CHAPTER II I
ANTAGONISTS IN SEARCH OF COEXISTENCE

In the first half of the 1980s relations between the United States and the Soviet Union were as bad as at any time in the post-Stalin era. The arms control negotiations between the two superpowers had stalled, and both were involved in a struggle for predominance in the Third world, including Afghanistan---centre piece for the implementation of the 'Reagan Doctrine'. The “American-Soviet propaganda war had reached hysterical proportions, going as far as to compare president Reagan to Hitler and warning of an inexorable movement toward war”.

However during Reagan’s second term in office, there was an extraordinary transformation in the superpower relationship. The American administration began to realize that “it could not complete its entire first term claiming that America was still too weak to negotiate with the Soviet Union. If that were truely the case, then how could the Reagan strategy be justified”? As a result of this appraisal, four summit meetings were held, the INF treaty was signed, bilateral relations expanded and key regional disputes were resolved. Reagan even stopped referring to the U.S.S.R. as an “evil empire”. By the time he left office, the U.S.-Soviet relations had not merely improved but were in better shape than at any time since the end of the World

War II, so much so that many observers were forced to conclude that the Cold War had finally been buried once and for all.³

Overcoming the forestalling effects of earlier strong notions about mutual animosity between two rival socio-economic-political systems, the two superpowers set an unprecedented example of mutual friendship on the basis of “New thinking” both in Soviet Union and United States. The consequent thaw in superpower relations was a result of corollary of events since the path breaking summit at Reykjavik in Iceland in 1986. The superpower summit at Reykjavik broke with virtually all the precedents, and the agenda turned out to be much broader and the issues discussed became far more consequential than even those the Americans had envisaged for the anticipated full summit at Washington itself.⁴

The “Reykjavik Revolution” made Secretary of State George Shultz speak hopefully of “potential agreements” that were “breathtaking”.⁵ Reagan and Gorbachev engaged each other on the biggest, most difficult issues dividing them -- so as to structure and limit their huge stockpiles of nuclear weapons -- and then proceeded to improvise. The two leaders themselves spontaneously tabled variations on one of the oldest, most implausible and least productive themes of nuclear age -- general and complete nuclear disarmament.

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⁵ Ibid., p. 216.
How did the two reach this point, which brought about the greatest opportunity for improvement in American-Soviet relations since the advent of the cold war forty years ago? Developments in both the United States and the Soviet Union contributed to it.

**WARY EXPLORATION OF IMPROVED RELATIONS**

January 1984 marked not only the beginning of President Ronald Reagan's campaign for re-election but beginning of the process that would lead ultimately to the end of the Cold War between the 'global rivals'. In the background of a "virtual breakdown in high level communication" with Soviet Union as a result of the KAL incident, and Soviet walk out from the arms control talks on Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) and Strategic Arms Reductions Talks (START), President Reagan was responsive to Shultz's proposal, to lay out the lines of American policy towards Soviet Union as it would be depicted for the year ahead, including the election campaign. In addition, the American president was concerned, if uncomprehending, over the intelligence report of "serious high level alarm in Moscow in late 1983 about the possibility of an American attack" and also Reagan "wanted to reaffirm American determination to reduce the risk of war while remaining strong".


7 ibid., p. 142. Late in 1983 and again in early 1984 Reagan was advised by Director of CIA William Casey that the NATO exercise Able Archer in November 1983, which simulated nuclear release procedures, had caused genuine alarm in the K.G.B and presumably in other upper reaches of the Soviet leadership. (Casey was relying mainly on information supplied by double-agent Oleg Gordievsky; See, ibid, chapter 3). President Reagan alluded indirectly to this event in his memoir, where he admits being surprised to have learned that the Soviet leaders were genuinely afraid of an American attack. See, Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990). PP. 588-89.
REAGAN'S NEW RHETORIC:

Reagan's historic speech of 16 January 1984, though consistent with National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) -75 was in favour of an accent on negotiation and not on confrontation. “I believe”, he said, “that 1984 finds the United States in the strongest position in years to establish a constructive and realistic working relationship with the Soviet Union”. He credited his administration with having “halted America’s decline,” which “have taken Soviet leaders by surprise” who had “counted on us to keep weakening our self”. Moreover, he reaffirmed the basic theme of detente and peaceful coexistence when he said that “we should always remember that we (US-and Soviet Union) do have common interests and the foremost among them is to avoid war and reduce the levels of arms,” and described American policy towards Soviet Union as “a policy of credible deterrence, peaceful competition, and constructive cooperation”, representing a challenge for American as well as for the Soviets. While recalling the ideological differences and competition between the two sides, “the fact that neither of us like the other system is no reason to refuse to talk;” indeed, “living in this nuclear age make it imperative that we do talk”.

The Soviets for their part echoed the Reagan’s own call for “deeds not words”. Secretary George Shultz’s meeting with Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko at the opening of the CDE conference in Stockholm in January.

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9 ibid, p. 41, p 44.
10 ibid.
1984 restored high level communication between U.S. and the Soviet Union. Gromyko proposed resuming the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) negotiations on conventional arms thus indicating that the suspension of the INF and the START did not represent a Soviet policy of boycotting all arms control talks. Shultz sensed that Gromyko was searching for a new approach to reopen strategic arms talks.\textsuperscript{12}

Chernenko, in his first address to the central committee as the new General Secretary, restated Soviet dedication to peaceful coexistence and interest in “peaceful, mutually advantageous cooperation with all states”. Moreover, in stressing the need for “practical deeds” Chernenko picked up the theme of his predecessor.\textsuperscript{13} Nonetheless, there were signs that not all members of the leadership shared Chernenko’s belief that the United States might come around to serious dealings with the Soviet leaders, at least under an administration led by President Reagan. There was also continuing debates over the “sufficiency” of the Soviet military programme to meet the challenge posed by the tremendous United States military build up.\textsuperscript{14} Indeed, not only were the Reagan administration protestation of desire to improve relations suspect, they were often seen as dangerous. While these early

\textsuperscript{12} Garthoff, n.6, p.147. also see, George p. Shultz, Turmoil and Triumph: My Years As Secretary of State (New York, 1993), pp. 469-71.

\textsuperscript{13} Pravda, 25 January 1984.

\textsuperscript{14} Valentin Falin, the first deputy chief of the International Information Department of the Central committee from 1975 to 1983 and later chief of the International Department of the Central Committee from 1988 to 1991 said, “the military factor acquires an ever greater significance in the eyes of Washington as the U.S. economic and political importance in the world shows relative decline”, “the policy of peaceful coexistence is not to their liking. They crave an American leadership that would confirm a right on the United States to disregard the rights of others”. See, Garthoff, n.6, p. 171-172.
exchange did not lead to any concrete result's, they did represent improvement in atmosphere over the chill of late 1983.  

Diplomatic talks related to reopening negotiation of a cultural and scientific exchange agreement and on opening consulates in Kiev and New York also took place. So did quiet diplomatic discussion on regional problems in Southern Africa, the Persian Gulf and the middle East. Shultz decided to use the occasion of the change in the Soviet leadership to launch a high-level review of United States policy toward the Soviet Union. In a paradoxical situation, president Reagan even complained that "we seek negotiation with the Soviet Union, but unfortunately we face an empty chair". Two days later he proposed to enter into discussions with the Soviets "on reaffirming the principle not to use force". He also said "we seek to build confidence and trust with the Soviets in areas of mutual interest" but claimed that "the Soviet response has been disappointing....... self imposed isolation". In economic relations the administration declared: "our policy is not one of economic warfare against the Soviets. We do not seek the 'collapse' of the Warsaw pact economies".

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15 Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin had informed Secretary Shultz in January 3, that the Soviet Union was indeed serious about a dialogue, see Shultz, n.12, p. 465.


17 President Reagan had indicated U.S. readiness to consider a non use of force agreement in a letter to Chernenko in April, in the course of their private exchanges. In June he decided to make this same offer publicly, without disclosing the earlier confidential discussion, See Garthoff, n.6, p. 154.


By the mid 1984, the Soviets began to resume normal bilateral relations. Chernenko resumed the presidential correspondence, in abeyance for nearly two months. Soon after, ambassador Dobrynin told Shultz that "the way was again open to resume steps in bilateral relations."\textsuperscript{20} In June-July 1984 a delegation of eleven Soviet journalist and editors from the union of journalists visited the United States for ten days as guests of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, with a return visit by a dozen Americans to the Soviet Union. This was only the second time such an exchange of visits had occurred, and the previous occasion had been twenty years earlier.

Agreement was reached on up grading the "hot line" direct communication. While addressing the United Nations General Assembly, in a statesmanlike tone and brimming with conciliation, the man who had once called the Soviet leaders "the focus of evil in the modern world" now appealed "for the sake of a peaceful world..... let us approach each other with ten-fold trust and thousand fold affection".\textsuperscript{21} More importantly he declared, "America has repaired its strength....... We are ready for constructive negotiations with the Soviet Union".\textsuperscript{22} This was the most categorical statement he or any other senior members of his administration had made that the rebuilding of American power, which he had considered a necessary foundation for real negotiation, had now been accomplished, and that it was therefore possible to look ahead and to go forward into negotiations. President Reagan's unusually conciliatory speech to the U.N. General

\textsuperscript{20} Garthoff. n.6, p. 156.
\textsuperscript{22} ibid., p. 1356.
Assembly on 24 September provided the backdrop to the events that followed in rapid succession.

Gromyko’s maiden meeting with Reagan thereafter, was path breaking. The most general political proposal was for institutionalizing regular cabinet-level ministerial meetings on a wide agenda of problems facing the two countries, “including the problem of needless obstacle to understanding”. The president also proposed “periodic consultations at policy level about regional problems”.23 However the Soviets made it clear that it was “concrete deeds and not verbal assurances that can lead to normalization of the situation”.24 And to Gromyko, Reagan’s speech had represented only verbal assurances. Soon diplomatic exchanges on possible new arms control negotiations revived. In November, twenty eight American and Soviet experts met in Moscow to discuss nuclear non-proliferation, long a subject of recognised common interest. Though the state of US-Soviet relation was warily warming up it was marked by persisting corrosive suspicion.

As the Reagan administration went into the Presidential elections of 1984, it claimed to seek a dialogue and negotiations on arms control and other issues with the Soviets. The democratic contender, Walter Mandale charged that the Reagan administration had not done enough in pursuing arms control, had converted Third World problems into East-West confrontation, and was not effective in dealing with Soviet Union. He pointed out that Reagan was the first president since Herbert Hoover not to have met with his

Soviet counterpart. In the election campaign, Reagan made it plain that "America was not out to change their system. We're certainly not going to let them change ours. But we have to live in the world together".

As the first term of Reagan's presidency ended, the question put up was whether Reagan would make substantial effort to negotiate, especially on arms control, and if he did, would his administration hold together in making such an effort? Moreover, were the Soviet leaders prepared for negotiations and would they recognize and accept a serious Reagan interested in dialogue and negotiations, and would they understand the American perspective well enough to negotiate effectively?

In a major speech on foreign policy in London during his December visit, Gorbachev, a senior politburo then, introduced a new theme, later to be developed and applied to Soviet policy under his leaderships, the idea that the Soviet Union and other countries of Eastern Europe and those of Western Europe inhabited a "common home". Emphasizing the need to abandon a military and confrontational frame of reference, he stressed "a common home...... and not a theater of military operation". No less important was Gorbachev's success in winning the confidence of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who informed the world including soon after Ronald Reagan, that Gorbachev was someone with whom the West could "do business".

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25 Garthoff, n.6, p. 166.
27 Pravda, 19 December 1984. See in particular the discussion in Garthoff, n. 6, chapter13.
28 Garthoff, n. 6, p. 194.
The year 1985 saw two important developments for American-Soviet relations: the accession to power of Mikhail S. Gorbachev in March, and the renewal of highest level dialogue between the United States and the Soviet Union in the Geneva summit meeting between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev in November. More equivocal significance was the resumption of arms control talks. As the year began, the American-Soviet relation was on the course of an unsteady, gradual normalization of relations launched the previous year.

**Gradual Normalization:**

The meeting in Geneva between Secretary George Shultz and Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko on 7-8 January resulted in agreement to begin the Nuclear and Space Arms Control Talks (NST), dealing with strategic offensive arms reductions (START), Intermediate-Range Missile Force (INF), and strategic defense and space weapons. There had earlier been talks on a possible renewed cultural exchange agreement and on opening additional consulates had resumed in the mid-1984. On the diplomatic side, a new exchange of views on the Middle-Eastern situation was quietly held in Moscow. More importantly, for the first time since 1973, a Soviet parliamentary delegation headed by a full politburo member, Valdimir Shcherbitsky, met President Reagan. As the uneven and inconsistent policy of gradual normalization of relations with Soviet Union continued, the conservative right accused the Reagan administration of following a "de facto turn toward a renewed detente".

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29 For details see, ibid., p. 199.

The first meeting of the politburo after the new leader Gorbachev’s accession, on 21 March declared Soviet readiness to pursue detente with western countries, including the U.S. Soon after, in an interview Gorbachev indicated that the question of a summit was not whether, but when, and “time and place will be the subject of subsequent agreement”. He was convinced that a serious impulse should be given to Soviet-American relations at a high political level, not only through meeting but by seeing that “the policies of the U.S.S.R and the U.S. are oriented not toward hostility and confrontation, but toward the search for mutual understanding and peaceful development”. “Confrontation,” he stressed, “is not an inborn defect in our relations”. But he felt it as, “an anomaly”, and hence regarded “the improvement of Soviet-American relations not only as extremely necessary but also as possible”. Gorbachev acknowledged, “the relations between the U.S.S.R. and the United States” “as exceptionally important factor in international politics”, although, he did not view “the world only through the prism of these relations”. He noted the resumption of arms talks as positive but “on the whole “he felt, relations remained “tense”.

Gorbachev also announced a six month unilateral moratorium on deployment of Intermediate-Range Missiles in Europe, on the condition that if the United States joined, it would become permanent. Ten days later, Gorbachev proposed moratorium on all nuclear weapon testing. However,

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32 Pravda, 8 April 1985.
33 ibid.
34 ibid.
Gorbachev maintained that moving beyond minimum peaceful coexistence to cooperation meant reining in the 'Reagan Doctrine'. He argued that "civilized relations" meant relations "based on genuine respect for the norms of international law". 35

The change in the leadership in Moscow and the evolving change in attitude towards superpower relations in the White House led to an unprecedented overall review toward the Soviet Union. 36 Secretary of State Shultz argued, similar to the Henry kissinger in the heyday of detente that US. could gain not only a constructive relationship but also leverage "from creating objective realities that give the Soviet a growing stake in better relations with us across the board". 37

Progress in better relations continued. Gorbachev met with Secretary of Commerce Baldrige, saying that it was "high time to defrost the potential of Soviet-American cooperation". Baldrige described his visit not only as restoring high level trade contacts (for the first time since Afghanistan) but as "part of President Reagan's effort to seek a more constructive working relationship with the Soviet Union". 38 A month later a new exchange agreement on agricultural research and technology was signed, replacing the one that had begun in 1973 and lapsed in 1980 after the crisis in Afghanistan.

35 See, Garthoff, n. 6, p. 215.
36 ibid., p. 216.
Moving to the summit

On 3 July 1985, it was announced in Washington and Moscow that president Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev would meet in Geneva on November 19-20. On 4 July the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet sent congratulatory message to the United States on their Independence Day, and Ambassador Hartman was given an opportunity to speak on the Soviet television. On the eve of Shultz’s meeting with Shevardnadze at Helsinki, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the signing of the CSCE Final act, the Soviets announced unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing until the end of the year (twice extended to the end of the following year). Though the United States declined to join the moratorium, the Soviet initiative generated a major campaign on the issue.

Now the process of “normalizing” developments could not be halted. It led to a high level visit to Moscow by Secretary of Agriculture John Block, a congressional delegation including nine senators led by Robert C. Byrd and Strom Thurmond, while Lev N. Tolkunov led a Soviet parliamentary delegation to the United States. In the following months the range of expert diplomatic talks on regional issues extended for the first time to a meeting on the Far East, and to Latin America as well. In early September, in an unusually candid interview with the Time magazine, Gorbachev expressed “disappointment and concern” over the American rejection of all arms control proposal, avoiding negotiations and to prevent extension of the arms race into

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39 According to Shultz, Ambassador Dobrynin had conveyed the Soviet agreement on place and date of the summit on July 1; the announcement was then coordinated. See, Shultz, n. 12, p. 571.

40 Garthoff, n. 6, p. 226.
space. Yet, he reemphasized the importance for “an improvement in relations between the two great nations on earth, nations on whom depends the very destiny of civilization”.

In a meeting with President Reagan, Shevardnadze through a letter from Gorbachev proposed reduction of 50 percent in strategic offensive arms to a level of 6,000 Warheads accompanied by agreement not to develop, test, or deploy “space-strike weapons”. However the American President was adamant against giving up the SDI and instead stressed human rights in the Soviet Union, regional conflicts and bilateral U.S.-Soviet relations as three other agendas for the forthcoming Geneva summit in November 1985.

Nevertheless, other developments in U.S.-Soviet relations were more encouraging. In particular, trilateral talks with Japan on cooperative measures to enhance airline security in the North Pacific, and to prevent further occurrence such as the KAL incident. Subsequently, talks were opened by the United States and the Soviet Union on resumption of bilateral civil air connections. In an effort to demonstrate a change of heart on human rights issue, the soviets allowed Andrei Sakharov’s wife, Yelena Bonner, to travel to the United States for medical treatment, and they permitted a Jewish dissident, Irina Grivnina, and her family to emigrate.

41 Time (New York), 9 September 1985, pp. 26-28. Gorbachev intended to influence public opinion both in America as well as in Soviet Union (the interview was simultaneously published in pravda and given wide coverage). When the Time interviewers gave him an opening to criticise American actions more generally, suggesting that “US announcement of the ASAT test and the spy dust charges could hardly have been helpful” and asking “is this type of things seriously damaging?” Gorbachev declined to pick up the criticism and merely repeated Soviet desire and preparation to make the summit succeed.

42 Shultz, n. 6, pp. 576-577.
On the eve of the Geneva summit president Reagan stated that his mission "is a mission of peace ....... to build a foundation for lasting peace". Moreover he acknowledged that "nuclear weapon," not an 'evil' adversary, "pose the greatest threat in human history to the survival of the human race" and reaffirmed that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought". He also proposed the "broadest people-to-people exchanges in the history of American-Soviet relations, exchange in sports and culture, in the media, education, and the arts".43 Gorbachev had taken the greater risk in agreeing to a summit without prior agreement on any of the arms control measures sought by the soviet side. Nonetheless, despite the lack of success on concrete issues, Gorbachev had succeeded in restoring a dialogue. His aim in this direction had dovetailed with Reagan's tentative new line of engagement intermittently pursued in 1984-85 and doggedly pushed by Shultz since 1983.

In retrospect, it is clear that both sides gained from Gorbachev's determination to turn around the confrontation and resume dialogue, resulting in reducing greatly the tensions and dangers of the year 1981-83. The foundation had been laid for later summits at Reykjavik in 1986, Washington in 1987, the INF Treaty, the Moscow summit in 1988 and great progress in strategic arms control and the general overall U.S.-Soviet relations leading to 'a new detente'.44 This was the first summit in six years, only the second in ten. No one could have expected four more in Reagan's term. Reagan was more prophetic than he knew when he commented at the end of the summit meeting, "the real report card on Geneva will not come in for months or even years".45

44. Garthoff, n. 6, p. 239.
THE COSTS OF THE CONFLICT

The financial and economic costs

Apart from the radically innovative 'New Thinking', the improvement in American-Soviet relations, came mainly due to the costs that both United States and Soviet Union had to pay for more than four decades of the conflict. "When the security commitment and economic strength of Great powers move out of balance they fall into decline". The implication was that the United States and the Soviet Union were at such a point. For the United States it had led to huge defense expenditure of $2.4 trillion during Reagan period, diverted attention away from urgent domestic problems, distorted relations with other nations and moved it away from traditional value.

The economic crisis in the Soviet Union was far more severe. The GNP growth rate, estimated at 6 per cent per annum in the 1960s, 4 per cent in the 1970s and 2 per cent in the early 1980s had become stagnant during the late 1980s. The effects of the stagnant economy had been reflected in basic measures of social welfare: life expectancy had fallen, infant mortality had risen and alcoholism had increased. Gorbachev in his book, 'Prestroika', spoke of a society in crisis.

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48 Ibid., p. 93.

The price of the Cold War had been high not only for the United States and the Soviet Union and their allies, but to the rest of the World-especially to the ‘South’. Since 1945, wars claiming an estimated eighteen million, mostly civilian, causalities had been fought in the developing countries with weapons provided by the industrialized and socialist worlds.  

**The Distortion of Value**

The overriding priority which the United States had given to actions designed to counter Soviet Union had distorted its values not only in economic and social affairs but also in foreign policy. And the emphasis in the Soviet Union on preparing for and sustaining the Cold War had the same effect there as well. The United States had become blinded to the actions required to effectively address many of its most serious domestic problems. At the end of the Reagan's term United States faced unacceptably high levels of unemployment, particularly among blacks and teenagers: a rapidly growing “underclass” - 51 per cent of the births in Washington D.C. were illegitimate; high and rising rate of drug abuse and drug related crimes; a failure to adequately address the problems of the poor and disadvantaged; a deteriorating infrastructure; severe distortion in sectoral and regional growth patterns; and “irresponsible economic policies towards other nations in both the developed and the developing worlds”.  

In foreign affairs, United States had more often supported “anti-democratic regimes” and anti-Soviet

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50 McNamara, n. 47, p. 94.
51 ibid., p. 95.
dictatorships than democratic government. It had been true in Latin America as in Zaire, the Philippines, Iran, Pakistan and elsewhere.

**The Risk of Destruction Through War:**

The Cold War had brought the risk of destruction of world society through nuclear war.$^{52}$ Studies by American Defense Department had concluded that even under the most favourable assumptions, “there was a high risk of over 100 million dead in the United States and Western Europe alone”. Helmut Schmidt, the famous Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany had stated that use of nuclear weapons will not defend the West, but destroy it.$^{53}$ Field Marshal Lord Carver, Lord Louis Mountbatten and several other of the eight retired chiefs of the British Defense staff had shared Schmidts' views.$^{54}$

**The Moral Dimension of the East-West Nuclear Confrontation**

The Superpower had translated their deterrent strategy into war plans involving the exchange of thousands of nuclear weapons. Such an exchange would have jeopardized the very survival of not only the United States and the Soviet Union but many of the other nations of the world. And this was a moral issue for morality dictates that given half a chance the world needs to be made safe from nuclear weapons. As a result of the realization and pain of

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$^{52}$ Robert S. McNamara, *Blundering into Disaster: Surviving the First Century of the Nuclear Age* (New York, 1982), pp. 70-71.


more than four decades of the Cold War rivalry, relations between the United States and the Soviet Union had reached a turning point in the mid 1980s, particularly since the advent of Mikhail Gorbachev as the leader of the Soviet Union.

**SOVIET “NEW THINKING”**

**GORBACHEV: THE PRAGMATIST**

When President Reagan met General Secretary Gorbachev he faced a formidable adversary. Gorbachev's preconceptions and perceptions of the United States, already deeply ingrained by the Soviet ideological and political culture were fortified by his "primer" on America, the Hoover Institutions book "The United States in the 1980s." General Secretary Gorbachev was generally believed to be a tough, pragmatic, strong, intelligent and principled young leader who had established well integrated domestic and foreign policy goals. He possessed a style often appealing to the West, though tactically adjustable to suit the proper occasion, and could negotiate from a base of power inherited from Andropov, solidly fixed in the direction of building "socialist legitimacy", who had increasing control over the instruments of foreign policy. But most importantly, the American President would be engaging a leader who had the will to negotiate and to establish

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through diplomacy some form of a modus vivendi in Soviet-American relations. In brief, Gorbachev possessed many formidable qualities as politician, statesman and Soviet leader.

However, despite such impressive qualities Gorbachev, like his predecessors, had serious shortcomings that derived from flaws inherent in the nature of the Soviet system and in the Soviet personality that the system produced. Not least among these shortcomings were the fixed ideological view of the world outside the Soviet Union that produced distorted judgement and an imperfect knowledge of the American political system that inturn led to serious miscalculations.

A fundamental new philosophy of international problems was developed, under the slogan of “New Thinking”. In many ways, the world view that Gorbachev and his colleagues had formulated represented a crystallization of tendencies that had been present, often in peacemeal in Soviet policy circle since Khruschev's 1956 anti-Stalin speech at the twentieth Party Congress. But the resulting synthesis of new and traditional elements constituted a distinctly “Gorbachevian” perspective that sought to integrate domestic and foreign policy in a mutually reinforcing combination.

Mikhail Gorbachev thus, represented a profound break with the Soviet past. Gorbachev's pragmatism, especially in foreign policy was derived from


the domestic goals that he had laid down, namely, reform the Soviet economy and reverse its decline and to revitalize and restore Soviet society. To achieve these often stated purposes required a breathing space in foreign policy, a time to consolidate gains, to mend fences among adversaries in order to redirect the nation's energy and resources inward.

Thus at the heart of his approach was his belief that Soviet interest in twenty first century could best be served in a peaceful international environment, an environment that featured reduced superpower tension and increased U.S.-Soviet cooperation. Gorbachev presented the West with an unprecedented opportunity to redefine the basic assumptions and conditions of East-West relations. "In his words and deeds he offered the West the chance to end the Cold War".

ORIGIN OF SOVIET "NEW THINKING"

The "underlying continuity in the Kremlin" despite the change in top leadership was one reason why the superpower relations took such a surprising turn in the mid 1980s. The conduct of foreign policy was still in the hands of the men who had helped create the detente of the early 1970s -- Andrie Gromyko, the foreign minister, and Konstantine Chernenko.


60 Time magazine, 9 September 1985, p. 29.

61 McNamara, n. 47, p. 108.

Brezhnev's closest colleague, who succeeded Andropov on February 10, 1984, as General Secretary. The coming to power of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 saw the beginning of a "revolution in Soviet foreign policy". Gorbachev's understanding of three inter-related phenomenon had prompted his new approach to Soviet foreign and domestic policy:

1. **The Soviet Economy**

Mikhail Gorbachev had made it clear that he seriously intended to carry out a thorough restructuring of the Soviet system to make the Soviet economy effectively assimilate the opportunities offered by contemporary science, technology and management.\(^63\) Concerned that the system he inherited from Leonid Brezhnev had become ossified, fraught with consequences for the nations international standard and material well being, Gorbachev and his key associates in politics, media and intelligentsia had called into question a whole series of institutional arrangements -- starting from "the hyper-centralized system of economic planning" -- that had for nearly 70 years been the bed rock of Soviet domestic and foreign policy.\(^64\)

Not content with administrative adjustments, which since Nikita Khruschev's time had substituted for meaningful reform, Gorbachev had repeatedly underscored the need for structural-economic, social and even political-reforms to sustain the economy over the long run. The Soviet leadership had concluded that Moscow's international relationships should be

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\(^63\) See, Seweryn Bialer, and Michael Mandelbaum, ed., *Gorbachev's Russia and American Foreign Policy* (Boulder, 1988).

\(^64\) Lynch, n. 58, p. 40.
subordinate to the task of domestic modernization. "The main thing," according to former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze was "that the country not incur additional expenses in connection with the need to maintain its defense capacity and protect its legitimate foreign policy interests. "This means", Shevardradze continued, "that we must seek ways to limit and reduce military rivalry, eliminate confrontational features in relations with other states, and suppress conflict and crisis situations."  

At the time when Gorbachev assumed the leadership, the Soviet economy was mired in a decade long slump. For the period 1976-1985, the average gross national product (GNP) growth rate was just 2 per cent per year, including less than 1.5 per cent in 1985. "An absurd situation was developing. The Soviet Union, the world's biggest producer of steel, raw materials, fuel and energy, had shortfalls in them due to waste or insufficient use", lamented Gorbachev. Not only had growth come to a halt, but the quality of Soviet industrial goods were acknowledged to be extremely shoddy as well. Gorbachev's chief economic adviser, Abel Agenbegyan, noted that "in machine tool construction and instrument making, 86 per cent and 83 per cent of output respectively, are below world standards". 

Thus, related to the restructuring of the Soviet economy was Moscow's desire to break down the insularity of the Soviet economic structure and

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66 Cited in Lynch, n. 58, p. 41.
67 Gorbachev, n. 49, p. 21.
integrate it -- technologically and financially -- into the increasingly interdependent global economy. Gorbachev sought it in four ways: “(1) by streamlining the Soviet foreign trade apparatus; (2) by obtaining access to western financial institutions; (3) by strongly encouraging joint ventures with western businesses; and (4) by petitioning for Soviet membership in international economic organizations, including the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT), the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF”).

Therefore, the foreign policy implications of Soviet reforms were clear. Gorbachev acknowledged that he was attempting to create a calm international environment in order to be able to devote maximum attention to the Soviet Union's economic woes. “Our international policy is more than ever determined by our domestic policy, by our interest in concentrating on constructive endeavours to improve our country. ... This is why we need lasting peace, predictability and constructiveness in international relations.”

2. Increased Soviet Attention to the Risk of Nuclear War

There was a major re-examination of security issues. Top Soviet officials, including those in the Soviet military stressed that a nuclear war could not be won. As a corollary, the leadership argued that security cannot be obtained through military means alone. Further, given the destructive potential of modern weaponry, security in the nuclear age had become a

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69 McNamara, n. 47, p. 124.

common concern of all countries. Gorbachev and his policy analysts asserted that even nuclear parity, which they regarded as a major historical achievement of socialism, might no longer insure stability amidst an unregulated 'East-West' arms competition. Nuclear arms control had taken priority as a means of reducing the external threat, limiting resources requirement for the military, and establishing a framework of East-West strategic stability.\(^{71}\)

Gorbachev had launched a fundamental reassessment of the Soviet view of national security and Soviet geopolitical objectives which featured at least three concepts strongly at odds with the traditional Soviet approach: "(1) A nation's security interests must be pursued through diplomacy, not military threats or the use of force; (2) A nation's security could not be guaranteed at the expense of the security of others. Security could not be pursued unilaterally, it had to be strengthened in cooperation with other states; and (3) International organization and bilateral efforts could serve to solve regional and global problems."\(^{72}\)

Moreover, Soviets were genuinely worried about the future of the nuclear competition. A respite from -- or perhaps a long term arrangement for the regulation of -- that competition was important if Gorbachev was to have the 'Peredyshka', or breathing space that he needed in order to carry out

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\(^{71}\) Lynch, n. 58, p. 42.

\(^{72}\) McNamara, n. 47, p. 109.
his domestic reforms programme. A major goal of Gorbachev's foreign policy, as a result was to enlist the cooperation of the United States in the creation of a more stable world. Gorbachev realized that "without that country it is impossible to remove the threat of nuclear catastrophe and secure a lasting peace".


The Soviet leadership perception of the mutual nature of security and the need for increased U.S.-Soviet cooperation to reduce the likelihood of nuclear war was founded on the new Soviet view of the interdependent character of the contemporary world. The Soviet had begun to discuss the increasingly complex nature of the world's economic, environmental, political and military inter-relationships and called for greater cooperation in all these areas. The world is small and fragile, according to Gorbachev, and its parts were linked together for better or for worse. As he put it, "world nations are interdependent, like mountain climbers attached to one rope. They can either climb together to the summit or all fall into the abyss." 

The Soviet leadership under Gorbachev had concluded that a favourable international environment could only be created on the basis of a

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74 Gorbachev, n.49, pp. 12-13.

75 "For a 'Common European Homes', For a New Way of Thinking", 10 April 1987 speech in Prague, (Moscow, 1987), Cited in McNamara, n. 47.
political accommodation with the leading industrial powers, above all with the United States, which remained the focus of Soviet attention in foreign affairs. In actuality, it reflected a strategic reevaluations of the international environment and international factors affecting the Soviet Unions global position.

Gorbachev's recognition of the multi-polar and interdependent character of contemporary international relations was reflected in the Soviet's utilization of international forums like United Nations Organization (UNO) on the one hand, and on the other, in the growing Soviet tendency to deal directly with key regional actors such as China and Japan in Far East, Egypt and Israel in the middle East, and Mexico in Central America. "The main goal had been to reduce the diplomatic isolation that had grown increasingly evident in the late Brezhnev era, and to multiply Soviet options. It was expected that this would lead to a more sophisticated and pragmatic Soviet policies throughout the world".77

4. The Breakdown of Classical Marxist-Leninist Ideology

Soviet ‘New Thinking’ in foreign and domestic policy had been accompanied by a rejection of some of the most basic concepts of traditional Marxist-Leninist assessment of economic and international relations. The revision of socialist ideology, especially concepts like the decline of capitalism, supremacy and inevitability of socialism and class contradiction

76 Lynch, n. 58, p. 42.
77 ibid.
all struck at the foundation of Marxist-Leninist ideology. Gorbachev wrote that the concept of class struggle -- perhaps the basic Marxist conception -- should be replaced by "peaceful coexistence" and mutual interdependence.\textsuperscript{78} Gorbachev also stressed that the "main contradiction" of the contemporary period is not the Marxist contradiction between Socialism and Capitalism but the contradiction between war and peace.\textsuperscript{79}

Key Soviet policy analysts interpreted peaceful coexistence less as a form of class struggle -- the traditional Soviet viewpoint -- and more as a long lasting condition in which states with different social and political systems learn how to live with each other. As Yevgeny Primakov, a close adviser to Gorbachev noted that Soviets no longer regarded peaceful coexistence "as a breathing space". "Inter-state relations" he emphasized, "cannot be the sphere in which the outcome of the confrontation between world socialism and world capitalism is settled".\textsuperscript{80} Such coexistence implied not the simple absence of war, but instead the establishment of an international order in which relations of confidence and cooperation prevail, and global problems -- the arms race, ecological problems, Third World development -- could be resolved collaboratively. Gorbachev wrote in his 1987 book, "Perestroika" that the Soviet leadership had "taken the steps necessary to rid out ideological policy prejudice".\textsuperscript{81}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{78} Gorbachev, n. 49, pp. 146-49.
\bibitem{79} McNamara, n. 47, p. 129.
\bibitem{80} Lynch, n. 58, p. 42.
\bibitem{81} Cited in ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
AMERICA'S "NEW THINKING"

The improved U.S.-Soviet relations was possible not only due to the Soviet "New Thinking" under Gorbachev but also as a result of an evolution of "New Thinking" among Americans. It was unlike the mood of the beginning of the Reagan administration, when Americans assertively endorsed a strong military build up.\(^\text{82}\) While Americans wanted to see U.S.-Soviet relations improve, they desired American policy to proceed with caution. Americans, had little desire for any quick change in 'East-West' relations because that evoked memory of "on again, off again" pattern (Cold War-detente-Cold War-detente) resulting in skepticism and negative reaction.

At least five major strands of perceptions combined to create "New Thinking" among Americans -- a singular mixture of hope and wariness -- which was in response to developments over a span of years: The first strand was the satisfaction of the American public with the achievements of the Reagan administration. In the assertive mood of 1980, Americans supported not only military build up but also a demonstration of American will. During the first term of Reagan administration, these feelings had been satisfied.\(^\text{83}\)

Secondly, American's were worried that excessive attention to military dimension of national security may be sapping the economy. Worry about whether the United States could compete successfully in the world economy had reached the point where it was considered a vital issue of national security. A solid majority believed that, "Economic competitors pose a


greater threat to national security than military adversaries do because they threaten jobs and economic security.°

The impact of Mikhail Gorbachev and his reforms comprised the third strand in the public attitude. American regard for Gorbachev had been rising steadily. It believed that he was trying to accomplish a change in the very character of the Soviet Union, not just in the details of its policies.

The fourth strand was the change under way in American's perception of the need to reduce the risk of nuclear war. A global nuclear holocaust remained so colossal a threat that even a small possibility of it, even in the distant future, created continuing anxiety. In the past, the Soviet threat and risk of nuclear war were closely linked, but 67 per cent of Americans in 1988 felt that nuclear weapons were most likely to be used by terrorists or countries other than the U.S. or the Soviet Union.°° The Americans appeared convinced that Gorbachev meant it when he expressed his desire to reduce nuclear threat. There was a feeling that any mutual reduction in nuclear forces made the world a safer place and improved national security.

Fifthly, it was increasingly felt that important problems were no longer just 'East-West' in nature, but global. New technologies and the spread of existing technologies were creating important dangers. The argument for "cooperative problem solving" option was that a variety of global problems confronted the superpowers equally, including, pollution, narco-terrorism, over-population, medical crisis like AIDS, the hazard of nuclear power

°° ibid., p. 13.

°° ibid., p. 9.
plants, and the nuclear proliferations.\textsuperscript{86} Finally, many Americans believed that United States had the global responsibility for peace and security which it could not set down. Any isolationist posture as alternative was disapproved.\textsuperscript{87}

Clearly there were some fundamental trends at work overriding the tactics of each side. The leadership of both the country were prepared for a new relationship, Gorbachev because of necessity and Reagan because of instinct. There were many close to President Reagan who had doubted his original harsh rhetorics and had pointed out that he was always a pragmatist. But Reagan devotees explained that the President's tough line -- build up of military power, the ‘Reagan Doctrine’ of opposing Communist regimes and movements, and the insistence that any arms control must involve far greater reduction of Soviet forces -- had succeeded in forcing moderation upon U.S.S.R. and helped Kremlin's reappraisals.\textsuperscript{88} By the early 1984, the Reagan administration had judged that the nation's power both economically and militarily, were sufficiently strengthened. It was now possible to negotiate effectively, perhaps even successfully, with the Soviets from “a position of strength”. Reagan felt that the United States was in a position to have “constructive and realistic working relationship with the Soviet Union”.\textsuperscript{89}

However, it is also true that the Reagan administration moved away from its original position. This shift was not as sweeping a revolution that took place in USSR, but nevertheless American foreign policy changed

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{86} ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{87} Daniel Yankelovich and Sidney Harman, \textit{Starting with the People} (Boston, 1988).
  \item \textsuperscript{88} Hyland, n. 62, p. 188.
  \item \textsuperscript{89} ibid.
\end{itemize}
considerably. The President’s view of the Soviet Union underwent a profound transformation that was brought about by his awareness of the power realities in American-Soviet rivalry and of the potential consequence of this rivalry if tension in the relationship were not reduced. Expert advices from outside the establishment had given the President some new insights into the “sensitivities and feelings of Russians” and made him more realistic.\(^{90}\) Reagan had sensed that something different was happening inside the Soviet Union which moved him from right to centre, from containment to conciliation. The President who had professed no illusion about the Soviet system and its purposes, was fully aware that a “window of opportunity” was opening in diplomacy where through negotiations some progress was possible in reducing the dangerous tensions in American-Soviet relations and establishing what he called “a world of peace”.\(^{91}\)

Thus, for President Reagan it was the question of overcoming his prejudice about Soviet Union and its leaders. In his second term, Reagan came out determined to go down in the history of U.S.-Soviet relations as a rejuvenator by generating a new concept of mutual security. Pressure had been coming from many quarters. A close friend of President, Senator Paul Laxalt, had reminded him of a higher destiny “to work out a meaningful agreement with the Soviets”.\(^{92}\) More importantly, the first lady, Nancy Reagan was also concerned (more than the President) about his place in

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\(^{92}\) Hedrick, n. 90, p. 75.
history. Not surprisingly, President Reagan became nervous with the pace of time to sign the most comprehensive arms control treaty with the U.S.S.R. so as to bring about the most cordial phase of U.S.-Soviet relations in the post war era, and if possible, to help end the Cold War itself.

In sum, by the end of the first Reagan administration, Americans were adopting a more global perspective on potential threats. America's economic strength was challenged not by the Soviets but by new competitors from a different part of the world, who seemed to be out-trading United States on a global scale. To the Americans the fearsome possibility of nuclear war derived not primarily from the Soviets but from nuclear power (actual and potential) elsewhere around the globe. Also, new dangers were appearing that were global in their impact. Finally, President Reagan's perception of the renewed strength of United States, "window of opportunity", for a better U.S.-Soviet relations, and above all his anxiety for a place in history, resulted in "New Thinking" among Americans. American were firm that it was time for negotiations, not confrontations.

Thus, the dramatic change in the U.S.-Soviet relations which began in the second term of President Reagan was result of a "New Thinking" in both United States and the Soviet Union. On the Soviet side, it was a formal recognition that the economic crisis in the Soviet system could be solved only when a permanent settlement with the West could be reached. In the United States the realization had grown that unnecessary defense expenditure was slowing down the American economy. Above all, it had diverted American

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93 ibid., p. 76.
94 Ynakelovich and Smoke, n. 83, p. 10.
interest away from urgent domestic problems leading to severe economic and social crisis. Therefore, to keep the world stable while it addressed its own economic problems, a deal with the Soviet Union was highly desirable. Hence, the "New Thinking" was a moment of truth for both the superpowers.