CHAPTER II
NEW COLD WAR RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SUPER POWERS

THE CARTER-REAGAN INTERREGNUM : RENEWAL OF THE COLD WAR

Marked deterioration in the American-Soviet relations and transition in presidential politics towards a conservative orientation in line with the shifting American national mood after the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, were the over-arching trends during the Carter-Reagan interregnum in 1980. The Soviet intervention of Afghanistan created a "watershed" in the American-Soviet relations in as much as it was the main catalyst in the renewal of the Cold War. Detente collapsed and hopes for negotiations virtually vanished as rhetorical charges and counter charges found concreteness in official American and Soviet policy. SALT II treaty was shelved, military build up continued on the Soviet side and accelerated on the American, and the rivalry sharpened accordingly along a global front. The Soviet expansionism was to be countered by the resurrection of American 'neo-containment'. The ultimate effect on the U.S. foreign and national security policy was a return to globalism. A deep freeze had set into the American-Soviet relations that continued into 1984 with little promise of a substantial thaw.

Soviets on the Defensive

Afghanistan placed the Soviets clearly on the defensive, even though the Russians asserted the motivation of security, not only for Afghanistan's
new social order but also for the Soviet Union itself in the light of the "imperialistic threat" to turn Afghanistan into a bridgehead for the preparation of imperialist aggression. Brezhnev emphasized the point that their motivation for intervention did not extend beyond Afghanistan. The "policy and mentality of colonialism are alien to us", he declared, adding, "we do not covet the lands or wealth of others. It is the colonialist who are attracted by the smell of oil".¹

In sum, Afghanistan ruptured American-Soviet relations almost completely. As Garthoff says, the Soviet intervention and the U.S. response "led to a sharp break from the whole course of U.S.-Soviet relations over the preceding decade". It rendered "the coup de grace" to the already seriously eroded and weakened policy of detente established in May 1972.² For Afghanistan raised an issue that went to the heart of Soviet fears for its Security - this time along its sensitive border and of U.S. fears for its security emanating from Soviet expansionism. SALT II was the victim of these fears and for the next eight years remained its hostage. On the defensive globally in response to a self perceived encirclement, the Soviets appeared to recoil momentarily in a state-of-seige mentality.

**Soviet Views and Expectations of Reagan Administration**

The roots of Soviet leader, Brezhnev's perception of the United-States, specifically of the Reagan administration and its foreign policy, can be

found in his political and ideological heritage. The United States as the leader of world capitalism was Russia's principal and implacable adversary. But the build-up of Soviet power in 1970s and the changing correlations of world forces said to be favouring Socialism compelled the United States to seek accommodation with Moscow. Such was the rationale for detente which until Afghanistan opened up possibilities for fruitful negotiations.

Moscow had looked upon 1980 and the Carter-Reagan interregnum as a time of transition from a weakened detente of the preceding three years to something not yet clearly defined. "There was hope", Garthoff observed. "that renewed detente, although probably, with a keen competitive edge, would emerge". But there was also "concern over a possible confirmation of the confrontational line of the transitional period." As such uncertainty permeated Soviet appraisals of the presidential election but also the belief persisted that the outcome of the election would probably make little difference. Reagan's hard line was probably discounted as campaign rhetoric, but Carter's policy record was seen as being much tougher on Soviet Union and stronger on the military build up than perceived by the American public.

Some officials looked upon Reagan as another Nixon, that is, a hardline conservative who once in power would negotiate in a spirit of 'realpolitik', while avoiding the troublesome human rights issue. Reagan was


5 Garthoff, n. 2, p. 1005.
expected to be more tractable in contrast to what many perceived as the
cascillating and uncertain Carter. There were hopes for some improvement
in relation. But some expectations persisted, nonetheless, that a long period
of intensified competition was getting under way. In general, the Brezhnev
approach to the United States under the new Reagan administration was at
first cautious and tentative, yet noticeably aggressive, yet unclear was
whether the pressure of Brezhnev's peace offensive would bring the Reagan
administration into a negotiating mood. 7

Reagan Administration's Perceptions of the Soviet Union

President Reagan and most of the leading officials in his
Administration perceived the Soviets generally from what U.S. political
observers term "the conservative far right" on the American political
spectrum. At the root of the Reagan view was a deep distrust of an
aggressive, expansionist Soviet Union. A conviction that the defense of the
Nation had to be improved and that fruitful negotiations on arms control
could only take place from a "position of strength". In the presidential
campaign of 1980, candidate Reagan gave renewed emphasis to the dual
theme of four years before. The code word for this decline in national power
and world position was the term "Window of vulnerability" for American
security that was to open during the 1980s. 8

6 Ibid.
During 1981 President Reagan's published statements and speeches fleshed out his perceptions of the Soviet Union and Communism. Notable among other characteristics were: the great Soviet respect for power and an appreciation of its use, militarily and politically; the importance of the balance of power in reaching arms control agreements and establishing a tolerable form of peaceful co-existence; the danger of an imbalance of power as seen in the dramatic and dangerous Soviet military build up in the 1970s; their increased revolutionary activity in the Third World under the guise of detente; the view of communism as an "evil force" and of Communists as being unprincipled and immoral in attempting to achieve their goals, reserving "unto themselves the right to commit any crime; to lie; to cheat" in order to advance their cause; and the notion that Communists were unbelievers in God and since they operate "on a different set of standards", "Americans have to be on their guard in dealing with them".

Accordingly, this moral asymmetry contributed to the President's perception of a deep and abiding distrust and suspicion, and reinforced a conviction that they would seek unilateral advantages and exploit flawed agreements if the other side is not watchful. The President rejected the notion that Communism is the wave of the future; argued that it will fail, and is failing, because of its denial of freedom; and expressed confidence in the historic mission of the United States as a leader of free men in a world of peace and progress.

For analysis of the Reagan administration's early foreign policy views, see, Alexander M. Haig Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy (New York, 1984).
Renewal of the Bellicose Spirit

The Reagan administration, therefore, came to power with the announced determination of increasing American-Military power across the board in order to redress aspects of the shifting military balance and of contesting Soviet encroachments on a broad international front. While the Soviets initially reacted with caution towards the new administration, it soon became evident by interacting charges and counter-charges that a renewed spirit of bellicosity had entered the relationship. Observers spoke of a Cold War II.\(^{10}\)

The Soviet Union was an ideological adversary in the President Reagan's view, but more importantly it was also a great power with whom the United States was vitally interested in establishing a stable and constructive relationship. Despite disturbing trends in the relationship, the United States remained committed to a dialogue with the U.S.S.R. on critical geopolitical issues and committed to negotiations leading to arms reduction.\(^{11}\) The relationship had to be built upon the principle of restraint and reciprocity and implicitly upon a mutual acceptable balance of power. Notwithstanding ideological and political differences, it was possible to establish a framework of mutual respect for each other's interest and a mutual interest in the resolution of international crisis leading to "a more solid and enduring basis for U.S.-Soviet relations".\(^{12}\)


INITIAL POLICY PHASE: U.S.

From January 1981 the Reagan administration dealt with the Soviet Union in three ways: first, it distanced itself from previous policies, making clear its rejection of detente, the SALT II treaty, and other such arrangements; second, it proposed major increase in American defense appropriations and unprecedented procurement to restore American military superiority and third, it engaged in rhetorical political warfare with the Soviet Union. The new defense program was meant to serve a variety of purposes. It could be seen as an end in itself, intended to reverse the widening gap between Soviet and American expenditures and narrowing the gap between military capabilities. It meant to stop Soviet initiatives and ideally, isolate or roll back the Soviet Union. It was part of an effort intended to postpone serious negotiations until the United States reached a stronger bargaining position. Domestically the attempt to dramatize the urgency and magnitude of the need for a stronger posture was meant, in the first place, to secure prompt congressional approval where it implied a growing budget deficit and a sacrifice of social programmes with a minimum of difficult or delay.

In December 1982, the Reagan administration approved National Security Decision Directive (NSDD)-75 which was a compromise between the ideological-confrontational tendency of the National Security council NSC staff and civilian leadership in the Pentagon and the pragmatic geopolitical tendency represented by secretary Haig and his successor Shultz.


14 ibid., p. 205.
along with other professionals in the State Department. The directives established “three long term objectives: (1) to contain Soviet expansion and to moderate the Soviet international behaviour; (2) to encourage change in the Soviet system towards greater liberalism over time, and (3) to negotiate agreements that were in the interest of the United States”. Thus, NSDD-75 “confirmed containment and circumscribed a confrontational approach”. Although important qualifications were placed on the aim of encouraging change in the Soviet system, that goal remained. Negotiations were clearly affirmed, but decisions on whether, when, and what to negotiate remained to be resolved.

The Reagan administration gradually moved from intransigent and confrontational rhetoric in 1981-83 to increasing effort to develop a diplomatic dialogue in 1983-84. The administration's own explanation for its shift toward greater expressed readiness for negotiation and dialogue, even with the untrustworthy leader of an "evil empire", was the “restoration of American strength”. Many commentators expressed the view that the shift in policy was attributable to a desire to show moderation during the election year. Though that consideration was clearly present, it may not have been the principal one. Certainly during its first term, the Reagan administration had pressed ahead with major military programme. Economic recovery had placed the United States in a stronger economic position internationally at the same time that the persistence of Soviet economic problems was evident. And politically the Western alliance had surmounted several crisis and had

---

15 Garthoff, n. 2. p. 1012.
over come strong but fading popular opposition to the deployment of American Missiles in Europe.

Thus at the time of President Reagan's address to the UN General Assembly in September 1984 he could say that "America had repaired its strength ... we are ready for constructive negotiations with the Soviet Union". By the end of 1984 when the Reagan administration was returned to office for another four years by an overwhelming majority, it seemed to have chosen containment and "peace through strength" and in addition, an interest in dialogue and negotiation on arms reduction rather than confrontation.17

THE SOVIET POLICY

The Soviet reaction to President Carter's abandonment of detente after Afghanistan was to reaffirm it as Soviet policy and to call for an American return to detente.18 The Soviet placed the blame on the departed Carter administration,19 leaving open the possibility that the new Reagan administration would take a different course of dialogue and negotiation. There was, however, a gradual conclusion that the Reagan administration too did not want to negotiate.

18 See, Garthoff, n. 2, pp. 966-1008.
19 ibid., p. 1014.
Even the change in the Soviet leadership after the death of Brezhnev in November 1982 saw Andropov strongly affirm a policy of detente. He stressed that it was not "a chance episode" or "a past stage", rather "the future belongs to it".\textsuperscript{20} However, the confrontational approach of the Reagan administration symbolized in describing the Soviet Union as an "evil empire"\textsuperscript{21}, as also the deterioration in relations as a result of the shooting down of the KAL plane, convinced the Soviets of American insincerity on detente.

In a first definitive and authoritative overall evaluation of Reagan administration on September 28, Andropov charged it of trying to "ensure a dominating position in the world for the United States of America without regard for the interest of other states and people".\textsuperscript{22} Party officials, government officials and academic and media commentators agreed that the U.S. had abandoned detente and was pursuing military superiority, and was pressing a broad offensive against the Soviet Union, Socialism and national liberation movements. All agreed that Soviet Union must and would see that its own military strength was maintained at the "necessary" or "appropriate" level.

\section*{MAJOR EVENTS IN U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS:}

Three major events occurred during Reagan's first term that also coincided with the 'New Cold War' years which made a notable impact, on the state of the U.S.-Soviet relations:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{20} ibid., p. 1015.
\item \textsuperscript{22} \textit{Pravda} (Moscow), 29 September 1983.
\end{itemize}
Martial Law in Poland

The first real test of Reagan administration's handling of U.S.-Soviet relations came in December 1981 with the imposition of Martial law and suppression of the solidarity trade union movement in Poland by the Communist government led by Jaruzelski. Secretary of State Alexander Haig said the that United States was "seriously concerned" about the events in Poland and warned Moscow not to interfere. The Soviets officially stated that Martial law in Poland was an "internal matter" and that "United States should not look there for any 'security zones' as Washington is doing practically in all other parts of the globe".23

U.S. Sanctions

President Reagan announced suspension of economic relations with Poland and imposed sanctions, which included suspension of U.S. government shipments of food to Poland; withdrawal of Poland's line of export credit insurance with Export-Import Bank; a halt to polish airline service in the United States and withdrawal of Poland's permission to fish in U.S. waters. Allocating "major share of blame for the developments in Poland" to Soviet Union, but Reagan refrained from wielding his strongest economic weapon, refusing to impose flat embargo on grain sales. He argued that grain embargo would be ineffective and would hurt American farmers far more than it would harm the Soviet Union. Inspite of various pressure the US-Soviet talks on limiting nuclear weapons in Europe or Secretary Haig's

January 26, 1982, meeting with Soviet foreign minister, the late Andrei Gromyko was not cancelled.

In response the Soviets accused President Reagan of trying "to hurl the world back to dark times of the Cold War" and predicted that the sanctions would have no effect on Soviet or Polish actions. It added that Washington wished to "undermine the foundations of Soviet-American relations worked out as a result of huge efforts, and curtail them to a minimum." 24

Though martial law was suspended on December 31, 1982, the American administration did not immediately lift any U.S. sanctions. However, through 1983 and 1984 it removed most of the less important ones, and responding to appeals from Walesa, Reagan restored fishing and certain air carrier rights. Furthermore, the American administration cited the release of political prisoners and the visit of Pope John Paul II to Poland in 1983 as "positive developments" that encouraged relaxation of additional economic and scientific sanctions.

Pipeline Sanctions

The most controversial of U.S. administration's measures to punish Moscow for its role in the imposition of martial law in Poland were the December 1981 sanction prohibiting American firm from selling the Soviet Union equipment or technology for oils and gas exploration, production and refining. The sanctions, costing U.S. companies and their subsidiaries millions of dollars worth of sales, met with stiff opposition from American

24 ibid.
businesses and Congress. As it became increasingly clear that the sanctions were having no effect on Soviet behaviour, the administration shifted their focus to disrupting construction of a natural gas pipeline from Siberia to Western Europe; which was not only to be "the largest single deal in the history of East-West trade" but "also destined to be the most controversial." 25

The United States believed that the pipeline would make Western Europe overly dependent on the Soviet Union for energy supplies and thus "with their hands on the spigot" the Soviets could put pressure on the West and ultimately weaken the NATO Alliance. 26 The administration reasoned that the contract would provide billions of dollars in hard currency to assist the ailing Soviet economy and ultimately lead to Soviet military gains. The United States also protested the alleged use of forced labour by Soviet Union at pipeline construction sites. The extension of Reagan's sanctions prohibited not only the foreign subsidiaries of U.S. firms from selling the same equipment and technology, but prohibited overseas firms from selling the Soviets products made under U.S. licences.

European leaders protested the United States actions, charging that the ban was "an unacceptable interference" 27 in European economic affairs. It had involved millions of dollars that an already economically depressed Europe desperately needed. In addition, European leaders saw the embargo as evidence of their belief that the United States was going its own way in

---


26 ibid., p. 40.

fiscal and trade matters without consulting its European allies. Even Margaret Thatcher, the British Prime Minister raised the question "whether one very powerful nation can prevent existing contracts being fulfilled"? 28 West Germany and Italy joined France and Britain in refusing to comply with the ban and in ordering companies to fulfil their contractual obligations with the Soviets. Although displeased with the actions of its allies, Reagan was reluctant to pull back the sanctions because he did not want to appear to be retreating. 29

The opposition to the pipeline sanctions was so strong from the American Congress and U.S. business community, as also from the popular European opinion that the Reagan administration, finally on 13 November lifted all sanctions, saying that the United States and its allies had reached "substantial agreement" on over all economic strategy towards the Soviet Union. 30 While the Europeans viewed the agreement as a "face saving" gesture for the Reagan administration, the American conservatives were disappointed, who had long argued that it was important for strategic reasons to avoid helping in the pipeline construction, or other elements of Soviet industry. 31 The sanctions came to symbolize Reagan administration's difficulties in pressuring the Soviet Union while attempting to maintain good relations with U.S. allies in Europe. 32

28 ibid., p. 28.
30 McGuiness and Russotto, n. 23, p. 29.
31 ibid.
Korean Airliner Downing

U.S.-Soviet relations took a turn for the worse in 1983 when a Soviet fighter plane shot down a South Korean commercial airliner on September 1, after it flew over strategically sensitive Soviet territory. All 269 people abroad were killed including 61 American passengers among whom was U.S. Representative Larry McDonald. The downing of the Korean plane unleashed a public furor. The United States alleged that the Soviets knowingly shot down an unarmed civilian aircraft and then refused to acknowledge or apologize for the act. The Soviets accused the United States of using the plane on a spy mission and of manipulating public opinion in support of militaristic policies.

President Reagan condemned the barbarity of the shootdown, referring to it as "murderous", "savagery", and an "atrocity". But he also held out the opportunity to negotiate arrangements to prevent such episodes from ever happening again, and more importantly, said that nuclear arms negotiations would continue. Reagan announced that the United States was suspending certain cultural, scientific and diplomatic exchanges with the Soviets and would work with other nations to curb Soviet Civil aviation in the West. Further, United States along with 13 other nations that had nationals abroad KAL 007, would seek reparations from the Soviets for the victims families.

---


34 For an authoritative account of the KAL 007 incident see, Seymour M. Hersh, The Target is Destroyed: What Really Happened to Flight 007 and American know about it. (New York, 1986).
To embarass the Soviets, the United States and nine other nations attempted to introduce a resolution in the UN Security Council that "deeply deplores the destruction" of KAL 007, but was vetoed by the U.S.S.R. In effect, the two weeks boycott of flights to the Soviet Union by most European Nations appeared to be the only international action directly affecting Soviet economic interests.35

**SOVIET RESPONSE.**

The Soviets responded defensively and offensively, their mounting fury was to lead to an across - the - board condemnation of the Reagan administration. The Soviets acknowledged that the airliner had been shot down by a Soviet fighter plane, but claimed that the attack was in accordance with international as well as Soviet regulations and security interests. It also charged the United States with responsibility for carrying out a spy mission over the Soviet Union that intentionally jeopardized the lives and well being of the airliner's passengers and crew.36

The careful consideration of the entire leadership was expressed in a statement by the Soviet leader Andropov, which was flavoured with the rhetorics of the Cold War. It broadened its range of fire to include condemnation of the U.S. position in the INF negotiations and of trying to "ensure a dominating position in the world ... regardless of the interests of other states and peoples".37 It seemed a formal declaration by the politburo

35 See, Jasjit Singh, "Tragedy of 007", Strategic Analysis (New Delhi), vol. 7, no. 7 (October 1983), pp. 528-539.


of what it wanted the whole world and particularly the Soviet people to think of the Reagan administration. It "came within a hair of stating flatly that he and the men for whom he was speaking wanted nothing more to do with the Reagan administration".38

**ARMS CONTROL**

The strategic and military relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union was the central "consideration influencing" the policy throughout the cold war. Even in the best of political environment the sharply divergent strategic interests of the United States and the U.S.S.R. had been extremely difficult to reconcile. As such, the state of arms control between the global rivals had depended not only on the troubled state of U.S.-Soviet relations but also on the superpowers basic perspective on arms control.39

The Soviet approach to arms control had evolved through distinct phases in the post war era in response to dramatic changes in the strategic position of the United States and the U.S.S.R., in military technologies, in the larger global geopolitical context and in the domestic and alliance environment of the two Superpowers. Arms control as a substantive political process in search of practical agreements, as opposed to arms control as an exclusively propaganda tool, became feasible and attractive to Soviet leaders only as the disparity between United States strategic nuclear capabilities diminished in the 1960s.40 On the other hand, United states sought to use

38 ibid., pp. 20-21.
arms control agreements as a means to cap the growth of Soviet strategic power and to stabilize a condition of deterence based on mutual societal vulnerability.

**REAGAN'S APPROACH TO ARMS CONTROL**

The incoming Reagan Administration was neither enthusiastic nor anxious to resume arms controls negotiations with Moscow. Their strategy was simply to build militarily in order to negotiate successfully, much in the churchillian manner of arming to Parley. However, the Administration was faced with the practical task of responding to unwanted pressures generated by Brezhnev's peace offensive, the growing anti-nuclear movement in Europe, the necessity of preparing European public opinion for accepting the Pershing II and Cruise missiles, and the intense bureaucratic infighting within its agencies on the wisdom or folly of negotiating with the Russians.

From the very beginning of the Reagan administration the Soviets persistently pressed the Americans to open arms control-negotiations, but the White House, just getting its military build up underway, was not yet ready to Parley, but only to arm. Reagan insisted that any arms agreement with the Soviet Union would have to preserve an "equitable" balance between the two superpowers. His goal was to reduce the number of deployed nuclear

---


weapons without endangering U.S. security.\textsuperscript{44} The administration's approach rested on two fundamental premises: (1) that peace depended on a nuclear balance of U.S. and Soviet forces, especially in land based ICBMs; and (2) that the Soviet Union would reduce its nuclear arsenals only in the face of unequivocal indications that the United States would match Soviet military advances in the absence of an arms control agreement.\textsuperscript{45}

Despite these largely pessimistic cross currents, the necessity of continuing the strategic arms control had been accepted by the Reagan administration, which had entered office with a sceptical view of the whole arms control enterprise. At the minimum, the need to respond to the nuclear anxieties of publics in democratic societies\textsuperscript{46} and the need to maintain public support for a strong defense were widely seen by the administration as requiring a credible effort to pursue comprehensive arms control agreement with U.S.S.R.

\textbf{The Geneva Talks: Intermediate Range Nuclear Force (INF)}

In November 1981 President Reagan announced his first arms control initiative. As a basis for the Intermediate Range Nuclear Force (INF) Talks, which began on 30 November 1981, the President proposed a "zero option"

\textsuperscript{44} See, Kenneth W. Dam, “Ensuring security in the Nuclear Age”, \textit{Department of State Bulletin} (Washington, D.C.) (April 1983), pp. 57-60.

\textsuperscript{45} McGuiness and Rusotto, n.23, p. 38.

for INF, meaning United States would" cancel its deployment of Pershing II and Ground Launched Cruise Missiles (GLCMs) if the Soviets will dismantle their SS-20, SS-4, and SS-5 missiles. 47

Although the Soviets expressed a willingness to give up some of their intermediate range weapons, they rejected Reagan's proposals, saying it had been designed to be 'non negotiable'. They claimed rightly, that the proposal gave the West unfair advantages.48 For years Moscow had insisted that any limitation of Nuclear forces in Europe must take account of all arms capable of reaching Soviet territory, including British, and French missile launching submarines and many bombers of NATO countries. Reagan proposal did not meet that demand. The Reagan administration, as well as the Soviet Union rejected an informal "walk in the woods" compromise that chief U.S. negotiator Paul Nitze had worked out in July 1982 with his Soviet counterpart, Yuli Kvitsinsky. 49

**Modified 'Zero Option'**

As the call for U.S. flexibility grew at home and in Europe, Reagan administration gave up its insistence that the Soviet abandon their entire force of SS-20. Although 'zero option' remained his ultimate goal, as an interim step he offered to consider any Soviet proposal that would limit to equal

---

47 Talbott, n.42, pp. 79-80.
48 Garthoff, n. 2, pp. 1023-1024.
numbers the U.S. and Soviet warheads deployed on Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles.

The new Soviet leader Yuri Andropov, announced in May 1983 that Moscow was prepared to reach an agreement with the United States limiting the number of nuclear warheads, as well as launchers to the existing NATO levels (including those of French and British forces) in the European theater. Andropov however, added that Moscow would be "compelled to take measures in reply" if the United States went ahead with its planned European deployment of Pershing II missiles. Reagan called Andropov's proposal encouraging and the Soviets continued to be conciliatory during the summer.

In December 1983, the Soviet not only suspended all arms control talks after the United States began deploying Pershing II and Cruise missiles in Western Europe but announced their intention to deploy medium range missiles in East Germany and Czechoslovakia. An explanation for the variations without change and subsequent failure of the INF negotiations derived from the asymmetries between the political and strategic objectives of both sides. Trying to satisfy their asymmetrical strategic and security needs could be compared to trying to square a circles.

51 McGuiness and Russotto, n.23, p. 41.
Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START): Conflicting Positions

Negotiations on strategic arms control (START) paralleled those on Intermediate Range Missiles. But from the very beginning the Reagan administration gave precedence to INF, while the Soviets preferred action on SALT II. Responding to pressure from home and abroad for negotiations, President Reagan outlined the administration's opening proposal for strategic arms control at Eureka College on 9 May 1982. The President stated that the United States negotiating team would stress "reduction" of nuclear weapons - hence the dropping of the term SALT with its emphasis on "limitations", in preference for START, meaning "strategic Arms Reduction Talks". Reagan laid out a two phase proposal that would require deep cuts in Soviet strategic weapons and in the number of warheads in an effort to establish a more acceptable military balance.

Negotiations on START began in Geneva on 29 June 1982. Though no fundamental incompatibility in aims comparable to that in INF existed, however, other formidable obstacles blocked a successful negotiations. The United States shifted its focus from launchers to war-heads as elements to be redressed. In contrast, the Soviet proposal was based on SALT framework and called for phased reduction of Strategic Launchers (ICBMs, SLBMs and heavy bombers) to a ceiling of 1800 on each side with equal warhead limits to be negotiated. In mid-February 1983, the United States tabled another offer that included proposed limitations on air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs) as well as strategic bombers.

---

53 Garthoff, n. 2, p. 1022.
54 See, Talbott, n. 42, chapter 12-14.
55 Garthoff, n. 2, pp. 1024-25.
Strategic Defense Initiative

To make the negotiation more complicated was President Reagan's launching of the 'Strategic Defense Initiative' (SDI) or what was labelled "Star Wars" in March 1983. Initially, this plan was intended to substitute assured defense for deterrence by assured retaliation. Reagan hailed the SDI concept as nothing less than visionary. The Soviet reaction to SDI in the form of an Andropov statement predicted that if this plan was "converted into reality" it "would actually open the floodgates to runaway race of all types of strategic arms, both offensive and defensive". Charging that the United States was seeking military superiority, Andropov countered, "all attempts at achieving military superiority over the Soviet Union are futile". The Soviet Union, he insisted, "will never be caught defenseless by any threat." By the summer of 1983, the START negotiations gave every indication of bogging down into a stalemate. Announcements of change in the U.S. negotiating position in June and later in October in order to meet Soviet complaints elicited little flexibility on the Soviet side.

58 "Although the catchy phrase 'star wars' was a journalistic invention, this evocation of the popular futuristic 'morality tale' film subtly and unintentionally fitted very well the Reagan image of the political universe, pitting death rays of a 'force' for good in battle against an "Evil Empire".
60 See, Garthoff, n. 2. and Talbott, n. 42.
By the time the Soviet broke off the INF and START negotiations, Moscow had concluded that an arms control negotiating environment was in fact helpful to the United States military buildup. Resuming talks with a United States administration that was unlikely to end in negotiated acceptable terms would only help secure congressional support for military programmes that was concern to the U.S.S.R. Yet Soviets also came to recognise that for them to be seen as unremittingly intransigent in the face of ostensibly reasonable United States proposals would also be counterproductive for Soviet interests in precisely the same respect.

ECONOMIC RELATIONS

American-Soviet economic and commercial relations provided different and sometimes unexpected insights into superpower behaviours. United States approach to economic and commercial relations with Soviet Union had pulled in two contradictory directions. One of imposing restrictions in times of political stress using such restrictions as a political weapon. The other, of expanding trade opportunities in times of easing tension in response to deeper impulses within the capitalist system to seek new markets.

The Soviet approach to economic and commercial relations with United States had generally been shaped by the uniqueness of the Soviet experience, namely, the Soviet goal of modernizing the Soviet Union,

---


drawing upon the technology and technical assistance from the advanced west, while at the same time holding firm to the fundamental principles and commitment of creating a self contained 'autarkic' economic system. Throughout its history the Soviet Union had experienced alternating currents of expanding commercial engagement with the capitalist world and withdrawal to 'autarkism' within the Communist bloc.

REAGAN PERIOD

In shaping economic policies towards the Soviet Union that would serve its broader political objectives, the Reagan administration faced the task of reconciling its commitment to economic deregulation and expanded free trade, with its desire to constraint the Soviet military build up by economic as well as by political and military means. The urgency of the latter task foreclosed a laissez-faire approach to America-Soviet economic relations and imposed instead a choice between a "strategy of leverage and a strategy of denial." Both entailed enhanced government control over the flow of trade, the transfer of technology, and the availability of credits to the Soviet Union.

Three specific areas formed the focus of policy debates: trade in strategic goods and technologies, general trade and the problem of credits:

65 For more on early American trade policies toward the Soviet Union see, Philip J. Funigello, American -Soviet Trade in the cold War (Chapel Hill, 1988).

Trade In Strategic Goods and Credit Policy:

In the case of trade in strategic goods the Reagan administration chose to pursue a complete strategy of denial, arguing that past policies had permitted the transfers of technologies, including ideas themselves, that might contribute indirectly to the Soviet military potential. The denial of strategic goods involved an effort to further tighten interallied coordinating Committee (CoCom) guidelines, to enforce export control more stringently to prevent Soviet industrial espionage, and most controversially, to reduce the scope of, and introduce closer controls over, scientific and cultural exchanges that might offer the Soviet Union access to key technologies in areas such as computers or artificial intelligence. 67

While the need to bar Soviet access to technologies of direct military significance was unquestioned, the effort to define whole classes of advanced technologies that had indirect military applications was fraught with difficulties, and the task of controlling their export still more so. The defense departments "initial list of military critical technologies", issued in 1980, contained, "a virtual roll call of leading contemporary techniques, including video-disk recording and polymeric materials. If this collection had automatically become the basis for the official commodity control list, the entire department of commerce would not have been large enough to administer the export control programme." 68

---

67 See, Gary Bertsch, East-West Strategic Trade: Cocom and the Atlantic Alliance (Paris, 1983).

68 Thane Gustafson, Selling the Russians the Rope ?: Soviet Technology Policy and US Export Controls (Santa Monica, Calif., 1981) p. 4.
When it came to general trade in which United States grain sales figured most prominently, domestic political consideration triumphed over foreign policy consistency. In April 1981, Reagan honoured his campaign pledge to the farm lobby by lifting the embargo on agricultural commodities that President Carter had imposed after the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. American government credit had not been available to the Soviet Union since 1975, therefore, it was the restriction of private credits that the militant wing of the administration sought, on the ground that such indirect subsidization of the Soviet economy was "selling the Russians the Rope" by which they would hang the Americans.69

**Pipeline Sanctions**

The protracted and bitter controversy over the projected Soviet-Western European natural gas pipeline project dramatized the degree to which the Reagan administration's economic policies had departed from those of its predecessors as well its allies and had moved in the direction of outright economic warfare. To the advocates of 'denial strategy' which included Defense Secretary Weinberger and Reagan himself, the pipeline project involved the export of critical technologies that would contribute to Soviet economic, and thereby, military power.70 Rejecting the advice of Secretary of State Alexander Haig and others, President Reagan in June 1982 made a last ditch effort to thwart the project by attempting to block the transfer of components manufactured by foreign subsidiaries of American companies or

---


70 See, Jonathan Stern, "Specters and Dreams", *Foreign Policy*, no. 48 (Fall 1982), pp. 21-36

53
by European firms under license from American corporations. This decision, of dubious legality and high political cost, provoked a crisis within the transatlantic alliance.71

Eventually, a face-saving measure was devised that enabled the United States to back away from an unwinnable issue without conceding it had lost. By November 1982 the United States lifted its sanctions against West European companies in return for a vague understanding with the allies to study trade and credit issues further.72 The crisis was itself an indication of the distance that Reagan administration had travelled in moving away from the "pursuit of leverage to a strategy of denial", if not outright economic warfare. The Reagan administration viewed economic interdependent relationship with Soviet Union as one sided and costly to the West, and sought instead to isolate the Soviet Union from Western technology and trade. The effort to bring greater relaxation in Soviet outlook and policy was rejected in favour of policies meant to maximize pressure on the Soviet system and to limit its capabilities.

COMPETITION IN THIRD WORLD/REGIONAL CONFLICTS

During the post war era, the Third World had been a principal arena of East-West rivalry. From Southeast Asia to the middle east to Southern Africa to central America, the Superpowers had found themselves on opposing sides

71 See, Bertsch, n. 68.

72 "East-West Trade Relations and the Soviet pipeline Sanctions," President Reagan's radio address to the Nation, Presidential Documents (13 November 1982), pp.1475-1476.
of regional conflicts, locked in a global competition for influence through a subtle and complex feedback process, prompting Zbigniew Brzezinski to lament that "SALT lies buried in the Sands of the Ogaden". East-West competition in the Third World "was more than just a complicating factor in US-Soviet relationship". There was also the very real danger that the superpowers might be drawn into those conflicts in support of local clients through inadvertent escalation or policy miscalculation.

Soviet objectives in the Third World had included national security, the 'spread of Socialism' and 'supplanting of Capitalism', and the enhancement of the prestige of the Soviet state. Along the Soviet periphery therefore, the Soviet conceptions of security dictated efforts either to control contiguous states or to deny western military access to them. United States policy towards the Third World had been characterized by an ambivalence and inconsistency. It had entailed a tension between an emphasis on the short term and tactical versus the longer run and architectural. It had called for a reconciliation of the necessary with the desirable, of U.S. exceptionalism with mundane reality.

---

73 Robert S. Litwak and Samuel F. Wells, Jr, ed., Superpower Competition and Security in the Third World (Massachusetts, 1988) p. IX.
75 S. Neil MacFarlane, "Soviet Union" in, Litwak and Wells, n. 74, p. 63.
77 Shahram Chubin, "United States", in Litwak, and Wells, n. 74, p. 1.
In the mid and late 1970s, Soviet direct and indirect intervention in Asia and Africa was a matter of growing concern to American policy makers. Soviet actions in Angola, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan raised fundamental questions about the Soviet's perception of their own security and the nature and extent of their designs in areas often far removed from the borders of the U.S.S.R. The Soviet military activity in the Third World poisoned the atmosphere of detente and, in conjunction with their buildup of strategic nuclear weaponry and of conventional and nuclear capabilities in the European theater, stimulated massive increases in Western, and nuclear and conventional balances.

The 'Reagan Doctrine'

President Reagan entered office with the conviction that "the Soviet Union underlies all the unrest that is going on" in the world. Secretary of State Haig also had a simplified and magnified image of the Soviet role in exploiting circumstances and situations around the world for its own advantage. Thus, the Reagan administration placed the subject of Soviet involvement and expansion of influence in the Third World at the very centre of American-Soviet relations. Haig saw Soviet pursuit of forceful expansion of its influence as aimed at securing strategic gains: "when the Soviet Union exploits local conditions for its own strategic aims, the problem is no longer local but a strategic threat to our own survival. We cannot ignore this

---

78 See, Mark Katz, The Third World in Soviet Military Thought (Baltimore, 1982).
79 MacFarlane, n. 76, p. 53.
threat.\textsuperscript{81} While stressing a key Soviet role, the administration also put particular stress on Soviet use of proxy and surrogate forces. The result was the formulation of the "Reagan Doctrine" which asserted America's "moral responsibility" for aiding popular insurgencies against communist domination.\textsuperscript{82} Since freedom and democracy were in Reagan's words, "the best guarantors of peace", support for popular insurgencies was no more than self defense.\textsuperscript{83}

In its own backyard, the United States, in parallel with its support for the government of El Salvador, took an increasingly hostile position towards Nicaragua. President Reagan in March 1981 had issued a secret "presidential finding on central America" that set up a covert action programme to make a halt to all arms supply to El Salvador guerillas from Nicaragua. The November 16, National Security Council meeting issued NSDD-17 which allowed widespread covert support to the 'contras'.\textsuperscript{84}

The aim of U.S, as evident from the leaked NSC document of April 1982, was to "eliminate Cuban-Soviet influence in the region".\textsuperscript{85} President Reagan defended the American administration's support to the contras, whom he


\textsuperscript{84} Garthoff, n. 2, p. 1057.

\textsuperscript{85} New York Times, 7 April 1983.
called "freedom fighters". The U.S. Congress cut-off funding to the contras when the news of mining of Nicaraguan ports became public. The final blow to the Reagan administration's policy was the revelation that the CIA was involved with the contras in a plan of selective terrorism and assassination. The contras however, continued their operations with other sources of support, including large sums from unofficial U.S. sources.

The Reagan administration in 1982 formalized a "Caribbean initiative" "intended as an economic-aid carrot to rally countries in the region to American policy, as well as to enhance their viability and resistance to leftist revolution". A commission under the chairmanship of former Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger was set up in 1983 "in order to rally the support of the American public" to resist "Communist encroachment in the region".

However, the focus of American action in the region Cuba, was seen not only "as a tool of successful Soviet expansion of influence in Africa, but also as the potential source of expanded Communist influence in the western Hemisphere, especially the Caribbean basin". Cuban aid to Nicaragua,

86 Washington Post, 5 May 1983.
90 Garthoff, n. 2, p. 1058.
91 ibid.
92 ibid.
including some military assistance annoyed Washington. Reagan was concerned also with the “increased Soviet supply to arms of Cuba which included MiG-23 Fighters”. 93

The Reagan administration also devoted attention to the other prominent alleged Soviet proxy, Qaddafi's Libya. 94 In May the United States not only closed the Libyan mission in Washington but considered a plan to "destabilize" Qaddafi's rule, 95 because of its links with terrorist activities. The United States administration also addressed the Soviet directly with its concern over the behaviour of Soviet proxies. Secretary Haig constantly raised the issue of acceptance of "restraint and reciprocity" in the Third World. 96 The administration wanted to ensure that U.S.S.R. and its clients, particularly Castro and Qaddafi moderated their interventionist behaviour.

Beginning with secretary Haig's raising the issue in 1981, but especially in 1982-83, several rounds of unpublicised, as well as formal U.S.-Soviet diplomatic exchanges, took place that dealt with middle east, in particular Iran-Iraq war, Afghanistan and Southern Africa. These confidential diplomatic exchanges were one of the most successful aspects of American diplomacy with Soviet Union in the early 1980s. Apart from the public postures "both sides were pragmatically probing "rules of engagement" in the


94 Haig, Caveat, n. 43, p. 96, p. 109.

95 See, Don Oberdorfer, "US has sought to pressure Qaddafi", Washington Post, 20 August 1981.

96 Haig, n.43, p. 107, pp. 108-110.
regional geo-political competition". In the Iran-Iraq war both the global rivals not only warned the other not to exploit the situation in the Persian Gulf, but also explained their own activities in the region, so that no misinterpretation would arise. In the middle East, the United States administration's effort to create "a strategic consensus" that would weild together Israel, Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia did not succeed because of sharp division over the Palestinian issue and the exigencies of internal and external relationship.

To the Soviets, the American eagerness to use military power to roll back revolutionary changes was evident in the American invasion of Grenada in November 1983. From the Soviet perspective therefore, in the first half of the 1980s the United States "had turned to a broad policy of more active use of counter revolutionary insurgent forces in its attempt to roll back history". Thus, beginning in 1981 the Reagan adminstration stepped up U.S. assistance to insurgents in Afghanistan, stimulated a new insurgency in Nicaragua, and indirectly supported other reactionary powers in aiding the insurgencies in Kampuchea, (now Cambodia) Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia. In other words, virutally all the "gains by the revolutionary forces" in the latter half of the 1970s were subjected to a vigorous counter-attack in the first half of the 1980s. Moreover, the Soviet Union too was over-extended by the mid 1980s and not in a favourable position to vigorously aid those regimes. The exception was the implementation of the 'Brezhnev Doctrine' in Afghanistan, where the Soviets had a direct and dominant role.

97 Garthoff, n. 2, p. 1061.
100 Garthoff, n.2, p. 1063.
HUMAN RIGHTS

Of all the issue that divided the United States and the Soviet Union, human rights had contributed considerably to the growth in deterioration in their relationship. It was an ideological conflict, pitted against each other were two distinct systems of political and economic organization, at whose core lay a sharp dispute over the theory and practice of human rights. "Human rights violations" during Stalin's regime was a "euphemism for Stalin's murderous rampages". During the Brezhnev era human rights became a subject of official discussion with the United States. Ironically, it was the popular interest that had occasionally forced the human rights issue on the official agenda of the two countries, despite the efforts of political leaders to avoid them. The Nixon adminstration regarded the issue of human rights as at best a "diversion from the principal business of East-West relations, at worst an obstacles to the kind of relationship with the other great nuclear power that it was trying to establish".

Soviet leadership resisted the idea that the United States, or any other country was entitled to pass judgement on, let alone promote a change in, the way it treated its own citizens. Indeed, in response to the steady western criticism of their practices of political repression, and in recognition of how deeply embedded the idea of human rights, as symbolized by Scharansky and

103 ibid., p. 102.
104 Garthoff, n. 2, p. 1124.
Sakharov, had become in the world's political discourse, the Soviet leaders insisted on a different definition of the concept. Rights they claimed, were to be understood in economic and social rather than in political terms. The performance of their own system in providing what they defined as rights was superior to that of United States and the West.

Thus, the Soviet response to U.S. charges of human rights violations had been to counter with charges of U.S. violation, such as the high rate of employment in which individual were deprived of "the right to work", a right guaranteed by the soviet constitution; evidence of anti-semitism and discrimination against other ethnic minorities such as Blacks; and the existence of "political prisoners". Further, the United States was accused of hypocrisy about human rights issue, since it had consistently supported governments that, although they may be hostile to the Soviet Union, themselves did not permit civil liberties and political participation.

Having assumed a high priority in the Carter administration, the human right issue became another stick to beat the Russians. The soviets failure to abide by the most elementary requirements had a spoiling effect on the relationship as a whole, raising a new doubts, suspicion and uncertainties. Officially the Soviets insisted that human rights was on internal matter, but they had been responsive to some U.S. requests, usually to gain commercial and other advantages.

Secretary of State Shultz had raised and discussed the differences over human rights during his Moscow talks early in November 1985. In his first

summit meeting with Gorbachev, Reagan raised the delicate question of human rights. Reagan said bluntly that the United States wanted results not publicity from the human rights campaign. If the Soviet Union really wanted to improve relations with the United States, Reagan insisted, the Soviets would have to repair their records on human rights. President Reagan said it was "morally repugnant" to see Soviet citizens denied the right to emigrate, and that it was "politically untenable for American leaders to make deals with the Soviet Union as long as Jews and dissidents are imprisoned".106

Thus, in the first half of the 1980s human rights and humanitarian issues had been a major issue of contention in U.S.-Soviet relations. Systematic and ideological differences were the root cause. Over the years the United States had taken its measure of Soviet good conduct in international relation in part by their performance in respecting the human rights of their people and others with whom they dealt. United States attention generally focussed on specific Soviet policy towards political dissent, religious practice, right of ethnic and national minorities and the right of emigration.

Sensitive to their own Communist values, preferences and political practices, the Soviet leadership resented what they termed as "U.S. intervention in internal Soviet affairs". Still, the Americans held fast to their position during the Reagan administration and insisted, as in the past, that the human rights must be a priority item on the U.S.-Soviet agenda, much to the chagrin of the Soviets.107


Successive American administration, through detente and confrontation, had to address the issue of human rights practices in the Soviet Union. The record strongly supports the conclusion that while the Soviet leaders objected to any American expression of judgement on such matters, they were prepared to take that consideration into account and made some accommodation. If, on the other hand, when faced with attempts at intimidation and coercion, they had reacted strongly and not yielded. Above all, attempts to link demand for internal changes with important arms control or trade agreements, had only sacrificed "those security or economic interests" and worsened, "political relations without moderating Soviet internal practices".108

In brief, U.S. action from 1981 through 1983 was too gratuitously hostile to serve usefully a policy of competition. It was neither a policy of combining the carrot and the stick, as in the early and mid-1970s, nor even of applying the stick while offering the carrot as in the late 1970s. Rather, it was ‘provocative’ brandishing of a stick that was enough to annoy and alarm ‘the Soviet bear but not enough to cage him’. In over simplified dialectical terms, it may be said that dissatisfaction with the thesis of detente in the 1970s led to its antithesis in confrontation in the early 1980s. The synthesis arrived a decade latter in the form of the end of not only the Cold War but the communist Soviet state itself.

Garthoff, n. 2, p. 1124.