual technological parity. The Western lead was constantly being diminished, yet the U.S. still enjoyed a technological advantage.

3. Conclusions

The Reagan Administration's belief system as it pertained to foreign policy is marked by contending, even contradictory demands. Whereas the moralist elements urged the establishment of an order of peace on the American model, the concept of leadership called for a careful, tentative foreign policy. Such a foreign policy followed the primacy of domestic policy and was not to be gauged by criteria of consistency or efficiency. This contradictory belief structure made the Reagan Administration appear sometimes ideologically oriented, sometimes pragmatic. Competing beliefs marked the Administration's actions in foreign affairs. Thus, the Soviet threat was painted in the

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83 SMP 1986, pp. 10, 121; SMP 1987, pp. 7, 10, 14.
84 SMP 1987, p. 10; National Security Strategy of the United States, pp. 6, 17.
87 SMP 1986, pp. 42, 45; SMP 1987, pp. 16, 45–46. This extension of threat analysis has to be seen in conjunction with the American SDI plan.
88 SMP 1987, pp. 111–112, 118.
The Reagan Administration reflected in its own values the same technocratic faith that it saw in the Soviet Union, namely, that military power was of decisive significance in the global balance of forces. This was true also of the contention that military strength could be used for purposes of political intimidation. This far-reaching coincidence suggests that its perception of the Soviet Union was distinctly shaped by the Reagan Administration’s belief system. To the European criticism that certain attitudes were equally characteristic of the two superpowers, the Reagan Administration countered with the moral argument that it was ultimately a difference of whether military power were used to maintain the existing international order or to change it. In other words, for the Reagan Administration military power was by no means of neutral value.

The primacy of domestic policy, which had become the Reagan Administration’s guiding principle, was also reflected in its threat analysis. The expansionist actions of the Soviet Union were ascribed mainly to domestic political motives such as ideology, Russian political culture, the elite’s efforts to hold on to power or legitimize its rule, or maintenance of the political and socioeconomic system. This connection between the Reagan Administration’s belief system and its image of the Soviet Union cannot be conclusively proved but does appear highly probable.

The Reagan Administration’s beliefs provided points of orientation for policy in other areas besides the Soviet Union. Thus, the domestic orientation of the concept of leadership, the conception of the statesman’s role as educator and the consensus-building function of the appeal to values were combined with a model of cyclical arms development. Together with the moral limits
attached to American politics and the belief, derived from the “appeasement” analogy, that security and war prevention were a direct function of military strength, the primacy of domestic policy resulted in the aforementioned restrictive principles for the use of military force. These shaped the Reagan Administration’s conception of deterrence. Accordingly, military arsenals were intended first and foremost to influence the adversary’s anticipated calculation of risk and only secondarily to be employed in armed conflicts. The threat of punishment therefore became the central instrument of a national security policy in which the use of military force was to be largely avoided.
III Decision-Making
At the start of the 1980s the general consensus in the United States was that détente had failed. The prevailing opinion held that during this period the U.S. political and military position in the world had been weakened. The call for greater defense efforts was therefore widespread. As newly elected president, Ronald Reagan proclaimed the strengthening of American leadership in international affairs to be one of his prime objectives, and he regarded a buildup of U.S. military forces as an indispensable precondition for it.

Yet this buildup could only be achieved through a drastic increase in defense spending, which in turn required that the President and Congress work together. While at the beginning of the Reagan Presidency this took place entirely on the President's terms, on Capitol Hill opposition was growing steadily to what was by and large an arms buildup in purely monetary terms, lacking foundation in a convincing defense strategy. The absence of a comprehensive concept within the Administration prompted more than just congressional cuts in military spending; it also led members of Congress to become more and more concerned with strategic questions. How did this arms buildup come about? Did the drastic increases in defense spending strengthen U.S. armed forces? How did Congress respond to President Reagan's defense policy and what were the consequences of the growing differences of opinion between the Administration and Congress?

1. The Budgetary Process in the Administration and in Congress

The sparring between the Administration and Congress on defense questions takes place primarily over the budget. But before taking up the budget negotiations between President Reagan and Congress, we should briefly indicate the budgetary process in the executive and legislative branches. This process entails the principle of separation of powers. While the President draws up a budget proposal, it is Congress that must make the final decision on the size and composition of the budget. In the process the administration tries to influence the voting in Congress in order to get through as many of
its specific proposals as possible. The budgetary process thus becomes a balancing act between the executive and the legislature whose outcome is determined by the different forces' political strengths, negotiating tactics and persuasive skills. Within the administration the defense budget is drawn up according to the PPB system, a three-stage process of planning, programming, budgeting.\(^1\)

The planning phase involves assessing the military threat and working out a comprehensive strategy for meeting it. To that end, "Defense Guidances" are drawn up for the three military services; these afford a rough overview of how much money is needed and what it should be spent for. These guidances are developed by the secretary of defense in close collaboration with the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They establish the framework within which all subsequent budgetary decisions are made.

In the programming phase the different branches of the armed services translate the guidelines into concrete programs. "Program Objective Memoranda" specify personnel requirements and indicate which new weapons ought to be procured, which current systems increased. These memoranda from the armed services are then harmonized by the Joint Chiefs in a "Joint Program Assessment Memorandum" and sent on to the Office of the Secretary of Defense. There they are gone over once more in accordance with the Defense Guidance and usually are given new budgetary ceilings before they are finalized by the defense secretary in a "Program Decision Memorandum."

In the budgeting phase the programs of the different services are translated into the language and categories of budget experts and coordinated with the proposed budgets of the other governmental departments. This takes place in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) which stands directly under the President. The primary task of the OMB is to adjust the different budgets in such a way that they conform to the administration's overall budget plan. The final decision over conflicts of interest and the ultimate shape of the budget proposal rests with the President.

Congress is then presented the defense budget for passage as part of the overall budget. Its constitutional authority to decide the budget is Capitol Hill's most effective means of influencing government policy. With the greater influence of Congress on administration policy in the 1970s, a more effective control of the budget process was needed. In 1974 the "Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act" was passed. This law created a new Budget

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Committee in both House and Senate, charged with determining the size of the budget and harmonizing the separate budget items with one another. Further, a bipartisan Congressional Budget Office was created to provide the members of Congress with analysis and prognosis produced independently of the executive. Moreover, a schedule was established for the distinct stages of the budgetary process: first budget resolution, authorization, appropriations, second budget resolution and reconciliation.²

In the first budget resolution, ceilings are set for the overall budget as well as the separate items. It is drawn up by the Budget Committees in conjunction with the respective committees for authorization and appropriations and introduced in both houses of Congress for adoption. There it goes through the normal legislative process, though the bill passed at this stage is not legally binding.

Authorization bills approve programs and their funding but do not actually allocate monies. The process begins in the different authorization committees responsible for the different departments. Thus, the Senate and House Armed Services Committees handle authorizations for all defense programs. But because parts of these programs fall within the jurisdiction of other committees, they are dealt with there as well. After detailed hearings with specialists from the departments, the executive and legislative budget offices, private organizations and industry, authorization bills are prepared in the respective authorization committees. These are regular bills and therefore require the approval of both houses and the President.

The appropriations bills establish the actual amounts to be spent for the authorized programs. Thus, before any money can be spent for programs, both the programs must be authorized and the funds appropriated. The appropriations bills are drafted by the House and Senate Appropriations Committees. These have a number of subcommittees which handle the individual budget programs. Thus, the Defense Subcommittee works on the appropriations bill for defense programs. The appropriations bills must be passed by both houses of Congress and signed by the President.

With the second budget resolution the individual budget programs are voted on once again. This is done mainly to adjust them according to the latest economic forecasts and make any necessary increases. Unlike in the first budget resolution, the spending stipulated in the second is binding. However, if the sum of all appropriations is greater than the total spending laid down

in the second budget resolution, then the two amounts have to be reconciled. The Budget Committees then propose cuts in the appropriations, which must be approved by the Appropriations Committees. All these cuts in the separate appropriations bills are then comprised in one reconciliation bill and attain the force of law through a single vote.³

By its budgetary authority the Congress has the final decision on the shape of the defense budget. It can, for example, decide which weapons systems are to be procured, how many soldiers put in uniform and where military bases are to be built. Hence, it has been argued that Congress decides what kind of war the U.S. Armed Forces are capable of fighting.⁴ The problem, however, is that the decisions on the individual programs are made in isolation and not according to strategic considerations. This is due to the size and complexity of the defense budget, but also stems from the fragmented decision making process and limited capacity of Congress for processing information.⁵

The defense budget is a highly complex construct that is put together by an “army” of Pentagon officials over a period of more than 14 months. The final version submitted to Congress as part of the overall budget contains thousands of individual items that have been developed more or less systematically in the PPB process and thus, at least in theory, are integrated in an overall strategy. Yet Congress does not have sufficient time, technical competence or staff to penetrate this complex system. As a result, attention is focused on major projects as well as lesser programs tied to the districts of individual congressmen.

2. The “Reagan Revolution”: The Triumph of Numbers

The growth in defense spending is generally associated with the Reagan Presidency. But this is only part of the picture. The debate on the SALT II treaty can be seen as a turning point both in the overall political situation and in U.S. defense spending. Rather than the high point of détente, the SALT II agreement became the catalyst for its demise. It set in motion a national

political discussion on the U.S.-Soviet military balance that resulted in the demand for greater defense efforts.

More than in any other political institution, the mood of the American public is reflected in Congress. During the SALT II hearings a resolution was passed in the Senate calling for an increase of not less than 5% in defense outlays. In 1980, leading members of Congress, such as Senators Nunn and Jackson, put pressure on President Carter to raise the defense budget by $2.9 billion. In the same year the Congress appropriated for the first time in 13 years more money for defense than the President's proposed budget had called for.6

In 1981 when Ronald Reagan became President, the mood in the United States was marked by more than just the desire for military strength, but by the kind of "rally-round-the-flag" movement that always accompanies a major upheaval. This need for a greater national cohesiveness was felt in Congress too and allowed the presidency to regain ground that had been lost during the 1970s.

Besides this general feeling, there were three other elements responsible for President Reagan's success in his first year in office. First, his electoral victory helped the Republicans gain a majority in the Senate. Second, Reagan took extremely good advantage of his "first hundred days," when every President is granted considerable leeway. Third, he was successful in selling his landslide victory as a mandate for his policies, though the vote should probably be interpreted more as a rejection of President Carter.7

Reagan's political program — lower taxes, cuts in non-military spending, increases in the defense budget — was aimed directly at a restructuring of budget policy. But this could be accomplished only in cooperation with Congress. Here would be the test of whether Reagan could assert presidential leadership toward Congress.

Upon entering office President Reagan benefited from the Democrats' disarray after their major electoral setback. While they did not want to confine themselves to opposition politics, the Democrats had no real alternatives to the Reagan program. With the Democrats in this difficult position, Reagan proved himself to be a pragmatic ideologue. He demanded extreme measures while simultaneously invoking the need for a bipartisan consensus.8 In his first State of the Union address he described the military situation as alarming. Rather than making the Democrats solely responsible for this, he discreetly

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8 Ibid., p. 148.
Reagan's principal budgetary objective was a drastic increase in defense spending together with deep cuts in non-military programs. These proposals were so radical, however, that great opposition had to be expected from Congress. The Administration's plan was therefore to exploit the President's popularity and force the measures through as quickly as possible. The new Republican chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, Pete Dominici, proposed that the reconciliation be effected upon the first budget resolution instead of the second. In this way the spending levels for the individual programs would be mandated in a single bill before the programs had been dealt with in the competent committees. Once the ceilings had been adopted, the Administration's budgetary demands would be enacted by just one vote in the Senate and House of Representatives. After some of the political maneuvering in Congress and on the part of the Administration had run aground, conservative Congressmen Phil Gramm and Delbert Latta introduced a resolution that essentially conformed to the Reagan budget proposal. After intense lobbying and a televised address by the President, in which the public was called upon to support his program and put pressure on Congress, all the Republicans and 63 Democrats voted for the Gramm-Latta substitute for the first budget resolution.

The vote was higher than expected and showed that President Reagan currently exercised greater influence over the majority of congressmen than Speaker Tip O'Neill. Following two more votes the reconciliation bill was finally passed. In a single bill, $35.2 billion was cut for fiscal year 1982. These cuts were the largest in the history of Congress and covered virtually all budget items. They were only slightly less than the Administration had called for and represented a huge success for Ronald Reagan. It seemed as if Congress not only wanted to give President Reagan's program a chance, but for the most part was prepared to give up some of its power after a decade of increasing engagement in budget policy. The President had gained the upper hand over the legislative branch. With his success in determining the budget, he was now in a position to carry out his political programs.

One of the President's most important goals was the buildup of American armed forces. To this end not only was defense spending to be exempted from the cuts — it was, in fact, to be drastically increased. Yet neither President Reagan nor his newly appointed defense secretary, Caspar Weinberger, brought any experience in defense matters or concrete ideas on how to carry out their proclaimed arms buildup. Eight days after the Reagan Administration had officially entered into office, Weinberger and the director
of the Budget Office, David Stockman, met with John Tower, the new chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Tower had been a member of this committee for 15 years and had developed into an authority on defense policy. He was a vehement opponent of the SALT II treaty and a strong proponent of higher defense spending. In the wake of Reagan's election and the new Republican majority in the Senate, he now saw a great opportunity to put his ideas into effect. It was he, then, who provided the figures for expanding the defense budget. Following this meeting between Weinberger, Stockman and Tower it was announced that the Administration would request an additional $32.6 billion in defense spending. Just two weeks before, President Carter had submitted his budget proposal for fiscal year 1982, which contained a $26.4 billion increase in military outlays. Thus, within a matter of weeks the Pentagon could expect its funding to rise by about $50 billion, the largest and certainly the quickest increase in defense spending in peacetime. Moreover, the defense budget was planned to grow by an annual 8% during the next five years.

While the Administration thus put forward very exact figures for its defense budget, its plans for using these monies were less precise. Besides the building of the B-1 bomber and the recommissioning of mothballed warships, there were no radical changes from the programs proposed by President Carter. Instead of establishing points of emphasis, the money was to be distributed across the board, in fact with the argument that there was a need to catch up in all areas. However, this posed a problem of budgeting the funds rationally in so short a time. What usually took 14 months in the administrative budget process was now to be carried out within weeks. The Pentagon, traditionally more accustomed to having to save money, was now overwhelmed by the demand to spend it. In order to reach the spending ceilings, both premature and obsolescent programs were pulled out of the drawer and activated. As a result, programs were financed that had been neither thoroughly planned nor coordinated in an overall strategy.


Planning a defense budget always entails reconciling the military necessities with economic and political realities. In the process a strategy ought to harmonize available means and appointed ends. But this demands the ability

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9 Nicholas Lemann, "The Peacetime War," *Atlantic Monthly*, October 1984, pp. 71–73. As defense spending in 1983 exceeded even that during the Korean and Vietnam Wars, Lemann remarks: "In spending terms we are in our first peacetime war," p. 73.
and the will to distinguish desirable from financially feasible projects. A good sense of priorities is thus the essence of any good strategy. The Reagan Administration, however, was lacking in precisely this sense of priorities. Whereas previous administrations in their first year for the most part adopted the budget proposed by the preceding administration, to gain time for working out their own strategy, President Reagan preferred to exploit his election victory to push through a drastic increase in defense spending. This did yield a quick success, but also led to his administration's arguing more for simply numbers than for programs based on a distinct strategy.

When they finally reached the public in the spring of 1982, the defense concepts of the National Security Council and the Pentagon did not reflect any clearly defined points of emphasis. Rather, the missions of the armed forces were so stretched out as to raise widespread doubts about whether they could be accomplished. In these concepts the Reagan Administration assumed that the armed forces must have a global war-fighting capability. Likewise, in a conflict with the Soviet Union, U.S. forces would have to be able to initiate a horizontal escalation. This in turn would rest primarily on a naval superiority. In the case of a Soviet attack on Western Europe, American aircraft carriers would attack important naval and air bases on the Kola Peninsula and Sakhalin Island. The objective would be both to divert pressure from the Central Front and to destroy so many atomic submarines and bombers as to alter the nuclear balance in favor of the U.S. A horizontal escalation with conventional weapons would then create a situation enabling the U.S., with the threat of a vertical atomic escalation, to terminate a war upon favorable conditions. However, a study by the Joint Chiefs of Staff calculated that implementing such a concept would call for increasing defense spending by $750 billion in the next five years.

During his 1980 election campaign Ronald Reagan had asserted a "window of vulnerability" in the nuclear balance: the Soviet Union had the possibility of checkmating the U.S. with a nuclear first strike. He therefore called for a drastic buildup of nuclear weapons. However, he rejected President Carter's plan to deploy 200 MX missiles in an underground tunnel system, arguing that this type of deployment was too expensive and complicated. When he came into office, Reagan had no alternative to offer to Carter's plans.

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12 Record, "Jousting with Unreality," p. 16.

However anxious to advance the modernization of ICBMs as rapidly as possible, he was unable to come up with a basing mode that would substantially reduce the vulnerability of these missiles. At least 30 possible kinds of deployment were considered and three commissions appointed. But while the proposal to deploy the missiles in large cargo aircraft was rejected by the Air Force, the House of Representatives blocked funding for the plan to deploy the MX missiles in a dense-pack formation. Finally, the proposals of the third bipartisan commission, the “Scowcroft Commission,” met with general approval. This panel recommended deploying 100 MX missiles in already existing silos, developing a small, mobile missile with just one warhead (“Midgetman”) and exercising greater flexibility in the arms control negotiations. In surveying the nuclear balance of forces the commission did not find any Soviet superiority, and the “window of vulnerability” was shown to be a re-run of the 1960 “missile gap.”

The modernization of strategic weapons thus did not involve any innovations. Instead of developing new concepts, the Reagan Administration was financing already conceived strategic programs. The only true innovation was the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). Announced by Reagan in March 1983, SDI was to revolutionize nuclear strategy by turning away from the concept of retaliation toward that of defense. Despite the Administration’s intense lobbying, this initiative was hampered by uncertainties about technical feasibility, costs and compatibility with the ABM treaty, and so never really got off the ground. Too utopian in conception, the “Star Wars” initiative, as it is called by opponents, will probably not outlive the Reagan Administration.

Up to now the Reagan Administration has failed to present a convincing defense concept. Instead of setting priorities it has simply tried to finance as many programs as possible. Military strength was not measured by the extent to which the armed forces were capable of achieving certain military objectives, but rather by the size of the defense budget. The concentration on spending immediately brought the Administration into a vicious circle. Many programs came under fire very quickly because they were not backed by a military concept. The more often this occurred the more energy had to

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be expended defending individual programs. As a result, Defense Secretary Weinberger took on more and more the role of a "salesman," which in the long run undermined his credibility.16

4. Criticism of the Arms Program: "Spend-up" instead of "Buildup"

The absence of a coherent defense concept amidst a precipitous rise in military spending naturally raised questions as to whether the increase was necessary to that extent, and to what extent the increased spending had improved the effectiveness of the armed forces. Most observers have come to the conclusion that military strength has been in no way commensurate with the money spent on it.17

What accounts for these disappointing results? For one thing, too optimistic estimates of costs and the absence of set priorities led to more programs being initiated than could be financed even under the most favorable circumstances. But because of the necessary cuts, the rate of production fell, which resulted in increased unit costs. In a hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Comptroller General Charles Bowsher complained that the number of programs was not being reduced but that these were only being stretched out, despite the additional costs this entailed. According to a Pentagon memorandum published in 1984, inefficient production rates had raised the unit price of the AH-64 helicopter by 20%, the Maverick missile by 51% and MK-48 torpedo by 220%.18

Furthermore, the precipitous increase in defense spending was attributable primarily to weapons purchases. The weapons manufacturers were inundated with orders that they could not fill so quickly. The demand exceeded the supply many times over and this meant enormous cost increases for individual


weapons systems. While in the Reagan Administration’s first term 6.4% more missiles were procured than in the Carter years, the cost of these rose by 91.2%. For 8.8% more aircraft, 75.4% more had to be paid, while for 30% more tanks the costs rose 147.4%. Thus, a considerable portion of the funds for the defense budget ended up as higher profits for defense contractors. In 1984 these firms had a yield per unit sold of 11% for non-military goods, 26.7% for weapons. FMC, the maker of the controversial Bradley infantry fighting vehicle, made a profit of 54% from government contracts. Orders from the Pentagon thus proved to be much more lucrative than private contracts. Whereas Boeing delivered only 42% of its production to the government, the latter accounted for 94% of its total profits. For McDonnell-Douglas the ratio was 69% to 98% and for Raytheon 50% to 79%. The necessity of having to spend the money quickly as well as the overburdening of the weapons manufacturers thus meant that the Pentagon was increasingly purchasing expensive, high-technology weapons.

The too rapid increase in defense spending and the Pentagon’s mismanagement in weapons procurement resulted in a cost explosion for military goods. Hence, despite the soaring defense budget, the strength of the armed forces was not growing as fast. For example, if in 1981, as part of President Carter’s defense budget, the Navy was able to procure 12 combatant ships for $6.2 billion, between 1982 and 1985 the same number of ships cost $10 billion each year. For the Air Force the number of planes actually declined while the expenditure increased. In the last three Carter years 227 planes per year were purchased, but between 1982 and 1985 the average was just 172, a drop of 24%. Nor were any great improvements achieved in the training and operational readiness of troops.

The strengthening of U.S. Armed Forces proclaimed by President Reagan turned out to be an empty phrase. In the opinion of many experts, what had taken place was not a military buildup but simply a military spendup.

5. Cuts in the Defense Budget by Congress

This inefficient use of defense funding accompanied by a sharply rising budget deficit provoked criticism from Congress. Reagan’s policy of drastic increases

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23 Ibid., p. 27.
in defense spending accompanied by tax reductions was not balanced by cuts in the non-military sector and so resulted in an immense budget deficit. His program did not stimulate the economy; rather, an economic depression followed in 1982.

The budget director, David Stockman, had feared this from the start. Yet while he was extremely successful regarding the cuts in non-military spending, Stockman’s proposals for lowering the defense budget were rejected within the Administration. When in August 1981 he tried to slash $30 billion in defense spending over three years, he met with stubborn resistance from Weinberger and Reagan.\textsuperscript{24} The latter regarded the raising of the military budget as one of the key elements of his program and geared his economic policy accordingly.\textsuperscript{25} Though this tactic had worked well for Reagan initially, the budget deficit was increasingly undermining support for higher defense spending.

Already by the end of 1981 there was a growing feeling in Congress that cuts in defense spending were needed to combat the deficit. Public statements to that effect began to come even from the Republican leaders in the Senate and House of Representatives, Howard Baker and Robert Michel, as well as the chairmen of the Budget Committee, Pete Dominici, and the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, Ted Stevens.\textsuperscript{26} Yet when President Reagan submitted his budget proposal for fiscal year 1983, it included a 14% increase in the defense budget. Outlays for nuclear weapons were to be raised by 40%. Even Republicans and conservative Democrats who had voted for the “Reagan revolution” were not prepared to go along with this mounting defense expenditure in the face of cuts in non-military programs and a growing federal debt. The consequence was a 7.25% reduction of the proposed defense budget by Congress.\textsuperscript{27}

In the congressional debate on defense cuts the MX missile, the major new nuclear project, became something of a symbol for the opposition to further

\textsuperscript{24} Lemann, “Peacetime War,” p. 87.


increases in defense spending.\textsuperscript{28} The cuts by Congress were less spectacular in other military programs. But after military outlays had been raised 14.6\% in the "Reagan revolution," the increases averaged 2.3\% in fiscal years 1983 to 1987. Here Congress cut on average 8.2\% from what the Administration had requested.\textsuperscript{29} While Congress had approved the Administration's defense budget in 98\% of the cases for FY 1982 and 1983, this slipped to just 91\% for FY 1984 and 1985, then dropped to 85\% for 1986.\textsuperscript{30}

Finally, defense spending was also encompassed in the deficit reduction plan of the 1985 Gramm-Rudman-Hollings bill. Thus, if the budget deficit exceeded a specified level, cuts would enter into effect automatically, with 50\% coming from the defense budget and 50\% from the non-military sector. This provision prompted immediate opposition from Defense Secretary Weinberger. However, President Reagan had no other choice but to accept the law in this form since he had worked himself in too deep in the budget deficit.\textsuperscript{31}

6. Congress's Occupation with Strategy

The budget deficit and the growing consensus in the public and Congress that cuts in military spending were needed to offset it only compounded the problem that the U.S. lacked a credible strategy. The tighter the resources the more imperative was a setting of priorities.

Once Congress had approved the largest ever peacetime increase in defense spending, it believed it had given the Reagan Administration the means for implementing its program. However, instead of developing a comprehensive concept and equipping the armed forces accordingly, the Administration simply financed many programs inefficiently, propounded an incredible de-

\textsuperscript{28} One commentator remarked: "MX stood up like a lightning rod. It took all the heat." Theodore White saw in the opposition to the MX the collapse of the American consensus on defense: "What has been provoked is this generation's reexamination of the defense posture of the United States." Cited in Dallek, Politics of Symbolism, p. 158.


fense strategy and called for increasingly greater military outlays. This prompted even moderate members of Congress such as Sam Nunn and Les Aspin, or even conservatives such as Richard Dickinson, to voice sharp criticism. The Administration's excessive demands and the evident need for Congress itself to make cuts made it increasingly clear to the members of Congress that realistic strategic planning was essential for an effective and reasonable budget. A "military reform movement" had already formed in the late 1970s. This was a loose association of defense experts, staff members in the Pentagon and Congress as well as congressmen from both houses. On a strictly bipartisan basis they worked on strategic concepts, with a view primarily to improving the effectiveness of U.S. forces. They called for a clearly defined military strategy, uncomplicated and easy to operate weapons systems and tighter military leadership. Their criticism was directed primarily at the large-scale weapons projects, the existing military doctrine and the decentralized command structure of the armed forces.

Out of this military reform movement there developed in 1981 a "Military Caucus" in Congress. Its members included congressmen from both houses and both parties, from the most diverse political and ideological camps. This great breadth did bring the caucus great respect but also made it more difficult to develop and pursue concrete alternatives. Still, it promoted in Congress the conviction that it was necessary to come to grips with strategic questions of defense policy.

This necessity became all the more urgent the more the budget deficit increased and the Administration refused to undertake cuts itself in defense spending. As never before, complete alternatives to the Defense Department's budget proposals were now being developed in Congress. For fiscal year 1983 both Senator David Durenberger and Senator Ernest F. Hollings introduced their own alternative proposals to the defense budget. Senator Gary Hart submitted a very detailed "military reform budget" for FY 1984, and in 1985 Congressmen Denny Smith and Tom Tauke together with Senators Charles Grassley and Nancy Landon Kassebaum issued a joint report arguing for a freeze on military spending.

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But in developing and dealing with alternative budget initiatives the members of Congress had to occupy themselves more and more with strategic questions. Senators Gary Hart and Sam Nunn stand out in this regard. As a founder of the military reform movement Senator Hart was one of its most prominent and influential representatives. He took the view that it was far more important to solve the problem of how the money for defense would be spent than to pursue the pseudo-problem of how much to spend. Thus, he criticized complicated and expensive weapons systems in particular. As a long-standing member of the Senate Armed Services Committee Sam Nunn has become a generally acknowledged expert on military matters. As an advocate of a strong defense he has also espoused greater efficiency in defense spending. For the requisite military strategy he posed four criteria, outlined in a speech in 1983. First, a strategy would have to be broadly structured and convincing to the public; second, greater stress should be placed on conventional defense capability; third, strategy should be coordinated with all the allies, and fourth, a strategy would have to reflect clearly set priorities. Nunn's criticism of the Reagan Administration was that it had no overall strategy, was expending too much on nuclear weapons and had too many programs in production at the same time. As the Administration stubbornly refused to set priorities and develop a convincing strategy, Senator Nunn, in one of his first official acts as the new chairman of the Armed Services Committee, scheduled a series of hearings on strategy in the spring of 1987.

7. The Long-Term Consequences of a Quick Success

On the heels of his electoral victory, President Reagan was able to capitalize on his popularity and raise military spending dramatically. However, the growing budget deficit and the absence of an overall defense concept very quickly aroused opposition in Congress to the arms spendup without underlying strategy. Since the Administration stubbornly refused to set priorities and make cuts, Congress had to occupy itself more and more with strategic questions. President Reagan's rapid success in effecting what was predomi-
nantly a spending buildup had, then, long-term consequences for the balance of power between the executive and legislative branches. That is, in handling strategic questions the Congress was moving into an area which had previously been the preserve of the executive. In the past, strategy had always been a hierarchical process in which the President laid down general guidelines in accordance with his foreign policy. The secretary of defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff would then fill out these guidelines with concrete defense concepts, which in turn served as directives for structuring the programs in the various departments. For its part, Congress had concerned itself only with the size of the total outlays and with the individual items in the budget proposal. The amounts for the military and non-military sectors were laid down in the budget resolutions. Then, in the authorization and appropriations bills the individual programs were dealt with according to economic and political criteria.

But the absence, or incredibility, of strategy in the Reagan Administration together with excessive demands for the defense budget forced the members of Congress to grapple with strategic questions so that the unavoidable cuts would not be made completely arbitrarily. By dealing with military strategy the Congress could in future become a serious participant in the strategy debate. From now on Congress will provide a notable and effective discussion forum in which a good deal of the agenda setting on strategic questions will take place. While this will afford the public a greater insight into this debate, the debate will also become more politicized. What consequences this will have for the making of U.S. strategy remains to be seen.
Decision in March: The Genesis of the "Star Wars" Speech and the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI)¹

1. Introduction

A bolt from the blue in the eleventh year announced the end of a long-standing security concord. Up to that moment it had seemed generally accepted that there could be no effective defense against the "absolute weapon."² Deterring an opponent from using the atomic bomb seemed possible, defending against it sheer illusion. Bernard Brodie's insight of 1946 was implicitly acknowledged a quarter of a century later as President Nixon and General Secretary Brezhnev signed the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in Moscow on May 26, 1972. The ABM treaty imposed strict limitations on missile defense systems. Two years later the superpowers agreed to reduce by half again the agreed ceiling on anti-ballistic missiles. Subsequently they deployed not even the 100 allowed by treaty.

Almost exactly ten years and ten months after the signing in Moscow, President Reagan surprised the public as well as the experts inside and outside the U.S. with a dramatic change in policy. In a televised speech on March 23, 1983 he declared that in future U.S. national security could be ensured if "we could intercept and destroy strategic ballistic missiles before they reached our own soil or that of our allies."³ In the past security had been achieved by deterrence, by the threat of retaliation. But "wouldn't it be better to save lives than to avenge them?" He would therefore initiate a long-term research and development program for defensive weapons.

¹ This essay is based upon the author's study "Die Entstehung der 'Strategischen Verteidigungsinitiative' (SDI). Wissenschaftliche Hausarbeit im Rahmen der Ersten (wissenschaftlichen) Staatsprüfung für das Amt des Studienrats. Berlin, den 10.6.1986." For reasons of space, only a small portion of the references compiled there, in the main primary sources, can be cited here.
At first glance reasonable and convincing to the layman, this change in policy drew immediate and strong criticism from a good many experts. It was seen as a dangerous step that would lead to more instability and thus less security, to a new round in the arms competition and new tensions in superpower relations. From the standpoint of the Soviet Union the Strategic Defense Initiative was by no means defensive, but rather a step toward U.S. superiority. SDI would add a shield of defensive weapons to the offensive sword of nuclear missiles, and the protection afforded by this shield would then create the window from which to launch nuclear strikes with impunity.

Whether viewed as a strain on the superpower relationship or as a reason for the Soviet Union's return to the negotiating table in Geneva, SDI became a central issue in U.S.-Soviet relations in the years following the speech. How then did this initiative come about? It seemed simply to set in motion what had been advocated for years by U.S. lobbyists for ballistic missile defense (BMD), and yet it surprised even a great many members of the President's own administration. In any case, SDI's diverse consequences do not invariably tally with the motives at work when the decision was taken.

2. Strategic Defense and the Conservative Agenda

In 1972 the ABM treaty had ended for the ensuing decade a debate that had been going on in the U.S. throughout the 1960s. Hence, SDI appeared at first glance as the late continuation of a battle fought long ago. Amid the traditional service rivalry the Army had begun to interest itself in a ballistic missile defense in the late 1950s. This would have given the Army a share in the armed forces' prestigious and well-heeled strategic nuclear mission, an area dominated up to then by the Air Force. However, then Defense Secretary McNamara had opposed the deployment of a ballistic missile defense. Besides doubts as to its effectiveness, McNamara feared that a missile defense could trigger an arms competition between offensive and defensive weapons. In 1967 President Johnson terminated the argument with an intra-bureaucratic compromise: the U.S. began to deploy a limited ABM system. This decision prompted the first "Great Debate" on ABM. The debate had strong reverberations in the public and in fact generated a broad-based movement of opposition to the ABM.

For Nixon and Kissinger, the ABM treaty contributed both to security policy and to the Administration's primary objective in foreign policy: ending the

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Vietnam War. Thus, the ties of triangular diplomacy were to induce collateral cooperation from North Vietnam's principal supporters, the Soviet Union and China. Negotiations between the Soviet Union and the U.S. on strategic arms limitation (SALT) had already been initiated under Johnson. The signing of the ABM treaty and nine other agreements at the May 1972 summit in Moscow was to usher in an "era of negotiation" (Nixon). The détente process thus begun was to create the framework for a policy which would be instrumental in resolving the Vietnam conflict.5

As a result the ABM treaty was perceived by the American public in a context which by the 1980s had become a serious burden. At the time the treaty had simply limited a single weapons type of limited military value, for the achievable effectiveness of a ballistic missile defense was by no means commensurate with the vast destruction that just a small number of incoming nuclear missiles would cause. On the other hand, the treaty was a political symbol for the success and possibility of arms control in general because it explicitly banned an entire weapons system for an unlimited period of time. Moreover, the ABM treaty was perceived in the context of détente policy, as it had helped to lay the foundation for this policy and had since been one of its prerequisites.6 The treaty was also linked with the concept of "mutual assured destruction" (MAD). McNamara had introduced this concept based on the understanding that with the advent of intercontinental ballistic missiles the age of "insular security"7 was irretrievably past for the U.S. Vulnerability was henceforth an insuperable fact of life. Security could only mean deterrence, for a reliable defense was impossible. The capability of both sides to deliver a devastating second strike would constitute a secure mutual deterrence. The strategic stalemate would remain stable as long it were not undermined by a defense against ballistic missiles. Yet this "MAD" concept courted a danger domestically: it might make it appear that the U.S. had irresponsibly abandoned defense of the population. As détente policy and the arms control process came increasingly into crisis in the late 1970s, the ABM treaty and the denial of a strategic defense were affected by the change in political climate.

A central element of the American political culture,8 its self-image as a "virtuous republic," fluctuates between the poles of model experiment and

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8 Cf. the essay by Jakob Schissler in this volume.
world mission. The Vietnam debacle had discredited the activist interpretation of this republicanism and made way for the quietist version. As a view of the essential role of government, this meant a shift in emphasis away from defense toward social welfare concerns. In foreign policy, détente emphasized the first part of the political culture’s stable diad of “peace” and “strength.”

During the Carter Presidency the cultural countermovement was accelerated with the perception of a decline in American strength. The year 1979 marked the nadir with the hostage-taking in Teheran, the pseudo-crisis of a Soviet combat brigade in Cuba and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Amidst an economic crisis and in the wake of a post-Vietnam crisis of foreign policy, American political culture experienced a shift back to a more defense-oriented view of the state. These shifts in the political culture’s deep structure underlay the basic change in direction setting in at the end of the 1970s.

Domestically, conservative forces were in the ascendancy. During the heyday of social liberalism conservatives had criticized the social welfare state and the decline of traditional values, stressed again performance and competition and gave a more activist bent to foreign policy. The leading spokesmen of this movement warned of a “window of vulnerability” through which U.S. land-based missiles were exposed to a potential Soviet disarming strike. They called for a restoration of American strength which had been dissipated by the weakness of President Carter and his wrong arms control. They deemed détente a failure.

The MAD concept, the ABM treaty and the denial of strategic defense were consistent with the American tradition of unpolitical technocratic thinking geared to criteria of efficiency. However, with the call for revitalizing American strength and an increasingly aggressive attitude toward foreign policy, it seemed unacceptable and defeatist to accept vulnerability in the superpower relationship – even if the Soviet Union found itself in precisely the same situation. The groups and individuals who had actively and in the changed climate so successfully worked against the SALT II treaty that Carter withdrew

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it for apparent want of the two-thirds majority necessary for ratification, these groups were the very ones who in the late 1970s and early 1980s had advocated what was now usually termed “ballistic missile defense.”


Contrary to a prevalent view, the change in the superpower relationship had already begun during the Carter Presidency. Contrary to the campaign rhetoric of his Republican challenger, Carter had already begun a buildup of American military power: he raised defense spending, ordered a number of new weapons systems and revised strategic concepts. The Reagan Administration's changes in arms policy and its Strategic Modernization Program of 1981 consisted in raising the planned rates of increase in the Carter defense budget and in restarting previously canceled projects such as the B-1 bomber. Conceptual innovation was not forthcoming.

Since the latter half of the 1970s, American military experts had concerned themselves more and more with the problems of how nuclear deterrence could be credibly assured as well as how command and control could be maintained in a nuclear crisis. The response in defense policy was to refine strategic concepts, graduate nuclear options and undertake modernizations such as for “hardening” installations and components of the armed forces against nuclear explosions. These measures contained an ambivalence: they could help ensure that in an acute crisis decision makers do not lose control, but they could also be seen as an attempt to make a nuclear war “wageable.” At least until early 1983 the Reagan Administration’s policy fit this pattern.

Since the “Great Debate” and the ABM treaty, research on ballistic missile defense had been greatly reduced but never completely abandoned. In the early 1980s its main object was to provide options for a potential defense of

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missile silos and a "hardening" of military command installations against nuclear explosions. If the planned MX missile were to be deployed in bunkerized silos, then a silo defense could close the "window of vulnerability" which according to critics was becoming an increasing threat to the U.S. second-strike capability.

This limited objective met with criticism, as simply securing a second-strike capability would mean reinforcing the MAD doctrine. Since the debate on the SALT II treaty, conservative lobbyists had increasingly called for a fundamentally new beginning in ballistic missile defense, for efforts to build with new technologies, such as lasers, a defense of the whole country and its population and not just a defense of missiles. The lobbyists were increasingly successful in canvassing for public support for a strategic defense. This represented a potential for regaining national strength and defending a "margin of safety" vis-à-vis the Soviet Union — a perspective that had to be especially attractive after the shifts in the political climate. For an ambitious research program toward ballistic missile defense would engage the technological creativity of the U.S., a source of national pride, in an activist, unilateral solution to the security problem. A comprehensive ballistic missile defense would raise a technological competition between the superpowers in an area of U.S. superiority, thus freeing the U.S. from the need for political cooperation in matters of national security.

Among the most active lobbyists was the Heritage Foundation. With its numerous policy papers it sought to influence the public, Congress and the media beyond Washington and New York, while also serving as a source of recruitment for the newly inaugurated Reagan Administration. In their lobbying efforts these groups and individuals formed a conservative network. In 1982 Daniel O. Graham, former director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), attracted public and congressional attention with his "High Frontier" proposal for a space-based ballistic missile defense. Graham had already worked actively against SALT II and advised Reagan in his election campaign. The Heritage Foundation financed Graham's High Frontier study, published the results and, by way of the Moral Majority, helped to disseminate and popularize it. The High Frontier project came into being, though, as Graham parted ways in 1981 with a lobby group which included Edward Teller, the "father of the American hydrogen bomb" and frequently dubbed "superhawk," as well as a number of Ronald Reagan's close friends. The group split over differences of opinion, with Graham advocating rapid deployment of a defensive system using already available technologies, while Teller proposed technically innovative but as yet undeveloped options. Teller had known

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Reagan since the 1960s. His particular efforts included several personal discussions with the President. In Congress Senator Malcolm Wallop from Wyoming had since the late 1970s come out strongly for a ballistic missile defense with lasers. Clarence A. Robinson from the influential *Aviation Week & Space Technology* supported his efforts in print. A strategic defense was also strongly supported by Congressman Ken Kramer from Colorado Springs, a center of interest in the military uses of space.

In congressional hearings the lobbyists' efforts to redirect defense budget funds to strategic defense met with opposition from the Pentagon's research and development departments. The latter considered the proposed systems either unfeasible, not effective enough or too expensive. They wanted to protect existing programs, expand them systematically and avoid overhasty measures that might politically jeopardize current projects. Prior to Reagan's speech the lobbyists were unable to generate sufficient political pressure from the public, hence the proponents of a strategic defense had no noticeable impact on defense policy. The leading policymakers of the Reagan Administration also rejected such steps. They feared the political costs of a radical change in policy both within the Administration and outside it. Nor should Edward Teller's influence on Ronald Reagan be overestimated; after a number of talks between the two there was nothing to indicate a change in Reagan's policy. In late November 1982 Reagan had once again emphatically reaffirmed the existing policy: the U.S. would adhere to the ABM treaty and do nothing that might endanger it; it had no plans for deploying ballistic missile defense systems, not even those permitted by the treaty. The current research programs were meant solely to preserve the technological competence and stability of the American ICBM arsenal.16

4. The Crisis in Domestic Support for Reagan's Arms Policy, 1982/83

By the end of 1982 there were no indications of the events that would culminate in the speech of March 23, 1983 and SDI. The critical decisions were not made until February and March 1983, that is, at a time when President Reagan's political problems had sharpened dramatically and simultaneously in four different areas: arms control and the nuclear freeze proposal, the MX debate in Congress, the Catholic bishops' pastoral letter on war and peace, and the conflict with Congress over the defense budget in view of the serious downturn in the economy and, tied to that, in the President's image.

The freeze movement’s demand for a halt to testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons reached Congress and Washington politics in the summer of 1982.\(^\text{17}\) For the Democrats this offered a potent campaign issue for the congressional elections in November 1982, in an area where the President appeared vulnerable. With the success of the freeze proposal in several state referenda the movement was reaching its peak. In retrospect it appears to have passed it only in March/April 1983, after Congress had voted on a second freeze resolution. In early 1983 the Administration’s political situation was further complicated when it named a new director to head the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA). Followed with great public interest the Senate in its first vote refused to confirm the nomination of the controversial Kenneth Adelman, and put him through additional, scrupulously thorough hearings.

The freeze movement attained added stature through the Catholic bishops’ letter on war and peace. A five-member ad-hoc committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) had completed a first draft in the summer of 1982. Though this did condone nuclear deterrence as the lesser evil, it made it subject to such serious qualifications that from a military standpoint key elements of Western defense strategy became untenable. The bishops’ letter carried political weight because it criticized arms policy with the moral authority of the church and de facto supported the freeze proposal. Parallel to the freeze movement this issue was coming to a head by the end of the year as the plenum of the NCCB met in Washington, D.C., in November 1982 to discuss the second draft of the bishops’ letter. The meeting received considerable sympathetic coverage by the national media and the issue did not subside until after the third version had been discussed and adopted by the plenum in April 1983.\(^\text{18}\)

The bishops’ letter also contributed to bringing the new MX intercontinental missile to a political impasse. Its deployment had already been delayed for several years as a result of the unsettled question of basing. The more than 30 basing modes proposed either left the MX too vulnerable or were unacceptable for reasons of domestic politics. After another of Reagan’s deployment proposals (“Dense Pack”) had failed in Congress in December 1982, the President appointed a bipartisan commission to find a way out of the impasse. The fate of the MX was to remain uncertain until, following an


interim report in February, the Scowcroft Commission submitted its final recommendations in April 1983.

Halfway through his first term Reagan’s popularity had reached a low point in early 1983, even below that of Carter at the corresponding point in time. In view of a record unemployment and a budget deficit of $200 billion annually, Reagan’s supply-side economic policy seemed a failure. The image crisis emerged in January as the New York Times quoted an unnamed Administration official as calling the budget process in the White House an “unmitigated outrage.”19 Reagan responded to the “leak” in a politically imprudent way and seemed more than ever indecisive, out of touch with reality and without control over his staff. Even his political friends in Congress seemed to be withdrawing their support for him. Editorials in the nation’s leading newspapers were already speaking of the “failing presidency” and the “phasing out of Reaganism.”20

The budget process for the new fiscal year 1983/84, which got underway in the first months of 1983, aggravated Reagan’s political problems. The budget which he submitted to Congress on January 31, 1983 combined measures and spending increases that appeared politically unacceptable to Congress: a budget deficit of $200 billion, cuts in social programs and at the same time an increase in defense spending of about ten percent. Despite broad opposition in Congress transcending party lines, Reagan and Defense Secretary Weinberger remained unyielding. In early March Reagan requested a postponement of budget deliberations in the committees until the beginning of April. To strengthen his bargaining position the President wanted to end-run Congress and appeal to the public for support for his budget plan. Reagan then made his “Star Wars” speech just a few hours before the final vote in the House of Representatives.

5. Considerations in the National Security Council21

It was not technological breakthroughs after years of basic research that brought about the Strategic Defense Initiative; rather, it was a political decision. Nothing in Reagan’s arms policy before 1983 had indicated a change

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21 The accounts presented in sections five and six were drawn from a number of primary sources that cannot be cited here in full. The reliability of these accounts was checked for consistency wherever possible. The fullest information, whose interpretation, however, the author does not share on some details, is provided by the reporting, based on interviews, of Frank Greve, “Out of the blue: How ‘Star Wars’ was proposed,” Philadelphia Inquirer, November 17, 1985, appearing also under the heading “‘Star Wars’.
in policy. On the very day of the speech, Major General Lamberson, who headed the Defense Department section on laser and particle beam weapons ("directed energy weapons," as they are called), was testifying in a Senate committee hearing; when asked by Senator Quayle whether he could on technical grounds recommend an acceleration of the program for space-based laser technology, Lamberson replied: "Senator, no, I cannot... (We) would not recommend an acceleration at this point." Only in tracing back over the decision-making process can we distinguish the coincident, chance events from the real causal relations:

The primary purpose of what came to be known as the "Star Wars" speech was to help the defense budget over its congressional hurdles. Ronald Reagan's pronouncement about making atomic weapons "impotent and obsolete" was actually an interference, for it deflected from this aim. Significantly, the relevant passages were drafted not by White House speech writers but by officers on the staff of the National Security Council. To keep the number of those in the know to a minimum and to prevent the public from learning of the idea prematurely, the additional remarks on strategic defense were inserted in Reagan's manuscript shortly before the speech.

SDI originated in the White House on February 11, in a routine meeting of the President with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and executive officials, including then Deputy National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane. The subject of ballistic missile defense did not just happen to be on this meeting's agenda. McFarlane had been working on it behind the scenes since late 1982, with the support of Navy Chief of Staff Admiral James D. Watkins. By the end of 1982 McFarlane was anxious about future U.S. security policy, where he saw a crisis in the making: In the Geneva arms control talks the "walk in the woods" had just failed and a treaty limitation of Soviet arms would be very difficult; in the U.S., on the other hand, still no agreement had been reached on the MX deployment and the freeze movement was growing. Stymied at home, the U.S. might find itself strategically outdistanced by the Soviet Union. Moreover, the increasing accuracy of Soviet atomic warheads made the U.S. land-based missiles increasingly vulnerable, even if deployed in hardened silos. Following the MX debate, the alternative of a mobile basing that would make them harder to hit was ruled out for reasons of domestic politics. On the other hand, a research program for a strategic


23 Cf. the essay by Christian Tuschhoff in this volume.
defense would bring a new element into play, would probably find widespread domestic support and might improve the U.S. negotiating position in Geneva. McFarlane was thinking not so much of a perfect, impenetrable defense against ballistic missiles, as Reagan later proclaimed in his “Star Wars” speech; the defense should rather be a component of deterrence and need not be perfect.24

Watkins and McFarlane drafted what was called internally the “freedom of fear” briefing paper. As a relatively low-ranking staff member at the time, the former Marine Lt.-Colonel McFarlane needed a higher-ranking ally to put forward his initiative. Since the Navy had no bureaucratic interest of its own in BMD, Watkins was especially well suited for this role. As a devout Catholic he was deeply concerned by the Catholic bishops’ debate on the morality of U.S. nuclear policy, and so he was attracted to the idea of a defense against nuclear weapons. Circumstances favored putting the subject on the agenda of a working lunch of the President with the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Reagan had made the meeting with his highest military advisors a monthly institution. This regular access to the President strengthened the influence of the Joint Chiefs, but to maintain it they had to make the sessions interesting for the President and avoid too much routine reporting. As yet there was nothing important scheduled for February.

The main item on the agenda for February 11 was offensive strategic weapons. The Joint Chiefs informed Reagan that they shared the concern of the Scowcroft Commission about the long-term security of the U.S. land-based missiles. The commission, which had submitted an interim report to the President two days before, concluded in its final report that a “reasonable survivability of fixed targets, such as ICBM silos, may not outlast the century.”25 Watkins turned the discussion to the possibilities of a ballistic missile defense. He argued that technological progress now made it worthwhile to study BMD more closely and make greater efforts in the research. Watkins even spoke of a “moral imperative” to defend rather than retaliate. The President showed great interest and held the discussion longer than planned on this topic. When asked, his military advisors confirmed that in principle they considered a strategic defense a good idea. Yet while they were thinking in terms of longer time frames and basic options without specifying any further the precise objectives, Reagan understood strategic defense as a comprehensive system to protect the entire nation. In contrast, a silo defense as had been discussed since the first ABM debate was technically much simpler to realize. The Joint Chiefs, then, did not share the President’s

optimism about a comprehensive defense. Their having raised the subject acted more to trigger than shape the subsequent development.

Reagan ordered that the idea be followed up immediately and proposals worked out. Without making it public in the President's Office, McFarlane entrusted the task to three Air Force officers on the staff of the National Security Council. In the weeks that followed they developed various options and analyzed their implications for security, arms control and foreign policy.

6. President Reagan's Decision: The "Star Wars" Speech

Shortly after March 8, 1983, the three NSC officers' assignment was altered: they were now to write a roughly five-minute insert for the President's speech on March 23. While Reagan's main purpose was to defend his ten-percent increase in military outlays, the additional remarks on strategic defense were supposed to open up a positive perspective on the future. On March 8, in a speech to the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Reagan had defended his increasingly beleaguered policies on strategic arms and arms control. The speech's unusually sharp, confrontational tone reflected the four-fold political crisis pressing more and more now in early March. He referred to the Soviet Union as the "focus of evil in the modern world," openly attacked the freeze proposal, which he termed a "dangerous fraud" and "merely the illusion of peace," and indirectly criticized the Catholic bishops by warning of "those who would place the United States in a position of military and moral inferiority."26

To prevent a premature leaking of the idea, McFarlane had this addition drafted in the National Security Council and not by the White House speech writers. The vague instructions and intentions made the officers' work more difficult; as various drafts were prepared, the tone fluctuated between careful consideration of the idea and an emphatic announcement of an initiative. The secrecy meant that no effort was made to draw upon the expertise of the Defense and State Departments or the ACDA.

The President's science advisor, George Keyworth, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff learned of the idea five days before the speech. The military men had misgivings about both the costs and the realizability of the necessary technologies; they understood too that a strategic defense could not be a panacea. But neither they nor Keyworth indicated that they had influenced

anything fundamental. Richard Perle, assistant secretary of defense for international security policy, became the spokesman of the internal opposition. He, like Secretary of State Shultz, had learned of the speech just three days beforehand. A knowledgeable conservative defense expert and proponent of "peace through strength," Perle was able to have the proposal limited to ballistic missile defense. A defense capable of countering strategic bombers and cruise missiles as well would have raised additional problems.

Perle was also concerned, as was Shultz, about a possible negative impact on the NATO allies and an unnecessary provocation of the Soviet Union. These points Reagan later addressed directly in his speech. Perle's superior, Defense Secretary Weinberger, who at the time was in Europe, had learned of the plan four days beforehand but decided not to inform the NATO partners in advance. At this juncture McFarlane as well as Fred Iklé, undersecretary of defense for policy, warned against a precipitous, overly ambitious and politically overblown handling of the concept of a strategic defense. The counterposition was argued by White House political advisors under chief of staff James Baker. They were planning a full-scale political offensive to win support for defense policy and wanted to use this fresh, unexpected and PR-handty idea as soon as possible.

On the day before, Reagan himself made the decision not to postpone the idea to a later speech in the "trilogy" of security policy speeches planned for March 23 on the defense budget, March 31 on medium-range missiles and arms control, and April 4 on the MX missile. He went over the relevant sections once again personally. "The giving of the speech, its content and its timing was the President's own initiative and objective," confirmed science advisor Keyworth.\footnote{U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations, \textit{Strategic Defense and Anti-Satellite Weapons}. Hearings, 98th Congress, 2nd Session, Washington, D.C.: G.P.O. 1984, p. 84.}

The timing was expressly chosen so that the impact of the speech would extend beyond Easter into the congressional recess. At that time the members of Congress were normally in their districts to sound out the mood of their constituents. The White House was hoping that by that time broad support for Reagan and his defense policy would have formed among the voters. To prepare the media, White House staff members leaked word that this was expected to be an important security policy address which, in contrast to the one in Orlando at the beginning of the month, would not be confrontational, but rather "reasonable and rational." Also a portion of the speech was previewed for the television networks earlier in the day so that the evening news broadcasts would be able to report that evening on the plan of a strategic defense. To highlight the plan as one of a national vision, 52 well-
known atomic scientists and experts on security policy were invited to a dinner at the White House — among them later some of SDI’s sharpest critics.

That the main objective was public impact can be seen also in the discrepancy between the rhetorical extravagance and the relatively modest actions taken. While the President raised the prospect of realizing a visionary goal, he actually proposed: (a) a major effort to define a long-term program of research in the area of BMD technologies — not necessarily to begin such research, and (b) a study to assess the roles that ballistic missile defense systems might play in U.S. security policy — not, say, to work out a new, defensive nuclear strategy.28

These limited measures contrasted with the forceful and visionary rhetoric: “Wouldn’t it be better to save lives than to avenge them? ... Let me share with you a vision of the future which offers hope ... What if free people could live secure in the knowledge ... that we could intercept and destroy strategic ballistic missiles before they reached our own soil or that of our allies ... I call upon the scientific community in our country, those who gave us nuclear weapons, to turn their great talents now to the cause of mankind and world peace, to give us the means of rendering these nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete ... My fellow Americans, tonight we’re launching an effort which holds the promise of changing the course of human history.”29

This appeal to the nation had to be — and no doubt was meant to be — understood as a promise that the government would undertake an impenetrable defense to shield the populace from nuclear weapons.

The object of changing U.S. security policy fundamentally — which was the impression intended for the American public- could have a negative impact abroad. Concerns of this nature had been raised by various Administration officials in the days prior to the speech. Reagan therefore acknowledged some of the concerns in his speech and, paradoxically, stressed continuity: the Administration would continue to seek genuine disarmament; the measures would not violate the ABM treaty; the U.S. recognized the need for close consultation with its allies because their security depended on American deterrence. The U.S. would maintain its deterrence posture while it went ahead with the plan. Regarding the Soviet Union, Reagan emphasized that the combination of offensive and defensive systems was not intended as an aggressive policy.


7. Results

The Strategic Defense Initiative came into being in a very untypical way, for the American system is characterized by a fragmentation of power. It came about because President Reagan — without any real preparation through the government machinery — personally and largely spontaneously seized the initiative in March 1983 and put the weight of his office behind his decision. Because it fell on fertile ground, prepared over a number of years by conservative forces, the initiative of an individual — albeit the President — could become a nation's policy. All the same, Reagan's initiative was the decisive motive force. Moreover, it was more than simply the fortuitous occasion for an historically necessary decision: without it SDI would not have taken shape either at this juncture or in this form.

Ronald Reagan's motive for the "Star Wars" speech was by no means congruent with the foreign policy consequences of the Strategic Defense Initiative that emerged from it. The decision was sustained by his strong and by no means new conviction that a strategic defense was the way of the future for U.S. security policy. However, in March 1983 the President seized the initiative not on substantive grounds of security policy, but because of the hoped-for political impact domestically. A program to point the way to the future, to electrify the nation and raise before it a vision, this was to help him regain the political leadership at home that he had increasingly lost. — It was no accident that commentators at the time compared Reagan's "Star Wars" vision to Kennedy's Apollo program.30

The control of technology transfer to the U.S.S.R. and its allies has been an essential component of Western security policy ever since the establishment in 1950 of a multilateral commission for export controls: COCOM. This institution was founded with the idea that the West can effectively offset the Warsaw Pact’s quantitative military superiority, and thus ensure a credible deterrence, by maintaining a qualitative superiority in military technology.

In practice this concept proves particularly problematic when it comes to the control of “strategic technologies,” i.e., those civilian goods and processes which, because of their potential military applications, can make a significant contribution to the development of a country’s military capabilities. In an increasingly technological economy, more and more civilian high technologies have become indispensable components of defense technology and thus quite comparable to weapons systems in their military utility and importance. As a result, these technologies have received increasing attention in recent years and the U.S. criticism of uncontrolled exports has grown correspondingly. However, the competitiveness of the American economy in many ways rests upon the utilization of precisely these advanced technologies. Consequently, economic and security interests come to be diametrically opposed.

The question of technology control did not become a major political issue until the Reagan Administration came forward in 1981 to reclaim leadership in dealing with the U.S.S.R. The U.S. aimed to overcome the lead that the Soviet Union supposedly had gained in the superpowers’ “strategic competition” in the 1970s and supplant it with American military and technological superiority. The new administration took the view that the Soviets’ dangerous quantitative and qualitative advances in military capabilities (hence its aggressive foreign policy) were attributable primarily to Western technology. Greater

For his critical comments and helpful ideas on this essay I would like to thank Dietmar Goll.

control over West-East technology transfer was therefore a desirable object of foreign policy and an urgent necessity of security policy. Within the Administration, however, the extent of the controls was the subject of intense controversy. In view of their far-reaching economic and political implications, it produced one of Washington's longest and most memorable "turf battles," chiefly between the Defense and Commerce Departments.  

1. The Conflicts of Interest in the Reagan Administration.

The dispute over the political aim and implementation of stricter controls broke out principally between the Administration's "ideologues" on the one hand and its political "pragmatists" and economic experts on the other. The ideologues, who occupied positions in the Pentagon's Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy and on the staff of the National Security Council, advocated a far-reaching restriction of trade with the Eastern bloc so as to lay bare the systemic economic weaknesses of the U.S.S.R. and thus contribute to the destabilization of the Communist political system in Eastern Europe. Leading figures in the Defense Department repeatedly charged that by selling a wide array of goods and technologies the West had enabled the U.S.S.R. to save research and development costs, avoid economic bottlenecks and thus continue its ambitious arms program. They argued that all militarily and economically exploitable technologies should be declared strategically significant. 

In the Export Administration Act of 1979, which regulates the administration of export controls, the Defense Department is assigned only a subordinate

2 The main conflict was between the Defense and Commerce Departments, but the differences ran right through every department, as President Reagan had filled important offices for control policy in all departments with well-known critics of trade with the Eastern bloc. 

3 Whereas the ideologues aimed at a policy whose ultimate objective was to destabilize and roll back the Soviet empire, the pragmatists regarded the restoration of the balance in political power as a prerequisite for peaceful coexistence with the U.S.S.R. Kurt L. Shell, "Die 'neue Agenda' politischer Diskussion in den USA," in Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte, No. 37/1986, (September 13, 1986), p. 27.

4 Cf. the characterization of the ideologues by George Ball on August 4, 1982: "Most of them follow the lines of a manifesto of a group called Committee for a Free World ... That manifesto calls on Americans ... to try and break the hold of the Soviets over Eastern Europe by denying the Soviet Union Western loans, Western grain, and above all Western technology," in U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. Subcommittees on Europe and the Middle East and on International Economic Policy and Trade, Export Controls on Oil and Gas Equipment. Hearing, 97th Congress, Washington, D.C.: G.P.O. 1983, p. 118.
role in matters of control policy. Because of its expert knowledge of military
technology the Pentagon was granted by Congress a say on all matters of
technology control and charged with drawing up a list of militarily critical
technologies (MCTL); however, this collaboration was to be confined to
providing technical expertise — political influence was not envisaged. Yet
because the MCTL formed the basis for all decisions on controls, the Defense
Department did acquire a leading role in technology control policy. Formally
the National Security Council had no policy function. Its influence on control
policy was based solely on its role as advisory and executive organ of the
President. Institutionally, then, the ideologues represented a small, though
potentially quite influential minority.

The pragmatists were situated predominantly in the Commerce and State
Departments. According to the Export Administration Act, the primary
responsibility for export control policy rested with the Commerce Depart-
ment, which, owing to its competence in economic policy and close contacts
with industry, was concerned with both export promotion and export control.
The State Department, on the other hand, bore the main responsibility for
negotiations on multilateral controls in COCOM. Leading representatives of
these two departments proposed that controls be extended only to civilian
high technologies with direct and clear military significance. The pragmatists
even supported an extension of non-strategic trade with the Eastern bloc,
provided political circumstances did not rule it out.  

The existence of two conflicting and irreconcilable viewpoints within the
Reagan Administration raised a question as to which direction U.S. control
policy might take: Economic warfare or a limited strategic embargo with
some trade?

2. The Legal and Political Parameters

The legal foundations and fundamental aims of technology control policy are
laid down in the Export Administration Act, which is regularly renewed or
amended. The two pillars of the Export Administration Amendments Act of
1979 were economic interests on the one hand and national security on the
other, and the executive was directed always to take both into account.  

Congress expressly ruled out a one-sided economic war against the U.S.S.R.

5 Cf. the statement by Undersecretary Myer Rashish on September 16, 1981, in U.S.
Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. Subcommittee on International
Economic Policy, East/West Economic Relations. Hearing, 97th Congress, 1st Session,
6 Export Administration Act of 1979, Section 3(2)(B).
by limiting the controls to goods and technologies that directly contributed to the further development of a country’s military system. The administration was therefore committed by law to conduct a balanced and moderate policy of technology control, though without clear guidelines as to how this was to be achieved.

However, since the passage of the Export Administration Act of 1979, the general political framework had changed substantially. The fact that the U.S.S.R. had not only expanded its quantitative military superiority, but had also made remarkable qualitative progress aroused widespread concern. Drawing on findings published by the CIA, many critics of East-West trade reiterated their view that the Soviet successes were attributable primarily to West-East technology transfer and to “spetsinformatsiya,” an extensive and systematic Soviet program for obtaining militarily relevant goods and technologies from the West. The general political framework at the start of the 1980s thus favored a shift toward more stringent technology controls.

3. The Increased Bureaucratic Power of the Ideologues in the Defense Department

Since the Reagan Administration neither had an agreed upon, binding concept of controls nor was distinctly constrained by Congress, the dispute between the ideologues and pragmatists for the lead in technology control policy developed into an interdepartmental battle for bureaucratic power. Politically strengthened by the general concern over the security implications of technology transfer, the ideologues in the Defense Department took the offensive in this dispute.

3.1. The Struggle within the Defense Department

Within the Defense Department, there were two sections concerned with technology controls. Because of its technical expertise, the division of Research and Engineering headed by Undersecretary Richard DeLauer was delegated leading responsibility on matters of technology control in 1979. While this division dealt with all military-technical aspects, the questions of strategic

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7 Cf. Export Administration Act of 1979, Section 5(d)(2).
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and security policy fell within the competency of the Policy Division headed by Undersecretary Fred Iklé and in particular the Offices for International Security Policy and for International Economic, Trade and Security Policy under ideologues Richard Perle and Stephen Bryen. The ideologues' efforts to bring about much stricter controls by drastically expanding the MCTL ran into opposition from DeLauer's section, which favored control decisions based primarily on the military capabilities of the technologies involved. The dispute was decided in several stages in favor of the ideologues. With the December 29, 1982 Directive 2040xx from Deputy Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci, the Department of Defense was restructured and the primary responsibility (hence power of decision) for technology controls was transferred to the Policy division. After that the R&E division was left with only an advisory function. 10

The conflict continued, however, as Perle and Bryen repeatedly used private consulting firms and ignored the technical reports from the R&E division. Moreover, with Weinberger's backing, Perle and Bryen expended substantial resources to build up the Pentagon's technology control apparatus within the Policy division, and the division for R&E assumed less and less importance. 11 With the January 17, 1984 Directive 2040.2, in which the Secretary of Defense effectively approved the de facto takeover of technology control policy by the Policy division, the ideologues finally prevailed. 12

3.2. The Conflicts with the Commerce Department

Directive 2040.2 stressed the great importance the Defense Department attached to militarily relevant technologies. These were termed precious national resources to be safeguarded and utilized primarily for the preservation of national security. 13 The dominance of the ideologues led to an increasing politicization of the Defense Department's supposedly military-technical decisions on controls, which resulted in mounting conflicts with the Commerce Department over the extent of controls necessary to protect national security.

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13 Ibid., annex, p. 2.
In 1976 the Bucy Report had recommended that controls be imposed only on technologies that could definitely contribute to the development of an opponent’s weapons systems.\textsuperscript{14} However, the Department of Defense interpreted the criterion of military significance more broadly. It compiled a 700-page control list which cited practically all current high technologies. Despite strong protests from the Commerce Department as well as exporters, the Defense Department insisted on using this list.

As it lacked the technical expertise to question the Defense Department decisions, the Commerce Department’s only way of countering the ideologues in the Pentagon was to insist on its leadership in the area of export controls and repeatedly point out the economic interests at stake. However, in the wake of Senate hearings revealing that the Soviet military had benefited from Western technology, the proponents of economic considerations found themselves on the defense politically: they did not want to lay themselves open to the charge of advocating exports at the expense of national security. The Commerce Department’s political authority was further assailed by several studies which criticized it for mismanagement, inefficiency and incompetence in administering technology controls.\textsuperscript{15} Consequently, leading conservatives in Congress such as Senator Garn called for divesting it of its primary authority for export controls in favor of the Defense Department or a new “Office of Strategic Trade.”\textsuperscript{16} The Commerce Department thus faced considerable political pressure and found itself unable to oppose effectively the ideologues in the Defense Department.

Moreover, the Defense Department exercised a virtual veto power over all decisions concerning controls. According to Section 10(g) of the Export Administration Act, the President is obligated to submit a written report to Congress if he were to reject the control recommendations of the Defense Department. As such a report would publicize dissent within the Administration, possibly diminishing the President’s authority, it was highly unlikely that the Defense Department would be overruled.\textsuperscript{17} The Defense Department

\textsuperscript{17} In fact there has never yet been such a report. On the problems of 10(g) cf. William Root, “State’s Unwelcome Role,” \textit{Foreign Service Journal}, Vol. 61, No. 5 (May 1984), p. 29.
used this political leverage uncompromisingly and refused to approve exports even if in the view of the Commerce Department these were clearly not subject to controls. It willingly accepted an escalation of inner-administrative conflict, knowing that the dispute was fairly certain to be decided in its favor.

The Defense Department was legally empowered to screen all exports to the Eastern-bloc countries. To ensure that the stricter controls would not be undercut by exports to third countries, and because they did not trust the Commerce Department to exercise proper control, the ideologues in the Defense Department demanded the right to check all technology exports to non-communist countries not belonging to COCOM. Such an extension of authority had not been provided for in the Export Administration Act and was flatly rejected by the Commerce Department. At the same time the latter was fending off demands from the Customs Service, which, with the support of the Defense Department, sought to take over the monitoring duties of the Commerce Department. When in November 1983 the illegal export of an American Vax-782 computer was stopped in most dramatic fashion in Hamburg, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and Treasury Secretary Donald Regan (whose department includes the Customs Service) used the occasion to sharply criticize the Commerce Department publicly and to reiterate their claims to greater control authority.\(^{18}\) This public demonstration proved successful. Upon instructions from the President, the National Security Council strengthened the Customs Service and issued a directive which allowed the Defense Department to control technology exports to 12 non-communist countries. Since the interdepartmental conflict continued, however, the then National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane issued a new directive in January 1985, by which the Defense Department obtained the right to check exports of technology to 15 instead of 12 non-communist nations.\(^{19}\)

With this expansion of the Defense Department's control authority at the expense of the Commerce Department the ideologues had enhanced their influence on technology control policy by another important step. They were able to implement their restrictive control policy toward the Eastern bloc without hindrance and for the first time extend it to certain non-communist

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\(^{19}\) Cf. *Washington Post*, January 12, 1985, pp. A1, A18. The 15 countries were Austria, Finland, Hong Kong, India, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Liechtenstein, Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and Syria. But the potential reach of these controls is greater since each year the Defense Department can replace up to five countries on the list with other countries. Background discussion in the Department of Commerce on May 15, 1986.
countries as well. De facto the Commerce Department had relinquished its primary authority in technology control policy to the Defense Department, whose role had originally been conceived of as strictly that of a technical advisor.

3.3. The Conflict with the State Department

The only policy area not yet dominated by the Defense Department was that of multilateral technology controls within COCOM, which came under the jurisdiction of the State Department. The ideologues in the Defense Department repeatedly criticized the control policy of the COCOM allies as irresponsible and termed it the "collapse of the international control system." They argued that the U.S. would have to exert pressure on the Europeans so as to force them to tighten their controls. The State Department, however, felt that multilateral technology controls could be tightened only in concert with the allies. Arguing that the State Department was technically out of its league in technology controls, the Defense Department demanded the main authority for COCOM negotiations.20

To give weight to its demands the Defense Department blocked the COCOM talks on computer technology by refusing to collaborate in working out the U.S. negotiating position, arguing that COCOM was an inadequate negotiating forum. It demanded that the negotiations be continued in an as yet undetermined forum under its direction.21 This tactic by the Defense Department resulted in the resignation of William Root, who had been the head negotiator on multilateral controls for many years. The State Department thus lost a leading pragmatist who for a long time had successfully resisted the pressure from the ideologues.

This made it easier for the ideologues to gain a greater say in COCOM matters, though this was also facilitated by their superior resources. In 1984 two million dollars was transferred from the Defense Department budget to the State Department for augmenting the American COCOM delegation.22

Shortly thereafter three officials from the Defense Department joined the delegation. Moreover, the State Department now supported the Defense Department's long-standing demand for a military committee in COCOM. Despite considerable opposition from the Europeans initially, STEM (Security and Technology Export Meetings) was instituted in October 1985 as a military

subcommittee of COCOM, under the direction of the Defense Department, to advise the COCOM nations on the potential military applications of new technologies.\footnote{Background talks with members of the Reagan Administration in April and May 1986.} With that the Pentagon had greatly expanded its influence vis-à-vis both the State Department and the allies in COCOM.

The Defense Department had prevailed all the way down the line. By steadily extending their responsibilities the ideologues in the Policy division of the Defense Department had skillfully and resolutely transformed their originally minimal say on technology control policy into a leading and often decisive role. Under their direction the Defense Department was actively involved in all control decisions nationally and internationally, and had actually come to assume primary responsibility in many key areas. As they extended their authority the ideologues were also continuously enlarging the control bureaucracy until finally, on May 10, 1985, the Defense Technology Security Administration was established. This control agency brought together for the first time all essential control functions: information analysis, technology control and political decision making within the Defense Department. This represented an unparalleled concentration of power in control policy.

4. The Defense Department and U.S. Technology Control Policy

4.1. The Export Controls

The influence of the ideologues soon made itself felt in all areas of technology control. The MCTL was constantly expanded by the addition of new goods and technologies. Older goods and technologies readily available internationally were not — as stipulated by law — removed from the list. The Defense Department frequently ignored the liberalization proposals by the Commerce Department and from industry so that in 1985 the MCTL comprised over 12,000 goods and technologies. The result was a dramatic increase in controls. The number of export license applications processed doubled from 65,000 in 1981 to 132–135,000 in 1985 (over 90% of which were due to technology controls).\footnote{Cf. William Archey on October 10, 1985, in U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. Subcommittee on International Economic Policy and Trade, Recent Developments in the Implementation of the Export Administration Amendments Act of 1985. Hearing, 99th Congress, 1st Session, Washington, D.C.: House stenographic minutes, p. 45.}

4.2. The Control of Scientific Knowledge and Research

Under American law, technological know-how in any form is subject to export control. As the Defense Department was also intent on restricting the
transfer of scientific knowledge and research findings, the MCTL was expanded to include a list of "emerging technologies." The control authority of the Defense Department was further extended by the President's Executive Order 12356 of April 1982, whereby all information produced by or for the government and affecting U.S. national security could be classified.25 Also the Department of Defense Authorization Act of 1984 empowered the Defense Department to classify information publicly accessible under the Freedom of Information Act if it concerned space technology or military subjects. In November 1984 Defense Secretary Weinberger's Directive 5230.25 extended this provision to cover non-secret technical information.26

On the basis of these regulations, more and more research in scientific institutes and universities was classified. Some universities were called upon to deny foreign students any participation in high-technology research projects. This was sharply criticized by the National Academy of Sciences. The report of a study conducted by the National Academy concluded that academic exchange of information had not contributed substantially to West-East technology transfer, and it warned of a strangulation of research and development.27 As a result of considerable opposition from the universities, the Administration agreed in June 1984 to control basic research in future only if this had been previously agreed upon.

The Defense Department also intervened increasingly in international conferences by preventing papers from being delivered because they allegedly contained classified information. After the National Academy of Sciences had again sharply criticized these controls in a second report of January 1984, President Reagan publicly declared his support for scientific freedom.28 Consequently, fewer papers were banned, but instead access to the conferences was controlled. Between January 1984 and April 1985, at least seven conferences were completely or partially closed to all foreign participants, or the latter had to commit themselves in writing to compliance with the U.S. technology control regulations.29 The Defense Department increasingly reverted to this type of controls since these, in its view, did not greatly impede American research.

4.3. The Multilateral Technology Controls

In Europe the extension of controls to Western nations gave rise to fears that the U.S. was turning to an economically motivated control policy which could threaten technologically dependent West European firms. In fact, the American technology controls vis-à-vis allied nations were motivated by a concern that the Europeans were not adequately monitoring their exports to the Eastern bloc. Although West Germany had been a member of COCOM since 1950, it too was criticized in Washington as the “greatest security risk of all America’s allies” on control matters. Exports to the Federal Republic were therefore checked closely, sometimes even prohibited altogether, in order to induce the Germans to tighten their controls. The interest in SDI research contracts was also used to effect a substantial improvement in the German administration of controls.

However, the ideologues in the Defense Department directed their attention primarily to tightening the multilateral controls decided upon in COCOM. By threatening stricter controls on American computer exports to Europe they were able to advance and, in July 1984, conclude the extremely difficult negotiations on the control of computer technology. This was a prestigious victory for the Defense Department, which thereupon assumed a leading role within the American delegation in the COCOM talks on further control-tightening measures. Under its direction the “third-country initiative” was also accelerated. Its aim was to induce industrialized non-COCOM nations to adopt technology controls similar to those of COCOM. As means of coercion the Defense Department could exercise control rights over technology exports to certain non-communist countries. Thus, Austria and Sweden were successfully threatened with a technology embargo if they did not institute

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32 Cf. Der Spiegel, April 21, 1986, p. 28.


34 Countries with whom an agreement has been sought include Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Egypt, Finland, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Israel, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Africa, South Korea, Switzerland, Taiwan and Yugoslavia. Various background conversations with members of the Reagan Administration in April and May 1986.
stricter technology controls. In 1985 the U.S. also concluded a control agreement with India and the following year with Pakistan.

Overall, the ideologues had not only succeeded in consistently extending their authority, but had also managed to translate it into stricter technology controls. As a result, the U.S. policy on technology controls had edged much closer to a policy of economic warfare against the U.S.S.R. and for the first time multilateral controls had been considerably tightened to include countries outside COCOM.

5. The Opposition to the U.S. Control Policy

In the early 1980s the competitiveness of American industry deteriorated rapidly. The trade deficit rose from $40 billion in 1981 to nearly $150 billion in 1985. The Young Commission, appointed by the Administration to make a detailed study of U.S. competitiveness, came to the conclusion: “Our ability to compete internationally faces unprecedented challenge from abroad. Our world leadership is at stake, and so is our ability to provide for our people the standard of living and opportunities to which they aspire.”

Heightened international competition also affected the high-technology industry, which in the 1970s had lost market shares in seven of ten high-technology sectors. The tightening of technology controls therefore came at precisely the time that American firms were under great pressure from economic competition. With export losses due to technology controls estimated at $7.6 billion annually, it was not surprising that the Reagan Administration’s policy on technology control met with sharp criticism and major opposition.

5.1. The Criticism from the Scientific and Business Communities

Representatives of the scientific and business communities criticized U.S. control policy as unrealistic and oblivious to the marked technological and economic interdependence in the high-technology sector. It erroneously assumed that the U.S. was the only producer of leading technologies. In reality, they noted, there was a lively international exchange of information from which the American high-technology industry also profited; thus it was not

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a matter of one-way technology transfer. By shutting out foreign scientists and experts the U.S. would lose important technological resources.

The high-tech industry was particularly affected by the tightening of controls. With export rates averaging 20–40%, U.S. high-technology firms are to an exceptional degree engaged in and greatly dependent on export. Research and development in this area simply cannot be sustained without export earnings. The high-technology industry saw its capacity for innovation and export jeopardized by American technology controls and charged that the controls increasingly damaged its competitiveness in Western markets. Together with representatives of the scientific community it called for a significant reduction in technology controls, their restriction to clearly military technologies and the removal from the control list of all obsolescent and militarily insignificant technologies. When these demands were largely ignored by the Reagan Administration, the domestic opposition concentrated on Congress, which in 1983 began deliberations on amending the Export Administration Act of 1979.

5.2. The Export Administration Amendments Act of 1985

By revising the control guidelines in the Export Administration Act of 1979, Congress had the chance to influence and even alter U.S. technology control policy. However, the conflict between economic and security interests also raged within Congress. The bill H.R.3231 passed by the Democrat-controlled House of Representatives to amend the Export Administration Act took the demands of industry into account. It provided for a notable reduction of controls as well as for increased funds for the Commerce Department to carry out its control duties. The bill passed by the Republican-controlled Senate, S.979, on the other hand, reflected the concerns about the security risks of technology transfer. It therefore supported a tightening of controls. The two houses of Congress agreed only on the need for strengthening COMON controls, better monitoring of control regulations and tougher sanctions on illegal export of technology.38

After lengthy negotiations in conference committee, Congress passed the Export Administration Amendments Act in 1985. The new law followed the example of its predecessors and advocated a balanced technology control policy which would give equal consideration to economic and security interests. But in fact initially the new law had virtually no effect on the Reagan Administration's technology control policy. The control lists were not reduced, since the Defense Department added more new technologies to the

control list than were removed on the Commerce Department’s initiative.\textsuperscript{39} Congress had not affected the Defense Department’s position of strength and the ideologues continued to dominate the U.S. technology control policy.

6. The Turning Point in U.S. Technology Control Policy

Supporters of a less restrictive control policy in both the Administration and Congress managed to increase their influence only after the overall economic conditions had deteriorated to an alarming degree. Ever since the Young Commission Report, which had gone largely unnoticed politically, the economic news had worsened. After the U.S. had registered a record trade deficit of over $148 billion in 1985, thus becoming the world’s largest debtor nation, it was hit with an even greater deficit of $169 billion in 1986. Moreover, the economic growth rate of 2.5\% for 1986 was the lowest since the recession of 1981/82, and with 1.1\% for the last quarter of 1986 it had sunk to a new low. Psychologically, the biggest blow was probably the awareness that even prestigious American industries such as high-technology and parts of the electronics industries were endangered.\textsuperscript{40} The diminishing competitiveness of the U.S. economy became a dominant political theme in 1987.\textsuperscript{41}

Against this background, a study published by the National Academy of Sciences appeared on January 14, 1987 with immediate political impact. This report emphasized the importance of exports and a healthy economy for national security. It criticized that the current U.S. control policy had discouraged many Western firms from purchasing leading technologies from the U.S.\textsuperscript{42} The NAS study attracted considerable attention in Congress. With a view to the impending deliberations on a new trade law, bills to reduce technology controls were introduced in both houses, this time gaining wide support in both parties. As a result of the political discussions on declining


\textsuperscript{40} A study by the U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee from October 1986 concluded that the U.S. was on the verge of losing its competitiveness in the high-technology sector. Cf. the \textit{International Herald Tribune}, October 22, 1986, pp. 1, 17. A similar conclusion was reached by a CIA study on the semiconductor industry. Cf. the \textit{International Herald Tribune}, January 7, 1987, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{41} Cf. the \textit{International Herald Tribune}, April 18 – 19, 1987, pp. 1 – 2.

U.S. competitiveness, members of Congress had become more attentive to economic interests, and measures to promote trade were now politically popular. The argument that a relaxation of controls could imperil national security had lost some of its persuasiveness owing to the predominance of economic problems on the one hand and the improved relations between the superpowers on the other. Furthermore, as of January 1987 the political balance of power in Congress had also changed, with the Democrats holding the majority in both houses.

These developments put the Reagan Administration under considerable pressure to act. In January 1987 President Reagan announced a comprehensive initiative for the advancement of American competitiveness. As part of this initiative the Cabinet was instructed to examine the possibilities for lessening and improving export controls and to report by March 1987.43 Boosted by the NAS study and with support in the Cabinet, the Commerce Department now took the lead. Without waiting for the Cabinet decisions in March, Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldridge announced on February 9, 1987 new general licenses for exports to COCOM countries, which would reduce the previous controls by about 20%.44 He called for an end to the program's unnecessary burdens on technology exports and announced further steps to relax export controls in order to strengthen U.S. competitiveness. The Administration's trade bill of February 19, 1987 provided for, among other things, a shortening of the control lists, a faster processing of export applications and an administrative strengthening of the Commerce Department.45

The ideologues in the Defense Department sharply criticized this new trend toward reducing export controls and emphasized the dangers to U.S. defense capability.46 But their views did not receive much support. Following the Cabinet discussion of export control policy in March 1987, the Commerce Department's proposals for rationalizing the export control system were approved by a majority.47 In June 1987 initial measures to facilitate exports came into effect.48 Thus, economic constraints had led to a change in course in technology control policy. In view of the unresolved conflicts in control policy, however, nothing definitive can be said about the duration and extent of this turnabout.

47 Telephone conversation with the Department of Commerce on July 23, 1987.
48 Cf. Business America, June 8, 1987, p. 3.

The technology control policy of the Reagan Administration provides an apt example of "bureaucratic politics" in the United States: the interdepartmental battle for power and influence on what continues to be an explosive subject. The analysis has shown how during the Reagan Administration the ideologues in the Defense Department progressively broadened their initially limited control powers in order to exercise greater influence on technology control policy. Bureaucratic politics became the decisive factor once the Reagan Administration found itself unable to devise a way of removing or bridging the conflicts of interests over technology control policy.

There are a number of reasons why the ideologues in the Defense Department were so successful in expanding their control authority, a move which from the start was clearly aimed at substantially tightening the controls. For one thing, the ideologues were far superior in bureaucratic skill, resoluteness and, above all, resources. For another, their perception of an increased Soviet power and threat was widely shared in the early 1980s, so that the American political environment offered good prospects for success. This background is essential for understanding the wide political attention attracted by various studies and hearings on West-East technology transfer and the heavy criticism of the Commerce Department, which had greatly strengthened the hand of the ideologues in the Defense Department. Up to the end of 1986 this constellation enabled them to ignore the liberal parts of the Export Administration Act and to conduct a one-sided control policy to the detriment of economic interests.

Winning bureaucratic turf proved to be an extremely effective way for the ideologues to gain control over the U.S. technology control policy. The Defense Department's newly established control agency rivaled that of the Commerce Department and formed the necessary institutional foundation for the ideologues to be present in every forum and actively involved in all decisions. The ideologues consistently utilized their newly achieved bureaucratic powers to exert political influence. For example, their hard-won right to control technology exports to certain non-communist countries served as a useful lever to exert pressure on third countries to introduce technology controls. In this way they were able to bring about a much more restrictive control policy, both nationally and internationally. From 1981 to 1986 the U.S. technology controls as well as the multilateral COCOM controls were continuously tightened. For the first time ever, control agreements were concluded with non-COCOM countries. During this period the criticism from trade and industry as well as Congress were ineffective because the Commerce Department was politically weakened and unable to assert itself against the Defense Department.
The change in technology control policy that became discernible in 1987 was — like the sharpening of controls in the early 1980s — largely attributable to the general political climate. Effective opposition to the restrictive policy of the Defense Department ideologues emerged only after economic factors had assumed politically significant dimensions. Economic constraints, not a sober weighing of the pros and cons, led the Reagan Administration to moderate its technology control policy.

The differences of opinion still exist and it remains to be seen how far the liberalization will ultimately advance. Although the restrictive technology control policy of the 1980s has probably passed its peak, we should be skeptical of any expectations of a fundamental change. Though the influence of the ideologues in the Defense Department is momentarily on the wane, the control organization they built up remains active and influential. Even after the Reagan Administration, this apparatus will still be at the disposal of the Defense Department to take the lead once again in technology control policy. More than anything else this fact explains why bureaucratic power plays such an important role in the U.S. political system: it not only provides the basis for effectively determining policy; once established, it is also very hard to counter.
The Lost Opportunity of the "Walk in the Woods": Motives and Calculations of U.S. Decision Makers

In the early 1980s no question so consumed and emotionally divided the West German people as that of NATO's nuclear modernization. The longing for peace and security gave rise to impressive demonstrations aimed at convincing the governments of West Germany and the United States that nuclear disarmament was both necessary and justified. For the administration of President Reagan was reputed to deny arms control the central importance widely attached to it in Germany. It was not uncommon for banners and placards to carry anti-American slogans. Then, in early 1983 the demonstrations swelled when it was learned that during the summer of 1982 the U.S. and the Soviet Union had nearly reached agreement in the Geneva negotiations on intermediate-range nuclear weapons. But without consulting the Federal Republic, the decision makers in Washington and Moscow had scotched the agreement and, in the eyes of many West Germans, lost an opportunity to achieve disarmament. The Reagan Administration justified its rejection of the "walk in the woods" with the argument that the Soviet Union had been unwilling to accept this compromise proposal. What role, then, did the Soviet rejection play in the American decision makers' deliberations, and what other factors may have influenced their decision? The following essay attempts to trace the history of the "walk in the woods" in light of the motives and calculations of U.S. decision makers on arms control policy.

1. Types of American Decision Making Processes

U.S. policy on arms control is part of a comprehensive national security policy. It therefore competes with other security requirements, such as those

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1 Above and beyond the published sources and accounts cited in the notes, the author was able to draw upon numerous interviews and background discussions which he conducted in the U.S. during an extended research stay in 1986. Assurances of confidentiality, however, preclude any detailed references. For their amiable support in his research the author would like to thank above all Norman Clyne, Lucas Fisher, Frank Gaffney, Leslie Gelb, Richard Haass, James E. Hinds, Yuli Kvitsinsky, Jack Matlock, John Newhouse, Mark Parris, Richard Perle, Eugene V. Rostow, Edward V. Rowny, Robert Simmons, Strobe Talbott, Greg Tielman and James Timbie. Special thanks are due to David
arising from economic and military planning. Among them there often emerge tensions or even conflicting aims. If concrete results are to be achieved in arms control, then the foreign policy decision making process of the U.S. must meet two conditions. First, basic decisions on the direction of foreign and security policy have to be taken; in particular, the political leadership must set priorities and establish guidelines for the experts within the bureaucracies. The sole responsibility for these decisions rests with the President, who is advised by the National Security Council. Secondly, the experts from the security policy bureaucracies have to prepare concrete decisions of arms control policy and harmonize them with the other dimensions of national security. The responsibility for this rests with the competent departments and agencies, which, however, because of their different purposes, represent different interests and often pursue opposing aims. Reconciling the various elements of security policy and resolving bureaucratic conflicts of interest can be done in essentially two ways. First, it can involve a process of establishing a value consensus, i.e., the decision makers agree on the basic lines of policy and must resolve the conflicts on matters of detail; or, secondly, it can involve a process of detail consensus, i.e., the experts are in full agreement on the correctness and judiciousness of particular decisions but they lack an overall political conception and strategy.

2. Ronald Reagan’s Approach to Foreign Policy

Part of President Reagan’s style is to set general political priorities. However, Reagan must also be characterized as a “domestically oriented” President.

Anderson, Uwe Nerlich and David Yost, who have helped greatly in establishing contacts for discussion.

2 In principle, decisions on arms control policy involve five departments and agencies, which have powers of initiative and rights of proposal. These are the Department of Defense, the Department of State, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, the National Security Council staff and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. When necessary, other departments and agencies can be called in for their expertise in specific matters. This applies in particular to the CIA, which is responsible for verification of arms control agreements and hence is always represented in the coordinating bodies; it does not, however, play an active role with its own comprehensive proposals on arms control policy.


His knowledge of foreign policy issues and international relations is limited and so he relies on the counsel of his closest advisors on these matters. His attention and personal interest are devoted primarily to his agenda in domestic policy and to the politics of mustering majorities.\(^5\) Hence, he is more inclined than his predecessors to "tolerate disagreement and even paralysis"\(^6\) in foreign and security policy. This in fact has not been conducive to implementing the larger designs of foreign policy. Reagan uses the national security advisor and his staff primarily for shielding him, or keeping him removed, from problems of foreign policy. Yet his national security advisors have by no means commanded the extensive authority that would have offset the President's deficiencies in guiding and directing policy.\(^7\)

3. Negotiating Style and Basic Tactical Decisions

Ronald Reagan's "philosophy" for negotiations with the Soviet Union can be summarized in five demands on the American negotiating style and tactics:

First, the negotiations must be conducted from a "realistic" standpoint that harbors no illusions concerning the Soviet leaders' ideological beliefs; in other words, there should be no misunderstandings about the aims of communism.\(^8\)

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\(^7\) In connection with the Iran-contra affair, McFarlane complained that Reagan had rarely relied on him as National Security Advisor: Often Reagan had not even taken note of his comments. For this reason the Reagan Administration was not thinking over long-term plans for foreign policy but occupied itself predominantly with matters coming up day to day. The first year the Reagan Administration was concerned with defining the President's goals; the second had been taken up with how to handle "partisanship" and "public understanding." There was no time left for reflection on foreign policy goals. Cf. *The International Herald Tribune* of March 3, 1987, as well as background information of the author.

Consequently, the U.S. conduct of negotiations must be pragmatic, but from an ideological standpoint. Second, Reagan regards power as being instrumental for successful negotiations, as the Soviet Union is said to understand and respect power. The negotiations with the Soviet Union must be conducted from a position of American strength, that is, on the basis of a "margin of safety." As a result, maintaining national security through programs of military modernization takes precedence over arms control negotiations. Third, the President attaches importance to disciplined negotiations. This is to be achieved by establishing and adhering to principles of negotiating tactics. Fourth, Ronald Reagan emphasizes the importance of patience and persistence in the negotiations. And fifth, he insists on very exact treaty terms to deny the Soviets any possibility of finding loopholes or exploiting ambiguous treaty provisions.

On the basis of these principles the Reagan Administration developed four standards to guide its conduct of arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union:

First, negotiations would have to truly reduce the two sides' arsenals rather than simply limit them. Second, the demand for negotiability of U.S. arms
control proposals was dropped. The American arms control policy had to serve exclusively as an instrument of national security.\footnote{Cf. the decision of the National Security Council of April 21, 1982 in \textit{Arms Control Reporter 1982}, p. 611.B.16; Strobe Talbott, "Playing for the Future," \textit{Time}, April 18, 1983, p. 24; also background information.} Third, the American delegations in Geneva were left without a \textit{fallback position}. Compromise proposals would require the explicit approval of Washington; the direction of the negotiating was centralized because the authority of the delegations was restricted.\footnote{Cf. U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. Subcommittee on Arms Control, International Security and Science, \textit{Fundamentals of Nuclear Arms Control Part V. Report, 99th Congress, 2nd Session, January 1986}, Washington, D.C.: G.P.O.1986, p. 32. Against this argument it has been countered that for reasons of negotiating tactics no administration would admit to having a fallback position. Yet this misses the real point of the argument. It is not that the Reagan Administration had not thought about further options in its arms control policy, but that the balance in authority between executive center and negotiating delegation had shifted from what it was in previous administrations. Furthermore, (again compared with previous administrations) more stress had been laid on the established negotiating proposals than on alternative approaches.} Fourth, in contrast to the SALT negotiations carried out by administrations from Nixon to Carter, the use of weapons systems in the negotiating process was changed: weapons such as the MX missile or new defense systems resulting from SDI research are no longer \textit{bargaining chips} in the talks. Rather, they are to serve as tactical "leverage" to keep the Soviet Union at the negotiating table and wrest concessions from it, as they demonstrate American resolve and determination to carry out further arms measures.\footnote{Cf. Talbott, \textit{Deadly Gambits}; Michael Krepon, \textit{Strategic Stalemate. Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control in American Politics}, New York: St. Martin's Press 1984, pp. 85 – 101; \textit{Public Papers 1981}, pp. 195, 878 and 957; \textit{Public Papers 1982}, Vol. II, Washington, D.C.: G.P.O. 1983, pp. 934, 1322 and 1598; \textit{Public Statements of Caspar W. Weinberger, Secretary of Defense 1981}, Vol. II, Washington D.C. n.d., pp. 1100 – 1101; \textit{Why SDI is No Bargaining Chip}, The Heritage Foundation Backgrounder No. 460, October 2, 1985; for instance, the Reagan Administration argued that SDI had brought the Soviet Union back to the negotiating table. How U.S. weapons systems that will be deployed regardless of any arms control agreement are to induce the Soviet Union to make concessions remains unanswered. The contradiction can be explained only by the idea that the intended leverage is geared exclusively to guiding Soviet behavior. In other words, leverage is the forcing of Soviet good conduct by means of American armament. But in this regard it should not be overlooked that Congress would perhaps cut funding for SDI or the MX if the Administration admitted that these weapons systems were only tactical bargaining chips.} This attitude and these principles were first demonstrated in the Geneva talks on intermediate-range weapons.

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4. Nitze's Initial Considerations on the "Walk in the Woods"

The American and Soviet delegations commenced the negotiations on intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) in Geneva on November 30, 1981. The chief American negotiator, Paul Henry Nitze, was operating not only from the Administration's guiding principles but also on the basis of a concrete U.S. proposal, the "zero option," which President Reagan had announced on November 18 in a speech before the National Press Club. The crucial statement in the speech was: "The United States is prepared to cancel its deployment of Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles if the Soviets will dismantle their SS-20, SS-4 and SS-5 missiles." The Soviet Union rejected this proposal as imbalanced and presented its own proposals. Despite Nitze's public statements to the contrary, the negotiations had not made any progress during the first two rounds. In Washington to prepare for the next round of talks, which was to begin on May 20, 1982, Nitze concluded that the system of coordination by interagency groups was not conducive to working out constructive solutions. A special initiative was needed.

The Reagan Administration had inherited the issue of intermediate-range weapons in the form of the NATO dual-track decision. The crucial question was whether the U.S. could negotiate an acceptable arms control agreement that would reduce the Soviet superiority in intermediate-range weapons, or whether NATO had to restore the cohesion of Western deterrence by means of a military modernization. In either case the Alliance was facing an internal test of strength. Both a constructive outcome of the arms control talks and a possible modernization could threaten a fragile alliance consensus that rested on divergent security interests and perceptions. Nitze took the view that an American strategy for the 1980s could be successful only if it were for the Allies recognizably consistent with their long-term interests. For him the cohesiveness of the Alliance was the key element of the INF problem. Only if the U.S. could credibly demonstrate the seriousness of its disarmament efforts would its Allies be willing, if need be, to begin deployment of intermediate-range weapons in 1983. Alliance management was even more important than the arms control negotiations themselves. The official U.S. negotiating position of a zero option seemed in the long run unlikely to achieve this because it did not force the Soviet Union to negotiate seriously.

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15 The "walk in the woods" was above all a matter of overcoming the weaknesses in decision making in both (!) capitals, Nitze stated in a lecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on June 25, 1986; author's note.

Rather, it tempted the Soviets to exploit disagreement in the West instead of offering constructive negotiating solutions. In Nitze's thinking the German Social Democrats played a central role in maintaining domestic consensus on German security policy and hence the cohesion of the Alliance. This had become clear to him in part from talks with Chancellor Helmut Schmidt.

Yet time was pressing. General Secretary Brezhnev's state of health was visibly deteriorating. And Brezhnev, as Nitze learned from Helmut Schmidt, did want an historic summit meeting with Reagan. In addition, Nitze's sense of timing was swayed by a second consideration: At the end of the second negotiating round in March 1982, Nitze's Soviet counterpart, Yuli Kvitsinsky, had informed him that Moscow was planning a thoroughgoing review of its INF policy. To influence positively the outcome of this review, said Kvitsinsky, it was important to make as much progress as possible in the negotiations beforehand, because a Politburo decision, once taken, was very difficult to revise. Nitze decided to make a thrust on his own in order to reach a negotiating solution. In so doing he could refer to President Reagan's general instruction that he should sound out whether in principle an agreement with the Soviet Union was possible. Nitze interpreted this instruction in such a way that to this end he might set forth his own personal thoughts and ideas to his Soviet counterpart. Nonetheless, he was aware of the great risk he was running.

5. The Initiative

Nitze's task first of all was to find a mutually acceptable compromise that could then attract the necessary support in the capitals of the superpowers and among the Allies. Without relinquishing the initiative or control, he established cooperative ties with four other figures in hopes of working out a compromise formula and getting it accepted politically.


18 Nitze is said to have made the following assessment: In terms of its membership strength the SPD is the strongest political force in the Federal Republic. It represents extremely popular ideas among large parts of the population even if they do not all vote for the SPD. The U.S., according to Nitze, cannot afford to neglect the SPD as a political force even if it is in the opposition in Bonn. And Nitze then points to the SPD's growing alienation from the NATO dual decision as a particular problem. Background information. Within the Administration Nitze stood alone in this assessment.

With the help of General William Burns, the representative of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) in the American INF delegation, Nitze sought to devise a militarily justifiable compromise for INF. The critical question was which systems NATO could most likely trade in, i.e., which weapons systems could be given up at the negotiating table without impairing the security of the Alliance. In other words, Nitze was looking for a bargaining chip. At the end of his deliberations he concluded that the Pershing II was the system NATO could most readily give up. The following reasons were decisive:

- For military targeting the Pershing II was not absolutely necessary. Targets in the Soviet Union that fell within the Pershing II's range of 1800 km could also be covered by strategic systems or GLCMs.
- It was more economical to opt for just one weapons system rather than striving for a weapons mix of Pershing II and GLCM.
- The Pershing II was earmarked for deployment only in West Germany. Abandoning the GLCM would have contradicted the principle of non-singularity of the German government. Giving up the Pershing II would have been simpler to handle from the point of view of Alliance policy.
- The Soviet Union was especially interested in a reduction of NATO's ballistic missiles. This enhanced the value of the Pershing II as a bargaining chip.

Without divulging his own considerations, Nitze sounded out the European Allies, in particular France and the Federal Republic, to see whether they were prepared for a compromise solution. The Europeans signalled interest.

If a solution to the INF problem were really to succeed, then in Nitze's thinking this could be achieved only with a formula that the two sides could either accept or reject. Under no circumstances could he permit a situation to develop in which his compromise proposal would become the starting point for further negotiations — that would amount to unilateral U.S. concessions. In other words, Nitze was seeking a compromise formula that took the criterion of negotiability into account. During one of the private meetings between the delegation heads in June, he proposed to Kvitsinsky that both negotiators name the points within any compromise that they regarded as non-negotiable from their governments' standpoints. In other words, Nitze was proposing that the two negotiators develop their respective fallback positions. When Kvitsinsky agreed, Nitze himself cited four indispensable conditions for an INF agreement from the American position:

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21 Cf. Talbott, _Deadly Gambits_, p. 122. Nitze avoided consultation on specific proposals. He was more concerned with the question of whether the Europeans were in general ready for compromise.
An INF agreement could not include Soviet compensation for British and French nuclear weapons;

An INF solution could not be confined to Europe without taking into account the Soviet Union's intermediate-range weapons in Asia.

An agreement must not weaken NATO's conventional strength, in effect as a result of negotiations on atomic weapons. This pertained in particular to the dual capability of bombers.

Any limitations must satisfy the criterion of "equality" both in substance and in appearance.

From the Soviet side, Kvitsinsky added only that there could be no compromise that would bring the two sides down to zero. The Soviet Union regarded the proposed zero option as unilateral Soviet disarmament.  

But Nitze was also aware that he needed the requisite backing in the Reagan Administration for this kind of independent undertaking. Besides limiting his own risk, it was also necessary if the compromise was to become supportable in Washington. Once he had worked out a compromise formula he showed it confidentially to his friend Eugene Rostow, the head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA). Rostow was of the opinion that in this venture the U.S. could only win: Either the Soviet Union would agree and the Reagan Administration would score a major success in the INF negotiations, with a summit meeting between Reagan and Brezhnev paying off handsomely for the President's domestic standing. Or else the Soviet Union would reject the compromise and the U.S. could demonstrate, above all to its European allies, that the Soviet Union was not interested in serious negotiations. It would then be easier to carry out a deployment of INF systems. Rostow made a few observations on Nitze's proposal which Nitze

23 Cf. NATO Special Consultative Group, Progress Report to Ministers, December 8, 1983, pp. 16 – 17. Interestingly enough, Kvitsinsky at this point was not insisting on inclusion of the third-country arsenals (British and French weapons).

24 For Rostow the propagandistic purpose of the compromise was clearly foremost. His assumption regarding the Soviet Union's fundamental strategic goal is that it wants to separate the U.S. from its Allies and to that end will use the superiority of its military potential. Cf. Eugene V. Rostow, "Where We Are Going In the Nuclear Arms Talks?" Atlantic Community Quarterly, Vol. 20, No. 4, p. 351. During his trip to Europe in October 1982 he had, against the wishes of the Reagan Administration, brought to the Allies' attention what had been happening in relation to the "walk in the woods." At the time the events surrounding the "walk in the woods" had nearly become public. Cf. the article by Paris correspondent Ray Moseley, "Secret U.S. atomic-arms talks with Soviets fail, sources say," Chicago Tribune, October 22, 1982; John Newhouse, "A Reporter at Large, Arms and Allies," New Yorker, February 28, 1983, p. 73. Rostow today takes the view that only the Soviet Union had rejected Nitze's "trial balloon"(!) of the "walk in the woods." The U.S. had accepted it — though with certain amendments
integrated into his paper. In Nitze's view, what had been an exclusively Nitze plan had now become a joint Nitze-Rostow proposal. This tying in of the ACDA director was supposed to provide him the necessary backing in Washington.

6. The Compromise

On July 16, 1982, in a walk in the woods outside Geneva, Nitze and Kvitsinsky agreed on the following compromise formula for intermediate-range weapons, which they submitted to their governments as the joint proposal of the negotiators:

The Soviet Union would:
- reduce its intermediate-range ballistic missiles stationed in Europe or threatening European targets to 75 launchers carrying a maximum of three warheads each;

(!) – and integrated its principles into all its subsequent INF proposals. Cf. Eugene V. Rostow, "Intermediate-range Nuclear Force Negotiations — Success or Failure?" Atlantic Community Quarterly, Vol. 22, No. 4, pp. 312–313; Rostow, "The Russians’ Nuclear Gambit," New Republic, February 20, 1984, p. 20; U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations, United States-Soviet Relations, Part 2. Hearing, 98th Congress, 1st Session, June 21, 22, and 23, 1983, Washington, D.C.: G.P.O. 1983, pp. 201, 213, 223 and 234. Two other considerations might also have played an important role in Rostow's decision to support Nitze's plan: Since Rostow had joined the Administration his agency had, in his view, played a largely secondary role within the overall apparatus. Before Rostow took up his post, Alexander Haig had drawn most of the authority for arms control over to the State Department and entrusted it to the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs as well as the European Bureau. Upon the change in the State Department from Alexander Haig to George Shultz, the summer of 1982 appeared to be an auspicious juncture for giving the ACDA more prominence in arms control policy. Cf. ibid., p. 222. Secondly, Rostow was interested in more personal prestige. On several occasions he had tried to gain direct access to the President, which he was denied. Hence, within the Administration he was pegged as unpredictable. Background information.

25 Unless otherwise indicated, this account is based on the concurrent reports of the three journalists Newhouse, "Arms and Allies," p. 70, Barry, "Zero-Zero," and Talbott, Deadly Gambits, pp. 126 – 130.

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— freeze its intermediate-range ballistic missiles stationed in the Far East at 90 systems;
— give up the option of stationing cruise missiles in Europe;
— reduce its nuclear-capable aircraft in Europe to 150;
— freeze its short-range missiles at the current level.

The United States would:
— deploy no intermediate-range ballistic missiles;\(^27\)
— deploy in Europe 75 launchers, each to handle four cruise missiles with one warhead apiece;
— reserve the right to deploy ground launched cruise missiles outside Europe;
— reduce to 150 aircraft its F-111 bombers stationed in Europe and its FB-111 bombers in the U.S.

The so-called third-country arsenals of British and French forces would not be taken into account. Appropriate measures for verification of the agreement would be negotiated within three months.

Over a safe line Nitze telephoned Eugene Rostow on July 19, 1982 and said that he had met with Kvitsinsky and would give a detailed report upon his return to Washington.

7. The Decision Making Process in Washington\(^28\)

7.1. Information and Preliminary Evaluations

Just half an hour after receiving Nitze’s telephone call Eugene Rostow set the American decision making machinery in motion. First he informed Secretary of State George Shultz. At the White House the ACDA director then informed the national security advisor, William Clark, who took on the further management of the decision making process under the strictest secrecy.\(^29\)

\(^27\) However, the U.S. reserved the right to modernize its Pershing Ia deployment in West Germany with the Pershing Ib. Cf. Barry, Zero-Zero.

\(^28\) On the following description cf. the largely concurrent accounts of Talbott, Barry and Newhouse.

Yet in Washington it was still not clear what exactly Nitze and Kvitsinsky had agreed upon. The details of the "walk in the woods" compromise assumed some shape only after Nitze’s return to the American capital. In the meeting of the responsible interagency group Nitze did not go beyond his cabled report from Geneva. Afterwards he endeavored to find allies in the White House and in particular to win President Reagan’s agreement. Together with James Timbie, an ACDA specialist whose expertise Nitze was relying on, he wrote an evaluation of the events surrounding the "walk in the woods" which rested primarily on two positive arguments: First, the "walk in the woods" would give the debate in Europe a new direction and break the political opposition to deployment of INF systems. Second, the reduction of the SS-20s by two-thirds was extremely advantageous for the West on strategic grounds. Nitze delivered this memorandum to the national security advisor. William Clark decided that the President would have to be informed first and instructed Nitze and Rostow for the time being not to discuss the matter with anyone else, including George Shultz. Thus Nitze’s hands were tied. At this early point in time he could not canvass for support within the Administration.

Meanwhile, Clark conferred with his deputy Robert McFarlane and with General Richard Bovarie from his staff. When McFarlane subsequently reported to President Reagan, he did not confine himself to presenting the facts but gave his own critical assessment of the substance and the procedures followed. McFarlane’s criticism comprised three arguments: First, Nitze had departed from the Administration’s political line without approval from Washington; in presenting his own ideas to the Soviet Union he had needlessly developed a fallback position. Second, McFarlane considered it rather ill-advised to give up the demand for equal global ceilings for the superpowers’ intermediate-range systems. Finally, he questioned whether it was wise militarily to allow the Soviet Union a monopoly on intermediate-range ballistic missiles in Europe. Especially this last point was convincing to Ronald Reagan. 30

In early August William Clark called a top secret meeting of the appropriate agency heads, asking each to bring one expert on arms control. The Defense Department was represented by Caspar Weinberger and Undersecretary Fred Iklé. From the Joint Chiefs of Staff there was the new chairman, General John W. Vessey, and General William Burns. George Shultz brought with him the head of the Politico-Military Bureau, Jonathan Howe. Eugene Rostow — together with Nitze — and William Casey represented the ACDA and the

30 For Reagan, airspeed became the central distinguishing criterion between ballistic missiles and cruise missiles. What military relevance this distinction might have was apparently not discussed with the President.
CIA. Clark as chairman and McFarlane stood for the NSC staff. The meeting went fairly harmoniously and culminated in the decision that Nitze’s initiative deserved a closer examination. To this end a group was set up consisting of the experts present and James Timbie of the ACDA. Its assignment was to examine and evaluate Nitze’s proposal from a military perspective.

Still, at this early juncture, some misgivings were voiced which in the subsequent course of the decision making process were to become increasingly important. The civilians heading the Defense Department were uncertain and ambivalent in their assessment. On the one hand, Iklé admired how Nitze had managed to solve the problem of Soviet missiles with three warheads by having these counted against American launchers for four cruise missiles. Another positive consideration was that the Soviets had to give up a large portion of their European SS-20s as well as the right either to deploy more SS-20s or to develop long-range cruise missiles. Moreover, the Soviets would sanction the emplacement of a new generation of American intermediate-range systems in Europe. In exchange the U.S. would forgo the deployment of the Pershing IIs. This was some daring bargaining, but it did offer advantages for future options.

The Joint Chiefs concerned themselves mainly with the question of giving up the Pershing II. General Vessey preferred the Pershing Ib for military reasons. However, giving up the Pershing II would be a sacrifice for the Army and no simple matter to carry through politically. Hence, in this meeting Vessey expressed himself cautiously positive. The State Department — and especially Assistant Secretary Richard Burt — looked at the Nitze-Kvitsinsky formula primarily from the standpoint of its likely impact on the European allies. Any compromise proposal that could be used by the Europeans as a pretext for no deployment had to be avoided. From this vantage point the “walk in the woods” had a number of demonstrable shortcomings: The introduction of airplanes into the equation could be interpreted by the Europeans as an unnecessary American complication of the negotiations and prompt them to call for a delay in commencing deployment. Secondly, the stationing of the

31 Gwertzman, “Rostow Defends Arms Agreement.” Richard Perle and Richard Burt, the division heads actually responsible in the Defense and State Departments, respectively, were at an arms control symposium of the Aspen Institute in Colorado. For the subsequent decision making process Burt was handicapped anyway, since as newly appointed assistant secretary for European Affairs he was in the middle of confirmation hearings of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. There a number of conservative Senators had taken aim at him; to them Burt was suspect as an “advocate of arms control.” It was therefore in Secretary of State Shultz’s interest to keep Burt out of the decision making process around the “walk in the woods” so as not to get caught in the fire of conservative criticism. Howe’s standing in for Burt altered nothing substantially in the State Department’s attitude on this matter.
Pershing IIIs was planned only for the Federal Republic of Germany. This was scheduled to begin in 1983, with other states deploying cruise missiles at the same time. Cruise missiles were not to be deployed in West Germany until a later date. The State Department therefore feared that an INF deployment might not be accepted in NATO if the West Germany were not one of the early deployment countries. The "walk in the woods" would consequently require an alteration of the schedule for deployment. The Europeans might use this circumstance as a loophole to get out of the deployment altogether.

The point of how Moscow would react to Nitze’s initiative played a rather secondary role at this stage of the decision making process. From the fact that Kvitsinsky had entered into Nitze’s initiative, Secretary of State Shultz concluded that the Kremlin desired a serious compromise.

The appointed group of experts prepared a report which listed the advantages and disadvantages of the "walk in the woods" and recommended that the plan be analyzed further. In addition, it was felt that President Reagan should authorize Nitze to continue private talks with Kvitsinsky on the basis of the existing package. Nitze’s formula had cleared the first hurdle and the chances were not bad that Washington might come to an overall positive assessment.

McFarlane summarized the reports and recommendations for President Reagan and gave him all the documents for further decision. Reagan examined the reports on a weekend at Camp David and afterwards gave them back to McFarlane with two questions for further study. One concerned the military value of the Pershing II and was directed to the JCS. The second concerned the timing in the negotiations. Was now the right time for a compromise solution, or could better terms be obtained if the U.S. waited? These questions went back to the experts for reexamination.

7.2. Opposition Develops

On the military value of the Pershing II, different positions were now becoming evident within the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Army chief of staff, General Edward Meyer, argued that the Army could under no circumstances do without this weapon because, first, it would help preserve Alliance solidarity and, secondly, recent intelligence data on Soviet air defense capabilities raised doubts about whether cruise missiles in the long run really possessed the military capabilities attributed to them. Hence, the Army could on no account replace the Pershing IIIs with cruise missiles. This concern was shared by General Vessey but assessed differently in view of what the Soviets were giving up. From their internal debate the Joint Chiefs of Staff drew up a working paper responding to Reagan’s first question. They pointed out the risks of forgoing the Pershing II deployment and characterized this weapon as a most important U.S. negotiating trump; on the other hand, in light of
the Soviet reductions envisaged by the “walk in the woods,” giving up the Pershing IIs was militarily supportable. The JCS delivered this memorandum to the Secretary of Defense.

Caspar Weinberger wanted to see that the Pentagon’s civilian and military leaders adopted a common position. He therefore handed the memorandum of the JCS to Richard Perle, the assistant secretary for International Security Policy. Perle’s argumentation was to form the basis for the subsequent posture of the entire Defense Department. In a tone which has been described as “violent” (John Newhouse), Perle wrote his own memorandum for Weinberger, rejecting the Nitze-Kvitsinsky formula on the basis of very fundamental considerations. He one-sidedly accentuated the discriminating JCS arguments on the problem of compensating cruise and ballistic missile capabilities: the arguments of General Meyer assumed such an importance as to give the impression that militarily the U.S. and NATO could not do without the Pershing II. Moreover, Perle expanded upon the basic military argument by raising a number of political reflections. Reagan had provided a first catchword here: timing. Perle took the view that true Soviet willingness to compromise in the INF negotiations would not be forthcoming until the U.S. had deployed the intermediate-range weapons in Europe. Hence, in the summer of 1982 the time was not yet ripe for a compromise solution. In other words, the Pershing II was not a bargaining chip in the INF negotiations, but rather, in Perle’s eyes, served as “leverage” to force a Soviet willingness to compromise. The Soviet move toward following the Nitze initiative Perle interpreted as a tactical maneuver for propaganda purposes. The Soviet Union would very soon let the “walk in the woods” leak out in Europe in order to kindle the already rising uncertainty within NATO and break the West Europeans’ will to carry out the deployment. For if in Western Europe it were suspected that NATO could dispense with the Pershing II, the deployment would be made impossible. On this point Perle’s argumentation for once accorded with that of Richard Burt and the State Department. In addition, Perle criticized the plan not to establish global ceilings for intermediate-range weapons. Moreover, he claimed that Nitze had exceeded his instructions by abandoning the official U.S. negotiating position, the zero option, and by creating, with the “walk in the woods,” a dangerous fallback position. In these two last points he agreed with Robert McFarlane’s argumentation. Between the staff of the National Security Advisor, the State Department and especially the leading civilians in the Pentagon there gradually formed at the working level a coalition that was dead set against Nitze, Rostow and the “walk in the woods” proposal.

7.3. The President’s Decisions

Influenced considerably by McFarlane and Boverie, William Clark had come to the conclusion that Nitze, with Rostow’s assistance, had far exceeded his
instructions and that the ACDA was conducting an arms control policy of its own. Hence, the State Department needed to reestablish its supervision over the arms control negotiations and the head of the Geneva delegation. On August 24, Clark sent Secretary Shultz a memorandum from the President, which, without mentioning any names, rebuked Nitze for having negotiated in Geneva without sufficient regard for his instructions. Further, the memorandum flatly rejected Rostow’s demand that the ACDA take over the chairmanship of the interagency group and that he as ACDA director have direct access to the President. As highest-ranking cabinet member, the secretary of state by law carried the highest responsibility for arms control policy, Clark argued. In unambiguous terms Shultz was admonished to supervise the ACDA and Nitze carefully and to ensure that the proper channels were used.32

Yet Nitze’s “fait accompli” of an INF compromise was weakened by a second development independent of the American decision making process: the anticipated positive response from Kvitsinsky had not materialized!33 Nitze’s position within the Administration was thus further undercut. Since he had heard nothing from Kvitsinsky, Nitze felt compelled to proceed more cautiously.34 If the U.S. were to accept the “walk in the woods” compromise

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33 Upon his return to Moscow Kvitsinsky had reported to his superiors. But obviously the initiative came too late because the fundamental review of INF policy by the Politburo had already taken place and the relevant decisions were not revised. The compromise formula worked out between Nitze and Kvitsinsky was reported on by Gromyko only to the body which, under his chairmanship, coordinates the Kremlin’s arms control policy on a day-to-day basis. In it are represented the armed forces, the Foreign Ministry, the KGB and the foreign policy section of the Central Committee of the CPSU. In this coordinating body the substance of the “walk in the woods” as well as the extraordinary procedure met with rejection and even vexation. The proposal was not discussed in the Politburo. Cf. Nitze, “Negotiating with the Soviets,” p. 36; background information. Nitze’s calculation that the proposal might be presented to Brezhnev turned out to be wishful thinking. Nitze in a lecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Mass. on June 25, 1986; author’s notes.

34 At the fringe of the regular negotiations the two delegation heads had agreed upon a communications link for the summer recess should Kvitsinsky want to get a message to Nitze. In this connection a staff member of the Soviet embassy in Washington was to be called in and, if need be, Nitze’s personal assistant Norman Clyne.
but the Soviet Union reject it, then there was a danger that the compromise would become the new point of departure for the U.S. negotiating position. Nitze, however, wanted to recommend the "walk in the woods" to his government not as a negotiable interim solution, but as an end product.  

On September 1, 1982 the interagency group responsible for INF discussed the "walk in the woods" formula without reaching agreement. Robert McFarlane insisted that the National Security Council under the President's direction should finally confer, lay down the U.S. position on the Nitze-Kvitsinsky proposal, and decide the subsequent American position in the INF talks. This meeting of the NSC took place on September 13.  

The debate was confined essentially to those two questions that Reagan had previously directed to the expert bureaucracies: the military value of the Pershing IIs, which the U.S. would have to regard as its concession to the Soviet Union, and the matter of timing in the context of American negotiating tactics. Nitze argued that the Pershing II was not absolutely necessary and substantiated his thesis with the familiar military and economic arguments. Defense Secretary Weinberger stuck to his counterarguments in line with Richard Perle's criticism. Perle had maintained that the "walk in the woods" was an "unequal" compromise: the U.S. would deny itself intermediate-range ballistic missiles while the Soviet Union could keep theirs. This point made sense to the President. Why should the U.S. have to do without ballistic missiles if the Soviet Union could not manage to do so? In essence Reagan was demanding from the Soviet Union the very same concession Kvitsinsky had cited as the Soviets' sole condition for an INF compromise: no reduction of intermediate-range weapons to zero. Nitze tried to explain to the President that such a demand was not negotiable. But this argument was not compre-

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35 Cf. John Barry, "New men take over in Moscow," Times (London), June 2, 1983. Some interpretations made the Soviet rejection the central argument that led to rejection in Washington: Cf. Wettig, "Irwege"; Halstead, "INF Negotiations." In view of the other arguments within the Washington bureaucracy this interpretation is carried much too far. In the American decision making process the Soviet rejection of the compromise formula actually played a more secondary role. In the final analysis, the "walk in the woods" was assessed by Washington, independent of the Soviet response, as being not in the American interest. The White House press spokesman responded to a question from one journalist: "Our judgment of it [the compromise] was that it was not the basis for an agreement." Bernhard Gwertzman, "Informal Agreement Is Called Inadequate by U.S.," New York Times, January 18, 1983. Yet Moscow's decision did have two consequences for the continued deliberations in the U.S.: it changed Nitze's own thinking and undermined his position within the bureaucracy.  

36 Cf. Talbott, Deadly Gambits, pp. 239 – 240.  

37 Thus at least under the prevailing conditions governing Soviet political decision making.
hensible to Reagan, especially when the meeting’s second central issue came into play: the appropriate timing for American concessions.

Nitze argued — and in this was supported by Secretary of State Shultz — that by Kvitsinsky’s entering into the “walk in the woods” the Soviet Union had shown flexibility and was negotiating seriously toward an INF agreement. It was therefore important for the U.S. to demonstrate a more flexible attitude also. But Reagan, together with Weinberger, took the view that the Soviets could be induced to make greater concessions if the U.S. remained steadfast with its zero option. Substantial Soviet concessions could not be expected until after a deployment of U.S. intermediate-range missiles in Europe. Nitze’s most important inducement for his initiative, the danger of a breakup of the security policy consensus in the allied European nations and within NATO, apparently ceased to play a significant role in this debate.

The outcome of the meeting of the National Security Council was the decision that the U.S. would adhere to the zero option as its official negotiating position. The “walk in the woods” was said not to be in the interest of American security. Furthermore, though the INF delegation chief was permitted to keep open the unofficial channel with Kvitsinsky, under no circumstances would Nitze be allowed to go so far again as to discuss proposals of his own with Kvitsinsky. It was argued that such actions would not only undermine the American negotiating position, but weaken the cohesion of the Western Alliance.

What was Nitze to do, however, if Kvitsinsky were to indicate Soviet interest in the “walk in the woods” compromise? In the event that the Soviet Union wanted to pursue the Nitze-Kvitsinsky initiative, the U.S. expected that Moscow would propose amendments to the “walk in the woods” formula. The U.S. developed at least six amendments of its own, two of a substantive nature, the others for clarification. First, the U.S. would not unilaterally give up the Pershing IIs and with that the right to deploy intermediate-range ballistic missiles. Rather, both sides should have the freedom to determine the weapons mix of ballistic and cruise missiles within the 75 systems designated for Europe. Secondly, the Soviet Union would have to be willing

38 Rostow and Nitze were still not entirely clear whether the Soviet Union would reject Nitze’s initiative. In a speech by Rostow on September 10, 1982, before the World Affairs Council in Los Angeles, there is a veiled reference to the “walk in the woods”: “It is clear that a potentiality exists for accommodating the analytic concepts used by both sides. What is not yet clear is whether the Soviet Union is willing to accept agreement based exclusively on the principle of deterrence.” U.S. Department of State, Current Policy, No. 425, Washington, D.C., 1982.

to reduce its SS-20s stationed in Asia, optimally to 75 systems, but at least below the 90 offered. The U.S. would not be satisfied with a mere freeze.

However, these negotiations never went into effect. The Soviets had come to the conclusion that the “walk in the woods” did not lie in their security interest either. They presumably calculated that NATO would be in no position anyway to carry out the deployment of U.S. intermediate-range missiles over the growing opposition within Europe. In the worst case the Soviet Union would have to accept new American weapons in Europe, but the Western Alliance would have to pay for its deployment with an erosion in the popular consensus on security policy. The Soviet Union thus intended to raise this price as much as possible.\textsuperscript{40}

With their rejection of the compromise worked out by their negotiators, the two superpowers had lost an opportunity to pursue cooperative solutions to European security problems with greater flexibility. For different motives they proposed to put to the test European and especially German loyalty to the Alliance.\textsuperscript{41}

8. Summary and Evaluation

The U.S. system for making decisions on arms control is capable of arriving at constructive resolutions only when a presidential decision creates a pressure to reach agreement. Without such a policy decision, initiatives toward constructive solutions get lost in bureaucratic infighting. Consequently, presidential initiative toward stimulating the bureaucracies assumes central importance. Because of Ronald Reagan’s disinterest in foreign policy matters, this has materialized only in exceptional cases. In general, Reagan has let new arms control proposals develop only in response to pressure from Congress or the public. Reactive behavior remains Reagan’s preferred approach to foreign and security policy.

The essential weakness of going it alone, as Nitze did, lies in the inadequate base of support within the executive. Nitze’s unconventional approach alone was an important argument against the compromise proposal. Besides Rostow, whom Nitze included, though late, in his plan, no one else in Washington was prepared or obliged to support the Geneva negotiator or lend him the

\textsuperscript{40} Only toward the fall of 1983 did American experts in Moscow discover that in the lower echelons of the Soviet decision making system doubts were surfacing as to the correctness of these assessments. However, these had no discernible influence on the Soviet negotiating tactics on INF. Background information.

\textsuperscript{41} Whereby each side could possibly see its strategy confirmed against the other.
necessary institutional backing. The key institutional conditions for the success of an initiative are then, first, the decision of the President that an arms control agreement be concluded and, secondly, the commitment of the bureaucracies to do so.

Nitze's initiative had neither of these two qualifications. It ran counter to the presidential motives and priorities. In other words, the Administration had no value consensus guiding its arms control policy. Nor on the detail questions was the Administration able to establish a constructive consensus on Nitze's compromise formula, as especially the disagreement within the Defense Department illustrates. In other words, there was no detail consensus in the Administration either. Nitze's initiative failed in the American decision making system ultimately because in this system of "network building" Nitze was unable to forge a coalition capable of putting through his compromise formula.

However, there were also substantive reasons for the proposal's failure. First, the compromise worked out between Nitze and Kvitsinsky did not observe the Administration's guiding principles. The "walk in the woods" formula could be interpreted as an American fallback position, it turned the Pershing II into a bargaining chip and simply froze the SS-20s in Asia at 90 systems instead of reducing them. A compromise encumbered with these "faults" met with the criticism of American opponents of arms control that U.S. proposals were preponderantly concerned with negotiability. Second, the "walk in the woods" ran up against ideas of proper timing, in two ways: In the summer of 1982 U.S. concessions were made needlessly and Reagan's principles of patience and persistence in negotiations were violated. Moreover, insufficient consideration was given to his view that arms control policy would bear fruit only from a "position of strength." Nitze's main considerations on the appropriate timing - Brezhnev's state of health and the Allies' critical domestic situations - missed the heart of the principles President Reagan had laid down for arms control policy. Third, the Reagan Administration was working from an alliance policy in which American leadership took precedence over alliance management. The Allies would ultimately accept the U.S. assertion of leadership even without American consideration of European arms control interests. Fourth, in 1982 neither was the Soviet Union interested in cooperative solutions to the problems of intermediate-range weapons, and the Soviets steered clear of supporting Nitze's initiative. The overall conditions for the intermediate-range negotiations did not change fundamentally until Mikhail Gorbachev became general secretary.

42 For this reason alone one has to question Nitze's argument - cf. Halstead, "INF Negotiations," p. 17 - that he could have persuaded Washington of the "walk in the woods" if the Soviet Union had been prepared to accept the compromise in toto. Background information.
Ever since President Reagan entered into office, "rebuilding American military strength" has been the basic aim of United States security policy. Invariably security has been defined as something that could be achieved unilaterally, against the Soviet Union, whereas in the period of détente the U.S. understood security to include elements of cooperation. In the view of the Reagan Administration, only the uninterrupted buildup and modernization of American forces would give the Soviets "the necessary incentives for them to reach agreements that meet our interests." Arms control assumes a secondary place in this scheme of things. The national security of the United States would be guaranteed not by bilateral arms control agreements, but by unilateral military measures.

And yet for nearly six years the Reagan Administration abided by the terms of the second U.S.-Soviet Treaty on Strategic Arms Limitation (SALT II).

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2 Ibid., p. 692.
3 The SALT II agreement of June 18, 1979 consists of the treaty itself, a protocol, various statements of intent as well as 98 agreed statements and common understandings. The treaty, to remain in force through December 31, 1985, set an aggregate limitation of 2,400 for ICBMs, SLBMs and strategic bombers; this ceiling was to be reduced to 2,250 by the end of 1981. Of these, 1,320 could be equipped with multiple warheads (in the case of bombers, with long-range cruise missiles). For the systems equipped with multiple warheads there are two further sublimits: 820 for ICBMs and 1,200 for ICBMs and SLBMs combined. The number of multiple warheads on ICBMs cannot be increased beyond the maximum established as of the time the treaty was concluded. Only one new type of ICBM (with a maximum of ten multiple warheads) was allowed within the term of the treaty. The protocol, to remain in force through December 31, 1981, stipulated that neither side was permitted to flight-test or deploy ICBMs from or on mobile launchers, also that land- and sea-based cruise missiles with a range in excess of 600 km were prohibited. In its "Backfire" Statement the Soviet Union assured that the "Backfire" was not a bomber with intercontinental range and that the Soviet Union did not intend to undertake changes to give it a strategic range. The SALT II agreement is documented in U.S. Department of State. Bureau of Public Affairs, SALT II Agreement. Vienna, June 18, 1979. Selected Documents No. 12A, Washington, D.C.
Although rejecting SALT II was a major foreign policy theme of Ronald Reagan's election campaign, as President Reagan showed no great haste to shake off the fetters of a treaty that he had previously characterized as a danger to national security.

Had Reagan altered his course in foreign policy at an early stage? Did his harsh anti-Soviet rhetoric serve to protect what was in substance a far more pragmatic policy? But why then was the SALT II agreement abandoned at the end of 1986?

This essay argues that the break with SALT II was the product of a security policy which in its basic elements the Reagan Administration has sustained since 1981. Taking the U.S.-Soviet relationship as one of adversaries, this policy has given priority to unilateral decisions and continued military modernization; arms control, with its inevitable compromise, has been a secondary, though not entirely abandoned instrument of policy.

1. From Campaign Rhetoric to Policy Continuity

Even before it was ultimately signed by Jimmy Carter and Leonid Brezhnev in Vienna on June 8, 1979, the SALT II agreement had become a focal point in the U.S. debate on the direction of American foreign policy. This controversy became a symbolic conflict over the future course of U.S. foreign policy as well as the future of détente and arms control. The critics of détente policy rejected SALT II and called for a new “policy of strength” toward the Soviet Union. They argued that SALT II cemented America’s “strategic inferiority” and left open a “window of vulnerability” through which the U.S. land-based nuclear arsenal could be destroyed in a disarming strike by Soviet ICBMs. SALT II was therefore incompatible with the “national security interests” of the United States. Restoring U.S. military and political strength was then a prerequisite for new, “genuine” arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union.  

From the domestic debate it was already becoming clear in the fall of 1979 that the Carter Administration would find it extremely difficult to gain the necessary two-thirds Senate majority for ratification of the SALT II accords. But it never came to a vote. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 completed the erosion of the American-Soviet détente process that had already begun in the mid-1970s. On January 4, 1980 President Carter requested the Senate to delay consideration of the treaty. A successful conclusion to the  

ratification process had become hopeless. However, the Carter Administration still adhered to its arms control policy, planned to resubmit the treaty at the appropriate time and committed itself to observing the terms of SALT II until then.

As the Republican candidate for President, Reagan had rejected the second SALT treaty as "fatally flawed" and, shortly before the election in November 1980, committed himself instead to early negotiations toward a better treaty. Following the election, how to handle the SALT II agreement became the first item on the new administration's arms control agenda. Immediately after taking office on January 20, 1981, President Reagan decided that the ratification process should not be resumed. However, he did not advise the Senate of this, and so the treaty remained under consideration.

Once the U.S. declared its intention not to resume the ratification process for SALT II, neither party to the treaty was bound under international law to abide by the agreement. Yet both the United States and the Soviet Union tacitly maintained treaty compliance. When in March 1981 Secretary of the Navy John Lehman proposed that U.S. defense planning should no longer be bound by the limits of the two SALT treaties, the State Department rejected this view: "While we are reviewing our SALT policy, we will take no action that would undercut existing agreements as long as the Soviet Union exercises the same restraint." This was the Reagan Administration's first official statement on continuing the policy of treaty compliance. Although on May 11, 1982, before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Secretary of State Alexander Haig had characterized the SALT II treaty as "dead," that same month he came to a verbal agreement with his Soviet counterpart, Andrei Gromyko, that both sides were committed to preserving what was of positive value in the SALT II treaty.

This course was confirmed by President Reagan on May 31, 1982. In the same speech in which he announced the resumption of U.S.-Soviet strategic arms negotiations — now designated Strategic Arms Reduction Talks, or START — in June 1982, in Geneva, Reagan declared that the U.S. would refrain from actions that would "undercut existing agreements so long as the

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Soviet Union shows equal restraint."9 Although the President did not mention SALT II directly, nor was it correct by international law to qualify the agreement as "existing," his statement served to establish a policy of "interim restraint." This policy was taken to mean that the U.S. would not pursue new arms measures that would breach the ceilings of the SALT II treaty, but that existing arsenals could remain intact even if treaty compliance would have necessitated their reduction.10

The decision to continue observing the SALT II accords was made basically for three reasons of security policy:

- First, until the mid-1980s the Administration could realize all its important arms projects without having to exceed the SALT II limits. These plans included development and testing of the new MX intercontinental ballistic missile, the Trident II submarine program, and the deployment of B-1 bombers, the Pershing II intermediate-range missiles as well as ground- and air-launched cruise missiles.11

- Second, even if it were politically resolved to do so, the U.S. would scarcely have been in a position to raise its arms levels beyond the SALT limits within a few years.

- Third, Soviet arms measures were constrained. The Soviet Union had to forgo options that were realizable in the short term; among others: outfitting its ICBMs with additional multiple warheads, increasing the rate of production for the Backfire bomber, testing and deployment of new intercontinental systems.12

Furthermore, this policy would avoid putting added strains on the incipient START talks, would meet the NATO allies' demand for continued compliance with SALT II, and, with a demonstration of interest in arms control negotia-

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10 In practice this course had but one immediate consequence: the Soviet Union was not compelled to reduce the number of its strategic nuclear launchers registered by SALT II from 2,504 (upon conclusion of the treaty) to 2,250 (stipulated for January 1, 1981).

11 The only measure of arms reduction undertaken by the United States in this period consisted in fulfilling the SALT I accords by dismantling old Poseidon nuclear submarines and Titan II ICBMs, which in any case would not have been operational anymore within a short space of time. Accordingly, the then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General David Jones, at a meeting of the National Security Council in May 1981, was able to state that there was "not even a marginal military reason for exceeding the SALT limits." "If SALT II disappeared, there's nothing we'd do differently." Quoted in Strobe Talbott, Deadly Gambits. The Reagan Administration and the Stalemate in Nuclear Arms Control, New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1984, p. 226.

tions, would influence public opinion that had been repeatedly disturbed by the confrontation rhetoric and arms programs.

The Reagan Administration's decision followed the clear-cut judgment of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, based on considerations of security policy. This was a victory neither for the advocates of arms control who had pushed for ratification of the treaty nor for the conservative critics of arms control in Congress, the political public and the Administration who had called for an immediate break with SALT II. For the President both options remained open: breaching the treaty at a point that seemed suitable to him; complying with it, possibly bridging the way to a START agreement. On this key question of arms control policy, campaign rhetoric gave way, for the time being, to continuity.

2. Compliance Policy Against Conservative Opposition

The demand to abrogate the SALT II accords did not cease after 1982. During the next two years, however, the subject was not a focus of attention. This was to change in early 1985. There are three reasons for this:

- First, the expiration of SALT II — on December 31, 1985 — was drawing nearer. Congress had called upon the President to submit by June 1 a report on the impact of further observance of the designated ceilings on strategic arms.
- Second, it appeared that various arms projects would collide with key provisions of SALT. The commissioning of another atomic submarine of the Trident class, the USS Alaska, in October 1985, would put the U.S. over the ceiling of 1,200 nuclear launchers equipped with multiple warheads. Further modernization measures required a dismantling of older nuclear systems if compliance with SALT II were to be maintained.
- Third, the question of Soviet compliance had become an important issue, not only in the case of SALT II, but with the ABM treaty and other arms control agreements.

Since the 1970s, U.S. critics of détente policy had constantly impugned the treaty compliance of the Soviet Union. Although Ronald Reagan had adopted this criticism as presidential candidate and had sustained it after taking office, albeit without specification, his administration for the time being refrained from officially claiming Soviet treaty violations. Not until early 1984 were a series of Soviet treaty violations indicated in several reports commissioned by Congress.13

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13 On the debate over treaty compliance and the substance of treaty violations see James Schear, "Arms Control Treaty Compliance. Buildup to a Breakdown?" International
These new political calls altered the balance among U.S. domestic political forces and brought the Administration to a new point of decision. On the one hand, SALT II was no longer automatically compatible with the military buildup. The Soviet Union's treaty compliance appeared at least questionable. On the other hand, abandoning the treaty could jeopardize the Geneva arms control talks which had resumed in March 1985.

Prior to his anticipated June 1985 decision on SALT II, both Congress and the NATO allies called on President Reagan to maintain compliance with the treaty. In contrast, many opponents of arms control in Congress and the public advocated renouncing it and criticized the Administration's course in security policy.

Upon the National Security Council's deliberations on June 3, 1985, the President opted for a policy that combined continued observance of SALT II in principle with "proportionate responses to Soviet breaches of the agreement." On June 10, 1985, Reagan declared that the U.S. "will continue to refrain from undercutting existing strategic arms agreements," that is, provided "the Soviet Union actively pursues arms reduction agreements in the currently ongoing nuclear and space talks in Geneva." He announced that an old atomic submarine would be retired prior to the sea trials of the USS Alaska in order for the U.S. to abide by the SALT limitations. At the same time the President accused the U.S.S.R. of serious treaty violations and promised "appropriate and proportionate responses...to insure our security, to provide incentives to the Soviets to correct their non-compliance, and to make it clear to Moscow that violations of arms control obligations entail real costs." In his statement Reagan distinguished between "irreversible" and "reversible" violations, indicating that the United States would respond to the former "at the appropriate time." At the same time the President announced that he had directed the Defense Department to submit by Novem-

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14 On June 5, 1986, the Senate adopted by a 90 to 5 vote a resolution calling for continued compliance with both SALT agreements. The large measure of support for the resolution can be attributed to the fact that an amendment was attached to allow "proportionate responses" to Soviet treaty violations. Cf. The New York Times, June 6, 1985, p. 1. The next day, thirteen Senators, including six who had voted for the resolution, called upon President Reagan to abandon the policy of treaty compliance.


17 Ibid.
ber 1985 a “comprehensive assessment” of possible military measures against Soviet treaty violations. In conclusion he emphasized that there would be reevaluation on a case-by-case basis in light of the indicated criteria.

What first appeared a success for the proponents of arms control turned out, upon closer analysis, to be a substantive compromise within the Administration: for the present maintaining its policy on SALT II, but already holding open possibilities for getting out. The decision not to make a definitive break with SALT II, as Defense Secretary Weinberger had proposed, was counterbalanced by the emphasis on Soviet treaty violations, the linking of further treaty compliance with their correction, the implicit announcement of a new Midgetman ICBM as the first concrete “proportionate response” (namely, to the Soviet SS-25) as well as the demand for greater Soviet flexibility in the arms control talks. This compromise had been supported by Secretary of State Shultz and his advisors as well as by National Security Advisor McFarlane and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

None of those involved had spoken out for a full, unconditional continuation of compliance. Nor was there sufficient support for the “dry-dock option” which had been favored by the President’s special advisors for arms control, Paul Nitze and Edward Rowney, as well as the director of the ACDA, Kenneth Adelman. In this proposal, the U.S. would compensate for the deployment of the USS Alaska not by dismantling a Poseidon submarine but by first putting it in dry dock for six months. The Soviet Union would then be called upon to correct its treaty violations within this period. Then the submarine in excess could be scrapped. But if the Soviets did not respond positively, the U.S. would put this nuclear launcher back into service and thus purposefully exceed the SALT ceilings. However, in the summer of 1985 President Reagan was not yet ready for such a proportionate response.

The sharpest criticism of Reagan’s decision came from his closest political friends. The conservative Republican Senator Steven Symms termed the continued compliance with SALT “unilateral disarmament and appeasement.” Opponents of arms control had expected that the President would answer Soviet treaty violations if not with immediate renunciation of the agreement, then at least with concrete military countermeasures. Now the fear was being voiced that Ronald Reagan might even accept a more permanent compliance with the SALT II treaty and thus impose restrictions on the U.S. strategic modernization program.

This fear was not unfounded. In their preliminary talks in Moscow at the beginning of November 1985, prior to the Geneva summit meeting of Novem-

18 “Nach Reagans SALT II-Entscheidung: Republikaner sprechen von Beschwichtigungspoli-
ber 19 - 21, Secretary of State Shultz and his Soviet counterpart Shevardnadze had proposed a joint declaration committing both sides to continued compliance with SALT II. Shultz had also declared that the United States would adhere to its policy of compliance without time limitation. The Secretary of State's initiative had been made known in advance to National Security Advisor McFarlane, but not to the Defense Department. Back in Washington, Shultz could not prevail in the Administration's internal deliberations. Just a few days before the summit his colleague Weinberger emphatically warned the President against any further commitment to the SALT II accords, arguing that this would jeopardize the strategic modernization program of the United States.

During the Geneva meetings, SALT II was dealt with only peripherally and was not taken up either in the final communiqué or in the separate statements by President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev. This removed any prospect that the treaty would be reaffirmed before its expiry at the end of the year.

3. The Final Break with SALT II

By the end of 1985 the question of Soviet treaty compliance had become a major issue. Defense Secretary Weinberger submitted two reports in which once again Soviet treaty violations were ascertained. In addition, conceivable countermeasures were raised for discussion, some of which were incompatible with continued observance of the treaty. At the end of December the President sent to Congress his annual report on the treaty compliance of the Soviet Union. The report supported the argument of arms control opponents that the U.S.S.R. ultimately aimed at using arms control measures to prevent the United States from carrying out military modernization. At the same time, the Soviets sought unilateral advantages in operating not just to the limits of treaty provisions but beyond them.


This debate over Soviet treaty compliance assumed special importance because it touched that basic dichotomy in the American political public's attitude toward the Soviet Union: desiring dialogue and improved relations with the Soviet Union, yet harboring deep-seated mistrust of it. On arms control a large and solid majority expressed a desire for agreements, yet equally large and stable majorities believed that the Soviet Union did not keep its treaties.22 The critical point here was not the military significance of Soviet treaty offenses but their existence at all. The unresolved conflict over treaty compliance with SALT II increasingly weakened support for arms control and "led public opinion to seek absolute, exaggerated verification standards."23 Opponents of the SALT II treaty capitalized on this to present the Soviet treaty violations as the most important reason for abrogating the accords. From their point of view this debate was a tactically proven way of bringing about a departure from compliance: the main justification was sufficiently convincing but did not reflect the real motivation.

The decision no longer to abide by SALT II was taken at a meeting of the National Security Council on April 22, 1986. For the nuclear submarine USS Nevada, which would begin sea trials in May 1986, two submarines of the Poseidon class were to be dismantled so that for the time being the SALT ceilings remained untouched. However, the equipping of more B-52 intercontinental bombers with cruise missiles was to proceed beyond the SALT limit. If the tempo of re-equipping were maintained, the United States would leave the treaty framework in November 1986. After several postponements of the activation date, the U.S. on November 28, 1986 exceeded the SALT II ceiling of 1320 nuclear delivery systems with multiple warheads. This step was preceded by another meeting of the National Security Council on November 27, at which Secretary of State Shultz was the only important figure to argue for continued treaty compliance.

The April 22 decisions were not fully disclosed right away. White House spokesman Speakes initially announced only the dismantling of the Poseidon submarines and stated that further action by the U.S. would depend "on the needs of our national security, on our commitments to our allies and on what the Soviets do."24 From the Administration there were also indications that

decisions to dismantle and thus to postpone the break with SALT II had been
governed by financial and not political criteria. To keep the submarines
operational would have required their being overhauled at a cost of $340
million.

After the full content of the decision had been made public by the press on
May 12, 1986, President Reagan stated on May 27 that the deployment of
more air-launched cruise missiles had been decided on without regard to the
previously observed SALT limitations. A few days later Secretary of State
Shultz did stress that continued observance of the treaty was “possible”
provided the U.S.S.R. reversed its treaty violations, though he held out little
hope for such a development. The future arms decisions of the United States,
according to Shultz, would be determined by Soviet conduct, inclusive of
human rights violations and “regional conflicts” such as in Afghanistan,
Nicaragua and Cambodia. Rather than pursuing a policy of concrete “pro-
portionate responses” along with basic compliance, the Reagan Administra-
tion had decided upon a new course: complete departure from the agreement
that had been observed for seven years without ratification.

Although in previous statements the Administration had accused the Soviet
Union of up to twenty breaches of arms control treaties, it cited only three
in support of its departure from SALT II. These, however, it viewed as
especially significant: the testing and deployment of SS-25 intercontinental
missiles, the encryption of data in missile test flights (both violations of SALT
II) as well as the building of a radar facility at Krasnoyarsk for strategic
missile defense (a breach of the ABM treaty). How to evaluate these treaty
violations was also a point of contention within the Reagan Administration.
Both the State Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff regarded their military
significance as relatively minor. Also problematic was the fact that the
decision to leave SALT II was justified not just with reference to Soviet treaty
violations within SALT, but with a breach of the ABM treaty also. This tactic
assumed greater importance in light of the debate within the Administration
on upholding the ABM treaty, the discussion having been launched in October
1985 with a “new interpretation.” It seemed reasonable to expect that

White House Office of the Press SecretaryMay 27, 1986.
28 On the discussion of the various treaty violations claimed see Schear, “Arms Control
Treaty Compliance.”
29 On the “new interpretation” of the ABM treaty cf. Bernd W. Kubbig, Die Neuinterpreta-
tion des ABM-Vertrages durch die Reagan-Administration. Situation und Perspektiven
des Rüstungskontrollabkommens im Kontext von Genf und SDI, HSFK-Report, Frankfurt
though the treaty violation represented by the early warning system at Krasnoyarsk would be cited this time as a reason for leaving SALT II, at a later date it could be used as an argument for renouncing the ABM treaty.

Moreover, the Reagan Administration was criticized by supporters of SALT II for not having brought forward the treaty violations in the American-Soviet "Standing Consultative Commission" SCC established in 1972 for this very purpose. The commission had worked successfully in the past, they argued, and the strictly confidential character of the SCC had contributed to a spirit of compromise on both sides. This had been a way of preventing complicated problems, often the product of gaps in the settlement, from becoming publicly aired matters of prestige.\(^\text{30}\)

The Reagan Administration had opted for another way. It did continue the SCC consultations but as of January 1984 publicly charged the Soviet Union with treaty violations, particularly in the case of SALT II. This approach was based on a considerably more negative assessment of the commission's work compared with that of previous administrations. Thus, Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle accused the American representatives on the SCC of having shut their eyes to treaty violations "out of their unwillingness to face up to the realities."\(^\text{31}\)

At bottom "serious problems of treaty compliance have been solved neither by the SCC nor in any other way."\(^\text{32}\)

This line of argumentation was firmly supported by opponents of SALT in Congress and in the political public. On March 12, 1986, 25 Senators urged the President not to comply with the treaty any longer.\(^\text{33}\)

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\(^{30}\) The function and activity of the SCC see Sidney N. Graybeal, Michael Krepon, "Making Better Use of the Standing Consultative Commission," {

\(^{31}\) Richard Perle in a Senate hearing on March 14, 1984: U.S. Congress. Senate. Armed Services Committee, {

\(^{32}\) Ibid., p. 39.

\(^{33}\) By the time a second letter to the same effect was sent on April 8, 1986, this group had grown to 34 Senators. "SALT II Indecision," {
made it easy for one side to cheat, but a treaty that actually permitted increases in nuclear arsenals." The opponents of further compliance with the agreement declared that it was unacceptable to threaten countermeasures against Soviet treaty violations only to keep putting off doing so. SALT II could not be allowed to hinder further military modernization.

Still, the opponents of the treaty did not speak for the political majority in the U.S. Various polls indicated a definite support for compliance. On April 10 and 16, 1986, narrow majorities of 52 Senators and 220 members of the House appealed to President Reagan (in each case by letter) to comply with SALT II as long as the Soviet Union did so.

The Administration ignored this appeal. For reasons of arms control and alliance policy, Secretary of State Shultz counseled observance of SALT II in principle with responses to Soviet misconduct kept within the confines of the existing agreement. Paradoxically, he was supported only by Ambassador Nitze, the leading critic of the treaty during the debate of the late 1970s. Defense Secretary Weinberger, ACDA Director Adelman, National Security Advisor Poindexter and White House Chief of Staff Regan came out solidly for leaving the SALT II agreement. For them the unencumbered continuation of the strategic modernization program had priority.

In this instance the Joint Chiefs of Staff could not agree on a recommendation. They confined themselves to pointing out the advantages of continued treaty compliance (preventing a Soviet "breakout" from the arms control regime, bilateral stability through continued commitment to strategic ceilings) and the disadvantages (restricting the U.S. military modernization program). Under the circumstances, their reticence favored the opponents of compliance.

All further efforts to save the SALT II treaty were to no avail. The discussion of possible treaty violations once again in a special session of the Standing Consultative Commission, held despite the opposition of the Defense Department, came to nought. The voice of the NATO allies, who unanimously pressed for continued compliance with SALT, also failed to alter the Administration's course.

The Senate and House of Representatives passed non-binding resolutions in support of continued observance of SALT II. However, in October 1986 the Senate rejected a more far-reaching House resolution, attached to the 1987 budget legislation, that would have blocked all funding for nuclear systems with multiple warheads exceeding the limits of the treaty. The Democrats then made significant gains in the congressional elections of November 4, and there were now political majorities in both houses to deny the Administration--

tion the funding for programs that would exceed the SALT ceilings. This would not eliminate the violation of the treaty that had already occurred but could make it impossible for the Administration to continue on this course.

At the Reykjavik summit of October 11–12, 1986, SALT II was not a topic of discussion. The Soviet Union responded to the U.S. departure from SALT II with the announcement that it intended to observe the terms of the treaty “provisionally”. It would respond only “when the arms balance [had] shifted markedly.”

Evidently, by the fall of 1986 the Soviets had given up on any prospects for bilateral efforts to sustain the accords and instead set their sights on new arms control agreements.

4. Arms over Arms Control: The Grounds for the Reagan Administration’s Decision to Abandon SALT II

The United States broke with the SALT II treaty for essentially five reasons, the most important of which were those of domestic politics.

First, continued compliance with the SALT II agreement stood in the way of the U.S. arms buildup. Discrepancies were constantly emerging between continued treaty compliance and the strategic modernization program.

Second, continued acceptance of Soviet treaty violations was increasingly viewed as intolerable, not on account of their military significance but solely because politically they signaled a failure to act.

Third, it was necessary to heed the vehement criticism of past compliance with SALT II coming from Ronald Reagan’s conservative base in Congress and the public.

Fourth, it was of no less importance that the President, always averse to complicated decision making and long-drawn-out discussions among his advisors, wanted to terminate the SALT II debate once and for all.

Fifth, the Geneva arms control negotiations as well as the future of U.S.-Soviet dialogue did not appear apt to yield rapid and, in American eyes, acceptable results. Continued compliance with SALT II was thus not necessary as a way of promoting progress in the negotiations.

Moreover, the Reagan Administration pointed out that its early public announcement of the intended break with SALT II six months later was designed to put added pressure on the Soviet Union to show greater flexibility in the current arms control talks. The prevailing view in the Administration was

that for economic reasons the Soviet Union would not be able to keep pace in a new arms race. President Reagan declared that he did not count on an "appreciable" strengthening of strategic forces. Moscow would not substantially increase the number of its nuclear weapons since it already had a great many such weapons at its disposal. In Reagan's view the number of strategic warheads deployed by the Soviets would increase from about 10,000 (1986) to 12,000 (1990). Without the limitations of the SALT II treaty the U.S. might then have over 14,000 warheads; but the U.S. did not wish to exceed the Soviet figure, provided there were "no significant changes in the threat" to the United States. However, all other forecasts as to the development of the U.S. and Soviet strategic arsenals without the SALT II agreement estimated that an intensive arms buildup would at first entail considerably higher costs for the United States and that the U.S. probably would not catch up with the Soviet Union until the 1990s.

All these predictions were largely irrelevant to the Reagan Administration's calculations. Administration decision making was based on the dual assumption that the U.S.S.R. was in no position to engage in an arms race, but that if need be the United States would be able to endure such a competition. All in all, the element of exerting pressure on the Soviet Union and thus giving new impetus to the arms control talks did not guide policy but rather served to legitimize it subsequently to the public. Otherwise, SALT II would have had to have been a much more important topic in the U.S.-Soviet negotiations.

Finally, the break with SALT II was critically influenced by what was, in this form, the new conflict between treaty compliance and military modernization. For the Reagan Administration, no doubt the main reason to abide by the agreement in 1981 had been that it regarded SALT II as basically compatible with its security policy until the mid-1980s. The agreement allowed it for the time being to carry out all its planned strategic arms measures, while it

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36 At the time the decision was made, President Reagan was said to believe that the Soviet economy was so overburdened that the U.S.S.R.'s level of defense spending could not be raised even if the U.S. ignored the SALT II limitations. Cf. The Washington Post, June 24, 1986.


imposed important restrictions on the U.S.S.R. and besides prevented a Soviet "breakout" from arms control in response to the revitalized American "policy of strength."

This allowed arms control critics in the Reagan Administration and a great many of their political allies in Congress and the public provisionally to approve compliance with the terms of a treaty strenuously opposed before. In this regard, SALT II could also be used as an instrument of current arms control policy. The willingness of the U.S. to respect the accords facilitated the initiation of the START negotiations in 1982. Certainly these and the INF negotiations would have been seriously strained if the break with SALT had already been made. At the same time, demonstrating in this way the U.S. interest in arms control met the demands of Congress, the Allies and the political public. Using compliance with SALT II as a means of arms control policy became less important to the extent that contradictions between compliance and military modernization emerged with increasing clarity. In the logic of the Reagan Administration's security policy, compliance with SALT II beyond 1986 would have been a case of arms control misunderstood as an "isolated objective or independent instrument" that was not subordinate to the "rebuilding of American military strength" — the overriding objective of national security. Once the Geneva negotiations had resumed in March 1985, the Administration could without SALT II meet the domestic interest in continuing the arms control dialogue with the Soviet Union and thereby raise congressional and public support for the military modernization: as a means of legitimizing American security policy the treaty was no longer necessary.

The U.S. strategic modernization program did not come into conflict with the limits set by SALT II until 1985. Before then, what were in any case obsolescent submarines could be deactivated to make room for nuclear systems ready for service. The need to choose between deactivating modern operational nuclear systems (Minuteman III ICBMs, more modern Poseidon submarines) and abandoning the SALT II treaty was first presented by the arming of intercontinental bombers with cruise missiles. Subsequent decisions, all falling within President Reagan's second term in office, were set: as of December 1986 the stationing of the first MX intercontinental ballistic missiles, in July 1988 the scheduled commissioning of the ninth atomic submarine of the Trident class, again in 1988 the start of testing for the new Midgetman ICBM. Each one of these programs was incompatible with SALT II.

The SALT II treaty was abrogated just as soon as the U.S. strategic modernization program demanded it; the moment the alternative between modernization

and treaty compliance became serious, the proponents of giving priority to “rebuilding military strength” prevailed. It is noteworthy, too, that the military stressed the advantages of continued adherence to the SALT II ceilings whereas most political decision-makers gave precedence to unilateral arms measures.

The abandonment of the SALT II agreement was thus the product of a U.S. security policy, adhered to in its principal features since 1981, in which the American-Soviet relationship was approached as one of security adversaries. Within the framework of this policy, unilateral decisions and continued military modernization were given priority over necessarily compromising arms control, without entirely abandoning the latter as an instrument of domestic, alliance and security policy. The outcome of the Administration’s internal debate over the SALT II treaty was a late success for the American critics and opponents of arms control, yet one inherent in the logic of the Reagan Administration’s policy.

The Reagan Administration’s handling of SALT II confirmed the argument that the great debate of the late 1970s had not been, primarily, about the substance of the agreement, but rather concerned the basic direction of foreign and security policy. A treaty whose terms the advocates of a “policy of strength” could abide by for nearly six years, with no further decline in “national security,” could not have been so unsatisfactory for the United States. This experience did not give rise to any rethinking in the Administration’s view of arms control. When in doubt, skepticism toward arms control continued to prevail.
IV  Case Studies
The Impact of the War Powers Resolution on Crisis Decision Making

1. The Issue

During the Reagan Administration the United States became involved militarily in various international conflicts, and once again the power to declare war became an issue in American politics. This essay will analyze and discuss the implications of war powers in the American political system.

What rules govern U.S. decision making in the event of military conflict? Answering this question affords an understanding of American behavior in diplomatic and military conflicts. The well-known and highly controversial focal point of this issue was the attempt by the American Congress to curb the military prerogatives of the President during the Vietnam War and force him to end the American military engagement in Indochina.¹

In late 1973 Congress adopted its famous War Powers Resolution, voting with a more than two-thirds majority to override the veto of President Nixon.² The War Powers Resolution regulates the power to declare war; it governs the conduct of the executive and defines the role of the legislative branch in the event of an impending state of war. For a declaration of war the U.S. Constitution tersely provides that “The Congress shall have the power to declare war [and] to raise and support armies.” (Art. I, Sect. 8). But in Article II, Section 2, the Constitution also states that “The President is Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy.”

These dual authorities are not conducive to harmony. Rather, on this vitally important matter of national security we find the same relationship between the executive and legislative powers that obtains in virtually all areas of the American body politic: where the two branches must work together the

Constitution has consciously left a gray area in which the two powers must reach agreement. Gray areas have yet to be resolved in any sphere, with authority definitively vested in one branch or the other. Rather, politics is marked by permanent conflict over redefining these powers. Since agreements depend on historical constellations, decisions are not valid once and for all. This is certainly true of the War Powers Resolution. The provisions established in the final stages of the Vietnam War are today applied in other contexts or must be reinterpreted. While some of its terms remain valid, the resolution has become untenable or useless in certain areas, though Congress has not inferred from this any need to act.

2. The Legislative Veto

European politicians and scholars accustomed to parliamentary systems often find it rather difficult to comprehend the mechanisms and political instrumentalties of the congressional system. The power of the U.S. Congress, as it is understood on Capitol Hill, far exceeds that of European parliaments — though the will to exercise this power cannot always be mustered. Whereas parliaments were introduced gradually into the authoritarian monarchies and republics of Europe and invested with powers offering minimal resistance to state bureaucracies, Congress has stood as a bulwark against inordinate executive power from the beginning of the American Republic. The Founding Fathers had consciously intended to prevent any concentration of power, as was expressed in the Constitution’s laconic statement of principles. By the Constitution, political power in the U.S. resides essentially in the Congress. The President is chief of the executive only in a rather narrowly conceived domain. However, since the President is popularly elected and thus can claim an authority of his own, he is certainly the political system’s central figure and single most powerful person. Moreover, the President has a veto power: he can reject acts of Congress if he feels that he cannot faithfully execute these in accordance with his office. To override the President’s veto Congress must reach a two-thirds majority — as indeed was the case with the War Powers Resolution.

From the beginning of the 20th century and especially since the depression, the proliferation of government business has entailed a tremendous growth

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5 Cf. Lester Salamon, “The Presidency and Domestic Policy Formulation.”
in the power of the presidency. It has become customary to describe the U.S. as a presidential system, and some major developments in the postwar period do appear to support this characterization. However, this view tends to overlook the fact that this increased power has been borrowed. From the constitutional standpoint Congress retains an authoritative claim to this power. Those familiar with European models tend to interpret one-sidedly the change toward greater power of the presidency; they often fail to grasp the meaning of legislative power in American politics. For its scope is broader than the European notion of what is "legislative." The influence of the legislative branch in America extends far beyond the legislative domain into the executive. Thus, it establishes departments; it confirms top-level executive appointments and in doing so exercises an influence on the "good conduct" of administration officials, including their dealings with Congress. In addition, congressional committees, particularly the subcommittees dealing with the specifics of legislation, exercise a legal oversight over the administration and execution of laws that is unknown to parliamentary processes in Europe.\(^6\)

Yet Congress has certain structural disadvantages which entail almost automatically an increased power of the executive branch, though this always means borrowed power. Congress is too large and party lines too weak for developing grand strategies for exercising its own power. Congress must therefore delegate labor-intensive matters to the executive and the bureaucracy. As in any modern state there has developed in the U.S. an immense machinery of government, one that was not provided for in the Constitution and that tends to be disparaged in the political culture. The beginning of this development can be marked with the administrative reform laws under President Hoover.\(^7\) Up to that point Congress had regarded it as its job to determine administrative structure and decide upon the institution and organization of specific offices. As government administration became more complex, Congress relinquished this function to the executive branch and presidential administrations.

Congress did not do so without a trade-off: the laws which formalized this increase in executive functions also established in general provisos or in very specific stipulations the means for congressional intervention. This instrument has been termed the "legislative veto." According to the Constitution, Congress makes the laws and the President has the power to veto them. The new


\(^7\) Cf. note 3.
legislative procedures enabled the President and the administrative authorities to regulate certain spheres of policy, with Congress then being able to intervene in matters of executive implementation.

In the past, i.e. up to 1983, Congress frequently made provision for subsequent legislative veto, which might be imposed by one house of Congress or even a committee. Thus, legislative provisos to prevent the closing of airfields have been attached to defense bills\(^8\) — to cite just one instance of intervention in detail. But the legislative veto presents a constitutional problem in that it is not implemented through the enactment of a law but comes as an intervention into executive action without the administrative authorities or the President's having the possibility of bringing their powers to bear. Under the Constitution only one institution is entitled to pronounce a veto, and that is the President. Congress, on the other hand, has to govern with laws and with votes, which in their highest form can override a presidential veto.

Hence, in this modern constitutional development presidents have not accepted the institution of the legislative veto. For pragmatic reasons, however, they have not taken action against them. For one thing, because the legislative vetos have most often been attached as amendments to larger legislative packages and the President would rather sign the bill in order to secure what was important to him in the legislation for his agenda. For another, the executive and in particular the bureaucracy has been able to live with some of the legislative vetos, or simply ignore or circumvent them. Thus, in legislation on foreign and security policy matters, most legislative vetos have not been especially burdensome to presidential authority.\(^9\)

Nevertheless, this constitutional problem needed to be resolved. The time was ripe for doing so when in late 1980 the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to consider an appeal against the decision of the immigration authorities in which a legislative veto was involved. This case, *Immigration and Naturalization Service v. Chadha* (the name of the immigrant), was decided by the Court in the summer of 1983 to the effect that legislative vetos as they had been used were in most instances not admissible.\(^10\) This set in motion within the government a process of revision by which a great many congressional injunctions set forth in bills became null and void. The actual impact of this


on the government’s actions was not as dramatic as the decision implied, as only a portion of administrative activity is carried out on the basis of general laws and legislative decisions. Many important executive measures are simply enacted by order of administration officials or civil servants.

The Chadha decision was of the utmost significance for the principle of separation of powers. With it the Court had drawn definite limits and prohibited Congress from encroaching upon executive action. The Court found that in future Congress could no longer effectuate its intentions through concurrent resolutions, committee jurisdiction or one-house resolutions, but solely by means of joint resolutions of both houses. These joint resolutions have the status of congressional acts and are passed like other legislation. Most important, these joint resolutions are passed on to the President for his signature and thus give him the opportunity to exercise a veto. In 1983, then, the power of the President was strengthened de jure, thus marking a significant turnaround after a decade of de facto constraint by Congress.

Removing the legislative veto does not completely deprive Congress of its influence over administrative action. In essence, the decision means first of all that current legislation would have to be more discriminating and more careful to encompass in its normal authorizations all eventualities in which Congress is interested. Yet Congress is normally too fragmented to express its will in a very determined way. Since party loyalties tend to be weak, a specific event must possess extraordinary symbolic importance to elicit consensus action on the part of the entire Congress. The “normal” fragmentation in Congress is, then, the source of true, de facto power of the presidency and the bureaucracy. When the President vetos a bill, congressional loyalties to the nation’s chief executive are usually sufficiently strong — especially within his own party — that an overriding of the President becomes a rare occurrence. On the other hand, the President does not want to overuse and thus erode his veto power.

The Chadha decision was significant in another respect. The Supreme Court had not addressed the basic change in lawmaking that had taken place since the 1930s, and thus it had not invalidated the devolution of institutional responsibilities upon the executive branch. Such a far-reaching decision by the Court would have fundamentally altered the distribution of power in the U.S. political system. In this respect the Chadha decision affected only a mechanism within the gray area between the executive and legislative branches.

This decision has a two-fold significance for the War Powers Resolution. First, it suggests that Congress had exploited the constitutional gray area in reinterpreting war powers plainly to its own advantage. Second, the resolution contains specific provisions with regard to concurrent resolutions that can no longer be regarded as legally binding.
3. The War Powers Resolution

Historically, the War Powers Resolution was a rebuff to the claim of presidents to continue waging "their wars" as defensive military actions for the protection of American forces or as interventions below the threshold of a war.\footnote{Cf. Fisher, \textit{Constitutional Conflicts}, pp. 184 – 187.} With the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in 1964 Congress had granted President Johnson just such a general authority.\footnote{Cf. Sundquist, \textit{Decline and Resurgence of Congress}, p. 241, as well as James A. Nathan, 
James Oliver, \textit{United States Foreign Policy and World Order}, Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1985, p. 312.} However, the Vietnam War produced changes in American society, Congress and the role of the congressman. As presidential power ebbed, Congress regained its power. Since the invasion of Cambodia in 1970, criticism of the President and his conduct of the war in Indochina had been growing; demands in Congress for ending the war became more insistent. Yet for all its criticism, Congress had not really limited appropriations for the armed forces nor passed any laws that would have meant a de facto termination of the Vietnam War. In other words, though Congress urged President Nixon to end the war, it did not want to curtail the authority or de facto power of the U.S. in international affairs.

In late 1973 the Senate and House of Representatives finally worked out a resolution which in ten sections relegislated the power to declare war. The President vetoed this act but, being already embroiled in the Watergate affair, was overridden by a large majority of Congress. With that the War Powers Resolution became law and at once a prominent symbol of the reassertion of congressional power.

Of the ten sections, two in particular assumed extraordinary importance, namely, Sections 4 and 5.\footnote{For the following interpretation of the War Powers Resolution and its application during the Reagan Administration I am indebted to Mrs. Ellen C. Collier. Mrs. Collier is the specialist for "war powers" questions in the Congressional Research Service (CRS), which is part of the Library of Congress. Her helpful providing of materials and obliging conversations greatly facilitated the preparation of this essay. Of her publications I have relied primarily on Ellen C. Collier, \textit{The War Powers Resolution: A Decade of Experience}, CRS, Library of Congress, Report No. 84 – 22 F, February 6, 1984, and idem, \textit{War Powers Resolution: Presidential Compliance}, CRS Issue Brief, Order Code IB81050, updated March 26, 1986.} Section 1 names the resolution and Section 10 stipulates when it shall enter into force. Section 2 discusses the purpose and political significance of the act. It explains that under the Constitution only the Congress and the President jointly can decide upon the use of armed forces, particularly in areas and under circumstances in which direct "hostilities" might result from such use. The President could take immediate action
only in case of national emergency. Section 2 is designed to establish con cep
tual distinctions, yet the President cannot agree to provisions that tie the use
of the armed forces to there being in fact a state of “hostilities.” The President
defines his role more broadly and sees himself as the ultimate decision maker
in a wider range of circumstance than simply national emergency. Moreover,
presidents would rather not see their role as commander-in-chief spelled out
in detail.

Section 3 obligates the President to undertake “consultations” with Congress
“before” he commits troops to situations “where imminent involvement in
hostilities is clearly indicated by the circumstances.” Again it is the notion of
hostilities that restricts the President’s freedom of action. Implicit in the
obligation to consult with Congress is an ideal of the democratic process:
consultations are important and necessary and not obstructive or detrimental
to effectiveness. Congress ought to be consulted: such an imperative does not
consider that consultations can lead to differences of opinion and that Con-
gress is an institution not for making but preparing decisions. Decisions
are taken not by Congress as a whole but by majorities. The concept of
“consultations” cannot be sharply differentiated from that of information. In
any case, if the President does not “wish” to consult on Congress’s “terms,”
he then deviates from the publicly and congressionally defined norm of
“consultation.” In 1973 and in opposition to President Nixon the idea certainly
did make sense; however, it is time-bound and reflects the U.S. democratic
ideal against the “imperial presidency.” It can even be argued that Congress
should not be fully informed because it then bears co-responsibility for
decisions and can therefore no longer properly exercise its oversight and
criticism.

Section 4(a)(1) stipulates that Congress must be informed when troops are
stationed under conditions of hostilities. Congress must also be apprised of
other kinds of troop movements into crisis areas. If hostilities are likely, the
President has not only to consult beforehand (Section 3), but he must submit
a formal report to Congress. This assumes great importance as it triggers a
mechanism defined in Section 5: the moment the President reports the intro-
duction of troops into hostile situations — and he must do so within 48
hours of commencing deployment — automatically the engagement becomes
limited. Unless Congress pronounces a declaration of war, the U.S. forces
may remain in action only 60 days. This period can be extended another 30
days if the President deems it necessary and reports to Congress accordingly.
What is significant and breath-taking about this is that the legislative branch
of a world power applies the democratic ideal of its political culture, even
to the nation’s conduct of warfare, to the point that it overshadows executive
“imperatives” and criteria of efficiency. The provision means, then, that if
Congress cannot reach agreement on continuing the military engagement, the
President must automatically withdraw the troops. This procedure requires no further legal act; according to Section 5, such a disengagement takes place automatically unless Congress has established some other legal basis in these 60 or 90 days.

Obviously, the conditions imposed by Sections 4 and 5 were unacceptable to President Nixon and his successors. In his veto in December 1973 President Nixon stated this very clearly. In Section 6, then, there logically follows the procedure by which Congress can expeditiously make a declaration of war within the period of 60 days. Section 7 seeks to establish a legislative veto on the traditional model. After the Chadha decision this Section is most certainly no longer legally binding. Section 8 has special importance for the North Atlantic Alliance, as it guarantees that the War Powers Resolution has no effect on agreements already established prior to enactment of the resolution and that the law does not intend to prejudice relations with friends and treaty partners. The dispatching of personnel to integrated staffs does not fall under the mandatory reporting requirement (8(b)).

Section 8(c), however, stipulates that American soldiers acting as advisors in other countries may not accompany foreign troops armed if these forces are involved in “hostilities.” A reflection of the Vietnam trauma, this provision today has immediate importance for the U.S. engagement in Central America. Yet it remains open to question whether this mechanism could become important if, say, a member of NATO were to become involved in “hostilities” with a Warsaw Pact nation.

Section 9 prudently contains a separability clause which states that if one part of the law were to prove legally untenable, then the rest of the resolution would still stand. This formula backed up the act in case the legislative veto should be invalidated.

All in all, the law seeks to bolster the power of Congress as the supreme constitutional body for enacting laws in the modern era. Presidents are to be bound in their ability to carry out military actions at their own discretion. On the other hand, the resolution’s formal and substantive determinations could be interpreted to mean that a hostile power could exploit the congressional definitions to its own advantage. The President’s freedom of action

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14 “I am particularly disturbed by the fact that certain of the President’s constitutional powers as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces would terminate automatically under this resolution 60 days after they were invoked ... In my view the proper way for the Congress to make known its will on such foreign policy questions is through a positive action, with full debate on the merits of the issue and with each member taking the responsibility of casting a yes or no vote after considering those merits.” In Congressional Quarterly Almanac 1973, pp. 2855 — 2856, here p. 2856.
and, especially in the case of a world power such as the U.S., the attendant incalculability surrounding the use of military power represent a means of threat that are then domesticated with the War Powers Resolution.

4. The War Powers Resolution under President Reagan

The resolution's most immediate consequence was that the presidents who had to live with it steered clear of reporting as prescribed in Section 4(a)(1) and of stating that their orders for troop movements or engagements had anything to do with introducing this military personnel into situations in which "hostilities" were indicated. "Hostilities" became the law's key concept. Only once was Section 4(a)(1) mentioned in President Ford's report to Congress on the Mayaguez incident in 1975, though this was of no consequence since the use of American forces here was but a single act. Otherwise, in fulfilling their obligation to report all presidents have tried to refer to the law and to their powers in only the vaguest of terms, i.e., they submitted to the law formally without letting themselves be forced into commitments. Congress might have tried to enforce "good conduct" on the presidents, but would have found congressional majorities hard to come by. The efficacy of the law was first tested seriously during the Reagan Presidency.

The principal test case was the stationing of American marines in Lebanon for the second time, in the fall of 1983. The action in Grenada and the Reagan Administration's course in Central America also provide telling examples. Less important, though with a strong signal effect, is the case of Libya, or generally American military actions against terrorism, as at present in the Persian Gulf.

4.1 The Case of Lebanon

In the late summer of 1983 President Reagan sent new contingents of marines to reinforce the multilateral force supporting the weak government of President Gemayel. Above all, the marines were to be enabled to better protect themselves, for a number had been killed in ambushes.

At this time President Reagan met his obligation to report but avoided mentioning the term "hostilities." Rather, the Administration argued that the American units would be carrying out a "peace mission" as part of a

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multilateral force to strengthen a friendly government and should not be seen as potential combatants. The mission was already carefully defined, then, in terms that need not be locked into the law’s formulations. The President thus avoided triggering the 60-day mechanism. This of course was recognized by Congress and met with loud protest. On September 29, 1983, Congress passed a joint resolution stating that Section 4(a)(1) had been in effect since August 29, 1983. Yet this resolution already embodied a compromise, for it had been worked out with the President that if he signed the resolution, Congress would allow him to keep the marines stationed for 18 months. The question is how to interpret this compromise.

On the one hand, the President “seemingly” was bending to the interpretation of Congress, on the other, he was granted a period of time for his policy which many felt to be too long to be regarded as any constraint. The matter was discussed in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, where liberal and centrist positions squared off. Senator Mathias, a liberal Republican (Md.), argued with the support of committee Democrats for a six-month term. After several attempts the centrists, led by majority leader Howard Baker (Tenn.), were able to line up a majority on the committee for an 18-month limit. This was then accepted by the Congress.

The thinking behind the liberal proposal was that the engagement of the marines could not be effective unless President Gemayel were put under pressure to carry through with his stabilization measures in a short period of time. The centrists, however, approached this from quite a different angle: for them the hard line had to be taken not with President Gemayel but toward the Syrians. They contended that limiting the U.S. presence to six months would send a signal to Syria that it need only wait a short period before it finally had a free hand in Lebanon. Senator Biden (D.-Del.) suggested the War Powers Resolution’s inherent potential in resolving conflicts by military means; he argued that the President should utilize his rightful 60 days in Lebanon to radically reshape the situation and decide the conflict on American terms by military might.17

Biden thus demonstrated his apparent ignorance of the real situation, for the dilemma confronting President Reagan in the fall of 1983 had been created by the bold but totally counterproductive intervention of Israeli Prime Minister Begin with his program of “Peace for Galilee.” The complex, entangled situation in Lebanon could not at that time, nor can it today, be resolved through a military occupation. However, Biden’s suggestion indirectly indicated the most important mechanism the resolution gives the President: if in future a President wants to pursue a military solution consistent with the

War Powers Resolution and without congressional involvement, then he is best advised to use U.S. forces massively, in "blitzkrieg" fashion aimed at victory. It may well be questioned whether this was the intention of those who passed the War Powers Resolution in 1973.

In the contest of wills between Congress and the presidency, the President's signing of the congressional legislation to permit the stationing of the marines in Lebanon would supposedly imply recognition of the injunctions and obligation to report under 4(a)(1). Of course, in the hearings prior to passage of the bill Secretary of State Shultz made it clear that in signing a bill into law a President does not recognize the execution of all its aspects as equally valid under law. When President Reagan signed the bill on October 12, 1983, he expressed the view that Congress had lodged in the bill much that might be regarded as adequate from the standpoint of Congress but that did not necessarily meet with the President's approval. In particular, with regard to the resolution's important notion of "hostilities" Reagan commented:

I would note that the initiation of isolated or infrequent acts of violence against United States armed forces does not necessarily constitute actual or imminent hostilities, even if casualties to those forces result. I think it reasonable to recognize the inherent risk and imprudence of setting any precise formula for making such determinations.

With respect to the time constraints set forth in Section 5(b), the President then added:

Nor should my signing be viewed as any acknowledgment that the President's constitutional authority can be impermissibly infringed by statute, that congressional authorization would be required if and when the period specified in section 5(b) of the War Powers Resolution might be deemed to have been triggered and the period had expired or that section 6 of the Multinational Force in Lebanon Resolution may be interpreted to revise the President's constitutional authority to deploy United States armed forces.18

4.2 Grenada

Not long after these remarks the President Reagan again had occasion to set forth his views on war powers, as he informed Congress that he had initiated an intervention in Grenada "consistent with the War Powers Resolution."19 Again, any mention of 4(a)(1) was avoided. Citing his obligation to consult, the President invited congressional leaders to the White House at 8 p.m. on October 24 to inform them that the military action would begin the next morning at 5:30. Thus notified, both houses of Congress immediately set to work to pass a Grenada bill. Again the President was to be induced to recognize a joint resolution to enforce 4(a)(1) and the time limitations defined by Section 5(b). By a 403 to 23 vote the House approved a resolution stating

18 Cited in Collier, A Decade of Experience, p. 35.
19 Cf. Congress and Foreign Policy 1983, p. 139.
that the mechanism of 4(a)(1) had been in effect since October 25. By a vote of 64 to 20 the Senate adopted a similarly worded amendment to a bill. But this rider died on November 17 and the legislation on the Grenada case came to nought. Events had overtaken Congress — as Reagan had previously intimated in his Lebanon statement. After this triumphant and in the public mind very popular action, the Administration declared that the combat troops would be withdrawn from Grenada before the 60-day limit. This then met the terms of the resolution, and yet in the whole affair the President had circumvented Congress. For neither had he explicitly and faithfully acknowledged the resolution mechanism, nor was the mention of 60 days a necessary consequence of the resolution.

More problematic was that the criticism voiced initially, for instance, that the Congress had not been consulted but simply notified, had died away. The charge that the English prime minister had been advised sooner and more fully than Congress likewise made no impact. Immediately after the action became public, Tip O’Neil, the Speaker of the House and hence the highest-ranking representative of the Democratic Party, had called it “gun-boat diplomacy,” only to approve the action later when a wave of patriotism broke over the U.S. With that it became very clear that the resolution is the object of political struggle between the two branches of government and does not constitute a settlement by which the powers have in fact been clearly apportioned.

4.3 Central America

Any large-scale U.S. intervention in Central America — most likely in Nicaragua — would be most apt to raise the Vietnam analogy. The activities of American military personnel in Central America have in fact been governed by the overall powers accorded the President, as in Lebanon and Grenada; however, up to now President Reagan has strictly observed the terms of Section 8(b), which prohibits American military advisors (e.g. in El Salvador) from playing an armed combat role in counterinsurgency with local government forces. Whenever the press claimed to have uncovered violations, the President responded quickly to warrant the noncombatant status of the military advisors. Thus the shadow of Vietnam: sending military advisors might eventually turn into an intervention with a large ground force.

In the spring of 1981 Congressman Crockett even filed suit against President Reagan to have the military advisors withdrawn from El Salvador on the

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grounds that their presence there was illegal.21 The decision of the federal judge for the District of Columbia did nothing to promote such a reading of the War Powers Resolution. For she ruled that “the subleties of fact-finding in this situation [the involvement in hostilities — J.S.] should be left to the political branches.”22 She concluded that Congress had done nothing to show that the War Powers Resolution was applicable. Today there is still no clear consensus in Congress on the extent to which all the indirect measures in Central America are covered by the war powers. Hence, in this area also, the indefiniteness of certain military measures in recent years has not contributed to strengthening the resolution.

5. Present Meaning of the War Powers Resolution and Summary

The more recent military conflicts characterized by “terrorism” have also done little to strengthen the resolution. To combat terrorism the White House can always claim that there is no time for consultations, that for reasons of secrecy decisions must be kept within a small circle and that the resolution’s injunctions, with its central concept of “hostilities,” are not open and subtle enough to come to grips with the actual situation.23

The critics of the resolution, including those in Congress, presently hold the high ground and can always refer to the resolution’s historical contingency. Congressman Cheney raised another point, which is actually the most important of all: what effect could the resolution have in the event of a nuclear exchange between the two world powers?24 In a word: none. For the time frames for notification and the concept of “determining hostilities” do not come to terms with the urgency of initiating a nuclear de-escalation. The notification of Congress within 48 hours after an action would be superfluous in the case of a nuclear war, as the nuclear strike itself would constitute “notification.” It is therefore unlikely that the reformers who want to

22 Cited in Collier, A Decade of Experience, p. 22.
strengthen restrictions will have any success. What some have in mind is to completely deny the President the decision on deploying troops, and to permit deployment solely on the basis of an act of Congress. Anyone familiar with the workings of Congress might readily conclude that if this were the case, U.S. troops would very rarely be moved. It is very questionable whether an action such as that in Grenada would ever have found a congressional majority beforehand. Yet even if Congress were able to place such restrictions on the President, this would not alter much in substance. The President as constitutionally designated chief of the armed forces would always try to justify military measures by citing his obligation to protect U.S. armed forces anywhere in the world — the Navy would not, say, pull back into American harbors.

In his veto in 1973 President Nixon had set the standard by which presidents would subsequently address the issue of war powers. They have refrained from detailed commentary on the War Powers Resolution, but rather have opposed its constraints, and particularly the time limitations. They have pointed to the constitutional power of the Congress legally and concretely, by majority vote, to set guidelines and correctives for presidential decisions through acts and budget appropriations. Since at the time of the Vietnam War the Congress did not really utilize its "power of the purse," it had not exhausted its legislative possibilities. At that time Congress wanted to post notice of its renewed activity and authority. From the President's standpoint, such a symbolic legislation for restricting presidential rights cannot be legitimate.

In practice it has proven increasingly difficult to wield the War Powers Resolution as a means of moving the presidency to a specific course of action; recent years have shown this forcefully. If it really wants to exercise controls over the President, Congress must use the normal legislative process and budgetary appropriations. But it is in a position to do so only in exceptional cases, for after the Vietnam War it has not been easy to muster majorities against the White House, much less two-thirds majorities against presidential vetos.

Yet the War Powers Resolution does have an effect. What critics fail to see, and what the President cannot admit, is that presidents have de facto recognized the existence of the resolution. Unlike before the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which was to legitimate the Vietnam War, the White House has come to anticipate the ways Congress might respond to presidential actions. During the Reagan Administration this has been made most evident by the absence of military actions in Central America. The resolution is effective, then, in

three ways: as a symbol; as a real mechanism, and as a de facto constraint on presidential power.\textsuperscript{26}

The War Powers Resolution has a very real symbolic value which Congress would readily exploit in a confrontation with the presidency. Then the public too would revive the reform movement as it stood at the end of the Vietnam War. The resolution provides an effective mechanism in that a military action triggers certain procedures which in turn attract great attention in the public. The President must live with this fact. Finally, in the estimation of former Senator Javits, who played a major role in drawing up the measure, it has proved an effective political constraint on presidential actions:

No major military action by the United States has taken place since the bill became law. The dire predictions that the resolution would undermine the Nation's ability to act decisively have not come true. It has simply imposed on the Presidency the necessity to stop, look, and listen, and to ask prudent counsel when a military operation is suggested.\textsuperscript{27}

The metaphor of traffic safety, where rules are needed to anticipate dangerous situations, broadly implies a threshold, poses a barrier against precipitous action and thus aptly symbolizes the circumstances. It is questionable, however, whether it is inherently positive that the U.S. has undertaken no "major" military action since 1973. It is also doubtful whether prudent counsel — especially from Congress — can prevent poor military decisions in future. At present there remains an overriding skepticism as to whether it would really be advantageous to dispel the gray area between the two powers.

\textsuperscript{26} These very apt categories are taken from \textit{The War Powers Resolution, A Special Study}, pp. 265–285.

\textsuperscript{27} Cited in \textit{The War Powers Resolution, A Special Study}, p. 285.
U.S. proposals for deep reductions in strategic nuclear weapons have often been looked at solely from the standpoint of disarmament. The Reagan Administration, however, has also, perhaps primarily, regarded the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) as a way of managing American and Soviet arms programs, that is, as arms control. The innovative element of START, distinguishing it from previous arms control, is that it explicitly aims at drastic and militarily significant reductions of the U.S. and Soviet strategic nuclear weapons arsenals. This goal was set forth in President Ronald Reagan’s Eureka speech on May 9, 1982. At the Geneva summit meeting of November 1985, the U.S. and the Soviet Union agreed on the principle of 50-percent reduction in strategic nuclear weapons.

The meaning of “deep cuts” again became an issue when in Reykjavik in October 1986 President Reagan and General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev discussed eliminating whole categories of nuclear weapons. Their proposals showed that strategic arms cuts conceived in terms of arms control can constitute a first step toward disarmament of a weapons category: ballistic missiles with multiple nuclear warheads (MIRVs). However, in the spring of 1987 the Administration unofficially backed off from the proposal for elimi-
nating ballistic missile systems. In light of these developments, then, what is the essential function of radical arms reductions? Do deep cuts support a shift in the arms competition, that is, conceivably an arms buildup in other weapons categories, or is drastic reduction of strategic nuclear weapons aimed at disarmament?

1. Discussing “Deep Cuts”

The reorientation of American arms control policy in the Reagan Administration revived central ideas from the late 1950s and 1960s and reintegrated them in a broader scope of defense planning. The politico-military concept of deep cuts and the Administration’s defense planning were to some extent based on the idea of a restoration of the status quo ante: the strategic situation in the 1950s, before SALT. Central to this was the Administration’s negative attitude toward previous arms control. In its view, the SALT treaties had sanctioned Soviet advantages in the realm of accurate MIRVed ICBMs, whose number and technical features permitted a Soviet “first-strike capability.” Thus, the credibility of American deterrence had been diminished. In SALT the negotiating criteria alone had been unsound. Besides, the U.S. had lost sight of the essential demand posed by the Antiballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty

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4 This assessment results from the concentration of deep cuts on ballistic systems and from the focus of strategic arms programs on anti-ballistic missile and air defense systems as well as strategic bombers and cruise missiles. Within the Administration, the leading civilian figures in the Pentagon especially take the position that the U.S. would be “somewhat better off” with a force posture of bomber-based offensive ALCMs as well as SLCMs and defensive systems. Thus Fred C. Iklé, quoted in R. Jeffrey Smith and George C. Wilson, “Reagan Plan Called Return To '50s-Era Arms Balance,” Washington Post, October 15, 1986, p. 22. For Richard Perle’s attitude toward the Reykjavik proposal on eliminating ballistic missiles, see Joseph Fitchett, “Bomber-Based Defense Is Sound, U.S. Aide Says,” International Herald Tribune, November 18, 1986, p. 1, and Richard Perle, “Reykjavik as a Watershed in U.S.-Soviet Arms Control,” International Security, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Summer 1987), pp. 175–178.

The Reagan Administration's Strategic Arms Control Policy

and the SALT I Interim Agreement of 1972: the reduction of offensive strategic weapons.

With the resumption of U.S.-Soviet talks in the Geneva START negotiations on June 29, 1982, the Reagan Administration was seeking not just to offset what was "fatally flawed" in SALT by negotiating drastic real reductions, especially of MIRVed ICBMs. President Reagan's "dual approach" was also aimed at harmonizing defense programs and arms control. However, the argument that the strategic modernization program, and the MX missile in particular, represented an incentive for the Soviet Union to negotiate served rather to legitimize the modernization program domestically. On the other hand, the arms control objective of a militarily significant reduction became a necessary part of a concept that envisaged more than simply matching Soviet strategic capabilities numerically. In particular, this concerned the Soviet Union's capability for destroying hardened targets such as silo-based ICBMs, as well as nuclear command and control installations C3I.

Although President Reagan criticized especially the Carter defense policy for having neglected U.S. military strength in the 1970s, the Reagan Administration's strategic arms programs were actually comparatively modest. At first the Administration concentrated on realizing the concept already developed under Carter of denying a potential opponent any promising military options. This was to be accomplished with fewer strategic armed forces than the Carter Administration had projected for the 1980s. Thus, the strategic "concept" of the Reagan Administration was far less spectacular than press reports suggested. And in the early 1980s, in light of the debates on MX deployment

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and nuclear war-fighting capabilities, it became evident that the Administration did not have a comprehensive and consistent nuclear posture.

Because the Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP) for U.S. nuclear forces is highly classified, it is impossible to say to what extent the Reagan Administration was altering strategic planning with its summer 1981 master plan for nuclear weapons acquisition and employment and the new SIOP-6 of October 1983. But assuming that the START proposals were coordinated with operational and force planning, the Administration's arms control policy displays a marked ambivalence. Instead of a consistent concept of reduction, different emphases were given according to the ambiguous preferences of those involved in the START process, generating a permanent controversy in the Administration on central issues of negotiation. Thus, the START proposal of May 1982 turns out to be a bureaucratic "compromise" favoring the position of the State Department. Later initiatives by Secretary of State George Shultz and arms control advisor Paul Nitze were unsuccessful, notably, since November 1985, to remove from the START proposals the ban on mobile ICBMs favored by the top civilian officials in the Pentagon. The demand for prohibiting mobile ICBMs was in itself contradictory. But it also showed that the Pentagon was concerned less with the negotiability of the proposal than with preventing a potential Soviet advantage.


11 It is a prime task of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to scrutinize every arms control proposal as to whether it accords with military planning. This means reconciling START with the SIOP. Cf. Strobe Talbott, Deadly Gambits, New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1984, pp. 254–257.


The overall objective of START, increasing strategic stability, was clearly characterized by an ambivalent understanding of stability within the Administration.

Yet there are some characteristic objectives connected with deep cuts. These have marked criteria for the START negotiations which had to be observed if the compromise within the Administration were to remain intact. In accordance with the principle of crisis stability, the reductions had to be so incisive as to eliminate the alleged preemptive first-strike instability, that is, the Soviet "first-strike capability," through reductions in "fast-flying ballistic missiles."14 and thus to ensure the survivability of central components of U.S. deterrence. The cuts had to be militarily significant so as to radically reduce Soviet strategic options. Besides the fact that the U.S. has but a small number of MIRVed ICBMs with more than three warheads, the point of military significance explains the American proposal for limiting MIRVed ICBMs with more than six warheads to a maximum of 1650 warheads.15 Thus the Soviet military capabilities were to be reduced to the extent that preemption cannot achieve any militarily calculable success.

The Reagan Administration's concept therefore does not encompass a general reduction16 of strategic nuclear weapons. Rather, it focuses on specific areas of the strategic balance of forces. The idea of symmetrical cuts is barred primarily by the asymmetry in the composition of the nuclear arsenals, which becomes all the more problematic the deeper the cuts go.


15 The latest American proposal of May 1987 contains the following sublimits (within a total of 6000 warheads): 4800 warheads on ballistic missiles, of which 3300 on ICBMs, with 1650 warheads on permitted light and medium silo-based ICBMs with six or fewer warheads. Cf. USIA, Nuclear and Space Talks: U.S. and Soviet Proposals, USWB 101, June 3, 1987, p. 26.

2. The Reagan Administration's Strategic Modernization Programs, SDI and Deep Cuts

In its first years the Reagan Administration's defense policy was clearly stamped by a political confrontation with the U.S.S.R. Initially, arms control as a cooperative element of relations was given correspondingly low priority. It took more than a year and a half before the START negotiations got underway. This was essentially a consequence of the Administration's criticism of past arms control and the resulting priority accorded to modernizing strategic nuclear weapons and C3I facilities. Theoretically, deep cuts, ballistic missile defense systems and individual arms projects fit in harmoniously with the objective of increasing American deterrence capabilities. In fact, however, numerous discrepancies become evident, substantially so in the implications of deep cuts.

2.1 The Criticism of SALT: Criteria for a Resumption of Arms Control Negotiations

In the eyes of the Reagan Administration, the critical outcome of SALT was that the Soviet Union had acquired a partial disarming capability.\(^{17}\) In the SALT framework of arms limitations, real increases in strategic arsenals were possible.\(^{18}\) On the Soviet side this had led to a significant increase in MIRVed ICBMs especially. In the Administration's estimation, a consequence of this arms buildup was a reduction of U.S. deterrence credibility that had not been offset by appropriate arms measures.

Against the background of SALT experience, the arms control negotiations could not be credibly continued by the Reagan Administration without at least

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\(^{17}\) The Soviet S-18 and SS-19 ICBMs, which can be used against hardened targets, are fitted with 5240 warheads. Mathematically this allows for a 2.5-fold coverage of every American ICBM silo with two warheads. Cf. Bruce W. Bennett, *How to Assess the Survivability of U.S. ICBMs*. R-2577-FF, Santa Monica: RAND Corporation June 1980.

\(^{18}\) The summation of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations concerning SALT II provides a clear example of this: "But the most important reason for the Committee's sense of disappointment is the large increase in warheads expected on both sides, despite the modest reductions in the number of permitted launchers. Thus, paradoxically, a vast increase in the quantity and destructiveness of each side's strategic power will occur during the period of the Treaty which seeks to limit strategic offensive arms. Moreover, ... the Committee believes that the Treaty does little to restrain potentially destabilizing technologies or to alleviate the main threats to strategic stability. SALT II has not been able, despite the Administration's efforts, to reduce the Soviet capability to threaten prompt destruction of most of the U.S. ICBM force." U.S. Senate, *SALT II Treaty*, pp. 316 – 317. On the problems of the SALT I treaty see Dieter Senghass, *Aufrüstung durch Rüstungskontrolle. Über den symbolischen Gebrauch von Politik*, Stuttgart et al.: Kohlhammer 1972, p. 20 ff.
radically changing the negotiating goals. It therefore linked the resumption of arms control talks with the demand that an agreement would have to achieve real and militarily significant reductions. Through the cuts, the strategic nuclear arsenals would be stabilized at a lower level. Thus, deep cuts also met the Senate's demands for reductions instead of a mere "freeze" on the weapons arsenals at existing levels.\textsuperscript{19}

2.2 Preconditions and Framework for Deep Cuts

In various ways the strategic modernization program served as a precondition for negotiations on deep cuts. For one thing, the Administration believed that the only reasonable way to negotiate was from a position of strength. It felt that the Soviet Union was prepared to reduce significantly its military options only when it faced a negotiating partner who was at least equal. In the Administration's view, U.S. defense had been neglected in the 1970s. Hence, first and foremost unilateral arms measures were required to ensure a "margin of safety."\textsuperscript{20} Consequently, meaningful arms control with the Soviet Union could take place, if at all, only once a credible deterrence capability was restored and the American strategic arms programs were exerting a pressure to negotiate on the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{21}

However, the problems in implementing a countervailing strategy soon emerged in the controversy over the basing mode for the MX missile. The April 1983 decision for a silo-based deployment of the MX once again posed the problem of ICBM vulnerability. This, however, highlighted a complementary function of deep cuts, namely, that the survivability of U.S. deterrence components could be enhanced by the direct reduction of Soviet MIRVed hard-target ICBMs.


\textsuperscript{20} However, it remained uncertain whether an "adequate margin of safety" is provided by general parity or is contingent on a certain measure of superiority (post-attack counter-force superiority) in one category of weapons. Cf. Weinberger, Department of Defense Report FY 1983, Ch. I, p. 17 ff.

\textsuperscript{21} Although in 1981/82 Congress approved virtually the entire strategic modernization program of the Administration, this did not produce the anticipated flexibility that some members of the Administration had hoped for from the Soviet Union in the START negotiations. Cf. Robert J. Einhorn, Negotiating from Strength. Leverage in U.S.-Soviet Arms Control Negotiations. The Washington Papers/113, New York: Praeger 1983, p. 7.
To enhance survivability, the combination of modernization and reductions aimed at *complicating Soviet offensive planning*. This was to be achieved through greater *diversification* of deterrence systems, particularly by deploying air- and sea-launched cruise missiles. In the medium term this would entail lessening the importance of MIRVed ICBMs and in the long run might make it possible to eliminate them. Thus, arms control policy's focus on cuts in the number of ballistic systems was the product of more than just domestic political considerations of regaining the initiative from the popular idea of a "nuclear freeze." In view of the politico-military and financial constraints on the modernization program, greater significance was attached to the *military calculation* of a significant reduction of fast-flying, hard-target kill capable (HTKC) missiles. A balance of options was sought via an asymmetrical reduction of Soviet capabilities together with a diversification of the U.S. arsenal.

### 2.3 The Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) and Deep Cuts

The high priority that SDI continues to assume is partly attributable to the recognition that significant improvement of the strategic balance could not be achieved through the strategic modernization program in offensive categories. Thus, the objective of the modernization program as a means of substantially altering the balance of forces — to catch up quantitatively through an arms buildup in ballistic systems that can be used against hardened targets — was shifted to another, qualitative plane of the arms competition. Instead of competition with the U.S.S.R. in an area of relative Soviet advantage, the traditional American superiority in technological innovation, as in the case of cruise missiles, offered another solution. Moreover, SDI might make it possible to achieve a technological solution to the arms control problem of how to reduce Soviet options in militarily significant ways. The idea of a comprehensive protective shield was, then, connected not only with President Reagan's vision of rendering nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete. SDI aimed more at diminishing the importance of the Soviet superiority in accurate and MIRVed ICBMs. A similar approach is the site defense of intercontinental ballistic missiles and C3I installations, which however has not been officially

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22 In this sense the Scowcroft Commission appointed by President Reagan recommended: "The objective for the United States should be to have an overall program that will so confound, complicate, and frustrate the efforts of Soviet strategic war planners that, even in moments of stress, they could not believe that they could attack our ICBM forces effectively." *Report of the President's Commission on Strategic Forces* (April 1983), p. 15.

designated as part of the objectives of SDI. However, in the transition phase toward eliminating the system of mutual deterrence, both defense concepts complicate the opponent’s target planning by an additional uncertainty factor and so, in the Administration’s view, enhance crisis stability.

In the context of the early deployment options favored by Weinberger for ballistic missile defense, deep cuts prove to be a flanking maneuver to ensure, in accordance with Presidential Directive No. 119 of January 6, 1984, the transition to a more defense-oriented strategic posture while at the same time raising deterrence by denying the adversary options. At present one can only speculate as to what cuts in the arsenal of ballistic missiles are necessary, how deep and under what conditions, in order to guarantee a high cost-effectiveness of defensive systems and specifically to prevent their saturation.

Deep cuts and SDI are closely related not just with regard to cost effectiveness. The Soviet rejection of the START proposals also acted as a catalyst for SDI. A ballistic missile defense would alternatively make possible a unilateral solution to the threat from Soviet ballistic missiles. At the same time SDI would serve as leverage for reduction agreements. But even if this negotiating leverage were to prove effective and the Soviet Union agreed to deep cuts, in the Administration’s view the research for SDI should be continued. In view of the U.S.S.R.’s modernized defense system, provision would have to be made for the event of a Soviet repudiation of the ABM treaty or a technological breakthrough.

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3. The American and Soviet Proposals for Deep Reductions in the START Negotiations

The American and Soviet proposals clearly reflected the central security interests of each. As in SALT II, the American position aimed at reducing the Soviets' numerical advantage. The U.S. was striving for a reduction in nuclear weapons and specifically in the number of MIRVed ICBMs. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, has traditionally sought to limit U.S. technological advantages.\(^\text{29}\) The Soviet demand for a ban on testing of the space-based components of SDI remained as contentious as the American proposals for sub-limits on MIRVed ICBMs.

The first American proposal of May 9, 1982 largely reflected the position of the State Department, supported by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The State Department prevailed over the radical demand of the civilians heading the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, who wanted to emphasize a direct reduction in the throw weight of ballistic missiles.\(^\text{30}\) The centerpiece of this proposal was the two-phase reduction of missile warheads by at least one-third, from the more than 8000 warheads at the time to 5000, of which no more than half could be mounted on ICBMs. In this first phase, ballistic missiles were to be reduced to 850 launchers, or “deployed missiles.” Medium missiles would have a sublimit of 210, heavy ICBMs a maximum of 110. The number of bombers would be limited to 400, the Soviet Backfire Bomber as well as the American FB-111 counting as strategic weapons. In the second phase, the throw weight was to be reduced to an equal ceiling and the number of cruise missiles limited.

On July 8, 1983, the proposal was modified.\(^\text{31}\) ICBMs and SLBMs were now limited to 1250 launchers. This made it possible to deploy the single-warhead Midgetman ICBM recommended by the Scowcroft Commission, created incentives for “de-MIRVing,” that is, the reduction of warheads in favor of

\(^{29}\) Thus the effort to curb the American lead in the area of cruise missiles has been evident since the 1970s. This was reflected in the first START proposal’s ban on ALCMs and SLCMs with a range of over 600 km, which with regard to ALCMs (as well as the D5 SLBM) was dropped in the summer of 1983. A year later the AS-15 was deployed, a Soviet ALCM with a range of approx. 3000 km. The proposal for a ban on long-range SLCMs on submarines was withdrawn at the end of June 1986, but up to now maintained for those stationed on surface vessels. Cf. note 40.


an increase in the number of launchers, and narrowed the gap from the Soviet proposal of June 1982 for a limitation to 1800 delivery systems. Previous sublimits for heavy and medium ICBMs and ICBM warheads at 2500 were abandoned. The demand for a reduction in throw weight remained. But upon resuming the talks on March 12, 1985, the U.S. delegation repeated the proposal of May 1982. Obviously Washington now felt it was in a stronger bargaining position. Three weeks before the November Geneva summit and after Gorbachev on October 3, 1985 had for the first time publicly announced a readiness to make radical reductions, the U.S. negotiating position was again modified from the offer of July 1983. The U.S. now proposed to limit ICBM warheads to a maximum 3000, with a total of 4500 warheads on ballistic systems and 1250–1450 launchers, as well as 350 bombers, each carrying a maximum 20 ALCMs (with a total of 1500 ALCMs). This yielded a ceiling of 6000 nuclear weapons, including ALCMs.

The Soviet Union’s first substantive response to the American proposals came in the proposal of September 30, 1985. The Soviets’ negotiating positions of June 1982 and July 1983 had been based on the SALT treaties. In essence they specified ceilings that had been proposed by the Carter Administration back in March 1977. With this new position Moscow was adopting the principle of drastic reductions in launchers and warheads. Yet its proposals contained elements of the negotiating tactic in SALT of one-sidedly blocking U.S. arms programs and incorporating “forward based” and hence, by Soviet definition, “strategic” weapons systems. These demands were given up in June 1986. The new Soviet interim proposal of 30-percent reductions now assumed higher ceilings of 8000 warheads with 1600 delivery systems. ICBM warheads were limited to 4800. With that the U.S.S.R signalled a readiness to reduce its 308 SS-18 ICBMs, each equipped with ten warheads. In addition, its position on SDI was revised to a ban specifically on testing in space.


33 Thus the proposal to put a ban on new types of weapons was geared to U.S. projects in their development phase, such as the Midgetman, Trident II (D5) SLBM and the Stealth bomber (ATB). It by no means hindered Soviet systems that were already at the test stage, such as the SS-24 and SS-25 ICBMs and the SS-N-23 SLBM. On the problems with Soviet criteria see Lothar Ruehl, “Gorbatschows trügerisches Angebot,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 10, 1983, p. 11.
In August 1986, mainly through the influence of the State Department, the American ceilings were once again revised upwards in various categories. The number of ballistic missile warheads and ALCMs was limited to 7500 (with a maximum 5500 warheads on ICBMs and SLBMs) and that of ICBM warheads to 3300. The U.S. was thus coming closer to the Soviet proposal of a 30-percent reduction with a ceiling of 8000 nuclear weapons. As President Reagan declared before the United Nations General Assembly, Washington continued to strive for 50-percent reductions. If, however, the U.S.S.R. wanted smaller cuts, such an interim agreement would be possible. Also, an agreement on strategic defense was acceptable if it permitted research up to 1991 in the framework of the ABM treaty.\footnote{ Cf. Reagan's Address to 41st UN General Assembly, USWB No. 137 (September 23, 1986), pp. 11–13, and Michael R. Gordon, "Aides Say Reagan Plans to Relax Arms-Talk Stand," \textit{New York Times}, August 31, 1986, p. 1.}

With the summit meeting in Reykjavik in October 1986, the Soviet linkage of SDI and deep cuts assumed even greater importance. The refusal of the U.S. to accept restrictions on SDI research in return for an agreement on deep cuts led to the charge that the Administration had prevented a "grand compromise."\footnote{Cf. Strobe Talbott, "Grand Compromise," \textit{Time}, June 23, 1986, pp. 12–14.}

However, extending the reduction initiative to complete elimination of all ballistic nuclear weapons within ten years, a move also made in Reykjavik, marks a dubious stage in the START negotiations. The proposal proves to be the logical consequence of a radical deep-cuts concept designed in part to meet the Administration's strict verification demand, as evidenced in the "double zero option."\footnote{ Mistrust regarding Soviet treaty compliance prompted the leading civilian officials in the Pentagon, also the ACDA, to refer heightened arms competition in certain areas; drastic equal reductions might work against the U.S. in an asymmetrical overall balance of military power favoring the Soviets. Radical reductions such as the elimination of all ballistic missiles would in this context create an "ideal" situation for exploiting relative American advantages. In the Administration's internal debate over the opening proposal for START, the Joint Chiefs of Staff argued for less drastic reductions. Cf. Talbott, \textit{Deadly Gambits}, p. 256.}

It was brought up again in Reykjavik\footnote{The elimination of ballistic missiles had already been proposed in President Reagan's letter to Gorbachev of July 25, 1986. This letter contained the offer of an SDI moratorium of seven and a half years, after which the U.S.S.R. could share the "benefits of the system" with the U.S. Cf. Don Oberdorfer, Lou Cannon and Walter Pincus, "Reagan Called Ready to Make Deal on Defensive Arms," \textit{Washington Post}, August 3, 1986, p. 1.} and with the backing of the Pentagon's top civilian officials, who recognized in the scenario of a bomber-based deterrence with ALCMs as well as SLCMs of the third generation the possibility of a dramatic shift in the arms competition.
into an area of relative American competitive advantage. This reflected Richard Perle’s thinking on shifting the arms competition to areas in which the U.S.S.R appeared inferior. \(^\text{38}\)

The American deep cuts concept thus represents a *disarmament measure* to reduce strategic nuclear arsenals. The cuts are designed to improve the *relation of warheads on "fast-flying" systems to specific targets* (such as fixed-site ICBMs) to a degree that an adversary’s offensive planning is denied any prospect of military success. This would be done by *altering the multiplier effect* of MIRVs, particularly with ICBMs, which considerably facilitate pre-emptive options. At the same time, deep cuts imply the possibility of a cooperative direction of the strategic modernization programs as a matter of *arms control*. Whereas both sides in the public debate have emphasized the disarmament components of deep cuts, a drastic reduction essentially entails a substantial change in the nuclear force posture: disarmament of obsolete, less accurate ballistic nuclear weapons that cannot be used against hardened targets would be followed by an increased deployment of systems with such capabilities. The Soviets are already effecting this change with land-based ballistic missiles. In the U.S., on the other hand, there is a discernible trend toward using new technologies for bombers and cruise missiles to be able in the long run to substitute for land-based ballistic missiles. \(^\text{39}\) Here a *shift in armament* is being made into areas of relative competitive advantage for the U.S.

Though the American and Soviet sides have since abandoned the Reykjavik disarmament proposals, the underlying calculations have by no means been given up. The current negotiating positions of May and July 1987 rest on the consensus established in Reykjavik. \(^\text{40}\) They show that the U.S.S.R. is still bent

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\(^{39}\) An example is the use of "Stealth" technologies in bombers and possibly supersonic cruise missiles of the third generation (advanced cruise missiles).

\(^{40}\) The consensus reached in Reykjavik comprises: (a) the reduction of strategic nuclear delivery vehicles to 1600, and (b) of warheads (including ALCMs) to 6000 systems; (c) a reduction period of five years; (d) the general Soviet concession of "significant" cuts in ICBMs; (e) each bomber would be counted as one strategic nuclear delivery vehicle, the aggregate of bombs on one bomber would count as one warhead, and each ALCM would count as one warhead; (f) SLCMs would not be covered by the START ceiling –
on preserving its superiority in MIRVed ICBMs. The U.S., however, seeks a significant reduction of these capabilities through deep missile reductions. This intent is reflected in the proposed sublimits for MIRVed ICBMs, on which no consensus has been reached, and in the proposal to ban mobile ICBMs, which has been maintained since 1985. This aims at removing existing Soviet advantages in the balance of forces and preventing more from emerging. In light of the Soviet move to deploy more mobile ICBMs, the proposal to ban mobile ICBMs must, however, be seen above all from a tactical standpoint, for example, to counter the Soviet demand for a sharp restriction of SLCMs.41

On this the U.S. START policy reflects a conservative position. Since 1982 a central dilemma of START has been that the Soviets are interested more in maintaining the strategic status quo. Under Gorbachev as well, the Soviet Union wants to preserve its position in the strategic nuclear area and maintain its superpower status symbolized by ballistic missiles. The U.S., on the other hand, is striving for a radical change in the strategic balance of power and in the importance of ballistic missiles. However, can a change be achieved with the proposed cuts, under the given conditions and in the existing politico-military context?

3.1 Implications for the Strategic Posture and Deterrence

Since 1982 the U.S. and Soviet START proposals have gradually converged. The present proposals agree on ceilings of 1600 strategic launchers and 6000 nuclear warheads.42 In fact, a 50-percent ICBM reduction results in but a relatively slight reduction of the Soviet superiority in HTCK ballistic missile warheads, since it is possible for the Soviet Union to keep and modernize a large number of MIRVed ICBMs.43 This can increase the vulnerability of

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42 On May 8, 1987 the U.S. submitted a draft treaty which provided for the relevant reductions and sublimits (see note 15) within seven years. The Soviet draft treaty followed on July 29. It proposed reductions in five years, linked — as an “indispensable prerequisite” — to a restricting of research on weapons of ballistic missile defense to laboratories for the next ten years. A limitation of SLCMs to 400 systems was mentioned for the first time in this proposal. Cf. Paul Lewis, “Soviet Submits Pact on 50% Missile Cut,” New York Times, August 1, 1987, p. 3.

43 With a smaller number of ALCM-armed Bear and Blackjack bombers and half the number of SLBMs, the Soviet proposal makes it mathematically possible to deploy 150 SS-11 and SS-13 ICBMs, 90 SS-17, 154 SS-18, 180 SS-19, and 100 SS-25.
components of U.S. deterrence, especially as greater accuracy is achieved in Soviet ICBMs of the fifth generation (SS-25, SS-24, SS-X-26 and SS-X-27).\footnote{As part of the Soviet ICBM modernization, a possible follow-on for the 308 SS-18 ICBMs — the SS-X-26 — as well as another version (Mod 5) have been tested since the spring of 1986. Virtually all the 510 medium SS-17 and SS-19 ICBMs presently deployed will presumably be replaced by new systems, thus the SS-24 and possibly the SS-X-27, by the mid-1990s. The 508 Soviet ICBMs of the SS-11 and SS-13 type are already being gradually replaced by the mobile SS-25. Cf. Department of Defense, Soviet Military Power 1987, Washington, D.C.: G.P.O. 1987, p. 31, and Anthony H. Cordesman, “The Nuclear Balance,” Armed Forces Journal, Vol. 6, No. 8 (August 1987), pp. 365–373.}

An analysis of the current START proposals for a 30-percent or at most 40-percent reduction in strategic nuclear weapons\footnote{The counting rule for bombers agreed to in Reykjavik gives the possibility of keeping over 2000 nuclear weapons (bombs and short-range attack missiles) beyond the ceiling of 6000 warheads, as well as additional nuclear SLCMs.} shows that in eliminating older weapons the nuclear weapons arsenals on both sides can be comprehensively modernized. A partial disarmament can be accompanied up to the mid-1990s by an increase in time-urgent and selective options, including against hardened targets. Yet an increase in Soviet warheads with these capabilities would not increase the vulnerability of U.S. fixed-site ICBMs. The Soviet Union needs a relatively small number of ICBM warheads to destroy silo-based Minuteman and MX missiles. The Soviets would have these even if they accepted the American ICBM sublimits. The advantage of warhead reductions is that they enhance the survivability of numerous, widely-spaced ICBMs in a hardened mobile mode, such as the planned Midgetman ICBM.\footnote{Destroying single-warhead ICBMs deployed in this way by means of a nuclear barrage attack requires a great number of ICBMs. From strategic considerations the costs of a barrage attack are relatively high for the benefits of destroyed warheads.}

From the available data on the two sides' proposals it can be concluded, first, that the reductions allow for a comprehensive modernization and deployment of the strategic systems which each side regards as being of prime importance: new mobile and fixed-site Soviet ICBMs as well as U.S. bombers and cruise missiles. Modernization of the Soviet ICBM potential, just as deployment of new U.S. SLBMs, could not be carried out full-scale. Presumably, the deployment of sea-launched cruise missiles could in some way compensate for the reduction in American SLBMs. Secondly, the ceilings afford a relatively wide latitude for choosing the appropriate weapons mix. This is especially true of the Soviet proposals, which do not stipulate sublimits in the ICBM category.\footnote{The Soviet proposal of October 25, 1987 does provide for a sublimit of 3000–3300 warheads on ICBMs but does not specify any sublimits for “heavy” ICBMs. In addition, the limitation to at most 1800–2000 warheads on SLBMs and 800 to 900 on strategic bombers is markedly at odds with the U.S. proposals.}
Thus, the Soviet Union keeps numerous options open until the SDI question and its implications have been clarified. Thirdly, it is possible to make a transition to additional HTCK systems whereby the trend to a strategy of denying options can be continued. And fourthly, the American proposals in particular reflect a greater emphasis on bombers and ALCMs.

3.2 Prospects and Perils of Deep Cuts: A Summation of the Dilemmas

In view of the enduring politico-military incentives, a comprehensive strategic arms reduction will continue to be of central importance beyond the Reagan Presidency. Thus, equalizing Soviet capabilities and eliminating current asymmetries, such as the numerical superiority of Soviet HTCK ICBMs, will require a combination of bilateral reductions and unilateral arms measures. And as yet there appears little prospect that the vision of a comprehensive ballistic missile defense will be realized.

Deep missile reductions therefore represent for the medium term a complement to the U.S. modernization measures to create a stability that meets Western security interests of diminishing preemptive instability and enhancing flexibility. The guiding idea of SDI, to render all ballistic nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete, also reflects the programmatic reorientation of U.S. arms control policy to a gradual disarmament especially in land-based ballistic systems. The longer-term perspective shows that the American priority of drastic reduction of ballistic systems is determined not just by ICBM vulnerability. Important also are developments of military technology in the realm of non-ballistic delivery systems. However limited, the increasing substitutability of ballistic missiles by weapons systems that are likewise capable of covering hardened targets as well as mobile targets, and that are less vulnerable, makes deep cuts appear a plausible option, provided they remain limited to ballistic systems. Yet it remains to be seen whether this will be accomplished unilaterally or cooperatively.

Even SDI presupposes that the number of nuclear warheads on Soviet ballistic missiles is not increased beyond certain limits. Given the extent of Soviet ICBM modernization, there is little probability that the U.S. can reduce

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48 Relocatable targets such as mobile ICBMs, C4I facilities and troop concentrations can be covered by ballistic systems only with some qualification. The greater importance of bombers derives in part from their ability to destroy mobile targets, which have come to represent about 15 – 25% of relevant strategic targets. In the realm of future weapons systems, “hypersonic glide vehicles” and warheads with high penetration capability against extremely hardened targets should be mentioned. Cf. Edgar Ulsamer, “Moving Targets,” Air Force Magazine (May 1987), pp. 23 – 29.

49 The traditionally lower estimates of the CIA predict a Soviet ability to double the number of its nuclear warheads to at least 16,000 and at most 21,000 by 1995 if there is no treaty
Soviet strategic advantages solely by means of unilateral arms programs. From this perspective, an agreed arms limitation on the basis of the START categories (deployed missiles, warheads and throw weight) or other criteria seems imperative for maintaining strategic parity and stability. On the other hand, while the U.S. cannot attain numerical parity, the unilateral reduction of vulnerabilities (Midgetman, rail-mobile MX, Trident II submarines and modern strategic B-1B and "Stealth" bombers) might eventually render the goal of rough numerical parity obsolete.

The comprehensive Soviet ICBM modernization signals also that in future the Soviet nuclear weapons arsenal will consist predominantly of land-based, increasingly mobile intercontinental ballistic missiles. The deployment of Soviet missiles that are rail- or road-mobile, as well as that of American cruise missiles, indicates that the significance of an agreement on deep cuts in the number of ballistic launchers and their warheads lies not so much in the idea of disarmament proclaimed by President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev. The importance of deep cuts consists more in its supportive function for a shift in armament to other, qualitatively equal and in some cases superior weapons categories. Such an arms shift has been taking place since the mid-1980s. Through an arms control agreement it can be effected cooperatively and at a lower level of armament.

To meet the standard that a good arms control agreement is possible only if the U.S. is fully prepared to live without one, then given continued rejection of American proposals, Soviet strategic capabilities can be diminished only by means of unilateral developments in military technology. This comprises areas such as ballistic missile defense systems, cruise missiles and "Stealth" technologies, in which the U.S. enjoys "competitive advantages." But deep cuts are an alternative to an arms development unfettered by agreed arms control measures. A cooperative arms reduction, however, will most likely be achieved through a series of less drastic, gradual reductions in nuclear weapons arsenals which can produce increasing confidence, above all by their verifiability. This could yield a cooperative control over the arms competition by means of which areas of the U.S.S.R.'s numerical superiority in ICBMs limitation. If the unratified SALT II treaty is adhered to, the increase comes to 12,000 nuclear weapons by 1990, 16,000 by 1995. Cf. U.S. Congress. Senate, Soviet Strategic Force Developments, Joint Hearings before the Subcommittee On Strategic and Theater Nuclear Forces of the Committee on Armed Services and the Subcommittee On Defense of the Committee On Appropriations, 99th Congress, 1st Session, Washington, D.C.: G.P.O. 1986, pp. 13–35.


would be offset by technological advantages of the U.S. Examples of this include accounting for ALCMs in the ceiling of 6000 strategic systems and examining the ABM treaty, common interpretation of which can satisfy the security interests of both sides.

The definition of these security interests and of a stable structure of security is all the more problematic as projects such as SDI and the Soviet ABM activities mark a transition in the system of nuclear deterrence. The Reagan Administration has contributed to resolving cooperatively the strategic problems connected with this by laying the foundation for an arms control agreement. Such an agreement faces many obstacles. However, the Administration's deep cuts proposals and the START negotiations mark the first time that a genuine reduction of strategic systems has become the object of negotiations in U.S.-Soviet arms control talks. Therein lies the new and constructive contribution that President Reagan has made. On the other hand, deep cuts also create new conditions of competition and incentives to focus more on war-fighting options. The evolutionary development of nuclear force postures and strategy can therefore proceed independently of deep arms reduction.

In effect, then, deep cuts produce not so much disarmament or arms reduction, but rather arms displacement. Deep cuts do not so much restrict the arms competition as create added incentives for qualitatively improving the strategic forces, because the "margin of safety" for both sides is incomparably harder to define at a lower level of nuclear weapons. Thus, the resulting force posture potentially entails more serious instabilities than are eliminated by the marginal reduction of American ICBM vulnerability in some areas.

The central dilemma is that advocating an arms reduction will probably result in a buildup of certain weapons categories such as mobile missiles and cruise missiles. Yet in rejecting arms control agreements with the U.S.S.R the ensuing arms buildup can also negate unilateral measures aimed at reducing instabilities. Finally, an essential problem of deep cuts lies in the fact also that there continues to be disagreement in NATO's strategy debate as to what form of deterrence, with how many or how few nuclear weapons, is acceptable militarily and sustainable politically. Neither has the Reagan


53 Here too deep cuts appear to be complementary to arms programs. For example, the deployment of bombers and ALCMs with "Stealth" capacities creates completely new demands on the air defense systems on both sides. Arms control limitations on the number of systems in no way prevents their being technically perfected.
Administration been able to establish such a consensus nor has it indicated ways of putting the Western nations' political relationship with the Soviet Union on a supportable, stable basis in the long run, which is an indispensable foundation for drastic reductions in strategic weapons. The way arms control functions as a replacement for political dialogue has, in the absence of a convincing perspective for Western security policy, once again rendered military power the primary element of bilateral policy.
U.S. Policy in COCOM

1. The Reagan Administration’s Reassessment of Trade with the Eastern Bloc

The Reagan Administration’s reassessment of East-West economic relations was the product of a changed view of Soviet policy toward the West. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and especially the extensive arms buildup by the Soviet Union in both the conventional and the nuclear spheres had largely dispelled any hope that the development of economic relations would have a moderating effect on Soviet conduct. This notion was dealt a final blow with the imposition of martial law in Poland on December 13, 1981, for which the U.S. held the Soviet Union principally responsible.

In the early 1970s, the springtime of détente between East and West, the U.S. had entertained hopes that economic relations between the two systems would be binding.\(^1\) Accordingly, the U.S. had reduced its national export control list and concentrated on those products which presumably would contribute to the military, as opposed to economic, potential of the U.S.S.R. and its allies. In the American view, essential premises underlying the “Export Control Act” of 1949 — the foundation for the far-reaching controls vis-à-vis the communist states — had changed: first, the Sino-Soviet bloc was no longer monolithic; second, the Soviets could acquire from other countries in the West many commodities blocked by the U.S., and third, the more stringent export controls carried out unilaterally by the U.S. had ultimately proved ineffective.

For these reasons, as the “Export Administration Act” of 1969 was variously amended and liberalized in 1974, 1977 and 1979, the emphasis shifted from control of economic exchange to promotion of trade with the East European countries and the Soviet Union. This in fact resulted in a notable increase in American trade with the Eastern bloc.\(^2\) At the same time the U.S. attitude

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toward multilateral export controls in COCOM was also changing. During this period the lists were actually reduced only negligibly, but the U.S. in particular applied for exceptions in COCOM for a number of its exports, thus diminishing the effect of this multilateral control instrument. From 1976 to 1978 the number of American applications for exception was greater than that of all other countries combined.

It was therefore not at all surprising that the new conservative Administration accused the preceding Carter, Ford and Nixon Administrations of having severely jeopardized the security of the West by allowing the export of militarily relevant goods and technologies. It argued that the increase in the Soviet military threat potential had been made possible solely by East-West trade, namely, by the U.S.S.R. and the other East European countries' having utilized in the military sphere machines and equipment imported for civilian purposes. Thus, it had been shown that the past practice of "end use control" over exported products had not worked and would have to be replaced by control over "critical technologies." Moreover, it was argued, the Soviet Union was making substantial efforts to gather as much information as possible on the latest state of technological development in the West. These efforts included student and scholar exchanges, access to U.S. scientific and technical journals as well as official documents, participation in technical conferences, and training of specialists on machines imported from the West.

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For the U.S. and the West as a whole this meant billions of dollars worth of self-inflicted damage; as Lenin had prophesized, the U.S. and its allies were selling the Soviet Union the rope with which they would be hanged.  

This view of exporting strategically relevant goods and technologies to communist countries prompted a number of U.S. initiatives pertaining to national as well as multilateral controls in COCOM. Thus, the U.S. “Commodity Control List” (CCL) was expanded, a “no-exceptions policy” was instituted governing COCOM-controlled products and, finally, a public campaign was waged to draw attention to semi-legal and illegal Soviet efforts to procure Western technology.

The responsible authorities recognized that the controls could be effective only if they were part of a multilateral initiative. If only the U.S. tightened its export controls, the Eastern-bloc states would be in a position to obtain the desired products and technologies in or by way of other countries. Hence, the U.S. called for strengthening COCOM through structural reform of the organization, expansion of the lists and improvement of the control procedures. To achieve these goals, a series of “high-level meetings” involving government representatives of the COCOM member-states were set to begin in January 1982, for the first time since the late 1950s. (Further meetings took place in April 1983 and February 1985).

2. U.S. Initiatives in COCOM

Since the days of the Cold War there had never been any disagreement in Western Europe, Japan or the U.S., over the fact that products of direct military significance were not to be exported to the communist sphere of influence. But Khrushchev went to the heart of the matter when he remarked, apropos the West’s strategic embargo, that even the buttons on a soldier's trousers could be regarded as a strategic material, for without buttons he would have to hold up his trousers with his hands and then what could he do with his weapon? In other words, it is not possible to differentiate precisely between products that can be used directly for military action (weapons, etc.) and those of indirect use (trucks, food, etc.). Ultimately, all…

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the division-of-labor advantages from international trade contribute to the economic strength of the countries involved; in this sense all exports and imports have strategic importance. Even when restricted to truly civilian areas, economic exchange has the effect of freeing capacities, potentially for a forced arms buildup.\(^8\)

As new technological developments made it difficult to draw the line between the military and civilian uses of products, with more and more products, e.g., computers, having “dual use,” ideas had been raised in the U.S. about changing the criteria for export controls. Thus, already in the 1970s the “Bucy Report”\(^9\) recommended a departure from the general principle of end product control, proposing instead consideration of whether the exported technology would mean a revolutionary advance for the recipient nation. To preserve U.S. “lead-time” advantage, such “critical technologies” should become the prime factor in the licensing of products and technologies even if the intended end use was clearly of a non-military nature. This proposal was reflected in the 1979 and 1985 amendments of the “Export Administration Act,” but in COCOM as well the U.S. pressed for establishing controls no longer just on products but on critical technologies and know-how also.

This proposal pertained especially to the COCOM list for other goods of strategic value,\(^10\) that is, goods that are not of unambiguously military

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\(^8\) This has been pointed out, for example, in connection with the American grain shipments to the U.S.S.R., which paradoxically were being expanded at the same time the U.S. was demanding stricter controls in its COCOM initiatives. By being able to import grain from the U.S., the Soviet Union was (and is) in a position to defer investments in agriculture, or not make them at all, and put the resources freed in this way into other areas, including the military.


\(^10\) There are altogether three COCOM lists: (1) for weapons, munitions and war material, (2) for atomic energy materials and (3) for other goods of strategic importance. Because of their undisputed strategic relevance the items in the first two lists have generally presented few problems. However, those entered in the third list have tended to be controversial because this list includes products which nominally are predominantly civilian but are of potential military significance. The lists are not published, in order — it is said — not to give the pertinent countries, that is, especially the Soviet Union, any indications of where their research and development efforts should be headed. It is possible, however, to reconstruct the essential items on the COCOM lists from the (published) national export control lists, e.g., from the American Commodity Control List (CCL), and from the West German Export List (Ausfuhrliste), which is set forth in the annex AL to the Foreign Economic Statutes (Aussenwirtschaftsverordnung).
application. This was a sore point for Japanese and West European allies, who regarded the American demands as vague and impractical. In particular the control of technology transfer proved to be problematic for most of the COCOM states because they had no legal foundations for the control of technology transfer (as opposed to the export of goods). But for economic reasons, too, the allies were very hesitant to give in to the U.S. demands. Hence, they urged that both economic and security aspects be taken into account.

A second U.S. demand sought to make the COCOM approval process more efficient and to improve the organizational basis for implementing extensive controls. Thus, the Reagan Administration proposed raising the status of COCOM by concluding a treaty among the member-states. However, the other COCOM members were opposed to this plan. They pointed out that COCOM’s relative success had come as a result of its informal structure; any attempt at formalizing it could create political conflicts within some countries and lead some members to pull out. This would then qualify even further the already limited universality of militarily strategic export controls (after all, a number of highly industrialized OECD members and threshold nations do not belong to COCOM). The allies also rejected the U.S. proposal to form a permanent military subcommittee because they viewed this as upsetting the delicate balance between military and economic considerations. They finally accepted a compromise by approving the formation of a body known as STEM (Special Technical Experts Meeting) which, however, has solely an advisory function.

In light of these differences it became evident that the West European governments basically were not willing to expand greatly the role and function of COCOM. Yet in some areas they could not get around the American proposals and demands. Thus, in 1980 they followed the U.S. lead in conducting a “no exceptions” policy, in effect since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; that is, they would refrain from applying for exemptions. In reviewing the lists between 1982 and 1984 they agreed to a substantial enlargement of the control lists. This involved above all the inclusion of robots and robotics technologies, silicon as a strategic material, also equipment for manufacturing silicon, sectors of laser technology, commercial astronautics and technologies used in the manufacture of integrated circuits — all in all, items that were

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of direct strategic value. These and a few other changes were put into effect already in December 1983, without — contrary to past practice — waiting for the revision of the lists to be completed.

Revisions in the areas of computers, software and telecommunications equipment proved to be especially controversial. In the summer of 1984 the U.S. and the other COCOM members were finally able to reach a compromise acceptable to all sides. In line with the changing technology, the previous export regulations were altered so that, e.g., advanced computers were controlled and less powerful (8 bit) computers were cleared. For software a special control list was drawn up for certain militarily relevant programs. Finally, it was agreed that digital telecommunications systems were not to be exported to COMECON countries through the end of 1988.

In addition, there were American initiatives to prevent illegal circumvention of the common export restrictions. In October 1981 the U.S. customs authorities began more thorough investigations of exports. Although formally these are conducted under the Treasury Department, the Department of Defense supported this initiative with the extraordinary allocation of $28 million from its budget. A special unit, designated as "Operation Exodus," was set up to carry out undercover operations. In November 1983 the customs agents achieved a spectacular initial success when, in collaboration with West German and Swedish customs, they stopped the illegal shipment of two VAX 11/782 computers produced by Digital Equipment; these advanced computers had been shipped to South Africa and were to be transported on to the U.S.S.R. via Sweden and West Germany. The formation of this special unit meant not only a tightening of controls in the ports and airports of the U.S. as well as additional inspections in the high-technology centers in California and Massachusetts; it also led to similar initiatives by other COCOM countries. This included West Germany, which tightened its border controls; France, which in 1983 expelled 47 Soviet citizens for industrial espionage; Japan, which tightened its ultimate destination controls on products and technologies, and especially Great Britain, which with its "Project Arrow" launched an initiative similar to that of the U.S.

It turned out, however, that the measures taken showed gaps and did not always have the desired effect. This became most evident in June 1987, when it was learned that between 1982 and 1984 the Japanese firm Toshiba and


the Norwegian state-owned company Kongsberg had delivered computerized milling machines to the Soviet Union in breach of COCOM agreements. These could be used to reduce considerably the noise of submarine propellers.\textsuperscript{14} This incident prompted further discussion on the implementation of export controls in all COCOM states and once again gave the U.S. occasion to point out the dangerous security consequences of high-technology transfer to the communist states.\textsuperscript{15}

In the early 1980s, improved relations between the U.S. and the People's Republic of China led to a number of American initiatives in COCOM that suggested the U.S. was using for political ends the tightening or loosening of export controls justified on security grounds. The Reagan Administration has increasingly allowed the People's Republic to import developed technology of military value from the U.S. This met with a cool response from COCOM allies, who felt that it violated the principle of equal treatment of communist countries. They noted with surprise that though the U.S. adhered to the COCOM list for China, it was increasingly applying for exceptions for controlled exports.\textsuperscript{16} This raised suspicion that the U.S. was using the exception mechanism not just for political but for economic reasons also, as American applications were put forward and those of other states were delayed or denied. Evidently on this question there arose substantial disagreements between the U.S. and Great Britain; ultimately the West Europeans accepted this practice only because as a trade-off the U.S. attenuated its very sweeping demands for making the lists more stringent.

3. Export Controls and Non-COCOM States\textsuperscript{17}

Efforts to make COCOM controls more effective have gone hand in hand with initiatives of the U.S. and other COCOM members vis-à-vis non-COCOM nations. For a number of countries in the international market of high technology do not belong to COCOM: in Western Europe, for instance, Sweden, Switzerland and Austria, in Asia threshold countries such as Taiwan,


\textsuperscript{16} In 1984 alone the U.S. applied for 3122 exceptions in COCOM, of which 89\% were meant for exports to China. Cf. \textit{Financial Times}, January 10, 1985, p. 4.

South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore. When the U.S. uncovered attempts by Western (including American) dummy companies to divert militarily relevant high technology to the Soviet sphere of influence via countries such as South Africa, Austria or Sweden, it stepped up its efforts to change the practices of non-COCOM members through bilateral negotiations or even by applying pressure. Austria, Sweden and Switzerland were cooperative, though none of these countries showed great interest in a public discussion of these problems. Spain was induced to join COCOM and has been a member since 1986. Toward Asian states the U.S., in collaboration with other COCOM countries, undertook a comprehensive initiative aimed at ensuring effective export controls in countries such as Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and the Philippines. Other ideas considered were to integrate these states (along with Hong Kong and Malaysia) into an expanded COCOM, to found an Asian COCOM or to conclude other bilateral or multilateral agreements. In the spring of 1985 Singapore was the first East Asian country publicly to declare its readiness to adopt COCOM rules to govern its export controls. Thus, the Reagan Administration did have some success inducing non-COCOM nations who carry out more and more high-technology research, development and production to accept more stringent export controls. Yet this has not been followed by any new accords, and there are many indications that these countries have become increasingly reluctant to commit themselves to global restrictions. This is hardly surprising, since in the U.S. itself opposition to broad extension of controls grew in the course of 1985 and 1986, while other COCOM countries have increasingly expressed their doubts about expanding the lists.

4. The Impact on International Technology Transfer

The effects of more stringent technology controls on international commerce were especially marked from 1983/84 on, when the U.S. and COCOM measures began to take hold. Certainly East-West trade was least affected, since the share of high technology in the economic exchange between the OECD and the COMECON nations was never very high and could not have increased greatly in the absence of controls. Because of their relatively low state of development, the East European countries seek above all developed ready-for-use technology; due to their systemic inflexibility and sluggish innovative

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20 Cf. on this the essay by Jörg Boltersdorf in this volume.
capability (also with regard to utilizing imports), the economic systems there are scarcely in a position to absorb large quantities of high technology.\footnote{Cf., inter alia, Helgard Wienert, John Slater, \textit{East-West Technology Transfer – The Trade and Economic Aspects}, Paris: OECD 1986, p. 377ff.}

Far more serious have been the effects on relations within the West, on trade, technology transfer and scientific and technical exchange.\footnote{Cf. Hanns-D. Jacobsen, “Auswirkungen der amerikanischen Technologiekontrollpolitik auf die West-West-Beziehungen,” \textit{Europa-Archiv}, Vol. 41, No. 15 (1986), pp. 443–450.} In 1983 and 1984 there were growing reports of restricted access of West European firms to American high technology, of scientists from allied countries being hindered from participating in scientific conferences in the U.S., and of tighter security conditions for the export of advanced computers even to COCOM states. This produced a number of economic constraints for the technologically advanced partners of the U.S. Foreign firms increasingly had to expect that they could gain access to the American market only at the price of recognizing U.S. export control policy. Business firms and scientific institutions that worked closely with American partners expressed misgivings about increased American powers, so that top-level management began to consider whether and to what extent a technological dependence on the U.S. could be reduced. Yet because of their intimate connections with American partners, especially in the high technology area, companies and research institutions were often left no other choice. The high technological standard in the U.S. prompted them, often from purely economic considerations, to enter into long-term cooperation with U.S. firms, apply for licenses and adapt their own research, development and production for the sake of uninterrupted business relations. It would have cost much time and money to make themselves independent and in this way avoid the economic consequences of the U.S. export control policy.

5. Proposals for Changing the Multilateral Control System

This uncertainty among U.S. allies is addressed in a study of the National Academy of Sciences from the spring of 1987.\footnote{Cf. Panel on the Impact of National Security Controls on International Technology Transfer of the Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering and the Institute of Medicine, \textit{Balancing the National Interest – U.S. Security Export Controls and Global Economic Competition}, Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press 1987, also known as the “Allen Report” (after its chairman Lew Allen, a former chief of staff of the U.S. Air Force and director of the National Security Agency, NSA). Other members of the commission included Bobby Ray Inman, also a former director of the NSA and deputy director of
the National Interest” and drawn up by an expert commission that included representatives of industry, scholars and former officials of the “defense and intelligence communities,” comes to the following main conclusions with respect to multilateral controls in COCOM:24

- Since 1981 the U.S. efforts to strengthen the multilateral control mechanism and improve the efficiency of COCOM have been successful. However, additional efforts are needed to harmonize the various national policies and arrive at a multinational system of joint controls. The creation of such a system requires greater coordination between the American position and that of U.S. allies.

- The extraterritorial application of U.S. export controls (e.g., in granting of reexport licenses) damages relations with allies, as the latter regard this as an intrusion on their national sovereignty; it also disadvantages American exporters, as it makes firms abroad inclined to prefer non-American suppliers.

- The U.S. should clearly distinguish between its export controls for reasons of security and those for reasons of foreign policy, otherwise cooperation with the allies, who are always cool toward politically motivated sanctions, could be jeopardized.

- The controls’ impact on scientific communication and technology transfer within the alliance should be diminished, because open scientific communication and economic exchange within the West are equally important for maintaining the Western lead over the Soviet Union in science and technology.

- The economic and military representation of member-states in COCOM should become more balanced.

- Unilateral controls by the U.S. have proved to be of limited effectiveness and should be at most measures of limited duration until a consensus has been reached within COCOM. Their continuous application undermines the allies’ readiness to cooperate.

On the basis of these conclusions, the commission recommended the following measures to strengthen the COCOM mechanism:25

- For all members to use the COCOM list exclusively;
- To establish a consensus in COCOM regarding controls for exports to Western non-COCOM states;
- To initiate negotiations with non-COCOM states on harmonizing control measures;

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U.S. Policy in COCOM

- To remove from the list items whose control is no longer necessary;
- To maintain unilateral controls only in exceptional cases;
- To eliminate reexport regulations for exports between COCOM countries;
- To maintain the present control procedures in COCOM on sensitive information, technical data and know-how;
- To reduce the COCOM list and modify the decision-making processes in COCOM;
- To distinguish clearly between export controls for security and those for reasons of foreign policy.

It should come as no surprise that this report's recommendations generated considerable controversy in the U.S. When the conclusions were prematurely leaked to the Washington Post,\textsuperscript{26} Pentagon figures such as Richard Perle, the assistant secretary for international security policy and long an advocate of tighter national and multilateral controls, accused the authors of having made themselves the mouthpiece of commercial interests and having completely lost sight of the concerns of national and Western security. In rebuttal, commission sources maintained that the inordinate use of export controls was straining the already shaken international economic competitiveness of the U.S. and undermining the U.S. technological base essential to national defense.

The study by the National Academy of Sciences, which was followed by a great number of analyses, proposals and legislative initiatives,\textsuperscript{27} no doubt helped improve the climate in the U.S. for a somewhat more moderate application of export controls. This had become clear by February 1987, when U.S. Secretary of Commerce Baldridge announced an easing of restrictions on the issuing of licenses (e.g., for sales to allied governments and for products


that are readily available in other countries). At the same time, list reductions were announced, particularly for computers; consequently, in August 1987, it was decided that most normal personal computers (16 bit) could henceforth be exported to the Eastern-bloc states without export licenses.

However, even if these decisions have yielded movement on the lower end of the COCOM list and released a number of products for export to the Eastern-bloc states, there can still be no doubt that the U.S. remains determined to protect high technologies relevant to security. The Defense Department, which takes an extremely critical attitude toward the Commerce Department's measures of relaxation, has concentrated its initiatives increasingly on advanced semiconductors with military and civilian application and on their related design, production and test procedures. Although Japan in particular has been able to gain a dramatic competitive lead in the production of semiconductors, the U.S. is not prepared to rely on other countries for technological innovations of fundamental importance for defense and national security. This applies to imports as much as exports even to friendly countries.

6. The Future of the COCOM System

Since the beginning of the Reagan Administration the role of COCOM as an instrument for control of high technology products and international technology transfer has been strengthened. The allies have, though hesitantly, joined in most U.S. initiatives and thus indicated that they too are prepared to see to it that militarily relevant goods and technologies are withheld from the U.S.S.R. and other communist countries. However, the initiatives, motivated predominantly by security concerns have also harmed the economic interests of American companies as well as firms in allied nations. Partners in Western Europe and Japan regard the list as too long; they fear that this instrument will become ineffective if their legitimate interests in the international economy continue to be ignored, particularly by the Defense Department. These interests pertain more to intra-Western than East-West trade, as in the last few years the U.S. has made it much more difficult for its allies to obtain American technology; as a result non-American firms have begun to review their in some cases long-standing business relations with American partners. If since early 1987 the discussion within the U.S. has yielded some relaxation of

procedures and reduction in the lists, reflecting greater consideration for U.S. economic interests, this has not eliminated the problems underlying these controls. The extent of the controls and the U.S. claim to enforce its national control regulations extraterritorially against its allies reduces the allies' willingness to cooperate.

These effects are addressed in the study by the National Academy of Sciences; the recommendations largely agree with what the West European allies and Japan have been demanding for a long time: to reduce the extent of the controls while making their implementation more effective. However, it is doubtful whether such changes can be effected in the medium term.

For in the U.S., unlike in the West European countries and Japan, military and security policy considerations play a paramount role in the development of high technology. The U.S. Department of Defense is actively involved in industrial policy concerning high technology, with a self-perceived responsibility to reestablish the industrial base of American industry while providing stimulus for modernization. The Pentagon supports ambitious developments such as very high speed integrated circuits, computers of the "fifth" generation, lasers, etc. Its direct influence is thus considerable; ultimately, it provides nearly two-thirds of all federal funding for research and development. Nearly all major high-technology companies, scientific research institutes and universities in the U.S. are recipients of such funds, and in order to continue receiving this assistance they submit to the security requirements of the Defense Department — even when the research is not directly related to national security. The more heavily the Pentagon is involved in granting funds for research and development, and the more companies and research institutions become dependent on obtaining such funds, the more the results are subject to the Pentagon's access, and thus ultimately to export controls motivated by security policy.

With its extensive national restrictions on technology transfer, with the tightening of multilateral export controls and, finally, with the accepted negative consequences for the international high-technology trade, the U.S. has initiated a process that in the long run not only works against the U.S. goal of improving its international competitiveness, but could also undermine U.S. leadership in the Western world. For if it were not able to carry out the Allen Report's critical recommendations on export controls and thus failed to satisfy the interests of American industry and the demands of its allies, new conflicts could well emerge in the next few years. It takes little imagination to see that as the competitiveness of the U.S. deteriorates further and/or the tensions with the Soviet Union cease to loom so large — for instance, as a result of an arms limitation or disarmament agreement — there will be increasing pressure from the allies on the U.S. to make further cuts in national and multilateral export controls.
The Collapse of “Constructive Engagement”:
U.S. Foreign Policy in Southern Africa*

1. Introduction

During the Reagan Administration, U.S. foreign policy in southern Africa acquired new significance in American politics. Political elites and subsequently the American public were increasingly polarized as the conflicts among and within the states of southern Africa escalated. The Reagan Administration meanwhile was unable either to exercise a moderating influence on the contending parties in southern Africa or to win public support with a convincing policy. In January 1987 an independent report ordered by President Reagan in September 1985 bluntly stated that the Administration’s policy had failed. Yet initially its southern Africa policy had seemed most apt to live up to the Administration’s claim to rebuild U.S. global leadership. How was it that a policy which in 1981 was regarded by nearly all sides as a coherent and reasoned whole could six years later be issued such a devastating judgment under the seal of the State Department? And is it valid to maintain that this policy was really “doomed to fail” from the start?

This essay seeks to show that the Administration’s policy failed in two respects. First and most fundamentally, the Administration failed to devise a coherent and effective policy transcending the tension between anti-communism on the one hand and anti-apartheid on the other. This conflict of goals had been evident, though largely latent, in policy toward southern Africa since the 1970s. Second, and more important, this essay will argue that it

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* For their valuable and stimulating ideas I would like to extend my special thanks to the editors and, in particular, Winrich Kühne and Ambassador Donald F. McHenry.
was already apparent in the spring of 1981 that the Administration's foreign policy for southern Africa rested on faulty premises and could succeed only under extremely favorable but highly improbable circumstances.

2. Determining Factors of Foreign Policy toward Southern Africa

Following the independence of Angola, Mozambique and later Zimbabwe, American foreign policy has attached increasing importance to southern Africa. This growing concern was precipitated in 1975 by the Soviet-sponsored airlift of Cuban troops to Angola. In American eyes Angola became the symbol of an alleged Soviet betrayal of détente; what is more, it became the geographical fulcrum of various U.S. designs for southern Africa. What for Kissinger was first solely a test case of the Soviets' desire for global détente prompted the Carter Administration to embrace a regional strategy of preventive diplomacy: U.S. mediation was to help resolve the conflicts over Rhodesia/Zimbabwe and South-West Africa/Namibia. While Zimbabwe achieved its independence during the Carter years, the continuing efforts to reach a negotiated settlement on Namibian independence have thus far been unsuccessful.

The interests of the U.S. in southern Africa are many and varied, though compared with other regions, by no means "vital". American experts on Africa largely agree that southern Africa in general and South Africa in particular, owing to the rich deposits of raw materials, are of great, though not critical importance to the American economy. Similarly, the shipping route around the Cape of Good Hope assumes strategic importance as one of the "lifelines" of the Western world. Finally, because of its own history the U.S. feels a special political and moral responsibility toward the black majority in South Africa and for a settlement of the outstanding issues of colonialism such as in Namibia.

In light of this large measure of agreement on basic U.S. interests in southern Africa, it is therefore surprising how controversial the Africa policy of practically every administration since Eisenhower has been. One reason for

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this may be that the political center is normally preoccupied with other foreign policy issues and thus leaves the field of public discussion of policy toward southern Africa to an "Afrocentric," predominantly black lobby on the one hand and a doctrinaire anti-communist circle of conservatives on the other. This, however, does not entirely explain the continued controversy surrounding U.S. policy, or why since the mid-1970s no administration has come even close to realizing its objectives. Rather, the central problem of U.S. foreign policy in southern Africa seems to be that no administration has been able to reconcile and integrate into a coherent policy not only the often diametrically opposed views of vocal minorities, but also the usually more subdued conflicts of interest reflected in public opinion as a whole.

3. Constructive Engagement: Premises, Objectives, Dilemmas

The Reagan Administration faced a familiar dilemma: with admittedly limited influence on regional developments, it had to formulate a policy that took into account both the often contradictory interests of the U.S. and the political conditions in southern Africa itself. At the outset things looked promising for the Reagan Administration, for Chester Crocker was the first proven expert on Africa to head the State Department's division for African Affairs.

After several months of reviewing U.S. Africa policy at the beginning of his tenure, Crocker announced in the summer of 1981 the principles of a "constructive engagement." The primary objective was to strengthen the

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6 Cf. ibid., pp. 16/17.
7 Public opinion polls make the whole dilemma clear. For example, in a Harris poll conducted in 1981 nearly three-fourths of the U.S. population condemned apartheid as an immoral system, yet in the same survey 54% of those polled agreed with the statement that the U.S. ought to support the South African government because it is an ally in the battle against Russian-style communism and is of vital importance for the national security of the U.S. Cf. William Foltz, "United States Policy toward South Africa: Is One Possible?" in Gerald J. Bender, James S. Coleman, Richard L. Sklar (eds.), African Crisis Areas and U.S. Foreign Policy, Berkeley: University of California Press 1985, pp. 38 – 42.
8 During the Nixon Administration the Africa specialist Crocker worked on Kissinger's staff in the National Security Council. As director of African Studies at the influential Center for Strategic and International Studies Crocker then made himself well known in Republican circles during the Carter Administration. On Reagan's campaign team and later on the "transition team" Crocker was responsible for Africa policy.
influence of the U.S. in southern Africa. In Crocker's view, three main obstacles had to be overcome: 1) the Cuban-Soviet presence in Angola and Moscow's influence on both the government of Samora Machel in Mozambique and the Namibian liberation movement SWAPO; 2) the extremely strained, dependency-ridden relationship between the "Frontline States" of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Angola, Botswana and Mozambique, and the region's dominant power South Africa; and 3) the existence of the apartheid regime itself, which made it practically impossible for any administration to cultivate the kind of close political and economic contacts with South Africa that American interests seemed to call for.

Crocker was convinced that constructive engagement integrated all the essential elements for a successful strategy. In its official reading, the constructive engagement of the U.S. would help build a network of mutually reinforcing links to replace force as a means of resolving conflicts in southern Africa and thereby strengthen the security of the region as a whole. Concretely, Crocker was thinking of a) a negotiated settlement on Namibian independence; b) the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola; c) the resolution of conflicts between and within states (above all in and over Angola) through talks between the parties involved — if need be and desired, with U.S. mediation; d) the determined but, if at all possible, nonviolent elimination of apartheid in South Africa, so that in the long term e) the complementary development goals of the states of southern Africa and the economic and political aims of the U.S. might be realized.

Thus, despite all the criticism of the Carter policy toward Africa, Crocker too placed resolution of the Namibian question at the top of his agenda. On this issue it seemed to him most likely — not least thanks to the groundwork of the Carter Administration — to achieve a rapid foreign policy success. Basically he would adopt the plan for free elections and a regulated and internationally guaranteed transition to Namibian independence. Based on Resolution 435 of the UN Security Council, this plan had been promoted by the Carter Administration. However, in two respects the international solution Crocker was seeking differed from the Carter Administration's goals. First, the Reagan Administration wanted to overcome South Africa's rejection of a UN solution (which all observers agreed would mean an overwhelming SWAPO victory in free elections and thus, from Pretoria's point of view, "Moscow's flag over Windhoek") by ensuring that a "bill of rights" to protect the white minority was established before elections to a constitutional

assembly. Secondly, the Reagan Administration referred to an "empirical relationship" between a solution to the Namibia question and the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola together with a political compromise between the Moscow-oriented MPLA government in Luanda and the UNITA rebels operating in the country's southeastern region.\(^\text{10}\)

The meaning of this "empirical relationship" was enunciated more clearly in a confidential policy paper written by Crocker back in early February and leaked to the *New York Times* on June 1, 1981. Thus, while it was important to avoid giving any impression publicly that the U.S. wanted to establish a linkage between the independence of Namibia and the situation in Angola, in the negotiations themselves this connection was inevitable, for these would be "mutually reinforcing, parallel tracks of an overall strategy." Crocker did not seem to see that linking these different, emotionally charged and in themselves highly complex problems might actually prevent a solution to either one. Rather, he claimed that the Reagan Administration had unprecedented credibility with Pretoria, that the Botha government was well aware that in the Reagan Administration they were dealing with the "best they can expect" and would therefore agree to a compromise on Namibia if, besides the matter of a Cuban troop withdrawal, the question of constitutional guarantees for the whites in Namibia were more or less satisfactorily resolved.

To this end Crocker wanted to press for concessions from the Frontline States and SWAPO, if in return South Africa were willing to give assurances that this would remove all obstacles, i.e., South Africa was prepared to help the Reagan Administration score a foreign policy success with Namibia's independence. In regard to the Frontline States, Crocker concluded in his policy paper that ultimately they would not oppose such a linkage "once they are made to realize that they can only get a Namibia settlement through us and that we are serious about getting such a settlement."

Crocker may have been as convinced of the success of his linkage strategy as he purported to be, but this would appear dubious at least in light of his earlier statements urging a cautious approach.\(^\text{11}\) Ultimately, however, the fact that linkage became the essential feature of the policy for which Crocker

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\(^{11}\) Cf., e.g., Chester Crocker, William H. Lewis, "Missing Opportunities in Africa," *Foreign Policy*, No. 35 (Summer 1979), pp. 142–161.
assumed responsibility reflected the predominance in the Reagan Administration of currents which were too powerful for relatively "liberal" Republicans such as Crocker to oppose. Yet, with linkage as its core, constructive engagement did not meet the very requirements that Crocker himself had formulated in 1979: Linkage rested on neither a "clear reading" of regional events and constellations nor an adequate appraisal of American policy resources. Above all the early warnings of the allies in the Contact Group went unheeded: South Africa might well try to use the explicit linking of Namibia's independence with the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola solely to further delay Namibia's independence. Crocker's essential mistake was to assume that South Africa wanted to rid itself of the Namibia problem and was therefore amenable to an international solution in the framework of UN Resolution 435, provided certain basic rights were established for the whites and the Cuban troops were to be withdrawn from Angola. First of all, this ignored the reasonable doubt as to whether South Africa had ever negotiated in earnest toward an international solution or had been prepared to accept such a solution. Secondly, this assumption failed to grasp the

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12 At least in the eyes of conservative Republican Senator Jesse Helms, Crocker was a "liberal" of that deeply despised East Coast establishment. Helms held up Crocker's confirmation as assistant secretary for African Affairs for over five months, while all the Democratic Senators supported Crocker's appointment.


14 The "Contact Group" included the United States, Great Britain, France, Canada and West Germany. Through their mediation efforts these five Western states had done a great deal to ensure in 1977 that the Namibia Plan of the United Nations came into being and was supported by all parties. Cf. Margaret P. Karns, "Ad hoc Multilateral Diplomacy: The United States, the Contact Group, and Namibia," International Organization, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Winter 1987), pp. 93–123.

15 As Crocker was already entertaining these misgivings in his policy paper of February 7, 1981, it is clear that he was confronted with this possibility from the start of the "review phase." Cf. The New York Times, June 1, 1981, pp. A1 and A8.


17 The former U.S. ambassador to the UN Donald McHenry, who was one of the originators of the UN Namibia Plan and who led the Namibia negotiations for the Carter Administration, had pointed out several times before the change in administrations that in his view South Africa was pursuing a two-track strategy: on the one hand, Pretoria was interested in advancing a so-called "internal solution" excluding SWAPO, but on the other, it continued to take part in the international negotiations in the UN framework — possibly just to keep up appearances. Cf. U.S. Congress. House Committee on Foreign Relations. Subcommittee on Africa, Namibia Update. Hearing, 96th Congress, 2nd Session, Washington, D.C.: G.P.O. 1981, pp. 3–9. On South Africa's negotiating strategy cf. also Deon
essence of the matter: South Africa was primarily interested not in the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola but in preventing a SWAPO majority in Windhoek. Indeed, South Africa had to find the continued presence of Cuban troops opportune for its own regional strategy.\footnote{Geldenhuys, The Diplomacy of Isolation. South African Foreign Policy Making, Johannesburg: McMillan Mail 1984, pp. 222 – 231.}

In light of these South African interests, linkage must have appeared to Pretoria as heaven-sent. Through South African support for UNITA, Botha was in a position to decide just how important the Cuban troops were for the survival of the Angolan government. If it seemed advantageous to him to make use of the tactical advantage of linkage, Botha could himself determine, as it were, behind the scenes of the international negotiations, whether and when Namibia were to become independent — and not his government but the U.S. would be held responsible.

Since Crocker had been confronted with all these risks early on, it is legitimate to ask why he took this road nonetheless. The situation within the Administration offers the only plausible explanation. Linkage was the concession of the carefully tacking politician Crocker to the influential conservative critics in his own ranks.\footnote{Cf. Winrich Kühne, “Die Politik der UdSSR gegenüber Südafrika nach dem Machrwechsel in Zimbabwe,” in: Südafrika: Internationale Lösungsstrategien und interner Wandel, Bonn: Europa Union Verlag 1980, pp. 94 – 106; cf. also Robert Jaster, South Africa in Namibia: The Botha Strategy, Lanham, NY: University Press of America 1985.} Crocker felt he could secure the necessary support of this group only if, alongside the possible prestige accruing from a Namibia solution, he could point out that through linkage Moscow’s influence in southern Africa had been forced back.\footnote{In his election campaign President Reagan himself had already indicated that he was by no means enthused about the prospect of entrusting Namibia to a “pro-communist government” under the leadership of the “terroristic” SWAPO. And he had not concealed how very highly he estimated the “anti-communist” UNITA. Cf. two of Reagan’s radio addresses cited by Senator Helms: U.S. Congress. Senate, Nomination of Chester A. Crocker, pp. 13 – 15.} The basic problem with this idea, however, was that the premises underlying the analysis were anything but unassailable. Ignoring these risks Crocker opted to safeguard his position within the Administration and thus, at least for the moment, gain a free hand.

If Crocker considered a solution of the Namibia question relatively straightforward, he expressed himself noticeably more cautious about the future of

South Africa. In an article appearing at the end of 1980 \(^{21}\) he characterized the political situation inside South Africa as follows:

The many changes occurring today in South Africa are inherently ambiguous. Nonetheless, it should be possible at least to agree that black politics are characterized by an increasingly confident experimentation with various strategies for challenging white control, while white politics are demonstrating a degree of fluidity and pragmatism that is without precedent in the past generation. The combination does not make meaningful evolutionary change certain, but it does make it possible for the first time in decades.

Despite this optimistic assessment Crocker assumed that the process of change would in all probability be marked by “a combination of violence and politics.” But because neither the black majority nor any foreign power (the U.S. included) would be in a position to force reforms on the white minority, the main task would be to express publicly encouragement and support for the initial steps toward opening up and reforming the apartheid system, initiatives that were by no means sufficient but still were in evidence for the first time. For the U.S. it was thus not a matter of “aligning ourselves with black or white,” of “abetting violence in the Republic [or] aligning ourselves with the cause of white rule.” If “evolutionary change” were achievable only through “autocratically imposed reforms,” then this would have to be accepted, as it was the only way to reform the system. These autocratic reforms \(\textit{could} \) become part of a process leading at a future stage to compromise and accommodation between freely chosen representatives of all major groups.” (Emphasis in the original.) Crocker argued that it was not enough just to denounce the injustice done to the blacks; rather, a “tone of empathy” was called for toward the “awesome political dilemma” facing those Afrikaners who were pressing for reforms. The West would then have “everything to gain if it succeeds in pressing white-led change in the direction of real power-sharing and in strengthening the capacity of blacks inside South Africa to participate in shaping a changing system.” Outside pressure in the form of public statements and diplomatic communications could, according to Crocker, be quite helpful. But “punishing” South Africa, e.g., by sanctions, would simply further constrict an already limited influence.

In the view of sympathetic critics, Crocker knew very well the foreign and domestic political risks entailed by proposing a closer cooperation with South Africa. These risks vis-à-vis the African and black American publics were acceptable only if there were hope that the Botha government would not rule out some power-sharing arrangement in the long run. But precisely here Crocker succumbed to the “myth of a pragmatic and dynamic [South African] government.”\(^ {22}\)


4. Constructive Engagement Put to the Test

4.1. The Namibia Talks and Linkage

As the logic of constructive engagement would indicate, during the first half of 1981 Crocker conferred mainly with the allies in the Contact Group, selected Frontline States and above all South Africa. In Crocker’s view the “key” to solving the region’s problems lay in South Africa. Crocker wanted to convince the Botha government that with the inauguration of the Reagan Administration the bilateral relations between the two states had arrived “at a crossroads of perhaps historical significance” and that “the possibility may exist for a more positive and reciprocal relationship between the two countries based upon shared strategic concerns.” A prerequisite for this, however, would be that the question of Namibia’s independence were resolved. Crocker wanted to know explicitly from South Africa whether it was really prepared to work toward an internationally acceptable solution and what a “conclusive list of [South African] concerns” would contain. If South Africa were to cooperate the U.S. in return would “work to end South Africa’s polecat status in the world and seek to restore its place as a legitimate and important regional actor with whom we can cooperate pragmatically.” If not, the U.S. would pull out of the negotiating process. With the other members of the Contact Group the U.S., alluding to South Africa’s demand for constitutional guarantees, pronounced itself willing “to complement and strengthen” the UN Namibia plan; until the summer of 1982, however, neither South Africa nor the U.S. discussed linkage publicly, although the formula had been a part of the negotiations at least since June 1981.

It is not certain whether South Africa ever submitted the “conclusive list” the Reagan Administration had asked for. However Pretoria’s conduct over the course of the year would seem to indicate that Washington’s requests fell on deaf ears. South Africa did continue to take part in the international negotia-

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23 Thus, the U.S. was well aware that the African states were being sent unmistakable signals when, e.g., in May 1981 a representative of the apartheid regime, in the person of the South African foreign minister, was the first government official from the African continent to be received at the White House, whereas Crocker did not conduct his first talks with key actors SWAPO and Angola until the end of July 1981 and January 1982, respectively.


tions yet simultaneously intensified its destabilization campaign against Angola\(^27\) as well as its efforts to promote an internal solution in Namibia.\(^28\) The invasion of Angola created a very awkward situation for Washington, as the U.S. felt compelled to veto a UN Security Council resolution condemning the South African invasion. Not only did this veto elicit deep resentment on the part of African member-states, but it became clear for the first time that the other members of the Contact Group did not approve of the American course of action.\(^29\)

Despite repeated South African incursions into Angola the Namibia talks seemed to be moving ahead quite well up to the summer of 1982. Knowing that it could at any time fall back on the U.S. linkage proposition,\(^30\) South Africa could calmly make "concessions" in those areas that seemed to have been settled before 1981, but which Crocker assumed would have to be renegotiated to secure South Africa’s final consent to Namibian independence.\(^31\) In the summer of 1982, as the negotiations reached the point of working out the details of a transition to independence, Prime Minister Botha for the first time declared that South Africa was not prepared to pull its troops out of Namibia — as provided for in the UN plan — "unless the Cubans are withdrawing from Angola."\(^32\) This was precisely the situation the U.S. had been warned about by the other Contact Group members. At this juncture Botha could have no interest in having to justify himself before his electorate over Namibia’s independence. In March 1982, a right-wing faction had split off from his National Party, claiming that Botha’s domestic reforms were going too far. In Namibia itself the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA), which was supported by South Africa as an alternative to

\(^{27}\) On August 24, South Africa invaded Angola. This “Operation Protea” marked the largest South African invasion since 1975. Cf. Jaster, pp. 49–51.


\(^{29}\) France voted for the resolution, Great Britain abstained. Canada and West Germany condemned South Africa’s action as “completely unacceptable.” Cf. ibid., p. 180.

\(^{30}\) Allegedly the Administration had formally assured the South African government that they would not demand a South African withdrawal from Namibia as long as agreement had not been reached on the withdrawal of Cuban troops. Cf. ibid., p. 183.

\(^{31}\) Basic agreement had been reached regarding the electoral law, a bill of rights, and the issue of UN “impartiality,” which South Africa insisted on. But with that, as even Crocker’s sympathetic critics said, the negotiations had simply come around again to the point that had already been reached by the Carter Administration. Cf. I. William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution. Conflict and Intervention in Africa*, New York: Oxford University Press 1985, pp. 190–192, as well as du Pisani, “SWA/Namibia update,” p. 183.

SWAPO, projected an image of anything but convincing unity following the resignation of one of its leading black members. Moreover, the South African military, suspicious of a negotiated solution anyway, could point to considerable success in its destabilization campaign: the invasion of Angola placed the Angolan government under increasing pressure, UNITA had expanded its zone of operations thanks to South African support, while SWAPO had to pull back from the border area into the north of Angola. South Africa, then, had no reason to appear willing to compromise. All the more so as uncompromising behavior always paid off with South Africa’s white voters and by no means appeared to have a negative impact on bilateral relations with the U.S.

By this time it had become evident what a risky undertaking Crocker had ventured into with linkage. In February 1982 the Angolan government had reluctantly yet unmistakably signaled compromise regarding a Cuban troop withdrawal as part of a Namibia settlement. However, South Africa not only refused to take the Angolans at their word, but applied even greater pressure with continued incursions. UNITA was steadily strengthening its position in the south of Angola, thereby becoming a real power factor in the Namibian-Angolan equation. Moreover, UNITA eluded any outside control and was intent on doing everything it could to prevent an international solution on Namibia until its own demands for participation in the Luanda government were met. With that the already highly complex tangle of conflicting parties and interests had become completely inextricable.

From mid-1982 on, Crocker’s diplomatic efforts essentially aimed at nothing more than defining the modalities of a parallel troop withdrawal of the South Africans from Namibia and the Cubans from Angola. Yet despite the repeated references to imminent breakthroughs, the negotiations showed no substantial progress toward this end. On the contrary, between the fall of 1983 and early summer of 1984 there seemed to be a real possibility not only that South Africa would come to terms with Angola and Mozambique regarding bilateral issues, but, under the favorable circumstances at the time and notwithstanding all American expressions of displeasure, it appeared that South Africa might arrive at a regional Namibia solution directly with the Frontline States.

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34 Cf. Jaster, South Africa in Namibia, pp. 45–65.

and SWAPO (i.e., excluding both the UN and the Contact Group). This scenario ultimately was dropped because a) neither SWAPO nor the South African military took any liking to this kind of solution and b) in the fall of 1984 both the Angolans and the South Africans complicated the negotiations by bringing in the factor of an increasingly strong UNITA. But this intermezzo clearly revealed to the U.S. that South Africa might be willing to ignore the allegedly so vitally important problem of the Cuban presence in Angola if it could otherwise consolidate its position of power and even legitimate it through agreements such as “Nkomati.”

4.2. The Development of American-South African Relations

From Crocker’s perspective the bilateral relations between the U.S. and South Africa were developing in a similarly fateful way. Consistent with his concept of “evolutionary change,” Crocker was of the view that given the “fragmentation” within the black majority it was necessary above all to strengthen the negotiating power of “moderate” blacks. To this end the U.S. during the first Reagan Administration made available roughly $10 million annually for student exchange programs, training for black trade unionists as well as startup aid for small businesses. However, because this policy was “change-oriented but not interventionist in the sensitive area of sovereign political and legal structures,” these measures met with deep suspicion, sometimes even

36 On the significance of the Lusaka Conference of May 1984 cf. David Martin, Phyllis Johnson, “Africa: The Old and the Unexpected,” Foreign Affairs, Vol. 63, No. 3 (America and the World 1984), pp. 607 – 616, in particular President Botha’s remarks, quoted on p. 616, that “the people of South-West Africa, including SWAPO, cannot wait indefinitely for a breakthrough on the Cuban question. If the political parties [of Namibia], including SWAPO, can in the meantime come to some agreement with regard to the future of their country, South Africa will not stand in the way.”

37 Angola made its consent to withdrawal of the Cuban troops contingent on South Africa’s discontinuing all assistance to UNITA, while South Africa insisted that the government in Luanda had to enter into direct talks with UNITA.

38 On March 16, 1984 South Africa and Mozambique concluded a widely noted “Agreement on Non-Aggression and Good-Neighborliness” which became known as the “Nkomati Accord.”


outright rejection from the leading black opposition groups. This was all the more the case when the Reagan Administration shunned direct talks with influential black organizations like the ANC. Consequently, blacks were more apt to regard constructive engagement as nothing more than a "moral choice" in favor of the apartheid regime.

This suspicion toward U.S. policy was fed by the flourishing trade between the U.S. and South Africa. Through a series of changes in American export regulations in the Administration's first two years, South Africa gained access to high technology which it had previously been denied because of international agreements (e.g., UN weapons embargo). These included modern civilian aircraft that could be readily converted into reconnaissance planes, advanced computers worth several hundred million dollars for a subsidiary of the South African arms concern ARMSCOR, as well as nuclear production facilities and the delivery of enriched uranium for the South African nuclear power plant at Koeberg. For South Africa these represented extremely valuable goods that either were unobtainable elsewhere or could be acquired from other countries only with great difficulty.

The U.S. concessions had just as little influence on the Botha government's domestic policy as it did on South Africa's military campaigns against its black neighbor states. The new constitution advertised by Botha as "reform," and actively supported by the U.S., was approved in a referendum in November 1983 by an overwhelming majority of the 4.6 million whites. Yet the discrimination against the 23 million blacks became all the more glaring as just the 2.7 million South Africans of mixed race and the 870,000 of Asian descent benefited from slightly expanded rights, while the blatant discrimination against the blacks was virtually enshrined in the constitution. Since the core apartheid laws ("Race Classification Act," "Group Areas Act" and "Separate Amenities Act") were not eliminated by the new constitution, it

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42 According to reports in a black South African newspaper (City Press, Johannesburg, May 19, 1985), on his numerous trips to South Africa Crocker never met with black opposition leaders; between January 1982 and December 1984 he is said to have met a total of just 15 black South Africans, and each time in the U.S. Cf. Ungar, Vale, "Why Constructive Engagement Failed," p. 245.

43 Thus Ungar, Vale quote the South African academic N. Chabani Manganyi, ibid., p. 245.

44 Cf. Christopher Coker, The United States and South Africa 1968–1985, pp. 205–209. Coker points out (p. 212) that in 1984 the U.S. Department of Commerce granted a total of 1,864 licenses at a value of $672.9 million, more than the Carter Administration had approved in three years; a considerable share of these permits pertained to materials that could be used for production or testing of nuclear weapons; according to a study by the General Accounting Office, in 1981 and 1982 South Africa thus became the second-largest purchaser of American "dual-purpose" equipment in the nuclear sector.
was obvious that President Botha intended merely "to decentralize and liberalize social and economic apartheid." While Botha recognized the economic necessity of modernizing apartheid, the whites' political control was to remain untouched. During President Reagan's first term the Administration tried to maintain a steady policy. From time to time the U.S. did sharpen its tone toward the apartheid regime, but in substance this altered nothing in the American approach. Although the U.S. had ample occasion to make the loosening of export controls dependent on South African cooperation in political matters, there is no evidence that the Americans ever made this kind of connection. 46

4.3. Between Anti-Communism and Anti-Apartheid: Constructive Engagement under Domestic Political Pressure

In the U.S. at the start of President Reagan's term in office, only a committed minority was interested in foreign policy toward southern Africa. Opposition to Chester Crocker's policy and person was roused both on the right wing of the Republican Party and in the predominantly black "Africa lobby." The rather indifferent majority in the Senate and House of Representatives confined itself to paying Crocker polite respect for an impressive and — to all appearances — thoroughly considered concept, and for the rest let him go his own way.

However, it was becoming apparent in 1983, and was obvious by the fall of the election year 1984, just how precarious the domestic backing for constructive engagement was. The longer it took for Crocker's repeatedly promised breakthrough to materialize in the Namibia negotiations, and the less credibly the Administration could claim progress in eliminating apartheid — after persistent unilateral concessions to South Africa — the more Crocker came under domestic pressure and the more it became apparent how little Administration support he could hope for outside the State Department.

47 This includes in particular the organization "TransAfrica" as well as Democratic Congressmen William Gray, Howard Wolpe and Stephen Solarz.
For the Reagan Administration's Africa policy 1985 became not just a "year of ironies," but a year of bankruptcies. Under the growing pressure from anti-communist conservatives from the one side and anti-apartheid forces from the other, constructive engagement collapsed as a policy. The Senate decision in early June 1985 to revoke the Clark Amendment paved the way for U.S. government support of UNITA and gave a first signal that the U.S. might be prepared to give up the neutrality it had maintained at least formally on Angola's internal conflict.

Domestic political calculation prompted a second decision of symbolically far-reaching importance: On September 9, 1985, President Reagan ordered a limited package of economic sanctions against South Africa. The Administration was thus able to forestall Congressional action to implement considerably stronger sanctions, but this reluctantly taken step was tantamount to conceding the failure of constructive engagement. Moreover, it signaled the South African regime the beginning of the end of a (for Pretoria) extremely beneficial turn in bilateral relations.

How was this spectacular failure of an ostensibly so promising policy possible? The revocation of the Clark Amendment and the imposition of limited sanctions on South Africa marked what was then the high point of two parallel debates in the U.S. One concerned support for so-called "freedom fighters" in "communist" states of the "third world," a discussion of growing intensity since the beginning of President Reagan's second term. The other dealt with the issue of what policy the U.S. ought to pursue toward South Africa's apartheid regime. There was no direct connection between these two controversies. Though each in its own way deeply stirred typical American self-conceptions, the lines of the debates were by no means rigidly drawn according to the ideological convictions of the persons and coalitions leading them.

Deftly handling a concerted campaign by conservative politicians and organizations in support of anti-communist "freedom fighters" from Nicaragua to

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50 In 1976, at the initiative of Senator Clark, the Senate prohibited any assistance to UNITA without the prior approval of Congress.


Afghanistan and from Kampuchea to Angola, the leader of UNITA, Jonas Savimbi, was able to win the sympathies of influential politicians — including the President. In its first years the Administration had accepted Crocker's view that support for UNITA would be detrimental to the U.S. objectives — namely, to move the Angolan government to agree to a Cuban troop withdrawal in the context of a Namibia solution. However, since the talks on "linkage" were dragging on with little promise of success and the number of Cuban troops in Angola was increasing, Crocker's position within the Administration was becoming increasingly precarious.

At the start of President Reagan's second term in office it became clear that in both Congress and the White House those forces pressing for greater U.S. commitment to anti-communist rebels were gaining ground. The simple fact that following the June 1985 repeal of the Clark Amendment up to March 1986 Congress entertained a total of nine resolutions to support UNITA shows how much the Congress felt compelled by this discussion to take a position publicly. In February 1986, the Savimbi euphoria peaked when the UNITA leader was received in Washington for several days virtually as a head of state. This made some U.S. material support for Savimbi practically inevitable. Those within the Administration (e.g., Shultz and Crocker) who had long opposed direct support for UNITA (though they fully welcomed the repeal of the Clark Amendment as a way of putting pressure on the Angolan government) could no longer prevent it. In March 1986, Administration and Congress agreed on secret weapons shipments by the CIA amounting to $15

53 In his efforts to utilize ideological preconceptions in the U.S. for his own ends Savimbi has been supported by influential institutions such as the Heritage Foundation and professional lobbyists such as "Black Manafort, Stone and Kelly (who received annual fees of 600,000 dollars from UNITA). In the conservative journal Policy Review, for example, Savimbi declared that Angola was becoming more and more the "Munich of Africa," and that American hesitation in southern Africa "will be taken as a signal by all the countries in the region that the United States has abandoned them to the Soviets just as the West abandoned Czechoslovakia." Cited in The Economist, January 25, 1986, p. 34.

54 Cf. the 30,000 troops cited by Secretary of State Shultz on April 16, 1985 (U.S. Public Statements, Document No. 161, p. 312) with the Administration's originally estimated figure of 20,000 Cuban troops (e.g., UN Ambassador Kirkpatrick's speech of April 29, 1981, U.S. Public Statements, Document No. 44, p. 70). Cf also Zartman, Ripe for Resolution, p. 198.


million. Consequently, the Angolan government denied the U.S. any further role as mediator 57 and, with increased Soviet and Cuban support, intensified its military actions against UNITA.

In its first two years the Administration had had a relatively free hand in its policy toward South Africa, but by 1983 the discussion on constitutional reform was galvanizing and the black opposition taking shape in South Africa itself was mobilizing the critics in the House of Representatives. The American debate on policy toward South Africa acquired a new dimension when the unrest that had been simmering in South Africa since January 1984 suddenly escalated in September over rent increases. The clashes depicted daily on American television screens offered the Democrats a welcome opportunity to refurbish their battered self-esteem after their defeat in the presidential election, to close ranks and attack the Administration in an area in which it was obviously vulnerable and where criticism could score points with the voters. 58 Day after day prominent Democrats had themselves arrested in sit-ins in front of the South African embassy in Washington to show their solidarity with the black majority of South Africa. The pressure on the Administration increased when in December, 34 conservative Republicans in the House of Representatives wrote to the South African ambassador demanding a speedy end to apartheid because otherwise they would no longer be in a position to reject the Democratic demand for effective sanctions. The 41 bills and resolutions considered by Congress between January 1985 and President Reagan's ordering of sanctions on September 9, 1985 are indicative of the electoral importance both parties attached to South Africa policy. 59 By imposing some sanctions the Administration was able to mollify Congress for a time. However, the collapse of constructive engagement was sealed by the House of Representatives and notably the Republican dominated Senate a few weeks before the congressional elections in the fall of 1986, after the political situation in South Africa had once again worsened with the renewal of the state of emergency in June. Both houses approved the most far-reaching list of economic sanctions yet; for instance, Congress prohibited any American investment in South African firms as well as import of South African goods such as coal and steel. The President's subsequent veto was overridden by an overwhelming majority in both houses.

57 Cf. The International Herald Tribune, April 4, 1986. Together with this declaration, the Angolan government made public, most awkwardly for the Reagan Administration, the "Mindelo Act" signed by the two countries in January 1984, wherein the U.S. ostensibly committed itself not to grant any further assistance to UNITA. This was particularly embarrassing for the State Department because the U.S. maintained no diplomatic relations whatsoever with Angola.


5. Summary

After six years of constructive engagement, the contrast between what was originally intended and what was actually achieved yields anything but a positive balance. Neither has Namibia attained its independence nor have the Cuban troops been withdrawn from Angola — on the contrary, they have been reinforced. South Africa is further removed than ever from “evolutionary change”; the influence of the U.S. in southern Africa and the credibility of its foreign policy throughout the continent have sunk to a low point. The American public itself is deeply divided over the events in southern Africa. In scarcely any other area of American foreign policy does the observer of President Reagan’s term of office arrive at a more dismal conclusion. The ironies are many, and in hindsight one might level caustic criticism not only at the Administration and its constructive engagement policy, but at the Congress as well. But this would not come to grips with the far more important questions of why constructive engagement failed and whether, as many argue today, it was “doomed to fail” right from the start.

With dimensions in foreign policy as well as domestic politics, the failure of constructive engagement can be understood in different ways: as the sequence and combination of unforeseen events, as the consequence of faulty premises and inadequate analysis, as a fateful crystallization of social values and political mobilization. The failure was particularly evident in the fact that none of the actors was prepared to play the part Crocker had envisaged: South Africa could not warm up to the idea of having first to make possible and then tolerate a SWAPO government in Windhoek; the Angolan government did not want to run the risk of sending the Cuban troops home without security guarantees from South Africa and the U.S.; Savimbi was not willing to render the presence of Cuban troops superfluous as long as he was not promised a share in power in Luanda; the blacks in South Africa were not prepared to rest content with the elimination of so-called “petty apartheid”; and after 1984, in the absence of discernible success and faced with growing public pressure, Congress could no longer remain patient. The conduct of all these actors demonstrates how constructive engagement failed, but it does not explain why the Administration remained unsuccessful.

It would be disingenuous to claim that all this was foreseeable in 1981. Yet it can be argued that the recognizable risks connected with constructive

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engagement from the start made it seem highly improbable that the ambitious goals could be realized, especially as Crocker was in no position to control the factors that might have minimized these risks. If we compare the publicly available assessments of the Administration with the events between 1981 and 1986, we inevitably come to the conclusion that despite statements to the contrary, the Administration overestimated its influence over events in southern Africa, and that its estimation of the other actors’ interests reflected more its own wishful thinking than what others fully recognized as complex motives and calculations. Contrary to what Crocker had assumed, the Front-line States were entirely willing to accept the consequences of rejecting linkage, because linkage threw into question in the most humiliating way the most sacred elements of African statehood: independence and the right of national self-determination. Moreover, the U.S. was unable to guarantee that these very principles would be respected by South Africa after a withdrawal of Cuban troops. Contrary to what Crocker had assumed, South Africa was not interested primarily in seeing the Cubans go; rather this turned out to be an elastic pretext in Pretoria’s regional calculus. And contrary to what Crocker had supposed, the blacks of South Africa could thoroughly unsettle Botha’s will to continue a steady and resolute reform of apartheid as desired by the U.S. Constructive engagement failed due to these factors. And because the risks that might have doomed constructive engagement could not have remained unapparent to an analysis striving for “a clear reading of events in the area” (Crocker), it can be argued that constructive engagement, under the given circumstances, was doomed to fail from the start.

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62 This last point was probably least predictable. Yet it must be pointed out that in assuming that the blacks of South Africa could not endanger Botha’s position of power, Crocker had simply insufficiently considered the basic condition underlying the Botha “reforms” (namely, acceptance in the white electorate, which was forthcoming only if continued control of state power by the whites were assured).
V Conclusion
Has the Reagan Presidency fulfilled its promise to reverse America’s “self-inflicted” decline? Did the alleged decline of American strength in the 1970s entail a loss of global power or did these processes of change simply weaken American hegemony? Of course a precise delineation of concepts such as strength, power and hegemony is impossible without a definition of their context. The concept of strength itself is ambivalent and elusive, for it can refer to both potentials and their perception. Moreover, it demands a very high level of analysis over various intermediate steps, as with the case studies in this volume. Still, at the end of President Reagan’s second term in office the question is: What has this presidency brought the American nation?

An evaluation of the American political system during the two Reagan Administrations ultimately yields a very mixed picture. Marking nearly a decade of American politics, Reagan’s tenure represents a time of fundamental change; old ways of thinking, models of public interest and approaches to foreign policy were called into question, in some cases rejected, in others reshaped.

From the outset this administration set its major tasks as historical imperatives: to curb the demands of the social welfare state, to reduce the role of government, to renew the economic model of a market society, to restore American strength and contain communism. This is not a modest set of demands; it betrays not just great self-confidence but a measure of presumption. American-neoconservatives of the 1970s had warned against “inflated expectations” (Samuel P. Huntington), but Reagan did not take the advice to heart. On the contrary, his political rhetoric often led to exaggerated expectations and illusions. On the other hand, the American President is expected to direct the nation toward higher goals, to mobilize its will and counter the frustrating heterogeneity of modern life with the heroism of “manifest destiny.”

Can we, then, take Reagan’s claims at face value, or must we consider their function and thus qualify their importance? The contributors to this volume have attempted both. In some instances they have examined rhetorical claims on their own terms, in others these are viewed in light of their specific contexts.
Since the focus of this book is on foreign and security policy, major domestic programs are only touched upon, with no attempt to evaluate them. Discussion of budget policy, however, inevitably raises the interrelationship between defense and foreign economic policy on the one hand and domestic policy on the other.

Before we begin to evaluate the "reconstruction of American strength," though, we should place this term in the context of U.S. foreign and security policy. Although Reagan's agenda contrasted with that of the Nixon Presidency, it seems most plausible to compare the Reagan Administration with its Republican predecessor. After all, a number of Reagan's leading policy makers, such as Secretaries of State Haig and Shultz as well as Defense Secretary Weinberger, held important government positions in the Nixon Administration.

With his Guam speech of 1969 President Nixon attempted to bring the American projection of power back down to rational dimensions in the wake of the Vietnam War. The Nixon Doctrine postulated that American power had to be guided by three basic considerations: American interests, concrete American involvements and American commitments. From this conceptual triad the President reasoned: "Our objective ... is to support our interests over the long run with a sound foreign policy. The more that policy is based on a realistic assessment of our own and others' interests, the more effective our role in the world can be. We are not involved in the world because we have commitments: we have commitments because we are involved. Our interests must shape our commitments, rather than the other way around."

These conclusions did not exhaust the concept's implications, for the President did not discuss the significance of involvements that go beyond U.S. interests and affect historical commitments from earlier, changing sets of interests. But the "triad" is definitive inasmuch as, according to Nixon, there should no longer be a general U.S. commitment to contain communism. This retraction of American power goes hand in hand with more flexible strategies of foreign and security policy, with a more discriminate mix of power projection, intervention and withdrawal. In Chile the Nixon Administration carried out intervention, whereas nuclear superiority was prudently constrained (détente policy) and the retreat from power in Vietnam was backed up by understandings with the Soviet Union and China before the final withdrawal in 1975.

Rhetorically it might appear that the Reagan Administration had reversed the Nixon Doctrine and put forward a general "commitment" of the U.S. In some sense it did revitalize a general U.S. commitment to global containment of communism, articulated at the outset by Secretary of State Haig (Haftendorn). Yet the Reagan Administration never went as far as the administrations before Nixon, that is, to interpret the doctrines of Presidents Truman and...
Kennedy in terms of "military containment." In this respect the lessons of the Vietnam War and the Nixon Doctrine remained binding.

Though in some ways it reinforced the concept of containment, the Reagan Administration did continue the Nixon Doctrine. This is reflected most clearly in the priority given to American interests in foreign and security policy. This administration has not pursued an autonomous globalist policy or independent multilateralism. Rather it has looked within and given primacy to American interests and demands. The “primacy of domestic policy” has been so pronounced that in fact the Reagan Administration has been described as “passive” in foreign and security policy. It has acted when domestic demands or international events made it necessary. Only arms control acquired an importance of its own in the second Reagan Administration because the President apparently wanted to leave his mark here; yet, as several essays show (Staack, Tuschhoff, Paul), arms control policy was also governed by the primacy of domestic concerns.

From this standpoint the “reconstruction of American strength” denotes primarily a strengthening of domestic potentials and perceptions but not of American influence in the international arena. Here, the U.S. simply reacted. Helga Haftendorn has analyzed the various international dimensions of this administration’s policies and concluded that the Reagan Administration failed to realize its claim to leadership: not only did it lack the most important prerequisites for effective leadership, but domestic conflicts and crises undermined the very principles on which it rested. Internationally, then, we cannot speak of a reconstruction of American strength. This assessment is shared by Claudia Wörmann in her comprehensive analysis of foreign economic policy. Here, American leadership amounted to promoting the export of Reagonomics, a policy which assumed that realizing Reagonomics nationally would quasi-automatically strengthen the U.S. position in the international economy. The long-term consequence in this perhaps most important area of international policy cannot be characterized as a “reconstruction of American strength.”

On the other hand, Jakob Schissler and Werner Schmidt see a partial reconstruction of American strength in the revitalization of political values and culture. And yet the Reagan Administration has reinvigorated traditional patterns of U.S. political culture, such as the liberal tradition, which are well received within the U.S., but abroad entail a rejection of demands (free trade philosophy) and a retreat from multilateral action.

That the domestic perspective prevails in American foreign and security policy is documented also by Michael Staack’s analysis of how American elites changed the foreign policy agenda in the latter half of the 1970s and then during the Reagan Administration. Staack concludes that arms control policy
was initially determined by staunch opponents and more flexible critics of détente, allied across a distinct spectrum of U.S. opinion. Not until the Freeze movement emerged in protest against the stagnation of American arms control policy did Reagan and his arms control experts address the domestic demands for a constructive approach to arms control. Similarly, the abrogation of the SALT II treaty, justified with reference to Soviet treaty violations, can be explained more as a response to domestic demands than as a result of new threat assessments. Exceeding the SALT limitations had to do with developments in arms technology, that is, with the internal structure of defense planning, and not with a "concerted" response to the Soviet military threat. Perceptions of the Soviet threat continue to shape the way the Reagan elite views the world (Christian Tuschhoff), yet these perspectives play a limited role in determining foreign policy. They assume considerably more importance for the evolution of an American attitude and "morality" toward the global rival, and for justifying defense budgets, than the general notion of a reconstruction of American strength.

Strengthening U.S. military capabilities through increased defense spending is the third and most important element of reconstruction efforts, next to renewed self-confidence and a "clear" view of the Soviet threat. With the nominal and real increases in the defense budget, the Reagan Administration achieved what it regarded as its greatest success; this does not stand up, however, to Andreas Fürt's critical examination. The budgetary commitments of 1981 have in the long run created more problems than they have solved. High defense budgets drastically increased the federal deficit and, as Fürt emphasizes, did not contribute to a proportionate strengthening of American defense capabilities. Their military value appears rather low, especially for evident want of a binding military strategy.

Strategies are not always so readily apparent, but can remain unformulated, or rather be conceived deep in the inner sanctum of American defense planning. The magnitude of the institutional machinery that has developed, particularly in the Defense Department, and the corresponding budget allocations fostered the kind of latitude that assures long-term security policy planning through institutional continuity. In his study of the deep cuts proposals on strategic nuclear weapons Michael Paul discerns both direction and ambiguity, or rather functional equivalence, which has nothing to do with the ideological underpinnings of arms control rhetoric.

The Reagan Presidency's enhanced control over war powers (Schissler) defies both direct congressional influence and the moods of the public. Though long-term commitments of American forces continue to be encumbered by the War Powers Resolution, the President has gained more power over decisions on short-term engagements (Grenada, international terrorism, Libya).
Karsten Zimmermann's essay on the genesis of the Strategic Defense Initiative reveals the subtle ways in which certain projects acquire political definition through careful, domestically determined calculations. A number of developments converged in late 1982 and early 1983 to bring the President to launch his famous initiative and thus register his administration's trade mark. SDI has since assumed unexpected importance in international politics.

It would of course be mistaken to overestimate the impact of domestic considerations and deny political autonomy in the origins and development of some designs of Reagan's security policy. Yet the fate of these very policies does point to the preponderance of American domestic policy. In his analysis of the first workable arms control proposal for the INF negotiations, namely, the Nitze-Kvitsinsky "walk in the woods," Christian Tuschhoff shows that there was greater room for creativity in foreign policy than subsequent outcomes would suggest. However, this first concrete negotiating proposal on intermediate-range missiles fell into the snares of bureaucratic politics in Washington and probably in Moscow too; the attempt at an independent experts policy came to a dismal end. In U.S. policy toward South Africa Gunther Hellmann points up similar developments: leading officials in the State Department could work out interesting and well thought out models for resolving a major international conflict, but these were then stymied by very parochial political forces. In this case they were thwarted by the opposition of Senator Helms and rendered unworkable by the force of domestic interests in Congress. The Nixon Doctrine's concept of interest was thus exposed as a euphemism.

On the other hand, domestic interests, successfully articulated as bureaucratic politics, can work to shape and establish policy while gaining independence as ideological "iron triangles" in the existing administrative structures. Jörg Boltersdorf analyzes the empire that Richard Perle and other leading Pentagon officials had established on matters of technology transfer, linking the Defense Department, Congress and neo-conservative groups. Under certain premises the control of technology transfer served to strengthen security policy. But though the efforts to impose American controls on other nations were not entirely unsuccessful, the principal advantages appeared in the domestic sphere. The effects on the international environment, as Hanns-Dieter Jacobsen illustrates in the case of COCOM, were of course not conducive to developing multilateral policy, i.e., to consensus building processes. Since 1986 the Reagan Administration's unilateral technology control policy, defined primarily from a military standpoint, has been criticized both by business interests and a national science establishment interested in information exchange (Wörmann, Boltersdorf, Jacobsen).

The essays in this volume, then, demonstrate the dominant influence of domestic concerns in the making of foreign and security policy. Their analysis
of the impact of the various policies on the international environment tends to depict American power as exerting a lesser, counterproductive or non-existent influence. Hence, in the areas of policy we have analyzed, we should look to test the hypothesis of a reconstruction of American strength in terms of its domestic impact.

The question is now, has the President strengthened both the potentials and the perceptions of the American nation to a degree that we can speak of a “reconstruction of American strength”? The preceding analyses come to the conclusion that the Reagan Presidency has rather failed to solve the great domestic and global economic problems and thus in the long run has probably weakened the American nation. The President has exercised domestic leadership only in the sense that he addressed public demands (the Freeze) or those of Congress (the budget) and then promised leadership — but the Reagan Presidency was not an active one.

The President strengthened American capabilities in those areas of policy designed to renew the nation’s self-confidence and where a strengthening of American values and U.S. military potentials was called for. As for the “rhetorical presidency” (Zimmermann), particularly with respect to SDI, he established a “new frontier” and new hopes, if only for his term in office.

Technology control policy, like the changes in war powers, have within certain limits also strengthened the authority of the security policy apparatus and its leading figure, the President. The results of arms control policy, especially the INF treaty, will represent this administration’s proudest achievement in foreign and security policy. The success of this policy surely has to be interpreted — with all due caution — as a sign of strength. The international aspects of technology and monetary policy were in some sense successful also, as a number of countries adopted the American standards.

As it is understood here, American strength has to do with increased, decreased or maintained potentials and perceptions that are viewed as elements of power. The conclusion, in terms of a reconstruction of American strength carried out largely at home, is that the United States during the Reagan Administration has enhanced its strength in some areas, though probably not the key ones, while in areas of long-term importance “non-decision” has created serious structural weaknesses. All in all, during the eight Reagan years the U.S. was able to maintain its level of strength; however, the potential gains were largely nullified by what in the long run appear striking deficiencies. For the U.S. to sustain itself both at home and abroad, it has caused upheavals in international economic and monetary policy which could prove very detrimental both to the international system and to American interests.

We can therefore conclude that American hegemony has continued to decline in the Western world. Hegemony, according to Keohane, denotes a political
system with inherent elements of compulsion but which must still build upon the understanding and cooperation of client states. With its pronounced domestic orientation the Reagan Administration has scarcely attempted to stop the decline of American hegemony. In the realm of international economic relations its pursuit of national interests has further weakened the existing regimes. By deciding important questions in a unilateral rather than multilateral way, it has failed to defend its hegemony in other foreign and security policy contexts, most likely because to this administration the price of creating international order appeared too high. Instead, it has tried to “close ranks” in the hope that reducing U.S. hegemony will not diminish its power; for decline in hegemony does entail a loss in indirect power but can help establish new direct means of power. The Reagan Administration attempted to effect precisely these trade-offs between abrogating hegemonial obligations on the one hand and increasing new power positions on the other. As to the “reconstruction of American strength” we must conclude that there has been no appreciable increase in strength, but that the Reagan Administration has guided the “ship of state” in stormy seas better than many critics had predicted at the start of this presidency.
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