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From the Truman Doctrine to the Second Superpower Detente: The Rise and Fall of the Cold War

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This article provides an overview of the Cold War from its origins in 1947 to the present day. It begins with a discussion of the balance of power after the war and asks why – if the USSR was as weak as many assumed – did a very powerful United States regard it as a threat to the West's vital interests. This discussion is then followed by an examination of the Cold War as a 'system' which concludes that for both superpowers bipolarity was an acceptable foundation upon which to base their security in the postwar period. The article then examines the crisis of the Cold War in the late 1960s and how Kissinger tried and failed to resolve the problem of world order through the strategy of superpower detente. This brings the discussion to the second Cold War. Here the author explores both the coherence of the Reagan strategy and the degree to which Reagan succeeded where Kissinger failed in establishing a more stable international system. The analysis then concludes with an examination of the origins and implications of the second superpower detente and poses and seeks to answer the difficult question: will the end of the Cold War also mean the end of the 'Long Peace'?

1. *Introduction*

Since the late 1970s the world has witnessed two quite dramatic shifts in the relationship between the United States and the USSR. The first, beginning in the last years of the Carter Presidency, led to the apparent death of superpower detente and the return to policies and rhetoric reminiscent of the 1950s. The second, following Reagan's electoral victory in 1984, not only witnessed the termination of this 'second' Cold War, but the establishment of a new 'entente cordiale' between Washington and Moscow – much to the surprise of those who only a few years previously had been predicting that an end to the antagonism was 'almost impossible to imagine'.¹

These quite extraordinary developments clearly need to be explained. However, comprehending the present assumes a knowledge of the past. After all, the roots of the Cold War go back a long way. Moreover, there have been periods of relaxation before which have always come to nothing. To understand the rise and fall of the second Cold War therefore presupposes a knowledge of the history of the Cold War itself – and an answer to at least three questions: (1) why did the Cold War begin in the first place?; (2) why

has it endured for so long?; and (3) why did its first attempted reform in the 1970s fail so miserably? Only when we have analysed these problems will we be able to assess whether the Cold War today has come to an end; and, if it has, what the consequences will be for the international system. Before discussing the future, however, let us return to the immediate postwar period when some assumed that a powerful United States was threatened by no-one, not even the Soviet Union.

2. *US Power and the 'Soviet Threat'*

US emergence as the unchallenged power within the capitalist world was the result of two factors: a huge economic base that had been ruthlessly and efficiently developed following the Civil War; and two world wars that together revolutionized the US economy while destroying or undermining any potential rival. Without its original base the United States would not have had the weight it had in the world. Without World Wars I and II, however, the United States could not have translated that weight into a position of absolute dominance. Thus a process which began in 1915 – when financial power began

to shift from London to New York – ended thirty years later when the United States found itself sitting astride the world as the undisputed hegemon.²

In 1945 the United States was in a uniquely favourable situation. It controlled just over half of the world's GNP, most of its food surpluses and nearly all of its financial reserves as well.³ Moreover, the war had generated a new industrial revolution in the United States that had given it a major lead in nearly all of the key technologies. Yet the United States was not simply in a position of economic dominance, it possessed enormous military power as well.⁴ The United States alone controlled the atomic bomb and the means to deliver it. It had created a worldwide network of military bases stretching from China across the Pacific to Europe. The US Navy and Air Force were also unchallengeable, while the two powers that had previously threatened US interests – Germany and Japan – had surrendered unconditionally and were now under military occupation.

After 1945 there was only one nation that appeared to have the capacity to challenge the United States: the Soviet Union. This threat, however, was more theoretical than real – for three reasons.

First, whereas the war had doubled US economic power to around USD 200 billion it had reduced Soviet economic strength by about 25% to a dollar equivalent of approximately one quarter of the US level. Moreover, it was widely assumed that it would take the USSR several years to make good its wartime losses. Indeed, according to official US figures, by 1950 the Soviet Union's economy was so inferior and overstretched that it did not even begin to compare with that of the United States.⁵

Secondly, although the USSR had defeated Nazi Germany and still fielded a large army, its military capability was not as great as first appeared. For one thing it had demobilized the greater part of the Red Army and returned it to the civilian economy where there was a massive shortage of labour.⁶ In fact, in 1947 (according to Western figures) the USSR simply did not possess the numbers thought necessary to overwhelm the allies stationed in Western

Europe.⁷ Nor did Moscow have the military strength needed to fight and win a global war against the United States. It had no navy worth speaking of, no long-range bombing capability and, until 1949, no nuclear weapons either. Significantly, Western intelligence assumed that Soviet military flaws would prevent it contemplating a war with the West until the mid-1950s at the very earliest.⁸

Finally, despite the appearance of strength and cohesion the Soviet Union had all the hallmarks of a deeply insecure power.⁹ Stalin may have led the country to victory over Germany. His policies after the war, however, reveal a deep sense of unease about the nation's future. He had good reason to be concerned. The economy was shattered. The people were literally exhausted. There was popular dissatisfaction at home.¹⁰ In Eastern Europe, Moscow confronted the uphill task of remoulding the region to its needs against peoples who, in the main, were both anti-Soviet and anti-communist.¹¹ Internationally, the Soviet Union faced the United States. Stalin, clearly, must have viewed the general postwar situation with great apprehension. Under these circumstances it was hardly surprising that before 1947 at least the USSR acted with decided caution.¹²

3. *Cold War Controversies*


The quite extraordinary imbalance of power between the USA and the USSR after the war had led many radical (and not so radical) critics of US foreign policy to ask a simple, but crucial question: if, as it appears, there was no serious Soviet challenge to the West, why did politicians and strategists act as if there was one? Dissatisfied with the 'orthodox' argument that the USSR was a dangerous menace to Western civilization to which the United States legitimately and belatedly responded in 1947, several historians of the period have sought to analyse the Cold War in other ways. This has led, not surprisingly, to a long and lively historical debate amongst those sceptical of the traditional refrain that the Cold War was the consequence of Soviet aggression in the postwar period.

One alternative explanation (derived from international relations theory) is that the conflict was the result of mutual misperception. Neither the USA nor the USSR actually threatened the other's interests; however, their intense mutual suspicion – born of their prewar experiences and their postwar fears – impelled them to view the other in the worst possible light. The result was the speedy collapse of the wartime alliance and the development of a highly antagonistic relationship.

Another influential interpretation has ascribed the Cold War to an unfortunate Western tendency to draw simple and misleading parallels between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. Assuming that Stalin was like Hitler (and Soviet totalitarianism no different to German), postwar Western leaders – according to this analysis – inevitably assumed the worst about Soviet intentions. The result was to make the West more anxious about the USSR than it otherwise should have been.

A third ('internalist') school of thought has taken a very different line, arguing that the key to understanding the Cold War lies in a proper appreciation of the peculiarities of the United States as a nation. Because of its history, the United States, it is pointed out, was either politically incapable of coexisting with a country like the Soviet Union (because it did not correspond to the democratic ideal) or ideologically predisposed to suspect it because of a deeply rooted detestation of all things radical. Indeed, so widespread was the popular antipathy to communism in the United States, that even if some sections of the establishment were prepared to sanction a deal with Stalin, large sectors of the US electorate (particularly the emigrés from Eastern Europe and US Catholics) were not. United States hostility towards (and logically fear of) the USSR was therefore built into the US political culture and nothing the USSR did, or could have done, would have made any difference.

The most critical, challenging and controversial interpretation of the Cold War, however, has been advanced by a loose inchoate intellectual current known as the 'revisionists'. The conflict – they insist – was not the result of a justifiable US response to Soviet

expansion. Rather, it was the direct consequence of an official US refusal to accept the legitimacy of Soviet power in Europe after the war. So deeply attached was the United States to the ideal of an open world economy dominated by free enterprise that it simply could not accept the fact that the USSR had a right to exist outside of that system. However – according to most revisionists – it was both convenient and useful to portray the USSR as the villain of the piece by suggesting that it was Soviet (rather than US) intransigence that led to the collapse of the relationship after 1945. Indeed, Washington, it is argued, exaggerated the idea of the 'Soviet threat' in order to advance its own foreign policy objectives: by claiming that it was engaged in a defensive attempt to prevent Soviet expansion, the United States could thus legitimize and obscure its own imperialistic ambitions. By overstating the 'Soviet menace' Washington also managed to overcome any domestic resistance to these plans. The Soviet threat even had an economic dimension as well, insofar as it provided the necessary justification for the high levels of military spending regarded as essential for US economic health in the postwar period. 

Not surprisingly, the radical case against US foreign policy met with widespread opposition in Cold War United States in the 1950s. William Appleman Williams, the doyen of the revisionists, was professionally marginalized and even subject to political harassment because of his non-conformist theories.¹³ The collapse of the Cold War consensus in the 1960s, however, did much to undermine the orthodox viewpoint, and, as a result, the revisionist school gained many new adherents. The intellectual consequence of this was to virtually destroy the credibility of the traditionalists who had hitherto claimed that US actions had been a legitimate response to a major Soviet challenge. Nor were the orthodox successful in defending their position. Try as they might, the urbane Schlesinger and the vituperative Maddox¹⁴ simply failed to convince their peers that there had indeed been a serious Soviet threat after the war. Even the so-called postrevisionists, although they rejected the radicalism and the materialism of the revisionists, had to agree with

them that the USSR was not a particularly serious problem for the West after 1945.¹⁵

Yet the radicals (and even some of their less radical liberal critics) left one fairly obvious question hanging in the air unanswered: to wit what had been the objective basis of the postwar conflict between the United States and the USSR? Had it all been a misunderstanding? Were American post-war leaders as myopic as their liberal critics seemed to imply or as cynical as some on the left had suggested? Had there been no Soviet threat after all? For while the sceptics may have successfully demonstrated that the contest was an uneven one, and even that the United States had utilized the 'Soviet threat' for its own purposes, they had still failed to explain why powerful United States may have had reason to feel insecure in the post-war period. To understand why it did, it is essential to analyse the enormous impact that World War II was to have upon the foundations of the world system.

4. *Explaining the Cold War*


The conflict between the capitalist world and the USSR obviously did not begin after World War II. Since 1917 there had been an intense hostility between the Soviet Union and the West. Assuming that it could not build socialism in one backward country the Bolsheviks, after having seized power, hoped and planned for the overthrow of capitalism in the other industrialized nations of Europe. In turn, the capitalist countries – internally unstable after the war anyway – felt deeply threatened by the new Soviet state and assumed that they would not be secure until the USSR had either been reincorporated into the world economic system or destroyed altogether.¹⁶

In the broadest historic sense neither the Bolsheviks nor the West were to achieve their principal objective. The USSR failed to stimulate revolution abroad; while the West (mainly because of its own divisions and internal problems) could not eliminate Soviet power. Yet, in a very real way, the capitalist world had temporarily solved the Soviet question. It had dammed up the flood of Bolshevism and inflicted huge damage on

the new Soviet state. It had then witnessed the political implosion of the Bolshevik Party in the 1920s and its destruction by Stalin in the 1930s. A buffer zone designed to contain Communism had also been created in Eastern Europe. And finally, in one country after another the communist and revolutionary left had been physically eliminated. The Soviet Union may not have been destroyed; indeed to many it shone out as an industrial and political beacon in a sea of economic stagnation and political reaction. The fact remains, however, that the once revolutionary regime had been contained and transformed into a highly autocratic isolated state with few allies abroad.

From the West's point of view, therefore, World War II was a disaster: in part because it permitted a growth of Soviet power; but also because it generated a whole range of new problems for which there appeared to be no ready solution. Thus, by 1945, although the United States was in a uniquely powerful position, it faced immense challenges. There were several reasons why. The barrier to the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe had been eliminated. The main props of anti-communism in Europe (Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany) had been destroyed. The communist parties had become mass organizations. Admiration for the USSR and the Soviet economic model had grown. And, although there was little talk of revolution, there was a widespread belief that planning was the only answer to mankind's problems. Finally, in Europe itself the war had left a series of unresolved economic difficulties which many assumed (and some feared) that the market would not be able to solve.¹⁷

The collapse of the interwar order inevitably posed great problems for the West in general and the United States in particular. The old world had been wiped away and it was widely assumed that the new one would be fundamentally antagonistic to the open international economic system regarded as desirable by the United States.¹⁸ Eastern Europe had already 'gone' – and in spite of the studied moderation of the communists, Western Europe (it was feared) might easily follow suit. The danger of course was not the Red Army, nor indeed the immediate activi-


ties of the communist parties, but economic decline.¹⁹ This, it was argued, would in time lead to a radicalization of the communist (and probably the socialist) left – followed by the imposition of greater state control of trade and industry to prevent total economic collapse. A statized Western Europe would then develop closer ties with the emerging planned economies of Eastern Europe. Finally, this developing entity would – it was maintained – forge tight links with the USSR which clearly would have welcomed the re-orientation of Europe as a whole away from the world market towards the Soviet sphere of influence. This, in essence, was the meaning of the ‘Soviet threat’ in 1947. 

Confronted with this very real possibility the United States, in a series of audacious steps, mobilized its not inconsiderable strength to solve the crisis – legitimizing this by claiming that the Soviet Union was about to sweep into Europe. The US offensive assumed a number of forms. At home it was expressed in a wave of anti-communism which was very effectively used to ‘scare the hell out of Congress’ so that it would grant long-term economic (and military) aid to Western Europe.²⁰ In Western Europe itself it led to the expulsion of the communists from government, and, where feasible, the establishment of parallel anti-communist trade unions. Under the cover provided by the Marshall Plan, the United States also set about restructuring West European labour in an attempt to bring it more into line with US practices.²¹ Pressure was brought to bear too on the European elites in an effort to force them along the path of economic integration. This, in turn, was accompanied by a series of measures designed to strengthen Western defence – on the assumption that there could be no economic or political recovery without military security as well. Finally, the United States started to think seriously about an economic blockade of the Soviet Union. After all, if – as it was reasoned – the USSR was a threat, then it had to be treated like an enemy state.

To US policy-makers no doubt these moves appeared to have been defensive in character. They did not seem like that to the USSR, however, whose position was now

threatened in several ways. First, if the USA were successful in rebuilding Western Europe this might weaken (possibly undermine) the USSR’s tenuous hold over Eastern Europe.²² More directly, by attacking the communist parties, the United States threatened to reduce Soviet influence in Western Europe as well. Nor could Moscow have viewed European integration or a closer relationship between the United States and Western Europe with anything but alarm, insofar as both moves strengthened the unity and weight of the capitalist world in relation to the USSR. Finally, as Western economic measures gave way to military ones, the Soviet Union was bound to be concerned not only about Western military intentions, but also about the costs which a new arms race might impose upon its much smaller, shattered economy.²³

Confronted by what it saw as a real challenge to its position – at a time when its own economic situation was especially vulnerable – the USSR responded by launching a political counter-offensive: first, against the Marshall Plan in 1947; then, later against the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; and, finally, against the more general rearmament programme organized by the United States during 1950. Outside of Europe Moscow also mobilized its forces and gave the green light for a militant attack against imperialism. Finally, in order to protect its flank, it reshaped Eastern Europe and sealed the area off from Western influence – these last moves leading to the Czech coup in February 1948 and the Berlin blockade four months later.

Ironically, these somewhat desperate actions not only failed to deter the United States but actually brought about legitimization of the original US strategy. They also spurred Washington and its allies on to even greater efforts. From the Western viewpoint, therefore, ‘Stalin’s crazy actions’ (as Truman was to call them) could not have been better timed.²⁴ Moreover, by acting in the way in which it did, the USSR was to undermine the moral and political authority it had acquired  as a result of its wartime efforts. The positive vision of an heroic nation was thus superseded in the West by the negative image of a powerful police state – imposing Stalinism

upon the hapless nations of Eastern Europe while planning the destruction of Western democracy. In this way, the insecure attempt of the Soviet Union to prevent the fulfilment of US plans, could easily be (and was) portrayed as part of a 'grand design' whose target – to quote the first US Ambassador to Moscow – was the 'great globe itself'.²⁵

5. *The Cold War as a System*

The Cold War thus grew out of a particular conjuncture in which Western anxieties about both the expansion of Soviet power and the postwar economic crisis coincided to produce a genuine concern about the long-term prospects of the free enterprise system – a fear inevitably exacerbated by the explosive growth of the communist parties during the war and the USSR's hostile response to US policies during and after 1947.

Yet what was most remarkable was the speed with which this conflict froze into a defined pattern. While the militarization of containment may have only seriously begun in 1950, long before then the antagonism had assumed an almost unchangeable form. Certainly by the end of 1947 there were few US citizens (with the exception of the remarkable Kennan) who either envisaged or sought its termination. Indeed, Kennan's rapid marginalization from the bureaucracy was precisely because he was opposed to the United States' easy acceptance of an institutionalized Cold War. In spite of his protests nothing changed. Thus, what began life as a series of US measures designed to rebuild Western Europe became a system – reinforced by a crisis here, a Soviet move there, and an analysis of the protagonists which insisted that Moscow was impelled to expand and that only the United States could prevent it from achieving world domination.²⁶

According to both Washington and Moscow the Cold War was the consequence of an irreconcilable antagonism between two hostile systems. Yet, in spite of its apparent intensity, the relationship was in fact far less dangerous and more controlled than it appeared to be on the surface. One reason for this of course was the realization that an uncontrolled conflict would inevitably lead

to a war that neither side could win. There was nevertheless another equally important factor involved: namely the recognition by both powers that a carefully managed antagonism actually served their respective interests.

First, it was fairly apparent that the Cold War had important domestic functions. At the most general level the tensions generated by the conflict helped reinforce discipline and cohesion within the capitalist and Soviet systems. Cold War fears were also used to justify major policy initiatives as well. For example, by exploiting the crisis created by the Czech coup and the Berlin blockade Truman was able to 'sell' both the Marshall Plan and NATO to Congress and the American people. Two years later, Acheson and Nitze then utilized the tensions generated by Korea to get Truman to agree to an already planned rearmament programme.²⁷ Stalin engaged in the same game. After 1946, for instance, he stressed the fact that the USSR was under threat from a 'war-like West' so as to mobilize a tired and dispirited people into renewed economic effort. He then manipulated the same theme to justify isolating the country from dangerous contact with the more advanced capitalist democracies.²⁸

Secondly (and somewhat ironically), the Cold War helped the two antagonists legitimize their respective social systems. In the ongoing struggle for the hearts and minds of men (and women) the two opposing elites tended to paint the most lurid picture possible of conditions on the other side. In the capitalist countries the masses were constantly reminded that if they ever sought to move beyond the market, this would only lead to the sort of economic inefficiency and political repression that existed in Stalinist Russia.²⁹ In the East they were informed that if they exchanged their socialist lot for capitalism, they would, inevitably, suffer the same economic insecurity endured by the workers in the Western countries. The paradoxical result of this ongoing ideological struggle was to make 'actually existing socialism' the most potent argument for capitalism – and the inequities and irrationalities of the market an important prop for the elites in the Soviet bloc.

Thirdly, both Washington and Moscow benefited from the Cold War because it secured their respective positions on the European continent. First, the conflict (or at least the appearance of one) reinforced European dependency upon the two powers. The 'Russian menace' gave the United States more influence and leverage in Western Europe than it would have had otherwise. Similarly, real (or imagined) fears of NATO and 'German revanchism' strengthened the Soviet position in Eastern Europe. Secondly, by imposing a two-bloc system upon Europe, the Cold War effectively contained, without completely eliminating, the disintegrative impact of nationalism – a force that was as inimicable to US interests in the postwar period as it was to the USSR's. Thirdly, and possibly most important of all, by freezing the division of Europe the Cold War provided a solution to the once insoluble 'German question'. As a result, Germany was split into two separate parts and thereafter was unable to challenge the peace in Europe as it had done twice before in the twentieth century.³⁰ Finally, the bipolar system that arose as a result of the ongoing conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union helped justify their respective world positions. Fighting the Soviet threat effectively legitimized the international position of the United States – in the same way that anti-imperialism provided a useful cover for the Soviet Union's forays abroad.

Historically, therefore, the Cold War served the interests of both the USSR and the United States. For this reason neither sought to alter the nature of the relationship once it had been established. Their goal, therefore, was not so much victory over the other as the maintenance of a balance.³¹ In this sense the Cold War was more of a carefully controlled game with commonly agreed rules than a contest where there could be clear winners and losers.³²

It is true of course that the USSR, because of its economic and military inferiority, felt the strain of the Cold War more than the United States. As a result, Moscow was always under greater pressure to reduce the costs of the conflict than its more powerful adversary. In this respect the Soviet Union

had a greater interest in 'peace' than the USA. We should not forget, moreover, that the Cold War had its US critics. Liberals, for example, feared that in the name of anti-communism, the United States would be forced to support conservatives and reactionaries around the world. Others, like Lippmann, believed that it would lead to an overcommitment of US power. Even some on the right had their doubts, arguing that high military spending would weaken the competitive edge of the US economy. And then there was Kennan, who questioned the US refusal to seek a negotiated settlement with the USSR.

Yet in spite of the critics, policy-makers in Washington showed little inclination to change course. Why should they after all? The struggle against the USSR had provided the United States with a clearly defined point of opposition around which to plan a US foreign policy. It had also legitimized US leadership of the capitalist world and united the West after decades of conflict. The Cold War furthermore had forced communism onto the defensive in the advanced industrial countries. Moreover, the postwar international system that had emerged as a result of the Cold War was a good deal more stable than the one which had collapsed so traumatically in 1939. Herein, perhaps, was the most potent argument of all for hanging on to the new status quo. Why – it was argued – tamper with a bipolar arrangement that had brought such order to the world after decades of disorder?³³ To its critics the Cold War may have seemed dangerous, costly and unnecessary; to its intellectual supporters, however, it seemed to provide a stable foundation for a US management of the international system. Identified with success abroad, and supported by a powerful anti-communist consensus at home, there was little chance of the United States moving beyond the Cold War once it had begun.

6. *The Crisis of the Cold War and the Origins of Detente*

The relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union was therefore a profoundly contradictory one. On the one hand, so long as the USSR stood outside of and in

opposition to the 'free world' economy (whilst posing as an historic alternative), it was bound to be regarded as a threat. On the other hand, this 'threat' so-called was not only less dangerous than the West claimed but was positively useful as well. For this reason the United States was prepared to accept the existence of the USSR and to build up its own position – as well as that of the Western world – around it. This is why, in the last analysis, the United States aimed only to contain the Soviet Union rather than to seek its elimination. A permanent conflict with a weak and unattractive competitor had much to recommend it.

The stability of this relationship, however, depended upon a certain balance of forces which could not last for ever. Concretely, the ability of the United States to sustain its chosen postwar strategy rested upon six key factors: US military superiority over the USSR; continued domestic support for its international role; a reasonable degree of success in the implementation of its foreign policy abroad; loyal and dependent allies; an economy that could bear the costs of the United States being the world's leading policeman; and, finally, a general agreement that the Soviet Union was a serious political threat to the West.

By the end of the 1960s these assumptions had been shattered. First, by 1969, the USSR had finally achieved nuclear parity – thus undermining the central prop of the United States' original strategy of containment. Vietnam then destroyed the foreign policy consensus within the United States itself. Western Europe too began to question the Cold War – with West Germany in particular demanding a new opening to the East. Declining productivity, increased social spending and the costs of the conflict in South East Asia also made it increasingly difficult for the US economy to sustain the heavy burden of the Cold War. Finally, as a result of the Sino-Soviet split, the declining appeal of communism and Soviet economic problems, the USSR no longer appeared to be such a dangerous political challenge to the capitalist world. Taken together, these changes were bound to have an impact upon US foreign policy. Certainly, by the end of the 1960s

there were many who believed that the United States had, of necessity, to move 'beyond the Cold War'.³⁴

It fell to Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger to manage the change from one epoch – when the United States had literally been able to dominate world affairs and discipline the USSR from a defined 'position of strength' – to another, when it was no longer capable of doing so.³⁵ The strategy they advanced to effect this transition went under the formal title of Detente.

Detente, we should remind ourselves, did not involve a formal abandonment of containment. Nor was it meant to lead to an alteration in the basic structure of bipolarity. Rather it would (it was hoped) help domesticate the Soviet Union and as a consequence make it easier for a United States in crisis to maintain global order. For twenty years the United States had assumed that Moscow could (or would) not play by the rules of the international game. Now, according to Kissinger, because of growing contradictions within Stalinism there was a real chance to change this – but only if the United States pursued the correct line. Confronted by several new problems – economic stagnation, the split with China and growing turbulence in Eastern Europe – the USSR it was felt would now accept that its security would be better served by developing a co-operative relationship with the United States. This might help the Soviet Union; however, it would also help the United States in its search to establish a new equilibrium in a more difficult world.³⁶

Kissinger's objective was thus clear: to gain a Soviet acceptance of the status quo – in exchange for a US agreement in the field of arms control supported by expanded economic relations between the capitalist world and the Soviet bloc. This in turn would be reinforced first by a tacit US promise not to exploit Soviet problems in Eastern Europe; and second by the threat that if Moscow did continue to challenge international stability Washington would feel free to exploit the full potential inherent in its new relationship with Peking. The United States was prepared to make certain concessions to the USSR, but only if Moscow was prepared to reduce

its support for disturbance in the world. Over the longer term the hope was that the USSR would become so closely associated with the world market that a dependency relationship would be established from which it would be too costly for the Soviet Union to escape.³⁷ A few even believed that as detente deepened at the economic level the Soviet bloc would begin to move away from planning towards the market, and from a position of relative isolation to full integration into the world economy.³⁸

A successful detente would thus lead to a modification (but not to a total redefinition) of the US–Soviet relationship. For twenty years, from a position of great strength, the US had been able to underwrite global stability. Now this was no longer possible. Kissinger, however, saw a way out of this impasse by exploiting Soviet problems but in such a way that it would be in Moscow's interest to help the United States maintain world order.³⁹ If nothing else, detente was certainly an audacious strategy. Moreover, if it could be made to work, it promised a great deal. In the short term, it would permit the US to leave Vietnam without this leading to the collapse of the South. In time, it would provide the West with greater leverage in the Soviet bloc. It would certainly keep the West Europeans happy and the West Germans in line. Finally, and more generally, it would permit the United States to reduce the increasingly heavy burden that the Cold War had imposed upon it by the late 1960s – but without this leading to an expansion of Soviet power, or of more international disturbance. It would, in other words, provide the US with 'containment on the cheap'.⁴⁰

7. *The Contradictions of Henry Kissinger*

Superpower detente was part of a more general restructuring that took place in the relationship between the capitalist and communist worlds in the 1970s. However, while this led to a new relationship between the two parts of Europe and Germany (as well as between the United States and China) neither Moscow nor Washington was able to establish the 'new deal' they had both been seeking. In short, while detente in general

succeeded, superpower detente failed. The question is why?

First, there is little doubt that detente met with powerful opposition within the United States. The US military was unhappy with it; so too were the conservative right, the still influential Cold War foreign policy elite, the powerful Zionist lobby and key sections of the trade union movement. Indeed, long before the so-called Soviet offensive in the Third World this coalition had done much to weaken Kissinger's new strategy.⁴¹ What then destroyed it completely was Watergate at home and the failure of detente to guarantee international stability abroad. After Saigon fell in 1975 – to be succeeded by a series of 'Marxist-Leninist' revolutions in Africa, the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 – many US citizens concluded that Kissinger's clever strategy had simply failed to deter aggression. Detente had been designed to help the United States manage the international system at lower cost. It became identified, however, with growing global anarchy and US decline.⁴²

There were also a number of problems inherent in the whole project itself. For one thing it was by no means clear that both sides had agreed to abide by the same rules when they signed the original Basic Code back in 1972.⁴³ Further, detente was based upon a flawed political economy which assumed that it would be relatively easy to expand US–Soviet economic relations. As it turned out, because of its non-competitive manufacturing base, there was little that the USSR could really export to the United States.⁴⁴ More seriously perhaps, detente was unable to solve the basic dilemma of how to manage Soviet military power – especially in the 1970s when the West in general and the United States in particular were cutting back on their military spending. Clearly the USSR never acquired military superiority; however, it was capable (because of its increased military reach) of projecting itself around the world without the United States being able to do very much about it.

There was, however, a deeper 'structural' impediment to detente. For over twenty years – as we have argued – the United States

and the USSR had defined themselves in terms of a managed but nevertheless highly abrasive conflict. This had shaped their respective systems, their alliances and of course their positions in the world arena. Detente, inevitably, threatened all this. Hence, as objectively necessary as it might have been at one level, at another it posed some real difficulties.

For example, during a period of relaxation it was clearly less easy for the United States and the USSR to control their respective European satellites. Equally (and this was a real problem for the USSR) detente, by removing the image of a hostile enemy, tended to create certain internal problems. Indeed, one constant Soviet refrain throughout the 1970s was that co-existence at the interstate level would actually require more, rather than less, 'ideological vigilance' at home.⁴⁵ Finally, without a clear point of opposition it was extremely difficult for either the USSR or the USA to legitimize their international roles. Fighting 'US imperialism' or the 'Soviet threat' had given a clear definition to both powers in the past, and there were many (on both sides) who feared that without a defined objective it would be impossible to develop a coherent global strategy.

Detente therefore presented many problems for the US and the USSR, although as the less advanced of the two the Soviet Union had a greater vested interest in modifying the superpower competition than its rival. For this reason Moscow remained more deeply committed to the preservation of detente than the United States. In the United States, however, it was literally destroyed before it was born.⁴⁶ Hence, what began as an intellectually sophisticated way of managing both the USSR and the world while guaranteeing America's continued dominance over both ended in disaster. Moving 'beyond the Cold War' clearly proved far more difficult than even Kissinger would have thought possible.

world based almost entirely upon its conservative interpretation of postwar history.⁴⁷ According to this view, during the Cold War a militarily powerful United States had been able to underwrite global stability. Since the late 1960s, however, the United States had grown weak and international anarchy had been the inevitable consequence.⁴⁸ If the United States wished to restore stability, therefore, it had to learn the simple, but important, lesson of history that taught that only when the United States was strong could there be order in the world.⁴⁹ The Administration's view of the USSR led to exactly the same conclusion. The Soviet Union as a totalitarian system was impelled to expand: the United States as leader of the free world had a duty to thwart Moscow's design. This could only be done, however, when the United States had the sort of military edge it had possessed before Kissinger and Carter had undermined US capability.⁵⁰ Finally, unlike Kissinger – but very much like US leaders in the 1950s – Reagan himself saw the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union in decidedly moral terms. This was no simple power struggle he insisted, but a clash between the forces of light and darkness on an international scale.⁵¹

Yet, while the Reagan Administration's analysis of the Soviet Union was decidedly orthodox, the strategy it outlined to deal with the Soviet problem was not. Previous administrations – as we have seen – had assumed that there was little that could (or should) be done to change the USSR. Some of Reagan's advisers took a very different view.⁵² Containment, they argued, was too defensive. The United States had to do more than just defend the cause of freedom around the world; it had to promote it as well.⁵³ This, it was maintained, was both necessary and feasible: necessary, because the Soviet Union had increased and would continue to increase its weight within the international system; feasible, because although the Soviet threat had grown in the 1970s, so too had its economic difficulties at home and its burdens abroad.⁵⁴ If the United States could take the offensive, therefore, there was a good chance of bringing enormous pressure to

8. *Reagan and the Second Cold War*

The Reagan Administration came to office with a simple yet coherent theory of the

bear upon the USSR. Concretely, by giving active support to those opposed to communism in the Third World⁵⁵ while at the same time squeezing a decaying Soviet system, this would force the Soviet elite to pull back internationally and to contemplate domestic economic reform.⁵⁶

The US task – thus argued the Reaganites – was clear: to seize the initiative and exploit it to the full. If the United States was successful, then Soviet communism might be placed in that same dustbin of history where it had been promising to consign capitalism since 1917.⁵⁷

9. *End of the Cold War? End of the Long Peace?*

Reagan was, without doubt, one of the most conservative Presidents to have occupied the White House after World War II. He was certainly one of the most uncompromising in his attitude towards the USSR. Yet in spite of this, during his second term there was to be an extraordinary transformation in the superpower relationship. Thus, after his second election four summit meetings were held, the INF treaty was signed, bilateral relations expanded and key regional disputes were resolved. Reagan even stopped referring to the USSR as an 'evil empire'. Indeed, by the time he left office in 1988, US–Soviet relations had not simply improved, they were in better shape than at any time since the end of World War II – so much so that many observers were forced to conclude that the Cold War had finally been buried once and for all.⁵⁸

One explanation for this dramatic change (one certainly favoured by Reagan devotees) was that the President's tough line had actually succeeded in its objective of forcing moderation upon the USSR. Another (equally popular in Europe) was that to preserve the NATO alliance the US had been impelled to modify its Cold War policies. Both arguments contain an element of truth: neither, however, accounts for what took place after 1984.

Basically, the metamorphosis in the US–Soviet relationship was the result of two interconnected factors: a formal recognition

by the Soviet leadership that to tackle its extraordinary economic difficulties it had to seek a permanent settlement with the capitalist world, and a growing recognition in Washington that to keep the world stable while it addressed its own economic problems (some of these the result of Reagan's policies) a deal with the Soviet Union would be highly desirable. To put it bluntly, the two powers, faced with economic decline (the Soviet's being the more catastrophic), were forced back along the path of agreement. Having attempted and failed before to establish a new relationship, they were, in effect, propelled once more along the original course mapped out by Kissinger in the 1970s.

Many obstacles naturally stand in the way of a complete settlement. For instance, there is a long way to go before the two powers will be able to sign a new strategic or conventional arms control treaty. Equally, an explosion in Eastern Europe or the USSR could undermine Gorbachev and the policies associated with his name. There are also many in the United States in particular who remain sceptical (and even afraid) of Gorbachev. Finally, the West still officially maintains that the Soviet Union is a military threat and that until it makes very deep cuts NATO will have to keep up its guard. Yet, notwithstanding these reservations, it is plain that something quite remarkable (and unforeseen) has occurred in the nature of the superpower relationship.

This leads us logically to ask a simple but crucial question: what will the winding down of the Cold War mean for the international system? There can be no unambiguous answer to the question. At one level of course the new entente will almost certainly lead to greater order in the world. After all, if the two most important powers are working together instead of opposing each other, then it follows that there will be more rather than less stability. We have already seen the results of this in South East Asia and Southern Africa.

On the other hand, if the Cold War has come to an end – as many seem to believe – then this could easily lead to new problems. For if, as we have argued, the Cold War

system has helped sustain both superpowers and led to a strange but nevertheless real form of stability, then its withering away (however slowly) could release previously contained forces and generate fresh contradictions.

First, if the current rapprochement continues, then, over the long term, it is bound to have an impact (perhaps a dramatic one) in Europe. Indeed, some analysts have already begun to think seriously about the shape of the continent in a post-Cold War era. What they see disturbs them greatly. A less cohesive Western alliance. A weakening of the two blocs over time. A more independent Germany. And, over the very long term perhaps, a continent without the superpowers. To many who have grown up with the certainties of the Cold War the new world that beckons appears a lot less enticing than the one that is gradually fading away.

The second problem concerns the international role of the United States. For over forty years it has legitimized its world position in terms of the Soviet threat. The question is – can it continue to do so if the USSR continues to retreat? This in turn raises a bigger question. If it is not just Soviet but US decline that has led to the current rapprochement, then does it not follow that the new era will be marked by more rather than less disorder? US power – we should remind ourselves – was the principle cause of postwar stability. Its erosion, therefore, is bound to make the world less stable. Of course it would be foolish to underestimate US strength. Moreover, one should not forget that Washington still has the option of devolving a part of its international burden onto its still dependent German and Japanese allies. This, however, will not prevent the United States from declining – no more than will its new deal with the USSR. And when great powers decline this inevitably weakens their ability to organize their imperial affairs. So far, nobody has convincingly demonstrated why the United States should be an exception to this obvious but undeniable historic rule.

This brings us, finally, to the Soviet Union. While the West applauds and seeks to reward Gorbachev for his moderate international

behaviour, it should remember that his reformism is not only the result of a very profound crisis, but could become the cause of a new one. This would obviously pose enormous dilemmas for the Soviet leadership. However, it would raise some real problems for the West, too, for as we have seen, while the capitalist world remains antagonistic to Soviet power – historically it has been defined in terms of the very object to which it has been opposed. If this ‘object’ were to change (or even disintegrate), therefore, it would not simply throw the whole of the Soviet Union into turmoil but the West as well. Thus, if instability did follow as a result of a loss of control by a reforming Soviet elite the West might be affected nearly as much as the USSR itself. And even if this worst case scenario does not come to pass, it remains a fact that the Soviet bloc today is undergoing a restructuring that is doing much to eliminate Stalinism. This again raises problems in the West where for so long it has been assumed that there was no possibility of any ameliorative change occurring in Soviet-type systems. What impact this will have at the ideological level remains uncertain. What it does mean, however, is that the capitalist world will find it increasingly difficult to use the image of a repressive communism as a means of internal control. For this reason, amongst others, there must be some in the West today longingly casting their eyes back to the Cold War days when Stalin kept his own house in order – and frightened his enemies into pulling together lest they be hanged separately.⁵⁹

NOTES

1. Cited in Halliday (1983, p. 261). For a lengthy critique of Halliday's influential work see Cox (1986).
2. The London *Economist* noted in an editorial two months after the announcement of the Truman Doctrine and one month before Marshall's speech at Harvard (24 May 1947, p. 785) that World War II had ‘enormously increased the scale upon which the United States now towers over its fellows. Like mice in a cage of an elephant, they follow with apprehension the movements of the mammoth. What chance would they stand if it were to begin to throw its weight about, they who are in danger even if it only decides to sit down?’
3. In the late 1940s, US blast furnaces also produced

- 50% of the world's steel while Americans owned 70% of the world's merchant marine fleet and about 75% of the world's transport and commercial aircraft. In 1949, per capita income in the United States was USD 1,453; in Britain it was USD 773; in the USSR it was estimated at USD 308. The government had also stockpiled 80% of the world's gold. In general terms no other nation produced even half of what the United States did. Figures from White (1982).
4. Even five years after the war, those justifying rearmament in the US still had to agree that the United States possessed 'the greatest military potential of any single nation in the world'. The Bureau of the Budget, which opposed the new build-up on economic grounds, pointed out that the United States was militarily superior to the USSR in five crucial areas: at sea, in the air, in terms of the economic and military potential of its allies – who were, moreover, situated close to the Soviet Union, – and in the 'supply of fission bombs' as well as 'thermonuclear potential'. See *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950*, vol. 1, *National Security Affairs: Foreign Economic Policy* (Washington: USGPO, 1977), pp. 261, 301.
 5. Ibid., esp. pp. 248–249, 256–258 on US (and NATO) economic superiority to the USSR.
 6. Khrushchev in a speech in 1960 claimed that Soviet armed forces in all categories had decreased from 11,365,000 in 1945 to 2,874,000 in 1948. These figures were never disputed in the West. See *Pravda*, 15 January 1960.
 7. US War Department figures 'as of 1 February 1947' calculated that the 'following armed forces were on foreign soil in Europe. United States 202,000. British 247,000. French 80,000. USSR 1,110,000'. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947*, vol. 1, *General: United Nations* (Washington: USGPO, 1973), p. 718.
 8. In a Top Secret document drawn up by the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee of the British Joint Chiefs of Staff in August 1947 it was concluded that for different reasons, both economic and military, the USSR would 'wish to avoid a protracted major war at any rate before 1955–60'. See 'Soviet Interests, Intentions and Capabilities', 6 August 1947, p. 2. In *The Soviet Union: Internal Affairs, 1945–1949*. Microfilm, Reel 2 (University Publications of America). On the postwar military balance, see Alperovitz (1965), Davis (1966), Evangelista (1983), Leffler (1984), Sherry (1977) and Smith (1970).
 9. In a secret communication from the US Embassy in Moscow in late 1945 (entitled 'Discontent in the Soviet Union'), the author pointed to at least three causes of discontent: 'economic deterioration and social maladjustments which in any country result from war and invasion'; the 'nature of the Soviet bureaucracy'; and 'demobilized soldiers, sailors and troops transferred back to the Soviet Union from eastern and central Europe'. Eight months later the situation had not improved. If anything it had got worse according to Eldridge Durbrow at the Embassy, who noted 'general apathy' amongst the people and an absence of 'zeal' amongst 'party members'. Cited in: *The Soviet Union: Internal Affairs, 1945–1949*. Microfilm, Reel 1 (University Publications of America).
 10. In March 1947, in a Top Secret State Department analysis, it was argued that while 'the situation in the USSR' could not be compared with '1933 ... the present political situation is undoubtedly serious'. It was deduced therefore that 'the Politbureau desires to avoid major political developments that might lead to a showdown and that this is largely due to weaknesses in the internal situation'. Cited in *The Soviet Union: Internal Affairs, 1945–1949*. Microfilm, Reel 2 (University Publications of America).
 11. In a May 1945 dispatch from Moscow, Kennan (1967, p. 536) noted that 'the Russian machine in Eastern and Central Europe was not without its weaknesses'.
 12. US Ambassador to the USSR Walter Bedell Smith (later head of the CIA), in one dispatch (13 January 1947) believed that 'one of the explanations for the less aggressive international attitude taken by (Soviet) authorities in recent weeks was in part attributable' to the deteriorating economic situation. Two months later, Llewellyn Thompson, Chief of the Division of East European Affairs, wrote that internal conditions in the USSR 'are sufficiently disquieting to justify the hypothesis that the pressure of internal events may be such as to force the Politbureau to consider a less aggressive position in foreign policy to concentrate on internal problems'. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947*, vol. 4, *Eastern Europe: The Soviet Union* (Washington: USGPO, 1972), pp. 515–517, 544, n. 2. The best study of Soviet foreign policy after the war remains Shulman (1963).
 13. Williams fought what William G. Robbins has described as an 'expensive and time-consuming fight against a subpoena from the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC)'. The committee, evidently, was interested in the manuscript of *The Contours of American History*, finally published in 1961. 'What the committee wanted most ... was to stop the publication of *Contours*. Williams finally went before the HUAC, which dropped the case, but then sent his name to the Internal Revenue Service, and that agency, according to Williams, harassed him for the 'better part of twenty years'. For this story, see Gardner, ed., (1986, pp. 11–12). See also Williams (1952, 1959, 1961).
 14. The history of the Cold War debate in the United States is an interesting one in itself. Schlesinger (1967) was probably the first serious counterblast against the revisionists. Williams responded to Schlesinger with an article in *The Nation* in the following month. The debate then exploded, leading to the publication of several monographs and articles, many of them extremely vituperative. The conflict reached its climax, however, with the publication of Maddox (1973), who accused the revisionists of misusing the evidence. The Maddox book literally engulfed the US historical community in a

- raging maelstrom of controversy – particularly as it was suspected that ‘Cold War liberals’ like Kennan, Herbert Feis, Eugene Rostow and Arthur Schlesinger had encouraged Maddox in his endeavours and then placed some pressure on Princeton University Press to publish the book. On the Maddox ‘affair’ see Melanson (1977) and Melanson (1983, pp. 84–93). For a guide to the Cold War debate see Gaddis (1983), Graebner (1969), Thompson (1978), Tucker (1971) and Walker (1981).
15. Gaddis (1972, p. 355, n. 2) states that ‘historians, revisionist and nonrevisionist, now generally agree on the limited nature of Stalin’s objectives’.
 16. Stephen White (1979) notes that in Britain after 1917 there was a division within the ruling class on how best to deal with the USSR: between the ‘traders’ represented by the Liberal Party, who sought to undermine the USSR using economic means, and the interventionists (in the main, Tory), who wanted to achieve the same objective using political or military methods.
 17. Significantly, the phrase ‘the world-wide trend away from the system of free enterprise towards state controlled economies’ was deleted from Truman’s March 1947 speech. See Jones (1955, pp. 156–157). On the foreign economic policy of the United States after 1945 see Block (1977) and Kolko (1969).
 18. The United States began planning for an ‘open’ world economic order even before its entry into the war in 1941. See Notter (1949).
 19. In the first analysis from Kennan’s Policy Planning Staff in May 1947 it was conceded that ‘communist activities’ were not at the ‘root of the difficulties of Western Europe’. Hence the US goal was not ‘to combat communism’ as such but ‘economic maladjustment’. See *The State Department Policy Planning Staff Papers 1947* (New York: Garland, 1983), pp. 4–5.
 20. On the use of ‘scare’ tactics to achieve the desired end, see Bohlen (1969, p. 87), Feis (1970, pp. 189–200) and Sanders (1983).
 21. See Carew (1987).
 22. ‘At best, American officials saw Marshall’s plan as a way to break Soviet influence on Eastern Europe’, writes Hogan (1987, p. 52).
 23. Kennan himself pointed out that by establishing NATO and jamming ‘American military power tightly at every point to the borders of the Soviet orbit’ the Soviet leadership, probably genuinely, came to fear ‘the sinisterness of western intentions’. See Kennan (1967), p. 463 and 1972, pp. 340–341). For a detailed discussion of Kennan’s critique of the Cold War see Cox (1988a).
 24. Truman’s words are quoted in Neustadt (1964, p. 57).
 25. The Ambassador was William G. Bullitt. See Bullitt (1947).
 26. According to NSC-68, ‘the Kremlin regards the United States as the only major threat to the achievement of its fundamental design’, which remains ‘the ultimate elimination of any effective opposition to (its) authority’. *FRUS 1950*, vol. 1, pp. 238, 239.
 27. In a National Security Council report of 16 December 1950, it was admitted that the invasion of South Korea had ‘imparted a new urgency to the appraisal of the nature, time, and scope of programs required to attain the objectives outlined in NSC-68’. *Ibid.*, p. 469.
 28. Churchill noted: ‘The Soviet regime and the lives of its rulers may be imperilled by allowing free, easy and intermingling with the outer world. An endless series of quarrels, a vehement and violent antagonism, the consciousness of an outside enemy in the minds of the masses, may be regarded by the Soviets as a necessary precautionary element in maintaining the existence of communist power’, *House of Commons Debates* (vol. 473, 28 March 1950, col. 199).
 29. Brzezinski (1970, p. 138) agreed that Stalinism, by creating ‘a particularly despotic model of communism ... vitiated much of communism’s appeal at a time when the susceptibility of the more advanced West – the area originally seen by Marx as ripest for historical transformation – might have made communism the truly dominant and vital force of our time’.
 30. See DePorte (1978) for the most persuasive intellectual defence of the Cold War status quo on the European continent.
 31. As Charles Lerche pointed out some time ago: ‘For both sides a sudden victory would be scarcely less embarrassing than a strategic defeat; either outcome would demand unpleasant rearrangements of complex and institutional patterns’. See Lerche (1964, pp. 31–32).
 32. As Liska (1967, p. 48) has noted, if one or other of the two superpowers were to ‘win’ politically, the victor would not be able ‘to deal effectively with the vacuum of ordering authority which the disintegration of the other would create’.
 33. Sir John Hackett concedes that ‘a world in which there are two superpower blocs in abrasive but more or less stable equilibrium is more likely to be a safer world than if one of them collapses’. *The Observer* (London), 4 July 1982. For a longer analysis of the Cold War ‘system’ see Cox (1984a) and Gaddis (1986b).
 34. Two of the most influential ‘realist’ works in the anti-Cold War genre of the 1960s were Shulman (1966) and Morgenthau (1969).
 35. Kissinger (1981b, p. 73) noted that ‘the late sixties, coinciding with Vietnam, marked the end of the period when America was overwhelmingly more powerful than any other nation’.
 36. Writing in 1968 Kissinger (1977, pp. 56–57) argued: ‘The greatest need of the contemporary system is an agreed sense of order’.
 37. Nixon (1980, pp. 207–208) put it thus: ‘We were quite deliberately creating a network of interdependencies that would give us more leverage in future crises. We wanted the Soviets to think twice about the potential economic costs of provoking us by troublemaking adventurism’. On ‘linkage’ see Sonnenfeldt (1978).
 38. In his 1974 testimony to the Senate Foreign Rela-

- tions Committee Kissinger believed that over time 'trade and investment may lessen the autarchic tendencies of the Soviet system and invite gradual association of the Soviet economy with the world economy' (1977, pp. 156, 158).
39. 'The critical need for Western technology and credits compelled Brezhnev to think about experimenting with a policy of detente' (Kalb & Kalb, 1974, p. 213).
 40. Robert Osgood characterized the general foreign policy of the Nixon administration as a form of 'American material retrenchment without political disengagement'. Cited in Gilbert, ed. (1973, p. 77).
 41. Kissinger (1981a, pp. 979–983) and Nixon (1979, pp. 874–875, 1023–1026) discuss this opposition.
 42. Jeanne Kirkpatrick later remarked that Reagan's election in 1980 was to mark the end of a period in which the world had become 'more dangerous'. She concluded that 'acquiescence in the decline of US power was neither desirable nor acceptable'. See her comments in *Encounter*, November 1983, p. 19.
 43. The documents covering the formal aspects of US–Soviet detente can be found in Pranger (1976). On detente see Bowker & Williams (1988), Garthoff (1985), Hyland (1987) and Litwak (1984).
 44. Total US–Soviet trade increased from USD 638 million to USD 2,503 million between 1972 and 1978. Over 70% of US exports, however, were in agricultural products, while Soviet exports to the USA never rose above USD 350 million in any one year. Figures in *Soviet Economy in a Time of Change*, vol. 2 (Washington: USGPO, 1979), p. 191.
 45. The fear that the US would either use detente as a way of dissolving the 'socialist commonwealth' or undermining the socialist system in the USSR itself was articulated on frequent occasions by Soviet analysts in the 1970s. See, for example, Knyazhinsky (1973) and Granov (1975).
 46. For a longer discussion on the rise and fall of detente, see Cox (1984b, 1988b).
 47. In 1980 Paul Nitze was to write: 'Providing for the common defense now requires the kind of priority it had in 1950' (p. 92). A year later Eugene Rostow called upon the United States to 'return to the containment policy pursued between Truman's time and the American withdrawal from Vietnam', (*New York Times*, 28 June 1981, p. E-5).
 48. Reflecting on the setbacks which the US had experienced in the so-called 'decade of neglect', Reagan asked: 'How did all this happen?' His response was unambiguous: 'Well, the answer is – America has simply ceased to be a leader in the world'. See US Department of State (1984, p. 2).
 49. Reagan put it thus: 'We know that strength is not enough, but without it there can be no effective diplomacy and negotiations: no secure democracy and peace. Conversely, weakness or hopeful passivity are only self-defeating. They invite the very aggression and instability that they would seek to avoid', *ibid.*, pp. 10–11.
 50. On the value of nuclear superiority see Eugene Rostow's reflections on the Cuba missile crisis (1983, p. 79).
 51. Reagan argued that the 'struggle (was) between right and wrong and good and evil'. See Talbott (1984, p. 117).
 52. Richard Pipes (Reagan's NSC adviser on Soviet affairs until 1983) insisted that the US should do more than simply manage the USSR (1984a, 1984b).
 53. Reagan proclaimed the 'democratic revolution' in his famous speech to the British Parliament in June 1982 – fittingly entitled 'Promoting Democracy and Peace'. See US Department of State (1984, pp. 77–81).
 54. *Ibid.*, pp. 78–80, and Reagan's message to Congress on 14 March 1986, 'Freedom, Regional Security and Global Peace' in US Department of State, *Special Report*, no. 143.
 55. In 1985 alone the US provided about USD 250–300 million to the Afghan rebels. USD 15 million went to Unita in Angola. In 1986 and 1987 USD 10 million went to non-communist resistance groups in Kampuchea. Over USD 100 million was provided to the Nicaraguan Contras for the period ending September 1987. USD 0.5 million went to anti-Marxist groups in Ethiopia as well. No (official) support was given to the guerrillas in Mozambique. Figures in Copson & Cronin (1987, p. 44).
 56. Pipes wrote (in 1984a, p. 280): 'The stalinist system now prevailing in the Soviet Union has outlived its usefulness . . . the forces making for changes are becoming well nigh irresistible. The West can promote these forces by a combination of active resistance to Soviet expansion . . . and the denial of economic and other forms of aid'. For a more general analysis of Soviet decline in the 1980s, see Cox (1985).
 57. In his June 1982 speech to the British Parliament Reagan spoke openly of the crisis of 'totalitarianism' leading to a 'decay of the Soviet experiment'. In his 'evil empire' speech of March 1983 he believed that Soviet communism's 'last pages even now are being written'. See Talbott (1984, pp. 94–95, 118).
 58. For a detailed discussion on whether the superpowers are (or are not) at the 'crossroads' see Cox (1990).
 59. The London *Economist* asked if the West really wanted a 'Cuddly Russia?' After all, it mused, the 'western alliance has stayed together because the Soviet Union's three big themes have been reinforcingly repulsive to the West: it has been an undemocratic police state of the worst kind; its economy for the past 25 years has done shamefully badly; and it has been a geopolitical menace'. The implication was that although change may have positive consequences, the West might face a more uncertain future as a result (Editorial, 14 February 1987, pp. 13–14).

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