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Evolving Soviet Perceptions of U.S. Strategy

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HIGHLIGHT: Commentators lament the absence of grand strategy in the foreign policies of the United States. Indeed, the real need for a more strategic vision in U.S. policy provided the original impetus to the founding of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in 1962. The need is far easier to identify than to meet, and much of what passes for strategic thinking is a disappointing rehash of ideology or budget rationale. The essays that follow shed new light on the character of U.S. strategy and the choices confronting Americans today.

SOVIET PERCEPTIONS ABOUT U.S. strategy have undergone an important evolution over the past 20 years. During the 1970s the Soviets saw the U.S. public as opposed to increased defense expenditures and involvement in foreign wars. They also concluded that in order to ensure their own political survival, the president and Congress had a strong interest in achieving arms-control agreements with Moscow. Indeed, the Soviets believed that the U.S. domestic imperatives for pursuing arms control were so great that negotiations would not be halted by increased communist bloc military activity in the Third World. Moscow recognized that there were sometimes conflicting views on defense issue within both the executive and legislative branches (as well as between them). The Soviets, however, appeared relatively confident that any group proposing a harder line toward Moscow could be defeated through judicious Soviet foreign-policy maneuvering.

The Soviets now understand that these earlier perceptions of U.S. strategy are no longer valid. The 1980s have shown that the U.S. public has supported increased defense expenditures and a more assertive U.S. military role in the world. Furthermore, the political survival of the U.S. president and members of Congress is not necessarily linked to progress on arms control. They have also seen that communist bloc military activity in the Third World can have an extremely negative effect on arms-control negotiations.

One of the causes of this change in Soviet perception of the U.S. national security process has been, not surprisingly, actual changes in U.S. public as well as congressional attitudes toward defense issues. Nevertheless, the Soviets appeared to retain their 1970s model of the U.S. national security process for several years after its obsolescence. It was not until Mikhail Gorbachev came to power that Soviet leadership perceptions about the functioning of U.S. defense policy became more realistic. Soviet perceptions of the U.S. strategy process have evolved over four periods during the past 20 years: the Nixon years, the Ford-Carter years, the first Reagan administration, and the second Reagan administration. Furthermore, Soviet perceptions of the U.S. national security process might evolve differently in the future.

The Nixon Years

From Richard M. Nixon's first presidential election in 1968, the Soviets perceived that he would have to mollify liberal sentiment in the United States. The Soviets believed that the Republican Nixon had defeated the Democrat Hubert H. Humphrey primarily because the latter was vice president under Lyndon B. Johnson -- the man responsible for the increased U.S. military involvement in Indochina. Under Johnson, not only the Vietnam war but also increased defense spending generally had become unpopular. Ironically, then, the conservative Nixon had been elected with the expectation that he would implement what were seen as liberal goals; to end U.S. military involvement in Indochina and to reduce defense spending.

Confirmation that Nixon would pursue liberal goals despite his conservative background came early on. Although President Johnson had suspended negotiations over strategic arms limitations after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, Nixon agreed to resume them by mid-1969. Furthermore, although Nixon at first sought to end the war in Vietnam through attacking Communist sanctuaries in Cambodia and Laos, he steadily reduced U.S. troop strength in Indochina and by the end of his first term was actively seeking a negotiated U.S. withdrawal from the war. Nixon had a strong incentive to do this because the main appeal of his Democratic opponent in 1972, George McGovern, was that he promised to end U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Secretary of state Henry Kissinger's announcement before the 1972 election that "peace is at hand" and that the United States would soon withdraw from Indochina was an important factor contributing to Nixon's reelection. The Soviet perceived that without this commitment to bring home the remaining U.S. troops from Vietnam imminently, Nixon risked not being reelected due to public fear that the war would continue to drag on.

The cost of the Vietnam war also contributed to the dramatic upsurge in inflation. In order to keep defense expenditures from growing even faster, Nixon cut back on other defense programs. Despite the rapid expansion in Soviet strategic offensive missiles during this period, the Nixon administration did not attempt to retain the United States' previous lead over the Soviet Union. The Soviets saw this budget constraint as being one of Nixon's primary motives for pursuing arms-control negotiations with them. n1

Even beyond the need to control the budget, the Soviets saw that Nixon and Kissinger were willing to go to great lengths to sell the idea of arms control and detente to Congress and the U.S. public. The Nixon administration argued against the position of such skeptics as Senator Henry Jackson. The Soviets saw Nixon and Kissinger as being so desperate for a strategic arms limitations talks (SALT) agreement that Moscow could extract important concessions from Washington. Indeed, this is what occurred: the SALT I agreement called for both sides to limit their arsenals of inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and sea-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) to the number each already possessed or were currently building. The agreement was signed allowed the Soviet Union to possess significantly more ICBMs and SLBMs than the United States when just a few years previously the Soviets had significantly fewer of both in their arsenal. n2

Why did Nixon do this? The Soviets identified several reasons. First, Nixon needed an arms-control agreement in order to be reelected. After his reelection, he continued to pursue arms control in order to distract public attention from the growing Watergate scandal. The Soviets perceived something else underlying the requirements for Nixon's own political survival. The Soviets had long talked about the "correlation of forces" and how it was changing in their favor. The events of the early 1970s appeared to confirm that their prediction was actually coming true. The American people were forcing the U.S. government to give up the burden of empire in the Third World. Not only was the public forcing the United States to withdraw from Vietnam, but also it seemed clear that Americans were unwilling to become involved in defending another Vietnam elsewhere in the Third World. This sentiment was growing when revolutionary prospects in Asia, Africa, and Latin America were increasing.

What the Soviets understood (or felt they understood) about Nixon and Kissinger is that these were two U.S. leaders who also realized that the correlation of forces was shifting in favor of the Soviet Union. Rather than fight against this trend as such extreme conservatives as Senator Henry Jackson advocated, Nixon and Kissinger seemed to understand that this was futile. U.S. economic problems and public attitudes would not allow a large military buildup to

counter growing Soviet strength anyway. What the Soviets perceived as Nixon and Kissinger's goal was the preservation of U.S. interests to the greatest extent possible when U.S. power was declining vis-a-vis the USSR. It was for this reason also that Nixon and Kissinger so eagerly pursued SALT agreements with Moscow.

The Soviet notion of U.S. weakness at this time should not be exaggerated. Moscow had a healthy respect for the United States' ability to develop new, powerful weapon systems, such as ICBMs and SLBMs with multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs). The Soviets were also eager to sign an arms-control agreement in order to curtail U.S. development of new weapons that Moscow would then have to duplicate.ⁿ³ Nevertheless, the image that the Soviets had acquired of the U.S. national security decision-making process led them to believe that they were in a strong bargaining position. Nixon's personal political goals made him and Kissinger willing to concede in order to obtain a SALT agreement -- more willing, certainly, than the U.S. SALT delegation in Geneva which Kissinger rarely informed about his back-channel negotiations with Moscow.ⁿ⁴ Furthermore, because Nixon had strong conservative credentials, he was able to persuade congressional conservatives to accept the agreement that he had negotiated. The Soviets did not then see Congress as a major obstacle to arms control anyway; because the American people seemed to want an agreement, most senators seeking reelection would not oppose it.

Although Kissinger talked about linking Soviet behavior in the Third World to a SALT agreement, the Soviets insisted that that two should not be linked. According to the Soviets, both superpowers benefited equally from arms control. By contrast, the United States and the West enjoyed predominant influence throughout most of the Third World, thus it was unfair to expect Moscow to acquiesce to this. As far as the Soviets were concerned, detente only extended as far as arms control; the basic competition between the two superpowers for influence in the rest of the world would continue. As the American people had clearly manifested their dissatisfaction over U.S. military intervention in the Third World, the Soviets may have calculated that Kissinger's talk about linkage was only a bluff.ⁿ⁶ What the Soviets apparently failed to understand was that in order to gain congressional and public support for detente, Nixon and Kissinger had raised expectations that it would extend beyond arms control to include reduced competition in the Third World and friendlier relations generally.ⁿ⁶

The Ford-Carter years

Even before Gerald Ford succeeded Nixon in August 1974, congressional criticism had risen over the SALT I accord permitting the Soviets to have a greater number of ICBMs and SLBMs than the United States. Congressional leaders demanded that all future SALT accords provide for equal levels of strategic nuclear delivery vehicles (SNDVs). The Soviets understood that this was a serious principle for the Americans. The Congress as well as the Ford administration insisted upon it. The American public to the extent that it was familiar with the SALT negotiations, also seemed to want overall equality in strategic nuclear weapons. This was not an issue over which the Soviets could take advantage of differences between the executive and the legislature or between the electorate and the government. Although they successfully bargained for unequal levels in SALT I, they did not want this issue to threaten future agreements. Leonid Brezhnev along with Ford signed the Vladivostok accord which called for equal levels of strategic arms for both sides in future SALT agreements. The SALT II accords with Jimmy Carter and Brezhnev signed in 1979 provided for equal numbers of SNDVs on both sides.ⁿ⁷

Nevertheless, the Soviets image of the U.S. national security process formed during the Nixon years remained basically unchanged. The pursuit of arms control was seen as a domestic political imperative for any president. In the 1976 presidential election campaign, both Ford and Carter advocated continuation of the SALT process. The Soviets viewed the American people as demanding arms control.ⁿ⁸ This may have contributed to their unwillingness to concede to the United States regarding certain features of the nuclear balance that many American critics of SALT I regarded as providing important advantages to the Soviets. Although the U.S. side first developed MIRVs, it deployed only three warheads on its relatively small, solid-fuel Minuteman III ICBMs. The Soviets, on the other hand, were able to deploy 8-10 MIRVs on their large, liquid-fuel SS-18 ICBMs.ⁿ⁹ This gave rise to fears among American conservatives that the Soviets could successfully launch a first strike destroying the U.S. ICBM and bomber force while

retaining a huge nuclear arsenal with which to deter a U.S. retaliatory strike. Whether the Soviets actually would or could do this was hotly debated in the U.S. strategic community. In the SALT negotiations, however, the Soviets were unwilling to reduce their heavy ICBM arsenal in order to assuage the fears of those who objected to it.

During the middle and late 1970s, the Soviets appeared to regard the political power of the peace movement in the United States and Western Europe as overwhelming. During this time, the Soviets began to build up their arsenal of MIRVed SS-20 intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) aimed at Western Europe. West European governments requested that Washington counter this move by deploying nuclear weapons systems on their territory that could reach the USSR. The Soviets did everything they could to encourage the public in Western Europe and the United States to resist this move. The Soviets, of course, did not actually create the peace movement. Its strength, however, benefited Soviet interests. The Soviets were particularly gratified when, immediately after chancellor Helmut Schmidt accepted U.S. deployment of the neutron bomb on West German territory, president Carter cancelled the entire project. n10 The Soviets attributed Carter's move to the strength of the peace movement in the West. They also hoped the peace movement would be strong enough to prevent the Americans from deploying Pershing II IRBMs and ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs) in Western Europe. n11

It was especially during the Ford and Carter years that Moscow regarded interested communist bloc military intervention in the Third World as no obstacle to arms control. The Ford administration was unable to secure congressional support for U.S. arms transfers and other support to South Vietnam from the autumn of 1974 through the fall of Saigon the following spring. Although the Ford administration began to support non-Communist opposition groups fighting the Cuban-backed Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) in its struggle over who would rule postindependence Angola, Congress cut off all funding for this effort. With Soviet and Cuban military assistance, the Marxist MPLA was able to come to power. In addition, the USSR and Cuba militarily intervened to protect Marxist Ethiopia from an effort to seize part of its territory from Moscow's and Havana's erstwhile ally, Somalia, in 1977-1978. The Carter administration refused to assist militarily Somalia's effort to seize the Ogaden (which was populated primarily by Somalis), so Ethiopia prevailed in the conflict. In December 1978 Moscow's ally, Vietnam, invaded Cambodia and replaced the pro-Beijing regime that had been in power with a pro-Hanoi one. The Carter administration announced that the United States would not get involved in quarrels between communist states.

In each of these instances, the U.S. government protested the expansion of communist bloc military activity but did little to stop it. The Americans also continued negotiating with the Soviets about arms control. This experience only served to confirm what the Soviets had concluded under Nixon about the U.S. national security process: despite U.S. government threats to link agreement on arms control to communist bloc behavior in the Third World, Washington could not enforce linkage. The Soviets saw the American people and the Congress as unwilling to sanction U.S. military involvement in the Third World. Heightened public criticism of the SALT process seemed to occur each time the Soviets and their allies intervened somewhere, but just as with the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, this criticism waned with the passage of time. For despite increased communist military activity in the Third World, the Carter administration continued to negotiate and actually signed the SALT II accord with the Soviets in 1979. From the Soviet point of view, the basic imperatives of U.S. domestic politics necessitated this: the administration's desire to reduce high interest rates and inflation (to which defense expenditures contributed), the strength of the peace movement, the public's desire for arms-control agreements, its fear of military involvement in the Third World, and Carter's desire to be reelected.

Brezhnev and his associates may have anticipated that Soviet intervention in Afghanistan would have no more adverse effect on arms control than previous communist interventions elsewhere. After all, the Americans apparently had accepted without much fuss the fact that a Marxist regime had come to power in Kabul in 1978. To Moscow, the dispatch of Soviet troops to defend that Marxist regime may have seemed like a much less momentous step for the United States to accept than the coming to power of a Marxist regime in the first place. If this indeed was Brezhnev's reasoning, he was clearly mistaken. For an immediate consequence of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was the Carter administration's withdrawal of the SALT II agreement from the Senate (which may well have voted to reject the accord). n12

The Soviets may well have hoped that the U.S. government would relent from this hard-line position with the passage of time. This, however, did not occur. Congress overwhelmingly approved increased U.S. aid to the Afghan mujaheddin. The Soviets did not appear to take seriously the possibility that Ronald Reagan, who had expressed serious reservations about the entire SALT process, could be elected. Moscow appeared to believe that the American public's desire for arms control and detente would, as before, ensure the election of a president who supported these policies. What the Soviets failed to understand was that the whole series of communist military interventions in the Third World, especially in Afghanistan, violated the American public's expectations about detente that Nixon and Kissinger had built up. n13

The First Reagan Administration

After Reagan's first election in 1980, the Soviets may have hoped that the prospects for arms control were not necessarily dim. After all, the conservative Reagan was willing to end the grain embargo against Moscow imposed by the liberal Carter in the wake of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Although the liberal Carter clearly did not have sufficient clout in the Senate to get SALT II ratified even before the invasion of Afghanistan, perhaps the conservative Reagan would be more successful in this regard just like Nixon was. Reagan's hard-line stance during the election campaign may just have been rhetoric. Moscow may have believed that U.S. economic problems, the strength of the peace movement in both Europe and the United States, and the previous Republican tradition of being willing to bargain pragmatically with the Soviets all militated in favor of the new Reagan administration pushing to ratify SALT II and working for additional arms-control agreements. n14

If this is what the Soviets hoped for from Reagan, they were quickly disappointing once he took office. Reagan's hard-line stance was not simply rhetoric. The reservations he expressed about the entire arms-control process were reflected in his administration's policies. Reagan was serious about not ratifying SALT II but renegotiating the accord entirely. Nor was he in any hurry to reach a new agreement. Instead, Reagan pushed for greatly increased defense expenditures, including funding for the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) which the Soviets claimed would violate the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. Further, Reagan insisted that Soviet behavior in the Third World was an obstacle to arms control. He also expanded U.S. aid to the mujaheddin and began supporting the Nicaraguan contras. Finally, in cooperation with the NATO allies, Reagan stepped up the process of deploying U.S. Pershing II and cruise missiles to certain countries in Western Europe.

During the first Reagan administration, the Soviets did not regard Reagan's harder line toward the USSR as a reflection of changed U.S. attitudes toward Moscow. Instead, the Soviets seemed to think that Reagan was somehow an aberration whose policies were extremely unpopular both in the United States and in Western Europe. Through the final years of Brezhnev as well as the brief reigns of Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko, the Soviets appeared to believe that a Soviet propaganda campaign could help galvanize Western public opinion into halting SDI, U.S. IRBM deployments to Western Europe, and aid to opposition movements fighting Third World Marxist regimes. Further, the Soviets seemed to think they could be this while deploying additional SS-20s as well as continuing military assistance to their beleaguered Marxist allies in the Third World. n15

The Soviets apparently believed much of their own propaganda about Reagan. They concluded that Congress, the American public, and pro-Western governments all feared his policies and would work to thwart them. The Soviets seemed ultimately to hope that Reagan could be defeated in his 1984 bid for reelection. Certain Soviet actions, such as their walking out of the INF negotiations in 1983, may have been designed to isolate Reagan. In this instance, the Soviets apparently hoped to rouse Congress, the American public, and other Western governments to blame the Reagan administration for the breakdown in the talks. If this was their objective, the Soviets clearly failed to achieve it. For, although the West had serious misgivings about Reagan's foreign and defense policies (as well as his domestic policies), Congress and Western governments continued to support his hard-line position against the Soviets. Of course, the American public resoundingly reelected Reagan in 1984. For, although, there were misgivings about Reagan's policies among the American public, Senators and Congressmen, and allied governments, all of these groups

had even greater misgivings about Soviet foreign and military policy.

What the Soviet apparently failed to understand was that their own actions, especially the invasion of Afghanistan, contributed to Reagan's rise in the first place. Nixon and Kissinger had led the American public to expect that detente would lead to reduced Soviet efforts to expand their influence in the Third World. When the Soviets instead increased their efforts to expand their influence and employed military means to do so, many observers noted that the American public felt that Moscow had taken advantage of detente. Continued Soviet military involvement in the Third World, deployment of additional SS-20s, and a generally hostile attitude toward the United States did not convince the American public that Reagan was the greatest threat to peace, but that the Soviet Union was instead. Despite Soviet efforts to discredit him, Reagan was reelected in 1984, and both Congress and the Western allies seemed generally prepared to cooperate with his hard-line anti-Soviet policies.

The Second Reagan Administration

Since Reagan's reelection, especially since Gorbachev came to power in March 1985, the Soviets have revised their perceptions of how the U.S. national security process operates. It was only at this point that the Soviets apparently realized that Reagan was no temporary phenomenon. Not only would Reagan be in office for four more years, but someone with similar policies would succeed him. The American public actually supported Reagan and his foreign and defense policies. Unlike under Nixon, the Soviets could no longer count on the American public and Congress to oppose increased defense expenditures or even heightened U.S. military involvement abroad.ⁿ¹⁶ It was much more difficult than it once was to exploit divisions between the Congress and the president, between the American public and the government, and between the Western allies and Washington.

Gorbachev, of course, also came to office seeking radical restructuring of the Soviet economy -- a goal that Brezhnev and Chernenko did not have.ⁿ¹⁷ It seems clear now that Gorbachev recognizes detente with the West is an essential precondition for the success of *perestroika*. If there was no detente and the United States, as well its allies, was increasing its defense expenditures, Gorbachev would have no choice but to increase Soviet defense expenditures, too. This could deny him the resources necessary to implement *perestroika*. If there was detente, Gorbachev would be in a better position to contain pressure to increase Soviet defense spending and may even be able to reduce it. Under these conditions, more resources would be available for restructuring the economy.

Gorbachev has also come to realize that whether the Soviets like it or not, detente with the West is dependent on Soviet behavior in the Third World. Thus, the success of *perestroika* is also dependent on how the West judges Soviet behavior in the Third World. Vyacheslav Dashichev explicitly acknowledged this relationship and described the stakes Brezhnev had pursued in the Third World as being of only marginal importance:

Could such a severe exacerbation of tension in Soviet-Western relations in the late seventies and early eighties have been avoided? Unquestionably so. It is our conviction that the crisis was caused chiefly by the miscalculations and incompetent approach of the Brezhnev leadership toward the resolution of foreign policy tasks. Though we were politically, militarily (via weapons supplies and advisers), and diplomatically involved in regional conflicts, we disregarded their influence on the relaxation of tension between the USSR and the West and on their entire system of relationships. There were no clear ideas of the Soviet Unions' true national state interests. These interests lay by no means in chasing petty and essentially formal gains associated with leadership coups in certain developing countries. The genuine interest lay in ensuring a favorable international situation for profound transformations in the Soviet Union's economy and sociopolitical system. However, at that time it was believed that no transformations were needed. . . .ⁿ¹⁸

Nevertheless, it was not clear when Gorbachev came to power that he would reach the conclusion that detente with the West was dependent on Soviet behavior in the Third World. In 1985 the Soviets and their allies launched stronger than ever military offensives against opposition forces fighting Third World Marxist regimes.ⁿ¹⁹ The Soviets also initiated a worldwide propaganda campaign against U.S. "neoglobalism" in an attempt to end American public,

congressional, and allied support for the Reagan Doctrine (support for anti-Soviet insurgent groups). Gorbachev only decided to withdraw Soviet forces from Afghanistan after it became clear that Moscow could not subdue the mujaheddin as long as they received U.S. assistance, and that the United States was unlikely to stop supporting them.

Regarding arms control, Gorbachev's position was initially uncompromising and appeared intended to force Reagan to change his position. Gorbachev at first insisted that an intermediate nuclear forces agreement would have to be linked to a START agreement as well as the abandonment of SDI. He designed this tactic to pressure the Reagan administration to agree to negotiate banning SDI. When this did not work, he later agreed to negotiate an INF agreement separately but insisted that British and French forces be included. This proposal, however, did not find support in Western Europe or the United States, and Gorbachev later agreed to the Western demand that British and French nuclear forces not be included in an INF agreement. At the Reykjavik summit, Gorbachev linked an agreement to reduce and later eliminate strategic nuclear weapons to an agreement banning SDI. When Reagan did not agree to this, the Soviets launched a massive propaganda campaign designed to encourage the American public, Congress, and the Western allies to demand an end to the Reagan administration's work on SDI. Gorbachev later backed down from this position when it became clear that opposition to SDI was not strong. n20

Compared with his predecessors, Gorbachev has had a much clearer understanding of U.S. strategy. He has a much better sense about how Soviet activity in one area will affect negotiations with the United States in another. He also seems to understand when efforts to encourage American public, congressional, and allied opposition to the administration's foreign and defense policy have failed, as well as when Soviet efforts to change it have become counterproductive. In other words, he realizes that U.S. foreign and defense policy in the 1980s does not face the kind of opposition it used to encounter more frequently in the 1970s from the American public, Congress, and allies. For the most part, these groups support American policy. The U.S. national security process, then, has not been as easily subject to disruption through differing interests on the part of the administration and these important groups whose support is essential if the administration's defense policies are to be implemented.

Despite his clearer understanding of the narrower limits of Soviet ability to influence U.S. strategy, Gorbachev has actively probed to determine what those limits are. He did, after all, try hard to bring about an end to the Reagan administration's work on SDI and support for the mujaheddin. The Soviets certainly benefited from Congress' forcing the administration to halt military support to the Nicaraguan contras. This Soviet probing effort to determine where public, congressional, and allied support for administration defense policies is weak will undoubtedly continue during the Bush administration and beyond.

Prospects for the Future

Gorbachev appears to understand that even when the American public, Congress, or allied governments successfully oppose or limit the U.S. administration's defense policies, Soviet efforts to exploit a particular weakness can prove counterproductive in the long run. For although the Soviets expanded their military activity in the Third World after the American public and Congress made clear that they would not support U.S. counterinsurgency efforts there, this increased Soviet activity ultimately contributed to the Reagan administration's defense buildup. From his actions so far, Gorbachev apparently wants to avoid behavior that may benefit Moscow in the short run but harm it in the long run.

It is doubtful, however, that Gorbachev would be as concerned as he appears to be about how Soviet behavior might affect U.S. defense policy had there not been an administration that pursued a strong defense policy which was basically supported by the American public, Congress, and the allies. Even then, Gorbachev actively probed to discover where these groups were unwilling to support Reagan administration.

Should the Bush administration not support a strong defense policy or should the American public, Congress, and the allies again reduce their support for one, Soviet efforts to seek concessions from the United States in arms-controls negotiations or to play an active military role in the Third World may well expand. A strong, well supported U.S. defense policy has forced Gorbachev to see how Soviet external behavior affects the prospects for his ambitious

domestic goals. At the same time, a U.S. administration overly confident about its own strength vis-a-vis the USSR and believing the Soviets can be forced to make large concessions may prove equally harmful. For such a policy might contribute to the overthrow of Gorbachev and the rise to power of Soviet leaders who do not appreciate the need for domestic reform and detente with the West as much as he does. Too strong a defense policy also runs the risk of losing the support of the American public, Congress, and the allies, as well as giving rise to the sort of precipitate U.S. retrenchment that occurred after Vietnam (which convinced Moscow that U.S. power was waning).

Considering the record of the entire Reagan administration, it indeed avoided the pitfalls of too hard or too soft a policy. It pursued a strong defense program but was willing to negotiate arms control and avoided direct U.S. involvement in unpopular protracted conflicts. The one arms-control agreement it negotiated on INF appears much less likely to undergo the domestic criticism than the SALT I and SALT II agreements did. Both the Bush administration and future ones would do well to match the Reagan administration's record in this regard.

Acknowledgment: This article is based on the author's presentation at the symposium on "The National Security Process: The Making of National Strategy for the 1990's and Beyond," sponsored by the National Defense University, December 1-2, 1988, in Washington, D.C.

Notes

- n1. For an excellent analysis of the Soviet discussion as to why Nixon and Kissinger were pursuing arms control and adopting a more moderate line toward the USSR, see Morton C. Schwartz, *Soviet Perceptions of the United States* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 108-117.
- n2. U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), *Arms Control and Disarmament Agreements* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, August 1980), pp. 148-149.
- n3. Raymond L. Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1985), pp. 131-134.
- n4. A member of the SALT negotiating team in Geneva, Raymond Garthoff, makes this point in *ibid.*, p. 147.
- n5. For more on the Soviet view of the relationship between peaceful coexistence and involvement in local war in the Third World at this time, see Mark N. Katz, *The Third World in Soviet Military Thought* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), pp. 79-80.
- n6. For an excellent analysis comparing the different U.S. and Soviet conceptions of detente, see Garthoff, ch. 2.
- n7. ACDA, pp. 201-206.
- n8. For a discussion of Soviet views on the effect of American public opinion on U.S. arms control policy, see Schwartz, pp. 79-88.
- n9. For current information on the characteristics, including numbers of MIRVs, on U.S. and Soviet SNDVs, see International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance 1988-89* (London: IISS, 1988), pp. 210-212, 215-217.
- n10. For a detailed account of this episode, see Garthoff, pp. 851-853.
- n11. See Angela Stent, "The USSR and Western Europe," and Robbin F. Laird, "Soviet Nuclear Weapons in Europe," both in Robbin F. Laird and Erik P. Hoffmann, eds., *Soviet Foreign Policy in a Changing World* (New York: Aldine, 1986), pp. 443-456 and 457-470 respectively.
- n12. On Kremlin consternation regarding the U.S. reaction to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, see Adam B. Ulam, *Dangerous Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 258-259.
- n13. On U.S. and Soviet assessments of why detente failed, see Garthoff, ch. 29.
- n14. Moscow's initial hopefulness that Reagan was actually a moderate and that the Soviets could do business with him is noted in Ulam, pp. 287-288.
- n15. For an analysis of the Soviet position on arms control during the first Reagan Administration, see Myron Hedlin, "Moscow's Line on Arms Control," *Problems of Communism* 33:3 (May-June 1984), pp. 19-36.
- n16. On Gorbachev's more moderate policy regarding arms control and involvement in the Third World, see Stephen Sestanovich, "Gorbachev's Foreign Policy: Diplomacy of Decline," *Problems of Communism* 37:1 (January-February 1988), pp. 1-5.

n17. During his brief tenure in office, Andropov also sought to improve Soviet economic performance. He concentrated his efforts, however, on improving labor productivity and discipline as well as reducing corruption, not on introducing market incentives into the economy. In any event, he was not able to accomplish much.

n18. Prof. Vyacheslav Dashichev, "East-West: Quest for New Relations. On the Priorities of the Soviet State's Foreign Policy," *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, May 18, 1988, p. 14, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Soviet Union Daily Report, May 20, 1988, pp. 4-8.

n19. Katz, "Anti-Soviet Insurgencies: Growing Trend or Passing Phase?" *Orbis* 30:2 (Summer 1986), pp. 365-392.

n20. On the evolution of Gorbachev's arms-control position, see Michael Mandelbaum and Strobe Talbott, *Reagan and Gorbachev* (New York: Vintage, 1987).

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