

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE UNITED STATES' SOVIET POLICY
DURING THE CARTER AND REAGAN ADMINISTRATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a work of American intellectual history that attempts to explain how the foreign policy of the United States was concocted and shaped in the late 20th century. Specifically, it focuses on the end period of the Cold War from 1975 to 1985, and Soviet/American relations concerning the issues of détente, arms control, and national defense. It examines American social and political trends as causal forces that played a role in the United States' policy turn against détente with the Soviet Union, and the turn toward a posture of confrontation by the late 1970s. Social trends included the changing mood and opinions of the American public, and the rise of a neo-conservative movement that increasingly relied on intellectuals, and think tanks, to promulgate and legitimize their ideas to the public and the political leadership simultaneously.

These social, intellectual, and political trends were evolving constants, they developed irrespective of changes in White House leadership. As such, they account for many of the continuities in Soviet and national defense policy between the administrations of Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. Continuity and the evolving spectrum of change that occurred during these years is the other major theme of this thesis. The Carter and Reagan administrations are often thought of as having been dramatically different in their approaches to the Soviet Union. However, this thesis attempts to illuminate that between these two administrations there was an evolving strategy that led the United States to Cold War victory. A confluence of the domestic and the foreign, the governmental and the private, the social and the political accounted for the paradoxical changes and continuities during this time.

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DEDICATION

My grandmother, Mildred Johnson.

INTRODUCTION

In *Strategies of Containment*, John Lewis Gaddis makes an especially useful observation about the beginning of the détente period. It is useful because it provides a constructive way of looking at many periods and subjects in the history of American foreign relations. Gaddis begins his chapter on “Nixon, Kissinger, and Détente” by observing the general world situation in 1968. China had emerged from isolation and became increasingly confrontational with the Soviet Union. The Soviets were poised to achieve numerical parity in Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM) with the United States, but at the same time suffered with economic difficulties that demanded closer relations with the West. In short, a confluence of geopolitical and economic realities shaped the birth of America’s détente policy with the Soviet Union. As Gaddis puts it, “This ‘objective’ situation, then, probably would have produced major changes in American diplomacy, whoever entered the White House on January 20, 1969.”¹

These outside world developments were linked to changing perceptions and appearances of this objective situation. The emphasis on ideology as a major impediment to good, or at least relaxed, relations was discarded and foreign policy was determined based on what the most desirable appearances would be to allies and adversaries. This translated into a willingness by Nixon and Kissinger to deal with communist regimes in China and Eastern Europe irrespective of their repressive nature and their ideology, which was so inimical to core American values.

The social and intellectual dimensions of this objective situation which led to the birth of détente have recently been impressively explored and analyzed by Jeremi Suri in

¹ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment : A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 273.

his book *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente*. In short, Suri's thesis is that by 1968 the major world powers, including the United States, Soviet Union, and China, were facing such dramatic social upheavals in the form of various dissident movements and generalized social discontent that in response they began the international process that would come to be called détente as a way to fortify their domestic position. As Suri writes, "The global disruption of 1968 grew from the declining ability of leaders to manufacture consent at home."² They used agreement with foreign adversaries to contain increasingly virulent internal pressures and deflect attention from domestic difficulties. Leaders had to find new sources of power away from home with which to contain domestic critics and enemies. President Nixon, "used the prospects of great power cooperation to argue that his opponents threatened international peace."³

In describing the pressures and movements that led to détente, Suri articulates especially salient concepts that relate to the following thesis. One is what he calls the "infrastructure" and "language" for dissent: the various protest movements, student groups, prominent iconoclasts, writers, artists, and musicians that organized, led, or inspired global dissent. He discusses the manner in which these groups and individuals spoke, wrote, and demonstrated, what their agendas were, and how they ultimately influenced international politics. Hence, Suri argues that détente was an initiative begun by those at the top but was ultimately motivated by pressures from the "bottom," those forces outside of the official government decision-making apparatus.

² Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest : Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2003) 166.

³ Ibid 5.

The following thesis attempts to finish the story and explain the death of detente by examining some of the same types of causal factors that Suri looks at in his work. This thesis will explain the counterrevolution of sorts to the policy changes that the turbulent 1960s had produced. Like the forces that created détente, its rejection was also largely influenced by organizations and individuals outside of governmental decision making structures who influenced and were influenced by, the changing moods in American society. However, these groups and individuals were for the most part very different from the agitators of the 1960s, and they were motivated by different agendas and ideologies.

Related to these ideas, the thesis will also argue that instead of a sharp change in policy between the Carter and Reagan administrations, there was instead a spectrum of change that occurred along a continuum linking the Soviet policy of the two administrations. This thesis accepts the commonly understood beginning of the détente period as lying in the Nixon years of 1968-69, with the high point reached in August 1975, symbolized by the Helsinki Final Act. What the thesis argues against is the widely held view that détente did not end until 1980 after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The reality is that, as early as 1975 important domestic and external events were precipitating important changes in the United States' Soviet policy. These changes led to a tacit return to a more traditional hard line containment posture as early as mid-1978. This change encompassed important links to the foreign and defense policies of Carter's successor, Ronald Reagan. Therefore, this thesis will focus on the years from 1975 to 1985 and the changes and continuities that characterize Soviet-American relations during this time period. Thus, the death of détente, and of initiatives like SALT, and the

resulting hard line against the Soviet Union was a *process*, a political evolution. The process was shaped by a combination of the emerging international situation, and a new, infrastructure and language of dissent influencing policy that evolved during this time period.

Chapter one overviews the continuum of opposition to détente in the “long” 1970 from 1968 to approximately 1983. In doing so the early political origins of détente are explained, and 1975 is highlighted as a particularly crucial year in which a tipping point toward renewed confrontation occurred. The Soviet’s international behavior and simultaneous defense build up and the role it played in feeding the fears of the American public, and lending credence to the arguments against détente is also examined. In particular, the Committee on the Present Danger (CPD) is discussed as one of the most important anti-détente groups and how it influenced foreign policy. In particular the CPD’s involvement in the CIA’s “Team B” project of the mid-1970s is discussed as a prime example. The state of the American public’s mindset in the 1970s is also examined as another important causal factor in the turn back toward confrontation.

Chapter two elaborates on the significance of Team B in the creation of foreign policy during the Carter years. Carter’s human rights focus and its relationship to détente is examined, and related to that issue, the importance of the Helsinki Final Act as an ultimately *anti*-détente measure. This chapter also addresses the return to a much more ideological posture under Jimmy Carter that American foreign policy, and how this related to his human rights beliefs. The significance of a concomitant rise in human rights politics in the United States, in the 1970s, is discussed here as well. This chapter also examines the rising neo-conservative movement of the 1970s and how its critiques

of détente, and the SALT process, were expressed and promulgated, and how that critique began to filter upward into the Carter administration. How this emerging critique translated into policy in the form of a modest incrementalism in defense expenditure and military modernization is also explained.

Chapter three focuses on the Soviet dimension of the move toward confrontation and examines how the intrinsic nature of the Brezhnev regime contributed to the death of the detente era. The Soviet's fundamentally different conceptions of what détente was supposed to mean play an important role in this regard. The significance of Carter's March 1977 arms control proposal, and the proposal's connection to the efforts of conservative democrats like Senator Henry Jackson are explained here as well. Emerging weapons technologies, and how they shaped Carter's confidence in the defense related incrementalism of his administration is explained. This chapter also addresses the marked shift toward a harder line with the Soviet Union by mid-1978 as away of illustrating the continuities part of the spectrum of change linking the Carter and Regan administrations. The question of *why* Carter chose to make human rights such an important part of his international agenda and what the ultimate pitfalls and problems associated with this issue were.

Chapter four moves into the first term of the Reagan administration and examines how by this time the conservative revolt against détente and Cold War foreign policy dogma was achieving it greatest victory up to that time. Specifically this chapter focuses on the influence of Stanford University's Hoover Institute and its influence in some of Reagan's most important policy decisions. Links to the defense and foreign policy initiatives of Jimmy Carter are further explained and elaborated.

Chapter five elaborates on the intellectual influences that inspired and guided Ronald Reagan's vision of both the Strategic Defense Initiative and arms control. The often unacknowledged link between these two is also explained. The growth in awareness and literacy on nuclear and defense related matters by the general public is examined as well. This is a cultural indication of how these issues were becoming of increasing concern by the late 1970s and continued into the early 1980s, and in part explains the overall issue of continuities addressed by this thesis. This chapter also focuses on the significance of Paul Nitze's return to government service, and his efforts on arms control, as it relates to the themes of change and continuity.

In addition to the themes of continuity and change in U.S. foreign policy, this thesis also is a work of American intellectual history. It examines the important currents of thought and opinion during endgame period of the Cold War, from approximately 1975 to 1985. It attempts to explain the apparent intellectual paradoxes and contradictions during this period as they related to détente, arms control and Soviet/American relations generally speaking. Moreover, this thesis also examines how groups and individuals, of apparently different political persuasions and agendas, often found common cause when their goals and concerns overlapped. The basic, overall, question addressed here is : How did emerging political ideas, and social changes, during this period evolve into declaratory and operational government policy?

Important works related to this thesis include Raymond Garthoff's *Détente and Confrontation* and *The Great Transition* which provide the most comprehensive and detailed examinations of the détente period and the Reagan years respectively. Garthoff's works are conventionally political and diplomatic histories, with its detail of

diplomatic and defense policy the two books together imply the continuities discussed here. Jeffrey Richelson's article, "PD-59, NSDD-13 and the Reagan Strategic Modernization Program," in the June 1983 *Journal of Strategic Studies* focuses specifically on the military dimension of this thesis and the operational links are made more explicit. Odd Arne Westad's collection of essays, written by himself and other historians, *The Fall of Détente: Soviet American Relations During the Carter Years*, is a more recent work and contributes more of the American domestic political scene and Carter's human rights focus to the subject. Dan Caldwell's, *The Dynamics of Domestic Politics and Arms Control*, focuses specifically on SALT II and the influence of public opinion and political opposition groups to the SALT ratification debate.

Recent scholarly articles were also key to the arguments of this thesis. Thomas M. Nichols' article "Carter and the Soviets: The Origins of the U.S. Return to a Strategy of Confrontation," in the June 2002 issue of *Diplomacy and Statecraft* explains Carter's rejection of détente and the factors that motivated him to do so. Two works that examine the nature of human rights politics in the 1970s, Carter's relationship to that political trend, and the problems it posed for him are : Kenneth Cmiel's "The Emergence of Human Rights Politics in the United States" from the December 1999 issue of *The Journal of American History*, and David Skidmore's "Carter and the Failure of Foreign Policy Reform" from the winter 1993-94 *Political Science Quarterly*.

Important works relating to the Soviet dimension of this issue are Harry Gelman's, *The Brezhnev Politburo and the Decline of Détente*, Robin Edmond's *Soviet Foreign Policy During the Brezhnev Years*, and Adam Ulam's *Dangerous Relations*, both of which examine the problematic nature of the Brezhnev regime to détente. Crucial

studies of American political interest groups, and neo-conservatism are John Ehrman's *The Rise of Neoconservatism*, William C. Berman's *America's Right Turn*, and Oran P. Smith's *The Rise of Baptist Republicanism*. James Allen Smith's *The Idea Brokers* and David Ricci's *The Transformation of American Politics* are important works on the history and influence of American think tanks.

Recent general histories of the 1970s and 1980s were very helpful in contextualizing the main arguments of this thesis. The most important of these are: Philip Jenkins' *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America*, David Frum's *How We Got Here*, and Bruce Schulman's *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics*.

Coral Bell's *The Reagan Paradox*, is an excellent analysis of the mindset of the Reagan administration, its foreign policy goals, and philosophies. Bell aptly explains the seemingly contradictory nature of Reagan's decision making as his political view evolved from confrontation to negotiation and arms control.

However, the above works do not connect the social, political, domestic and external factors that account for the continuities between the Carter and Reagan administrations in a manner that focuses on *connections* in an explicit way. Books by Jenkins, Frum, and Schulman come the closest, but their treatment is very broad and do not focus in detail on the evolution of Soviet/American relations. This thesis is an attempt to synthesize the important insights of the above authors, and provide a conceptual matrix for explaining the multifaceted nature of American foreign policy in the Cold War. In doing so, this thesis also seeks to add the body of American intellectual

history as well, by illustrating that the nation's foreign policy concerns were as diverse an issue as any other in American history.

CHAPTER 1

A CONTINUUM OF OPPOSITION IN THE “LONG” 1970S

Aside from the more subtle political motivations for détente explained by Jeremi Suri, the most immediate impetus for both superpowers was the approaching parity in strategic nuclear forces that the Soviet Union was soon to achieve by the early 1970s with the United States. The word *détente* means “a relaxation of tensions” but the two nations sought different goals from the process. President Nixon hoped that the process would lead to Soviet assistance in ending the Vietnam War, attain for him personally a legacy as a peace president, and more generally provide a way of managing Soviet behavior and power.

That power seemed clearly on the rise and was juxtaposed with America’s desperate final efforts in Vietnam. In 1969, the Soviets surpassed the United States in numbers of ICBMs. By 1973, the same year that U.S. ground forces were withdrawing from Vietnam, the Soviets successfully tested their first multi-warhead (MIRVed) ICBM.⁴ That same year the embargo on oil to the United States, ordered by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, resulted in dramatic increases in inflation and unemployment. The combination of these economic setbacks and Soviet strategic parity made it difficult to justify increasing expenditures on the arms race. More generally, détente was a method of crisis avoidance that established the political rules of the game through an agreed upon code of conduct. In this sense Nixon and Kissinger

⁴ Thomas B. Cochran et al., *Nuclear Weapons Databook, Vol. IV : Soviet Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989) 10-11.

saw détente as, “a strategy, rather than as an objective; it was a means rather than a goal.”⁵

Détente’s relationship to arms control was fundamentally conservative, as symbolized by the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) negotiations. Conservative, not in the political sense, but rather in its goals of limiting, rather than reducing, nuclear weapons. In short, SALT sought to cap the production of certain types of weapons, like ICBMs, Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBM), and their warheads and limit developments of new weapons systems such as the cruise missile and modern bombers.

There was a commercial and cultural aspect to détente as well, codified in the “Basic Principles of Relations Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics” signed by Nixon and Brezhnev on May 29, 1972. This agreement involved promises to expand cultural, scientific, and economic exchanges between the two nations. It also outlined a code of conduct in which the two nations would “do their utmost to avoid military confrontations and to prevent the outbreak of nuclear war,” and “will be prepared to negotiate and settle differences by peaceful means.”⁶

For the Kremlin, détente was a way to get the United States to accept Soviet political equality and henceforth their status as an equal world power. In this respect, détente would “have helped manage the transition of *the United States* into a changing

⁵ Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation : American – Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, revised edition (Washington D.C., Brookings Institution, 1994) 32. See also: Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979) 949 & 1143. Kissinger describes détente as a *strategy* of “carefully calibrated measures” toward the Soviet Union that had “lured” Brezhnev into important concessions and agreements. He also explains that détente depended on “a firm application of psychological and physical restraints and determined resistance to challenges.” See also: Richard Nixon, *The Real War*, (New York : Simon and Schuster, 1980) 297. Nixon describes both containment and détente as “defensive strategies designed to keep the Soviets from advancing and to keep World War III from escalating.”

⁶ “Text of Basic Principles, May 29” *The Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. 66, 26 June 1972, 898-901.

world, one no longer marked by American predominance but by political parity of the Soviet Union with the United States that matched their military parity.”⁷ Simultaneously, they also sought Western trade credits, loans, and technology transfers. Détente was also seen by the Soviets as a way of achieving the peaceful co-existence necessary both to bide time for the inevitable triumph of socialism and for the assistance of “national liberation” movements around the world that would increase their worldwide power and influence. In this sense peace was not the absolute Soviet goal of détente, peace was “waged” and “like war... is a continuation of policy.”⁸ In short, détente for the Soviets was a way to make the world safe for socialist revolution.

Nevertheless, nuclear weapons and arms control remained a major component of détente, so much so that the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) became a major forum for U.S./Soviet relations itself, and was a process that, in Strobe Talbott’s words, “acquired an institutional mass that some political innovators might have considered dead weight but that served as a kind of deepwater anchor in Soviet – American relations.”⁹ Regardless of whatever other motivations the two sides had for pursuing détente, the issue of nuclear weapons claimed the highest profile as the most obvious symbols of power and influence and, as such, the main point of contention within the general issue of détente.

Although Nixon and Kissinger did not use the term with any regularity until the early 1970s, the concept of détente had been officially articulated as early as 1967 in the Harmel Report, a NATO study that recognized a changing international situation, and the

⁷Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation : American – Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, revised edition (Washington D.C., Brookings Institution, 1994) 42.

⁸ Ibid 44-51.

⁹ Strobe Talbott, *Endgame : The Inside Story of SALT II* (New York: Harper &Row, 1979) 20.

opportunity to build a more stable relationship with the communist bloc.¹⁰ The report led to the first NATO studies of mutual force reductions and a general acknowledgement of interest in arms control.¹¹ The need for slowing the proliferation of nuclear weapons was a subject of discussion throughout the 1960s, since the Cuban Missile Crisis, illustrated the need to reduce superpower tensions, but the Harmel Report reflected that by the late 1960s these ideas had effectively moved past the debate stage and were becoming official matters of Western defense policy.

It did not take long for opposition to these ideas to emerge, and the year after the report was written retired commander of Strategic Air Command (SAC), Curtis LeMay, submitted his trademark blunt opinion on the subject of arms control. In his book, *America Is in Danger* he asked his readers if in the near future, “will we look over our shoulders at our shrinking nuclear force, at our missing anti-ballistic missile system, and succumb to Kremlin demands?”¹² LeMay’s main targets of criticism were defense intellectuals whom he derisively referred to as “the new thinkers” who advance “topsy-turvy doctrines of weakness to achieve security” and “stigmatize solid military experience and even uninformed military leaders in order to gain credence for the strange philosophy of weakness.”¹³ While contemptuous of defense intellectuals, he also acknowledged the increasing amount of influence they were having on defense-related

¹⁰ *American Foreign Policy, Current Documents, 1967*, (Washington D.C.: Department of State, 1969) 322-323. Paragraph eight of this report, entitled “Future Tasks of the Alliance,” states that “The evolution of Soviet and East European policies gives ground for hope that those governments may eventually come to recognize the advantages to them of collaborating in working towards a peaceful settlement.”

¹¹ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 127-128.

¹² Curtis E. LeMay, *America Is in Danger* (New York : Funk & Wagnalls, 1968) 264. It is worth noting that this book appeared during the same year that LeMay ran as George Wallace’s running mate in the presidential elections of 1968.

¹³ *Ibid*, 268.

matters, and lamented the naïve, dangerous path they were leading the nation down in the face of a hostile and deceitful enemy whose nuclear strength was growing.

Even after the SALT I agreements were signed in May 1972, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird gave optimistic, yet guarded, statements about the treaty. He maintained that SALT I had been possible only through the United States' determination to negotiate from strength, and admonished those listening that "we still need to keep on our guard" and announced a new program of modernization and improvement in U.S. strategic forces.¹⁴

By 1976 Paul H. Nitze, a member of the SALT negotiating team from 1969 to 1974, was expressing an even more pessimistic assessment of where détente was taking the United States. In an article entitled "Assuring Strategic Stability in An Era of Détente" in the January 1976 edition of *Foreign Affairs*, Nitze argued that under the existing SALT agreements the Soviet Union may very likely pursue and achieve strategic *superiority*. He also asserted that the SALT II proposals based on the Vladivostok Accord, "would *not* provide a sound foundation for follow on negotiations under present trends."¹⁵ This accord was an interim agreement on arms control reached by President Ford and Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev until and actual SALT II negotiations began. Nitze's conclusions were based, in part, on the greater relative importance that the Soviets put on civil defense, reflecting their belief that nuclear conflict was likely and that such conflict was survivable. His assessment of Soviet motivations for détente itself suggested that they had approached the process with a

¹⁴ Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation : American – Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, revised edition (Washington D.C., Brookings Institution, 1994) 218.

¹⁵ Paul H. Nitze "Assuring Strategic Stability in An Era of Détente", *Foreign Affairs* Jan. 1976, Vol. 54, No. 2.

cynicism that sought advantage rather than parity. In sum, Nitze felt that the SALT agreements and the pursuit of détente in general had placed the United States at risk of falling into a dangerously inferior position to the Soviet Union.

The article made such an impression that it was included in the text of a Senate hearing in April of 1976 on the issue of civil preparedness. During that hearing, Nitze reiterated his views on the destabilizing effects of the Soviet civil defense program and the need for the United States to develop its own civil defense effort. Also present during this hearing were other respected defense intellectuals, namely, Herman Kahn, Richard Garwin, and Wolfgang Panofsky.¹⁶ Nitze agreed with Herman Kahn's estimate of a \$300 to \$400 million program and seemed to believe that 300 million was a reasonable amount to spend for civil defense. However, he disagreed sharply with his other colleagues, particularly with Wolfgang Panofsky. Responding to Panofsky's assertion that it would be an "abomination" for the U.S. to possess the relative nuclear capability that it possessed during the Cuban missile crisis, Nitze said, "I do not think the United States is the enemy. The enemy is a different enemy. If we want to preserve the chance for peace in a decent world, we have got to go at this without the kind of an approach which appears to assume that the principal enemy is the Defense Department or those who think we ought to have an adequate security."¹⁷ This statement was also a response to Richard Garwin, whom Nitze felt had questioned his motives for promoting civil defense. The statement is telling when one considers that at first glance it seems that Nitze is referring only to the Soviet Union when he says "The enemy is a different enemy," but he did not specify.

¹⁶ Congress, Senate, *Hearings Before the Joint Committee on Defense Production : Civil Defense and Limited Nuclear War*, 94th Congress, second session, April 28, 1976 (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976).

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 60.

Rather, when considered with the rest of the statement, the suggestion seems to be that those who disagree with “those who think we ought to have an adequate security,” in other words *him*, were not being realistic about national security. In short, among America’s defense and foreign policy intelligentsia, battle lines were being drawn.

By 1980, on the eve of Ronald Reagan’s election to the presidency, the Russian dissident writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn declared that, “Communism will never be halted by negotiations or through the machinations of détente. It can be halted only by force from without or by disintegration from within.”¹⁸ That was just one of many blunt statements from his book *The Mortal Danger: How Misconceptions About Russia Imperil America*. Ironically, the book, as its title suggests, shares much in the way of general tone and sentiment with Curtis LeMay’s. Like LeMay, Solzhenitsyn lambasted American diplomats and foreign policy intellectuals (calling out George Kennan and Henry Kissinger by name) as pretentious self-serving bureaucrats who succeeded only in deceiving Americans about the true nature of the Soviet government, which was irredeemably repressive to its own people and belligerent to the free world. As David Frum points out, by 1978, even George McGovern, who in 1975 predicted that most of the Vietnamese refugees would eventually want to go back home, was calling for a U.S. invasion of Cambodia.¹⁹ By March of 1983 President Reagan was openly referring to the Soviet Union as an “evil empire” and “the focus of evil in the world today.” One would have to look back to the Truman years to find equally inflammatory rhetoric.

¹⁸ Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Mortal Danger : How Misconceptions About Russia Imperil America* (New York : Harper & Row, 1980) 70.

¹⁹ David Frum, *How We Got Here : The 70s Decade That Brought You Modern Life (For Better or Worse)* (New York: Basic Books, 2000) 311.

The salient point of the above examples is that opposition to détente began almost as soon as it was proposed and involved a wide range of people who were sometimes radically different in occupation, training, background, culture, place and time. Nevertheless, all of these voices were essentially saying the same thing: *America is fooling itself by pursuing détente with a nation that is determined to maintain an adversarial relationship with the United States and is implacably hostile to America's very existence. Détente is putting America in an increasingly perilous position.* As the above examples illustrate as well, the certainty and passion of this sentiment seemed to increase throughout the period of the “long” 1970s from 1968 to 1983. However, 1975 was a crucial year when a confluence of world events, emerging American political movements, and American opinion, precipitated a tipping point in the growing doubts about détente, and laid the groundwork for a return to confrontation.

AMERICA IN THE MID-1970S

Isn't that what a farmer has with his turkey until Thanksgiving Day?

Ronald Reagan, giving his
definition of détente (1978)

A universal feeling, whether well or ill founded, cannot be safely
disregarded.

Abraham Lincoln

By 1975 it seemed apparent to many that while détente *may* have led to a relaxation of tensions between the superpowers, this did not translate into greater security for the United States. Increasingly the entire philosophy of détente, and its main policy corollary SALT, was seen a Soviet attempt to dupe America until “Thanksgiving Day”

arrived, whenever the Soviets were ready to start carving. In 1975 and 1976, some important themes began to emerge in American neoconservative writing, mainly the decline of U.S. power relative to the perceived growth in Soviet military spending and expansionist activity. The growing neoconservatives movement saw a growing crisis as the nation's leadership refused to face the reality of Soviet aggressive intentions and react appropriately, which for them meant taking a hard line, increasing defense spending. This neo-conservatism was the political child of the older conservatism championed in the 1950s and 60s by figures like William F. Buckley, who combined philosophies of limited government, free market capitalism, moral traditionalism and militant anti-communism.²⁰ It was a movement that grew from domestic concerns of abortion, school busing, drugs, and sexual promiscuity. Not surprisingly, they often compared themselves to Winston Churchill, and their opponents to the Nazi appeasers of the 1930s.²¹ Moreover, this was a sentiment shared not by just a few government insiders or intellectual elites, but increasingly the American public as well.²² In some respects world events seemed to support these fears.

The previous year saw the publication in the west of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*, and the resulting publicity surrounding the book reminded

²⁰ William C. Berman, *America's Right Turn From Nixon to Bush*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994) 29.

²¹ John Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism: Intellectuals and Foreign Affairs* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) 104-109.

²² See : Dr. George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll : Public Opinion 1972-1977* (Wilmington DE : Scholarly Resources, 1977) Public cynicism about U.S. -Soviet relations and the prospects for world peace in general are indicated by responses to a 1975 poll indicating that 63% of Americans expected Soviet power to increase in 1976 (p.646) and 61% of Americans felt that 1975 would be a more troubled year in international relations (p. 405) A Time magazine poll found that a majority of Americans felt that detente benefited the Soviet Union the most, or that it benefited neither party. See: "The Public: Disenchanted with Ford" *Time* October 13, 1975. 18. See also : John E. Rielly ed. *American Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Chicago : Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 1979) Which reported that by 1978 of those Americans favoring increased military spending, 69% felt the U.S. was falling behind the Soviet Union, and a majority of the American public (56%) shared this view. 26.

Americans of the brutal nature of Soviet communism. Horrifying evidence of brutality and death under communist rule in Cambodia under Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge were increasingly being seen and heard in the West. After South Vietnam fell in April 1975, approximately one million Vietnamese were brutalized and killed, and many were sentenced to “reeducation” camps from which some did not emerge until 1986.²³ By 1979 the Soviets had secured a major warm water naval and air force base at Cam Ranh Bay. The Portuguese government had narrowly avoided being overthrown by communists, and in November 1975 was forced to put down a left wing coup attempt by paratroopers and other soldiers. During that same time Cuban troops were intervening in the civil war in Angola, and by January 1976 Cuba and the Soviet Union signed an agreement to provide weapons to Cuban troops in Angola. In short, communism seemed to be gaining ground all over the world, presumably all at the direction of Moscow.²⁴

As for the Soviets themselves, by 1975 it seemed evident they were indeed determined to pursue an improvement in their nuclear forces that flew in the face of the idea of parity as outlined by SALT I. By the summer of 1973 they were flight testing a new generation of ICBMs with larger payloads, and with the ability to carry Multiple Independently Targeted Re-entry Vehicles (MIRV), which reflected a significant technical breakthrough for them. Moreover, in tests observed by U.S. analysts these Soviet MIRVs were clearly meant to destroy U.S. missile silos as a counterforce, rather than as a purely retaliatory weapon, indicating that the Kremlin was pursuing a war

²³ Stephane Courtois et al. *The Black Book of Communism* (Cambridge MA : Harvard University Press, 1999) 571-572.

²⁴ A book published in 1976 for the general public about the Soviet military flatly declared, “There is scarcely a country in the world where the Soviet Union does not pursue some military, economic, or political interest...” Ray Bonds ed. *The Soviet War Machine* (London : Salamander Books, 1976) 48.

winning capability rather than mutual deterrence.²⁵ Expectations that SALT II would be finalized that year were thwarted by the issues of how to count U.S. cruise missiles under the treaty, and the Soviet's new bomber, the Tu-22 "Backfire," and whether it should be counted as a heavy bomber. The Backfire would be a source of constant worry for U.S. defense planners throughout the 1970s. When first deployed in 1974 it represented the most capable Soviet bomber to date; it could carry nuclear weapons, possessed super sonic, low level flight capabilities, and could possibly be refueled in flight, giving it intercontinental range. The U.S. would not have an aircraft of similar overall capabilities until Strategic Air Command adopted the B-1B in 1986.

SALT negotiations had stalled but not been abandoned. Instead they would be left in a strange kind of limbo until Jimmy Carter's election as President in November of 1976. It is not too surprising, then, that a CIA National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) in November 1975 was less than definitive in its projection of future Soviet strategic capabilities and intentions. Instead of one set of speculations, it posited five possible Soviet force developments based on five possible ways SALT negotiations and Soviet/American relations may have gone through the mid -1980s.²⁶ Although expressing caution about future Soviet capabilities, the NIE ended by optimistically projecting the best of the five scenarios for future SALT developments.

In less than a year's time the complacent, less than definite, tone of these NIEs were directly challenged, ironically at the request of CIA director George Bush. By

²⁵ Strobe Talbott, *Endgame: The Inside Story of SALT II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979) 24-27. See also: Thomas B. Cochran, *Nuclear Weapons Databook Vol. IV : Soviet Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989) 100. Shows the number of Soviet ICBM warheads, which in the previous two years had held at 1587 jump to 1917 in 1975, a 21 percent increase.

²⁶ NIE 11-3/8-75 "Soviet Forces for International Conflict Through the Mid-1980s" Central Intelligence Agency, 17 November 1975. 43-44 (www.foia.cia.gov). It should be noted, however, that even under the best diplomatic scenario envisioned by this, NIE still estimated an "increasing but moderate threat to Minuteman silos through 1980" 48.

1975, the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB) began to question the accuracy of the traditional "in house" CIA assessments. Respected outsiders like arms control expert Albert Wohlstetter also voiced concerns that the CIA was underestimating the Soviet threat. By 1975 PFIAB was recommending the creation of an outside group of experts as a "Team B" to engage in competitive analysis with the CIA's analysts who would constitute "Team A."²⁷

Chosen to head Team B was historian Richard Pipes, a very conservative, anti-communist Soviet expert then teaching at Harvard. Pipes selected the rest of his team, and among those he picked was Paul Nitze and Dr. William van Cleave, both of whom had at one time been members of the SALT I delegation. Also chosen were Paul Wolfowitz, then working for the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Thomas Wolfe of RAND, and Foy Kohler, former Ambassador to Moscow. Team B's methodology was to use the same information given to Team A and to prepare their own independent report by first analyzing Team A's methodology, and then look at specific Soviet strategic programs and the CIA's interpretation of this evidence and offer their own competing interpretation. A more general political-military assessment of the Soviet strategic situation was also a part of the process.²⁸

The particular criticisms leveled by Team B in their own NIE are instructive to consider, based not only on what they say, but how it reflects the general critique of the supporters of détente and SALT, (albeit sometimes less articulately) that would gain ground throughout the 1970s. According to the Team B summary, previous

²⁷ John Prados, *The Soviet Estimate : U.S. Intelligence Analysis & Russian Military Strength* (New York : Dial Press, 1982)248-257.

²⁸ This is description of the process is given by Dr. Pipes himself in, "Team B: The Reality Behind the Myth" *Commentary* magazine, October 1986. 32

NIEs erred in focusing on only the “hard” data collected by technical means, and ignored “soft” data about Soviet strategic *concepts* and military *thinking*. This failure resulted in NIEs that did not address “the broader political purposes which underlie and explain Soviet strategic objectives.”²⁹ Previous NIEs continually interpreted Soviet behavior in American terms, and this “mirror-imaging” “ignored the fact that “Soviet thinking is Clausewitzian in character, that is, that it conceives in terms of ‘grand strategy’ for which military weapons,....represent only one element in a varied arsenal of means of persuasion and coercion, many of them non-military in nature.”³⁰ The Soviets were offensive rather than defensive minded and pursued a nuclear war-*winning* capability. They did not think in terms of mutual stability or parity, and as such, the Soviets pursued détente only as a way to hold the West at bay while they pursued strategic advantage.

A final criticism by Team B bears special mention because it also reflects a complaint about not only where many increasingly thought arms control was going, but the wrong-headed direction of the government in general. This had to do with what the perception of the pernicious influence of political pressure on intelligence interpretation. Earlier drafters of NIEs displayed an inclination to downplay the Soviet threat for fear of the upsetting implications for détente, SALT, and congressional sentiments.³¹ In short, intelligence, and hence national security, was being hindered and sacrificed for the sake of political and bureaucratic sensibilities.

The opinions and feelings expressed by Team B would have represented simply an interesting historical footnote in the annals of U.S. intelligence gathering had those

²⁹ “Soviet Strategic Objectives: An Alternative View Report of Team B” Central Intelligence Agency, 1 December 1976. (www.foia.cia.gov) 1.

³⁰ Ibid, 1.

³¹ Ibid, 4.

individuals and their opinions existed in vacuum, or had they been wildly out of step with prevailing or growing opinion.³² But neither was the case, nor were the key Team B members confined in their activities and opinions only to the then secret CIA project. In fact, several key members of Team B, namely Richard Pipes, Paul Nitze, Foy Kohler, and William van Cleave were also, while serving on Team B, also members of the conservative, anti-communist, private interest group, the Committee on The Present Danger (CPD).

The CPD that formed in 1976 was the second version of this advocacy group first formed in the winter of 1950-51 in the wake of the Soviet explosion of an atomic bomb, Truman's promulgation of NSC-68, and the outbreak of the Korean War. The second CPD was a larger group than the original and officially consisted of a little over 150 prominent people in academia, business, the media (mainly magazines), the arts (mostly novelists), retired military officers, attorneys, and a host of former government employees and insiders. They advocated a rejection of détente as an exercise in self deception regarding the Soviet threat, a U.S. military modernization and build up, and a general return of the hard line with the Soviet Union. They would consistently offer a harsh critique of President Carter's policies vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. As will be seen later, these people constantly spoke and wrote, and sometimes protested, to articulate and further their ideas through the 1970s and into the 1980s. In 1979 they would add a new member who as early as 1976 had already created a stir, and a hope, within the Republican Party and with conservatives in general-- Ronald Reagan.

³² John Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism: Intellectuals and Foreign Affairs* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) 111. Ehrman credits the Team B report as *the* reason neoconservatives came to oppose SALT II.

Set against these political and policy debates, American society was changing and transforming in ways that would facilitate the success and influence of groups like the CPD. By the mid -1970s the face of anti-communism was changing. Increasingly, the most vocal anti-communists were Democrats, many of whom were old liberals alienated by the leftist radicalism of the 1960s. In 1972 anti-communist liberals formed their own pressure group, the Coalition for a Democratic Majority, whose leader was the hawkish Democrat, Senator Henry “Scoop” Jackson from Washington.

American Jews, many of whom considered themselves liberal, also increasingly took an anti-Soviet position because of the military support that the communist bloc was providing to Israel’s adversaries in the Middle East. The increasing repression of the Jews and the violation of their human rights violations in the communist world also played a role. Although many American Jews remained loyal to the Democratic Party, they became increasingly disenchanted with President Carter, and they became a significant voice in the neo-conservative movement.³³ Historian Philip Jenkins has recently made a telling observation about Jewish struggles in the 1970s and anti-communism. Jenkins discusses the anti-Jewish terrorism that, by the mid 1970s, was reaching new heights, as epitomized by the Entebbe crisis of 1976 in which an El Al passenger plane was taken hostage by Palestinian radicals and German militants and the subsequent successful rescue mission by Israeli commandos. Jenkins contends that; “Terrorism, Third World radicalism, and anti-Semitism merged symbolically. The dazzling Israeli rescue mission proved, triumphantly, that armed force could and should

³³ Ibid, 129-131.

serve as the proper response to such menaces. It did not take great imagination to extend these lessons to the confrontation with Communism.”³⁴

Jenkins also examines how Americans in general linked their domestic fears with their international ones. Fear of Soviet power was sincere and in some respects reasonable, but was also a foreign extension of fears over issues like rising crime, rapists, child molesters, cults, drugs, and gangs. These were problems that many Americans attributed as the legacy of the radical sixties, and as Jenkins puts it, “Popular anger and fear were aroused by perceptions of military weakness and international decline, but these issues were intimately linked to threats to the most basic realities of life: family structures and gender roles, neighborhood and community.”³⁵ It was within this political and social environment that Jimmy Carter would attempt to craft his own arms control and Soviet policy, and fight the Cold War.

³⁴ Philip Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares : The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 91.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 76.

CHAPTER 2

In recent years, historians have debated the accuracy of the Team B NIEs; but however accurate, in hindsight, the reports may have been, the experiment certainly had an effect on how intelligence was interpreted from then on, and therefore, how any president would have perceived the Soviets based on that information. Many years later, Carter's CIA Director Admiral Stanfield Turner claimed that after Team B's report, analysts tended to "lean over backwards not to underestimate the Soviet Union."³⁶ According to Willard Matthias, the Team B experiment also led to a breakdown in the CIA's ability to produce authoritative Soviet estimates, and the process became dominated by politics, the military services, and "anti-Communist ideologists, collaborating under the aegis of the Committee on the Present Danger."³⁷

Whatever the accuracy of America's intelligence gathering may have been at the time, it nevertheless seems clear that the Soviet Union *was* increasing in its confidence and ambition. When the Politburo met to discuss their plans for the Third World, Anatoly Dobrynin says that, "American complaints were not even seriously considered. The Politburo simply did not see them as a legitimate American concern and not a major factor in our relations with Washington."³⁸ Georgi Arbatov acknowledges that during the mid-1970s the Soviet Union embarked on a nuclear buildup "Possibly out of our own

³⁶ Willard C. Matthias, *America's Strategic Blunders: Intelligence Analysis and National Security Policy, 1936-1991* (University Park PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001) 311.

³⁷ Ibid 311-314. The influence of the Team B view is supported by Norman Friedman by citing a disagreement between Adm. Turner and the services over an NIE Turner wrote in 1980. According to Friedman the services "echoed Team B" in the nature of their disagreement. See: Friedman, *The Fifty Year War: Conflict and Strategy in the Cold War* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2000) 422. Derek Leebaert gives a more positive view of Team B, contending that Russian sources indicate that Team B analysts were "fundamentally correct on all the key issues" and that the team's study "was healthy and long overdue." See: Leebaert, *The Fifty Year Wound: How America's Cold War Victory Shapes Our World* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2002) 451.

³⁸ Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence* (New York : Random House, 1995) 405.

deeply rooted inferiority complex,” as well as the joy over seeing the West worry about each new weapons system as a manifestation of Soviet strength. However, Arbatov states that “we were arming ourselves like addicts, without any apparent need.”³⁹

American fears then were both real and constructed, and the two often overlapped, so it is perhaps fitting that a president like Jimmy Carter, who likewise at the time often seemed so ambiguous and contradictory, should have assumed office when Soviet intentions, and the state of U.S. security, represented such a big question mark. Even today, the words “ambiguous”, “contradictory”, “vague”, or “confusing” are often used when describing the man and his policies. For the most part, this is justified. Carter was often contradictory and vague in his public statements, and looked at as a whole, so was his Soviet policy.

In some respects this incoherence only seems such, and if looked at with an eye for subtle continuities of foreign policy *intent* rather than of style, then what happened during the Carter years starts to make more sense. It also allows one to see more clearly how the new infrastructure and language of dissent against detente in American society was shaping the nation’s foreign policy. To do this, we must focus on the aspect of President Carter’s Soviet policy that was the most vexing to the Soviets themselves, to his critics, to historians, even to some in his own administration, namely his insistence on pursuing human rights issues within the détente/SALT context.

³⁹ Georgi Arbatov, *The System : An Insider’s Life in Soviet Politics* (New York : Random House, 1992) 206.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE RETURN TO CONFRONTATION

There were changes taking place in America socially and politically when Jimmy Carter took office in 1977. The emergence of human rights politics was fast becoming a popular cause across the political spectrum. Human rights have, of course, been a part of the American national ethos from the beginning; it is woven into the language of the nation's founding documents. But for most of the nation's history, America and its leaders tended to maintain a policy of non-involvement concerning how other countries chose to treat their own people unless it was felt that the issue somehow affected U.S. national security or credibility. Human rights did not become a permanent part of the political agenda in America until the late 20th century and, as Kenneth Cmiel has pointed out, the mid 1970s in particular.⁴⁰

Key to this new political vogue was the emergence of new sources of funding for Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch and the passage of legislation by Congress before Carter assumed office. The new human rights movement was decidedly international in scope and focused on state-sponsored repression of the basic civil rights of freedom of expression, fair trials, and protection from torture as well as the right to emigrate. It provided a new way for many to view international politics, and, as Cmiel puts it, "It also, especially between 1973 and 1976, presented a sharp and explicit challenge to the cynical *realpolitik* of Richard M. Nixon's and Henry A. Kissinger's *détente*."⁴¹ Between 1970 and 1976, the number of dues paying members in the American branch of Amnesty International rose

⁴⁰ Kenneth Cmiel, "The Emergence of Human Rights Politics in the United States" *The Journal of American History*, Dec. 1999 Vol. 86, No.3. 1231-1250. Cmiel cites the years 1973 to 1978 as particularly crucial.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 1234.

from 6,000 to 35,000, and in 1977 the organization was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Most importantly, however, the human rights issue attracted an ideologically diverse group of patrons with otherwise different, even opposing, political agendas. Liberal Democrats like Senator Don Fraser of Minnesota and Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa, along with conservative anti-communists like Democrat Senator Henry “Scoop” Jackson of Washington, and Republican Senator John Ashbrook of Ohio made common cause under the human rights banner.⁴²

This bipartisan, or multi-partisan, nature of the mid-70s human rights movement can perhaps be linked to broader and deeper trends in American life that also crossed political lines, namely the growing emphasis on morality and its perceived decline in the nation. As Phillip Jenkins points out, for liberals politics was always a “profoundly moral endeavor” but that morality was limited to issues of social and racial justice. Issues of personal morality were not seen to be within the scope of government. This began to change in the 1960s so that by the early 1970s “many ordinary people actively sought public and political intervention to combat social decay.”⁴³

Likewise, during the 1960s conservatism, as epitomized by Barry Goldwater and his political philosophy, could be hawkish on issues of anti-communism and national defense, but libertarian on social issues.⁴⁴ By the mid-1970s, however, a distinct evangelical “southernization” of American politics made such social permissiveness politically untenable.⁴⁵ A significant factor contributing to this “southernization” was the

⁴² Ibid, 1235.

⁴³ Philip Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 77.

⁴⁴ Robert A. Goldberg, *Barry Goldwater* (New Haven :Yale University Press, 1995) Goldberg discusses the libertarian views on issues like abortion and marijuana legalization that Goldwater held in the 1960s.

⁴⁵ Ibid 81.

social and economic changes occurring in the nation's "sunbelt" region in the 1970s that increased the South's political power.⁴⁶ This trend brought with it a growing fundamentalist, Baptist-based, reaction to the perceived moral decline of the nation and called for Americans to put God at the center of their lives again.⁴⁷ This brand of religious conservatism helped Carter, an openly "born again" Christian, get elected, but it also "linked domestic and foreign issues in a way that now seems absolutely commonplace but which was then not seen as quite so inevitable."⁴⁸ Crucial figures in this new religious movement were televangelists like Pat Robertson, who supported Carter in 1976, and Jerry Falwell. Carter quickly fell into disfavor with both men, and they became instrumental in organizing and promulgating the opposition of a grass roots movement against the President's policies which included arms control and détente.⁴⁹

Both liberals and conservatives were concerned with the crime rate, which by the mid-1970s was in fact so high that by 1976 the Supreme Court approved the reintroduction of the death penalty.⁵⁰ Movie goers cheered in the theaters at graphic depictions of bad guys receiving brutal street justice in films like *Dirty Harry*, *Death Wish*, and *Taxi Driver*. There was also a growing consciousness over child abuse and

⁴⁶ Steve Bruce, *The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) 46-47. Among those important economic changes, according to Bruce, was the addition of high technology and aerospace industries associated with the military. See also: Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Transition in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 2001) 102-117.

⁴⁷ *Public Opinion*, March/May 1979. 60% percent of Americans polled in April 1978 identified themselves as Protestant, and of that percentage the largest portion claimed affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention. See also: Steve Bruce, *The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) 23-49.

⁴⁸ Philip Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 81. See also: William Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996) 148-153. Martin explains the advantages that Carter's openly expressed religious convictions gave him during the 1976 election.

⁴⁹ William C. Berman, *America's Right Turn From Nixon to Bush* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994) 63-64.

⁵⁰ William J. Bennett, *The Index of Leading Cultural Indicators*, (New York: Broadway Books, 1999) 10. From 1970 to 1975 total crime in the United States increased 39%. See also, pages 16 and 22. Bennett's source is the FBI.

molestation that, while reflecting an obviously reasonable concern, often took on a hysterical and sometimes homophobic quality.⁵¹ In short, Americans at this time were being increasingly swept up into a climate of fear and victimhood, and human rights provided a logical extension of these concerns into the international arena that allowed for both confrontation with the enemy and a rejection of Cold War containment dogma.

In August of 1975, the Helsinki Final Act represented a new and important form of international human rights activism. Ironically, this act, which was considered a central symbol of détente, provided a political weapon that Jimmy Carter used to return the United States to an era of confrontation with the Soviet Union and with which he would wage his brand of Cold War. The principle element of this agreement was the confirmation and acceptance of Eastern European boundaries established in 1945. The agreement was divided into three main parts, or “baskets.” Basket I provided for “Security in Europe” and consisted of ten principles of international relations that covered issues like respect of sovereignty, abjuring the threat or use of force, peaceful settlement of disputes and respect for human rights. Basket II covered cooperation in economic, scientific, and technological interests, such as the promotion of tourism and migrant labor. Basket III elaborated on the human rights language in basket I and covered cultural and educational exchange, freer movement of people, ideas and information, and contained provisions for family reunification, bi-national marriages, access to published and broadcast information.⁵²

⁵¹ Philip Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)108-151.

⁵² Lester H. Brune, *Chronological History of United States Foreign Relations Vol. 2*, (New York: Garland,1985) 1123-1124. See also: Congress, House, Committee on International Relations, *Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe : Part II : Hearings Before the Subcommittee on International and Military Affairs*, 94th Cong., 18 November 1975, and 4 May 1976, 119-184. This contains the entire text of the Final Act.

Either Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev did not fully realize the implications the Final Act, specifically Baskets I and III, or he considered the gains in the agreement to outweigh any future problems. In any case John Lewis Gaddis has argued that, “Helsinki became, in short, a legal and moral trap....Without realizing the implications, he [Brezhnev] thereby handed his critics a standard, based on universal principles of justice, rooted in international law, independent of Marxist-Leninist ideology, against which they could evaluate the behavior of his and other communist regimes.”⁵³ The “they” referred to here was not only the United States, but dissident groups and human rights organizations all over the world emboldened by the agreement who began evaluating communist behavior and found it severely wanting. “Helsinki Groups” sprouted throughout Eastern Europe, even in Moscow, with the endorsement of high profile dissidents like Andrei Sakharov.

JIMMY CARTER AND THE RETURN OF IDEOLOGY

A renewed focus on ideology was probably the most important factor that linked the Presidencies of Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. For both men their ideology had a distinct moralistic component to it. Both saw America, and its core principles, as a force for freedom, justice, and peace. The *policy* decisions that each would draw from this belief would, however, be very different, and that difference would lie in what the two Presidents saw as the most effective way to wage Cold War. Carter’s ideology was that of human rights, and compared with Reagan’s it was a bit more politically elastic and inclusive. Human rights were appealing to both conservatives and liberals albeit for different reasons. As Robert A. Strong has pointed out, conservatives saw the human

⁵³ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005) 190.

rights issue as important because it provided a way to abandon détente and step up attacks on the Soviet Union, liberals saw it as a way to limit U.S. support for right-wing dictators around the world. Regardless, the net effect of the policy was a platform, “on which George McGovern and Henry Jackson could stand side by side without much distance, or discomfort between them.”⁵⁴

This facet of Carter’s foreign policy would represent a continuity of policy initiatives begun by his predecessor President Ford. Carter criticized Ford for not taking human rights seriously. This was exemplified by Ford’s refusing to meet with Soviet dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Moreover, it seems that Carter’s human rights values came from a deeper place, born of his experience growing up in the South during the civil rights movement of the 1960s, and the lessons he drew from the success of non-violent resistance that he felt could be applied to a world wide struggle.⁵⁵

In his memoirs, Carter expressed admiration for Thomas Jefferson and Woodrow Wilson, listed human rights first among his “most important values” and hoped that the expansion of human rights “might be the wave of the future throughout the world, and [he] wanted the United States to be on the crest of this movement.”⁵⁶ Carter also believed that the nation had historically been at its strongest and most effective when it adhered to its basic values of freedom and democracy and emphasized these values in its foreign policy.⁵⁷ These were especially useful values in a post -Vietnam, post-Watergate, bicentennial election year.⁵⁸ In his inaugural address, Carter asserted that the

⁵⁴ Robert A. Strong, *Working in the World: Jimmy Carter and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000) 72-73.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 73-74.

⁵⁶ Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982) 144.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 142.

⁵⁸ Robert A. Strong, *Working in the World: Jimmy Carter and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000) 72.

nation's commitment to human rights must be "absolute" and "human dignity must be enhanced."⁵⁹ He also linked national strength abroad to domestic strength and asserted that "To be true to ourselves we must be true to others" reflecting, or maybe responding to, the connection between the domestic and the foreign noted by Phillip Jenkins. "Dirty Harry" would have agreed with President Carter's dream of a "just and peaceful world that is truly humane", though Carter's vision relied not on the use of a big gun, but rather the nation's founding principles, and the new human rights movement that he believed was on the rise.

Indicative of the type of official criticisms of Soviet non-compliance with the Helsinki agreements from the Carter White House was a report delivered to the Committee on International Relations in June 1977. The report spoke of "sharp differences between Western and Eastern interpretations of the Final Act," and accused the U.S.S.R. and its allies of using specious legalistic arguments to deemphasize the Final Act's human rights principles.⁶⁰ The report further summarized the Soviets' human rights violations against dissidents like Aleksandr Ginzburg, Yuri Orlov, Anatoli Shcharansky, and Andrey Sakharov. It also cited an Amnesty International report that at least 90 such dissidents had been convicted in the Soviet Union since the signing of the Final Act.⁶¹ Persecution of Christian religious groups was another major charge, and the report quoted Carter asserting that, "no member of the United Nations can claim that mistreatment of its citizens is solely its own business."⁶²

⁵⁹ *Public Papers of the Presidents : Jimmy Carter, 1977 Vol.1* (Washington DC :U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977) 1-4.

⁶⁰ The White House, President Jimmy Carter, *Second Semiannual Report by the President to the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Report Submitted to The Committee on International Relations (June 1977)*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington : 1977, 3.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 7-8.

However, Carter's handling of the human rights issue would quickly become a target of criticism for the neo-conservatives. Even relatively centrist neo conservatives like Daniel Patrick Moynihan disparaged the President's approach as too soft on the Soviet Union because it focused too much on the human rights abuses of third world nations (some friendly to the U.S.), and diverted attention from the "central struggle of our time" between democracy and communism.⁶³ This was a view that was shared across the spectrum of opposition to détente, including the neo-conservatives, the religious right, American Jewry, and the rest of the public.

However, it was this inherent tension between the President's view of how to confront the Soviets, and what the opponents of détente and SALT, which increasingly would include the American public, saw as the best way to meet rising Soviet power that would characterize the return to confrontation during Carter's Presidency. Conservatives embraced the fight for human rights as a way to put pressure on the Soviet government, but they also felt human rights alone would not ensure America's safety. Paul Nitze's *Foreign Affairs* article, published a year before Carter took office, would prove to be only the beginning of a sustained and increasing attack on détente and Soviet policies. Nitze's fellow CPD member Norman Podhoretz provided a regular forum for the emerging neo-conservative critique of U.S.-Soviet relations in his magazine, *Commentary*.

Whereas Nitze's January 1976 article represented cautious skepticism about the possible dangers of détente, Theodore Draper was, in February that same year, characterizing détente as appeasement in new packaging.⁶⁴ Specifically, he contended that appeasement had been "built into" détente due to a combination of naïve concessions

⁶³ John Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism: Intellectuals and Foreign Affairs* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) 94.

⁶⁴ Theodore Draper, "Appeasement & Détente" *Commentary*, Feb. 1976. 27-38.

and “incentives” given to the Soviets, who were “unappeasable” and unquestionably expansionist. Two months later Podhoretz accused liberal American isolationists (i.e. liberals against U.S. aid to anti-Communist forces in Africa and elsewhere) of “Making the World Safe for Communism” and by July 1977 Richard Pipes was explaining “Why the Soviet Union Thinks it Could Fight and Win a Nuclear War.”⁶⁵ Both Draper’s and Podhoretz’s articles linked their critiques of détente to a lack of resolve on the human rights issues by both the Nixon and Ford administrations, but they also linked it to what they saw as a growing imbalance of *power* in the Soviet’s favor. Put another way, they echoed Carter’s belief that the will to support human rights reflected the nation’s will to live up to its core principles, but they did so in a decidedly partisan, anti-communist manner that demanded a rejection of détente. Podhoretz rejected Carter’s idea of denouncing *all* oppressive governments, maintaining that U.S. supported dictatorships at least had a fighting chance to acquire democratic freedoms (e.g. Spain and Portugal), as opposed to the Communist world, “where there is still not a single instance of any Communist regime being overthrown and succeeded by a democratic government...”⁶⁶

Richard Pipes’ article focused more specifically on matters of military doctrine, specifically the difference in understanding the two nations had about the purpose of maintaining a nuclear arsenal and the goals of nuclear warfare between the two nations. Pipes concluded that the Soviets did, and always had, believed that nuclear war, while certainly a costly and destructive option, was nevertheless winnable. They did not invest the same amount of faith in mutual deterrence as the United States, and American

⁶⁵ Norman Podhoretz, “Making the World Safe for Communism” *Commentary*, April 1976. 31-41. See also Richard Pipes, “Why the Soviet Union Thinks it Could Fight and Win a Nuclear War.” *Commentary*, July 1977. 21-34.

⁶⁶ Podhoretz, *Commentary*, April 1976. 40.

leadership was deluding itself in this regard through a dangerous “combination of arrogance and ignorance.”⁶⁷ He linked this ignorance to an even deeper misunderstanding of a Soviet mindset that viewed life with “an extreme Social Darwinist outlook” that held that only cunning and coercion ensured survival, and that this attitude “permeates the Russian elites as well as the Russian masses.”⁶⁸ Moreover, SALT overlooked the important issue of *qualitative* improvements within established weapons quotas, and the size of Soviet land and sea forces.⁶⁹

The apparent growth in the size and quality of the Soviet navy was a particular concern for U.S. military analysts throughout the 1970s. Admiral Stansfield Turner, whom President Carter appointed Director of Central Intelligence on March 9, 1977, shared these concerns about the Soviet navy in an article in *Foreign Affairs* published shortly after his appointment as CIA director.⁷⁰ In this article, Turner criticized the manner in which U.S. and Soviet navies had been traditionally compared. In short, he contended that too much emphasis had been placed on raw numbers (mainly of ships and subs) at the expense of thoughtful consideration of how naval power related to each nation’s respective goals, security concerns, and geo-political agenda. The differences in these factors determined different military needs, and hence the differences in technological and war fighting capabilities of the two navies.

Nevertheless, he was still able to come to some general conclusions, specifically, that in the area of anti-submarine warfare the balance was tipping against the United

⁶⁷ Pipes, *Commentary*, July 1977. 22.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 26.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 34. Historian Paul Boyer stresses this same basic flaw in the SALT approach in his article “From Activism to Apathy: The American People and Nuclear Weapons, 1963-1980” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 70, No. 4 March 1984. Boyer argues that by 1972 the growing qualitative improvements, by both nations, in existing weapons, “emerged as the most volatile feature of the nuclear arms race” 827.

⁷⁰ Adm. Stansfield Turner, “The Naval Balance : Not Just a Numbers Game” *Foreign Affairs*, April 1977, Vol. 55, Issue 3. 339-354.

States, and that an increase in Soviet missile firing naval aircraft *could* tip the balance in their favor in the future. More importantly, Admiral Turner made an even more insightful and astute observation about how cleverly the Soviet Union was playing the arms game when he wrote, “Realizing that they [the Soviets] are dealing with perceptions, they are gaining maximum advantage from the fact that any change is news,” and this change “creates the impression of improvement as the Soviet move from little to more.”⁷¹ Moreover, Turner argued that as the U.S. Navy drew down from traditional deployments, the Soviets had simultaneously increased its global deployments and, in a statement that echoes President Lincoln’s quote when he observed that, “It seems a confirmation of the claim that we are a declining sea power and that they are a growing and restive one. The invalidity of that claim is academic if it is universally believed.”⁷²

The overall relevance of Turner’s article is that it reflects what seems to have been a fundamental way of thinking about arms control in the Carter Administration. Namely, that comparative military strength could not be reduced simply to numbers. Arms control is a complex issue, filled with ambiguity reflected in the equally ambiguous ways that Carter would speak and act on the issue and in how he would *react* to the sometimes ambiguous Soviet actions and pronouncements. The article also conveyed an overall attitude of conservative moderation on national defense requirements, and simultaneously a prudent caution over the nature of the Soviet threat. Turner closed his article with an implicit warning, that while the Soviet Union was a latecomer as a sea

⁷¹ Ibid, 346.

⁷² Ibid, 346.

power, it “exhibits many of the traits of nineteenth century imperialism exercised with all the resources of supertechnology...”⁷³

Turner was a midshipman with Carter at Annapolis, and at his swearing in as DCI the President expressed his deep admiration for the Admiral and confidence in Turner’s ability to provide “superb leadership” for the task of intelligence gathering and coordination.⁷⁴ Even though Turner may not have been the most consistently influential person in the Carter administration, it seems reasonable to assume that Turner communicated his ideas to the President and that those ideas made an impression. The article clearly made an impression on the U.S. Senate in 1977, specifically on their Committee on the Budget. The entire text was included in a Senate study entitled “The Military Balance between NATO and The Warsaw Pact.”⁷⁵ The study was a part of a larger Senate hearing on the defense budget for fiscal year 1978, and Turner’s article was only one of several by defense experts who gave cautiously optimistic appraisals of the U.S.-Soviet strategic balance.

Put simply, by the time Carter took office, even nonpartisan expert opinion on America’s strategic vulnerability seemed to skirt the line between prudence and paranoia. In the summer 1976 John D. Steinbruner and Thomas Garwin of Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government attempted to discern exactly where that line could be drawn in an article in *International Security*.⁷⁶ The article is highly technical, but their salient points were that many technical realities of nuclear weapons, including

⁷³ Ibid, 354.

⁷⁴ *Public Papers of the Presidents: Jimmy Carter, 1977 Vol.1* (Washington DC:U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977) 350-352.

⁷⁵ U.S. Congress, Senate, *Hearings Before The Committee on the Budget, First Concurrent Resolution on the Budget- Fiscal Year 1978*, 95th Cong. , First sess. , 8 March 1977, Vol. 1. 230-239.

⁷⁶ John D. Steinbruner and Thomas M. Garwin, “Strategic Vulnerability : The Balance between Prudence and Paranoia” *International Security*, Summer 1976, Vol. 1, No.1, 138-181.

the effects of an all out nuclear exchange were a mystery for the simple reason it had never occurred. Likewise, the performance of nuclear weapons, specifically regarding warhead accuracy and reliability, under actual combat conditions is also rife with unknowns. The authors made modest predictions about Soviet technological improvement and the threat it would pose. However, their general conclusions were still ambiguous because “The full consequences of nuclear war cannot be calculated with much assurance, and, as far as objective validity is concerned, even the most exacting analysis is destined to be overwhelmed by uncertainty.”⁷⁷ However, they concluded that the implication of weighing these uncertainties against known generalities about nuclear weapons technology meant that, “it would be more pathological than prudent to undertake major changes in the deployed strategic forces of the United States in order to solve the problem of vulnerability...”⁷⁸ They also argued that the gains from major upgrades in weaponry would be gains mainly in the form of the “elusive” area of political perception, and would be out weighed by the enormous monetary cost and the burden put on existing command and control systems, thereby *degrading* the effectiveness of America’s military capability.⁷⁹

Here again was a call, not for military force reductions, but for caution and modest change. It is unknown whether President Carter ever actually read Steinburner’s and Garwin’s article, but it is certainly the type of literature he did read. Overall, therefore, informed opinion on national defense ranged from the alarmist, virulently anti-communist to the cautious voice of reason and moderation. But even in the most sanguine estimates of the strategic balance, there were hints of danger. Senate hearings,

⁷⁷ Ibid, 168.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 170.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 170.

while largely neutral in tone, nevertheless included a statement by Senator Sam Nunn, of Georgia, speaking before the New York Militia Association, in which he used the historically potent term “blitzkrieg” to characterize Soviet war fighting doctrine in Western Europe.⁸⁰

In sum, by 1978 there was a developing view in the United States of the U.S.-Soviet strategic relationship that was masked in ambiguity, but which identified a dangerous Soviet threat. Critics of détente and SALT like Nitze, Pipes, and Podhoretz insisted that this threat be made more explicit to the American people, and they set about doing just that. The public and the mainstream media began to agree with them in increasing number as the 1970s wore on. Philip Jenkins sums up the trajectory of public sentiment well by observing that domestic worries coincided with international ones and, “these issues encouraged a sense of imminent apocalypse, a term that can be used with little exaggeration to describe the national mood of 1980.”⁸¹

Jimmy Carter’s Soviet policy can be seen as consisting of two distinct characteristics: a clear ideological crusade to pressure the Soviet Union into improving its human rights record, and a national defense policy that called for pursuing strategic arms limits while maintaining a credible strategic deterrent that was not destabilizing. Human rights was Carter’s method of waging Cold War in the most politically advantageous way

⁸⁰ U.S. Congress, Senate, *Hearings Before The Committee on the Budget, First Concurrent Resolution on the Budget- Fiscal Year 1978*, 95th Cong. , First sess. , 1977, Vol. 1. 203-204. The actual quote reads : “The Soviets and their Warsaw Pact allies have prepared to wage a short war of singular violence, preceded by little warning, and characterized by a massive blitzkrieg which seems aimed at overwhelming NATO forces deployed in the Center before they can be augmented from outside the European theatre.”

⁸¹ Philip Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 16. See also: David Frum, *How We Got Here : The 70s Decade That Brought You Modern Life (For Better or Worse)* (New York : Basic Books, 2000) 144-166. Frum surveys the various sources of American’s growing doom laden pessimisms, ranging from religious millennial rhetoric to popular predictions of environmental catastrophe. See also: *Public Opinion*, June/July 1979. The number of Americans who felt that the nation was in “deep and serious trouble” rose steadily from 41% in July 1977, to 67% in April of 1979. p.21

possible, something that every U.S. President since 1945 had to do in the most politically feasible way open to them. What remains is to explain just how confrontational this human rights agenda was by looking at the Soviet reaction to it, and how the combination of this reaction, the nature of the Brezhnev government, and the growing infrastructure of dissent against détente at home, shaped Carter's decisions and linked him to the hard line for which his successor would become known.

CHAPTER 3

Only six days after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, President Carter told ABC news anchor Frank Reynolds, “My opinion of the Russians has changed most drastically the last week than even the previously two years before that.” There was a distinct tone of disbelief in his remarks as he paused, and occasionally stammered slightly that suggested an implicit inclusion of himself when he said that it was “only now dawning upon the world the ...magnitude of the action the Soviets undertook.”⁸² Carter had awakened to a new rude reality in which he felt his Soviet partner in détente had deceived him. In hindsight, his surprise seems startling when one considers, as Adam Ulam puts it, “This was the President of the United States, with his special sources of intelligence, innumerable expert advisers, and his own prior first-hand experience in dealing with Brezhnev and his colleagues!”⁸³ Indeed, Ulam’s observation suggests that in the Carter administration there existed a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of the Soviet government under Brezhnev.

Considering it now, in its historical entirety, it seems clear that the Soviets played an unintentional role in the infrastructure of dissent against détente. They held a fundamentally different conception of what détente was supposed to be and what it was supposed to achieve, and they approached the arms control aspect of the process half-heartedly at best. Politically, and therefore culturally, the Soviet Union was following a different political path than the United States. The basic Soviet conception of détente was, broadly speaking, twofold; it was a process of obtaining American acceptance of

⁸² Jimmy Carter, interview by Frank Reynolds, *ABC World New Tonight*, December 31, 1979, ABC News Transcripts.

⁸³ Adam Ulam, *Dangerous Relations : The Soviet Union in World Politics, 1970-1982*, (New York : Oxford University Press, 1983) 4.

Soviet strategic and political equality, and a method of gaining economic and technological benefits while biding time until the eventual collapse of capitalism. Therefore, Soviet détente, and its stress on peaceful coexistence, did not preclude the continuation of socialist struggle against an aggressive imperialist West.⁸⁴ *Advantage* rather than peace then was the ultimate goal of Soviet détente and their policy, as Raymond Garthoff explains, always contained “a strong competitive element” and was “guided by calculations of relative cost, risk, and gain in any initiative or response.”⁸⁵ Recently released and translated Warsaw Pact documents indicate that by the mid-1970s the initial Soviet confidence in its own strategic parity with the West, and NATO’s comparative weakness, had given way to a perception of insecurity and a perceived imbalance of power in NATO’s favor.⁸⁶ Suspicion, growing NATO defense budgets, and the increasing influence of the military and other hard liners would lead Brezhnev, in November 1978, to assert that, “one could anticipate a massive attack against détente, against the policies of the socialist states.”⁸⁷

However, anti-western suspicion and belligerency was an established facet of Soviet culture long before the détente’s death in the late 70s. Émigré Cathy Young recalls as a third grader, in 1973, being taught confrontational poems with titles like “Them and Us” that spoke of the dollars that “they” would use to “furnish murderers with deadly tools;” and included caricatured illustrations of evil looking, hawk nosed capitalists with a bag of money in one hand and a missile in the other, juxtaposed with a

⁸⁴ Raymond Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 40-45.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 54.

⁸⁶ Vojtech Mastny and Malcolm Byrne ed. *A Cardboard Castle? An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1991* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2005) 44-47.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 419.

big blond, muscular worker in overalls .⁸⁸ Likewise, Hedrick Smith reported on the militarized nature of Soviet schools, and how in 1973 textbooks for ninth and tenth graders assured students that “the U.S. has not turned away from its aggressive course” and explained how the requirements for military readiness had *grown* because of the dangers posed by “imperialist circles.”⁸⁹ More recently, Robert Conquest asserted that throughout the entire *détente* period the Soviet government maintained a continuous flow of propaganda at home and abroad to undermine Western governments.⁹⁰ These are simply cultural reflections of the two most important characteristics of Leonid Brezhnev’s government : one that it was conservative, stuck in ideological tradition, and resistant to radical change ; and two, that by the mid-1970s, the military increasingly influenced and shaped policy to a degree perhaps never seen before in Soviet history.

In this respect the Soviet government of the 1970s stood as a mirror of its leader, or perhaps he mirrored it. Whatever the case, as Dmitri Volkogonov writes, Leonid Brezhnev “was a man of one dimension, with the psychology of a middle ranking Party functionary, vain, wary, and conventional. He was afraid of sharp turns, terrified of reform, but was capable of twisting the Party line in whatever direction the hierarchy desired.”⁹¹ From 1973 onward he suffered several strokes. By the mid seventies his authority rested squarely on a system of cronyism. His Politburo was composed mostly

⁸⁸ Cathy Young, *Growing Up in Moscow : Memories of a Soviet Girlhood*, (New York : Ticknor & Fields, 1989) 41-42.

⁸⁹ Hedrick Smith, *The Russians*, (New York : Ballantine Books, 1976) 426-428.

⁹⁰ Robert Conquest, *Reflections on a Ravaged Century*, (New York : W.W. Norton & Company, 2000) 170.

⁹¹ Dmitri Volkogonov, *Autopsy For an Empire : The Seven Leaders Who Built the Soviet Regime*, (New York : The Free Press, 1998) 264.

of promotees from the Stalin era whose average age by 1980 was sixty nine and whose “fundamental attitudes to politics and economics had been formed before 1953.”⁹²

Much the same was true of Brezhnev’s close associates who included future General Secretary Konstantin Chernenko (Central Committee secretary in 1977) and Nikolai Tikhonov who served as First Deputy Chairman. Some of these associates and acquaintances included military officers who had fallen into disfavor under Khrushchev but to whom Brezhnev had remained friendly. The most notable of these were Marshall Andrei Grechko and Admiral Sergey Gorshkov. Brezhnev repaid their friendship after taking power with important and influential appointments in the government.⁹³

Of these two military figures, it is Marshal Grechko with his election to Minister of Defense and his promotion to the Politburo as a voting member in May 1973. Many historians and Soviet experts consider the most significant, mainly because it was seen as indicative of the growing power and influence of the military in Soviet politics and policy making, especially by the late years of the Brezhnev era.⁹⁴ As early as 1973, Soviet experts recognized that an important change had occurred in the relationship between

⁹² Robert Service, *A History of Twentieth Century Russia* (Cambridge Mass : Harvard University Press, 1997) 404-405. See also: William E. Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) 18. Odom mentions the lack of administrative purges under Brezhnev and the “diffusion of bureaucratic power” that “continued unabated” during his rule.

⁹³ Georgi Arbatov, *The System : An Insider’s Life in Politics* (New York: Random House, 1992) 174-175. Arbatov explains that, “Brezhnev was indebted to the military for its support and liked to see himself as a war hero.” and beginning with his experience as head of the defense industry Brezhnev, “had grown accustomed to granting the generals and military industrialists what they wanted.”

⁹⁴ Jerry F. Hough and Merle Fainsod, *How the Soviet Union is Governed* (Cambridge Mass : Harvard University Press, 1979)391-396. Although Hough and Fainsod believe that putting too much emphasis on the military is “misleading,” they acknowledge that in the Brezhnev era the military had more reasons to be satisfied than under Khrushchev. They also acknowledge the observations of commentators that the military may have then [1979] been “more powerful than suggested earlier.” See also : Harry Gelman, *The Brezhnev Politburo and the Decline of Détente* , (Ithaca NY : Cornell University Press, 1984) 46-47. Georgi Arbatov, *The System : An Insider’s Life in Soviet Politics* , (New York : Times Books, 1992) 201-202. Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, (New York : Times Books, 1995) 350. Dobrynin mentions the “strong pressure” that the Soviet leadership was under from the military regarding details of SALT negotiations.

military and civilian leadership in the government. Marshall Grechko's new position suggested "a new departure in army-party relations and in the system of checks and balances hitherto maintained by the Soviet political leadership." Moreover, this new development was seen as so far representing, "the military leaders' nearest point of access to the party chief on a constitutional basis."⁹⁵ By 1977 Soviet military expert Edward L. Warner could confidently state that, "throughout the Brezhnev period the Soviet military has most certainly been well treated by the political leadership." and "the Ministry of Defense has most likely become accustomed to having a significant voice in defense-related matters..."⁹⁶

Although Brezhnev's inner circle was not composed entirely of military people most, like KGB chief Yuri Andropov, were conservative ideologues whose attitudes toward foreign policy, including détente, were characterized by suspicion, caution, and duplicity. The more the Soviet leader's health deteriorated, the more this group of flatterers and self serving bureaucrats began to shape foreign policy from behind the scenes.⁹⁷

These basic characteristics translated into a Soviet conception of détente and arms control fundamentally different from the Carter administration's goals. The effect of this, in turn, was that although the two nations pursued the same goal in name, they nevertheless followed different paths. Like two travelers who agree that their destination is "Paris" but fail to realize that one means France and the other Texas, the two

⁹⁵ Malcolm Mackintosh, "The Soviet Military : Influence on Foreign Policy" *Problems of Communism*, Sept-Oct. 1973, 3.

⁹⁶ Edward L. Warner III, *The Military in Contemporary Soviet Politics: An Institutional Analysis* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1977)53.

⁹⁷ Dmitri Volkogonov, *Autopsy For an Empire : The Seven Leaders Who Built the Soviet Regime*, (New York : The Free Press, 1998) 262-328. Brezhnev is characterized as a "puppet" throughout this chapter devoted to his rule.

superpowers found themselves moving radically away from each other by the late 1970s, with the basic spirit of détente becoming attenuated to the breaking point.

In 1975 Raymond Garthoff observed a virtual absence of references to SALT in Soviet military literature, yet he noted that the military's participation in SALT planning "has been active and vigorous at all levels." Furthermore, he surmised that the effect of this was a conservative and cautious influence on Soviet positions born of a concern for undercutting the case for a strong military posture.⁹⁸ Harry Gelman sees 1975 as the "decisive crossover" point in Politburo attitudes away from "the expectations of grandiose benefits from bilateral relationship toward a more forthright flaunting of the pursuit of competitive advantage." He cites the effort to support a Communist take over in Portugal, growing involvement in Africa, and the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 as the three events which had the greatest effect of the evolution of Soviet behavior.⁹⁹ Also influential was the American humiliation after the fall of South Vietnam in 1975, a humiliation that made possible largely through the increased Soviet military aid that allowed North Vietnam to ignore the terms of the 1973 peace agreements.¹⁰⁰

This emphasis on advantage and American humiliation after 1975 was simply an expression of a policy continuity based on the concept of the "correlation of forces." This idea entails both military and nonmilitary concerns, but in the context of détente, it specifically meant an advantageous *strategic* position in relation to the United States, both in geopolitical terms and relative raw military strength. Soviet leadership under Brezhnev held a world view that centered on an expectation of lasting struggle with the

⁹⁸ Raymond Garthoff, "SALT and the Soviet Military," *Problems of Communism*, Jan.-Feb. 1975, 25 & 29.

⁹⁹ Harry Gelman, *The Brezhnev Politburo and the Decline of Détente*, (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1984) 162-173.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 164.

West.”¹⁰¹ Peace was not the ultimate Soviet aim of détente, the very concept for them meant a world safe for “national liberation movements” and the socialist world in general. It was a means of biding time, by obstructing Western military development and influence, to allow for an ultimate ideological victory under the guise of peaceful coexistence.¹⁰²

This translated in the SALT negotiation to a half-hearted attempt at arms control. The Soviet government exploited the vague, open ended language of SALT I in the Vladivostok Accords of 1974 to pursue a modernization and expansion of their strategic nuclear capability.¹⁰³ In the mid-1970s, new generations of nuclear-capable tactical aircraft and more accurate, and multiple warheads (MIRVed), ICBMs began to appear in the Soviet arsenal.¹⁰⁴ This was mainly possible because of the provisions, or *lack of* provisions, of the Vladivostok Accord. This agreement had resulted from a summit meeting arranged by Kissinger between President Ford and Brezhnev ostensibly as a “getting to know you” session. It produced an accord which served as a stop gap agreement until SALT II negotiations could begin in earnest. The agreement set overall levels of strategic nuclear weapons launchers (meaning ground based silos, bombers, and submarines that could launch nuclear weapons) at 2,400 for each side.¹⁰⁵ The agreement

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 25-27.

¹⁰² Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American – Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, revised edition (Washington D.C., Brookings Institution, 1994) 50-56.

¹⁰³ Georgi Arbatov, *The System: An Insider’s Life in Soviet Politics*, (New York: Times Books, 1992) 206. Arbatov’s comment that “we were arming ourselves like addicts.” Also on page 204 he mentions SS-20 deployments in the second half of the 1970s.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas B. Cochran et al., *Nuclear Weapons Databook Vol. IV: Soviet Nuclear Weapons*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1989) 11.

¹⁰⁵ Within this limit, a sub ceiling of 1,320 missiles could have multiple warheads (MIRVs). The Soviets agreed to this because the limits were high enough that it left intact the weapons they cared most about (ICBMs) and it did not affect the ongoing MIRVing program for their missiles. Also, the 1,320 sub limit did not address the issue of bombers, (that was to be addressed in SALT II), and left the issue of what constituted a “heavy” bomber in a gray area. As such, this left the Soviets free to pursue whatever aircraft programs they wanted, specifically their Tu-26 “Backfire” bomber that was so worrisome to the Pentagon.

did not, however, propose any constraints on *qualitative* improvements in weapons systems, allowing both sides to upgrade existing weapons in terms of accuracy, reliability, offensive capability, and overall performance.

Within the terms of the agreement, both sides had a “freedom to mix,” meaning they could have more bombers than ICBMs, or more submarines than the other two. As one expert observed years later, the Vladivostok agreement did not accomplish that much. It allowed the U.S. an additional 258 launchers above SALT I limits and only reduced Soviet launchers by only 99.¹⁰⁶ It also left undefined the issue of the cruise missile, a new type of weapon perfected in the mid-1970s by the United States and “the object of the latest Soviet phobia.”¹⁰⁷

Regardless of these problems, Brezhnev and the rest of the Soviet leadership remained satisfied by the provisions of the Vladivostok Accord and subsequently used this agreement as the measuring stick against which any subsequent proposals would be judged. For them, Vladivostok essentially *was* SALT II, and in their conservatism they saw no reason to deviate far from it.¹⁰⁸

This combination of civilian conservatism and the influence of the military produced Soviet policy decisions that sought to retain the competitive advantages gained

¹⁰⁵ Strobe Talbott, *Endgame: The Inside Story of SALT II*, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1979) Talbott confirms the cautious nature of the Brezhnev regime and cite several examples of how the Soviet used Vladivostok as their touchstone for subsequent talks. See pages 45-48, 65, 67, 70, 127. See also : Odd Arne Westad ed., *The Fall of Détente : Soviet American Relations during the Carter Years* (Oslo : Scandinavian University Press, 1997) 12. Westad points out that Brezhnev considered the Vladivostok agreement the “peak of his achievement” during the détente era.

¹⁰⁶ Dietrich Schroer, *Science, Technology, and the Nuclear Arms Race*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1984) 384.

¹⁰⁷ Strobe Talbott, *Endgame*, 34.

¹⁰⁸ Strobe Talbott, *Endgame*. Talbott confirms the cautious nature of the Brezhnev regime and cite several examples of how the Soviets used Vladivostok as their touchstone for subsequent talks. See pages 45-48, 65, 67, 70, 127. See also : Odd Arne Westad ed., *The Fall of Détente : Soviet American Relations during the Carter Years* (Oslo : Scandinavian University Press, 1997) 12. Westad points out that Brezhnev considered the Vladivostok agreement the “peak of his achievement” during the détente era.

in the early 1970s, and to exploit this advantage to further political expansion and influence around the world. Soviet policy was, therefore, a strange combination of caution and suspicion toward the U.S. and NATO and ambition and adventurism in the third world. The net result of these two characteristics was a Soviet government that, by the late 1970s, took a particularly defensive stance out of fear of losing strategic and political gains, and of being obstructed from obtaining further competitive advantage. President Carter's noble, but ill-conceived, focus on human rights and linkage of Soviet behavior in general exacerbated the already defensive and suspicious posture of Soviet policy on arms control and relations with the United States.

Jimmy Carter found out just how stubborn and conservative the Soviets could be early in his presidency when his administration proposed a revised arms control agreement in March 1977. The President and his senior foreign policy team, which included Secretary of Defense Harold Brown and National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, proposed more dramatic cuts in nuclear arms than were provided by the Vladivostok agreement. This new proposal sought to reduce the Vladivostok limit of 2,400 strategic launchers to between 1,800 and 2,000 such systems. It required the Soviets to dismantle half of their 300 very large ICBMs, and both sides would forgo the deployment of any new ICBMs. It also proposed to limit the range of the cruise missile to 2,500 km, and if deployed on an aircraft, the plane and the missiles together would count as a MIRVed strategic weapon. The Backfire bomber was removed from the debate entirely as long as the Soviets promised to not develop it as a long range weapon. In return, the U.S. would cancel the development of the B-1 bomber and the Trident submarine.

Robert Strong surmised that the proposal was attractive to Harold Brown because it solved the problems of American missile vulnerability that so concerned Paul Nitze and some defense analysts in the Pentagon. As Strong reasons, the acceptance of this “deep cuts” proposal by the Soviets would have made the dire interpretations of Soviet strategic build up, presumably by groups like the Committee on the Present Danger, less plausible.¹⁰⁹ Olav Njolstad echoes this conclusion, stating that Carter was particularly attracted to Nitze’s arguments that deep cuts would be the best way to enhance strategic stability and solve the problem of “the window of vulnerability” threatening the nation’s Minuteman missile force that so concerned Nitze and Senator Henry Jackson.¹¹⁰

The proposal failed because the Soviets flatly rejected it and saw it as an attempt to scrap the Vladivostok accord in favor of an agreement that would unfairly benefit the United States. Georgi Arbatov felt that the deep cuts proposal, “confirmed the impression in Moscow that Carter was not serious.”¹¹¹ Anatoly Dobrynin also saw a lack of American seriousness in the proposal and felt that it was, “an attempt to harass us, to embarrass us.”¹¹² Because of his pride over Vladivostok Brezhnev in particular took the deep cuts proposal as a personal affront, and the Soviet negotiators felt that the Americans did not appreciate the effort he had to exert within the Politburo to get the

¹⁰⁹ Robert A. Strong, *Working in the World : Jimmy Carter and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, (Baton Rouge : Louisiana State University Press, 2000) 37-38.

¹¹⁰ Odd Arne Westad ed., *The Fall of Détente : Soviet American Relations during the Carter Years* (Oslo : Scandinavian University Press, 1997) 37-38.

¹¹¹ Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American – Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, revised edition (Washington D.C., Brookings Institution, 1994) 626.

¹¹² Westad ed., *The Fall of Detente* 15.

accords approved.¹¹³ In sum, the deep cuts proposal was too drastic for the Brezhnev government and hence viewed with suspicion and anger.

Senator Henry “Scoop” Jackson had been a major influence in the formulation of the March “deep cuts” proposal. In February 1977, a twenty-three page memo crafted by the senator and his aide Richard Perle explained their criticisms of Nixon’s and Ford’s arms control policies. It was submitted to Carter while his administration was working on what would become the March proposal.¹¹⁴ Carter took the recommendations of this memo very seriously, including what the president would call “Scoop’s ambitious demands.”¹¹⁵ Carter was anxious to make progress on arms control, but also wanted to win the support of conservatives like Henry Jackson. When the draft of the March proposal was completed, both Jackson and Perle were pleased, feeling that it was “eminently reasonable and sensible.”¹¹⁶ This may seem like a strange position for someone as hawkish as Senator Jackson until one considers, as Dan Caldwell has suggested, that the memo and proposal constituted a political “honey trap” set to trip up Carter in his arms control negotiations with the Soviets.¹¹⁷ Whether meant as a trap or not, it did, as Caldwell observes, illustrate “Carter’s desire to achieve an arms control agreement that was acceptable to conservatives such as Senator Jackson.”¹¹⁸

President Carter was neither a naïve nor foolish man when it came to the intricacies and subtleties of international diplomacy and arms control. He was certainly

¹¹³ Strobe Talbott, *Endgame: The Inside Story of SALT II*, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1979) 73. Talbott describes how a deputy of Andrei Gromyko admonished Paul Warnke to not disregard the “political blood” Brezhnev spilled over Vladivostok.

¹¹⁴ Dan Caldwell, *The Dynamics of Domestic Politics and Arms Control*, (Columbia, S.C. : University of South Carolina Press, 1991) 40.

¹¹⁵ Ibid 40.

¹¹⁶ Ibid 40-41.

¹¹⁷ Ibid 42. Caldwell quotes a staff member of the National Security Council as making the characterization. On the same page he also quotes Richard Perle that “the Soviet reaction was predictable.”

¹¹⁸ Ibid 42.

not ignorant of the technical details and important strategic considerations regarding national defense and nuclear deterrent. However, he did come to the White House with a bold and lofty vision of a world with far fewer nuclear weapons than then existed, with the ultimate goal of eliminating nuclear weapons altogether. Carter placed a great deal of stock in the efficacy of direct conversations and the power of personal “heart to heart” talks in resolving international disputes. The best evidence of this is found in Carter’s own words, in his memoir, *Keeping Faith*. Carter points out that all of his letters to Brezhnev were “quite personal in nature--I even wrote some of them in long hand.”¹¹⁹ He felt that a summit meeting between himself and Brezhnev, “would take care of any problems of great importance after our subordinates had hammered out acceptable compromises ahead of time.”¹²⁰ In his description of the Vienna summit meeting that led to the signing of SALT II in 1979, Carter places a great amount of importance on the private chats that allowed him and Brezhnev to talk as “real people.” He was genuinely touched when the Soviet leader said, with his hand on Carter’s shoulder, “If we do not succeed, God will not forgive us.” Carter seemed sincerely convinced that these personal moments “bridged the gap between us more effectively than any official talk.”¹²¹

The salient point here is that President Carter made the mistake of believing that in his talks with Leonid Brezhnev, he was effectively dealing with the legitimate source of Soviet political power, and that was clearly not the case. Carter and his administration faced a conservative, militaristic, ideologically stagnant oligarchy whose view of what détente meant fundamentally differed from the United States’. This failure to understand the essential nature of the Soviet government in the 1970s accounts for President Carter’s

¹¹⁹ Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith*, (New York : Bantam Books, 1982) 223.

¹²⁰ Ibid 232.

¹²¹ Ibid 244-245.

rude awakening in December of 1979, and his “drastically” changed opinion of the Russians in those days after the invasion of Afghanistan. Therefore, by 1978, the Soviet government became an unintentional part of the body of dissent against détente, along with special interest groups like the Committee on the Present Danger, human rights organizations, the growing neo-conservative movement, conservative Democrats, and the religious right.

America’s new brand of religious conservatism was another phenomenon that Carter misunderstood. The religious right misunderstood him as well, and the support they provided in the 1976 campaign quickly gave way to disillusion and disappointment. As William Martin points out, during the first two years of his presidency, “Jimmy Carter saw much of his evangelical and other conservative support slip away because people felt he had not lived up to the promise of his campaign.”¹²² Particularly indicative of this loss of support were the negative feelings by prominent conservative ministers like Jerry Falwell, Oral Roberts, Rex Humbard, Tim LaHaye, Jim Bakker and Charles Stanley toward Carter after a January 1980 White House breakfast with the President. During this breakfast, Carter gave what the ministers believed were non-committal or “off the wall” answers to questions concerning subjects like abortion and the ERA. The final verdict according to LaHaye was “We had a man in the White House who professed to be a Christian, but didn’t understand how un-Christian his administration was.”¹²³

Disenchantment with Carter coincided with the religious right’s desire to expand its base and support. Jerry Falwell in particular was one of these ambitious evangelicals and, with the help of theologian Francis Schaeffer, he discovered the concept of

¹²²Quoted in, William Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America*, (New York: Broadway Books, 1996) 173.

¹²³ Ibid 189.

“cobelligerency.” This meant the process of finding an issue over which people who may differ theologically, or on other issues, will nevertheless fight on the same side over certain causes or goals.¹²⁴ One of those issues was anti-Communism and the concomitant resistance to détente and arms control. Falwell’s Moral Majority and organizations like The Christian Voice went on record as opposing SALT II and favoring increased defense spending. Falwell lamented the fact that in a nuclear exchange, more Americans than Russians would die because of the Soviet’s antiballistic missiles and civil defense, and he attacked politicians on religious grounds if they voted against the B-1 bomber. A Falwell associate explained the rationale for this involvement in such non-religious matters. “It was a very real threat, and Falwell had an easy time rallying people for a strong America.”¹²⁵

By 1978, the combined demands of the upcoming congressional election, Soviet intransigence over arms control, and the criticisms of special interest groups began to move Carter in a more hard line direction that favored a steady increase in military spending. Biographers and historians, as well as journalists at the time, writing of the President and his administration often comment on how Carter seemed to vacillate between the opinion of his two most important foreign policy advisers, Zbigniew Brzezinski and Cyrus Vance. Brzezinski, as national security advisor, had a reputation for being bold, outspoken, and blunt in his negotiating style. As a Pole, he had no great affection for the Soviet Union and he favored a tougher line in Soviet policy than Vance. Strobe Talbott described Brzezinski’s impatience with the slow pace of SALT

¹²⁴ Ibid 197.

¹²⁵ Ibid 210-211.

negotiations, his deep mistrust of the Soviets, and his idea of SALT being a “truth test” of Soviet intentions.¹²⁶

The changes in Carter’s attitude are evidenced in two important speeches he made in 1978, one at Wake Forrest University in March, and the other at Annapolis in June. Raymond Garthoff identifies both speeches as indicative of “A Turn Toward Confrontation” exacerbated by Soviet involvement in the Horn of Africa.¹²⁷ Carter did not miss an opportunity to appeal to the audience’s patriotic values. Early in the speech, he invoked the memory of North Carolina militiamen taking arms against the British in the Revolution. From there he began discussing the tradition of military service in his own family, and the peaceful purposes of America’s military and how this had remained unchanged, but that the “world” was changing.

In fact, *change* was a major theme of this speech, namely changes in the nation’s defense requirements and the change (*increase*) in the security threats America faced. He emphasized his duties as commander in chief “for *modernizing, expanding, and improving* our armed forces when our security requires it. [italics added]”¹²⁸ Toward this end, Carter mentioned the nation’s submarine fleet, the new Trident submarines under construction, and the development of the cruise missile and new MX ICBM.¹²⁹ He also used the speech, and his own sense of domestic feeling, to issue a warning to the Soviets that if “they fail to demonstrate restraint in missile programs and other force levels or in the projection of Soviet proxy forces into other lands and continents, then popular support

¹²⁶ Strobe Talbott, *Endgame: The Inside Story of SALT II*, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1979) 48.

¹²⁷ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation* 653-668.

¹²⁸ *Public Papers of the President : Jimmy Carter, 1978, Vol. I* “Address at Wake Forrest University, March 17, 1978” (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979) 529-535.

¹²⁹ *Ibid* 533.

in the United States for such cooperation [scientific and economic] with the Soviets will certainly erode.”¹³⁰

Carter’s expression of confidence in the credibility of the nation’s military strategic nuclear deterrent was not entirely empty rhetoric. It also reflected the realities of how certain American weapons systems, specifically the submarine launched Trident ballistic missile and the air launched cruise missile (ALCM), were evolving into truly effective weapons systems, and what informed opinion felt the implications of these weapons were to national security and arms control controversies. Until the mid-1970s, because of its relative inaccuracy compared to ICBMs and aircraft delivered weapons, the submarine launched ballistic missile (SLBM) was considered a “counter value” weapon, meaning that it was assigned to destroy “soft” targets such as urban population areas and civilian industrial centers. As such, SLBM warheads had lower yield warheads than ICBMs and were considered second strike weapons for follow on “mopping up” attacks.¹³¹ By the mid-1970s, however, various technological improvements had enhanced the weapons capability for “hard” targets, counterforce use against military targets (i.e. enemy ICBM silos) and command and control facilities.¹³² By 1977, discussions of this new SLBM capability circulated through the open literature written by defense intellectuals.¹³³

Years later in his memoirs Carter expounded more upon the factors weighing in his decision to cancel the B-1 bomber in his memoirs. He mentions a “very thorough

¹³⁰ Ibid 532.

¹³¹ Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy, Third edition* (London: Palgrave, 2003) 336-337.

¹³² Donald Mackenzie and Graham Spinardi, “The Shaping of Nuclear Weapon System Technology: US Fleet Ballistic Missile Guidance and Navigation: II: ‘Going for Broke’-The Path to Trident II” *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 18, No.4, Nov. 1988, pp.581-624.

¹³³ Desmond J. Ball, “The Counterforce Potential of American SLBM System,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 1977, pp. 23-40.

study of the issue during the spring of 1977” with Secretary of Defense Harold Brown and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.¹³⁴ He explains that at the time he felt it necessary to prevail against not only the supporters of the B-1, but also within the Oval Office, Congress, and the American public. He expressed a great deal of gratitude for Secretary Brown’s competence and knowledge in this matter and his ability to “address such a difficult question in an objective manner.”¹³⁵ Certainly Brown was an apt consultant on such matters by virtue of being a scientist by training, the president of the California Institute of Technology, and Secretary of the Air Force under the Johnson administration. As Strobe Talbott explained, Brown was “a civilian who knew how to deal with-- and give orders to—the military, and he possessed two qualities that other administration officials lacked, government experience, and “intellectual boldness.”¹³⁶

With such a background, Brown certainly would have made a point of remaining knowledgeable of the intellectual arguments concerning this emerging and possibly revolutionary new type of weapon. Two defense intellectuals who dominated the B-1 vs. cruise missile debate in the mid-1970s were Alton H. Quanbeck and Archie L. Wood. They wrote books, an important article, and corresponded with critics and colleagues expressing, albeit in a much more technical and detailed manner, the same basic analysis, and opinions that Carter used to defend his B-1 decision.¹³⁷ There were valid disagreements with Quanbeck and Wood, one of the most notable came from Committee on the Present Danger member Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, who wrote a well reasoned

¹³⁴ Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith*, (New York : Bantam Books, 1982) 81-83.

¹³⁵ *Ibid* 82.

¹³⁶ Strobe Talbott, *Endgame: The Inside Story of SALT II*, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1979) 50.

¹³⁷ Alton H. Quanbeck and Archie L. Wood, *Modernizing the Strategic Bomber Force: Why and How* (Washington : The Brookings Institution, 1976). Archie L. Wood, “Modernizing the Strategic Bomber Force Without Really Trying—A Case Against the B-1,” *International Security*, Fall 1976, pp.78-122. Correspondence from Francis P. Hoerber and Alton H. Quanbeck and Archie L. Wood, *International Security*, Spring 1977, pp.163-169.

rebuttal to their anti B-1 argument. However, the arguments presented by Quanbeck's and Wood's argument were obviously more convincing to many, including Harold Brown and President Carter. Wood's *International Security* article in particular articulated the arguments related to the greater efficacy of the SLBM force and the improved B-52 effectiveness provided by the cruise missile and aircraft upgrades. Like John Steinbruner and Thomas Garwin, they also advocated the prudent but relatively modest strategic upgrades that Carter would support.¹³⁸

These were the kind of articulate, convincing ideas that were in currency at the time that filtered into the public debate on the issue. The point here is that even relatively objective and politically non-partisan ideas of defense intellectuals had on the Carter administration just as they had on the previous and subsequent administrations. Although Carter's decision favoring the cruise missile over the B-1 bomber was a relatively modest increase in strategic nuclear capability, it was nevertheless an *increase*. President Carter could have chosen to turn down both the B-1 *and* the cruise missile, but he knew that the anti-SALT, anti-détente forces were such that he had to initiate some type of improvement in the nation's defenses. Also, it was his advocacy specifically of the air launched cruise missile, which he knew was a major strategic worry for the Soviets, and that many arms control commentators considered destabilizing, occurred while he was still touting the value of arms control and peaceful coexistence. This is only one example of how Carter's declaratory and operational policy would diverge as he tried to respond to the foreign and domestic anti-détente forces and simultaneously adhere to his original idealistic vision.

¹³⁸ Archie L. Wood, "Modernizing the Strategic Bomber Force Without Really Trying—A Case Against the B-1," *International Security*, Fall 1976, pp.78-122. Wood cites The Steinbruner and Garwin article in the Summer 1976 issue of *International Security*.

In his next major speech on June 7, 1978, at the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Carter took an even stronger tone. This time the President wasted little time in focusing on his singular subject of Soviet-American relations. He expressed continued belief in détente and the SALT process and even claimed that, “the prospects for a SALT II agreement are good.”¹³⁹ Nevertheless, this speech was the bluntest bit of finger wagging at the Soviets that he had ever committed. Even the positive and optimistic sections of the speech were filled with qualifying language that conveyed the idea that much of the onus fell on the Soviet leadership for the development of improved relations. In some respects, the speech was almost schizophrenic; one moment he promised that he had no desire to link SALT negotiations with other “competitive relationships” and in the next breath warned of the complicating factor of American public opinion, declaring that “The Soviet Union can choose either confrontation or cooperation. The United States is adequately prepared to meet either choice.”¹⁴⁰

Likewise, while insisting on détente’s centrality to world peace, he also explained the stark differences of understanding in the concept that existed between the two nations. For the Soviet Union it meant, “A continuing aggressive struggle for political influence in a variety of ways,” along with, “military power and military assistance as the best means of expanding their influence abroad.”¹⁴¹ This begged the obvious question: If the two nation’s views are so different, then how is détente *really* possible? Carter offered no explanations that connect these competing ideas in a way that explains how his hopes, and the actual reality, could be reconciled and his ideas seem to be strung together as if

¹³⁹ *Public Papers of the President : Jimmy Carter, 1978, Vol. I* “Address at Commencement Exercises. June 7, 1978” (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979) 1054.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid* 1057.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid* 1054.

born of two different minds. In fact, journalists quickly noticed this fact as well, and surmised that the explanation must have been that Carter awkwardly combined the positions of Vance and Brzezinski in the speech, and that this accounted for the combination of the soft and hard line respectively. In fact a year after the speech a former Carter speech writer claimed that the President had literally stapled together two memos, one from Vance and the other from Brzezinski, to construct the speech. More recently, historian Robert Strong has disputed this idea based on information from the Carter presidential library.¹⁴²

The overall tone of the speech was accusatory, especially in the area of human rights. This speech represented his most direct attack on the *Soviets'* human rights record to date, something that conservative forces both inside and outside of government had long pressured him to do. Carter spoke of the abuse of human rights in the Soviet Union in direct violation of the Helsinki Accords, and the Soviet system's intolerance of free expression and the free movement of people. As Raymond Garthoff has observed, the speech marked a distinct return to ideology as Carter emphasized that America's principal goal was to help shape a world more responsive to economic freedom, social justice, and "political self determination" (read *democracy*).¹⁴³ In his memoirs, Zbigniew Brzezinski admitted that the focus on human rights attempted to "match Soviet ideological expansion by a more affirmative American posture on global human rights."¹⁴⁴ This was a change from the cynical realpolitik of the Nixon/Kissinger years,

¹⁴² Robert A. Strong, *Working in the World: Jimmy Carter and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, (Baton Rouge : Louisiana State University Press, 2000) 100.

¹⁴³ Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American – Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, revised edition (Washington D.C., Brookings Institution, 1994) 665. See also : *Public Papers of the President : Jimmy Carter, 1978, Vol. I* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979) 1053.

¹⁴⁴ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983) 54.

but it also, , constituted a revolt against the “moral anesthesia” of détente itself, whether Carter intended to or not. As John Lewis Gaddis put it, détente, “had not been intended, in any immediate sense, to secure justice: that could only emerge....from within a balance of power that each of the great powers considered legitimate.”¹⁴⁵ This return to ideology and challenge to the fundamental nature of détente, namely its amoral maintenance of the status quo, is an important link between Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan in the spectrum of change in Soviet-American relations during the two administrations.

Jimmy Carter was the first U.S. president to use the issue of human rights to wage Cold War in such an explicit manner that attempted link the issue to other foreign policy matters. For a leader who dreamed of arms control, even substantial arms reductions, as one of his prime legacies, human rights was an ideological strategy of exerting political pressure that did not involve militaristic brinksmanship. It was an attempt to take an attractive political stand that appealed to American’s patriotic values, and a growing international movement, that did not risk damaging détente and SALT.

Carter’s human rights focus was a least a large enough caliber issue that it proved enough of an aggravation and annoyance to the Soviets to undermine “peaceful coexistence.” Human rights alone did not undermine détente, but it certainly strained a relationship that by late 1978 was already turning sour. To the Soviet leadership, the Annapolis speech represented a clear turn towards confrontation. The one basic understanding of detente shared by both nations was that it was supposed to be a mix of

¹⁴⁵ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2005) 181. “Moral anesthesia” is Gaddis’ characterization for the détente period. p. 180

cooperation *and* competition, and Carter seemed to be making it and either/or choice.¹⁴⁶

They had long since viewed America's protests over human rights resentfully as an attempt to interfere with their nation's internal affairs. As such, this represented a challenge to the legitimacy of their entire political system and an attempt to undermine the legitimacy of socialism itself.¹⁴⁷

The human rights rhetoric was given some teeth later that year when on July, 18 the U.S. government denied an export license for a Sperry Univac computer to the Soviet Union. The denial was in response to internal repression of political dissidents; new licensing requirements were imposed for the export of oil and gas exploration equipment.¹⁴⁸ Technology transfers were an especially important part of détente for the Soviets, and one of the most important technologies was in the area of computers. Soviet computer science had always lagged significantly behind the West and behind the United States in particular. This had obvious implications for the Soviet's military standing vis-à-vis the United States given the increasing sophistication of both nuclear and conventional weaponry. Any technology denial was seen simultaneously as a blow to their military development and an advantage for the U.S., since as one historian and defense expert has pointed out, "To an extent unappreciated in the United States of the 1970s, the Soviets believed that their American rivals were scientific magicians; what they said they could do, they could do."¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 667.

¹⁴⁷ Adam Ulam, *Dangerous Relations : The Soviet Union in World Politics, 1970-1982* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983) 166-167 & 201-202. See also: Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation* 673. Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's six Cold War Presidents, 1962-1986* (New York: Times Books, 1995) 387-390.

¹⁴⁸ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation* 674.

¹⁴⁹ Norman Friedman, *The Fifty Year War: Conflict and Strategy in the Cold War* (Annapolis : Naval Institute Press,2000) 448.

American conservatives strongly supported the Carter human rights initiatives, but likewise, this wound up becoming a political trap for the President. Prominent neo-conservatives like Daniel Patrick Moynihan criticized Carter for not taking a strong enough stand on human rights. To Moynihan, the president was not using the human rights issue properly. He felt that Carter put too much focus on Third World dictatorships and gave the real enemy, the Soviet Union, a pass. In August of 1977, he contended that such policies “will soothe the Soviet Union and only challenge Ecuador.”¹⁵⁰ The Democratic senator’s comments were indicative of the sentiment of the “Henry Jackson” wing of the Democratic Party.

Senator Jackson himself criticized the lack of proper focus in Carter’s human rights campaign, and he saw these misplaced priorities as a pretext for Carter’s abandoning the policy of containment, and for lessening U.S. commitment abroad. Jackson’s aide, Richard Perle, observed that the senator’s ideas about human rights were close to those of Jeane Kirkpatrick in their emphasis on distinguishing between right wing authoritarian dictatorships friendly to the U.S. and left wing totalitarian regimes like the Soviet Union.¹⁵¹ Jackson also felt that in the pursuit of his moralistic ideals that Carter had ignored the imperatives of power and geopolitics and the “unsettling mixture of moralism, malaise, and retrenchment” created contempt for U.S. weakness.¹⁵²

Carter’s competence and the deleterious effect of his self conscious moralism on American foreign policy came under more direct attack in November of 1978 when an article by Republican congressman John Anderson, entitled “Faith, Virtue, and Honor

¹⁵⁰ John Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism: Intellectuals and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1994* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) 94.

¹⁵¹ Robert G. Kaufman, *Henry M. Jackson: A Life in Politics*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000) 370.

¹⁵² *Ibid* 371.

Are Not Enough” appeared in the Christian magazine *Christianity Today*. Anderson explained that the president’s emphasis on virtue and honesty, while admirable, was no substitute for competence and a realistic appreciation of the complexities of world politics.¹⁵³ A more subtle, and perhaps more damning, point was that Carter has actually been *dishonest* and misrepresented himself. Anderson accused Carter of being too vague on the issues during his campaign and “soft-pedaled ideology and instead appealed for support on the basis of that amorphous quality he liked to call ‘character’.”¹⁵⁴ Once in office however, “Carter had a huge agenda tucked away in his coat pocket,” that he attempted to deliver to Congress, “with amazing naiveté about what it takes to get something passed in that complex, independent body.”¹⁵⁵ Anderson ended his article with an observation that Carter sometimes exhibits two different personalities, one of excessive moralism and one that advocates “politics-as-usual.”¹⁵⁶

Human rights, then, represented one of Carter’s biggest political traps, partly of his own making, and partly one created by the various civilian and governmental groups that used the issue as their weapon *against* détente. The moral imperatives created by a human rights movement, and its emotional and psychological implications, meant that it was intrinsically at odds with any attempt to maintain a business as usual attitude with a nation that was, in fact, committing blatant human rights violations against its own citizens. That same nation was also the sworn ideological enemy of the United States and had a massive conventional military and nuclear arsenal to back them up compounded the incompatibility of human rights with détente.

¹⁵³ John B. Anderson, “Faith, Virtue, and Honor Are Not Enough,” *Christianity Today*, November 3, 1978, 14-20.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid* 14.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid* 18.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid* 20.

David Skidmore has aptly explained why Carter tried to use human rights as a Cold War weapon and the nature of the problem with this strategy. Aside from his need to respond to the growing public interest in the issue, Carter was interested in using human rights as a way to win support for his foreign policy reforms. Also, in the face of variables not under Carter's control, (namely the rise in Soviet power, weakness of the dollar, and the rise of Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries), the international environment, and America's options, seem more constrained. An ideological focus on human rights was one way to retrench in a cost effective manner that put the nation's adversaries on the defensive.¹⁵⁷ Skidmore acknowledges that Carter's move to the hard line by mid-1978 was in large part due to the influences of elite opposition groups like the Committee on the Present Danger and their congressional allies, along with "broad ideological resistance in the society at large."¹⁵⁸ This of course means the public, and the growing anti-Soviet feeling among the American people. Skidmore acknowledges that it was this factor above all that was the undoing of Carter's initial vision for Soviet policy (drastic arms cuts, modest human rights pressure, maintenance of détente) and the cause of his hardline reversal, "back upon both the legitimitive techniques and associated policies of the cold war era in an effort to shore up his political position at home."¹⁵⁹

Both Skidmore and Thomas Nichols see this development as the bridge linking the Soviet policies of Carter and Reagan toward the death of détente, and the return to confrontation.¹⁶⁰ Nichols observes that human rights and arms control was a doomed

¹⁵⁷ David Skidmore, "Carter and the Failure of Foreign Policy Reform," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol.108, No. 4 Winter, 1993-1994, 704.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid 707.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid 710.

¹⁶⁰ Thomas M. Nichols, "Carter and the Soviets: The Origin of the U.S. Return to a Strategy of Confrontation," *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol.13, No.2, June 2002 21-40. See pages 21&22 in particular. Nichols observes that Carter's foreign policy represented a transition away from détente and bridged the

marriage and that Carter never realized that “moralizing on one issue would jeopardize progress on the other, and he continued to believe that he could castigate the Soviets on human rights but still manage to forge ahead on SALT II.”¹⁶¹ Skidmore explains why human rights, as a political weapon, was not a powerful enough weapon to influence Soviet behavior, namely because it “did not possess the ideological power, as anticommunism once had, to unite the country around a common vision,” and was conceptually, “often ambiguous, sometimes proved divisive...and held only a tenuous relationship to many of Carter’s more pragmatic policies.”¹⁶²

One final problem that neither author is that along with its lack of power domestically, human rights lacked the power to force the kind of changes needed to alter Soviet behavior. Granted, the Soviet leadership did take great umbrage at Carter’s human rights rhetoric because it questioned the legitimacy of their government and ideology, and this had profound long term social consequences within the communist world in the form of growing discontent with Soviet hegemony, and the communist system itself, throughout the communist world. But these consequences were not readily apparent in the late 1970s and, more importantly, while human rights questioned Soviet legitimacy it did not threaten the *source* of that legitimacy.

That source was the Soviet government’s ability to use force and coercion to achieve certain ends, in other words, their military power. Power projection vis-a-vis military strength was, from the Brezhnev regime until the ascendancy of Mikhail

gap “between Nixonian realpolitik and Reagan’s ideological crusade.” See Skidmore, page 699 where he begins by characterizing the Carter years as a transitional time between “new orientations” in foreign policy and the traditional cold war posture of the Reagan years.

¹⁶¹ Nichols, 22.

¹⁶² David Skidmore, “Carter and the Failure of Foreign Policy Reform,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol.108, No. 4 Winter, 1993-1994, 714.

Gorbachev, the Soviet Union's first political and economic priority. Ronald Reagan has often received almost sole credit for bringing competitive pressure to bear on the Soviet Union and thereby causing an already wobbly political system to topple over under the strain of a new arms race. However, that trend toward renewed confrontation and competition began under Jimmy Carter and was just one factor that linked the two presidents in the continuum of Soviet/American policy change.

CHAPTER 4

On November 5, 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev expressed his discovery of a fundamental fact about American politics and political leadership in the late 20th century on which historians and political scientists would not begin to elaborate until some years later. Namely, he had discovered the influence, the almost symbiotic relationship, of American think tanks and American foreign policy. Speaking to Secretary of State George Shultz and National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane, Gorbachev held in his hand a book published by Stanford University's Hoover Institute entitled, *The United States in the 1980s*. By 1985 Hoover had long been one of the more respected conservative think tanks in the United States. Its fellows included Nobel laureates like economist Milton Friedman, historian Robert Conquest, and Secretary Shultz himself. Holding the book, Gorbachev claimed that he knew what the Reagan administration's "game plan" was and began explaining how the assumptions and predictions about the Soviet Union contained in the book were all wrong.¹⁶³

Regardless of how correct Gorbachev may have been about the book's analysis, it is true that, as George Schultz admitted, "Ronald Reagan had looked to the Hoover Institution for help in his administration."¹⁶⁴ Indeed, aside from Secretary Schultz, several important members of the Reagan administration were drawn from the ranks of organizations like Hoover and interest groups like the Committee on the Present Danger. Sometimes the associations overlapped, but in any case, some of the most influential people in the administration were also members of the very organizations that were the

¹⁶³ George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years As Secretary of State* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993) 589. See also: Martin Anderson, *Revolution: The Reagan Legacy* (Stanford CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1990) 3-4. Anderson was also a Hoover Senior Fellow at the time of the book's publication. He also served as Reagan's domestic and economic policy adviser.

¹⁶⁴ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 589.

constant critics of détente, and of Carter’s Soviet policy. Martin Anderson, one of Reagan’s domestic and economic policy advisers and a Hoover Senior Fellow, explained that the Hoover book that so concerned Gorbachev, “was just one part of an intellectual revolution that has been building and growing stronger-for decades.” The events of 1980, specifically election of Ronald Reagan as president, “were a political expression of powerful forces that have been growing and deepening in the United States for many years.”¹⁶⁵

The meeting on that November day was a preparatory talk for the upcoming summit meeting between Reagan and Gorbachev in Geneva, Switzerland, and the Soviet leader drew another correct conclusion about recent U.S. foreign policy history. The subject of SALT II was raised as an example of an unratified American agreement, and Secretary Schultz replied that SALT II had been withdrawn from consideration only after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Gorbachev, incensed, declared that, “SALT II was dead and buried even before Afghanistan....The U.S. got out of SALT II because you didn’t want to be constrained by it...You ought to put that one in mothballs. It’s old hat.”¹⁶⁶ In this, Gorbachev was correct, because as much as Martin Anderson and other conservatives may like to believe that what occurred in foreign policy during the Reagan years was a “revolution” the reality is that it was closer to *evolution*. Policy changes in the last two years of the Carter presidency were built upon and accentuated during the early years of the Reagan administration. Certainly those accentuations were important, a different kind of president than Reagan could have made radically different decisions. The evolving hard line and traditional Cold War posture that developed during the Carter

¹⁶⁵ Anderson, *Revolution*, 5.

¹⁶⁶ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 589.

years could have been reversed. Nevertheless, Reagan's get tough strategy with the Soviet Union, the wave on which he rode into the White House, formed and grew during the administration of his predecessor, and it would build strength and finally crest by the mid 1980s under his leadership.

By the beginning of 1979 developments did not seem to bode well for the chances of a peaceful world and a stable environment for U.S. national security in general. In hindsight it is clear that détente, and along with it SALT II, was dead, even if the Carter administration did not know it or want to accept it yet. The growing problem of the Middle East and Southwest Africa was apparent early in the year when the January 15, 1979 issue of *Time* magazine featured the "Crescent of Crisis," stretching from Ethiopia to Pakistan, with the Soviet bear looming in the background, as its cover story. The story focused primarily on the Carter administration's mishandling of the Iranian situation and the problems of Shah Pahlavi's U.S. friendly, but repressive and unpopular, rule of Iran.¹⁶⁷

The article included in its analysis the opportunistic Soviet interest in these various Middle Eastern crisis areas, but ironically, relatively little space was devoted to the situation in Afghanistan. This is all the more ironic considering that as early as the initial Shiite uprising, against the Taraki government, in March of 1979, , the CIA had already foreseen trouble from the growing Soviet involvement in Afghanistan. By September 14, CIA Director Stansfield Turner warned Carter, in a memo, that Soviet leaders were possibly ready to commit their own military forces to prevent the collapse of

¹⁶⁷ "The Crescent of Crisis," *Time*, 15 January 1979, 18-25.

the newly installed Amin regime.¹⁶⁸ As former CIA director Robert Gates has explained, the Carter administration had been aware of increasing Soviet involvement in Afghan affairs for almost a year before the invasion, and as early as April 1979 the CIA concluded that if the Soviets were determined to keep their puppet rulers (then Taraki, later Amin) in power, then perhaps U.S. covert assistance to Moslem resistance movements “would raise the costs to the Soviets and inflame Moslem opinion against them in many countries.” The range of assistance options included anti-Soviet propaganda, direct financial assistance, weapons, and training.¹⁶⁹ After the Soviet invasion on December 25, 1979 the Carter covert program dramatically expanded to supply all sorts of weapons and support, and tens of millions of dollars, for the *mujahedin*, the Muslim freedom fighters.

If this strategy sounds more indicative of what the United States pursued in the 1980s, it is because it was just one policy initiative under Carter that would expand under the Reagan administration. It would find its most official and concrete expression in one of the most important foreign policy documents of the Reagan years, National Security Decision Directive Number 75 (NSDD-75), entitled “U.S. Relations With the USSR.” Dated January 17, 1983, this directive outlined a broad Soviet policy that included assisting Third World nations threatened by the Soviet Union. Afghanistan, in particular, ranks in this document as one of the important weaknesses of the “Soviet Empire” and that specifically, “The U.S. objective is to keep maximum pressure on Moscow for

¹⁶⁸ 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)131-134.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid* 145-146.

withdrawal and to ensure that the Soviets' political, military, and other costs remain high while the occupation continues."¹⁷⁰

Those intended costs that link the agendas of the two administrations were political-- discrediting the USSR in the Middle East and simultaneously rebuilding U.S. credibility to protect friends and economic-- increasing the "cost of empire" for the Soviet Union's already limping economy. Under Reagan there was more emphasis on the latter goal, but the continuity is there nevertheless, one initiative led to the other. As Robert Gates puts it, "Carter did not intend to worsen their difficulties through economic warfare, but the policies he pursued in response to other events had that practical effect."¹⁷¹ Gates also asserts that the Kremlin itself saw great continuity between Carter and Reagan's approach and that, "Carter prepared the ground for Reagan in the strategic arena..."¹⁷²

In the more immediate sense for Carter, this policy initiative in Afghanistan led to the formulation the Carter Doctrine in January of 1980, officially articulated by Carter himself in a State of the Union address on January 23. The doctrine in its short form was fairly straightforward; "Any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."¹⁷³ This constitutes the most strongly worded piece of declaratory policy of the entire Carter administration and was, by Zbigniew Brzezinski's own admission, modeled

¹⁷⁰ Christopher Simpson ed. *National Security Directives of the Reagan and Bush Administrations: The Declassified History of U.S. Political and Military Policy, 1981-1991*, (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995) 258.

¹⁷¹ Robert Gates, *From the Shadows*, 177.

¹⁷² *Ibid* 179.

¹⁷³ U.S. President, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States Vol. I* (Washington, D.C. : United States Government Printing Office, 1981) Jimmy Carter, 1980, 197.

on the Truman Doctrine signifying a clear return to traditional cold war confrontation. Although not made official until after the Soviet invasion, the doctrine's concepts had been formulated and discussed as early as mid 1979, and was largely the work of Brzezinski himself, and his military assistant, General William Odom.¹⁷⁴

Jimmy Carter had finally decided to take his national security advisor's advice and became a "President Truman" instead of a "President Wilson," Carter's true idol.¹⁷⁵ This tough turn would prove too little too late. By the beginning of 1980 the combination of a stagnant economy, the Iranian hostage crisis, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had already doomed Carter's chances for reelection. Ironically he had in fact finally become the "new Truman" that, according to John Ehrman, the neo-conservative Democrats had been looking for throughout the 1970s. Jimmy Carter had responded to the pressures and influences of the neo-conservative movement, but only fitfully. Although he became the foreign policy president they had wanted in his last year in office, "the neoconservatives were effectively divorced from the Democratic party by February 1980."¹⁷⁶ Not finding the Democrat they wanted, "they embraced the Republican party and Ronald Reagan as the best alternative."¹⁷⁷

Nevertheless, an important intellectual link between the two administrations to consider was the developing neoconservative position in the late 1970s on the subject of undemocratic dictatorships and authoritarian regimes and their advantage over communist governments. Probably no single neoconservative expressed this lesser of

¹⁷⁴ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 444. Brzezinski also cites Under Secretary of Defense Robert Komer as an important supporter of this new security policy.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 432. Brzezinski offered this conciliatory advice in early January after Carter decided that SALT II would be one of the first post Afghan invasion casualties.

¹⁷⁶ John Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism*, 99.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 99. Zbigniew Brzezinski characterizes Carter's foreign policy shift, by 1980, as being a combination of Wilson and Truman. See: *Power and Principle*, 459-460.

two evils argument more cogently than Jeane Kirkpatrick, one time Democrat and member of the Committee on the Present Danger. Kirkpatrick wrote about the important differences between authoritarianism and totalitarianism, especially the communist variety. But it was not until 1979 that she produced her most celebrated work on the subject, her article “Dictatorships and Double Standards,” now considered one of the most important writings in American neoconservative thought.

Published in *Commentary* magazine in November of 1979, the article represents the intellectual glue that holds the Carter Doctrine and Reagan’s NSDD-75 together. Kirkpatrick identified the most urgent problem with current American foreign policy as the need to formulate, “a morally and strategically acceptable, and politically realistic, program for dealing with non-democratic governments who are threatened by Soviet-sponsored subversion.”¹⁷⁸ Kirkpatrick used the Shah and Somoza as her main cases in points to demonstrate how Carter’s excessive moralism and rigid idealism had led to the fall of U.S. friendly regimes to communist movements that held less promise for eventually evolving into democracies than the authoritarian alternatives. In sum, Kirkpatrick argued that in both Iran and Nicaragua, the Carter administration, in pursuit of some vague unattainable perfection, had sacrificed the good. A key theme was that the world cannot be democratized over night, and that the development of American style democracy is a process that demands patience while the worse alternative is guarded against.

The new policy focus expressed by Carter on January 23, 1980, which would come to be called the “Carter Doctrine,” represented a tacit acknowledgement of Kirkpatrick’s arguments. This declaration implied the support for friendly dictatorships

¹⁷⁸ Jeane Kirkpatrick, “Dictatorships and Double Standards,” *Commentary*, November 1979, 34.

that Kirkpatrick called for, and was intended to reassure friends and allies that they *could* count on support from the United States. This commitment to the protection of the “Crescent of Crisis” included, ironically enough, the same Iranian government that only the previous November had taken American embassy employees as hostages. The doctrine also legitimized the already in progress covert assistance to the Afghan resistance, a resistance which contained a significant Shiite element, the same strain of repressive, fundamentalist Islam practiced in Iran under the Ayatollah Khomeini. In fact, by mid 1980, both the Carter administration *and* the Khomeini government were supporting the Afghan resistance, albeit in different ways and to different degrees.¹⁷⁹ Although these political/religious groups did not necessarily constitute the friendly dictatorships that Kirkpatrick had in mind, they were at least anti-Soviet, and clearly this fact overrode any human rights complications that may have given the administration pause at an earlier time. More importantly, the Carter Doctrine represented the culmination of a concerted push, both from within and outside of the administration, to return to the traditional cold war “realism” that was desired by the neo-conservatives, and increasingly by the American people.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ Robert Gates, *From the Shadows*, 148-149. Gates claims that by July 1980, Carter’s covert program of support, “had been dramatically expanded to include all manner of weapons and military support for the Mujahedin.” By this time the Islamic leadership in Iran had been encouraging fundamentalist resistance movements into Afghanistan since October of 1979. See: Edgar O’ Balance, *Afghan Wars: Battles in a Hostile Land, 1839 to present*, (London: Brassey’s, 1993) 86. Most histories on the subject point out that the Iranian government was particularly sympathetic to the mujahedin element. The membership of the mujahedin was predominantly fundamentalist. See: O’ Balance, 116.

¹⁸⁰ “Foreign Affairs: As the Great Debate Approaches,” *Public Opinion*, January/February 1979, 29. When asked, “do you feel the military defense system of the United States is stronger than that of the Russians or, weaker?” the percentage of Americans that responded “weaker” rose from 30% in December 1976 to 43% in November of 1978. See also: *Public Opinion*, March/May 1979, 25. When asked if the CIA should work within other countries to try and strengthen elements that serve U.S. national interests, and weaken those forces that work against the interests of the United States, the number of Americans who said “should” rose from 43% in 1974 to 59% in 1978.

By the time NSDD-75 was issued on January 17, 1983, Jeane Kirkpatrick had reached the highest point of her official influence in U.S. foreign policy as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. The link between the Carter Doctrine and NSDD-75 is fairly explicit, mainly because it is made explicit by NSDD-75 itself. The Middle East was now a major “arena of engagement” in the administration’s strategy of “Shaping the Soviet Environment.”¹⁸¹ The spectrum of policy change had effectively moved from theory/opinion to its adoption under Carter characterized by a primarily defensive posture to a more ambitious offensive goal under the Reagan administration. In NSDD-75, supporting the Third World (with a specific focus on Afghanistan) was no longer just a hedge against Soviet expansion, it was now part of a strategy to *change Soviet behavior* by increasing the costs of their empire.¹⁸² Moreover, by 1983, America’s support to the *mujahedin* had moved well past the “covert” stage in any meaningful sense, and was the biggest foreign policy “secret” known, and largely accepted without complaint, by the American public.

Another important link between NSDD-75 and the intellectual currents shaping foreign policy is in how the scope of the contest with the Soviets was conceived in terms of time. It seems clear that at least one way that the incoming Reagan administration was prepared to differ fundamentally from Carter’s was that it conceived a definite timeline for the remainder of the superpower contest, with the United States as the winner. Fred Charles Ikle was one of the Hoover contributors to the book *The United States in the*

¹⁸¹ Christopher Simpson ed. *National Security Directives of the Reagan and Bush Administrations*, 256.

¹⁸² Christopher Simpson ed. *National Security Directives of the Reagan and Bush Administrations*, 262. Concerning Afghanistan specifically, NSDD-75 required that, “the U.S. must keep pressure on Moscow for withdraw and ensure that Soviet costs on the ground are high.” See also: Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows*, 197. Gates confirmed that U.S. strategy under Reagan for the Third World quickly moved away from one of reaction and defense, and more to, “seize opportunities to challenge and then try to reverse past Kremlin successes.”

1980s and in his chapter, “Arms Control and National Defense” he contended that “in the next five to ten years three new challenges clearly will endanger America.”¹⁸³ Ikle became the Under Secretary for Defense Policy in the Reagan administration, and those three new challenges were: continued growth in Soviet military power, U.S. and allied dependence on Middle East oil, and the problems of the West’s nuclear strategy that “will be aggravated by adverse trends in the global military balance.”¹⁸⁴

Three years later, NSDD-75 would similarly state that, “The coming 5-10 years will be a period of considerable uncertainty in which the Soviets may test U.S. resolve by continuing the kind of aggressive international behavior which the U.S. finds unacceptable.”¹⁸⁵ In the early years of his administration Reagan and CIA Director William Casey who, like Reagan, was a member of the Committee on the Present Danger, felt a sense of inevitability in the collapse of the Soviet economy and perceived that an end to the Cold War was in sight.¹⁸⁶ This perception that an endgame to the Cold War was in progress was unique to the Reagan administration, but the concept did not originate with Reagan himself. Rather, like the other arguments and currents of thought discussed here, the idea percolated upward into government policy making from a body of various neoconservative intellectuals. NSDD-75 is one of the most important foreign policy documents of the Reagan administration and of the history of American foreign

¹⁸³ Peter Duignan and Alvin Rabushka ed., *The United States in the 1980s* (Stanford CA: Hoover Institute Press, 1980) 420.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid 420.

¹⁸⁵ Christopher Simpson ed. *National Security Directives of the Reagan and Bush Administrations*, 260.

¹⁸⁶ Ronald Reagan, *An American Life*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990) 237-238. and Derek Leebaret, *The Fifty Year Wound*, 526. Leebaret claims that as early as 1982 Casey was telling anyone who would listen that the Soviet economy was going to “implode” and that, “This was the intelligence community opinion that mattered to Reagan.” By 1986 other important members of the intelligence and defense community, and at least one prominent member of RAND confirmed Casey’s and Reagan’s feelings about the crisis in the Soviet economy. See: Ronald Kessler, *Inside the CIA*, (New York: Pocket Books, 1992) 152-153.

policy in general. It was nothing less than America's game plan, roughly ten years in the making, for winning the cold war.

CHAPTER 5

Well before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Carter's subsequent removal of SALT II from Senate consideration, the treaty's death seemed a forgone conclusion. A July 20, 1979 issue of *National Review* featured a cartoon of President Carter holding a dove labeled "SALT" standing beside a hunter labeled "Senate" clutching a shotgun and yelling "Pull!"¹⁸⁷ Another cartoon in their June 22, 1979 issue featured a delighted Brezhnev licking a sucker with the American flag painted on it in one hand and holding a salt shaker in the other.¹⁸⁸ The latter cartoon was featured as part of an article by retired foreign service officer Norman Hannah entitled "SALT II: No Meeting of the Minds." The article was, in one respect, predictably an anti-SALT commentary, but it differed from many articles on the subject in that it refrained from the typical technical minutia of nuclear weapons and strategic theory.

Instead, it focused much more on what Hannah saw as important "asymmetries" between the nature of the American and Soviet systems. Specifically, he discussed the asymmetries of information access to verify compliance in SALT II stipulations. Hannah pointed out that the U.S. represented a much more open society than the Soviet Union and that the USSR had total access to that information contained in publications like *Time*, *Aviation Week*, and the *Congressional Record*.¹⁸⁹ The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was, "the most rigidly closed totalitarian Leviathan in history" and, as such, the U.S. was restricted to electronic and satellite monitoring.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ *National Review*, July 20, 1979, 899.

¹⁸⁸ *National Review*, June 22, 1979, 802.

¹⁸⁹ Norman B. Hannah, "SALT II: No Meeting of the Minds," *National Review*, June 22, 1979, 801.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid* 801.

Hannah also pointed out that because the United States was an open society it was subject to a kind of political “feedback” into its system because of the promise that SALT held for a reduced risk of war and reduced military spending. This, he argued, resulted in the lack of a replacement for America’s aging B-52 bombers, and a lack of deployment of other important weapons systems. The Soviet Union, a closed, totalitarian society, was not subject to this feedback.¹⁹¹ Lastly, and most importantly to Hannah, there was the asymmetry of understanding of what détente meant and what it stood for. Quoting from Soviet publications like *Kommunist* and *Red Star*, he pointed out that for the Soviets détente was only a part of a larger strategy for *victory* over the West as part of their vision of the inexorable historical process toward world socialism. In sum, Hannah’s article took a decidedly ideological look at SALT and détente, and it suggested a frame of mind that certainly guided Reagan during his early years in office. Specifically, it suggested that, the Soviet Union, because of its political/social system and ideological view, is systemically and intrinsically opposed to any meaningful idea of arms control and peace. Therefore, the Soviet system must change fundamentally for progress to occur. *They were the problem, not us.*

This type of commentary had of course been the stock in trade of *National Review* since its founding in 1955 by William F. Buckley, Jr. Writers for the magazine, as epitomized by Buckley, were intellectuals of impressive erudition, insight, and wit, and through the magazine they promulgated the mainstream conservative critique of American politics and life to a general readership. Among those devoted readers was Ronald Reagan who, from his years as governor of California, was an admirer of Buckley. He appeared on Buckley’s talk show, *Firing Line*, five times between 1967 and

¹⁹¹ Ibid 802.

1980. According to Buckley himself, Reagan admitted to having read *National Review* for twenty five years, and once expressed thanks for, “a fund of great knowledge that I’ve acquired,” from the magazine.¹⁹² The critique that *National Review* provided of the Soviet Union was invariably one that juxtaposed its system with a belief in American exceptionalism. In other words, the American way of life was not just an *alternate* ideology, or one life style among many, it was *better* than any others, especially communism, and because of that America would ultimately *prevail*.

This influence on Reagan’s thinking helps explain the similarities and differences between his ethos and that of his predecessor. Both believed in the inherent goodness of America and its founding values. Both believed that the nation should champion those values abroad, which included an emphasis on human rights. Carter, however, held these beliefs while continuing to view the world through the traditional cold war prism that assumed the virtual permanence of a bi-polar world. This precluded the idea of pressuring the Soviet Union for meaningful change through the use of competitive pressure as adopted by the Reagan administration. Carter focused on peace even if it meant preservation of the status quo, Reagan focused on change, even if it meant creating a tense, dangerous confrontation between the superpowers. Of course, Reagan would also eventually benefit from something that Carter never enjoyed, a powerful partner on the other side who also believed in change: Mikhail Gorbachev.

That there were anti-SALT articles in publications like *National Review* or *Commentary* is not surprising, although the frequency and length of these articles did increase as the Senate debate grew more intense in 1979, especially after the SALT II

¹⁹² William F. Buckley Jr., *Let Us Talk of Many Things: The Collected Speeches*, (Roseville, CA: Prima Publishing, 2000) 269.

signing in Vienna in June. However, by 1979 even relatively nonpartisan academic defenders of the treaty were beginning to admit that SALT negotiations, I *and* II, had failed to fulfill the expectations of a safer, more peaceful world that advocates of the treaties had promised. One of the best examples of this emerging view is in an article in *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, hardly a conservative publication, by Michael Mandelbaum, a professor of government at the Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University. The article defended the SALT treaty, but it was also deeply pessimistic about what the treaty would actually accomplish. To begin with, he argued that regardless of what agreements were reached, “There is no ironclad guarantee that the Soviets will not behave in belligerent reckless fashion in the 1980s.” He pointed out that both superpowers lived at the mercy of each other’s sanity, a feature of the nuclear age that could, “only be eliminated by political and technical changes more drastic than either side has yet made or seems willing to make.”¹⁹³

He also cited the violations of the spirit of SALT by both nations as they exploited loopholes in the agreements to improve their strategic arsenals both quantitatively and qualitatively. As Mandelbaum put it, “The spirit of SALT has hardly been one of restraint. It is perhaps aptly captured by the phrase... ‘everything not prohibited is required’”¹⁹⁴ Furthermore, he argued, the attempt at “linkage” of SALT to other commitments and expectations had failed to moderate Soviet behavior. He conceded that SALT did represent a modest form of cooperation that gave the strategic balance a measure of predictability and had served to lessen the chances of nuclear war somewhat. But these were grudging admissions, and the thrust of his argument can be

¹⁹³ Michael Mandelbaum, “In Defense of SALT,” *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, January 1979, 16.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid* 17.

summed up by his advice to the reader that, “It is important to be clear about what SALT cannot hope to accomplish.”¹⁹⁵

The consequences of unmet expectations, in the form of disillusionment and political dissent, is an important conceptual link between Jeremi Suri’s explanation of the rise of détente and analysis of its death offered here. As Suri explains, it was the efforts of world leaders in the early 1960s to transcend cold war divisions and quell domestic unrest that led to rising expectations that none of them could fulfill. In particular, attempts by American presidents like Kennedy and Johnson in the form of foreign intervention were “profoundly self-defeating.”¹⁹⁶ The resulting discontent reached its apex by 1968, forcing a move toward détente by great power leaders to reassert their legitimacy. Likewise, by 1980 the unmet promises of détente forced Carter and Reagan to move back to confrontation and the hard line. Reagan’s landslide victory in November that year was, to paraphrase Suri, the expression of unmet popular expectations, disappointment, and fear that had coalesced around an infrastructure and language of dissent.¹⁹⁷ Jimmy Carter’s response to this dissent was too little too late to save him politically, but in doing so he did lay some policy groundwork for his successor.

A particular *cultural* current in America beginning in the late 1970s that bears acknowledging is the growth, or perhaps resurgence in, the public’s literacy and awareness of matters pertaining to nuclear warfare and national security issues. In 1978 a war novel written by General Sir John Hackett, former commander of the British Army of the Rhine, and a team of other NATO military experts called *The Third World War*:

¹⁹⁵ Ibid 19.

¹⁹⁶ Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest*, 3-4.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 3. The passage I am paraphrasing reads, “Popular expectations coalesced around what I call an ‘international language of dissent.’ ”

August 1985 was published. As the title suggests, Hackett and company told the story of a hypothetical war between the Soviet Union and the West breaking out in the mid-1980s. The scenario described is basically modeled on the doctrine of flexible response in which the conflict begins as a conventional clash of arms in central Europe that steadily escalates to a limited nuclear exchange in which Birmingham, England (hit first of course), and the Soviet city of Minsk are destroyed. The style and content of the novel prefigured the work of more popular authors in the 1980s like Tom Clancy and was indicative of a new kind of fiction called *faction* because of its blend of a fictional premise with factual technical details.¹⁹⁸

Hackett's background gave the book an air of knowledgeable authority, and his central argument was that a built up and technologically capable conventional military force is needed if nuclear war is to be avoided. Hackett's book was meant as a wake up call, and he criticized those, "who argue for the reduction of defense expenditure in the countries of the West not only seem to live in a land of total make-believe, but refuse to give the Marxist-Leninists who govern the USSR any credit either for meaning what they say...or for knowing what they are doing."¹⁹⁹ The book sold more than 190,000 hardbound copies in the United States, and 3 million copies in 10 languages world wide.²⁰⁰ The book remained among the top twenty best selling fiction works from 1978 to 1980, and in December of 1983, President Reagan named the book as one of the most important books he had read that year.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Filomena Simora ed., *The Bowker Annual of Library & Book Trade Information 1980*, (New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1980) 556.

¹⁹⁹ General Sir John Hackett et al., *The Third World War: August 1985*, (New York: MacMillan, 1978) 359.

²⁰⁰ Edwin McDowell, "Novel on World War III Now Has a Sequel," *New York Times*, 1 September 1982, sec. C, p. 22.

²⁰¹ "Reading for Work and Pleasure," *The New York Times*, 4 December 1983, sec. 7, p. 11. For information on the book's position on various best seller lists see: Simora ed., *The Bowker Annual, 1980*.

Hackett's book soon spawned imitators, many of who were also retired military officers who wrote in either a fictional setting or in a nonfiction polemical, alarmist, vein about the looming Soviet threat.²⁰² A significant nonfiction book of this type was *Inside the Soviet Army* written by a defected Soviet Army officer under the pseudonym Viktor Suvorov (real name, Valdimir Rezun) and published in 1982. In this book Suvorov provided his explanations of Soviet military thinking, which included a highly incredulous attitude, bordering on ridicule, about the American idea of flexible response and gradual escalation. Suvorov assured his readers that Soviet military doctrine was firmly rooted in the idea of the *massive offensive*, and that nuclear weapons were *not* considered weapons of last resort, but rather an important part of the initial stages of an offensive.²⁰³ In another section of the book called "Operation Détente" he explains that the peace movement in the East was encouraged by Moscow, and that it had the same goal as the movement in the West, namely the prevention of new missile installations in the *West*. In this same section, he invokes the history of Soviet/Finnish relations, asserting that, "If they [the Kremlin] could not bring the Finns to their knees by fighting, they decided they would do it by peaceful methods."²⁰⁴

Like Hackett's book and others, *Inside the Soviet Army* was regularly advertised in a variety of magazines either by itself or often as part of a book club offers. Also like Hackett's book, the rank and occupation of the author lent credibility to the author's conclusions. The salient point here is that these books were written for the non-

Karen Hinckley and Barbara Hinckley, *American Best Sellers: A Reader's Guide to Popular Fiction*, (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1989) 239. *The World Almanac & Book of Facts, 1981*, (New York: Newspaper Enterprise Association, 1981) 410. Almanac used information from *Publishers Weekly*.

²⁰² Indicative of these types of books are *The Eleventh Hour* by Gen. Lewis W. Walt, USMC Ret. and *Shall America Be Defended? SALT II and Beyond* by Daniel O. Graham, both of which were advertised with full page ads in *National Review* in June and August of 1979 respectively.

²⁰³ Viktor Suvorov, *Inside The Soviet Army*, (New York: Berkley Books, 1982) 185-195.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 197-198.

professional, general public, and from the late 1970s onward, they introduced that public (which did sometimes include important leadership figures) to subjects and issues that had largely been forgotten during the previous ten to fifteen years.²⁰⁵ These books were a response to a growing public demand for knowledge on these matters, and they helped intensify the cultural attention that would first support a military buildup under Carter and Reagan, and develop into nuclear war *anxiety* by the mid-1980s.²⁰⁶

THE STRATEGIC MODERNIZATION CONTINUUM

On July 25, 1980 President Carter signed a directive that laid the foundations for the military buildup and modernization under Ronald Reagan. The Carter directive, officially Presidential Directive 59 (PD-59), established objectives for making the nation's strategic nuclear forces more capable and resilient in the event of nuclear conflict thereby enhancing the credibility of the United States' nuclear deterrent.²⁰⁷ This initiative was built upon and enhanced by the Reagan administration and cited in its National Security Decision Directive 13 (NSDD-13), written in October 1981.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ This can be attributed to the major issues of the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, social unrest, and Watergate. Certainly other factors played a role as well, but clearly the mid-1960s to the late 1970s was a time of *public* apathy on the specific issues of nuclear weapons and the Soviet/American strategic balance. For one of the best explanations of this see: Paul Boyer, "From Activism to Apathy: The American People and Nuclear Weapons, 1963-1980," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 70, No.4, March 1984, 821-844.

²⁰⁶ See: Louis Kriesberg and Ross Klien, "Changes in Public Support for U.S. Military Spending," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 24, No. 1 March, 1980, 79-111. Kriesberg and Klien focus on roughly the same time period as Boyer, and outline various reasons for the concomitant rise in support for increased military spending.

²⁰⁷ Presidential Directive/NSC-59, "Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy," July 25, 1980, www.jimmycarterlibrary.org/documents/pddirectives

²⁰⁸ Christopher Simpson ed. *National Security Directives of the Reagan and Bush Administrations*, 49. At the date of this writing, the entirety of the text of NSDD-13 is still blacked out. Information on the details of this directive are culled from secondary sources mentioned here in the text. A related directive, NSDD-12, was written at the same time. More text of this directive is available, and its plans regarding the B-1 bomber, MX missile, and even what would eventually become the Strategic Defense Initiative is fairly clear.

PD-59 set requirements that could not be met at the time of its signing, and NSDD-13 was an attempt, as Jeffery Richelson explained, to match capabilities to strategy.²⁰⁹ In fact, Richelson's 1983 article, in *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, is probably still the best explanation of the link in strategic military policy between Carter and Reagan. As such, there is no need to reiterate the details and particulars of the directives that are already so ably explained by Richelson, but it is necessary to mention what the general requirements of PD-59 were and how NSDD-13 responded to those needs.

PD-59 called for improvements in command, control and communications systems, what in military shorthand is referred to as C³. This enhancement would allow for more flexible targeting as the battlefield situation changed rapidly and for more reliable communications with strategic assets, mainly bombers and submarines, that could be recalled, if need be, after receiving an attack order. The directive also called for increased emphasis on striking "hard" targets like ICBM sites and leadership command and control bunkers. This, in turn, called for the deployment of more accurate warheads for land and submarine based ICBMs, including the newer MX missile that had already been approved by Carter in June of 1979. Another requirement of PD-59 was that the nation's nuclear force capable of surviving an initial attack. This demanded an increase in production of the newer Trident D5 SLBM and the Air Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM) to compensate for the perceived vulnerability of the land based ICBM force.²¹⁰

The Reagan Administration enthusiastically sought to meet these military demands and built upon them in a way that seemed to consider the goals of PD-59 and

²⁰⁹ Jeffrey Richelson, "PD-59, NSDD-13, and the Reagan Strategic Modernization Program," *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 6, June 1983,

²¹⁰ *Ibid*, 133-136.

conclude, “not bad, but not quite enough.” Richelson’s article effectively demonstrates that, like the other political trends discussed here, that there was not a sharp divide between the two administrations. There were some differences, however, that were, paradoxically, the result of the same conservative forces that account for the similarities.

A primary difference was doctrinal, in that PD-59 stressed the idea of military *endurance* and the ability to fight a *prolonged* conflict so as to inflict high costs on the Soviet Union.²¹¹ The Reagan modernization program focused on fighting a nuclear war in such a manner as to end hostilities as soon as possible and, most significantly, to *prevail* and be in a position of advantage after hostilities stopped. In August of 1982 Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger declared that any Secretary of Defense that did not intend to prevail “ought to be impeached.”²¹² Two months later the *Washington Post* reported details of a “five year guidance” from Weinberger to the military that was leaked to the paper. Part of that guidance was the requirement that if nuclear war with the Soviet Union should take place, the U.S. must be able to, “seek earliest termination of hostilities on terms favorable to the United States.” It also directed that the nation should maintain a reserve of nuclear forces, “sufficient for trans-and post-attack protection and coercion.”²¹³

Operationally, this translated into approval of the B-1 bomber for deployment with SAC by 1986. This decision to deploy with this new aircraft, made in October 1981, did *not* lead to the sacrifice of any other weapons system. The B-1 was designed to carry the ALCM and other types of nuclear ordinance, such as the newly developed B-83

²¹¹ Ibid, 125.

²¹² Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 388.

²¹³ Michael Getler, “Administration’s Nuclear War Policy Stance Still Murky,” *The Washington Post*, November 10, 1982, First Section, A24.

free fall bomb which was specifically designed for high-speed, low-level delivery on supersonic aircraft, like the B-1, against the type of hard targets that were a priority of PD-59.²¹⁴ The B-1 was meant to serve as a penetrating bomber that could strike targets deep within Soviet territory. Moreover, the B-1B delivered to SAC in 1986 was a much more advanced version than the prototypes cancelled by Carter, and development of the Advanced Technology Bomber (B-2 Stealth), another Carter era initiative, was continued.

Existing B-52s continued to be upgraded, and a smaller version of the MX, called the “Midgetman,” was to be added to the land based ICBM arsenal. The expansion of the U.S. Navy to a 600 ship force and the continued development of the Trident D5 SLBM was also ordered.²¹⁵ The emphasis on better C³ systems complimented and enhanced the flexibility of all U.S. bombers and subs by making their recall, or retargeting, more reliable and assured their efficacy in the, “trans-and post-attack protection and coercion” scenario envisioned by Weinberger.

Thus, the U.S. strategic modernization program was a continuum that moved from a trade off oriented incrementalism under Jimmy Carter, to the buy and deploy it all attitude of the Reagan Administration, which sought a fully comprehensive range of strategic capabilities to project an aggressive and confident military posture. This new view was based on the belief by many important administration officials, including Reagan himself, that the traditional deterrence concept of Mutual Assured Destruction

²¹⁴ Chuck Hansen, *U.S. Nuclear Weapons: The Secret History*, (Arlington TX: Aerofax, 1988) 171.

²¹⁵ National Security Decision Directive 91, April 19, 1983, Christopher Simpson ed. *National Security Directives of the Reagan and Bush Administrations*, 294-295.

had either outlived its usefulness, or was essentially immoral, dangerous, and unnecessarily fatalistic.²¹⁶

Undersecretary of Defense Fred Ikle was also influential in this anti-MAD viewpoint, having spoken and written against it before becoming a member of the administration.²¹⁷ Once entering office, he initiated studies, the conclusions of which supported the doctrines of PD-59 and suggested the military needs to be met by NSDD-13.²¹⁸ There is every reason to believe that if Jimmy Carter had won re-election that he would have pursued a similar type of military buildup, albeit not necessarily to the same degree and scale as Reagan. A comparison of Carter's proposed spending plans for the years 1982 to 1986 and the actual spending of the Reagan administration during those same years shows a steady increase in both budgets, with Reagan's actual outlays being, on average, about 37 billion dollars more than that projected by Carter.²¹⁹

The apparent paradox of Reagan's abhorrence of MAD and his simultaneous military build up was resolved, at least in Reagan's mind, by the concept of "negotiation from strength."²²⁰ In other words, a strong military position was needed to gain respect and negotiating power, which included the "bargaining chips" that an increased weapons inventory would provide. Put another way, it meant; get tough and strong first so that

²¹⁶ Ronald Reagan, *An American Life*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990) 13-14 and 257-258. Probably more than anyone else in the administration, Reagan's stance on MAD was based on moral concerns.

²¹⁷ Peter Duignan and Alvin Rabushka ed., *The United States in the 1980s*, 419-443. Ikle does not address MAD directly but his chapter is devoted to eroding U.S. military strength, and provides a philosophical underpinning of both PD-59 and NSDD-13. See also: Fred Ikle, "Can Nuclear Deterrence Last Out the Century?" *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 51, No. 2, January 1973, 267-285. This article was a more direct attack on the MAD doctrine. Even at this early date, Ikle expressed the need for reliable C³, force vulnerability, and early warning that would find its way into PD-59 and NSDD-13. The article also attacked MAD on moral grounds, criticizing its "tasteless jargon" that concealed the reality that assured destruction was really "assured genocide." 280-281.

²¹⁸ Richelson, "PD-59, NSDD-13, and the Reagan Strategic Modernization Program," 131.

²¹⁹ Wilbur D. Jones Jr., *Arming the Eagle: A History of U.S. Weapons Acquisition Since 1775*, (Ft. Belvoir, VA: Defense Systems Management College Press, 1999) 395.

²²⁰ Reagan, *American Life*, 13-14.

you can play nice later, risk free, and with real leverage. Jack Matlock explains that this concept went beyond military strength however, and included the idea of a revitalized U.S. economy, and “a renewed sense of national purpose” that would strengthen America’s political will.²²¹ This concept was a part of the overall strategy of NSDD-75 both in its ideological focus and in its goal of “Maximizing Restraining Leverage on Soviet Behavior.”²²²

SDI AND INF

In *The United States in the 1980s*, physicist, Hoover Institute senior fellow, and Committee on the Present Danger member, Dr. Edward Teller contributed a chapter called “Technology: The Imbalance of Power.” Teller explained the importance and inevitability of the march of technology in the history of warfare. Using historical examples ranging from World War I to the present day strategic nuclear arms race, he explained how every new offensive technology had spawned the need for an equally high tech defense against it, and vice versa.²²³ Teller pointed out that technological innovation had often resulted from a desire to break stalemate situations as well. He discussed the significant major weapons systems in the history of modern warfare; the rifle, the machine gun, the modern navy, the airplane, rockets and missiles, and nuclear weapons.

²²¹ Jack Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended*, (New York: Random House, 2004) 13.

²²² Christopher Simpson ed. *National Security Directives of the Reagan and Bush Administrations*, 260. NSDD-75 explicitly states the importance of sustaining a steady increase in military spending and capabilities as a way of, “conveying to the Soviets U.S. resolve and political staying power.” (261) and the need to sustain, “a major ideological/political offensive which, together with other efforts, will be designed to bring about evolutionary change of the Soviet system.” (262)

²²³ Peter Duignan and Alvin Rabushka ed., *The United States in the 1980s*, 497-534.

He ends his historical discussion by touting the promise of “Radar, Lasers, and Beyond” to provide an effective defense against an attacker’s ICBMs.²²⁴

The second part of his essay is “A Program for the 1980s” in which the familiar themes in the conservative critique of the U.S./Soviet strategic balance were reiterated: the balance is in the Soviet’s favor, many refuse to acknowledge that fact, the SALT treaties are pointless, and that a renewed focus on improving America’s technological superiority will help redress the nation’s dangerous position. He also mentions the need to negotiate from strength, but most importantly he concludes by returning to the issue of “future weapons” and technological progress for the “influence for war or for peace.” Teller counsels the reader that, “throughout history the term ‘ultimate weapon’ has been used again and again; just as frequently, that ultimate weapon has been replaced by a new candidate. In reality, the limits of damage from weapons have always been set, not by weapons, but by the intentions of those who wield them.”²²⁵

Three years after the Hoover volume’s publication, Ronald Reagan, in one of his most important speeches, echoed these same themes. On March 23, 1983 he presented his interpretation of Teller’s vision to the American people in the form of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). SDI was not just a vision of one type of weapon, rather, the program would involve the development of a variety of systems ranging from exotic ideas involving orbiting laser armed battle stations, to “kinetic energy” weapons that would destroy a missile or warhead by directly impacting it using advanced “smart

²²⁴ Ibid, 513-514.

²²⁵ Ibid, 532.

bullets.” The various weapons systems envisioned were based in space, on the ground, or on aircraft.²²⁶

Like Teller, Reagan assured America that “current technology has attained a level of sophistication where it’s reasonable for us to begin the effort,” the purpose of which was, “our ultimate goal of eliminating the threat posed by strategic nuclear missiles.”²²⁷ In his memoirs, Reagan sounded even more like Teller, and recalled telling the Joint Chiefs of Staff that, “Every offensive weapon ever invented by man has resulted in the creation of a defense against it...” and then asking them if it were not possible to likewise create a weapon to defend against ICBMs.²²⁸

Although, strangely, Reagan did not mention Teller in his own memoirs, the esteemed physicist’s influence on Reagan’s thinking about ballistic missile defense (BMD) is well documented in the personal histories of several members of the administration. Ed Meese characterizes Teller as a “key influence in Reagan’s thinking” about the promise of BMD, and that Teller himself had, “a long history of bucking fashionable opinion.”²²⁹ George Schultz asserts that the basic vision of SDI was all Reagan’s own, but also acknowledges that Teller was an influence as early as 1967 when Reagan, as governor of California, visited the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory where Teller briefed him on the latest research on how to defend against nuclear attack by using nuclear explosives. Reagan listened intently, asked many questions, and as

²²⁶ Col. Richard S. Friedman et al., *Advanced Technology Warfare*, (New York: Salamander Books, 1985) 84-89. See also: Robert Jastrow, *How to Make Nuclear Weapons Obsolete*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1985) Both these books provide a good overview of SDI technology and concepts. Jastrow is also a scientist and an early supporter of SDI.

²²⁷ U.S. President, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States* (Washington, D.C. : Government Printing Office, 1984) Ronald Reagan, 1983,

²²⁸ Reagan, *An American Life*, 547. See also : John Patrick Diggins, *Ronald Reagan: Fate, Freedom, and the Making of History*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007) 290-291. Diggins asserts that, “Reagan agreed with Teller that defense is morally preferable to offense...”

²²⁹ Edwin Meese III, *With Reagan: The Inside Story*, (Washington D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1992) 192.

Schultz says, “This may have become the first gleam in Ronald Reagan’s eye of what later became the Strategic Defense Initiative.”²³⁰ Reagan’s science advisor, George Keyworth, was recommended to the administration by Teller and, according to Martin Anderson, Keyworth regarded Teller, “with awe” and as such, “we were not surprised to find Keyworth generally supportive of missile defense.”²³¹ Moreover, a diverse group of Reagan administration officials and personal associates also supported BMD, some were Committee on the Present Danger (CPD) members, others were simply Republican or Democratic conservatives.²³²

Although it would be tempting to conclude that the Hoover Institute members mentioned here constituted a kind of “brain trust” for Ronald Reagan that directly shaped the president’s views and policy decision, it would be more accurate to say that these individuals provided a scholarly, intellectual backing and legitimacy for basic beliefs that Reagan already held. When Reagan switched his party affiliation from Democrat to Republican in 1962, the Hoover Institute was still only an “underfunded library with a modest publishing program,” and nowhere near the intellectual force it would become by the late 1970s.²³³ By Reagan’s own account the political views he would take to the White House; the virtues of free market capitalism, small government, low taxes, anti-

²³⁰ George Schultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 261.

²³¹ Martin Anderson, *Revolution*, 90-91.

²³² Among these individuals were conservative Democrat and CPD member, Karl R. Bendtsen. Joseph Coors, of the Coors beer company. Southern California businessman, and Reagan friend, William A. Wilson. San Francisco businessman, Jaquelin Hume. Reagan defense advisor, and CPD member, William Van Cleave. Attorney General Ed Messe. Republican Senator Malcolm Wallop and former head of the Defense Intelligence Agency General Daniel Graham, who founded a BMD program called the High Frontier.

²³³ James Allen Smith, *The Idea Brokers: Think Tanks and the Rise of the New Policy Elite*, (New York: The Free Press, 1991) 280.

communism, strong national defense, and a philosophy rooted in American exceptionalism, were already well formed before he ever met the first Hoover fellow.²³⁴

The Hoover Institute's influence in the Reagan administration was the culmination of a process beginning in the early 1970s whereby a conservative infrastructure of policy critique and dissent was built. This dissent was just as confident and revolutionary as that of the 1960s, and like those earlier rebels, "The conservatives were not afraid of invoking large ideals and of setting them in sweeping historical contexts in which grand ideas clashed and struggled."²³⁵ Even more fundamentally, the Hoover Institute's thorough insinuation into the highest levels of American government and policy represented, up to that time, the ultimate achievement of the American think tank.

It is important to realize that even BMD, a subject so indelibly connected to Ronald Reagan, was not a concept unique to that administration. Edward Teller discussed defensive possibilities as early as late 1945 after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings when many were asserting that there could be no defense against the atomic bomb.²³⁶ The United States first developed actual Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) defenses as early as 1963. By the mid 1960s Soviet developments in ABM weapons and a possible Chinese nuclear program increased calls in the United States for a real ABM system. By the late 1960s the United States had a small ABM system mainly designed to

²³⁴ Reagan, *An American Life*, 106-712. As early as the post war years of the late 1940s and early 1950s Reagan was speaking out about the danger of communism.

²³⁵ Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, 170.

²³⁶ Edward Teller, *Memoirs: A Twentieth Century Journey in Science and Politics*, (Cambridge MA: Perseus Publishing, 2001) 218.

protect ICBM sites²³⁷ This system was further limited by the 1972 ABM treaty, and by 1975 Congress discontinued the program was discontinued altogether.

However, BMD research and development continued, and many of the systems and technologies that would reach the experimental stage in the mid and late 1980s were discussed as part of Senate hearings on Department of Defense appropriations in March of 1980.²³⁸ This discussion of BMD, led by Major General Grayson Tate, BMD program manager, illustrates the context in which missile defense was considered at that time. Specifically, the technology was seen as a way to address the ever present issue of ICBM silo vulnerability. In particular the discussion related to the protection of the MX and Minuteman missile sites.²³⁹ In other words, these proposed systems were integrated closely with offensive strategic systems to ensure their survivability and therefore enhance the credibility of the nation's nuclear deterrence which, in turn, preserved the validity of MAD.

The important point here, then, is two fold: (1) Missile defense, and its related technology and applications, did not originate with Ronald Reagan. It was a national security issue as far back as the Kennedy administration. Like the strategic modernization program, Reagan's adoption of the idea was just that, an adoption. (2) The important difference was that, like strategic modernization, Reagan made missile defense a part of his actual political platform and agenda, and shifted its context from the MAD paradigm to his own vision of arms control.

²³⁷ Dietrich Schroer, *Science, Technology, and the Nuclear Arms Race*, 238-240.

²³⁸ U.S. Congress, Senate, Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services United States Senate, *Department of Defense Authorization For Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1981, Part 5, Research and Development*, 96th Congress, Second Session, March 5,11,12,13,14,25,26, 1980. 2867-2885.

²³⁹ *Ibid*, 2879-2882.

The link Reagan drew between SDI and arms control or, more accurately, arms *reduction*, has not always been readily apparent because the debate over the issue focused so disproportionately over the “militarization of space” concerns. Reagan’s address to the nation on March 23, 1983 actually dealt mostly with more conventional matters of national security and defense. The subject of missile defenses constituted only the last few minutes of the address, *after* acknowledging the value of the nation’s traditional strategic nuclear deterrent and the need to maintain this long standing force. In the last section of the speech Reagan segued into the simultaneous topic of SDI *and* arms reduction. The language of these last eleven paragraphs speak of the need to “lower the level of all arms” and the desire to “achieve major arms reduction” and “save lives.”²⁴⁰ For Reagan, SDI was “a vision of the future” that would provide “measures that are defensive” and would be worth any investment to “free the world from the threat of nuclear war” and “pave the way for arms control measures to eliminate the weapons themselves.”²⁴¹

Reagan insisted that nuclear weapons not be a part of SDI, and he did not want to send them into space.²⁴² Clearly, he viewed these technologies as a purely defensive solution to the problem of the very existence of nuclear weapons themselves. In his own memoirs his discussion of SDI is linked to his explanation of the “zero-zero” proposal related to the negotiations on reducing Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF).²⁴³ As Lawrence Freedman puts it, “SDI sought a Great Escape from the nuclear dilemma” and,

²⁴⁰ U.S. President, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, (Washington D.C. : U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984) Ronald Reagan, 1983, 442.

²⁴¹ *Ibid*, 442-443.

²⁴² Edward Teller, *Memoirs*, 532. See also: George Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 263-264. Schultz acknowledges that initially SDI was linked to the use of nuclear devices but that, “the core of his [Reagan’s] vision was his deep unease about nuclear weapons.

²⁴³ Reagan, *An American Life*, 547-556. Reagan implicitly characterizes both SDI and zero-zero as important methods of eliminating nuclear weapons.

as Freedman also points out, Reagan would eventually promise to share the secrets of this “Great Escape” with the Soviets in exchange for the drastic arms reductions he wanted.²⁴⁴ With SDI Reagan was, “not attempting a new move in the prolonged game of nuclear deterrence but seeking to terminate the game. The objective was not to protect vital military assets but society itself.”²⁴⁵

Aside from lofty rhetoric and visions, the actual historical record on the matter shows that during the Reagan administration all actual testing and experimentation of SDI technology, and those related to it, were in fact non-nuclear and involved research into either “kinetic energy” weapons that impact directly with the target, or laser weapons powered with chemicals.²⁴⁶ More importantly, this reality about Reagan’s vision of SDI as an arms control measure addresses what Coral Bell identified as the “Reagan Paradox,” the seeming discontinuity between the administration’s declaratory signals (what they *say*) and their operational signals (what they *actually do*).²⁴⁷ Moreover, it is this very paradox that provides an interesting link between Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan.

The paradox can be expressed as a question : How is it that a seemingly right wing, anti-communist, defense hawk could, after approximately four years in office, switch almost seamlessly into becoming perhaps the most successful arms control president in American history? Likewise, how did a seemingly dovish, moralistic, liberal

²⁴⁴ Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 395.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 395.

²⁴⁶ It should be noted that National Security Decision Directive number 119 (NSDD 119) did hold out the *possibility* of research involving nuclear devices “as a hedge against a Soviet ABM breakout.” See : Christopher Simpson ed. *National Security Directives of the Reagan and Bush Administrations*, 375. However, most of the systems seriously considered and tested involved some type of “kinetic kill” impact weapons vis a vis high speed, high altitude missiles. See : Edward Reiss, *The Strategic Defense Initiative*, (Cambridge, U.K. : Cambridge University Press, 1992) 113-136.

²⁴⁷ Coral Bell, *The Reagan Paradox: U.S. Foreign Policy in the 1980s*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989)

internationalist, like Jimmy Carter, end up laying the groundwork for the nation's most expensive peacetime military modernizations ever, with a return to a Truman type policy of hard line containment?

Bell suggests the answer to both with a French saying: "The soup is never eaten as hot as it is cooked." Or in other words, the "hot soup" of declaratory policy emerges from the ideological "cooks" who prepare it, but is later cooled by the "breath of pragmatism before it is served up as policy."²⁴⁸ For Carter, that breath of pragmatism resulted from changes in the concerns and attitudes in American society, the rise of neo-conservatism, and Soviet adventurism abroad and their intransigence on arms control. For Reagan, it was a combination of his own abhorrence of the MAD doctrine, a genuine desire for arms reduction, and a growing concern over the danger of nuclear war by the American public. In sum, a basic fact that connected the two presidents was that both believed sincerely in arms reduction and peace, but approached that goal with different strategies which were subject to evolving social and political forces. A final subject to consider here in this examination of continuums, changes, and links between the two administrations is the issue of intermediate range nuclear weapons and how that issue came full circle by the mid 1980s.

In 1977, the Soviet Union began to deploy a new mobile, solid fueled, MIRVed, intermediate range ballistic missile (IRBM), the SS-20. The missile carried three warheads and with its short flight time and range could hit nearly any important NATO target in Europe. SALT I did not cover this type of intermediate range missile and Carter, not considering them a serious threat to Western Europe, did not include the

²⁴⁸ Ibid, 7.

missile as part of SALT II discussions.²⁴⁹ Many Europeans, in particular the West Germans, disagreed, and in the fall of 1977 West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt urged the U.S. to deploy its own intermediate range weapons to offset this new threat. In January of 1979, Carter worked out a “two track” agreement with the major NATO nations (Britain, France, and Germany) to deploy the Pershing II IRBM and the Tomahawk ground launched cruise missile (GLCM).²⁵⁰ Simultaneously, deployments were linked to the promise that the United States and the Soviet Union to enter into negotiations aimed at limiting these very systems.²⁵¹

Actual deployments of the Pershings and GLCMs did not take place until December of 1983, and by that time Paul H. Nitze was called back to government service after his long hiatus following his resignation from the SALT II negotiating team in 1974. Nitze personally felt that the Pershing deployments were unnecessary and that the case for them, “was more political than military.”²⁵² However, in 1981 he was asked by fellow CPD founder Eugene Rostow, also Reagan’s director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, to join him as part of the INF negotiating team. By that time Nitze felt that there was no other choice than to proceed with the two track policy. The reason was the need to hold the NATO alliance together and not repeat Carter’s mistake with the neutron bomb by being indecisive.²⁵³

Nitze, and his involvement in the INF talks in some ways personifies and explains the threads of continuity between the Carter and Reagan administrations. Nitze

²⁴⁹ Paul H. Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost: At the Center of Decision*, (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989) 366.

²⁵⁰ The numbers agreed to were 108 Pershing IIs and 464 GLCMs.

²⁵¹ Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost*, 366-369. Nitze provides one of the best overviews of these developments.

²⁵² *Ibid*, 368.

²⁵³ *Ibid*, 368-369.

was a CPD member, and certainly an anti-communist, but his opposition to SALT and détente was not based on a desire for more nuclear weapons and superpower tension. He supported the idea of arms reduction and peaceful relations. His disagreement rather had always been over treaties and agreements that put the United States at a disadvantage both militarily and in any subsequent negotiations. In sum, he had always believed in the “negotiation from strength” concept that was so central to Reagan’s Soviet policy.

However, it is exactly this concept that falls within the realm of the “borderline signals,” between declaratory and operational, that Coral Bell discusses. Borderline signals may move from the first category to the second within a matter of years.²⁵⁴ While still in their ambiguous transitional stage, borderline signals can be interpreted by an adversary depending on the nature, and conviction of how those signals are communicated. As Bell points out “negotiation from strength” works both sides of a psychological street, it seeks peace, but caters to the desire by a society for safety and security and, “produced a greater tolerance of negotiation, simply by promoting renewed national self assurance.”²⁵⁵ The Carter administration’s fundamental mistake was its failure to realize the increasing need for this self assurance during the “decade of nightmares” that was the 1970s.²⁵⁶

Reagan’s zero-zero option and SDI was just as bold, and seemingly unrealistic, as Carter’s March 1977 proposal, and was likewise rejected and criticized both domestically and abroad. However, the INF treaty, concluded in December 1987, in which Nitze also played a role, did constitute a major breakthrough in nuclear arms reduction. An entire

²⁵⁴ Coral Bell, *The Reagan Paradox*, 8-9.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁵⁶ Phillip Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006)

class of nuclear weaponry was eliminated, and the path was opened for further reductions in strategic weapons that would lead to a 25 to 30 percent reduction in offensive warheads.²⁵⁷ By that time, the American public had evolved to that combination of confidence and concern that made those reductions palatable. Furthermore, the spectrum of change in Soviet/American relations and policy had finally come full circle to the point of realizing Carter's dreams of peace and arms control.

²⁵⁷ Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 397.

CONCLUSION

Regardless of how much admirers of Ronald Reagan may wish to believe that he alone, among all other Cold War U.S. presidents, led the free world to victory over Soviet communism, the historical record does not support this belief. This thesis has been, in part, an attempt to explain why that belief is false. In the Cold War, the United States faced a unique situation in its history: a roughly fifty year period of continuous confrontation with an adversary equal in military strength and political influence. That adversary sought to promote a political and social vision of the future that was completely at odds with the principles on which the United States was founded. Therefore, as much as many people at the time, and still a few today, wanted to believe the Cold War did not “end” at any point, even temporarily, until the Soviet government’s dissolution in 1991.

Accordingly then, American presidents out of necessity had to pass the struggle to their successors like runners in a relay race, or players in a game of “hot potato,” each one having figure the best way to handle it as best they knew. This is not to suggest that a given president played no unique role on their own. Indeed, in the case of Ronald Reagan, a strong case can be made that his efforts *hastened* the fall of a regime that perhaps could have limped along for another ten years or more, all the while subjecting its citizens to a life of stifling repression, fear, and a miserable standard of living. Likewise, it is fair to say that the Helsinki Final Act under Ford, and Jimmy Carter’s human rights focus, initiated the cracks in the foundation of the Soviet empire by emboldening civil rights movements in the communist world. This in turn created the

support base for such important anti-communist freedom fighters like Pope John Paul II and Lech Walesa.

However, a continuous confrontation produced continuities in policy in which changes evolved over time in a much more subtle and nuanced manner than many have chosen to recognize. This evolution mirrored the changing currents of thought and attitude among the American public, and its foreign policy intelligentsia. The existence of these two factors, and Soviet aggression, were constant influences on the government's decision making, with the latter gaining power and influence and the Cold War progressed. These evolving constants accounted for much of the continuities and evolutions examined in this thesis.

The modern American think tank, as it exists today, was born from the felt need to bring together the smartest minds available, and marshal their brilliance and creativity to advise elected decision makers in the complex game of politics, psychology, and high technology that the Cold War represented. By the 1970s however, many think tanks had become decidedly partisan political institutions and their membership often overlapped with that of political special interest groups. This political orientation gave many American think tanks, particularly the conservative ones, a greater degree of focus to their energies. This would result in one of the modern think tank's greatest accomplishments; the thorough insinuation by the Hoover Institute, into the highest levels of U.S. government policy making.

These facts suggest some interesting questions for all Americans to consider. How should the influence of organizations like Hoover and the Committee on the Present Danger on American foreign policy be considered? As a net positive or negative? What

are the implications when so many non-elected people have such sway in such matters?
Who then really makes and shapes the nation's foreign policy?

Another major subject of this thesis is the influence that social movements and public opinion have on policy making. This can perhaps be viewed at bit more positively as an affirmation of the effectiveness of America's democratic system to affect change and direction in policy even between election cycles. However, here as well, there are similar important questions to be asked. To what degree does the American public make and shape foreign policy? As democratic as this may seem, was it the public zeitgeist that produced the often inconsistent and ambiguous nature of U.S. diplomacy? Did this ambiguity and inconsistency unnecessarily slow diplomatic progress more than otherwise would have been the case if a given president had been unfettered by public pressure concerns?

Overall, it is important to remember that none of these factors exist and exert their influence in a vacuum. As Robert Higgs points out, "One is not justified, however, in regarding public opinion as entirely autonomous or spontaneous. There occurs a ceaseless contest over the determination of public opinion, and in this contest, defense policymakers, whose preferences may differ from those of the mass public, occupy a powerful position."²⁵⁸ In short, the United States' foreign policy was shaped from a confluence of various forces. However, as one saying goes, the American people have always managed to eventually get what they wanted, or deserved, depending on one's point of view.

²⁵⁸ Robert Higgs, *Depression, War, and Cold War: Studies in Political Economy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 205.

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