

*Strategies of Containment*

A Critical Appraisal of American National  
Security Policy during the Cold War

Revised and Expanded Edition

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## *Reagan, Gorbachev, and the Completion of Containment*

By the time Henry Kissinger stepped down as Secretary of State with the departure of the Ford administration from office in January 1977, the limits of both symmetrical and asymmetrical containment had become clear.

Symmetry offered protection against incremental threats, against the danger that peripheral challenges to the balance of power might become major ones, if not in fact, then psychologically, which amounted to the same thing. It made available multiple levels of response, affording policymakers choices wider than those of escalation or humiliation. But it also involved letting adversaries select the nature and location of competition, and that, for the nation on the defensive, required virtually unlimited resources. Despite expansionist economic theory, the United States never generated either the capabilities or the will that would have been necessary to support symmetrical containment over an extended period of time. Attempts to do so, as in Korea and Vietnam, had only led to frustration, disillusionment, and exhaustion. One might, in such situations, win battles—even that was not always assured—but one could as well, in doing so, lose the war.

Asymmetry recognized the reality of limited resources, stressing the need to pick and choose the manner of one's response, lest wars in fact be lost while winning battles. It concentrated less on a multiplicity of options than on a variety of means, emphasizing the need to act in circumstances, at times, and in ways that would apply one's strengths against adversary weaknesses. It retained, thereby, the initiative, but often at the price of yielding positions not easily defended, or of expanding the confrontation

to exploit new positions that could be. It required, as a result, steady nerves: one had to distinguish rationally, even cold-bloodedly, between peripheral and vital interests, tolerable and intolerable threats, feasible and unfeasible responses. There was little protection against the emergence of psychological insecurities or the invocation of moral principles, neither of which could be disregarded in a democracy. It was difficult enough to maintain one's balance when walking a tightrope, as Kennan had once suggested;<sup>1</sup> all the more so when critics, whatever their reasons, had chosen to shake it at both ends.

The obvious solution would have been to devise some new strategy of containment, neither symmetrical nor asymmetrical in character, drawing upon the strengths of each approach while rejecting their weaknesses. Jimmy Carter, Ford's successor as president, sought to do just this and failed. Ronald Reagan, Carter's successor, attempted the same feat, and succeeded beyond all expectations. As a result, Reagan's successor, George H. W. Bush, inherited a world in which the threat containment was meant to contain no longer existed. By the time he left office, neither did the country that had posed that threat through over four decades of Cold War.

### I

Jimmy Carter entered the White House in 1977 determined to reverse the preoccupation with containment that had dominated American foreign policy for so many years. The time had come, he insisted, to move beyond the belief "that Soviet expansion was almost inevitable but that it must be contained," beyond "that inordinate fear of communism which once led us to embrace any dictator who joined us in that fear," beyond the tendency "to adopt the flawed and erroneous principles and tactics of our adversaries, sometimes abandoning our own values for theirs," beyond the "crisis of confidence" produced by Vietnam and "made even more grave by the covert pessimism of some of our leaders." "It is a new world," Carter argued, "but America should not fear it. It is a new world, and we should help to shape it. It is a new world that calls for a new American foreign policy—a policy based on constant decency in its values and on optimism in our historical vision."<sup>2</sup>

And yet, less than three years later, Carter was describing the state of Soviet-American relations as "the most critical factor in determining whether the world will live in peace or be engulfed in global conflict,"

praising past efforts at containment, calling for steps toward reconstituting the military draft and lifting "unwarranted restraints" on intelligence collection capabilities, increasing defense spending by 5 percent annually, expressing a determination to make the Russians "pay a concrete price for their aggression," and even proclaiming his own "Carter doctrine": that "any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."<sup>3</sup> Reports of containment's demise, it appeared, had been somewhat premature.

Much can happen in three years: it would not be the first time an administration had been forced, within so brief a period, to rethink its most fundamental geopolitical assumptions. But when the Truman administration did this in 1950, it was moving from an asymmetrical approach to containment—Kennan's—to a symmetrical one—NSC-68. The Carter administration, in contrast, had difficulty aligning itself with either tradition, or indeed with any coherent conception of American interests in the world, potential threats to them, or feasible responses. The reasons included disagreements among Carter's advisers, growing out of an unusual interaction of domestic politics, clashing personalities, and external circumstances, together with the President's inability to resolve them. But there was also increasing evidence that neither symmetry nor asymmetry provided a satisfactory method of containment any longer, and that that strategy, if it was to survive, was at last going to have to evolve into something new.

All incoming administrations try to distinguish themselves from their predecessors, but Carter's determination to do so was particularly striking. Whether one looks at his emphasis on human rights and morality, on openness and de-centralization, on solidifying relations with allies and neutrals, on giving up linkage as a means of modifying Soviet behavior, or on removing the U.S.S.R. from the privileged position it had long occupied as the central obsession of American foreign policy, one senses an almost desperate effort to establish a distinctive identity, to escape the lengthy and intimidating shadow of Henry Kissinger.<sup>4</sup>

One explanation, curiously, was that Carter had so few differences of substance with Kissinger's policies. There was no effort to revive the last Democratic administration's commitment to symmetrical response—to return to the view that all interests were vital, all threats were dangerous, and all means were available to counter them. Instead, Carter retained the Republicans' asymmetrical approach of differentiating between vital and

peripheral interests, of distinguishing between levels of threat, and of keeping responses commensurate with means. He continued Kissinger's practice of working with some communists to contain others. Nor did the new administration question the importance of negotiations with the Russians, especially on the control of strategic arms. Even its ostentatious abandonment of linkage<sup>5</sup> was less of a departure from past practice than it initially seemed: Kissinger himself had concluded, early in 1976, that SALT was too important to be used as a bargaining chip.<sup>6</sup> In terms of methods, then, the continuities were considerable.

Appearances, however, were quite another matter. Carter and his advisers developed no new strategy, but they did graft onto the basic premises of the old one certain highly visible initiatives designed to make it *seem* as though the American approach to the world had changed. Some of this was simple one-upmanship; some of it was also an effort to build domestic support for détente, which Kissinger had never managed to do. The resulting fusion of surface innovation with subsurface continuity gave rise to such confusion, however, that the image the Carter administration in fact conveyed, at least in its dealings with the Soviet Union, was that of having no strategy at all.

The most obvious example came with regard to human rights, the issue Carter had focused on during the campaign as a way of distinguishing his own policies from those of Nixon, Ford, and Kissinger. The President's personal commitment to this cause was not in doubt;<sup>7</sup> still, there were compelling political reasons for making it a priority, providing as it did a way to win the support of critics on the Right who had objected to Kissinger's "appeasement" of the Soviet Union, and those on the Left who had worried about his "amorality." Carter chose to do this, however, at just the moment his negotiators were trying to persuade the Russians to make deep cuts in the SALT II limits on strategic weapons—cuts that would have benefited the United States disproportionately.<sup>8</sup> Kremlin leaders could hardly have been expected to accept such a deal without the sense that they could trust the new administration in Washington. "Whether Carter meant it or not," the long-time Soviet ambassador to the United States Anatoly Dobrynin later recalled, "his policy was based on linking détente to the domestic situation in the Soviet Union. This represented an abrupt departure from the policy followed by preceding administrations, inevitably making his relations with Moscow tense."<sup>9</sup>

Carter's simultaneous pursuit of contradictory policies had to do, in part, with who he was: he prided himself on being both a moralist and an

engineer, a combination conducive to self-confidence, to be sure, but also to a certain fascination with technical and ultimate questions that left little room for the realm of strategy that lay in between.<sup>10</sup> As a result, the new President failed to align his moral and domestic political commitment to human rights with his geopolitical and (given the alternative) humane determination to achieve arms control. He thought he could embrace the cause of dissidents in the Soviet Union, with all that implied in terms of interfering in the internal affairs of that country, and still continue "business as usual" on other issues. It did no good to abandon linkage publicly in an effort to rationalize this approach, because Moscow was certainly prepared to link the issues of arms control and human rights, even if Washington was not.

Nor were Carter's advisers helpful in clarifying priorities. His national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, had an academic background similar to Kissinger's; conceptually, though, the two could hardly have been more different. Kissinger had articulated a consistent view of international affairs: one could read *A World Restored* (published in 1957) and find in it a generally reliable guide to the policies he would seek to implement a decade and a half later. Brzezinski's writings showed no such depth. There was instead, as one critic put it, an "enduring penchant for fashionable issues and concepts that are adopted or discarded in the light of changing circumstances, . . . an unbecoming reliance on the intellectual cliché of the moment."<sup>11</sup> Once installed as national security adviser, Brzezinski by his own account sought inconsistent objectives: to put the Soviet Union "ideologically on the defensive" with respect to human rights, to "promote a more comprehensive and more reciprocal détente," and to "move away from what I considered our excessive preoccupation with the U.S.-Soviet relationship."<sup>12</sup> The premise seemed to be that one could reform, negotiate with, and ignore the U.S.S.R., all at the same time.

Carter's Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, sought a more straightforward approach. A New York lawyer with extensive Washington experience during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, Vance saw his chief task as one of negotiating with the Russians to lower the risks of nuclear war, to avoid the distractions and dangers of "third world" conflicts, and to build a stable long-term superpower relationship. He distrusted the "globalist" perspective that saw all interests and threats as interconnected; he disliked linking progress in one set of negotiations to what was happening in others; and while sympathetic to the cause of human rights, he was disinclined to make it the predominant standard by which relations between Washington and Moscow were to be conducted.<sup>13</sup>

It did not take long for Vance and Brzezinski to get at odds with one another, or for the tension between them to be reflected in the administration's public pronouncements on Soviet-American relations. The clearest example came on June 7, 1978, in a speech that Carter largely wrote himself for delivery at the U.S. Naval Academy. It was, as one historian has put it, "so disjunctive in its combined reaffirmation of détente and articulation of a confrontational strategy that the general reaction was perplexity."<sup>14</sup> Jokes abounded that the President had simply stapled together drafts by Brzezinski and Vance. For Dobrynin, the absence of any "solid and consistent direction" in Carter's policy evoked an image from Russian literature: Ivan Krylov's fable about a cart ineffectively pulled by "a swan, a pike, and a crayfish."<sup>15</sup>

The problem with trying to sustain Kissinger's strategy while placating his critics was that the former Secretary of State and his adversaries had held mutually exclusive views of the U.S.S.R. Kissinger had seen it as a state with which reasonable accommodations could be worked out, given firmness and patience on the American side, while his critics regarded it as an aggressive and immoral power with which the United States could not deal on any basis other than resistance. One could not embrace one position without rejecting the other; and yet, this was precisely the choice Carter hoped to avoid making. As a result, he never developed a sense of priorities—a clear idea of what to do first, what to postpone, and what not to attempt at all. "At least for me," he later acknowledged, "it was natural to move on many fronts at once."<sup>16</sup> Policy-makers must almost always choose between praiseworthy but incompatible objectives. The Carter administration was singularly ill-equipped to do so.

Internal disarray, however, was not the only difficulty the Carter administration faced. It had the misfortune to come into office as the Soviet Union was launching a new series of challenges to the global balance of power, but also at a time when the United States faced unusual constraints in trying to counter them. Solving these problems would have taxed the skills of even the best organized and most consistent of administrations. Carter did not handle these challenges particularly well; still, given their complexity and intractability, one wonders how well others might have done.

There had long been speculation as to whether the Soviet Union's emergence as a full-fledged military rival of the United States would make it easier or more difficult to deal with.<sup>17</sup> One school of thought had held that parity would induce self-assurance, a sense of restraint, and a willingness to negotiate on the part of Kremlin leaders. Another had insisted that

parity would bring arrogance, aggressiveness, contempt for Western weakness, and a determination to exploit this condition where it could be done without the risk of war. Carter saw both theories proven at least partially right during his term in office. Despite his human rights campaign, the Russians continued serious talks on limiting strategic arms, making in the course of them a surprising number of concessions to the Americans.<sup>18</sup> But they also chose, during these years, to deploy a new generation of SS-20 intermediate-range missiles in Europe, to provide military assistance to Marxist regimes in Angola and Ethiopia, and most disturbingly, in December 1979, to invade Afghanistan.

It is clear now that these were the terminal excesses of a declining empire, but they did not seem so at the time. The Brezhnev regime, it appeared, had taken the American defeat in Vietnam as a signal to seek opportunities elsewhere in the "third world"—an accurate enough assessment, Soviet sources now confirm.<sup>19</sup> Quite independently, the United States had suffered major setbacks with the overthrow of its long-time client, the Shah of Iran, in January 1979, the coming to power of the Sandinista government in Nicaragua in July, and the seizure of American hostages in Tehran in November. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, therefore, was only the most dramatic of a series of humiliations for the United States that were raising questions about whether any form of containment—symmetrical or asymmetrical—could reverse a tide of history that seemed to be flowing in a decidedly unfavorable direction.

Compounding these difficulties were constraints unprecedented in the postwar era on the American ability to act in world affairs. These included the effects of a post-Vietnam conviction on the part of much of the foreign policy "establishment" that there were few if any occasions upon which the United States might legitimately use force.<sup>20</sup> Another problem was the debilitating impact of inflation, a continuing and corrosive legacy of the Vietnam War, exacerbated by a growing dependence on Middle East oil that further limited the nation's capacity to act.

It is not surprising, then, that divided counsels should have existed inside the Carter administration, with Brzezinski and the National Security Council staff favoring a hard line toward the Russians even if it meant delaying SALT II, but with Vance, the State Department, and the arms control community emphasizing continued negotiations, on the theory that the Russians would eventually overextend and defeat themselves in the "third world." Afghanistan settled this debate: that first use of Red Army troops outside the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe since the end of World War II left the administration little choice but to withdraw the

SALT II treaty from the Senate, and to call a halt, for the time being, to any further steps in the direction of détente.

Those who listened to the President's forceful "Carter doctrine" speech on January 23, 1980, might well have concluded that Afghanistan had shocked his administration into embracing the undifferentiated view of interests and threats that was characteristic of symmetrical response. But Carter gave no hint of how the nation could generate the means necessary to sustain such a strategy in an era of energy dependency and double-digit inflation. The difficulties the White House had in rallying support for its new tough line, what with widespread opposition to draft registration, grain and technology embargoes, and even its boycott of the Moscow Olympics, reflected not only a crisis of leadership at the top but a resistance to being led from below that, even in a more disciplined administration than Carter's, would not have boded well for a coherent grand strategy, much less an effective one.

## II

Because the Carter strategy—such as it was—failed to fit within the Cold War categories of symmetrical or asymmetrical containment, it is difficult to claim that the outcome of the 1980 election was an endorsement or a repudiation of either approach. What it did confirm was a growing sense of alarm: the Soviet Union, it seemed, was on a roll; the United States appeared to be in retreat, if not actual decline. Dissatisfaction with existing policy was at least as strong as it had been in 1952, 1960, 1968, and 1976, which meant that Ronald Reagan's decisive victory was a mandate to reverse course and reassert American strength. What that implied for the strategy of containment, however, was not at all clear.

The greatest uncertainty had to do with the man who took office on January 20, 1981. Reagan was the first major American politician—though not the last—to have begun his career as a film and television star. He had gained political prominence as a Barry Goldwater conservative, as governor of California from 1967 to 1975, and as a presidential contender during the 1968 and 1976 campaigns. He had been as critical of Republican as of Democratic approaches to containment, having almost derailed Ford's nomination in 1976 by condemning the alleged amorality of Kissinger's policies, but having also accused Carter, in 1980, of allowing moral concerns to inhibit the use of American power. Only one thing seemed obvious at the time of Reagan's inaugural: détente was dead, buried, and in the

new administration at least not mourned. As the new President himself had admitted to a radio audience three years earlier, "I didn't exactly tear my hair and go into a panic at the possibility of losing détente."<sup>21</sup>

For years intellectuals, journalists, and political opponents derided Reagan as a telegenic lightweight, too simple-minded to know what containment had been about, much less to have had constructive ideas about how to ensure its success. It is true that Reagan relied more on instincts than on systematic study in shaping his positions: in this, he differed conspicuously from Carter. Derived from his Midwestern upbringing, his experiences in Hollywood, and an occasional tendency to conflate movies with reality, those instincts included an unshakable belief in democracy and capitalism, an abhorrence of communism, an impatience with compromise in what he regarded as a contest between good and evil, and—very significantly—a deep fear that the Cold War might end in a nuclear holocaust, thereby confirming the Biblical prophecy of Armageddon.<sup>22</sup> This was, to say the least, an unorthodox preparation for the presidency. When combined with the fact that Reagan took office as the oldest elected chief executive—he turned seventy shortly after his inauguration—it seemed reasonable to expect an amiable geriatric who would for the most part follow the lead of his own advisers.

That expectation turned out to be wrong on several counts. First, it overlooked the skill with which Reagan had managed his pre-presidential career: it was no small matter to have shifted the Republican Party to the right while centrist Republican presidents—Nixon and Ford—were occupying the White House.<sup>23</sup> Second, it failed to take into account Reagan's artful artlessness: his habit of *appearing* to know less than his critics did, of *seeming* to be adrift even as he proceeded quietly toward destinations he himself had chosen.<sup>24</sup> Third, it neglected what Reagan himself had said in hundreds of radio scripts and speech drafts prepared between 1975 and 1980: these almost daily commentaries, composed in longhand on legal pads without the assistance of speechwriters, provided a more voluminous record of positions taken on national and international issues than had been available for any other modern presidential aspirant.<sup>25</sup> They put forward no comprehensive strategy for ending the Cold War. That would emerge only gradually, in response to what happened after Reagan entered the White House. These broadcasts and speeches did, however, contain most of the ideas that lay behind that strategy—and they establish that the ideas largely came from Reagan himself.

The one most obvious at the time was optimism: faith in the ability of

the United States to compete successfully within the international system. One would have to go back to Roosevelt in 1933 to find a president who entered office with comparable self-confidence in the face of bleak prospects. Like F.D.R., Reagan believed that the nation was stronger than it realized, that time was on its side, and that these facts could be conveyed, through rhetoric, style, and bearing, to the American people. "[I]t is important every once and a while to remind ourselves of our accomplishments . . . lest we let someone talk us into throwing out the baby with the bathwater," he told his radio audience in 1976. "[T]he system has never let us down—we've let the system down now & then because we're only human."<sup>26</sup>

It followed from this that the Soviet Union was weaker than it appeared to be, and that time was not on its side: Reagan had insisted as early as 1975 that communism was "a temporary aberration which will one day disappear from the earth because it is contrary to human nature."<sup>27</sup> This too was an unusual posture for an incoming president. The fundamental premise of containment had always been that the United States was acting *defensively* against an adversary that was on the offensive, and was likely to continue on that path for the foreseeable future. Now, just at the moment when the U.S.S.R. seemed to be pushing for superiority in strategic weaponry as well as influence on a global scale, Reagan rejected that premise, raising the prospect of regaining and indefinitely sustaining American preeminence.

He did so by assuming expandable resources on the part of the United States, a view consistent with NSC-68, which Reagan read and discussed on the air shortly after it was declassified in 1975. He concluded, as he later recalled, that "capitalism had given us a powerful weapon in our battle against Communism—*money*. The Russians could never win the arms race; we could outspend them forever."<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, the Soviet Union was denying its people "all kinds of consumer products" in its quest for military supremacy. "We could have an unexpected ally," he noted in 1977, "if citizen Ivan is becoming discontented enough to start talking back."<sup>29</sup> After becoming president, Reagan quickly became convinced, on the basis of intelligence reports, that the Soviet economy "was a basket case, partly because of massive spending on armaments. . . . I wondered how we as a nation could use these cracks in the Soviet system to accelerate the process of collapse."<sup>30</sup>

The Soviet Union was also vulnerable, Reagan insisted, within the realm of ideas. Despite his support for the Committee on the Present Danger,

founded by Paul Nitze in 1976 to warn of the Soviet military buildup,\* Reagan had never accepted the assumption that armaments alone could make the U.S.S.R. an effective competitor with the United States. Moscow's failure to respect human rights, he maintained, was a serious weakness, even in a military superpower. Although Reagan had opposed the Helsinki Conference, which he regarded—shortsightedly—as having ratified Soviet control over Eastern Europe, by 1979 he was acknowledging that “something [is] going on behind the Iron Curtain that we've been ignoring and [that offers] hope for all mankind. . . . [A] little less détente . . . and more encouragement to the dissidents might be worth a lot of armored divisions.”<sup>31</sup>

Mutual Assured Destruction, however, had to go. Unlike all previous presidents dating back to Kennedy, Reagan refused to accept the proposition that a nuclear balance of terror could ever lead to a stable international system: it was “the craziest thing I ever heard of.”<sup>32</sup> The SALT process, geared as it was toward reinforcing MAD, was flawed because it did nothing to reverse reliance on nuclear weapons or to diminish the risks that their continued existence in such vast numbers entailed. “I have repeatedly stated that I would be willing to negotiate an honest, verifiable reduction in nuclear weapons . . . to the point that neither of us represented a threat to the other,” Reagan wrote in a 1980 speech draft. “I cannot, however, agree to a treaty—specifically the Salt II treaty, which, in effect, legitimizes a nuclear arms buildup.”<sup>33</sup>

The problem with détente was not that it had encouraged negotiations with the U.S.S.R., but rather that it had done so without enlisting American strengths: the idea had been to “seek agreements just for the sake of having an agreement.” The Russians had to understand that “we are . . . building up our defense capability pending an agreement by both sides to limit various kinds of weapons.” But “if we have the will & the determination to build a deterrent capability . . . we can have real peace. . . . [T]he men in the Kremlin could in the face of such determination decide that true arms limitation makes sense.”<sup>34</sup> In Reagan's view, then, *rejecting* détente was the way to reduce the danger of nuclear war and move toward a negotiated settlement of Cold War differences.

Such a settlement would require, however, a fundamental change in the

\*The Committee on the Present Danger took its name from an earlier organization that had been formed in 1950 to lobby for the implementation of NSC-68. See Paul H. Nitze, with Ann M. Smith and Steven L. Rearden, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost: At the Center of Decision: A Memoir* (New York: 1989), pp. 353–54; also Jerry W. Sanders, *Peddlers of Crises: The Committee on the Present Danger and the Politics of Containment* (Boston: 1983).

nature of the Soviet Union itself. This had been the long-term objective of containment since Kennan first articulated that strategy; but as the nuclear danger had grown, the American interest in encouraging reform within the U.S.S.R. had receded—until the Carter administration made the promotion of human rights there one of its chief priorities.<sup>35</sup> Carter, however, had sought to do this while preserving détente, a futile endeavor because one could hardly challenge a state's internal makeup while simultaneously soliciting its cooperation within the international arena. For Reagan, reforming the Soviet Union required abandoning détente. “Our foreign policy should be to show by example the greatness of our system and the strength of American ideals,” he wrote in August 1980. “[W]e would like nothing better than to see the Russian people living in freedom & dignity instead of being trapped in a backwash of history *as they are*.”<sup>36</sup>

Reagan was, then, no lightweight. He came into office with a clear set of ideas, developed for the most part on his own, on how to salvage the strategy of containment by returning to the objective Kennan had set for it in 1947: “to increase enormously the strains under which Soviet policy must operate, to force upon the Kremlin a far greater degree of moderation and circumspection than it has had to observe in recent years, and in this way to promote tendencies which must eventually find their outlet in either the break-up or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power.”<sup>37</sup> Reagan would do this, not by acknowledging the current Soviet regime's legitimacy but by challenging it; not by seeking parity in the arms race but by regaining superiority; not by compromising on the issue of human rights but by capitalizing on it as a weapon more powerful than anything that existed in the military arsenals of either side. “The Reagan I observed may have been no master of detail,” Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin later observed, “but he had a clear sense of what he wanted.”<sup>38</sup>

### III

Like earlier strategies of containment, Reagan's was not fully formed when he entered the White House. He was determined to distance himself, as several of his predecessors had sought to do, from what he regarded as the discredited policies of a defeated incumbent. He was unusual, however, in that he rejected the legacies of earlier administrations as well, including those of his fellow Republicans Nixon and Ford. The new President also departed from precedent by relying on no principal adviser to help shape and articulate his strategy. Despite the presence of heavyweights like

Alexander Haig and George Shultz in the State Department, Caspar Weinberger in the Defense Department, and William Casey in the Central Intelligence Agency, no one in Reagan's administration wielded the influence that Kennan, Nitze, Dulles, Rostow, Kissinger, and Brzezinski had had within the administrations they served: Shultz would come closest, but only in Reagan's second term. The fact that Reagan went through *six* national security advisers—Richard Allen, William Clark, Robert McFarlane, John Poindexter, Frank Carlucci, and Colin Powell—suggests the extent to which he was, in the end, his own chief strategist. It was obvious, Dobrynin concluded after his first long conversation with the President, "that Reagan was the real boss."<sup>39</sup>

Reagan's objective was straightforward, if daunting: to prepare the way for a new kind of Soviet leader by pushing the old Soviet system to the breaking point. Kennan, Nitze, and other early strategists of containment had always held out the possibility that Moscow might someday acknowledge the failures of Marxism-Leninism and the futility of Russian imperialism—the two foundations upon which the Soviet state had been constructed.<sup>40</sup> But neither symmetrical nor asymmetrical containment had produced anything like that result, and by the time Reagan took office early in 1981 the apparent strength and actual behavior of the U.S.S.R. made the prospect seem very distant indeed. It was not at all clear then that the Soviet economy was approaching bankruptcy, that Afghanistan would become Moscow's Vietnam, that the appearance of a Polish labor union called Solidarity portended the end of communism in Eastern Europe, or that the U.S.S.R. itself would disappear in just over a decade.

The strategy Reagan developed over the next several years did not cause these things to happen. They resulted from structural tensions that had been building within the Soviet Union and its satellites for many years. Even if Carter had been re-elected in 1980, they would at some point have produced a crisis. Whether it would have come as quickly or with such decisive results, though, is another matter. For however Carter's policies may have appeared from Moscow's perspective, no administration prior to Reagan's had deliberately sought to exploit those tensions with a view to destabilizing the Kremlin leadership and accelerating the decline of the regime it ran.

All previous shifts between symmetrical and asymmetrical containment had taken place in response to what presidents and their advisers thought the *American* system could stand. Thus, Truman was moving even before Korea toward a reorientation of strategy on the basis of claims that the economy could tolerate large increases in the defense budget without set-

ting off inflation. Eisenhower's rejection of those arguments, together with his concerns about the political costs of limited wars, drove his administration back to asymmetry in the form of the New Look. Kennedy and Johnson embraced an expansionist economic philosophy without which their return to symmetrical response would not have been possible. Nixon, Ford, and Kissinger, recoiling from the excesses of Vietnam, reverted to asymmetry again. And one of the reasons Carter continued the substance, though not the appearance, of Kissinger's strategy was that the inflationary spiral set off by the last application of symmetrical response still persisted, ruling out further experimentation with that approach.

None of these shifts, however, had had much to do with what the *Soviet* system could stand. Even the Carter administration, which did challenge Moscow on the issue of human rights, refrained from any systematic effort to take advantage of internal weaknesses within the U.S.S.R. Its first presidential directive on national strategy, prepared in 1977, called attention to American technological, economic, and political strengths, while noting that "the Soviet Union continues to face major internal economic and national difficulties." It failed to build on this insight, though, recommending instead efforts to secure Moscow's cooperation in managing regional conflicts and achieving arms control agreements, as well as "involv[ing] the Soviet Union constructively in global activities, such as economic and social developments and peaceful non-strategic trade." Despite all that had happened by 1981, that strategy of seeking a partnership with the Brezhnev regime was still in place when Carter left office.<sup>41</sup>

The first Reagan directive on national strategy, in contrast, called explicitly, in May 1982, for efforts to force "the U.S.S.R. to bear the brunt of its economic shortcomings, and to encourage long-term liberalizing and nationalist tendencies within the Soviet Union and allied countries."<sup>42</sup> Three weeks later, in a speech to the members of the British Parliament, Reagan elaborated on what he had in mind. Karl Marx had been right, he pointed out, in predicting "a great revolutionary crisis . . . where the demands of the economic order are conflicting directly with those of the political order." This was happening, though, not in the capitalist world but in the Soviet Union, a country that "runs against the tide of history by denying human freedom and human dignity to its citizens." Nuclear superpower status provided no immunity from this great trend, for "[a]ny system is inherently unstable that has no peaceful means to legitimize its leaders." The West, therefore, should insist "that freedom is not the sole prerogative of a lucky few, but the inalienable and universal right of all human beings." What was needed was "a plan and a hope for the long term—the



march of freedom and democracy that will leave Marxism-Leninism on the ash-heap of history."<sup>43\*</sup>

No American president had ever before talked like this, and the effects were profoundly unsettling in Moscow. It had been difficult, Dobrynin later recalled, to imagine that anyone could be worse than Carter, "but it soon became clear that in ideology and propaganda Reagan [was] . . . far more threatening."<sup>44</sup> The new administration sought, in the words of National Security Decision Directive 75, completed in January 1983, "[t]o contain and over time reverse Soviet expansionism by competing effectively on a sustained basis with the Soviet Union in all international arenas."<sup>45</sup> The contest would range from buildups in nuclear and conventional weaponry through new and openly discussed war-fighting strategies, economic sanctions, the aggressive promotion of human rights, and overt and covert support for anti-Soviet resistance movements in Eastern Europe and Afghanistan as well as for opponents of Marxist regimes in Angola, Ethiopia, and Nicaragua. As Reagan's British Parliament speech made clear, the strategy would also include the vigorous employment of rhetoric as an instrument of psychological warfare, a trend which culminated in the President's March 1983 claim that the Soviet Union was "the focus of evil in the modern world."<sup>46</sup>

All of this came at a time when the domestic strains that had long been building within the U.S.S.R. had converged to produce a stagnant economy, environmental degradation, the beginnings of social unrest, and—remarkably for an advanced industrial society—declining life expectancy. Soviet military expenditures, meanwhile, were now consuming between 15 and 20 percent of gross domestic product; the comparable figure for the United States, through the last half of the 1970's, had averaged slightly under 5 percent.<sup>47</sup> The aging Kremlin leadership, burdened by both ideological and biological senescence, could only respond autistically to these developments, a trend that continued even after Brezhnev's death in November 1982, when the Politburo appointed successors, Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko, who were themselves approaching their deathbeds.<sup>48</sup> Reagan had, in this sense, picked a good time to push.

Pushing, however, still carried risks. Reagan could hardly dismantle détente and exploit Soviet vulnerabilities without reviving fears of nuclear

\* The historian Richard Pipes, then serving on the National Security Council staff, played a significant role in shaping the drafting of these documents. (Richard Pipes, *Vixi: Memoirs of a Non-Belonger* [New Haven: 2003], pp. 197–200.)

war. This is indeed what happened during the first two years of his administration, a period that seemed at the time—and still seems—the most dangerous one in Soviet-American relations since the Cuban missile crisis. Some of these fears resulted from the collapse of arms control negotiations, despite Reagan's willingness to abide by the numerical limits of the unratified SALT II treaty. Some arose from rhetorical excesses on the part of Reagan's subordinates, notably the official who immortalized himself by extending the assurance that with "enough shovels" to build backyard bomb shelters, it should be possible to survive a nuclear attack. Some grew out of protests in Europe against the forthcoming installation there of Pershing II and cruise missiles, NATO's response to the Soviet SS-20 deployment of the late 1970's. All of these fears were reflected in the campaign, within the United States, for a "freeze" on the production, testing, and deployment of Soviet and American nuclear weapons, in Jonathan Schell's best-selling 1982 book, *The Fate of the Earth*, a graphic account of the physical and biological consequences of nuclear war, and in the equally explicit ABC television production, *The Day After*, which riveted a national audience in the fall of 1983 with its portrayal of a nuclear attack on the United States.<sup>49</sup>

What hardly anyone realized at the time was that Reagan also feared a nuclear apocalypse—perhaps more deeply than most of his critics did. He had warned, as early as 1976, of "horrible missiles of destruction that can, in a matter of minutes, . . . destroy virtually the civilized world we live in."<sup>50</sup> His rejection of Mutual Assured Destruction, and hence of the SALT process, stemmed from a long-standing conviction that relying on nuclear weapons to keep the peace was certain sooner or later to bring on a nuclear war. Détente itself, he believed, had frozen the nuclear danger in place, rather than doing anything to alleviate it. Soon after entering the White House, he began promoting initiatives to reduce that threat: these involved shifting SALT to START—from "strategic arms limitation talks" to "strategic arms reduction talks"—as well as endorsing the then radical idea of seeking an agreement with Moscow to phase out all intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe. But because the very concept of arms control as it had evolved over the past two decades had assumed that arms reduction was impossible, these Reagan proposals were widely regarded as efforts to kill rather than to advance progress toward eliminating the nuclear peril.<sup>51</sup> Then Reagan really shook up the arms control community, the anti-nuclear protesters, the Russians, and most of his own advisers as well.

The Strategic Defense Initiative, which the President announced on March 23, 1983, shattered orthodoxies on all sides. By endorsing a program to defend the United States against long-range nuclear missile attacks, Reagan called into question the 1972 Soviet-American treaty banning strategic defenses, a fundamental pillar of the SALT I agreements. In doing so, he denied the basic premise of Mutual Assured Destruction, which was that vulnerability could produce safety. He thereby reversed an American position on arms control dating back to the Kennedy administration. He raised the prospect of extending the arms race into outer space, a region hitherto off limits to it. He exploited an overwhelming American superiority in computer technology, precisely the field in which the Soviet Union would find it most difficult to keep up. But he also linked SDI to the goal of *lowering* the nuclear danger: missile defense, he insisted, could in time make nuclear weapons "impotent and obsolete."<sup>52</sup>

Reagan did not invent the idea of strategic missile defense. The United States and the Soviet Union had made efforts to develop such systems prior to the SALT I agreements, and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty had even allowed limited deployments.<sup>53</sup> Technical problems caused the Pentagon to abandon these, however, so that only the concept remained alive through the end of the 1970's, especially at the Lawrence Livermore Nuclear Laboratory, where Edward Teller, the father of the American H-bomb, had strongly endorsed it. But it was nowhere near the mainstream of policy until Reagan placed it there—very much to the consternation of aides and allies. "I was completely taken by surprise," Paul Nitze, the chief White House arms control negotiator, later acknowledged. "I had no idea," Secretary of State Shultz recalled, "that anything regarding strategic defense was on the president's agenda." Secretary of Defense Weinberger immediately scrambled "to ensure that the announcement did not fall on totally astonished NATO ears."<sup>54</sup>

From an operational perspective, SDI was as remote from reality in 1983 as Khrushchev's claims of strategic missile superiority had been in the 1950's. Reagan's interest in the concept had grown more out of incredulity that the United States lacked the means of defending itself against a Soviet attack—and perhaps also out of movies and science fiction—than from an informed assessment of what might be technologically feasible.<sup>55</sup> Two decades later a workable system seems almost as far away as it did then. As grand strategy, though, SDI was a striking demonstration of killing multiple birds with a single stone: in one speech Reagan managed simultaneously to pre-empt the nuclear freeze movement, to raise

the prospect of not just reducing but eliminating the need for nuclear weapons, to reassert American technological preeminence, and, by challenging the Soviet Union in an arena in which it had no hope of being able to compete, to create the strongest possible incentive for Soviet leaders to reconsider the reasons for competition in the first place. To reinforce that argument, he later proposed—in a gesture so unorthodox that virtually no one apart from himself took it seriously—to *share* the technology of SDI with the nation against whose weapons it was to be developed.<sup>56</sup>

Reagan had never ruled out the possibility of negotiations with Moscow, as long as they could be geared toward ending, not perpetuating, the Cold War. He had written to Brezhnev as early as April 1981—while recovering from a nearly fatal assassination attempt—to express his hope for a "meaningful and constructive dialogue which will assist us in fulfilling our joint obligation to find lasting peace."<sup>57</sup> His May 1982 national strategy directive had predicted that although the next few years "will likely pose the greatest challenge to our survival and well-being since World War II, . . . our response could result in a fundamentally different East-West relationship by the end of the decade."<sup>58</sup> He made it clear, in a quiet meeting with Secretary of State Shultz in February 1983—*before* the "evil empire" and SDI speeches—that he wanted to begin talking to the Russians, despite the reservations of his own staff.<sup>59</sup> "Probably, people in the Soviet Union regard me as a crazy warmonger," he acknowledged shortly thereafter to Ambassador Dobrynin. "But I don't want a war between us, because I know it would bring countless disasters. We should make a fresh start."<sup>60</sup> He proposed, as a test of the possibilities, that the Soviet government facilitate the emigration, with no publicity, of a group of Pentecostals who had taken refuge in the American embassy in Moscow five years earlier and had not been allowed to leave. The release did occur, with minimal publicity, in July.<sup>61</sup>

None of this, however, reassured the new—but already mortally ill—Soviet leader, Yuri Andropov. He bitterly denounced SDI, claiming that the Americans were "devising one option after another in their search for best ways of unleashing nuclear war in the hope of winning it."<sup>62</sup> When the

\* NSDD-75, which Reagan approved in January 1983, set out as a major objective of American strategy "[t]o engage the Soviet Union in negotiations to attempt to reach agreements which protect and enhance U.S. interests and which are consistent with the principle of strict reciprocity and mutual interest. This is important when the Soviet Union is in the midst of a process of political succession." (NSDD-75, "U.S. Relations with the U.S.S.R.," January 17, 1983, p. 1.)

Soviet air force shot down a civilian South Korean airliner over Sakhalin on September 1, having mistaken it for an American reconnaissance plane, he insisted that the incident had been a "sophisticated provocation, organized by the US special services."<sup>63</sup> And after the West German Bundestag voted, in November, to go ahead with the deployment of Pershing II and cruise missiles, Andropov ordered his negotiators to break off arms control talks altogether, leaving Soviet-American relations at their lowest point in years.

These public positions were not nearly as ominous, though, as the conviction that had taken hold within Andropov's mind that the Reagan administration was planning a nuclear first-strike against the U.S.S.R. While still KGB chief in 1981, Andropov had instructed Soviet intelligence agencies to undertake a world-wide effort aimed at detecting evidence of such planning. When none was found, they fabricated it rather than question the assumption that had led to the order in the first place.<sup>64</sup> That operation was still under way in November 1983, as the United States and its NATO allies began a major military exercise known as "Able-Archer 83." Such maneuvers had taken place in the past, but these had a higher level of participation by top officials and new communications procedures, all carefully monitored in Moscow. Primed by Andropov to assume the worst, Soviet intelligence concluded that Able-Archer might be a ruse to cloak preparations for an actual attack—in which case Soviet war plans called for launching a pre-emptive nuclear strike against the United States.<sup>65</sup>

Fortunately, the Able-Archer crisis ended peacefully, but it badly shook Reagan, who had the nuclear danger very much on his mind in the fall of 1983. He had previewed *The Day After*, and shortly thereafter—having postponed it several times—he received his first full Pentagon briefing on American nuclear war plans: "[T]here were still some people at the Pentagon who claimed a nuclear war was 'winnable,'" he later wrote. "I thought they were crazy. Worse, it appeared there were also Soviet generals who thought in terms of winning a nuclear war."<sup>66</sup> After a British spy in Moscow, Oleg Gordievsky, confirmed how close to war the Able-Archer crisis had come, Reagan resolved to take a new approach. He chose, once again, to make a speech, on January 16, 1984, this time not for the purpose of rattling the Kremlin leadership, but rather to reassure it. The most important passage was unmistakably his own:

Just suppose with me for a moment that an Ivan and an Anya could find themselves, say, in a waiting room, or sharing a shelter from the rain or a storm with a Jim and Sally, and that there was no language barrier to keep

them from getting acquainted. Would they then deliberate the differences between their respective governments? Or would they find themselves comparing notes about their children and what each other did for a living? Before they parted company they would probably have touched on ambitions and hobbies and what they wanted for their children and the problems of making ends meet. And as they went their separate ways, maybe Anya would say to Ivan, "wasn't she nice, she also teaches music." Maybe Jim would be telling Sally what Ivan did or didn't like about his boss. They might even have decided that they were all going to get together for dinner some evening soon. Above all, they would have proven that people don't make wars.<sup>67</sup>

Within three weeks of this speech Andropov was dead. His feeble successor, Chernenko, maintained a hard line initially, but Reagan interpreted this as weakness: "maybe they are scared of us, and think we are a threat."<sup>68</sup>

In an effort to alleviate these anxieties, the President made a point, in September 1984, of inviting Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko to a carefully prepared meeting at the White House. Three hours of arguments with "this frosty old Stalinist" convinced Reagan that he had achieved little: "If I scored any points, Gromyko didn't admit it to me. He was as hard as granite."<sup>69</sup> The President stuck to his strategy, though: his national security adviser, Robert McFarlane, assured Dobrynin in December that Reagan "believed that he had fulfilled the basic task of his presidency, which was to restore the potential of the American armed forces." Now it was time "to improve relations with the Soviet Union gradually and reach agreements on reducing nuclear arms."<sup>70</sup> When it became apparent that Weinberger and Casey were trying to get Shultz fired for seeking to reopen talks with the Russians, Reagan came down firmly on the Secretary of State's side: "George is carrying out my policy," he noted in his diary. "I'm going to meet with Cap and Bill and lay it out to them. Won't be fun, but it has to be done."<sup>71</sup>

Shultz's policy—following Reagan's lead—had one additional dimension, which was to wait for the Grim Reaper to complete his work in Moscow. "Sooner or later," he told the President in the summer of 1984, "the Soviets would have to face the hurdle of a generational turnover when the senior members of the Politburo retired or died and would be replaced by younger men who might have a significantly different outlook." These would be "post-World War II people. I suspect that ideology will be less of a living force for them, that they will believe more in technology and will look for policies that are genuinely effective. . . . It will pay dividends to treat them with civility, whatever our differences might be and to

recognize the importance of their country."<sup>72</sup> Reagan needed no prompting to see the benefits of fresh leadership in the Kremlin. "How am I supposed to get anyplace with the Russians," he asked his wife, Nancy, after the news came of Chernenko's death on March 10, 1985, "if they keep dying on me?"<sup>73</sup>

#### IV

But they did not. The circumstances that produced Mikhail Gorbachev's appointment as General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on March 11 are, even now, not completely clear. What was apparent at the time, though, was that an important turning point had been reached. Gorbachev himself recalls telling his wife, Raisa, on the eve of his elevation, that "We can't go on living like this." He later acknowledged, as if to echo Reagan and Shultz: "The very system was dying away; its sluggish senile blood no longer contained any vital juices."<sup>74</sup> The Secretary of State, who attended Chernenko's funeral, saw the new leader's potential immediately: "Gorbachev," he told the press, "is totally different from any Soviet leader I've ever met."<sup>75</sup> Shultz's assessment still holds despite all that has happened since: Gorbachev was indeed the Kremlin leader for whom Reagan—and strategists of containment as far back as Kennan—had been waiting.

There were, in retrospect, three Soviet Unions during the era of détente. The one most visible from the outside was an ambitiously self-confident superpower whose global influence seemed to be growing at a time when that of the United States definitely was not. Since its invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the U.S.S.R. had claimed the right, in what came to be known as the Brezhnev Doctrine, to intervene whenever "external and internal forces hostile to socialism try to turn the development of a given socialist country in the direction of the restoration of the capitalist system."<sup>76</sup> From within, however, the Soviet Union was a very different place. Socialism had burdened it with sclerotic leadership, a bloated and corrupt bureaucracy, an economy that diminished expectations, a dangerously unhealthy environment, and a political system that appeared to leave little if any room for dissent, fresh thinking, or prescriptions for change. Except that it did: there was a third and, at the time, almost invisible Soviet Union—but, for the history of containment, it turned out to be the most significant one.

It existed within the minds of a new generation of scientists, engineers, technicians, administrators, diplomats, intelligence analysts, lawyers, and teachers, all of whom had benefited from the heavy investment the Kremlin had made, during the 1950's and 1960's, in mass higher education. The purpose had been to strengthen the Soviet system in its competition with capitalism: Khrushchev had promised, after all, to overtake the West, not just in military capabilities but in the quality of everyday life, by 1980.<sup>77</sup> It is difficult to educate, however, without provoking curiosity. That quality, in turn, produces questioning, which leads to criticism, which if unanswered invites dissatisfaction with the status quo. In the United States and Western Europe, where the postwar era also saw a vast expansion of university education, the result was an open assault by youthful rebels on "establishments" of all kinds. In the U.S.S.R. the challenge was, necessarily, more discreet. It took place quietly within seminar rooms, walks in parks, kitchen table conversations that extended far into the night—and, most importantly, in the thinking of an emerging Soviet elite who had come to see, thanks to the education the system had provided them, that the system itself could not, in its existing form, survive.<sup>78</sup>

Gorbachev was the first member of that generation to reach the top in the Kremlin hierarchy. His presence there did not immediately improve Soviet-American relations: "Gorbachev will be as tough as any of their leaders," Reagan predicted in April 1985. "If he wasn't a confirmed ideologue, he never would have been chosen by the Politburo."<sup>79</sup> Soviet sources confirm, in turn, that Gorbachev was then, and remained for months to come, suspicious of Reagan.<sup>80</sup> But the new Kremlin leader—unlike his recent predecessors—was not so locked into ideology that he allowed it to close his eyes, ears, or mind. Exchanging messages with Brezhnev, Andropov, and Chernenko had been like conversing with robots, a frustrating experience for a president like Reagan who prided himself on his communications skills. Gorbachev, in contrast, was as unrobotic as it was possible to imagine, and Reagan was quick to sense the opportunity thereby provided. He had always intended for his strategy of confrontation to prepare the way for one of persuasion:\* now the moment had come.

\* NSDD-75 had concluded that "the U.S. must demonstrate credibly that its policy is not a blueprint for an open-ended, sterile confrontation with Moscow, but a serious search for a stable and constructive long-term basis for U.S.-Soviet relations." (NSDD-75, January 17, 1983, p. 9.)

The points of which he hoped to convince the skeptical but attentive Gorbachev boiled down to three:

First, *that the United States was sincere in seeking to lower the danger of nuclear war*. Reagan had long believed that "if I could ever get in a room alone with one of the top Soviet leaders, there was a chance the two of us could make some progress. . . . I have always placed a lot of faith in the simple power of human contact in solving problems."<sup>81</sup> It sounded naive, but when this finally happened—when Reagan actually did sit down across from Gorbachev, with only their interpreters present, at their first summit conference in Geneva on November 19, 1985—several interesting things occurred. One was that the meeting ran well beyond the time scheduled for it. Another was that an unscheduled meeting followed later in the day, at which the two leaders agreed to hold future summits in Washington and in Moscow. But the really big story, as Shultz recalled, was "that they had hit it off as human beings."<sup>82</sup> Despite vigorous disagreements on responsibility for the Cold War, human rights, regional conflicts, and especially SDI, Reagan found "something likeable about Gorbachev. There was warmth in his face and his style, not the coldness bordering on hatred I'd seen in most other senior Soviet leaders I'd met until then."<sup>83</sup> Gorbachev caught the mood as well: "something important happened to each of us on that day. . . . We both sensed that we must maintain contact and try to avoid a break."<sup>84</sup>

At one point during these conversations, Reagan suggested to Gorbachev that if there were no nuclear missiles, then there would be no need for defenses against them.<sup>85</sup> The President's desire to rid the world of all nuclear weapons—not just missiles—was nothing new: he had been talking about this for years, to the puzzlement of his aides, few of whom took him literally. Gorbachev did, though. In January 1986, no doubt with Reagan's Geneva comment in mind, he publicly proposed phasing out nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles by the year 2000. Most of Reagan's advisers dismissed this as a publicity stunt, and perhaps it was. But as one of Gorbachev's top aides noted at the time, the Soviet leader was "taking this 'risk' because, as he understands, it's no risk at all—because nobody would attack us even if we disarmed completely."<sup>86</sup> That was a big change from the fears that had beset Andropov and Chernenko: Reagan's reassurances at last were working. The President himself liked the Gorbachev proposal and wanted to go further: "Why wait until the end of the century for a world without nuclear weapons?" he asked Shultz. It was a good question,

and it led the Secretary of State to conclude that, "utopian though his dream might be, the shared view of Reagan and Gorbachev on the desirability of eliminating nuclear weapons could move us toward the massive reductions in medium-range and strategic ballistic missiles that Reagan had proposed back in 1981 and 1982."<sup>87</sup>

The months that followed saw a top-level Soviet-American consensus begin to emerge in support of a proposition that, only a few years earlier, would have seemed improbable if not ludicrous: that it might indeed be possible to move, not just from the limitation to the reduction of strategic arms, but toward their *drastic* reduction, perhaps even *elimination*. It was Reagan who, by challenging the conventional wisdom of détente, the SALT process, and the concept of MAD that lay behind it, brought the United States around to this position. It was also he who persuaded Gorbachev—face-to-face in Geneva in front of a fireplace—that he meant what he said. And when Gorbachev claimed to share that vision, it was Reagan who reciprocated by assuming sincerity on the part of the Soviet leader, despite evidence to the contrary. Chance then intervened to reinforce this meeting of minds: the Chernobyl nuclear disaster of April 26, 1986, which contaminated large portions of Ukraine and Byelorussia, could hardly have been more effective in dramatizing a common nuclear danger. Reagan, by this time, did not need to be convinced. Gorbachev, however, was severely shaken by what had happened: what may have been opportunistic anti-nuclearism on his part now became much more serious.<sup>88</sup>

The next superpower summit, held at Reykjavik, Iceland, in October 1986, was the most astonishing one of the postwar era.<sup>89</sup> It had been hastily arranged to resolve a stalemate in negotiations on intermediate range missiles in Europe. To the surprise of Reagan and his advisers, though, Gorbachev arrived with far more sweeping proposals. Not only would he now accept Reagan's long-standing proposal to phase out such missiles altogether, he would also agree to a 50 percent cut in Soviet and American strategic weapons across the board, without insisting that British and French weapons be included in the count. This went well beyond any possibility of a publicity stunt, and the Americans responded quickly by offering to phase out all ballistic missiles within a decade in return for the right to deploy defenses against cruise missiles and bombers. Gorbachev countered by advancing his proposal for the abolition of all nuclear weapons to the year 1996. Reagan immediately jumped at this, and for a moment it appeared as though the leaders of

the United States and the Soviet Union had agreed on a position that went beyond everyone's wildest dreams.\*

It did not happen, though, because Gorbachev made his offer contingent upon banning the further development of SDI. Reagan, who saw SDI as necessary to ensure a safe transition to a non-nuclear world, refused to relinquish it. The summit broke up with angry words and anguished faces—but Gorbachev, collecting his wits prior to the inevitable press conference, resolved to “cool off and think it all over thoroughly. . . . [T]he merciless, often cynical and cheeky journalists. . . standing in front of me seemed to represent mankind waiting for its fate to be decided. At this moment I realized the true meaning of Reykjavik and knew what further course we had to follow.” The summit, he announced, “[i]n spite of all its drama . . . is not a failure—it is a breakthrough, which allowed us for the first time to look over the horizon.”<sup>90</sup> It was at Reykjavik, Dobrynin recalled, that “Gorbachev put away passion and decided that he could and would work with Reagan,” that he was “a person capable of taking great decisions.”<sup>91</sup> Reagan, who later admitted that “I was mad and showed it,” also had second thoughts: “Despite a perception by some that the Reykjavik summit was a failure, I think history will show it was a major turning point in the quest for a safer and secure world.”<sup>92</sup>

An agreement to phase out all nuclear weapons, had one been reached at Reykjavik, probably would not have held up. No one had thought through the implications for NATO strategy, which still relied upon nuclear “first-use” to counter Soviet conventional force superiority in Europe: “I felt as if there had been an earthquake beneath my feet,” British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher remembered.<sup>93</sup> Nor was it clear how such an agreement would affect the nuclear capabilities of France, China, India, or Israel, none of whose leaders were any more likely than Thatcher to accept, even as an aspiration, the idea of nuclear abolition. Still, the fact that the leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union had briefly done so was important. It paved the way for the Intermediate Nuclear Forces

\*The American record of the Reykjavik conference quotes Reagan as follows: “The President [said that] ten years from now he would be a very old man. He and Gorbachev would come to Iceland, and each of them would bring the last nuclear missile from each country with them. Then they would give a tremendous party for the whole world. . . . The President . . . would be very old by then and Gorbachev would not recognize him. The President would say, ‘Hello, Mikhail.’ And Gorbachev would say, ‘Ron, is it you?’ And then they would destroy the last missile.” (Tom Simons notes, Reagan-Gorbachev meeting, October 12, 1986, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Records, File 869075, Ronald Reagan Library. I am indebted to Matthew Ferraro for this document.)

Treaty, signed at the third Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Washington in December 1987, which did bring about the dismantling and destruction of an entire category of weapons, under the watchful eyes of witnesses from both sides. It created the basis for deep cuts in ICBMs, SLBMs, and bombers that would, by the end of the century, significantly reduce the number of nuclear weapons Russians and Americans had targeted at one another.\* And it led Gorbachev, on his return to Moscow, to report to the Politburo in words that acknowledged Reagan's persuasiveness:

In Washington, probably for the first time we clearly realized how much the human factor means in international politics. Before . . . we treated such personal contacts as simply meetings between representatives of opposed and irreconcilable systems. Reagan for us was merely the spokesman of the most conservative part of American capitalism and its military-industrial complex. But it turns out that politicians, including leaders of government if they are really responsible people, represent purely human concerns, interests, and the hopes of ordinary people—people who vote for them in elections and who associate their leaders' names and personal abilities with the country's image and patriotism. . . . In our age, it turns out, this has the biggest impact on political decisions. . . . And it was in Washington that we saw it so clearly for the first time.<sup>94</sup>

Gorbachev made a similar point when, on this visit, he met Kennan: “We in our country believe that a man may be the friend of another country and remain, at the same time, a loyal and devoted citizen of his own,” the Soviet leader told the original strategist of containment. “[T]hat is the way we view you.”<sup>95</sup>

The second point of which Reagan hoped to persuade Gorbachev was *that a command economy, when coupled with authoritarian politics, was a prescription for obsolescence in the modern world*. Reagan had argued this often in the past, most colorfully in May 1981, when he predicted that “[t]he West won't contain communism, it will transcend communism. It won't bother to . . . denounce it, it will dismiss it as some bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages are even now being written.”<sup>96</sup> But he left it to Shultz—who had taught economics at Stanford—to put the case to the new Kremlin leader. The Secretary of State was eager to do so, convinced that the generational shift in Moscow had opened the way for fresh

\*In 1985, the Soviet Union was estimated to have over 40,000 nuclear weapons, and the United States approximately 24,000. By 2002, these numbers were down to approximately 11,000 each for Russia and the United States. (National Resources Defense Council, “U.S.S.R./Russian Nuclear Stockpile, 1945–2002,” at <http://www.nrdc.org/nuclear/nudb/dafig11.asp>.)

thinking. What Gorbachev needed, he thought, was a tutorial on trends that "were already transforming the worlds of finance, manufacturing, politics, scientific research, diplomacy, indeed, everything." The conclusion would be that "[t]he Soviet Union would fall hopelessly and permanently behind the rest of the world in this new era unless it changed its economic and political system."<sup>97</sup>

Shultz began the seminar in Moscow in November 1985, just before the first Geneva summit. "Society is beginning to reorganize itself in profound ways," he told Gorbachev. "Closed and compartmented societies cannot take advantage of the information age. People must be free to express themselves, move around, emigrate and travel if they want to, challenge accepted ways without fear. . . . The Soviet economy will have to be radically changed to adapt to the new era." Gorbachev responded surprisingly well to this, joking that Shultz should take over the Soviet planning ministry "because you have more ideas than they have." Shultz's observations on economics had attracted his interest, Gorbachev told Dobrynin afterward. "On that subject, he would willingly talk with Shultz in the future."<sup>98</sup>

What Shultz was arguing, in effect, was that Soviet power was becoming monodimensional in an increasingly multidimensional world. "The Soviet Union is a superpower only because it is a nuclear and ballistic missile superpower," he told his own advisers early in 1986.<sup>99</sup> It made sense, then, to reduce Soviet and American capabilities in that particular area—as both Reagan and Gorbachev seemed to want to do—because the United States and its allies were so far ahead of the Soviet Union in all other areas. It was also important, though, to be certain that Gorbachev understood the failures of the Soviet system in these other areas, together with the need to correct them. The only way he would be able to do that, Shultz believed, would be to "change the Soviet system. So we need to keep trying to influence Gorbachev in that direction."<sup>100</sup>

Shultz's seminar resumed on his next trip to Moscow, in April 1987. This time he had pie charts ready estimating the global distribution of gross domestic product and international trade through the year 2000, projections not at all to the advantage of the U.S.S.R. "What drives this growth?" he asked, professorially. "Science and technology," Gorbachev responded. "Yes," Shultz acknowledged, "but hitched to an incentive-based, market-oriented economic system. . . . There was a time when a government could control its scientific establishment and be basically successful. No longer." Shultz went on to point out that Marxism had always

stressed the distinction between capital and labor. "But that dichotomy is becoming obsolete because we have entered a world in which the truly important capital is human capital, what people know, how freely they exchange information and knowledge, and the intellectually creative product that emerges." "We should have more of this kind of talk," Gorbachev acknowledged.<sup>101</sup>

It would be too much to claim that Shultz's tutorials planted the idea of *perestroika* in Gorbachev's mind: the Soviet economy faced such severe problems by the mid-1980's that there was no real alternative to fundamental restructuring. What Shultz did do was to explain why this was the case, and to point the way toward possible solutions. The Soviet leader himself was soon acknowledging the need "to get rid of the force of habit in our thinking" while recognizing "a world of fundamental social shifts, of an all-embracing scientific and technological revolution, . . . of radical changes in information technology."<sup>102</sup> He admitted to Shultz, in April 1988, that he had thought a lot about "the charts you brought on what the world would look like in a few years," and had "consulted experts." If the trends projected in them continued, "our two countries have a lot of reason to cooperate."<sup>103</sup> A month later Reagan himself, with Gorbachev's approval, was standing beneath a huge bust of Lenin at Moscow State University, lecturing students on "a very different revolution that is taking place right now, quietly sweeping the globe without bloodshed or conflict. . . . It's been called the technological or information revolution, and as its emblem, one might take the tiny silicon chip, no bigger than a fingerprint."<sup>104</sup>

So just as Reagan had established common ground with Gorbachev on the dangers posed by nuclear weapons, Shultz managed something similar with respect to economic and technological issues. The idea, in both instances, was to bring the new Soviet leader around to the American way of thinking—and by doing so, to change the nature of the regime he led.

The Reagan administration's third objective was to persuade Gorbachev that *the Soviet Union had itself become, over the years, what it had originally sought to overthrow—an oppressive empire*. The principal instrument of persuasion here was the Reagan Doctrine: a plan to turn the forces of nationalism against the gains the Soviet Union had made in recent years in the "third world," and eventually against its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe itself. The idea echoed Kennan's predictions, from as early as 1947, that Stalin's determination to control communist parties beyond the boundaries of the U.S.S.R. might come across, in those

regions, as a new form of imperialism which would, in time, generate local resistance.<sup>105</sup> Yugoslavia's defection from the Soviet bloc in 1948 and the rise of Sino-Soviet antagonism during the 1950's had proven him right; in the early 1970's Nixon and Kissinger capitalized on that latter development by playing the world's most populous communist state off against its most powerful communist state. They had remained pessimistic, however, about the possibility that nationalism might trump Marxism in Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia. They were slow to detect evidence, in the emergence of "Eurocommunism," that this had already begun to happen within the communist parties of Western Europe. And they saw few if any signs that resistance to Soviet authority in Eastern Europe might develop anytime soon: Kissinger himself went along reluctantly with the Helsinki Conference, and on balance preferred to stabilize rather than to try to upset the status quo in that part of the world. Political problems and economic stagnation would eventually bring about the collapse of the Soviet empire, he believed, but the way to hasten that process would be to delay a confrontation with the West, not to encourage one.<sup>106</sup>

By the end of the Carter administration the situation had changed. The expanding Soviet presence in southern and eastern Africa, the emergence of a Marxist regime in Nicaragua, the rise of Solidarity in Poland, and especially the invasion of Afghanistan suggested that the possibility might now exist to turn the tables on the Russians and begin portraying *them* as the new imperialists. Carter had created the basis for such an effort by authorizing overt and covert aid to anti-Soviet resistance movements in all of these regions; but since he had never given up the hope of reviving *détente*, he was wary of publicizing what he was doing.<sup>107</sup> The Reagan administration, which had fewer such inhibitions, expanded this assistance, and by early 1983 the shape of a strategy was beginning to emerge. There were, NSDD-75 pointed out, "a number of important weaknesses and vulnerabilities within the Soviet empire which the U.S. should exploit," by seeking "wherever possible to encourage Soviet allies to distance themselves from Moscow in foreign policy and to move toward democratization domestically."<sup>108</sup>

Reagan's use of the term "evil empire," in March 1983, was the first public hint of this strategy: he had chosen the phrase, he admitted, "with malice aforethought; I wanted to remind the Soviets [that] we knew what they were up to."<sup>109</sup> In October of that year he authorized an American occupation of Grenada, a small Caribbean republic in which the Cubans and the Russians had been seeking to establish a sympathetic government.<sup>110</sup>

By January 1985, Reagan was openly promising support to those "who are risking their lives—on every continent, from Afghanistan to Nicaragua—to defy Soviet-supported aggression and secure rights which have been ours from birth."<sup>111</sup> A month later Shultz elaborated publicly on what the Reagan Doctrine meant. "For many years," he noted, "we saw our adversaries act without restraint to back insurgencies around the world to spread communist dictatorships." In line with the "infamous" Brezhnev Doctrine, "any victory of communism was held to be irreversible." But in recent years, "Soviet activities and pretensions have run head-on into the democratic revolution. People are insisting on their right to independence, on their right to choose their government free of outside control." The United States had not created this phenomenon of "popular insurgencies *against* communist control." What was happening in Poland, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Nicaragua, Ethiopia, Angola, and even inside the Soviet Union itself was no different from what was taking place in South Africa, South Korea, the Philippines, and Chile: the citizens of those countries were simply seeking to determine their own futures. "The nature and extent of our support—whether moral support or something more—necessarily varies from case to case. But there should be no doubt about where our sympathies lie."<sup>112</sup>

The Reagan Doctrine was firmly in place, therefore, before Gorbachev took power. Once he had done so, Reagan and Shultz set out to convince him of its logic: that just as the tides of history were running against command economies, so they were also running against latter-day empires. The issue was an entirely pragmatic one, the President wrote to Gorbachev in February 1986: the war in Afghanistan "is unlikely to bring any benefit to the Soviet Union, so why is it continued?" Resistance there did not flow from the actions of the United States. "Even if we wished we do not have the power to induce thousands of people to take up arms against a well trained foreign army equipped with the most modern weapons." At the same time, though, "who can tell the people of another country they should not fight for their motherland, for their independence and for their national dignity?"<sup>113</sup>

Gorbachev, on Afghanistan, needed little convincing. He admitted to Reagan, at Geneva, that he had known nothing about the 1979 invasion until it had been announced on the radio. The President viewed this as confirmation that "it was a war he had no responsibility—and little enthusiasm—for."<sup>114</sup> The United States continued nevertheless to supply military assistance to the Afghan *mujahadeen*, including Stinger anti-aircraft



missiles, which proved lethally effective against Soviet air operations. By September 1987, Gorbachev's new foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, was assuring Shultz privately that the U.S.S.R. would soon leave Afghanistan, and that it would welcome American assistance in facilitating that process.<sup>115</sup> Shultz concluded from this that "the Brezhnev Doctrine was dead; the Reagan Doctrine was driving spikes into that coffin. The Soviets wanted to get out of Afghanistan, and I felt they were fading in other regional hot spots. I was hearing more and more about the possibility of change in at least some of the Warsaw Pact countries. I felt that a profound, historic shift was under way."<sup>116</sup>

And so it was—except that the shift had begun long before Shultz or anyone else in the Reagan administration had suspected. Recent research in Soviet archives suggests that the Brezhnev Doctrine from the beginning had been little more than a bluff. Brezhnev and his advisers had quietly concluded, after the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, that the U.S.S.R. could never again use force to reassert its authority against an Eastern European satellite that was seeking either to reform or reject socialism. Moscow did succeed in convincing General Wojciech Jaruzelski to declare martial law in Poland in December 1981, thereby—for the moment at least—suppressing Solidarity. Had he refused to do so, however, the Soviet Union would almost certainly not have intervened, and its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe might have begun to unravel almost a decade earlier than it actually did.<sup>117</sup> Gorbachev himself attempted to signal an end to the Brezhnev Doctrine at his first meeting with Warsaw Pact leaders in September 1985, only to meet with incredulity: "I had the feeling that they were not taking [what I said] altogether seriously. . . . they probably thought that they would just wait and see."<sup>118</sup> When Reagan publicly challenged Moscow's control over East Germany, in a dramatic speech in West Berlin in June 1987—"Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"—the Kremlin's response was surprisingly restrained. Reagan, for his part, "never dreamed that in less than three years the wall would come down and a six-thousand-pound section of it would be sent to me for my presidential library."<sup>119</sup>

The final acknowledgment that the Brezhnev Doctrine was dead—and that the Reagan Doctrine had driven spikes into its coffin—came shortly after Reagan left office, when the year 1989 saw one Eastern European country after another throw out their Soviet-installed governments with no apparent objections, and certainly no resistance, from Moscow. It was a

sign of how far things had come when Gorbachev's press spokesman, Genadi Gerasimov, announced—with a degree of whimsy unprecedented for a Soviet official—that the Brezhnev Doctrine had been replaced with the Sinatra Doctrine: the Eastern Europeans were now "doing it their way."<sup>120</sup> Throughout these months of toppling dominoes, Gorbachev recalls, "not once did we contemplate the possibility of going back on the fundamental principles of the new political thinking—freedom of choice and non-interference in other countries' domestic affairs."<sup>121</sup> The irony is that Brezhnev himself, had he still been in power, would have had little choice but to do the same.

## V

George F. Kennan had warned, as the Cold War was beginning, against the illusion that American leaders might influence their Soviet counterparts "by reasoning with them, by arguing with them, by going to them and saying: 'Look here, this is the way things are.'" They were not about to turn around and say: "By George, I never thought of that before. We will go right back and change our policies. . . . They aren't that kind of people."<sup>122</sup> That was true enough of Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Andropov, and Chernenko: certainly Reagan's own efforts to get through to these last three Soviet leaders, upon whom death in rapid succession imposed its own term limits, brought minimal results. Gorbachev, however, was different. Neither the Soviet Union nor the Russian empire that preceded it had ever before produced a leader who combined openness to the outside world with an unwillingness to employ brutality.\* He *was* prepared, therefore, to listen to an American administration that said: "Look here, this is the way things are." And he *did* change Soviet policies, more fundamentally than he or anyone else could possibly have expected.

One of the best explanations for why Gorbachev chose this path has come from Reagan himself. "When I met him for the first time in the fall of [1985]," the former President wrote in his memoirs, "he made it plain that he believed wholeheartedly in the Communist system of government. I inferred from his remarks that he thought Communism had been managed poorly and it was his intention to change its management." At some

\*A fact that distinguished him from such earlier "reformist" rulers as Peter the Great, Catherine II, Alexander I, Alexander II, and Nikita Khrushchev.

point, however, "he ultimately decided to abandon many of the fundamental tenets of Communism along with the empire that Joe Stalin had seized in Eastern Europe after World War II."

One reason, Reagan speculated, may have been that "the metamorphosis started when he was still a young man, working his way up the inefficient and corrupt Communist bureaucracy and witnessing the brutality of the Stalin regime." But it could also have resulted from "discovering that the three percent of Soviet agricultural land cultivated by private profit-making farmers produced forty percent of the meat in his country." Or possibly "the robust recovery of the American and Western European economies following the recession of the early eighties—while the Communist economies went nowhere—convinced him that central planning and bureaucratic control . . . sapped the people's incentive to produce and excel." Whatever the case, Gorbachev must have realized that the Soviet Union

could no longer support or control Stalin's totalitarian empire; the survival of the Soviet Union was more important to him. He must have looked at the economic disaster his country was facing and concluded that it couldn't continue spending so much of its wealth on weapons and an arms race that—as I told him at Geneva—we would never let his country win. I'm convinced that the tragedy at Chernobyl . . . also affected him and made him try harder to resolve Soviet differences with the West. And I think in our meetings I might have helped him understand why we considered the Soviet Union and its policy of expansionism a threat to us. I might have helped him see that the Soviet Union had less to fear from the West than he thought, and that the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe wasn't needed for the security of the Soviet Union.

In the end, Reagan concluded, "Gorbachev had the intelligence to admit Communism was not working, the courage to battle for change, and, ultimately, the wisdom to introduce the beginnings of democracy, individual freedom, and free enterprise."<sup>123</sup>

There is less triumphalism in this account than in those put forward by many of Reagan's advisers and acolytes.<sup>124</sup> Indeed there is little in it to which Gorbachev himself could take exception. It places the Soviet leader in the center of the picture, thereby reflecting the conviction of Kennan and the other early architects of containment that the Soviet system would change only when it produced a leader who was willing to make it happen. It emphasizes the structural deficiencies within that system that had brought it to the point of crisis. It stresses the contrast that had developed,

as a result, between the respective accomplishments of capitalism and communism. It acknowledges the role of accident. In the end, Reagan claimed credit only for having explained a few things: that the U.S.S.R. could not hope to win an arms race with the United States, that Soviet expansionism—past and present—had created more vulnerabilities than strengths, and that common interests could outweigh long-standing differences. Gorbachev has provided no comparably succinct account of his political and ideological trajectory in his own voluminous unreflective memoir. But he has made a point of insisting that "the 40th President of the United States will go down in history for his rare perception."<sup>125</sup>

It seems reasonable, then, to follow Reagan's lead, and seek no single explanation for what happened in the Soviet Union under Gorbachev: internal developments were surely more important than external pressures and inducements, although in just what proportion may not be clear for decades. What one can say now is that Reagan saw Soviet weaknesses sooner than most of his contemporaries did; that he understood the extent to which détente was perpetuating the Cold War rather than hastening its end; that his hard line strained the Soviet system at the moment of its maximum weakness; that his shift toward conciliation preceded Gorbachev; that he combined reassurance, persuasion, and pressure in dealing with the new Soviet leader; and that he maintained the support of the American people and of American allies. Quite apart from whatever results this strategy produced, it was an impressive accomplishment simply to have devised and sustained it: Reagan's role here was critical.

What one can also say is that Reagan—and Shultz—had a clearer vision than Gorbachev, in 1985, of the changes the Soviet Union would have to make in order to survive. Gorbachev knew only that his country could not continue along the path that it had followed under his predecessors. The next six-and-a-half years would see his initial efforts to redeem Marxism-Leninism while remaining a superpower dissolve into an increasingly desperate series of improvisations that ultimately led to the complete collapse of Soviet authority, at first abroad, and then at home.<sup>126</sup> Reagan, to be sure, shed no tears over the demise of the U.S.S.R. But it was Gorbachev's actions, not his, that brought about that outcome. So who had a strategy and who did not? That question, at least, is easy to answer.

The more difficult question is where the Reagan strategy fits within the traditions of symmetrical and asymmetrical containment. For in his assumption of unlimited resources—his belief that "we could outspend them forever"<sup>127</sup>—he was squarely within the symmetrical containment

camp. In contrast to the authors of NSC-68 and the strategists of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, however, Reagan made this calculation on the basis of what the Soviet economy, not his own, could withstand. He thereby exploited the multidimensional nature of American power at a time when Soviet power was becoming increasingly monodimensional. This allowed retaining the initiative while shifting the competition onto terrain that favored the United States, an approach consistent with the legacy of asymmetrical containment.<sup>128</sup> Reagan thereby avoided the costs, risks, and frustrations of competing on terms set by the other side—the symmetrical response dilemma that had undermined domestic support for the wars in Korea and Vietnam. But he also yielded no gains to the U.S.S.R., whether by acknowledging its spheres of influence or by overlooking the mistreatment of those who lived under its rule: in this way, he insulated his administration from the fears of falling dominoes and the moral qualms that had beset practitioners of asymmetrical containment.

To a greater degree than any of his Cold War predecessors, therefore, Reagan drew on the strengths of both symmetry and asymmetry, while avoiding their weaknesses. He did so, not because he knew these terms, but because he understood the paradox they were meant to illustrate: that competing at times and in places chosen by adversaries minimizes risks but drives up costs, while competing at times and in places of one's own choosing minimizes costs but drives up risks. And so, without ever putting it in quite this way, Reagan devised a remedy: a strategy of high risks and costs that sought, by *changing rather than containing* an adversary, to make possible a world of much lower risks and costs.<sup>129</sup> In doing so, he resolved a contradiction that had bedeviled strategists of containment from the earliest days of the Cold War.

"Reagan's was an astonishing performance," Henry Kissinger has written, "and, to academic observers, nearly incomprehensible. . . . When all was said and done, a president with the shallowest academic background was to develop a foreign policy of extraordinary consistency and relevance."<sup>130</sup> Reagan did this by drawing upon a few simple habits: a focus on outcomes rather than on details; a willingness to choose among priorities rather than to be pulled apart by them; an understanding that priorities can shift as policies achieve their purposes; a refusal to be intimidated by orthodoxies; a realization that power resides as much in ideas as in material capabilities; an ability to combine conviction with the capacity to express it; a belief that no strategy can sustain itself if it fails to advance the principles upon which the society it seeks to defend is based. Reagan's

foibles—of which there were many—were also, in a way, a source of strength, because they encouraged others so easily to underestimate him. And he always counter-balanced these quirks with healthy reserves of good humor and common sense.\* It was these qualities, together with the reforms Gorbachev brought about within the Soviet Union, that allowed *both* leaders to achieve the result Kennan had hoped for from the strategy of containment when, four decades earlier, he first proposed it.<sup>131</sup>

Kennan had been no admirer of Reagan during his presidency. But when I asked him in 1996 who or what had ended the Cold War, his answer reflected significant reassessment. "I think the historical forces were a greater factor in overcoming the Cold War than were the actions of any individuals," he replied. "But if you have to find two individuals who contributed greatly to this, I would put first of all Gorbachev . . . but also Ronald Reagan, who in his own inimitable way, probably not even being quite aware of what he was really doing, did what few other people would have been able to do in breaking this log jam."<sup>132</sup> Of course, it is also possible that Reagan really *did* know, all along, what he was doing.

## VI

By the time Reagan left office in January 1989, the strategy of containment had largely achieved its purposes: a Soviet leader had indeed acknowledged the failures of Marxism-Leninism and the futility of Russian imperialism. The incoming administration of George H. W. Bush found it difficult to believe what had happened. "I was suspicious of Gorbachev's motives and skeptical of his prospects," Bush's new national security adviser Brent Scowcroft remembered. "He was trying to kill us with kindness. . . . My fear was that Gorbachev could talk us into disarming . . . and that, in a decade or so, we could face a more serious threat than ever before."<sup>133</sup> Bush himself, who had known Gorbachev since their first meeting at Chernenko's funeral in 1985, was less distrustful; nevertheless, "I certainly did not want to make a foolish or short-sighted move."<sup>134</sup> The result

\* Most of the time. Reagan's most glaring departure from common sense came with the Iran-Contra affair, a complicated scheme he had authorized to secure the release of American hostages in the Middle East by selling arms to the Iranians, then using the profits to support the anti-Sandinista resistance in Nicaragua. The resulting investigations preoccupied the administration for months in the aftermath of the 1986 Reykjavik summit, and may well have contributed to its failure to follow up the progress that was made there toward phasing out reliance on nuclear weapons. (Peter Kornbluh and Malcolm Byrne, eds., *The Iran-Contra Scandal: The Declassified History* [New York: 1993], provides the basic documentation.)

was an extended review of Soviet-American relations that took months to determine what had been obvious to Reagan and Shultz: that the Soviet Union under Gorbachev was a very different country from what it had been throughout most of the Cold War.

Gorbachev, for his part, appeared to have anticipated Scowcroft by seeking to remove all sources of conflict with Washington. It was as if he had taken literally the strategy the Kremlin's long-time American expert, Georgii Arbatov, had been jokingly recommending, which was to "contain" the United States by depriving it of an enemy.<sup>135</sup> Gorbachev had announced, at the United Nations, in December 1988, a *unilateral* withdrawal of 500,000 Soviet troops from eastern and central Europe. He did nothing to halt the collapse of Moscow's authority in Poland and Hungary during the summer of 1989. He told the East Germans, at their fortieth anniversary celebrations in October, that they would have to reform themselves: when they did not and the Berlin Wall came down the following month, he let it be known that he approved of what had happened. He made no effort to preserve the remaining Soviet satellite governments in Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania, all of which were gone by the end of the year. And at Gorbachev's first summit with President Bush, held at Malta in December, he made a point of acknowledging the legitimacy of an American role in Europe, while failing to specify what the Soviet role there should be.<sup>136</sup>

By then it was becoming clear, though, that if Gorbachev had any strategy of containment, it was not one aimed at the United States. Rather, its purpose was to contain the consequences, for his own country, of a set of events that no one in either Moscow or Washington could now control. For once Gorbachev let it be known that the Soviet Union would not forcibly resist demands for self-determination, there was no stopping them. He had no choice but to accept the dismantling, almost overnight, of the sphere of influence Stalin had constructed so long ago in Eastern Europe. He had no means of resisting pressures—from within Germany and from the Bush administration—for the reunification of that country. He had no way to prevent the newly unified German state from being incorporated into NATO: a geopolitical outcome, conventional wisdom had always insisted, that the Soviet Union would never accept. And, of course, in the end he also lacked the means to deny self-determination to the non-Russian republics of the U.S.S.R., or for that matter to the Russian republic as well, now headed by his freely elected rival, Boris Yeltsin.

Not the least of the ironies associated with Gorbachev is the fact that, despite having made self-determination possible throughout the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, he never subjected himself to a democratic election.<sup>137</sup> As a result, his domestic base of support diminished even as his international reputation grew: that left him vulnerable to the coup that almost removed him from power in August 1991, and to the irrelevance that finally did end his rule on Christmas Day of that year, when the Soviet Union itself at last ceased to exist.

"During these last few months," President Bush told the nation that evening, "you and I have witnessed one of the greatest dramas of the 20th century, the historic and revolutionary transformation of a totalitarian dictatorship, the Soviet Union, and the liberation of its peoples." The United States for over four decades had led the struggle "against communism and the threat it posed to our most precious values. . . . That confrontation is now over." It was a hastily composed speech that seemed almost to shrink from the significance of what it was saying: Bush lacked Reagan's skill in connecting language with history. The history itself, though, was right. The United States had indeed avoided the alternatives of war and appeasement that seemed to be the only ones open to the West when Kennan composed his "long telegram"—also hastily—forty-five years earlier. "Our enemies," Bush concluded succinctly, "have become our partners."<sup>138</sup>

- House Years*, p. 229; Annual foreign policy report, May 3, 1973, *NPP: 1973*, p. 376. See also Nixon, *RN*, p. 348.
73. Nixon press conference, March 21, 1970, *NPP: 1970*, p. 292. See also Hanhimäki, *The Flawed Architect*, pp. 43–46.
74. Herring, *America's Longest War*, p. 256.
75. Bell, *The Diplomacy of Détente*, pp. 127–29, 224; Brown, *The Crises of Power*, p. 52.
76. Elizabeth Drew, "A Reporter at Large: Human Rights," *New Yorker*, LIII (July 18, 1977), 36; Bell, *The Diplomacy of Détente*, pp. 31–32.
77. See, on this point, Richard H. Ullman, "Washington, Wilson, and the Democrat's Dilemma," *Foreign Policy*, #21 (Winter, 1975–76), 108–9; and Stoessinger, *Kissinger*, p. 218. Jeane Kirkpatrick would later popularize this argument in her influential article, "Dictatorships and Double Standards," *Commentary*, LXVIII (November, 1979), 34–45.
78. Ford, *A Time to Heal*, pp. 297–98; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, pp. 648–52, 861–67.
79. Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 191.
80. See, especially, Kissinger's speeches at Minneapolis, July 15, 1975, and Montreal, August 11, 1975, also his 1968 essay, "Central Issues in Foreign Policy," all printed in Kissinger, *American Foreign Policy*, pp. 91–97, 195–236. For the background of Kissinger's "heartland" speeches, see Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York: 1992), pp. 658–59. My understanding of Kissinger's position on morality and foreign policy has been enhanced by reading Schuyler Schouten, "Kissinger's Realist Ethics: Morality and Pragmatism in American Foreign Policy," senior essay, Department of History, Yale University, April, 2003.
81. *Ibid.*, pp. 218–19; Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 55.
82. Kissinger, "Central Issues," *American Foreign Policy*, p. 94.

### ELEVEN. *The Completion of Containment*

- See above, p. 72.
- Speech at the University of Notre Dame, May 22, 1977, *Public Papers of the Presidents: Jimmy Carter*: [hereafter *CPP*] 1977, pp. 956–57.
- Carter state of the union address, January 23, 1980, *CPP: 1980*, pp. 196–98.
- Talbott, *Endgame*, pp. 48–50; Dan Caldwell, "US Domestic Politics and the Demise of Détente," in Odd Arne Westad, ed., *The Fall of Détente: Soviet-American Relations during the Carter Years* (Oslo: 1997), pp. 105–6.
- Cyrus Vance interview, February 3, 1977, *DSB*, LXXVI (February 21, 1977), 148. See also Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977–1981* (New York: 1983), pp. 185–86.
- See above, p. 314.
- Carter discusses the origins of his commitment to human rights in *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: 1982), pp. 141–44. See also Tony Smith, *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: 1994), pp. 239–65.
- Talbott, *Endgame*, pp. 60–61.
- Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, p. 388.
- See, on this point, Stanley Hoffmann, "The Hell of Good Intentions," *Foreign Policy*, #29 (Winter, 1977–78), pp. 12–13; also Hugh Sidey, "Assessing a Presidency," *Time*, CXVI (August 18, 1980), 10–15, and Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, pp. 14, 49, 71.
- Simon Serfaty, "Brzezinski: Play It Again, Zbig," *Foreign Policy*, #32 (Fall, 1978), pp. 6–7.

- Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, pp. 148–49.
- Gaddis Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power: American Diplomacy in the Carter Years* (New York: 1986), pp. 40–42. See also Vance's memoir, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy* (New York: 1983).
- Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, p. 666. The speech is in *CPP: 1978*, pp. 1052–58.
- Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, p. 387. See also Dobrynin's report to Moscow, "Soviet-American Relations in the Contemporary Era," July 11, 1978, in Westad, ed., *The Fall of Détente*, pp. 213–20. Brzezinski's account of the drafting of the June 7 Carter speech is in *Power and Principle*, p. 320.
- Carter, *Keeping Faith*, p. 66. See also Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 145.
- See, for example, Wolfe, *Soviet Power and Europe, 1945–1970*, pp. 501–6.
- Talbott, *Endgame*, pp. 134–35, 181–83.
- Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, pp. 402–7. See also Westad, "The Fall of Détente and the Turning Tides of History," pp. 11–12.
- Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power*, pp. 242–45. See also, for a contemporary assessment, Carl Gershman, "The Rise & Fall of the New Foreign Policy Establishment," *Commentary*, LXX (July, 1980), 13–24.
- Reagan radio script, March 23, 1977, in Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Anderson, and Martin Anderson, eds., *Reagan In His Own Hand* (New York: 2001), p. 118.
- Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: 1991), pp. 280–96, summarizes Reagan's instinct-based orthodoxies, their origins, and the extent to which they departed from established information-based Cold War orthodoxies.
- See, on this point, Lee Edwards, *The Conservative Revolution: The Movement That Remade America* (New York: 1999), especially pp. 201–5.
- For another president who operated in this way, see Greenstein, *The Hidden-Hand Presidency: Eisenhower as Leader*, especially pp. 34–35, 53.
- Skinner, ed., *Reagan In His Own Hand*, reprints several hundred hand-written commentaries on a wide range of domestic and foreign policy issues that Reagan prepared for his nationally syndicated radio program between 1975 and 1979. See also, on his speech-writing habits, Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (New York: 1990), p. 246.
- Radio script, December 22, 1976, in *ibid.*, p. 12. See also scripts for May 25, 1977, October 10, 1978, November 28, 1978, and June 29, 1979, *ibid.*, pp. 85–86, 94–95, 146–47, 149–50. For the Roosevelt-Reagan analogy, see Cannon, *President Reagan*, pp. 109–11.
- Radio script, May, 1975, in Skinner, ed., *Reagan In His Own Hand*, p. 12. For evidence of even earlier Reagan thinking along these lines, see Paul Lettow, *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons* (New York: 2005), pp. 16, 27.
- Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 267. For Reagan's commentaries on NSC-68, see his radio scripts of May 4, 1977, in Skinner, ed., *Reagan In His Own Hand*, pp. 109–13.
- Radio script, May 25, 1977, in Skinner, ed., *Reagan In His Own Hand*, p. 147.
- Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 238.
- Radio script, June 29, 1979, in Skinner, ed., *Reagan In His Own Hand*, pp. 149–50. See also *ibid.*, pp. 129–34, 150–56.
- Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 13. See also Lettow, *Ronald Reagan*, pp. 22–23.
- Reagan's handwritten draft of a speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Chicago, August 18, 1980, in Skinner, ed., *Reagan In His Own Hand*, especially p. 484; also Reagan, *An American Life*, pp. 257–58; Reagan's radio broadcast of December 12, 1978, in Skinner, ed., *Reagan In His Own Hand*, pp. 86–87; and Cannon, *President Reagan*, pp. 292–93, 305, 320, 751. I have benefited, as well, from reading Matthew Ferraro, "Going M.A.D.: Morality, Strategy, and Mutual Assured Destruction, 1957 to 1986," a senior essay prepared in the Yale University Department of History, 2004.

34. Reagan speech draft of August 18, 1980, in Skinner, ed., *Reagan In His Own Hand*, pp. 484-85.
35. For more on this point, see Gaddis, *The United States and the End of the Cold War*, pp. 39-45.
36. Reagan speech draft of August 18, 1980, in Skinner, ed., *Reagan In His Own Hand*, p. 485. I have edited this passage slightly for clarity.
37. Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," p. 582.
38. Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, p. 477.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 521. See also Fareed Zakaria, "The Reagan Strategy of Containment," *Political Science Quarterly*, CV (Autumn, 1990), 373-74.
40. Gaddis, *The United States and the End of the Cold War*, pp. 27-29.
41. PD/NCS-18, "U.S. National Strategy," August 24, 1977, <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.org/documents/pddirectives/pd18.pdf>; PD/NSC-62, "Modifications in U.S. National Strategy, January 15, 1981, <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.org/documents/pddirectives/pd62.pdf>.
42. NSDD 32, "U.S. National Security Strategy," May 20, 1982, <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-032.htm>. See also, for background on this document, Lettow, *Ronald Reagan*, pp. 65-72.
43. Reagan address to members of the British Parliament, London, June 8, 1982, *Public Papers of the Presidents: 1982* [hereafter *RPP*] (Washington: 1983), pp. 744-47. See also Reagan's speech at Notre Dame University, May 17, 1981, *RPP: 1981*, especially p. 434.
44. Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, p. 484.
45. NSDD 75, "U.S. Relations with the Soviet Union," January 17, 1983, <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-075.htm>. For more on this document, see Richard Pipes, *Vixi: Memoirs of a Non-Belonger* (New Haven: 2003), pp. 188-202; and Lettow, *Ronald Reagan*, pp. 77-82.
46. Speech to the National Association of Evangelicals, Orlando, Florida, March 8, 1983, *RPP: 1983*, p. 364. For more on Reagan's rhetoric, see William K. Muir, Jr., "Ronald Reagan: The Primacy of Rhetoric," in Fred I. Greenstein, ed., *Leadership in the Modern Presidency* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1988), pp. 260-95.
47. Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000* (New York: 2001), especially pp. 10-30, provides a good overview of the problems confronting the Soviet Union during this period; but see also Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the U.S.S.R., and the Successor States* (New York: 1998), pp. 436-42. The figures on Soviet military spending come from Aaron Friedberg, *In the Shadow of the Garrison State: America's Anti-Statism and Its Cold War Grand Strategy* (Princeton: 2000), pp. 82-83. See also William E. Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military* (New Haven: 1998), especially pp. 49-64. For the American figures, see Appendix.
48. Soviet leadership autism is well described in Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, pp. 472-76; and at considerably greater length in Georgi Arbatov, *The System: An Insider's Life in Soviet Politics* (New York: 1992), pp. 190-294.
49. See Spencer R. Weart, *Nuclear Fear: A History of Images* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1988), pp. 375-88; Beth A. Fischer, *The Reagan Reversal: Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (Columbia, Mo.: 1997), pp. 115-20; and, for the administration's rhetorical excesses, Robert Scheer, *With Enough Shovels: Reagan, Bush, and Nuclear War* (New York: 1983).
50. Speech to the 1976 Republican National Convention, quoted in Cannon, *President Reagan*, p. 295. Cannon provides a brief account of Reagan's anti-nuclear views in *ibid.*, pp. 287-95. For a more recent and comprehensive treatment, see Lettow, *Ronald Reagan*, pp. 3-82.
51. Talbot, *Deadly Gambits*, pp. 80-81.
52. Radio-television address, March 23, 1983, *RPP: 1983*, pp. 442-43.
53. See above, p. 324n.
54. Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost*, p. 401; George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: 1993), p. 249; Caspar W. Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon* (New York: 1990), p. 306.
55. For the origins of Reagan's interest in SDI, see Cannon, *President Reagan*, pp. 292-93, 319; Lettow, *Ronald Reagan*, pp. 19-42; and Martin Anderson, *Revolution: The Reagan Legacy*, expanded and updated edition (Stanford: 1990), pp. 80-99.
56. Lettow, *Ronald Reagan*, pp. 120-21, 214-15; Mira Duric, *The Strategic Defense Initiative: US Policy and the Soviet Union* (Aldershot, England: 2003), pp. 24-25.
57. Reagan to Brezhnev, April 24, 1981, quoted in Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 273. See also, for Dobrynin's impression of Reagan's letter and Brezhnev's response, *In Confidence*, pp. 492-93.
58. NSDD 32, May 20, 1982, p. 3.
59. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, pp. 163-67. See also Don Oberdorfer, *From the Cold War to a New Era: The United States and the Soviet Union, 1983-1991*, updated edition (Baltimore: 1998), pp. 15-21.
60. Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, pp. 517-18.
61. *Ibid.*, pp. 518-21, 529-30; Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, pp. 165-71.
62. Quoted in Duric, *The Strategic Defense Initiative*, p. 41.
63. Andropov statement, September 28, 1983, *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, XXXV (October 26, 1983), 1.
64. Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, pp. 522-24; Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *KGB: The Inside Story of Its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev* (New York: 1990), pp. 583-99.
65. For the Able-Archer crisis, see *ibid.*, pp. 599-601; also Fischer, *The Reagan Reversal*, pp. 122-31; Oberdorfer, *From the Cold War to a New Era*, pp. 65-68; and Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: 1996), pp. 266-73.
66. Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 586. See also pp. 588-89.
67. Reagan television address, January 16, 1984, *RPP: 1984*, p. 45. See also, on the preparation of this speech, Jack F. Matlock, Jr., *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: 1995), pp. 83-86.
68. Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 602.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 605.
70. Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, p. 563. See also, on this point, Barbara Farnham, "Reagan and the Gorbachev Revolution: Perceiving the End of Threat," *Political Science Quarterly*, CXVI (Summer, 2001), p. 233.
71. Reagan, *An American Life*, pp. 602-5.
72. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 478.
73. Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 611.
74. Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (New York: 1995), pp. 165, 168. See also, on Gorbachev's appointment, Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*, pp. 54-57.
75. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, pp. 532-33.
76. Brezhnev speech to the 5th Congress of the Polish United Workers Party, November 12, 1968, quoted in Matthew J. Ouimet, *The Rise and Fall of the Brezhnev Doctrine in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: 2003), p. 67.
77. William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York: 2003), pp. 507-11. For the Soviet educational investment, see Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, p. 440.
78. The best book on the relationship between higher education and social protest in the 1960's is Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge, Mass.: 2003). For the rise of the new Soviet intelligentsia, see Robert D.

- English, *Russia and the Idea of the West: Gorbachev, Intellectuals, and the End of the Cold War* (New York: 2000).
79. Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 615.
80. William D. Jackson, "Soviet Reassessment of Ronald Reagan, 1985–1988," *Political Science Quarterly*, CXIII (Winter, 1998–99), 621–22; Vladislav M. Zubok, "Gorbachev and the End of the Cold War: Perspectives on History and Personality," *Cold War History*, II (January, 2002), 63. See also Anatoly Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, translated and edited by Robert English and Elizabeth Tucker (University Park, Pennsylvania: 2000), p. 32, for an early indication of the extent to which Reagan's rhetoric placed Gorbachev and his advisers on the defensive.
81. Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 567.
82. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, pp. 600–2.
83. Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 635.
84. Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, p. 408. See also Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, pp. 592–93.
85. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 700; Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 657.
86. Chernyaev diary, January 16, 1986, in Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, pp. 45–46.
87. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, pp. 700–1. See also Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire*, pp. 93–94; and Lettow, *Ronald Reagan*, pp. 137, 199–200.
88. Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, pp. 189–93. See also Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, pp. 66–67; and Reagan, *An American Life*, pp. 676, 710.
89. My account here follows that in the Reagan, Shultz, and Gorbachev memoirs, as well as Oberdorfer, *From the Cold War to a New Era*, pp. 189–209; Jackson, "Soviet Reassessment of Reagan," pp. 629–34; Lettow, *Ronald Reagan*, pp. 223–31; Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations at the End of the Cold War* (Washington: 1994), pp. 285–291; and Jack F. Matlock, Jr., *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (New York: 2004), pp. 215–37.
90. Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, p. 419.
91. Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, p. 610. See also the comments of Anatoly Chernyaev, in William C. Wohlforth, ed., *Witnesses to the End of the Cold War* (Baltimore: 1996), p. 109.
92. Reagan, *An American Life*, pp. 679, 683.
93. Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (New York: 1993), p. 471.
94. Gorbachev report to the Politburo, December 17, 1987, quoted in Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, pp. 142–43.
95. Kennan diary, December 9, 1987, quoted in George F. Kennan, *Sketches from a Life* (New York: 1989), p. 351.
96. Speech at Notre Dame University, May 17, 1981, *RPP: 1981*, p. 434.
97. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 586.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 591; Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, p. 583.
99. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, pp. 700–1. See also *ibid.*, pp. 716–17. For more on monodimensionality, see John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: 1997), p. 283–84.
100. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 711.
101. *Ibid.*, pp. 892–93; Oberdorfer, *From the Cold War to a New Era*, pp. 223–24. See also Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, p. 142; and Fred I. Greenstein, "Ronald Reagan, Mikhail Gorbachev, and the End of the Cold War: What Difference Did They Make?" in Wohlforth, ed., *Witnesses to the End of the Cold War*, p. 217.
102. Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (New York: 1987), p. 135.
103. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 1098. See also, for Gorbachev's subsequent acknowl-

- edgment of the economic superiority of market capitalism, Mikhail Gorbachev and Zdeněk Mlynář, *Conversations with Gorbachev: On Perestroika, the Prague Spring, and the Crossroads of Socialism*, translated by George Shriver (New York: 2002), p. 160.
104. Reagan speech at Moscow State University, May 31, 1988, *RPP: 1988*, p. 684.
105. See above, pp. 41–46.
106. For more on this, see pp. 287–88, 341–42, above; also Henry A. Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: 1994), p. 714, and John Lewis Gaddis, "Rescuing Choice from Circumstance: The Statecraft of Henry Kissinger," in Gordon A. Craig and Francis L. Lowenheim, eds., *The Diplomats: 1939–1979* (Princeton: 1994), pp. 585–87. Kissinger's own account of the Helsinki Conference is in his *Years of Renewal* (New York: 1999), pp. 635–63.
107. Gates, *From the Shadows*, pp. 142–53, 161–69.
108. NSDD 75, "U.S. Relations with the U.S.S.R.," January 17, 1983, p. 4.
109. Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 569.
110. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 323–45.
111. Reagan state of the union address, February 6, 1985, *RPP: 1985*, p. 136.
112. Speech to the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco, quoted in Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 525. Chernyaev describes the "panic" this speech caused in Moscow in *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, pp. 16–17. For more on the Reagan Doctrine, see Smith, *America's Mission*, pp. 297–304.
113. Reagan to Gorbachev, February 6, 1986, quoted in Reagan, *An American Life*, pp. 654–55.
114. Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 639. For Gorbachev's reservations about the war in Afghanistan, see also Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, pp. 42–43, 89–90, 106.
115. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p. 987.
116. *Ibid.*, p. 1003.
117. The evidence is laid out in detail in Ouimet, *The Rise and Fall of the Brezhnev Doctrine*.
118. Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, p. 465.
119. Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 683. Reagan's speech, delivered at the Brandenburg Gate on June 12, 1987, is in *RPP: 1987*, p. 686. For Gorbachev's response, see Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, pp. 316–18.
120. Bill Keller, "Gorbachev, in Finland, Disavows any Right of Regional Intervention," *New York Times*, October 26, 1989.
121. Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, p. 522.
122. See above, p. 48.
123. Reagan, *An American Life*, pp. 707–8.
124. See, for example, Peter Schweizer, *Victory: The Reagan Administration's Secret Strategy That Hastened the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: 1994) and *Reagan's War: The Epic Story of His Forty Year Struggle and Final Triumph Over Communism* (New York: 2002).
125. Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, p. 457.
126. The evidence for Gorbachev's evolving views—and, as time went on, his increasingly desperate improvisation—is now overwhelming. See Arbatov, *The System*, pp. 330–35; and especially Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, who documents the process throughout his book.
127. Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 267.
128. See, on this point, Lettow, *Ronald Reagan*, pp. 125, 130.
129. I owe this argument to Zakaria, "The Reagan Strategy of Containment," especially pp. 374, 387. For more on the cost versus risk dilemma, see John Lewis Gaddis, "Containment and the Logic of Strategy," *The National Interest*, #10 (Winter, 1987/88), 27–38.
130. Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, pp. 764–65.

131. Jeremi Suri, "Explaining the End of the Cold War: A New Historical Consensus?" *Journal of Cold War Studies*, IV (Fall, 2002), 92, emphasizes the joint responsibility of both leaders for bringing about the end of the Cold War.
132. Interview with George F. Kennan, June 10, 1996.
133. George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: 1998), pp. 13-14.
134. *Ibid.*, p. 9. For the Bush review and its follow-up, see Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, pp. 375-89.
135. See, for example, Georgii Arbatov, "The Limited Power of an Ordinary State," *New Perspectives Quarterly*, V (Summer, 1988), 31; also Charles Paul Freund, "Where Did All Our Villains Go?" *Washington Post*, December 11, 1988.
136. Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1995), pp. 127-31. See also, for background on these events, Michael R. Beschloss and Strobe Talbott, *At the Highest Levels: The Inside Story of the End of the Cold War* (Boston: 1993), pp. 3-171.
137. James M. Goldgeier and Michael McFaul, *Power and Purpose: U.S. Policy toward Russia after the Cold War* (Washington: 2003), p. 20.
138. Bush national radio and television address, December 25, 1991, *Public Papers of the Presidents: George Bush, 1991*, pp. 1654-55.

## TWELVE. Epilogue

1. Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950*, pp. 308, 310. See also Giles D. Harlow and George C. Maerz, eds., *Measures Short of War: The George F. Kennan Lectures at the National War College, 1946-47* (Washington: 1990).
2. Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950*, p. 367.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 356.
4. Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," pp. 574-75. For the extent to which Hitler believed the opposite, see Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: Nemesis, 1936-1945* (New York: 2000), pp. 207, 228.
5. Michael Howard, *The Lessons of History* (New Haven: 1991), p. 75. See also, on this "bellicist" mentality, Howard, *The Causes of War*, second edition, enlarged (Cambridge, Massachusetts: 1983), especially pp. 7-22.
6. This was the title of Kennan's first National War College lecture, delivered on September 16, 1946, published in Harlow and Maerz, eds., *Measures Short of War*, pp. 3-17. For the argument that great power war had by then become unfeasible, see John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (New York: 1989), pp. 3-92.
7. For more on this point, see Gaddis, *The Long Peace*, pp. 215-45.
8. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: 1976), p. 87.
9. For the manner in which the Clausewitzian consensus crossed Cold War boundaries, see Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: 1991), pp. 34-35.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.
11. I have discussed this strategy at greater length in *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: 2004). The Bush administration's strategy is most clearly expressed in *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America: September 2002* (Washington: 2002).
12. See, on this point, Melvyn P. Leffler, "9/11 and the Past and Future of American Foreign Policy," *International Affairs*, LXXIX (2003), 1051-54.

13. For more on this, see Gaddis, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience*, p. 99.
14. I have written more about this in *The United States and the End of the Cold War*, pp. 193-216; and "Living in Candlestick Park," *The Atlantic*, CCLXXXIII (April, 1999), 65-74.
15. The term comes from Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford: 1992); but see also Gaddis, *We Now Know*, p. 284; and, for post-Cold War American predominance, Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Price of America's Empire* (New York: 2004), pp. 14-19.
16. Geir Lundestad, "Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945-1952," *Journal of Peace Research*, XXIII (September, 1986), 263-77.
17. See Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York: 2003), pp. 42-53; also Philip H. Gordon and Jeremy Shapiro, *Allies at War: America, Europe, and the Crisis Over Iraq* (Washington: 2004), pp. 37-39.
18. Gaddis, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience*, pp. 100-1. For the decline in support for American foreign policy, see the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press report, "A Year After Iraq War: Mistrust of America in Europe Even Higher, Muslim Anger Persists," March 16, 2004, available at: <http://people-press.org/reports/print.php3?PageID=795>.
19. Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," p. 582.
20. See, for example, Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, translated by Samuel B. Griffith (New York: 1963), p. 77; Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 384; and on Marx and Lenin, Tony Smith, *Thinking Like a Communist: State and Legitimacy in the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba* (New York: 1987), pp. 24, 45, 48. Kennan discusses this Marxist-Leninist idea in "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," pp. 566-67.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 580.
22. For more on this, see John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (New York: 2002), especially p. 11.
23. The most comprehensive attempt to treat Kennan as a theorist is Richard L. Russell, *George F. Kennan's Strategic Thought: The Making of an American Political Realist* (Westport, Conn.: 1999). For Kennan's long-time aversion to theory, see his *Around the Cragged Hill: A Personal and Political Philosophy* (New York: 1993), p. 11.