CONTAINMENT REVISITED: US-SOVIET RELATIONS IN THE 1980s

by

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> If Central America were to fall, what would the consequences be in Asia, Europe, and for alliances such as NATO? If the U.S. cannot respond to a threat near our own borders, why should Europeans or Asians believe that we are seriously concerned about threats to them? If the Soviets can assume that nothing short of an actual attack on the U.S. will provoke an American response, which ally, which friend will trust us then?
>
> —Ronald Reagan

> We take it as part of our obligation to peace to encourage the gradual evolution of the Soviet system toward a more pluralistic political and economic system, and above all to counter Soviet expansionism through sustained and effective political, economic, and military competition.
>
> —George P. Shultz

> Soviet power threatens us directly and poses obstacles to the successful conduct of our foreign policy . . . . [The] critical point in deterring war and preventing aggression is maintaining a balance of forces. History shows us all too often that conflicts occur when one state believes it has sufficiently greater military capability than another and attempts to exploit that superior strength through intimidation or conflict with the weaker state.
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> —Caspar Weinberger

These statements from the Reagan Administration reveal a political and strategic orientation reminiscent of containment in the 1940s.[1] They reflect the Reagan version of the skepticism of Soviet intentions and the need for resistance rather than appeasement found in the strategy articulated within the Truman Administration and followed with more or less vigor, consistency, and effectiveness ever since. However, containment, as defined by George Kennan in the nascent cold war of the 1940s, is not attainable now, although some of the principles associated with containment still apply. Kennan argued, for example, that containment, or modifying Soviet behavior via counterpressure deterrents followed by rewards for acceptable behavior, would lead to political mutation within the Soviet Union because its deterministic ideology, which drives it to expand, could not survive if the United States blocked its "inevitable" expansion. Kennan assumed that internal forces, then, would bring about an evolution in Soviet ideology and expansionist tendencies. In contrast, the Reagan Administration wants to do more than merely react to Soviet moves to facilitate internal changes in the Soviet Union. Reagan hopes to reinstate a balance of power in which the

United States and its allies can have the time to conduct the "Campaign for Freedom" announced in June 1982. In this campaign Reagan anticipates winning the struggle for the hearts and minds of the peoples of the world, which he believes possible if the free world engineers a collective educational/propaganda offensive. While similar offensives originated in the anti-communist doctrines of the 1940s, the Reagan emphasis on a military application of containment and on winning allies rather than changing Soviet society constitutes a significant distinction from Kennan.

Another reason for the difficulty in attaining containment, as described in the late 1940s, has more to do with the different international systems than with the specific contrasts between administrations. The balance of power between the United States and the Soviet Union evolved from one of American superiority to one of tenuous parity by the 1970s. An even more important change occurred in Western views of the Soviet Union. In the late 1940s, there was a widespread public acceptance of the arguments about the need for the United States to resist Soviet threats actively and globally. In the 1980s, perceptions of the Soviet threat vary from a similar acceptance, to an overwhelming fear that paralyzes the will to resist, and to equally self-deterring assumptions that the Soviet Union is a status-quo power and is as unwilling as the United States to risk nuclear war.

Despite differences in emphasis and atmosphere and differences that reflect which members of the two administrations exercised the greatest influence over their president, both Reagan and Truman assumed that the Soviets posed a direct threat to the United States, and both chose containment as the most effective way of dealing with this threat. Truman, impressed with the consequences of Munich and appeasement, expected similar results from accommodation with what increasingly appeared to be an aggressive and expansionist Soviet or communist threat. Reagan's equal fear about detente inspires his appreciation of the value of containment. As Truman and the authors of NSC-68 argued, the Reagan Administration argues that Soviet expansion poses a threat to US interests, that only Western firmness and demonstrated willingness to resist all Soviet challenges encourage Soviet awareness of the benefits of self-restraint, and that for purposes of credibility "a defeat of free institutions anywhere is a defeat everywhere" and therefore can not be tolerated. With respect to this latter point about credibility, made first in the NSC-68 paper, the Reagan Administration emphasizes, as the Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson Administrations emphasized, that the United States had to have the capacity to respond to Soviet attempts to alter the balance of power at whatever level, region, or cost. Truman discovered that peripherally important Korea assumed major importance as a test of the credibility of American commitments. Reagan finds that a Caribbean micro-state assumes macro-importance in a similar test of American power and willingness to use force to prevent destabilization in that strategic region. Tiny Grenada assumes large stature in the political/psychological/military struggle between American interests in supporting a gradual evolution toward democracy and stability in the third world and the Soviet/Cuban interest in fostering and exploiting instability that already feeds on the frustrations of peoples disillusioned with the slow pace of political and economic development. The discovery of Soviet and Cuban arms in quantities beyond the ability of Grenadians to absorb, and of documents indicating the scheduled arrival of an even larger Soviet presence, provided evidence that Grenada was being prepared as a launching point for military revolution into Central and South America and justified the decision to prevent an escalated Soviet/Cuban presence.

Both presidents, while pursuing global containment, also have appreciated the limits imposed by domestic and international realities. In fact, the thunderous anti-Soviet and anti-accommodation rhetoric of both Truman and Reagan have intermingled with hints of compromise, awareness of the limits of American power, and acceptance of the reality that some interests and commitments

have superseded others. While Truman made general statements about defending free peoples everywhere, he directed American effort toward economic reconstruction in Europe and Japan, military aid to Greece and Turkey, limited support of selected allies in key geographic locations, and a war in Asia where Truman limited the fighting to Korea and forbade the use of nuclear weapons. While Reagan has urged replacing detente with containment and unilateral arms restraint with renewed military strength, and while the invasion of Grenada reminds the world that he sees an obligation to counter Soviet or Cuban victories in the third world, he has shown signs of compromise over the number and basing mode of MX missiles, the SALT II treaty he agreed to honor, the INF zero-option, and the execution of economic and technological sanctions against the Soviets.

Before reviewing the Reagan version of containment further, it is necessary to describe the political environment facing the Administration and its evaluation of the decade of detente, Soviet military buildups and political adventures, disintegrating alliances, third world turmoil, and American retrenchment. The post-detente decade began with President Carter's reluctant and disheartened rejection of detente in the aftermath of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. This dramatic addition to what Brzezinski labeled the arc of crisis forced Carter to withdraw his SALT II treaty from Senate deliberations, announce the institution of a neo-containment doctrine (Carter Doctrine), and accept the fact that the Soviet pursuit of strategic, geopolitical, and ideological objectives in Afghanistan trampled on what remained of US support for detente. Carter's heightened interest in El Salvador, Poland, and China; support for redirecting funds to the defense budget and for draft registration; and direct sanctions against the Soviets reflected his determination to hold a faltering line against the Soviet Union. Reagan inherited this belated policy of reaction to Soviet pressures in an era of Soviet political and military ascendancy and of American military, political, and economic decline.

Interest in redressing these two trends dominated the Reagan foreign policy agenda. However, many factors complicated this agenda. The United States faced the delicate tasks of wooing the PRC without abandoning Taiwan, answering European demands for equal rights in NATO planning and independence from American positions on international finance and detente, and repairing the damages in Japanese-American trade and defense relations. In the meantime, circumstances around the globe offered opportunities for Soviet exploitation: turmoil in Middle Eastern states, which demanded American adaption to post-Shah, post-Camp David, and post-Sadat events; turmoil in the Americas, where the United States faced anti-Americanism, Marxist revolutionaries, vulnerable right-wing governments, and new economic and political demands from important neighbors like Mexico; and unrest in Africa over American support of South Africa and corrupt regimes such as that in Zaire. Finally, inadequate, detente-inspired responses of previous administrations to direct and indirect Soviet machinations in these trouble spots provided additional Soviet opportunities.

Reagan's indictment of past administrations rests on the conclusion that contrasting Soviet and American views of detente and Soviet exploitation of these precluded the emergence of a genuine improvement in US-Soviet relations and made suspect the concomitant mutual declarations of peaceful intentions and irreversible processes. One

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example of this disparity was the marked difference between the Nixon and Carter emphasis on detente as a process of stabilizing US-Soviet relations and Brezhnev's emphasis on peaceful coexistence as a method of continuing and even intensifying the class struggle.[2] In point of fact, while US officials spoke of balance, restraint, and a gradual transformation to an era of detente, the Soviets disclaimed interest in perpetuating the status quo and spoke of an inevitable transformation to an era of socialist dominance. In addition, the Soviets expected American fears of jeopardizing detente and the pressure of the international correlation of forces favoring the Soviets to constrain American responses to Soviet moves. However, Nixon and Carter hoped to circumvent Soviet inclinations to upset that status quo or abuse detente, which they saw diminishing as a result of internal and external Soviet difficulties, by enticing the Soviets into a closer partnership with the United States.[3] Pessimism about America's ability or willingness to compete with the Soviets as vigorously as in the past also influenced the attempt to encourage Soviet moderation through accommodation.

The contrast in expectations for detente also included contrasting views on the nature of linkage, which in the American interpretation meant that detente depended on Soviet behavior, defined in terms of accepting the status quo and forgoing attempts at jockeying for marginal advantages. However, the Soviet notion of a favorable shift in the correlation of forces precluded their acceptance of the inherent value of the status quo or of American stipulations about linkage. Soviet leaders saw no contradiction in accepting the fruits of detente in Europe while rejecting limitations on their pursuit of socialist victory elsewhere via subversion, propaganda, or intervention. These Soviet assessments limited the prospects of a detente-inspired balance of power. Ultimately the Nixon Administration responded to Soviet maneuvering and reduced reliance on the ephemeral crisis-management capability of detente. Carter discovered the Soviet-imposed boundaries on detente and the parochial Soviet interest in stability after the 1979 move into Afghanistan. This move invalidated the notion that Soviet and Western perceptions of detente were similar enough to provide mutual guidelines for acceptable behavior and demonstrated that the expansionist and opportunistic character of Soviet foreign policy was not obsolete, limited to Eastern Europe, or a myth perpetuated by a hostile West.

Before the final denouement, however, the two administrations pursued arms and trade agreements with the Soviets. Domestic pressures obviously influenced the eagerness for negotiations in the 1970s. Nixon's efforts to initiate a superpower summit, for example, were spurred by hopes of formalizing detente, and thus capitalizing on the American fascination with the prospect of normalizing superpower relations; diverting public attention from Vietnam; and concluding a successful arms agreement before the 1972 election. Carter responded to post-Vietnam, neo-isolationist sentiments by advocating political retrenchment and the conclusion of SALT II, which he envisaged as a remedy for the tensions between the two superpowers. He hoped to revitalize cooperative relations by exploiting the political spillover effects from a successful arms agreement. Unfortunately, the results of negotiations over SALT I and II reflected neither contributions to improved superpower relations nor to strategic stability.[4] SALT I did not lead to substantial Soviet concessions in SALT II, and Soviet strategic programs, looking very much like programs designed to implement superiority and war-winning capability, expanded while US defense programs and spending retrenched. Carter's failure with respect to SALT II indicated a dead end in the process that Reagan hopes to by-pass with the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START).

While critical of detente in general, Reagan reserved special attention for Carter's approach, which he characterized as one of hesitation, inconsistency, and ineffectiveness. According to Reagan officials, due to Carter's decisions not "to maintain strategic and conventional

capabilities" nor to "respond vigorously to the use of Soviet force," President Carter jeopardized the prospects of international stability and encouraged Soviet behavior that showed "little regard for the ability and/or will of the West to respond effectively to its challenge."[5] After a decade of experimenting with a partial and ineffective replacement of containment, there now existed a need to replace detente, make clear to the Soviets that certain behavior contradicted the requirements of a genuine relaxation of tensions, convince the Soviets of American willingness to resist unacceptable behavior, and design a foreign policy that facilitated the ability to resist. Former Secretary of State Alexander Haig outlined the procedures for instituting such a policy. He divided foreign policy objectives into four interrelated parts: restoring economic and military strength; renewing the strength and unity of NATO and adding new allies to the Western front; promoting peaceful change in the third world; and pursuing a constructive relationship with the Soviets based on restraint, reciprocity, and realism.[6] Secretary of State George Shultz reiterated these objectives in Senate testimony. With language consistent with NSC-68, Shultz emphasized that the United States would "resist encroachments on our vital interests . . . ensure that those who have a positive alternative to the Soviet model have our support," and "leave Moscow no opportunity to distort or misconstrue our intentions."[7] While his statement is consistent with past strategies of containment, the Reagan objectives highlight the determination of the Administration to compensate for the recent voluntary or inadvertant American political and military decline that encouraged the Soviets to exploit the resulting near impotence of US foreign policy, divisions in NATO, and turmoil in the third world.

Compensations began immediately in the military arena, where Reagan requested an overdue reinvestment in defense efforts (partially successful) and weapon deployments that would buttress American deterrent capabilities. Reagan viewed modernization of strategic nuclear forces as essential in light of the erosion of American deterrent capabilities since the Soviet achievement of parity (and superiority in some areas) in the 1970s. This view reflected the concern that—given the massive Soviet strategic buildup, Soviet technological advances in accuracy and MIRV capability, and the increased vulnerability of American ICBMs, an antique bomber force, and an on-station nuclear submarine fleet of about 15—the United States faced the uncomfortable prospect of being forced to retaliate after a Soviet counterforce strike with only the remaining portions of countervalue second-strike forces that would invite subsequent Soviet attack on American cities. To forestall this scenario and to maintain a credible deterrent, the United States must, in the Administration's view: match the Soviets' nuclear capability; "have a capability for a survivable and enduring response" (invulnerable second-strike capability); "be able to respond in a measured and prudent manner to the threat posed by the Soviet Union" (escalation domination); "make the cost of nuclear war much higher than any possible benefit" (assured destruction); and make "our threatened response . . . credible, that is, of such a nature that the potential aggressor believes we would carry it out."[8] Without these capabilities, according to Weinberger, the United States would be tempting the Soviets to threaten the use of nuclear weapons, and "we cannot afford to place ourselves in the position where the vulnerability of our deterrent would force the President to choose between using our strategic forces before they were destroyed or surrendering . . . . Forces that must be used in the very first instant of an enemy attack are not the tools of a prudent strategy."[9]

These remarks reiterate the central objective of deterrence: to have the unqualified capacity to level unacceptable damage on an enemy after receiving a nuclear first strike. Deterrence also depends on accurate Soviet perceptions of the vitality of American retaliatory forces in answering various levels of threat or attack. Most importantly, according to Reagan officials, deterrence also depends on preparing responses to a

protracted nuclear conflict and improving counterforce and damage-limiting capabilities. While US officials recognize the unlikelihood that a nuclear war could remain limited or that any side could win in such a contest, Reagan officials remind us of the possibility that the Soviets view strategy, the prospect of superiority, and the utility of nuclear weapons differently. Soviet military deployments as well as past military writings indicate Soviet acceptance of the possibility of a protracted nuclear war and the inherent necessity of preparing to fight and win such a conflict. In view of these possibilities, US strategic forces have responsibilities in addition to deterring a Soviet first strike, such as deterring escalation in a nuclear war; imposing "termination of a major war, on terms favorable to the U.S. and our allies, even if nuclear weapons have been used"; and denying the Soviets "a military victory at any level of hostilities."[10]

These references to prevailing if attacked and denying the Soviets a nuclear victory mark a move away from the strategy of mutual assured destruction (MAD) to a strategy that accepts the facts that nuclear capabilities and balances change constantly, that these changes may have a negative effect on the American ability to retaliate and deter, and that the most effective way to deter the Soviets is to convince them of the US determination to maintain a military balance. The numerous critics of MAD assert that by the late 1970s the objective of countervailing—deterrence based on the ability to deny nuclear victory to an aggressor via improved counterforce capability and decreased second-strike vulnerability—began supplementing MAD.[11] Whether or not one accepts this assertion, it is evident that by the 1980s US strategic forces had inherited a mixture of traditional and modern assignments: deterring attack, ensuring survivability of retaliatory forces, avoiding the necessity of a launch-on-warning, coping with the threat of escalation, denying a Soviet victory, enabling the United States to terminate conflict before the conclusion of an all-out nuclear war, and prevailing if attacked.

These forces also encompass a role in persuading the Soviets to negotiate on arms control. According to Reagan, "Only if the Soviets recognize the West's determination to modernize its own military forces will they see an incentive to negotiate a verifiable agreement establishing equal, lower levels."[12] Without going into the details of just how many strategic, Eurostrategic, or conventional weapons are enough to persuade the Soviets to reduce arsenals or to deter a nuclear or conventional war, suffice it to say that Reagan supports across-the-board investment in the military as a prerequisite of concluding any arms control treaty. However, as evidence of his interest in arms control, Reagan offered the Soviets several proposals: the zero-option for Eurostrategic deployments in Europe, a major reduction in MIRVed ballistic missiles, and the promise to abide by the terms of SALT II. Negotiations over long-range theater nuclear forces (LRTNF or INF—intermediate-range nuclear forces) and strategic weaponry began in 1981 and 1982.

With respect to START, Reagan originally proposed a two-part reduction package with cuts outlined for ballistic missile warheads, especially on land-based systems, and missile throw-weights. Each side would reduce warheads on land- and sea-based systems to equal levels one-third below current levels. Since only half of these warheads could be deployed on ICBMs, this would also reduce throw-weight totals. While such cuts would entail a Soviet dismantling of more ICBM warheads than the United States, since a larger portion of their approximately 7500 ballistic missile warheads are emplaced on ICBMs, the US reduction in warheads would entail more of a mixture of ICBM and SLBM cuts. The United States assumed that equal ceilings "would strengthen deterrence and promote stability by significantly reducing the Soviet lead in ICBMs," thereby making a Soviet first strike "impossible without expending most of the Soviet force."[13] It is the current Soviet ability to launch a debilitating first strike against US ICBMs with one-half to two-thirds of its heavy ICBMs (SS-18s) that the United States

sees as defying deterrence and most destabilizing.

There are a number of problems with START, as critics, freeze proponents, and the Soviets quickly pointed out.[14] The Soviets were asked to make major cuts and de facto alterations in their strategic posture in exchange for equal ceilings in areas in which they were most ahead of the United States. Another criticism concerned the extent to which warhead cuts would reduce the vulnerability of American ICBMs. Critics pointed out that with each side reducing the number of MIRVed ICBMs, the ratio of warheads to targeted ICBMs might be greater after START than before. For example, as Jan Lodal noted, the USSR currently has 5500 ICBM warheads aimable at 1052 American ICBMs—a 5:1 ratio.[15] After a START reduction, the Soviets could aim 2500 warheads at approximately 400 American ICBMs—an even greater ratio. With respect to the value of reducing throw-weight, Lodal concluded that the main source of American vulnerability was not the weight of Soviet weapons; it was the development of accuracy and MIRVs.

Lodal's observations may be countered in the following ways. First, the tripartite dispersal of warheads among sea-, land-, and air-based systems accentuates the invulnerability of the US force posture. In addition, vulnerability derives not solely from a MIRVed and highly accurate attacking force, but also from the sheer blackmail potential of overabundant Soviet heavy missiles and their excessive concentration of warheads, which in their present deployment suggest a first-strike intention. If both sides reduce their ICBMs to a much lower figure, then a first strike by ICBMs of one side might destroy the other's ICBMs, but the SLBM and bomber elements surviving would be proportionately greater. Hence, a US president faced with the in-progress destruction of his ICBM force might more logically choose to retaliate. At present, if he retaliates, he commits national suicide—because the size of his retaliatory force is only a tiny fraction of the force in reserve in the Soviet Union (the after-first-strike force). If ICBM force levels are lowered, however, the surviving US force and the reserve Soviet force are a closer match. Looking at it from the Soviet side, and considering all the catastrophic risks involved with a nuclear exchange, the Soviets must have a massive advantage before considering a nuclear war. The START cuts would prevent this necessary margin of advantage.[16]

Unfortunately, the Soviets rejected this formula of cuts. Consequently, in October 1983, in an effort to meet domestic and Soviet objections, Reagan indicated willingness to include limits on bombers and cruise missiles, and offered a "build-down" arms plan to reduce the number of old missile warheads—on the basis of a mutually agreed-upon ratio—as new warheads are added. In addition, after the 1983 report of the President's Commission on Strategic Forces (which argued that effective deterrence of Soviet temptations to threaten conventional, limited, or strategic nuclear war required an ability to destroy targets the Soviets value most—hardened military targets), Reagan adopted the commission's recommendation to deploy only 100 MX missiles to remove the Soviet advantage in ICBMs and to encourage Soviet movement toward a more stable regime of deployments. Reagan also adjusted his proposal for an ICBM warhead ceiling in hopes of meeting Soviet objections and demonstrating arms control flexibility.

Despite Soviet objections to various START proposals, culminating in their walkout in late 1983, they might be induced to make concessions once convinced that weapons like MX, Trident II, and the B-1 bomber will be fielded, that military appropriations will provide resources for weaponry and research, and that prospects for superiority will remain elusive while prospects of an American-paced arms race become imminent. In addition, the Soviets may feel constrained economically and hence more willing to participate seriously in START talks. As long as they have something to fear or gain, they will continue the negotiating process. And, further, the Soviets have a remarkable history of successful arms bargaining with the United States. With this

in mind, Reagan has to convince the Western public that

> Impatience can be a real handicap at the negotiating table . . . . If one side seems too eager or desperate, the other side has no reason to offer a compromise and every reason to hold back, expecting that the more eager side will cave in first. It is vital that we show patience, determination, and above all, national unity. If we appear to be divided—if the Soviets suspect that domestic political pressure will undercut our position—they will dig in their heels . . . . That is why I have been concerned about the nuclear freeze proposals.[17]

Indeed there is much reason for concern over the effects of a freeze. First, to freeze at current strategic levels would keep in jeopardy American ability to survive a Soviet first strike and then retaliate, and thus would erode nuclear stability. The freeze would prevent US efforts to remedy the erosion in the retaliatory capability of strategic nuclear forces while rewarding the Soviets for their buildup of ICBMs, SLBMs, and IRBMs in the 1970s.[18] Second, the United States has instituted freezes in the past. Carter unilaterally halted such weapon systems as the B-1 bomber, Minuteman III, and the neutron bomb; delayed Trident II and cruise missile production; and retired several hundred SLBMs, cruise missiles, and the sole remaining ABM site. Other freezes, such as SALT I and II, demonstrated the problem in negotiating what to freeze; how to compare land-, sea-, and air-based weapons and their warheads and throw-weight; and how to verify results. Third, preventing American compensations for Soviet advantages in missiles and throw-weight would undercut the credibility of American negotiating delegations and make the achievement of an equitable treaty difficult.

Many of the principles discussed above, such as the urgency of reestablishing a strategic balance, demonstrating firmness and patience, and circumventing the danger of the freeze, relate to American concern over INF in Europe. The linkage derives from the fact that a strengthened US deterrent depends on augmenting both American and NATO force structures. Arms control negotiations have not been ruled out, especially in deference to European fears, but a military balance was to be reestablished first—hence the 1979 Dual-Track NATO decision to conduct INF negotiations while preparing for deployment of Pershing IIs and cruise missiles in Europe starting in November and December 1983. Actually, problems concerning INF go back to the first decades of NATO's existence, when the United States withdrew its short-range nuclear forces (believed obsolete, given America's intercontinental ability to protect Western Europe), while the Soviets began deploying large, land-based IRBMs—SS-4s and SS-5s, unlikely first-strike weapons given their intermediate range and accuracy.

As long as the United States had nuclear superiority, its promise to incorporate NATO under its nuclear umbrella retained credibility. Deterrence in the European theater depended, then, on persuading the Soviets that any attack on Western Europe automatically would provoke American retaliation. The more sure the Soviets were about such a response, the less they would be tempted to initiate any conflict that might escalate into a war in Europe. As this capacity eroded after institution of the Flexible Response strategy and after Soviet achievement of nuclear parity, however, Western Europeans increasingly speculated about the reliability of the American commitment to defend Europe. The West Germans requested more tangible evidence that the United States would intervene on behalf of NATO. The first part of the 1979 decision to respond to the Soviet deployment of accurate, mobile, and MIRVed IRBMs (SS-20s) with deployment of US INF was one way to meet the requirement of coupling American and European defense. As Barry Blechman pointed out,

> Deployment of the American missiles in Europe, it was agreed, would provide an intermediate option, making it possible for

> the United States to respond to the SS-20 without resorting to its central forces, presumably a less difficult step. It was recognized, of course, that the Soviets would likely react to attacks against their territory, regardless of their origin, by attacking U.S. territory, thereby precipitating a full exchange in any event. But this was the main point. Since all parties would recognize that the full escalation spiral would be facilitated by deployment of NATO missiles, Soviet leaders would be reluctant to undertake that first move—the conventional attack or even the political act which made a conventional war likely. Thus, by making the U.S. strategic commitments more credible, deployment of Pershing IIs and GLCMs was intended to strengthen NATO's ability to deter even modest moves towards war in Europe.[19]

In essence, NATO intended to maintain the impression of the inevitability of the US response without signalling an intention to strike first. Since, as Christoph Bertram noted, "neither the cruise missiles, which require a flight time of two to three hours to reach their targets, nor the Pershing IIs, which are well below the quantitative levels required for an effective disarming strike against Soviet military installations, provide serious offensive options," the INF assume a deterrent rather than offensive function.[20]

However, the Soviets objected to this raising of the ante in Europe, which would jeopardize the Eurostrategic advantage acquired with the 360 or so SS-20s already deployed opposite no Western equivalent. They also feared the quick release time of the Pershing II—minutes from launch to impact. Finally, they argued that there already existed a rough parity in Europe. They suggested a "compromise" that would reduce SS-20s to a figure equal to French and British nuclear forces. However, the Andropov insistence that the old, less-capable, European missiles threatened the Soviet Union and provided incentive for its IRBMs strained credulity. The United States rejected this insistence for several reasons. In the first place the British and French nuclear forces, most of which are not under NATO command, are strategic not theater weapons and represent a retaliatory weapon of last resort. A first strike with these, primarily SLBM and nuclear-capable aircraft, given the overwhelming Soviet preponderance in these systems, would be insanely suicidal.

Soviet resistance to INF deployments is not the only problem. Many Europeans doubt the deterrent value of these weapons, and this doubt mixes with the general fear of nuclear war, suspicion of American motives, and concern over economic trends. The Reagan mission is to alleviate fears that American weapons are somehow more destabilizing than Soviet ones, that the United States is looking to substitute Europe for an American battlefield, and that a Western commitment to contributions for defense precludes concern for social welfare. Reagan must prove that the central issue is not fear of war, but how best to prevent nuclear war and prevent the Soviets from exploiting Western fears. NATO and the United States traditionally rely on nuclear deterrence to prevent war. Occasionally the deterrent capacity needs patching—as occurs with a Soviet increase in nuclear capability. INF deployment is one patch to close a gap opened in the European theater. Despite European fears about Soviet reaction to this deployment,

> If NATO, as a result of Soviet political pressure, were to abandon a program that is essential to assure the security of Europe, it would be the beginning of the end of an effective Western alliance. If the Soviets learn that we and our allies lack the will, in the face of missile rattling, to carry out difficult decisions commonly arrived at, then we can look forward to ever more aggressive behavior each time we seek to respond to Soviet provocations . . . . [It] may be that the Soviets will not negotiate in good faith until we prove that we will carry out our decisions.[21]

For this reason, Western peace movements undermine Western arms control efforts. They provide a constant reminder of

the exploitable divisions within NATO. More importantly, given the Western democracies' sensitivity to loud-voiced portions of public opinion, the louder and more physical the rhetoric and actions of peace marchers, the more likely Western governments will appease these groups via watered-down defense budgets, offers of strategic concessions to the Soviets, and increasing maneuvers away from the United States. With these demonstrations in mind, the Soviets may, with patience, confidence, and periodic new threats of additional SS-20 deployments or withdrawals of arms delegations, await the avalanche of Western concessions. Without the inducement of Western pressure, preparedness, or perseverence, there are few incentives to do otherwise. Why reduce the number of SS-20s when disarmers may help to limit Western INF deployment?

The Reagan Administration, the conservative governments in Britain and West Germany, and the socialist government in France are aware of these problems after 35 years of the East-West face-off in Europe, and they oppose leaving Soviet strategic threats unanswered. The problem remains, as Reagan noted recently, in doing a better job at selling the Western arms control policies to the public and thus making it clear to the Soviets that deployments will continue if there is no progress at Geneva. On the other hand, the proposals to shelve the zero-option for some agreement on an equal ratio of INF warheads represented a concession to both the Soviets and peace marchers. While the prompt Soviet rejection of all the Reagan proposals surprised few, the Soviet INF walkout raises several possible questions (none of them new): are the Soviets committed to genuine arms reductions; if so, are they waiting for the results of the 1984 US presidential election before reopening negotiations; and how far should the West go in offering new concessions to entice the Soviets back to the arms talks?

The discussion in this section on strategy and arms control points to the central problem for Reagan: how to mount and maintain an effective and acceptable deterrent in view of fiscal constraints, controversy over strategy, debate over NATO functions and responsibilities, and criticism from peace advocates, many of whom see the need for neither deterrence nor defense. The Reagan determination to provide the funding, strategic equipment, and political leadership necessary to overcome these problems (although blunted by congressional criticism, defense cuts, and the Administration's sometimes inarticulate instructions on strategic conceptualizations and its waffling on issues such as MX basing modes) reflects his concern for maintaining the requirements of strategic deterrence and its political counterpart—containment.

These two requirements and their dependence on restoring American and Western political will and military strength head the list of Reagan's foreign policy objectives just as they headed the list of the Truman Administration. This is due to the long-standing competition between the two superpowers as well as to Reagan's suspicion that the Soviets are preparing for the occasion to use an ability to fight and win a nuclear war to paralyze the American deterrent and coerce other nations. Reagan sees this preparation as one part of a Soviet plan for upsetting the international status quo. Current and former Administration officials blame, as past administrations have blamed, the Soviets for exploiting and aggravating, if not causing, the tension and conflicts in the third world. According to Haig, "The Soviet Union is the greatest source of international insecurity today. Soviet promotion of violence as the instrument of change is the greatest danger to peace."[22] In a similar vein, Secretary Shultz insisted that the United States "stand up to the problems that we confront around the world and the problems imposed on us by the military strength of the Soviet Union and the demonstrated willingness of the Soviet Union to use its strength without any compunction whatever."[23] The main pillar of the Reagan foreign policy, then, consists of meeting the challenge of Soviet aggression and global intervention. Rejecting the detente of the 1970s, the Reagan Administration intends to

counter Soviet moves, support all who resist communism, and equal the increase of Soviet military power.

This 1980s version of containing the Soviets depends on securing a military balance, convincing the Soviets that there "are penalties for aggression and incentives for restraint," and forging an American consensus on the need to manage Soviet power, defend Western interests, and reestablish an American global presence.[24] The underlying premises of containment—that the Soviet Union is an expansionist state; that Soviet activism falters when met by resistance; and that Western military power, commitment, and unity of purpose prompt and reinforce Soviet caution—remain in force in the Reagan policy. The recent naval and military maneuvers near the borders of Nicaragua and Cuba and the invasion of Grenada provide physical evidence of Reagan's persuasion that explicit warnings in this region signal the Soviets and their friends (and American friends) that the United States remains determined to act in key areas in the mode of containment. Aside from this "gunboat diplomacy," one may also point to rhetoric on Soviet involvement in Africa and Central America, repression by proxy in Poland, sponsorship of international terrorism, brutality in Afghanistan, and violations of treaties (SALT, the Helsinki Accords, and the 1972 Biological Warfare Convention) to find examples of Reagan's justification of the need for containment.

Perhaps the most comprehensive restatement of this need emerged in the Senate testimony of Secretary Shultz in the summer of 1983. Shultz spoke of the obligation to counter Soviet encroachments, the assumption "that the Soviet Union is more likely to be deterred by our actions that make clear the risks their aggression entails than by a delicate web of interdependence," and the "expectation that, faced with demonstration of the West's renewed determination to strengthen its defenses, enhance its political and economic cohesion, and oppose adventurism, the Soviet Union will see restraint as its most attractive, or only, option."[25] His assumption that the United States can define Soviet options displays a striking resemblance to the assumptions of the Truman Administration that the proper focus of US foreign policy revolved around the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, and that the proper American response was containment through demonstrations of American strength and willingness to use strength when necessary to counter Soviet threats to peace. Perhaps not satisfied with the reactive quality of this response, Shultz suggested what we might call preemptive containment: "Where it was once our goal to contain the Soviet presence within the limits of its immediate post-war reach, now our goal must be to advance our own objectives, where possible foreclosing and when necessary actively countering Soviet challenges wherever they threaten our interests."[26]

Critics warn of a danger that this promise of anticipatory vigilance entails the prospect of yielding the same results that past containments did, i.e. bitter cold-war atmospherics and peripheral confrontations inherently vulnerable to escalation. This danger motivates critics to remind Reagan of the results of containment that led Nixon and Carter to search for alternatives like detente. However, after this review of the recent unfolding of containment, we can conclude that containment remains superior to detente, if applied appropriately and consistently. In fact, throughout the postwar years Americans have accepted, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, the reality of the need to counter Soviet threats to American interests. However, while American nuclear forces have deterred the strategic threat, the need to maintain the invulnerability of these forces, while crucial, has been a difficult concept to relay to Western publics fearful of the potential consequences of an arms race. In addition, the subtle, ambiguous, and uncertain political threat has been even more difficult to explain. Complicating this situation, American officials have had difficulty deciding what issues and areas were important enough to demand a response, and determining how to explain these to the public. For example, the United States wrote

Korea off in 1950 only to find in retrospect that for the sake of the credibility of other commitments, it had to respond. On the other hand, the Truman Administration excluded China from this category. In rhetoric and style the Eisenhower Administration pursued containment, while sacrificing conventional military strength for a balanced budget and abandoning liberation by 1956. Perhaps more consistency between rhetoric and action might have added more consistency in the pursuit of containment. The Kennedy and Johnson Administrations reverted to what John Gaddis called a symmetrical application of containment. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to describe their applications as both symmetrical and asymmetrical. While both undertook to maintain commitments for appearance's sake, the failure in Vietnam, for example, may be attributed to tactics and public opinion as well as to a symmetrical containment. Limitations on the application of American force did occur during this period (over Berlin, Laos, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, and Africa) as did limits on the conduct of the Vietnam War. While it is beyond the scope of this article to discuss Vietnam, it is interesting to note that Gaddis approved of the asymmetrical approach to containment (detente) of the Nixon period, a period ending in American retreat on all fronts—economic, military, and political.

It is also beyond the scope of this article to review in greater depth the last 40 years of US foreign policy. However, I would like to conclude with the following points.

- The Reagan approach to the Soviet Union displays considerable consistency with the policies of containment since World War II. While Reagan's approach most closely resembles that of Truman, it reflects an appreciation of the intrusive strategic, political, and economic realities that all postwar administrations have faced. While Reagan lectures the Soviets and concentrates on rebuilding American military strength, refostering Western unity, and reinstituting notions of the mission of the free world to persuade the Soviets of the benefits of restraint and reciprocity, he also recognizes the limits of American power and the need for the United States to accept gradual changes in the international balance of power.

- Given that Soviet strategic and political goals conflict with American objectives of security and a stable world order that is basically friendly to the United States, the policy of containing the Soviets and demonstrating that Soviet attempts at superiority, political dominance, and upsetting the status quo will fail and prove costly and counterproductive seems a more effective policy than detente. Only a policy devoid of excessive wishful thinking about the prospects that freezes and accommodation will enhance American security, or automatically lead to Soviet moderation, will provide reminders that the United States is and should be determined to resist Soviet expansion, unequal arms treaties, and a selective detente. To the extent that President Reagan convinces the Soviets and the West of this determination, to that extent the Soviets, however grudgingly, will see restraint and reciprocity as their preferred policy.

NOTES

1. Ronald Reagan, address before Congress, 27 April 1983, in Department of State, *Current Policy*, No. 482 (27 April 1983), p. 4; George P. Shultz, *Testimony*, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 15 June 1983, Department of State Delivery copy, p. 5; Caspar Weinberger, *Annual Report to the Congress, FY 1984 Budget and FY 1984-88 Defense Programs*, 1 February 1983, p. 19.

2. Louisa S. Hulett, *Decade of Detente* (Washington: Univ. Press of America, 1982). For Soviet views see L. Brezhnev, *Report of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, 23d Congress, 1966, and subsequent Congresses; *Peace, Detente, and Cooperation* (New York: Consultants Bureau, 1981); Y. V. Andropov, *Speeches & Writings* (New York: Pergamon, 1983); and G. Arbatov, *Soviet Viewpoint* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1983).

3. For insight into the Carter Administration see Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle* (New York: Farrar, 1983); Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith* (New York: Bantam, 1982); and Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983). For the Nixon Administration see Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), and *Years of Upheaval* (Little, Brown, 1982).

4. US Congress, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 1979; and Hulett, *Decade of Detente*, chs. 2 and 3.

5. Alexander Haig, speech in *Current Policy*, No. 292 (14 July 1981); and Lawrence Eagleburger, address to Congress, *Current Policy*, No. 284 (10 June 1981).

6. Haig, "A Strategic Approach to American Foreign Policy," *Current Policy*, No. 305 (11 August 1981).

7. Shultz, p. 9.

8. Weinberger, letter to US newspapers in August 1982, and *Annual Report*, p. 34.

9. Weinberger letter.

10. Fred Charles Ikle, "The Reagan Defense Program," *Strategic Review*, 10 (Spring 1982), 17.

11. Donald Kerr and Robert Kupperman, "Nuclear Force Architecture for the 1980s," *Washington Quarterly*, 5 (Winter 1982), 121; and Colin Gray, "Dangerous to Your Health: Debate over Nuclear Strategy," *Orbis*, 26 (Summer 1982), 339.

12. Reagan, address, Los Angeles World Affairs Conference, 31 March 1983.

13. Eugene Rostow, address, Los Angeles World Affairs Conference, in *Current Policy*, No. 425 (10 September 1982).

14. See *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* and *International Security* for running commentaries on START.

15. Jan M. Lodal, "Finishing START," *Foreign Policy*, No. 48 (Fall 1982), 70.

16. My thanks to Philip S. Cox, editor of *International Security Review*, for his comments on START.

17. Reagan, 31 March 1983.

18. John M. Collins, *U.S.-Soviet Military Balance: Concepts and Capabilities 1960-1980* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1980).

19. Barry M. Blechman, "Is There a Conventional Defense Option?" *Washington Quarterly*, 5 (Summer 1982), 60.

20. Christoph Bertram, "Implications of Theater Nuclear Weapons in Europe," *Foreign Affairs*, 60 (Winter 1981-82), 309.

21. Eagleburger, address, *Current Policy*, No. 450 (1 February 1983).

22. Haig, address, *Current Policy*, No. 275 (24 April 1981).

23. George Shultz, address, *Current Policy*, No. 457 (24 February 1983).

24. Haig, "American Power and American Purpose," *Current Policy*, No. 388 (27 April 1982).

25. Shultz, *Senate Testimony*, pp. 11, 35.

26. Ibid., p. 10.