

The Intellectual Roots of Reagan's Strategy

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to develop a useful, accurate and complete definition of grand strategy, to apply that definition to the grand strategy of the Reagan administration, to identify the intellectual roots of this strategy and to explain how this strategy was developed and implemented. While current strategic thought captures much of the essence of grand strategy, existing definitions are inadequate. This study argues that grand strategy is the planned use of all available tools of statecraft to achieve first-order national goals based on a given understanding or belief regarding the nature of the international system.

In applying this definition to the Reagan administration, it becomes clear that the administration pursued a radically different strategy for dealing with the Cold War. Among the key elements of this strategy was its focus on victory in, rather than management of, the Cold War, its ideological campaign against communism and its pursuit of the liberation of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union itself. Key to this strategy was the recognition that the Cold War was fundamentally a political struggle between two incompatible political systems and that, therefore, Western victory would require the political defeat of communism. A close examination demonstrates that each element of the Reagan strategy mirrors the thinking of important post-WWII conservative foreign policy strategists.

The key individual in developing this strategy was Reagan himself. Contrary to much of the conventional wisdom, Reagan had very clear, well-thought out ideas about foreign policy and understood exactly what he wanted to accomplish. The oft-reported clashes among his advisors was, in virtually every case, over how to implement Reagan's strategy, not what the strategy itself should be.

This study concludes with some observations about the nature of grand strategy and the role of the individual statesman in the development of grand strategy. It argues that grand strategy cannot be thought of as a given, but rather flows from the national leader's underlying beliefs, central goals and preferred tools. It posits that a greater emphasis on understanding these components of grand strategy will improve our understanding of international affairs.

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Chapter 1: Defining Grand Strategy

Introduction

The late 1970s and early 1980s were times of tremendous change in US national security policy. A nation humbled by its demeaning withdrawal from Vietnam in 1973, wracked with indecision and distrust following the revelations of Watergate, and increasingly concerned about Soviet advances in the Third World began to seek a new direction and more vigorous national strategy by the beginning of the 1980 presidential election. In November 1980, Ronald Reagan was overwhelmingly elected the 40th President of the United States, in large part due to the perception that he had a better strategic vision for standing up to Soviet pressure.

The foreign policy of the Reagan administration has been the subject of countless books, articles and analyses, which have congealed to form the conventional history of the administration which is so prevalent today. This conventional history tends to take one of two forms. For some, the very notion that the Reagan administration developed and implemented a genuine grand strategy is unthinkable,¹ thus rendering the search for its underlying base pointless. This version of conventional history, probably the most common, is rooted in the idea that Reagan knew virtually nothing about such matters and was therefore easily swayed by individuals within his administration. In this view, Reagan himself amounted to little more than (as Clark Clifford once put it) an “amiable dunce” whose decisions were “based on instinct and deeply rooted prejudices, and

¹ See, for example, John Karaagac, *Between Promise and Policy: Ronald Reagan and Conservative Reformism* (Landham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000), 39 or Charles W. Kegley, Jr. and Eugene R. Wittkopf, “The Reagan Administration’s World View,” *Orbis* 26, No. 1 (1982): 223-244.

[whose] advisors often tend[ed] to tailor their recommendations to fit his presumed views and biases.”² Reagan, his critics claim, relied heavily on his subordinates to explain foreign policy to him and “did not really understand the foreign policy debates swirling around him.”³ As a result, Reagan is depicted as little more than a figurehead, who chose from a carefully screened list of foreign policy options, but who made no meaningful intellectual contribution to his own foreign policy.⁴ At best, Reagan is described as an “inside-out sandwich,” with a set of strong beliefs and great political skill, but completely ignorant of foreign policy issues.⁵ Those holding this view of the Reagan presidency argue that his ignorance of foreign affairs, when combined with his allegedly extreme beliefs, essentially drove US foreign policy down a path far removed from the accepted, mainstream approach.

Others, holding an only slightly more charitable view of Reagan, attempt to find the sources of the administration’s strategy in the bureaucratic politics and personalities clashes within his administration. In this view, it is not Reagan’s supposedly simplistic ideas or prejudices which caused his administration’s radical departure from a mainstream foreign policy, but rather Reagan’s alleged inability to control the internal struggles within his administration. The fact that there were deep divisions within the Reagan administration is well-known, with conventional wisdom listing the factions as the “pragmatists” (George Shultz, Jim Baker, Michael Deaver) versus the “Reaganauts”

² Alexander Dallin and Gail W. Lapidus, “Reagan and the Russians: United States Policy Towards the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe,” in *Eagle Defiant: United States Foreign Policy in the 1980s*, eds. Kenneth A. Oye, Robert J. Lieber and Donald Rothchild (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1983), 202.

³ Karaagac, 58.

⁴ Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 362-3.

⁵ Godfrey Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up: A History of the Conservative Ascendancy in America*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996), 246.

(Caspar Weinberger, William Casey, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Edwin Meese).⁶ Those holding this view of the Reagan administration argued that both “pragmatists” and “Reaganauts” were convinced that they represented the “real Reagan,” and they therefore viewed any policy decision which they did not support as a result of bureaucratic politics or personal betrayal. Analysts holding this view argued that Reagan’s unwillingness to take sides in the struggle led to a erratic, inconsistent and unpredictable foreign policy.⁷ According to these conventional accounts, it was not until Reagan decided (sometime during his second term) to side with the so-called “pragmatists” that anything resembling a “real” foreign policy emerged.

These two depictions of the Reagan administration have existed since its earliest days, and have achieved an almost-unquestioned validity among many scholars.⁸ Yet the plausibility of both descriptions of the Reagan strategy have come under increasing scrutiny in recent years, as scholars have challenged Reagan’s alleged ignorance of foreign affairs by releasing Reagan’s own writings on the subject. A recent series of books have provided unprecedeted insight into Reagan’s personal views on a number of topics, to include foreign policy.⁹ These writings reveal a Reagan far different from the commonly-held caricatures of Reagan as either an intellectually empty ideologue or a closet “moderate” captured by his “hardline” advisors. Instead, recent scholarship proves

⁶ See Cannon, 306, for an example of this too-common (and deeply flawed) categorization of Reagan administration officials.

⁷ George Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State*, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1993), 267.

⁸ In fact, Cannon’s book (which is widely considered one of the most “accurate” biographies of Reagan) perpetuates both of these flawed views at various points throughout his book. See, for example, his denigration of Reagan’s intellect (137-8), knowledge of foreign affairs (295), management style (182) and decision-making (363).

⁹ Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Anderson and Martin Anderson, eds., *Reagan, In His Own Hand: The Writings of Ronald Reagan That Reveal His Revolutionary Vision for America*, (New York: The Free Press, 2001), *Reagan: A Life In Letters* (New York: The Free Press, 2003) and *Reagan’s Path To Victory: The Shaping of Ronald Reagan’s Vision: Selected Writings*, (New York: Free Press, 2004).

that Reagan had a very clear understanding of American foreign policy and had already outlined, in his own mind, long before entering office the direction in which he would ultimate lead his country. Unsurprisingly, his foreign policy thinking mirrors closely the thought of a number of key conservative strategists who shared his ideological perspective. His writings also reveal that, contrary to the claims of some, his views on foreign policy did not change appreciably, nor did Reagan feel any need to side with either the “pragmatists” or the “Reaganauts.” Rather, Reagan pursued the course that he believed to be right, based on his own beliefs and foreign policy goals. While recognizing the need for making pragmatic tradeoffs in foreign affairs, Reagan never allowed such tradeoffs to moderate his determination to achieve his key goals. While philosophically committed to conservatism, he was completely willing to sacrifice ideological purity for real results. In truth, Reagan played the central role in his administration’s strategy, a role which will be more thoroughly explored in Chapter 6.

The specific goal of this study is to explain the development and implementation of grand strategy during the early years of the Reagan administration by focusing on President Reagan and his key foreign policy advisors. After defining grand strategy, it will identify the key components of the Reagan administration’s strategy, paying particular attention to Reagan’s efforts to roll back the Soviet empire and destroy the Soviet state. This study will then demonstrate the intellectual linkage between Reagan’s strategy and the gradual evolution of post-World War II conservative strategic thought. Finally, it will explain the roles Reagan and his closest advisors played in creating and implementing this fundamentally different strategic concept.

In order to conduct such analysis, however, grand strategy must be defined clearly and accurately. The goal of this chapter, then, is to examine the long history of strategic thought and, from this thought, derive the elemental principles of grand strategy.

Defining Grand Strategy

The notion of “grand strategy” is, in at least one respect, similar to the concept of “God.” Most people readily accept its existence, but precious few can actually discuss its meaning intelligently. Too often, careless thinkers equate grand strategy to “foreign policy” or “military capabilities.” To do so is inaccurate and misleading, similar to confusing the blueprints of a house with the lumber and hammers used to put up the walls. In order to reduce this confusion, to define clearly the nature of grand strategy and to lay the foundation for further analysis, it is necessary to review the thinking of true strategists, ranging from ancient China to the present, and derive from their thoughts some basic characteristics of grand strategy.

Sun Tzu

Little need be said about the importance of Sun Tzu to any discussion of grand strategy. The fact that he remains relevant today is powerful evidence in support of the idea that strategy is a timeless art which is influenced, but not fundamentally altered, by social or technological change. More than any other author discussed here, Sun Tzu emphasizes the breadth of grand strategy and the importance of political, economic and social factors, as well as the role of the individual. His strong preference for pre-war strategic victory, his development of the notions of strategic position and strategic

advantage, as well as his emphasis on the importance of command offer important lessons about the nature of strategic conflict and the formulation of grand strategy.

Unlike modern strategic literature, which tends to focus heavily on the relationship between the military instrument and the goals of the state, Sun Tzu argues for a more comprehensive view of grand strategy by emphasizing the possibility of achieving the goals of the state without resorting to military conflict. In fact, he states that “to win a hundred victories in a hundred battles is not the highest excellence; the highest excellence is to subdue the enemy’s army without fighting at all.”¹⁰ This reluctance to rely on military force reflects, in large part, the recognition that military conflict is both economically devastating to the state and fraught with uncertainty. For this reason, Sun Tzu argues that the best forms of victory are defeating the opponent’s strategy and destroying the opponent’s alliances, both of which require the use of nonmilitary tools (though likely backed by military force). Only when these efforts fail should the political leader resort to force.

In his discussions of planning and conducting the battle, Sun Tzu develops two important concepts which offer valuable insights into the nature of grand strategic conflict: strategic position and strategic advantage. Sun Tzu describes strategic position as the line between weakness and strength,¹¹ and roughly equates it to the placement and relative strength of one’s forces. Translated to the level of grand strategy, strategic position is the systematic assessment and deployment of a state’s various instruments of power, somewhat similar to the modern concept of “net assessments.”¹² Unlike a net

¹⁰ Sun Tzu (translated by Roger T. Ames), *Sun Tzu: The Art of Warfare* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 111.

¹¹ Sun Tzu, 120.

¹² I am indebted to Dr. Carnes Lord for this analogy.

assessment, however, a state's strategic position is greatly influenced by the specific actions taken by the leadership and is constantly changing. For this reason, the skilled general (or statesman) is always attempting to mask his own strategic position, while determining that of his adversary.

Strategic advantage is closely related to strategic position and is described as "making the most of favorable conditions and tilting the scales in [one's] favor."¹³ In order to achieve a strategic advantage, then, the leader must make the best use of his strengths in the proper place at the proper time. The use of strategic advantage, therefore, requires both skill and timing. "The strategic advantage ... of the expert commander in exploiting his men in battle can be likened to rolling round boulders down a steep ravine thousands of feet high."¹⁴ His placement of the "boulders" at the top of the ravine is strategic position. His unleashing them at the proper moment is strategic advantage.

The preceding discussion of strategic position and advantage also highlights the importance Sun Tzu places on the individual general or statesman. Without a wise and talented leader, an army (or a state) is in danger and its strategic position meaningless. A foolish commander (or statesman) will often squander a superior strategic position, while a skilled leader can maximize his chances of victory by creating a strategic advantage from a weak strategic position. Sun Tzu repeatedly focuses on the importance of the leader and his knowledge of the struggle, insisting that "he who knows the enemy and himself will never in a hundred battles be at risk... [but] he who knows neither the enemy nor himself will be at risk in every battle."¹⁵ While he was certainly well aware of

¹³ Sun Tzu, 104.

¹⁴ Sun Tzu, 121.

¹⁵ Sun Tzu, 113.

material concerns and limitations in the conduct of war, he does not consider them as important as the “intangibles.” In fact, it is worth noting that Sun Tzu lists quality of leadership ahead of more material concerns such as troop strength in assessing the likelihood of victory.¹⁶

At the same time, however, Sun Tzu’s approach to grand strategy has important limitations. First, while far broader in scope than any other notable writing on the subject, *The Art of War* does not attempt to apply some of Sun Tzu’s core concepts beyond the battlefield. It would have been quite illuminating, for example, to examine political negotiations in terms of strategic position and strategic advantage. Second, and more importantly, Sun Tzu’s “model” of strategic development relies heavily on the notion of rationality. Despite his emphasis on the strategic value of deception and deceit, his method of assessing strategic position (“the temple rehearsal of the battle”¹⁷) suggests an underlying assumption that near-perfect knowledge is possible. In this rational model of strategic development, he leaves little room for instinct, intuition or beliefs. Yet, in the real world, such beliefs are critical, as they are the filters through which the statesman interprets the world. For this reason, Sun Tzu’s view of grand strategy requires augmentation and modification to better reflect the climate of uncertainty in which strategic decisions are made and the role of individuals in the strategy-making process.

Carl von Clausewitz

No examination of strategy is complete without a discussion and analysis of the one of the greatest strategic thinkers in human history: Clausewitz. No other individual

¹⁶ Sun Tzu, 104.

¹⁷ Sun Tzu, 105.

has had such a wide-ranging impact on modern strategic thought. While Clausewitz never directly addressed the nature of grand strategy, his insights into the nature of war are, on the whole, readily transferable into the realm of strategic conflict. Provided his theory is approached carefully and with appropriate caveats, Clausewitz remains a valuable tool in understanding grand strategy.

By far the most widely recognized message of *On War* is Clausewitz's insistence that "war should never be thought of as *something autonomous* but always as an *instrument of policy*."¹⁸ By pointing out both the centrality of politics (or policy) in the conduct of war and the fact that strategy is defined as "the use of engagements for the object of the war,"¹⁹ Clausewitz recognizes the inherent necessity of political control over strategy. Given that the same political authority which sets the goals and strategy of war also commands the other forms of national power, one can reasonably infer from his writings that he recognizes the need for an integrated, consistent grand strategy (even if he would not use that term).

A second important strategic legacy of Clausewitz is the notion of "centers of gravity," which he describes as "the hub of all power and movement, ... the point against which all our energies should be directed."²⁰ In his view, repeated blows against these centers of gravity, which consist of the most important assets and critical strengths of the adversary, represent the surest path to victory. In most cases, an opponent's main center of gravity is his military. While Clausewitz himself focused on the use of military force against these (primarily military) centers of gravity, it is entirely consistent with his

¹⁸ Carl von Clausewitz (edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret), *On War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 88 (emphasis in original).

¹⁹ Clausewitz, 128.

²⁰ Clausewitz, 595-6.

theory to broaden both the types of “attacks” launched against these points (to include nonmilitary “forces”) and the types of points targeted (to include important nonmilitary assets). It is also generally consistent with his approach to consider an adversary’s critical weaknesses as centers of gravity, provided that attacking these targets will, in some way, contribute to his defeat. In this way, what Clausewitz largely views as a operational, military idea translates relatively easily into a valuable grand strategic concept.

Clausewitz’s emphasis on “military genius” is likewise readily translated into important principles at the grand strategic level. Unlike many other strategic writers (both then and now), Clausewitz openly acknowledges the critical importance of the commander and makes a useful effort to describe the qualities most desirable in a military leader. By logical extension, the same qualities which contribute to the success of a military campaign should have some relevance at the level of grand strategy. Indeed, two prerequisites for the successful military commander-in-chief are statesmanship and a clear understanding of the state’s political situation and goals.²¹ Similarly, Clausewitz highlights the importance of intuition as well as “determination, firmness, staunchness, and strength of character,” while pointing out that a truly successful commander also requires “a sense of unity and a power of judgment raised to a marvelous pitch of vision.”²² Although he does not specifically address grand strategy in this regard, the fact that he stresses these characteristics as necessary conditions for success under the stress of war indicates that he values similar qualities in higher-level political leaders.

Despite these invaluable contributions to the field of grand strategic thought, however, not all of Clausewitz’s theoretical approaches translate well into the realm of

²¹ Clausewitz, 111-2.

²² Clausewitz, 112.

grand strategy, nor does he offer much insight into the formulation of grand strategy. These deficiencies are hardly surprising, since his focus is almost exclusively on war itself, not its precursors or its aftermath. For example, while one can translate his military-based definition of strategy (“the use of engagements for the object of the war”) into nonmilitary terms, not all of Clausewitz’s elements of strategy, namely the “moral, physical, mathematical, geographical, and statistical,”²³ have readily identifiable applications beyond the military realm. While the moral element of human intellect and psychology is certainly omnipresent and the physical element can be roughly equated to the power of the tool being used, it is difficult to see how geometry (the mathematical), terrain (the geographical) or logistics (the statistical) can be applied to political or economic forms of conflict.

The most fundamental danger in relying solely on Clausewitz for a comprehensive approach to grand strategy is the fact that, while recognizing the political nature of war, Clausewitz deliberately omits any discussion of the making of policy or grand strategy. This limitation is recognized even by Clausewitz’s many supporters, who recognize that “[w]ar is about policy, but *On War* is not.”²⁴ Explicitly accepting the ultimate goals of the state as given, he makes no attempt to discuss the various factors which influence policy formulation or grand strategy. Instead, it is enough for the military commander to “be familiar with the higher state of affairs and its innate policies.”²⁵ While it is not clear that such an explanation should be expected or would

²³ Clausewitz, 183.

²⁴ Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 106.

²⁵ Clausewitz, 146.

even have been appropriate at the time of his writing, this omission nevertheless requires those studying the development of grand strategy to seek other, supplemental sources.

B.H. Liddell Hart

The catastrophic loss of life resulting from the First World War encouraged a number of authors to reassess the state of existing strategic thought and seek innovative approaches to preventing similar wars in the future. Of these authors, none was more important than the British strategist, Basil Henry Liddell Hart. In his writings, he criticized his predecessors for misinterpreting and misusing Clausewitz's writings, noting that they had confused means and end, leading them to believe that "in war every other consideration should be subordinated to the aim of fighting a decisive battle."²⁶ Instead, he argued that the "indirect approach" offered a better, more economical and more assured method of defeating an adversary than the massive, force-on-force clashes which characterized World War I. While there are some important weaknesses in Liddell Hart's thinking, his indirect approach offers some valuable insights into grand strategy.

Liddell Hart's most noteworthy innovation to strategic thought, his notion of the "indirect approach," has useful applications in thinking about grand strategy. For Liddell Hart, the indirect approach offered a way around the meaningless and indecisive clashes of the First World War. In essence, he argued that earlier strategists had wrongly assumed that Clausewitz's "centers of gravity" were those areas of key national strength, specifically the nation's army. Instead, he argued that nations should use the indirect approach of attacking an enemy's critical weaknesses.²⁷ Rather than waste one's strength

²⁶ B.H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2nd revised ed. (London: Faber & Faber Ltd.), 1967.

²⁷ Liddell Hart, 212.

trying to destroy the forces of an adversary, he argued that targeting “the internal organs and nerve-system” of a state, namely its “stability of control, morale, and supply” were a more effective method of achieving victory.²⁸ While Liddell Hart saw the indirect approach as a guide to the use of military force on the battlefield, the concept can also readily be applied to the use of all elements of national power to achieve national objectives. The careful targeting of an adversary’s critical vulnerabilities offers a state the greatest chance of achieving its strategic goals.

In addition to his notion of the indirect approach, Liddell Hart offers two other valuable insights into the development of grand strategy. First, he highlights the critical importance of understanding the adversary’s psychology and way of thinking, both as a way of improving one’s chances of victory on the battlefield and as a guide to ensuring a stable and lasting peace following a military conflict.²⁹ While he never really applies this approach to his discussion of grand strategy, this emphasis on the beliefs and values of the adversary must be a central element of any useful grand strategy. Second, his repeatedly-expressed concern about ensuring that one’s economic and military means are sufficient to achieve one’s political ends serves as an important reminder that the statesman must regularly reassess his grand strategy to ensure that its goals can be achieved at an acceptable cost.

At the same time, however, Liddell Hart’s writings on grand strategy itself leave much to be desired. His greatest shortcoming is his failure to apply the concepts he developed at the level of military strategy to the higher level of grand strategy. In fact, he states in his discussion of grand strategy that “while grand strategy should control

²⁸ Liddell Hart, 212.

²⁹ Liddell Hart, 235, 358.

strategy, its principles often run counter to those which prevail in the field of strategy,”³⁰ yet he offers no explanation as to how he reached that conclusion. In an earlier chapter, he notes that “it should be the aim of grand strategy to discover and pierce the Achilles’ heel of the opposing government’s power to make war.”³¹ Yet, in his later discussions of grand strategy, this idea is never developed further or even mentioned. Instead, he equates grand strategy to “war policy”³² and gives only cursory treatment to the nature of grand strategy. His discussions of “conservative” and “acquisitive” states generates no real insight into the nature of grand strategy, other than to note that acquisitive states, by seeking to change the international order, must accept a greater risk of failure than conservative states.³³ In summary, while his “indirect approach” offers a critically valuable tool, Liddell Hart’s own writings on grand strategy do relatively little to enhance the study of grand strategy, nor do they discuss or acknowledge the critical role leaders play in its development.

André Beaufre

Building on the work of Liddell Hart, French General André Beaufre, writing in the early 1960s, sought to expand the notion of strategic conflict to include more subtle, nuanced forms, to include “indirect strategy.”³⁴ By focusing on targeting the will of the opponent and emphasizing the importance of both the military and nonmilitary components of national power, his insights are of tremendous value in the analysis of

³⁰ Liddell Hart, 353.

³¹ Liddell Hart, 212.

³² Liddell Hart, 353.

³³ Liddell Hart, 355.

³⁴ André Beaufre, *An Introduction to Strategy* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1965), 43.

grand strategy. Nevertheless, Beaufre's decision to focus his analytical skills on the nature of strategy prevents him from addressing the centrality of the statesman in the development and implementation of grand strategy.

Perhaps Beaufre's most important insight into the nature of grand strategy (which he preferred to label “total strategy”³⁵) is his recognition that there was far more to strategic thought than theorizing about the impact of military power. Beaufre argues that states can choose, depending on their specific goals and circumstance, from two main types of grand strategy: “direct strategy,” which he characterizes as heavily Clausewitzean conflict based on the threat or use of military force, and “indirect strategy,” which he explicitly states tend to make extensive use of political or economic power.³⁶ Furthermore, he recognizes the need for an “overall strategy,” directly beneath the level of total strategy, for each component of national power.³⁷ By making clear the importance of nonmilitary approaches to national security problems, he encourages genuine strategic thought.

The other major contribution which Beaufre has made to the field of strategic thought is his elaboration of the two components of any strategy: the “selection of the decisive point (this depends on the enemy’s vulnerable points)” and the “selection of the preparatory manoeuvre [sic] which will enable this decisive point to be reached.”³⁸ While his notion of decisive points is very similar to Clausewitz’s centers of gravity, his focus on an enemy’s weaknesses, rather than his strengths, is noteworthy and represents a true innovation from Clausewitzean thinking. In combination with his enthusiasm for indirect

³⁵ Beaufre, 30.

³⁶ Beaufre, 43-4.

³⁷ Beaufre, 31.

³⁸ Beaufre, 34-5.

strategy and his recognition of the possible efficacy of nonmilitary power, this characterization of strategy is easily adaptable to grand strategic conflict in which political, economic or ideological force can successfully be applied to an adversary's weaknesses.

Despite these immensely valuable insights, *An Introduction to Strategy* does not seek to explore the role of the statesman in strategic development. In fact, Beaufre treats the creation of total strategy in very abstract terms and, by artificially dividing policy from strategy,³⁹ clearly chooses to avoid any attempt at listing or prioritizing the various "ingredients" which go into strategy. Instead, he chooses to state that "strategy is no more than a means to an end. It is for policy to lay down the aims to be achieved by strategy, and policy is governed basically by the philosophy which we wish to see prevail. The destiny of the human race depends upon the philosophy which it chooses and upon the strategy by which it tries to ensure that that philosophy shall prevail."⁴⁰ By ignoring "philosophy" and its source, the statesman, Beaufre is ultimately unable to explain the importance of these critical aspects of grand strategy.

Edward Luttwak

In the modern era, few have contributed as much to the rigorous, systematic study of strategic thought as Edward Luttwak, whose insights into the "paradoxical logic of strategy,"⁴¹ the various levels of strategy and the impact of strategic thinking on international relations have truly revolutionized the field. Nevertheless, while his analysis

³⁹ Beaufre, 134.

⁴⁰ Beaufre, 50.

⁴¹ Edward N. Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1987), 7.

illuminates important aspects of grand strategy, Luttwak is less successful in explaining why grand strategy develops in some settings, yet not in others. This shortcoming is a result of his unwillingness to consider the ultimate source of grand strategy: national leadership.

In his book, Luttwak slowly works his way through the four lower levels of strategy –technical, tactical, operational and theater —before unveiling his notion of grand strategy, in which:

the interactions of the lower, military levels ... yield final results within the broad setting of international politics, in further interaction with the nonmilitary transactions of states; the formal exchanges of diplomacy, the public communications of propaganda, secret operations, the perceptions of others formed by intelligence official and unofficial, and all economic transactions of more than purely private significance.⁴²

By setting forth this broad, encompassing description of the components of grand strategy, Luttwak ensures that the critically important elements of diplomacy, intelligence and economics are considered in any discussion of grand strategy, while carefully excluding the truly trivial.

It is at the level of grand strategy that another of Luttwak's useful concepts emerges, namely the critical importance of understanding what he calls the “vertical and horizontal dimensions” of strategy.⁴³ The vertical dimension of strategy reflects an understanding that success or failure at the technical, tactical, operation, theater or grand-strategic level has a direct impact on the likelihood of success or failure at the other levels, while the horizontal dimension focuses on the fact that strategy is conducted against adversaries seeking to advance their own interests with their own strategies.⁴⁴

⁴² Luttwak, 179.

⁴³ Luttwak, xii.

⁴⁴ Luttwak, xii.

While the vertical and horizontal dimensions of strategy are present at all levels, they become most influential at the level of grand strategy. These two dimensions represent the competing forces which make the development and implementation of grand strategy such a difficult task. Not only must the statesman deal with unforeseen developments and problems which undermine his ability to implement his strategy, but he must also deal with an opponent capable of responding to and frustrating his strategy.

Luttwak's final significant contribution to grand strategic thought is his emphasis on the paradoxical logic of strategy and the inherent difficulty states have in thinking and acting strategically. At the military level, paradoxical logic tends to make the easy, obvious choice dangerous (since it is likely to be defended by the enemy), while making the obscure, difficult choice attractive.⁴⁵ A similar logic exists at all levels of strategic interaction. Knowing that the direct pursuit of their true goals will likely generate resistance, diplomats, trade ministers and spies all attempt to achieve their goals, at least in part, by following the path of least resistance. Naturally, one's adversary is likely pursuing precisely the same course, thus leading to the move-countermove dynamic characteristic of all strategic conflict. It is because of this paradoxical logic that such seemingly contradictory statements as "if you want peace, prepare for war" illuminate so much about the nature of strategy.

Due, in large part, to the seemingly contradictory tenets of strategic thought, Luttwak argues that "very few of the states that participate in international politics have a thought-out grand strategy of their own."⁴⁶ This paucity of true grand strategic thought is due, at least in part, to the inherently differences between the linear logic of domestic

⁴⁵ Luttwak, 7.

⁴⁶ Luttwak, 178.

politics and the paradoxical logic of strategy.⁴⁷ This problem poses special challenges for democratic governments, which are generally unaccustomed to the sort of deception and misdirection necessary to pursue a strategic policy. In democracies, for example, the presence of political opponents, the press and public scrutiny make it difficult for leaders to pursue “policies that can so easily be branded as illogical and contradictory.”⁴⁸ A democracy’s general preference for rational, linear logic, then, can put it at a distinct disadvantage in a strategic conflict with a dictatorship.

Despite these important insights into the nature of strategic thought, however, Luttwak’s theory ultimately fails to provide answers to some of the most critical issues in any exploration of grand strategy. First, since his theory focuses solely on the nature of strategic logic, Luttwak does not address the necessary conditions for state-level grand strategy, nor does he suggest any meaningful role for the individual in the development of grand strategy. Given his argument that many states, especially democratic ones, lack any meaningful grand strategy, some explanation for why some states do develop grand strategies while others do not is certainly in order. Second, as Luttwak is preoccupied with the role of military force in his exploration of the nature of strategy, he does not discuss how to think about or apply his lower levels of strategy –technical, tactical, operational and theater –beyond the military instrument of national power, nor does he explain the connections between military and nonmilitary strategy below the grand strategic level.

Finally, one must recognize the practical constraints on using paradoxical logic at the level of grand strategy, of which two are worthy of mention. First, it is not entirely

⁴⁷ Luttwak, 182-3.

⁴⁸ Luttwak, 234.

clear how to reconcile Luttwak's emphasis on strategy's paradoxical logic with the (seemingly obvious) need for a grand strategy which is internally coherent and mutually reinforcing. History is littered with the bones of states, such as Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, which failed to ensure that their political, economic and military policies supported one another. Even today, a high degree of policy cohesion is critical to the success of a state's international efforts. For example, the uneven history of American covert action programs has given rise to the widespread acceptance that, "to be effective, it must be a part of a well-coordinated policy."⁴⁹ Similar "rules" exist for the use of military force, diplomacy and economic policies. Thus, rather than enhancing strategic performance, following a paradoxical approach in implementing national policy may lead to little more than wasted resources and strategic failure.

Second, while the paradox is an important and useful theoretical concept with a great many practical applications, any statesman relying solely on this notion runs a serious risk of strategic confusion and, ultimately, paralysis. Vigorous use of this paradoxical approach is likely to cause serious problems, as the statesman's allies are likely to become confused and angry by his seemingly contradictory policies, leading them to question the value of the alliance or oppose his policies. Meanwhile, his domestic political opponents are likely to seize on these policies as proof of his inability to conduct foreign affairs competently and attempt to stifle his foreign policy initiatives. There is, in conclusion, a value in predictability, policy consistency and steadfastness in one's strategic approach which Luttwak too readily overlooks.

⁴⁹ Roy Godson, *Dirty Tricks or Trump Cards: U.S. Covert Action and Counterintelligence* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1995), 121.

Colin S. Gray

Another highly influential figure in contemporary strategic thinking is Colin S. Gray, whose writings on geopolitics and national strategy have influenced academics and practitioners alike. In his recent treatise, *Modern Strategy*, Gray expands Clausewitz's definition of strategy to include other instruments of statecraft and persuasively argues that "nothing vital to the nature and function of war and strategy changes."⁵⁰ Rather than point to a single, unalterable determinant of grand strategy, he demonstrates that numerous factors influence strategy and that changes in any single factor (or group of factors) cannot alter the basic logic of strategic conflict. While recognizing the complexity of forces which influence the development of grand strategy, however, he fails to place sufficient emphasis on the role of individuals and politics in strategy formulation.

While recognizing the limitations of Clausewitz's definition of strategy, Gray correctly points out that it is easily expanded to incorporate other elements of state power. For this reason, Gray alters Clausewitz's definition, saying that "strategy is the use of tacit and explicit threats, as well as of actual battles and campaigns, to advance political purposes."⁵¹ Gray continues his elaboration of Clausewitz's thinking by expanding the Prussian's elements of strategy to include some seventeen "dimensions of strategy," which he divides into three general categories: "People and Politics," which includes people, society, culture, politics and ethics; "Preparation for War," which consist of economics, organization, military administration, intelligence, strategic theory and technology; and finally "War Proper," which includes military operations, geography,

⁵⁰ Gray, 1.

⁵¹ Gray, 17.

friction, the adversary, and time.⁵² By setting out this expansive set of influences, Gray succeeds in portraying strategy's depth and complexity.

While stressing that all these factors have an important impact on strategy, Gray also attempts to highlight those factors which are particularly influential. Among them, he pays special attention to the role of individuals in strategy's execution. In his discussion of the role of people in strategy, he laments that the "human dimension of strategy is so basic and obvious that it often escapes notice by scholars with a theoretical bent."⁵³ He points out that all strategies, at some point, rely on humans for implementation, and that every strategy has real costs, whether in material wealth, human lives or both. At the same time, he points out that it is individual genius, such as that of Clausewitz, which makes the study and understanding of strategy possible. By recognizing that "the influence of people has a strong claim to be the most pervasive element in strategic activity of all kinds,"⁵⁴ Gray properly places the study of the individual in an important place in strategic thought.

Unfortunately, however, while Gray successfully demonstrates the important role individuals play in the *implementation* of strategy, he is less clear regarding the role of the individual in the actual *development* of strategy. Throughout the book, he emphasizes that the various dimensions of strategy are heavily dependent on each other and must be thought of, not as distinct parts, but as a cohesive whole. Although he acknowledges that it is the strategist's job to appreciate this complicated web of interrelationships while focusing on broader concerns,⁵⁵ Gray does not provide for actual input by the strategists

⁵² Gray, 24.

⁵³ Gray, 26.

⁵⁴ Gray, 43.

⁵⁵ Gray, 52.

into the process. In many instances, he seems fundamentally uncomfortable with any one individual having significant impact on the strategic development process. In his discussion of the importance of organization, he states that

If the process that makes, executes, and monitors, the consequences of the execution of strategy is best described as the intuition of the warlord, then national security is hostage to that warlord's genius, sanity, sobriety, energy, industry, and judgment. Both historical experience and common sense suggest strongly that such a personal process of strategy-making is unwise; even genius needs assistance.⁵⁶

While Gray is certainly correct that some form of organizational control over the genius of the leader is necessary, his discomfort with a personalized process of strategy-making is difficult to understand. Strategy is, by its very nature, the outcome of the beliefs and world views of the individuals entrusted with the reigns of national power. While one would be foolish to imagine that Gray's other seventeen dimensions of strategy have no role in the process, the fact remains that all these dimensions are influenced and interpreted by the head of state and his closest advisors. While he correctly points out the danger that unrestrained individual strategists, such as Hitler, pose to both a state and its neighbors, Gray is confusing "what ought to be" from "what is." The very fact that Hitler, Stalin and Mao were able to develop and implement strategies which reflected their own warped view of the world is regrettable proof that the ideas of individual leaders and their advisors play a major role in the formulation of national strategy.

⁵⁶ Gray, 33.

US Government

Given this study's focus on the specific grand strategy of Reagan administration, it is useful to consider how the US government in general has thought about grand strategy. Although a detailed examination of other administrations' grand strategies is far beyond the scope of this study, analyzing publicly-released documents does offer a glimpse of how other administrations have thought about grand strategy. Of the hundreds of speeches and reports produced by a given administration, the document which most closely resembles a genuine grand strategy is the National Security Strategy (NSS). This document, which was mandated by Congress under the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, has become an important tool for assessing US grand strategy.

The key element of every NSS is a listing of the major, overarching goals which the administration is pursuing. These goals are particularly instructive, as they tend to reflect the administration's intellectual and conceptual predispositions. Thus, it is hardly surprising that the 1991 NSS highlights a number of critical challenges facing the George H.W. Bush administration, such as promoting democratic change in the Soviet Union, obtaining mutually-beneficial arms control agreements and deterring regional aggression.⁵⁷ Similarly, the emphasis which the 1995 NSS gave to such challenges as ethnic conflict, environmental depletion and even domestic economic growth reflect many of the priorities of the Clinton administration.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *National Security Strategy of the United States*, August 1991 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office) (accessed November 11, 2003), available from <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/nss/nss-0891.htm>.

⁵⁸ *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, February 1995 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office), 1, 19.

While these documents certainly demonstrate a recognition on the part of successive US administrations of the breadth of grand strategy, they ultimately fail to capture the totality of national strategy. This failure, it should be pointed out, is rooted not in the real or imagined failures of a given administration, but rather in the public and inherently political nature of the NSS itself. Because the NSS is a public document available to one's adversaries, every administration must be careful to avoid the specificity which a genuine grand strategy requires. It would be reckless and strategically unwise for any administration to publicize the specific goals it will pursue or the methods on which it will rely. In addition to this international strategic constraint, the NSS is closely scrutinized both by an administration's domestic supporters and its political opponents. The political firestorm which could result from even a slightly unorthodox idea tends to limit the NSS to largely generic and uncontroversial statements. Goals are couched in lofty rhetoric, while the methods by which these goals will be pursued is never clearly stated in sufficient detail. Thus, while the NSS serves as a useful tool for assessing an administration's strategic approach, it offers little in terms of a useful definition of grand strategy.

Peter Ackerman and Christopher Kruegler

While the preceding strategists have all tended to focus on strategy as it relates to the military instrument of foreign policy, there are also valuable insights to be gained from the study of nonviolent strategy. In one such study, Peter Ackerman and Christopher Kruegler examine various examples of strategic nonviolent conflict and generate useful insights into the nature of strategic reasoning which translate very well to

the level of grand strategy. Their twelve strategic principles,⁵⁹ in particular, have immediate relevance not only for popular movements, but also for national strategists seeking to better prepare for grand strategic conflict.

The first set of principles, which the authors term “Principles of Development,” explain how the leader of a movement (or a state) should approach the task of generating a sustainable strategy with a reasonable chance of achieving the desired results. These tasks include outlining goals, creating an organizational structure, obtaining access to necessary materials, cultivating external assistance and developing a broad range of capabilities.⁶⁰ These seemingly obvious requirements are nonetheless quite important. Imprecise strategic goals, poor organization and a paucity of external support were all important contributors to the failure of Nazi Germany. These principles serve as a reminder to the strategist that the development and allocation of resources is a critical task in the development and execution of grand strategy.

The second collection of principles, “Principles of Engagement,” set forth guidelines for conducting the actual conflict. Particularly noteworthy is the first such principle, which urges the leader to “attack the opponent’s strategy for consolidating control.”⁶¹ The similarity between this principle and Sun Tzu’s preferred method of victory is both strikingly obvious and further evidence to support the notion that the logic of strategy is consistent across varied situations. Not surprisingly, another principle of engagement calls for the strategist to detach the adversary from his supporters and

⁵⁹ Peter Ackerman and Christopher Kruegler, *Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: The Dynamics of People Power in the Twentieth Century* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1994), 23.

⁶⁰ Ackerman and Kruegler, 24.

⁶¹ Ackerman and Kruegler, 35.

allies,⁶² further highlighting the parallels between this work and *The Art of War*. The other two principles of engagement can also be easily translated to the level of grand strategy.⁶³ One calls for the maintenance of organizational integrity and discipline, and is roughly analogous to the principle of unity of command. The final principle, which urges leaders of these movements to diminish the ability of their opponents to rely on the use of force, can be seen as a form of strategic position, one in which the enemy is unable to exploit his advantages and is forced to expose his weaknesses.

The authors' final set of principles, called the "Principles of Conception," emphasize the importance of understanding the different levels of strategy, conducting regular strategic reviews and maintaining one's focus on the preferred endstate of the conflict.⁶⁴ Each of these principles has direct relevance, not only to the leadership of nonviolent movements, but also to the conduct of grand strategy. Mainstream discussions of grand strategy, for example, provide the basis for their discussion of the different levels of strategic decision making. Similarly, the authors' emphasis on the importance of constantly reevaluating one's strategy to probe for the enemy's weaknesses is quite similar to the thinking of Beaufre, among others. Finally, their discussion of the endstate and its importance serves as a powerful reminder to the strategist that all actions taken must serve pre-determined policy ends.

At the same time, however, Ackerman and Kruegler's model of grand strategy has only limited applicability to this study. The authors' goal was to derive core strategic principles, not to assess the influence of individual beliefs, values or skill in the

⁶² Ackerman and Kruegler, 40.

⁶³ See Ackerman and Kruegler, 38, 42.

⁶⁴ Ackerman and Kruegler, 45, 48, 49.

development of strategy. While they certainly allude to the importance of leadership in the conduct of a strategic nonviolent campaign, it is clearly not their focus.⁶⁵ As a result, their model can only suggest the importance of the individual; it can not prove it.

Elements of Grand Strategy

While all these various approaches studied above offer important insights into the nature of grand strategy and useful means of thinking about conflict at the level of grand strategy, none of them capture the totality of grand strategy. Any useful definition of grand strategy must incorporate the breadth of Sun Tzu and Luttwak, Clausewitz's emphasis on genius, as well as and Liddell Hart and Beaufre's discussions of direct and indirect strategy. It must build on Gray's recognition of strategy's human dimension, while incorporating Ackerman and Kruegler's emphasis on the importance of organizations. Most of all, however, a reasonable definition of grand strategy must recognize that not only is a strategy the result of human thought, but that the numerous inputs to the development of strategy must be prioritized, gathered, analyzed and incorporated into a reasonably consistent whole by individuals with specific views of the world. Whatever this view is called –ideology, baseline assumptions or biases –it plays the central role in the process of strategic formulation. Thus, for the purposes of this study, grand strategy (or national strategy) will be defined as *the planned use of all available tools of statecraft to achieve first-order national goals based on a given understanding or belief regarding the nature of the international system*. This definition,

⁶⁵ Ackerman and Kruegler, 7.

therefore, argues that there are three central components to grand strategy: beliefs, goals and tools. Each of these components will be analyzed in more detail below.

Before analyzing the various components, however, it is important to make equally clear what falls outside the scope of grand strategy and to note that grand strategy itself is subsumed by a broader, more encompassing concept: statecraft. While the term statecraft is rarely used in modern social science, its close relationship with grand strategy is worth exploring. If grand strategy is responsible for balancing the pursuit of various national goals, then statecraft is responsible for balancing the pursuit of a nation's grand strategy with other pressing concerns. Grand strategy is concerned almost exclusively with a nation's relationship with the outside world; statecraft is concerned with both "securing the state against foreign adversaries and ensuring at least a modicum of justice and social peace."⁶⁶ Thus, while developing a grand strategy is one of the most important tasks a statesman faces, it is not the only one. Making the difficult tradeoffs between pursuing one's grand strategy and preserving domestic stability, or between improving one's international position and strengthening one's domestic political base, is but one of the requirements of statecraft. Yet, as some have noted, the internal logic of both strategy and statecraft are quite similar.⁶⁷ Both must contend with one or more potential adversaries, both must be practiced in a realm of imperfect information and both seek to achieve specific goals. In fact, the overlap between these two concepts is considerable, since the leader is ultimately responsible for both strategic and statecraft

⁶⁶ Carnes Lord, *The Modern Prince: What Leaders Need to Know Now*, (Harrisonburg, VA: R.R. Donnelley & Sons, 2003), 106.

⁶⁷ Lord, 24.

decisions. Put in terms of the definition of grand strategy outlined above, defining beliefs and goals is a task of statecraft; planning for and using the various tools is strategy.⁶⁸

Beliefs

At its most basic level, the purpose of strategy is to create a connection between ends and means, to develop a causal link between goals and tools. In a simple world, this connection would be direct, obvious and ultimately uninteresting as a field of study. Just as the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, so too the best method for achieving a goal would be the obvious and “rational” one. States seeking peace would disarm, invest power in international institutions and cooperate with one another. Differences among states would be resolved through negotiations genuinely aimed at accommodation and mutual satisfaction. Yet such a simple world does not now, nor will it ever, exist. Statesmen instead must navigate through a world of conflict and uncertainty, a world in which states pursue numerous goals, including power, position and wealth, while information on real or potential adversaries is always incomplete and of uncertain value. Because of these central realities of the international system, national leaders’ view of the world around them necessarily drive the vital art of strategy.

The impact of a national leader’s beliefs on the domestic goals a country pursues is fairly obvious. Candidates for elected office frequently run on entirely different platforms and set forth radically different domestic policies. One would be hard-pressed to argue, for example, that American domestic life would have remained constant

⁶⁸ Even this delineation is, in one sense, incomplete, since the quality and capability of one’s tools can serve as a limiting mechanism for the setting of goals.

regardless of whether Walter Mondale or Ronald Reagan won the 1984 presidential election. Most serious political analysts understand and accept this reality.

Yet the ready acceptance of these differences rapidly disappears when the subject turns to foreign policy. Many international relations theorists have a great deal of difficulty in accepting such a reality, as it makes theory more challenging to develop and, ultimately, less useful as a predictive or prescriptive tool. While it is certainly true that many countries have a general “strategic culture,” there are nonetheless important differences within a given culture regarding national priorities. Announcing, clarifying and pursuing these priorities is a core task of national leadership. Further complicating the job of the statesman is the need to balance the unavoidable tradeoffs between goals. Answering the question of how many “guns” versus how much “butter” is a central task of the president and his advisors and directly reflects their beliefs about the hierarchy of national goals.

More importantly, a leader’s core beliefs play a critical role in the development of his grand strategy. As highlighted by Alexander George, a statesman’s belief system or “operational code” serves as the prism through which he views and interprets the world around him.⁶⁹ These beliefs serve to structure his thinking and permit him to deal with the unavoidable fact that information in the real world is often incomplete, inaccurate or deliberately falsified. If, in fact, Clausewitz is right when he states that “most intelligence is false,”⁷⁰ then the statesman must rely on some baseline understanding of how the world, and his adversary, operate. It must be hastily pointed out, however, that such an

⁶⁹ Alexander L. George, “The ‘Operational Code’: A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making,” *International Studies Quarterly* 13, No. 222 (June 1969): 191.

⁷⁰ Clausewitz, 117.

understanding should not be equated with irrational, mindless prejudice, nor does it preclude rational analysis. “Such a belief system influences, but does not unilaterally determine, decision-making.”⁷¹ Consider, for example, the often wildly differing opinions on such issues as the future of stock prices, inflation, interest rates or national income. Different economic analysts, all with access to roughly identical information, frequently have different predictions about how the market or individual firms will act in the future. These differences are the natural outgrowth of different beliefs about how the financial world works, which pieces of data are most important and which economic tools are most useful. Similarly, different national leaders have different views regarding how the international system works and which tools are most useful for achieving national objectives.

Goals

Grand strategy is ultimately about achieving certain national objectives. Beyond a set of obvious, minimal goals, such as the preservation of the country and some basic level of material well-being, defining the goals of the state is also primarily a task for the national leader and his close advisors. While numerous factors play a role in the development of a state’s goals, the national leadership is ultimately responsible for setting priorities and monitoring pursuit of these goals. Certainly, such factors as national power, geography, national history and real or potential external rivals have a significant

⁷¹ George, 191. While George deserves much credit for highlighting the influence beliefs have on the actions and decisions of policy makers, his “operational code” suffers from some serious flaws. First, for no apparent reason, he wrongly excludes personal ethical beliefs as being part of a leader’s operational code. Second, and more importantly, his set of core questions used to develop a picture of a given leader’s operational code is inadequate. It both fails to capture key elements of a leader’s belief structure and captures other information which is less important or relevant to some decision makers. As a result, this study will not explicitly use George’s approach in subsequent chapters.

impact on the objectives of the state. Additionally, internal factors such as culture, political ideology and electoral considerations certainly rank as important considerations for many national leaders. Yet it is the leader and his core advisors who, based on their beliefs and view of the world, define and prioritize national goals.

Most important, from the standpoint of developing a successful grand strategy, is that these national goals be mutually reinforcing and focused on remedying specific problems or exploiting certain opportunities. Their function, after all, is to direct the efforts of the government toward some reasonably well-defined “endstate.” While it is inevitable that the leader will, at some point, be forced to make tradeoffs between competing goals, on the whole the effective pursuit of these goals requires coherence and unity of purpose. Without such coherence, the pursuit of national goals becomes fragmented, confused and haphazard, leading to strategic incoherence and the stagnation of national will. Only the national leadership, entrusted with the ultimate responsibility for national strategic success, is capable of providing that coherence and unity of effort.

Tools

Simply having well-defined goals, however, is no guarantee of strategic success. These goals must still be linked to specific tools of state power. While placing the various “tools of statecraft”⁷² into political, military and economic categories may be an overused approach, it is nevertheless a reasonably useful way of thinking about the various means a state has to pursue its goals. Rather than an exhaustive listing of all possible tools of

⁷² The approach this section takes is drawn heavily from the thinking of Dr. Carnes Lord.

national power, this section seeks merely to highlight the wide variety of tools available to the national leader.

The political tools of statecraft are almost certainly the most numerous and wide-ranging of those available to a world leader. However, they are also inherently difficult to differentiate from one another, as so many of them are mutually reinforcing. With this caveat in mind, it is nevertheless possible to discuss several types of political tools available to the statesman. The first and most heavily used tool is that of traditional diplomatic interactions. Modern diplomacy, whether conducted via the State Department, Defense Department, other federal agency or through the president himself, is a constant feature of the international scene and a critical component of national power.⁷³ These diplomatic tools include the negotiation of international agreements, the routine maintenance of friendly or cordial relations between states, the coordination or discussion of political cooperation in all its forms, and the use of various forms of political or diplomatic sanctions.

A second, and increasingly important, political tool is public diplomacy. With the explosion of international communication technology and the increasing reach of media coverage, the ability of Americans (both inside and outside the government) to bypass foreign governments and speak directly to the people of the world offers tremendous opportunities for the advancement of US national interests. It should hardly be surprising that this tool is inextricably linked to the idea of “soft power,”⁷⁴ a term referring to the attractiveness of US ideals and ways of life. By enabling him to influence an audience

⁷³ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1978), 146.

⁷⁴ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Bound To Lead* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1990), 31.

beyond his borders, a president's speeches and rhetoric, which are often overlooked in discussions of national power, can become important tools for achieving state objectives.

Unlike the political tools, which can often seem abstract and without concrete form, the military tools of statecraft are certainly more easily quantified and more widely understood. Outside of the central role of the military to deter, threaten or actually use force to achieve national objectives, however, there are other aspects of the military tool which are worthy of attention. The provision or withdrawal of military aid, whether in the form of actual hardware or training, is another such tool which is available to the statesman. Closely related is the use of intelligence, both as a means of obtaining necessary information and making that information selectively available to friends and allies. Finally, the use of covert action must be considered another important tool of statecraft. Such actions can consist of virtually anything, ranging from clandestine support to like-minded states or groups, to clandestine broadcasts aimed at stirring up domestic unrest among an adversary's population, to concrete steps designed to undermine the political or military power of the adversary.

Finally, some of the least understood but most important sets of tools are economic ones. The very notion of economic statecraft seems somewhat unusual and at odds with the basic capitalist tenet of a market free from excessive governmental regulation. Yet there can be little doubt that states pursue economic policies designed to advance their own interests. The provision of economic aid, support for loans from international lending institutions and drafting of trade agreements are all important economic tools for achieving national ends. Similarly, the withdrawal of such aid or the

imposition of unilateral or multilateral economic sanctions can also be valuable tools in advancing the goals of the state.

As mentioned earlier, the above discussion of the various tools available to a state in implementing its grand strategy is, by necessity, limited. The fact is that national leaders have numerous potential tools for achieving the desired strategic ends, and that no single tool will be useful in all cases in the pursuit of all goals. Just as Clausewitz stressed the need for genius on the part of the military commander, so too does grand strategy require a form of genius on the part of the statesman in the selection and use of specific tools towards specific ends.

Conclusions

Strategy in general, and grand strategy in particular, represents the most important and difficult task for the statesman of any era. History has demonstrated repeatedly that a leader's strategic failure can lead to catastrophe, while strategic brilliance pays rich rewards. It is also a uniquely human endeavor which is heavily influenced by the world view and beliefs of the individuals wielding national power. As such, it should hardly be surprising that the most important and influential thinkers on grand strategy, such as Sun Tzu and Clausewitz, have stressed repeatedly the central role that individual genius plays in the success of a state's grand strategy. Indeed, one can only understand and explain the three central elements of any nation's grand strategy –beliefs, goals and tools –by understanding the people who ultimately develop and implement it.

The goal of this chapter was to develop a reasonable definition of grand strategy with which to analyze the grand strategy of the Reagan administration. This definition

bears repeating, as it forms the intellectual basis for the rest of this study: grand strategy is the planned use of all available tools of statecraft to achieve first-order national goals based on a given understanding or belief regarding the nature of the international system.

Subsequent chapters will demonstrate that:

- the Reagan administration developed and implemented a fundamentally different American grand strategy which set out to roll back the Soviet sphere of influence and undermine the bases of the Soviet state;
- the beliefs, goals and tools used by the Reagan administration represent the culmination of almost forty years of conservative foreign policy thought; and
- the individual ultimately responsible for the development and implementation of this strategy was Reagan himself.

Chapter 2: The Reagan Administration's Grand Strategy

Having analyzed the nature of grand strategy and identified its core elements, it is now useful to discuss the grand strategy of the Reagan administration, particularly in the formative period of the early 1980's. Under the Reagan administration, the US followed a fundamentally different approach to national strategy which challenged old assumptions about how best to deal with the Soviet threat and which tools were most useful in resisting Soviet expansionism. The administration's beliefs, goals and tools reflected a new assertiveness and determination which arguably hastened the end of the Cold War.

Identifying any administration's grand strategy can prove a difficult task, and the Reagan administration is no exception. As noted in Chapter 1, much of the conventional history of the administration, drawn as it is from journalists' accounts, is deeply flawed. Memoirs of senior administration officials, while much more reliable sources, are also incomplete. In fact, most were written at a time when the key documents outlining Reagan's grand strategy were classified and thus could not be discussed publicly.¹ Because of this fact, even these generally useful memoirs provide only a limited insight into the administration's real strategy. Instead, in the Reagan administration's case, as with every other post-World War II administration, the best sources for finding its grand strategy are National Security Council (NSC) documents. NSC documents represent the highest-level agreement possible within the US government. Since they represent direct orders from the president himself, they are negotiated, debated and finalized throughout the interagency community. A large number of key Reagan administration documents

¹ While almost every senior administration official carefully avoids discussing these documents in their memoirs, Edwin Meese does make a statement about Reagan's grand strategy which is largely consistent with the key NSC documents. See Edwin Meese III, *With Reagan: The Inside Story*, (Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway, 1992), 167.

were declassified during the 1990s, revealing a vastly different administration than the one commonly portrayed and leading to a significant rethinking of Reagan's foreign policy. These documents, while quite broad in scope, are surprisingly specific in the beliefs, goals and tools which characterized the Reagan strategy. These documents, when combined with memoirs and interviews with senior administration officials, provide the best possible source material for a more accurate analysis of the administration's grand strategy. This strategy, which will be outlined below, consisted of a sustained military, economic, political and ideological campaign targeting key Soviet weaknesses with the goal of winning, rather than managing, the Cold War.

Beliefs

At first glance, one might be tempted to doubt that any effort to classify the central foreign policy beliefs of the Reagan administration is possible. There were, after all, serious differences of opinion among members of Reagan's inner circle on many national security issues, often reflecting fundamentally different views about which courses of action were most likely to advance US interests. Despite these differences of opinion on policy implementation, however, the administration's foreign policy team did share a set of well-established operating assumptions about the international system which, when studied as a whole, form a coherent worldview upon which to build a distinctly different American foreign policy. These assumptions included: a rejection of both détente and containment as useful frameworks for American-Soviet relations; a belief that Soviet aggression was rooted in the internal nature of the Soviet state; a conviction that power, not accommodation, was critical to dealing successfully with the

Soviet Union; an understanding that the Soviets had important weaknesses which could be effectively targeted; and a belief in the moral and political superiority of democracy and capitalism.

Rejection of Containment and Détente

Virtually all accounts of American Cold War strategy revolve around two central concepts: containment and détente. Formulated under Harry Truman, the concept of containment would rapidly become the overarching intellectual approach successive administrations took towards its dealings with the Soviet Union. While different administrations implemented it in different ways, at its core, containment was a defensive strategy which aims at preventing the expansion of Soviet control or influence while waiting for internal factors to lead to a “gradual mellowing”² of Soviet behavior and its eventual transformation into a responsible, traditional “great power.” Reflecting its roots in realist theory, the strategy of containment advocated US actions based solely on the external policies of the Soviet Union, while rejecting any effort to promote or accelerate change within the Soviet empire.

Yet containment was never as widely accepted as is commonly assumed. Indeed, the policy had been actively opposed and denounced, by members of both the political left and right, since its inception. Events of the 1960’s and 1970’s, including the Cuban Missile Crisis, the rise of Soviet military power and the social turmoil growing out of the anti-war movement, energized the political left and “mainstreamed” their ideas of

² “X” (George F. Kennan), “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” *Foreign Affairs* 25, No. 4 (July 1947), 582.

détente, which liberal circles had been advocating for years.³ Liberals would find many of their ideas embraced by the most unlikely of allies, President Richard Nixon. By the early 1970's, this unusual alliance between liberals and the pro-détente wing of the Republican Party had replaced containment with détente as the intellectual framework for US-Soviet relations. Under this strategic approach, the US would actively seek to negotiate common ground with the Soviet Union, by means of trade deals and arms control agreements, which would lessen the competition for influence in the Third World, reduce mutual suspicion and give the Soviets a stake in the existing international system. This approach would remain largely intact until the inauguration of Ronald Reagan, when the United States embarked on a fundamentally different approach.

In his failed effort to win the Republican nomination for President in 1976, Reagan made Gerald Ford's support for détente a major campaign issue. Following Ford's defeat, Reagan remained actively involved in opposing and criticizing the Carter administration's pursuit of détente. From its earliest days of office, the Reagan administration made clear that it no longer considered détente a reasonable goal of American foreign policy. Reagan himself denounced it in his first press conference as "a one-way street that the Soviet Union has used to pursue its own aims."⁴ Instead of leading to international peace and stability, the Soviets had taken advantage of détente to expand their military arsenal, accelerate their efforts to destabilize Third World countries and increase Soviet influence around the world. As Reagan later wrote, "the Russians had interpreted [détente] as a freedom to pursue whatever policies of subversion, aggression,

³ See James Roosevelt, ed., *The Liberal Papers* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1962) for an excellent example of liberal opposition to containment.

⁴ Press conference cited in Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 281.

and expansionism they wanted anywhere in the world.”⁵ This view of the Soviet interpretation of détente was heavily criticized at the time, but was later confirmed by Anatoly Dobrynin, who acknowledges that détente drove the Soviets to become more deeply involved in the Third World.⁶ As stated in a memo to National Security Advisor William P. Clark, the Reagan administration’s approach:

seeks “to neutralize the efforts of the USSR to increase its influence” and “to foster restraint in Soviet military spending, adventurism, and to weaken the Soviet alliance system”. The Soviet Union is “to bear the brunt of its economic shortcomings”. The formula is not détente.⁷

While Reagan’s personal rejection of détente was recognized at the time of his election, his administration also refused to consider the hallowed goal of containment a viable long-term approach for dealing with the Soviet Union. The administration considered traditional notions of containment too defensive and timid to deal with the Soviets’ sustained, intense, global challenge that had begun in the 1970s. Secretary of State George Shultz, in testimony before Congress, argued that the global reach of Soviet power had rendered containment unworkable and that the US instead needed to begin actively pursuing its own interests.⁸ Outside of a few notable exceptions,⁹ there was

⁵ Ronald W. Reagan, *An American Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 265.

⁶ Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow’s Ambassador to America’s Six Cold War Presidents 1962-1986* (New York: Random House, 1995), 475.

⁷ “Basic Differences Between Reagan Administration’s National Security Strategy (NSDD-32) and Carter Administration’s Strategy (PD-18 and PD-62),” Memorandum from Allan A. Myer to William P. Clark, October 5, 1982, obtained at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, NSC Executive Secretariat Collection, Box OA91311.

⁸ George Shultz, “U.S.-Soviet Relations in the Context of U.S. Foreign Policy.” Testimony given before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, June 15, 1983.

⁹ For example, John Lewis Gaddis, “The Rise, Fall and Future of Détente,” *Foreign Affairs* 62, no 2 (Winter 1983/1984): 354-377.

widespread recognition at the time that the Reagan administration was uninterested in pursuing containment. Indeed, the administration's critics repeatedly attacked Reagan for abandoning containment in favor of a more confrontational approach which, in their view, substantially raised the likelihood of a military conflict with the Soviet Union.¹⁰

Roots of Soviet Aggression

A second core assumption of the Reagan administration's strategy was that the Soviets' aggressive behavior was a direct and natural outgrowth of its internal social and political processes. In particular, the administration focused on the link between Soviet aggression and communist ideology. Hence, Reagan argued that a state which regularly violated the basic human rights of its own citizens, engaged in the brutal repression to any and all challenges to the Communist Party's monopoly on power and was itself led by a small and unrepresentative elite with no accountability to the general population would inevitably use deceitful and violent measures against its foreign opponents as well.

The heavy emphasis the administration placed on communist ideology ran counter to the popular view of the Soviet Union put forth by many "Kremlinologists," the media and much of the academic establishment, who argued that the role of communism in Soviet foreign and domestic policy was negligible and *pro forma*. According to George Kennan, one of the intellectual leaders of this view, belief in the ideals of Lenin had long since died off within the USSR by the 1980s. While the Soviet Union remained a "communist" state, communism had become "a lifeless ideology" that was almost

¹⁰ Strobe Talbott, *The Russians and Reagan* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), 7.

entirely ceremonial.¹¹ Although Soviet leaders continued to publicly espouse Marxist-Leninist ideology, in private they saw the pursuit of world revolution as unachievable and unrealistic in the short term.¹² Instead, Kennan and his supporters argued that a combination of great-power geopolitics and age-old Russian territorial ambitions had become the primary drivers of Soviet foreign policy. Rather than seeking international proletariat revolution and global domination, the leadership of the USSR focused primarily on preserving its superpower status and was increasingly willing to ignore ideological goals in its pursuit of Soviet national interests.¹³ Nor did these analysts view Soviet domestic policy as particularly ideological in nature. They argued that “in domestic affairs, few governments are as conservative as the Soviet regime”¹⁴ and that the Russian mentality and (alleged) preference for economic and political security over civil liberties made much of the repression a natural outgrowth of Russian political culture.¹⁵

The Reagan administration and its intellectual allies vehemently rejected this view of the ideological element of Soviet policy and repeatedly stressed the powerful influence communist ideology had on Soviet behavior. In an NSC-drafted report entitled “Response to NSSD 11-82: U.S. Relations With The USSR,” the administration set forth its collective view on the primary determinants of Soviet behavior.¹⁶ While not ignoring the impact of Russian imperial traditions or Soviet geopolitical realities, the report

¹¹ George F. Kennan, “Communism in Russian History,” in *At a Century’s End* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), 51.

¹² George F. Kennan, *The Nuclear Delusion: Soviet-American Relations in the Atomic Age* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 148.

¹³ Dimitri K. Simes, “The New Soviet Challenge,” *Foreign Policy* 55 (Summer 1984): 117-122.

¹⁴ Simes, 115.

¹⁵ John M. Joyce, “The Old Russian Legacy,” *Foreign Policy* 55 (Summer 1984): 137, 150.

¹⁶ “Response to NSSD 11-82: U.S. Relations With The USSR,” December 6, 1982, obtained at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, NSC Executive Secretariat Collection, Box 91287.

highlighted the central role of communist ideology in Soviet aggression. It stressed that communist ideology “provides the intellectual prism through which Soviet leaders perceive the outside world,” thus ensuring that the Soviet leadership “views non-socialist states both as potential targets for revolution and as potential threats.”¹⁷ For example, the report states that Moscow’s increased focus on “active measures,” such as “political training, covert support to insurgencies, grooming of agents of influence and propaganda activities,” demonstrated the Soviets’ dedication to winning the “ideological struggle.”¹⁸ Additionally, communism continued to provide the primary source of the regime’s legitimacy and the only justification for the repression and brutality of Soviet domestic policy. In its review of Soviet domestic policy, the report repeatedly highlighted the powerful influence communism exerted over Soviet policymakers and the unwillingness or inability of Soviet authorities to consider non-communist solutions to their mounting internal problems.¹⁹ This report provided the intellectual basis for National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) 75, which defined the official administration strategy towards the Soviet Union.

While the Reagan administration clearly viewed communist ideology as a central driver of Soviet foreign policy, contrary to the claims of many of its critics,²⁰ it did not believe that the Soviets intended to militarily conquer the world, nor did it believe the Soviets had a single, “master plan” for world domination. Instead, it recognized that the Soviets were ideologically committed, opportunistically expansionist and would seek

¹⁷ “Response to NSSD 11-82,” 4.

¹⁸ “Response to NSSD 11-82,” 9.

¹⁹ “Response to NSSD 11-82,” 7-8.

²⁰ See Alexander Dallin and Gail W. Lapidus, “Reagan and the Russians: United States Policy Towards the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe,” in *Eagle Defiant: United States Foreign Policy in the 1980s*, eds. Kenneth A. Oye, Robert J. Lieber and Donald Rothchild (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1983), 207.

“continuing opportunities to exploit and foster international tensions and instabilities to their own advantage.”²¹ The administration made this assessment of the role of communist ideology in Soviet foreign and domestic policy explicit in NSDD-75, which stated that “Soviet aggressiveness has deep roots in the internal system.”²² From this assumption, the administration logically deduced that changes in the internal nature of the Soviet regime could lead to more acceptable behavior in the outside world.

Power the Key to Dealing with Soviets

A third, and closely related, assumption underlying the Reagan grand strategy was the belief that the US could only deal successfully with an expansionist, revolutionary state such as the Soviet Union through superior power. While this conviction was certainly derived, in part, from the failure of appeasement prior to the Second World War, it was also founded on the recognition that a state such as the Soviet Union, whose internal politics were based on the brutal and arbitrary exercise of power, would only submit to superior power when confronted on the international scene.

The President and his advisors rejected the approach taken by the Carter administration, which Reagan characterized as “having to beg [the Soviets] to negotiate seriously with an appeal to their better nature.”²³ In their view, efforts to accommodate “legitimate” Soviet concerns were counterproductive. Rather than enhancing relations with the Soviets and assuaging their (alleged) fears of Western hostility, such efforts merely encouraged further Soviet intransigence and reinforced Soviet beliefs in the

²¹ “Response to NSSD 11-82,” 4.

²² “U.S. Relations with the USSR,” National Security Decision Directive, NSDD-75, dated January 17, 1983, 1. Hereinafter cited as NSDD-75.

²³ Reagan, 549.

inevitable triumph of communism worldwide. The Reagan team understood that, in the Soviets' ideological view of the world, international affairs was a struggle for power and all efforts at accommodation were a sign of weakness. The administration recognized that US efforts to encourage Soviet involvement in solving regional issues during the period of détente had resulted in renewed Soviet expansionism and increased regional tension. Instead of peace through mutual accommodation, the motto of the Reagan administration became "peace through strength."²⁴ With a clear understanding of the importance the Soviets placed on power relationships, the administration believed that only overwhelming power and the willingness to use it would deter the Soviets from continued expansionism. Although this belief did not rule out the possibility of negotiations with the Soviets, it did make clear that such efforts could only supplement, not replace, genuine national strength.

While this approach may seem obvious today, opponents of the administration bitterly criticized this belief on a number of grounds. Many Soviet specialists, such as Strobe Talbott, argued that this approach was dangerous, destabilizing and excessively confrontational, claiming that it "had forced the Soviets into a corner from which they might yet lash out."²⁵ They argued that pressure of any kind on the Soviets was counterproductive, as it would only provoke them into greater hostility and less flexibility. Others argued that the US had no choice but to seek some form of mutual accommodation with Moscow, if for no other reason than that "neither superpower can realistically expect to achieve a position of dominance except at astronomical costs."²⁶

²⁴ Reagan, 267.

²⁵ Talbott, 7.

²⁶ William G. Hyland, "Clash with the Soviet Union," *Foreign Policy* 49 (Winter 1982/1983): 4.

Since both sides had limited resources, the only wise choice was to reach a mutual understanding on the “rules of the road” so as to constrain superpower competition into specific areas. In short, they believed that the only solution to the resource limitation problem was some form of détente. While acknowledging that the Soviets were becoming increasingly active in the Third World, particularly in Angola, Nicaragua and Afghanistan, the administration’s critics insisted that these actions were essentially defensive in nature and rooted in Soviet fear and insecurity, not their desire for power.²⁷

Significant Soviet Weaknesses

Although none of the core beliefs of the Reagan administration were without controversy, perhaps the most contentious (and important) was the administration’s intense focus on the Soviet Union’s political, economical and demographic weaknesses. While Reagan administration officials were extremely concerned about the rapid growth of Soviet military strength and political influence which took place during the 1970s, they also firmly believed that the Soviets had important vulnerabilities which could be effectively targeted by US policy. This belief served as a primary driver of US policy towards the Soviet Union.

The Reagan administration understood that the Soviets’ success in expanding their global influence had come at a staggering cost. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, it had become increasingly clear to administration officials and their supporters that the Soviets faced massive economic and political problems which had been exacerbated by their feverish military buildup. The Soviet economy was facing serious, systemic

²⁷ Kennan, *Nuclear Delusion*, 162.

challenges which raised serious questions in the minds of Reagan and his staff about its long-term viability. As Reagan stated in his autobiography, “I had always believed that, as an economic system, Communism was doomed.”²⁸ In the early days of the administration, at the request of Director of Central Intelligence William Casey, the CIA began a detailed analysis of Soviet economic weaknesses. When presented with these findings, President Reagan became increasingly convinced of the ultimate frailty of the Soviet economy.²⁹

As outlined in “Response to NSSD 11-82: U.S. Relations with the USSR”, the Soviet economy was stagnating, with economic growth and labor productivity steeply declining while raw material costs skyrocketed.³⁰ At the same time, the Soviets’ hard currency earnings were dropping and the costs of maintaining their empire were steadily increasing. “Assistance to East European and Third World clients rose dramatically from \$1.7 billion in 1971 to \$23 billion in 1980 – some 1.5 percent of GNP.”³¹ Finally, the technological backwardness of the Soviet economy, especially in the areas of natural resource extraction, and the ideological blinders which prevented the regime from instituting any meaningful reforms, made it heavily reliant on Western support.³² This reliance on Western technological and financial assistance would play an important role in defining the administration’s economic policy toward the Soviet Union.

As difficult as these economic troubles were for the Soviet Union, the political problems that the Soviet leadership faced were, if anything, even more challenging. At

²⁸ Reagan, 237.

²⁹ Christopher Andrew, *For the President’s Eyes Only: Secret Intelligence and the American Presidency from Washington to Bush* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995), 468.

³⁰ “Response to NSSD 11-82,” 5.

³¹ “Response to NSSD 11-82,” 11.

³² Louis J. Walinsky, “Coherent Defense Strategy: The Case for Economic Denial,” *Foreign Affairs* 61, no 2 (Winter 1982/1983): 281-283.

the international level, “the return of the Chinese Communist Party to active involvement in the international [communist] movement” posed a serious challenge to the Soviets’ status as *de facto* leader of Marxist groups worldwide.³³ This need to compete with the Chinese for influence would further tax Soviet economic resources, as Soviet leaders felt compelled to offer ever more generous aid to pro-Soviet regimes. In Eastern Europe, nationalist sentiment had begun to reemerge in Eastern Europe, partially as a result of the Polish Solidarity movement. The spread of Eastern European nationalism posed a dire threat to Soviet control of the region and complicated its efforts to expand its influence in Western Europe.

Meanwhile, declining standards of living and rampant political corruption at home contributed to a widespread “loss of commitment to the [Soviet] system and to the political order” among the Soviet public.³⁴ Ethnic nationalism was also on the rise in Central Asia, the Ukraine and the Baltic States, with increasingly urgent demands for greater ethnic autonomy and improved standards of living. These demands coincided with a serious demographic change within the Soviet Union, in which the non-Russian population was steadily growing while the ethnic Russian population declined. The growing importance of the nationalities problem and the gradual rise of separatist movements in the Soviet Union caught the eye of DCI Casey, who ordered the CIA in September 1981 to more closely follow these issues.³⁵ Yet the Soviet leadership found nationalist demands impossible to accommodate, due both to their own ideological rigidity and the looming ideological challenge posed by China. Finally, the long-running

³³ “Response to NSSD 11-82,” 10.

³⁴ “Response to NSSD 11-82,” 7.

³⁵ Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider’s Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 187.

problem of political succession continued to plague the rapidly aging Soviet leadership, making it increasingly difficult to inject new ideas into the Soviets' intellectually stagnant policies and creating the potential for internal power struggles and a divided leadership.³⁶

While administration officials were not alone in recognizing the serious challenges facing the Soviet regime, they were the only ones who believed that the US could use these weaknesses to its advantage or that these weaknesses could have any significant impact on Soviet behavior. The administration's critics argued that, while the Soviets faced serious economic and political problems, Reagan's approach was "based on an overly optimistic assessment of Soviet vulnerabilities."³⁷ The main criticisms of the administration generally followed two principle lines of arguments. One set of critics insisted that the administration was overstating the severity of the challenges facing the Soviet Union. The other, while acknowledging the serious problems within the Soviet state, insisted that any effort by the US to capitalize on these weaknesses was counterproductive and would end in failure. Instead, they argued that the US should support Soviet efforts to solve these problems by reducing American pressure on the Soviet regime and expanding economic ties to the struggling Soviet economy.

While acknowledging the existence of economic and political challenges, for example, some critics argued that the Soviet Union was still strong enough to maintain its international position vis-à-vis the West without significant reform.³⁸ Rejecting the administration's belief that the fundamental basis of the Soviet economy was irredeemably flawed, they argued that those who "predict the imminent collapse of the

³⁶ "Response to NSSD 11-82," 8.

³⁷ C. Robert Zelnick, "Pipe Dreams: The Foundering Soviets," *Foreign Policy* 57 (Winter 1984/5): 93.

³⁸ Zelnick, 100.

economy ... underestimate not only the basic stability of the system, but also the vast difference that would be made if things as they now are were simply made to work properly," through relatively minor improvements in bureaucratic efficiency.³⁹ The administration's critics took a similar view of the political challenges facing the Soviet regime, insisting that relatively minor changes would resolve the growing political challenges. While recognizing the potential problem of demographic trends which would undermine the dominant role of ethnic Russians in the Soviet Union, they insisted that it was largely manageable, primarily because these ethnic groups had materially benefited from membership in the USSR and because the central authorities could still resort to population relocation and the selective liquidation of anti-Soviet ethnic leaders.⁴⁰ The problems of corruption and popular discontent could be readily solved by the rising generation of Soviet leaders who understood the need for greater discipline and more centralized control than had existed in the late Brezhnev period. This optimistic view of Soviet strength is best summarized by the claim put forth in 1982 by two noted Sovietologists, who insisted that the Soviet Union "is not now nor will it be during the next decade in the throes of a true systemic crisis, for it boasts enormous unused reserves of political and social stability that suffice to endure the deepest difficulties."⁴¹

Critics also argued that, even if the Soviets were facing major political and economic problems, the US was incapable of using these problems successfully to pressure the Soviet Union or extract any meaningful advantage. In fact, they argued that any effort to do so would greatly worsen the US-Soviet relationship and make real

³⁹ Michael Binyon, *Life In Russia* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 276.

⁴⁰ Zelnick, 101.

⁴¹ Seweryn Bialer and Joan Afferica, "Reagan and Russia," *Foreign Affairs* 61, No. 2 (Winter 1982/1983), 263.

progress on the outstanding issues between the two countries more difficult. For example, one Soviet expert argued that the Soviet leadership understood that ethnic nationalism posed a very real danger of destroying the USSR, yet insisted that any efforts to place pressure on the regime's weaknesses were useless.⁴² Others insisted that the US lacked both the understanding and the capability to promote any meaningful change within the Soviet Union, making any such effort a waste of time and resources.

Superiority of Democracy and Capitalism

The final core assumption of the Reagan grand strategy was the belief that the moral superiority of democracy represented a powerful asset in the West's battle with totalitarianism. While the administration understood very well the power wielded by the Soviet Union and its allies, it never questioned the ability of democratic societies to compete with the Soviets at the moral, political, economic or military level. Just as the administration emphasized the importance of communism to the behavior of the Soviet state, it also highlighted the importance of the Western ideals of natural rights and individual freedom to the US. Rejecting the self-doubt endemic to the American approach to foreign policy since the Vietnam War, Reagan and his advisors had tremendous optimism that victory over the Soviets in the battle for the "hearts and minds" of the world was inevitable. "Reagan believed staunchly in the power of freedom,"⁴³ and had no doubt about the attractiveness of Western ideals. The administration believed that, ultimately, it was at the level of ideas and values that the West's struggle with communism would be won.

⁴² Binyon, 3-4.

⁴³ Cannon, 281.

To critics and supporters alike, Reagan's belief in the strength of free-market capitalism and democratic institutions was well-known and understood. A firm believer in American exceptionalism, Reagan tirelessly emphasized the latent power of Western ideals and the vast gulf between the West's admittedly imperfect pursuit of its ideals and the Soviets' morality of convenience. For him, the Cold War was "a battle of values – between one system that gave preeminence to the state and another that gave preeminence to the individual and freedom."⁴⁴ He drew a sharp contrast between the West's belief in an objective moral code with the Soviet view that "any crime including lying is moral if it advances the cause of socialism."⁴⁵ In the administration's view, the "morality gap" was an important element of US power and a fact worth highlighting internationally. NSDD-75 makes clear that US policy would be based on "the superiority of U.S. and Western values of individual dignity and freedom, a free press, free trade unions, free enterprise, and political democracy over the repressive features of Soviet Communism."⁴⁶

Goals

While there remains some debate over how to best characterize the worldview of the Reagan administration in general, and the beliefs of Reagan and his core advisors in particular, there is considerable evidence to indicate that the overarching, first-order goals of the administration remained remarkably consistent over time. These fundamental goals

⁴⁴ Reagan, 715.

⁴⁵ Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Anderson and Martin Anderson, eds., *Reagan, In His Own Hand: The Writings of Ronald Reagan That Reveal His Revolutionary Vision for America*, (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 60.

⁴⁶ NSDD-75, 3.

represented the preferred “end-state” for America’s strategic position and provided the “aim points” for the administration’s foreign policy initiatives. The five core US goals, as described in NSDD-32 and NSDD-75, consisted of: the preservation and strengthening of deterrence; the expansion of US global influence; the continuation of dialogue with the Soviet Union; the reversal of Soviet expansionism; and the undermining of the Soviet Union and its empire.⁴⁷

Preservation of Deterrence

During the Cold War, the most basic, fundamental goal of every administration was to protect the nation and its armed forces from a direct Soviet military attack, whether nuclear or conventional. Closely related to this necessity was the need to deter any attack on America’s allies or regional partners and successfully to defeat any Soviet attack. These goals were enshrined in the first official document to set forth a comprehensive statement of US national strategy: NSDD-32, which President Reagan signed on May 20, 1982. In the document, the President stated that the US would seek to “deter military attack by the USSR and its allies against the U.S., its allies, and other important countries across the spectrum of conflict; and to defeat such attack should deterrence fail.”⁴⁸

However, while the administration was dedicated to preserving conventional and nuclear deterrence, it was not interested in preserving the structure of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) which had been the cornerstone of US nuclear doctrine for over 20

⁴⁷ “U.S. National Security Strategy,” National Security Decision Directive, NSDD-32, dated May 20, 1982, 1-2 (hereinafter cited as NSDD-32) and NSDD-75, 1.

⁴⁸ NSDD-32, 1.

years. Administration officials questioned the logic behind the doctrine, arguing that MAD was rooted in highly questionable assumptions about what the Soviet leadership valued and how it might react to a crisis. Emphasizing the limited knowledge the US had about the inner workings of the Soviet state, these officials questioned MAD's premise that "on the big issues of nuclear strategy, [the Soviets] would act as we would; they would take no risks we would not."⁴⁹ On a personal level, Reagan was deeply offended by the moral implications of MAD and set out, early in his administration, to lay the groundwork for a different approach to deterrence. At his direction, in September 1981 he began meeting with a small group of his advisors, including Edwin Meese, National Security Advisor Richard Allen, Science Advisor George Keyworth, presidential advisor Martin Anderson, as well as Gen. Daniel Graham, William Van Cleave and Edward Teller, to discuss and develop what would eventually become the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).⁵⁰ Representing the most significant change in US nuclear doctrine since the early days of the Cold War, SDI would play an important role in the administration's confrontation with the Soviet Union.

Expand US Influence

The Reagan administration's second major goal was to "strengthen the influence of the U.S. throughout the world."⁵¹ During the 1970s, Soviet global influence, particularly in the Third World, steadily increased, while the US experience in Vietnam convinced many in the West that the US was no longer able to exert global leadership. In

⁴⁹ Caspar Weinberger, *Fighting For Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon* (New York: Warner Books, 1991), 293.

⁵⁰ Martin Anderson, *Revolution: The Reagan Legacy* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1990), 92.

⁵¹ NSDD-32, 1.

their view, the US was a declining power whose ability to influence international events was in an unalterable decline. Some argued that the US needed to accept that a new, multi-polar world was emerging and reduce its international commitments.⁵² They insisted that the administration's belief that Western cohesion relied on American strength was irrational. Instead, they insisted that US retrenchment would spur Western Europe and Japan to improve their own defenses and ultimately improve the US relationship with its allies.⁵³ Finally, some insisted that the US had neither the moral right nor economic resources needed to actively pursue expanded American influence.⁵⁴ The Reagan administration rejected these claims and set out aggressively to pursue American political and economic interests.

In rejecting the claims of its critics, the Reagan administration also refused to choose between strengthening relations with its Western allies and enhancing its ties to critical Third World countries. Recognizing that the Soviets viewed the shaky political cohesion of NATO as a major strategic opportunity, the administration understood that “[s]trengthened Western unity and continued U.S. resolve” were critical US foreign policy goals.⁵⁵ At the same time, however, Reagan and his team were committed to expanding US influence in the Third World, which had declined so drastically in the previous decade. Particularly important were “efforts to rebuild the credibility of the U.S. commitment to resist Soviet encroachment on U.S. interests and those of Allies and friends, and to support effectively those Third World states that are willing to resist

⁵² Christopher Layne, “The Real Conservative Agenda,” *Foreign Policy* 61 (Winter 1985): 74.

⁵³ Kenneth A. Oye, “International Systems Structure and American Foreign Policy,” in Oye, Lieber and Rothchild, 17.

⁵⁴ Charles William Maynes, “Old Errors in the New Cold War,” *Foreign Policy* 46 (Spring 1982): 101.

⁵⁵ “Response to NSSD 11-82,” 22.

Soviet pressures.”⁵⁶ This focus on the willingness to resist Soviet advances or pressure was the critical component of this foreign policy goal. As demonstrated in both the 1981 gas pipeline controversy and the 1983 Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) deployment effort, the Reagan administration refused to seek Western unity for its own sake. Instead, it sought to create a unified group of nations dedicated to standing up to Soviet intimidation worldwide.

Maintain Dialogue With USSR

Third, contrary to the claims of Reagan’s critics,⁵⁷ the administration saw the pursuit of dialogue with the Soviet Union as an important goal of American policy. In fact, Reagan himself, early in his administration, began efforts to engage in dialogue with Soviet Premier Brezhnev through a series of personal letters.⁵⁸ Unlike arms control enthusiasts, however, the administration never equated dialogue with arms control, nor did it make the reaching of an arms control agreement, regardless of its provisions, the central US goal. Instead, the administration pursued a significantly more nuanced, subtle and strategic approach, leaving the door open to discussions on a wide range of topics while making clear that the US would not moderate the pursuit of its long-term national interests in exchange for negotiated settlements.

In the administration’s view, dialogue with the Soviet Union was comprised of three key elements: arms control, human rights and Soviet international behavior.⁵⁹ In terms of arms control, the administration rejected the liberal view of arms control

⁵⁶ “Response to NSSD 11-82,” 33.

⁵⁷ See Stephen S. Rosenfeld, “NATO: Read the Fine Print,” *The Washington Post*, May 8, 1981, A19.

⁵⁸ Cannon, 298.

⁵⁹ “Response to NSSD 11-82,” 38.

negotiations “as codifications of equality and as mutual commitments to preserve and honor that equality,”⁶⁰ instead insisting on agreements which “protect and enhance U.S. interests and which are consistent with the principle of strict reciprocity and mutual interest.”⁶¹ It argued that arms control agreements could not be an end in themselves, but rather a single component of a much broader effort to enhance US security. It also insisted, contrary to the wishes of the Soviets, that the human rights situation within the Soviet Union and Soviet conduct in the Third World were equally important topics of discussion and central elements of US-Soviet dialogue. In the administration’s view, dialogue on these issues were a useful tool to maintain pressure on the Soviets to behave responsibly in the Third World and highlight the high costs of Soviet misbehavior.⁶²

The first three goals outlined above can hardly be considered unusual. After all, every administration during the Cold War recognized the need for preserving deterrence, expanding US influence and interacting with the Soviet Union. While each pursued different approaches for achieving them, every president understood the importance of these goals. What truly set the Reagan administration apart were its fourth and fifth goals, which represented a shift away from the passive, defensive strategic approach of the past. By taking up these objectives, the administration seized the strategic offensive and pursued a “theory of victory” which guided US policy towards the Soviet Union. Understanding that victory was the only outcome which could permanently eliminate the threat the Soviets posed to the West, the administration emphasized the need for

⁶⁰ Talbott, 67.

⁶¹ NSDD-75, 1.

⁶² “Response to NSSD 11-82,” 39.

“building and sustaining a major ideological/ political offensive which, together with other efforts, will be designed to bring about evolutionary change of the Soviet system.”⁶³

Reverse Soviet Expansionism

The fourth goal of the Reagan administration was to “contain and over time reverse Soviet expansionism,”⁶⁴ not only in conventional political-military terms, but also in terms of the persistent ideological struggle. In response to steadily increasing Soviet activity in the Third World, the Reagan administration set out to challenge the fundamental bases of communist thinking and exploit the weaknesses in the Soviet’s global position to diminish the attractiveness of the Soviet model. In time, this desire to reduce or eliminate Soviet influence and expansionism in the Third World became known as the Reagan Doctrine. However, it must be pointed out that the goal of reversing the Soviet “sphere of influence” was not limited to the developing world. The administration also set out to undermine Soviet control over Eastern Europe and eliminate the artificial division of Europe resulting from the Yalta agreements.

One of Reagan’s primary efforts was attacking the so-called “Brezhnev Doctrine,” which stated that the spread of communist governments, in both Europe and the Third World, was irreversible. Successfully disproving the Brezhnev Doctrine, in the administration’s view, would reap tremendous benefits. First, by reversing Soviet expansionism, the administration saw the opportunity to undermine the geopolitical gains the Soviets received from its client states. For example, a Soviet defeat in Afghanistan would greatly limit their ability to threaten the oil-rich Gulf region. A setback in Central

⁶³ NSDD-75, 8.

⁶⁴ NSDD-75, 1. See also NSDD-32, 1.

America would weaken the Soviets' ability to pressure the US in a region of special interest and sensitivity. Second, the administration believed that reversing Soviet global expansionism "might well increase the likelihood that other Third World countries would resist Soviet pressures."⁶⁵ Finally, and most importantly, the rollback of Soviet control posed a fundamental challenge to the basic ideological validity of communism by demonstrating that there was nothing inevitable or historically predetermined about communist expansion. Given the importance the Soviets placed on the ideological element of power, the administration understood that the successful overthrow of a Soviet-backed regime would have a major impact on Soviet strength.

While the Reagan Doctrine focused on Soviet expansionism in the Third World, the administration also saw Eastern Europe as an important East-West battleground. Rejecting the arguments of those who insisted that the US had a greater interest in international stability than in a free and democratic Eastern Europe, the Reagan administration also sought to undermine Soviet control over Eastern Europe and eliminate the ability of the Soviets to effectively threaten Western Europe. As stated in NSDD-75, the administration's central goal in Eastern Europe was "to loosen Moscow's hold on the region while promoting the cause of human rights in individual Eastern European countries."⁶⁶ In pursuing this goal, the administration recognized both the need to reward Eastern European states that sought to reduce its dependence on the Soviets and to punish those which reversed or halted liberalization efforts.

⁶⁵ "Response to NSSD 11-82," 35.

⁶⁶ NSDD-75, 4.

Undermine the Soviet Union

Finally, and most controversially, the Reagan administration, from its earliest days, deliberately set out to undermine the cohesion of the Soviet Union and ultimately destroy the Soviet state.⁶⁷ Mindful of the Soviet Union's political, economic and social weaknesses discussed above, the Reagan administration sought to decentralize the Soviet economy, weaken the power of the *nomenklatura*, and gradual democratize the Soviet state by forcing it to deal with its own economic weaknesses, exacerbating its own internal problem of ethnic minorities and promoting the movement within the Soviet Union towards political and economic reform.⁶⁸ This effort to undermine and destroy the Soviet Union represented the most significant change in US Cold War strategic thought since the rollback theorists of the early post-World War II period. But while John Foster Dulles and the Eisenhower administration talked about rollback, the Reagan administration actually pursued it.⁶⁹ By taking the strategic offensive, the administration sought to break out of the “essentially reactive and defensive strategy of containment”,⁷⁰ and pursue an active strategy of victory.

In pursuing this ambitious goal, the administration understood the very real dangers this strategy entailed.⁷¹ Administration officials accepted that some segments of the US and Western population would reject this goal as an affront to efforts to reach the comprehensive East-West settlement which détente was supposed to provide. It also understood that, at least in the short-term, this effort would raise tensions with the Soviet

⁶⁷ See NSDD-75, 1 and NSDD-32, 2.

⁶⁸ “Response to NSSD 11-82,” 1.

⁶⁹ Jeane Kirkpatrick, interview by author, January 10, 2002, American Enterprise Institute.

⁷⁰ “Response to NSSD 11-82,” 23.

⁷¹ The three risks outlined below are drawn from “Response to NSSD 11-82,” 24.

Union and worsen Soviet political repression and militarism. Finally, it acknowledged that US policies designed to force Soviet internal change could succeed in creating a more successful, advanced and powerful adversary. Indeed, the administration's critics raised these very concerns repeatedly during the early 1980s, attacking the administration for taking (what they viewed) as a reckless gamble with virtually no chance of success. A noted advisor to the Carter administration on Soviet policy denounced "hard-liners" within the administration for orchestrating "an ideologically driven campaign to force either capitulation on our terms or collapse of the Soviet regime by exploiting its serious economic problems and its related troubles in Eastern Europe."⁷² Some critics, while acknowledging the major challenges facing the Soviets, insisted that outside assistance and inducements would be more effective in promoting gradual change within the Soviet Union than would the administration's confrontational approach.⁷³ Others insisted that the US should pay no attention to the Soviets' internal situation and instead should focus solely on the USSR's international behavior.⁷⁴ Finally, the intense negative reaction in some quarters to Reagan's prediction that the West would "leave Marxism-Leninism on the ashheap of history"⁷⁵ demonstrated the widespread belief of many knowledgeable administration critics that the Soviet system was extremely stable and largely immune to external pressure.

Despite this criticism and the risks inherent in their new strategic approach, administration officials remained committed to this strategy throughout Reagan's

⁷² Marshall D. Shulman, "Sensible Policy Toward Moscow," *The New York Times*, June 27, 1982 (accessed March 13, 2000), available from Lexis-Nexis Universe.

⁷³ Hyland, 7.

⁷⁴ Zelnick, 98.

⁷⁵ Ronald Reagan, "Promoting Democracy and Peace." Speech given to the British Parliament on June 8, 1982 in *Realism, Strength, Negotiation: Key Foreign Policy Statements of the Reagan Administration*, (Washington DC: United States Department of State, 1984), 80.

presidency. Convinced that the internal nature of the Soviet state was the principal driver of Soviet foreign policy, Reagan and his team made Soviet internal change a centerpiece of US-Soviet relations and crafted US foreign policy to maximize pressure on Soviet weaknesses. Neither the rise of Gorbachev nor the improvement in US-Soviet relations in the late 1980s changed the administration's fundamental strategic approach or reasoning. While it understood that success was never guaranteed, the administration vehemently disagreed with those who saw the Cold War as a permanent feature of international affairs and set out to prove the inherent weakness of the Soviet empire.

Tools

As controversial as some of Reagan's goals were, the tools his administration used to pursue these goals were even more contentious. Opponents of the administration regularly denounced the approach taken by the administration as unrealistic, reckless, dangerous and destabilizing. Yet these tools, when viewed as a whole, reinforced one another and directly contributed to the successful pursuit of the administration's strategic goals outlined above. The four principle tools which the Reagan administration used to weaken and defeat the Soviet Union were: a large-scale defense buildup which sought to restore American military superiority; a sustained program of economic warfare aimed at undermining the ability of the Soviets to compete with the US; an unrelenting ideological and political assault which highlighted the moral differences between the US and the Soviet regime; and an aggressive campaign of clandestine operations designed to roll back Soviet power and undermine the Soviet state.

Military Buildup

Perhaps the most obvious and well-known tool the Reagan administration used to implement its grand strategy was a large-scale, wide-ranging military buildup, consisting of several important components, each having an important strategic impact on the US-Soviet competition. First, the significant improvements the administration made to both nuclear and conventional forces was meant to strengthen deterrence and dissuade Soviet adventurism by sending a message to the Soviets that “we were going to spend whatever it took to stay ahead of them in the arms race.”⁷⁶ The administration understood that, since Soviet leaders considered military power the “principal basis of their influence and status in international relations,”⁷⁷ a successful US challenge to their military superiority could have major strategic effects. The administration’s success in fielding the Pershing II and cruise missiles greatly enhanced Western European defenses and undermined Soviet efforts to intimidate NATO allies. At the same time, its efforts to improve America’s power projection capabilities also forced the Soviets to reconsider its expansion into the Third World.

The second critical component of the military buildup was the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). Representing one of the most important “paradigm shifts” in the history of nuclear theory, SDI played a major role in Reagan’s confrontation with the Soviet Union. By opening the door to a sustained US effort which could quickly surpass the Soviet ABM efforts (which had continued despite the ABM Treaty), the administration raised the possibility of a entirely new arms race which the Soviets could not afford, especially since such a race would emphasize high-technology systems that the Soviets

⁷⁶ Reagan, *An American Life*, 267.

⁷⁷ “Response to NSSD 11-82,” 8.

had great difficulty designing and building on their own. With the potential to render worthless the massive Soviet efforts to modernize their ballistic missile force, SDI also threatened to eliminate the Soviets' first-strike capability and greatly complicate any effort to use its nuclear superiority for political advantage.

The final component of the buildup, a new assertiveness in the use of military force, also played an important role in the administration's Soviet strategy. From the beginning of the Reagan administration, the US demonstrated that it was both willing and able to deploy military force. During the early 1980s, US forces engaged Libyan fighters over the Gulf of Sidra (1981), deployed to Lebanon on two separate occasions (1982 and 1983) and invaded Grenada (1983). While each of these operations were planned and executed in response to specific threats to US national interests, as a whole they represented a new willingness to confront regional insecurity with military means and a weakening of the "Vietnam syndrome" which had inhibited the US willingness to engage in military operations throughout much of the 1970s. These operations –particularly the Grenada invasion – also sent a clear message to the Soviets that the US would not shrink from protecting and advancing its interests in the Third World. This new assertiveness was also aimed at reasserting US leadership and expanding US influence, not only in the Western alliance, but throughout the world.

Economic Warfare

The fact that the United States deliberately sought to exploit Soviet economic weakness is rarely discussed these days in discussions about the end of the Cold War.

When it is mentioned, it is often dismissed as either ineffective or counterproductive.⁷⁸

Yet, throughout the early 1980s, there was widespread recognition that the Reagan administration was conducting a broad campaign of economic warfare against the Soviet Union, the goal of which was to contain Soviet power, limit the Soviets' hard currency earnings and promote change within the Soviet Union itself. The plan which guided this effort was NSDD-66, which Reagan signed on November 16, 1982. Drafted by Roger Robinson, Director of International Economic Affairs for the National Security Council, this plan outlined a sustained Western effort to force the Soviet Union to deal with its own economic shortcomings and to weaken the Soviet economy.⁷⁹

In exchange for lifting the highly-contentious and divisive US sanctions against Western companies working on the natural gas pipeline between the Soviet Union to Western Europe, Reagan obtained from the Allies a firm commitment to a set of principles which would guide the West's economic dealings with the Soviet empire. In NSDD-66 (and restated in NSDD-75), President Reagan outlined the four central principles which had been agreed to by the US and its allies. First, in order to limit the West's vulnerability to a Soviet cutoff during a crisis, allies agreed not to commit to any increase in the purchase of Soviet natural gas beyond the first strand of the pipeline and to accelerate development of secure Western supplies, such as in the Norwegian Sea.⁸⁰ This agreement virtually guaranteed that the planned second strand of the pipeline, which

⁷⁸ For the former view, see Strobe Talbott, "Rethinking the Red Menace," *Time*, Jan 1, 1990, Vol. 135 No. 1 (accessed April 1, 2000), available from Lexis-Nexis Universe. For the latter view, see Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, "Reagan and the Russians," *The Atlantic Monthly* 273, no. 2 (February 1994) (accessed April 1, 2000), available from Lexis-Nexis Universe.

⁷⁹ Roger Robinson, interview by author, October 2, 2002, Center for Security Policy.

⁸⁰ "East-West Economic Relations and Poland-Related Sanctions," National Security Decision Directive, NSDD-66, dated November 16, 1982, 1. Herinafter cited as NSDD-66.

was expected to provide the Soviets billions of dollars in hard currency earnings, would never be built.

Allies also agreed to two other major steps which greatly limited the flow of high-technology goods to the Soviet Union. First, the West agreed to expand the list of critical technologies and equipment which would be subject to COCOM restrictions.⁸¹ Doing so would enable the US to block any transfer of sensitive technology to the Soviet Union. Second, the Allies agreed to reach an early agreement on similar controls on the export of gas and oil drilling and production equipment.⁸² This effort was particularly important to the Reagan administration, which understood that limiting the ability of the Soviets to develop their extensive gas and oil reserves in Siberia would greatly reduce Soviet hard currency earnings. Given the fact that oil and gas exports accounted for between 60% and 80% of the Soviets' hard currency, any serious reduction in their production capabilities would represent a significant blow to the Soviets' financial health.⁸³

The final component of the agreement between the US and its allies was an understanding that Western nations would greatly curtail the provision of official credits for the Soviets to use in purchasing Western goods.⁸⁴ Until this agreement, Western European states had regularly offered the Soviets and their Eastern European allies extremely generous terms of credit, with very low interest rates and lengthy repayments schedules. Despite these attractive terms, Soviet and Eastern European loan repayment was unreliable and marked by frequent threats of default. In view of this problem, the

⁸¹ NSDD-66, 1. COCOM, which stands for the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls, was created in 1949 as a means of preventing the flow of controlled technology to the Soviet bloc. Under COCOM rules, the export of a controlled technology to the USSR was prohibited unless all members agreed to permit the transfer.

⁸² NSDD-66, 2.

⁸³ Robinson interview, October 2, 2002.

⁸⁴ NSDD-66, 2.

administration feared that extending further credits to the East raised the very real danger of “reverse leverage,” in which the lender, fearing that the loan may never be repaid, is forced to offer steadily more generous terms to the lendee. By eliminating these generous terms, the Soviets lost access to the critically-needed capital which was sustaining their struggling civilian economy, funding their military buildup and financing their adventurism in the Third World.

Finally, one must also see the heavy emphasis which the administration placed on the development of high-technology weapon systems as another component of this campaign of economic warfare. There is no better example of such an effort than SDI. While, as discussed above, SDI was primarily aimed at redefining deterrence and ending Mutual Assured Destruction, Reagan and his aides were also well aware that the Soviets would be under immense economic pressure to compete with such a system.⁸⁵ Mindful of the Soviets’ mounting economic problems, the administration understood that the scope, size and high-technology focus of the buildup would exacerbate the Soviets’ economic difficulties. It is hardly a coincidence that one of the most frequent Soviet criticisms of the defense buildup was that it was an attempt “to sabotage [Soviet] economic programs by forcing the shift of money to the military sector.”⁸⁶

Political Warfare

A third major tool that the administration employed was a heated ideological and political campaign which attacked the legitimacy of the Soviet system, exposed the

⁸⁵ Peter Schweizer, *Victory*, (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1994), 135.

⁸⁶ John F. Burns, “Moscow: Arms Buildup is Economic Warfare,” *The New York Times*, June 13, 1982 (accessed May 17, 2001), available from Lexis-Nexis Universe.

fallacies of Soviet propaganda and demonstrated the value and power of American ideals. The administration deliberately planned this attack on the basic legitimacy of Marxism and mandated that the US policies towards the Soviet Union maintain “a strong ideological component” aimed at communism’s ideological flaws.⁸⁷ A critical component of this effort was the use of public diplomacy and international broadcasting as tools to continue Reagan’s ideological war with the Soviet Union. In a series of decisions made during his first term, Reagan outlined his vision for revitalizing America’s efforts to sell its ideals abroad while attacking communist ideology. Early in his first year, Reagan directed major improvements to America’s public diplomacy efforts, which had been virtually ignored under the Nixon, Ford and Carter administrations.⁸⁸ First, recognizing that much of the equipment used by Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) was hopelessly outdated and easily jammed by the Soviets, he ordered a broad technological modernization effort to increase the broadcasting power of the radio stations and to counter (at least partially) the Soviets’ jamming. Over the next several years, the administration would spend nearly \$1 billion to upgrade its broadcasting facilities.⁸⁹ Second, concerned about the Soviets’ increasing use of Cuban troops to support its expansionist efforts in the Third World, the administration also proposed the creation of Radio Marti, which was designed to “generate difficulties for the Castro regime at home and limit its ability to support Soviet global interests,” particularly

⁸⁷ NSDD-75, 6.

⁸⁸ For a fuller discussion of the decline of public diplomacy prior to the Reagan administration, see Carnes Lord, “The Past and Future of Public Diplomacy,” *Orbis* 42, No. 1 (Winter 1998) (accessed December 7, 2005), available from InfoTrac.

⁸⁹ Lord, “The Past and Future of Public Diplomacy,” available from InfoTrac.

in Central America.⁹⁰ However, despite these important early efforts, a broader plan for the strategic use of public diplomacy had not yet been developed.

The first step towards correcting this shortfall occurred in July 1982, when President Reagan signed NSDD-45, which identified public diplomacy as an important tool of national policy and directed VOA to “incorporate vigorous advocacy of current policy positions of the U.S. government.”⁹¹ This directive represented a significant change from the approach taken by previous administrations, which generally tried to eliminate any overt statements supporting the US or attacking Soviet policies. As a result, this new, more aggressive use of information was not popular with some analysts, who argued that using VOA and RFE/RL to attack the Soviet Union was unlikely to change the views of the Soviet or Eastern European people, more likely to harden anti-US sentiment and could incite an uprising in Eastern Europe, resulting in greater Soviet repression.⁹² Rejecting such gloomy predictions, the administration accurately foresaw that its media campaign would strengthen internal opposition movements, weaken central control and enhance the political standing of the West. As a further sign of the importance which President Reagan placed on public diplomacy, in January 1983 he signed NSDD-77, which created a Special Planning Group within the NSC to coordinate, oversee and integrate America’s public diplomacy efforts into its broader national security policy.⁹³ These efforts to improve the ability of the US to conduct political and ideological warfare against the Soviet Union were further enhanced by NSDD-130,

⁹⁰ Lord, “The Past and Future of Public Diplomacy,” available from InfoTrac.

⁹¹ “United States International Broadcasting,” National Security Decision Directive, NSDD-45, dated July 15, 1982, 1. Hereinafter cited as NSDD-45.

⁹² John Spicer Nichols, “Wasting the Propaganda Dollar,” *Foreign Policy* 54 (Fall 1984): 129.

⁹³ “Management of Public Diplomacy Relative to National Security,” National Security Decision Directive, NSDD-77, January 14, 1983, 1. Hereinafter cited as NSDD-77.

which made clear that public diplomacy was a “key strategic instrument for shaping fundamental political and ideological trends around the globe” and thus vital to marginalizing and discrediting communist ideology.⁹⁴ Stressing that honest and accurate information would be the most effective means of influencing key foreign audiences, NSDD-130 directed the US government to target both elites and the general population of key countries and to pay special attention to overcoming barriers to the flow of information into closed societies, such as the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.⁹⁵ Two remarkably successful programs would best reflect this newly effort to engage in political warfare: Project Truth and Project Democracy.

Project Truth was the outgrowth of attempts by the US Information Agency, led by Reagan’s long-time friend Charles Wick, to defend against the increasingly aggressive Soviet disinformation campaign, “restore an anti-Soviet focus and mission to U.S. international information programs” and attack the underlying behavior and morality of the Soviet state.⁹⁶ Perhaps the most potent weapon in this effort was Reagan himself. A powerful, influential speaker with a deep sense of purpose, Reagan’s speeches succeeded not only in capturing the attention of the press, but was critical in publicizing the ideological failures of Marxism and the brutal, dehumanizing impact of communist ideology. He began his ideological battle with the Soviets at his very first press conference, attacking Lenin’s statement that communists had the moral right to lie, cheat, steal and commit virtually any crime provided it advanced the cause of communism.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ “US International Information Policy,” National Security Decision Directive, NSDD-130, March 6, 1984, 1. Hereinafter cited as NSDD-130.

⁹⁵ NSDD-130, 1-3.

⁹⁶ Lord, “The Past and Future of Public Diplomacy,” available from InfoTrac.

⁹⁷ “Transcript of President’s First News Conference on Foreign and Domestic Topics,” *New York Times*, January 30, 1981, A10.

His willingness to use his rhetorical skills to engage in ideological warfare helped effectively turn back the Soviet “peace offensive” of the early 1980s, which aimed at derailing US and NATO military modernization. By pointing out the brutal, repressive policies of the Soviet regime, he reminded the West that the Soviets’ one-sided peace proposals were unworthy of consideration. By highlighting the Soviets’ repeated violations of international law and basic human rights, he claimed the “moral high ground” for the West and reminded Western publics of the fundamental differences between East and West. “To the extent that American public diplomacy as a whole came to be infused with this spirit, it represented a strategic threat of an altogether different order than the one to which the Soviets had become accustomed over the years.”⁹⁸

Yet the administration also understood the need to highlight not only what it opposed, but what it supported. From this understanding came Project Democracy, which was launched by Reagan himself in his famous speech to the British Parliament in June 1982 when he called on the West “to foster the infrastructure of democracy –the system of free press, unions, political parties, universities –which allow a people to choose their own way, to develop their own culture, to reconcile their own differences through peaceful means.”⁹⁹ The goal of this effort was to provide support to private organizations working to strengthen democratic institutions and thereby demonstrate to both the Soviet bloc and the Third World the superiority of democratic ideals and practices. This effort quickly obtained broad, bipartisan support and led to the creation, in 1983, of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). The NED would provide both overt support to nations around the world, as well as serving as a conduit for covert aid to the Polish

⁹⁸ Lord, “The Past and Future of Public Diplomacy,” available from InfoTrac.

⁹⁹ Ronald Reagan, “Promoting Democracy and Peace,” 80.

Solidarity movement as well as to Czechoslovakian dissidents.¹⁰⁰ While rarely discussed in most conventional histories of the Cold War, Project Democracy represented a significant change in American policy. By openly, publicly and officially committing itself to spreading democracy, the Reagan administration expressed “a faith in the principles of liberal democracy and a confidence in the democratic future” which had a profound influence on the Soviet elites as well as the general population behind the Iron Curtain.¹⁰¹

Covert Action

The final major tool the administration used to implement its grand strategy was the vigorous use of clandestine operations to reinforce the other tools outlined above. Certainly the best-known set of covert operations involved US material support to anti-Soviet forces, both in Europe and in the Third World. Under what eventually became known as the “Reagan Doctrine,” the US announced that it would seek to reverse Soviet expansionism by giving political, military and economic support to anti-Communist movements around the world. While this policy was not publicly announced until the 1986 State of the Union address, it was very clearly a component of Reagan’s grand strategy from the outset of his presidency. Both NSDD-32 and NSDD-75 highlight the administration’s goal of reversing Soviet expansionism and supporting friendly forces in the Third World.¹⁰² Guided by this policy, the US provided assistance to, among others,

¹⁰⁰ For a more detailed discussion of the creation and activities of the NED, see Peter Schweizer, *Reagan’s War: The Epic Story of His Forty-Year Struggle and Final Triumph Over Communism* (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 184-188.

¹⁰¹ Lord, “The Past and Future of Public Diplomacy,” available from InfoTrac.

¹⁰² See NSDD-32, 1 and NSDD-75, 4.

the mujahadeen in Afghanistan, the UNITA rebels in Angola and the Nicaraguan contras. This support greatly increased the costs of Soviet aggression, demoralized the Soviet leadership and forced the Soviets and their allies onto the defensive.¹⁰³

While US support for these movements was widely-known and hotly debated during the 1980s, there was at least one other clandestine effort, taking place in the heart of Europe, which remained secret until the end of the Cold War. Beginning in February 1982, the US provided millions of dollars in aid to the Polish Solidarity movement in an effort to help it survive martial law and ultimately overthrow the Communist government there.¹⁰⁴ Most of the aid came in the form of communications equipment, fax machines, printing supplies and photocopiers, all of which were important in keeping the movement active and its remaining leaders out of the hands of Polish authorities. While it would be a gross exaggeration to claim that US aid alone saved Solidarity (the Vatican, for example, gave significantly more aid to Solidarity than did the US), the aid was nonetheless an important component of the administration's grand strategy.

In addition to the Reagan Doctrine, the administration engaged in several other covert operations to reinforce and support the overt tools discussed above. For example, the administration's public diplomacy and international broadcast efforts were supplemented by a covert CIA program which smuggled anti-Soviet propaganda to predominantly Muslim Soviet Central Asia.¹⁰⁵ The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan generated significant unrest within Soviet Central Asia. These operations built on this

¹⁰³ Richard V. Allen, "The Man Who Changed the Game Plan," *The National Interest* No. 44 (Summer 1996) (accessed December 12, 2000), available from Lexis-Nexis Academic.

¹⁰⁴ Schweizer, *Victory*, 75.

¹⁰⁵ Schweizer, *Victory*, 173.

unrest and on the Soviets' economic and political problems in the region and were designed to further complicate the Soviets' problem of internal control.

Finally, the Reagan Administration ran a little-known but extremely important covert operation which was designed to undermine the Soviet economy. In the summer of 1981, French President Mitterrand informed Reagan that French intelligence had successfully recruited a KGB colonel named Vladimir Vetrov who was assigned to Line X, the KGB's directorate dedicated to the theft of Western technology.¹⁰⁶ With the detailed information on Soviet technology theft provided by Vetrov, the CIA and FBI began feeding disinformation to the Soviets, greatly complicating their efforts to integrate high technology into their economy. Numerous faulty blueprints and schematics were sold to the Soviets, as were deliberately sabotaged computer chips and other flawed technologies which caused systems failures, plant shutdowns and other economic disruptions. In addition, thanks to the information Vetrov provided, over 200 Line X officers and sources were expelled or compromised, decimating the Soviets' technological intelligence operations and further weakening their ability to obtain critically-needed Western material.

Conclusion

The three components of grand strategy – beliefs, goals, and tools –are particularly evident in the Reagan administration's national strategy. Unlike his predecessors, Reagan rejected containment, which had been the dominant belief system

¹⁰⁶ The story of Farewell can be found in Gus W. Weiss, "The Farewell Dossier," *Studies in Intelligence*, Vol. 39, No. 5, 1996, available at <http://www.odci.gov/csi/studies/96unclas/farewell.htm>, as well as Schweizer, 187-9.

of America's Soviet policy during most of the Cold War, and instead espoused a belief that winning the Cold War was possible. The administration promoted radically new goals for the US, including the destabilization and ultimate defeat of the Soviet Union, and made use of tools, such as economic and political warfare, which were widely considered ineffective or counterproductive. While a change in any one of the core components of US grand strategy would have been noteworthy, the fundamental changes the Reagan administration made to all three elements of grand strategy demonstrate the revolutionary nature of the Reagan strategy.

Yet defining the Reagan administration's grand strategy is just the first step in understanding its intellectual roots. Given the highly personal nature of grand strategy and the pervasive influence which individuals exert over the definition and implementation of strategy, it is necessary to identify the strategists whose thinking and writing were particularly important to the development of the Reagan foreign policy. The next chapter will trace the history of conservative thought following the Second World War and demonstrate the intellectual pedigree of Reagan's strategy.

Chapter 3: Beliefs

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Reagan administration, from its earliest days, embraced a grand strategy that was fundamentally different from the approaches of its predecessors, both Democratic and Republican. At its core, this strategy focused on ending the strategic stalemate of the Cold War by pursuing a strategy of Western victory. Yet the core ideas and fundamental tenets of the Reagan strategy did not spontaneously generate in 1981, but rather represent the embodiment of a long-standing conservative approach to foreign policy which had developed since the beginning of the Cold War.

One of the most enduring myths of US Cold War strategy is the belief that, in contrast to the heated, divisive debates which characterized domestic policy, there existed a broad consensus among the American people on foreign policy issues. Indeed, as the Cold War continues to recede into the past, there is a growing tendency among historians to gloss over, underestimate or completely ignore the very real disagreements which routinely arose over critical foreign policy issues. Yet any fair-minded review of Cold War history will reveal numerous cases in which fundamental issues of grand strategy were hotly contested. In the early post-war period, the Truman administration was repeatedly criticized both by those who felt it was being too confrontational with the Soviets and by those who felt it was not being confrontational enough. During the 1950s, debates raged over the conduct of the Korean War, the Suez Crisis, the US role in Eastern Europe, decolonization and the defense budget. This pattern continued throughout the 1960s and 1970s, with highly divisive debates on Vietnam, arms control and détente being the most widely recognized. In short, American Cold War history is replete with cases of various presidents making difficult choices over critical strategic issues despite

vehement opposition from some segments of society. In each case, the president's ultimate decision largely reflected his priorities, beliefs and fundamental view of the world.

As a result, it should come as no great surprise that, in tracing Reagan's "strategic lineage," conservative foreign policy thinkers had an important formative influence on the eventual Reagan strategy. After all, Reagan was the first (and only) truly conservative president of the Cold War, and had been a leading spokesman for the conservative movement for decades before his presidency. Contrary to the claims of some critics, Reagan had a long-standing interest in foreign affairs and a strong sense of what the US needed to accomplish in the world.¹ The strategy his administration developed and successfully implemented is a direct descendent of the rollback theorists of the early Cold War, the Goldwater conservatives of the 1960s and the neoconservatives of the 1970s and represents a distinctive, conservative approach to foreign policy. This chapter will trace the development and evolution of each of the five core beliefs of the Reagan strategy and highlight its critical intellectual ancestors.

Rejection of Containment and Détente

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Reagan administration came to office with a fundamentally different approach to relations with the Soviet Union. Rather than rely on the timid, defensive approach of a containment policy or accept the strategic dangers of continuing the failed policies of détente, Reagan chose to take the initiative,

¹ See Peter Schweizer, *Reagan's War: The Epic Story of His Forty-Year Struggle and Final Triumph Over Communism* (New York: Doubleday, 2002) for an excellent overview of Reagan's life-long interest in foreign policy.

seize the strategic offensive, and seek a Western victory in the Cold War. This decision to pursue a policy of confrontation represents the culmination of almost 40 years of conservative foreign policy thought.

Early Cold War Period

The end of the Second World War gave rise to an extensive and heated dialogue on the proper role of the United States in the world and, more specifically, the proper approach for the US to take in dealing with its fellow superpower, the Soviet Union. Many Americans had hoped that the wartime allies, perhaps by working through the United Nations, could avoid the great power clashes which had contributed to the First and Second World Wars. Yet, as the euphoria of the defeat of Germany and Japan died off and the Soviets began tightening their grip on Eastern Europe and supporting communist insurgencies worldwide, it became increasingly clear that the political struggle between the US and the USSR would not be resolved quickly or easily. While a small segment of the West continued to hold out hope for renewed cooperation between the two sides, the great debate on US foreign policy shifted from whether the US and USSR could work together to how best to protect the US and its allies from the Soviet threat. The dominant position was best expressed in the famous “X Article” written by George Kennan and published in *Foreign Affairs* in 1947.² According to Kennan, the most reliable method for preventing further Soviet expansionism was to confront them with “unalterable counterforce at every point where they show signs of encroaching upon

² “X” (George F. Kennan), “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” *Foreign Affairs* 25, No. 4 (July 1947), 566-582.

the interests of a peaceful and stable world” until such time as the Soviets’ own internal development led to the “breakup or gradual mellowing of Soviet power.”³

While it would soon become the “default” US grand strategy during the Cold War, containment was never widely accepted by conservatives, many of whom had deep reservations about the strategic wisdom of containment and supported a fundamentally different approach to protecting the US from the Soviet threat. At the same time, however, one must exercise considerable caution when tracing the history of conservative foreign policy thought, especially in the early days of the Cold War. Fighting and winning World War II caused radical changes in America’s position in the world and its psychological outlook. Understanding and reacting to these changes posed a special challenge for conservatives, many of whom had been isolationists before the war. While the vast majority of conservatives ultimately embraced a greatly enhanced US role in the world, there were numerous foreign policy debates within the movement. While these debates sharpened and refined conservative foreign policy thinking, it also makes it particularly difficult to identify specific individuals who can be seen as representing the “typical” conservative. Nevertheless, one individual in particular stands out as the focal point of conservative foreign policy thought during this period: James Burnham. A former Trotskyite turned dedicated conservative, Burnham provided the intellectual foundation for a distinctive, conservative approach to foreign policy and served as the “chief global strategist” of *National Review*, the most important conservative journal of the day.⁴

³ “X” (Kennan), 582.

⁴ George Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement Since 1945* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 91, 149.

Despite their occasional internal differences, however, most conservatives focused on two major criticisms of containment. First, conservatives argued that containment was a fundamentally flawed approach because it was an entirely defensive strategy. Pointing out that a NATO-wide policy of containment could only work if the Soviets were willing to pursue a similar policy, conservatives stressed that there was no sign that the Soviets were even marginally interested in reaching such an accommodation.⁵ While agreeing that Soviet expansionism needed to be halted, conservatives felt that containment failed to provide any meaningful endstate which could guide American policy, other than the unfounded hope that one day the Soviet Union may “mellow.” As Burnham noted, “a defensive policy … can never win.”⁶ Burnham went on to argue that “our present planning and policy cannot stop the communists more than temporarily, nor can any other plan or policy which is essentially defensive.”⁷ Others pointed out that constantly responding to Soviet efforts to subvert friendly governments worldwide committed “the free world to dealing with symptoms while ignoring causes” of international tension.⁸ At best, such a defensive policy could slow the West’s defeat and make victory more difficult for the Soviets, but it could not, in itself, change the ultimate outcome. Mindful of the West’s experiences with Nazi Germany, conservatives stressed that a stable international order was impossible “between democracies and totalitarianism, or between free economies and economic

⁵ Zygmunt Nagorski, Jr. “NATO and the Captive Nations,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 284 (July 1953): 79.

⁶ James Burnham, *The Coming Defeat of Communism* (New York: John Day Company, 1950), 24.

⁷ Burnham, 99.

⁸ Eugene Lyons, *Our Secret Allies: The Peoples of Russia* (New York: Duell, Sloane and Pearce, 1953), 297.

dictatorship.”⁹ In light of this reality, conservatives urged the US to seize the strategic initiative and force Moscow onto the defensive, arguing that “victory and even, in the long run, survival come only by carrying through an attack, only by passing to the offensive.”¹⁰ This belief in the need for a more assertive, offensively-minded West would become a core element of conservative foreign policy thought during the Cold War.

The second key criticism that early conservatives leveled against the containment strategy was that it played to Soviet strengths while exposing Western vulnerabilities. Conservatives pointed out that the Soviets were making heavy use of indigenous communist parties and movements to undermine friendly governments. Given the ease with which these movements could infiltrate the open societies of the West and play on the anti-Western sentiment of the recently-decolonized Third World nations, conservatives argued that defending against Soviet expansion would prove increasingly difficult for the West.¹¹ Particularly in the aftermath of the McCarthy hearings (which also caused deep divisions within the conservative movement), they argued that Western leaders were becoming steadily less willing to make the sustained, global effort required to challenge Soviet expansionism. Burnham was particularly concerned about this erosion of national will and insisted that the West needed an immediate reawakening or it would face possible destruction.¹² As evidence of the failure of containment, another important conservative author of this period, Eugene Lyons, pointed out that within a few years of containment becoming official US policy, a popular government in

⁹ Charles J. Kersten, “The Liberation Policy and International Order,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 284 (July 1953): 97.

¹⁰ Burnham, 25.

¹¹ Burnham, 26.

¹² Burnham, 134.

Czechoslovakia was overthrown, China and Tibet were taken over by communists and an anti-Western brand of neutralism had spread to portions of the Third World.¹³ These events demonstrated to conservatives that containment could not lead to a lasting peace; in fact, conservatives strongly believed that superpower tension and the numerous conflicts of the period were “the inevitable products” of the containment policy.¹⁴ In short, conservatives in the early Cold War period argued that containment was both a deeply-flawed strategic concept and a politically unsustainable policy which offered no realistic hope of long-term security for the United States or its allies.

Middle Cold War Period

By the end of the post-war era, conservatives had reluctantly accepted that neither Democratic nor Republican administrations were willing to reconsider containment or give serious consideration to conservative foreign policy ideas. While the Eisenhower Administration began by talking about “rollback” and “liberation,” Eisenhower had secretly decided early in his first term not to seek any meaningful deviation from the containment strategy which Kennan had proposed.¹⁵ Eisenhower’s refusal to respond in any meaningful way to the Soviet repression of the 1956 Hungarian revolution made abundantly clear that he was uninterested in pursuing a genuinely conservative foreign policy. Despite these setbacks, the conservative approach to grand strategy continued to develop, with a rising new crop of conservative strategists building on the ideas of their predecessors. This new set of conservative voices would finally find a true supporter in

¹³ Lyons, 302.

¹⁴ Kersten, 101.

¹⁵ Robert R. Bowie and Richard H. Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 137.

Barry Goldwater, who was dedicated to implementing the ideas they had been developing for almost two decades. Despite his landslide defeat in the 1964 presidential election, his candidacy proved a defining moment in American conservatism and fueled the further development of conservative foreign policy thought. While Goldwater was certainly the most well-known figure in American conservatism, several other notable scholars emerged during this period to refine conservative foreign policy thought. Throughout the 1960s, these men reinforced and refined the conservative opposition to containment, while further challenging the arguments of an increasingly large segment of society seeking “peaceful coexistence” or détente with the Soviets.

One of the most important and influential conservative scholar during this period was Robert Strausz-Hupé, an Austrian-born professor and political philosopher. Building on the criticisms that earlier conservatives had leveled against containment, Strausz-Hupé argued that the US had unwisely yielded the strategic initiative and accepted the Soviet distinction between the “peace zone,” which consisted of Soviet-controlled areas, and the “war zone,” which consisted of the rest of the world.¹⁶ By accepting this distinction, the West had opened the door to large-scale Soviet subversion while refusing to seize opportunities to disrupt Soviet control of Eastern Europe. This decision to acquiesce in a sustained Soviet effort to expand its influence came at a particularly dangerous time for the West. The widespread political upheaval resulting from decolonization had already generated a significant amount of anti-Western sentiment in the Third World. By tacitly accepting the Soviet argument that these areas were suitable grounds for superpower

¹⁶ Robert Strausz-Hupé, William R. Kintner, James E. Dougherty and Alvin J. Cottrell, *Protracted Conflict* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 21. See also James Burnham, *The War We Are In*, (New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1967), 20.

competition while accepting the inviolability of Soviet influence in Eastern Europe, the US had essentially granted the Soviets the chance to make significant gains while limiting itself to, at best, preserving the status quo. To conservatives, such a policy represented an almost total absence of rigorous strategic thought and demonstrated the intellectual failure of containment as a plausible theory for winning the Cold War.

Nor was this criticism of containment the only one conservatives would make during this period. Much like his predecessors, Strausz-Hupé expressed his concern that containment, by permitting the Soviets “to devote [themselves] full time to the job of aggression,” would ultimately weaken the West’s morale and undermine its long-term willingness to resist communist expansion.¹⁷ This criticism was echoed by several other conservative foreign policy analysts during this period, who argued that the *status quo* which containment sought to preserve was strategically foolish and impossible to sustain in the long-term. They argued that the USSR was not, and never would be, a *status quo* power and thus would never stop seeking to expand communism worldwide.¹⁸ Thus, conservatives believed the theory that communism would “mellow” over time was neither plausible nor supported by any existing evidence. Conservatives, sharing Burnham’s concern about the ability of the West to sustain its willingness to confront Soviet aggression, were more convinced than ever that only a clearly-stated goal of victory would sustain Western resolve to fight the “protracted conflict” of the Cold War. It was, therefore, critical for the US to seize the initiative and go on the strategic offensive. As Goldwater pointed out, under the strategy of containment, the US witnessed

¹⁷ Robert Strausz-Hupé, William R. Kintner and Stefan T. Possony, *A Forward Strategy for America* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 29.

¹⁸ David Sarnoff, “A Political Offensive Against Communism,” in *American Strategy for the Nuclear Age*, eds. Walter F. Hahn and John C. Neff (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1960), 425.

a rapid expansion of Soviet influence throughout the Third World and an equally rapid decline in Western influence.¹⁹ Only by making it clear to the world that the US intended to not merely halt this trend, but reverse it, could the West achieve real security. In the view of these conservatives, the Cold War could not last forever and would end either in a Western victory over communism or the collapse and destruction of Western civilization.

Nor did this new breed of conservatives place much faith in the other major strategic approach which emerged during the 1960s: “peaceful coexistence” or détente. Indeed, most of the conservative criticism of US foreign policy during this period focused on the dangers such a policy posed to the West. Using arguments strikingly similar to their criticisms of containment, conservatives stressed that the Cold War could not end without the capitulation of one side or the other. Thus, efforts to reduce tension were pointless, as they could never eliminate the fundamental incompatibility of the two competing systems. In Strausz-Hupé’s view, the US and USSR had been engaged in a long-term “protracted conflict” since the end of the Second World War which could not be resolved by either negotiations or the relaxation of tensions. Because “permanent coexistence between systems so fundamentally opposed as closed societies and open societies is impossible,” this conflict could never be resolved until either Western-style democracy or Soviet communism emerged as the dominant model of human society.²⁰ In the view of most conservatives, any effort to relax tensions with the Soviet Union was more likely to encourage increased Soviet expansionism and greater international

¹⁹ Barry M. Goldwater, “A Foreign Policy for America,” *National Review* 10, No. 11 (March 25, 1961): 178-9.

²⁰ Strausz-Hupé, *Forward Strategy*, 35, 45. See also Frank S. Meyer, “‘New Ideas’ or ‘Old Truths’,” in *The Conservative Mainstream*, ed. Frank S. Meyer (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1969), 319.

instability than it was to reassure the Soviets of the peaceful intentions of the West. Harshly criticizing those who sought to change the fundamental nature of the superpower competition by demonstrating the West's goodwill and peaceful intentions, Burnham (who would remain a major figure in conservative foreign policy thought until the late 1970s) argued that the Kennedy and Johnson administrations' efforts to pursue a policy of détente and coexistence "disguised underlying attitudes of appeasement and capitulation" and could only result in a stronger, more dangerous communist movement and a weakened, demoralized West.²¹ Not only would such a policy have a corrosive effect on Western will, but conservatives feared such a policy could actually increase the danger of war, as it could encourage the Soviets to take greater risks (particularly in the Third World) while misjudging the likelihood of a strong Western response.

Conservatives also pointed out that the very term "peaceful coexistence" had a vastly different meaning to Soviet leaders than it did to those in the West. To its advocates in the West, it represented a world in which the two blocs agreed to accept the *status quo* and halt all efforts to shift the balance of power or spread their respective political and economic systems. Conservatives criticized this policy's supporters in the US for believing that détente could change Soviet perceptions and goals and thereby create an "emerging Communist Party of the Soviet Union that is worthy of the West's trust and friendship."²² Such a belief, they argued, represented a fundamental misunderstanding of the Soviet concept of peaceful coexistence. Conservatives stressed

²¹ James Burnham, "Some Proposals to a Goldwater Administration Regarding Foreign Policy," *National Review* 16, No. 28 (July 14, 1964): 590. For a fuller discussion, see Jonathan Martin Kolkey, *The New Right, 1960-1968 With Epilogue, 1969-1980*, (Washington: University Press of America, 1983), 116-117.

²² Gerhart Niemeyer, "Détente and Ideological Struggle," in *Aftersight and Foresight: Selected Essays*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), 134.

that, to the Soviets, peaceful coexistence was not a description of their preferred endstate, but rather a strategy to continue their political struggle against the US, with the ultimate aim of global domination.²³ The core beliefs and central goals of Soviet grand strategy remained the same under détente –only the tools they would use had changed. Rather than resorting to direct military force, which risked a major response by the superior military power of the West, the Soviets saw political warfare and clandestine support to anti-Western movements as valuable and legitimate tools for use under a policy of détente. Conservatives further warned that the Soviets would use détente, and particularly the “gestures of mutual consultation and apparent good-will” to undermine the legitimacy of anti-communism as a reputable policy within Western society and thereby weaken Western resolve.²⁴ Citing numerous public statements by Soviet officials, conservatives also argued that the Soviets sought to use the strategy of peaceful coexistence in the Third World as a way of “mobilizing the masses and launching vigorous action against the enemies of peace,” namely pro-Western rulers in the Third World.²⁵ By encouraging the spread of “neutralism” in the wake of decolonization, the Soviets saw an opportunity to convince the US to withdraw its support for its anti-communist allies in the Third World. Once the ties to the US were disrupted, the Soviets could then more easily make use of coups and subversion to topple “neutral” regimes and place reliable, pro-Soviet leaders in power. This recognition that peaceful coexistence represented not a final settlement to the Cold War, but rather a new and more dangerous phase of Soviet

²³ Frank J. Johnson, *No Substitute For Victory*, (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1962), 33. See also, M. Stanton Evans, *The Politics of Surrender*, (New York: Devin-Adair, 1966), 35-37.

²⁴ Niemeyer, 128, 132.

²⁵ Barry M. Goldwater, *Why Not Victory?*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1962), 25.

aggression, would become a central tenet of conservative thinking and would be reinforced by later conservative and neoconservative strategists.

Late Cold War Period

As the 1960s came to a close, the United States was deeply divided over the conduct of American foreign policy. Protests against the Vietnam War were swelling, and large segments of the foreign policy establishment and the general public condemned the very notion of a forceful, vigorous, anti-communist US foreign policy. Instead, much of the foreign policy elite insisted that the time was right for the US to seek a more cooperative approach: détente. This leftward shift in American foreign policy thinking, especially within the Democratic Party, helped give rise to a new breed of conservatives, the “neoconservatives.” While their influence was never as dominant as some of their supporters (and critics) would later claim, these neoconservatives were destined to play an important role in further refining conservative foreign policy thought. Yet, the neoconservatives’ core arguments were surprisingly similar to, and in some cases derived from, those that traditional conservatives had been making for two decades. In particular, much of the ideological rigor and intellectual flavor which would characterize neoconservative foreign policy thought can be traced back to traditional conservatives, such as James Burnham.²⁶

While conservatives (and now neoconservatives) continued to question the fundamental assumptions underlying containment,²⁷ the bulk of their critique of US

²⁶ Gary Dorrien, *The Neoconservative Mind: Politics, Culture and the War of Ideology*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 19.

²⁷ See Brian Crozier, *Strategy of Survival*, (New Rochelle: Arlington House Publishers, 1978), 151-156 for a good example of conservative criticisms of containment from this period.

foreign policy focused on détente. In fact, by the mid-1970s, the debate over détente had become the single most important foreign policy issue dividing liberals and conservatives. Arising out of this debate, and driven by a concern that détente had led to a weakening of American resolve and that the balance of power had begun to shift decisively in the Soviets' favor, a number of notable conservatives and neoconservatives joined to form an organization which would exert a profound influence on the strategic debate: the Committee on the Present Danger (CPD). Founded by (among others) Paul Nitze, Charles Walker and Eugene Rostow, the CPD was a bipartisan group which sought to alert the general public to the growing Soviet threat and to rally national decisionmakers to take the measures necessary to counter this threat.²⁸ While often depicted as a primarily neoconservative organization, CPD membership was extremely broad and included both traditional conservatives (such as Colin Gray and Robert Strausz-Hupé) and neoconservatives (such as Jeane Kirkpatrick and Richard Perle). Reagan himself joined in January 1979, and a number of CPD members were appointed to positions in the Reagan administration.²⁹ The CPD and other conservatives viewed the rise of détente as proof of their contention that Western publics would never support a static, defensive strategy such as containment over an extended period of time. For conservatives, détente had not only failed to promote any meaningful change in either Soviet goals or Soviet institutions, but had also given the Soviets a significant strategic advantage.

²⁸ For more information on the founding of the CPD, see Paul H. Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glastnost: At the Center of Decision, A Memoir*, (New York: Grove Wiedenfeld, 1989), 353-354, Hodgson, and Jay Winik, *On the Brink: The Dramatic, Behind-the-Scenes Saga of the Reagan Era and the Men and Women Who Won the Cold War*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 110-112. For a more critical history of the CPD, see Jerry W. Sanders, *Peddlers of Crisis: The Committee on the Present Danger and the Politics of Containment*, (Boston: South End Press, 1983).

²⁹ Sanders, 282.

Many of its supporters in the West saw détente as a way to end the global struggle for power and influence which had, in their view, undermined relations between the superpowers. Believing that military superiority no longer had any meaning, they insisted that the US take the lead in building a new relationship with the Soviets, founded on a set of clear principles.³⁰ These principles, which would eventually be enshrined in the “Statement of Basic Principles,” included an agreement that both sides would avoid situations which could lead to military confrontation, cease efforts at unilateral advantage, work to avoid situations that contribute to international tension and claim no special rights anywhere in the world.³¹ At its most basic level, then, both détente required the superpowers to institute fundamental changes in their behavior and presumed that better economic and political relations between the two would reduce the Soviets’ incentives to continue their arms buildup or exacerbate international tension.

In the view of most conservatives, such an approach was built on “a monumental piece of fatuous misjudgment,” namely that the Soviets would ever willingly foreswear efforts to gain a unilateral advantage.³² As conservatives pointed out, the Soviets steadfastly refused to make any significant change in their international behavior and began violating the “Basic Principles” almost immediately, backing their Arab clients in the October 1973 Yom Kippur War and flagrantly violating the 1973 agreement on Indochina. Nor, indeed, did the Soviets show any signs of reducing their massive military buildup, instead continuing and accelerating its modernization efforts. Throughout the 1970s, conservatives stressed that Soviet foreign policy remained aggressive and

³⁰ Marshall D. Shulman, “What Does Security Mean Today?” *Foreign Affairs* 49, No. 4 (July 1971): 613.

³¹ Theodore Draper, “Détente,” *Commentary* 57, No. 6 (June 1974): 38.

³² Leopold Labedz, “USA and the World Today: Kissinger and After,” *Survey: A Journal of Soviet and East European Studies* 22, no. 1 (1976): 2.

expansionist, while détente's commercial and political agreements had done nothing to alter the Soviets' openly-professed goal of destroying the Western democratic system.³³ This behavior reinforced the long-standing conservative contention that the Soviet and Western concepts of peaceful coexistence were fundamentally different and incompatible. Conservatives continued to argue, as they had throughout the Cold War, that the Soviets saw détente not as a means of ensuring world peace, but as a grand strategy aimed at undermining the political and economic cohesion of the West while building up Soviet military power.³⁴ Ultimately, conservatives felt that Soviet behavior clearly indicated that overarching Soviet policy had not changed, but had merely become "more sophisticated in style" and thus harder to stop.³⁵

In addition to highlighting repeated Soviet violations of both the terms and spirit of détente, conservatives also argued that the US pursuit of this policy had conceded to the Soviets two important strategic advantages. First, conservatives noted that the relaxation of international tension had enhanced the ability of the Soviets to influence Western policies. In particular, détente had granted them easier access to Western technology and financial credits, which were critically needed to sustain the Soviet economy with relatively little gain for the West.³⁶ Furthermore, by convincing much of the foreign policy establishment that the only alternative to détente was a third world war,

³³ Robert Conquest, *Present Danger: Toward A Foreign Policy*, (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1979), 32.

³⁴ United States Central Intelligence Agency. *Intelligence Community Experiment In Competitive Analysis, Soviet Strategic Objectives: An Alternative View, Report of Team "B"*, December 1976, 5. The "Team B Report" was conducted in response to complaints that the CIA's analysis of the Soviet military buildup was biased in favor of détente and overly optimistic about Soviet intentions. Team B was lead by Richard Pipes and included several other well-known conservatives, including William Van Cleave, Daniel Graham and Paul Nitze.

³⁵ Eugene V. Rostow, "The Safety of the Republic: Can the Tide Be Turned?" *Strategic Review* 4 (October 1976): 18.

³⁶ Crozier, 173. See also Patrick J. Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories: Why the Right Has Failed*, (New York: Quandrangle, 1975), 157.

the Soviets were able to pressure Western policymakers into make greater concessions, particularly in the area of arms control, thus further shifting the balance of power in the Soviets' favor. Second, conservatives argued that détente had allowed the Soviets to manipulate Western publics and politicians. By publicly attacking any Western policy which the Soviets did not approve of as inconsistent with détente and a threat to world peace, the Soviets were able to use the peaceful intentions of the general public to undermine the West's will to resist Soviet expansionism. At the same time, détente strongly implied a certain moral equivalence of the two superpowers which "divorced the idea of freedom from the US stance in international affairs" and thereby sapped a source of the West's ideological and political strength.³⁷ In short, conservatives believed that détente was not a solution to the East-West struggle, but rather a Soviet-supported tactic for achieving global superiority and a strategic disaster for the West.

As outlined above, conservatives throughout the Cold War consistently argued that containment and détente were unwise and unsound strategic approaches. They argued that these policies would encourage Soviet expansionism, weaken Western resolve and render an acceptable outcome to the Cold War impossible. Instead, they called for the US and its allies to seize the strategic initiative and develop a truly global strategy aimed at a Western victory.

Major Role of Communist Ideology in Soviet Foreign Policy

While recognizing that Russian culture and long-standing Russian national interests did have some influence over Soviet actions, most conservatives argued that

³⁷ Labedz, 29. See also, Gerhart Niemeyer, *Deceitful Peace*, (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1971), 162-172, and Norman Podhoretz, "The Future Danger," *Commentary* 71, No. 4 (April 1981): 47.

communist ideology was the primary driver of Soviet behavior. In particular, they argued that communism set forth the guiding vision of Soviet foreign policy, validating the Soviets' declared goals and justifying Soviet behavior. Because of the central role Marxist ideology had for the Soviet Union, conservatives argued that understanding, confronting and defeating Soviet ideology was a critical element of any successful US grand strategy.

Early Cold War Period

In the early days of the Cold War, there was a fairly widespread agreement among foreign policy analysts that Soviet foreign policy was heavily influenced by communist ideology. Even Kennan, who would in subsequent years deny that communist ideology played any significant role in Soviet behavior, highlighted that communism "has profound implications for Russia's conduct as a member of the international community."³⁸ Yet this consensus would not last very long. The rise of Senator McCarthy and his accusations of widespread communist infiltration of the US government made anti-communism a less reputable political position, while Khrushchev's "secret speech" denouncing Stalin raised the hopes of Western liberals that the Soviets had given up elements of their ideology and had become a more traditional great power. By the mid-1950s, the belief that communism remained central to explaining Soviet foreign policy was found almost exclusively among conservatives. Conservatives in the early days of the Cold War consistently argued that both the Soviets'

³⁸ "X" (Kennan), 572.

goals and their behavior demonstrated the importance they placed on communist ideology.

Of the major conservative writers of this period, none played a greater role in highlighting the ideological dimension of the communist threat than Hannah Arendt. In her seminal work, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt analyzed the nature of totalitarian rule and identified the mindset which animated totalitarian movements. She noted that, when compared to other parties or political organizations, totalitarian movements were characterized by “their demand for total, unrestricted, unconditional, and unalterable loyalty of the individual member,” a fact which made ideological moderation or internal reform unlikely.³⁹ Arendt stressed that, for totalitarian movements (such as Soviet communism), “the scientificity of totalitarian propaganda” was essential to maintaining control of the population, as it provided the only justification for the regime’s political repression and use of terror.⁴⁰ Thus, for members of the Soviet leadership, communist ideology was neither a convenient cover masking Russian national objectives nor a passing intellectual fad, but rather the defining element of the Soviet system. Future conservatives (as well as her own contemporaries) would echo and build upon this assessment of ideology’s critical importance to the Soviet Union.

While Arendt provided the philosophical basis for conservatives’ focus on communist ideology, others were demonstrating the close linkage between communism and Soviet foreign policy goals. In that effort, none were as insistent as James Burnham and Whittaker Chambers. As former communists, they understood better than most the priority the Soviets placed on ideological indoctrination and the influence communist

³⁹ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1951), 316.

⁴⁰ Arendt, 336-337.

doctrine had on the worldview of the Soviet leadership. In Chambers' view, the Soviets saw communism as much more than merely a form of government rooted in Marxist thought. It was, instead, a "rival faith" that guided the Soviets' challenge to the West.⁴¹ Similarly, Burnham argued that, since the days of Marx, communism had always been a ideology with the absolute end of a global communist empire. The Soviet Union's core goal, which it repeatedly and publicly expressed, was to fulfill that ideological imperative.⁴² While not denying the influence of traditional Russian interests on Soviet behavior, Burnham and his fellow conservatives insisted that the primary motive for Soviet expansionism was to encourage the spread of communist governments worldwide.⁴³ Nor was the pursuit of this goal mitigated by conventional morality. As one conservative noted, Lenin and his successors "repeatedly defined morality as whatever will advance the success of the communist cause."⁴⁴ Reagan himself would make an almost identical statement early in his presidency.

In addition to highlighting the influence communist ideology had on the professed goals of the Soviet Union, conservatives also noted that Soviet international behavior provided compelling evidence of the powerful influence of communist ideology. For conservatives, the Soviets' use of military force to suppress "bourgeois uprisings" in Eastern Europe was but the most obvious example of the Soviet dedication to maintaining and expanding communist influence. Yet there were a number of other Soviet actions which clearly demonstrated the centrality of communist ideology. Throughout the Cold War, conservatives were careful to emphasize both the wide range

⁴¹ Whittaker Chambers, *Witness*, (New York: Random House, 1952), 9.

⁴² James Burnham, *The Struggle for the World*, (New York: John Day Company, Inc., 1947), 60.

⁴³ Burnham, *Struggle*, 92. See also Lyons, 299.

⁴⁴ William Henry Chamberlain, *Appeasement, The Road To War*, (New York: Rolton House, 1962), 36.

of tools and the inherent tactical flexibility which communist ideology afforded Soviet rulers. Some conservatives, for example, stressed that the Stalin's post-war refusal to cooperate with the West, particularly in light of the Soviets' critical need for aid in rebuilding their country, could only be understood in light of communism's visceral opposition to the capitalist economic order and its deep-seated paranoia that widespread contact with the West (and particularly Western ideas) could destabilize the Soviet regime.⁴⁵ Similarly, conservatives argued that the Soviets' extensive use of infiltration, espionage and propaganda to influence Western society represented a clear link to Lenin's use of similar techniques to facilitate his own seizure of power.⁴⁶ Finally, conservatives noted that the Soviets' efforts to expand were truly global, and thus reflected the universal ambitions of communist ideology. They stressed that the rapid increase in Soviet military and political support to communist movements in such areas as Malaya, Costa Rica and the Philippines —areas far outside Russia's traditional sphere of influence —was a clear indication that ideology, not historical ambitions or geopolitics, was the primary driver of Soviet foreign policy.⁴⁷

Middle Cold War Period

Unlike their more liberal counterparts, throughout the middle phase of the Cold War, conservatives continued to emphasize the significant influence that communist ideology had on the goals and behavior of the Soviet Union. In fact, one of the most important disputes between liberals and conservatives during this period was over the

⁴⁵ Lyons, 312.

⁴⁶ Lyons, 106.

⁴⁷ Burnham, *Coming Defeat*, 83.

role of Marxist ideology in determining Soviet actions.⁴⁸ Many liberals downplayed the differences between the leadership of the two superpowers, insisting that most of the Soviets' actions were defensive in nature and rooted in the fear of Western invasion. Liberals argued that the conservative view of the Soviet leadership as committed communists was wrong, instead insisting that Soviet leaders were more interested in improving the lives of their people than in pursuing larger, ideological goals.⁴⁹ Conservatives, on the other hand, continued to insist that the role of communist ideology in Soviet behavior had not diminished and increasingly saw the Cold War as a struggle between two inherently incompatible ideologies.

Throughout the 1960s, conservatives continued to argue that the Soviet Union remained committed to aggressive, ideologically-based expansionism, with the ultimate goal of global supremacy. Building on the arguments of their predecessors, conservative strategists emphasized that the Soviet leadership's view of international politics was heavily colored by Marxist ideology and thus fundamentally opposed to a stable, long-term peace with the West. They pointed out, for example, that despite Khrushchev's "secret speech" and the denunciation of Stalin's crimes, the Soviets had shown no signs of reducing their support for global revolution, nor of abandoning their efforts to overthrow the existing global order.⁵⁰ If anything, they argued, the events of the 1960s had reinforced the ideological convictions of the Soviet leadership. Given the steady expansion of communist influence worldwide and the internal turmoil resulting from

⁴⁸ Nash, 268.

⁴⁹ McGeorge Bundy, "To Cap the Volcano," *Foreign Affairs* 48, No. 1 (October 1969): 12.

⁵⁰ Strausz-Hupé, *Protracted Conflict*, 8. See also Johnson, 1, and William R. Kintner with Joseph Z. Kornfeder, *The New Frontier of War: Political Warfare, Present and Future*, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1962), xii.

Western decolonization, conservatives rightly asked, “What reason does a man looking with Khrushchev’s eyes have for abandoning the view that ‘capitalist-imperialism’ is decadent” and doomed to collapse?⁵¹ Conservatives saw no evidence that the mellowing of ideological fervor, which liberals claimed was the inevitable outcome of Soviet economic growth, had begun. Instead, communist ideology remained the unifying factor and the primary motivation guiding the Soviet elite.⁵²

In light of the continued importance of communist ideology and the sustained Soviet efforts to expand the reach of their ideology, conservatives during this period increasingly focused on the centrality of the ideological battle to the ultimate outcome of the Cold War. Winning this ideological battle required understanding the fundamental basis of Marxist thought. Communist theory, they pointed out, did not arise out of a desire for social justice, but rather from Karl Marx’s claims to have discovered the fundamental laws of human history.⁵³ Conservatives argued that it was the belief in these “laws of history,” not economic collectivism, which represented the key to understanding and defeating communist ideology.⁵⁴ The communist belief in historical determinism provided the justification and motivation for Soviet conduct, including the use of violence, subversion and aggression as tools for achieving the historically inevitable communist world. Conservatives believed that, rather than focusing solely on the expansionism and aggression that resulted from communist ideology, the most practical and effective solution to resolving the Cold War was in undermining and destroying the

⁵¹ Bertram D. Wolfe, “Communist Ideology and Soviet Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs* 41, No. 1 (October 1962): 167.

⁵² Strausz-Hupé, *Forward Strategy*, 22. See also, Frank S. Meyer, “Of Khrushchev, Stalin, and Sitting Ducks,” in Meyer, 309.

⁵³ Gerhart Niemeyer, “The Ideological Core of Communism,” in Hahn and Neff, 56.

⁵⁴ Gerhart Niemeyer, “The Communist Mind,” in *Aftersight and Foresight: Selected Essays*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), 73.

root cause: communist doctrine. In particular, conservative strategists argued that it was critical to disprove the Soviets' claim that a communist world was a historical inevitability. For conservatives, the West's larger goal of a free and peaceful world could only come about after the decisive defeat and elimination of the world communist movement and the thorough discrediting of communist ideology.⁵⁵ Thus, American grand strategy needed to focus more heavily on the ideological battle between East and West.

Late Cold War Period

The dispute over the influence of communist ideology on Soviet behavior remained a major topic of debate during the 1970s. In fact, as discussed above, one of the core assumptions of the détente policy was the belief that the Soviets no longer really believed in communism and had become a traditional great power. As such, détente supporters argued that traditional methods of statecraft, such as negotiations and mutual accommodation, were the best way to maintain international peace. During this period, much of the foreign policy establishment focused primarily on the alleged continuity between the policies of pre-revolutionary czarist Russia and those of the Soviet Union. Some, such as Kennan, argued that Marxism's influence on Soviet policies had evaporated within a few years of the Bolsheviks coming to power.⁵⁶ Others, while acknowledging that Soviet behavior during the early Cold War did have an important ideological component, insisted that the Soviets recognized the folly of such an ideological view of the world and had abandoned their efforts to change the international

⁵⁵ Goldwater, *Why Not Victory?*, 38-40.

⁵⁶ George F. Kennan, *The Cloud of Danger*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1977), 174. It is worth pointing out that Kennan's view of communism's influence on Soviet behavior appears to change over

system.⁵⁷ In either case, however, the view of most liberals was that efforts to challenge the validity of communism or to conduct “ideological warfare” against communist doctrine was a waste of time which could only increase international tension without advancing American interests.

Given the close connection between détente and this view of Soviet ideology, it should hardly be surprising that conservatives of the 1970s continued to focus on the impact of communism on the goals and actions of the Soviet Union, arguing that the Soviets continued to strive for global communist domination. Both established conservative figures, such as Barry Goldwater, James Burnham and M. Stanton Evans, and the emerging neoconservatives argued that the Soviets had not given up their goal of world domination, nor had they ceased their efforts to overthrow pro-Western governments and support pro-Soviet regimes in the Third World. This consistency in Soviet foreign policy was hardly a surprise, as conservatives pointed out that the ruling elite of the Soviet system viewed conflict and violence as the “natural regulators of all human affairs” and believed that conflict could only end when communism had spread worldwide.⁵⁸ After all, conservatives noted, the Soviet and Cuban intervention in Angola had no geopolitical or traditional Russian overtures. Such involvement only made sense if one recognized the Soviets’ ideological commitment to “national liberation

time. The view expressed in *The Cloud of Danger* does not, for example, correspond to Kennan’s view as expressed in “The Sources of Soviet Conduct.”

⁵⁷ Shulman, “What Does Security Mean Today?”, 614. In fairness, this view was also held by a few conservatives and neoconservatives. See, for example, Hans J. Morgenthau, “Changes and Chances in American-Soviet Relations,” *Foreign Affairs* 39, No. 3 (April 1971): 432 and Irving Kristol, *Reflections of a Neoconservative: Looking Back, Looking Ahead*, (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 23.

⁵⁸ Richard Pipes, “Why the Soviet Union Thinks It Could Fight and Win a Nuclear War,” *Commentary* 64, No. 1 (July 1977): 26.

movements.”⁵⁹ In her detailed criticism of the Carter administration’s foreign policy, Jeane Kirkpatrick highlighted that the ideological goal of communist expansion drove Soviet support for similar movements in Latin America.⁶⁰ For the Soviets, this expansion of communism into the US’s own sphere of influence would not only demonstrate the historical inevitability of communist expansion, but would also serve to demonstrate the expansion of Soviet power and further accelerate the decline of American power and prestige. Another major neoconservative author, Richard Pipes, argued that Marxism-Leninism remained “a militant doctrine” which would not accept an international system it could not control and which drove the Soviet Union to seek global domination.⁶¹ In the minds of conservatives, failure to understand the influence this ideology had on Soviet goals and actions could only lead to flawed Western policies and, ultimately, the West’s defeat.

Conservatives also saw the lack of any significant structural or behavioral change within the Soviet state as further proof of the central role of communist ideology. Despite decades of industrialization and modernization, the Soviet state had remained largely unchanged, reliant on brutal repression and coercion to maintain domestic order. Conservatives argued that the Soviet leadership’s refusal to make any significant domestic change demonstrated the sustained influence of communist ideology. Some pointed out that even Khrushchev’s denunciation of Stalin’s crimes, which some liberals hailed as evidence of the erosion of communist dogma, did not lead to meaningful change

⁵⁹ Labedz, 8. Similar arguments were made throughout the 1980s as well. See, for example, H. Joachim Maître, “Soviet Military Power,” in *To Promote Peace: US Foreign Policy in the Mid-1980s*, ed. Dennis L. Bark, (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1984), 221.

⁶⁰ Jeane Kirkpatrick, *Dictatorships and Double Standards*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982), 64.

⁶¹ Richard Pipes, “Soviet Global Strategy,” *Commentary* 69, No. 4 (April 1980): 31-2. See also Barry M. Goldwater, “The Perilous Conjunction: Soviet Ascendancy and American Isolationism,” *Orbis* 15, No. 1 (Winter 1971): 53.

in the structure of the Stalinist state.⁶² Despite years of being led by such “moderates” as Khrushchev and Brezhnev, none of the basic institutions of the Soviet state had changed. The general population still had no say in the basic policies of the Soviet government, nor was there any relaxation of the economic or political power of the state.⁶³ Others pointed out that the Soviet leadership’s refusal to make even modest changes to the Marxist agricultural policy, despite worldwide recognition of its absolute failure, demonstrated a deep, abiding commitment to communist doctrine.⁶⁴ In fact, most conservatives argued that the Soviet leadership could not afford to question or revise the role of communist ideology, as it represented the only remaining claim to the government’s legitimacy. Since the Soviet Union remained a totalitarian state rooted in a utopian vision and dedicated to the destruction and wholesale remaking of society, any significant departure from the central teachings of Marx would destroy the only basis for the Communist Party’s continued monopoly of power.⁶⁵ Stressing the fact that communist doctrine permitted temporary retreats in the face of overwhelming power, conservatives insisted that the core elements of communist ideology remained central to the worldview of the Soviet leadership throughout the Cold War.

Centrality of Superior Power in Dealing With the Soviet Threat

Another common theme in conservative foreign policy thought was the central role that power played in assessing the US-Soviet relationship. Yet conservatives did not

⁶² Jean-Fracois Revel, *The Totalitarian Temptation*, (New York: Doubleday, 1977), 30.

⁶³ Richard Pipes, “Basic Soviet Institutions Have Not Changed,” in *Decline of the West? George Kennan and His Critics*, ed. Martin F. Herz (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, Georgetown University, 1978), 62-3.

⁶⁴ Conquest, 13. See also, Niemeyer, *Deceitful Peace*, 93.

⁶⁵ Kirkpatrick, 110. See also, Crozier, 131.

merely focus on the reality of power. After all, many noted liberals, such as George Kennan, accepted the importance of power in international relations. Where the two groups diverged is over the impact and importance of the US maintaining a significant power advantage over the Soviet Union. Beginning in the mid-1960s, Western liberals became increasingly convinced that power differentials, especially in the military arena, had ceased to play much of a role in influencing Soviet behavior. Rather, they argued that mutual goodwill, reassurances of America's peaceful intentions and honest efforts at negotiation were the key to reducing US-Soviet tension and encouraging Soviet moderation. Conservatives never accepted this claim and insisted that the Soviet leadership would only respond to superior Western power.

Early Cold War Period

In the early days of the post-World War II era, most foreign policy analysts, both liberal and conservative, recognized the dangers of appeasement and importance of dealing with the Soviet Union from a position of strength. Having witnessed the failure of British and French efforts to appease a rising Nazi Germany, there was little question in the minds of most Americans that it was both foolish and dangerous to yield to the demands of an aggressive, expansionist state. As the Soviets tightened their grip on Eastern Europe and sought to extend their influence in the rest of the world, the immediate reaction of both liberals and conservatives was to criticize Soviet actions and to call upon the West to resist further Soviet expansion. Many liberals argued that, by doing so, the West could strengthen the "peace group" within the Soviet leadership and

bring about a more reasonable, moderate Soviet foreign policy.⁶⁶ Most also agreed with their conservative counterparts, who argued that the absolutist nature of Soviet demands (which themselves were rooted in communist ideology) made any effort at appeasement a grave mistake. Because the Soviets' goal was global domination, there was no concession, short of total surrender, which could satisfy their demands. In their highly ideological view of the world, the Soviets would view any friendliness or accommodation as either blatant capitalist hypocrisy or as a sign of Western weakness or stupidity.⁶⁷ Rather than easing Soviet fears and reducing their expansionist desires, concessions would, in the view of most Western strategists, merely lead to additional and more outrageous Soviet demands. As Arendt noted, the greatest mistake the West could make was failing to recognize that "important concessions and greatly heightened international prestige did not help to reintegrate the totalitarian countries into the comity of nations" but rather "clearly precipitated their recourse to the instruments of violence and resulted in all instances in increased hostility against the powers who had shown themselves willing to compromise."⁶⁸ In the view of both liberals and conservatives during this period, only Western resolve, backed by superior power, could dissuade Soviet aggression and lead to improved Soviet behavior.

Middle Cold War Period

This consensus on the centrality of power would not survive the turmoil of the 1960s. As American liberals moved steadily towards advocating peaceful coexistence

⁶⁶ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Vital Center*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1949), 225.

⁶⁷ Burnham, *Struggle*, 95.

⁶⁸ Arendt, 379.

and détente with the Soviet Union, conservatives continued to insist that superior power was crucial to preventing Soviet aggression and promoting Soviet reform. Liberals argued that superior American power was dangerous, as it exacerbated Soviet fears of invasion and made Soviet leaders less likely to moderate their international or domestic behavior.⁶⁹ Many liberals argued that the Soviet Union was a deeply insecure nation, absolutely convinced that the West harbored plans to attack and destroy the Soviet state. At the same time (and somewhat contradictory), they argued that power, particularly military power, was becoming increasingly irrelevant in the international arena. The destructive power of nuclear weapons, they claimed, had progressed to the point that these weapons were unusable, rendering superiority meaningless. As a result, many influential liberal voices called for the US to not only renounce efforts to retain its military superiority, but to accept parity or even slight inferiority as a way of calming Soviet fears.⁷⁰

Unsurprisingly, conservatives viewed this approach as highly dangerous and rooted in a serious misunderstanding of the Soviet Union. Echoing Arendt's argument from the previous decade, they insisted that unilateral Western concessions would not ease tensions, but rather spur additional, more extreme Soviet demands.⁷¹ Drawing on the basic precepts of communism, conservatives further noted that Marxism-Leninism was an inherently "combative ideology" which viewed history as a series of conflicts whose outcome was dictated by the power differential.⁷² In addition, since the Soviet leadership,

⁶⁹ Charles E. Osgood, "Reciprocal Initiative," in *The Liberal Papers*, ed. James Roosevelt (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1962), 168.

⁷⁰ Bundy, 17.

⁷¹ Bertram D. Wolfe, "Communist Vulnerabilities," in Hahn and Neff, 90. It is important to note that some anti-communist liberals agreed with this assessment. See, for example, Dean G. Acheson, "Premises of American Policy," in Hahn and Neff, 417.

⁷² Wolfe, "Communist Ideology and Soviet Foreign Policy," 161-162.

in both its internal and external dealings, relied on the coercive threat and use of superior power to achieve its objectives, only a significant Western power advantage could dissuade the Soviets from further expansionism.⁷³ For conservatives, events such as the Berlin Blockade and the Cuban Missile Crisis demonstrated that the Soviets would only back down in the face of superior power. Given that Soviet international designs remained aggressive, conservatives argued that the only reasonable approach for maintaining international peace was unquestioned Western superiority. While acknowledging that this approach increase international tension, conservatives believed that this tension would “produce the maximum disintegrative and weakening effect on the Communist bloc” while a relaxation in tension would help the Soviets to solve their “social and economic failures” and thereby become an even more dangerous competitor.⁷⁴

Late Cold War Period

This debate over the importance of power and military superiority continued to rage throughout the 1970s. By the end of the decade, this gulf between liberals and conservatives had widened, leading each camp to espouse fundamentally different views of the importance of national power. Liberals believed that any efforts to pressure the Soviet Union by building up Western military power was doomed to failure, arguing that such efforts would only heighten Soviet feelings of insecurity and fuel the arms race, thereby worsening East-West relations and diminishing American security.

⁷³ William R. Kintner, *Peace and the Strategy Conflict*, (New York: Praeger, 1967), 3. See also, Burnham, *The War We Are In*, 145.

⁷⁴ Burnham, “Some Proposals,” 590.

Conservatives, on the other hand, insisted that Western military superiority was critical and would provide important strategic and psychological advantages.

The liberal distaste for superpower competition, particularly in the military realm, steadily increased throughout the 1970s. Many liberals argued that the failure of US military power to end successfully the Vietnam War had demonstrated that superiority and coercive power had become increasingly irrelevant in international affairs. After all, they argued, the US had a sizable margin of military superiority, particularly in nuclear weapons, for most of the post-World War II era, yet has been unable to translate this superiority into meaningful political influence.⁷⁵ This belief in the futility of coercive diplomacy was enshrined in détente's Statement of Basic Principles, in which each side renounced any effort to obtain unilateral advantage and pledged to work together to solve international problems. For most liberals, such a statement made eminent sense. Because there were no longer any issues between the US and USSR that could possibly be solved by military conflict and because there was no political value for military superiority, the arms race had become "essentially devoid of political justification."⁷⁶ Rather than advancing American interests, liberals argued military pressure would only diminish chances for a negotiated settlement between the two superpowers.

This view, unsurprisingly, was not shared by conservatives, who continued to emphasize two central points in arguing for ensuring and expanding Western military superiority. First, conservatives felt that the international psychological impact of Soviet military superiority could be dangerously destabilizing. They insisted that the Soviets,

⁷⁵ Shulman, "What Does Security Mean Today?", 607.

⁷⁶ George F. Kennan, "After the Cold War: American Foreign Policy in the 1970s," *Foreign Affairs* 51, No. 1 (October 1972): 220.

guided by their highly ideological view of the world, would see Western weakness as proof of the long-expected collapse of the capitalist world and would thus become more aggressive and less interested in reaching mutually-beneficial agreements. As evidence, they pointed out that the Soviets responded to the unilateral restraint which the US showed in the mid-1970s, not with matching restraint, but with a renewed effort to achieve military superiority.⁷⁷ For conservatives, this Soviet action was hardly surprising, given the importance the Soviets placed on military power and particularly the nuclear balance. For the Soviets, the nuclear balance was “the fulcrum upon which all other levers of influence –military, economic, or political –rest.”⁷⁸ Thus, in the view of most conservatives, it made little sense to expect the Soviets to slight willingly one of the defining elements of Soviet international importance. Second, conservatives argued that, while Western liberals may have believed that military power was no longer an important factor in international politics, such a belief was not shared by others around the world. As a result, the (self-imposed) decline of US power could only raise concerns among pro-Western Third World governments about the wisdom of relying on American friendship.

In addition to expressing concerns regarding the impact Soviet superiority would have on international politics, conservatives also worried that, by forgoing military (and particularly nuclear) superiority, the West would undermine its entire approach to Cold War military strategy. Lacking the ability to stop a Soviet conventional assault on Western Europe, US nuclear doctrine relied heavily on the threat of massive retaliation in

⁷⁷ Carl Gershman, “The Rise and Fall of the New Foreign Policy Establishment,” *Commentary* 70, No. 1 (January 1980): 22. See also Crozier, 40.

⁷⁸ Committee on the Present Danger, “Peace With Freedom: A Discussion by the Committee on the Present Danger Before the Foreign Policy Association, 14 March 1978,” in *Alerting America: The Papers of the Committee on the Present Danger*, ed. Charles Tyroler II, (Washington: Pergamon-Brassey’s, 1984), 28.

response to any Warsaw Pact invasion. Yet many conservatives questioned whether any such threat would be deemed credible when the Soviets also possessed nuclear superiority.⁷⁹ US inferiority, then, would neither reassure the Soviets of the West's peaceful intentions, nor would it reduce the likelihood of East-West conflict. Instead, conservatives argued that it would encourage Soviet adventurism, undermine deterrence and raise questions among America's NATO allies regarding the credibility of US security guarantees. At the same time, conservatives also emphasized that efforts to reach equitable arms control agreements were heavily dependant on the West having a clear margin of military superiority. Only with such a margin could the US "expect successfully to negotiate hardheaded and verifiable agreements to control and reduce armaments."⁸⁰ Finally, conservatives remained deeply concerned about the impact that Soviet superiority could have on the willingness of the Western public to stand up to Soviet pressure. Noting that "the political will to resist an expanding power is a precondition of stopping its expansion," conservatives feared that Soviet superiority (especially when compounded by the unwarranted hopes for détente) could weaken this will and thereby undermine the ability of the West to protect its vital interests.⁸¹ In short, conservatives believed that power, and particularly military superiority, were central to ensuring Western security.

⁷⁹ Fred Charles Ikle, "Arms Control and National Defense," in *The United States in the 1980s*, eds. Peter Duignan and Alvin Rabushka, (Stanford University: Hoover Press, 1980), 433.

⁸⁰ Committee on the Present Danger, "Common Sense and the Common Danger," Policy Statement issued November 11, 1976 in Tyroler, 4.

⁸¹ Labedz, 9. See also Conquest, 51.

Recognition of Soviet Weaknesses

While deeply worried over the threat posed by communist political and military expansion, conservatives throughout the Cold War argued that the Soviet Union had important weaknesses which, if properly exploited, could force the Soviets to alter their behavior. Whereas early conservatives tended to focus on the Soviets' economic vulnerabilities, conservative thought would gradually, over time, outline both political and economic weaknesses which could be exacerbated and manipulated by the strategic use of American power.

Early Cold War Period

As discussed above, conservatives of the early Cold War period believed that the US needed to take the strategic initiative and launch a more aggressive, assertive campaign against the Soviet Union. This belief was founded, in part, on an analysis of Soviet weaknesses which would prove to be remarkably prescient. In fact, the conservatives of this era accurately identified many of the economic and political weaknesses which would only become apparent to much of the foreign policy elite in the late 1980s. During this time, no one was more insistent on the inherent fragility of the Soviet domestic and international position than James Burnham. His review of Soviet vulnerabilities was remarkably foresighted, particularly in identifying some of the fundamental economic flaws in the Soviet empire.

Recognition of some of the Soviet Union's economic weakness following the Second World War scarcely required a great deal of insight. After all, Western analysts were well aware that the German invasion had inflicted massive damage to the Soviet

economic infrastructure. Much of the mainstream discussion of Soviet weakness, then, had focused on the obvious problems of rebuilding infrastructure and overcoming the serious population losses from the war. While Burnham acknowledged these problems, he greatly expanded the scope of this analysis to identify more systemic flaws which could be exacerbated by Western policy and which were not widely recognized in the West. Chief among these flaws were the steadily increasing production costs, extreme inefficiency and poor quality of manufactured goods throughout the Soviet empire.⁸² While recognizing that the Soviet landmass had an abundance of natural resources, he accurately predicted that the Soviets would have increasing difficulty extracting these resources, given their technological backwardness.⁸³ The recognition of these flaws would, in the years to come, drive conservatives to argue for economic and trade policies designed to worsen these fundamental economic weaknesses.

While accurately predicting the economic difficulties which would plague the Soviet Union in the 1980s, Burnham and his fellow conservatives also recognized the serious political flaws in the Soviet system which could be worsened by the skillful use of American power. Burnham pointed out the younger members of the party were exhibiting signs of “a grave theoretical and …moral crisis,” caused by the inability of the Soviet leadership to justify its dominant role in the socialist world or to develop a reasonable solution to the problem of political succession.⁸⁴ Other scholars noted that, in addition to these challenges, the leaders of totalitarian states face a paradox which becomes increasingly difficult to manage. A totalitarian state’s “disregard for facts, its

⁸² Burnham, *Coming Defeat*, 111.

⁸³ Burnham, *Struggle*, 116.

⁸⁴ Burnham, *Coming Defeat*, 113-122.

strict adherence to the rules of a fictitious world, becomes steadily more difficult to maintain, yet remains as essential as it was before.”⁸⁵ Leaders are forced to promise the impossible in order to seize power, and then must develop an all-encompassing governmental structure to pursue the impossible in order to remain in power. Conservatives stressed that this structure, while ensuring leadership control, stifled individual initiative and rendered Soviet society so inflexible that Burnham accurately predicted that “it seems to me likely, from its very nature, that the communist system can collapse fast once it starts collapsing.”⁸⁶ Finally, he and many other conservatives pointed out the serious political challenges the Soviets faced in retaining control over their empire, particularly over the captive nations of Eastern Europe and their own nationalities within the Soviet Union.⁸⁷ Despite Soviet propaganda to the contrary, the peoples of Eastern Europe, the Baltic states and Central Asia welcomed neither Russian domination nor the repressive and alien political system imposed on them. As with the economic vulnerabilities, future conservatives would advocate aggressive US actions to target these political weaknesses.

Middle Cold War Period

While much of the conservative analysis of Soviet weaknesses during the early years of the Cold War focused on the serious economic challenges facing the regime, by the 1960s conservatives had gradually begun to focus on the political vulnerabilities inherent in communist systems. Whereas the earlier focus on economic difficulties

⁸⁵ Arendt, 378.

⁸⁶ Burnham, *Coming Defeat*, 124.

⁸⁷ See, for example, Lyons, 326.

reflected a recognition of the economic damage which the Second World War inflicted upon the Soviet Union, the focus on political factors can be seen as a response to three key factors: the political upheaval within the Soviet Union which occurred during the mid-1950s; the relative stabilization of the military balance in Europe; and the Soviets' increasing use of communist ideology as a tool of foreign policy. As the US was increasingly forced to deal with a political, vice military, threat, conservative foreign policy strategists responded by analyzing the USSR's political vulnerabilities.⁸⁸

Among the first to highlight the serious vulnerabilities of the Soviet regime was Robert Strausz-Hupé, whose analysis of the USSR's political failures were echoed by a number of conservative writers. Strausz-Hupé believed that the Soviet Union's greatest threat was also its greatest weakness, namely its unending, ideologically-driven desire for power.⁸⁹ He argued that this lust for control led the Soviets to implement foolish economic policies and made it impossible for the regime to develop any real support among the general public. Conservatives recognized that this popular opposition to communist rule was widespread not only among the captive nations of Eastern Europe but also within the Soviet Union itself. Despite the Soviets' prediction that it would wither away with the building of the socialist state, nationalism remained a serious challenge to the political stability of the Soviet empire. If the Soviets, in response to nationalist pressures, moved towards greater federation, they risked splintering the empire. At the same time, if they moved towards greater centralization, they risked accelerating the growth of nationalist sentiment.⁹⁰ As demonstrated by the 1956 uprising

⁸⁸ It must be stressed, however, that the Soviets' shift from military intimidation to political subversion represented only a change in Soviet tactics, not goals.

⁸⁹ Strausz-Hupé, *Protracted Conflict*, 142.

⁹⁰ Stefan T. Possony, "The Challenge of Russian Totalitarianism," *Orbis* 8, No. 4 (1965): 765.

in Hungary, rising nationalist sentiment caused the local communist regimes to be extremely unpopular in Eastern Europe, making them the Soviets' "Achilles' heel" and leading conservatives to urge sustained pressure on these regimes to increase the likelihood of upheaval and revolution.⁹¹ In the view of many conservatives, the situation in Eastern Europe would not be easily remedied any time soon, making future revolts against Soviet domination inevitable.

As a result of the gradual buildup of Western military power in Europe, Soviet tactics shifted from the use of military pressure on Western Europe towards the use of communism's intellectual allure to gain influence within the recently-decolonized Third World. In response, Strausz-Hupé and his fellow conservatives paid increasing attention to the communism's inherent ideological vulnerabilities and urged the West to exploit these weaknesses. In particular, the conservatives highlighted that communist doctrine, which provided the basis of the Soviet state, was extraordinarily frail. First, conservatives pointed out that it was becoming increasingly clear that communism's "laws of history" did not exist and thus the worldwide spread of communism was not inevitable.⁹² For example, whereas Marxist ideology claimed that living conditions for the working class in the West would worsen over time, the fact was that they had steadily improved. Second, conservatives pointed out that, despite the growing movement towards national independence, the Soviets' "insistence on retaining in political bondage alien national bodies inevitably leads to strains and frictions within the communist world."⁹³ Finally, conservatives recognized the political weaknesses caused by "the wide discrepancy

⁹¹ Strausz-Hupé, *Protracted Conflict*, 79. See also Johnson, 123 and Burnham, "Some Proposals," 590.

⁹² Kintner, *The New Frontier of War*, 323. See also Evans, 523.

⁹³ Kintner, *The New Frontier of War*, 324.

between communist ideology and practice.”⁹⁴ While the Soviet leadership promised the elimination of classes, wealth for all, and the elimination of the state, in practice it had established an entirely new class, appropriated almost all of the national product for use by the new elite, and created the most repressive, totalitarian state in human history.⁹⁵ Strausz-Hupé and his colleagues argued that a victory in the Cold War required the West to target these political and intellectual failures.

While their focus may have been primarily on the Soviets’ political weaknesses, conservatives during this period did expand upon their earlier assessments of the Soviets’ economic vulnerabilities as well. At a time when most Western liberals denied that the Soviets faced any significant economic challenges, conservatives continued to highlight key economic trends within the Soviet empire which the West could use to its advantage. While recognizing that the Soviets had (for the most part) managed to recover from the destruction resulting from the Second World War, conservatives noted that a number of new, longer-term problems were emerging within the Soviet and Eastern European economies. The Soviets’ collectivized agricultural program was a disaster, forcing the USSR to become reliant on the outside world to feed their own people, and the transportation and energy sectors were mismanaged and grossly inefficient.⁹⁶ It continued to face severe manpower problems, in particular a shortage of skilled labor, as well as significant shortfalls in capital. Yet, beyond these specific weaknesses, conservatives also recognized the key problem which underpinned all of the Soviets’ economic weaknesses: an inability rationally to allocate its resources between “short-run strengthening of power,

⁹⁴ Kintner, *The New Frontier of War*, 322. See also Sarnoff, 425-426.

⁹⁵ Strausz-Hupé, *Forward Strategy*, 276-277. See also Wolfe, “Communist Vulnerabilities,” 100.

⁹⁶ Ralph James, “The Soviet Economy,” in *Handbook on Communism*, eds. Joseph Bochenski and Gerhart Niemeyer, (New York: Praeger, 1962), 444. See also, Kintner, *Peace and the Strategy Conflict*, 87-88.

long-run strengthening of power, and raising standards of living.”⁹⁷ The most effective, efficient method for managing the struggle between these three competing goals was greater decentralization of the economy. Yet the Soviet leadership had for years known that they could not meaningfully decentralize their economy without threatening the control and ideology of the Soviet Communist Party. Thus, conservatives of this period grasped the Soviets’ key economic challenge some twenty years before the vast majority of the foreign policy establishment: the Soviets could either attempt to compete with the Western economies by embarking on a program of massive economic reform and risk the political collapse of their system or they could retain central control of their political and economic system, but fall further behind the West.

Late Cold War Period

During the 1970s, recognition of the Soviets’ critical weaknesses became more widespread, even among some (but by no means all) American liberals. In fact, one of the intellectual justifications for détente was the belief that both the US and the USSR were facing increasing political and economic difficulties which required greater cooperation to solve. Where liberal and conservative views diverged during this period, then, was not over the existence of these weaknesses, but rather their severity and the extent to which the West could exacerbate these difficulties to its own benefit. For most liberals, the Soviets’ feeble economic growth and internal political problems were severe enough to provide an incentive to seek détente, but not so severe as to offer hope for a Western

⁹⁷ G. Warren Nutter, “The Effects of Economic Growth on Sino-Soviet Strategy,” in *National Security: Political, Military, and Economic Strategies in the Decade Ahead*, eds. David M. Abshire and Richard V. Allen, (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1963), 162.

victory nor a significant decline in Soviet power. This incentive on the Soviet side, combined with America's perceived decline, convinced most liberals that some sort of grand compromise with the Soviets was possible. By the end of the decade, conservatives had identified all the major economic and political vulnerabilities which would, in later years, lead to the collapse of the Soviet state. In fact, by the early 1980s, a few conservatives had already begun urging Western leaders to begin thinking about how to deal with the actual collapse of the Soviet regime.⁹⁸ This listing of vulnerabilities would become a virtual "target set" for the Reagan administration in its efforts to undermine and destroy the Soviet empire.

Whereas conservative writers of the previous decade had largely (though, as noted above, by no means exclusively) focused on the political difficulties facing the Soviet Union, the conservatives of the late Cold War period renewed its analysis of communism's economic vulnerabilities. Conservatives argued that the Soviets' declining economic growth was neither a transitory phenomenon nor merely the result of poor national leadership or individual corruption, though such problems did exacerbate matters. Instead, they stressed that the worsening economy was an inherent feature of the communist economic system. In particular, the economic weakness was the result of administrative over-centralization, the lack of genuine economic incentives and the heavily-militarized nature of the Soviet economy.⁹⁹ Symbolic of communism's failure, they argued, was the miserable state of Soviet agriculture, which was heavily dependent on the very small percentage of privately-owned farmland in the Soviet Union, as well as

⁹⁸ Brian Crozier, "Apocalyptic Thoughts," *National Review* 33, No. 10 (May 29, 1981): 604.

⁹⁹ Richard Pipes, *Survival Is Not Enough*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984), 114. See also Gerhart Niemeyer, *Deceitful Peace*, 96.

Western grain sales. Yet conservatives saw, in these weaknesses, opportunities which the West could exploit for strategic advantage. Increasingly, it became clear to conservatives that the Soviet Union was becoming heavily dependant on the West to sustain its economy, particularly in the areas of technology, energy exploration and financial credits.¹⁰⁰ Even the Soviet military, which had long privileged access to scarce Soviet technological and economic resources, had become increasingly reliant on Western technology, obtained from both legal purchase and outright theft.¹⁰¹ It should hardly be a surprise, then, that years later the Reagan administration would target these specific areas in its effort to put pressure on the Soviet regime.

Conservatives of the 1970s also continued their efforts to assess the Soviets' key political vulnerabilities and had, by the time of Reagan's election, identified a set of weaknesses which they believed could be effectively targeted by Western policies. At its core, conservatives argued, the Soviet Union was facing a serious crisis of legitimacy which was undermining its ability to control both its international empire and its domestic population. Despite its success in expanding its influence in Africa and the Middle East, the Soviet Union was facing serious questions about its political and intellectual credibility. Conservatives believed that the Soviets' inability to maintain control over their empire without resorting to force and repression revealed a critical vulnerability.¹⁰² They argued that the continued opposition within Eastern Europe to Soviet rule, particularly in Poland during the 1970s, demonstrated the inherent

¹⁰⁰ R. Sean Randolph, "Trading With the Enemy: A Happy Way to Die?" *National Review* 32, No. 19 (September 19, 1980): 1133. See also Robert Conquest, "A New Russia? A New World?," *Foreign Affairs* 53, No. 3 (April 1975): 485-495.

¹⁰¹ M. Stanton Evans, "Selling the West," *National Review* 31, No. 1 (January 5, 1979): 33.

¹⁰² Crozier, *Strategy of Survival*, 158. See also Buchanan, 152.

illegitimacy of communist rule there, a view strengthened by international condemnation of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

In addition to these threats to the Soviet Union's international authority, conservatives also identified the growing challenges the Soviets faced in merely controlling its own population. They argued that, despite over 50 years of communist rule, the regime had lost the respect and support of virtually the entire Soviet population and remained intact solely due to the coercive power of the ruling class.¹⁰³ As a result of this inherent illegitimacy (as well as its pressing economic problems), the regime had become increasingly fragile and prone to collapse.¹⁰⁴ Mirroring the argument Strausz-Hupé had made years earlier, conservatives of the 1970s pointed out the impact of "the gap between promise and fulfillment" on the Soviet population, stressing that "the more patent the failures of Soviet Communism are, the harder it is to justify the dogmas that constitute ... the *only* source of legitimacy of the Soviet autocracy."¹⁰⁵ At the same time, conservatives highlighted the rise of ethnic nationalism within the Soviet Union, particularly in Central Asia and the Baltic states, and the dangers this rival ideology posed to Soviet internal stability. Making this rise of nationalism even more dangerous were the demographic changes which had begun to occur during the 1970s, with the population of better-educated, more highly-skilled ethnic Russian work force declining, while the number of less-educated workers from Central Asia and the Transcaucasus

¹⁰³ Conquest, *Present Danger*, 30.

¹⁰⁴ Revel, 267-268. See also Kristol, 273 and Pipes, *Survival Is Not Enough*, 200.

¹⁰⁵ Crozier, *Strategy of Survival*, 161-162 (emphasis in original). See also Walter Laqueur, "Containment For the 1980s," *Commentary* 70, No. 4 (October 1980): 41.

steeply increasing.¹⁰⁶ During the Reagan years, conservatives would exploit these economic and political weaknesses in an effort to undermine the Soviet regime.

Superiority of Democracy and Capitalism

Even to many of his most bitter critics, Reagan's belief in the moral superiority of the West's political and economic system was unquestionable. "Ultimately, Reagan was a professed believer in freedom – economic, political and intellectual."¹⁰⁷ His optimism about the future of democracy and his belief in the ascendancy of Western ideals was a core element of his worldview and central to his administration's national strategy. Yet, unlike the other four core beliefs discussed above, this idea is less easily found, and was more heavily debated throughout the history of conservative foreign policy thought. In almost every standard account of both the Reagan foreign policy and conservative intellectual history, the administration's belief in the inherent superiority of democracy is attributed to the rise and influence of neoconservatism. However, without denigrating the important contributions made by the neoconservatives, such a claim fails to recognize the long history of conservative thought in this area. In fact, with a few notable exceptions during the early stages of the Cold War, conservatives repeatedly made the superiority of democratic capitalism a central element of their strategic thought.

¹⁰⁶ Edward N. Luttwak, "After Afghanistan, What?" *Commentary* 69, No. 4 (April 1980): 45.

¹⁰⁷ John Karaagac, *Between Promise and Policy: Ronald Reagan and Conservative Reformism* (Landham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000), 74.

Early Cold War Period

Reviewing the writings of both liberal and conservative foreign policy thought in the early days of the Cold War reveals surprisingly little discussion of the relative merits of Western society nor the role of democratic ideology in American strategy, especially when compared with the intense debates on this subject which would occur in later years. In Burnham's writings, however, one finds a deeply conflicted view of Western democracy. On one hand, he repeatedly called for the establishment and spread of democratic institutions around the world. A common theme of much of his writing is the need to create a "non-communist world federation" which would be led by the United States and guarantee every member nation the right to organize its own political institutions and express its own cultural and religious values.¹⁰⁸ He also regularly emphasized the utilitarian value of Western ideology as a weapon against the Soviets and was one of the most committed supporters of assisting the nations of Eastern Europe in replacing their communist regimes with free institutions. On the other hand, however, Burnham was extremely concerned about the many weaknesses he saw in Western societies. He regularly highlighted the dangers of democratic idealism and questioned the ability of much of the world to govern itself democratically without substantial Western assistance. Most of all, he worried about the dangerous tendency within democracies to underestimate the will and goals of totalitarian regimes (as they had prior to the Second World War) and to believe that reasonable, mutually-satisfactory agreements could be reached with these regimes.¹⁰⁹ In summary, Burnham, while believing in the moral

¹⁰⁸ Burnham, *Struggle*, 187-189.

¹⁰⁹ Burnham, *Coming Defeat*, 10. Similar concerns are expressed in Arendt, 379 and Niemeyer, *Deceitful Peace*, 176.

superiority of democracy, was not convinced that Western democratic institutions were capable of dealing with the political challenge posed by Soviet communism.

While Burnham's views were representative of many conservatives, it is important to note that not all conservatives agreed with Burnham on this issue, nor was concern about the ability of democracies to meet the Soviet challenge limited to the conservative end of the political spectrum. Other well-known conservatives, such as Frank Meyer, criticized the moral relativism of some liberal writers (such as Walter Lippmann) and emphasized that the West needed to recognize and use the power of its own traditions.¹¹⁰ Indeed, many conservatives saw the spread of communism as a fundamental challenge to the underlying assumptions of Western civilization, specifically the West's commitment to individual rights. Only by tapping into the strengths of the West, to include individual freedom, economic opportunity, national unity and the traditions of Western civilization, could the US and its allies hope to counter the threat posed by communist ideology.¹¹¹ In addition, Burnham's concern about the ability of democratic societies to remain united was shared by many across the political spectrum. Even Arthur Schlesinger, a well-regarded anti-communist liberal, urged the West to "make democracy a fighting faith" in large part because he recognized the difficulty democracies have in maintaining the political unity needed to implement a successful foreign policy.¹¹² Nevertheless, unlike the other four beliefs discussed above, the direct linkages between early conservative thought in this area and the Reagan administration's

¹¹⁰ Frank S. Meyer, "The Relativist 'Re-evaluates' Evil," *National Review* 3, No. 18 (May 4, 1957): 429. See also Kersten, 103 and Edmund A. Walsh, *Total Empire: The Roots and Progress of World Communism*, (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1951), 99-100.

¹¹¹ William Henry Chamberlain, *Beyond Containment*, (Chicago: H. Regnery, Co., 1953), 348-9.

¹¹² Schlesinger, 246.

strategic beliefs are tenuous. Not until the late 1950s and early 1960s would most conservative strategic thought begin to reflect the core beliefs that would eventually become part of Reagan's grand strategy.

Middle Cold War Period

The transition in conservative thought from concern to strongly-held belief in democracy's power began in the late 1950s and culminated in the rise of Barry Goldwater, who made faith in Western ideas a core element of conservative philosophy. High-profile conservatives such as William Buckley and Robert Strausz-Hupé repeatedly urged the West to find, in its own great traditions, the will and strength to win the ideological war with communism. In his criticism of American liberals, Buckley argued that liberalism was unable and unwilling to provide a faith strong enough to motivate the West. While he agreed with Schlesinger and other liberals that democracies had not successfully rallied their people to resist the appeals of communism, he insisted that a revival of the people's faith in democracy was only possible by emphasizing the core political values of the West.¹¹³ While some of Strausz-Hupé's earlier writings express concern about the impact of material wealth on the willingness of the US to live up to its moral philosophy, by the early 1960s he made clear that a key strategic goal of the West was "to assure mankind a future of freedom" premised on the notion that "government is legitimate and genuine only so far as its ruling end is the protection of human

¹¹³ J. David Hoeveler, *Watch on the Right: Conservative Intellectuals in the Reagan Era*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 131. This belief in traditional American values was shared by much of the pro-Goldwater movement. See John A. Andrew, III, *The Other Side of the Sixties: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of Conservative Politics*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 19.

freedom.”¹¹⁴ This emphasis on the preservation and expansion of human freedom became a central tenet of the new conservative political revival sparked by Barry Goldwater. Goldwater argued that the US needed to make clear to the world that it was “willing to fight and to die in defense of freedom” and was committed to take the actions required “to stop the ideas of communism with the better ideas of free men.”¹¹⁵ For him, victory over the Soviet Union in the Cold War was merely a stepping stone to the ultimate goal for the West, which was the creation of a world which placed a premium on democratic governance and human freedom.

This view of democracy was not universally shared, and was criticized by both liberal and conservative critics. For some liberals, the notion that democracy was somehow morally superior to communism was rooted not in fact, but in the West’s own psychological distortions.¹¹⁶ In fact, a few argued that the democratic West had no hope of competing with command economies, which, could better focus national resources on specific goals. Others, while acknowledging the superior morality of democratic principles, felt that there was no realistic hope of establishing democracies in the developing world.¹¹⁷ This concern about the viability of democracy abroad was echoed by some conservatives, who felt that transforming the international system into a democracy was neither possible nor necessary to achieve the key goal of defeating communism.¹¹⁸ Rather, these conservatives believed that the West needed to focus solely on defeating the external manifestations of communism, such as its efforts to subvert or

¹¹⁴ Strausz-Hupé, *Forward Strategy*, 11. His concern about Western materialism can be found in *Protracted Conflict*, 144.

¹¹⁵ Goldwater, *Why Not Victory?*, 34. See also Kintner, *The New Frontier of War*, 341 and Labedz, 36.

¹¹⁶ Osgood, 188.

¹¹⁷ James Warburg, “A Re-Examination of American Foreign Policy,” in Roosevelt, 82.

¹¹⁸ Johnson, 5.

intimidate other governments. There was, in their view, no meaningful strategic advantage to be gained by encouraging the spread of democracy. Despite this limited opposition from fellow conservatives, by the end of the 1960s, belief in the power of democracy had gradually become an important element of conservative foreign policy thought.

Late Cold War Period

Throughout the 1970s, neoconservatives played an increasingly important (though by no means exclusive) role in the development of conservative thinking on the role of democratic principles in US foreign policy. The primary neoconservative innovation to conservative strategic thought was its emphasis in the belief that the spread of democracy would enhance American security. Whereas earlier conservatives had generally focused on the impact of democratic capitalism on the material power relationship between the US and the USSR, the neoconservatives also highlighted the broader ideological benefits that the spread of democratic systems would provide the West. Specifically, the spread of democratic governments worldwide would disprove the Marxist prediction of a communist world, limit the ability of the Soviets to expand its international influence and create the political conditions necessary for an expansion of American political and economic influence. By endorsing the spread of democratic capitalism, they rejected the criticisms of American liberals who insisted, particularly in the aftermath of Vietnam, that the flaws in the US system had rendered it unfit for global leadership and that the decadence of Western society made it unworthy of saving.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ George F. Kennan and George Urban, “From Containment to … Self-Containment” in Herz, 15. See also Kennan, *The Nuclear Delusion*, 145.

Of all the Reagan administration's core beliefs, its belief in the superiority of democracy is the one most closely associated with neoconservatism. For neoconservatives, the ideological dimension of the Cold War was central to any Western strategy of victory. In the view of such notable neoconservatives as Norman Podhoretz and Sidney Hook, the gradual expansion of democratic institutions, including into the nations of the Soviet bloc, offered the only legitimate hope for a lasting peace. In addition, they argued that the only sustainable American foreign policy was one rooted in strengthening and spreading its core political and economic values.¹²⁰ Neoconservatives further believed that the most important US weakness could be found not in the Western political and economic system, but rather in the morale of the elite, many of whom had lost faith in the ability of the West to solve its own problems.¹²¹ While clearly influenced by Wilsonian thought, the neoconservatives differed from Wilsonians, in part, by focusing on the use of US national power, vice international institutions, to advance America's democratic ideals. Yet both Wilsonians and neoconservatives shared a view that democratic institutions were inherently superior to other systems, and that advancing democracy abroad was a moral obligation, albeit one to be advanced with great caution.¹²²

While much of the intellectual focus during this period remained on the neoconservatives, it should be stressed that other conservative authors made similar arguments about the moral and political superiority of Western democratic capitalism.

¹²⁰ Nathan Glazer, "American Values & American Foreign Policy," *Commentary* 62, No. 1 (July 1976): 37. See also Norman Podhoretz, "The Present Danger," *Commentary* 69, No. 3 (March 1980): 27-40.

¹²¹ Peter Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives: The Men Who Are Changing America's Politics*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 150.

¹²² Kirkpatrick, 92. See also Michael Ledeen, *Grave New World*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 25.

Jean-Francois Revel, in his seminal work, *The Totalitarian Temptation*, argued that in both economic performance and respect for basic human rights, communism was “vastly inferior” to capitalism and insisted that the spread of democracy would greatly improve living conditions worldwide.¹²³ Similarly, other conservatives pointed out the importance of the US simply telling the truth about the Western system, emphasizing that, despite its flaws, democratic capitalism represented the best system available for both economic progress and individual freedom.¹²⁴ This conservative view of the power and superior morality of Western political and economic institutions would serve as the intellectual basis for the Reagan administration’s aggressive efforts to undermine the communist system via public diplomacy and covert action.

Conclusion

As demonstrated above, the core beliefs of the Reagan administration represent the culmination of almost 35 years of conservative strategic thought which challenged mainstream foreign policy assumptions. In some cases, such as highlighting the need for a more offensively-minded US policy and explaining the role of communist ideology and power on Soviet behavior, conservative thought remained remarkably consistent throughout the Cold War. In other cases, such as analyzing Soviet weaknesses and assessing democracy’s strength, conservative thought gradually evolved from the early days of James Burnham, through the Goldwater Revolution, to the rise of the neoconservatives. And while the beliefs outlined above were by no means agreed upon

¹²³ Revel, 22, 33.

¹²⁴ Conquest, *Present Danger*, 58-59. See also Committee on the Present Danger, “Common Sense and the Common Danger,” 4, Buchanan, 159 and William R. Kintner, “A Program for America: Freedom and Foreign Policy,” *Orbis* 21, No. 1 (Spring 1977): 148.

by every conservative strategist, as a whole they represent a fundamentally different worldview which served as the intellectual and philosophical basis of the Reagan administration. As a result of these beliefs, the administration developed a set of more ambitious goals for the United States and designed a plan to wield more assertively all available tools of national power.

Chapter Four: Goals

The previous chapter highlighted the commonality between the Reagan administration's strategic beliefs and those of mainstream conservative strategic thought. It showed how Reagan's key assumptions regarding the nature of the Cold War and the international system were representative of the larger conservative foreign policy community. This chapter will conduct a similar analysis to demonstrate that, just as in the case of the administration's core beliefs, its central goals reflect the steady evolution of conservative foreign policy thought.

Preservation of Deterrence

The goal of deterring military conflict, particularly nuclear war, can hardly be described as unusual or unique to the Reagan administration. In fact, every administration since Hiroshima wrestled with the challenges of deterring World War III while pursuing other American goals and interests. Yet, as described in Chapter 2, the approach Reagan took to preserving deterrence represented a fundamental shift from the widely-accepted approach of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD), towards an approach which sought to deter Soviet aggression through the development and fielding of superior Western power. This approach, which was captured by the oft-repeated phrase "peace through strength," emphasized strategic defense, robust counterforce capabilities and improved conventional capabilities. This belief in "peace through strength" tracks closely with the thinking of several notable conservative strategists, who saw efforts to prevent full-scale military conflict with the Soviets as a necessary, but by no means sufficient, condition for achieving larger strategic goals.

Early Cold War Period

The early years of the Cold War were, in many ways, the “Golden Age” of nuclear strategy. The advent of the Nuclear Age sparked a period of intense thought about the new strategic challenges resulting from the atomic (and later thermonuclear) bomb. While the actual terms may not have been used, the genesis of most of the key concepts of nuclear theory, such as “extended deterrence,” “countervalue targeting,” and “credible threat” can be found in the writings of the period. Of the many strategic theorists to consider the problem of nuclear deterrence during this period, none was more influential than Bernard Brodie. His thinking would, by the end of the 1950s, exemplify the collective opinion of the foreign policy establishment and serve as the bedrock for most left-of-center nuclear strategists. Believing that nuclear weapons had fundamentally changed military conflict, Brodie argued that nuclear superiority offered no meaningful political or strategic advantages and thus could not contribute to US national security.¹ In his view, the fundamental mission of the military had changed: whereas the military’s role used to be to fight and win wars, “from now on its chief purpose must be to avert them. It can have almost no other useful purpose.”² This statement reveals the fundamental basis of much mainstream and liberal nuclear strategy: nuclear weapons are so overwhelmingly destructive that their mere existence is more than enough to render military aggression pointless. As a result, the US did not need to be overly concerned with numeric or technological superiority, nor with robust defenses or comprehensive

¹ Bernard Brodie, “The Absolute Weapon,” in *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order*, ed. Bernard Brodie (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1946), 24, 76.

² Brodie, 76.

plans for fighting a nuclear war. Provided it was able credibly to threaten the destruction of much of the Soviet homeland, these strategists believed that the Soviets would be effectively deterred. An underlying assumption of his writings (and those of virtually all of his contemporaries) was, of course, the acceptance of containment as the guiding strategic concept. If the US was only seeking to dissuade or halt Soviet expansionism, then the reactive, defensive-minded approach endorsed by most mainstream nuclear strategists made perfect sense. A Soviet invasion of, for example, Western Europe would result in a full-scale conventional war which would likely escalate into a nuclear exchange. Since neither side could hope to emerge from such an exchange a “winner,” the Soviets would be effectively deterred. Absent a commitment to roll back Soviet power, there was no reason for the West to seek or maintain nuclear superiority. Brodie’s thinking on deterrence would remain influential throughout the Cold War, with later nuclear strategists building upon his belief that a secure and devastating second-strike capability was the centerpiece to a reliable deterrent posture.

While Brodie exemplified the thinking of most mainstream nuclear strategists, one can see in Burnham’s writings the beginnings of a distinctively conservative approach to deterrence theory. For Burnham, the notion of relying solely on deterrence was dangerous and strategically unsound. Prior to the Soviets’ first nuclear test, he questioned whether a strategy that relied so heavily upon deterrence could actually keep the peace, arguing that the presence of nuclear weapons on both sides of the Iron Curtain would make a surprise attack increasingly likely and make the international system highly unstable.³ While his concern that a nuclear-armed Soviet state would make war

³ James Burnham, *The Struggle for the World*, (New York: John Day Company, Inc., 1947), 36.

inevitable would prove inaccurate, his concern regarding the dangers of a devastating surprise attack would become a central feature of later conservative thinking. In many ways, his critique of mainstream deterrence strategy mirrored conservatives' general criticism of containment: an approach based solely on defensive, reactive measures can never lead to victory. Rather, he believed that the US needed to pursue a global, wide-ranging strategy containing both offensive and defensive elements and saw the deterrent force of American nuclear weapons (and military power as a whole) as an important defensive component, supporting the pursuit of broader strategic goals.⁴ By deterring Soviet military action against key Western interests, American military superiority would enable the US to make offensive use of other, non-military means. This view that an effective deterrence required American superiority would be echoed and expanded upon by later conservatives.

Middle Cold War Period

As noted above, the 1960s saw a rapid growth in the systematic study of nuclear deterrence and the development of more robust theories of deterrence. Drawing on the thinking of Brodie and others, many mainstream nuclear theorists argued that vast increase in the power and number of nuclear weapons held by the superpowers had made unthinkable any serious military conflict between the US and the USSR and had forced both sides to recognize that maintaining the ability to cause massive devastation in response to a surprise attack was the only reasonable nuclear strategy. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara strongly endorsed MAD, and at one point even suggested that

⁴ James Burnham, *The Coming Defeat of Communism* (New York: John Day Company, 1950), 140.

the US required only a second-strike capable of destroying 20-25% of the Soviet population and 50% of its industrial output to guarantee a stable nuclear deterrence.⁵ For McNamara and other proponents of the MAD approach, the key to deterring a Soviet nuclear attack was to have a reliable and secure second-strike capability, aimed primarily at Soviet population centers. Provided this second-strike capability was developed and maintained, they argued that any other capability improvements were strategically meaningless, a waste of national resources, and potentially destabilizing.

As the codification of MAD progressed throughout the 1960s, conservatives became increasingly concerned about MAD's implications for overall American strategy. One of the most important, influential voice in the development of a conservative approach to deterrence was Strausz-Hupé. Deeply concerned about the West's rapidly-shrinking military, and especially nuclear, superiority, he argued that "American policy relies upon a margin of military superiority vis-à-vis the communist bloc which is dangerous narrow by the measure of American global commitments."⁶ In the view of most conservatives, nuclear superiority was critical both to maintaining the credibility of the US commitment to Western Europe and to enabling the US to resist Soviet aggression in more limited wars. Strausz-Hupé argued that the US move towards MAD would further encourage Soviet piecemeal aggression, since the Soviets knew that the US would never risk a nuclear war (and thus its own destruction) over a limited Soviet incursion in the Third World. As a result, he stressed that any theory of deterrence must rest on an

⁵ This figure has been quoted widely, and can be found in Lawrence Freedman, "The First Two Generations of Nuclear Strategists," in *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 758.

⁶ Robert Strausz-Hupé, William R. Kintner and Stefan T. Possony, *A Forward Strategy for America* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 95.

understanding of how such a war would be fought. “It is only by devising *operationally* effective forces that we will have at hand at the crucial moment adequate deterrent forces.”⁷ The mere existence of nuclear weapons was not enough to ensure deterrence. Rather, in order to maintain a credible deterrent, the West needed to think through and plan for the actual use of these weapons. Echoing Burnham’s earlier writings, other conservatives also emphasized that deterrence was only one element of national power, and needed to be integrated into a much broader strategic effort.⁸ Central to such an effort was American nuclear superiority, which conservatives argued would enable the US to more readily confront Soviet aggression by presenting them “with the same choice which they now purport to offer us: peaceful co-existence or the possibility of a war in which they would be destroyed.”⁹ This superiority would not only serve as an effective deterrent against a full-scale Soviet nuclear attack, but would also permit the US greater freedom to pursue the more aggressive, offensive efforts required to win the Cold War.

Late Cold War Period

Perhaps the most important factor in the development of deterrence theory during this period was the loss of American nuclear superiority. By the early 1970s, the Soviet Union had reached (at least) rough equality to the US in overall nuclear capability, if not outright superiority. This fact generated two fundamentally different responses, largely along liberal-conservative lines.¹⁰ For adherents to the assured destruction approach, the

⁷ Strausz-Hupé, *Forward Strategy*, 115.

⁸ Gerhart Niemeyer, “Political Requirements,” in *National Security: Political, Military, and Economic Strategies in the Decade Ahead*, eds. David M. Abshire and Richard V. Allen, (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1963), 262.

⁹ Frank J. Johnson, *No Substitute For Victory*, (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1962), 7.

¹⁰ One must, as always, be very careful about such generalizations, as there were some “Cold War liberals” who were very uncomfortable with MAD and some conservatives who supported the concept.

growth of the Soviet arsenal was largely irrelevant. Provided that a sizable portion of US arsenal could reasonably be expected to survive a surprise attack (which the development of ballistic-missile submarines made increasingly likely), they believed that deterrence was unaffected. “Deterrence comes from having enough weapons to destroy the other’s cities; this capability is an absolute, not a relative, one.”¹¹ Thus, proponents of MAD argued that the only way for this mutual deterrence to fail would be if either side developed the ability to prevent the destruction of their population centers and economic assets, primarily through the development and fielding of large-scale civil or missile defenses. Otherwise, they argued that the nuclear balance was ultimately meaningless. Since no advantage could be gained by achieving nuclear superiority, it did not matter how large or technologically advanced the Soviet arsenal became, so long as the US retained the ability to devastate the Soviet homeland.

For the (mostly) conservative strategists who opposed MAD, the loss of American nuclear superiority represented a dangerous change to international stability and posed a major threat to Western security. It also served to intensify conservative criticisms of MAD, in particular highlighting two key weaknesses in America’s nuclear strategy. First, they stressed that the Soviets’ strategic writings and military policies indicated that they did not accept the notion of MAD and that they viewed nuclear superiority as valuable.¹² As evidence of the Soviets’ rejection of MAD, conservatives cited the massive Soviet buildup which began in the 1960s, arguing that it far exceeded amount necessary for the Soviets to implement MAD. This buildup, and the Soviets’ own strategic writings,

¹¹ Robert Jervis, “Why Nuclear Superiority Doesn’t Matter,” *Political Science Quarterly* 94, No. 4 (Winter 1979-1980): 618.

¹² Paul H. Nitze, “The Relationship of Strategic and Theater Forces,” *International Security* 2, No. 2 (Autumn 1977): 123.

indicated that “Soviet strategists regard[ed] the possession of more and better strategic weapons as a definite military and political asset, and potentially the ultimate instrument of coercion.”¹³ The problem this difference in views caused for superpower deterrence was obvious: were the Soviets to view America’s deterrence strategy as either implausible or impossible to implement in light of Soviet nuclear superiority, they would be more likely to take greater risks to achieve Soviet global objectives. Since the key to deterrence was the ability to deny one’s adversary any plausible hope of victory, conservatives argued that the development of a nuclear war-fighting capability was critical to effectively deterring the Soviets. Such a capability would “den[y] the Soviet Union any plausible hope of success at any level of strategic conflict; [offer] a likely prospect of Soviet defeat; and [offer] a reasonable chance of limiting damage to the United States.”¹⁴ Failure to develop such a capability, they argued, would weaken deterrence and make a nuclear war more likely.

Conservatives argued that the second key weakness in MAD was its failure to acknowledge that there were a large number of possible scenarios in which nuclear weapons might be used, only one of which was the large-scale, intercontinental destruction of population centers with which MAD supporters were preoccupied. In these situations, the ability to control the process of escalation was critical to deterring a conflict or preventing a conventional conflict from becoming a nuclear one. In considering these scenarios, conservatives found particularly troubling the effect

¹³ Committee on the Present Danger, “What is the Soviet Union Up To?” 4 April 1977, in *Alerting America: The Papers of the Committee on the Present Danger*, ed. Charles Tyroler II, (Washington: Pergamon-Brassey’s, 1984), 13. See also Robert Conquest, “The Limits of Détente,” *Foreign Affairs* 46, No. 4 (July 1968): 736.

¹⁴ Colin S. Gray and Keith Payne, “Victory Is Possible,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 39 (Summer 1980): 26-7.

America's loss of nuclear superiority would have on its extended deterrence posture. They stressed that this loss meant that the US would no longer have the "excess capability" at the strategic nuclear level to either control nuclear escalation or to deter, for example, the Soviet use of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe.¹⁵ As a result, the lack of America's nuclear superiority would have a corrosive impact on its international commitments, as America's allies would begin to question whether the US would willingly risk a full-scale nuclear war in response to a regional crisis.¹⁶ For this reason, conservatives insisted that inferiority (or even parity) was "incompatible with extended deterrence duties because of the self-deterring inherent in such a strategic context."¹⁷ In pointing this deficiency out, this argument mirrored the concern Strausz-Hupé expressed almost 15 years earlier, namely that nuclear superiority was vital to the credibility of America's global commitments.

Expansion of US Influence

Although each administration pursued this goal with different means, maintaining and expanding American influence around the world was a central goal of every president during the Cold War. In the years immediately following World War II, there was a broad consensus regarding the importance of both strengthening the close ties which had developed between the US and Western Europe and improving America's relationship with the Third World. Yet, as decolonization began and the number of anti-

¹⁵ Nitze, "The Relationship of Strategic and Theater Forces," 128. See also Ikle, 438.

¹⁶ Richard Burt, "Reassessing the Strategic Balance," *International Security* 5, No. 1 (Summer 1980): 48. See also Charles Burton Marshall, "Strategy: The Emerging Dangers," in *National Security in the 1980s: From Weakness to Strength*, ed. W. Scott Thompson, (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1980), 439.

¹⁷ Gray and Payne, 16.

colonial, nationalist movements began to rise, the postwar consensus regarding the Third World gradually began to dissolve. By the time Ronald Reagan took office in 1981, the gap between liberals and conservatives had widened significantly, with each espousing radically different opinions regarding the wisdom and ability of the US to expand its influence in the Third World.

Early Cold War Period

In the aftermath of the Second World War, there was a general understanding that America's choice of isolationism prior to the war had been strategically unsound and that, given its status as a superpower, such an approach was no longer appropriate. Nor indeed was there major disagreement over the notion that the US had vital interests, not only in war-ravaged Europe, but throughout the world. The outbreak of the Korean War left little doubt that America's interests were global. This postwar consensus, however, began to fall apart with the push for decolonization and the rise of governments throughout Asia, the Middle East and Africa which espoused anti-Western, Marxist or nationalist ideologies. The critical question became how best to expand American influence in a Third World largely dominated by outwardly anti-American governments. For most liberals, the moral and political value of ending European colonialism, in and of itself, was a major enhancement to long-term American security. By supporting decolonization, liberals hoped that the US would be seen as a potential friend and ally. Additionally, since most of these new states lacked both the technical expertise and economic infrastructure to function effectively, liberals also urged the US to provide significant economic assistance, and strongly opposed imposing political or economic conditions on

such aid. Such conditions amounted, in their view, to little more than “neo-colonialism” and would undermine America’s appeal in the Third World. Finally, US liberals tended to downplay the importance of Marxist or anti-Western statements by the rulers of these newly independent states, insisting that such statements reflected little more than an effort to either strengthen their nationalist credentials or to attract additional aid from either the Soviet Union or the West. In short, liberals argued that only by “winning over” the rulers and people of the former colonies could the US measurably increase its support and influence in the Third World.¹⁸

While most recognized that decolonization was both necessary and inevitable, conservative strategists were significantly more skeptical about the ability of Western aid to, in essence, buy the friendship of the Third World and were extremely concerned about the anti-Western, pro-Marxist tendencies of many post-colonial governments. For conservatives, expanding influence around the world was an important goal, but only in the context of improving the likelihood of a Western victory in the Cold War. According to Burnham, only by supporting its allies and retaining “the solidarity of the non-communist sections of the world” could the US succeed in destroying communist power.¹⁹ Conservatives saw that, by developing and strengthening a global, anti-communist system of alliances (both formal and informal), the US could gain two important strategic advantages over the Soviet Union. First, improved relations with key Third World nations would provide a significant enhancement to the West’s overall

¹⁸ For a good example of liberal views on decolonization, see Chester Bowles, *The New Dimensions of Peace* (New York: Harper, 1955).

¹⁹ Burnham, *Coming Defeat*, 141.

power by allowing the free world to combine its resources to resist Soviet pressure.²⁰ Second, and even more important in the view of most conservatives, expanded US influence would have a major impact on the crucial ideological battle between democracy and communism. This focus on the ideological struggle represents the most important difference between liberal and conservative views on expanding American global influence. For example, as a result their emphasis on the ideological dimension of the Cold War, conservatives supported economic assistance, but insisted that Western aid be offered only to those states willing to stand with the US against communist expansionism.²¹ By discrediting Soviet ideology, conservatives hoped to diminish the appeal of communism and thereby deprive the Soviets of one of their most important strategic weapons.

Middle Cold War Period

The divide between liberal and conservative views became steadily more pronounced throughout the 1960s, with the rise of “national liberation movements” and the deepening social divide over the Vietnam War. The US policy of expanding its influence in the Third World by supporting, in some cases, anti-communist authoritarian regimes had become increasingly controversial. American liberals were highly critical of any effort to gain friends based on a shared opposition to communism, arguing that such an approach ultimately undermined America’s appeal around the world, as it caused the

²⁰ Edmund A. Walsh, *Total Empire: The Roots and Progress of World Communism*, (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1951), 219.

²¹ Burnham, *Coming Defeat*, 198.

US to ally itself with unpopular and repressive regimes.²² In the view of many liberals, the damage done to American ideals by supporting Franco, the Shah and Chiang Kai-shek posed a far greater risk to American security than the possible rise of anti-Western or Marxist governments in the Third World. Liberals also continued to urge greater economic aid to the Third World and preferred to see the UN oversee the political and economic development of the post-colonial world, rather than have the West impose its own conditions on how aid should be used.²³ Ultimately, liberals argued that expanding US global influence was only possible by winning over “the people” of the Third World, by offering unconditional support for revolutionary governments and by downplaying the ideological element of the Cold War.

Unsurprisingly, conservatives took an entirely different approach to expanding American influence around the world. Continuing to focus on the superpower struggle, they argued that the only reasonable basis for a enduring security partnership with the Third World was anti-communism.²⁴ While acknowledging that authoritarian or military regimes in the Third World were not in America’s long-term interest, most conservatives argued that quiet pressure on these regimes gradually to introduce democratic reforms was preferable to abandoning them and allowing pro-Soviet rulers to come to power. While recognizing the need to show “reasonable deference to local sensitivities,”²⁵ Strausz-Hupé and others urged the US to use economic aid to promote regional cooperation and greater economic integration with the West. Yet conservatives cautioned

²² James Warburg, “A Re-Examination of American Foreign Policy,” in *The Liberal Papers*, ed. James Roosevelt (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1962), 54.

²³ Warburg, 85.

²⁴ Barry M. Goldwater, *Why Not Victory?*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1962), 38. See also Johnson, 124.

²⁵ Strausz-Hupé, *Forward Strategy*, 235.

that neither economic aid nor political support could be counted on to win over the Third World. At best, such efforts could only buy time for Third World nations to develop the institutions and economic infrastructure that would orient them towards the West. In the meantime, conservatives argued, only the willingness to use America's superior power to protect its friends and allies could enhance US international influence. Noting that "foreign peoples believe the United States is weaker than the Soviet Union, and is bound to fall still further behind in the years ahead,"²⁶ Goldwater argued that seizing the strategic offensive against the Soviets' political and military aggression was the most reliable way to reassure the world of America's commitment to freedom, and thereby win the "war of ideas" with the Soviet Union and expand US influence.

Late Cold War Period

Throughout the early and middle periods of the Cold War, the debate between liberals and conservatives on expanding US influence worldwide revolved around how the US could best achieve this goal. While this debate was often heated and contentious, there remained a significant area of common ground, rooted in the shared understanding that the US can and should enhance its standing throughout the world, especially within the Third World. This common ground steadily disappeared in the wake of the highly divisive debates over Vietnam and détente, in large part due to the pronounced leftward shift among American liberals. The new debate was not over how to expand American influence, but whether the US should even be pursuing such influence around the world.

²⁶ Barry M. Goldwater, "A Foreign Policy for America," *National Review* 10, No. 11 (March 25, 1961): 178.

For many American liberals, the US intervention and defeat in Vietnam raised fundamental questions about both the morality and effectiveness of American foreign policy. The war served as a rallying cry for liberals and contributed to the rise of the more extreme elements of the democratic left, culminating in the Democratic Party's nomination of George McGovern in the 1972 presidential election. As a result of this change in American liberalism, a number of new arguments were put forward opposing the expansion of US influence in the Third World. For some well-known liberals, such as George Kennan, the only reasonable response to the decline in American prestige was to become an isolationist, gradually withdrawing from existing commitments (except for Western Europe, Japan and Israel).²⁷ Given the decadence and self-absorption of Western society, they argued that "we have nothing to teach the world" and thus have no business attempting to expand influence abroad.²⁸ For others, the primary problem with US efforts to enhance its international prestige stemmed from changes in the international system which had rendered the US unable to exert any meaningful influence abroad. They argued that the reduced importance of military power and the rise of more assertive and independent Third World states meant that neither the US nor the USSR were capable of controlling or shaping events in the developing world.²⁹ Finally, a number of liberals (and a few conservatives³⁰), argued that previous US efforts had been counterproductive, as they had worsened American security and undermined its broader national goals. They claimed, for example, that American support for the Shah of Iran

²⁷ George F. Kennan and George Urban, "From Containment to ... Self-Containment," in *Decline of the West? George Kennan and His Critics*, ed. Martin F. Herz (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, Georgetown University, 1978), 13.

²⁸ Kennan and Urban, "From Containment to ... Self-Containment," 18.

²⁹ Edward M. Kennedy, "Beyond Détente," *Foreign Policy* 16 (Fall 1974): 20.

³⁰ See, for example, Christopher Layne, "The Real Conservative Agenda," *Foreign Policy* 61 (Winter 1985): 74.

and American military bases throughout the world served only to heighten Soviet concerns and inhibit superpower cooperation.³¹ In their view, reaching a meaningful détente with the Soviet Union was significantly more valuable than any improvement in US relations with the Third World.

Unlike their liberal counterparts, however, most conservative strategists did not substantially alter their position on the wisdom or value of expanding US international influence in light of Vietnam. Although many questioned how quickly or effectively the US could rebuild its shattered reputation, few challenged the basic necessity of enhancing American power and prestige. In attempting to justify this goal, however, those within the conservative camp used two slightly different, but mutually reinforcing, arguments. For some, the primary reason for expanding US influence was as a tool for advancing American ideals and fighting the ideological Cold War. While neoconservatives have often been closely identified with the ideological dimension of the superpower conflict, as demonstrated above earlier conservatives had made similar arguments throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Thus, while noted neocon Norman Podhoretz argued that the US needed to focus its efforts on defeating the idea of communism in the Third World,³² traditional conservatives such as Gerhart Niemeyer also pointed out the need to defend Western values and prestige in the developing world.³³ Conservatives understood that the US, as the leading power of the Western world, had a responsibility to stand up for and advance certain core principles. Indeed, they criticized the Nixon administration's failure to recognize that efforts to expand America's influence rested, in part, on the

³¹ Richard J. Barnet, "U.S.-Soviet Relations: The Need for a Comprehensive Approach," *Foreign Affairs* 51, No. 4 (Spring 1979): 789.

³² Norman Podhoretz, "The Future Danger," *Commentary* 71, No. 4 (April 1981): 41.

³³ Gerhart Niemeyer, *Deceitful Peace*, (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1971), 201.

international belief in America's "moral mission in the world."³⁴ While understanding that tradeoffs between values were inevitable, conservatives believed that, on the whole, a foreign policy based on Western values of freedom and democracy was not only in America's interest, but in the interest of the rest of the world as well.

Other conservatives, while mindful of the ideological element, focused primarily on the material benefits resulting from greater US influence and the inherent dangers of an American withdrawal. Once again, while this notion is often linked to traditional, geopolitically-minded conservatives, this view was widely shared among conservative strategists. Thus, while Brian Crozier pointed out the geopolitical value of assisting those Third World states most vulnerable to Soviet pressure,³⁵ well-known neoconservatives such as Jeane Kirkpatrick expressed similar sentiments.³⁶ Both conservatives and neocons argued that America's influential role as leader of the free world facilitated the mutually-beneficial economic and political relations which sustained Western prosperity and secured Western democracy. Concerned about the steady erosion of American influence in both Europe and the Third World, they urged the US to reassert its leadership within NATO and make clear to undecided nations that they could rely on American support.³⁷ The growing perception of American weakness, combined with the internal domestic turmoil of the period, had led to a strengthened "neutralism" movement within Europe and doubts in the Third World about America's reliability as an international partner. Only by being strong and vigilant could the US retain its leadership role in the

³⁴ William F. Buckley, Jr., *Inveighing We Will Go*, (New York: Putnam, 1972), 95.

³⁵ Brian Crozier, *Strategy of Survival*, (New Rochelle: Arlington House Publishers, 1978), 191.

³⁶ Jeane Kirkpatrick, *Dictatorships and Double Standards*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982), 89.

³⁷ Carl Gershman, "The Rise and Fall of the New Foreign Policy Establishment," *Commentary* 70, No. 1 (January 1980): 21. See also Richard Pipes, "Soviet Global Strategy," *Commentary* 69, No. 4 (April 1980): 39.

West and thereby preserve its political, social and economic systems.³⁸ In short, while some conservatives tended to focus on one or the other of these two arguments, there was broad consensus within the conservative movement that both arguments helped to justify the need for an assertive effort to expand American influence and power worldwide.

Maintain Dialogue with USSR

The new global reality in the aftermath of the Second World War was that there were two genuine superpowers with fundamentally different national interests and goals. It was therefore widely recognized that the interactions between the US and USSR would be the single most important force determining the stability of the international system. As in the case of maintaining deterrence and expanding US influence abroad, the early Cold War saw a generally widespread acceptance of the “ground rules” which guided American diplomacy towards the Soviet Union. Yet, by the mid-1950s, these rules had become part of the much broader debate between liberals and conservatives regarding the proper conduct of American foreign policy.³⁹ The split between the two sides became evident by the 1960s and continued to widen throughout the Cold War, with each side taking fundamentally different approaches to US-Soviet diplomacy.

³⁸ Eugene V. Rostow, “The Safety of the Republic: Can the Tide Be Turned?” *Strategic Review* 4 (October 1976): 25. See also Leopold Labedz, “USA and the World Today: Kissinger and After,” *Survey: A Journal of Soviet and East European Studies* 22, no. 1 (1976): 15.

³⁹ Gary W. Reichard, “Divisions and Dissent: Democrats and Foreign Policy, 1952-1956,” *Political Science Quarterly* 93, No. 1 (Spring 1978): 57.

Early Cold War Period

As was the case of the previous two goals discussed above, the early days of the Cold War saw a relatively solid consensus that maintaining dialogue with the Soviet Union was an important goal of US foreign policy, even if such dialogue did not result in a specific agreement. In fact, the understanding that this was a central task of American foreign policy was so widespread, that the topic was treated as a “given” in most discussions of international strategy and was rarely a major element of any strategic writers’ work. At the same time, however, the notion that international agreements between the US and the USSR was the most important goal was scarcely even considered. Soviet violations of the Yalta accords, communist repression in Eastern Europe and the outbreak of the Korean War made the notion of serious negotiations between the superpowers virtually unthinkable to any strategist, liberal or conservative. However, the growth of the superpowers’ nuclear arsenals, the death of Stalin in 1953 and the 1955 Geneva Summit began to raise hopes that a “final settlement” of issues between the US and the Soviets was both necessary and possible.

By the middle of the 1950s, American liberals themselves were deeply divided between what could be described as the “Acheson wing” and the “Stevenson wing” of the Democratic Party. Whereas Acheson and his supporters were more supportive of a hard-line against the Soviet Union and less inclined to endorse US-USSR negotiations, the Stevenson wing urged greater US flexibility in its dealings with the Soviets and urged stronger efforts to work with the Soviet Union, through the United Nations, on a comprehensive disarmament agreement.⁴⁰ Conservatives, on the other hand, were

⁴⁰ The fundamental divide within the Democratic Party can be seen by comparing Dean G. Acheson, *A Democrat Looks At His Party*, (New York: Harper, 1955) and Bowles.

significantly more unified in their assessment of the value of US-Soviet negotiations.

While accepting the need for regular diplomatic contact with the Soviets, several conservatives expressed deep suspicions regarding the strategic value of a negotiated settlement or disarmament agreement and outlined three major concerns about the West's tendency to equate the routine practice of diplomacy with the drafting and signing of international agreements. First, conservatives noted that the history of disarmament negotiations demonstrated that neither a genuine desire to disarm nor even a signed agreement was sufficient to achieve actual disarmament, as nations frequently violated such agreements when doing so suited their interests.⁴¹ In light of the Soviets' ideological goals and history, conservatives were convinced that they would violate any deal which interfered with their ability either to maintain control of its subjects or to expand its global control. Second, conservatives cautioned that treaties only reflect and codify the existing power balance, and thus cannot survive significant changes in national power.⁴² Given the fluid nature of technological developments and the major impact these developments can have on the international balance of power, conservatives doubted that any treaty could remain both relevant and effective for any extended period of time. Finally, conservatives cautioned that the two superpowers had fundamentally different approaches to international negotiations and that these differences made a comprehensive settlement with the Soviets extraordinarily unlikely. Whereas the free world saw negotiations as a good-faith bargaining process aimed at finding common interests, conservatives argued that the Soviets viewed them as merely another battleground in their struggle against the capitalist world and were interested in negotiations only to the extent

⁴¹ Edward Teller, "Alternatives for Security," *Foreign Affairs* 36, no. 2 (January 1958): 203.

⁴² Burnham, *Coming Defeat*, 37.

that they provided an opportunity to influence world opinion and sow division among the nations of the West.⁴³

Middle Cold War Period

Throughout the 1960s, successful diplomacy with the Soviet Union was increasingly seen, particularly by the foreign policy establishment, as synonymous with the negotiation and signing of bilateral or multilateral arms control agreements. The successful completion of the Limited Test Ban Treaty in 1963 only served to reinforce this idea. This notion, along with the growing partisan division within American society, further widened the split between conservative and liberal strategists, with each side viewing US-Soviet dialogue in radically different ways.

For liberals, the fundamental problem plaguing the US-Soviet relationship was the nuclear arms race, and thus the central task of superpower diplomacy was to slow down and eventually halt the further expansion of the US and Soviet nuclear arsenals. Well-regarding liberal spokesmen such as George Kennan and Sen. William Fullbright argued that much of the distrust and mutual hostility between the superpowers was rooted in the mutual fears sparked by the continued build-up of nuclear weaponry. Because the arms race was so dangerous and destabilizing, liberals argued that progress towards disarmament offered the best hope towards ensuring humanity's survival and preserving the American way of life.⁴⁴ At the same time, however, they recognized that a negotiated settlement had proven very difficult to achieve, a fact they attributed to each side's

⁴³ Burnham, *Coming Defeat*, 41. See Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1951), 379 for a fuller discussion of the differences between the West and totalitarian governments on this point.

⁴⁴ Charles E. Osgood, "Reciprocal Initiative," in Roosevelt, 175.

deeply-held misperceptions of the other. Thus, arms control agreements had two essential functions: controlling the arms race and reassuring each superpower of the other's intentions. At the core of liberal thinking, then, was the theory that, because tension was rooted in misperception and not the result of fundamentally differing national interests, the basis for a comprehensive agreement existed: the challenge was to uncover it.

Conservatives, on the other hand, rejected this entire line of reasoning and set forth a significantly different approach to US-Soviet dialogue. The conservative view revolved around Strausz-Hupé's argument that there were three core tasks of diplomacy: representation, intelligence and negotiation. He argued that the first two tasks were far more important in the superpower relationship than was the third.⁴⁵ Forcefully representing American resolve during a crisis, for example, was vital to preventing misunderstandings or miscalculations which could lead to war, as was providing senior policymakers with information to improve their understanding of current thinking within the communist bloc. He and other conservatives argued that, for several reasons, negotiations were unlikely to produce much in the way of meaningful improvements. First, and most important, they argued that the ability of arms control to enhance security was severely limited, since, as long as nations have conflicting interests, arms will be a critical component of national power.⁴⁶ Neither the destructive power of nuclear weapons nor the ideals expressed in the Charter of the United Nations could alter this reality. As a result, arms control and disarmament could never be the primary focus of the superpower relationship. Second, they reiterated Burnham's observation that treaties last only as long as they conform to the existing power relationship, and thus could not serve as the basis

⁴⁵ Strausz-Hupé, *Forward Strategy*, 222.

⁴⁶ Goldwater, *Why Not Victory?*, 114.

of a long-term settlement.⁴⁷ Finally, they stressed that there remained no sign that the Soviets were willing to forgo their efforts to incite world revolution and were serious about reaching and honoring a mutually beneficial agreement.⁴⁸ Committed as they were to their ideological goals, conservatives understood that, in the Soviet mind, no treaty or agreement could end the struggle between the two competing systems. Rather, the Soviets viewed such agreements as tools to undermine the will of the West, not as means of resolving the superpower rivalry. In short, conservatives believed that US-Soviet tension was the result, not of misperceptions or mistrust, but rather of fundamentally incompatible national interests which could not be resolved via arms control agreements. As a result, they viewed intelligence collection and the clear and forceful representation of American policy and resolve as the more important elements of the US-Soviet dialogue.

Late Cold War Period

In most respects, the debate over US-Soviet dialogue did not change significantly between the late-1960s and the beginning of the Reagan administration. Many of the arguments which were made during the arms control debates of the 1970s amounted to amplifications of the points made during the more generic disarmament debates of the previous decade. The rise of détente and the signing of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT), rather than settling the issue, only served to spark continued debate between detractors and supporters. In fact, this debate would continue throughout the

⁴⁷ Strausz-Hupé, *Forward Strategy*, 215.

⁴⁸ William R. Kintner, *Peace and the Strategy Conflict*, (New York: Praeger, 1967), 137. See also M. Stanton Evans, *The Politics of Surrender*, (New York: Devin-Adair, 1966), 30.

Reagan years, with relatively little change in the fundamental points of either side. Supporters saw their drive for arms control as a way of managing and controlling the superpower conflict, while allowing the West to redirect its resources towards resolving its own domestic problems. For détente's (largely) conservative opponents, however, this effort to make arms control (and particularly the SALT process) the centerpiece of the superpower relationship was rooted in misplaced hopes that the Soviets genuinely desired to preserve the *status quo*.

For liberals, arms control negotiations continued to represent the most important element of the US-Soviet dialogue, and thus remained a critical American goal. While recognizing the difficulty inherent in negotiating arms control agreements (and, for that reason, continuing to call for unilateral disarmament measures), they continued to stress that the nuclear arms race represented the greatest single threat to world peace and thus that controlling it was the most important task for American diplomacy. They argued that arms control was central, regardless of whether or not it modified Soviet behavior or attitudes.⁴⁹ Instead, liberals increasingly argued that the actual content of the agreement was irrelevant. Since, as discussed above, they felt that nuclear superiority was a meaningless concept which offered no advantage, it made little difference “who got more” out of a specific agreement. The purpose of arms control was not so much to balance each side’s nuclear forces as it was to “reduce the element of ambiguity in U.S.-Soviet relations and to clarify intentions in such a way as to build confidence and political support in both societies.”⁵⁰ With each successful arms control agreement,

⁴⁹ Kennedy, 8.

⁵⁰ Barnet, 780.

liberals hoped to increase the costs of either side taking provocative actions and to build an increasingly strong foundation for long-term cooperation between the superpowers.

For conservatives, these hopes for a negotiated “final settlement” between the superpowers amounted to little more than wishful thinking, and represented a major strategic weakness on the part of the US.⁵¹ They argued that their more liberal counterparts failed to understand that the two superpowers had fundamentally different goals in the arms control process. Whereas the US hoped to use the SALT negotiations to “reduce the weight of nuclear arms … as a factor in world politics” and to slow the Soviet buildup, the Soviet Union saw them as a means “to extend its gains in relative posture while encouraging maximum restraint upon U.S. programs” and to push American public and congressional opinion to accept “unequal compromises unfavorable to the United States.”⁵² Given these widely divergent goals, conservatives saw no objective basis for a meaningful and lasting agreement. Rejecting the idea that very existence of an arms control agreement would reduce US-Soviet tension, they instead continued to insist that any agreement needed to support broader American goals and advance America’s global interests. For example, an agreement which imposed equal limits on both sides could enhance crisis stability and change the dangerous Soviet perception that the correlation of forces had permanently shifted in their favor.⁵³ While acknowledging that, in theory, such an agreement could be drafted, conservatives believed that most Western officials (and the foreign policy establishment as a whole) had become so invested in the negotiating process that they were no longer willing to

⁵¹ Niemeyer, *Deceitful Peace*, 172.

⁵² Committee on the Present Danger, “Where We Stand on SALT,” 6 July 1977, in Tyroler, 16-17.

⁵³ William R. Van Cleave, “SALT on the Eagle’s Tail,” *Strategic Review* 4, No. 2 (Spring 1976): 46. It is worth noting that the idea of equal limits would become a centerpiece of Reagan’s arms control proposals.

resist Soviet demands.⁵⁴ Rather than focusing on negotiations, conservatives throughout the 1970s continued to argue that the central purpose of US-Soviet dialogue should be the gathering of information and the clear representation of American policy and resolve.

Reverse Soviet Expansionism

The first three goals discussed above –preserving deterrence, expanding US influence, and maintaining US-Soviet dialogue –can best be described as goals of necessity. While the manner in which these goals were pursued would vary, the structure of the international system, the fact of Soviet power and the existence of nuclear weapons made their pursuit largely unavoidable. The final two goals discussed in this chapter – reversing Soviet expansionism and undermining the Soviet Union –represent goals of choice. Until the Reagan administration, these goals had never been pursued and, indeed, had been considered and rejected by previous administrations. For this reason, these two goals, which were more broadly known as “liberation” or “rollback,”⁵⁵ were extremely controversial. They also represent the most effective means of differentiating between conservative and liberal grand strategy during the Cold War.

Early Cold War Period

The years following the Second World War represent, in many ways, the high-point of liberation thought. Called upon to take up its role as a global superpower and facing a fundamentally different world, the US desperately needed an organizing

⁵⁴ Colin S. Gray, “SALT: Time To Quit,” *Strategic Review* 4, No. 4 (Fall 1976): 15-16. See also Robert Conquest, *Present Danger: Toward A Foreign Policy*, (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1979), 51.

⁵⁵ In this work, these two terms will be used interchangeably.

principle and defining goal around which to build a new grand strategy. International strategists responded to this period of “strategic flux” with a flurry of creativity, putting forth several competing strategic concepts. Some saw strengthening the infant United Nations as the central purpose of American foreign policy, while others proposed a more traditional, balance-of-power effort akin to Britain’s role in the 19th and early 20th century. And while (as discussed in Chapter 3) containment became the choice of the foreign policy mainstream, the strategic thinking which went into rollback served as the basis for the continued development of a distinctly conservative approach to Cold War strategy.

For much of the foreign policy establishment, the idea that the US should seek to reverse Soviet gains, specifically in Eastern Europe, was far too risky to be given serious consideration. The Soviet Union’s detonation of its own nuclear device in 1949 and the inconclusive military stalemate in Korea left few interested in undertaking any policy which could be seen as likely to provoke a direct military clash with the Soviet Union. Many, in an effort to reassure the Soviets, argued against “a policy of threatening Soviet interests in what has become the settled sphere of Soviet power,” such as Eastern Europe.⁵⁶ Even Kennan, who had been an early proponent of covert rollback operations, had decided by 1953 that such operations were hopeless and dangerous, and urged that they be halted.⁵⁷ Despite his campaign calls for the rollback of communist power, President Eisenhower never pursued the idea vigorously and explicitly rejected the

⁵⁶ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Vital Center*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1949), 224.

⁵⁷ Peter Grose, *Operation Rollback: America’s Secret War Behind the Iron Curtain*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 209.

rollback approach presented to him as part of the Solarium Exercise.⁵⁸ As a result, containment would represent the most aggressive, forward-leaning strategy the US would pursue until Reagan entered office.

As discussed in Chapter 3, conservatives rejected the fundamental logic of containment, viewing it as deeply-flawed strategic concept that had no realistic hope of long-term success. Instead, they argued that the US must make victory over the Soviet bloc the explicit goal of its foreign policy. Seeing the Soviets as a relentlessly expansionist power, conservatives recognized the strategic and international political value of forcing the Soviets onto the defensive, reversing their territorial gains and ultimately driving communists from power in Soviet client states.⁵⁹ In addition, conservatives worried that a policy aimed solely at preserving the *status quo* would permit the Soviets to consolidate their already-sizable empire and greatly enhance their future ability to pursue global domination.⁶⁰ During the early years of the Cold War, conservatives viewed Eastern Europe, especially Germany, as the primary target for American liberation efforts. Not only did conservatives argue that the numerous uprisings in Eastern Europe offered the US the chance to build upon the clearest examples of popular opposition to communist rule, but they also stressed that the successful rollback of Soviet power in Eastern Europe would represent a major setback for the Soviets' ability to threaten Western Europe, either militarily or politically. At the same time, however, conservatives also called for the rollback of Soviet control in Northern Iran,

⁵⁸ Robert R. Bowie and Richard H. Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 137.

⁵⁹ Burnham, *Coming Defeat*, 27.

⁶⁰ William Henry Chamberlain, *Beyond Containment*, (Chicago: H. Regnery, Co., 1953), 294.

Afghanistan, Manchuria and on the Korean peninsula.⁶¹ While such calls were certainly much less common during this period of the Cold War, they would steadily increase over time, as the superpower rivalry moved steadily into the Third World.

Middle Cold War Period

By the 1960s, liberation had been thoroughly rejected by mainstream strategic thinkers, who insisted that such a policy was unlikely to succeed and could only lead to a nuclear war between the superpowers. Despite steady Soviet advances in the developing world, the foreign policy elite largely remained focused on containing Soviet expansion while seeking to reach a lasting détente with the Eastern bloc. In fact, on the rare occasion that the concept of rollback was mentioned at all, it was attacked as an example of the type of foreign policy that was simply too extreme to be seriously considered by foreign policy professionals. Ignoring the criticism they received from their more liberal counterparts, conservatives continued to develop a comprehensive rollback theory, steadily expanding its focus beyond Eastern Europe into the Third World.

For American liberals, the central challenge of the 1960s was finding some way to prevent Soviet expansion (in the face of steadily rising Soviet power) while reaching some form of long-term resolution to the Cold War. Given the vast nuclear arsenals on each side, they saw no possible advantage in exerting significant pressure on the Soviet Union, and saw grave danger in threatening what were widely seen as critical Soviet interests, particularly in Eastern Europe. Instead, they argued that what was needed was a mutual understanding regarding the “rules of the game” as a way of preventing a military

⁶¹ Burnham, *Struggle*, 162.

conflict. Nor was this view shared only by the more left-leaning members of the Democratic Party (the “Stevenson wing”). In fact, anti-communist liberals, such as Acheson, had also taken the view that restoring and ensuring equilibrium between the superpowers was the single most important task of American foreign policy.⁶² Many liberals also held the view that the ideological element of Soviet policy had largely dissipated and claimed, therefore, that attempting to base American foreign policy on anti-communism was impossible and unwise.⁶³ Such a policy could only inhibit East-West dialogue and complicate efforts to achieve détente. Some even questioned whether those living in the Soviet bloc, particularly in Eastern Europe, would even willingly choose to disassociate themselves from Soviet rule.⁶⁴ They argued, for example, that the communist regimes in Eastern Europe were widely accepted (if not loved) by the general population and had proved their legitimacy by providing significant improvements in the overall standard of living. Overall, liberal (and even mainstream) foreign policy strategists argued that the key goal of US foreign policy was to slow or halt, not reverse, Soviet gains in the Third World while improving relations between East and West.

Conservatives of the period, on the other hand, continued to view the rollback of Soviet power as a critical goal in the much broader effort to win the Cold War. The strategic advantages of successfully rolling back Soviet control were obvious to most conservatives. In addition to the obvious improvements to the military and economic balance of power that a successful rollback would have for the West, conservatives also saw important moral and (in particular) ideological gains from liberating portions of the

⁶² Dean G. Acheson, “Premises of American Policy,” in *American Strategy for the Nuclear Age*, eds. Walter F. Hahn and John C. Neff (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1960), 410.

⁶³ John Kenneth Galbraith, “An Agenda for American Liberals,” *Commentary* 41, No. 6 (June 1966): 32.

⁶⁴ Warburg, 69.

Soviet empire and demonstrating that global Marxist revolution was neither inevitable nor irreversible. While some continued to focus on Eastern Europe as others turned their attention to the Third World, conservative strategists as a whole urged the US to take the initiative and seek the liberation of all those living under Soviet domination. Some, such as Strausz-Hupé, challenged the frequently-expressed view of the foreign policy mainstream that any effort to roll back Soviet control of Eastern Europe would result in a superpower nuclear exchange. Instead, he argued that while the growth of nuclear arsenals on both sides had resulted in a form of “mutual deterrence” at the military level, it made possible a “psychopolitical offensive” against the Soviets’ “peace zone” in Eastern Europe.⁶⁵ In his judgment (and that of most conservatives), the Soviets would never resort to either conventional or nuclear war with the US (particularly in light of America’s strategic superiority) in response to Western political warfare against the communist regimes in Eastern Europe. The key component to such a political campaign was making clear to the Soviets, Eastern Europeans and the rest of the world that the West would never acknowledge either the legitimacy of Soviet control there nor would it cease its efforts to detach Eastern Europe from the Soviet bloc.⁶⁶

While Strausz-Hupé and his supporters argued that Eastern Europe needed to remain the focus of America’s liberation efforts, other conservatives, particularly Goldwater, saw the expansion of Soviet influence in the Third World as both a rapidly-worsening threat and a significant opportunity to reverse Soviet expansion. While Soviet expansion in the developing world threatened to deny the West the crucial natural resources required to maintain their economic health, most pro-Soviet regimes in the

⁶⁵ Robert Strausz-Hupé, “The Protracted Conflict,” in Hahn and Neff, 31.

⁶⁶ Strausz-Hupé, *Forward Strategy*, 29-31.

Third World were extremely unpopular and had (unlike the communist regimes of Eastern Europe) only a tenuous hold on power. As such, they represented excellent targets for the careful and selective use of American power. While most conservatives saw the elimination of the Castro regime in Cuba as particularly important, due to Cuba's proximity to the US, Goldwater stood apart by also recognizing the need for a broader moral principle to guide anti-communist strategy in the Third World. He and other like-minded conservatives urged the US to make clear to the world that it would support any anti-communist revolt against a communist government and would oppose any communist revolt in a pro-Western regime.⁶⁷ And while this principle, which served as one of the major tenets of the Goldwater presidential campaign, died off following his defeat in 1964, one can see in this approach the roots of what would eventually become known as the Reagan Doctrine.

Late Cold War Period

While a number of events during the late 1960s, particularly the 1968 "Prague Spring" uprising, led a few Western strategists to consider the problem of continued Soviet domination in Eastern Europe, in many respects the 1970s represented a nadir in the debate between liberation and containment. By marginalizing liberation-minded conservatives, Goldwater's massive defeat in the 1964 presidential election greatly contributed to the declining popularity of rollback theory. In addition, the steady rising of détente-style thinking had begun shifting the terms of foreign policy debate steadily leftward, leaving the few remaining conservative strategists even further outside the

⁶⁷ See Goldwater, "A Foreign Policy For America," 181 and Johnson, 209.

foreign policy mainstream. Yet, despite the declining popularity of rollback, the 1970s saw a small number of conservatives and neocoservatives offer subtle refinements to the liberation approach, highlighting the strategic and moral advantages of a sustained policy of freedom for those living under Soviet control.

As noted in Chapter 3, the 1970s saw the rapid rise of détente as the central strategic concept for Western liberals. The same hope which fueled their desire to see greater US-Soviet dialogue and compromise also led them to unconditionally reject any Western policy which aimed to undermine Soviet control over either Eastern Europe or communist client states in the Third World.⁶⁸ While most liberals rarely bothered to challenge openly their conservative counterparts' arguments in favor of liberation, when they did, their objections to rollback generally relied on three distinct arguments. First, they argued that any Western effort to incite trouble in either the Third World or Eastern Europe would undermine prospects for a US-Soviet détente, which they viewed as the central American goal.⁶⁹ In their view, no reversal of Soviet expansion was nearly as valuable as establishing a more open, cooperative relationship with Moscow. Second, they argued (particularly in discussions of Eastern Europe) that encouraging upheaval or even offering moral support to people living under Soviet control was inherently immoral as it would only exacerbate their suffering and increase the likelihood of direct Soviet military intervention without offering them any legitimate hope of improving their situation.⁷⁰ For most of the foreign policy mainstream, the pro-Soviet regimes were to be

⁶⁸ It should be noted, however, that this opposition to rollback could also be found among a small number of conservatives. See Patrick J. Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories: Why the Right Has Failed*, (New York: Quandrangle, 1975), 161.

⁶⁹ Richard Rosecrance, "Détente or Entente?" *Foreign Affairs* 53, No. 3 (April 1975): 467.

⁷⁰ George F. Kennan, "After the Cold War: American Foreign Policy in the 1970s," *Foreign Affairs* 51, No. 1 (October 1972): 217.

considered permanent fixtures of the international community. Finally, and most disturbingly, some liberals argued that many Soviet client states were already largely free, and thus did not require assistance from the West. Many of these strategists, who had long questioned the real extent of Soviet control in the Third World, argued that much of Eastern Europe was already free to manage its internal affairs without Soviet influence.⁷¹ Overall, American liberals largely ignored the argument for liberation, viewing it as a fringe movement which was no longer worthy of serious intellectual consideration.

As mentioned above, the 1970s were an inhospitable climate for discussions of rollback, and thus resulted in a significant reduction in the number of conservative strategists openly discussing and advocating such a policy.⁷² Greatly disillusioned by the march towards détente and the overall societal reluctance to pursue an openly anti-Soviet policy, some conservatives who had previously urged a rollback strategy began to view containment as the best American strategy currently available. Yet a few conservatives continued to argue that liberation, both in Eastern Europe and the Third World, was the surest way to improve Western security. Mindful of the serious weaknesses which were becoming increasingly evident within the Soviet bloc, conservatives continued to argue that reversing the Brezhnev Doctrine was possible, even in Eastern Europe.⁷³ They also rejected the claim of most mainstream strategists that a closer, more organic relationship between the USSR and Eastern Europe was in America's interest, as it would transform

⁷¹ Kennan and Urban, "From Containment to ... Self-Containment," 24.

⁷² George Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement Since 1945* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 322.

⁷³ Crozier, *Strategy of Survival*, 124. See also Lev E. Dobriansky, *U.S.A. and the Soviet Myth*, (Old Greenwich, CT: Devin-Adair Company, 1971), 60. Conservatives would make similar arguments in the 1980s. See, for example, Charles A. Moser, "Foreign Policy and the Conservative Blueprint," in Paul M. Weyrich and Connaught Coyne Marshner, eds. *Future 21: Directions for America in the 21st Century*, (Greenwich, CT: Devin-Adair Company, 1984), 105.

the Soviet Union from a revolutionary to a “satisfied” power.⁷⁴ Given the centrality of ideology to Soviet behavior, conservatives insisted that the USSR could never become a satisfied, *status quo* power and thus that Western support was a necessary condition for the liberation of the Soviet empire. At the same time, conservatives noted how fragile the Soviets’ position in the Third World was. The Soviets’ aggressive efforts to expand their reach in the developing world had left them vulnerable to an aggressive counterattack. Conservatives therefore urged the US to find a suitable target in the Third World, with one even noting that “Grenada (the Soviet Union’s subsatellite, via Cuba) cries out for the rollback treatment.”⁷⁵ Roughly 18 months later, the Reagan administration would, of course, take this advice and overthrow Grenada’s Marxist government.

In addition to these more strategic arguments, both conservatives and neoconservatives also increasingly highlighted the superior morality of this goal, arguing that failing to seek the freedom of those living under communist rule was an affront to basic Western morality. For example, while deeply critical of the 1975 Helsinki Agreement for its acceptance of Soviet domination of Eastern Europe, conservatives noted that even this flawed agreement recognized the moral and political right to national self-determination, a right which the Soviet Union had denied its subjects. By refusing to stand up for this right, conservatives believed the West was betraying its own moral beliefs and squandering a potential political advantage.⁷⁶ They further noted that Soviet ideology mattered, especially in the Third World, and that the damage communism could

⁷⁴ James Burnham, “The Kissinger-Sonnenfeldt Doctrine I,” *National Review* 28, No. 17 (May 14, 1976): 495.

⁷⁵ Brian Crozier, “Rollback, New Style,” *National Review* 34, No. 14 (July 23, 1982): 884.

⁷⁶ Stefan Korbonski, “The Helsinki Agreement and Self-Determination,” *Strategic Review* 4, No. 3 (Summer 1976): 54.

inflict on the developing world was staggering.⁷⁷ Already plagued by economic backwardness and political immaturity, the nations of the Third World could ill afford the political repression and economic catastrophe which would result from a communist dictatorship. By making it clear that the West would not accept the Soviet Union's imperialism in Eastern Europe nor its subversion of the Third World, America could force the Soviets onto the defensive, while regaining the political credibility it had lost since the fall of South Vietnam.⁷⁸ What was needed, they argued, was the use of American power (both military and non-military) "to overwhelm and defeat tyranny in every arena where freedom is now threatened."⁷⁹ Thus, by the end of the 1970s, conservatives had set forth a series of mutually-supporting strategic and moral arguments for aggressively seeking to reverse Soviet expansionism.

Undermine the Soviet Union

The final, and certainly most controversial, goal of the Reagan administration was to undermine and destroy the Soviet regime. In many respects, this goal represents little more than the logical extension of the goal to reverse Soviet expansionism discussed above. Just as conservatives saw the installation of communist governments in Eastern Europe and the Third World as inherently illegitimate, so too did they view the continued rule of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as a threat to both American interests and basic democratic values. Discussions of eliminating the Soviet threat by undermining the Soviet state were, unsurprisingly, rejected and ignored by most mainstream

⁷⁷ Podhoretz, "The Future Danger," 41.

⁷⁸ Anthony R. Dolan, "Let's Take the Offensive," *National Review* 32, No. 11 (May 30, 1980): 662.

⁷⁹ Barry M. Goldwater, *With No Apologies: The Personal and Political Memoirs of Senator Barry M. Goldwater*, (New York: Morrow, 1979), 302.

strategists. Yet it represents a major element of most conservative foreign policy thought, which saw the destruction of the Soviet Union as the key to victory in the Cold War.

Early Cold War Period

For much of the foreign policy elite in the early days of the Cold War, the possibility that the Soviets would, some day, lose control of their own internal population was a very real one. The massive damage resulting from the Second World War, which was actually far higher than most Western estimates, had devastated popular morale and destroyed much of the Soviet economy. This destruction, plus the broad recognition that the Soviets' ruling ideology was increasingly incompatible with the effective functioning of a modern state, made many anticipate some form of change in the Soviet regime. Indeed, the strategic reasoning behind containment was that, if given enough time, the inherent weaknesses of the Soviet Union would eventually force substantial changes in the internal and external policies of the Soviet leadership. The crux of the liberal-conservative debate, then, was whether or not the West should take actions designed to accelerate this process.

It should hardly be surprising that, in rejecting efforts to extend liberation to the Soviet Union, Western liberals relied upon many of the same arguments they used against reversing Soviet expansionism. First and foremost, they cited the inherent danger of this approach, particularly if pursued with military means. Warning that the US "must not succumb to demands for an anti-Soviet crusade,"⁸⁰ American liberals argued instead that such efforts would only strengthen the so-called "hard-liners" within the Soviet

⁸⁰ Schlesinger, 235.

leadership and make internal reform less likely. Second, since many liberals agreed with Kennan that the gradual mellowing of Soviet behavior was inevitable, they believed US actions aimed at weakening the Soviet state could disrupt this gradual process and increase the likelihood of war. Finally, there was a sense, even among dedicated anti-communist liberals, that the Soviet state had some redeeming intellectual characteristics and thus should not be destroyed. Schlesinger himself argued that communist goals derive from “a respectable intellectual lineage saturated in nineteenth-century values of optimism, rationalism and detailed historical inquiry” and that “Soviet totalitarianism lays greater initial claim on democratic sympathies than does fascism,” while praising Lenin’s character for giving the Bolshevik Revolution “a character of sacrificial dedication to the good of humanity.”⁸¹ While one certainly can not question Schlesinger’s opposition to communism, the fact that such a well-regarded individual had anything supportive to say about the Soviet regime certainly weakened the willingness of some liberals to see the end of the great “Soviet experiment.”

Reflecting Burnham’s argument that a defensive policy can never win, conservatives argued that the US needed to aim for victory in the Cold War and that a true victory ultimately required the destruction of the Soviet Union. Conservatives took issue with the argument of some of the liberal colleagues that communist rule had provided some meaningful benefits to the people of the Soviet Union. Instead, they argued that Soviet rule had been a disaster for the Russian people, who were socially, politically and economically better off under the Czar. Dismissing the popular view that the Soviet Union was a legitimate state and therefore entitled to the same mutual respect

⁸¹ Schlesinger, 63, 68.

as any other member of the international community, conservatives argued that the Soviets' history of subversion, aggression and expansionism demonstrated that the USSR was little more than a conspiratorial movement using the power of the Russian state to pursue a goal of world empire.⁸² As such, its very existence posed a threat to the United States and the rest of the world. Since the Cold War amounted to a war of survival and since the Soviet leadership showed no signs of relenting in its pursuit of world domination, conservatives saw that the only option for the West was to seek the destruction of communist power in the Soviet Union.

While mindful of the significant weaknesses inherent in the Soviet regime, conservatives believed that, absent sustained Western efforts to exacerbate these difficulties, they were not severe enough to compel the Soviet leadership to make significant internal or external reform. Rejecting containment's "wait-and-see" approach, Burnham argued that, without the strong leadership which could only come from serious external support, mass resistance movements within the Soviet Union were highly unlikely to emerge or succeed.⁸³ Just as demonstrating the West's solidarity with the people of Eastern Europe was critical to rolling back Soviet expansionism, conservatives insisted that political support for the freedom of the various nations within the Soviet Union was vital to undermining the Soviet system. In fact, contrary to the claims of some of their opponents, most conservatives strongly believed that political, not military, action was the best option for achieving the liberation of the Soviet people.⁸⁴ While recognizing

⁸² Eugene Lyons, *Our Secret Allies: The Peoples of Russia* (New York: Duell, Sloane and Pearce, 1953), 303.

⁸³ Burnham, *Coming Defeat*, 151.

⁸⁴ See, for example, Burnham, *Coming Defeat*, 109, and Lyons, 319-320. See David Sarnoff, "A Political Offensive Against Communism," in Hahn and Neff, 426 for a later example of conservatives' preference for political warfare over military conflict.

that, in the short-term, sustained pressure on Soviet weaknesses could result in greater repression, conservatives believed that such pressure would, in the long-term, accelerate the breakdown of the Soviet political and economic system and ultimately lead to a fundamental change in the Soviet regime.

Middle Cold War Period

As the hope for “peaceful coexistence” increased within the West, much of the foreign policy elite took a more relaxed view of the Soviet threat, instead focusing their attention on the perceived dangers of upheavals in the Third World or the nuclear arms race. As a result, they saw no real need for liberation and were thus significantly less tolerant of conservative strategists who continued to argue for a rollback strategy. The smear campaign waged against Goldwater during the 1964 presidential campaign was but one example of growing liberal hostility towards any foreign policy which did not conform to “mainstream” views. The idea that the US should seek to win the Cold War or defeat the Soviet Union was no longer an acceptable point of view. Instead, they argued that détente and sustained US-Soviet cooperation offered a better approach to advancing American interests. Viewing liberation as “a dangerous promise without substance,” Western liberals instead argued that the US needed to make “universal security against military aggression through universal disarmament under adequately enforced world law” and the “achievement of universal human betterment through world-wide co-operation in economic and social development” its long-term goals.⁸⁵ Rather than challenge or confront the Soviet leadership, they argued that Americans needed to recognize that

⁸⁵ Warburg, 56-58.

Soviet leaders largely shared their desire to help protect, support and improve the lives of their own people.⁸⁶ To the extent that there were disagreements between the two superpowers, they believed such disagreements were the result of misperceptions, which could be eliminated by more intense dialogue and renewed efforts at cooperation. But this cooperation was only possible if the United States made it clear that it was “not out to eradicate communism from the face of the earth.”⁸⁷ Thus, the fundamental focus of the liberal foreign policy elite was not on changing the Soviet system, but rather on finding common ground with the Soviet leadership.

Conservatives, on the other hand, continued to argue that the ultimate US goal in the Cold War could only be victory, and that this victory required the destruction of communist rule in the Soviet Union. In a forceful call to arms, conservative strategists insisted that the West’s goal must be “to turn the tide of battle against the Communists, to induce them to overextend themselves, to exploit the weakness of their system, to paralyze their will, and to bring about their final collapse.”⁸⁸ Building on the arguments of their predecessors, conservatives developed two distinct, but reinforcing, arguments in support of undermining the Soviet state. Some made a “survival-based” argument, namely that the destruction of communist power was the only way to ensure the survival of the Western political and economic system. Others developed a “morality-based” argument, stressing that the West had a moral duty to aid the destruction of the Soviet Union and the liberation of the various nationalities there.

⁸⁶ McGeorge Bundy, “To Cap the Volcano,” *Foreign Affairs* 48, No. 1 (October 1969): 12.

⁸⁷ Theodore C. Sorensen, “Why We Should Trade With the Soviets,” *Foreign Affairs* 46, No. 3 (April 1968): 579.

⁸⁸ Strausz-Hupé, “The Protracted Conflict,” 31.

For many conservatives, the existence of communist rule and the steady expansion of Soviet power posed a fundamental, existential threat to the Western world. They argued that, at its core, the Cold War was neither a purely geopolitical struggle for influence, nor was it a clash of different economic systems. If it were, traditional methods of statecraft, such as negotiations, would have been sufficient to manage the rivalry. Instead, the key, unresolved issue between the US and the USSR was political, and specifically the inherent incompatibility of democracy, which strived for individual and national freedom, and totalitarianism, which sought only conflict and conquest.⁸⁹ Reflecting their belief in the centrality of Soviet ideology to its behavior, conservatives saw little hope that the Cold War could eventually fade away. Because it was caused by the defining characteristics of each sides' political system, the conflict could only be resolved by the destruction of either communist rule or Western civilization.⁹⁰ While recognizing the dangers of pursuing such a goal, conservatives argued that it was the only method of ensuring the survival of Western civilization.

While acknowledging the fundamental threat posed by communist power, other conservatives saw liberation as a moral imperative and focused on the moral benefits which would result from the destruction of the Soviet system. The fact that major conservative strategists of this period did focus on the moral dimension of the Cold War is important to highlight, as it demonstrates the remarkable continuity between conservative and neoconservative thought. Given that neoconservatives have been both praised and criticized for their willingness to insert moral principles into strategic

⁸⁹ Strausz-Hupé, *Forward Strategy*, 8.

⁹⁰ Frank S. Meyer, “‘New Ideas’ or ‘Old Truths’,” in *The Conservative Mainstream*, ed. Frank S. Meyer (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1969), 322.

thought, it is critical to recognize that traditional conservatives had made similar arguments for many years before the emergence of the neoconservatives. In fact, the rise of the Goldwater movement and the Young Americans for Freedom can be traced back to conservative outrage at Eisenhower's refusal to support the 1956 uprising in Hungary, which conservatives viewed as a betrayal of basic American values.⁹¹ Mindful of the inherent immorality of the Soviet system and its international behavior, conservatives argued that there had to be a moral basis for American foreign policy, and that the only proper moral aim for the US was the eventual destruction of the Soviet regime.⁹² Other conservatives made a slightly different, but reinforcing, argument by stressing that the key US moral objective was a world with the greatest possible degree of freedom, justice, peace and prosperity. Since the existence of the Soviet system made such a world impossible, the destruction of Soviet power had to become a central US goal.⁹³ Thus, throughout this period, conservatives cited both reasons of survival and reasons of morality to support their goal of undermining and destroying the Soviet Union.

Late Cold War Period

With the Western world focusing increasingly on the prospects of a US-USSR détente, it should hardly be surprising that there was little interest in rollback among much of the liberal foreign policy community. Throughout the 1970s (and well into the 1980s), liberal strategists argued vehemently against rollback efforts, claiming that

⁹¹ Gregory L. Schneider, *Cadres for Conservatism: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of the Contemporary Right*, (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 20.

⁹² Meyer, "Just War in the Nuclear Age," in Meyer, 375.

⁹³ Goldwater, "A Foreign Policy for America," 177. See also William R. Kintner with Joseph Z. Kornfeder, *The New Frontier of War: Political Warfare, Present and Future*, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1962), 339-341, for similar sentiments.

undermining the Soviet Union was not in America's long-term interest. Many argued that the US had, for too long, seen the Soviet challenge as a zero-sum game. Instead, they argued that America's long-term goal of international security could only be achieved by accepting Soviet equality and supporting its efforts to achieve a level of global influence commensurate with its superpower status.⁹⁴ In their view, the worldwide social and political upheaval of the 1960s and 1970s indicated that the entire international system was in danger of descending into anarchy and instability. Since only some form of US-Soviet entente could prevent such a catastrophe, efforts to weaken or destroy the USSR were counterproductive.⁹⁵ Whether this catastrophic threat to international security was environmental degradation, global economic problems or the arms race, liberals argued that only by working together could the US and Soviet Union adequately address these emerging threats.

While the early period of the Cold War represents the Golden Age of liberation strategy, the late period of the Cold War saw relatively little new thinking on the issue of liberating the Soviet Union. As noted above, while some conservatives had given up on extending rollback to the Soviet Union altogether, many other conservatives supported the idea but questioned the willingness of the West to follow through on such an ambitious effort.⁹⁶ To some degree, the lack of new thought on the issue of liberating the Soviet Union during this period is hardly surprising. After all, it is difficult to underestimate the demoralizing effect which the turmoil of the 1970s and the rise of détente had on much of the conservative movement. The pronounced leftward shift in US

⁹⁴ Marshall D. Shulman, "What Does Security Mean Today?" *Foreign Affairs* 49, No. 4 (July 1971): 613.

⁹⁵ Rosecrance, 481. See also, George F. Kennan, *The Cloud of Danger*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1977), 216.

⁹⁶ Niemeyer, *Deceitful Peace*, 199.

foreign policy (and Western society in general) had pushed most conservative ideas far from the political mainstream and given them little, if any, policy relevance. Furthermore, in the view of most conservatives, détente was so dangerous that their primary focus became reinstituting the marginally-acceptable containment policy, which conservatives saw as the best approach which could be obtained in light of the current world situation and political climate.

In addition to fact that conservatives during the 1970s were preoccupied with undermining détente rather than the Soviet Union, the lack of new thought on this issue also reflects a much simpler reality: the basic conservative argument on this issue had already been largely developed by earlier figures. In short, they continued to argue that the Soviets remained committed to world domination, and that only by decisively defeating the Soviet regime could the West advance its moral and strategic goals. As a result, one can find Goldwater continuing to urge the US to unleash its economic and technological superiority to “reestablish confidence in the power of freedom … to overwhelm and defeat tyranny,” even within the Soviet Union.⁹⁷ Crozier, himself a student of Burnham, was perhaps the most outspoken supporter of rollback, echoing his mentor’s argument when he argued that the long-term goal of the US remained the destruction of the Soviet system and the political freedom of the various nationalities within the Soviet Union.⁹⁸ To achieve this goal, he called for a “New Forward Policy, the ultimate aim of which can be nothing less than the destabilization and, in time, the collapse of the Soviet empire, including the system itself.”⁹⁹ Conservatives paid

⁹⁷ Goldwater, *With No Apologies*, 302.

⁹⁸ Crozier, *Strategy of Survival*, 185. See also Dobriansky, 60.

⁹⁹ Brian Crozier, “Rollback, Mark II,” *National Review* 31, No. 23 (May 8, 1979): 724.

particular attention to rolling back the ideological base of the Soviet Union, urging the West to wage an “official crusade” dedicated “absolutely to the total atomization of the Marxist myth” and the complete discrediting of communism as a political theory.¹⁰⁰ While traditional conservatives largely dominated the development of this argument, neoconservatives also contributed to this effort. Pipes, for example, noted that the US needed to recognize the ideological nature of Soviet goals and to “compel the Soviet Union to turn inward –from conquest to reform,” understanding that any meaningful reform could only undermine the bases of the Soviet system.¹⁰¹ Thus, despite the dampening effects of détente, conservatives foreign policy strategies of the 1970s continued to reflect an intellectual continuity with the work of James Burnham, Robert Strausz-Hupé and Barry Goldwater, whose goals would ultimately be embraced by the Reagan administration.

Conclusion

The discussion above demonstrates how the central goals of Reagan’s grand strategy gradually evolved from their roots in the early days of the Cold War into the coherent whole which had emerged by the end of the 1970s. In some cases, such as the efforts to reverse Soviet expansionism and undermine the Soviet regime (the “goals of choice”), these goals were proposed, developed and endorsed almost exclusively by conservative strategists. In other cases, such as the widely-accepted “goals of necessity,” conservatives supported the goals, but argued for a fundamentally different understanding of their practical meaning. Thus, whereas liberals tended to equate nuclear deterrence

¹⁰⁰ William F. Buckley, Jr., “Marx Is Dead,” *National Review* 32, No. 4 (February 22, 1980): 244.

¹⁰¹ Pipes, “Soviet Global Strategy,” 39.

with MAD and US-Soviets dialogue with arms control, conservatives saw nuclear superiority and unyielding pursuit of American interests as the focal points of these national goals. Throughout conservative writings on these five goals, however, runs a common thread: an unwavering commitment to an American victory in the Cold War. The Reagan administration shared this commitment and made extensive use of all the major tools of national power to achieve its far-reaching goals.

Chapter Five: Tools

The previous two chapters have reviewed the beliefs and goals of the Reagan administration and analyzed the link between these elements of grand strategy and conservative strategic thought. Both chapters demonstrated that the key elements of Reagan's grand strategy were rooted in a fundamentally different, conservative approach to foreign policy, one which was not widely shared by the administration's mainstream and liberal critics. This chapter will conduct a similar analysis on the major military, economic, informational, diplomatic and intelligence tools used by the Reagan administration. The fact that the administration used these tools is unremarkable, as they represent the major means by which any nation seeks to achieve its goals. Rather, what distinguished the Reagan approach from earlier efforts was the manner in which these tools were used. This chapter will demonstrate that the Reagan administration's use of these tools was largely consistent with the larger body of conservative strategic thought.

Military Buildup

Historically, the ability to fight and win wars has been an important factor in the ability of any state to preserve its existence and expand its international influence. Yet, in the aftermath of the Second World War and the development of the atomic bomb, understanding the role and value of military power became increasingly difficult. For some, the destructiveness of nuclear weaponry had undermined the credibility of military action and the value of military power. Yet in the view of others (including many conservatives), the new era had not fundamentally changed the importance of the military instrument, which remained a critical tool for deterring aggression and blackmail and

advancing American national interests. At the same time, however, it must be stressed that most conservatives did not see military power as the only important element of national power. In fact, the inherently supporting nature of military power is a common theme which appears throughout the history of conservative strategic thought. For conservatives, military strength provided the base upon which to build a much broader, more comprehensive national strategy.

Early Cold War Period

As discussed earlier, there was widespread understanding, in the immediate post-war era, among most conservatives and anti-communist liberals that superior power was critical to the West's ability to deal effectively with the Soviet threat. Yet, while they agreed on the need for superior military power, liberals and conservatives saw that power serving fundamentally different purposes. For many anti-communist liberals, US military power was a much more limited tool, useful only as a means of implementing their preferred policy of containment and convincing the Soviets that they had no hope of destroying the West.¹ Having already rejected the notion of winning the Cold War, they paid little attention to the broader value of military superiority nor the strategic options which it offered the West. Greatly influenced by Brodie's belief that, in the nuclear age, the military's only purpose was to prevent war, Western liberals rejected the idea that America's military superiority could be used to coerce concessions from the Soviet Union or to enhance America's global influence.

¹ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Vital Center*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1949), 239.

Conservatives, on the other hand, even at a time when the US possessed a monopoly on atomic weapons, viewed the West's military strength as a supporting element of national power, but one which could contribute to achieving far more ambitious goals. In the view of Burnham (and many other conservatives), the military tool was, first and foremost, a defensive component of the West's grand strategy, useful primarily to prevent communist encroachment in Western Europe and the Third World.² However, contrary to the claims of their critics, conservatives understood that the primary purpose of superior military power was not to reverse by force communist control of Eastern Europe or to invade the Soviet Union. Rather, they argued that an unrivaled US military would provide the West two important strategic advantages. First, by achieving and maintaining military superiority, the US could, in essence, "beat the Soviets at their own game." By remaining significantly ahead of a Soviet regime based on force and violence, in which "the value of power far outweighs the power of values," America would demonstrate the futility of the Soviets' global challenge to its power and devalue the Soviets' only real strategic asset.³ Second, conservatives argued that American superiority would not only deter Soviet aggression, but would also enhance America's influence with its friends and allies and, most importantly, "buy time" for the West to use its superior political, economic and spiritual resources to achieve its ultimate goal: the rollback of Soviet expansionism and the destruction of communist power.⁴ By denying the Soviets the ability to engage in significant military expansion (particularly into

² James Burnham, *The Struggle for the World*, (New York: John Day Company, Inc., 1947), 162. See also William Henry Chamberlain, *Appeasement, The Road To War*, (New York: Rolton House, 1962), 187.

³ Edmund A. Walsh, *Total Empire: The Roots and Progress of World Communism*, (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1951), 209.

⁴ James Burnham, *The Coming Defeat of Communism* (New York: John Day Company, 1950), 140.

Western Europe), the US could more easily target key Soviet economic and political weaknesses and thereby destroy the Soviet regime. In this early period, then, one can see the beginnings of a recurrent theme in conservative strategic thought: military superiority was a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for a Western victory in the Cold War.

Middle Cold War Period

By the 1960s, the gap between liberals and conservatives on the value of military power had begun to widen, with each side viewing military power in fundamentally different ways. For many liberals, Soviet aggression had become virtually unthinkable, particularly in such key areas as Western Europe, despite the West's conventional inferiority, making the "Soviet threat" a steadily less important one. Instead, they viewed the arms race itself as the primary threat to both US security and better relations with the Soviet Union.⁵ In the view of many liberals, the destructive power of modern weaponry had made the military instrument of national power increasingly unusable, while radically increasing the costs and risks of accidental war. In light of these changing views of the threat, liberals throughout this period became increasingly skeptical about the real value of military power and called for more robust efforts at achieving a general disarmament.⁶ While still reluctantly accepting the need for a deterrent force of nuclear weapons, liberals were especially critical of significant conventional forces, which they felt were too expensive, had little deterrent value, and provided no meaningful increase in Western security.⁷ The fact that US conventional forces were, by the end of the decade, still

⁵ McGeorge Bundy, "To Cap the Volcano," *Foreign Affairs* 48, No. 1 (October 1969): 15.

⁶ Walter Milis, "A Liberal Military Defense Policy," in *The Liberal Papers*, ed. James Roosevelt (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1962), 114.

⁷ Arthur Waskow, "The Theory and Practice of Deterrence," in Roosevelt, 138.

unable to achieve victory in Vietnam merely served to reinforce this skepticism about the value of military superiority.

Despite the enormous changes in the international system since the end of the Second World War, the conservative view of military power during this period was largely consistent with that of their predecessors: military power was a critical, but supporting, tool in the pursuit of broader political goals. Unlike their liberal counterparts, conservatives argued that all elements of military power, including conventional and tactical nuclear forces, could contribute to achieving America's broader national goals. In outlining his strategy for victory over communism, Goldwater reiterated Burnham's view that military power should undertake the defensive task of deterring Soviet aggression, while the US waged political warfare aimed at the Soviets' destruction.⁸ Yet, in addition to its value in deterring actual military aggression, conservatives during this period also began to stress the ability of superior military power to deter Soviet political coercion and blackmail. By developing and maintaining superior nuclear and conventional forces, conservatives insisted the US could eliminate the ability of the Soviet Union to intimidate or threaten America or its allies.⁹ Since these attempts to intimidate the non-communist world were central to the Soviets' expansionist efforts, Western military power could have a profound impact on the broader political struggle between the two superpowers.

At the same time, however, some conservatives increasingly saw other uses for Western military power, particularly in response to unrest in the developing world. In

⁸ Barry M. Goldwater, *Why Not Victory?*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1962), 35.

⁹ M. Stanton Evans, *The Politics of Surrender*, (New York: Devin-Adair, 1966), 527. See also William R. Kintner with Joseph Z. Kornfeder, *The New Frontier of War: Political Warfare, Present and Future*, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1962), 343 and Frank S. Meyer, "The McNamara Policy: Road to Disaster," in *The Conservative Mainstream*, ed. Frank S. Meyer (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1969), 388. This point was also made by some anti-communist liberals. See Dean G. Acheson, "Premises

light of the sustained Soviet campaign of aggression in the Third World, many conservatives noted that a robust conventional capability offered important strategic options for the West. If the US was serious about taking the strategic offensive, expanding its influence in the Third World, and developing an “independent rather than reactive” foreign policy, Strausz-Hupé argued that the ability to use force was essential.¹⁰ Indeed, he cautioned that “to abjure the use of force under all circumstances except self-defense in a contest with a revolutionary power is a fateful decision” since the most effective deterrent to revolution is the willingness to use superior power.¹¹ As a way of defending itself against Soviet efforts to spark a worldwide communist revolution and discrediting Marxist ideology, conservatives urged the West to use military power to reverse communist expansion, focusing in particular on Cuba and (to a lesser degree) Albania.¹² While their calls for such actions were largely ignored (particularly after the Bay of Pigs fiasco), this support for a more aggressive use of military power in the Third World would continue throughout the 1970s and helped form the intellectual basis for the Reagan administration’s actions in Beirut, Grenada and Libya. Yet, even in these calls for the more aggressive use of military power, conservatives continued to emphasize that force alone could not win the Cold War and that the “actions of arms must always be considered in combination with political, educational, and organizational measures aimed at the isolation and total political discreditation of the enemy.”¹³

of American Policy,” in *American Strategy for the Nuclear Age*, eds. Walter F. Hahn and John C. Neff (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1960), 417.

¹⁰ Robert Strausz-Hupé, “The Diminishing Freedom of Choice,” in Hahn and Neff, 44.

¹¹ Strausz-Hupé, “The Diminishing Freedom of Choice,” 48.

¹² Frank J. Johnson, *No Substitute For Victory*, (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1962), 201.

¹³ Gerhart Niemeyer, “Political Requirements,” in *National Security: Political, Military, and Economic Strategies in the Decade Ahead*, eds. David M. Abshire and Richard V. Allen, (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1963), 263.

Late Cold War Period

The liberal-conservative divide steadily widened throughout the 1970s, as the two sides' views gradually hardened to represent fundamentally opposing views on the importance of military power. In many respects, much of the debate over the value of military power reflects the disagreement between the two camps over the importance of nuclear superiority, which was discussed in Chapter 4. Because liberals had decided that the destructiveness of nuclear weaponry rendered nuclear superiority meaningless and that changes in the international system had made the military tool of statecraft unusable, they were obviously less willing to support the development of robust conventional or nuclear forces. At the same time, conservatives who continued to see value in military power urged the West to take seriously the danger of Soviet aggression and reestablish military superiority via a sustained buildup of Allied defenses.

Most leading liberals of this period assessed the various proposals to develop or enhance Western military power on the basis of their impact on détente and their ability to slow or halt the arms race. Since they continued to believe that military power was rapidly declining in political importance, the only purpose nuclear or conventional forces could possibly serve was deterrence.¹⁴ As a result, only those programs (which were few and far between) deemed unlikely to either worsen US-Soviet ties or accelerate the arms race were considered even minimally acceptable. Indeed, liberals were virtually unanimous on the need for the US to show unilateral restraint in its efforts to update its

¹⁴ Hubert H. Humphrey, "The Course of Soviet Foreign Policy and Soviet-American Relations in the 1970s," *Orbis* 15, No. 1 (Winter 1971): 69. See also Edward M. Kennedy, "Beyond Détente," *Foreign Policy* 16 (Fall 1974): 11 and George F. Kennan, "After the Cold War: American Foreign Policy in the 1970s," *Foreign Affairs* 51, No. 1 (October 1972): 220.

military forces or improve its defensive capabilities. One leading figure, for example, went so far as to call for the US to provide a “full public disclosure of nuclear weapons doctrines and programs” (even absent a similar disclosure by the Soviets).¹⁵ He also demanded that the US not build any weapon system which could either be seen as a rejection of mutual assured destruction or which was intended to serve as a bargaining chip for future arms control treaties.¹⁶ Rather, the US needed to limit its development of modernized nuclear (and conventional) forces and focus instead on obtaining an arms control agreement with the Soviets.¹⁷ In short, guided by the belief that military power was strategically meaningless, most liberal strategic thinkers argued that the US needed to ensure that nothing it developed could reasonably be expected to challenge the power equilibrium which most liberals believed existed between East and West.

For conservatives, the Soviets’ nuclear and conventional buildup, which had begun in the 1960s, raised troubling questions about Soviet intentions and convinced them of the need for a similarly robust Western effort to enhance its military power. In the view of many conservatives, America’s conventional and nuclear inferiority (combined with the aftereffects of Vietnam) had rendered the West dangerously vulnerable to Soviet psychological manipulation and political pressure. Reversing that inferiority, restoring the West’s ability to deter Soviet aggression, and rebuilding the ability of the US to act decisively in the Third World were the key goals of conservatives throughout the 1970s. To do so, conservatives argued that the US needed first to redress

¹⁵ Kennedy, 12.

¹⁶ Kennedy, 13. See also George F. Kennan, *The Cloud of Danger*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1977), 203 for similar calls for unilateral restraint in arms production.

¹⁷ For an example of this approach, see Paul C. Warnke, “Apes On A Treadmill,” *Foreign Policy* 18 (Spring 1975): 12-29.

the massive Soviet military advantage by acting quickly to restore its nuclear deterrent and rebuild its conventional forces.¹⁸ By improving America's military forces, conservatives hoped to deny the Soviets any plausible scenario in which it could hope to emerge from a nuclear or conventional war more powerful than the United States and thus eliminate the danger of Soviet coercion. In addition, while America's experience in Vietnam had made military intervention almost impossible to contemplate, conservatives continued to build upon Strausz-Hupé's argument that the West needed to be prepared to act decisively, particularly in the Third World.

Yet during this phase of the Cold War, as in earlier periods, conservatives continued to highlight the inherently political nature of the West's struggle with the Soviet Union and, therefore, the necessarily supporting role that military power played in their Cold War grand strategy. Thus, conservatives saw the rebuilding of US military power as a critical element in overcoming the psychological and political barriers to the coordinated use of American power. Understanding that the US defeat in Vietnam had greatly undermined the rest of the world's confidence in America's willingness to counter Soviet pressure, conservatives recognized the need to reverse this perception of American weakness. They argued that a sustained military buildup was critical to overcoming "an attitude toward nuclear weapons which leaves us increasingly vulnerable to subtle forms of psychological and political blackmail" and to reassure America's friends and allies that it had not given up hope of winning the Cold War.¹⁹ The primary purpose of an arms

¹⁸ Fred Charles Ikle, "Arms Control and National Defense," in *The United States in the 1980s*, eds. Peter Duignan and Alvin Rabushka, (Stanford University: Hoover Press, 1980), 438-9. See also Brian Crozier, *Strategy of Survival*, (New Rochelle: Arlington House Publishers, 1978), 193 and Barry M. Goldwater, *With No Apologies: The Personal and Political Memoirs of Senator Barry M. Goldwater*, (New York: Morrow, 1979), 302.

¹⁹ Richard Pipes, "Soviet Global Strategy," *Commentary* 69, No. 4 (April 1980): 39. See also Daniel O. Graham, "Détente Adieu," *National Review* 28, No. 33, (September 3, 1976): 946-50.

buildup, then, was to demonstrate to the Soviets and the world that the West would not be intimidated by communist pressure nor deterred from acting in areas of its vital national interests.²⁰ Thus, conservatives throughout the Cold War based their view of military power's role in American grand strategy in largely Clausewitzian terms, seeing it as a tool for achieving political ends.

Economic Warfare

The strategic use of America's vast economic power to achieve broad political objectives is a topic frequently overlooked by the foreign policy community. Much writing on America's foreign economic policy (both during and after the Cold War) tended to assume that the primary goal of such policies was to, for example, foster domestic economic growth or, at its most ambitious, improve America's relations with the rest of the world. To the extent that more aggressive actions were considered, such discussions generally focused on the efficacy of trade sanctions and similar instruments as symbols of US displeasure. Rarely was the possibility considered that economic tools could serve as powerful weapons to be wielded against the enemies of the West. Indeed, the liberal-conservative debate on the West's economic policy towards the Soviet bloc hinged on whether and how economic power could effectively advance America's interests. As a result, throughout the Cold War, the appropriate level of Western economic interaction with the Soviet bloc was a deeply contentious issue, with each side motivated by different overarching theories regarding the impact such trade would have on the broader strategic competition between the US and the USSR. For some, strict

²⁰ Robert Conquest, *Present Danger: Toward A Foreign Policy*, (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1979), 49.

sanctions, heavily restricted economic relations with the communist world and the economic burden of the arms race offered the greatest hope for a Western victory in the Cold War, while others insisted that greater economic integration and arms reductions offered the US the greatest opportunity to exert leverage and influence over Soviet actions. The gradual ascendance of the latter theory would result in the steady relaxation of Western export controls, the loosening of trade restrictions and the renunciation of the arms race as a tool of economic warfare, decisions which conservatives strongly opposed and which the Reagan administration would quickly reverse.

Early Cold War Period

In response to the violent repression of Eastern Europe and the Soviet support to North Korean forces in the Korean War, President Truman imposed wide-ranging economic sanctions and trade restrictions against the Soviet Union and its allies. Despite some resistance within his own administration, Truman was largely able to retain these economic restrictions throughout his tenure in office.²¹ However, much of the liberal and mainstream establishment viewed these restrictions as ineffective and, in fact, counterproductive. In their view, the Soviet Union and its allies constituted a self-sufficient society which was, therefore, largely immune to most forms of economic pressure.²² More importantly, however, much of the liberal establishment felt that the expansion of East-West trade relations would generate good will towards the US within the Soviet bloc, demonstrate the Soviets' material weakness and enhance the West's

²¹ Robert R. Bowie and Richard H. Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 211.

²² Schlesinger, 221.

negotiating leverage over the Soviets. According to this approach, Western trade would improve standards of living within the Soviet bloc, which would increase popular pressure on the Soviet leadership to pursue a more conciliatory policy towards the West and reform its political institutions. This theory was ultimately endorsed in Eisenhower's "Project Solarium," and would serve as the basis for the efforts of Eisenhower and his successors to "reduce radically the restrictions on East-West trade."²³

Conservatives, on the other hand, took the view that the fundamental purpose of US economic policy towards the communist world was to exacerbate, not relieve, the Soviets' economic difficulties, as part of a larger effort to weaken and eventually destroy the Soviet state. Whereas much of the establishment believed that a more prosperous Soviet Union would be more likely to seek genuine accommodation with the West, conservatives believed that a stronger Soviet economy could only result in a more aggressive and dangerous global rival. Criticizing those who sought to expand East-West trade, Burnham argued that the Soviets viewed trade as a zero-sum struggle for power, not an effort to find mutual advantage, which forms the basis of trade among capitalist states.²⁴ Instead, conservatives urged the nations of the West to harness the power of their own economies by reducing trade barriers between capitalist nations and particularly by supporting the nascent efforts to create a unified European economy. A stronger, more unified Europe would be better able to resist Soviet intimidation and would be able to contribute more to the growing need for better military defenses in Europe.²⁵ Conservatives also hoped that a more united Western economy would make a common

²³ Bowie and Immerman, 213.

²⁴ Burnham, *Coming Defeat*, 258.

²⁵ Chamberlain, *Appeasement*, 193.

policy towards East-West trade more likely, and thus increase the chances that the US could convince its allies to severely limit Western economic contact with the communist bloc. In the view of most conservatives, such restrictions, by carefully targeting key Soviet vulnerabilities, would work to America's strategic advantage. By exacerbating bottlenecks in the Soviet economy, trade restrictions would force the Soviet leadership to make more difficult decisions regarding resource allocation and, potentially, compel it to abandon its expansionist efforts. In addition, by worsening the Soviets' economic problems, they would undermine popular support for the Soviet regime and intensify nationalist opposition to Soviet rule. While not popular within the foreign policy establishment, this view of trade controls as a key weapon to use in the West's struggle with the Soviet Union would emerge as a central element of conservative Cold War strategy.

Middle Cold War Period

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, both East-West trade and the arms race had become highly contentious issues within the United States. Many liberals felt that Eisenhower's efforts to reduce trade barriers between the superpowers had not gone far enough and instead supported a significant expansion of economic ties between the US and USSR. Liberals such as James Warburg argued for the full normalization of trade with the Soviet bloc, insisting that existing restrictions imposed far greater burdens on a market economy than on a command-style economy.²⁶ At the same time, they expressed increasing concern over the acceleration of the arms race, which they felt was not only

²⁶ James Warburg, "A Re-Examination of American Foreign Policy," in Roosevelt, 75.

strategically meaningless but also economically counterproductive. Deeply concerned about the economic strain caused by the arms race, some argued that the US had no realistic hope of winning an arms race with the communist world, which had a much greater manpower supply, ample access to raw materials and the ability to “channel the energies of their people into military preparations at the expense of civilian needs and comforts.”²⁷ Others, while more optimistic about the ability of the US to compete in the arms race, argued that using the arms race as a tool of economic warfare would make a negotiated political settlement with the USSR less feasible.²⁸ At its core, the general liberal approach to economic warfare was to deny its usability and to view it instead as a threat to broader efforts to improve relations with the Soviet Union.

Conservatives, on the other hand, argued vehemently against any expansion of trade with the Soviet bloc and urged the West to use its economic prosperity as a weapon to undermine the Soviet regime. While recognizing the potential for mutually beneficial trade, conservatives argued that the West needed to prohibit any East-West trade in strategically useful goods. In the view of most conservatives, “strategic trade” included any item which would facilitate industrial development or improve the technology base of the Soviet bloc.²⁹ Understanding the importance of allied support for these restrictions, conservatives highlighted the need for improved Western coordination on export controls, stressing that tighter restrictions would “remove from the Communist enterprise

²⁷ Charles E. Osgood, “Reciprocal Initiative,” in Roosevelt, 166.

²⁸ Bundy, 14.

²⁹ Robert Strausz-Hupé, William R. Kintner and Stefan T. Possony, *A Forward Strategy for America* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 174. While some conservatives, such as Burnham, clearly preferred an all-out boycott of all trade with the Soviet bloc, they reluctantly accepted a more selective boycott of strategic goods. See, for example, James Burnham, “Some Proposals to a Goldwater Administration Regarding Foreign Policy,” *National Review* 16, No. 28 (July 14, 1964): 590, and John A. Andrew, III, *The Other Side of the Sixties: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of Conservative Politics*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 136.

the material supplements it needs to keep its staggering economy in motion.”³⁰

Recognizing the continued weakness of the Soviet economy, conservatives saw economic pressure as a tool for compelling the Soviets to curtail their increasingly aggressive efforts to expand their influence in the Third World. By forcing the Soviet leadership to make difficult economic choices, conservatives sought to use this economic offensive to undermine the cohesion of the Soviet bloc, complicate Soviet decision-making, reduce the ability of the Soviets to foment international conflict and convince them that global hegemony was an unachievable goal.³¹

Conservatives also urged the West to withhold all trade credits, thereby forcing the Soviets to expend their scarce supply of hard currency, and to forbid the flow of capital or capital goods into the Soviet bloc, in order to prevent the Soviets from easing production bottlenecks and enhancing the reliability of their economic system. For example, conservatives (led by the Young Americans for Freedom) mobilized to oppose the building of a Firestone synthetic rubber plant in Romania, arguing that the material would not only have direct utility for Warsaw Pact forces, but would also provide critically needed technical knowledge to the communist bloc.³² While conservatives were largely successful during this period in preventing either the large-scale expansion of East-West trade or the extension of Western government credits to the Soviet Union and its satellites, by the end of the 1960s the popular desire for détente and the opposition to the Vietnam War made it increasingly difficult to sustain public support for such policies.

³⁰ Evans, *The Politics of Surrender*, 527.

³¹ Strausz-Hupé, *Forward Strategy*, 205.

³² Gregory L. Schneider, *Cadres for Conservatism: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of the Contemporary Right*, (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 101.

Finally, in addition to their calls for tighter restrictions on East-West trade and their opposition to Western trade credits, conservatives during this period increasingly saw the arms race itself as an important element of their Cold War economic strategy. Recognizing both the inherent economic weaknesses of the Soviet regime and the West's comparative advantage in economic productivity, conservatives of the period urged the West to accelerate, not relax, the arms race. While the primary reasons conservatives supported the arms race were (as discussed above) to discourage Soviet adventurism and enhance the West's ability to go on the strategic offensive, there was also an important economic component to their calls for a military buildup. Conservatives argued that a sustained arms race would allow the US to "undermine [the Soviets'] ability to do world mischief, cut [their] flexibility, and prod the discontents of [their] subjects."³³ They also noted that America's technological strength and innovation provided the US the ability to render obsolete large amounts of Soviet hardware and significantly drive up Soviet military costs, making it possible to "grind the Soviet revolutionary dynamism to a halt."³⁴ As in the case of trade and credit restrictions, however, by the end of the 1960s popular fatigue with East-West tension and the Vietnam War had undercut the conservative position on the arms race and opened the door to the arms control efforts which characterized détente.

³³ also James Burnham, *The War We Are In*, (New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1967), 151. See also Ralph James, "The Soviet Economy," in *Handbook on Communism*, eds. Joseph Bochenski and Gerhart Niemeyer, (New York: Praeger, 1962), 448.

³⁴ Strausz-Hupé, *Forward Strategy*, 209.

Late Cold War Period

Given that expanded East-West economic ties was one of the cornerstones of détente, it should hardly be surprising that foreign policy strategists' view of détente closely corresponded to their views on improved economic relations between the US and USSR. Throughout the 1970s (and well into the 1980s), liberal and conservative analysts struggled with one key question regarding East-West economic cooperation: what effect would Western aid, credit and trade have on the behavior of the Soviet Union and its allies? Or, put another way, would Western efforts to exacerbate the Soviets' economic difficulties provide any meaningful benefit to Western security? The debate between liberals and conservatives on this topic would be heated and prolonged, and serves as one of the most revealing examples of the two sides' fundamentally different strategic approaches.

Most liberals argued that expanding on East-West trade, particularly by increasing trade credits and reducing US restrictions on technology exports to the Soviet bloc, offered a number of important strategic advantages for the West. Organizations such as the Trilateral Commission argued that improved economic relations would lead to a reduction in international tension, a decline in the likelihood of East-West conflict and a greater propensity within the Soviet leadership to seek other areas of cooperation with the West. These conclusions were based on the belief that "highly developed economic relations between countries can help reduce the incentives to develop and exploit tensions."³⁵ Believing that much of the Soviets' internal repression and hostility towards the West was rooted in its perception of capitalist hostility, liberals also argued that

³⁵ Kennedy, 24. See also Adam B. Ulam, "Détente Under Soviet Eyes," *Foreign Policy* 24 (Fall 1976): 517.

improved trade relations would demonstrate Western goodwill, thereby strengthening the “peace camp” within the Soviet leadership and increasing the pressure on Soviet rulers to seek “greater accommodation with the United States and its allies.”³⁶ By bringing the Soviets into the global economic system, the foreign policy establishment believed that the Soviets would become increasingly dependant on Western economic support and would, therefore, “develop a stake in the smooth functioning of the international economic order of capitalism.”³⁷ In addition, liberals argued that relaxed rules on East-West trade would also improve the lot of Eastern Europeans. They insisted that, by expanding economic contacts directly with Eastern Europe, the US and its allies would “encourage greater autonomy … loosen ties between Moscow and some of its Warsaw Pact allies, and … facilitate some broadening of contacts between Eastern and Western Europe.”³⁸ Thus, for liberal strategists, the expansion of East-West trade would serve as a moderating influence on Soviet behavior, promote reform within the Soviet bloc and make a lasting, negotiated settlement between the superpowers easier to achieve.

Conservatives, on the other hand, saw the expansion of East-West trade, and particularly the 1972 decision to permit the Export-Import Bank to extend US government-backed credit to the Soviet Union, as a major strategic mistake which posed a serious threat to the US and its allies. Building on the arguments conservatives had made throughout the Cold War, most conservatives argued that increased economic ties to the Soviet Union would not only strengthen the Soviets’ ability to cause or exacerbate

³⁶ Humphrey, 68. See also Kennan, *The Cloud of Danger*, 219.

³⁷ Jerry W. Sanders, *Peddlers of Crisis: The Committee on the Present Danger and the Politics of Containment*, (Boston: South End Press, 1983), 177.

³⁸ William G. Hyland, “Clash with the Soviet Union,” *Foreign Policy* 49 (Winter 1982/1983): 17. It is important to note that a small number of conservatives agreed with this approach. See William R. Kintner and Wolfgang Klaiber, *Eastern Europe and European Security* (New York: Dunellen Publishing Company, 1971), 311-312.

international tension, but also would reduce their incentive to consider internal reform. They argued that trade with the West had already provided significant assistance to the Soviets' expansionist efforts and insisted that expanding East-West trade would simply enable the Soviets to divert money to military expenditures and improve their ability to challenge Western influence worldwide.³⁹ Throughout the latter days of the Cold War, conservatives argued that only massive internal and external failures, such as those caused by the collapse of the Soviet economy, could convince the Soviet leadership that reform was necessary.⁴⁰ Indeed, many conservatives saw no fundamental difference between "strategic goods" (such as computers and other high-technology items) and "non-strategic goods" (such as raw materials and agricultural products), arguing that any trade with the Soviet Union would help it overcome bottlenecks in its production process and free up resources to assist in Soviet expansionism.⁴¹ While recognizing that the political climate of the 1970s rendered such sweeping restrictions infeasible, these conservatives would continue to push for stricter limitations on East-West trade throughout the decade and well into the Reagan years.

In addition to concerns regarding the support East-West trade provided to the Soviets' military capabilities, conservatives argued that expanding trade relations and extending credit to the Soviet bloc had failed to have any meaningful impact on Soviet international behavior and had, in fact, created a new Western vulnerability to Soviet pressure. Casting aside mainstream theories about the power of trade to create converging

³⁹ Conquest, *Present Danger*, 42. For a detailed, comprehensive review of the impact of Western trade on the development of the Soviet military, see Antony Sutton, *Western Technology and Soviet Development, 1945-1965* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1973).

⁴⁰ Richard Pipes, *Survival Is Not Enough*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984), 204.

⁴¹ See, for example, Goldwater, *With No Apologies*, 302, Richard Viguerie, *The New Right: We're Ready to Lead*, (Falls Church, VA: The Viguerie Company, 1981), 119, and Crozier, *Strategy of Survival*, 190.

national interests, conservatives pointed out that “neither relaxations of U.S. export controls nor promises of increased trade and credit appear to have had a noticeably moderating effect on Soviet policy in Africa, the Middle East, or Asia, or on the continuous Soviet military buildup.”⁴² In fact, the reduction of limitations on East-West trade coincided with a rapid expansion of Soviet activity, particularly in the Third World, as the Soviet leadership took advantage of America’s defeat in Vietnam to back more vigorously pro-Soviet dictatorships around the world. Conservatives further noted the huge increase in Eastern bloc governments’ debt to Western companies throughout the 1970s (and the very real danger of these governments defaulting on their debts) and argued that these debts had lead to precisely the “reverse leverage” which they had repeated cited as one of the dangers posed by East-West trade.⁴³ Rather than given America a new source of leverage over the actions of the communist bloc, these credits had caused Western businesses, fearful of losing the millions of dollars they had invested in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, to pressure Western governments to be more flexible and responsive to Soviet economic and political demands. This expansion of trade had also opened up new opportunities for the Soviets to weaken Western unity by “[m]ultiplying and tightening the links connecting Western Europe to the Soviet Union and its dependencies” and thereby undermining the willingness of Western Europe to support an aggressive anti-Soviet policy.⁴⁴ Finally, they argued that, contrary to the claims of its supporters, expanded trade with Eastern Europe had undermined popular

⁴² Yuan-li Wu, “U.S. Foreign Economic Policy: Politico-Economic Linkages,” in Duignan and Rabushka, 615. See also, Pipes, *Survival is Not Enough*, 133-134.

⁴³ Richard F. Starr, “Soviet Union,” in Duignan and Rabushka, 741. See also Pipes, *Survival is Not Enough*, 135.

⁴⁴ Committee on the Present Danger, “Common Sense and the Common Danger,” in *Alerting America: The Papers of the Committee on the Present Danger*, ed. Charles Tyroler II, (Washington: Pergamon-Brassey’s, 1984), 12.

resistance to Soviet domination and weakened opposition to increased defense spending within the Warsaw Pact.⁴⁵ Thus, for conservative opponents of détente, enhanced East-West trade posed a serious threat to the US and represented a missed opportunity for the US to use its considerable economic power to target a key Soviet vulnerability and undermine the Soviet system. Rather than continue to pursue these failed policies, conservatives urged the West to recognize the valuable weapon its economic strength could be and to use it to compel the Soviets to engage in serious reform.⁴⁶

Political Warfare

Given that the Cold War was, at its core, a struggle between two fundamentally different political theories, it should hardly be surprising that political warfare played a central role in Cold War strategic thought. Yet the phrase “political warfare” itself was seldom used by most mainstream strategists, who too often mistakenly focused almost exclusively on negotiations, while viewing public diplomacy and rhetoric as minor, supporting elements of national power. Conservatives disagreed with this limited view of the political dimension of the Cold War struggle, and argued that diplomacy involved more than merely negotiations. As Strausz-Hupé pointed out, diplomacy also consists of a representation function and an intelligence function, both of which he argued were significantly more important to the US than negotiations with the Soviet bloc.⁴⁷ In many

⁴⁵ Robert English, “Eastern Europe’s Doves,” *Foreign Policy* 56 (Fall 1984): 56.

⁴⁶ Lev E. Dobriansky, *U.S.A. and the Soviet Myth*, (Old Greenwich, CT: Devin-Adair Company, 1971), 231. See also Conquest, *Present Danger*, 63 and Charles A. Moser, “Foreign Policy and the Conservative Blueprint,” in Paul M. Weyrich and Connaught Coyne Marshner, eds. *Future 21: Directions for America in the 21st Century*, (Greenwich, CT: Devin-Adair Company, 1984), 112.

⁴⁷ Strausz-Hupé, *Forward Strategy*, 222.

ways, the liberal-conservative debate over Cold War diplomacy reflects fundamentally different views over which element of diplomacy was most important to the West.

Early Cold War Period

While the Soviets' brutal repression in Eastern Europe and their blatant violations of the Yalta agreement provoked widespread concern across the political spectrum about their reliability as negotiating partners, nevertheless the liberal-conservative divide on the role of political warfare emerged surprisingly early in the Cold War. By the end of the 1940s, less than five years after the end of the Second World War, liberal strategists were increasingly arguing for renewed efforts to reach a negotiated settlement with the Soviets and had largely rejected the notion of a sustained international political campaign against Soviet ideology and behavior. Insisting that the purpose of foreign policy is "to produce real changes in a real world," many Cold War liberals argued that, while the US may disagree with the character or morality of the Soviet regime, speaking out publicly against Soviet behavior was counterproductive.⁴⁸ While some, such as Kennan, supported the limited use of propaganda, they saw it primarily as a defensive weapon, intended to convince the Soviet leadership that their efforts to destroy the West would not only fail, but would also weaken their own system.⁴⁹ For much of the Cold War liberal establishment, aggressive assertions of Western economic and political values could only increase superpower tension and weaken "moderates" within the Soviet leadership. This general opposition to pro-Western propaganda would steadily increase over time and would become a central tenet of liberal views on the political dimension of the Cold War.

⁴⁸ Schlesinger, 221.

⁴⁹ Bowie and Immerman, 129.

Instead, liberals saw a key role for negotiations, both as a way of undermining Soviet propaganda and as a way of providing “hope to captive people that their freedom need not come about through a general war that they could probably not survive.”⁵⁰ They believed that, by actively pursuing a negotiated settlement with Moscow, the US could disprove Soviet claims that the capitalist West was seeking to launch a new war for global domination and thus expand American influence. Yet, this preference for a negotiated settlement with the Soviets also demonstrated a key difference between liberal and conservative views of the Cold War. In the view of many liberals, victory in the Cold War was impossible, thus the overriding US goal could only be to manage, control or limit superpower rivalry. Conservatives, on the other hand, believed that victory over the Soviets was not only possible, but necessary to the survival of the West.

As a result, conservatives viewed political warfare as a critical component of the West’s Cold War strategy, and paid particular attention to the use of public diplomacy and propaganda to represent America’s position to the rest of the world. Noting the importance the Soviets placed on propaganda and the ideological battlefield, conservatives urged the West to engage in a serious, sustained and wide-ranging effort to not only counter Soviet misinformation, but also to take the ideological offensive by attacking communist ideology and using the ideals of the West as strategic assets. In particular, conservatives highlighted the need to provide accurate, honest information which focused on the inherent flaws and political repression of the communist system and the merits of democratic capitalism.⁵¹ To be effective, this information needed to be widely disseminated, both within the Soviet bloc (to the extent possible) and to the

⁵⁰ Bowie and Immerman, 130.

⁵¹ Burnham, *Coming Defeat*, 176-179. See also Walsh, 218.

“undecided” nations throughout the world, and needed to come from both Western governments and private organizations. In keeping with the tendency of conservatives during this period to focus on the situation in Europe, they highlighted the potential role NATO could play in orchestrating a broad political warfare campaign and urged the West to use such a campaign to break the Soviets’ hold over Eastern Europe, particularly East Germany.⁵² By engaging in vigorous public diplomacy, conservatives argued that the West could not only prevent further Soviet gains in the Third World, but could greatly weaken the cohesion of the Soviet bloc and, ultimately, undermine the stability of the Soviet state.⁵³

While strongly supportive of public diplomacy and other “representational” efforts, conservatives were deeply skeptical of conferences, treaties or open-ended negotiations with the Soviet Union. As noted in Chapter 4, while conservatives were not opposed, in principle, to negotiations with the Soviet Union, they insisted that the West enter any such negotiations from a position of superiority. Arguing that international conferences and treaties can only lead to a lasting agreement when each side shares “a common frame of interest,”⁵⁴ conservatives were highly doubtful that the two sides shared any significant interests. They further argued that the Soviets’ ideological opposition to any permanent peace with the capitalist world (as well as their long history of treaty violations) made a lasting settlement with the Soviet Union impossible. As a result, they saw little reason to expend significant political energy on disarmament talks

⁵² See Zygmunt Nagorski, Jr. “NATO and the Captive Nations,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 284 (July 1953): 77 and Burnham, “The Third World War,” *National Review* 1, No. 3 (December 7, 1955): 16.

⁵³ Burnham, *Coming Defeat*, 143. See also Bowie and Immerman, 135.

⁵⁴ Burnham, *Coming Defeat*, 37.

or similar efforts. Such negotiations could only increase domestic political pressure to reach an agreement while misleading Western publics into thinking that the Soviets were more moderate and open to genuine compromise than they really were. This skepticism towards superpower negotiations and strong preference for public diplomacy would characterize conservative diplomatic strategy throughout the Cold War.

Middle Cold War Period

For a number of reasons, by the beginning of the 1960s, Western liberals had increasingly viewed the management of superpower conflict via arms control as the primary purpose of diplomacy. The apparent stability of the Soviet bloc convinced many liberals that the Soviet Union was likely to remain a fixture on the international scene. As a result, bitter denunciations and “Cold War polemics” were neither useful nor appropriate.⁵⁵ In addition, the rapid decolonization of the Third World and the spread of “national liberation movements” in former Western colonies convinced many liberals that Western values, such as individual rights, free markets and democratic pluralism, were alien and unwelcome to much of the world, thus making Western propaganda efforts pointless.⁵⁶ This generally hostile view of pro-Western and anti-Soviet public diplomacy, while certainly present during the early 1950s, strengthened throughout the 1960s in response to the wider public support for détente. While President Kennedy generally supported a more aggressive use of Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Free Europe (RFE), there was nevertheless a gradual movement towards toning down broadcast attacks on Soviet behavior lest it exacerbate superpower tension. This movement became

⁵⁵ John Kenneth Galbraith, “An Agenda for American Liberals,” *Commentary* 41, No. 6 (June 1966): 33.

⁵⁶ Warburg, 93.

even more pronounced following the Soviet quashing of the 1968 Prague Spring movement, with VOA and (to a lesser degree) RFE becoming more journalistic and pro-détente.⁵⁷ Finally, the growing concern about the arms race, and popular fears that it could lead to a full-scale nuclear war, convinced many Cold War liberals that some form of arms control was necessary to ensure the physical survival of the West. The belief that the US and USSR had developed a mutual interest in arms control led many liberal and mainstream strategists to view negotiations, particularly arms control, as the key first step towards cultivating a broader political settlement to the superpower rivalry.⁵⁸

Building on the arguments of their predecessors, conservatives of the 1960s vehemently rejected this focus on arms control negotiations and instead argued that the political battle between East and West was the key struggle of the Cold War. As a result, conservatives considered efforts to manage or control superpower rivalry (such as arms control) dangerous, as they granted the USSR a moral equivalency it did not deserve and weakened the will of the Western public to oppose Soviet policies. In their (ultimately unsuccessful) effort to defeat the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, conservatives argued that the agreement was a strategic distraction, drawing the West away from a policy of confronting and resisting Soviet aggression.⁵⁹ At the same time, however, it must be stressed that most conservatives did not reject outright all arms control negotiations. Provided the final agreement was both verifiable and in the interests of the West,

⁵⁷ Michael Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens: The Battles of Western Broadcasting in the Cold War*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 148. For the gradual decline of RFE's anti-communist tone during this period, see also Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty*, (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 142-3.

⁵⁸ Bundy, 9.

⁵⁹ Schneider, 66.

conservatives generally viewed arms control as a useful, albeit minor, tool.⁶⁰ However, the focus of conservative strategists was primarily on winning the key, political struggle of the Cold War. Conservatives argued that forceful public and private representational diplomacy, by attacking the ideological and moral legitimacy of communism and exposing the true nature of Soviet rule, was critical to a Western victory in the Cold War.

During this period of the Cold War, conservatives recognized that representational diplomacy needed to achieve two different, but mutually supporting, tasks: winning over allies and undecided countries, and undermining the ideological legitimacy of the Soviet system. Much as in the earlier period, conservatives argued that telling the truth about US and Soviet global intentions and highlighting the moral stakes in the superpower conflict were the most effective means of improving allied cohesion and enhancing America's standing in the Third World.⁶¹ Central to such efforts were such organizations as RFE, VOA and the US Information Agency (USIA). Conservatives repeatedly urged the US government to make better strategic use of these assets by making them forceful proponents of American values, ideals and beliefs.⁶² Recognizing that the Soviets had moved aggressively to expand the influence of its ideology, conservatives urged the West to engage fully in the ongoing "war of ideas." Such a war, they insisted, could be won if the US improved its efforts to "prove and sell [its] set of ideas" while demonstrating the hypocrisy of the Soviet system.⁶³ In addition, conservatives argued that, since the struggle for the minds of man was central to the

⁶⁰ See, for example, Thomas W. Wolfe, "Soviet Strategy of Disarmament," in Hahn and Neff, 148, and William R. Kintner, *Peace and the Strategy Conflict*, (New York: Praeger, 1967), 159.

⁶¹ Strausz-Hupé, *Forward Strategy*, 261-265.

⁶² See, for example, Chamberlain, *Appeasement*, 191 and Burnham, *The War We Are In*, 62.

⁶³ Goldwater, *Why Not Victory?*, 121-123.

outcome of the Cold War, the export of US ideology was critical to victory over the Soviets.⁶⁴ This belief in the power of American ideology would become a central tenet of the neoconservative movement.

Yet, while enhancing America's global influence and strengthening the unity of the West were important, so too was the task of weakening the ideological underpinnings of the Soviet bloc. Since communism formed the sole justification for the governments of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, conservatives believed the central purpose of America's political war against the Soviets was to discredit Soviet ideology while reassuring the world that it intended to fight and win the Cold War. Conservatives saw a major role for public diplomacy in this effort, and called for a full-scale political offensive against communist ideology aimed at demoralizing the Soviet elite and reassuring the domestic opposition within the Soviet empire that the West supported their cause. Specifically, conservatives urged the US to highlight the reality of Soviet colonialism and to make more effective use of Soviet émigrés and dissidents to show the world the brutality of Soviet rule.⁶⁵ They also urged the West to highlight through official speeches and radio broadcasts the political and economic differences between the "Open Society" of the West and the "Closed Society" of the Soviet bloc as a means of weakening Soviet control of its restive populations, especially in Eastern Europe.⁶⁶ Conservatives believed that publicizing the West's material and moral superiority could only weaken the morale of the ruling elite in the East and increase popular pressure for the relaxation of totalitarian control. Thus, conservatives argued that honest portrayals of

⁶⁴ Andrew, 19.

⁶⁵ Sarnoff, 426. See also Frank Rockwell Barnett, "What Is To Be Done?," in Hahn and Neff, 446.

⁶⁶ Strausz-Hupé, *Protracted Conflict*, 133.

life in the West could only highlight the political and economic failures of the Soviet system and increase pressure on the Soviet leadership to undertake significant reform.

Late Cold War Period

By the early 1970s, support for a negotiated resolution, based on arms control, to the East-West conflict had definitively entered the political mainstream. Political liberals hailed the arrival of détente as a fundamental change in America's view of the Soviet Union, shifting from a relationship rooted in mistrust and conflict to one of mutual respect and cooperation. While understanding that some form of peaceful competition with the Soviet Union was inevitable, most Western liberals also argued that the low-level political warfare which had been a staple of the superpower conflict since the end of the Second World War was no longer useful or appropriate. In the view of the vast majority of the foreign policy establishment, harsh rhetoric, public denunciations and other openly political efforts to criticize Soviet actions were counterproductive. Such efforts, they insisted, harmed US-Soviet relations, strengthened anti-Western "hardliners" in the Soviet leadership and ultimately did nothing to improve the situation in Eastern Europe. This view had, by the early 1970s, steadily eroded the tough, anti-communist message of America's two principal tools of political warfare, VOA and RFE. By 1973, the VOA had become so sensitive to Soviet opinion that it refused to read from Aleksandr Solzenitsyn's masterpiece *The Gulag Archipelago*, lest VOA be seen as using the plight of dissidents as a political weapon.⁶⁷ So widespread was this opposition to any US-backed broadcast which could be viewed as hostile to the Soviets that such leading

⁶⁷ Nelson, 149.

liberal figures as Senator William Fulbright repeatedly tried (and very nearly succeeded) to cut off all funding for Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty (RL). This tendency reached its high point in 1978, when the chairman of the Board for International Broadcasting (which had oversight responsibilities for RFE and RL) proposed providing Soviet and Eastern European officials time on the radios to respond to claims they felt were inaccurate.⁶⁸ While congressional opposition blocked that specific proposal, the event highlighted the extent to which America's public diplomacy tools had changed from their original role as staunchly anti-communist political weapons into purveyors of inoffensive, sanitized and largely apolitical cultural journalism.

Western liberals, having successfully marginalized political warfare as fundamentally incompatible with the détente policy of negotiation and compromise, instead urged the US to downplay the political differences between the two sides and instead focus its diplomatic energies on controlling the arms race.⁶⁹ For many, America's experience in Vietnam convinced them that the dynamics of the arms race, when combined with militant anti-communism, were the greatest threat to world peace and American security. In fact, so convinced were Western liberals of the need to stop the arms race that they argued the actual content of an arms control agreement was largely irrelevant, as was its impact on Soviet behavior or society.⁷⁰ What mattered was that these agreements existed, and made possible additional negotiations and compromise

⁶⁸ Nelson, 148. See also George R. Urban, *Radio Free Europe and the Pursuit of Democracy: My War Within the Cold War*, (Binghamton, NY: Yale University Press, 1997), 38.

⁶⁹ Humphrey, 70. See also Alexander Dallin and Gail W. Lapidus, "Reagan and the Russians: United States Policy Towards the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe," in *Eagle Defiant: United States Foreign Policy in the 1980s*, eds. Kenneth A. Oye, Robert J. Lieber and Donald Rothchild (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1983), 220 and Marshall D. Shulman, "What Does Security Mean Today?" *Foreign Affairs* 49, No. 4 (July 1971): 616.

⁷⁰ Kennedy, 8. See also Kennan, "After the Cold War: American Foreign Policy in the 1970s," 220.

which could ultimately lead to a broader improvement in East-West relations. Ideally, this network of treaties and compromises would not only halt the arms race, but discredit the hard-line anti-communist ideology which liberals felt also threatened Western security. Thus, for much of the foreign policy mainstream, political warfare was a largely useless tool which could only harm American interests. In their mind, only serious negotiations, rooted in a genuine desire to compromise, could advance America's goals.

Conservatives, on the other hand, continued to make a fundamental distinction between the representation and negotiation functions of diplomacy. While they continued to focus on the representation function throughout the 1970s, it is important to note that some conservatives did see a limited role for negotiations, particularly in the area of arms control. Even the Committee on the Present Danger, which was often portrayed as being unalterably opposed to all arms control agreements, explicitly supported genuine, mutually-advantageous treaties.⁷¹ Unlike their more liberal counterparts, however, conservatives never saw these negotiations as critical to Western security. As one pointed out, “[a]rms control talks are desirable, but we have lived without them. Their absence could not endanger peace.”⁷² In addition, conservatives were much more inclined than their liberal counterparts to set conditions on the types of agreements which they would be willing to support. Particularly worrisome for many conservatives was the Soviets' long history of violating treaties and international agreements, a practice deeply rooted in Soviet ideology. Rather than see these agreements as tools for achieving mutual interests,

⁷¹ See, for example, Committee on the Present Danger, “Common Sense and the Common Danger,” 4 and “Peace With Freedom: A Discussion by the Committee on the Present Danger Before the Foreign Policy Association, 14 March 1978,” 30.

⁷² Jeane Kirkpatrick, *The Withering Away of the Totalitarian State ... And Other Surprises*, (Washington, DC: AEI Press, 1990), 17. See also Committee on the Present Danger, “Where We Stand on SALT,” 17.

the Soviets saw them as a way to buy themselves “time to strengthen their empire economically and militarily” and as a tool for “psycho-political” warfare against the West.⁷³ For the Soviets, arms control treaties between it and the United States offered the opportunity to weaken Western unity by raising doubts in the minds of America’s allies (particularly in Western Europe) about its willingness to defend them. As a result, most conservatives believed that meaningful arms control would not be possible until there was “a basic and fundamental change in the Soviet approach to East-West problems,”⁷⁴ specifically a willingness on the part of the Soviets to break from this ideological view of international agreements. Given the Soviets’ penchant for ignoring inconvenient elements of its international obligations, many conservatives believed that stringent, intrusive verification was critical to successful arms control agreements.⁷⁵ Finally, conservatives rejected the liberal argument that the content of an agreement was largely irrelevant, instead arguing that the agreements were valuable only to the extent that they advanced Western interests and reduced the risk of war.⁷⁶ Thus, conservatives of this period argued that the US should only pursue those treaties which were both in its national interest and could be readily verified.

Much more important, in the conservative view, was the representational elements of diplomacy and the use of political warfare as a tool of national power. Much like their predecessors, the conservative strategists of the 1970s saw the outcome of the political war as central to a Western victory in the Cold War, and believed that public and private political pressure was critical to advancing America’s interests. During the 1970s,

⁷³ Dobriansky, 181.

⁷⁴ Goldwater, “The Perilous Conjunction: Soviet Ascendancy and American Isolationism,” 54.

⁷⁵ Committee on the Present Danger, “Common Sense and the Common Danger,” 4.

⁷⁶ Paul H. Nitze, “Living With The Soviets,” *Foreign Affairs* 63, No. 2 (Winter 1984/1985): 363.

conservatives continued to focus on using America's diplomatic and informational arms to attack the USSR, its goals and its international behavior. At the root of these attacks was a recognition that Soviet actions and beliefs were based on lies and that, as a result, the West could politically defeat the Soviets with a massive, sustained and worldwide effort to tell the truth about its communist adversaries.⁷⁷ In particular, conservatives recommended the West pursue three major "lines of attack" in its political struggle with the Soviet Union. In each case, they argued, these attacks would expose Soviet dishonesty, undermine Soviet cohesion, complicate the Soviets' relationship with its client states (particularly in Eastern Europe) and reduce its attractiveness and influence within the Third World.

First, conservatives called for the US to highlight the Soviets' unreliability by publicizing the large number of Soviet treaty violations, starting with the 1918 Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, continuing through Potsdam and Yalta and culminating in the ABM Treaty and the Biological and Toxins Weapon Convention.⁷⁸ Conservatives hoped that these violations would not only temper Western enthusiasm for additional arms control treaties with the Soviets, but more importantly that they would reduce Soviet international influence by raising serious doubts in the minds of foreign leaders regarding the value of Soviet promises. Second, conservatives (particularly neoconservatives) saw tremendous value in highlighting and vigorously defending traditional Western values of free enterprise, democracy and human rights.⁷⁹ Conservatives believed that for too long the West in general (and the US in particular) had refused to defend itself against Soviet

⁷⁷ Crozier, *Strategy of Survival*, 190. See also Ikle, 442 and Viguerie, 118.

⁷⁸ Viguerie, 119.

⁷⁹ Kirkpatrick, *Dictatorships and Double Standards*, 91. See also Niemeyer, *Deceitful Peace*, 201.

denunciations of Western immorality, a decision which had cost the US dearly in international prestige and influence. Citing Daniel Patrick Moynihan's tenure as US Ambassador to the UN as a model, conservatives urged the US to defend itself vigorously and return the rhetorical fire launched by the USSR and its allies.⁸⁰ Finally, recognizing that much of the Soviet leadership's legitimacy was based on communist ideology, conservatives urged a full-scale ideological assault on the fundamental failures of Marxism in general and the Soviet system in particular.⁸¹ Critical to this effort was highlighting to the world that the Soviet system offered neither economic stability nor political freedom and that the countries of the democratic West were the only real supporters of progress in the Third World. By incorporating these three major themes in the West's diplomatic and informational efforts, conservatives argued the US could reverse Soviet political gains and exert significant pressure against one of the Soviets' greatest weaknesses: its political system.

Covert Action

When compared to the other tools of statecraft discussed above, the emphasis Cold War strategists placed on the strategic use of covert action was surprisingly limited. In addition, at least until the 1970s, there was generally greater consensus among liberal and conservative thinkers about the need for and value of covert operations. As a result, the type of heated discussion and debate which surrounded other contentious issues (such as East-West economic relations) did not emerge on the topic of covert action until the latter days of the Cold War. In short, until the 1970s, covert action was not a particularly

⁸⁰ Conquest, *Present Danger*, 74. Moynihan was UN Ambassador from 1975 to 1976.

⁸¹ Moser, 108. See also Staar, 754-755.

contentious issue, nor was the gulf between liberal and conservative views on its use particularly large. The only major disagreement between the two sides involved the use of covert action on the other side of the Iron Curtain. In the opinion of most liberals, such efforts were unlikely to succeed and could only damage US-Soviet relations. Meanwhile, conservatives argued that such efforts would reassure the captive nations of US support, force the Soviets onto the strategic defensive, and, if properly planned, could succeed in weakening communist rule in Eastern Europe or within the Soviet Union itself.

Early Cold War Period

To some degree, it should hardly be surprising that there are very few public discussions or policy writings on the role of covert action in Western strategy from the early days of the Cold War. Given the widespread recognition at that time of the need for secrecy during times of conflict, neither the American press nor most strategic thinkers were particularly inclined to discuss or advocate covert action openly. Nevertheless, recent studies have cast light on how the foreign policy mainstream within the Truman and Eisenhower administrations thought about and used covert action.⁸² In general, there was widespread support for the careful, judicious use of covert operations in support of anti-communist governments and groups in the Third World, as evidenced by a number of successful covert actions. In addition to backing pro-Western figures in Iran and Guatemala during the early 1950s, the CIA provided critical support to Congress for Cultural Freedom, which would serve as a forum to mobilize intellectuals in opposition to

⁸² See Peter Grose, *Operation Rollback: America's Secret War Behind the Iron Curtain*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000) for one such example.

communist ideology.⁸³ These and other examples of successful covert action demonstrate a recognition on the part of the foreign policy mainstream that these operations were a usable and viable option for policymakers.

At the same time, however, important disagreements between liberals and conservatives gradually emerged regarding the value of covert operations within Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The failure of a few of these efforts in the early 1950s convinced a number of liberal strategists that covert action in the Eastern bloc was largely hopeless. In fact, by 1953 Kennan, who had previously supported these efforts, changed his mind and opposed any further effort to conduct operations within Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union.⁸⁴ On this point, Burnham (who was serving as a consultant to the CIA on political warfare) and other conservatives vehemently disagreed. Arguing that the communist regimes of Eastern Europe remained extremely unpopular and fragile, conservatives stressed that the US had both a moral obligation and a strategic interest in providing political and material support to any popular uprisings against the communist governments in the region.⁸⁵ While recognizing the inevitable human costs of such uprisings, they argued that these costs were significantly lower than the alternative of allowing the Soviets uncontested domination over Eastern Europe. Similarly, conservatives argued that “untraditional methods” such as guerrilla warfare and subversion were also capable of undermining the Soviet state and ultimately destroying Soviet power.⁸⁶ Reminding the West that communist rule was no more popular to the captive nations within the USSR than it was in Eastern Europe, conservatives urged the

⁸³ Grose, 139.

⁸⁴ Grose, 209.

⁸⁵ Frank S. Meyer, “The Relativist ‘Re-evaluates’ Evil,” *National Review* 3, No. 18 (May 4, 1957): 429.

⁸⁶ Burnham, *Coming Defeat*, 143-4.

US to take advantage of this popular unrest. In their view, given that the Soviets had been engaging in efforts to infiltrate and subvert the democracies of the West, the West needed to side with the peoples of the Soviet Union and “organize fifth columns of one kind or another in every country behind the iron curtain, including the Soviet Union.”⁸⁷ In addition to supporting military aid to governments under siege from Soviet-backed insurgents, Burnham went a step further by also calling for Western aid to anti-communist insurgents fighting Soviet-backed regimes worldwide.⁸⁸ Years later, such a policy would, of course, become known as the Reagan Doctrine.

Middle Cold War Period

This distinction between liberal and conservative views of covert action would largely continue through the 1960s. With the Cold War now fully established and popular resistance to discussing covert action fading, both liberals and conservatives became more open and vocal about the potential uses of covert action. And while the general support for these measures continued to be shared across the political spectrum, there were signs that American liberals were growing increasingly uneasy with the use of covert action in the Third World. In the wake of the growing decolonization movement, many liberals became more skeptical of the wisdom of supporting pro-Western authoritarian regimes, more open to US support for “national liberation movements,” and more resistant to a foreign policy based on anti-communist ideology. Believing that many Western values, such as capitalism and democracy, were largely alien to non-Western

⁸⁷ William Henry Chamberlain, *Beyond Containment*, (Chicago: H. Regnery, Co., 1953), 300. See also Eugene Lyons, *Our Secret Allies: The Peoples of Russia* (New York: Duell, Sloane and Pearce, 1953), 319.

⁸⁸ Burnham, *Coming Defeat*, 87.

cultures, liberals began to urge the West to side with anti-colonial revolutions and make clear that the US was also a revolutionary power, using all its abilities to advance a “great, unfinished experiment” in human freedom.⁸⁹ As the decade proceeded, liberal strategists increasingly worried that many of the covert actions undertaken in the Third World were strategically unsound, unlikely to succeed and would ultimately result in reduced US influence around the world. While these strategists were, in general, not particularly effective in changing the thinking of the foreign policy elite during the 1960s, they would become increasingly important during the 1970s, as their view of covert action would rapidly enter the political mainstream in the aftermath of Vietnam.

Unsurprisingly, conservatives during this period remained strongly supportive of covert action and continued to urge greater use of this tool to confront Soviet expansionism and undermine the bases of the Soviet system. Rejecting the claims of some that the US needed to take a more “even-handed” approach to communist insurgents in the Third World, conservatives urged the West to provide military aid to support any regime threatened by communist-backed guerillas.⁹⁰ While such operations had been conducted repeatedly in the past (witness Truman’s assistance to Greece in the early days of the Cold War), they had grown increasingly controversial in light of the push to decolonize the Third World. With regard to operations behind the Iron Curtain, conservatives continued to argue that the regimes in Eastern Europe were deeply unpopular, an assessment strengthened by the 1956 uprising in Hungary. As a result, while recognizing that the US could not create revolutionary movements in either Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union, conservatives believed that it could and should provide

⁸⁹ Warburg, 95.

⁹⁰ Strausz-Hupé, *Forward Strategy*, 41.

moral and material support to these movements once established.⁹¹ They argued, however, that such support should not come solely from the US government. Instead, they called for a truly national effort, involving trade unions, private foundations, educational institutions and civic groups, to support democratic forces within the Soviet bloc.⁹² This approach, while ignored at the time, would eventually be implemented by the Reagan administration, which worked closely with a number of such organizations, such as the AFL-CIO, to assist the Polish Solidarity movement. Finally, drawing on the successful covert actions of the previous decade, conservatives urged the West to reverse Soviet expansionism by providing more support to anti-communist movements in Soviet client states, such as Cuba.⁹³ Such operations, while controversial and risky, offered tremendous payoffs if successful, as they would disprove the Soviets' prediction that a communist world was inevitable, significantly damage Soviet international prestige and send a powerful signal to America's allies that the US would remain active in the Third World. Most importantly, however, conservatives argued that these types of operations would force the Soviet Union onto the strategic defensive, compelling it to waste scarce resources propping up these regimes, and enable the West to "reverse the psychological equation" to favor the US.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Kintner, *The New Frontier of War*, 321. See also Sarnoff, 426.

⁹² Barnett, 448. See also Burnham, "Some Proposals to a Goldwater Administration Regarding Foreign Policy," 593.

⁹³ Johnson, 209.

⁹⁴ Evans, *The Politics of Surrender*, 527-529.

Late Cold War Period

While liberal and conservative views on covert action had begun to drift apart by the mid-1960's, the disillusionment and bitter political division resulting from the Vietnam War widened this gap. Accusations that the CIA and other Western intelligence agencies had engaged in unauthorized secret wars, rogue assassination plots, illegal domestic espionage and other questionable activities lead many liberal strategists to question the morality of covert action. At the same time, they argued that rising anti-American sentiment in the Third World was the direct result of American overt and (particularly) covert support for pro-Western regimes, such as Pinochet's Chile and the Shah's Iran. Believing such actions were increasingly proving counterproductive, a number of important liberal thinkers, such as Anthony Lake and Marshall Shulman, argued that such covert actions in support of an anti-communist foreign policy were both immoral and unnecessary.⁹⁵ In addition to being inherently undemocratic, they insisted that, with the rise of détente, such operations were rapidly becoming a strategic liability, as they could only disrupt East-West accord and revive the Cold War. As a result, many called for the US to accept, as one of its guiding principles, the "non-interference by force in processes of internal change."⁹⁶ By renouncing the use of covert action and similar means, they argued that the US could avoid finding itself on the "wrong side of history" and improve its relations with the Eastern bloc and the Third World.

For conservative thinkers, on the other hand, the rise of Soviet power and influence (particularly in the Third World) and the growing political constraints on the

⁹⁵ Carl Gershman, "The Rise and Fall of the New Foreign Policy Establishment," *Commentary* 70, No. 1 (January 1980): 16.

⁹⁶ Shulman, "What Does Security Mean Today?", 614.

use of US military power made covert action even more important than in the past. Seeing these actions as critical to winning the West's political struggle with Moscow, conservatives urged the US to make greater use of covert operations. While acknowledging that some previous operations were ill-advised and better oversight of such activities was needed, they argued that covert operations remained an important tool of foreign policy and that the US needed to take a more balanced view of its use.⁹⁷ Given the fragility of communist rule, both in Eastern Europe and the Third World, conservatives argued that covert campaigns to undermine these regimes would not only force the Soviets to defend their territorial gains, but could actually reverse communist expansion. Conservatives also saw an opportunity to use these activities to strengthen the Western alliance. Some went so far as to urge the development of a NATO-run "Department of Unconventional War," which would coordinate Allied policy and direct Allied actions against Soviet-backed subversion worldwide.⁹⁸ Mindful of the conventional military weakness of most NATO allies, conservatives believed that supporting these covert operations against the Soviets was a way for Western Europe to make a meaningful contribution to Western security while providing the US with the political support it required to remain actively engaged in the Third World. Throughout the 1970s, despite the post-Vietnam opposition within Western society to such actions, conservatives continued to call for vigorous support to America's allies in the developing world, such as a significant expansion of covert assistance to pro-Western forces in Africa and Southeast Asia.⁹⁹ Indeed, by the end of the decade, support for the robust use

⁹⁷ Ikle, 441.

⁹⁸ Crozier, *Strategy of Survival*, 189.

⁹⁹ Viguerie, 121. See also Crozier, *Strategy of Survival*, 194.

of covert action had become a political position occupied almost exclusively by conservatives.

Conclusion

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the fact that these tools were used by the Reagan administration to implement its grand strategy is hardly surprising or remarkable. Every president has, with varying degrees of success, sought to make use of these fundamental elements of US power to pursue America's national interests, however defined. What is noteworthy, however, the fact that, as in the case of its core beliefs and overarching goals, the Reagan administration's use of the tools of statecraft closely mirrors the thinking of conservative Cold War grand strategists. The administration's emphasis on achieving Western military superiority, its use of economic warfare, its approach to the international political struggle against the Soviets, and its support for covert action reflects over thirty years of conservative thought aimed at delivering a Western victory in the Cold War.

Chapter Six: The Role of Reagan and His Advisors

The preceding chapters have defined grand strategy, outlined the Reagan administration's "strategy of victory" and discussed the intellectual roots of the administration's strategic beliefs, goals and tools. Yet there remains a final question to be answered regarding this strategy: how was it created and implemented? How could so many ideas which had been rejected by the foreign policy elite find their way into national policy? What can explain the fundamental shift in American grand strategy during the 1980s? In order to answer these questions, Reagan's management style must be analyzed, since the development and implementation of the strategy was itself a direct outgrowth of Reagan's approach to decisionmaking and his preferred method of organization. This chapter will briefly outline Reagan's management style, explain how this style affected the development and implementation of the administration's strategy, highlight the central role that Reagan himself played in the process of strategy development and delineate roles of Reagan's advisors in implementing this strategy.

Reagan's Management Style and Its Impact on Administration Strategy

Handling the almost-overwhelming job of President of the United States is, to say the least, a daunting task. Unlike any other job, presidents daily make decisions on a whole host of issues far beyond the scope of any one individual's expertise. Indeed, the scope of issues relating to foreign relations alone is too broad for any single person to master completely. When combined with the even broader array of domestic issues requiring the president's attention and his need to address the electoral and political realities of his time (such as seeking reelection or strengthening his political party), the

need for a system to manage the multitude of decisions the president must make becomes obvious. In light of the vast number of systems which various presidents have used to guide their decisionmaking throughout American history, it seems self-evident that each system will, invariably, reflect the particular president's preferred approach.¹ While analyzing all major elements of presidential decisionmaking is far beyond the scope of this work, assessing a president's management style regarding the three core elements of grand strategy (beliefs, goals and tools) is of particular importance in identifying the sources of the administration's grand strategy. Thus, first it is critical to identify how the central beliefs of an administration are developed. Does the president have an understandable set of beliefs about the nature of the international system and his adversary? Are these beliefs shared by the rest of his administration?² Second, it is necessary to identify how an administration's foreign policy goals are set. Does the president enter office with a clear vision of where he wants to lead the country? Does the president seek to create something new, or is he content with addressing foreign policy issues on an *ad hoc* basis? Third, it is important to understand how such decisions are implemented. Does the president have a set idea about how to achieve national goals, or does he seek recommendations from a broad array of advisors? Does he frequently "reach into" the bureaucracy to guide the implementation? By analyzing these aspects of Reagan's management style, certain conclusions can be made about the respective roles

¹ This statement does not, of course, mean that all systems are equally effective, but rather that presidents dictate how they will make decisions.

² In theory, this question should always be answered in the affirmative, as it is virtually unthinkable that a president would ever appoint or retain foreign policy advisors who disagree with him over something as fundamental as the nature of the adversary or the international system as a whole.

of Reagan and his advisors in the development and implementation of the administration's grand strategy.

In Reagan's case, the fact that he entered office with a very clear idea of what he believed and where he wanted to lead the United States has been established with thunderous unanimity. Every one of Reagan's key advisors has repeatedly made clear that it was Reagan himself who dictated, from the outset, his administration's underlying beliefs and core goals.³ He was, contrary to the claims of his critics, quite knowledgeable, well-read and interested in foreign policy matters. His experience fighting communist infiltration of Hollywood gave him an appreciation of the Soviets' relentless ambition, while his involvement with for the Crusade for Freedom, an organization started in 1950 which called for the rollback of the Soviet empire, demonstrated his early commitment to defeating Soviet power.⁴ His strong support for Barry Goldwater during the 1964 presidential contest was based, in part, on his support for Goldwater's beliefs and determination to reverse Soviet expansion. Reagan's effort to challenge Gerald Ford for the presidential nomination in 1976 was largely based on his rejection of the Ford foreign policy, while many of his radio commentaries from the late 1970s detailed the beliefs and goals his administration would subsequently pursue. His senior advisors during his victorious 1980 campaign also understood, and made clear to his administration's national security team, that the beliefs and goals Reagan had espoused his entire adult life were the ones his administration would follow.⁵ In short, while most of his advisors

³ Interviews by author with Jeane Kirkpatrick, January 10, 2002, American Enterprise Institute; Caspar Weinberger, August 4, 2005, via telephone; Edwin Meese, August 17, 2005, Heritage Foundation; and Richard V. Allen, August 9, 2005, via email.

⁴ Peter Schweizer, *Reagan's War: The Epic Story of His Forty-Year Struggle and Final Triumph Over Communism* (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 25.

⁵ Weinberger, interview by author, August 4, 2005, Meese, interview by author, August 17, 2005, and Allen, interview by author, August 9, 2005.

shared his beliefs and goals, it was Reagan himself who was the ultimate source of these components of his administration's grand strategy.

While Reagan was, undoubtedly, the principal source of his administration's beliefs and goals, his involvement in the development and use of its tools is less definitive. As both supporters and critics have widely reported, Reagan's management style focused on conveying "the big picture," while seeking broad input from his senior advisors on how best to implement his vision.⁶ It was at this level that the infamous battles between and among the State Department, Defense Department, the NSC and the CIA were waged. As several participants have acknowledged, the internal struggles over foreign policy within the Reagan administration were not over what it believed or which goals to pursue, but rather how best to achieve these goals.⁷ Thus, for example, while Reagan made clear to his subordinates that he wanted to attack the Soviets' economic weaknesses by cutting off the trade of strategic technologies to Moscow, he left the details of identifying such technologies to experts at the NSC and in the Departments of Defense, State and Commerce. While critics derided this approach as causing Reagan to be overly reliant on his subordinates, it actually provided Reagan the flexibility necessary to change tactics in pursuit of his goals. This ability to adapt to changing circumstances was particularly important, as it prevented Reagan from being overly committed to a specific path to victory. As one advisor stated, because of the difficulty in accurately

⁶ For a broad array of similar analyses of Reagan's management style, see Martin Anderson, *Revolution: The Reagan Legacy* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1990), 284, John Karaagac, *Between Promise and Policy: Ronald Reagan and Conservative Reformism* (Landham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000), 58-9, Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 182 and Carl M. Brauer, *Presidential Transitions: Eisenhower Through Reagan*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 222. This view was confirmed in interviews with Weinberger, August 4, 2005, Meese, August 17, 2005, and Allen, August 9, 2005.

⁷ Weinberger, interview by author, August 4, 2005, Meese, interview by author, August 17, 2005, and Allen, interview by author, August 9, 2005.

predicting how effective a specific tool would be, Reagan “could never be certain any one element would work, but gladly utilized them all, flooding the end zone with excellent receivers.”⁸ For this reason, excessive presidential focus on any single tool was strategically unwise and, in fact, counterproductive, as it could only draw Reagan’s attention away from “the big picture.”

At the same time, there are at least two key tools over which Reagan clearly asserted ownership and for which he felt personally responsible. The first, and most well-known, was SDI. Reagan, a man who was never comfortable claiming personal credit for the successes of his administration, was uncharacteristically assertive in highlighting his own personal commitment to the idea of strategic defense.⁹ Reagan’s refusal, despite tremendous pressure from the State Department, some of his own advisors and Gorbachev himself, to use SDI as a “bargaining chip” at the Reykjavik Summit can ultimately only be explained by Reagan’s deep, personal belief in the need to move away from the immorality and strategic folly of MAD. Similarly, Reagan took great personal interest in his administration’s political warfare efforts as well, specifically the important impact of his own speeches. Understanding how powerful the tool of rhetoric could be, Reagan cared deeply about the words attributed to him and thus spent a great deal of time revising and rewriting his speeches to ensure they accurately represented his thinking.¹⁰ What his critics saw as merely the rhetorical flourishes of a former actor were actually, in Reagan’s view, one component of the plan Reagan had for winning the Cold War.

⁸ Richard V. Allen, interview by author, August 16, 2005, via email.

⁹ Ronald W. Reagan, *An American Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 548. See also George Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State*, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1993), 246 and Caspar Weinberger, *Fighting For Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon* (New York: Warner Books, 1991), 309.

¹⁰ Kirkpatrick, interview by author, January 10, 2002.

As noted above, Reagan's management style was specifically designed to ensure that his beliefs and goals controlled the development of his administration's strategy, while encouraging debate and discussion over its implementation. Having identified Reagan himself as the primary source of his administration's strategy, the next section in this chapter will demonstrate how the beliefs, goals and tools of his administration's strategy can be found in the thoughts and writings of Reagan himself.

Beliefs

Rejection of Containment and Détente

For Reagan, both containment and détente were deeply flawed approaches to US-Soviet relations which offered little hope for meaningful advancement of America's national security interests. While his public comments on the underlying theory of containment are quite limited, it is clear that Reagan believed containment, while the "default" approach that many administrations had pursued, was entirely too defensive and passive to serve as a unifying concept of American foreign policy. Nor did he believe, based on his own knowledge of Soviet weaknesses, that containment was even necessary any longer. As he noted in his famous 1981 speech at the University of Notre Dame, "The West won't contain communism, it will transcend communism. It won't bother to denounce it, it will dismiss it as some bizarre chapter of human history whose last pages are even now being written."¹¹ In Reagan's view, containment offered only guidelines on how to react to Soviet expansion, but provided no strategic direction or final outcome

¹¹ Ronald Reagan, "Address at Commencement Exercises at the University of Notre Dame," May 17, 1981 in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1981* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1982), 434.

capable of guiding America's actions. He grasped, long before becoming president, that the US needed to pursue a positive goal and he understood that, given the Soviets' absolute aims, the only acceptable outcome was an American victory and a Soviet defeat.

While his criticisms of containment were relatively subtle, his opposition to détente was well-known long before his election. In fact, while his comment at his first Presidential press conference that he believed détente had been little more than a "one-way street" favoring the Soviets drew a great deal of public and media attention, he had been making similar statements for years. Throughout the 1970s, he argued that the Soviets were taking advantage of the West's internal division, lack of resolve and dedication to détente to accelerate its expansionist efforts.¹² Indeed, his decision to challenge Ford for the 1976 Republican presidential nomination was primarily a reaction to Ford's continued support for Nixon's détente policies. While recognizing and supporting the widespread desire to stabilize superpower relations and reduce the risk of war, he argued that détente was proving to be counterproductive. Rather than encouraging Soviet moderation, it was only emboldening the Soviets to take even more aggressive actions, particularly in the Third World. Echoing the criticisms earlier conservatives (particularly Goldwater) launched against "peaceful coexistence," he argued that the Soviets viewed détente not as a way of reducing tensions with the US, but rather as a more effective strategy for pursuing their long-term goal of expansion and global domination while sapping America's will to resist.¹³

¹² Reagan, *An American Life*, 266.

¹³ Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Anderson and Martin Anderson, eds., *Reagan, In His Own Hand: The Writings of Ronald Reagan That Reveal His Revolutionary Vision for America*, (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 118.

Major Role of Communist Ideology in Soviet Foreign Policy

In Reagan's view, the defining characteristic of the Soviet Union was its relentless dedication to communist ideology. From his earliest days in politics, Reagan recognized that much of the power and prestige accorded the Soviet Union (particularly in the Third World) was rooted in its claim of the historical inevitability of communism. As a result, he set out to demonstrate both the barbarity of communist rule and the intellectual bankruptcy of communist ideology. As he repeatedly pointed out to his friends and colleagues over the years, Reagan received his first real lesson in communist tactics during his period as president of the Screen Actors Guild, when he successfully thwarted several efforts by communists to take over the motion picture industry.¹⁴ Highlighting the threat communism posed to self-determination around the world, he noted in a 1957 letter to then-Vice President Richard Nixon that, of all the political and economic systems throughout the world, "only 'Communism' is dedicated to imposing its 'way and belief' on all the world."¹⁵ Sharing the view of many conservatives, he argued that communist ideology posed a fundamental threat to basic human values.

"Communists are not bound by our morality. They say any crime ... is moral if it advances the cause of socialism."¹⁶ Echoing Whittaker Chamber's view that Soviet communism represented an absolutist "rival faith" to the West, Reagan noted that every Soviet leader since Lenin had dedicated themselves to the goal of imposing communism on the world.¹⁷

¹⁴ For more detail on these events, see Schweizer, *Reagan's War*, 5-16 and Peggy Noonan, *When Character Was King: A Story of Ronald Reagan*, (New York: Viking, 2001), 54-65.

¹⁵ Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Anderson and Martin Anderson, eds., *Reagan: A Life In Letters* (New York: The Free Press, 2003), 703.

¹⁶ Skinner, *Reagan, In His Own Hand*, 60.

¹⁷ Reagan, *An American Life*, 265.

Nor did his view of communism's role in Soviet behavior change during his time in office. While much has been made of Reagan's relationship with Mikhail Gorbachev, with many pundits claiming that his views on communism softened as a result of Gorbachev's reform efforts, there is remarkably little evidence to support such a claim. Rather, Reagan's own words indicate that, to the contrary, he continued to condemn the immorality of communism and recognize its central role in Soviet foreign policy. In 1986, he noted that the Soviet Union "is bent on an expansionist policy in an effort to make the whole world into a single Communist state."¹⁸ Even after the signing of the INF Treaty (which many saw as "proof" that the Soviets had changed), Reagan continued to reassure his supporters that "I'm still the Ronald Reagan I was and the evil empire is still just that."¹⁹ These comments demonstrate that Reagan's view of the nature of the Soviet regime never changed significantly. While he recognized the opportunities for progress on East-West relations which emerged from Gorbachev's reform efforts, he clearly never lost sight of the ideological struggle which, in his view (and the view of many other conservatives), was at the heart of the Cold War.

Centrality of Superior Power in Dealing With the Soviet Threat

Reagan also understood, based on both his reading of human history and his understanding of communist ideology, that national power was critical to any effort to halt or reverse expansionist powers. Drawing from the failures of Britain, France and the United States prior to the Second World War, he recognized the need to confront aggression with overwhelming power. As one of his closest advisors noted, Reagan

¹⁸ Skinner, *Reagan: A Life In Letters*, 546.

¹⁹ Skinner, *Reagan: A Life In Letters*, 384.

emphasized, from the outset of his administration, the importance of having “sufficient power that you’re not forced to accept someone else’s view of the world,” but rather having “sufficient power to impose your view” on an adversary.²⁰ Recognizing that much of communist theory was rooted in the use of power, he believed that it was absolutely essential that the US only deal with the Soviet Union from a position of strength.²¹

This position of superior power would, in Reagan’s view, provide two important benefits to the West. First, and most importantly, superiority would make the Soviet goal of a communist world impossible to achieve. And while military power played a major role in this effort, Reagan recognized that other, non-material, factors were also critical to achieving true superiority. As he noted in the late 1970s, “only by mustering a superiority, beginning with a superiority of the spirit, can we stop the thunder of hobnailed boots on their march to world empire.”²² Yet he also recognized another, practical value of American superiority: its impact on the will of the enemy. He noted that there were, in essence, two approaches one could take to attempt to influence an adversary’s behavior. The one advocated by most of his critics and much of the foreign policy establishment called for the US to recognize the “legitimate” goals of the Soviet Union and reach some form of mutual accommodation. The other, urged by Reagan and his conservative allies, was to engage in a policy of sustained confrontation with the Soviets “based on the belief (supported so far by all evidence) that in an all out race our system is stronger, and eventually the enemy gives up the race as a hopeless cause.”²³

²⁰ Kirkpatrick, interview by author, January 10, 2002.

²¹ Reagan, *An American Life*, 294.

²² Skinner, *Reagan, In His Own Hand*, 113.

²³ Skinner, *Reagan, In His Own Hand*, 442.

This approach would characterize the approach Reagan ultimately took upon entering the White House.

Recognition of Soviet Weaknesses

While Reagan understood well the dangers communist ideology and the Soviet military posed to human freedom, he also believed that the Soviet system had many vulnerabilities which Western policies could exacerbate. For Reagan, the weakness and absurdity of the communist system were common topics of letters, conversations and speeches. He noted that, throughout his life, he “had always believed that, as an economic system, Communism was doomed.”²⁴ Even during the 1970s, when popular opinion held that the Soviet economy was rapidly gaining on the West, Reagan attacked the very notion of successful communist economics. “Nothing proves the failure of Marxism more than the Soviet Union’s inability to produce weapons for its military ambitions and at the same time provide for [its] people’s everyday needs.”²⁵ This deeply skeptical view of the Soviets’ economic situation was reinforced in early 1982, when Reagan received two detailed CIA briefings on the Soviet arms buildup and the Soviet economic situation. The mismatch between Soviet military planning and the fragile economic base available for supporting such a buildup further convinced him that the serious vulnerabilities existed within the Soviet economic system.²⁶

Yet, while the Soviets’ material weaknesses were important, Reagan also believed that the Soviets faced serious political and spiritual deficiencies which could be used to

²⁴ Reagan, *An American Life*, 237.

²⁵ Skinner, *Reagan, In His Own Hand*, 30.

²⁶ Reagan, *An American Life*, 551.

the West's advantage. In fact, given Reagan's belief in the essentially ideological nature of the Cold War, these weaknesses were probably even more important to him than the material ones. Perhaps the best summary of Reagan's view of the political absurdity of communism came in a speech he gave during his 1980 campaign:

The greatest fallacy of the Lenin-Marxist philosophy is that it is the “wave of the future.” Everything about it is as primitive as tribal rule; compulsion in place of free initiative; coercion in place of law; piracy in place of trade, and empire-building for the benefit of a chosen few at the expense of the many. We have seen nothing like it since feudalism.²⁷

In Reagan's mind, communism was not a historical inevitability, but rather an abomination which was ultimately unsustainable. In addition to communism's clear political failings, Reagan also felt deeply that the loss of spiritual freedom was one of the Soviet Union's most significant vulnerabilities. Calling the inability of the Russian people to worship as they please “the most important human right being violated in the Soviet Union,”²⁸ he often expressed hope that the pent-up desire for freedom of religion could spark internal change within the communist bloc. For Reagan, these hopes were reinforced by the reaction of the Polish people to the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1981. Following the visit, Reagan expressed hope that “religion may very well turn out to be the Soviets' Achilles heel.”²⁹

Superiority of Democracy and Capitalism

Much has been made of Reagan's optimistic view of America's future, rooted in a firm belief in the inherent political, economic and spiritual superiority of Western

²⁷ Skinner, *Reagan, In His Own Hand*, 486.

²⁸ Skinner, *Reagan: A Life In Letters*, 385.

²⁹ Skinner, *Reagan: A Life In Letters*, 375.

systems based on free markets, individual rights and democracy. For Reagan, this superiority was not merely a fact, but a necessary condition for a functioning democracy. In his view, every form of government was rooted in a single characteristic which, if lost, threatens the stability of the state. For democracies, he argued, the defining characteristic is virtue, while for dictatorships, the key characteristic is fear.³⁰ This belief in the superiority of the democratic West, and this notion of preserving American virtue, was central to his vision of US foreign policy. To demonstrate the higher moral standards that democracies set for themselves, he frequently invoked such programs as the post-World War II Marshall Plan as examples of American generosity and often quoted a former Australian prime minister who highlighted the many sacrifices the US has made throughout its history for the benefit of others.³¹ While recognizing that, in many cases (such as the Marshall Plan), this generosity also advanced American national interests, he nevertheless understood that this fact did not diminish its inherently moral quality.

Much like the neoconservatives, Reagan believed that democratization and the expansion of human freedom needed to be central elements of any sustained, long-term American foreign policy. In fact, one of the key elements of the foreign policy he unveiled during his 1980 campaign was to demonstrate, particularly to the Third World, the inherent superiority of the Western system of democratic capitalism and the strength of American ideals.³² Yet Reagan did not limit his interest in expanding democracy abroad to the Third World alone. He often noted that he “would like nothing better than to see the Russian people living in freedom and dignity instead of being trapped in a

³⁰ Skinner, *Reagan, In His Own Hand*, 61.

³¹ Skinner, *Reagan: A Life In Letters*, 261.

³² Skinner, *Reagan, In His Own Hand*, 472.

backwash of history as they are.”³³ This belief in the power of American ideals is critical to understanding the foreign policy goals that Reagan set for his administration.

Goals

Preservation of Deterrence

Like every president since Hiroshima, upon taking office Reagan needed to come to terms with the necessity of nuclear deterrence. Despite his deep personal revulsion of nuclear weapons, Reagan understood the importance of this task. Yet, unlike his predecessors, Reagan never accepted the conventional wisdom regarding proper nuclear strategy and instead set out to alter the fundamental thinking underlying American nuclear doctrine, mutual assured destruction. For a number of reasons, Reagan had long considered MAD strategically absurd and morally dubious.³⁴ He was appalled by the notion that, in times of crisis, a suicidal bout of mass slaughter was the only strategy available to the US in response to either a nuclear strike or major conventional defeat in Europe. He was also concerned that, since the Soviets themselves had repeatedly rejected MAD and espoused a war-fighting strategy, clinging to this concept could be highly dangerous during a crisis.³⁵ Equally important, however, was the fact that MAD required the permanent presence of nuclear weapons, something Reagan deeply resented. Throughout his life, he had often spoken of his desire to see the elimination of nuclear weapons.³⁶ While he understood the difficulties in verifiably eliminating all nuclear

³³ Skinner, *Reagan*, *In His Own Hand*, 485.

³⁴ Skinner, *Reagan: A Life In Letters*, 424.

³⁵ Skinner, *Reagan*, *In His Own Hand*, 82.

³⁶ See, for example, Skinner, *Reagan: A Life In Letters*, 424, 497.

weapons, it seems clear that Reagan also saw the elimination of MAD as a useful step in this direction.

At the same time, given the Soviets' massive conventional superiority (particularly in Europe), Reagan understood the need for some form of extended nuclear deterrence. Echoing the work of Strausz-Hupé and Nitze, he recognized the need for a "margin of safety" and noted that the US needed "to be so strong that no other nation will dare violate the peace."³⁷ He did not believe, as many of his critics did, that international stability required the US to eschew military superiority, but rather felt that only unquestionable American power could, in the long run, deter Soviet adventurism. Reagan believed that only by restoring this "margin of safety" could the US pursue its other, more far-reaching goals. This understanding of the requirement for some type of deterrence, yet also the need to move away from MAD would lead to one of Reagan's most well-known efforts: the Strategic Defense Initiative.

Expansion of US Influence

As discussed in an earlier chapter, the 1970s witnessed a heated debate between liberals and conservatives over whether and how to reverse the post-Vietnam decline in American power and prestige. For Reagan, as well as many other conservatives, the problem was not (as many of their opponents claimed) that the US had nothing to offer the world, or that it had squandered its moral authority by backing unpopular regimes. Instead, he argued that it was the failure of the US to stand behind its friends and allies which had diminished America's standing in the world. In Reagan's view, America's

³⁷ Skinner, *Reagan, In His Own Hand*, 480.

support of South Vietnam was not a case of the US backing the wrong side of a civil war, but rather was “a noble cause” consistent with American morality.³⁸ He argued that many of America’s Third World allies had been steadfast supporters of US policy and taken significant risks to resist Soviet expansionism. He saw abandoning these allies (such as in Vietnam and Iran) in their time of need as a gross violation of democracy’s moral code and a grave strategic error.

Based on this view, Reagan believed that rebuilding US credibility was central to any effort to expand American influence. Echoing the arguments of both traditional conservatives and neoconservatives, Reagan argued that the widespread international perception of American retreat from the world had convinced many friends and allies that they had no choice but to reach some form of accommodation with the communist world. He noted, for example, that the US withdrawal from Vietnam had undermined America’s relationship with several other Asian nations, which were then forced to open negotiations with China and Vietnam.³⁹ Such an accommodation could only endanger Western security in the long run. Instead, he insisted that only by reassuring America’s friends and allies that the US would stand firm against Soviet encroachment could the US hope to rebuild its international reputation and expand its influence. While recognizing that such a view was quite unpopular among many Americans during the late 1970s, he understood that only a renewed effort to restore US leadership of the Free World would convince America’s allies to take the political risks required to resist Soviet expansionism.⁴⁰

³⁸ Skinner, *Reagan, In His Own Hand*, 481.

³⁹ Skinner, *Reagan, In His Own Hand*, 49.

⁴⁰ Skinner, *Reagan, In His Own Hand*, 112.

Maintain Dialogue With the USSR

Of all Reagan's major foreign policy goals, his desire to maintain communications with the Soviet Union is perhaps the least understood, particularly among his more outspoken critics. Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, many continue to claim that Reagan had little interest in discussions with the Soviet leadership, and that it was only the arrival of Gorbachev on the world scene which spurred Reagan to pursue East-West dialogue seriously. While it is certainly true that Reagan had only modest interest in the formalized arms control negotiations which much of the foreign policy establishment considered the most important form of dialogue, it is also indisputable that Reagan was committed to maintaining superpower discussions. Early in his presidency, he sent his first personal letter to Brezhnev, stating clearly that the US would never accept the Brezhnev Doctrine, but also urging the Soviet leader to seek meaningful dialogue with the US.⁴¹ Reagan would continue this effort at personal dialogue with various Soviet leaders throughout his presidency, using his letters to forcefully represent American policy while making clear that his desire to find areas of practical cooperation. One can see in his views a striking similarity to Strausz-Hupé's "three pillars of diplomacy," with Reagan paying particular attention to the "representation" element.

While committed to continuing superpower dialogue, however, Reagan also recognized that discussions with the Soviet Union were fundamentally different from those with any other nation. Based on his belief that power was central to Soviet thinking,

⁴¹ Reagan, *An American Life*, 271-273.

Reagan understood that superpower diplomacy amounted to a struggle for political power based on relatively simple cost-benefit calculations. As he noted in a letter to one of his supporters, diplomatic discussions with the Soviets were “really a case of presenting a choice in which they face alternatives they must consider on the basis of cost.”⁴² Thus, Reagan rejected the popular notion that the US and Soviet Union had a large number of mutually-agreeable goals which could be achieved if each side negotiated in good faith and demonstrated flexibility. Rather, he saw relatively few common goals (avoiding a nuclear exchange being one notable exception) for the two sides, and thus believed that the scope of useful superpower negotiation was quite limited, as were the likely benefits of such negotiations.

Reverse Soviet Expansionism

As noted in Chapter 2, the Reagan administration’s desire to reverse Soviet expansion and undermine the Soviet state were the two truly defining elements of its grand strategy. These two goals, which represented the most important strategic innovation of the Cold War, were central elements of Reagan’s personal foreign policy philosophy. Representing both moral and strategic thought, Reagan’s goal of rolling back Soviet expansionism represented the logical outgrowth of his deeply-held beliefs in the power of human freedom and the centrality of communist ideology in Soviet foreign policy. At the moral level, Reagan saw the destruction of communist domination and the expansion of human freedom as an intrinsically moral act, stating during the 1980 campaign that the US should support those “who want to be free of Soviet and Cuban

⁴² Skinner, *Reagan: A Life In Letters*, 410.

domination.”⁴³ Throughout his political career, Reagan remained committed to the “captive nations” of Eastern Europe, whom the US had all but abandoned following the Second World War. Even the 1980 Republican platform, which was largely written by Reagan’s campaign staff, notes that one of his administration’s goals would be to “pursue positive, non-military means to roll back the growth of communism.”⁴⁴ In his mind, “peace and freedom for the enslaved people behind the ‘iron curtain’” was the only morally appropriate US goal for these nations and those in the Third World suffering under communist rule.⁴⁵

While there was certainly an important strand of moral reasoning in Reagan’s pursuit of rollback, he also understood the strategic benefits of reversing Soviet expansion. Recognizing that their claims of the historical inevitability of worldwide communist expansion were central to the Soviets’ expansionism and their own domestic legitimacy, Reagan made disproving the Brezhnev Doctrine one of the central goals of his administration.⁴⁶ Unlike many of his critics, he recognized that communism’s claim to be the “wave of the future” represented the only possible justification the Soviet leadership could offer their people for Soviet material poverty and political repression. By reversing history’s allegedly unstoppable march towards a communist world, Reagan saw an opportunity to strike a devastating blow to the international perception of Soviet power, as well as demoralize the Soviet elite and challenge the regime’s internal stability.

⁴³ Skinner, *Reagan, In His Own Hand*, 473.

⁴⁴ “Republican Party Platform of 1980,” (accessed July 22, 2005) available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/showplatforms.php?platindex=R1980>.

⁴⁵ Skinner, *Reagan: A Life In Letters*, 378.

⁴⁶ Kirkpatrick, interview by author, January 10, 2002.

This dedication to disproving communist ideology would exert a powerful influence over Reagan's use of military power and covert action.

Undermine the Soviet Union

Yet, in Reagan's mind, it was not enough "merely" to reverse Soviet expansionism. Given the inherent incompatibility between Western democracy and Soviet communism, Reagan believed that only by eliminating communist rule within the USSR itself (and thereby destroying the Soviet state) could the West truly be secure. As Reagan noted in his autobiography, given his understanding of communism's numerous failures, "I wondered how we as a nation could use these cracks in the Soviet system to accelerate the process of collapse."⁴⁷ Throughout his political career, Reagan made reference to his desire to see the end of communist rule and the emergence of democratic freedom within the Soviet Union. During the 1980 campaign, he reassured one supporter that the US must "keep alive the idea that the conquered nations –the captive nations –of the Soviet Union must regain their freedom."⁴⁸ As this statement demonstrates, Reagan believed that America's efforts to expand political and economic freedom needed to extend not only to the captive nations of Eastern Europe but also to those nations within the Soviet Union itself. Reagan's desire to pursue this goal as a central element of his grand strategy was well-known to his closest advisors, who shared his belief that "it was possible and desirable to roll back Soviet advances and basically defeat the Soviet

⁴⁷ Reagan, *An American Life*, 238.

⁴⁸ Skinner, *Reagan: A Life in Letters*, 375.

Union.”⁴⁹ Although revolutionary in view of the conventional wisdom of the time, this goal was actually a quite common theme of many conservative strategists.

While it would be easy to ascribe this goal as a simple outgrowth of Reagan’s idealism and belief in the power of freedom, it is also important to recognize the shrewd strategic analysis which went into Reagan’s pursuit of undermining the Soviet system. Reagan clearly understood (far better than his critics realized) that the US could not achieve the destruction of the Soviet Union from military conquest. Instead, it seems clear that his goal was to force the Soviet leadership into making an extraordinarily difficult decision: either attempt to reform the Soviet system in order to better compete with the US or continue their efforts to keep up with the resurgent military, economic and political power of the West. As he noted in a 1975 radio address, “[W]hat do we envision as the eventual outcome? Either that [the Soviets] will see the fallacy of their way and give up their goal or their system will collapse.”⁵⁰ The brilliance of this effort lies in the fact that Reagan understood that either decision would necessarily lead to the erosion of Communist Party control. Without substantial political and economic reform, Reagan recognized that the Soviet Union would rapidly lose ground under the relentless pressure of American power and become unable to assist the “forces of history” in spreading communism around the world. Yet Reagan also understood that no Soviet reform effort could succeed without reducing the role communist ideology played in Soviet policy, thereby undermining the leadership’s only justification for political repression. As

⁴⁹ Kirkpatrick, interview by author, January 10, 2002.

⁵⁰ Skinner, *Reagan, In His Own Hand*, 31.

Gorbachev would later state, Reagan's goal was "to take the Soviet Union to edge of the abyss and then induce the regime to take 'one step forward.'"⁵¹

Tools

Military Buildup

For Reagan, the precipitous decline in military spending which occurred throughout the 1970s was a catastrophic blunder that undermined Western security and increased the likelihood of superpower conflict. Echoing the arguments conservatives had been making since the 1960s, Reagan stressed that a robust and capable military had both operational and political-psychological effects. He noted, for example, that while US military superiority played a major role in the outcome of the Cuban Missile Crisis, by 1973, the strength of the Soviet military had grown to the point that the Soviet threat to intervene in the Arab-Israeli war forced the Israelis to halt their operations against Egypt.⁵² This ability to influence and shape international events, in his view, had declined within the US as a result of the significant reductions in military spending and general loss of America's self-confidence following the US withdrawal from Vietnam. In response, America's global influence began to wane, as friends and allies throughout the world "reluctantly conclude[d] that America [was] unwilling or unable to fulfill its obligations as the leader of the free world" and sought to reach their own separate accommodation with the Soviets.⁵³ Reagan believed that only by strengthening

⁵¹ Quoted in Dinesh D'Souza, *Ronald Reagan: How an Ordinary Man Became an Extraordinary Leader*, (New York: The Free Press, 1997), 193.

⁵² Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Anderson and Martin Anderson, eds., *Reagan's Path To Victory: The Shaping of Ronald Reagan's Vision: Selected Writings*, (New York: Free Press, 2004), 353.

⁵³ Ronald Reagan, "Time to Recapture Our Destiny," July 17, 1980 speech (accessed June 13, 2005); available from www.reaganfoundation.org/reagan/speeches/speech.asp?spid=18.

America's military capability and resolve could the US effectively counter the expansion of Soviet influence and regain the strategic initiative.

Yet Reagan also understood that a significant military buildup (particularly in strategic weapons) was critical to maintaining deterrence and preventing a war between the superpowers. Rejecting the counsel of the foreign policy mainstream who insisted that the US-Soviet military balance was politically meaningless, Reagan insisted US superiority was crucial to international peace, arguing that “war comes not when the forces of freedom are strong, but when they are weak.”⁵⁴ In Reagan’s view, superior power, not negotiations or compromise, was the most certain and reliable path to peace. As he argued in 1978, “if the object of the SALT II talks is to reduce the possibility of war, what better way is there than to stay so far ahead in weaponry that Russia’s imperialistic desires will be inhibited?”⁵⁵ Given his faith in the economic strength and technological prowess of the West, he had little doubt that the US and its allies could, with relative ease, overcome and ultimately reverse the Soviets’ military advantage. No other Reagan administration program demonstrated this belief in the innate power of the West better than SDI.

Of all the military program and initiatives the Reagan administration developed, none was as closely identified with Reagan as SDI. In fact, the administration’s interest in, and ultimately its decision to pursue, SDI was the direct result of Reagan’s personal commitment to the concept of strategic defense.⁵⁶ While some of his more shrill critics insisted that Reagan drew the idea of strategic defense from one of his old movies, in fact

⁵⁴ Reagan, “Time to Recapture Our Destiny.”

⁵⁵ Skinner, *Reagan, In His Own Hand*, 86.

⁵⁶ Weinberger, 309. See also Shultz, 261.

Reagan had been interested in the idea of missile defense since at least 1967, when he was briefed on America's ABM efforts as part of a tour of Lawrence Livermore Laboratories arranged by Edward Teller.⁵⁷ In Reagan's view, history had repeatedly demonstrated that the development of a new offensive weapon inevitably sparked the development of a defensive counter-system. Given his personal hatred for nuclear weapons, Reagan hoped that this historical trend would ultimately provide an opportunity for both sides to develop highly reliable defenses, escape from the immorality of MAD and ultimately make possible the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. Yet, while Reagan's dedication to SDI certainly had an important "idealistic" component, he also recognized, understood and embraced the strategic value SDI had in his quest to rollback Soviet expansion and undermine the Soviet state. Shortly after Reagan's 1983 speech announcing the creation of SDI, the CIA informed Reagan that the Soviets would feel compelled to match the US effort in strategic defense, but would find it increasingly difficult to do so, given the growing frailty of the Soviet economy.⁵⁸ This fact, along with the much broader program of economic warfare Reagan endorsed, demonstrates that Reagan's refusal to compromise or trade away SDI stemmed not merely from his idealistic hopes of a nuclear-free world, but also a shrewd understanding of the power the program had to render useless the Soviets' advantage in strategic missiles, weaken the Soviet economy and thereby undermine the Soviet state.

⁵⁷ See Frances Fitzgerald, *Way Out There In The Blue: Reagan, Star Wars, and the End of the Cold War*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 22 for the erroneous claim. See Schweizer, *Reagan's War*, 84 for the story of Reagan's visit to Livermore. Schweizer's view is generally corroborated by Weinberger, 296.

⁵⁸ Schweizer, *Reagan's War*, 152.

Economic Warfare

While somewhat less outspoken (particularly during the 1960s) in his views on the dangers of extensive East-West trade, Reagan's views on the proper use of American economic power were remarkable consistent with those of leading conservative strategists. In one of his earliest public speeches on the topic, delivered in 1963, Reagan outlined his opposition to the mainstream view that expanded trade with the communist bloc advanced the interests of the West. Instead, he argued in terms strikingly similar to those of Strausz-Hupé and Goldwater that:

If we truly believe that our way of life is best aren't the Russians more likely to recognize that fact and modify their stand if we let their economy come unhinged so that the contrast is apparent? Inhuman though it may sound, shouldn't we throw the whole burden of feeding the satellites on their slave masters who are having trouble feeding themselves?⁵⁹

As successive American presidents moved steadily towards a policy of détente, Reagan became increasingly convinced that the dominant theory of East-West trade was hopelessly flawed and strategically unsound. As Reagan pointed out in his autobiography, "in theory, expanding trade was supposed to make the Soviets more moderate, but ... it had simply allowed them to spend fewer resources on agriculture and consumer goods and more on armaments."⁶⁰ Expanding trade and extending credit had not, as its proponents expected, changed the Soviet leadership's mind about the value of free market capitalism, nor had it exposed the people of the Soviet Union to the benefits of individual freedom. Rather, it had merely strengthened Soviet control over Eastern Europe and the peoples of the Soviet Union and created a more efficient, powerful and

⁵⁹ Skinner, *Reagan In His Own Hand*, 442.

⁶⁰ Reagan, *An American Life*, 238.

dangerous adversary.⁶¹ Throughout the mid- and late-1970s, Reagan would make the real effects of East-West trade one of the central themes in his criticism of détente.

In Reagan's writings (both before and during his presidency), one can also see support for each of the key elements of his administration's program of economic warfare against the Soviet Union. Recognizing how dependant the Soviet Union was on Western capital goods and financing, Reagan understood the strategic value of cutting off the flow of credit to the communist bloc.⁶² Long critical of the Nixon administration's decision to permit the Kama River Truck Plant to be built with Western technology, Reagan called for much tighter restrictions on the types of material which could safely be exported to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.⁶³ Even his thinking on the need for a defense buildup, while primarily rooted in his concern about America's declining military capability, had an important economic component. By making clear to the Soviets that the US was "going to spend whatever it took to stay ahead of them in the arms race," Reagan sought to use the economic superiority of the West as a weapon against the Soviet Union.⁶⁴ There was, however, at least one area where Reagan's views diverged slightly from those of some conservatives. His decision to lift the grain embargo against the Soviet Union (which President Carter had imposed following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan) was heavily criticized by some conservatives at the time as a betrayal of his goal of rollback.⁶⁵ As he noted in a letter to a supporter, however, lifting the grain embargo had a strategic purpose, namely, to drain the Soviets' extremely limited hard

⁶¹ Skinner, *Reagan: A Life In Letters*, 373.

⁶² Reagan, *An American Life*, 320.

⁶³ Skinner, *Reagan In His Own Hand*, 73.

⁶⁴ Reagan, *An American Life*, 267.

⁶⁵ Norman Podhoretz, "The Reagan Road To Détente," *Foreign Affairs* 63, No. 3 (America and the World 1984): 456.

currency assets and thus reduce their ability to purchase advanced technology or capital goods.⁶⁶ Overall, however, Reagan's thinking on the strategic use of economic power closely mirrored that of Burnham, Strausz-Hupé, Goldwater and other conservative strategists.

Political Warfare

While Reagan certainly recognized the importance of both military power and economic warfare in America's struggle against the Soviet Union, he clearly saw the political battleground of the Cold War as the decisive one. From the time he first entered the national political spotlight, giving his nationally-televised speech in support of Barry Goldwater, Reagan had repeatedly stressed that victory in the Cold War was possible, provided the West regained its spiritual strength and recognized the inherent power of its own ideals.⁶⁷ Throughout the 1960s and 1970s (and well into his presidency), Reagan's writing and thinking placed an extraordinary emphasis on accurately representing America's intentions and ideals to the world. As America's foreign policy elite increasingly viewed sustaining détente and encouraging arms control as the central tasks of managing the Cold War, Reagan became increasingly vocal in his skepticism about the enduring value of negotiations with the Soviets. In doing so, Reagan demonstrated that his thinking on diplomacy and political warfare largely reflected that of his fellow conservatives, particularly Strausz-Hupé.

⁶⁶ Skinner, *Reagan: A Life In Letters*, 378. This explanation was corroborated by Roger Robinson, interview by author, October 2, 2002, Center for Security Policy.

⁶⁷ Ronald Reagan, "Rendezvous With Destiny," October 27, 1964 speech (accessed June 17, 2005); available from www.reaganlibrary.com/reagan/speeches/rendezvous.asp.

For his entire adult life, both before and during his political career, expressing himself and his ideas was one of Reagan's most important tasks. As noted earlier in this chapter, Reagan spent a significant amount of time ensuring that his speeches reflected his own views. This tendency was particularly pronounced in his foreign policy addresses, which he understood to be a key element of his political offensive against the Soviet Union. In his repeated rhetorical attacks on Soviet conduct and immorality, as well as his efforts to restore faith in the democratic capitalism of the West, Reagan made clear the primacy he gave to the representational element of diplomacy. Since his early days in Hollywood, Reagan had been outspoken in his denunciation of communist ideology, calling it "a predatory system of absolute, authoritarian rule that had an insatiable appetite for expansion"⁶⁸ and "the most dangerous enemy that has ever faced mankind in his long climb from the swamp to the stars."⁶⁹ Reagan's commitment to representational diplomacy can also be seen in his strong support for strengthening America's public diplomacy. Having begun his own show business career in radio, he understood the power it had to influence and inform those behind the Iron Curtain. It is therefore no accident that, during his 1980 campaign, he promised to use Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty to "take the lead in pointing out to third world nations the superiority of our system" and to "call attention to those nations that once were poor but now enjoy a standard of living far above that of their neighbors who put their faith in communism."⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Reagan, *An American Life*, 473.

⁶⁹ Ronald Reagan, "Rendezvous With Destiny."

⁷⁰ Skinner, *Reagan, In His Own Hand*, 472.

At the same time, it is important to stress that, contrary to the claims of many of his critics, he did see a role (albeit a limited one) for negotiations with the Soviet Union. Many of his biographers have noted that Reagan was deeply influenced by *The Treaty Trap*, a book written by an old friend, which argued that nations only obey treaties when doing so is in their interest.⁷¹ The long history of Soviet violations of arms control treaties served only to reinforce Reagan's view of the limited utility of these agreements. As a result, Reagan believed that the elaborate arms control schemes advocated by détente enthusiasts throughout the 1970s were ultimately doomed to fail. Only agreements rooted in a realistic understanding of each sides' strategic interests had any hope of lasting. Nonetheless, he repeatedly stressed, both before and immediately after entering office, that he "would like nothing better than to see the two great superpowers, the U.S. and the Soviet [Union] agree to a real and effective reduction of armaments ... one that would increase not decrease our hopes for lasting peace."⁷² In his view, "continued negotiations with the Soviet [Union] is essential" and the US must never be afraid to negotiate, provided it retains a clear understanding of its interests and its adversary.⁷³ Contrary to the claims of some critics, Reagan's willingness to negotiate a mutually-advantageous arms control agreement with Moscow was present from the outset of his administration. In fact, within the first few months in office, Reagan publicly stressed that he was willing to "negotiate as long as necessary to reduce the number of nuclear weapons" but that the

⁷¹ Lawrence W. Beilenson, *The Treaty Trap*, (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1969). The role this book played in Reagan's thinking is discussed in Anderson, *Revolution*, 74-5 and Schweizer, *Reagan's War*, 86. See also Skinner, *Reagan, In His Own Hand*, 52 for direct evidence of Reagan's support for this argument.

⁷² Skinner, *Reagan, In His Own Hand*, 86.

⁷³ Skinner, *Reagan, In His Own Hand*, 484.

Soviets' refusal to embrace arm reduction made such an agreement impossible.⁷⁴ Yet Reagan never made the mistake of thinking that the Cold War could ever be settled via negotiations, nor that the fundamental differences between the two sides could be resolved by frequent summits or mutual professions of peaceful intentions. For him, negotiations were not a means of escaping superpower confrontation, but merely another tool for waging a political war against the Soviet Union.

Covert Action

Of the four tools used by his administration to confront Soviet power, Reagan had the least to say publicly about covert action. This relative quiet should hardly be surprising. For most of his adult life, these sorts of activities were rarely discussed in public. Politicians across the political spectrum understood the sensitivities of discussing covert action and generally refrained from openly commenting on or advocating these activities. Only after the highly-publicized Congressional investigations of the intelligence community during 1970s (such as the Church Commission) did a more open discussion of covert action become fairly common. As a result, it is much more difficult to identify from Reagan's own writings his personal views of the utility and purpose of covert action. Nevertheless, the views he did express on the use of intelligence and covert action largely mirror those of conservative strategists.

Reagan's first serious involvement with the intelligence community occurred in January 1975, when President Ford named him a member of the President's Commission on CIA Activities Within the United States, better known as the Rockefeller Commission.

⁷⁴ See Don Oberdorfer, "Kennan Urges Halving of Nuclear Arsenals," *Washington Post*, May 20, 1981, A1 and Skinner, *Reagan, A Life In Letters*, 402.

This commission, which preceded the more well-known and controversial Church Commission, reviewed a number of questionable CIA activities, to include the illegal opening of private mail to and from the Soviet Union and the monitoring of the political activities of domestic political groups.⁷⁵ As a member of the Commission, Reagan was granted extensive access to Agency files and was briefed on a number of ongoing CIA operations. While CIA critics accused the Rockefeller Commission of being a “whitewash,” it offered a number of reasonable and constructive recommendations for improving the oversight and performance of the intelligence community. While critical of the CIA’s serious mistakes, Reagan nevertheless pushed American intelligence to become even more active abroad and repeatedly urged caution in endorsing more extensive and onerous regulations of the CIA’s overseas operations.⁷⁶ Later, during the 1980 Presidential contest, he campaigned on the idea that the CIA should be “unleashed” and allowed to be more active in conducting covert action abroad. His selection of (and unwavering support for) William Casey, an Office of Strategic Services veteran and staunch advocate of covert action, as DCI further demonstrated his intention to pursue on a more proactive and aggressive program of covert action against Soviet interests worldwide.⁷⁷ In Reagan’s endorsement of covert action, especially in the Third World and in Poland, one can see striking similarities between his views and those of Burnham, Barnett and Strausz-Hupé.

⁷⁵ A copy of the Rockefeller Commission Report can be obtained at <http://www.aarclibrary.org/publib/church/rockcomm/contents.htm>.

⁷⁶ John A. Andrew, III, *The Other Side of the Sixties: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of Conservative Politics*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 459.

⁷⁷ For a largely critical account of the Reagan administration’s dealings with the CIA that nevertheless acknowledges Reagan’s personal support for covert action, see Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider’s Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 197.

Yet no strategic plan, no matter how carefully thought out, matters unless it is diligently and faithfully implemented. As noted above, while Reagan was unquestionably the primary source of his administration's grand strategy, he could not have accomplished as much as he did without the loyal support of his key advisors. These individuals, and their key subordinates, were the ones primarily responsible for using their respective tools of statecraft in a manner consistent with the beliefs and goals which Reagan set forth. The rest of this chapter will identify those individuals and organizations which played key roles in the use of each of the administration's principal tools.

Implementing the Strategy

One of the more interesting and unusual facts about the Reagan foreign policy team was the stability of its composition. With the exception of the National Security Advisor slot, there was remarkable consistency among most of the key cabinet-level positions. William Casey and Caspar Weinberger served from the outset of the administration until May 1987 and November 1987, respectively, while George Shultz was named Secretary of State in July 1982 and served until the end of Reagan's second term. Jeane Kirkpatrick's tenure as US Ambassador to the United Nations lasted roughly four years, the longest tenure at the position since the 1960s, as did Edwin Meese's position as counselor to the President. Each of these individuals, as well as Reagan's first two National Security Advisors (Richard V. Allen and William Clark) were either long-time loyal aides to Reagan or (in the case of Shultz and Kirkpatrick) highly-regarded individuals who strongly supported the President's vision. Meese, who led the Reagan

transition effort, including the search for Cabinet officials, noted that support for rolling back Soviet expansion was, in essence, a precondition for anyone being offered a senior-level foreign policy position.⁷⁸ While there were certainly a number of vigorous disagreements among these officials over the implementation of this strategy, it is notable that these key personnel have stressed that the famous battles within the administration were strictly over the use of the tools, not the underlying beliefs or major goals, of the strategy. Contrary to much of the conventional history, for example, Weinberger and Shultz actually agreed on the vast majority of issues; the most important area of disagreement regarding US-Soviet relations was over the timing and content of arms control proposals, which were themselves only one piece of the political warfare effort, which was but one component of the overall strategy.⁷⁹ Similarly, their disputes over pipeline sanctions and Central America, while heated, were not over the fundamental strategic approach, but rather over how best to implement Reagan's wishes. Ultimately, however, such disputes were quite uncommon, since this rather remarkable collection of advisors ultimately understood that their job was to use these tools to achieve Reagan's strategic goals.

Military Buildup

It should be blindingly obvious that the vast majority of the planning, managing, directing and decisionmaking regarding the significant increase in the US defense budget Reagan sought (and obtained) was the work of Weinberger and his staff. A serious increase in the defense budget was one of Reagan's key campaign promises, as an

⁷⁸ Meese, interview by author, August 17, 2005.

⁷⁹ Weinberger, interview by author, August 4, 2005 and Meese, interview by author, August 17, 2005.

extensive modernization of the American military was long overdue. Weinberger was relentless in pushing for this increase, despite the opposition of some of Reagan's domestic policy advisors and budget personnel, who repeatedly fought to cut back some of Weinberger's budget requests.⁸⁰ On this issue, however, there was broad agreement among Reagan's key foreign policy advisors. All of them recognized that rebuilding America's military strength was absolutely necessary for the US to have any hope of winning the Cold War. This consensus, however, did not extend into the other two key pieces of the military component, namely the Strategic Defense Initiative and the administration's greater assertiveness in the use of military power.

As noted above, the creation of SDI was the direct outcome of Reagan's own personal disgust for nuclear weapons, his own belief in the immorality of MAD and his faith in the power of American technology. Given the extremely close-hold manner in which SDI was developed (neither Weinberger, Shultz nor any of their subordinates knew about this effort until a few days before Reagan's nationally televised speech) and the President's clear personal commitment to this program, opposition to the program itself was largely muted. However, as it became increasingly clear that SDI would play an important role in the arms control debate, the battle lines became much more starkly defined. For Weinberger, Meese and Casey, SDI represented an opportunity to undermine one of the key bases of Soviet power, to move away from MAD and (later) to complicate further the Soviets' difficult economic circumstances.⁸¹ For McFarlane and Shultz, SDI represented instead a "bargaining chip" which could be useful in convincing the Soviets

⁸⁰ Weinberger, 30.

⁸¹ Weinberger, interview by author, August 4, 2005 and Meese, interview by author, August 17, 2005.

to accept steep cuts in the superpowers' nuclear arsenals.⁸² Shultz also worried about the impact that aggressively pursuing SDI could have on US-Soviet negotiations, fearing that it could create "huge, perhaps insuperable, problems."⁸³ In this case, the strongest supporters of SDI were much closer to Reagan's real view of the program, a fact which should have been obvious to anyone working closely with Reagan long before it was made public in the collapse of the Reykjavik Summit, where Reagan solidified the position that SDI would never be a bargaining chip.

Weinberger and his staff were also critically important to operationalizing the final element of the buildup, a greater assertiveness in using military power. Under his watch, the US military establishment implemented more aggressive military concepts, such as the Maritime Strategy, which represented a greater willingness to challenge Soviet military power. At the same time, however, the Defense Department leadership repeatedly felt the need to restrain those who called for even more aggressive actions. Early in the Reagan administration, Weinberger argued strenuously against Haig's suggestion that the US invade Cuba to eliminate the Castro regime.⁸⁴ While there was broad support among Reagan's key advisors for the 1981 operations against Libya and the 1983 invasion of Grenada, Weinberger often found himself arguing against State Department proposals for more aggressive uses of force, particularly in Lebanon.⁸⁵ Yet Weinberger and his staff were hardly the only ones playing an important role in this area. One of the critical defense efforts of Reagan's first term, the INF deployment to Europe,

⁸² Cannon, 325 and 760.

⁸³ Shultz, 246.

⁸⁴ Weinberger, 31.

⁸⁵ It was America's troubled experience in Lebanon which led Weinberger to issue his famous "rules" regarding the use of force.

was also an important signal to the Soviets that the US would not allow them to intimidate its allies. While much work was done to encourage this deployment through military-to-military channels, the ultimate key to the successful deployment of these weapons were the sustained diplomatic campaign and the major public diplomacy effort which was largely led by the State Department and the NSC staff, respectively. In short, while the bulk of the work involved in implementing this component of the strategy fell to Weinberger and his staff, they received important support and assistance from others within the administration.

Economic Warfare

Given the nature and scope of the economic challenge which Reagan sought to pose to the Soviets, any successful use of economic warfare required a well-designed, coordinated and broad effort which spanned a number of bureaucracies. The program of economic warfare which the administration pursued cut across several agencies' formal responsibilities, placing a premium on interagency cooperation. As a result, much of the work done to implement Reagan's program of economic warfare was done by the NSC staff under the guidance of Richard Allen and (later) William Clark, though with a great deal of assistance from the Defense Department (specifically Richard Perle and Stephen Bryen) and CIA Director Casey. Indeed, Reagan's critical decision to expand the pipeline sanctions to licensees and subsidiaries of US firms was made at the urging of the NSC, DoD and CIA, over the objections of the State Department. This decision, while deeply resented by the allies, ultimately forced the West to reassess its economic relations with Moscow and develop a much tougher line on East-West trade. At the same time, the State

Department deserves much of the credit for crafting the final deal, which ended the unilateral sanctions in exchange for strengthening COCOM restrictions and cutting off trade credits to Moscow. This compromise was largely developed under the leadership of Under Secretary of State James Buckley, but the NSC staff, particularly Norman Bailey and Roger Robinson, provided critical assistance. Reagan approved this deal in October 1982, largely over the objections of the Defense Department, which felt it did not go far enough. This episode highlights a common feature of Reagan's decisionmaking: an absolute willingness to take a tough stand, despite the fierce opposition of the so-called "moderates," while being equally ready to ignore the concerns of the "hardliners" when he felt he had accomplished his key goals.

Implementing a new, more security-minded export control policy was, to say the least, a difficult undertaking for the Reagan administration. Despite Reagan's clear personal commitment to cutting off the flow of advanced technology to the Soviet Union, it was extremely difficult to ensure that his wishes were followed. Domestic pressure to permit exports was significant, with much of the business community urging a more relaxed set of restrictions. While the official, administrative responsibility for reviewing export licenses fell to the State Department, it was the Defense Department which ultimately played the dominant role in determining what technologies could safely be exported.⁸⁶ At the outset, however, there was little consensus even within DoD over who should be in charge of reviewing these exports. After a sustained bureaucratic struggle between Perle and Under Secretary for Research and Engineering Richard DeLauer, who preferred a less stringent approach, Deputy Secretary Frank Carlucci ultimately sided

⁸⁶ Richard Perle, interview by author, October 8, 2004, American Enterprise Institute.

with Perle.⁸⁷ This decision resulted in the creation of the Defense Technology Security Administration (DTSA), which was led by Perle's deputy, Stephen Bryen. While Perle and Bryen nominally reported to Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Fred Ikle, Ikle largely delegated this work to them, giving Perle and Bryen tremendous freedom to set department, and hence national, policy on export controls.⁸⁸

Political Warfare

As noted above, Reagan himself was directly involved in some elements of his administration's political warfare campaign against the Soviets. Much as he had throughout his career, Reagan recognized the importance of his public addresses and therefore exerted almost complete control over his speeches (particularly his major ones). Yet as important as his speeches were to this effort, his vision of his administration's political warfare campaign was significantly broader and required sustained, senior-level oversight and good interagency coordination. Under NSDD-77, the National Security Advisor was responsible for exercising this coordination and oversight as the chairman of the Special Planning Group for public diplomacy. NSDD-77 also directed the creation of four subcommittees, each of which oversaw key elements of the overall public diplomacy effort. The committees consisted of:

- the Public Affairs Committee, cochaired by the White House communications director and the Deputy National Security Advisor, which was "responsible for the planning and coordination of major

⁸⁷ Perle, interview by author, October 8, 2004.

⁸⁸ Fred Ikle, interview by author, July 5, 2005, Center for Strategic and International Studies.

speeches on national security subjects” and other public communications;

- the International Information Committee, chaired by the Deputy Director of USIA, which would mainly oversee USIA activities, but was also responsible for managing Project Truth;
- the International Political Committee, chaired by the State Department, which was responsible for coordinating “aid, training and organizational support” for national democracy-building efforts, to include Project Democracy; and
- the International Broadcasting Committee, chaired by the NSC staff, which was responsible for the diplomatic and technical planning required to modernize America’s radio broadcast capabilities.⁸⁹

This interagency structure proved remarkably successful in ensuring that the administration stayed “on message,” providing a focus for America’s political warfare efforts and allowing all key members of the national security team to participate in the political war with Moscow. And, indeed, each made important contributions to support the efforts of Clark and his staff. For example, CIA Director Casey strongly backed this effort, and was instrumental in developing the early structure of what eventually became Project Democracy.⁹⁰ Kirkpatrick was a strong supporter of this political assault on the Soviet Union, and her unyielding rhetoric at the United Nations played an important role

⁸⁹ Details of the structure of the SPG can be found in “Management of Public Diplomacy Relative to National Security,” National Security Decision Directive, NSDD-77, January 14, 1983, 1-3 as well as Carnes Lord, “The Past and Future of Public Diplomacy,” *Orbis* 42, No. 1 (Winter 1998) (accessed December 7, 2005), available from InfoTrac.

⁹⁰ Meese, interview by author, August 17, 2005.

in discrediting Soviet ideology internationally. The State Department, in addition to chairing the committee with the broadest mandate, was generally supportive of these efforts, though Shultz and some of his allies within the White House (particularly Baker and Deaver) did not approve of some of the harsh rhetoric used to attack the Soviets' human rights record.⁹¹ The Defense Department also strongly backed these efforts and worked to improve its own psychological operations capability, which had declined throughout the 1970s.⁹² Even the USIA (not normally considered a major player in national security discussions) made a valuable contribution by launching Project Truth. While there were certainly disagreements among the various bureaucracies over the implementation of the President's guidance, the administration's successes in such areas as Poland, the INF deployment and SDI demonstrated the strategic impact that political warfare could have.

The final key component of the administration's political warfare campaign was, without a doubt, the most contentious and divisive issue in the Reagan administration: arms control. It was in this area that, once again, Reagan himself ultimately was forced to intervene to ensure that his views, rather than those of his advisors, controlled America's actions. While most conventional histories give the bulk of the credit to Shultz's influence, the truth is significantly more complicated. First, it must be stressed that everyone on Reagan's national security team understood that arms control was a tool for achieving America's objectives. Even Weinberger, who is commonly portrayed as vehemently opposed to arms control, shared Reagan's commitment to achieving an

⁹¹ Shultz, 266.

⁹² Ikle, interview by author, July 5, 2005. For more detail on the history of America's and DoD's efforts to develop these capabilities, see LTC Susan L. Gough, "The Evolution of Strategic Influence," (Research Project: US Army War College, 2003), available at <http://www.fas.org/irp/eprint/gough.pdf>.

agreement, provided it enhanced America's security.⁹³ Second, and equally important, none of Reagan's senior foreign policy advisors believed that any agreement, regardless of content, was a step in the right direction. Shultz, as leader of the "pro-negotiation" side of the administration, agreed with Reagan's view that arms control agreements were but one element of America's relationship with Moscow and that arms control could never resolve the underlying differences between the two sides. Thus, the struggle was not over whether the US should pursue arms control, but rather over the much more detailed question of what the terms of such an agreement should be.

The impact and importance of the "Weinberger camp" can be seen in the outcome of the two most important arms control-related issues of the Reagan administration: the INF Treaty and the administration's embrace of the "broad interpretation" of the ABM Treaty. Contrary to the conventional view that the signing of the INF Treaty represented a defeat for DoD, the NSC and CIA, in truth the content of this agreement largely vindicates their positions. For example, despite Haig's vehement opposition and Shultz's plea for greater flexibility, it was the DoD-developed "zero option" which Reagan endorsed and the INF Treaty ultimately codified.⁹⁴ It is impossible to imagine that this treaty could ever have taken the shape it did without the active input of the so-called "hardliners." Similarly, Reagan's announcement of SDI led to a heated debate within the administration over whether and how the US could pursue strategic defenses in a manner consistent with the ABM Treaty. While Weinberger made clear that he preferred

⁹³ Weinberger made this point directly to Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin in March 1981, as related in Weinberger, 36. See also Caspar Weinberger, *In the Arena: A Memoir of the 20th Century*, (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2001), 278-184 for further discussion of his views on arms control.

⁹⁴ For information on Haig's opposition and Shultz's concerns, see Alexander M. Haig, *Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy*, (New York: MacMillan, 1984), 229 and Shultz, 155-160.

withdrawing from the treaty (particularly in light of the Soviets' repeated violations), he and his allies were ultimately successful in getting Reagan's approval of the "broad interpretation" of the ABM Treaty rather than the narrow one Shultz and his supporters had advocated.⁹⁵ Embracing the "broad interpretation" permitted the administration to investigate and even develop a broad array of potential defensive technologies and thus complicate the Soviets' efforts to keep up with American technological innovation. Given how important SDI was to Reagan's strategy, his decision to back the broad interpretation was crucial to his strategy's success. Thus, in both these critical cases, a more accurate reading of the administration's actions shows the vital role that the "hardliners" played in Reagan's arms control successes.

At the same time, however, it is important to note the successes for which the "Shultz camp" was largely responsible, specifically in the efforts to reach agreement on the INF Treaty. As noted above, Reagan supported the "zero option" and was insistent that it represent America's ultimate goal. Yet, because the Soviets had denounced it as unacceptable, it was not particularly popular with some segments of the European population and was causing serious domestic political pressures for many NATO allies. At Shultz's urging, and despite opposition from some of Reagan's advisors, Reagan did announce in March 1983 an "interim solution" which would have permitted the US and Soviets to deploy equal numbers of INF systems.⁹⁶ While such a stance was rejected by the Soviets, it proved very popular within Europe and helped counter the perception that the US was not interested in arms control negotiations. This proposal, as well as the intense diplomacy which maintained alliance unity during this difficult period, helped

⁹⁵ Weinberger, *Fighting For Peace*, 320. See also Reagan, *An American Life*, 685.

⁹⁶ Shultz, 351.

make it possible for the US to “buy time” until the Soviets’ political and economic failures compelled it to negotiate in good faith. Much of the credit for skill with which this effort was implemented belongs to the “Shultz camp.” In the end, as was the case in the pipeline sanctions debate discussed above, both camps made important contributions to Reagan’s arms control proposals. On substance, Reagan largely agreed with the “Weinberger camp”; yet he was also flexible enough to side with the “Shultz camp” when changes were needed. As Shultz himself noted, the battle between the two camps led to gradual movement on INF, “with the timing and content of our moves being just about right.”⁹⁷ This happy circumstance could only have occurred with both sides aggressively advocating their positions.

Covert Action

Much as in the case of the military buildup, the bulk of the responsibility for implementing Reagan’s goals via covert action fell to a single agency: in this case, Casey and the CIA. In many ways, Casey was the perfect DCI for Reagan. A former OSS agent during World War II and an extremely intelligent man, he embodied the risk-taking, aggressive attitude Reagan admired and needed to implement his strategy. Having served as Reagan’s campaign manager, Casey had developed a strong relationship with the President upon taking office, and this closeness “opened the door to more operations than would have been the case otherwise.”⁹⁸ He was vehemently anti-communist and, as his critics have noted, had one overriding interest for his time at the CIA: to wage war

⁹⁷ Shultz, 377.

⁹⁸ Perle, interview by author, October 8, 2004.

against the Soviet Union.⁹⁹ While he usually sided with Meese, Allen, Clark, Weinberger and Kirkpatrick in interagency battles, he did get important support from Shultz on certain issues. The most well-known of the administration's covert actions were those taken to implement what became known as the Reagan Doctrine. In particular, the administration gave crucial support to anti-communist movements in Afghanistan, Angola and Nicaragua. While aid to the mujahadeen in Afghanistan began under Carter, his administration's goal was not to defeat the Soviets, but merely to harass them.¹⁰⁰ Despite vehement opposition within a CIA bureaucracy fearing the loss of plausible deniability, Casey (with the support of the entire foreign policy team) gradually increased aid to the Afghan rebels in the hope of driving the Soviets out of Afghanistan. All Reagan's key foreign policy advisors also supported the critical 1986 decision to provide the rebels Stinger missiles, despite resistance from both the CIA and military bureaucracies.¹⁰¹ Likewise, support for arming the Angolan resistance was fairly widespread within the administration and, once Congressional concerns were resolved in 1985, significant aid (including Stingers) began to flow to the UNITA movement.¹⁰²

In fact, the only major area in which there was significant internal infighting over implementing the Reagan Doctrine was in Central America, specifically supporting the Nicaraguan contras. On this issue, the much-discussed division between "hardliners" and "moderates" was most evident. For Weinberger, Meese, Casey and Kirkpatrick, the logic of the situation was self-evident: support for the Nicaraguan resistance was an important

⁹⁹ Gates, 199.

¹⁰⁰ Derek Leebaert, *The Fifty-Year Wound: The True Price of America's Cold War Victory*, (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2002), 483.

¹⁰¹ Ikle, interview by author, July 5, 2005.

¹⁰² Leebaert, 544-5.

part of the Reagan strategy to rollback the Soviet empire. As such, they believed the US should take the same attitude towards the Sandinistas as it did towards any inherently illegitimate Soviet-backed government. For Shultz and his allies, the administration needed to balance the threat the Sandinistas posed with broader concerns regarding the sustainability of America's support for this effort. In light of significant Congressional hostility to contra aid, they urged Reagan to seek some form of negotiated solution, even if such a solution left a Marxist government in power in Nicaragua.¹⁰³ Whereas, in previous struggles, Reagan himself settled the debate, in this case Congress would also play a major role by cutting off aid to the contras. This issue would, of course, continue to plague the administration and would contribute to the Iran-contra debacle.

In addition to his key role in implementing the Reagan Doctrine, Casey was also crucial to a number of other important covert actions undertaken by the administration. Responding to the declaration of martial law in Poland, Casey played an important role in supporting the Polish Solidarity movement, funneling money, supplies and intelligence information to key members of the labor union.¹⁰⁴ His efforts, which enjoyed broad Congressional support, included working extremely closely with American organizations, such as the AFL-CIO, and even briefing Pope John Paul II, who was engaged in an even larger effort to support Solidarity, on the US efforts. Fascinated as he was by challenges to the Soviets' internal stability, he was also deeply involved in other efforts, such as smuggling anti-communist propaganda into Soviet Central Asia. Finally, by all accounts, he was the primary driver for urging the US to use the FAREWELL information to wreak

¹⁰³ Michael K. Deaver with Mickey Herskowitz, *Behind the Scenes*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1987), 168. See also Shultz, 278.

¹⁰⁴ Schweizer, *Reagan's War*, 174-5 and Leebaert, 541. For an opposing view, see Gates, 237.

further havoc on the Soviet economy.¹⁰⁵ In short, the aggressive and largely successful use of covert action during the Reagan administration was due, in large part, to Casey's dedication, hard work and vision.

Conclusion

This depiction bears little resemblance to the one commonly found in most journalistic and academic accounts of the Reagan administration, which tend to overstate the importance of Reagan's advisors while slighting the role Reagan himself played in his own administration's foreign policy. Yet this simplistic view is becoming increasingly outdated as more information becomes available regarding Reagan's own foreign policy views and as greater documentation from the Reagan administration is released. As demonstrated above, Reagan had strongly-held and insightful views regarding what America's Soviet policy should be. Given his deep roots in conservative thought more generally, it is unsurprising that his thinking should mirror that of people like Burnham, Goldwater, Strausz-Hupé and Niemeyer. Rather, what is surprising is that so much of the current scholarship on Reagan's foreign policy neglect to analyze the clear and important connections between Reagan and the conservative intellectual movement or to recognize that Reagan played the definitive, central role in the development of his administration's grand strategy.

There is a great temptation, when discussing the roles that each of Reagan's key advisors played in implementing his strategy, to claim that one side was clearly in the right, while the other side was secretly trying to implement policies that were contrary to

¹⁰⁵ Leebaert, 525-6. Casey's central role in this effort was reiterated in interviews with Perle (October 8, 1980) and Ikle (July 5, 2005).

the President's wishes. Such a portrayal is certainly easier, as it allows the analyst to lionize one group while vilifying the other. For this reason, it is a common thread in most journalistic histories of the administration. Yet, as is often the case, the truth is much more complex. Neither the "Shultz camp" nor the "Weinberger camp" were perfectly attuned to Reagan's mind, nor did either ever succeed in "winning over" Reagan to their point-of-view. Reagan was simply too strong-willed and confident in his own views to ever be captured by any of his advisors. Nor was either side innocent of using bureaucratic maneuvers or well-timed leaks of information to circumvent the decisionmaking process in an effort to ensure that their preferred policies won.

Fortunately for Reagan, these scuffles remained at the tactical level, and never posed a serious threat to his overall strategic goals. Ultimately, the fights over arms control and Central America, while making good headlines and interesting tell-alls, were of limited strategic importance. On the whole, the Reagan team worked quite well together, faithfully implementing Reagan's strategy while offering the president their best advice. The reasons for their success would appear twofold. First, most of these individuals, especially those from his first term, knew, understood and respected Reagan and his ideas and were committed to his program. Second, they also (for the most part) adhered to Reagan's preferred method of decisionmaking: allowing everyone with a stake to express their views, then make a decision. It was only when these two conditions broke down during Reagan's second term, as individuals (particularly on the NSC staff) who had no real understanding of Reagan's goals and who consistently short-circuited the decisionmaking process became more influential, that Reagan committed his greatest strategic blunder: the Iran-Contra scandal.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions

The preceding chapters have proposed a working definition of grand strategy, used that definition to identify the Reagan administration's grand strategy and demonstrated the degree to which the key components of this strategy correspond to the beliefs, goals and tools conservative strategists had advocated since the early days of the Cold War. In addition, this dissertation has also identified Ronald Reagan himself as the ultimate source of the grand strategy his administration pursued and has pointed out the critical role that a select group of close advisors played in ensuring this strategy was implemented. These findings raise a number of interesting questions regarding the conventional history of the Reagan administration, and, more generally, regarding the nature of grand strategy and the role of the individual in international affairs. This final chapter will explore the broader implications of these findings and will attempt to draw some conclusions about the practical challenges of developing and implementing grand strategy, particularly in a post-September 11th world.

Rethinking the History of the Reagan Administration

As discussed earlier, much of the conventional history regarding Reagan, his role in directing his administration's foreign policy and the credit he deserves for America's victory in the Cold War has proven steadily less plausible as historians have obtained greater access to Reagan's personal and presidential papers. The fact that a rethinking of Reagan is long overdue should hardly be surprising; many presidents are more accurately and fairly judged only after most of the political passions and partisan rancor surrounding

them fade.¹ While some of the political battles of the 1980s are still being fought, the time has come for a more fair-minded assessment of Reagan and his foreign policy team. It now seems reasonable to reach a number of conclusions about the Reagan years which would have seemed overstated only a few years ago.

First, it is difficult to overstate how revolutionary the Reagan approach to American grand strategy truly was. Rarely in American history has a president so totally focused the power of the United States on such a lofty and seemingly unachievable goal. Only Washington's seemingly hopeless struggle to liberate the American colonies from British rule and Lincoln's single-minded determination to preserve the Union during the darkest days of the Civil War can be reasonably compared to the effort Reagan undertook during the 1980s. While Woodrow Wilson certainly hoped to transform the international system in the aftermath of the First World War, he was either unable or unwilling to harness America's national power to achieve this end. Similarly, while Franklin Roosevelt was certainly eager to wield America's vast economic and military power, his ultimate war aims seemed little more than a slightly-altered version of the pre-war *status quo*. Alone among the Cold War presidents, Reagan sought to end the struggle by fundamentally altering the international landscape and eliminating the greatest single threat to American security. The fact that he did so in the face of heated, often hysterical, opposition from both political adversaries and the foreign policy establishment makes his success all the more remarkable.

¹ Woodrow Wilson was an extremely controversial figure in the years following his presidency, yet is now widely cited as one of America's most important figures. For a more recent example involving Dwight D. Eisenhower, see Fred I. Greenstein, *The Hidden-Hand Presidency: Eisenhower as Leader*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

A second key conclusion which can be drawn from the historical record is the remarkable consistency and quality of Reagan's foreign policy thought. The record now clearly demonstrates that, contrary to the claims of many who insist that he "saw the light" and radically softened his view of the Soviet Union, Reagan never ceased his intense criticism of the Soviet regime, nor did his views of America's goals appreciably change over the course of his Presidency.² Here again, one should hardly be surprised at the consistency of Reagan's views. Reagan was an extremely smart man who was confident in his own judgment. He had also spent a significant portion of his adult life thinking about American foreign policy and, as even his closest advisors have acknowledged, could be extraordinarily stubborn when convinced that he was right.

Nothing in Reagan's own writings supports the "Reagan reversal" theory, nor do those who worked most closely with him make such a claim. The persistence of this theory reflects little more than the intellectual pride and persistent bias of journalists and much of the foreign policy elite. Forced to explain how a man widely "stereotyped as a likable and decent man who was lacking in intellectual candlepower"³ could have achieved so much, the only rationalization they can come up with is that Reagan must have "grown" in office and embraced the policy positions they had been advocating all along.

Apparently, the possibility that they themselves had simply been wrong cannot be considered.⁴ As the previous chapter shows, Reagan understood the Soviets' political and

² For examples of this view, see Beth A. Fischer, *The Reagan Reversal: Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War*, (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1997) and Don Oberdorfer, *From the Cold War to a New Era: The United States and the Soviet Union, 1983-1991*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

³ Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 295. Ironically, Cannon himself makes the very same mistake repeatedly throughout his book. See, for example, the condescending way in which he portrays Reagan's decision-making process (362-3).

⁴ For the best example of such thinking, see Strobe Talbott, "Rethinking the Red Menace," *Time*, January 1, 1990: 66-72, in which Talbott claims that American doves had been right all along about the Soviets.

economic vulnerabilities far better than his critics and developed the brilliantly effective strategy his administration would use to target those weaknesses and ultimately win the Cold War.

A final conclusion which flows naturally from this analysis of the Reagan administration's strategy involves the relative credit which Reagan and Gorbachev deserve for end of the Cold War. Once again, much of the conventional history grossly misrepresents the causes of the Soviet collapse by portraying it as the result of Gorbachev's far-sightedness and wisdom. In this view, it was Gorbachev who sought to end the Cold War by instituting a broad program of political and economic reform while reaching out to and reassuring the West of the Soviets' peaceful intentions. Indeed, much of the conventional wisdom criticizes Reagan for allegedly failing to move fast enough in supporting Gorbachev (due primarily to his own hard-line beliefs and those of his advisors). A number of stubborn facts tend to discredit the conventional story and instead put credit where it rightly belongs: with Ronald Reagan himself. First, the very existence of the strategy, as outlined in NSDD-75 and its supporting documents, supports the conclusion that it played the pivotal role in the collapse of the Soviet empire. While, theoretically, one could dismiss the fact that this strategy immediately predated the end of the Cold War as mere coincidence, such a conclusion strains logical thought. Second, it is important to point out that Gorbachev's efforts were not designed to end competition with the West, but rather to strengthen the Soviet Union and expand its global power. Following his rise to power in 1985, he increased the Soviet defense budget by roughly 45% over five years, while vastly expanding his nation's covert offensive biological warfare program (in direct violation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention);

neither of these actions bespeak peaceful intentions.⁵ He never sought either the dissolution of Soviet domination over Eastern Europe, nor the destruction of communist rule in the Soviet Union proper. Yet, as long as such conditions held, some form of Cold War was inevitable. Finally, while Reagan recognized early on that Gorbachev was different, he never made the mistake of trusting him, nor did he ever change his view of the inherent immorality of communism (an ideology which Gorbachev has never renounced) nor his goal of defeating the Soviet Union. As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, Reagan's view of communism was deeply rooted in an accurate understanding of its real goals; he would never abandon those views merely because Gorbachev was successful in presenting himself as a more moderate, humane version of his predecessors.

Inherent Risks and Uncertainties of the Reagan Strategy

In discussing and analyzing the Reagan administration's strategy from the safety of the post-Cold War era, one runs the danger of assuming that the historic collapse of the Soviet position in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the Soviet Union itself were inevitable. To make such an assumption, however, is to commit the same intellectual error which lies at the heart of Marxist ideology: believing that the "laws of history" dictate the outcome of human endeavors. Such a fallacy is both alluring and dangerous, as it reassures the statesman that, eventually, the "good guys are going to win" while simultaneously absolving him of any responsibility to assist the "good guys" in their efforts. History follows no laws, and thus every grand strategy (no matter how well-

⁵ Derek Leebaert, *The Fifty-Year Wound: The True Price of America's Cold War Victory*, (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2002), 516.

developed and planned it may be) bears certain risks and challenges. The intrinsic uncertainty involved in the clash of two opposing strategic plans renders the outcome and its costs unknowable until the struggle is resolved. In order to better understand the nature of the Reagan strategy, as well as for the sake of historical accuracy, it is therefore important to outline and discuss the risks of the Reagan approach.

Certainly the most obvious risk, and the one critics used most frequently to attack the administration, was the danger that pursuing a policy of confrontation with Moscow would result in a full-scale superpower war, one likely to end in a nuclear exchange. On the surface, there are some reasons to acknowledge that this danger was a real one. First, and most obviously, the sweeping nature of Reagan's goals increased this danger. By seeking to exacerbate Soviet weaknesses with the intent of destroying the Soviet state, Reagan risked placing the Soviets in a position in which they judged that war was less risky than peace. Second, the Soviets had become steadily more aggressive since the end of the Vietnam War, increasing the danger that the Soviet leadership could miscalculate Western resolve and overreach, leading to an unanticipated Western reaction. Finally, compounding this danger was the fact that the Soviet leadership did not understand that the foreign policy of Ronald Reagan would bear little resemblance to the realist, balance-of-power machinations of the Nixon-Kissinger years.⁶ Many have claimed, for example, that NATO's 1983 Able Archer exercise was nearly misinterpreted by the Soviets as a sign that the US was about to start a war in Europe. And while these breathless claims now appear to have been overstated,⁷ there is no question that a more aggressive

⁶ Leebaert, 497-8.

⁷ For a good summary of this controversy, see Benjamin B. Fischer, "A Cold War Conundrum," (Center for the Study of Intelligence: Central Intelligence Agency, 1997) available at <http://www.cia.gov/csi/monograph/coldwar/source.htm>.

American strategy *could* have so rattled the Soviet Politburo that it *may* have started a third World War. Yet, this (marginally) increased danger of war must be balanced against two other dangers: the danger that American weakness could invite a Soviet overreach, resulting in war, and the danger a perpetual Cold War held that some other miscalculation, technical malfunction or mental breakdown of either sides' leadership could result in an accidental war. On balance, the Reagan administration judged (rightly in the author's view) that seeking to win the Cold War offered a lower chance of conflict in the long-term than did attempting to manage it indefinitely.

There were, however, other risks inherent in the strategy, chief among them the risk that the Soviets would figure a way out of the strategic trap the Reagan administration had set for them. Some have argued that, for example, the Soviets could have saved themselves if they had reduced the crushing burden of their military expenditures, been less insistent about overcoming SDI or reduced their massive outlays of aid to their Third World clients.⁸ These specific claims, however, are highly questionable and rest on the inaccurate assessment that the root cause of the Soviet collapse was fundamentally economic in nature. In truth, as argued in earlier chapters, the economic weaknesses of communism were the direct result of its political failure. If it is theoretically true that reduced military expenditures may have partially alleviated the Soviets' economic problems, why then did the Soviets not pursue such a course? The answer is obvious: such a radical political decision was not possible given the highly ideological worldview espoused by Gorbachev and his predecessors. To permanently escape Reagan's trap, the Soviet leadership would have been required to jettison their

⁸ Leebaert, 538.

commitment to Marxist ideology, thereby destroying the only justification for the Soviet regime. Otherwise, the best they could do was to pursue the course they eventually took: attempt to “muddle through” by tinkering with marginal improvements in the Soviet bureaucracy while attempting to sway Western public opinion into taking a softer line towards the Soviet Union. Such an effort very nearly succeeded, as evidenced by James Baker’s efforts during George H.W. Bush’s administration to prop up the failing Soviet government.⁹

The final, and certainly most significant, risk revolves around the question of how sustainable this strategy really was. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, Reagan’s strategy was a radical departure from those of his predecessors. And yet, there was virtually no way to ensure that Reagan’s strategy would continue to be implemented after January 1989.

While Vice President Bush was loyal to Reagan, it was no secret that he did not share all of Reagan’s views, particularly in the area of US-Soviet relations. Individuals who would become Bush’s key foreign policy advisors, particularly Baker, did not support the plan outlined in NSDD-75, nor did they see the collapse of the Soviet Union as being in America’s interest.¹⁰ Thus, Reagan had only eight years in which to make his strategy work. Had the Soviets not been in so great a political and economic decline, or had the leadership of the UK, France Germany and the Vatican been less willing to support Reagan’s efforts, or had the Soviets realized that Reagan’s policies would not outlive his administration, this strategy may not have been successful. The George H.W. Bush administration would likely have resorted to a more traditional policy of containment,

⁹ Norman A. Bailey, *The Strategic Plan That Won the Cold War: National Security Decision Directive 75*, (McLean, VA: The Potomac Foundation, 1999), 5.

¹⁰ Bailey, 8.

allowing the Soviets to cling to a central government rooted in Marxist ideology. In such a case, it is not inconceivable that historians of the early 21st century would remember the Reagan years as a period of heightened superpower tension which faded after the entry into office of a “more enlightened” American administration and the signing of a new arms control agreement. America’s foreign policy would continue to revolve around managing the US-Soviet relationship, while its defense community continued to agonize over the military challenges stemming from a large-scale Warsaw Pact invasion through the Fulda Gap.

While the findings of the previous chapters provide a better, more complete picture of the Reagan administration, they also provoke some additional, more general conclusions about the necessity and universality of grand strategy, the challenges in its development and implementation, and the role of the individual in foreign policy. In light of the potential for a lengthy “global war on terrorism,” the need for a prudent and comprehensive grand strategy becomes evident. The remainder of this chapter will draw out these conclusions and suggest additional areas into which further research should be done.

Necessity and Universality of Grand Strategy

There are a number of reasons for arguing that some form of grand strategy is an absolute requirement for any president or head of state. Certainly, the nature of the international system heavily favors the creation of a grand strategy. The modern international system is extraordinarily complicated. Determining how confrontational he should be in his relations with a potential adversary, how accommodating he should be to

a current ally, and how he should balance his country's numerous competing economic, political, electoral, military and moral interests are but a few of the decisions which a leader cannot make (or at least not well) without some form of grand strategy. In addition to the pressures the international system exerts towards the development of a grand strategy, so to do those of the modern state. Particularly in light of the difficulties inherent in controlling the contemporary bureaucratic state, any national leader who fails to harness and control the vast array of government agencies which nominally serve him faces almost-certain ruin. When left to their own devices, such bureaucracies will inevitably dilute presidential authority, circumvent presidential decisions (at least those with which they disagree) and misallocate national resources. Grand strategy is a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for controlling these bureaucracies, as it should provide a clear vision of the beliefs and goals which will guide the use of the nation's tools of statecraft. Finally, presidents (at least in democratic countries) are presumably elected on a platform and are thus personally driven to achieve certain foreign policy objectives, even if only to fulfill their campaign promises. Absent some form of grand strategy, achieving these objectives is likely to prove extraordinarily difficult. For these reasons, developing and ensuring the implementation of grand strategy is one of a leader's central tasks.

Yet, the necessity of a grand strategy does not always mean that they take the form similar to the one the Reagan administration created. While documents roughly analogous to NSDD-75 (though, obviously, with different content) can be found in the Truman, Eisenhower, Johnson, Carter and Bush administrations, it does not appear that a written, interagency-approved statement of America's strategy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union

was ever created for the Kennedy, Nixon or Ford administrations.¹¹ Yet even in the cases of these three administrations, some form of strategic thought was clearly evident. For example, any effort to identify the Nixon administration's grand strategy would clearly include Kissinger's contention that the world had become pentapolar as one of its core beliefs, the administration's efforts to play the balancing role between the various poles as one of its goals and Nixon's diplomatic opening with China as one of the tools to achieve his goals. And while a detailed assessment of every Cold War president's grand strategy is far beyond the scope of this study, the central point remains clear: in one form or another, every president has developed and attempted to implement a grand strategy. A similar argument can be made for every head of state of every country in the world.

If every president has a grand strategy, what explains why some strategies fail while others succeed? There are a number of possible reasons, some of which are found in the definition of grand strategy outlined in this dissertation, namely *the planned use of all available tools of statecraft to achieve first-order national goals based on a given understanding or belief regarding the nature of the international system*. Thus, a carefully-planned and focused effort, using every element of national power, aimed a clearly-expressed goals and based on an accurate understanding of the international context in which decisions will be made has a much greater chance of success than one which is haphazardly implemented, pursues contradictory goals or is rooted in wishful thinking or unrealistic beliefs about the international system. At the same time, as pointed out above, even a well-made strategy (such as Reagan's) can fail, while a poorly

¹¹ This statement is based on the author's review of currently declassified NSC documents from the various administrations, as found at www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/direct.htm. It is, of course, possible that such documents exist for the Kennedy, Nixon or Ford administrations, but simply have not been released.

developed one can occasionally succeed. Gorbachev's grand strategy, while deeply flawed, could have succeeded had a different president been in office. It is always possible that one's adversary could be more clever, more prepared, more capable or even more fortunate, resulting in his victory. Clausewitz's observations about the uncertainty inherent in war are equally applicable regarding grand strategic conflict.

Grand Strategy After the Cold War

One of the fundamental advantages which Cold War presidents had was a general recognition that America's grand strategy had to be focused on the Soviet Union. In fact, apart from a few isolated rumbles during the Carter administration claiming that the East-West dimension had become less important than the so-called North-South divide, America's grand strategy and its strategy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union were synonymous. Dealing with the international implications of Soviet power had been the central task of Western foreign policy since the end of the Second World War. The importance of a central organizing threat to grand strategy can be seen in the strategic confusion, hesitation and outright failures which occurred in the ten-year period between the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, George H.W. Bush was never entirely comfortable with the aggressive attacks and ideological offensives which characterized the Reagan administration. His dominant foreign policy advisor, Secretary of State James Baker, did not see the collapse of the Soviet empire as necessarily good for the West, nor did he see the destruction of the Soviet state as something the US should look upon favorably. The administration's general lack of any real vision of the purposes and goals

of American foreign policy could have proven catastrophic at any other time of the Cold War. Yet fortunately, such a vision was not necessary, as much of the administration's dealings with Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union involved responding to the tremendous changes which the previous administration had set in motion. With a few notable exceptions (such as discouraging the Baltic states from pursuing their long-denied and rightful independence), the Bush administration handled these changes about as well as could be hoped. Yet the absence of a unifying focus for US foreign policy left American grand strategy adrift until the 1991 Gulf War.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was the first sign that the relatively easy and (most importantly) peaceful resolution of the East-West conflict would not be typical of the post-Cold War era. Rather, it signaled to the Bush administration that addressing the threat and use of force outside the context of the East-West struggle would be a central challenge in the post-Cold War world and that America's grand strategy needed to reflect the new realities. It was in light of these events that President Bush outlined his hope for a "new world order" in which superior American power would be used, in concert with major allies, to respond to international aggression. At the same time, and partially to implement this vision, the Defense Department developed its own strategic concept, in which the US would convince "potential competitors that they need not aspire to a greater role or pursue a more aggressive posture to protect their legitimate interests."¹² The domestic and international outcry resulting from the leak of this strategy, which was criticized (wrongly) as a sign that America intended to remain the sole superpower and would threaten any nation which sought to challenge it, was but the first of several

¹² Patrick E. Tyler, "U.S. Strategy Plan Calls For Insuring No Rivals Develop," *New York Times*, March 8, 1992 (accessed September 7, 2005), obtained via Lexis-Nexis.

examples of the difficulties in developing a post-Cold War grand strategy: the fundamentally different views of the beliefs and goals which should guide America's foreign policy.

These difficulties persisted through the Clinton administration, which entered office with an entirely different set of guiding beliefs and major goals. The administration's use of diplomacy and military force in areas such as Haiti, Somalia and the former Yugoslavia provide useful insights into its grand strategy. In Clinton's view, the primary challenge to American national security in the post-Cold War era was not another Desert Storm, but rather dealing with ancient hatreds and ethnic tension which had been suppressed or ignored during the Cold War, but which were now exploding across the globe. Peacekeeping, peace-making and nation-building were the tasks which would occupy the West's military forces and diplomatic corps, while America's economic might and technological innovation would help mitigate the (alleged) causes of conflict by spreading prosperity and facilitating international communication and dialogue. Gone was the concern expressed by the previous administration regarding the rise of a rival superpower. In the Clinton administration's view, the rise of Europe and China, the two emerging superpowers, was inevitable. Thus, the proper strategy was not to challenge or oppose their rise, but rather to use multinational institutions and economic integration to alter gradually their perceptions of their interests (particularly in the case of China) in a direction more favorable to the United States. In doing so, the Clinton administration pursued a strategy similar to the one détente supporters urged the US to follow during the 1970s. Unsurprisingly, many of the same conservatives who rejected the idea of détente with the USSR in the 1970s were equally hostile to the revival of such

a concept in the post-Cold War 1990s. Conservatives criticized the Clinton administration as being too deferential to America's allies, too solicitous of China's great power ambitions and too reluctant to use American power for more traditional national interests.

A great deal more could be said about the two post-Cold War grand strategies which emerged under the administrations of George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton and the skill with which they were pursued. Yet, for the purposes of this dissertation, the key point is that these strategies were fundamentally different both from the Reagan administration's approach and from each other. The fact that there were several competing approaches to American grand strategy during this period demonstrates the difficulties inherent in developing a grand strategy absent a clearly understood, obvious main challenger. Domestic political considerations, although present even during the Cold War, become harder to ignore and more influential in the absence of a strategic opponent, while the multitude of potential American goals can cause the president and his national security team to lose focus and begin pursuing ancillary and even contradictory goals. This lack of focus and the tendency to view foreign policy as a mere outgrowth of domestic policy makes it especially difficult for the national leadership to anticipate emerging strategic challenges, as evidenced by the fact that neither administration foresaw the rise of international terrorism, specifically the al-Qaida movement, as the next great challenge to American power and ideology.

Grand Strategy After 9/11

To say that the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 changed the way America thought about national strategy is to repeat the obvious. Not since Pearl Harbor had

America been attacked so directly, nor had Americans civilians ever been so directly targeted as they were that day. In the aftermath of these attacks, a number of strategic thinkers highlighted the lessons America learned during the Cold War and attempted to apply them to the global war on terrorism (GWOT).¹³ They rightly noted, for example, that victory in the GWOT, like victory in the Cold War, required far more than defeating an armed adversary, but rather discrediting a hostile, totalitarian ideology. As is the case in the GWOT, America's adversary in the Cold War posed an existential threat to not merely Western security interests, but also to its fundamental social, political and economic institutions. The extreme Wahabbist ideology which animates al-Qaida can, like communism, be readily used as a means of subversion and is particularly adept at using the openness and freedom inherent in Western society as a shield to protect itself. As a result, victory in the war on terrorism requires an integrated, wide-ranging effort to prevent terrorist attacks while engaging in a sophisticated ideological battle to discredit radical Islamist thought. And while there are a number of important differences between the Cold War and the current war on terrorism, much of the Reagan administration's strategy can be readily applied to the GWOT. The next several paragraphs will briefly outline the central elements of an American grand strategy for the post-9/11 world.

Beliefs

The first core belief of a modern grand strategy must be a recognition of the centrality of American power to the international system. Contrary to the predictions of

¹³ See, for example, Michael McFaul, "To Fight A New 'Ism,'" *Washington Post*, September 22, 2001, A29, and (far more extensively) David Frum and Richard Perle, *An End To Evil: How To Win the War on Terror*, (New York: Random House, 2003).

many pundits and the wishes of those who seek to strengthen international institutions such as the United Nations, the world is unipolar and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. Only the United States has the resources, capabilities, global reach and willingness to combat terrorism worldwide. As a result, the locus of decisionmaking for the GWOT will reside not in Turtle Bay, London, Paris or Beijing, but in Washington. While the United States will certainly require the cooperation of many nations, the indispensable need for American power will necessarily make the GWOT, like the Cold War, a US-dominated enterprise.

A second core belief which should guide American strategy is the recognition that, given the open nature of Western societies, only an offensive posture can ultimately lead to a Western victory. In every Western city there are thousands of potential targets, any one of which could be used to cause panic, terror and significant casualties. While much attention has recently been focused on subways and busses (in response to the July 2005 London attacks), there are countless other targets which could prove equally appalling to the Western public. As a result, purely defensive measures such as police patrols, bag checks, border controls and similar measures simply cannot provide an adequate level of protection while preserving the freedoms upon which Western society is based. Only by forcing terrorist onto the defensive by actively disrupting terrorist planning and aggressively targeting terrorist leaders (and their supporters) will the West have any hope of winning its struggle against terrorism.

A third guiding belief upon which America's strategy should be based is the understanding that Islamic radicalism is ultimately rooted in the political and cultural failures of the Islamic world. Unfortunately, this belief is not widely acknowledged,

either among the ruling elite in the Muslim world or within much of the foreign policy elite in the West. Many argue that only massive increases in economic aid will “drain the swamp” of the angry young men who are turning to terrorism due to the lack of jobs and economic opportunities at home.¹⁴ While it is comforting to believe that the threat of terrorism can be eliminated by merely “throwing money at the problem,” in truth the problems lie in the political failures of the Islamic world. While there is no doubt that the lack of economic opportunities contributes to the terrorist problem, these economic shortcomings are fundamentally a result of the corrupt and undemocratic political systems which exist throughout the Muslim world.

The final belief which should form the basis for America’s GWOT strategy is a recognition of the political and moral superiority of democratic government. It is notable that this belief is virtually identical to the one the Reagan administration espoused in its own struggle with the Soviet Union. The reason for this similarity is obvious: in both cases, the driving force behind America’s adversary is a philosophy and ideology which utterly rejects democratic governance. And while there is significantly less support for radical Islamism among Western intellectuals than there was for communism, it enjoys far greater support among the Islamic public than communism ever did among the people of Russia and Eastern Europe. It therefore remains critical that the US make clear that it believes in and will vigorously assert the core values of democracy, such as the notion that all political power derives from the consent of the governed and that individuals possess certain inalienable rights. Faith in the universal attraction and power of these

¹⁴ For an example of this approach, see Robin Wright, “Don’t Just Fund the War, Shell Out for Peace,” *Washington Post*, March 10, 2002 (accessed September 7, 2005), obtained via Lexis-Nexis.

ideals is a crucial component to sustaining the support of the Western public and convincing the population of the Islamic world to turn against radical Islamism.

Goals

Preventing and responding effectively to terrorist attacks is perhaps the most obvious goal of America's GWOT strategy. Given that, for al-Qaida and its associated groups, successfully striking targets in the West is critical to their victory, effectively protecting the homeland is an absolute necessity. Requiring close coordination and cooperation between the law enforcement, intelligence and "first responder" communities, this goal embodies the largely defensive approach to terrorism which existed prior to September 11th. While the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon certainly demonstrated the need to take a more proactive approach, it also highlighted the need for a much more robust set of defensive countermeasures. More aggressive offensive actions against terrorists can never prevent all attacks; as a result, a layered, reliable set of defenses are needed to identify and disrupt terrorist activity in the homeland while minimizing the impact of a successful terrorist attack. The need for an effective consequence management capability is especially important in light of the growing concern that terrorists may successfully use chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapons.

Since terrorists must live, organize, train and plan somewhere, a second key goal is the elimination of support and sanctuary for terrorist organizations. While an obvious example of such an effort was the destruction of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, there remain a number of nations and individuals which provide Islamic radicals the support

required to plan and conduct additional attacks. While many such support nodes can be found throughout the Muslim world, it is also important to note that many exist in the Western democracies as well. The July 2005 bombings of London subways, for example, appear to have been planned and conducted primarily (if not exclusively) by legal residents of the United Kingdom. According to most accounts, terrorist cells exist in every major country of Western Europe, as well as within the United States itself. Whether provided as a matter of state policy or as a result of individuals acting alone, the United States needs to limit, reduce and ultimately eliminate the outside support which is so critical to sustaining terrorist organizations.

A third important goal for America's GWOT strategy must be the capturing or killing of the key leadership figures within al-Qaida and its associated organizations. In doing so, the United States can use the terrorists' own organizational structure against them. By all accounts, al-Qaida is extraordinarily careful about operations security (OPSEC) and keeps the vast majority of its members (even those picked to conduct a given operation) ignorant about the structure of the organization and the details of its ongoing operational planning. While there are certainly obvious security benefits from such a decision, these benefits come at a high cost. First, there is little or no redundancy in leadership positions, meaning that the loss of a single important facilitator, planner or logistics expert can completely halt planning for an operation and force the organization to restart its efforts from scratch. Second, limiting member involvement discourages individual initiative, makes identifying future talent much harder and inevitably results in less-talented personnel being promoted to leadership positions. For example, the capture of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed in March 2003 was not only devastating to al-Qaida's

planning efforts, but it also forced Osama bin-Laden to promote a less capable individual as his successor, Abu Faraj al-Libi, who himself was captured in May 2005.¹⁵ Only by striking at the leadership of terrorist organizations can the United States and its allies keep the al-Qaida movement off-balance and on the defensive.

A longer-term, but equally important, goal of America's grand strategy to fight terrorism is the discrediting of radical Islamic thought and the subtle encouragement of a more moderate (and far more extensively practiced) version of Islam. This task will certainly prove immensely difficult, as it will require a subtlety and discretion rarely found in either Western political leadership or the national diplomatic corps. Indeed, because of the cultural difference between the West and the Muslim world, it will be significantly more challenging for current and future American administrations to discredit radical Islamism than it was for Reagan to challenge communism. As a result, much of the Western effort to achieve this goal will, by necessity, require the active and sustained support of Muslim religious leaders and pro-democracy NGOs. Yet only by making clear to the Muslim world that radical Islamism will inevitably lead to political repression, moral bankruptcy and economic hardship can the West "drain the swamp" that produces al-Qaida and its ilk.

Finally, and closely related to the previous goal, the United States must take the lead in reasserting the cultural and political values of Western civilization. It is, as Reagan understood, simply not enough to demonstrate the flaws and failures of a "rival faith" without highlighting the superiority of religious, cultural, political and economic freedom. Doing so will serve a number of important strategic purposes. First, by

¹⁵ For an account of al-Libi's capture, see Kamran Khan and John Lancaster, "Top Al Qaeda Figure Is Held In Pakistan," *Washington Post*, May 5, 2005 (accessed September 7, 2005), obtained via Lexis-Nexis.

demonstrating the West's commitment to religious freedom, it will reassure the Muslim world that the West has no hostile intent towards the peaceful practice of Islam. Second, by making clear that the West cannot be intimidated or frightened into abandoning its beliefs, it will dishearten violent extremists who believe that the West is too decadent to fight back. Third, demonstrating that the West continues to stand by its cultural and political traditions will strengthen the will of pro-democracy political reform movements which can be found in virtually every Muslim nation. The success of these movements is critical to eliminating the political corruption which truly fuels Islamic radicalism. Finally, it will serve as a constant reminder to Western publics that the stakes in this war are as absolute as they were during the Cold War, that losing the war on terrorism will mean nothing less than the wholesale destruction of the political, social, economic and religious institutions which form the basis of Western civilization. As Reagan himself emphasized in his Westminster speech, the message the West must send to Islamic extremists is that we are “free people, worthy of freedom, and determined not only to remain so but to help others gain their freedom as well.”¹⁶

Tools

While the threat and use of military power will be an important component, as was the case with Reagan’s strategy, America’s GWOT strategy will not be primarily a military-led effort. Since the stunning American military success in Afghanistan, no other nation has so openly and blatantly backed al-Qaida and its associated groups. As a result,

¹⁶ Ronald Reagan, “Promoting Democracy and Peace.” Speech given to the British Parliament on June 8, 1982 in *Realism, Strength, Negotiation: Key Foreign Policy Statements of the Reagan Administration*, (Washington DC: United States Department of State, 1984), 81.

there simply are not a particularly large number of viable military targets, nor an obvious adversary who can be effectively threatened. Nevertheless, military power will play an important supporting role, particularly in concert with the intelligence community, in capturing or killing key al-Qaida leaders and forcibly cutting off support to terrorist organizations. Operations such as the January 2003 use of an armed unmanned aerial vehicle to kill a number of terrorists in Yemen and the worldwide use of Special Operations forces against terrorist targets will be critically important to preventing terrorist attacks and acquiring additional intelligence on terrorist organizations. In addition, security assistance, counterterrorist training and military-to-military contact will play a particularly important role in strengthening the ability of friendly nations and key regional allies to protect themselves against terrorist attacks and conduct their own counterterrorist operations. Finally, novel approaches such as the Provisional Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan, which combine diplomacy, intelligence collection, and security and reconstruction aid, represent another way for military power to contribute to the war on terrorism.

Similarly, whereas economic warfare played an absolutely central role in the Reagan strategy, its value in a modern GWOT strategy is less evident. Certainly efforts to track and cut off terrorist groups' funding sources are important and must continue. Yet the actual amount of money terrorists require to conduct even spectacular attacks is quite small. According to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, the September 11th attacks cost between \$400,000 and \$500,000 to plan and execute, a relatively small amount of money given the massive damage the attacks

caused.¹⁷ Preventing terrorist groups from obtaining this level of funding is virtually impossible. Unlike the Soviet Union, which only had a few options for obtaining the hard currency they needed to fund their activities in the Third World, al-Qaida has numerous options for obtaining necessary funding, ranging from the voluntary contributions of wealthy supporters to drug smuggling to quasi-legitimate business dealings around the world. Nevertheless, there are a few areas which hold some promise for effectively using economic tools to attack al-Qaida and its affiliated groups. Much of the their current funding still comes from a number of wealthy Middle Eastern donors, particularly Saudis. Identifying these individuals, then either seizing their assets or arresting them could interrupt the flow of resources to these groups. Unsurprisingly, however, doing so will not be easy, as some states in the region (despite their claims to the contrary) have little interest in fighting Islamic extremism. Even in the states that do, these individuals represent a politically well-connected and influential “fifth column” which is difficult to eradicate, especially in regimes which are themselves politically unstable.

As with the Cold War, the West’s victory in the GWOT will ultimately depend on politically and ideologically defeating Islamic extremism. Political tools will be absolutely critical to this effort, even more so than during the struggle with communism. Unfortunately, to the (very limited) extent that the West has even tried to engage in a political contest with radical Islamism, its efforts have been halting, misguided and poorly organized. Overdrawn, even hysterical, concern that the West do nothing that could potentially be seen as offensive to even a small segment of the Muslim community has led Western governments, particularly in Europe, to shrink from making the forceful

¹⁷ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2004), 169.

statements of Western values that are critical to sharpening the dividing lines and winning the debate. The interagency approach to public diplomacy which proved so effective under Reagan has been abandoned; as a result, America's public diplomacy efforts (particularly in the Muslim world) have been haphazard and ineffective in explaining American policy abroad and attacking the political repression which fuels extremism. Moving government-wide control over public diplomacy efforts back to the National Security Council is a necessary first step to improving America's conduct of the political war against Islamic extremists. Just as it did in the Cold War, the US needs to make clear that it supports pro-democracy movements in the Muslim world and to encourage private, non-governmental support to these movements. Finally, presidential leadership is absolutely critical in making clear the stakes of the current struggle; already, public support for the GWOT is unclear, particularly within Europe. Just as Reagan made clear to America and the world the fundamental distinctions between the free West and the totalitarian East, so too must America's leaders remind the people of the West that the struggle with al-Qaida is not about Israel, Iraq or America's support for the Saudi regime, but rather is a battle between for the survival of Western civilization that could last a generation or longer.

By necessity, much of the war on terrorism will rely on the intelligence community. Even more so than during the Cold War, effectively targeting al-Qaida and preventing terrorist attacks will require robust, reliable and timely intelligence, as well as the much more aggressive use of covert action. Yet, by their very nature, terrorist organizations are "hard targets" which are extraordinarily difficult for any intelligence agency to penetrate or disrupt. And while some progress has been made in the years since

September 11th, the West's intelligence community still needs to place greater emphasis on human intelligence, particularly information obtained by individuals acting under unofficial cover, if it wants to have any hope of penetrating modern terrorist organizations.¹⁸ At the same time, American policy makers will need to come to terms with some uncomfortable facts; namely, that perfectly accurate information on the locations or plans of terrorist groups will be extremely rare, that policy makers will increasingly need to take action based on supposition or educated guesses, and that, in some cases, this information will be wrong. Preparing Western publics for the inevitable mistakes which will occur while making clear the value these operations can have is vital to maintaining national support for these operations. In addition to some of the more obvious forms of covert action which could be used in the GWOT, such as clandestine strikes against specific terrorist targets, consideration should be given to other efforts as well, such as the covert funding of moderate pro-democracy groups in the Muslim world and the distribution of pro-Western information.

Unlike in the Cold War, there is also an important domestic component to America's GWOT strategy which is worth noting. Largely subsumed today under the title of "homeland security," it includes a number of important tasks for the war on terrorism. Three, in particular, stand out. First, ensuring that the federal, state and local governments have the skills and equipment needed to conduct consequence management operations is crucial to mitigating the effects of a major terrorist attack. Billions of dollars have already been allocated towards such efforts, yet there remain questions about how well-prepared

¹⁸ For a more detailed discussion of the need for improvements in America's intelligence collection against terrorist groups, see Francis H. Marlo, "WMD Terrorism and US Intelligence Collection," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 11, No. 3 (Autumn 1999): 53-71.

the United States as a whole is for such an attack. Regular, robust planning at every level of government is ultimately the key to such efforts. Second, effective border and immigration controls are needed to prevent terrorists from entering the United States as easily as the 19 hijackers did for the September 11th attacks. While a great deal has been done to control the flow of legal immigrants and visitors to the United States, America's borders with Mexico and Canada remain largely unpatrolled and easily crossed, making it relatively easy for potential terrorists to enter. Third, the United States and its allies need to improve their individual and collective ability to use domestic law enforcement tools to identify, track, arrest and prosecute terrorists and their supporters. Aggressive investigation and the free flow of information between the intelligence and law enforcement communities is critical to the successful use of the criminal justice system in fighting terrorism.

The strategy outlined above represents a brief description of how the definition of grand strategy can be readily applied to the modern, post-9/11 world. In doing so, it reinforces the notion that the development and implementation of grand strategy is an enduring and vitally important task of statecraft. Drawn, as it is, from this author's own personal views, it also raises some interesting propositions about the role of the individual in foreign affairs. This dissertation will, therefore, conclude with some general observations on the role of the individual in the development and implementation of grand strategy, as well as in international affairs as a whole.

Role of the Individual

In recent years, the role of the individual in political science, and particularly in the field of international affairs, has largely vanished as a topic considered worthy of consideration. For example, neither of the two dominant schools of thought in international relations, neorealism and neoliberalism, place any significant emphasis on the motivations, beliefs or thought processes of national leaders.¹⁹ Similarly, efforts to identify sources of state behavior typically focus on state-level factors, such as organizational processes or bureaucratic politics. The reasons for this lack of interest in the individual are as understandable as they are unfortunate. Much of international relations focuses on developing, testing, refining and debating various explanatory models. Yet, by definition, every model must simplify reality, identify variables which can be readily applied across cases and assign a value and relative weight (numerical or otherwise) to each variable. Applying such an approach to individuals is extremely difficult, as factors which are extremely important to one world leader may be entirely irrelevant to another. Any effort to capture a sizable number of leaders in a single model would quickly degenerate into an extremely broad and unwieldy framework that would lack either explanatory or predictive power. Even if one were to focus solely on psychological factors, to the exclusion of other potentially important factors such as domestic politics, the complexity of the human psyche is far too great to be easily

¹⁹ International relations theorists would rightly point out that both schools focus on levels of analysis above the individual (namely at the international system level) and thus are specifically not designed to address the role of the individual. While certainly true, the fact that the greatest (and most persistent) debate in international relations completely ignores the individual simply proves the point that the field generally views other levels of analysis as more important than the individual.

modeled.²⁰ In short, there is no suitable model to accurately capture the nature of individual decisionmaking.

Yet the inability to model individual decisionmaking poses a significant challenge to any effort to model strategic development, primarily because, as the Reagan strategy demonstrates, the individual statesman is the key source of grand strategy. As shown in Chapter 6, Reagan himself was the ultimate source of his administration's grand strategy. It reflected his beliefs about nature of the international system and the motivation of his adversary. Reagan, not his advisors or the bureaucracy or the international system itself, set forth the goals his administration would pursue. He either approved of or personally got involved in every major tool his administration used to achieve his goals. Nor was Reagan's personal influence on his administration's grand strategy unusual; one can certainly see the guiding spirits of Nixon, Carter and Clinton in their respective administrations' grand strategies. In fact, for the national leader, grand strategy represents the only viable way to guide and control a nation's foreign policy. Since bureaucracies are not capable of developing or implementing true grand strategies, absent such a strategy imposed from the top, they will instead pursue their own agendas, often contrary to the wishes of the president. Thus, because strategic development is so tightly bound to the individual decision maker, conventional decisionmaking models are unsuitable for effectively understanding and explaining grand strategy. Rather than relying on these flawed models, those seeking to understand a specific nation's grand strategy would be

²⁰ For a good summary of the challenges in using psychological tools to model decisionmaking, see James E. Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr., *Contending Theories of International Relations: A Comprehensive Survey*, 4th ed. (New York: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers, 1997), 485-491.

better served by obtaining a thorough understanding of the beliefs, perceptions and ambitions of the nation's leader.

This finding that the key to understanding grand strategy lies in the study of the individual leader offers some interesting logical consequences. To the extent that international affairs as a whole is a struggle between the competing grand strategies of various states, this finding tends to make individual leaders the crux of the international system and thus to move the analysis of these leaders towards the center of the study of international affairs. Other disciplines would certainly continue to play an important role, but primarily as a means of better understanding the constraints, tendencies and pressures with which leaders must contend. System-level international relations theory, for example, could help students gauge whether a leader's perceptions regarding the nature of the international system were accurate, while regional studies could provide valuable insights into the influence of culture, history and religion on international leaders. Moving the field in this direction would ultimately push the academic study of international affairs towards a much more history-centric, rather than theory-centric, approach. While such a radical change in the field is unlikely (at least in the near future) given the vested interests which would vehemently oppose it, at the very least greater attention should be paid to the role of the individual in international affairs. As Reagan demonstrated, individual statesmen has far greater influence over the international scene than most analysts, or even the leaders themselves, realize. Closer study of that influence can only benefit the field as a whole.

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