CONCLUSION

At the end of an eventful twelve years of the Reagan-Bush administrations, the dominating theme during this period was to open a new era in US-Russian relations. The year 1979 had hopes of an improved relationship with the signing of the SALT II agreement, but a complex of external interferences---the most critical being the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan---broke the chain of accommodation. Their relations forthwith descended into a nadir of despair, tension, vitriolic exchanges and danger.

President Ronald Reagan assumed the reins of his administration with a commitment to effecting changes in the domestic and foreign policy spheres. He also found fault with his predecessor for not checkmating the Soviet threat and permitting the erosion of the U.S. military strength. They appeared to have acquiesced in the dangerous expansion of the Soviet power. Hence, he pleaded to give the highest priority to challenge the “Soviet imperialism” on all fronts. As such, during his first term, Reagan sought to use the economic policy, political and human rights issues, and intervention by proxy in the Third World conflicts to confront, and embarrass the Soviet system and thus destabilize the “Soviet empire”. Nevertheless, the American president with an eye on the Presidential elections in November 1984, and confident of the restored American strength, held open the door of negotiations that the Soviets had unilaterally slammed shut.
With the death of Chernenko in March 1985, Gorbachev became the General Secretary and the American-Soviet relations saw an ascending curve of improvement. The heart of the Soviet approach to international relations in the Gorbachev era had been the belief that nuclear war between the two superpowers was not a viable option and that global interdependence, a second principle in that policy, mandated international cooperation on global scale. These concepts determined the shape of the Soviet foreign policy and the Soviet conduct in international affairs as the principal determinants of Soviet national interests.

Inherent in these concepts were, the re-evaluation of Soviet national interests in keeping with the changed realities of the nuclear age. Also, the acceptance of the idea that great powers, faced with enormously complex economic, ecological, demographic, political and social problems on a global scale, could not escape the imperatives of at least some international cooperation. At the base of Gorbachev’s re-evaluation of national interests was the belief that domestic and foreign policy were inextricably interconnected. The state of Soviet society and the economy had to be reformed and regenerated if the Soviet Union was to be a genuine superpower rather than being only a super-military power.

As a result of the changed thinking between the great rivals, President Reagan declared that the days of the Soviet Union as an “evil empire” had become the story of the past. In concrete terms the signing of the Intermediate Range Nuclear Force (INF) Treaty, substantial negotiation on Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), massive Conventional Forces
reduction, solving of major regional disputes such as Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia and above all, improvement in the Soviet human rights record were the results of improved superpower relations. In sum, by the end of the Reagan administration, an hiatus of discord lasting nearly a decade was finally closed by the wisdom and judgment of Gorbachev and Reagan, spurred albeit by deeper historical forces working on both sides to bring the American-Soviet relations to a new era of diplomacy and negotiations.

The advent of the Bush administration in January 1989 was not only a mandate to preserve Reaganism but to move the U.S.-Soviet relations “beyond containment”. The democratic revolution in Eastern Europe in 1989 gave a formal burial to the Cold War by sweeping away one of the basic causes of the conflict between the two global rivals. The U.N. Security Council was reinvigorated and the U.S.-Soviet cooperation eased the process of United Germany’s membership in the NATO. As such, the American-Soviet relations were on firmer ground in dealing with arms control issues, which had long been the centre-piece of the superpower relations. The Sweeping cuts in Nuclear and Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) were announced. The weapon modernization programmes were halted and defense spending was reduced sharply. During the July 1991 Superpower Summit, Bush and Gorbachev signed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). Additionally, they took all strategic bombers off twenty-four hours alert and Gorbachev announced a one year unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing.

Although many in the administration had questioned Gorbachev’s commitment to structural reforms, the fear of the unknown and the prospect of chaos in the Soviet Union led Bush to embrace Gorbachev in a futile
attempt to prop up the centre. The American President categorised the members of the ‘coup d’etat’ as “criminals” and backed Yeltsin’s call that Gorbachev be returned to power. In its aftermath, although the Soviet Union was on the verge of dissolution in December 1991, the Bush administration continued to search for some sort of central authority in which a political role could be found for Gorbachev. When this proved impossible, and Gorbachev announced his resignation on 25 December 1991, the United States declared that it would establish full diplomatic relations with six of the republics of the former Soviet Union: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhastan and Kyrgyzstan. Full relations were established with the other republics as and when they demonstrated their commitment to democracy, economic reforms, minority rights, and other international agreement previously signed by Moscow on their behalf.

The US-Russian relationship after the advent of Boris Yeltsin, as the first democratically elected president of the Russian Republic as a successor state of the erstwhile Soviet Union, indicated that it was moving in the direction of establishing a security relationship based more on partnership than on confrontation. Gorbachev attempted to carry out reforms in the context of the existing socialist system. Yeltsin however, abandoned the socialist model and openly opted for capitalism, eliminating ideological ambiguity. The economic relations between the two experienced dramatic normalization and further expansion. Yeltsin undertook to create a new administrative apparatus and a legal and business environment which was conducive to market economics. President Bush and Yeltsin signed the U.S.-Russian trade agreement’, which provided for reciprocal ‘Most Favoured Nation’ (MFN) access for both sides; the ‘Bilateral Investment Treaty’ and
the ‘Treaty for the Avoidance of double Taxation’ of income. More importantly, in April 1992, “House joint Resolution 465 repealed the Stevenson-Byrd Amendments” which removed a $300 million limit on trade financing with Russia along with other restrictive legislations.

The political and economic conditions, as a result, was conducive for arms control. The period was highlighted by the completion of negotiations and finally signing of the landmark Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty II (START), ratification of the Conventional Force in Europe (CFE) Treaty, great progress towards Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban, (CTBT) and joint technical cooperation on the safe and environmentally responsible storage, transportation, dismantling and destruction of nuclear warheads. The Vienna Document of 1992 was signed in March, which established a new set of Confidence and Security Building Measures, (CSBM). The multilateral Treaty on ‘Open Skies’ was signed on 24 March. Above all, the Convention on the ‘Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical weapons and on their destruction was also completed in Paris on 13 January 1993.

In other words, the U.S.-Russian relations during the last phase of the Bush presidency were characterized as transition from détente under Gorbachev to an ‘entente’ under Yelstin. It involved the wholesale abandonment of the action on the part of CIS that the United States or its Western allies could be potential enemies of the new Russian Federation. The end of the cold war created a new world, in which both the United States and Russia sought to establish their conduit. Much had changed. yet, elements of continuity was apparent in the conduct of their relationships.
CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

The most striking feature of the Soviet defense and foreign policies between 1984 and the end of 1986, was the extent to which the new leadership under Gorbachev continued with the general approach that had emerged in 1983-84. The 1984 approach had reaffirmed various aspects of the policy established by the 1981 party congress. It had a notably overriding importance of Superpower agreement to limit nuclear weapons, the favourable turn towards China, and the more pragmatic approach towards the countries of the Third World.

The most significant change that emerged from the 1983-84 reappraisal was the conclusion that, while peaceful coexistence was a sine quonon, it was unrealistic to count on sustained detente relationship with the United States---certainly as long as Reagan was in office. The March 1985 accession of Mikhail Gorbachev became the starting point for the policies of Perestroika in the domestic and foreign affairs. The first twenty months of the new leadership yielded mixed results in the field of national security. It was evident that international tension had been relaxed for the time being and the danger of war had receded. The international image of the Soviet Union had improved sharply, from that of doctrinaire, intransigent, militarized state to that of a more conciliatory and cooperative member of the world community, led by a new generation of leaders that sought to mesh the Soviet national security with the broader concept of international security. However, no significant changes in “Real Politik” appeared to have come about. There had been no progress in arms control and the arms race continued unabated, with the United States still determined to extend it into space. The successive
concessions offered and the conciliatory approach by Gorbachev had been looked upon by the Reagan administration as a reason to demand for more, while offering nothing in return.

Another element of continuity with the pre-Gorbachev era was the need for Soviet Policy to accommodate an unusually large number of internal contradictions, which had their roots in the requirements of the Soviet military doctrine and the Marxist ideology, including the politico-military requirement to cover the contingency of world war, a war that the Soviets wanted to avoid but could not afford to lose, should it prove unavoidable. In addition, the new political thinking about international relations introduced basic contradictions related to the Marxist doctrine, that the Soviet foreign policy should be guided by the class analysis and the admission, that other nations had legitimate interests and that their viewpoint had to be respected.

Thereafter, many radical changes in Soviet foreign and defense policies occurred. These included the withdrawal of forces from Afghanistan, the acceptance of a separate Treaty on Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF), a reversal of policy toward the United States, the adoption of a new kind of military doctrine, and the announcement of a very large unilateral cuts in Soviet forces, and major efforts to achieve reconciliation between the parties to regional conflicts, by above all, greater emphasis on the role of the United Nation. Yet, despite Gorbachev’s much acclaimed ‘New thinking’ on economic resurgence by de-emphasizing the military role in foreign policy, the “Soviet defense spending continued from 1985 through 1988 to remain
roughly constant as a share of Soviet gross national product (GNP). As such, the western political-military establishments remained unconvinced that the Soviet threat, had changed in any substantive way.

The Bush administration came to office in 1989 with an outlook and commitment not only to preserve Reaganism but also to take the U.S.-Soviet relations ‘beyond containment’. Initially it seemed however, that the Bush administration was still seeking to 'test Gorbachev'. The Skeptics in the administration still believed that changes taking place were reversible. The United States security could be endangered by the consequences of letting down its guard’ in the reversal of a detente policy.

In the early 1980s, the strategic-military consideration had influenced the transformation of political relations, but by the beginning of the 1990s political changes dominated and transformed their strategic relationship. Nuclear arms control had ceased to be the exclusive plank of political relations between the Superpowers. Both the symbols and realities of the cold War had disappeared yet, the START negotiations which had been conceived in the ‘new cold war era’ of the 1980s, proceeded seemingly untouched by the changing political and security context.

One of the revealing aspect of American policy towards the Soviet Union was the search for continuity in the aftermath of the failed coup and the rapidly disintegrating Soviet Union. The reality of an eclipsed Soviet Union and the democratic credentials of Boris Yeltsin were side tracked, as Bush

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stuck doggedly to prop up Gorbachev and find a relevant political role for him in a centralized Union with highly autonomous constituents. In effect, the United States tried to bolster the prospects for a federal solution to the Soviet Union's internal crisis in order to find a solution to the nuclear proliferation problem.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union, brought about change in the pace and style of nuclear arms control efforts. The 1991 START Treaty was negotiated over nine year period in which the "technical specialists haggled seemingly ad infinitum" over details in Geneva until high-level political officials intervened to resolve the residual issues. The START II treaty of 1993, by contrast, was negotiated over a period of less than one year, in which "high officials worked out agreements in principle", and then let technical specialist work out the final details. Moreover, the emphasis on extensive verification provisions were de-emphasized as the fear of cheating declined. Due to the political instability in the former Soviet Union, parallel unilateral initiatives that could be implemented quickly were emphasized. The issue of 'physical control of and central control over' nuclear weapons, now preoccupied both the United States and Russia. Paradoxically, the dismantlement of the nuclear delivery vehicles and warheads as a result of the successful disarmament process posed formidable economic and environmental challenges. Russia's lack of funds, along with questionable safety and cost effective method for denuclearization engaged the American-Russian attention.
The dramatic transformation of the U.S.-Russian relationship was most visibly symbolized in their renewed emphasis on their economic relations. Though legislations had been identified that impeded trade and investment but revision of the respective laws to conform to a policy of partnership did not come about. American laws continued to be invoked to restrict Russian exports to the United States of Uranium, Ferrosilicon and Potash. Restrictions on export of dual-use technologies such as fiber, optics, telecommunication, and high speed computers largely continued. Even as there was much debate, some promise but little delivery of western economic assistance to Russia.

In conclusion, one can say that the fundamental underlying cause of the cold war was the belief in both the United States and the Soviet Union that confrontation was inevitable---predestined by history. Soviet leaders believed that communism would ultimately triumph and that the Soviet state was the ‘vanguard socialist-Communist state’. They also believed that the western “imperialist” powers were historically bound to pursue a hostile course against them. On their part, the western leaders in general, and the Americans in particular, assumed that the Soviet Union was “determined to enhance its power” and pursue expansionist policies by all expedient means to achieve a Soviet-led “Communist world”.

The prevailing western view was wrong in attributing a master plan to the Kremlin, in believing that “communist ideology” alone impelled the Soviet leaders to expand their power, “in exaggerating” communist abilities
to "subvert a free world", and in thinking that the Soviet officials viewed military power as an ultimate recourse. Without doubt, other motivations and interests, including national aims, institutional interests, and even personal psychological considerations, played a part. Moreover, the actions of each side were sufficiently consistent with the ideological expectations of the other side to sustain their respective worldviews for many years.

As such, within the framework of the ideological conflict, the Americans and the Soviets waged the cold war as a 'geopolitical struggle' based more realistically on the traditional balance-of-power politics than on world class struggle or "global containment" and "deterrence theory". In effect, the cold war had essential "ideological-geopolitical" dimensions. Though the US-Soviet Cold War confrontation was based on the calculation of risk, cost, and gain, the hazard of a miscalculation was dangerous because of the coincidence of the cold war with the nuclear age. Yet, ironically, the nuclear weapons helped to keep the cold war 'cold'.

As a result, while the cold war and the nuclear arms race could be attenuated when opportunities or constraints led both sides to favour a relaxation of tensions, neither could be ended until the ideological underpinnings and the confrontation had also been released. This occurred under Mikhail Gorbachev's leadership, which brought about fundamental re-evaluation in Moscow and the processes at work in the real world, a basic reassessment of threats, and finally a deep revision of aims and political objectives. The United States and the West in general, were cautious but eventually recognised this fundamental change and need for reciprocity.
The West did not, as is widely claimed ‘win the cold war’ through “geo-political containment” and “military deterrence”. Still less was the cold war ‘won’ by the Reagan administrations military buildup and the ‘Reagan Doctrine’. Instead, transformation came about when a new generation of Soviet leaders realized how badly their system at home and their policies abroad had failed. Gorbachev persisted with an ultimately successful campaign that he would pursue to bring about a sharp decline in the military factor of the American-Soviet and East-West relations. Reagan’s military buildup and pursuit of the SDI had posed a military challenge to the Soviet Union, which it was economically and technologically hard pressed to meet. The American role in ending the cold war was therefore, necessary but not primary because American worldview was derivative of the communist worldview. Containment was hollow without an expansionist power to contain. Gorbachev did not ‘lose’ the arms race, he ‘called it off’.

Gorbachev’s ‘new thinking’ while ‘revolutionary’ in its aim and impact was ‘evolutionary’ in source and origin. The foundation of the new thinking had been percolating for many years before Gorbachev. As recent as Andropov, aided by the vantage point of exposure to the K.G.B, understood the deepening stagnation of the Soviet system. While Gorbachev remained a Socialist and in his own terms even a Communist, he renounced the Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist idea of the inevitable world conflict. Gorbachev eventually realized that the Communist party of the Soviet Union was not able to reform itself. He had counted on a reformed party to lead Perestroika, later he successfully neutralized the party as a potential obstacle, engineered its loss of a monopoly of power, and shunted it to the sidelines in the 1990s. He was not, as has sometimes been alleged, a prisoner and devotee of the Communist
Party or to socialism in its Marxist-Leninist form. Gorbachev was ultimately stymied not by the limits of his vision or his readiness to revise his understanding and his programmes but by opposition and ultimately by his inability to control the forces unleashed by his destruction of the older order.

President Reagan did not deviate from the principled path that he had embarked upon, as was claimed by his critics. Though a dedicated skeptic of arms control, Reagan had continued for six years to observe the SALT II Treaty and his actual arms budgets were by no means beyond the historical norms for the United States in the post war decades as a whole (5.9 percent of G.N.P. in 1988 as compared to 5.5 percent of G.N.P. in 1981). The reality was that the vast American armoury had never been in all that much need of major repair work, nor was America as weak as claimed by the essentialists.

Similarly, the 'Reagan Doctrine' seemed in retrospect chiefly a banner under which the established operational policies were 'hyped' into an ambitious declamatory policy which could be endowed with the President's name. On operational policies it was rather difficult to see in what areas any great difference between the Reagan years and those of his predecessors could be shown to lie. The major difference, therefore, have to be located in the sphere of declamatory policy; the major long term intellectual debate on this eight years patch of American foreign policy may be, as to whether the Reagan declaratory policies were on balance, useful or damaging to American interest.

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Despite his wide experience and the effort to move ‘beyond containment’ President Bush showed a lack of ‘the vision thing’ to deal with the historic opportunities in the wake of the radical transformation of Europe and later in the aftermath of the failed Soviet coup, leading to the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Having known only the cold war all their lives, the fear of chaos and unpredictability in the Soviet Union, with more than 30,000 nuclear warheads in their possession, Bush and his advisers went out of their way to prop up Gorbachev and ignored the democratic credentials of Boris Yeltsin, in their effort to find a formula that would allow the Soviet Union to survive, despite mounting centrifugal forces. It seemed President Bush was stuck by conservatism, slow-footedness and tight-fistedness.

In the post-Soviet period, Russian policy initially sought to apply idealistic international ‘new thinking’ even more consistently than it had been during Gorbachev. However, the cold warriors had been reluctant to give up an enemy, while the geopoliticians had been reluctant to give up the ‘game’. Some including Zbigniew Brzezinski and sometimes Henry Kissinger had suggested building up counter weights to Russia in Ukraine and other border states -- contesting in effect, the ‘near abroad’ with a forward neo-containment strategy.3

The Soviet reforms were not only the results of a profound crisis, but could become the cause of new ones. The consequences of ignoring or failing to invest substantial attention and resources in promoting a favourable US - Russian partnership could make Russia increasingly vulnerable to hostile and anti-western forces. Indeed, with deterioration in socio-economic

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and political conditions, the possibility of a wide-scale conflict raging on the territory of a nuclear superpower is an apocalyptic nightmare no one wants to consider. Moreover, the democratic transformation in Russia was crucial for the success of peaceful reforms in the other Soviet successor states. Russia had the capacity of exerting global influence not only because of the formidable nuclear arsenal, but because Russia was endowed with large population and abundant natural resources.

Isolationism for sure, cannot be a realistic option in the increasingly interdependent world community of the post-cold war era. Although the United States may be the world's sole remaining 'superpower' and the undisputed leader of the western world, it cannot expect to maintain peace in the 'new world order' alone. The United States singularly lacks the resources to shoulder this burden and must have the cooperation of other major global power to effectively meet the challenges presented in the post cold war 'new world order'.

For the Russian people, and above all, the diplomatic and the defense establishment, the jolt of the disintegration of the Soviet state was terrible. Now with many socio-economic and political problems, it cannot afford to ignore the United States or become so consumed with its own internal problems that it focuses only on contiguous major powers. The new Russian realism is entirely compatible with the development of good relations between the two countries. The challenge for both the country is to build a real partnership deriving upon the national interests of both countries,
cooperation in pursuit of congruent and common interests, accommodating differences where interests or objectives diverge and reconciling or neutralising interests that conflict.

While the American-Russian relations have remained a mix of cooperation and competition, as with the U.S.-Soviet relations during the cold war, the basic framework has undergone transformation. No longer are the two powers engaged in a fundamentally ‘zero-sum contest’, and no longer is there a fear of war. However, with the end of the cold war, the United States had exchanged one kind of insecurity for another. The insecurity of the nuclear peril and the bi-polar confrontation with the Soviet Union has been exchanged for the unpredictability of a far more complex era. In this new post-cold war world of global interdependence, financial and labour markets, fossil fuel emission, ideas, technology, drugs, crime, and weapons -- all know no boundaries.

The relationship between United States and Russia will continue to occupy a place of importance in international politics. It will, nonetheless, be relatively less important than the former US-Soviet relations, above all because of the rising significance of Europe and Japan and of multilateral problems, decisions, and agreements in all spheres, including arms and arms control as well as political and economic issues.

The cold war has been an important episode. But the roots of the earlier history with ramifications continue to influence the post-cold war world. There will be a return to the more traditional pattern of shifting blend
of cooperation and competition among all nations, including former cold war allies as well as former adversaries. The nature of the global new order will be influenced by policies of the United States and Russia, but at the same time the policies of the two great powers will be influenced by the evolution of the world order. The cold war was not only the most recent phase of history, it also constitutes the foundation for the future U.S.-Russian relationship.