THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

At Cold War's End: Complexity, Causes, and Counterfactuals

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DECLARATION

I certify that the thesis I present for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work, except where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out by any other person is clearly identified in it).

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ABSTRACT

What caused the Cold War to end? In the following I examine the puzzle of the fast and peaceful conclusion of the bipolar superpower standoff, and point out the problems this creates for the study of International Relations (IR). I discuss prevailing explanations and point out their gaps, and offer the framework of complexity theory as a suitable complement to overcome the blind spots in IR's reductionist methodologies. I argue that uncertainty and unpredictability are rooted in an international system that is best viewed as non-linear. My analysis of the end of the Cold War proceeds with counterfactual investigations of leaders' foreign policy choices. This helps produce a more fine-grained understanding of the manifold, dense interactive causal effects that abound in the international arena. I find that various choices made by four key international leaders in the 1980s – Ronald Reagan, George Shultz, Mikhail Gorbachev and George H. W. Bush – contributed to the rapid and unexpected end of the Cold War in various ways. While such leadership effects need to be offset against the wider structural context within which politicians operate, it is mistaken to exclude individual leaders and their key associates from the study of IR. I conclude that deterministic analyses fail to account for the independent causal wellspring provided by reflexive, conscious human agency. Complexity theory and counterfactuals can help identify the scope and limits of leaders' influence on international affairs.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

1976

11 March The Soviet Union begins deploying modern SS-20 Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles capable of targeting the capitals of Western Europe, sparking a new round of the arms race.

1977

28 October In London, West Germany's Social Democratic Chancellor Helmut Schmidt calls on NATO to undertake a massive programme of nuclear rearmament in response to the growing threat of the Soviet missile build-up.

1979

5 January The heads of state of the West's 'Big Four' – Britain, France, Germany, and the United States – meet in Guadeloupe. Among other things, they decide that NATO should embark on theatre nuclear force modernisation to counter the SS-20 threat, whilst pursuing arms control negotiations with the Soviets in parallel.

18 June US President Jimmy Carter and Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev sign the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks II accords in Vienna. The SALT II accords are never ratified.

12 December NATO takes its Double Track decision, offering the Warsaw Pact mutual limits on ballistic nuclear missile levels while simultaneously threatening to deploy new US Pershing-II warheads in Western Europe in the event no ceilings to missile levels are agreed.

24 December The Soviet Union deploys its 40th Army to Kabul, marking the beginning of the Soviet-Afghan War. The USSR will eventually withdraw its forces nine years later.

1980

20 January Among other measures such as trade sanctions, President Carter threatens a boycott of the 1980 Summer Olympics due to be held in in Moscow unless Soviet troops are withdrawn from Afghanistan. The US and 64 other countries eventually stay away from the Olympics.

4 November Ronald Reagan wins the US presidential election. Having accused Jimmy Carter of being "totally oblivious to the Soviet drive for world domination" during the campaign, Reagan begins to expand the US defence budget by 10%, year-on-year, until 1986.

1981

30 March 69 days into his Presidency, Reagan narrowly survives a deranged assassin's gunfire outside the Washington Hilton. Reagan is hit in the torso; the bullet misses his heart by 25mm.

18 November Reagan proposes the Zero Option as the basis for arms negotiations with the Soviet Union: the US will not station new Pershing-II missiles in Europe if the USSR removes all its deployed intermediate-range nuclear missiles, including the SS-20s. Initially met with derision as an unrealistic goal, the Zero Option will become the basis for the Intermediate Nuclear Force treaty signed six years later.

13 December Poland's leader General Jaruzelski announces a state of emergency and imposes martial law. Dozens of opposition activists are killed and thousands jailed. The crackdown permits the Warsaw Pact to call off plans to invade Poland to quell political unrest, an operation which had been in the offing since December 1980.

1982

9 May During a Commencement Address at Reagan's alma mater, Eureka College, the US President announces his intention to kick-start nuclear arms reduction talks with the Soviet Union and expresses plans to meet with Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev at the United Nations. Reagan sets out a standard for engagement with the USSR: "A Soviet leadership devoted to improving its people's lives, rather than expanding its armed conquests, will find a sympathetic partner in the West. The West will respond with expanded trade and other forms of cooperation." Nothing becomes of any of these initiatives.

5 July Alexander Haig, US Secretary of State, resigns after proving to be both an ineffective diplomat-in-chief and following repeated confrontations with other senior Administration members. Reagan chooses George Shultz, a business executive with a background in academia and government who advised Reagan on economic affairs during the presidential campaign, to replace Haig.

10 November Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR, passes away. The Politburo votes to elect Yuri Andropov, who had previously run the Soviet intelligence service KGB for 15 years, as its new leader.

1983

15 February Ronald Reagan meets Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin in the White House, a secret meeting arranged by George Shultz. It is Reagan's first business session with a Soviet official.

8 March In a widely covered speech to the National Association of Evangelicals, Reagan labels the Soviet Union an 'evil empire'.

23 March Ronald Reagan proposes the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), a colossal research programme aimed at constructing a space-based defense system against ballistic nuclear missile attack. It is nicknamed 'Star Wars' by the press (the third instalment of George Lucas' franchise is due for release in May).

1 September A Soviet fighter jet shoots down Korean Airliner Flight 007 close to the island of Sakhalin after the civilian airliner strays into Soviet airspace due to a navigational error. All 269 passenger and crew on board are killed.

2 November NATO begins Able Archer, a ten-day command post war game which includes simulated nuclear attacks. Some in the Soviet Politburo fear the exercise is a prelude to war; the USSR readies its nuclear forces and places air units in Poland and East Germany on alert.

15 December In West Germany, NATO deploys the first of its 572 new Pershing-II missiles. Despite an enormous effort by the USSR to scupper it, the Dual Track strategy of 1979 is thus implemented. George Shultz later deems this the crucial turning point that marked the beginning of the Cold War, demonstrating to the USSR firm Allied cohesion behind its strategy of collective security.[1]

[1] Shultz (2007), xxiv

1984

16 January Ronald Reagan holds a nationally televised address during which he announces a strategy of engaging the USSR in a 'serious' dialogue seeking 'areas of constructive cooperation.' Reagan declares 1984 to be a 'year of opportunities for peace'; domestic commentators wryly observe that it is also a year of presidential elections. The speech receives little attention abroad.

9 February Yuri Andropov passes away, and is replaced as General Secretary by Konstantin Chernenko, an ailing apparatchik.

8 May The USSR and 14 other Eastern Bloc nations announce their boycott of the 1984 Summer Olympics due to be held in Los Angeles.

24 September Ronald Reagan meets the USSR's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrei Gromyko, in New York, his first direct contact with a ranking Soviet statesman since he became President.

16 December Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister of the UK, meets Mikhail Gorbachev (at that point a senior Politburo member seen as a potential Chernenko successor) for lunch and discussions at Chequers, the PM's country house retreat, as part of an effort to open up new lines of communication with senior Soviet leaders. The meeting is positive, prompting Thatcher to remark afterwards that she found herself liking Gorbachev and that 'she can do business with this man.'

1985

10 March Konstantin Chernenko is the third Soviet leader to die in office in as many years. He is replaced by Mikhail Gorbachev, who has just turned 54, thus becoming the youngest Soviet leader since Joseph Stalin.

19 November Reagan and Gorbachev meet in Geneva for the first US-Soviet head of state summit in six years. No concrete results are achieved beyond commitments to expand certain diplomatic, commercial and cultural links, and an agreement to hold a further two summits.

1986

26 April A Soviet nuclear power reactor explodes in Chernobyl, Ukraine. It is the worst nuclear power plant accident in history in terms of cost and

casualties. Radiation fall-out contaminates the western USSR and Northern Europe.

11 October Reagan and Gorbachev meet for a summit in Reykjavik, Iceland. After two days of marathon negotiations, the two leaders come close to but ultimately do not arrive at an agreement that would eliminate all their strategic nuclear weapons by the year 2000. They fail to reach a consensus over Reagan's Star Wars initiative, which Gorbachev wants scuppered but Reagan refuses to give up.

1987

27 January At a Central Committee plenum, Gorbachev gains assent to several of his signature proposals for political and economic reform, and announces a 'restructuring' ('perestroika') of Soviet policy.

28 May A West German teenager, Mathias Rust, lands his light aircraft on the Red Square after single-handedly flying through more than 750 km of heavily defended Soviet airspace in a self-declared 'peace mission.' He is promptly arrested. Mikhail Gorbachev uses the blunder as a pretext to start the largest purge of the Soviet military since Stalin's time, forcing the Defence Minister, the air defence chief, and over 150 officers into retirement. A major obstacle to Gorbachev's reform plans – the military – is thus weakened.

11 November Gorbachev arranges for the dismissal of Boris Yeltsin as Moscow party leader, seeing him as a potential rival. Yeltsin had written to Gorbachev in autumn urging him to push for deeper reforms and to call out the conservative-minded opposition to perestroika and glasnost.

8 December In Washington, DC, Reagan and Gorbachev sign the milestone Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the Cold War's first-ever arms reduction agreement. The two leaders agree on the complete elimination of all mid-range nuclear weapons in Europe, against opposition from conservatives at home and abroad.

1988

14 April The Soviet Union announces its intention to withdraw all its troops from Afghanistan by February of 1989.

7 May The Soviet Union's first anti-Communist party, the Democratic Union, is founded in Moscow.

29 May Ronald Reagan arrives in Moscow on his first-ever trip to the Soviet Union. On the Red Square, he tells interviewers that his description of the USSR as an 'Evil Empire' refers to 'another time, another era.'

4 November George H. W. Bush, who served as Reagan's Vice President since 1980, is elected President of the United States.

7 December Gorbachev gives a speech at the UN General Assembly in New York, endorsing the 'common interests of mankind' as the basis for Soviet foreign policy (rather than the class struggle of yore). The Soviet leader surprises the West by announcing the withdrawal of tens of thousands of tanks and troops from Eastern Europe, as well as cuts to the Soviet army to the tune of 500,000 soldiers.

1989

4 June Poland's legislative election is the first popular vote in the Soviet bloc and paves the way for the peaceful democratic transition first in that country, and soon after in other Warsaw Pact states. On the same day as the Polish elections, the Chinese government launches a violent military crackdown on democracy protestors on Tiananmen Square, leading to hundreds, if not thousands, of civilian deaths.

8 November After a year of major political upheaval across Eastern Europe, with increasingly dramatic steps toward the liberalisation of political systems across the Warsaw Pact, the Berlin Wall falls unexpectedly. Following months of pressure from hundreds of thousands of demonstrators in major East German cities, Politburo functionary Günter Schabowski mistakenly announces the immediate lifting of all travel restrictions in the country, prompting an instant exodus of hundreds of thousands of East Germans.

2 December Gorbachev and Bush hold their first summit meeting in Malta. Their personal chemistry leads to frank and wide-ranging talks, which reassure Gorbachev that Bush is not fomenting unrest in Eastern Europe, while Bush concludes that Gorbachev is genuinely committed to major reform.

1990

11 March Lithuania becomes the first Soviet Republic to declare independence, a move not recognised by the Kremlin.

29 May Against Gorbachev's wishes, Boris Yeltsin is elected de facto President of the Russian constituent republic of the USSR. Two weeks later, Russia declares independence.

30 May Under pressure at home from political developments and a deepening economic slump, Gorbachev arrives in Washington, DC for a summit meeting. Hoping for favourable terms in a potential US-Soviet trade deal, Gorbachev surprises all attendees when he signals his tacit consent for a reunified Germany to remain within NATO.

3 October 45 years after the end of World War Two, East and West Germany are formally reunified. The most enduring symbol of Cold War division disappears on Western terms: reunified Germany remains in NATO.

20 December Soviet Foreign Minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, Gorbachev's closest political ally, stuns his boss by announcing his surprise resignation in Parliament. In a dramatic speech, Shevardnadze warns that reformists are losing ground and warns: 'Dictatorship is coming.'

1991

31 March The Warsaw Pact is dissolved.

18 August KGB and military hardliners launch a coup against Gorbachev, isolating him in his Crimean holiday home and sending troops to secure government buildings in Moscow. Their chaotic effort fails within a few days, but Gorbachev's authority is fundamentally weakened when it is Boris Yeltsin who takes the decisive stand against the plotters in Moscow.

6 September The Soviet Union announces its recognition of the Baltic States' independence.

1 December In a referendum, more than 90% of Ukrainians vote to declare their independence from the Soviet Union.

8 December Russia, Ukraine and Belarus establish the Commonwealth of Independent States.

25 December Gorbachev resigns as President of the USSR. The Soviet flag is lowered for the last time from the Kremlin and replaced with the Russian tricolour. The UN recognises the USSR's dissolution on 31 December.

CAST OF PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

Sergey Akhromeyev (1923 – 1991)
Chief of the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces (1984 – 1988), Advisor to the President of the USSR on military affairs (1990 – 1991)

Yuri Andropov (1914 – 1984)
Chairman of the KGB (1967 – 1982), General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR (1982 – 1984)

James Baker (b. 1930)
White House Chief of Staff (1981 – 1985, 1992 – 1993), Secretary of State (1989 – 1992)

Alexander Bessmertnykh (b. 1933)
Consul at the Soviet Embassy in Washington, DC (1970 – 1983), Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR (1986 –1990), Soviet Ambassador to the United States (1990), Minister of Foreign Affairs the USSR (1991)

Leonid Brezhnev (1906 – 1982)
General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR (1964 – 1982)

George Bush (b. 1924)
Director of Central Intelligence (1976 – 1977), Vice President of the USA (1981 – 1989), 41st President of the USA (1989 – 1993)

Frank Carlucci (b. 1930)
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence (1978 – 1981), Deputy Secretary of Defense (1981 – 1982), National Security Advisor (1986 – 1987), Secretary of Defense (1987 – 1989)

Jimmy Carter (b. 1924)
39th President of the USA (1977 – 1981)

William Casey (1913 – 1987)
Director of Central Intelligence (1981 – 1987)

Konstantin Chernenko (1911 – 1985)
General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR (1984 – 1985)

Anatoly Chernyaev (b. 1921),
Foreign policy advisor to Mikhail Gorbachev (1986 – 1991)

William Clark (1931 – 2013)
Deputy Secretary of State (1981 – 1982), National Security Advisor (1982 – 1983), Secretary of the Interior (1983 – 1985)

Les Denend (b. 1941)
National Security Council staff member (1977 – 1979), advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1979 – 1981), Deputy Director of the White House Cabinet Council on Economic Affairs (1982 – 1983)

Anatoly Dobrynin (1919 – 2010)
Soviet Ambassador to the United States (1962 – 1986), Head of the International Department of the Central Committee (1986 – 1988)

Robert Gates (b. 1943)
National Security Council staff member (1974 – 1979), Deputy Director of Central Intelligence (1986 – 1989), Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Adviser (1989 – 1991), Director of Central Intelligence (1991 – 1993)

Mikhail Gorbachev (b. 1931)
General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR (1985 -1991), President of the USSR (1990 – 1991)

Andrei Gromyko (1909 – 1989)
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR (1957 – 1985)

Alexander Haig (1924 – 2010)
Deputy National Security Advisor (1970 – 1973), White House Chief of Staff (1973 – 1974), Supreme Allied Commander Europe (1974 – 1979), Secretary of State (1981 – 1982)

Woijciech Jaruzelski (1923 – 2014)
Defence Minister of Poland (1968 – 1983), First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party (1981 – 1989), Prime Minister of Poland (1981 – 1985), President of Poland (1989 – 1990)

Jack Matlock (b. 1929)
US Ambassador to Czechoslovakia (1981 – 1983), Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director of European and Soviet Affairs on the National Security Council (1983 – 1987), US Ambassador to the USSR (1987 – 1991)

Richard Pipes (b. 1923)
Director of East European and Soviet Affairs on the National Security Council (1981 – 1982)

Ronald Reagan (1911 – 2004)
40th President of the USA (1981 – 1989)

Condoleezza Rice (b. 1954)
Special Assistant to the Director of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1986), Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and Senior Director of Soviet and East European Affairs (1989 – 1991)

Brent Scowcroft (b. 1925)
Special Assistant to the Director of the Join Chiefs of Staff (1970 – 1972), Military Assistant to the President (1972 – 1973), Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (1973 – 1975), National Security Advisor (1975 – 1977, 1989 - 1993)

Eduard Shevardnadze (1928 – 2014)
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR (1985 – 1990, 1991)

George Shultz (b. 1920)
Secretary of Labor (1969 – 1970), Director of the Office of Management and Budget (1970 – 1972), Secretary of the Treasury (1972 – 1974), Secretary of State (1982 – 1989)

Dimitriy Ustinov (1908 – 1984)
Minister of Defence of the USSR (1976 – 1984)

Caspar Weinberger (1917 – 2006)
Director of the Office of Management and Budget (1972 – 1973), Secretary of Defense (1981 – 1987)

Alexander Yakovlev (1923 – 2005)
Foreign policy advisor to Mikhail Gorbachev (1985 – 1991)

Dmitry Yazov (b. 1924)
Minister of Defence of the USSR (1987 – 1991)

Boris Yeltsin (1931 – 2007)
President of Russia (1991 – 1999)

Philip Zelikow (b. 1954)
National Security Council staff member (1989 – 1991)

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INTRODUCTION

For it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophise; they wondered originally at the obvious difficulties, then advanced little by little and stated difficulties about the greater matters.
Aristotle

The ideal scientist thinks like a poet and only later works like a bookkeeper.
Edward Osborne Wilson

Nothing endures but change.
Heraclitus

26 years ago the Cold War entered its terminal phase. Peaceful democratic revolutions swept across Eastern Europe: the Iron Curtain that had kept the continent divided for almost half a century was lifted. The reunification of East and West Germany in 1990 was a powerful symbol of this. East Germany, the most technologically advanced of the Warsaw Pact states, had been the crown jewel of the Soviet empire.[2] Territorially the farthest western outpost of the Soviet bloc, it was the Kremlin's 'grand prize' of World War Two.[3] Indeed, it was over Germany that Cold War tensions had first flared up in Europe in 1948, when Stalin ordered a blockade of all land routes to West Berlin, prompting the US, Britain and France to respond with the Berlin Airlift. As the US-Soviet relationship descended into antagonism, jointly occupied Germany was divided into two separate nations. The Berlin

2 On the technological aspect, see Brooks (2005), 115
3 Brent Scowcroft describes East Germany as the Soviet's 'grand prize' in Maynard, 74

Wall, built in 1961, became an emblem of Cold War tensions and the enforced partition of Europe. Its fall in 1989 underlined the peaceful power shift that took place as Warsaw Pact states transitioned out of the Soviet Union's orbit. Mikhail Gorbachev tolerated regime change in Eastern Europe, actively negotiating with Western powers over the reunification of Germany and mutual troop reductions across the continent. Meanwhile the constituent republics of the Soviet Union became restive as Moscow's hold over Soviet territory weakened throughout 1990. The ideological core of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was hollowed out by Gorbachev's increasingly far-reaching economic and political reforms. Long-repressed nationalist sentiments flared up in the USSR's peripheries in the form of demands for autonomy or, in the Baltics, Ukraine, and Central Asia, for outright sovereignty. In December 1991, Gorbachev dissolved the terminally weakened Soviet Union after 69 years of existence, leaving behind 15 separate, independent states.

It was an astonishing conclusion to one of the defining chapters in modern history. Within a few decades of the Bolshevik assumption of power in 1917, Soviet Russia had transformed itself from an economically and socially backward monarchy into a military, industrial and ideological superpower that was the geopolitical counterpoint to the democratic-capitalist Western world. Jack Matlock, US Ambassador to the USSR at the time of its collapse, describes his feelings in December 1991:

> "I could not explain with confidence just how it had happened. After all, the Soviet Union had possessed the largest military machine ever assembled on this planet by a single political authority. It had been governed by an apparently monolithic party with historically unparalleled instruments of compulsion. Tentacles of its elaborate bureaucracy had reached into every crevice of its subjects' lives. How could such a state simply have destroyed itself?"[4]

Anatoly Dobrynin, who served as the USSR's Ambassador from Presidents Kennedy to Reagan, is equally perplexed:

[4] Matlock (1995), 6

> "The Soviet Union that Gorbachev inherited in 1985 was a global power, perhaps somewhat tarnished in that image, but still strong and united and one of the world's two superpowers. But in just three years, from 1989 to 1991, the political frontiers of the European continent were effectively rolled eastward from the center of Europe to the Russian borders of 1653, those before Russia's union with the Ukraine. How did all this happen?"[5]

The discipline of International Relations (IR), established in order to analyse and understand the dynamics that govern relations between states, neither anticipated the end of the Cold War nor could account for its peaceful resolution. As Roberts observes, "few political scientists foresaw the end of the Cold War," and "many International Relations specialists got it wrong."[6] Kenneth Waltz claimed as late as 1988 that "although its content and virulence vary as unit-level forces change and interact, the Cold War continues. It is firmly rooted in the structure of postwar international politics, and will last as long as that structure endures."[7] The fact that said structure disintegrated three years later remains an indictment of the predictive abilities of IR theories, particularly neorealism. John Gaddis notes that the end of the Cold War was "of such importance that no approach to the study of international relations claiming both foresight and competence should have failed to see it coming. None actually did so, though, and that fact ought to raise questions about the methods we have developed for trying to understand world politics."[8] The substance of what happened after 1989 – the resolution of the US-Soviet bipolar standoff without great power war – was as unpredictable as the sequence of events that ended the Cold War. The end of the Cold War was "dramatic, decisive and remarkably peaceful: a rapid succession of extraordinary events."[9]

That is not to say that no-one foresaw the possibility of a Soviet collapse. In 1946 George Kennan, a diplomat at the US embassy in Moscow, penned his famous 'Long Telegram' for Secretary of State James Byrnes, outlining a strategy of Western containment to address the threat of Soviet

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5 Dobrynin, 615
6 Roberts, 518
7 Waltz (1988), 628
8 Gaddis (1992), 6
9 Roberts, 513

expansionism. Kennan argued that if the Soviet Union could be prevented from expanding it would eventually collapse due to its inherent systemic flaws. According to Kennan, Soviet leaders would continue to enjoy unchallenged domestic political power for as long as they mastered "the arts of despotism."[10] But maintaining internal security, in addition to the stresses of a collectivised, top-down economic system, would end up testing the "the physical and nervous strength" of the Soviet people.[11] Kennan qualified his projections by highlighting the unpredictability of the USSR's political and social development. He focused on the constraints that the US could place on the Soviet Union in the hope of fostering change within the country, but pointed out that violent intervention would be counterproductive. The source of Soviet power should not be attacked outright, as it would likely exhaust itself internally with time.

Kennan was enthusiastic about the Marshall Plan, agreeing that the large-scale provision of American aid would give Western European states less reason to turn to the Soviet Union.[12] This reflected his belief that the external environment had to be made inhospitable to the spread of Soviet power. Kennan suggested a particular factor that could change the Soviet political system – its own leadership: "A great uncertainty hangs over the political life of the Soviet Union. That is the uncertainty involved in the transfer of power from one individual or group of individuals to others."[13] Though any change to the Soviet system could only come from within, the transfer of power to a new generation of leaders would not itself necessarily bring the Soviet Union down. Kennan simply raised the possibility that, in light of the Soviet Union's weaknesses, political change introduced by a new generation of leaders could one day "shake Soviet power to its foundations."[14] But this was not a given. All the West could do was contain the USSR and hope its future leaders would change their country once it became too weak to compete with the US.

This was an astute and nimble prognosis that enmeshed analysis with policy. An overly aggressive stance, Kennan reasoned, could strengthen Soviet power. Containment, by contrast, would gradually exacerbate Soviet

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10 Kennan, 576
11 Ibid, 577
12 Miscamble, 73
13 Kennan, 578
14 Ibid

weaknesses over time, until political change became possible. Kennan's prognosis described the interdependence of US foreign policy and the future of international affairs: whichever strategy the US pursued would affect the trajectory of the Cold War. Hence Kennan suggested levers that would manage the conflict gently, not escalate it to military confrontation. Kennan lived to see his far-sighted vision become reality. The Cold War ended after Mikhail Gorbachev rose to power and became determined to reform a failing Soviet Union.[15] How could Kennan anticipate this four decades in advance, when IR's social scientists struggled to predict it even in 1988?

Hugh Trevor-Roper asked a similar question: looking at the field of history, which thinkers have seen farthest into the future? His answer is intriguing: "Ironically, it is those who have made the least claim to rational prophecy: those who, in looking at past history, have admitted the limitations of human free-will but have been most careful to reserve its rights, and who, in order to leave some room for the operations of the imagination, have preferred to pose rather than to answer questions, to wonder rather than to explain why."[16] By contrast, predictive social science considers a causal explanation to be, in Dray's words, "a statement of antecedent conditions together with certain laws or generalisations," which permits the "logical deduction of the occurrence of what is to be explained."[17] Such analyses treat explanation as a matter of showing why things necessarily occurred – their arguments are by definition predictive. E. H. Carr embraced this philosophy in history, advising his colleagues: "write as if what happened was in fact bound to happen, and as if it was [your] business simply to explain what happened and why."[18] This ignores that which might have happened, but did not. Trevor-Roper explains why this is problematic: "In retrospect, we read the signs, select the evidence, and complacently predict what has already only too visibly happened. But at the time who foresaw such things, or would have believed them if foretold?"[19]

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15 Though the Cold War ended as Kennan had predicted it would, "it was extremely difficult to get him to see this. When the Berlin wall finally came down and Germany finally reunified, he wrote in his diary that nothing good can come of this." Gaddis, in Economist (2011)

16 Trevor-Roper, 367

17 Dray, 47

18 Cited in Trevor-Roper, 363

19 Trevor-Roper, 366

This thesis is premised on the conviction that the failure to anticipate the end of the Cold War throws doubt on the usefulness of prediction in IR. The Cold War ended in a mosaic of complexity that overly parsimonious forms of causal analysis necessarily obscure. Instead, this thesis advances an analysis rooted in the open-ended, non-linear nature of the social world, and uses tools drawn from complexity theory in order to analyse why some events happened – and others did not.

Complexity theory, combined with historical imagination, can add to our understanding of the end of the Cold War

It is well known that the study of IR is divided into various theoretical approaches. A 1997 article by Stephen Walt, titled 'One World, Many Theories,' sets out the case that no single approach can make sense of all the complexities that prevail in contemporary world politics. Walt argues that IR is better off with a diverse array of competing theoretical traditions instead of a single orthodoxy. He uses the then on-going debate about NATO's proposed expansion into Eastern Europe to illustrate this point, presenting various theoretical interpretations at the time.[20] Realists viewed NATO expansion as a project to further US influence beyond its vital sphere of interests, making a harsh response from Moscow likely. Liberals saw it as an institutional means of reinforcing Eastern Europe's burgeoning democratic rule and extending collective security to a potentially turbulent region. Constructivists stressed the social consequences of integrating countries like the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland into the Western security community, enlarging the common identity shared by NATO states that has made war among them virtually unthinkable. Walt's point is that competition between IR's paradigms reveals the strengths and weaknesses of various theories and spurs refinements in them, all the while revealing flaws in conventional wisdom.[21]

The NATO example, however, suggests that much of the time these theories do not compete with each other. Instead, each presents only a narrow empirical canvass. The interpretations made by realists, liberals and constructivists all apply to some degree and in some combination: separately, however, they do not adequately capture the complexity of an

[20] Walt (1997), 30

[21] Ibid, 43

event like NATO expansion. After all, this simultaneously enlarged the European security community to the benefit of the continent (as per constructivist thinking), bolstered democratic rule in Eastern Europe and enabled the region to grow economically (liberal thinking), and provoked a backlash from Moscow that countries like Georgia and Ukraine are currently experiencing (realist thinking). The interconnections between the stories these different theories tell about world politics are worthy of study in and of themselves.

Walt asks whether the end of the Cold War signalled a qualitative change in the nature of world politics – making new research methods necessary – or whether it was simply a far-reaching shift in the global balance of power.[22] A number of points provide evidence for the former. New sources of change have gained relevance, including transnational networks of people and ideas, social movements, and the proliferation of new media both global and local in scope. Snyder makes the case that while the Cold War followed a comparatively predictable pattern of political action and reaction, its end was characterised by the emergence of more complex relationships in the international system.[23] Witness only the multiple concurrent dimensions to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989: economic trends, political developments, social pressures, and cultural movements all combined in a relatively short timeframe to bring about an unanticipated, yet major, shift in the European security structure.[24]

Parsimonious explanations of such events that rest on too high a degree of abstraction do not capture the operation and impact of complex dynamics in the international system.[25] Just how was the international system transformed in the 1980s? The fall of the Soviet Union was the first imperial collapse in history that was not accompanied by a great power war.[26] The destructive potential of nuclear weapons has made such wars less likely; as a result, other factors drove international political change in that period. Verba

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22 For an analysis that does not see the end of the Cold War as a fundamental rupture in world order, see Lawson (2010).

23 Snyder (1993), 4

24 Garton Ash's description (2009) is apt: "The essence of 1989 lies in the multiple interactions not merely of a single society and party-state, but of many societies and states, in a series of interconnected three-dimensional chess games." See Sarotte (2014) for an account that combines all the developments above with historical contingency.

25 Christensen (1993)

26 Kissinger (1994), 763

lists the easing of great power tensions, the adoption of democratic rule in many states, the renegotiation of certain national boundaries, new claims of statehood, and demands for human rights.[27] Does this suggest that the nature of international affairs is changing?

The international system has evolved considerably since the 19th century. Continuous advances in transportation and communications technology in the wake of the industrial revolution have 'shrunk' the world, making the tapestry of international politics denser and the social world more tightly intertwined than before.[28] Hannah Arendt described this in the late 1960s: "For the first time in history, all peoples on earth have a common present. […] Every country has become the almost immediate neighbour of every other country, and every man feels the shock of events which take place at the other end of the globe."[29] Buzan and Lawson argue that the industrial revolution massively increased the world's interaction capacity, defined as "the ability to move people, goods, information, money and military power around the [international] system."[30] The interactive potential of people and networks of people has become thicker, across a wider range of more inter-connected societies. Most recently, the digital communications revolution created an entirely new domain in the international system – cyberspace, an arena with its own peculiar dynamics whose effects on global politics we are only beginning to understand.[31]

The world's growing interconnectivity has given rise to unpredictable sources of political turbulence that are hard to anticipate. The rise of the Islamic State from small terrorist group to transnational military network provides a potent example of this. Spawned as an unintended consequence of the US administration of post-invasion Iraq, ISIS grew in the wake of the anti-Assad uprising in Syria and the fragile state of governance in Iraq.[32] The group deftly exploits the organisational resources available to social movements in the digital age. Its incubation was decentralised: lacking access to traditional mobilisation channels, ISIS instead projects a successful

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27 Cited in Snyder (1993), 3

28 Buzan & Lawson (2015)

29 Arendt, 83

30 Buzan & Lawson (2014), 448

31 See, for example, Reveron (2012)

32 The US involuntarily gestated a new generation of hardened Islamist agitators, including the eventual founder and leader of ISIS, in the sprawling prison complex of Camp Bucca outside Baghdad. See, for instance, McCants (2015), or Chulov (2014).

propaganda narrative that directly targets and recruits disenchanted Muslims in both the Middle East and the West.[33] Within a brief timespan this loose grouping of violent extremists mobilised itself into a formidable military actor in the Arab world, one that grew in the shadows and was registered only once it began to wield power. If rapidly emerging phenomena such as ISIS are a sign of a more unpredictable era of world politics to come, then IR needs to be primed for an age of turmoil. This requires the development of tools of analysis appropriate for a more complex world.

Stephen Walt accepts that "realism and liberalism both failed to anticipate the end of the Cold War and had some trouble explaining it." Moreover, he concurs that "we live in an era where old norms are being challenged, once clear boundaries are dissolving [and] issues of identity are becoming more salient."[34] In this thesis I make the case that we ought to break down the silos between IR's theoretical stories and study how the causes and processes highlighted by each interact with one another. I subsume this approach to IR under the mantle of complexity theory, and use its principal analytical tools to study the end of the Cold War in the hope of making sense of the twilight of an old and the dawn of a new era.

Complexity theory addresses the gaps in predictive social science

Predictive social science is underpinned by a methodological axiom that sees its purpose as the discovery and explanation of regularities in the social world.[35] In IR, such approaches seek to specify and isolate certain linear causal links in the international system, test the strength of these cause-effect connections repeatedly, and use the results to form generalised rules that apply across the system.[36] Such explanations require a strong degree of simplification. This comes at a cost. At worst, simplified causal connections are so general as to be insufficiently informative, or so conditional as to not

[33] For an account of ISIS' recruitment methods, see Erelle (2015)

[34] Walt (1997), 42

[35] "Prediction, which presumes the acceptance of regularity-deterministic assumptions, is widely accepted as a legitimate goal of social scientific inquiry." Kurki (2008), 68. Schweller, for instance, asserts: "The more predictions a theory generates, the more tests we can construct to evaluate it." (1998), 11. On prediction in the social sciences, see Kincaid (1996); Rescher (1998). See also footnote 115 on p. 31 and fn 178 on p. 42.

[36] Walt (1999)

be general.[37] Prediction, far from being the hallmark of social science, can act as a red herring. [38]

After the end of the Cold War many neorealists engaged in a game of retroactive prediction, crafting artful post-hoc accounts to demonstrate that peaceful Soviet retrenchment was the likeliest conclusion of the conflict: it could have been predicted had the necessary information (such as the scale of the USSR's economic troubles in the 1980s) been available.[39] By contrast, studying the trajectory of change in the 1980s through the lens of complexity theory suggests that how events play out in the international system is open-ended, not pre-determined. The end of the Cold War was inherently unpredictable because it could have unfolded in many different ways.

Kurzman, writing about the 1979 revolution in Iran, argues that social science ought to incorporate unpredictability into its explanations.[40] He takes issue with Theda Skocpol's influential theory on the causes of revolutions[41] and instead maintains that such uprisings are sudden, unpredictable breaches of routine social practices which shatter the 'rules of the game' that had hitherto been in place. Social preferences shift abruptly, and new options emerge. Skocpol's argument – that state collapse opens the door to the expression of popular discontent and produces revolutions – begs the question of why this only occurs in some instances, not in all (such as the Iranian revolution, as Kurzman demonstrates). Ellman and Kontorovich make an analogous point regarding the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918: to say, simply, that a multinational empire was not viable in a world of nationalism does little to explain Austria-Hungary's collapse in 1918, since this was also true of Austria-Hungary in 1908.[42] For a full account, further explanations are required that link such simplified (and not necessarily wrong) causal narratives with other processes (in the case of Austria-Hungary, its defeat in WW1, as Ellman and Kontorovich argue).

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37 Hawthorn, 160

38 Kurzman (2004)

39 Brooks and Wohlforth, for example, assert: "Rather than being simply one of many equally probable responses to Soviet material decline, retrenchment was the most likely one." (2002), 99

40 Kurzman, 8

41 Her point being, "an adequate understanding of social revolutions requires that the analyst takes a nonvoluntarist, structural perspective on their causes and processes." Skocpol, 14

42 Ellman and Kontorovich, 5

The main trouble with existing theoretical accounts of the end of the Cold War is not that they are false: they are incomplete. Realists are right that economic weakness gradually worsened the Soviet position; liberals are correct that the Soviet system struggled to keep up with its Western competitor on many social and political fronts; and it is true, as constructivists point out, that fundamental social and ideational developments were underway in the civil societies of both East and West which challenged established political, social and cultural practices. Arguing that one theory has greater explanatory purchase than another, therefore, is a quixotic enterprise: the various causal elements in the Cold War's end are too intertwined for their different cause-effect sequences to be isolated and ranked. Instead, complexity theory can shed light on the links between concurrent causal dynamics in the international system.

In 1982 eight scientists, most of them based at the Los Alamos national nuclear laboratory in New Mexico, founded the Santa Fe Institute, a research centre dedicated to the study of complexity. Andrei Kolmogorov, a Soviet mathematician, provides an understandable definition of 'complexity': the length of the shortest description of an object.[43] For example, irrational numbers – those that cannot be written out as fractions – are complex because they are not reproducible through a reductive, simplifying formula. Similarly, a complex system is one with organisationally non-reducible properties.[44] Such systems have three characteristics: they are non-linear (that is, such systems evolve in a convoluted manner), interaction effects abound (units in the system continuously affect each other's behaviour), and 'emergence' reigns. Emergent phenomena arise from within a system through the contingent combination of separate causal events, taking on a life of their own by interacting with the system as a whole and reverberating within it.[45] Durkheim describes the phenomenon of emergence thus: "when certain elements combine and thereby produce, by the fact of their combination, new phenomena, these new phenomena reside not only on the

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43 Gerovitch (2013)

44 Stewart, 367. Herbert Simon defines a complex system as one in which, "given the properties of the parts and the laws of their interaction, it is not a trivial matter to infer the properties of the whole." (1981 [1969]), 195

45 For instance, traffic jams without a seeming cause (i.e., not due to roadworks or other obstructions) are emergent phenomena (Sugiyama et al), as are the movements of flocks of birds and school of fish (Cucker and Smale), or ant colonies (Gordon).

original elements but in the totality formed by their interaction."[46] Emergence is not the same as chaos, which entails root unpredictability.[47] Complex systems are situated on a spectrum that ranges between complete order and complete chaos: complexity theory tells us what types of systems tend to exhibit complicated, self-organising behaviour, and where on the spectrum of order and chaos such systems live.[48]

Theories seek to identify and understand the crucial causes that shape outcomes.[49] Complexity theory does this by teasing out how interactive causal effects combine to produce dynamics in systems and shape events.[50] Its tools of analysis can increase our understanding of how complexity operates in the social world. The concept of emergence is key: complex systems exhibit behaviours and tendencies that transcend its components.[51] This is what is meant by the expression 'the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.' Reducing a complex system to its various parts does not clarify how it works: the interactions between these parts create outcomes in the system. An emergent phenomenon is contingent across a range of events, it is not produced by single events, but by multiple events acting in conjunction. As a whole, complex systems move in a non-linear fashion, i.e. not through step-by-step cause and effect chains.[52]

Applying this to political analysis yields interesting implications. A complex system is not fundamentally chaotic, so it is possible to make forecasts of it: by sketching out various dynamic causal scenarios, and highlighting the conditions under which such competing trajectories become

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46 Durkheim (1982 [1985])

47 Johnson, 39

48 Stewart, 370

49 "Theory is invaluable for many reasons. Because the world is infinitely complex, we need mental maps to identify what is important in different domains of human activity. In particular, we need theories to identify the causal mechanisms that explain recurring behavior and how they relate to each other." Mearsheimer and Walt, 430

50 In the social sciences, complexity theory is an approach rather than a theory that purports to explain everything. See Bunge, 265

51 Stewart, 367. Weaver (1948) distinguishes between disorganised complexity – many variables, each with erratic behaviour, such as the behaviour of gas molecules in a container – and organised complexity – "a sizeable number of factors which are interrelated into an organic whole." The 'organisation' of the latter is brought about by emergence. Whereas disorganised complexity is susceptible to statistical analysis, the interrelationships of variables in systems of organised complexity cannot be understood fully using statistics. Snyder (1993) and other authors in that volume argue that the interstate sphere is an organised complexity.

52 See Simon, Chapter 7

reality.[53] Such forecasts can be updated on the basis of actual events, as information and knowledge of a system accumulates.[54] In a sense, Kennan practised a variant of this style of analysis in 1946.[55] Forecasts integrate uncertainty (Kennan emphasised the unpredictability that characterised the Soviet Union's future development) and conditionality (Kennan pointed to Soviet domestic political processes as a potential future source of change). Forecasts differ from predictions that construct calculated, stylised punts based on a theory's underlying parsimonious base.[56] Precise, empirical predictions are not useful tools to analyse open-ended, non-linear complex systems like world politics.[57] Numerous outcomes are possible in complex systems due to the dynamic interaction of multiple causes: the route charted by such systems is driven by the behaviour of the goal-oriented actors and units within it, who are moved by their own incentives and calculations.[58] The interactions between actors in a system give rise to emergent structural effects, and these effects in turn shape the behaviour of actors. Patterns across a complex system, then, are formed interactively.

The on-going interactions of units can be difficult to track, making system-wide predictions unsound (though certain types of local interaction are susceptible to forecasting).[59] It is a challenge to link the intentions and behaviour of actors to results and outcomes in a complex system. These systems do not operate on the basis of repeated regularities and linear causal movements. Instead, they evolve in a non-linear manner, brought about not by the simple addition of various causal elements, but through their interaction. Stock markets, for example, are populated by individuals and institutions who pursue private incentives, accessing and interpreting

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53 For a description of such conditional forecasts, see Lebow (2000), 613

54 Johnson, 91. This approach rests on the concept of Bayesian reasoning, see Silver (2012), pp. 240-250

55 Gaddis disagrees; he finds Kennan's observations 'vague' and 'impressionistic'. (1992), 57

56 "A forecast is a statement about unknown phenomena based upon known or accepted generalizations and uncertain conditions ('partial unknowns'), whereas a prediction involves the linkage of known or accepted generalizations with certain conditions (knowns) to yield a statement about unknown phenomena." Freeman and Job, 117. Forecasts are non-deterministic probabilistic statements: "if A, then (probably) B." See Gaddis (1992), 6

57 Lebow (2011)

58 This makes local prediction in complex systems possible, such as that a rise in the price of a good will most likely reduce its demand.

59 See Jervis (1997), 12-17

information to guide their decision-making. They interact with each other in the process by purchasing and selling stocks. These actions affect stock prices, which prompts new behaviour by participants, leading to new interactions between them that in turn produce further changes in the market, and so forth. Certain local trends can at times be forecast, like the prospects of particular industries or companies. However, stock markets as a whole exhibit complex behaviour, making aggregate price movements unpredictable.[60] Predictive parsimonious theories are limited in their ability to generate knowledge about outcomes in complex systems.

Complexity theory allows for a novel take on the study of leadership in IR

Leaders are critical nodes in international affairs because they are choice-producing units: when faced with the need for action they select certain policies over others. These policies interact with the international system, producing both intended and unintended effects that leaders respond to through further choices. This iterative process can end up changing the very fabric of international relations, as happened in the 1980s. Political leaders are one set of causal linchpins in the international system. When they make choices it provides us with counterfactuals in the form of alternative decisions that could have been taken. Such 'What If' questions allow us to explore causal interconnections in complex systems.

A good example of this is the 'Shultz-Clark' showdown of March 1983, presented in detail in Chapter Four. When Reagan's Secretary of State George Shultz began to press the President for deeper engagement with the Soviet Union, National Security Advisor William Clark and other hardliners pushed back and argued for a tougher line. The dispute culminated in an Oval Office meeting in March 1983 during which Reagan opted to side with Shultz.[61] Reagan authorised the preparation of a strategy of diplomatic engagement with a view to reducing Cold War tensions. His decision produced a series of ripple effects (e.g. the appointment of Jack Matlock on the NSC, a diplomat and Sovietologist whose thinking was closely aligned with Shultz's).[62] Had Reagan sided with Clark, Shultz's influence on the Administration's Soviet strategy would have decreased relative to that of the

[60] Johnson, 113
[61] See Wilson, 73-74
[62] Matlock (2004), x

hardliners, making any eventual rapprochement with the Soviets that much harder to envisage. Gorbachev, upon coming to office in 1985, would not have found as willing and prepared a diplomatic partner in Reagan with backing from key aides. This would have made the dramatic moderation in Soviet foreign policy between 1985 and 1989 less likely: the budding trust that underpinned nuclear arms reduction and the concomitant reduction in US-Soviet tensions had its origins in the repeated high-level interactions between Reagan and Gorbachev.[63] Gorbachev needed to point to progress in these talks to convince his own hardliners that the US was no longer an implacable foe.[64] The analysis in Chapter Four suggests that Reagan's March 1983 decision to endorse Shultz's strategy opened a causal channel of consequence in the complex maelstrom of US-Soviet relations in the 1980s. The chapter highlights the diffuse causal influence of leaders (i.e. the signals Reagan sent in 1983 to the USSR that he was ready to engage, signals that had no immediate impact, but without which relations would have struggled to improve rapidly from 1986 onwards)[65] as they interact with systemic developments (Gorbachev's desire to reduce tensions with the US was driven by the aim of reducing the pressures of the arms race on the Soviet Union)[66] and wider matters of timing (the fact that in Reagan and Gorbachev, two leaders came together who developed an effective personal chemistry that allowed them to pursue rapprochement against the advice of reactionary thinkers in their respective cabinets).[67] Counterfactual analyses of decision-making improve our understanding of complex interactive effects between leaders, policy choices, and outcomes; between leaders and their own staff; and between leaders and other leaders.[68]

During an interview, Brent Scowcroft, who was National Security Advisor to George H. W. Bush, expressed unease over how poorly such interaction effects are understood, stressing this especially in regard to how leaders engage with their cabinet, and how cabinet members interact with

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63 See, for instance, Greenstein (1998)

64 Larson, 190-234

65 See Fischer (1997)

66 Bessmertnykh comments: "Gorbachev wanted to go on with the reforms and the continued arms race, and especially the nuclear area, was a tremendous hindrance to the future of those reforms." Cited in Kagan (2000), 21. Chernyaev also stresses this point repeatedly (2000 [1993]).

67 See, for instance, Breslauer and Lebow (2004)

68 Lebow (2010), 103-136

each other.[69] Many IR theorists are reluctant to integrate the study of decision-makers and their interactions into analyses of international affairs.[70] Remarks at a panel discussion during the 2015 annual convention of the International Studies Association help explain why: John Mearsheimer commented that an important tool open to leaders in the international arena – arms control agreements – are of little interest to IR.[71] He argued that such agreements inevitably reflect the balance of power, only affect weapons that states do not care much about anyway, and are formed solely because they are in the interests of the states that sign them. This reflects the reductionism that prevails in Mearsheimer's (influential) theoretical analyses of IR.[72] In actual fact, such treaties are the product of intense diplomatic negotiations whose outcome is rarely foreordained. Leaders may lack the desire or political will to engage in such negotiations. Different leaders may diverge in their evaluation of what constitutes their own and their state's best interests. Leaders must decide to open up negotiations, and must then oversee the process and bring it to a successful conclusion. None of these are straightforward, unitary decisions that all politicians would handle in the same manner. Such talks are complex affairs, and they divide political opinion, as demonstrated most recently by the Iranian nuclear talks that concluded in Vienna in 2015.[73]

Different leaders and the various circumstances in which they find themselves can change the outcome of such negotiations – even whether or not they take place. This, then, is one straightforward effect of leadership on the evolution of the international system.[74] Unless we take the intuitively unsatisfactory approach that any leader faced with a negotiation scenario would act in an identical manner, it seems clear that leaders have some causal influence on international affairs. While individual agency should not be prioritised over other important drivers of events – like the wider context in which decision-makers operate, the incentives they face, and the international position of the country they represent[75] – bracketing leaders out

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69 Personal interview; 14 October 2014.

70 For good reason: this is difficult to accomplish in a meaningful manner; see Jervis (2013)

71 Mearsheimer (2015)

72 See Snyder (2002) for a broad-ranging critique of Mearsheimer's analyses of IR.

73 Contrast the varying verdicts offered by Kissinger and Shultz (2015), Haass (2015), and Mogherini (2015).

74 See Nye (2013), who also applies this argument to the domestic politics.

75 Jervis (2013)

as mere pawns of bigger structural forces brings about a grainy understanding of international affairs. When are leaders beholden to wider dynamics, and when do they have leeway to shape those dynamics?[76] This study aims to provide a firmer grasp on how leaders influence international affairs and the limits of their influence. That, in turn, contributes to a more a fine-grained, nuanced understanding of inter-related events and dynamics in the modern international system.

We need to understand the ways in which leadership can introduce original impulses of change into the international system

An additional reason why political decision-making should form an integral part of studying IR relates to the problem of determinism, specifically the social scientific approach it generated: this views its purpose as uncovering law-like generalisations in human relations.[77] The project of causally reductionist science was given a decisive boost by Isaac Newton's feat of reducing all motion in the universe to three laws.[78] On the basis of these laws astronomers have computed planetary movements in the solar system for 200 million years into the future.[79] The success of this line of research, and the insights into the natural world it made possible in the centuries after Newton's discoveries nailed a plank to the scientific method: the notion that the universe we inhabit, and thus our world, is fundamentally predictable, provided we can reduce phenomena to their correct causal basis. In the 20th century, disciplines like economics, political science and to some degree IR have attempted to extract the operational laws of the human world through similar reductive thinking. The basic appeal of that approach is clear. Abstraction and generality in science suggest a comforting sense of stability and continuity in a world that our sensory experiences suggest is

[76] Greenstein (1992)

[77] For an example of this methodology, see King, Keohane and Verba (1994); for a critical examination, see the symposium in the American Political Science Review 89:2 (June 1995).

[78] Howard Brody, a physicist, has pointed out that these laws make for a good summary of the game of tennis: 1. An object in a state of uniform motion will remain in that motion unless it encounters an external force 2. Force equals mass times acceleration 3. For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction (unless the ball goes out). *The Economist* (2015)

[79] Stewart, 11. Lakatos (1973) calls Newton's laws of planetary motion "the most powerful theory science has yet produced."

disorderly and chaotic.[80] Robert Shiller explains it thus: "Theorists like models with order, harmony and beauty […] People in ambiguous situations will focus on the person who has the most coherent model."[81] Moreover, predictive methodologies have brought about tremendous successes in the natural sciences, through which humans have discovered truths in the physical world and harnessed them, making major advances in science and medicine possible. These methodologies assume that theories need to predict, and should be subject to testing and falsification.[82]

Prediction implies determinism, as it presupposes causal links between present and future which are for us to uncover. To what extent, then, is the world predetermined by natural ordering principles? Pierre de Laplace, a French mathematician in the 19th century, took determinism to its logical conclusion:

> "An intellect which at any given moment knew all the forces that animate nature and the mutual positions of the beings that comprise it, if this intellect were vast enough to submit its data to analysis, could condense into a single formula the movement of the greatest bodies of the universe and that of the lightest atom: for such an intellect nothing could be uncertain, and the future just like the past would be present before his eyes."[83]

To the extent that humans are powered by natural forces, we too are subject to the laws of nature, and as such it should be possible, in theory, to uncover law-like regularities that govern human relations. But other than generalisations relating to material matters, such as 'for any good, people tend to want more, not less', we cannot project on all agents a deterministic psychology that captures all practical deliberation in a realistic manner.[84] The human mind is too idiosyncratic. People are reflexive, thinking beings; molecules do not share this trait. As Stanley Hoffman points out, humans are

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80 Hawthorn, 181

81 Cited in Coggan (2015)

82 Consider Stephen Hawking's description: "A theory is a good theory if it satisfies two requirements: It must accurately describe a large class of observations on the basis of a model that contains only a few arbitrary elements, and it must make definite predictions about the results of future observations." (1998), 10

83 Cited in Sarewitz et al (2000)

84 Hawthorn, 185

not "gases or pistons:" our movement and behaviour is subject to internal sources of decision-making.[85] Chemistry, too, would struggle to predict the motion and behaviour of molecules if they possessed minds of their own.[86]

Reductionist social science attempts to deal with the problem of individuality by assigning generalised rules to human behaviour, such as utility maximisation, or rational agency. It is true that humans behave in consistent enough ways for us to make accurate generalisations such as, 'politicians are motivated by their desire to stay in office.'[87] What's more, human cognition does not escape the determinism of the natural world; our minds are shaped by all kinds of molecular phenomena, like basic biological drives, our brain chemistry, hormonal make-up, and so forth. But the notion that the mind is entirely reducible to predictable natural processes sits uneasily with our intuitive experience as free autonomous individuals. Natural laws may constrain us, but as Kant argued, humans can see themselves and others from outside as well as from inside, through the use of reason.[88] Hawthorn points out that we are distinct as creatures in our capacity to seek to know ourselves, to grasp universals, to sustain relations to the inexistent, to use language, to act freely, and to become part of social groups.[89] Humans can reflect on their self-conceptions and change them if they so choose. This should form part of our analyses of why people do what they do. It may well be possible that consciousness is ultimately reducible to natural, deterministic processes. But if it is not, as I argue, then consciousness can be a source of independent thought that gives relations between humans a self-defining, if not a self-creating quality.[90]

I try to show in my thesis that individuals can act as unique causal influences in shaping the course of history. As Lebow puts it, "structural change may be the product, not the cause, of behaviour," the opposite of

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85 Hoffman (1959), 366

86 Gaddis (1992), 51

87 See de Mesquita (2011)

88 For further elaboration on Kant's stance regarding internal vs. external reasons for action and its connection to reason, see Wood (1999).

89 Hawthorn, 176

90 Take, for instance, Albert Hirschman's analysis (1991) of the idea of 'civil rights' and its spread since being unleashed by the thinkers of the American and French Revolutions, producing waves of political action and reaction across the Western world throughout the next two centuries, though arching overall towards progressively more liberal social relations in the West.

what most structural theories of IR contend.[91] People think and act differently depending on their dispositions, abilities and states of mind. Character matters: when a leader is confronted with alternative choices that cannot be ranked according to some kind of clearly definable payoff, the driving force behind whichever path is selected is what the individual tasked with the choice argues is the right path of action. Such choices are in no small part influenced by the interacting teams of advisors that leaders rely upon. Other leaders, reyling on other other advisors, may reach different decisions. For that reason, Watkins argues that 'personalities' have influence on history.[92] Collingwood believes that individuals can change their dispositions by an exercise of free will, arguing that what politicians are trying to accomplish forms an important part of the analysis of history.[93]

In fact, this recognition is one of the defining operational pillars of democratic rule: it matters whom the citizenry elects to power, because the candidates will perform differently in office. Through their temperament and their choices relating to personnel and policy, political leaders can affect the course of history. They are subject to external, identifiable and reducible constraints, some of which are natural, others economic or social. I maintain that in addition to such structural drivers, free will also forms part of our being: consciousness and self-reflection are essential qualities of human decision-making, and this makes individuals unique. This thesis exhibits a strong interest in the causal force of the key actors involved in the end of the Cold War. Why did they select certain policies, how did they relate to other important decision-makers, how did they make sense of a changing international system, and what effect did all this have on the course of events?

The analysis of causal complexity is aided by counterfactual thinking

The ensuing study examines, in the context of the end of the Cold War, how leaders interact within a complex international political system filled with dense, multi-layered causal channels that connect structures (such as ideology, norms, economics), contingencies (events that occur because they fortuitously overlap with certain other events), and leaders' choices.

[91] Lebow (2000), 616
[92] Dray (1980), 48
[93] Dray (1995)

Causal explanations describe relations between events and actuality.[94] Humans, by virtue of their reflexivity, can influence and direct some events, thus giving them the power to create new situations.[95] As my research shows, leaders are far from omnipotent and subject to limitations – big, system-wide forces; their own cognition; the wider possibilities of nature. But it is a mistake to exclude political leaders from the study of international relations. Without Reagan, Bush and Gorbachev, the end of the Cold War would have unfolded differently. Ronald Reagan was the first President who outlined a vision for transcending US-Soviet hostilities and acted upon it. Mikhail Gorbachev stands as one of the only leaders of a major power to explicitly reject violence as means of preventing a precipitous loss in state power.[96] George Bush handled the liberation of Eastern Europe diligently, treading softly to encourage the reunification of Germany within NATO – something The Economist viewed, as late as November 1989, as a highly unlikely outcome – without antagonising the USSR in the process, convincing Gorbachev that the US was not exploiting its weakening position.[97]

This thesis describes all of the above with the aid of counterfactual arguments: I explore how alternative decisions could have swayed events, using counterfactuals to highlight causal pathways for change. This yields a more fine-tuned understanding of how the international system was transformed in the 1980s. Counterfactuals – which involve speculating how world history would be different if some aspect of it is changed – inevitably provoke arguments about the permissibility of considering alternative histories as legitimate options, rather than as abstract 'What Ifs' that never took place and therefore have no bearing on empirical analysis. The aim is to convince the reader that particular 'What Ifs' contribute constructively to our understanding of international affairs. Understanding, qua Hawthorn, starts and ends with our experience of the actual. The actual, as this thesis tries to demonstrate, turns on what is causally and practically possible: what is actual

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94 Hawthorn, 172

95 See ibid, 172 (esp. fn 9) for an overview of the literature regarding links between causal relations (between events and realities) and interpretive explanations of self-defining relations in the realm of human thought.

96 Lévesque (2004, 139) regards Gorbachev's refusal to use force directly or indirectly to maintain the Soviet hold over Eastern Europe as "the most remarkable departure from Leninism in the Gorbachev years."

97 The Economist (1989)

depends on what else could have become actual.[98] Laplace's vision of a fully determinable world is not possible if the social world humans inhabit is at least partially malleable through our choices. Predictive theories stumble at the potential for humans to act independently of social laws, to innovate, dream, think, and decide. It is no surprise that creativity has been such a powerful force in shaping human history – and creativity is by definition unpredictable.

The evolution of complex systems cannot be predicted

Reductionist science has shed light on powerful causal dynamics in the social sphere: economics has advanced our understanding of production and consumption systems in a world of scarce resources; psychology has generated insights into how we think; political science has revealed knowledge concerning how politicians and parties seek and wield power, as well as how citizens form opinions and select their leaders.[99] But as the failure to anticipate the end of the Cold War shows, social science struggles to come up with practically useful macro-predictions. There are limits to the usefulness of the reductionist model of knowledge generation. Hawthorn argues that "theory and method protect us from disorder and disarray, but what once gave consolation now confines."[100] Once we embrace complexity, the only generalisability left is unpredictability. History unfolds according to Runciman's description, as a sequence that is, "no less than natural selection, both random in its origins and indeterminate in its outcome."[101] Successful institutions and ideologies will prove themselves adaptable (adaptation being one of the means through which units inside a complex system evolve). But we cannot know how or in what direction this evolution takes place, because multiple directions are open in the future, and humans can partially influence what direction to take. The best we can do is forecast what

98 Hawthorn, 164-166

99 For examples of powerful insights from economics, psychology, and political science, respectively, see Levitt and Dubner (2005), Kahneman (2011) and de Mesquita and Smith (2011)

100 Hawthorn, 181

101 Runciman, 449. Interestingly, he refers to he end-product as "the most complex patterns of structure," namely, "an intense, unremitting, and all too often violent competition for power between rival armies, classes and creeds."

alternative paths are open in future, and how our choices can bring certain paths about vis-à-vis others, as Kennan did in 1946.

The research undertaken here aims to be of practical as well as intellectual use. The gap between IR as a discipline and the policymaking world exists in part because IR's abstract generalisations are of little relevance to those confronting everyday policy dilemmas.[102] Bernard Williams argues that for a theory to be of practical use it has to give the agents for whom it is intended reasons that they recognise as reasons for themselves.[103] This does not mean disavowing theory, which is "the lodestone in the field of International Relations."[104] Theories try to explain the world, so a theory of IR that is practically relevant helps anyone with an interest in politics and society. 'What If' questions form an integral part of this project: when applied to the past they can suggest important causal mechanisms in a complex international system.

Understanding causation empowers. Causes are the levers that change the world.[105] Some causes we are beholden to, others we have influence over and can deliberately pursue or avoid. Studying the role of leaders in shaping history matters to all who wonder how they as individuals can act in a complex world to create change, what constraints they face, when to pursue a vision in the hope of making it a reality, and when to yield to bigger systemic forces, or better yet, how to harness those forces optimally and productively to bring about change for the better (something Gorbachev in the end failed to achieve).

The structure of the study

The thesis proceeds as follows. Chapter One discusses the theoretical debates behind causal analysis in IR, presents complexity theory in more detail, and describes the role of counterfactual thinking in the analysis.

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[102] See Sagan (2014)

[103] Williams, 101-13

[104] Mearsheimer and Walt, 428

[105] All the more frustrating that harnessing them in the social sphere has proved an elusive endeavour; see Cartwright and Efstathiou (2011). Their conclusion states one of two scenarios: either a) "our elaborate methods for testing are neither necessary nor sufficient for claims that give true conclusions about [causal] policy manipulations," or a more optimistic scenario b), "Conclusion 2: There is a lot of work left for philosophy to do: to find good, rich theories of causality that support method and use in one fell swoop." This thesis aspires to achieve the latter.

Chapter Two offers an overview of the existing IR literature on the end of the Cold War. Chapter Three introduces three important concepts of complexity theory – nonlinearity, interaction, and emergence – in the context of the late 1970s and early 1980s, the period just before the Cold War entered its endgame. Chapter Four is a counterfactual study of the impact of leadership, by contrasting the policies and characters of Reagan's two Secretaries of State. Chapter Five is a study of the origins and consequences of Reagan's decision to engage the Soviet Union before Gorbachev became leader, and examines how the Cold War entered a phase of emergent transformation, launched and guided by the interactions between Reagan and Gorbachev. Chapter Six uses nonlinearity, interaction effects and contingent emergence to trace causal links between the evolution of Gorbachev's reforms, the events of 1989, and Bush's diplomatic approach.

The aim of the study is to describe more clearly some of the causal dynamics in international affairs that parsimonious approaches only cover nebulously. One issue with IR theory before the end of the Cold War was that it struggled to imagine the conditions in which systemic change would come about. But, as Einstein said, "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them." Complexity theory is attuned to the importance of original thinking in politics. The end of the Cold War demonstrates this point: Reagan and Gorbachev overcame the deep-seated enmity between their two nations only after bold, creative diplomatic manoeuvres. Among many other things, it took a concerted act of will – the emerging vision of a post-Cold War era – to make this reality happen. As our complex world evolves into the future, this thesis aims to contribute to the efforts of those who are thinking about how to bring about change in our age.

CHAPTER ONE

ON CAUSAL ANALYSIS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, COMPLEXITY THEORY, AND COUNTERFACTUAL THINKING

You see things; and you say, 'Why?'
But I dream things that never were;
And I say, 'Why not?'
George Bernard Shaw

When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.
Arthur Conan Doyle

The explanatory powers of established methods for causal analysis in IR are limited in scope

In their 1994 book 'Designing Social Inquiry,' Gary King, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba present a unified logic of inference for social science. In an effort to save political science and IR from unsystematic inquiry, King, Keohane and Verba set out to design a scientific method that relies on the construction and testing of hypotheses in order to uncover regularities, potentially even laws, which govern the sphere of international affairs. Their research seeks to arrive at "valid inferences about social and political life."[106] In order for such an approach to make sense, hypotheses need to be tested in controlled, replicable experiments. This standard is uniquely difficult for IR to meet, since world politics is in effect one giant, on-

[106] King, Keohane and Verba, 3

going natural experiment. King, Keohane and Verba's 'logic of inference' permits the discovery of correlations, but not the establishment of causes. The authors know this: "uncertainty about causal inference will never be eliminated."[107] Combining empirical patterns with a theory presents an observed relationship, but says little about the causal link between the data and the theory.

The behaviour under investigation in IR – the subject matter that makes up international affairs: events, developments and decisions in the realm of foreign relations between states, all of which occur in a dense, strategically related web of war, diplomacy, treaties, trade, and social relations – exhibits a great degree of malleability. Such phenomena are less amenable to prediction on the basis of continually recurring patterns that can be deemed 'law-like regularities.'[108] It could be said that wars are to IR what recessions are to economics: both are forms of large-scale social upheaval that occur repeatedly and frequently, typically go unpredicted by their respective disciplines, but are susceptible to rigorous analysis and explanation once they occur. In IR, theoretical accounts of war ascribe general causes to broad categories like 'the security dilemma' or 'power shifts'.[109] But wars originate as instantiations of specific circumstances, limiting the efficacy of attempts to find general causes that are common denominators to all wars. Nye, reviewing major theories on the origins and prevention of major wars, maintains that none of them are predictively powerful. That is not necessarily a problem: a good theory gives rise to clearly defined implications concerning, for instance, the role of rationality, perception and misperception, crises, and power transitions in prompting war.[110] But Nye warns political scientists not to confuse reductionist theory with reality. Law-like generalisations about the causes of war that hold universally are hampered by the fact that each war comes about in a distinct historical context. General causes – for example, "shifts in the offense-defense balance which make conquest easier cause war"[111] – are hedged on so many assumptions as to end up becoming rather particular accounts

[107] Ibid, 75
[108] Suganami, 635
[109] See, for instance, Gilpin (1988); Brown et al (2004)
[110] Nye (1988), 12
[111] See van Evera (1984; 1999)

themselves.[112] It is important to study the origins of wars through a systematic search for general causes, but any causal connections found at a general level are necessarily stylised abstractions.

When it comes to the end of the Cold War, the gap between IR's scientific ambitions and the empirical reality is particularly acute. Positivist science aims to develop theories and hypotheses that do not merely explain, but that yield valid and meaningful predictions about phenomena not yet observed.[113] Such theories are vulnerable to blind spots. Structural realists, for instance, perceived the Cold War as a relatively static, rigid bipolar structure which could only change at the macro-level of the system, for instance through a Great Power war.[114] Such theoretical models do not capture the possibility that new systemic realities can come about relatively rapidly through the practice of international politics. An empiricist theory's worth is judged by its predictive power.[115] In this respect, IR's assessment of the end of the Cold War was poor: despite its predictive aspirations, the IR community failed to even so much as tentatively suggest an end to the conflict when it was already in the process of drawing to a close in the 1980s.[116] The end of the Cold War thus sparked explanatory efforts from across the paradigmatic spectrum, with theorists diving deep into the conceptual arsenal of their respective analytical approaches to account for what had happened, after it happened.[117] A post-hoc deterministic account of an event – after failing to predict it in the first instance – casts doubt on the worth of a methodology that gives rise to such claims.

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[112] Hawthorn, 161

[113] See Hempel (1965)

[114] Waltz (1988)

[115] Friedman (1953) presents the classic formulation of the argument for instrumentalist causal analysis; see also Lakatos (1973)

[116] "Not only did almost nobody in politics or academia predict [the end of the Cold War], most forecasts pointed in the opposite direction of what actually happened. And most false predictions followed logically from core assumptions of major international relations theories." Grunberg and Risse-Kappen, 105. The end of the Cold War thus constitutes "a formidable challenge to international relations theory. Neither realists, liberals, institutionalists nor peace researchers recognized beforehand the possibility of such momentous change, and they have all been struggling to find explanations consistent with their theories." See Lebow and Risse-Kappen (1995)

[117] See, for example: Brooks and Wohlforth (2004), Waltz (1993)

The poor prognostic track record of IR theorists who rely on predictive methodologies provokes unease.[118] Stephen Walt describes this approach as follows: a theoretical model is formulated, dependent and independent variables are specified, data pertaining to each variable is obtained, and the correlation examined.[119] Such research aims to a) test the strength of the correlation between two variables and b) establish whether they co-vary in the manner predicted by the researcher. Empirical testing leaves the actual causal logic of the model untouched – it can only find evidence for or against it.[120]

Integrating the causal role of leadership into IR lends itself to thinking in terms of complexity theory

The method of inference described by King, Keohane and Verba rests on measuring the causal effect exerted by an explanatory variable on the dependent variable.[121] This generates systematic, cross-case causal claims. Underpinning this methodology is the assumption "that the better the causal argument, the better the predictions" it generates."[122] Kurki describes neopositivist causal analysis as the investigation of regularity relations in patterns of events.[123] Determinism is inherent in these models of causation, which make claims of the form, "given that regularities connect type A and type B events, we have the basis for assuming when A, then B."[124] The search for regularities across cases in IR requires simplifying assumptions,

[118] For example, Mearsheimer (1990) argues that structural neorealism best explains the absence of a major power war during the Cold War through its modelling of a bipolar, stable world. Consequently, he predicted that following the breakdown of this structure and the emergence of a multipolar world, the prospects for inter-state wars would increase, particularly in Europe, where the power vacuum left behind by the implosion of the USSR would bring intra-European security concerns back to the fore and usher in a new period of instability. The perhaps most extraordinary outgrowth of this failed set of predictions was Mearsheimer's advice that "the US should encourage the limited and carefully managed proliferation of nuclear weapons in Europe." Other examples of predictive IR work in the aftermath of the Cold War are Snyder (1990), and van Evera (1990).

[119] Walt (1999)

[120] Kurki (2006), 96

[121] King, Keohane and Verba, 75

[122] Kurki, 104

[123] Ibid, 46

[124] Ibid, 38

particularly concerning the independent influence of human behaviour.[125] This departure from reality is deliberate: generalisable causes need to strip away the particulars from each historical case that are unique to it. When different decision-makers are present in the cases under study, they must be reduced to a general 'decision-maker', for example by including a rational actor assumption.[126] This generalisation clashes with the possibility that the decision-makers involved in each case contributed uniquely to the outcome being studied. For instance, neorealist work in IR studies the influence of anarchy – the lack of an overarching authority in the international system – on patterns of war and peace among states.[127] With good reason, these theories assume that anarchy engenders fear in the international system: there is no world policeman, states are ultimately left to their own devices, and so they must protect themselves. Neorealists deliberately reduce the role of decision-makers as agents that seek to safeguard their states' security in all cases.[128] Indeed, such assumptions are not limited to IR alone. Macroeconomists, like structural realists, have crafted careful models of the financial system that rely on the causal forces of structural economic realities, with agents in financial systems assumed to maximise their expected utility in all cases.[129] Richard Thaler quips, "compared to this fictional world of [rational agents], humans do a lot of misbehaving, and that means that economic models make a lot of bad predictions."[130]

Relying on a general 'decision-maker' makes structural causal findings incomplete. Humans are not pure automatons. As Lebow argues, decision-makers "change their goals and their modus operandi in the light of experience."[131] This makes humans an unpredictable causal force that cross-

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125 Lebow (2014), 4

126 It is worth noting that not all parsimonious theories in IR rely on rationality. Waltz (1986, 330) is clear that his "theory requires no assumptions of rationality." Because foreign policy is a 'complicated business,' "one cannot expect of political leaders the nicely calculated decisions that the word 'rationality' suggests" Cited in Mearsheimer (2009), 241. Other structural realists integrate rationality into their models, e.g. Wohlforth (1995), 97.

127 See, for instance, Mearsheimer (2003)

128 "Since neorealist theories focus on external constraints, there is nothing intrinsic to the substance of the theories that require scholars to trace the decision-making process." Elman (1996), 17

129 Silver (2012), 19-46

130 Thaler (2015)

131 Lebow (2014), 5

case comparisons, with their reliance on deterministic causal explanation, struggle to register.[132] Niebuhr explains why:

> "The realm of freedom which allows the individual to make his decisions within, above and beyond the pressure of causal sequences, is beyond the realm of scientific analysis. Furthermore, the acknowledgement of its reality introduces an unpredictable and incalculable element in the causal sequence. It is therefore embarrassing to any scientific scheme. Hence scientific cultures are bound to incline to determinism."[133]

Niebuhr echoes Collingwood's point on the indeterminacy of history: "The plan which is revealed in history is a plan which does not pre-exist in its own revelation."[134] The past affects humans, who change their behaviour on the basis of supposed and actual lessons of history.[135] People are not passive conveyor belts of external causal forces. Leaders come up with evolving internal reasons for action, through their individual interpretation of and response to external events, such as changes to the balance of power in the international system.[136]

The search for fixed, law-like causal dynamics thus neglects an important, dynamic source of change in international relations: individuals, who are able to purposefully adjust their behaviour. "A simple search for regularities and lawful relationships among variables – a strategy that has led to tremendous successes in the physical sciences – will not explain social outcomes," Almond and Genco argue. This is because "relationships among political events are not simply reactive, as are encounters of physical objects. They are not amenable to cause-and-effect like 'clocklike' models or metaphors. This is because the behavioural repertoires of elites and citizens are not fixed."[137] And that is why "the production of knowledge is itself also

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[132] As Odom argues in his analysis of Soviet domestic reforms in the 1980s, the source of New Thinking was Gorbachev's exercise of free will in policy-making, "in the context of decades of Soviet institutional decay and wretched economic performance." (2004), 119. When reforms ran into difficulties, Gorbachev's decision to continue could not be predicted.

[133] Niebuhr, 8

[134] Collingwood, 44

[135] On the prevalence of historical analogies in decision-making, see Khong (1992)

[136] On the distinction between internal and external reasons for action, see Williams (1981)

[137] Almond and Genco, 492

simultaneously productive of the world."[138] Human ingenuity has causal effects on the world that can end up changing it.[139]

As a result of our reflexive abilities humans can effect deliberate change in the social world. This means the social world is to a degree malleable.[140] Reductionist theories struggle to incorporate this self-reflexive dynamic of change. This makes them of little use in providing guidance to policymakers who want to achieve certain goals. As Alexander George explains, "structural theory by itself does not give us much help in understanding how to promote peaceful change in international relations; how to achieve cooperation among states; how states define their interests and how their conception of interests changes."[141] Of course, Kenneth Waltz – who authored a famous structural theory of international politics – was deliberately parsimonious. His theory aims for what King, Keohane and Verba call 'maximal leverage': "we should attempt to formulate theories that explain as much as possible with as little as possible."[142] As such, Waltz points out that the *omissions* in his theory of international politics are a key feature of his theoretical enterprise.[143]

Snyder explains why parsimonious theories are wary of integrating too much detail into an explanation: this can clutter an account and in the process mask underlying, recurring causal patterns. Walt agues that IR is more concerned with general theorising than with studying particular events because it attempts "to explain patterns of behaviour that persist across space and time, [using] relatively few explanatory variables (e.g. power, polarity, regime type) to account for recurring tendencies."[144] The benefit of parsimony is a focus on the bare, systemic effects of structure on the behaviour of a system's units, such as how the distribution of power influences state behaviour. In this vein, Waltz's theory seeks to "to find the central tendency among a confusion of tendencies, to single out the propelling principle even though other principles operate, to seek the

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138 Jackson, 114

139 Giddens makes this point when describing the 'double hermeneutic': the findings of social science can be taken up by those whose behaviour they refer to (1982, 14).

140 See, for instance, Popper (1972) 206-255.

141 George (1996), 244

142 King, Keohane and Verba, 105

143 Waltz (1990), 31

144 Walt (2005), 33

essential factors where innumerable factors are present."[145] This position is sound in terms of the internal logic and consistency of his theory.

While parsimonious systems theories in IR knowingly abstract from the messiness of historical reality, this approach has two important shortcomings: low levels of explanatory determinacy, and low levels of policy relevance.[146] "International relations theory," Stein notes, "deals with broad sweeping patterns; while such knowledge may be useful, it does not address the day-to-day largely tactical needs of policymakers."[147] Take the three policy areas Alexander George sees as structural theory's blind spots in IR: peaceful change, the promotion of cooperation, and the re-definition of state interests. These three phenomena, incidentally, describe the means through which Ronald Reagan, Mikhail Gorbachev and George Bush, as leaders of the US and the USSR, influenced the end of the Cold War. None of the three processes George points out lends itself easily to generalisations. As such, abstract, simplified cross-case theories of world politics at the macroscopic level struggle to capture them. To be clear, structural theories are not necessarily refuted by the peaceful end of the Cold War, they simply "did little to illuminate the process."[148]

George suggests that if a theory does not account for the role that individuals played in the peaceful ending of the Cold War, its explanatory power is limited. The basic question concerning the causal influence of leaders on the international system is this: "Do the particular ideas and preferences of senior policymakers drive states, or is foreign policy largely determined by geopolitical, organisational, or economic factors over which individuals have limited control?"[149] The analysis of decision-makers should not be all encompassing. Studying leaders and decision-making without due regard to the role played by the international system is just as self-limiting as pure macro-theorising. So-called 'Bad King John/Good Queen Bess' histories exaggerate the causal force of individuals, which is the inverse sin of the structural reductionism of macro-theories.[150] It is difficult to balance the idiosyncratic predilections of individuals with the deterministic pressures of the structural variant. Lebow argues that a deeper understanding of political

[145] Waltz (1979), 10
[146] See Christensen (1993)
[147] Stein (2000), 56
[148] Snyder (1993), 8
[149] Shifrinson (2014), 2
[150] See Carr (1961), 53-56

outcomes requires us analyse two factors: the behaviour of the relevant actors – by reconstructing the world through their eyes, in an effort to understand their choices and behaviour – and the consequences of the actors' behaviour.[151] One way to do this is by studying the interaction of multiple policymakers, both with each other and with the international system. These findings are much harder to generalise than those of reductionist analysis. However, just as theory can be deliberately sparse, it can be purposefully rich. King, Keohane and Verba argue that parsimony is a judgment, namely, "the assumption that the world is simple."[152] Complexity theory, by contrast, assumes that complex systems are hard to understand: the behaviour of such systems is driven by tight, ambiguous causal interconnections.[153] Complexity theory tries to shed light on these interactive effects in the hope of offering clues as to how outcomes are generated in complex systems.

After more than a century of the formal study of IR, many events in international relations retain a mysterious quality. What does it tell us about IR and the nature of change in the international system when seemingly singular micro-events like the rise of Gorbachev can have momentous consequences?[154] Why did the 'domino theory' fail to hold as originally feared after the fall of Saigon, but was at work in Eastern Europe in 1989? Why does hegemony sometimes lead to bandwagoning and at other times to balancing? [155] One answer is that the interactive dynamics of the international system permit multiple, contingent outcomes. If true, it suggests that complexity is a defining characteristic of the international system, and that a more open-ended means of causal analysis can provide deeper understanding of the complex processes within it.

The first step towards such an analysis is recognising the limitations of linear analyses of IR. Andrew Abbott outlines the deep, parsimonious assumptions of the 'general linear reality' models that are pervasive in social science. These axioms are, in short order: the social world is made up of entities that are fixed, though their attributes can change; an entity's given attribute has only one causal meaning; causality is monotonic and flows from

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151 Lebow (2014)

152 King, Keohane and Verba, 20

153 Snyder (1993), 5

154 Grunberg & Risse-Kappen (1992)

155 On a generalisable, structural realist (and thus reductionist) explanation of balancing vs. bandwagoning, see Walt (1987)

large to small (little things can't cause big things, the arbitrary does not cause the general); sequencing effects do not matter (the order of things does not influence the way they turn out); independence of the dependent variable (an independent variable determines the dependent variable, up to an error term); and, lastly, the causal meaning of an attribute does not depend on its context in space or time (an attribute's causal effect cannot be redefined by its own past).[156]

General linear reality models are powerful tools for empirical research, but it is a mistake to assume that social causality actually obeys the rules of linear transformations.[157] Consider this description of linearity:

> "By linear systems, we mean the arrangement of nature to be one where outputs are proportional to inputs; where the whole is equal to the sum of its parts, and where cause and effect are observable. It is an environment where prediction is facilitated by careful planning; success is pursued by detailed monitoring and control; and a premium is placed upon reductionism. […] Reductionist analysis consists of taking large, complex problems and reducing them to manageable chunks."[158]

Does that sound like an accurate description of the workings of international politics? "Despite nearly a hundred years of theorizing" in IR, Harrison argues, "scholars and practitioners alike are constantly surprised by international and global political events." As an example he cites the end of the 'much-studied' Cold War and the collapse of Communism in Europe, during which the "defining characteristics of four decades of international politics were erased in a few short years."[159] Methods that rely on linear causation, as Doran argues, cannot capture nonlinearity, defined as "a critical point at which expectations induced by a prior trend suddenly confront a

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156 Abbott (1988)

157 Abbot writes, "They do this by assuming, in the theories that open their empirical articles, that the social world consists of fixed entities with variable attributes, that these attributes have only one causal meaning at a time, that this causal meaning does not depend on other attributes, on the past sequence of attributes, or on the context of other entities. So distinguished a writer as Blalock has written, 'These regression equations are the 'laws' of science.' To say this is to reify an entailed mathematics into a representation of reality." (1988), 175

158 Alberts and Czerwinski (1997), ii

159 Harrison, 103

profound alteration in that trend, indeed, an abrupt inversion."[160] At the heart of thinking about complexity lies non-linearity[161]: as such, it is well-equipped to handle when systems experience what Duran describes as "a total break from the past, a discontinuity." The evolution of a complex system proceeds not in simple, additive causal steps – one event follows another, one at a time – but in unpredictable bursts, influenced by contingent events that interact with each other across the system. These processes can generate critical mass in a particular area of the system with little forewarning and produce swift, unforeseeable changes.

Three concepts of complexity

Complexity theory studies "phenomena which emerge from a collection of interacting objects."[162] Three properties describe a complex system: [163]

1. Emergence: the system as a whole is *more* than the sum of its parts, and exhibits behaviours that arise from the interaction of its units. [164]
2. Interactive effects: changes in some parts in the system can produce expected or unexpected changes in other, distant parts of the system, and the system as a whole can change when its parts change.
3. Non-linearity: multiple, dynamic causation means the effects of actions in the system are never isolated.

Complexity theorists treat politics as "emerging from interactions among interdependent but individual agents within evolving institutional formations. So world politics is a more or less self-organizing complex system in which

[160] Doran (2002)

[161] Not to be confused with multi-linearity, a mathematical term for a function of several variables such that when all variables but one are held fixed, the function is linear in the remaining variable. See, for instance, Tam (2011).

[162] Johnson, 51

[163] Based on Jervis (1997b)

[164] This idea is expressed in an intuitively understandable manner by Dray when he writes, "the characteristics of nations, classes and institutions need no more resemble those of their constituent individuals than need the characteristics of gases resemble those of their constituent molecules." (1980), 42. In fact, James Madison made the point in 1788 in The Federalist Papers (No. 55): "Had every Athenian citizen been a Socrates, every Athenian assembly would have been a mob."

macroproperties emerge from microinteractions."[165] To understand the operation of the system, one needs to gain a sense of the nature of the interactions between the system's parts, and how these interactions affect the properties of the system as a whole.

Complex systems feature multiple, concurrent causal dynamics. The interconnected chains of causation that pervade world politics can produce contradictory 'push vs pull' effects: for example, the development of nuclear weapons by the US restrained Stalin as it increased his fear of military confrontation, yet at the same time also made him "less cooperative and less willing to compromise, for fear of seeming weak."[166] The diffuse, open-ended causal effects of an emergent property (US-Soviet rivalry, conditioned by the budding nuclear age) re-shaped the international system through multiple causal layers, with competing effects (restraining the Soviets vs. reducing their cooperation) that varied in strength over time. Similarly, consider the following (deliberately hyperbolic, but apposite) claim: 'If Edward Snowden killed off the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership in June 2013, Vladimir Putin returned it to the agenda in April 2014.'[167] The point is that small, unforeseeable events that snowball and take on a dynamic of their own (Snowden's NSA revelations) can alter the perceptions and incentives of various agents in a system (creating suspicion of US intent among even close Allies). But at any time, other unanticipated shocks (Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014) can rapidly re-shuffle the priorities of agents in a system (as expressed by the degree of transatlantic cohesion in the economic sanctions applied to Russia).

It should not surprise that complex systems can go through long, stable periods before suddenly being shaken by far-reaching waves of change. The constant combination and co-mingling of multiple chains of causation in an interactive manner can produce phases of severe turbulence. The Arab Spring is an example of a systemic conflagration that emerged when particular concurrent dynamics happened to overlap: economic hardship in the Arab world after the 2008 crisis heightened social tensions

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[165] Harrison, 17

[166] See Jervis (1998). On Stalin and the bomb, see Holloway, 272

[167] An expert at the German Council on Foreign Relations commented at the time, "'It's an issue of trust. There is widespread anti-Americanism [in Germany], and the Snowden affair erased any trust people had. So when the US now says that we are going to have equal standards, everyone believes that these are bad standards.'" See Oliver and Vasagar (2015)

and weakened elite loyalty towards incumbents, new technological outlets for political communication made innovative forms of social organisation possible that were harder to repress, and popular resentment against seemingly impervious incumbents was widespread – all of these were potent causal developments in their own right.[168] These causal currents merged after an unforeseeable micro-incident – the self-immolation of a young unemployed street vendor in Tunisia – which snowballed into a regional revolutionary conflagration that ended up toppling four dictators who had on average held power for the preceding 28 years. When particularly potent causes align and are triggered by a catalyst, complex systems can experience rapid cascades of events that produce far-reaching change.[169] Similar developments occurred in Eastern Europe in 1989, discussed in Chapter Six. The divergence between the post-revolutionary experience in Eastern Europe compared to the Arab Spring shows that further causal forces are at work still in determining outcomes.

Causation is difficult to discern in a complex system, given that a cause may have different effects at different times. From the fact that nuclear weapons stabilised Soviet-American relations it cannot be inferred that they would have a similar impact on other rivalries: the interaction of nuclear weapons with the political context may differ among cases (contra much realist writing on the subject).[170] Those who aspire to study global politics in a way that does its complex ontology justice are not surprised that no general laws of international relations have been found: events in a complex system are brought about by multiple interacting prior events. It is self-defeating to expect credible law-like generalisations to be made in open-ended systems. As Jon Elster points out, "One cannot have a law to the effect that 'if *p*, then

[168] See, for example, Dobson (2012).

[169] Lebow (2000)

[170] This point is made by Jervis (1997b). Realists have often opined that, since nuclear deterrence held between the US and the USSR, this is a model for conflict de-escalation in many other settings, for instance, Waltz (2012) argued as much in reference to Iran. John Mearsheimer (1993) once advised, seemingly prophetically in light of Russia's recent annexation of Crimea, that Ukraine should retain its nuclear arsenal. Though it is worth pointing out the covert nature of Russia's intervention in Ukraine, itself a reflection of how warfare in the age of complexity is morphing. Nuclear deterrence is of little use against an enemy who is not officially at war: hence the fears that Russia's 'hybrid war' tactics could undermine NATO's nuclear deterrent in a possible Baltic incursion. See Pfifer (2015).

sometimes *q*.'"[171] When studying complex systems, we seek instead to uncover causal channels, the mechanisms that show us how complex causal forces can operate[172]. Multiple actual and potential causal mechanisms co-exist at any given time in complex system and generate contingent pathways for the system's future.

A complex system has interactive, emergent and non-linear properties. Its causal mechanisms interface with each other in contingent ways. Thus, by identifying such a mechanism, we "make no claim to generality. When we have identified a mechanism whereby *p* leads to *q*, knowledge has progressed because we have added a new item to our repertoire of ways in which things happen."[173] If we can identify some of the causal mechanisms that operate in global politics, our understanding of the nature and implications of the interactions between the various parts of the system is enriched. In complex systems, unpredictability emerges from the interactively formed patterns of the varying actors involved, all of whom pursue their own goals.[174] Shedding light on how complex social systems operate should thus also be of interest to policymakers, especially if these analyses help clarify the role that leaders can play in the complex systems.

The study of causal mechanisms is forms part of what Jackson calls 'analyticism'.[175] This organises scholarship around the causes of a particular sequence of events, so-called 'singular causal analysis'. The aim is not generalisation: causal findings are not systematically extrapolated to other cases. [176] Lebow deems singular causal analysis "the most appropriate approach to understanding an open-ended, non-linear, and reflexive political world."[177] It consists of constructing causal narratives about outcomes or sets of outcomes.[178] These narratives do not refer to prior generalisations, nor do

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[171] Elster (1989), 10. That is why it is not particularly useful to speak of hegemony bringing about *either* bandwagoning or balancing. In a complex system, both outcomes are possible. This is not deny probabilistic causation, but a basic philosophical point: if a relationship is truly law-like, it should be possible to break down 'if p, then sometimes q' further, to show when p' → q and when p'' → r.

[172] On the 'elucidation of mechanistic processes', see Suganami, 367

[173] Ibid, 10

[174] Jervis (1998), 572-73

[175] Jackson, 114

[176] Jackson, 149

[177] Lebow (2014), 7

[178] Scientific realist theories are statements that accurately reflect how the world works. Its causal logic flows from a theory's realistic microfoundations, involving entities and processes that exist in the real world. Instrumentalist theories, instead, focus on

they predict future events. Causes are understood "as the glue that holds a story together: it is something akin to a plot line in a novel."[179] History is the source of such narratives; as Dilthey writes, history provides "the totality of man's nature."[180] In this thesis I plot the complex historical processes that ended of the Cold War, with the hope of narrating the causal dynamics at play in that recent instance of system change in IR.[181] The analysis aims to connect the past to our present-day understanding by seeking out relevant cause-effect interactions and bringing them into sequence, instead of abstracting causes and breaking them up into law-like generalisations.[182] As Jervis argues, a multi-causal, convoluted event like the end of the Cold War cannot be captured by the simple correlation of one-directional cause and effect sequences.[183]

Complexity theory suggests that the international system is open-ended, that causation flows in many directions, and that contingency and causal indeterminacy abound. Leaders play an important role in this conception of international relations: their choices and interactions with other agents can push outcomes in the international system in particular directions, opening up certain avenues and closing down others in the process. As described in Chapter Four, Ronald Reagan – helped by shifting patterns of interaction in his Administration following the appointment of George Shultz – embarked on a course of conciliation years before relations with the Soviet Union actually improved: had he opted for continued confrontation, the trajectory of East-West relations could have taken a different direction following the rise of Gorbachev. The iterated, positive interactions between Reagan and Gorbachev would not have taken place so quickly, giving Gorbachev less room to manoeuvre to reconfigure the USSR's aggressive international posture. As a result, reconciliation and trust-building would have taken longer, and may well not have taken place at all.

Scientific analysis is committed to exploring and attempting to understand a given segment of empirical reality.[184] Methodologically, I rely

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describing predictable causal processes from empirical observations. See Mearsheimer and Walt (2013, 430-434) for a description of the two.

179 Lebow (2014), 7

180 Dilthey, 166

181 For a parallel account in sociology, see Sewell (2005)

182 For more on neopositivism's inability to 'do time', see Hom (2013), especially 129-166

183 Jervis (1993)

184 Almond and Genco, 511

on idiographic (i.e. historical) counterfactual reasoning. 'What Ifs' can be used to delineate *actual* from *potential* outcomes in particular episodes, in the process outlining the driving forces of events in these periods. Such counterfactuals imagine "alternative historical trajectories that might have led to different outcomes than that actually observed," and are distinct from theory-based (i.e. nomothetic) counterfactuals that seek to clarify the implications of law-like generalizations.[185] I subject evidence from history to counterfactual analyses in order to estimate how causally influential given developments were. This allows for the establishment of a non-linear causal trajectory of complex systemic change in IR. Causal-counterfactual narratives can make the nature of change in IR – in all its contingency, idiosyncrasy, and unpredictability – meaningful. The idea is to make sense of the vast petri dish of world politics by causally tying together the various events that in aggregation produce 'history'.

Causal narratives, assessed for their relevance using counterfactuals, can explain outcomes in IR and provide an awareness of the precariousness of history and the uncertainty of a complex world. This ties in to Hudson's call for "nonarithmetic ways to relate variables."[186] The careful analysis of the past can also glean useful lessons for policymakers. Even without seeking law-like generalisations, we can still look for "plausible, frequently observed ways in which things happen."[187] In particular, the thesis highlights three complex causal mechanisms – interactions among different leaders both at home and abroad, emergent systemic effects, and nonlinear developments – which influenced changes in pattern of events in the international system in the 1980s.

Complexity theory is sensitive to the open-endedness of history and the role of dynamic factors like time

Timing is an important consideration in the study of complex causation: it affects the unfolding of non-linear, indeterminate chains of developments.[188] By placing events into a logical temporal sequence we can look at the influence of timing as a cause. Reductionist models strip such

185 Jackson, 115
186 Hudson (2007), 32
187 Elster (1989), viii
188 See Pierson (2004)

factors out of their analysis for the sake of parsimony.[189] But 'timing' – i.e. 'what happens when' – has effects: causal sequences that overlap will produce different interaction effects at different times. For instance, the match-up of Reagan and Gorbachev as leaders of their respective countries in 1985 was an effect of timing. Chapter Five narrates the rapport built up between Reagan and Gorbachev, with the two men growing to like each other and defending policies they forged together against detractors at home. This raises the question of whether alternative timing and a different leadership pairing could have produced the same positive feedback processes in the mid-1980s that led to substantial arms reduction treaties.

Timing predisposes particular developments over others.[190] Trevor-Roper expresses the point as follows: "The crisis does not always produce the man, moments of vital decisions quickly pass, in a period of confusion the power to act may be irrevocably lost."[191] None of this commits the analyst to an exaggerated emphasis on the contingency of history or the idea that "rich particularities of individual events and processes render them unique."[192] The main influence of timing on leadership is adding or removing options from the menu of political possibilities. Gorbachev's words of prophetic advice to East Germany's leader Erich Honecker, offered (in vain) in October 1989, express this concept: "he who comes too late is punished by life."[193] Critical junctures – moments of open-endedness in a complex system where events could unfold one of various ways – can be harnessed by agents, or subject them to political shocks.[194] As discussed in Chapter 6, Gorbachev faced such a time-sensitive critical juncture in his dealings with Yeltsin: had he chosen to co-operate with his rival rather than seek to dominate him, different possibilities for rescuing the Soviet Union would have emerged.

Causal turning points in the international system, which emerge in moments of contingency, are time-sensitive. At such moments of inflexion,

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189 Hom, 236

190 The 'Polya urn process' gives a mathematical description of this phenomenon, describing how certain temporal junctures can bring about contingent but self-reinforcing dynamics, (colloquially referred to as 'the rich get richer phenomenon'). See Pierson, 30

191 Trevor-Roper, 360. He echoes Herodotus: "Very few things happen at the right time, and others do not happen at all," epigraph in Lebow (2000)

192 Pierson, 4

193 There is some dispute over whether Gorbachev actually said this. He claims so in his memoirs, Bock (2014) disagrees.

194 The political system can be more open or less open to challenge at different times. See e.g. McAdam, 41

multiple causal avenues open up, providing alternative pathways for the future.[195] Historical methods – the chronicling of events and re-construction of how given moments in history presented themselves to the decision-makers of the day – can be used to derive an account of how and why developments in international affairs unfolded in a particular manner. This indicates what it took for outcomes to move from the domain of the possible – along with all other possibilities at the time of a turning point in that domain – to the actual.

Such analyses of IR are less concerned with abstract theoretical models and more with the interconnections between different causal factors and events. The method I espouse relies on empirical work, namely archival research, interviews and source analyses, all with a view to process tracing the end of the Cold War. The historical research pursued here is for its own sake, not for the sake of diving into history so as to obtain 'raw materials' that are 'mined' from history in order to fit a previously constructed theory.[196] Findings can be used to generate insights that apply more widely to policy analysis in other cases, but without treating these insights as having the status of a law. Theoretical insights are yielded through what Almond and Genco's call 'soft regularities', those that embedded in the malleable, complex web of human social relations.[197]

Counterfactual analysis can help clarify the role of leadership and decision-making in complex systems

Counterfactuals can be used to make arguments about how history might have unfolded in slightly different circumstances. The problem with counterfactuals, as described by Levy, is that they rest on non-existent events whose consequences cannot be known, and with an unknown and possibly infinite number of supplementary 'ripple effects'. As a result analysts often construct 'counterfactuals of convenience' to bolster their theoretical prejudices and advance their political agenda.[198] Still, counterfactual thinking has been part of our analytical toolkit for a long time. Herodotus argued that

[195] Turning points, qua Herrmann and Lebow, are changes of significant magnitude that are difficult to undo. (2004), 7-14

[196] See Lawson (2012)

[197] Almond and Genco (1977)

[198] Levy (2014)

if Athens had not sided with Sparta to resist Xerxes in 480 BC, the Persians would have subdued Greece.[199] Livy made the case that Alexander the Great would have failed if he had attempted to invade Rome.[200] At the turn of the 20th century, Max Weber examined the links between counterfactual analysis and causality. In Weber's words, counterfactuals involve "the mental construction of a course of events which is altered through modification in one or more 'conditions.'"[201] Counterfactuals can be used to estimate significance of a particular causal factor. Weber describes how: to "assess the degree to which a particular cause 'favoured' a given effect, we must hypothetically 'compare' the result that actually followed with alternate possibilities."[202] This is a powerful way of thinking about what constitutes a cause: some X, in absence of which some outcome Y would not have come about.[203]

Counterfactuals, in Fearon's words, are "propositions that take the generic form 'If it had been the case that X (or not X), it would have been the case that Y (or not Y).'"[204] In formal terms, counterfactual $X \;\square\!\!\rightarrow\; Y$ is the antithesis to a causal statement of the form $X \rightarrow Y$ (i.e., $\neg X \rightarrow Y$, or $X \rightarrow \neg Y$).[205] To construct a counterfactual, a conditional logical statement of the form 'if X then Y' is set up. Then, the antecedent or the consequent is negated. This is by definition a speculative move: a counterfactual supposes a change in a specified sequence of occurrences. This can test a factual statement.

For example, let:

X = Ronald Reagan was President of the US from 1980 to 1988

Y = The Cold War ended peacefully

The conditional is:

$X \rightarrow Y$ i.e., if Ronald Reagan is President, the Cold War ends peacefully

The counterfactual is:

[199] See Foster and Lateiner, 324
[200] See Levy (2014), 3
[201] Weber (1949), 173
[202] Ringer, 164
[203] Ringer, 274-275
[204] Fearon (1991)
[205] See Collins et al (2004)

C = {¬X □→ Y} i.e., even if Ronald Reagan had never become President, the Cold War would still have ended peacefully

To evaluate C, we need to investigate two alternative scenarios:

A = {¬X □→ ¬Y} i.e., if Ronald Reagan hadn't been President, the Cold War would have ended violently

B = {X □→ ¬Y} i.e., although Ronald Reagan was President, the Cold War ended violently

Now let reality be

Z = {X □→ Y} i.e., Ronald Reagan was President, and the Cold War ended peacefully

If it can be demonstrated that counterfactual A is less of a departure from reality Z than counterfactual B – i.e. that a violent end to the Cold War *absent* Reagan is likelier than a violent end to the Cold War *with* Reagan in power – then we have found evidence that X ('Ronald Reagan was President of the United States from 1980 to 1988') was a cause of Y, the peaceful end of the Cold War.

As David Lewis shows, asking what caused something is in effect a request for the entire list of causal events that took place in the run-up to it, "the culmination of countless distinct, converging causal chains."[206] Causal questions can be narrowed down by making them binary: 'Why *x* rather than *y*?'[207] This question is structured counterfactually: implicit in its answer is a causal logic that underpins *x* vis-a-vis the causal process that would have brought about *y*. These kinds of 'choice' counterfactuals open up when policymakers are confronted with a sharply defined decision. Looking backwards at past decision-making dilemmas, and probing the consequences of a policy choice having gone another way, forms an important part of studying the interaction of leaders with each other and the international system. "Choices and decisions," Almond and Genco assert, are "the heart of politics."[208] An individual's decisions are made of ideas and goals in a process of constant interaction with other ideas, the behaviour of other

[206] Lewis (1986), 214
[207] Grynaviski, 831
[208] (1977), 492

individuals, and the physical world. Hypothetical *alternative* decisions can be used to try and shed light on how political reality would have unfolded differently as a result, yielding what Ringer terms "a dynamic vision of alternate paths of historical change."[209] Counterfactuals can re-open the indeterminacy of the world as it presented itself to policy-makers at the time of a decision. By re-creating the uncertainty of political decision-making, this can offset the predestination of outcomes assumed by determinist theories.

Decision-making counterfactuals are historical:[210] they involve re-imagining historical alternatives – trajectories that didn't actually unfold – in order to loosen the deterministic grip of post-hoc analysis and reconstruct the world as it was during the period under analysis. Political decision-making takes place under fluid circumstances. To understand the connection between the decisions taken and the outcomes produced under such uncertainty, we need to ask ourselves: why did key agents act the way they did? And why did events unfold the way they did? If events were foreordained, a counterfactual analysis should show that there was no real alternative to the actual outcome. If events were contingent, counterfactuals would illustrate where, within the realm of the possible, the trajectory of history could – or could not – have taken a different path. Historical counterfactuals highlight structural determination as much as contingency.[211]

The speculative foundation of counterfactuals – re-imagining history and speculating on that which never was – elicits scepticism among certain parts of the academic community.[212] We simply don't know what would really have happened in alternative worlds. Carr is particularly dismissive: "The trouble about contemporary history is that people remember the time when all the options were still open, and find it difficult to adopt the attitude of the historian for whom they have been closed by the fait accompli."[213] Carr has a teleological view of history, believing that coherent sequences of cause and effect expunge the role of chance and contingency. Believing in the pre-

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209 (2002), 167

210 Tetlock and Belkin (1996) conduct an exhaustive survey of the types of counterfactuals deployed in the social sciences and categorised their findings.

211 Tetlock and Belkin, 37

212 Ferguson (1997) categorises opponents to counterfactual theorising into two camps: materialists (who treat the study of history as analogous to the natural sciences) and idealists (for whom history is the transformation of past thought into an intelligible and often teleological structure by the imagination of the historian).

213 Carr (1961), 98

eminence of the real and the irrelevance of the plausible, Carr defines progress through power.[214] Whoever is in power, the argument goes, controls history and thus the progress of history: there are no alternatives. In his view, accident in history is devoid of meaning and hence cannot fit into a historian's pattern of rational explanation and interpretation. Oakeshott argues that historians who consider what might have happened produce "not merely bad or doubtful history, but the complete rejection of history […] a monstrous incursion of science into the world of history."[215] Sequences of cause and effect, that did not take place, are irrelevant because that which did not happen is not amenable to interpretation, making alternative worlds meaningless for both the past and present.

But not all share this assessment. Contra Carr, Isaiah Berlin criticises the inability of determinists to make value judgements about the "character, purposes and motives of individuals."[216] Berlin argues for the need to establish the possible courses of action open to human beings in the present *and* the past. He calls for "the placing of what occurred (or might occur) in the context of what could have happened (or could happen), and in the demarcation of this from what could not." Delineating alternatives has as much to do with historical analysis as it concerns thinking about the present and the future. Hugh Trevor-Roper, Carr's intellectual sparring partner, explains why:

> "At any given moment in history there are real alternatives […] How can we explain what happened and why if we only look at what happened and never consider alternatives […] It is only if we place ourselves before the alternatives of the past […] only if we live for a moment, as the men of the time lived, in its still fluid context and among its still unresolved problems, if we see those problems coming upon us [...] that we can draw useful lessons from history."[217]

Where Carr argues that history is the record of what people did, rather than what people might have done – "let us get rid of this red herring once and

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[214] Wilson (2009)

[215] Oakeshott (1966), 128-129

[216] Berlin, 55. Jervis (2010) discusses the difficulties of assigning causal responsibility to individuals.

[217] Trevor-Roper, 367

for all" – Trevor-Roper counters: "History is not merely what happened: it is what happened in the context of what might have happened."[218] Weber makes a similar point: "In order to penetrate the real causal interrelationships, we construct unreal ones," which is echoed in Bueno de Mesquita's claim, "we cannot understand what happened in reality without understanding what did not happen but might have happened under other circumstances."[219]

But how to demarcate the actual from the possible, and the possible from the impossible? The distinction between what happened and what could *plausibly* have happened is crucial. Karl Popper believes that counterfactuals are necessary to understand history: "In order to be able to examine [counterfactual] possibilities in our search for the true conditions of a trend, we have all the time to try to imagine the conditions under which the trend in question would disappear."[220] Popper used counterfactuals in a Weberian sense, linking and de-linking actors with choices and outcomes and benchmarking counterfactual causal chains against what happened in reality in order to deepen understanding of how and why particular events occurred. Weber argues that historical counterfactual thinking proceeds by eliminating or changing certain facts or events, and using 'general rules of experience' to probe whether things would have happened differently if certain facts were changed:

> "The weighing of the causal significance of a historical fact begins with the question: whether with its elimination [...] or alteration, the course of events could, according to general rules of experience, have taken a [different] direction. We conceive of one or a few of the actual causal components as modified in a certain direction and then ask ourselves whether under the conditions which have been thus changed, the same effect [...] or some other effect 'would be expected.'"[221]

The 'rules of experience' ('Erfahrungsregeln') that Weber appeals to are, in a sense, imperfect empirical generalisations.[222] Not laws proper, but causal

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[218] Ibid, 363
[219] Weber (1949), 185-86; Bueno de Mesquita (1996), 229.
[220] Popper (1957), 119
[221] Weber (1973)
[222] Ringer, 167

associations which can be used to design conjectures about alternative pathways, i.e. developments that can be properly expected – and justified – as consequences of given antecedents.[223] This allows certain historical facts to be changed without creating the intractable situation of having to decide which of an infinity of possible outcomes would have ensued. Weber's 'rules of experience' thus offer a means of delineating consequences from counterfactual antecedents. The conceivability of the consequent depends on the reliability and comprehensiveness of the causal connections that the analyst draws upon – in the form of nomological knowledge, not rigorous laws – when imagining the consequences of a changed fact, so as "to sustain a projection about events that did not occur."[224] Thus, a counterfactual derives its strength from the argument it constructs about what would have happened. A good counterfactual argument is made credible by:

1. Invoking general principles, theories, laws, or regularities
2. Drawing on knowledge of historical facts relevant to a counterfactual scenario.[225]

Recourse to laws is possible but not necessary, as a counterfactual "is invalidated not by lack of a law upholding it, but by conflict with a more strongly upheld conditional."[226] The credibility of a counterfactual must be judged not against any possible 'laws' it violates, but against the reality that it challenges. Counterfactuals underpin all explanatory thinking: as Hawthorn notes, "an explanation suggests alternatives. […] the force of an explanation turns on the counterfactual which it implies."[227] A causal account convinces when we think its inverse is implausible: thus, any explanation builds on counterfactual reasoning, whether this is made explicit or not.[228]

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[223] Kray et al (2010) argue that ideology infuses the causal linkage analysts construct between a counterfactual antecedent and its consequences: all can agree that Reagan was almost assassinated in 1981, but conservatives are more likely than liberals to argue that the Soviet Union would still exist if Reagan had died.

[224] Ringer, 168

[225] Fearon (1991), 176. A counterfactual's plausibility depends on the type of manipulations to obtain the antecedent, and the general conceivability of the consequent. See also Reiss (2009)

[226] Goodman (1983 [1954]), 122

[227] Hawthorn, 13-14

[228] Fearon (1991) demonstrates that analyses with few cases and many variables are compelled to use counterfactual argument by statistical principle.

Counterfactuals have numerous applications in causal analysis

Historic counterfactuals of the kind discussed so far aim to explain or understand a particular historical episode or development. Another important type of 'what if' scenarios are covering law-based nomothetic counterfactuals. They explore more general theoretical arguments. Idiographic counterfactuals invoke plausible worlds, which nomothetic counterfactuals do not have to do:[229] they are formulated in terms of a general theoretical proposition, taking a clearly specified causal model, applying it to an actual empirical situation and manipulating the antecedents of this case to draw conclusions in the form of predictions that are grounded in the theoretical implications of the model.[230] As explained by Tetlock and Belkin, the goal of nomothetic counterfactuals "is not historical understanding; rather, it is to pursue the logical implications of a theoretical framework."[231] For instance, John Mueller, using the rational actor model as a covering law to account for leaders' decisions about going to or refraining from war, traces the development of post-WW2 history in the absence of nuclear weapons.[232] He argues that the Cold War did not turn 'hot' because World Wars One and Two showed how costly great power war had become: in a counterfactual post-1945 world without nuclear weapons, the US and USSR would still not have gone to war with each other. Mueller does not dispute that the atomic bomb influenced international affairs. Nuclear weapons shaped diplomatic thinking during the Cold War and had a stabilising effect on superpower relations.[233] But nuclear weapons, according to the counterfactual scenario, were coincidental to US-Soviet peace: with or without the existence of nuclear weapons, war had become so destructive that the USA and USSR would never have gone to war against each other. War-weariness was the real cause of great power peace since 1945.[234]

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229 Levy (2014)

230 An innovative example is Fogel's counterfactual analysis of the impact of railroads on US economic growth (1964). See also Bueno de Mesquita's 'prediction' of the peaceful end of the Cold War (1998)

231 Tetlock and Belkin, 11. See also Fogel (1970), 256-264

232 Mueller (1998)

233 Mueller (1999)

234 In a similar counterfactual analysis, Mueller (1991) makes the argument that World War Two would not have occurred had Hitler not taken power, by looking at the identities and policy preferences of potential alternative chancellors to Hitler.

Of course, this analysis is not problem-free. As Tetlock and Belkin put it, "it is not at all clear that cotenability obtains between the counterfactual antecedent of a non-nuclear world and any connecting principle that posits the occurrence of the Cuban missile crisis in 1962."[235] In other words, one cannot simply counterfactually change one fundamental fact of world politics and then ignore the ripple effects of this change. Weber therefore recommends that for the purpose of causal analysis, counterfactuals should follow a minimal rewrite rule. Lebow follows this advice in his study of the causes of World War One.[236] Counterfactuals, in order to convince, need to be deployed in a disciplined and transparent manner. The bigger a counterfactual rewrite and the longer the period of history it covers, the more difficult the process of spelling out an alternative world: in a system of interconnected behaviour, we can never do merely one thing.[237]

Counterfactual arguments concerning the same outcome can reach fundamentally different conclusions. Lebow rewrites history by supposing that Archduke Ferdinand had survived the assassin's bullet in 1914 on the eve of World War One, concluding that the conflict was highly contingent and could have been averted.[238] His counterfactual argues for the power of small events in producing large outcomes. Paul Shroeder's counterfactual re-examination of WW1 reaches the opposite conclusion, namely that WW1 was overdetermined and driven by structural and social forces, not by contingency and human agency.[239] Counterfactuals can be used to argue for or against the contingency of an event: this hinges on whether changes in a key causal factor are deemed to have a large or small impact on the subsequent outcome[240] The key point to appreciate is that counterfactual conclusions do not constitute proof. Readers are the ultimate judges of a counterfactual's utility, since they are free to either accept the counterfactual argument (which will always have to follow the basic logical structure outlined on page 58). A counterfactual succeeds when it presents a compelling chain

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235 Tetlock and Belkin, 23

236 Lebow (2005)

237 Taken from Garrett Hardin, cited in Jervis (1997), 10. Lebow (2000) questions the utility of surgical counterfactuals that change one fact only. Similarly, Jervis holds that counterfactuals "cannot be employed to help us imagine a world that is like our own in all ways except for one." Instead, counterfactuals are helpful to think through complex connections in world politics. (1996), 316

238 Lebow (2010), 69-102

239 Schroeder (2004)

240 Levy (2014)

of reasoning, giving the reader few reasons to reject the logic or the conclusion.

Counterfactuals and complexity theory are means to a deeper understanding of the causal forces at work in the international system

Linear models of world politics do a poor job of explaining periods of dynamic change such as the end of the Cold War, or the period of emergent instability we are arguably experiencing in the present. Reductionist approaches do not accurately capture the complexities that characterise change in international politics. If a system's variables cannot be effectively isolated from each other or from their context, then "linearization is not possible, because dynamic interaction is one of the system's defining characteristics."[241] The non-linear dynamic interaction of causal factors in complex systems makes it supremely difficult to predict large-scale outcomes. Research that aims to understand effects of contingent emergence, interaction, and non-linearity helps make sense of the open-ended, contingent nature of change in such systems. An early advocate of this kind of causal complexity theory was Carl von Clausewitz, the 19th century Prussian military strategist. Clausewitz deems it imperative to face "up to the intrinsic presence of chance, complexity, and ambiguity in war." For Clausewitz this is preferable "to the risk of being blind-sided by the strictures of a theory artificially imposed on the messiness of reality in the name of clarity." These concerns mirror those of scientists studying nonlinear phenomena. Open systems, those "which cannot be isolated from their environments even in theory, which are characterized by numerous levels of feedback effects," need to be described realistically as an interactive whole.[242]

Clausewitz pioneered the concept of an enemy's 'centre of gravity' in war, which he deems to be "the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends."[243] This could be anything from a city, to an alliance of interests, public opinion, or particular leaders. Clausewitz's point exemplifies his perception of war as a profoundly nonlinear phenomenon: certain aspects of war have an outsized impact on its conduct. Targeting an enemy's centre

[241] Beyerchen (1992)
[242] Ibid, pp. 75, 82. See also Waldman, 175-184
[243] Clausewitz (1976), 596

of gravity is strategically advantageous, because concentrating fighting resources on the driving force that underpins the enemy's power can bring victory even in the face of overwhelming military inferiority (a strategy that the Vietcong used to their advantage by sapping the US public's will to fight in Vietnam, relying on the psychological impact of events like the Tet Offensive: though the attack was a military failure, it reinforced perceptions in the US that the Vietcong could not be beaten, and undermined public support for the war).[244]

Toward a counterfactual analysis of complex change in the international system

The end of the Cold War is a nonlinear phenomenon, an episode of international system change characterised by a multiplicity of interactive causal factors. This theoretical view, following Lebow and Stein, "suggests that system transformations – and many other kinds of international events – are unpredictable because their underlying causes do nothing more than to create the possibility of change."[245] Actual change comes about through the (sometimes fortuitous) meeting of causal chains, and the policies pursued key agents. The latter form the point of entry into my analysis.

In Chapter Three I begin to connect these dots together by telling a causal story based on the evolutionary dynamic of the international system in the 1980s.[246] The trajectory is traced through the eyes of high-level decision-makers, whose causal role is not yet well understood, certainly not from the perspective of complexity theory.[247] Leaders and the networks of associates they surround themselves with are a source of potential causal influence: the

[244] Nagl (2005). A compelling example of how warfare is infused with complexity is provided by the Battle of Britain. Hermann Goering, who commanded Hitler's Luftwaffe, decided in September 1940 to cease attacking RAF airfields in the Southeast of the country, and instead ordered daytime raids over London. These seemed more destructive – but Goering failed to appreciate that the RAF's airfields were a key, and weakening, pillar in British defences. The impact of bombing London was visually more extensive, but nowhere near as impactful as attacks on airfields: they were the RAF's centre of gravity. In fact, continued bombing of the airfields could have led to Nazi Germany's triumph in the Battle of Britain. See Turner (1994)

[245] Lebow and Stein (2004), 214

[246] For the depiction of useful technical cause-effect accounts of complex evolutionary processes using narrative methods, see Tilly (2006).

[247] For general accounts of complexity leadership theory from the perspective of systems management, see Uhl-Bien and Marion (2008) and Uhl-Bien et al (2007).

interaction effects they generate are worth investigating. Critical junctures of decision-making form the most straightforward framework within which I construct my causal narrative. Causal dynamics are examined through counterfactuals, in an effort to estimate why given events took place over other alternatives. I investigate how and why leaders arrived at given decisions during that period, and look at the consequences of these decisions as they worked their way through the international system. The former requires examining policy or personnel alternatives at certain turning points – what other choices were available and why were they not pursued? I assess the consequences of decisions counterfactually, testing whether alternative choices would have materially affected the trajectory of the end of the Cold War.

Individuals in positions of political power are constrained in their dealings by the wider context within which they operate.[248] This sets out a sometimes clear and sometimes less clear framework for action, which in turn informs the menu of choices individuals face. In 1985, for instance, the Soviet Union would have struggled to afford a new round of the arms race. This structural reality influenced Gorbachev's search for arms control treaties that would alleviate the USSR's military burden.[249] The crucial question, however, is precisely *how* and *why* Reagan and Gorbachev signed the treaties they did: what were the negotiation processes that finally produced success rather than degenerating into the mutual recriminations that had characterised arms control efforts prior to 1986? The details of the interactions that produced the known outcome allow for a counterfactual-causal exploration of what happened and why it happened. Gorbachev was under pressure to act and improve the USSR's relative position. The policy paths he chose were not foreordained: Gorbachev faced real choices and real alternatives. Why did he not pursue perestroika without glasnost, for example? It is imperative to trace out how Gorbachev and Reagan arrived at their respective policy choices that brought the Cold War to a peaceful conclusion.

<u>How does complexity theory help us make sense of how individuals can influence international affairs?</u>

[248] See Odom (2004)
[249] See Stein (1994)

A favoured realist argument concerning the peaceful end of the Cold War is that material factors left Gorbachev with little choice but to concede defeat.[250] This assumes that Gorbachev's choice was 'made' by the structural context in which he operated. Relaxing that assumption produces a more open-ended international system in which Gorbachev could also have opted to pursue strategies with precedence in the history of imperial decline, rather than the voluntary abnegation of authority through peaceful political reform. Even more indicative of the complexity of events was the fact that Gorbachev did not actually intend to bring about the outcome that eventually occurred – the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.[251] The unintended consequences of what people did intentionally are part of history.[252] As such, we cannot understand historical events until we see why the individuals involved did what they did. Inadvertent, unplanned outcomes feature prominently in complexity theory.[253] They come about through the open-endedness of political developments, the interactions of leaders, and the dynamic processes of change this can produce in the international system.

IR's various theoretical interpretations of the end of the Cold War each fit a standard theory and static piece of the puzzle. Lining these up as a chain of discrete, linear causal steps, however, does not explain how and why events unfolded.[254] Economic weakness gradually worsened the Soviet position; fundamental social and ideational developments were underway in civil society in East and West that changed established political and cultural practices; and both Reagan and Gorbachev made remarkable choices in domestic and foreign policy that improved East-West relations. Each of these stories is described by different IR paradigms in isolation: my goal is to explain how these accounts are linked, in part by examining the positions leaders – as choice-producing units – occupied in the network of interrelated causes of the end of the Cold War. Complexity theory pushes beyond existing, compartmentalised accounts of the end of the Cold War and advances our understanding of how different causal effects interact.

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[250] See, for example, Brooks and Wohlforth (2000)

[251] See Pravda (2010). As Odom puts it, "It seems highly improbable that Gorbachev did understand the implications of his 'New Thinking' unless he was bent on the destruction of the Soviet state." (2004), 146

[252] Dray (1980), 48

[253] Jervis (1997a)

[254] I am indebted to Robert Jervis for making this point in April 2015.

Waltz argues that theories "are useful because they because they may help to understand, explain and sometimes predict the trend of events, and to help us understand how a system works."[255] I suggest that complexity itself can be the basis for a theory of IR that brings about greater understanding, clarification, and sensitivity to possible future trends. "International studies," Lake maintains, "deals with the largest and most complicated social system possible."[256] Mearsheimer and Walt add, "the more complicated the realm, the more dependent we are on mental maps to help us navigate the terrain."[257] Non-linearity, interaction effects and contingent emergence guide us through the analysis of complex events. Counterfactuals can be used as methodological tools to estimate interactive causal effects in complex systems: they help explore the various trajectories events in a system could take.

'What if' questions highlight points of open-endedness in history by re-opening events of the past and subjecting them to scenarios where things turned out differently.[258] If done effectively, the contrastive appraisals of various scenarios indicate mechanisms of change in the international system. Robert Jervis explains this as follows:

> "Counterfactual thinking can be extremely useful for thought experiments that assist us in developing our ideas about how elements are connected and how results can arise. Counterfactuals can alert us to the possible operation of dynamics and pathways that we would otherwise be prone to ignore." [259]

A 'What If' that credibly and convincingly highlights different possible outcomes in world history describes plausible causal mechanisms that operate in our complex social world. Counterfactuals oblige researchers to delineate why their chain of causation has a higher probability than alternative chains: they force transparency on the argumentative structure underpinning a causal account. This is why I use them as causation detection devices in my analysis of the Cold War's complex ending.

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[255] Waltz (1990)

[256] Lake (2011)

[257] Mearsheimer and Walt, 17

[258] This also makes 'What If' reasoning a powerful antidote to the perils of hindsight bias. On this point, see Tetlock and Lebow (2001).

[259] Jervis (1996a), 310

CHAPTER TWO

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND THE END OF THE COLD WAR

Reviewing the history of international affairs in the modern era, which might be considered to extend from the middle of the seventeenth century to the present, I find it hard to think of any event more strange and startling, and at first glance more inexplicable, than the sudden and total disintegration and disappearance from the international scene, primarily in the years 1987 through 1991, of the great power known successively as the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union.

George F. Kennan

110 years before the start of the Cold War, Alexis de Tocqueville predicted that the US and Russia would sooner or later have a rendezvous with history: "There are now two great nations in the world, which, starting from different points, seem to be advancing toward the same goal: the Russians and the Anglo-Americans […] Each seems called by some secret design of Providence one day to hold in its hands the destinies of half the world."[260] It was World War Two that paved the way for de Tocqueville's scenario to become reality. After the US and the USSR jointly defeated the Axis powers in 1945, their wartime cooperation soon gave way to a scramble for influence, first in Europe and then around the world. The two wartime allies became combatants in a new kind of conflict. Neither of them dared to attack the other directly, yet both constantly tussled in the hope of gaining a geostrategic edge, soon supporting or launching proxy wars in nations as

[260] De Tocqueville (2003 [1835]), 458

distant as Greece, Iran, Indochina, Korea and Cuba.[261] As Europe's declining imperial powers retrenched and decolonialisation took hold in the developing world, the United States and the Soviet Union filled the emerging voids and engaged in a globe-spanning geopolitical confrontation. Facing each other at various strategic East-West faultlines across the world, the two combatants built vast military alliances and sought to sign up non-aligned states to their respective blocs. This struggle for influence took place under the spectre of a potentially apocalyptic atomic confrontation. Both countries pursued a relentless multi-decades arms race that produced enormous arsenals of nuclear weapons, ironically all in an effort to deter each other from using these weapons. Forty-five years of Cold War were punctuated by periods of tension and conflict, followed by efforts at arms control and reduced confrontation, a cycle that was repeated but not broken. The ebb and sway of superpower conflict was never tempered by a serious effort at de-escalation. Hostilities between the US and USSR became embedded in the fabric of world politics, and the Cold War was seen as an essentially permanent condition of international affairs.

At the beginning of the final decade of the Cold War, the Soviet Union remained one of the world's two superpowers. Zubok argues that Moscow's relative material position vis-à-vis Washington was much stronger in 1980 than at the beginning of the Cold War.[262] Kissinger describes how perception soon diverged from reality:

> "At the beginning of the 1980s it was as if communist momentum might sweep all before it; at the next, as history measures time, communism was self-destructing. Within a decade the Eastern European satellite orbit dissolved and the Soviet empire fell apart, disgorging nearly all the Russian acquisitions since the time of Peter the Great. No world power had ever disintegrated so totally or rapidly without losing a war."[263]

[261] See, for instance, Leffler and Westad (2010)
[262] Zubok (2005), 158-160,
[263] Kissinger, 763

The disappearance of as powerful a state as the USSR was hard to fathom.[264] As late as April 1991, when the Soviet Union was clearly in the midst of a severe crisis, Condoleezza Rice – who had just left her job as George H. W. Bush's Soviet advisor – maintained that the country would not disintegrate: "The Soviet Union is going to be around for a long time to come."[265] Yet in December of that same year, the USSR's flag was lowered over the Kremlin for the last time, bringing to a close the first voluntary, peaceful dissolution of an empire since the creation of the Westphalian order in 1648. The sudden end of the Cold War, Gaddis writes, "brought about nothing less than the collapse of an international system" through an abrupt shift in the balance of power, akin to the birth of bipolarity in 1945.[266]

Academics have produced a plethora of articles and books in response; it takes a brave researcher indeed who ventures to read and synthesise all that IR has to say on the subject.[267] The field's penchant for macro-theorising[268] has given rise to a debate in IR about how to treat the end of the Cold War: is this to be viewed as a tectonic shift in IR, brought about by the collapse of one of the two poles of power that dominated the international system since 1945? Or is the Cold War's end a data point, conclusions drawn from which are inherently limited in scope since the event, despite its symbolic significance, was ultimately just another 'happening' in the chronology of world politics, one which is not significant enough to merit an evaluation of the major theoretical orientation?[269] This question is further complicated by the fact that the Cold War was not a singular occurrence, but a cluster of events involving multiple temporalities and multiple spaces.[270] Brown remarks that the 'Cold War' was a mere metaphor, and as such disappeared rather than ended.[271]

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[264] A far-sighted, non-determinist description of the impending dangers posed by the increasing imperial burdens of the Soviet Union was offered by Valerie Bunce (1985)

[265] Cited in Sparrow, 95

[266] Gaddis (1992), 52

[267] A quick LSE Summon search for the exact phrases "International Relations" + "Cold War" (with the date range adjusted so that only results published after 1991 are listed, and excluding newspaper articles and book reviews) yields in the region of 4,000 articles and books on the topic.

[268] See James (2014)

[269] Lebow (1994)

[270] Lawson et al (2010)

[271] Brown (2007), 3

The discipline of IR analyses the end of the Cold War along its paradigmatic fault-lines of realism, liberalism (and their respective 'neo'-variants), constructivism and critical approaches. All four explanations "offer distinctive accounts of the origins, nature and end of the Cold War," but are nevertheless difficult to compartmentalise.[272] Structural realists are right to point out that objective material pressures matter in determining a state's power and position in the international system. But there is no singular causal direction from material structural developments to changes in policy, and rarely is a single policy path open to the decision-maker responding to material pressures. As many a leader will point out, easy policy choices are taken at the lower levels of an organisation's bureaucracy. It is thus a triusm that hard choices, often equally (un)-appealing and with uncertain payoffs, are the ones that end up in the in-tray of high-level leaders; making a call in such scenarios is part of their job specification.[273]

By failing to take into account the relevance of policy alternatives that open up divergent paths, structural realism is essentially an underspecified theory. Neoclassical realists try to rectify this by looking at the transmission of structural pressures to policy, integrating intervening variables such as domestic politics.[274] But they too struggle to explain the central conundrum the end of the Cold War poses for realist theorising, namely, the evolution of the US-Soviet relationship from one of mutual animosity to one of co-operation. As Jervis points out, "US perceptions of the Soviet threat changed despite the continued existence of large nuclear arsenals."[275] Constructivist theories highlight to good effect the interaction of agents and structures when identities are re-constituted, and shed light on the process by which norms evolve and permeate the policy-making establishment. Liberals offer a convincing perspective of how the ideological strength of Soviet communism was eroded by the comparative successes Western liberalism. But they do not explain why the Soviet desire for change took on a liberal mantle when

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[272] Lebow (1999)

[273] A good example is the decision facing President Obama on whether to authorise a high-risk special forces kill/capture mission targeting Osama bin Laden in Abottabad, or whether to attack by drone. The former option risked personnel loss and uncertainty as to the success of the mission, the latter risked civilian casualties and uncertainty as to the fate of bin Laden. There was considerable doubt whether the US had actually found the bin Laden compound, adding further ambiguties to the whole policy dilemma.

[274] See, for instance, Quinn (2013), 45

[275] Jervis (1996b), p. 225

technocratic economic reform along Chinese lines could also have been attempted, along with the maintenance of a repressive state apparatus.

The dominance of the material: Realism

The core premise of realist thinking, Berenskoetter and Quinn assert, is that power is a central feature of international politics.[276] There are many variants of realist theory in IR, all of which view the international system as an anarchic arena in which states need to ensure their survival.[277] Kenneth Waltz's 'Theory of International Politics' represents a pure form of structural realism: the theory relies on one constant factor, the lack of a supranational authority in the international system, in combination with one variable, the number of great powers in a system.[278] Waltz relegates the remaining variables that influence international affairs to the unit level, and thus beyond the scope of his theory.[279] In accounting for the end of the Cold War, structural realists see the changing distribution of material resources as the central driver explanatory driver.[280] Brooks and Wohlforth, for instance, argue that changes in ideas and policies in the 1980s were prompted by "changing material incentives; that is, their effects are largely a reflection of a changing material environment."[281] The USSR lacked the power to maintain its control over allies such as East Germany: "in truth, there was little that the Soviets could have done to prevent the GDR's demise."[282]The structural realist argument is that the relative economic decline of the USSR and its Warsaw Pact allies was the basis for the end of the Cold War.[283]

The USSR's systemic problems began in the 1970s, and turned out to be the start of an economic descent from which the country never recovered. In the early 1980s, the Soviet economy was marred by crisis, experiencing a recession from 1980 to 1982, declining oil revenue as a result of a slump in world oil prices from 1985 onwards, growth rates that lagged behind their US counterparts by at least 1% per year and had done so since 1975, and a

[276] Berenskoetter and Quinn (2012)
[277] For two surveys of realism, see Brooks (1997); Brown et al (1995)
[278] Waltz (1979). See Snyder (1993)
[279] Mearsheimer (2009)
[280] Waltz (1993); Oye (1995); Wohlforth (1997)
[281] Brooks and Wohlforth, (2007) 195
[282] Schweller and Wohlforth (2000), 35
[283] Davis and Wohlforth (2003), 133

defence budget that approached 20% of GDP by the time Gorbachev assumed office.[284] Thus, structural realists argue, the Soviet leadership lacked the material means to maintain the Cold War status quo and faced economic collapse, unless it took steps to end its on-going confrontational relationship with the United States. After all, it was the country's international position that caused its economic malaise: defence and military outlays consumed too much of GDP. Brooks and Wohlforth speak of a "punishingly high peacetime military burden,"[285] given that "nearly a quarter of all economic activity, the best R&D resources, and the best technical and science expertise were being cannibalized by the massive defence sector."[286]

The claim that the USSR spent 'too much' on defence merits further examination. How much is too much? The average citizen suffers when national resources are devoted to the military rather than to consumption goods, but whether this inevitably translates into declining international power cannot just be assumed. The Soviet economic model was entirely different from the Western consumer-capitalist paradigm: its military-oriented economy may well have been the logical conclusion of Soviet-style communism, which spurned a market-based supply and demand society – treating this as the cause of class warfare and inequality – in favour of a massive state-led production system to support a garrison state.[287] Kenneth Oye speaks of the potentially positive relationship between economic growth and military spending; it is not the case that military spending unavoidably leads to economic weakness.[288] Given that the Soviet behemoth justified its political monopoly by constant reference to the threat of counter-revolution from within and attack from abroad, it made sense to direct a large proportion of GDP to the armed forces: permanent militarization was a core feature of this model of governance. It is not clear that this necessarily had to lead to economic decline.

The structural realist story about Soviet decline provided an expedient narrative *after* the state had imploded.[289] At the time the USSR's economic difficulties were first beginning to show they seemed much less determining

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[284] Ibid, 135-136

[285] Ibid, 174

[286] Brooks and Wohlforth (2004), 296

[287] See Ellman and Kontorovich, 310

[288] Oye, 69

[289] On how the un/under-predictability of an event is correlated with post-hoc determinism, see Kurth (1973).

than appears with hindsight. Between 1950 and 1973, the annual Soviet real per capita growth rate exceeded that of the USA by 1%. During the same period, the USSR witnessed a 100% increase in real GDP per person employed, 25% more than in the US.[290] Clearly, the Soviet economy wasn't a disaster from start to finish. It is unclear why structural realists deem the Soviet economic troubles of the 1980s to have been terminal, and why the economy's former virility could not return. The USSR's rise from an impoverished agrarian state into a superpower was stunning.[291] Its collapse discredited command economics, but to conclude that the latter caused the former is spurious in the absence of evidence that the Soviet economy was beyond salvation and *had* to lead to the USSR's ruin. Moreover, the statistical picture painted is not as clear-cut as it is sometimes made out to be. Brooks and Wohlforth's assertion that the USSR experienced declining productivity relative to the US is based on the use of inaccurate statistics which were inflated by the inclusion of value added by offshore production of intermediate products to American plants, a mistake corrected by the US Department of Commerce in 1991.[292] The revised figures show that Soviet productivity growth from 1972 onwards first exceeded that of the US, and only began to underperform marginally by 1984.[293]

Gorbachev's reforms, the structural realist argument goes, were spurred by Soviet economic decline, but at the same time, "Gorbachev's particular economic reforms clearly helped propel the Soviet economy into a severe tailspin by the late 1980s."[294] A conceptual contradiction is at work here: Gorbachev was at once a passive respondent to fundamental economic trends *and* responsible for their subsequent course. How could Gorbachev's policies simultaneously have been the dependent and the independent variable with respect to the Soviet economy? That only makes sense when leaders and the economy interact through feedback loops. This, of course, suggests a causal role for agency and the potential for Gorbachev to embark

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[290] Ferguson (2010)

[291] "Since the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the Soviet Union has transformed itself from an undeveloped economy into a modern industrial state with a GNP second only to that of the United States. Until the late 1950s, the main question among Western scholars was,' When would the Soviet Union catch up with the United States?'" Ofer (1987), 1767. See also Cooper (2010)

[292] Oye, 68

[293] Ibid

[294] Brooks and Wohlforth (2003), 295

on reforms that could have improved economic outcomes. The question is how and when leaders can influence the performance of their state: which decisions affect the wellbeing of a state in the international system? It is true that the Soviet Union's negative economic backdrop of the 1980s provided the context for Gorbachev's decisions: but this left open *what* response would be taken. In fact, the verdict of US intelligence agencies from the end of the 1970s onwards was that the slowdown in Soviet growth would have profound political effects, but that it could not be predicted how the Soviets would deal with stagnation.[295]

Structural realists maintain that Gorbachev's policy decisions were not his own, but the product of the USSR's calamitous circumstances by 1985: reform policies were epiphenomenal, that is, structural developments gave rise to them.[296] The point here is not to dispute that the USSR was experiencing severe economic turbulence by the start of the 1980s, but that the economic picture was fuzzier than it is retrospectively claimed. Consider the economic situation in the West at the time. While the USSR struggled economically in the 1980s, Western countries suffered from malaise in the 1970s. In 1980, inflation in the United States reached 15% and in 1981 the unemployment rate topped 10%, the highest since the Great Depression.[297] For the first time since the Great Depression, the real value of stock holdings in the UK and the US was lower in 1980 than at the beginning of the decade.[298] Economic difficulties were not limited to the Eastern bloc alone.

In the absence of further causes, it appears that hindsight is the main basis for structural realist's claim that the USSR's economic position made the peaceful and rapid end of the Cold War all but inevitable. This is postdiction, not prediction, an avowed aim of structural realist theorising.[299] Such arguments res on post-hoc rationalisations, not logical necessity. The more statistics and facts are cited to support the argument that the Cold War's peaceful end was brought about by incontestable material developments which left Gorbachev with no choice but to effectively wind down the bipolar stand-off, the more it begs the question: if this is so obvious now, why wasn't it then? As Philip Everts maintains: "The manifest inability to assess correctly

[295] Berkowitz (2008), 240

[296] Lebow (1999)

[297] Ferguson (2010)

[298] Dimson et al, pp. 55-56

[299] "Theory enables prediction, which is essential for the conduct of our daily lives, for policymaking, and for advancing social science." Mearsheimer and Walt (2013), 436

the probability of certain developments in the East-West context since 1988 does not seem to have contributed notably to the modesty of many observers and commentators of this conflict, and to reluctance on their part to make strong claims and predict what would happen next."[300] Quite simply, glasnost was unthinkable in the early 1980s, and to treat political reform of this kind as inevitable is a major fault with the realist position.

Berkowitz categorises the broad alternatives open to the Soviet leadership from the mid-1970s onwards: "A more ruthless leader might have held the state together for another ten or fifteen years; witness Alexander Lukashenko in Belarus and Kim Jong-Il in North Korea. A more flexible leader might have managed a 'soft landing' for the Soviet Communist Party; witness the current situation in China. To provide a more definitive estimate fifteen years before the fact was impossible because the future was not yet certain. It never is."[301] Brooks and Wohlforth argue that the USSR, as the declining challenger in a bipolar system, was especially sensitive to any trends that had negative consequences for its ability to keep up with the leading power.[302] That leaves open why a strategy of retrenchment was pursued rather than attempt to maintain the status quo as long as possible.

Brooks and Wohlforth cite another case of a relatively declining hegemon in support of their theory: between 1893 and 1913, Britain's economy grew by 56%, compared to 90% in Germany.[303] According to neorealist theory, this "produced a major reorientation in [British] grand strategy that combined retrenchment and engagement with growing rivals, notably Germany."[304] Again, however, it seems that post-hoc over-determination is at work. Where the case of declining Britain versus rising Germany culminated in the First World War, the case of a declining USSR versus the USA culminated in the former's peaceful implosion. To attribute this difference entirely to the USSR's position as a declining challenger (rather than that of a declining hegemon) misses out on the aspects of political leadership that influenced the trajectory of the US-Soviet (and UK-British) relationship. Brooks and Wohlforth argue that the rapidly escalating economic costs of maintaining the USSR's international position made the

[300] Everts (1992), 58
[301] Berkowitz, 241
[302] Brooks and Wohlforth (2000), 26
[303] Ibid, 19
[304] Brooks and Wohlforth (2007), 174

end of the Cold War on American terms the most likely outcome.[305] An alternative explanation is that the interactions between the USSR and the USA were transformed at a crucial moment from confrontation to cooperation. Where leadership interactions made for a destructive trajectory of UK-German relations that ended in an arms race and eventually war, the leadership of the USA and USSR embarked on a constructive path in the 1980s and emerged out of their arms race peacefully.

Brooks and Wohlforth maintain that just because some variable (economic malaise in the USSR) does not wholly determine an outcome (the peaceful end of the Cold War), this neither invalidates their theory nor does it show that other causes matter. By misrepresenting their work as deterministic, they argue, critics construct a strawman to showcase the otherwise unremarkable finding that some other cause matters in explaining a complex outcome.[306] But that misses the point: of course, no one demands that theories can predict single events such as the rise of Gorbachev or the design and implementation of *perestroika*. Instead, what I wish to contrast is the certitude with which Brooks and Wohlforth make statements such as this – "one of many equally probable responses to Soviet material decline, retrenchment was the most likely one"[307] – with the reality of how this material decline was viewed by scholars of international affairs at the time, such as Paul Kennedy:

> "There is nothing in the character or tradition of the Russian state to suggest that it could ever accept imperial decline gracefully. Indeed, historically, none of the over-extended, multinational empires which have been dealt with in this survey – the Ottoman, the Spanish, the Napoleonic, the British – ever retreated to their own ethnic base until they had been defeated in a Great Power war, or (as with Britain after 1945), were so weakened by war that an imperial withdrawal was politically unavoidable."[308]

Structural realists such as Kenneth Waltz have a response to the objection that their framework is underspecified as history unfolds, and overspecified

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[305] Wohlforth (2011)
[306] Brooks and Wohlforth (2003), 273
[307] Brooks and Wohlforth (2002) 99
[308] Kennedy, 514

when explaining of historical change retroactively: "Theory explains regularities of behaviour and leads one to expect that the outcomes produced by interacting units will fall within specified ranges."[309] That is, structural realism is a theory about how the international system *works*, one that parsimoniously gets at the operational essentials in order to understand developments in international relations at a deeper level:

> "Of necessity, realist theory is better at saying what will happen than in saying when it will happen. Theory cannot say when 'tomorrow' will come because international political theory deals with the pressures of structure on states and not with how states will respond to the pressures. The latter is a task for theories about how national governments respond to pressures on them and take advantage of opportunities that may be present. One does, however, observe balancing tendencies already taking place [in the unipolar system that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union]."[310]

Again, the theory is underspecified in the present (is the current, turbulent epoch of world politics one of re-balancing? Or is the US maintaining its hegemonic position and preventing balancing? Either outcome seems possible), but allows for an explanation of systemic developments to be made after the fact (either outcome can be explained).

The influence of structural pressures on the behaviour of states is real. But to focus only on those pressures without due regard for how national governments, or more precisely national leaders, choose to respond, and how their response ends up affecting the international system, leaves our understanding of outcomes in IR sorely incomplete. Structural realism is a mechanistic paradigm in which "essentially identical units – interests and identities are assumed to be exogenously formed – are driven by 'natural laws' to behave predictably in response to exogenously determined conditions […] This generates ahistorical, universal explanations of relations between states."[311] Such simplifications of reality do not always aid our understanding of international politics. For instance, concentrating on the

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[309] Waltz (1979), 68
[310] Waltz (2000), 27
[311] Harrison, 7

state as the unit of analysis creates an analytically convenient but arbitrary separation of international and domestic politics.

The rapid and peaceful end of the Cold War upset a whole range of structural realism's staple axioms, including the notion that when the cost of maintaining hegemony rises, states try to adjust without ever giving up their hegemony voluntarily: indeed, the latter was regarded as the reason why the international system is so war-prone.[312] Says Everts, "we should recall that we are not talking here about trivial details, but about central elements and characteristics of the international system. The very incapacity to distinguish between 'fundamental' and 'accidental' forms of change of the system strikes me as a reason for serious concern."[313] Structural realists maintain that the relative decline in Soviet power caused the end of the Cold War. [314] The analytical focus on Soviet economic performance and its impact on the material balance of power ignores the fact that the USSR's military capabilities continued to pose an enormous threat to the US at least until the Intermediate Nuclear Force and START treaties had been signed and ratified. In order to understand on a deeper level how and why the hostile relationship between the US and the USSR changed, it seems important to study what steps were taken by the relevant actors on both sides toward this end: agency is one of (though not the sole) the missing links between what Everts calls 'fundamental' (i.e. structural) trends and 'accidental' (i.e. contingent) outcomes.

Schweller and Wohlforth assert, "The Soviet Union's *best* response to relative decline within a US-dominated bipolar system was emulation and engagement. [Emphasis added]"[315] This implies that the USSR could have responded differently to the deterioration in material conditions (and in doing so pursued a sub-optimal policy, compared to emulation and engagement). So while agency isn't absent in this explanatory framework, material change "precedes and prompts change in [...] ideas."[316] What is left unclear is why Gorbachev chose the policies that defined his tenure. Structural realists answer this by arguing that their theory gives *primacy* to structures, not that material developments are wholly deterministic. Agency

[312] Gilpin (1981), 157
[313] Everts, 71
[314] Wohlforth (1995), 96
[315] Schweller and Wohlforth (2000), 85
[316] Ibid, 104

is not denied outright; Davis and Wohlforth, for instance, recognise that ultimately, leaders choose strategies.[317] Structural pressures are translated via governmental officials into actual policy; Wohlforth is clear that "decision-makers' assessments of power are what matters."[318] Individuals thus aren't irrelevant to the realist explanatory framework, but insofar as they play a role, they are actors in a wider material play directed by the balance of power. Gorbachev was responsible for dramatic policy changes such as his surprise announcement of a unilateral Soviet troop withdrawal from Eastern Europe in December 1988, but the underlying reason for this change in foreign policy was the USSR's precipitous economic decline, which made such military commitments unaffordable. Gorbachev "could not have been a reform leader [...] unless he could point to undeniable material trends" to explain his change in foreign policy.[319] Brooks and Wohlforth approach Gorbachev's choices from a structural angle: "We do not claim – no responsible analyst can – to account for each microanalytical decision or bargaining position adopted during the Cold War endgame."[320] This leaves unclear the transmission belt from 'material change' to 'policy change.'

A variant of realist theory – neoclassical realism – attempts to fill this gap by incorporating an intervening variable in the form of agents' perceptions of power and their reaction to changes in the balance of power. Neoclassical realists maintain that while material conditions determine the behaviour of states, structural signals are channelled through the foreign policy-making process.[321] This allows them to introduce factors like domestic politics, ideas, belief systems, bureaucratic politics, and bargaining into the structural realist framework, in an effort to explain actual foreign policy decisions and outcomes.[322] A country's position in the anarchic international system and its relative power drive its behaviour, but the pressures of anarchy are ultimately expressed through policy.[323] The mediation of systemic impulses through agents and bureaucracies introduces two intervening

[317] Davis and Wohlforth, 145
[318] Wohlforth (1995), 97-98
[319] Davis and Wohlforth, 151
[320] Brooks & Wohlforth (2003), 298
[321] See Rathbun (2008)
[322] Waltz, of course, designed his theory as a deliberately sparse framework, and thus "viewed his contribution as a reaction against precisely the sort of unit-level variable proliferation and fine-grained historical case-study" that neoclassical realism deliberately pursues. See Quinn (2013)
[323] Sterling-Folker (1997)

variables: the mis/perceptions of the actors in charge, and the domestic politicising involved in determining and implementing foreign policies.[324] This leaves open the possibility that a Soviet leader with views different from Gorbachev could have pursued alternative policy paths. Neoclassical realists, because they argue that the primary lines of causation in international politics flow from the structure of the state system, also end up with underspecified explanatory stories.

Neither structural nor neoclassical realists can account for the consequences of Gorbachev's policies – the largely peaceful disappearance of a hegemonic state. That outcome was not in the USSR's national interest: realists assume that states, above all, seek to ensure their own survival.[325] The destruction of their state could not have been the intention Soviet policy-makers.[326] So did Gorbachev simply choose the wrong policies? Or were his policy choices irrelevant, since the USSR's fate was determined by other, non-agentic factors? The first response spells trouble for those who assume leaders select the optimal policy responses to changing international structural conditions. The second reduces the role of policymakers to that of walk-on extras, and leaves unclear what ideational factors caused dissolution of the USSR.[327] Both narratives do not highlight what alternative policies the Soviet Union could have pursued in response to its materially-induced crisis, and how this could have changed outcomes.

By counterfactually scrutinising the potential consequences of alternative decisions, researchers can attempt to estimate the interaction effects between policy-making and its corollaries. The US intelligence community knew from the mid-1970s onwards that the Soviet economy had run into systemic headwinds, that "the Soviet Union as a whole was stagnating or declining economically."[328] Presumably, then, so did the Soviet leadership during that time. Yet a succession of leaders did not embark on reforms. Gorbachev either did so because of decisions specific to his thinking, as neoclassical realists can argue, or because he had no choice, as

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[324] See, for instance, Rose (1998), or Zakaria (1998)

[325] Mearsheimer (2003)

[326] Indeed, it wasn't: as Marshal Akhromeyev told George Shultz in December 1987: "My country is in trouble, and I am fighting alongside Mikhail Sergeevich to save it." Shultz (1993), 1011-1012

[327] Hence Berenskoetter and Quinn's call for neoclassical realists to show greater sensitivity "to the role ideas can play in determining policy and shaping relationships." (2012), 229

[328] Berkowitz (2008), 240

structural realists maintain. Ideas-based explanations provide some redress. Liberals, for instance, point to the pervasive disillusionment with the Leninist model of society as the foundation for Soviet reforms.[329] Constructivists maintain that material forces produce indeterminate outcomes if they are considered in the absence of prevailing norms and ideas.[330]

Institutions and ideas: Liberalism and Constructivism

Liberal theories concur with realists that the economic decline of the USSR formed the underlying cause of the end of the Cold War, but include the prevailing international environment as a conditioning factor which accounts for the Soviet response. The principle of nuclear deterrence, for instance, allowed Gorbachev to implement policies that created short-term vulnerabilities, such as a more conciliatory foreign policy, in pursuit of better economic performance, without putting the USSR's national security at risk.[331] This still leaves open the question of how it was that Gorbachev arrived at his policy choices – how did he formulate his policies, and what scope did he possess to go down other routes? Deudney and Ikenberry suggest that the international context was one in which liberalism ended up dominating competing ideologies: in terms of satisfying human wants, the free market proved superior to command economies; liberal democracies provided stable and agreeable political governance whilst respecting a broad array of citizens' rights, in stark contrast to Soviet rule.[332]

This explanatory perspective contends that long-term liberal trends punctuated the ideological membrane surrounding the Eastern bloc. People desire to live in freedom, and the USSR was not immune to this universal aspiration. The prospect of democratic liberalisation explains the opposition to Communism both in Eastern Europe and at home. East Germany in 1953, Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Poland in 1980: periods of popular dissent and unrest in the Soviet sphere remained a theme throughout the Cold War. And where liberal modernisation – capitalism's dominance over collectivised economies in terms of enhancing human welfare – explains the failure of communism, liberal internationalism, in the

[329] E.g. Halliday (1992); Doyle (1995)
[330] E.g. Evangelista (2001); Herman (1996)
[331] Deudney and Ikenberry (2011)
[332] Deudney and Ikenberry (1991a; 1991b)

form of transnational commercial links and interactions of dissident movements in the East with human rights campaigners in the West, undermined the social and ideological stability of Communist rule.[333] Ikenberry argues that after 1945, the United States spearheaded an international alliance of democracies that built a 'Liberal International Order'. This American-led hegemonic order resided within the larger global bipolar system. The Cold War ended when the competing Soviet bloc succumbed to its internal weaknesses: the Liberal International Order took over the emerging vacuum and was extended to the larger global system.[334] Ultimately, the outlook for the Soviet leadership of joining the prospering liberal sphere of peace offered the most appealing way out of the increasing and worsening strains and burdens of Cold War competition.[335]

This is an intuitively credible approach to explaining Communism's failure. It has yielded some surprising philosophical implications. Fukuyama, for instance, ingeniously uses the liberal story to turn Marx's Hegelian interpretation of history – as a series of class-conflict driven epochs that inevitably bear toward Communism – on its head, proclaiming the inverse to be true: in the evolution of political thought, the back and forth between the cosmopolitan liberal creed and its detractors, culminated with liberalism remaining as the only credible ideological system capable of enabling Hegelian self-actualisation on a macro-social scale.[336] As Fukuyama argues, "What is important about China from the standpoint of world history is not the present state of the reform or even its future prospects. The central issue is the fact that the People's Republic of China can no longer act as a beacon for illiberal forces around the world, whether they be guerrillas in some Asian jungle or middle class students in Paris."[337] Liberalism, in other words, still lacks a credible ideological competitor.

But the success of China's economic reforms exposes the limits of the liberal account. After all, the Chinese leadership deliberately embarked on economic reform without political reform: it is no coincidence that the Tiananmen crackdown took place in 1989, the year that political revolutions

[333] Fukuyama (1992)
[334] Ikenberry (2009), 80
[335] Doyle (1995)
[336] Fukuyama (1989)
[337] Ibid, 5

swept across Eastern Europe.[338] This suggests that a wider array of possible courses of action presented themselves to the Soviets in the 1980s, not all of which entailed the end of one-party rule. The USSR was not obliged in any sense of the word to adopt the political system of its competitor. As a matter of fact, Russia – the rump of the Soviet Union – did not end up becoming a liberal polity, unlike its former client states. By examining the potential for economic rejuvenation in the absence of pluralist politics in the Soviet Union, the contingency of liberalism's victory can be examined. Was it an unintended consequence of particular choices? A contingent coincidence? Or, after all, an inevitability?

Liberals also have a hard time explaining the timing of the USSR's reforms: why did Gorbachev acknowledge the Soviet system's shortcomings in the late 1980s, when this was not a new revelation? As put by former Secretary of State George Shultz, the USSR's failure as an economic and ideological model was fairly clear to most objective observers; it was in the military dimension "it had proved itself able to develop awesome power and use it ruthlessly and skilfully."[339] It may be that the timing of Soviet collapse was the result of the rapid deterioration of the USSR's economic performance at the end of the 1980s. But was this collapse a consequence of Gorbachev's decisions? Could the Soviet malaise have been handled differently? Was the USSR's economic deterioration caused by Gorbachev's idiosyncrasies or by powerful underlying economic forces? Counterfactually changing some of Gorbachev's decisions and examining how this would have affected the performance of the Soviet economy can addresses these causal riddles that liberalism leaves unanswered.

Constructivist accounts of the end of the Cold War emerged as a challenge to established theoretical paradigms in IR.[340] Where realists see states as being trapped in an anarchic system, constructivists emphasise the constitutive power of norms in the international system: anarchy is not some objective external feature, it is what 'states make of it'.[341] Constructivists discuss the sources and course of the Soviet ideological transformation. The re-making of Soviet security interests paved the way for changes in foreign policy: accepting a re-unified Germany within NATO could only come about

[338] Sarotte (2012)
[339] Shultz (1993), 10
[340] See Hopf (1998); Copeland (2000)
[341] Wendt (1992)

after a significant ideational transformation took place in the USSR.[342] Koslowski and Kratochwil focus on the changing constitutive rules of international politics: the international system is an ensemble of institutions, these institutions are artificial, and fundamental change in the international system takes place when its constitutive norms are changed.[343] Actors and structures mutually constitute one another, structures are not immutable because they depend on actors for their reproduction. These actions are in turn conditioned by the social systems that surround them.[344] Material facts are meaningless in and of themselves. Instead, constitutive social norms govern how and why agents choose to deploy the material resources available to them. Changes that occur in the 'rules' governing superpower relations are vital to understanding the entire Cold War, rather than changes in material balances. In this vein, Stalin's rejection of free elections in Eastern Europe started a process that created a Soviet empire, while Gorbachev's revocation of the Brezhnev doctrine began the process whereby this empire was deconstructed. Koslowski and Kratochwil maintain that the bipolar international system that prevailed during the Cold War was the "outcome of a succession of choices" by key actors.[345] These agents rely upon normative conceptualisations of the world, which constitute an ideational structural framework. When key actors re-interpret these normative positions, new policy choices can come about: Koslowski and Kratochwil argue that "by opting for a united Germany within Western European structures, the Soviet leadership decided that such a solution was likely to serve Soviet security interests better than a neutral Germany."[346] Constructivists thus emphasise the role of ideational change in shaping the international system.

Constructivists see Gorbachev and the fellow 'new thinkers' he promoted in the Soviet government as norm entrepreneurs, whose ideational influence acted as the source of eventual US-Soviet accommodation. Evangelista highlights how Gorbachev persuaded authoritative figures who disagreed with him to accept his policy proposals, through heresthetics, the use of language to manipulate the political agenda.[347] The keys to Gorbachev's success were "his skilful manipulation of the political agenda,

[342] Herman (1996)
[343] Koswlowski and Kratochwil (1995)
[344] Ibid, 128
[345] Ibid, 143
[346] Ibid, 148
[347] Evangelista (2001)

his appeal to broad norms […] and his mastery of the main features of the Soviet political system." [348] Re-constituting norms such as the Brezhnev Doctrine was only possible after social-structural changes took place, prompted by civil society developments and changes in self-identification.[349] Evolving social practices – for example the rise of anti-totalitarian movements in Eastern Europe – undermined the legitimacy of the existing norm of Soviet suzerainty and brought about civil disobedience. This eventually destabilised the Soviet system, as the actors in charge decided to dismantle the social practices that upheld the informal Soviet empire (such as military intervention in client states that rejected Communist one-party rule).[350] The structural-ideal features of the 'normative identity' concept are placed on a co-constitutive footing with the policy decisions of agents, meaning neither agency nor structure causally precedes each other.

Co-constituting ideational structures and idiosyncratic agency makes for a thought-provoking explanation for how the Cold War ended. It also heightens researchers' sensitivity to the role agents can play in influencing events. Evangelista, for instance, reaches a careful counterfactual conclusion of Gorbachev's importance: "It is not too much of a leap to suggest that a politician less skilled in heresthetic techniques than Gorbachev would have failed to implement the foreign policy reforms that contributed to the end of the Cold War."[351] However, as Dessler notes, constructivist theories relying on co-constitution "have often been presented in terms too vague to be of practical use." [352] Koslowski and Kratochwil maintain that Gorbachev's toleration of Poland's free elections in 1989 (in which the Communist party was roundly defeated) meant the beginning of the end of Soviet dominance of the Warsaw Pact. But just why Brezhnev sent troops into Czechoslovakia in 1968 to uphold Communist governance, while Gorbachev refused to do so in 1989, is not accounted for. And the norm-evolution posited as the explanation for Communism's collapse is troubling in its certitude. Anti-totalitarian sentiment in Eastern Europe was hardly a normative innovation of the 1980s. What prompted the grip of dictatorship to be lessened after 50 years of domination? Evangelista asserts, "There is no doubt that the desire

[348] Ibid, 7
[349] Koslowski and Kratochwil, 158
[350] Breslauer (1994)
[351] Evangelista, 34
[352] Dessler, 442

to improve the Soviet economy in the long term lay behind many of Gorbachev's security policy initiatives, including the unilateral reduction in conventional forces."[353] Checkel identifies two causal mechanisms that can run concurrently when agents begin to observe new norms: an instrumentalist channel, wherein changing cost-benefit calculations and bargaining produces new behaviour, and persuasion at the level of groups or societies through learning and socialisation.[354]

Risse-Kappen argues that ideas intervene between material factors and actors' interests and preferences. In terms of where they originate, "ideas do not float freely": agents are always exposed to a number of competing, sometimes contradictory policy ideas, which arise from "epistemic communities of knowledge-based transnational networks." [355] Domestic political structures are the key variables that determine which policies move up to high-level decision-making stratas. Risse-Kappen discusses Soviet political institutions, state-society relations and the values and norms embedded in Soviet political culture, all of which influenced the intellectual policy climate at the end of the 1980s. Policy networks in the West advocated common security and non-offensive defence, and promoted these ideas to Soviet institutchniks who participated in exchanges and meetings with Western security analysts and scholars. This emerging intellectual community changed the normative environment within which Gorbachev's new thinking developed and took hold. When Gorbachev adopted the idea of a common security policy, he was met with the most immediate and positive response in Germany, where the idea of a common security policy had already established itself in the foreign policy consensus of society.[356]

This raises questions about the role of leaders, specifically the scope agents possess to actively shape the ideational basis of policymaking: to what extent do idiosyncrasies matter? Is the agent in charge of or beholden to extraneous ideological forces? To what extent is the agent a recipient as opposed to a generator of ideas? There is a class of theorising in IR that borrows from psychology to open up the cognition of decision-making in an attempt to answer such questions. Such theories can "offer significant

[353] Evangelista, 24
[354] Checkel (1997; 1999)
[355] Risse-Kappen (1995), 189
[356] Ibid, 195

insights into why particular ideas carry the day in specific policy choices."[357] Lebow, for example, highlights the importance of agents' motivation and the consequent distribution not of material capabilities but of interests.[358] Stein argues that Gorbachev was an inductive learner who was open to radical ideas and policies and adjusted his policies in response to Western reactions and initiatives, rather than deductively thinking about how to best maximise his objectively given interests.[359] Gorbachev was just one half of the equation: he had to interact with his counterpart in the US in order to defuse the Cold War. Breslauer and Lebow argue that Reagan entered office with simplistic but strong anti-Soviet views, illustrated by his 'evil empire' rhetoric, but "retired as the biggest dove in his administration."[360] Because his image of the Soviet Union, "while pronounced in its hostility, was relatively simple and undifferentiated," it was susceptible to dramatic change.[361] Reagan's tendency "to reduce issues to personality" meant that he came away from personal meetings with Gorbachev in Geneva in 1985 and Reykjavik in 1986 impressed and convinced by his commitment to reduce the nuclear danger.[362] Keith Shimko demonstrates that in the years before Gorbachev's rise to power, Reagan's belief system was much more open to the possibility of Soviet–American cooperation than were those of his advisors.[363]

This cognitive assessment of agency stands in opposition to the utility maximising agent encountered in rational choice theories: idiosyncrasies matter, in that perception affects one's choice of policy. Leaders work to build a balance of interest, interacting with other leaders, their domestic audience, international public opinion and the elite consensus among the policy-making class.[364] The national interest is not a fixed, materially defined goal, but a flexible construct subject to re-definition via a complex process of ideological change. This means that policy-making behaviour can be non-linear.[365] Elite learning at the unit level has systemic consequences – "reflective actors [...] can [...] transcend the consequences of anarchy."[366]

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[357] Ibid, 193
[358] Lebow and Risse-Kappen (1995), 17
[359] Lebow and Stein (2004)
[360] Breslauer and Lebow (2004)
[361] Lebow and Risse-Kappen, 10
[362] Breslauer and Lebow (2004), 183
[363] Shimko (1991)
[364] Lebow and Stein (2004)
[365] Ibid, 214
[366] Lebow (1994), 276

Human beings are able "to alter their social environment in profound ways" by knowing and understanding the structures around them.[367] The human intellect gives agents the "understanding and courage to escape from their security dilemma."[368]

The implication is that individual actors matter a great deal in world politics. IR traditionally locates variables that affect international politics on three levels of analysis: the international system, the domestic character of states, and the level of the individual.[369] In *Man, the State and War*, Kenneth Waltz offers a compelling reason to leave the level of 'man' out of the study of war. Waltz argues that the search for causes attempts to explain differences in the world, which cannot be accomplished when the factor in question, human nature, is in fact not variable but constant.[370] "Human nature may in some sense have been the cause of war in 1914, but by the same token it was the cause of peace in 1910," writes Waltz.[371] Since man's nature is a given, it is futile to try and explain variance in international politics on this causal dimension: a constant cannot explain a variable, and so the level of the individual agent ought to be left aside as an explanan in IR.

As a result, the concept of the 'state' – Waltz's 'second image' – is a significant analytical building-block in IR. Singer, for example, who first formally introduced 'levels of analysis' to IR, was quite clear that the state is the "primary actor in international relations."[372] Hudson points out that "most contemporary theoretical work in IR gives the impression that its ground lies in states."[373] Wight has gone further, arguing that "any denial of the 'state-as-agent' thesis might seem to presage the end of IR as an academic discipline […] without the notion of the 'state-as-agent', IR appears to be little other than a macro-sociological exercise in political theory or history."[374] In other words, IR as an academic enterprise has to devote significant analytical focus to the state as an autonomous actor in international politics for it to provide a distinct set of contributions to social science. A commitment of some kind to the state is shared by most IR theorists, although the actual content of their

[367] Ibid, 275
[368] Ibid, 276
[369] Waltz (2001 [1959]), 6-12
[370] Ibid, 5
[371] Ibid, 27
[372] Singer (1961), 79-81
[373] Hudson (2005), 2
[374] Wight, 177

theories and the way they approach the state – critically, or axiomatically – radically differs.[375] Waltz's theory of structural realism, for example, does not analytically probe the existence of states as such, states are simply assumed to be the principal actors in international politics. Wendt formulated his constructivist theory of IR as an explicit counterweight to what he felt was an ontologically reductionist approach by Waltz: but he, too, argues that the state is a 'person' possessing agency and deems IR theory to be a state-centric project.[376] Paradigms such as liberalism and constructivism, which probe the domestic arrangements of states, be they institutional or ideal, often do so with the aim of explaining the configuration of the international system populated by states, albeit from a state-level rather than a systems-level perspective.[377] To use Hudson's terminology, the 'ground' of IR is the state, and insofar as human agents are included in IR theory, they are 'black-boxed' as decision-makers, operating under the imperatives of the state as the key agent in international affairs.[378]

By contrast, Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) concerns itself centrally with the decision-makers running the state, and thus focuses its inquiry on the state *and* individual levels of analysis. Foreign policy, defined by Hill as "the sum of official external relations conducted by [the] state in international relations," is the manifestation of state behaviour in the international realm.[379] The aggregated outcomes and dynamics of such state behaviour are the focus of IR. But, as Welch points out, "all state behaviour is the product of human decisions. We talk about the [...] behaviour of states, but this is merely a convenient shorthand [...] for the goals and choices of individual human beings who make decisions that result in the behaviour we observe."[380] Hudson disagrees with Wendt: "states are not agents because states are abstractions and thus have no agency. Only human beings can be true agents."[381] Snyder lays out the ground of FPA clearly: "We adhere to the nation-state as the fundamental level of analysis, yet we have discarded the state as a meta-physical abstraction. By emphasizing decision-making as a

375 See Wendt (2004)
376 Wendt (1999), 7
377 Fearon (1998), 295
378 Hudson (2005)
379 Hill, 3
380 Welch, 22
381 Hudson (2005), 2; see also Hermann et al (2001)

central focus we have provided a way of organizing the determinants of action around those officials who act for the political society."[382]

Where IR struggles to theoretically integrate agency into its analyses, FPA deliberately opens up the black box of decision-making as the target of its scholarship.[383] A host of associated assumptions accompany this theoretical baseline. Governments are not mere passive absorbers of societal and international pressures, but actively shape the context they find themselves in. Leadership matters, and leaders differ both in their psychopathology and how they influence/are influenced by their milieu. It follows that, if we want to understand events in international politics, we need to study the decisions that preceded these events, who took them, how and why. As put by Walt: "Not all [of IR theory] falls neatly into the realist, liberal, or radical paradigms. In particular, a number of important works focus on the characteristics of states, governmental organizations, or individual leaders."[384]

What scholars of FPA do not do is "seek to provide a general theory of international behavior," hence FPA is not to be seen as an "approach for the analysis of the international system as a whole."[385] Rather, FPA focuses on specific instances of actual state behaviour in the international realm – that is, foreign policy – peering past the state level of analysis into the individual level. This is what Hudson means when she states that FPA's "ground of the human decision maker leads us toward an emphasis on agent-oriented theory."[386] Gerner observes, "the central focus on foreign policy analysis is on the intentions, statements, and actions of an actor – often, but not always, a state – directed toward the external world and the response of other actors to these intentions, statements, and actions."[387] FPA "privileges the human decision maker".[388] It seeks to unpack the 'black box' of decision-making.[389] A basic distinction between IR and FPA, then, is that the former looks at *outcomes* in international affairs. Much of IR theory aims to understand how

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382 Snyder (1954), 53

383 For reviews of FPA, see Gerner (1995); Hudson and Vore (1995); Hudson (2007); Kaarbo (2015).

384 Walt (1997), 34

385 Ibid 35

386 Hudson (2005), 2

387 Gerner, 18

388 Hudson (2007), 31

389 Hudson and Vore, 211

these outcomes are brought about in relation to other outcomes and variables operating at Waltz's third image: the international system of states. FPA, by way of contrast, studies the *people* and the *decision-making processes* that produce these outcomes. The interaction effects between decision-makers, policy and outcomes in the international system are the targets of this thesis' investigation.[390]

Agents are of particular interest in this mesh of causal influence. Due to the importance of idiosyncrasies, leaders cannot simply be exchanged counterfactually without affecting outcomes. By asking and trying to answer counterfactual questions – both about decisions taken and those considered but not taken (why not?), and about the presence of agents themselves – the extent to which leaders played a role in ending the end of the Cold War can be probed. This means looking at specific decisions, for instance on arms control negotiations, which involved the weighing up of options and adjudication between competing views. By examining why given options were selected and others discarded, the level of opposition that needed to be overcome, and suggesting alternative courses, the causal weight of actors can be studied. Was Reagan uniquely accommodating to Gorbachev's overtures? Would different decisions have yielded different outcomes, or was the USSR headed inexorably toward collapse and capitulation? If the latter is true, was this due to Gorbachev? In a sense, such questions are applied forms of the agent-structure problem, which is one of the central ontological dilemmas of the discipline of International Relations.[391]

Do Leaders Matter? Setting the analytical stage

This thesis is an effort to examine the influence of leadership on international affairs. Jervis explains, "the question of the extent to which leaders matter in international politics is as familiar as it is impossible to fully

[390] This echoes Gaddis, who calls for the study of the interaction between policy-making processes, the effects/outcomes produced by policy (including whether they were intended or not), and the evolution of policy over time. (1988)

[391] This concerns the relative causal weight of agency – the power of individuals (or indeed states) to independently operate and make choices – against the influence of structures. Cairo has a concise definition of the agent-structure problem: the "recurrent patterned arrangements in the system that influence or limit the choices and opportunities available to states and individuals." (Wohlforth, 2015, 6). See also Wendt (1987); Wight (2006)

answer." [392] One attempt is to ask whether leaders have individual preferences that have deep effects on their responses to particular events. Decision-making agents, in their interpretation of world events, differ in how they perceive "other leaders, the domestic sources of foreign policy, and the external environment.[393] Counterfactuals that compare leaders can be used to examine whether alternative leadership leads to different policies in similar circumstances. Failure to find evidence of policy divergences suggests that leaders exhibit behaviour consistent across time and place. Such analyses are difficult to undertake, as it is unclear whether changing leaders in a counterfactual fundamentally changes the situation under investigation – just as it is unclear whether particular situations give rise to particular kinds of leaders. Leader substitutions that are random – such as deaths of leaders, or elections whose outcome are very close – put researchers on stronger ground in terms of attributing changing policies to factors we associate with the outgoing or incoming leader.[394]

Ronald Reagan's election victory in 1980 coincided with the beginning of a decade of geopolitical change that culminated in the peaceful collapse of the Soviet Union. Was Reagan incidental or coincidental to this outcome? There exists a so-called 'Reagan victory school'[395], interestingly its major proponents are non-academics including "former Pentagon officials like Caspar Weinberger and Richard Perle, columnist George Will [and] neoconservative thinker Irving Kristol."[396] In 1992, Deudney and Ikenberry described the Reagan victory school as an emerging orthodoxy, particularly in its praise of the Reagan Administration's 'peace through strength' policies: "The view giving most of the credit [for ending the Cold War] to Reagan-era assertiveness and Western strength has become the new conventional wisdom." They challenged such accounts: "contrary to the conventional wisdom, the defense buildup did not produce Soviet capitulation," citing instead Soviet internal weaknesses and "an extraordinary convergence by Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev on a vision of mutual nuclear vulnerability and disarmament." [397] Two years later, Lebow and Stein went further, asserting that the Reagan military build-up "did not defeat the Soviet Union.

[392] Jervis (2013), 154
[393] Ibid, 156
[394] Jervis (2013)
[395] Examples include: Kengor (2007); Schweizer (2003); Bailey (1998); Pipes (1995)
[396] Deudney and Ikenberry (1992), 125
[397] Ibid, 127

On the contrary, it prolonged the Cold War."[398] Their reasoning is that Reagan's hard-line stance on defence matters made it more difficult for Gorbachev to convince conservatives and his military leadership of America's peaceful intentions. April Carter goes so far as to deny outright a link between Reagan's policies and the end of the Cold War, arguing that this "vindicates the policies of seeking military superiority and 'negotiations from strength,' which could be disastrous as precedents," and reject the idea that "Reagan's arms build-up and his economic pressure on the USSR directly influenced the *content* of Gorbachev's policies. [original italics]"[399] Others, such as Beth Fischer, have tried to show that the Reagan victory school overplays the extent of Moscow's apprehension about the US military build-up, while Dobson questions whether the political goals of the Reagan Administration's massive defence budget increases were anything other than domestic, with its foreign policy ambition limited to strengthening the US' negotiation position rather than bringing about the USSR's collapse.[400]

A particularly controversial feature of Reagan's military strategy was the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). Launched in March 1983 this was soon nicknamed the 'Star Wars' project, with its ambitious vision of space-based defence against intercontinental ballistic missiles. Critics at home and abroad perceived SDI as a deliberate act of upping the ante on the USSR by opening a new phase in the arms race: targeting nuclear weapons mid-flight protects the US homeland but undercuts the basis for nuclear deterrence, because a defence against Soviet missiles would give the US a first-strike capability. Reagan faced serious domestic criticism for Star Wars. George Ball, Ambassador to the UN under Lyndon Johnson, penned a withering 10,000 word critique of SDI, accusing the President directly:

> "The risks of this ill-conceived venture are enormous and they are increased by the possibility that the public will be so deceived by specious promises or confused by technological jargon that it will ignore the lessons of the past and acquiesce in a vision that seems to promise peace but will have the opposite result. Pursuing the President's Star Wars program will turn outer space into a new

[398] Lebow and Stein (1994), 37
[399] Carter (1995), 27
[400] Fischer (2004); Dobson (2005)

> battlefield, increase the risks of catastrophic conflict, and enlarge man's ability to destroy civilization."[401]

Evangelista believes that SDI was an obstacle to progress: reformers in the USSR pursued the goal of arms control despite, not because of 'Star Wars'.[402] Zubok, by contrast, believes SDI signalled a new round of the arms race that Gorbachev was keen to prevent, contributing to the Soviet decision to pursue arms control instead. [403] Brown disagrees: "it was not so much the hard-line policies of Reagan's first term [like SDI] that ended the Cold War, but his willingness to enter into serious negotiations and treat the Soviet leader more as a partner than an enemy."[404] The question is how sustained rapprochement between Reagan and Gorbachev came about. Did Star Wars create a climate in which any leader of the Soviet Union found it more advantageous to negotiate? A deeper question concerns whether Gorbachev or indeed any Soviet leader coming to power in 1985 was bound to pursue arms control, regardless of who was in office in the US. Relatedly, would someone other than Reagan have been able to strike the far-reaching deals with Gorbachev that were necessary to fundamentally defuse Cold War tensions? Lebow and Breslauer address this question by counterfactually examining how events might have unfolded in the absence of Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. They engage in a minimal-rewrite counterfactual study in which they have the President die at the hand of John Hinckley Jr., his failed assassin, a scenario which rests on but a few millimetres' difference in Hinckley's bullet's trajectory.[405]

This truly is a minimal rewrite counterfactual. It highlights the central role played by sheer chance in preventing Hinckley's assassination attempt from succeeding. Had it not been for a few coincidences, Reagan's presidency would have ended 69 days after it began. No model and no theory can integrate the underlying presence of such contingency in shaping social affairs. Randomness is by definition not amenable to analysis for patterns.[406] Only theories of IR that abstract contingency entirely out of their analyses of world politics fail to view this fundamental presence of

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401 Ball (1985), 44
402 Evangelista (1999)
403 Zubok (2003)
404 Brown (2004), 51
405 Breslauer and Lebow (2004)
406 Carr, 31

unpredictability in daily human affairs as significant for causal analysis. Whilst no counterfactual can definitively demonstrate whether or not a particular agent was of causal importance in an event, they all raise profound questions concerning the relevance of individuals in influencing reality.

Breslauer and Lebow's counterfactual involves reconstructing the entirety of the 1980s and scrutinising whether the same policy outcomes would have occurred under Reagan's Vice-President, George H. W. Bush. This analysis sheds light on Reagan's influence as an agent on the end of the Cold War. Breslauer and Lebow argue, on grounds of Bush's "ambivalence, moderate Republicanism, and lesser popularity" that he would likely have embarked on a "less sweeping strategy of confrontation, less extreme rhetoric ('evil empire') and policies (Star Wars)." As such, Bush would have been less confrontational in his policy choices than President Reagan, particularly in the face of tacit Soviet conciliatory gestures by Andropov in 1982 and the increasing intensity of the West European peace movement in response to the upcoming deployment of American Pershing II missiles.[407] Reagan's choice of strategy was idiosyncratic, they maintain: "Reagan dug in his heels in the face of all these obstacles and held out for maximal Soviet concessions." Moreover, "the temper of American politics, as well as Bush's personality […] probably would have ruled out a substantially conciliatory US response to Soviet gestures [under Gorbachev]." Still, according to Breslauer and Lebow's counterfactual, Bush's marginally more mollifying course could have produced large-scale ramifications down the line: "The lesser resolve and greater insecurity of a George Bush or Walter Mondale might have made it less attractive tactically and more difficult politically for Gorbachev to justify far-reaching concessions."[408] Breslauer and Lebow provide a cognitive schema of sorts on President Reagan, contending that his "ignorance of […] [and] much less complex cognitive schemas about the Soviet Union" enabled his "dramatic about-face" in going from regarding the USSR as an 'evil empire' to striking far-reaching security and arms agreements within the span of a few years.

Breslauer and Lebow's counterfactual extrapolation of someone as deeply engrained in the fabric of history as President Reagan primarily serves to illustrate the underlying contingency of events in the 1980s (in that a minor

[407] Breslauer and Lebow (2004), 183-184
[408] Ibid

rewrite of historical events – Reagan's death – would have fundamentally altered political outcomes). Their minimal rewrite of history offers one way to try and measure the role of leadership in world politics. Another is to look at the policy ruptures introduced when a leader selects a policy. Leaders' choices provide a 'natural' counterfactual in the form of alternative decisions considered but not taken. Following from the theoretic baseline that causation operates on all three levels of analysis in a complex system, one way 'into' complexity is at the level of leadership. In the complex adaptive system that is the realm of international affairs, leaders are critical nodes, acting as choice-producing units. My argument is not that agents are the only critical nodes, but that they form a set of causal linchpins.

Counterfactuals, in the first instance, distinguish between incidental and coincidental events. For example, it is hard to conceive of Soviet retrenchment in the absence of economic weakness, so it can broadly be surmised that the decline in material power of the USSR contributed to the end of the Cold War, which is what realists argue. Similarly, in the absence of breakthroughs in expanding the liberal-institutional order, such as the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Force treaty, the normalisation of East-West relations is much harder to imagine – again, then, it can be surmised that liberal processes causally contributed to the end of the Cold War. Likewise, the peaceful revolutions of 1989 would not have occurred without the rise of a transnational epistemic community in Europe in the 1970s and the resulting normative-ideational evolution it brought about, as per constructivist accounts. Such broad counterfactuals establish expansive causal drivers, but on their own do not tell us how various incidental causal dynamics relate to each other. Similarly, different theories of IR make good sense of specific developments in the 80s in isolation. The economic picture favoured Soviet retrenchment (realists). Norm evolution occurred thanks to Gorbachev (constructivists). Leadership co-operation allowed for arms control agreements (liberals). It is when these developments are lined up concurrently that complexity arises. The causal interactions among IR theories can and should be made better sense of. Complexity theory is not a solution to all of IR's epistemological problems: it is a supplementary means of investigating the more granular operational features of the international system. In combination with counterfactual analysis, complexity theory can help shed light on the meta-theoretical linkages between IR's various approaches.

What follows is, to all intents and purposes, an attempt to 'predict the past': studying how events have unfolded versus how they could have unfolded, so as to better differentiate between essential and incidental causes. Counterfactuals suggest causal pathways. It is important to remember that counterfactuals do not imply inherent contingency: they can equally reveal an event to be overdetermined. By helping to distinguish between the contingent and the preordained, counterfactuals generate knowledge about causes. After all, the credibility of any postulated cause rests on how convincing its counterfactual inverse is.

A note on methodology

History is non-repeatable, so reverse-engineering it is enormously challenging.[409] Nonetheless, if a counterfactual analysis contributes to understanding of the general properties of the phenomenon under study (in this case, how structures, agents and chance interacted to bring about systemic change in the 1980s), and points out the limits of what can't be known, the exercise is a knowledge-generating one. My theoretical contribution (I hope) is to go beyond existing approaches and advance our knowledge of how different causal effects interact. The study examines events in the 1980s as they were perceived and shaped by leaders. In an effort to reconstruct events as they were seen at the time I interviewed a number of policymakers from the Reagan and Bush Administrations who were involved in the end of the Cold War.[410] This was also driven partly by a desire to safeguard the plausibility of the counterfactual scenarios I construct, by benchmarking them against what eyewitnesses deem to have been possible and realistic. I also consulted archival material, in order to back my accounts of the policies and strategies advocated by Reagan and Bush's cabinets with primary source material. In addition, the analysis relies on secondary literature and autobiographical accounts from policymakers of the time. The 1980s are narrated sequentially, embellished by counterfactual

[409] Taleb likens the process to back-tracing a puddle left by a molten ice cube to its original form. When looking at an ice cube on a table, we can confidently predict that it will turn into a puddle of water, and precisely compute the process. When looking at a puddle of water, even with the knowledge that this used to be an ice cube, the process of reconstructing the shape of the ice cube and its disintegration is immensely complex, if not impossible. (2007), 195-198

[410] A list of interviewees is provided at the beginning of the bibliography.

analyses that tease out interactive causal links between the various driving factors of US-Soviet relations in the decade. Policy decisions, personnel appointments and bilateral negotiations are presented along with an analysis that attempts to weave together the complex and dense causal dynamics of the era.

CHAPTER THREE

CARTER, REAGAN, AND THE BEGINNING OF THE END

Reagan really wasn't paying that much attention to Soviet affairs in the first two years. As a matter of fact, I think he didn't fully grasp how his policies were coming across. He would tend to disengage if he felt nothing was going to happen.
Jack F. Matlock

This chapter describes the features of complexity at the end of the 1970s that established the context within which US and Soviet leaders acted in the 1980s.

The deterioration in US-Soviet relations after 1979 was characterised by **non-linearity**: the Soviet decision to deploy a new class of intercontinental ballistic nuclear missile prompted renewed security fears in the West; concurrently, an avoidable domestic political manoeuvre – the Cuban Brigade crisis – in the US unintentionally convinced the Soviets that SALT II, the last remaining arms control pillar of détente, would not be ratified. This contributed to the Soviet decision to invade Afghanistan in 1979. Minor rewrites could have precluded this outcome.

The **interaction** of US political leaders with the complex international context of 1980 is studied through the policy continuities and discontinuities between Presidents Carter and Reagan. Policy shifts from Carter to Reagan are examined counterfactually, providing evidence that Reagan introduced certain original, idiosyncratic foreign policy positions.

The contingent non/emergence of events and the limits of leadership are discussed in terms of the Soviet non-invasion of Poland in 1980. Had the USSR not invaded Afghanistan, ample resources would have been available

to intervene in the Polish political crisis. This would have presented any incoming US President with an international crisis that would have significantly altered the policy context of the 1980s, with unforeseeable outcomes.

Non-linearity: SALT II, Cuba, and Afghanistan

Seemingly unrelated events in complex systems can have large-scale, unanticipated consequences. Rosenau calls this feature of complexity 'the power of small events'.[411] Decision-makers sometimes influence international affairs inadvertently through their contingent behaviour, bringing about outcomes through non-purposeful choices. A good example thereof is the curious tale of the Cuban Brigade Affair and the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. A few minor rewrites of entirely contingent choices could have substantially altered the Soviet strategic picture in the run up to the invasion of Afghanistan. This ties into the notion that in complex systems, decisions and conditions in one area of the system can causally influence future outcomes elsewhere in a system in a manner disproportionate to the seeming significance of events at the time. If an event is brought about by a confluence of many different causes, then the fewer such causes need to be removed to prevent the event, the more contingent it is.[412] In the run-up to contingent events, a multiverse of pathways present themselves; history could unfold differently along each of these. Outcomes brought about by such non-linear confluences are not straightforward causal affairs. This poses a problem for theories that attempt to draw linear causal connections between events. The indirect and convoluted links between the Cuban Brigade Affair and the invasion of Afghanistan underline this point.

At the end of the 1970s, the Soviet Politburo's main benchmark to measure US engagement was the Carter Administration's handling of the Strategic Arms Limitations Treaty 2 (SALT II) ratification process.[413] SALT II was a US-Soviet arms control treaty signed by Carter and Brezhnev in the spring of 1979. Carter formally submitted it to the Senate for consideration in

411 See Rosenau (1998)

412 By extension, the more causes need to be removed to prevent said event, the more redundant it is. For a more elaborate discussion of this point see Lebow (2000)

413 See Savranskaya and Welch (1994), especially comments by Dobrynin (95) and Gelb (148). Caldwell sums it up: "SALT, and the broader Soviet-American relationship, were intertwined like the strands of a rope." (214)

June. During the summer months, a political storm in a teacup brewed in the US: the Cuban Brigade 'crisis.' Though on the face of it unrelated to SALT, a confluence of unfortunate timing, miscommunication, and misguided judgment meant that the issue eventually assumed an urgency wholly disproportionate to its actual relevance, and in the process helped derail the ratification of SALT II, which accidentally removed a key barrier to the Soviet decision to invade Afghanistan.

Throughout 1979 Senator Richard Stone, a Florida Democrat threatened by a Republican bid for his seat, used his position on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to press for intelligence on Cuban military affairs. At a hearing of the committee in July, Stone asked Secretary of Defence Harold Brown and CIA Director Stansfield Turner to comment on reports that a Soviet brigade of combat troops had recently arrived in Cuba. Brown and Turner responded that there was no new information on Soviet activities in Cuba – a factually correct statement, as the brigade in question had been stationed there since 1962 to train and provide support to Cuban forces.[414] Idaho Senator Frank Church, who chaired the hearing, made a public statement afterward confirming that the situation in Cuba remained unchanged. At the same time, news about an apparent Soviet military build-up in Cuba was leaked to the press.[415] By July 20, ABC news reported "a brigade of Soviet troops, possibly as many as six-thousand combat-ready men, has been moved to Cuba in recent weeks."[416] Senator Stone wrote a letter to President Carter four days later enquiring about the unit in Cuba and received a reply on from Cyrus Vance, the Secretary of State, again reiterating what Turner and Brown said to the Foreign Relations Committee. Vance cleared his letter with the White House, the Department of Defense, and CIA. But on August 22, the National Foreign Assessment centre issued a co-ordinated intelligence finding based on fresh satellite imagery that confirmed the presence of a Soviet combat brigade consisting of about 2,600 men – a finding falsely presented as new. Senator Church's statement of July now seemed to be contradicted. Church was under political pressure from a Republican Political Action Committee targeting his seat, which was

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414 See statements by Wayne Smith, Director of Cuban Affairs Bureau at the State Department in Savranskaya and Welch (1994), 157-160

415 One such leaker was through John Carbaugh, an aide to hardline Senator Jesse Helms. See Savranskaya and Welch (1994), 166

416 Ibid

airing a TV commercial that showed Church smoking a cigar with Fidel Castro on a recent trip to Havana.[417] Church, advised that the 'new' intelligence 'finding' was due to be published in the media imminently, decided to pre-emptively leak the news and announced the presence of the brigade live on television, stating "there is no likelihood whatever that the Senate would ratify the SALT II Treaty as long as Russian combat troops remain stationed in Cuba."[418] This press conference took on Saturday, a day after a phone-call between Senator Church and Cyrus Vance, in which Church informed Vance of his intention to make a statement on the matter. Secretary Vance advised the Senator not to blow the affair out of proportion.[419] Senator Church had also tried to reach President Carter by phone but was told by the White House operator that Carter was in Georgia and unavailable throughout the weekend.[420]

The Soviets interpreted this turn of events as a deliberate effort by Carter to torpedo SALT II before the ratification process had even begun. It took a week for the US intelligence community to confirm that the Soviet brigade was not new but stationed there for almost 20 years. When Vance explained to Anatoly Dobrynin, the Soviet Ambassador, how the brigade affair came about, Dobrynin shook his head in disbelief and exclaimed, "How am I ever going to persuade the people back at home that this is what happened? They'll never believe me."[421] Alexander Bessmertnykh, Counsellor at the Soviet Embassy, described the affair as "so artificial it was almost like an attempt to sabotage the SALT treaty," while Dobrynin later commented, "We simply could not believe the story. We could not believe it!

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[417] Duffy (1983), 78

[418] Savranskaya and Welch (1992), 162. Reported on the front page of the Washington Post, 6 September 1979; see Shoultz (2009), 669

[419] Vance responded to Church's question ('Would you mind if I made a statement on the brigade?') with his trademark gentlemanly, but indirect form of communication: "Well, Senator, that would not be at all helpful, but of course the decision is up to you. I know you'll use your best judgment in what you say." Savranskaya and Welch, 157

[420] Les Denend, then a staff member on the NSC, has the following to say about this: "The Cuban Brigade was a summer event […] so nobody was there. Everybody takes vacation, and the first team is not there […] 1979 wasn't like it is today. There was no e-mail, there were no cell phones, there was no messaging […] It was somebody in the White House Situation Room, who worked for me, who [was] going through the old material [and] found the press release from 1962 that said that a Brigade would remain. […] The damage was done. […] [The US Government] had agreed to the situation that Church was [now] outraged about." Personal interview with Les Denend.

[421] Testimony by Marshall Shulman, Special Advisor to the Secretary of State for Soviet Affairs, in Savranskaya and Welch (1992), 154

It was ridiculous – all this talk about a brigade, quote unquote, that had just arrived in Cuba."[422] An editorial in *Pravda*, a propaganda organ of the Soviet Communist Party, entitled 'Who needed this and why?' asked how something that had been a non-issue for 17 years could all of a sudden threaten to derail SALT II, the crown jewel of the arms control process.[423] Moscow refused to remove or modify their brigade in Cuba, treating the issue as a wilful and clumsy attempt by the Carter Administration to extract concessions from them after the treaty had already been signed. By mid-September, Vance admitted the U.S. had no right to demand that the troops be removed, under understandings signed in 1964 and 1970 with the Soviet government about the nature of relations between the USSR and Cuba.[424] The affair thus not only failed to elicit a change in Soviet behaviour, but also undermined the credibility of the Carter Administration. Carter used a televised address to the nation on October 1 1979 to announce that "the presence of Soviet combat troops in Cuba is of serious concern to us," but seeing as the brigade would not be moved, could do no more than announce a few toothless unilateral steps to increase US monitoring of Soviet behaviour in the Caribbean region.[425]

The timing of this unforeseeable turn of events was crucial to its subsequent impact. Until the brigade issue rose to the fore, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had undertaken a number of weeks' worth of detailed hearings on SALT II, and "the prospects for its passage looked at least equitable."[426] However, in light of the 'new' intelligence about Soviet behaviour in Cuba, Frank Church – the committee chairman – decided to link further hearings to the outcome of the brigade affair. This meant that the Committee only ended up concluding its hearings by November. By the time it was finally tabled for debate in the Senate, the invasion of Afghanistan had already taken place, which effectively 'killed' SALT II.

The various contingencies involved in the entire debacle must not be underestimated: when Senator Church received the supposedly novel but entirely misleading intelligence about the Soviet brigade late in August 1979, some of the key members of the Carter Administration were on holiday and

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422 See statements by Alexander Bessmertnykh and Anatoly Dobrynin, in Savranskaya and Welch (1992), 150-151

423 Duffy, 80

424 Ibid, 72

425 Carter (1979)

426 Duffy, 81

could not be reached in a timely fashion for non-emergency matters, including National Security Advisor Brzezinski and President Carter.[427] Senator Church, by contrast, was campaigning in Idaho, feeling the heat regarding his 'soft' approach to foreign policy. When Church reached Secretary of State Vance before his ill-fated public announcement regarding the brigade, Vance failed to urge Church strongly enough not to go public. In the event, Church's manoeuvring damaged SALT II's prospects before it even made it to the Senate floor. For example, Senator Russell Long, a senior figure in the Senate, announced on September 12 that he was going to change his vote and reject SALT II, stating that 'Soviet bad faith,' as demonstrated by the brigade in Cuba, made this necessary.[428] The fact that Church, during the August 27 press conference, linked the ratification of SALT to the departure of the brigade boxed in the Administration's response, depriving it of an opportunity to craft a face-saving response. The leak-driven nature of the entire affair gave it a nefarious quality in the eyes of the Soviets.[429] As Vance remarked subsequently, the brigade affair "was a real blow that set us back substantially."[430]

This seemingly minor episode brought about large-scale ramifications down the line. The Carter Administration presented itself in confusion over the brigade issue, handling it in a contradictory manner and reacting with bluster that later turned out to be hollow when it became clear that the brigade could not be removed. The impression this made on the Soviets was that Carter was an unreliable partner who was willing to risk SALT II ratification over an issue that had in effect been made up. Moreover, it signalled that Carter's Administration was inconsistent and confused over its aims regarding the US-Soviet relationship, at a time when détente was already fraying. All this occurred *before* the invasion of Afghanistan. The brigade 'crisis' removed any remaining external reasons for the Soviets not to invade: SALT II was now dead-in-the-water in the eyes of the Soviets, even if it wasn't to Carter. Viktor Komplektov, Head of the US Department at the Soviet Foreign Ministry at the time, later noted, "SALT was finished before

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[427] Interview with Les Denend. Jimmy Carter was on the paddle wheeler Delta Queen on the Mississippi and Brzezinski holidaying in Vermont. See Savranskaya and Welch (1992), 168

[428] This again made front-page news on the Washington Post, September 13, 1979; see Shoultz, 670

[429] A point made by Robert Pastor, Director of Latin American Affairs on Carter's National Security Council. See Savranskaya and Welch (1992), 145

[430] Cited in Scheer, 226

Afghanistan […] to us [ratification] was impossible, no matter what [Carter] did." This despite the fact that Carter's aim to ratify SALT II remained unchanged: "It is important to understand that Carter was determined to go ahead with SALT even as he was making is October 1 speech."[431] A more elegant resolution of the Cuban brigade issue would have left the prospects of SALT II intact as it began its passage through the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. This could have altered the Soviet risk calculus in the run-up to the invasion of Afghanistan. Instead, after the public statements made by Senator Church and President Carter during the Brigade affair – statements that seemed bewildering in the eyes of the Soviets – the Politburo did not pay much attention to the Carter Administration's potential response to a Soviet invasion of Afghanistan: Bessmertnykh recalls, "Gromyko [the Soviet Foreign Minister] was an experienced man. He knew that the United States would react strongly, as Carter did. But all the same, I think they felt that they would survive it."[432] This was compounded by the fact that the Carter Administration failed to explicitly signal to the Soviets what repercussions awaited in the event of an invasion. The American reaction to any invasion could have been a more potent concern for the Politburo as it mulled whether to send troops into Afghanistan:

> "By not repeatedly warning against direct Soviet military intervention as the Soviet stake in Afghanistan grew, the Carter administration left the erroneous impression that what happened in Afghanistan was of no great importance to the United States."[433]

By August 1979, increasing Soviet involvement in the political affairs of Afghanistan had prompted speculation that a military engagement might be in the offing. This led National Security Advisor Brzezinski to give a speech in which he stated that after the US exhibited prudence with regard to Iran, others were expected to "abstain from intervention and from efforts to impose alien doctrines on a deeply religious and nationally conscious people."[434] Brzezinski did not explicitly mention either the USSR or Afghanistan, but the New York Times titled its report of speech, "US

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[431] Robert Pastor in Savranskaya and Welch (1992), 150
[432] Cited in n Wohlforth (1996), 128
[433] Matlock (2007), 32
[434] See MacEachin (2002)

Indirectly Pressing Russians to Halt Afghanistan Intervention." [435] By September 6, the New York Times, citing diplomatic sources, reported that the Soviets' inability to resolve the political turmoil in Afghanistan was pushing them toward direct military intervention. Clearly, the possibility of a Soviet incursion was not considered a complete non sequitur. But a US Inter-Intelligence Memorandum (IIM) on September 28, after taking a wide range of sources and analyses into consideration, concluded (with no dissenting opinion) that on balance, the cost of a Soviet invasion would outweigh its potential benefits.[436] The IIM was right that such a decision could not be considered 'rational', but this didn't prevent the Soviets from invading. Indeed the choice to invade Afghanistan illustrates how agency – in this case, poor Soviet decision-making – can upset apparently sound predictions such as the September 28 IIM.

How did the US' intelligence agencies arrive at their verdict that the Soviets would not invade? This is where the Cuban Brigade affair becomes important again. The uproar it left in its wake and the involvement of key Administration members convinced the Soviets that Carter was acting in bad faith over SALT II. The suspension of the treaty's discussion in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee either signalled that the Americans wanted to extract further concessions, or were not interested at all in ratification. Either way, to the Soviets the Cuban Brigade affair spelled the end of SALT II. And this was of great consequence, particularly regarding the September IIM. The Memorandum relied on "a senior Soviet political counselor in Kabul, Vasily Safronchuk, [informing] the US chargé [in Kabul] on 24 June that the USSR had no intention of sending combat troops to Afghanistan. He pointed to the harm such a move would do to the SALT II Treaty, and to the USSR's political position worldwide."[437] That is the reason why "intelligence assessments at the time continued to portray the insertion of Soviet combat forces as unlikely, although it was not ruled out."[438] Whereas to Carter and Vance, SALT II was still salvageable until the invasion of Afghanistan, in actual fact the Cuban Brigade Affair altered Soviet perceptions of the Carter

[435] See Freedman, 98

[436] Ibid. See also Central Intelligence Agency. (1979)

[437] CIA (1979a), 9; and CIA (1980), 14-15. The latter cites a 'pro and con' invasion assessment disseminated in 16 June 1979.

[438] MacEachin (2002a)

Administration to the point that ratification was no longer seen as feasible. [439] Valentin Varennikov, Deputy Minister of Defense and Chief of Ground Forces in the Soviet General Staff at the time of the invasion, recounts that the main motive for the invasion of Afghanistan were the security interests of the USSR, which shifted after Moscow perceived the US to have unilaterally frozen the process of ratifying SALT II.[440] Anatoly Dobrynin is clear about this: "Brezhnev was very glad to have signed the [SALT II] treaty, but [events like] the Cuban brigade affair signalled major problems in our relations" and eventually, "it became very clear that there would be no SALT."[441] This might of course be a post-hoc rationalisation by Dobrynin. But the fact is that the decision to invade Afghanistan was made last minute in December of 1979.[442] The implication is that the successful ratification of SALT could have given the Soviets a reason not to jeopardise their relations with the US. Dobrynin phrased it starkly: "By the end of the Carter administration, there was very little left on our bilateral agenda. There was really only one small I link – the SALT talks – which we tried to maintain as a bridge between us. But when it failed, we had nothing left."[443]

Simply put, the artificial Cuban Brigade crisis removed the Politburo's concerns over the effects the Soviet invasion would have on détente. The IIM of September 28 argued that the costs to the Soviets of invading Afghanistan were greater than the benefits – but "the Soviet leadership had long written off what the United States saw as the costs of Soviet intervention. Soviet leaders were pessimistic about the prospects of SALT II and improved trade before they decided to send troops to Afghanistan. They consequently did not consider these as costs."[444] It is worth bearing in mind that when Nur Mohammed Taraki, the Communist-leaning President of Afghanistan, requested Soviet troops to enter his country in March 1979 to help quell political unrest, the Politburo rejected this because it would wreck preparations for the Brezhnev-Carter summit and threaten SALT II.[445] At a

[439] Savranskaya and Welch (1992), 162
[440] See Westad (1996), 75
[441] Ibid, 109
[442] Ibid, 153
[443] Ibid, 221
[444] Lebow and Stein (1993), 104. Lebow and Stein's assessment of Soviet leaders' perspectives is based on and interview of Soviet leaders by Gary Sick in 1988 and one of the author's subsequent personal communications with Sick in March 1988. See also Caldwell (1991)
[445] Dobrynin, 435

Politburo meeting on 19 March, Foreign Minister Gromyko warned of the ramifications of a Soviet intervention on the superpower relationship: "We would largely be throwing away everything we achieved with such difficulty, particularly détente; the SALT II negotiations would fly by the wayside."[446] Nine months later, the Soviet calculus had shifted, as SALT II – so the Soviets believed – had been wrecked by the Carter Administration, though in truth it had been undermined by the Cuban Brigade affair.

A combination of timing, contingencies and unintended consequences conspired to suffocate SALT II by the autumn of 1979, thereby strengthening Soviet incentives to intervene militarily in Afghanistan whilst simultaneously blinding the Carter Administration to this. The outcome was avoidable. And it was not one that was planned, or even favoured, by either the US or the Soviets. The implications of the combined micro-decisions in these small-scale contexts – which are difficult to incorporate into a modelised or macro-theoretical account of world politics – are profound. None of the agents involved at the time appreciated or could foresee the eventual consequences of the episode. As Robert Pastor, Director of Latin American Affairs on Carter's NSC, explains, "Though the Carter Administration may have appeared to some to be coming apart at that moment, the main players were not consciously self-destructive."[447] Blight describes the Cuban Brigade affair as "intriguing, multidimensional, full of peculiar interactions between US domestic politics and the foreign policies of the US and Soviet Union toward one another."[448] The Soviet decision to send troops into Afghanistan was contingent, taken by a small group of Politburo bigwigs, essentially Ustinov, Gromyko and Andropov, in consultation with Brezhnev. Anatoly Chernyaev, then Deputy Head of the International Department of the Central Committee, reports he was informed by Kornienko, the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, "that the initiator of intervention was Gromyko who was enthusiastically supported by Ustinov."[449] They had rejected a request for

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[446] Cited in Wilson, 45

[447] Pastor in Savranskaya and Welch (1992), 167

[448] Ibid, 168

[449] Brown (1996), 54. Alexander Bessmertnykh, who was to become Foreign Minister in 1990, comments: "To me it was always a mystery why Gromyko, who was very cautious in foreign policy, would support the introduction of troops into Afghanistan when […] it was a conventional wisdom [sic] that Afghanistan is an area which should not be invaded." Bessmertnykh speculates that Gromyko was not the driving force behind the decision, but rather went along with Defense Minister Ustinov and KGB head Andropov, whose reasoning was ideological: they feared the loss of a socialist country at the Soviet Union's

'fraternal assistance' from Kabul a mere eight months earlier. Relations with the US soured in the meantime, influenced by the Cuban Brigade crisis and its negative consequence for the passage of SALT II. By the end of 1979, the group of Soviet leaders around Brezhnev reversed their opinion and decided to launch the invasion of Afghanistan.

The episode shows how convoluted and indirect micro-causal processes can escalate in a complex system and end up bringing about dramatic shifts. Causality can flow from small to large in international relations, an empirical finding that macro-theorists need to take into account. Had the Cuban Brigade story been nipped in the bud, and SALT II ratification proceeded as planned, the USSR would have been much less likely to invade Afghanistan – by all accounts a peculiar decision with a weak strategic rationale – and a significant source of trouble for the Soviets in the coming decade could have been avoided. Marshal Akhromeyev, who became Chief of the General Staff in 1984, has remarked on several occasions that the Soviet military was wary of going invading Afghanistan.[450] The invasion of Afghanistan was resource-intensive, making military intervention in Poland in 1980/81 much costlier. Had the Afghan operation not taken place, the Politburo could have pursued a more aggressive line in dealing with political unrest in Eastern Europe, in keeping with the pre-Afghanistan Soviet policy of intervening only inside Warsaw Pact states. Any such third Warsaw Pact intervention, following Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, would have caused significant turbulence in Europe, producing an entirely different geopolitical context in the 1980s. It was thus a strange kind of luck that the USSR dealt itself a self-inflicted blow by invading Afghanistan in 1979, in that it was influenced unintentionally by foreign policy blundering in Washington. Such is the nature of non-linearity in international affairs.

The invasion of Afghanistan rests at the capricious end of the order-chaos spectrum. It was a foolish decision by Soviet leaders, unduly influenced by the Cuban Brigade Crisis. Had the invasion not gone ahead, a significant source of trouble for the Soviets in the coming decade could have been avoided. More resources would have been available to deal with the subsequent turmoil in Poland (discussed at the end of this chapter on page

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Southern border. Chernyaev, on the other hand, believes the ideological justification was a post-hoc effort to rationalise a fundamentally 'absurd' and 'crazy' decision. In Wohlforth (1996), 125; 128; 136

[450] Wohlforth (1996), 127

139): the Soviets sent more than 80,000 troops to Afghanistan within six months of the invasion and ended up committing hundreds of thousands of soldiers to the conflict.[451] In the 1980s the USSR confronted mounted economic and political problems in the Eastern bloc. These troubles meant that the Soviet hold over Eastern Europe could have faded regardless of whether the Afghan intervention had gone ahead or not: but invading Afghanistan certainly didn't strengthen the Soviet hand when dealing with unrest in its own front yard. By 1981, "the Soviets could ill afford to take on the new costs that would come with a military occupation of Poland [and] the almost certain imposition of far more stringent Western penalties."[452]

Sketching out parameters of leadership interaction: Carter vs. Reagan

Did Ronald Reagan pursue an original 'Soviet strategy', and if so, did this influence the end of the Cold War? Wilson cautions against the tempting assumption that outcomes favourable to US foreign policy goals are the direct product of presidential leadership. He sees such a stance as failing to do justice to the complexity of international politics: "Ascribing important events to wise decisions laid out in a clear set of directives might be more comforting to historians as they seek to find coherence amidst change, but such interpretations do not explain the swift and peaceful end of the Cold War."[453] Wilson locates the idea that grand strategy ended the Cold War in the camp of the 'Reagan victory school', a set of triumphalist accounts arguing (with varying emphases) that a combination of Reagan's rhetorical offensive, rejection of détente, military build-up and uncompromising anti-Communism pushed the Soviet Union to the brink of collapse.[454] Wilson's own explanation proceeds from a systemic base: the stage for a final showdown between East and West was set by the revitalisation of capitalism in the 1980s in the face of Communist stagnation. Paul Volcker raised interest rates to tackle stagflation, Reagan's supply-side reforms stimulated the US economy, and the information technology revolution gave the Western world a productivity boost that the USSR could not keep up with. In this context Gorbachev emerged as the key agent of change, determined to reform the

[451] Wilson, 47; see also Kalinovsky (2011)
[452] MacEachin (2002b), 241
[453] Wilson, 198
[454] See footnote 395

struggling Communist system after defusing tensions in the international arena. What followed, in Wilson's interpretation, was an improvised series of steps undertaken by four key actors – Ronald Reagan, his Secretary of State George Shultz, Mikhail Gorbachev and George Bush – which shaped the outcome of the Cold War. Economics set the stage but did not write the script or act out the play: leaders determined the nature of the end of the Cold War.

Wilson insists that US leaders did not rely on some kind of strategic blueprint that wound down the Cold War. Brands, in contrast, discerns a deliberate and innovative Soviet strategy on the part of the Reagan administration, summing it up as 'coercive diplomacy' (a term that echoes Reagan's famous 'peace through strength' dictum).[455] From the outset of his Presidency, Reagan undertook a deliberate, concerted arms build-up, accompanied by a more assertive military posture.[456] This was an intended consequence of Reagan's rejection of détente, the doctrine that governed America's policy towards the Soviets since the Nixon Administration. The Office of the Historian of the US Department of State summarises the period of détente as follows:

> "Between the late 1960s and the late 1970s, there was a thawing of the ongoing Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. This détente took several forms, including increased discussion on arms control. Although the decade began with vast improvements in bilateral relations, by the end of the decade events had brought the two superpowers back to the brink of confrontation."[457]

Détente was born of the post-Vietnam age. In addition to the political backlash the war produced in the US, the country experienced economic difficulties in the 1970s. The OPEC oil embargo of 1973 led to the phenomenon of stagflation in Western economies: a hitherto unknown mixture of high inflation rates combined with a stagnant economy. In the US, the 'misery index', a measure combining unemployment and inflation

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[455] Brands (2014), 123; on the theory of coercive diplomacy see George (1991); Art and Cronin (2003)

[456] For instance, Reagan approved clandestine Navy and Air Force missions that probed the Soviet defence perimeter. See Wilson, 76

[457] Department of State (2010)

developed in the 1970s – this fact is itself a suggestive reflection of public concern over these metrics – averaged 14% between 1970 and 1980, double what it was in the decade prior.[458] The US' economic difficulties affected its capacity to confront the Soviets abroad. After the colossal price paid in American blood and treasure in Vietnam, anti-military sentiment was strong. Economic difficulties and the Vietnam drawdown led defence outlays to fall by one third between 1968 and 1976.[459] Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger responded to the US' weakened international position by embarking on a course of de-escalation with the USSR through arms settlements. This ushered in the era of détente, seen as a strategic solution to improve Cold War relations during a time when the US was less capable of pursuing direct military competition with the Soviets.

Reagan made this a feature of the 1976 presidential campaign: his major foreign policy theme was that détente, far from creating a more stable superpower relationship, was instead a gateway to Soviet military superiority.[460] Reagan's proposed remedial strategy consisted of reasserting American power, which he believed to have declined. In Reagan's view (and that of a vocal section of the American foreign policy establishment, embodied by organisations such as the Committee on the Present Danger), détente not only failed to bring about stability in East-West relations, it had in fact prompted a series of Soviet expansionist moves in the Third World.[461] Instead of a more accommodating foreign policy, what was required for the US to emerge from its post-Vietnam slump was a charismatic leader who could re-inspire the public's confidence. Since the American system would in the long run outperform the Soviet model, Reagan's case went, the country could afford to engage in a renewed bout of the arms race that aimed to outspend the USSR.[462] Reagan argued in 1980 that the US negotiated the SALT II treaty from a position of weakness and announced, "we are going about the business of building up our defense capability pending an agreement by both sides to limit various kinds of weapons."[463] That said, already in 1980 Reagan made it clear that coercion was not an end in itself: "I have repeatedly stated that I would be willing to negotiate an honest,

458 Mankiw (2010)
459 Sigal (1999)
460 See Garthoff (1985); Hanhimaki (2012)
461 See FitzGerald (2000), particularly chapter 3
462 See Perlstein (2014); Skinner et al, 770
463 Skinner et al, 787

verifiable reduction in nuclear weapons by both our countries to the point that neither of us represented a threat to each other."[464] A confrontational stance in order to up the ante on the Soviets, combined with arms control negotiations as a concurrent pathway toward defusing tensions in the long term: this sums up Brands' analysis of Reagan's 'coercive diplomacy' strategy.

The evidence suggests that Brands accurately assesses the origins and overall thrust of US policy toward the Soviet Union in the 1980s. At the same time, he overstates the case that this was exclusively the product of the Reagan Administration. The political backlash against détente began after it became apparent that the Soviets did not intend to play by the same détente rulebook as the West.[465] This changed the foreign policy context for all political actors in the US. Indeed, there is an argument to be made that, far from spearheading a turnaround in the American public mood away from liberalism toward conservatism, Ronald Reagan was the product of a gestalt switch that preceded him:

> "Reagan's real achievement was to take advantage of a transformation that predated him. […] Conservative attitudes peaked, and liberal attitudes plateaued, in the late 1970s […] Reagan was the beneficiary of these trends, rather than their instigator."[466]

Martin Anderson, one of Reagan's domestic policy advisers, writes:

> "What has been called the Reagan revolution is not completely, or even mostly, due to Ronald Reagan. He was an extremely important contributor to the intellectual and political movement that swept him to the presidency in 1980. He gave that movement focus and leadership. But Reagan did not give it life."[467]

Ronald Reagan took advantage of the fact that by the end of his first term, Carter was seen as a weak foreign policy President who lacked the toughness to deal with a threatening international environment exemplified by the Soviet move into Afghanistan. Carter was vocal in his outrage and quickly

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[464] Reagan (1980)
[465] Craig and Logevall (2009), 287-288
[466] Klein (2012)
[467] Anderson (1990), 7

imposed sanctions on the Soviet Union, but coming so shortly after the 'loss' of Iran, the invasion of Afghanistan cemented his image in the public eye as an impotent defender of America's interests abroad.[468]

On the issue of rearmament, too, Reagan picked up where the outgoing Carter Presidency left things off; it was Carter's final budget that substantially increased US military outlays, beginning a process that either incoming Administration would likely have continued.[469] Most importantly, a pronounced and probably terminal weakening of the forces that drove détente occurred at the end of the Carter presidency, not the start of the Reagan era. By 1980, Carter began to respond angrily to increased Soviet adventurism in the Third World, prompted by the invasion of Afghanistan, but also Moscow's decision to deploy a new generation of intermediate ballistic missiles, the SS-20, which threatened Western Europe. Robert Gates, who served both Carter and Reagan, makes the point that such moves were going to elicit a US response regardless of who was in power: "Carter in the end had a very tough policy behind the scenes on the Soviets. I believe, to a degree that both the Republicans and Democrats would probably find objectionable, that there was in fact a good deal of continuity between Carter and Reagan."[470]

The connections and dissimilarities between Reagan and Carter that Gates alludes to are important: they illustrate how US strategy towards the Soviet Union was a function of both relatively permanent security interests on the one hand and an expression of the differing personal convictions of Presidents on the other. In fact, the pressures of the international system and the idiosyncrasies of Presidents are related: the latter can give rise to the former. Robert Gates cites the example of President Ford, who signed the 1975 Helsinki Final Act "against the tremendous opposition of conservatives in this country who believed he was signing up to the Yalta Accords."[471] The Helsinki Declaration attempted to place relations between the Communist bloc and the West on a more stable footing. It recognised the inviolability of the borders of all the signatories (in a sense legitimating the Soviet

[468] See Brands (1994), pp. 148, 164

[469] Carter's 1980 budget forecast that military spending would rise to 5.7% of GDP by 1985, the actual figure of that year of 6.2% suggests the Reagan Administration increased outlays by an extra $21 billion, hardly a make-or-break sum; see White House Office of Management and Budget (2014).

[470] Cited in Halliday (1995), 62

[471] Ibid, 61

occupation of Eastern Europe), accepted their sovereign equality, and committed all parties to non-interference in each other's domestic affairs. But another protocol of the Declaration pledged the signatories to respect their citizens' human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the principle of sovereign self-determination. In signing Helsinki,

> "Ford created an opening that the peoples in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe were able to use, and everything from Helsinki Watch, the Orlov Group in Moscow to Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia, all of these things, were born out of that Helsinki Accord. So Jimmy Carter didn't begin the human rights policy any more than Reagan began the attack on Soviet legitimacy. There is tremendous continuity here in many respects and one that for political reasons people have chosen to either ignore or pretend it didn't exist."[472]

In an irony of history, it was the Helsinki principle of self-determination through which George Bush ultimately managed to convince Mikhail Gorbachev that a reunified Germany was entitled to join NATO if it so chose (see Chapter 6). More immediately, Ford's decision to disregard conservative misgivings in the US and sign the Helsinki Accords ended up creating a new institutionalised security interest in the international system through which US human rights concerns could be expressed and, in an unintended consequence, helped mobilise civic activists on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

The way that this interest played out was determined by various Presidents' preferred approaches. Both Carter and Reagan publicly attacked the legitimacy of the USSR: "[Reagan's] powerful rhetoric about the Evil Empire frankly played into Jimmy Carter's denial of legitimacy to the Soviet leaders. That was the thing that made them hate Jimmy Carter so much: he was the first President who basically questioned their legitimacy as a government, since Harry Truman. And that's what Reagan continued."[473] Carter publicly raised awareness of the plight of particular dissidents, for instance by inviting exiled Soviet novelist Alexander Solzhenitsyn to the White House.[474] Reagan, although similarly inclined to berate the Soviets on

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[472] Ibid, 64

[473] Ibid, 62

[474] Savranskaya and Welch (1994), 144-155

human rights in public, managed to actually solve one of these cases by trying a different approach. In 1978, a group of religiously persecuted Russians sought refuge in the US Embassy in Moscow. The issue remained unsettled for five years. Reagan brought it up during his first encounter with a top Soviet official – a confidential two-hour conversation with Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin in the winter of 1983 (described in more detail in Chapter Four). George Shultz remembers that the clandestine meeting produced "the first deal we made with the Soviet Union during the Reagan Administration. […] The deal was 'We let [the Pentecostalists] out if you don't crow.'"[475] Reagan kept his word, believing, at least in this case, "front page stories that we are banging away at [the Soviets] on their human rights abuses will get us some cheers from the bleachers but it won't help those who are being abused."[476] In a January 1984 exchange between Shultz and Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, the Secretary of State expressed the President's "admiration for the Soviet Union for taking a decision on the Pentecostal families. The decision had been up to the Soviet Union, and it had been made. It showed progress was possible. With reference to individual issues, President Reagan prefers a process of quiet diplomacy in this area [of human rights]."[477] Arguably, then, a different Presidential approach to the same issue (i.e., pressing for human rights improvements in private rather than in public) produced better results (in that Carter had tried but failed to secure the Pentecostals' release).[478]

Policy continuities between Carter and Reagan reveal pressures on policymaking that are independent of the two men's personal differences, and policies on which they held the same views. We can look to policy continuities and discontinuities between US Presidents and try to link them to outcomes in the international system in an effort to increase our understanding of how leaders interact with other causal dimensions to produce outcomes in the international system. Such analyses must remain aware that the outcomes under scrutiny are ultimately produced through the complex interaction of leadership with other factors that influence for the

[475] Personal interview with George Shultz

[476] Reagan (1985), Dictated Personal Observations, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library (henceforth: RRPL)

[477] Memorandum of Conversation, Shultz and Gromyko (1984), RRPL

[478] The alternative explanation is that the Pentecostal case was solved because the Soviet leadership changed its views on how to best deal with this irritant in the US-Soviet relationship.

outcome under scrutiny. Leaders are part of a wider fabric of causal forces in the international system, so 'ripping' one out counterfactually also tears out additional surrounding texture: agents are not pieces of Lego that can be replaced in isolation. However, it is possible to tease out some of the means through which leaders can exert influence on international affairs.

On interaction effects between leaders and complex systems

Chapter Five discusses at length the positive interactive effects between Reagan and Gorbachev, showing how personal relationships can contribute to the erosion of structural factors such as mistrust. Reagan abhorred nuclear weapons and wanted to transcend deterrence, either through a nuclear missile defence system, or denuclearisation. Gorbachev's relationship with Reagan resulted in substantial arms reduction agreements that no other US-Soviet leadership pairing had managed to produce. Just as it is important to point out the limits of influence leaders have, the ability of leaders in a complex system to redefine certain relationships through specific choices is a valuable causal avenue available to leaders at given times. In the late 1970s, however, the Kremlin's policy choices fed into the security dilemma and produced an anti-Soviet backlash in the United States, which preceded the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 and reduced the scope of US leaders to idiosyncratically improve relations.

Take the US-Soviet arms race, a structural security phenomenon that accompanied the Cold War from 1945 until the 1980s, during which a multitude of leaders of various stripes and colours came and went. The logic of deterrence – nuclear weapons are such potent weapons that the only way to prevent their use is accumulating more than any potential adversary – held sway over a range of actors with different political preferences. Robert Gates, a Deputy CIA Director under Reagan and CIA Director under Bush, makes this point: "One of the areas where conventional wisdom is wrong is that it holds there were significant changes or differences in policy from one President to the other when it came to dealing with the Soviets."[479] This is not to say that there are no idiosyncratic elements influencing arms races: insofar as balance of power judgments are in the eye of the beholder, how agents perceive their counterparties matters greatly by way of influencing

[479] Halliday (1995), 62

policy recommendations.[480] For instance, Gerald Ford's Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Secretary of Defence James Schlesinger had opposing views of the USA's long-term potential vis-à-vis the USSR: Kissinger was a pessimist, Schlesinger an optimist.[481] This led them to hold differing views on détente and the US negotiating strategy for the SALT accords: Schlesinger wanted "to make the terms for a SALT agreement tougher than would Kissinger."[482] It was ultimately up to President Ford to resolve the dispute, which he did in Kissinger's favour. Thus individual analyses by decision-makers could influence the direction of the Cold War's arms race.

The importance of these subjective and inter-subjective elements in policymaking must not be overstated. The security dilemma underpinning the arms race placed constraints on the idiosyncratic leeway policymakers possess. The adversarial relationship between the US and the USSR could not be just be 'thought away' by the agents in charge. In a democracy, the security dilemma affects policymaking through the feedback channel of domestic politics.[483] Cyrus Vance, Secretary of State under Carter, describes how the "rising tide of conservatism" during Carter's tenure limited the Administration's room for manoeuvre in the SALT II negotiations.[484] Vance's Assistant Secretary of State, Leslie Gelb, speaks of 'political tides' and 'atmospherics', which set limits to how far the President's desire for accommodation through arms control could go.[485] The security dilemma's 'causal role' was to act as the structural driver of the arms race. Carter's goal of achieving bipolar stability by pursuing strategic equivalence with the Soviet Union did not solve the actual security dilemma, which resulted from each superpower's differing interpretations of the other's intentions. As Carter's Secretary of Defence Harold Brown has explained, nuclear "parity is not a line, it's a very broad band, […] The fact that's it a broad band makes it subject to a great deal of interpretation […] Do we measure parity by numbers of warheads? Numbers of launchers? By throw weight?"[486] Soviet successes in developing Multiple Independent Re-Entry Vehicle warheads, international turbulence relating to the two superpower's global footprint,

480 See Jervis (1976)
481 See, for instance: Chalmers (1974)
482 Ibid
483 See Zakaria (1998)
484 In Savranskaya and Welch (1994), 8
485 Ibid, 148
486 Ibid, 126

and the importance of maintaining Allied cohesion invariably meant that the lowest common denominator through which to perceive the adversary was that of mistrust and fear.

Moscow's decision in 1977 to deploy SS-20 Intermediate-range ballistic missiles aimed at Western Europe, followed by the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, brought an end to the period of relative stability in US-Soviet relations that characterised the 1970s. Fears about an emerging 'window of vulnerability' in the US vis-à-vis the Soviet's nuclear capabilities put Carter under pressure to assert US interests more assertively amd constrained his ability to pursue arms control, thereby making it more difficult to move the US-USSR relationship to a more stable level. Already in 1976, before the deployment of the SS-20, Paul Nitze – a stalwart of Washington's diplomatic establishment who had previously helped to negotiate both the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the interim strategic arms limitation agreement (SALT I) – warned that détente had upset the strategic balance in favour of the Soviet Union.[487] A year later, a debate began in the US policy establishment "over the significance of growing Soviet nuclear capabilities that would culminate in the widespread conviction that a so-called window of strategic vulnerability existed."[488] Allied states began to call for a response to what was perceived to be a growing Soviet threat. In 1977, the Social Democratic Chancellor of the Federal German Republic Helmut Schmidt gave a speech at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London in which he highlighted the growing nuclear imbalance in Europe, declaring:

> "The Warsaw Pact has […] increased the disparities in both conventional and tactical nuclear forces. Up to now the Soviet Union has given no clear indication that she is willing to accept the principle of parity for Europe."

Schmidt called on "the Western Alliance to undertake a massive build-up of forces and weapons systems" in the absence of genuine prospects for arms reductions.[489] This eventually culminated in NATO's Dual Track decision of December 1979: to "meet the challenges to their security posed by the continuing momentum of the Warsaw Pact military build-up" by "the

[487] Nitze (1976)
[488] Goldberg (1990), 101
[489] Schmidt (1978)

deployment in Europe of US ground-launched systems comprising 108 Pershing II launchers […] and 464 Ground Launched Cruise Missiles (GLCM), all with single warheads". NATO simultaneously authorised the US to pursue arms limitations negotiations, but explicitly stipulated that any future "limitations on [US and Soviet land-based long-range theatre nuclear missile systems] must be consistent with the principle of equality between the sides."[490] The planned Pershing deployment incensed the Soviet leadership, who viewed it as a first-strike decapitating nuclear missile.[491] It thus seemed that a new round of the arms race was being ushered in, one that seemed unavoidable given the increasingly charged international climate. Soviet policy choices – to deploy the SS-20 and invade Afghanistan – made worsening relations with the West and a retaliatory deployment to counter the SS-20s likely. The Soviets evidently discounted such worries at the time, but this was a miscalculation. In 1986, Gromyko, who had been Soviet Foreign Minister from 1957 to 1985 – conceded at a Politburo meeting, "the deployment of the SS-20 was a major error in our European policy."[492] The West responded by threatening the deployment of its own intermediate ballistic missiles unless the Soviets would remove theirs.

The classic arms race dynamic was at work: NATO leaders viewed their Dual Track strategy as an appropriate response to the strategic challenge posed by the SS-20 deployment, which were missiles targeting Western Europe. The Soviet leadership in turn regarded NATO's response as an escalation of the nuclear arms race, with some in Moscow arguing the NATO decision was the final straw that made them feel as if they had nothing to lose by invading Afghanistan.[493] The deterioration of East-West relations under the Carter Administration was driven by the international context: "Each side took steps to ensure its own security which the other in turn perceived as threatening its security."[494] Agency played a role through policy

[490] See NATO (1979)

[491] The Soviet leadership viewed the Pershing II as a first-strike decapitating weapon capable of reaching Moscow. Interestingly enough, this was based on flawed Soviet intelligence which wrongly assumed the Pershings had a range of 2,500km, when the true figure was 1,600km, meaning that Moscow was outside the range of the Pershing II deployment zones in West Germany. Matlock (2004), 39

[492] Neef (2006)

[493] Blanton and Burr (2010)

[494] Garthoff (1994), 935

miscalculations on the Soviet side, especially regarding the invasion of Afghanistan.

On 12 December 1979, the same day that NATO announced its Dual Track decision, the Politburo deployed Soviet forces to Kabul, where they stormed the Presidential Palace and executed the Afghan President, Hafizullah Amin.[495] Soviet troop movements and the build-up to the invasion had begun in October, but the intervention nevertheless caught the Carter Administration by surprise.[496] Whilst the Soviets viewed the Afghanistan operation as a move to prevent an allied country from slipping from its reach, some in the US foreign policy establishment feared that the reasoning behind it was expansionary – an incipient Soviet push toward the Indian Ocean or even the Persian Gulf.[497] Carter himself did not necessarily view the Afghan invasion as a major strategic offensive, but after having lost a major ally in the region during the Iranian Revolution a few months earlier, US military authorities viewed the Persian Gulf area as highly sensitive to US security interests, particularly in light of the ongoing Iranian hostage crisis.[498] This is why President Carter took a strong public stance against the USSR's actions. Calling the invasion 'a grave threat to peace', Carter responded with a raft of anti-Soviet measures: he publicly demanded the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops, announced on national television that "my opinion of the Russians has changed more drastically in the last week than even the previous two and a half years," asked the US Senate to indefinitely postpone the ratification process for the SALT II Accords, imposed a US grain embargo on the Soviet Union, suspended the opening of US and Soviet consulates in Kiev and New York, nullified US-Soviet cultural and economic agreements, and, lastly, declared the US would boycott the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow.[499] It was Carter, prompted by his National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, who initiated the clandestine CIA campaign to provide material support for Afghan mujahedeen to take up arms against the invading Soviet forces.[500] An Executive policy towards Afghanistan was thus already in place when Reagan assumed office in 1981.

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[495] Matlock (2004) 47; see also Wohlforth (1996), 128
[496] Garthoff (1994), 1017-1018; Halliday (1995), 50
[497] Wohlforth (1996), 130
[498] Ibid, 135
[499] Philips (1980)
[500] Wohlforth (1996), 133; Brzezinski (1997)

Policy discontinuities as natural leadership counterfactuals: Carter vs. Reagan

The claim that an individual leader's characteristics matter implies that a state's policy would have been significantly different had someone with other characteristics been in power. Counterfactuals seeking to assess the effects of leadership through individual policy beliefs need to show that these beliefs were: a) powerful – consistent with the policy eventually chosen and inconsistent with other policy paths; and b) autonomous – i.e. not produced by the immediate international or domestic situation.[501] Numerous of Ronald Reagan's policy idiosyncrasies meet these criteria, and I argue that Reagan's assumption of office generated a noticeable impact on East-West relations across a variety of issues.

Evidence for the autonomy of Reagan's policy beliefs is provided by the fierce anti-détente platform he campaigned on during the 1976 race for the Republican nomination – long before either the SS-20 deployment or the invasion of Afghanistan made this a particularly salient issue.[502] Whereas Carter maintained that the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan came as the greatest surprise of his life, Reagan during his 1980 campaign emphasised, time and time again, how he had argued for years that the deterioration of American military and strategic strength under the Carter Administration would bring about a resurgence of Soviet aggression.[503] During the 1980 campaign, Reagan accused President Carter of being "totally oblivious to the Soviet drive for world domination."[504] Reagan could point to his own track record as a staunch anti-Communist who consistently warned of the Soviet threat.[505]

After he assumed office, Reagan's hardliner stance had immediate consequences for the US-Soviet relationship: "Since 1960, every incoming administration had made the US-Soviet relationship its first order of business and had set about putting its own stamp on the arms-control process. The Reagan administration was an exception. In its first two years it had virtually no dealings with the Soviet Union."[506] At President Reagan's first press conference, he announced his uncompromising view of the Soviets: "They

[501] See Jervis (2013), 167
[502] Garthoff (1994), 595
[503] Matlock (2007), 13
[504] Sanders (1983), 283
[505] Cannon, 66-67; 98
[506] FitzGerald, 151

reserve unto themselves the right to commit any crime, to lie, to cheat" in order to pursue their policy goals.[507] Anatoly Dobrynin, Soviet ambassador to the US, informed Secretary of State Alexander Haig that he hoped such rhetoric would not continue, as it would cause concern in Moscow.[508] Alexander Bessmertnykh, who later became Deputy Foreign Minister of the USSR, states that although the Soviets felt like they "had a pretty good picture of Reagan […] concern started to appear when Reagan started to make his positions clear on the Soviet-American relationship."[509] During the same press conference, Reagan announced his goal of achieving "an actual reduction in the numbers of nuclear weapons."[510] This seemingly innocuous statement in fact represented a radical break with US arms control policy since the inception of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks in 1969, which, as the moniker makes clear, were predicated on the notion of arms limitations rather than outright reductions.[511] Reagan's loud emphasis on the verifiability of any arms control agreements indicated that he planned on shifting gear when it came to authentication procedures to monitor Soviet compliance in any future agreements.[512] Reagan's argument that SALT II was "fatally flawed" was based on his refusal to accept an agreement that "allowed the Soviet Union to just about double their present nuclear capacity."[513]

Njølstad argues that there was no "great political divide between the outgoing Carter and incoming Reagan administration as far as US policy towards the Soviet Union is concerned," and maintains that there were more similarities than differences between their approach to strategic arms control.[514] It is true that Carter's SALT II accords represented the first arms-reduction treaty between the two superpowers, albeit only in the narrowest

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[507] Reagan (1981)

[508] Haig (1984), 103

[509] Wohlforth (1996), 106

[510] Reagan (1981)

[511] The logic was that nuclear deterrence was key to keeping the peace between the US and the USSR, and that deterrence was best achieved by ensuring both sides kept roughly equal numbers of weapons. Arms reductions would reveal imbalances in each side's conventional military forces and thus introduce new sources of tension into the international system.

[512] As described by Matlock, Reagan was sharply critical of the SALT II accord's verification mechanism during the campaign. The treaty would have allowed encrypted of telemetry from Soviet weapon tests, making difficult, if not impossible, the accurate verification of some of the treaty commitments. See Matlock (2007), 17

[513] Fischer (1997), 27

[514] Njølstad (2004), 163

sense of the word 'reduce' – in that the ceiling for nuclear delivery vehicles was to be lowered from 2,400 as stipulated by the Vladivostok Agreement of 1974, to 2,250 in 1981.[515] It seems that Carter viewed SALT II as a stepping stone towards a subsequent round of arms reduction talks, which weakens the argument that Reagan's presidency made much of a difference in terms of US negotiation strategy. Njølstad argues that "it became a standing goal for all US presidents from Carter to Bush to seek substantial reductions in the first-strike capabilities of the Soviet Union."[516] THIs, however, is misleading. It is one thing to pay lip service to the aim of reducing the levels of nuclear arms; it is another to follow this through in policy terms. As Figure 1 illustrates, Soviet nuclear weapons exhibited a manifest 'stickiness,' in that their number trended upward until 1986, with the pace of the USSR's total atomic stockpile rising rapidly after 1977. That, incidentally, was the year when President Carter made a 'deep cut' proposal, which was rejected out of hand by the Soviets.[517] Reducing nuclear arms levels was easier said than done, and this goal eluded Carter.[518]

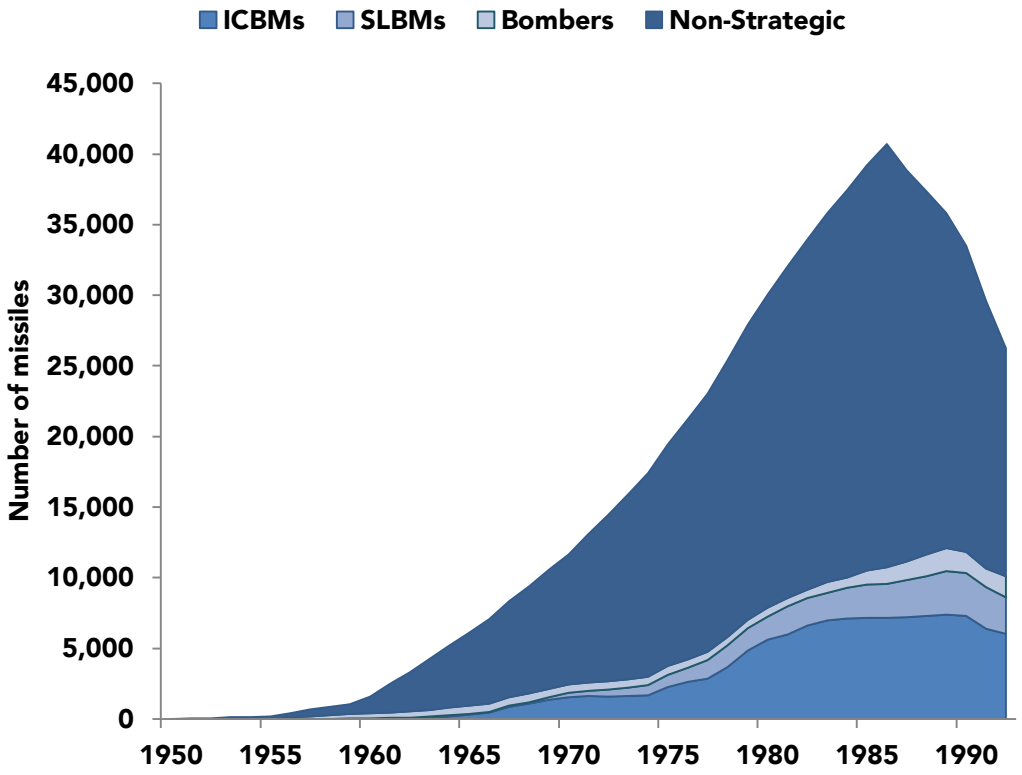
[515] See Arms Control Association (1979)

[516] Njølstad (2004), 167

[517] Blanton and Burr (2010)

[518] Njølstad writes, "It is well-known that Carter intended, as soon as SALT II had been ratified, to push hard for a SALT III Treaty based on the notion of deep cuts."(Njølstadt 2004, 167). He provides no evidence for this.

Fig. 1: Soviet Nuclear Stockpile[519]



Reagan approached nuclear arms talks with the Soviets differently than Carter, because he disagreed with the premise that parity should be the basis of arms limitations agreements.[520] Reagan and most in his Administration felt the USSR was overtaking the US militarily, meaning that policy priority had to shift from arms control to re-armament. As put by Secretary of State Al Haig in the summer of 1981, "arms control is no longer the centrepiece of US-Soviet relations."[521] As a result of this stance, Reagan maintained an uncompromising attitude toward arms control, refusing to deal with the Soviets on anything other than an arms reduction basis.

Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger made clear in April of 1981 that the Administration would not resume arms talks until the USSR began to change its behaviour on the international stage. Convinced that détente worked to the Soviets' advantage, Reagan wanted to approach arms

[519] 'ICBM': Intercontinental Ballistic Missile; 'SLBM': Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile
Data obtained from the National Resources Defense Council's Nuclear Energy, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament project at http://www.nrdc.org/nuclear//nudb/datab10.asp

[520] Tarr (1991), 63

[521] Cited in Fischer (1997), 27

negotiations with caution.[522] Throughout 1981, however, the phenomenon of mass anti-nuclear demonstrations in Europe began to undermine this position. By October, a quarter-million people were demonstrating on the streets of Bonn against nuclear weapons, the largest public gathering in Germany since JFK's Berlin rally in 1963.[523] Stubbornly refusing to sit down with the Soviets seemed to begin to harm support for NATO in Europe. Reagan's reluctance to engage in arms control talks was thus untenable in the long run, political reality dictated that he had to give way eventually and commence negotiations. Indeed, in November 1981, Reagan made his first formal arms control proposal – the zero option, which envisaged the US cancelling its Pershing deployment if the Soviet SS-20s were dismantled in their entirety. This proposal was born of the arms reductions philosophy Reagan outlined in his first press conference. It reflected his stubborn approach to the matter: the zero option seemed a wholly unrealistic ideal-state which did not provide a reasonable basis for negotiation; "those who designed the zero/zero proposal knew very well that the Soviet leaders at that time were unlikely to accept it."[524] The decision to resume negotiations was in no small part designed to acquiesce the European arms control movement.[525]

Nonetheless, the zero option reflected Reagan's long-term aspiration of nuclear disarmament in Europe and came to embody some of the key strategic priorities of the Reagan Administration. The proposal resolved the US' 'decoupling' dilemma: Soviet SS-20s aimed at Western Europe made necessary a corresponding US deployment of a ballistic missile in Europe to maintain the US' nuclear umbrella. Otherwise, retaliation to a nuclear attack by Soviet forces against Europe would involve the US' domestic nuclear arsenal, thus exposing American cities to counterattacks. If the SS-20s were removed, however, this quandary would disappear. For that reason, the Reagan Administration viewed the zero option as a legitimate basis for talks, not as an escape from negotiations. Secretary of State Haig told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee after Reagan's November 1981 announcement that the United States hoped for "a verifiable agreement that would achieve significant reductions on both sides, leading to equal ceilings at the lowest

[522] Matlock (2007), 18
[523] FitzGerald, 153
[524] Matlock (2004), 40
[525] See Arbatov (2007), 52

possible levels – levels which ideally could be zero."[526] His statement also expressed another of Reagan's strategic priorities: a cut in arms on both sides. This was a manifestation of Reagan's deep-seated desire to overcome the entrenched nature of the nuclear standoff, the only escape from which had to involve radical reductions in arsenals on both sides. At the same time, the zero option revealed Reagan's belief that the USSR could be 'pushed' towards the negotiating table, and ultimately towards accommodation with the US. It was this stance, paradoxical though it may sound, which contained within it the seeds for the resolution of the superpower impasse, because it was linked to another Reagan idiosyncrasy: his eagerness to establish contact with the Soviets in order to inject momentum into the US-USSR relationship.[527] This is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

Reagan had no qualms about rejecting arms control agreements which violated his conviction that the Soviet Union needed to make deeper cuts than the US. In 1982, after yet another fruitless US-Soviet meeting in Geneva to explore the reopening of talks on an Intermediate Nuclear Forces agreement, Paul Nitze, who headed the US negotiation team, went on an impromptu two-hour stroll with Yuli Kvitsinsky, his Soviet counterpart.[528] Their ramble became known as the 'Walk in the Woods', during which Nitze and Kvitsinsky sketched a far-reaching proposal for mutual cuts to nuclear weapons in Europe. Their initiative initially generated hopes that stalled US-Soviet relations could be re-energised. A key element of the package was a formula that foresaw a two-thirds reduction of Soviet SS-20 missiles in exchange for the US giving up its Pershing II deployment plans. When Nitze returned to Washington with his proposal, Reagan asked him to explain why the US was supposed to do without its medium-range missiles in Europe whilst the USSR would keep a portion of theirs. Nitze answered that there was a conceptual difference between the US giving up a weapon on paper – the Pershings were yet to be installed – and the USSR dismantling an already deployed force of its most modern missile class. Nonetheless, Reagan refused to accept the deal unless all the SS-20 missiles went. Nitze told the President he was asking and hoping for too much, to which Reagan replied, "Well, Paul, you just tell the Soviets that you're working for one tough son-of-

[526] Cited in Matlock (2004), 41

[527] Oberdorfer (1998), 22

[528] Nitze was a veteran diplomat and co-author of NSC-68 who had been present at the creation of the Cold War. See Talbott (1998)

a-bitch."[529] Nitze's pragmatic argument embodied the cold calculus of nuclear arms negotiations, in which he was steeped during four decades of nuclear diplomacy with the Soviets.[530] The point Nitze made to Reagan was sensible from a deal-making perspective. At the same time, Nitze's proposal maintained the inherent instability of the nuclear arms race, as it effectively sanctioned a first-mover advantage to whichever party deployed new missiles before the other. Reagan was unique among US Presidents in refusing arms negotiations outright unless they involved nuclear cuts.

An interesting degree of overlap between Presidents Carter and Reagan exists in the area of defence spending. Reagan's arms build-up was preceded by a change of course that Carter initiated.[531] In his final defence budget request, Carter asked Congress for a 14.2% nominal increase in military expenditure for fiscal year 1982 – a 4.4% increase in real terms – with 5% year-on-year increases to follow afterward.[532] In 1978 Carter had already secured an agreement among NATO members states which committed them to increase national defence budgets by a minimum of 3% per annum. Matlock agrees that the US arms build-up of the 1980s was not just a Reagan initiative: "Carter had also sought sharply increased defence funding at the close of his administration."[533] Reagan restored some arms programs cancelled by Carter, such as the neutron bomb and the B-1 bomber.[534] But the thrust of US weapons modernisation programmes in the Reagan Administration were initiated by Carter, including the Trident submarine, the air-launched cruise missile programme, the Pershing II and Trident II missiles, MX, and Mk-12A deep-penetration warhead programmes, and the B-2 bomber programme.[535] It is also true that Reagan's National Security Decision Directives 12 and 13 endorsed the doctrinal positions by Carter in his own Presidential Directives 53 and 59. These concerned US nuclear strategy such as selective strike options, escalation control or intra-war deterrence and were, in the words of Carter's Secretary of Defense Harold

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529 Talbott (1988), 177

530 See Nitze (1989)

531 The key difference between the two, of course, was President Reagan's initiation and dogged pursuit of the Strategic Defence Initiative. This is scrutinized in greater depth in Chapter Five.

532 Matlock (2007), 16

533 Matlock, (2004), 11

534 Ibid, 12

535 Njølstad (2004), 165

Brown, "not new strategic doctrines or a radical departure from US strategic policy over the past decade [but] a codification of previous statements."[536] This represented a long-ranging element of continuity in American nuclear war-fighting doctrine, where little agentic leeway existed in the first place.

That said, Reagan went further in his military build-up than Carter, putting forward a budget to Congress which foresaw a yearly nominal increase in defence spending of 10% between 1980 and 1986.[537] In real terms, Reagan's defence appropriations peaked at 7.3% in 1983 and levelled off at roughly 7% afterwards, compared to Carter's 5%.[538] Reagan's unprecedented peacetime build-up was not fully a product of forward-thinking decision-making. Instead, it provides an interesting illustration of how such policy decisions can be influenced by contingency and bureaucratic inertia.[539] President Reagan's first director of the Office of Management and the Budget was David Stockman. He had his hands full within days after Reagan's inauguration, being charged with finding cuts worth hundreds of billions of dollars in current and future budgets, as part of the Administration's signature Economic Recovery Tax Act. This involved twelve-to-sixteen hour workdays, and although defence was exempted from the cuts, Stockman needed to meet with Secretary of Defense Weinberger in order to outline the trajectory for future military spending. This meeting occurred at 7.30pm on 30 January 1981, on a day that had begun at 4.30am for Stockman. When Weinberger's Deputy Defence Secretary, Frank Carlucci, suggested a real increase of 8% to 9%, Stockman responded with an offer of a 7% year-on-year increase, which Weinberger agreed to. Carlucci then suggested that 1982 was to be taken as the baseline year for the increases, to which Stockman concurred. Later, Stockman realised he had made a costly mistake: his calculations foresaw a 7% real annual defence budget increase using President Carter's 1980 defence budget as a baseline. By instead using 1982 as the baseline year, Congress' 9% defence budget increase of 1981 was incorporated into future defence spending increases: the baseline now started at $222bn instead of $142bn. The defence budget would grow 160%,

[536] Cited in Walsh (20080, 40
[537] FitzGerald, 159
[538] Matlock (2007), 16
[539] For a detailed account see FitzGerald, 158-167

totalling the enormous sum of $1.46tn of military spending over a six-year period.[540]

In repeated meetings in August with both Reagan and Weinberger, Stockman was unable to reverse his fateful error: "There must be no perception by anyone in the world that we're backing down on the defence build-up […] when I was asked during the campaign about what I would do if it came to a choice between defence and deficits, I always said national security had to come first," Reagan told Stockman.[541] Weinberger, too, proved to be obstinate, refusing to accept any reductions to the rate of growth in the defence budget. During the third meeting on the issue, Weinberger provided Reagan with charts showing the scale of the Soviet military threat, and a cartoon which depicted a powerful American soldier shrunk to Woody Allen size by Stockman's budget cuts. At the same time, it was becoming clear that the Economic Recovery Tax Act had relied on overly optimistic growth forecasts, and since the economy was heading into a recession, the cloud of large federal budget deficits was hanging over the Administration. Nonetheless, Reagan's convictions in the area of defence were firm. He told Weinberger, "Defense is not a budget issue. You spend what you need."[542] In the event, after a series of fruitless meetings, Stockman managed to coax $13bn of defence spending 'cuts' over the 1982-85 period out of the two. This was eventually increased by a further $19bn for the fiscal year 1983 by Congress, but only after the sheer scale of the deficit crisis became apparent. In any case, the trajectory of the colossal Reagan arms build-up was steeper than initially anticipated: not out of design, but by accident.

Reagan's handling of the budget incident, with his emphasis on the signals that policy changes could send out and insistence on maintaining a defence policy consistent with his public rhetoric, is reflective of a broader communication strategy he pursued. To his domestic audience, Reagan conveyed a resolute determination to build up America's defences. Convinced that the country's military position relative to the USSR's had deteriorated during the era of détente, Reagan loudly broadcast a new strategy of massive rearmament within weeks of assuming office, as he had repeatedly promised during the campaign. Reagan also changed tack in

[540] FitzGerald, 162
[541] Stockman (1986), 296
[542] Ibid, 302-17

terms of public communication with his adversaries in Moscow. His administration officials publicly discussed US nuclear-war fighting capabilities and limited war scenarios. Weinberger spoke of the need for parity "across the full range of plausible nuclear war-fighting scenarios with the Soviet Union," and his Deputy Frank Carlucci stated at his confirmation hearing "I think the Soviets are developing a nuclear-war fighting capability, and we are going to have to do the same."[543] At a press conference, President Reagan proposed that a tactical exchange of nuclear weapons in Europe would not inevitably bring about a wider war.[544] In a similar vein, FitzGerald writes:

> "During the campaign, both Reagan and Bush had made statements suggesting that they did not regard nuclear war as catastrophic. Reagan had charged that the Soviets believed nuclear war was winnable, and Bush had told a reporter that nuclear superiority did not matter 'if you believe that there is no such thing as a winner in nuclear war […] And I don't believe that.'"[545]

Njølstad confirms that there was a difference between how the defence spokesmen of the Carter and Reagan administrations discussed the possibility of winning a nuclear war:

> "According to PD-59 [issued by President Carter] there was no way to ensure victory in an all-out nuclear war 'on any plausible definition of victory'. The main task, therefore, really was to convince the Soviets that they, too, were deprived of that possibility. By contrast, the official position of the Reagan administration was that the United States must obtain the capability of prevailing in a nuclear war – that is, of winning."[546]

This was not just a PR strategy: it was spelled out in President Reagan's NSDD-12 and NSDD-13. Both these directives reiterated the policy of deterrence, but also made clear that nuclear war is a contingency the US must be militarily prepared for:

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543 Scheer (1982), 29
544 Newhouse (1988), 337
545 FitzGerald, 150
546 Njølstad (2004), 166

> "Strategic Communications […] is the highest priority element in [the Strategic Forces Modernization] program. It would develop command and communication systems for our strategic forces that can survive and endure before, during, and after a nuclear attack. We do not have such systems now."[547]

And:

> "If deterrence fails, the employment of nuclear forces must be effectively related to the operations of our general purpose forces. Our doctrine for the use of forces in nuclear conflict must ensure that we can pursue specific objectives selected by the National Command Authority (NCA) at any given time."[548]

Njølstad's contention that "US quest for 'first-strike' stability would probably have been equally strong had Carter remained in the White House after January 1981" is questionable.[549] He cites Carter's PD-50, which directed "that any new US arms-control proposal should (1) contribute to US defence and force posture goals; (2) help in deterring and restraining the Soviet Union and its allies; and (3) promise to limit arms competition and reduce the likelihood of military conflict."[550] Njølstad argues this "was as close to a recipe for 'first-strike' stability as you could possibly ask for in the Cold War world."[551] As the wording of Reagan's NSDD-12 and NSDD-13 make clear, this is not the case. The point is that Reagan was serious about strengthening the US' defence posture, and communicated this vigorously. On the former, the difference between him and President Carter was one of degree, on the latter, one of kind. Njølstad concedes that one of the most significant differences between the defence policies of the Carter and Reagan administrations was "the latter's far more explicit ambition of regaining some kind of superiority."[552]

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[547] National Security Decision Directive 12 (1981), RRPL
[548] National Security Decision Directive 13 (1981), RRPL
[549] Njølstad (2004), 167
[550] Presidential Directive 50 (1979)
[551] Njølstad (2004), 167
[552] Ibid

When Ronald Reagan entered office he was known for his vivid anti-Communist rhetoric. He continued to make his belief know that he did not view the USSR as a permanent feature in the world's political landscape. In a 1980 campaign speech he declared, "The greatest fallacy of the Lenin-Marxist philosophy is that it is the 'wave of the future.'"[553] In 1982 he remarked, "The Soviet Union runs against the tide of history by denying human freedom and human dignity to its citizens. It also is in deep economic difficulty. […] The constant shrinkage of economic growth combined with the growth of military production is putting a heavy strain on the Soviet people.''[554] The same year Reagan maintained, "The Soviet Empire is faltering because it is rigid […] In the end, this […] will undermine the foundations of the Soviet system."[555] Simultaneously, Reagan outlined a vision for transforming the East-West relationship if the Soviet Union changed its policies. In the same 1982 speech, Reagan specified what it would take for the US-Soviet relationship to improve: "I'm optimistic that we can build a more constructive relationship with the Soviet Union. […] [A] Soviet leadership devoted to improving its people's lives, rather than expanding its armed conquests, will find a sympathetic partner in the West."[556] A 1980 campaign speech included the line, "We would like nothing better than to see the Russian people living in freedom and dignity instead of being trapped in a backwash of history as they are."[557]

There were not many in the Reagan Administration who agreed with the President when he tacitly suggested post-Cold War vision, conditional on the Soviet Union being coaxed to change itself as a result of US policy. Robert Gates thinks Reagan was unique in believing "that a tottering regime could be pushed further off balance. […] President Reagan, nearly alone, truly believed in 1981 that the Soviet system was vulnerable, not in some vague, long-range historical sense, but right then."[558] This is not just hindsight reasoning applied retrospectively. In October 1981, President Reagan privately expressed his belief that the Soviets could not "vastly increase their military productivity because they've already got their people on a starvation diet […] They've been building the greatest military machine

[553] Cited in Hoffman (2009), 32
[554] Reagan (1982a), 742
[555] Reagan (1982b), 582
[556] Ibid
[557] Cited in Hoffman (2009), 33
[558] Gates (2007 [1996]), 194-97

the world has ever seen. But now they're going to be faced with […] an arms race and they can't keep up."[559] In 1982, when Yuri Andropov became leader after Leonid Brezhnev's passing, a State Department memorandum for National Security Advisor William 'Judge' Clark outlined how Reagan's stance was perceived in Moscow. "The new leadership, like the old, sees in Washington an Administration that refuses to recognize Soviet status and prerogatives as an equal superpower. […] They see us as having raised the costs and risks of military and international competition." The memorandum argued that the Reagan Administration was "more openly competitive and militarily threatening", all of which was occurring at a time of "continuing discontent and potential instability in Eastern Europe." The memorandum alluded to the fact that the USSR might one day "find it difficult to meet the growing economic burdens of empire."[560]

This memo reflects the early Reagan Administration's strategy of upping the ante on the Soviets by doggedly pursuing re-armament in combination with increasingly antagonistic public rhetoric: "Détente with the United States – from which the USSR derived important benefits – has collapsed, and […] Moscow sees NATO as having embarked upon an effort to deprive the USSR of its longstanding advantage in medium-range missiles." Would a Carter administration have pursued a similar approach? While détente was in the process of collapsing before Reagan became President, Carter dismissed Reagan's overt hostility during the 1980 presidential campaign. At the Democratic convention, he said the choice between him and Reagan was one of "security, justice and peace" versus "the risk of international confrontation; the risk of an uncontrollable, unaffordable and unwinnable nuclear arms race."[561] In September 1980, President Carter told Californians the election choice could be reduced to "whether we have peace or war."[562] During the sole presidential TV debate, Carter made clear that he endorsed the principles behind SALT II as the basis for arms control and would try to convince Congress to ratify it, correctly predicting that under a Reagan presidency, "the adversarial relationship between ourselves and the Soviet Union would undoubtedly deteriorate very rapidly," and warned of Reagan's "extremely dangerous and belligerent"

[559] Cited in Garthoff (1984), 11
[560] Bremer (1982), *Memorandum for William Clark*, RRPL
[561] Cited in FitzGerald, 110
[562] Carter (1981), 1884

attitude.[563] Whilst Carter's assessments were hyperbolic in the context of a high-stakes debate, on the basis of his comments it seems unlikely that a re-elected President Carter would have ended up pursuing Reagan's policy of deliberately confronting the Soviets rhetorically and pushing for arms reduction instead of limitations.

In sum, there is counterfactual evidence that the election of Reagan, in interaction with a variety of other factors, had altered the trajectory of US-Soviet affairs. This provides evidence for the relevance of agency: through their chosen approach to foreign policy, Presidents causally interact with the international system. President Reagan oversaw a switch in US strategy of dealing with USSR: from managing to confronting the Soviets, with a view to the eventual abolition of East-West rivalry. We do not know how Carter, in a hypothetical second term, would have dealt with the increasingly charged international environment after 1979, and whether he would eventually have overseen a similarly assertive US foreign policy as Reagan.

Contingent non/emergence – the crisis that never was

A counterweight to leaders' influence is their exposure to events beyond their control that can force their hand, or demonstrate their impotence. The Polish crisis, for instance, had the potential to push the trajectory of US-Soviet relations into dangerous territory in 1980, potentially weakening the Reagan presidency before it even began properly. As Reagan came to office, a budding political crisis in Poland unfolded which had the potential to spark a military intervention by the Soviet Union. This turbulence occurred independently of whoever took the White House in 1980, it would have presented any incoming President with serious geopolitical turmoil with unpredictable consequences. In the event, a number of complex and distantly related developments precluded the emergent crisis from tipping into an open-ended violent conflagration with serious repercussions for international politics.

The Soviet response to turmoil in Poland was the intervention that never was. Brooks and Wohlforth, two structural realists, use the Polish non-invasion as evidence that the end of the Cold War, far from being in large part the product of leadership, was primarily brought about by the economic

[563] Commission on Presidential Debates (1980)

decline of the USSR. The fact that the Soviets decided against intervention in Poland is taken by them as evidence that the Brezhnev doctrine was not revoked by Gorbachev as is commonly assumed, but by the Old Guard themselves back in December 1980 – a doctrinal paradigm shift driven by material necessity.[564] What Brooks and Wohlforth leave unanswered is why merely a year earlier, the material situation was such that the Politburo felt comfortable deploying 100,000 troops to Afghanistan, a country three times as distant from Moscow than Poland. One assumes that the USSR's immediate strategic priorities would have rested in its own backyard rather than in a landlocked Central Asian backwater of limited geostrategic value. Brooks and Wohlforth's reasoning, conditioned by hindsight, goes against the grain of realist thinking. If ever there was a situation in which a state could have legitimately felt the imperative to use force to defend its own national interest, then this was it: Poland was the entry point into the Soviet empire, the territory through which Russia was twice invaded in the 20th century. Its defection from the Warsaw Pact would have been a serious blow (as events in 1989 showed) to the Soviet Union.

Contrary to the claims made by Brooks and Wohlforth, the historical evidence indicates that the USSR strongly considered and came very close to executing military intervention in Poland. When Solidarity emerged as a serious protest movement in Poland in the summer of 1980, the Politburo responded by increasing the combat readiness of the Soviet Forces' Northern Group. Led by Foreign Minister Gromyko, the Soviet government in its discussions concerning the Polish situation was unequivocal that "we cannot afford to lose Poland."[565] Brezhnev, though ailing, was: "still capable of articulate expression and decisive action […] [he] agreed with Honecker and Husák that the Czechoslovak and Polish situations were similar and the use of outside force was perhaps needed."[566]

Plans were drawn up for Warsaw Pact forces to invade Poland by the time of the Pact's annual Soyuz manoeuvres, to be held on December 8, 1980. In time-honoured fashion, Warsaw Pact troops from the USSR, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Bulgaria and Hungary were to enter Poland under the pretext of the manoeuvres, with a total of seventeen divisions – i.e. just short of 200,000 soldiers – to be deployed around Poland's largest

564 Brooks and Wohlforth (2000)
565 Minutes of CPSU politburo session, 29 October 1980; cited in Mastny (1998)
566 Mastny, 10

cities and industrial clusters.[567] Movement of troops began on 1 December, a week before zero hour of the planned invasion. The wheels had been set in motion – but then the plan was paused at a contingent turning point. At the final pre-invasion Warsaw Pact leader summit on December 5, Stanislaw Kania, the First Secretary of the Polish Communist Party, made a compelling case that his government would resolve the crisis through political means. Whilst this did not impress other Communist leaders such as East Germany's Honecker and Czechoslovakia's Husak, Brezhnev subsequently took Kania aside for a one-on-one meeting. It was then that Kania convinced Brezhnev that "if there were an intervention there would be a national uprising. Even if angels entered Poland, they would be treated as bloodthirsty vampires and the socialist ideas would be swimming in blood."[568] To which Brezhnev replied, "OK, we will not go in, although if complications occur we would. But without you we won't go in."[569] Rather than non-invasion being a fait accompli pre-determined by the USSR's material conditions, Mastny builds a compelling case that "given the advanced state of the [military] operation and its timetable, its subsequent halting was an extraordinary event."[570]

Thanks to a high-ranking CIA source in the Polish military – Richard Kuklinski, a colonel who had been recruited in 1971 and ended up working in the group of the Polish army charged with drawing up martial law plans in 1980 – the pertinent facts about the Warsaw Pact build-up and planned invasion were known in Washington.[571] This time, National Security Advisor Brzezinski worked hard to dissuade the Soviets from invading, informing the public of the upsurge in Soviet forces around Poland on December 3 and privately warning Brezhnev of the adverse US response to any use of military force in Poland.[572] By that point, however, the lame duck Carter Administration was bereft of credibility in the eyes of the Soviets. As such,

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567 Kramer (2009), 18

568 Cited in Byrne, 158

569 Cited in Mastny, 15

570 Ibid, 13

571 Robert Gates, a high-ranking CIA Soviet expert at the time of the Polish crisis, has described Kuklinski as 'one of the most important CIA sources of information on the Soviet military of the Cold War period' who provided the US with 'more than thirty thousand Soviet documents over a ten-year period, including Warsaw Pact contingency plans for war in Europe, details on large numbers of Soviet weapons systems and planning for electronic warfare." See Gates (2007 [1996]), 238.

572 MacEachin (2002b), 50

"the American warnings had no noticeable effect on the Kremlin leaders."[573] It was Brezhnev's decision to delay the intervention and give the Polish government more time to resolve the crisis that provided the crucial break for the Reagan Administration. Reagan's hardline cabinet, too, proved largely ineffectual in exerting influence over events in Poland.

The case of the Polish non-invasion illustrates how a dense thicket of interrelated contingent events interacts with systemic pressures and leaders. Contingent emergent pressures operate as bottom-up sources of causation in the international system.[574] The impermeable causal texture of such events means that as they unfold, outcomes cannot be predicted. The later significance of events and non-events are also rarely predictable. The Reagan cabinet understood the significance of Poland, but neither comprehended what went on, nor exuded control over events on the ground. It went on to enjoy a considerable dose of old-fashioned luck.

Reagan's pick for Secretary of State in 1981, Alexander Haig, followed the Carter Administration's policy of deterring a Soviet invasion. He responded to a congratulatory note on his appointment from Gromyko by warning him of "major consequences for East-West relations if the Soviets intervened militarily in Poland."[575] However, a number of comments by new Administration officials actually relieved the external pressure on Poland and the USSR somewhat. A State Department implied that were Polish forces to 'establish order' domestically, the United States would treat this as a 'Polish matter.' It was subsequently 'clarified' that the US would still view a crackdown as a 'matter of very great concern'.[576] At the time the comments were made, General Jaruzelski – who had been appointed Polish Prime Minister in February – was already in the process of planning the subsequent imposition of martial law, as instructed by the Soviets. The US' stance encouraged him to continue on this path.[577] As for the Soviet leadership, it showed few signs of concern about the consequences of the Polish crisis on

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573 Mastny, 14

574 In other words: the invasion would have gone ahead if Brezhnev had been more firmly committed to it. His lack of commitment had little to do with the USSR's economic position, as Brooks and Wohlforth insinuate. His idiosyncratic choice – either way – was a product of local decision-making, but with large-scale ramifications for IR.

575 MacEachin (2002b), 98

576 FitzgGerald, 157

577 Mastny, 19; Cynkin, 90

its relations with the new Administration.[578] Another invasion scare passed at the end of March, when further Warsaw Pact manoeuvres took place, after which the window for a military operation had passed. Brezhnev's dithering in December gave the Polish government much-needed breathing space.

Secretary Haig was under pressure from hardliners who viewed the Polish crisis as "an opportunity to inflict mortal political, economic and propaganda damage on the USSR."[579] However, US options were severely limited by the reality on the ground. Realising that the Soviets would treat a genuine anti-Communist uprising as *casus belli*, Secretary Haig pursued the idea that the situation in Poland ought to be deescalated. After all, the incoming Administration had made it clear its first priority was to focus American resources on rebuilding its armed forces. A military commitment against any Soviet aggression in Poland, therefore, was not even under discussion.[580] President Reagan was simply fortunate not to have been confronted, within a few weeks of entering office, with a crisis of the kind witnessed in Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968 – a crisis which, whilst it would not have come as unexpectedly as the invasion of Afghanistan, would nonetheless have tarred him with the brush of Carter-esque impotence in the face of the USSR's seemingly unstoppable military might, undermining the Reagan's Administration subsequent 'loose talk' strategy about war with the Soviets.

In the event, Secretary Haig embarked on a twin strategy of alleviating economic pressure on Poland by re-scheduling its foreign debt obligations, whilst issuing 'strong warnings' to the Soviets to desist from intervening.[581] Such threats did not seem to influence Moscow's decision-making. US leverage over the Soviets was limited beyond outright military action; total trade between the two states accounted for less than 1% of the USSR's GDP.[582] Moreover, in April 1981 Reagan decided to lift the embargo on US grain sales to the USSR that President Carter had imposed after the invasion of Afghanistan. Reagan thereby fulfilled a campaign promise directed at the rural vote in the Mid-West.[583] Haig, a day after the announcement, told the

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578 Mastny, 19

579 Haig (1984), 238-241

580 Gates (2007 [1996], 228

581 Devries (1981)

582 FitzGerald, 173

583 American farmers, after all, had suffered most from losing access to their biggest export market.

press that a Soviet invasion of Poland would lead to a complete halt of bilateral trade between the two countries, in an effort to maintain a modicum of pressure on the Soviets.

Reagan's attempt to alleviate the Polish crisis through debt relief was a continuation of Carter's approach. Interestingly enough this came to unexpectedly help the Western position, since it was matched with an economic strategy in kind pursued by the USSR. As Mastny explains, the Soviets wanted to keep Poland afloat with substantial economic aid so that it could eventually resolve its internal crisis.[584] Weakened as its economic foundations were, the Soviet Union felt the burden of aid to Poland to a far greater extent than the US. General Jaruzelski used the severity of the problems that afflicted the Polish economy, compounded by the threat of social turmoil in case of a further deterioration to wring more material concessions out of Moscow – aid the USSR could ill-afford. At a Politburo session shortly before Jaruzelski introduced martial law, Andropov remarked, "Jaruzelski has been more than persistent in setting forth economic demands from us and has made the implementation of 'Operation X' [the codename of the martial law operation] contingent on our willingness to offer increased economic assistance."[585] Although other Politburo members commented on Jaruzelski's 'slyness', they were in no position to turn down his request. Notes from the same meeting depict a consensus that the USSR should offer whatever economic aid was necessary to Poland in the aftermath of martial law, even if that meant "drawing down [Soviet] state reserves or sacrificing deliveries to the [USSR's] internal market."[586] This was a direct consequence of Soviet worries that if an appropriate amount of aid were not forthcoming, Poland would become increasingly reliant on Western aid. It was particularly the idea that Poland would pursue the restoration of its membership of the International Monetary Fund that was unpalatable to the Soviets. [587]

It is difficult to counterfactually speculate about the outcome of a Soviet invasion in 1980 or 1981. The key question is whether the invading Warsaw Pact forces would have encountered widespread resistance, which would have necessitated bloodshed. The CIA, in a classified 1981 study of the implications of a Soviet invasion of Poland, argued that "the Soviet

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584 Mastny, 16

585 Cited in Kramer (2009), 20

586 Ibid

587 Kramer (2009), 21

leadership would have to expect a degree of resistance to invasion far surpassing that encountered in Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968."[588] MacEachin believes "the Soviets had the military might to overcome the Polish resistance" and concludes that "Moscow in the end could probably have won the war."[589] Kramer, in an exhaustive analysis of a recently released batch of CIA files on Kuklinski's intelligence work, finds that his reports "implied that if the Polish army facilitated rather than opposed the entry of Soviet and Warsaw Pact troops for 'exercises,' the level of resistance from society would be negligible, particularly if the Polish security forces took preventive measures envisaged under the martial law plans."[590] It appears that the Polish army, by and large, remained loyal to the Warsaw Pact. In March, teams of Soviet officers travelled through Poland in order to assess the allegiance of the Polish forces. Their findings were so confident that the Commander-in-Chief of Warsaw Pact forces, Marshal Kulikov, concluded "the Polish Army and the security organs were prepared to fulfil any assignment given to them by the party and state leadership."[591] Indeed, Kuklinski reported in December 1980 that "everyone [in the highest levels of the Polish Defense Ministry] is very depressed and crestfallen, no one is even contemplating putting up active resistance against the Warsaw Pact action."[592] In April, he wrote that at most, uncoordinated and localised resistance by individual units seemed feasible, but that staunchly pro-Soviet figures, such as the Polish Deputy Defence Minister and Warsaw Pact Commander General Eugeniusz Molczyk would ensure that resistance would be stamped out at the first sign.[593]

The CIA's scenario envisaged fiercer Polish resistance because it assumed (despite Kuklinski's reports) a much larger invading force of 30 to 45 divisions.[594] This would have constituted a far more aggressive incursion, and could concomitantly have provoked a fiercer response from within Poland. The actual invasion plans considered in December 1980 and spring 1981 would have involved the imposition of martial law by Polish authorities, with

[588] Cited in Kramer (2009), 26
[589] MacEachin (2002b), 241
[590] Kramer (2009), 21
[591] Ibid, 20
[592] MacEachin (2002b), 53
[593] Ibid
[594] CIA (1981)

external military backing.[595] It is difficult to speculate on whether a Warsaw Pact invasion of Poland would have led to widespread bloodshed or a quick, effective and brutal crackdown like in 1956 (Hungary) and 1968 (Czechoslovakia). In any case, the Soviet strategy was to gradually push the Polish authorities toward the imposition of martial law. As time went on, the plan no longer foresaw Warsaw Pact involvement, save for a catastrophic breakdown of law and order in Poland. This was for no other reason than the fact that as time passed after the initial aborted invasion, the initiative gradually slipped from Moscow. It is a good example of how temporal sequencing can open up or, in this case, close down particular policy avenues.

Kuklinski informed the CIA that "the martial law planning still held out the possibility of early Soviet and Warsaw Pact military intervention in Poland if the clampdown led to serious incidents of bloodshed" and the Polish army began to disintegrate.[596] In the event, the martial law crackdown was swift and severe. In less than ten hours, the Polish army arrested 6,000 opposition activists and General Jaruzelski transitioned from civilian to military rule: "With brutal efficiency and minimal bloodshed, the Polish authorities managed to crush Solidarity, a broad-based social movement that had seemed invincible."[597] This was thanks to the detailed plans that had been drawn up by the Polish General Staff, aided by Warsaw Pact commanders and the Soviet KGB.

Nevertheless it is plain that the Soviets were reluctant to invade Poland. This is why some realists cite evidence to the effect that the Brezhnev Doctrine was 'dead' by 1981. Indeed, such quotations can be gleaned from Politburo discussion documents. Andropov, for instance, was adamant that Warsaw Pact forces should not move in: "We cannot risk it. […] Even if Poland were to be ruled by Solidarity, so be it."[598] The context in which these arguments were made, however, was that of General Jaruzelski requesting a guarantee days before imposing martial law that "if the Polish forces do not manage to break the resistance by Solidarity [they could] expect assistance from other countries, up to the introduction of armed forces into the territory

595 Kramer (2009), 21
596 Ibid, 31
597 Ibid, 32
598 Cited in Mastny, 29

of Poland."[599] The Politburo rejected this request and was apparently prepared to live with Poland's Communist rule being swept away with a Solidarity-led government being installed in its place.

However, this scenario was only tolerable if it led to Poland's Finlandization – not an unlikely prospect. Why would Solidarity not have wanted to maintain a working relationship with the USSR at a time when it was the only restive Warsaw Pact state, to reassure Moscow of its underlying peaceful intent and guarantee the Warsaw Pact's vital lines of communication in the country? Under such conditions, the USSR was prepared to live with Poland outside of the Warsaw Pact, provided it offered safeguards not to become a NATO outpost.[600] An overtly hostile anti-Soviet Poland would have risked being nipped in the bud by a Warsaw Pact invasion, so accommodation would have been a perfectly rational path for Solidarity to pursue. Crucially, in 1981, Moscow had means to prevent Poland's defection from producing a domino effect across Eastern Europe: Solidarity's appeal at the time was narrow, and in neighbouring East Germany and Czechoslovakia, the Communist "regimes were safely entrenched and [their] relatively affluent populations viewed the unruly Poles with indifference if not hostility because of the economic chaos they engendered."[601] It is thus short-sighted to assume that a Solidarity-governed Poland in 1981 would have acted as a catalyst for the rapid end of the Cold War. By that point, the Soviet leadership was not ready to wind down the Cold War. Timing mattered. As put by Kramer, "The inability of the hard-liners to produce better results (from 1981 to 1985) undoubtedly gave the new Soviet leader greater leeway to consider 'new thinking' in foreign policy."[602] Just as the Polish invasion became unrealistic as time went on, so the perception of the deteriorating Soviet position needed to grow over time for new policy avenues such as serious disarmament to open up.

A 'Finlandized' Poland could have prolonged the Cold War in that it would have removed a significant source of economic pain for the USSR. In 1980 alone, total hard currency transfers to Poland amounted to $3bn.[603] As

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599 Ibid

600 Marshal Kulikov stated as much in a 1997 interview: 'If a war with NATO came, Soviet forces would have always had enough warning time to force their way through Poland without difficulty.' Cited in Mastny, 29

601 See Mastny, 33; and also Kubina and Wilke, 270-285

602 See Levin (2004)

603 Krawczyk, 101

put by Mastny, "by prompting Moscow to consolidate the rest of its empire, Poland's escape from Moscow's fold would have made its final break-up more difficult."[604] A non-Communist Poland would have been unpleasant for Moscow, but would not have necessitated the premature break-up of the Soviet Union. The statements cited by Brooks and Wohlforth that supposedly exemplify the death of the Brezhnev Doctrine were made in response to Jaruzelski asking for outside military support to back up his impending martial law crackdown. It is likely that in the event martial law were to fail – with Poland collapsing into a state of quasi-civil war rather than a swift transition to Solidarity rule – the Warsaw Pact was ready to intervene.[605] The night before the proclamation of martial law, army units in East Germany and Belarus were put on alert.[606] Kramer concurs: "the evidence suggests that Soviet leaders had not ruled out a large-scale invasion of Poland if the martial law operation had gone disastrously awry and civil war had erupted."[607] The Kremlin decided to reject a military option only when asked by General Jaruzelski to provide a military assurance that could back up martial law.

The above begs the question why the Soviets were seemingly coming to terms with the limits of military force to achieve their foreign policy objectives. Only a year earlier an invasion was a near certainty. And two years earlier the same leadership – with Andropov as the driving force – launched the invasion of Afghanistan. What changed in the meantime? The underlying approach to the Polish question taken by the Carter and Reagan Administrations was broadly identical, and is best summed up by the record of a meeting between President Carter and his national security advisors on December 7, 1980: "We do not know whether the Soviets will go in. Our first goal is to keep them out."[608] The Reagan Administration maintained a high level of apprehension until springtime, and was kept up-to-date on Soviet plans by Colonel Kuklinski's detailed and accurate intelligence. The President had no appetite for a military confrontation, preferring to focus on restoring

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[604] Mastny, 34

[605] In 1995, Mikhail Gorbachev (a Politburo member since 1979) stated that in in the event that chaos spreading through Poland and "threatened the breakdown of the whole socialist bloc […] our troops and tank columns were there along the Polish border, along with the sufficiently strong Northern Group of the Soviet Army in Poland itself. All could have been used in extreme circumstances." See Ostermann (1998), 33

[606] Ostermann, 30

[607] Kramer (2009), 21

[608] Cited in MacEachin (2002b), 81

American strength. In addition, Soviet decision-makers at the time were largely impervious to American attempts at influencing their policies:

> "In December 1980 and the spring of 1981, when Kuklinski's reports and other evidence were pointing to the threat of Soviet/Warsaw Pact military intervention in Poland, high-level U.S. officials warned the Soviet Union both privately and publicly that an invasion of Poland would lead to major political and economic consequences for the USSR. These warnings probably had only a minuscule impact at most on Soviet calculations."[609]

This was first and foremost an internal matter for the Warsaw Pact, something that Robert Gates corroborates: "The United States had limited power to affect the course of events in Poland."[610] Still, as Kramer points out, it is important to appreciate that under such highly delicate and fragile circumstances, "even a tiny difference can be important."[611] As it happened, the Soviet leadership's choice to invade Afghanistan a year earlier now took military intervention in Poland off the table. At a Politburo meeting in December 1981, shortly before the Polish crackdown, Andropov explained why the Soviets could not commit to military intervention: "A variety of economic and political sanctions" prepared by the West "would make things very difficult for us." His colleague Mikhail Suslov added, "world public opinion will not allow us to [invade]."[612] This is rich in historical ironies: Afghanistan was an ill-conceived campaign in a country of little relevance to the Soviet Union, but ended up becoming a serious strain on the USSR as a result of the invasion. Poland, in the meantime, not only had the potential to become an actual threat to Soviet hegemony, but nine years later became the first Warsaw Pact country in which the Communist party was peacefully deposed from power.

By the fall of 1981, the US intelligence community had come to attach too great a probability to the possibility of a Soviet invasion, and the CIA ended up discounting Kuklinski's warnings of the rapid approach of martial

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609 Kramer (1999), 168
610 Gates (2007 [1996]), 239
611 Ibid, 240
612 Cited in Mastny, 30

law.[613] As a result, the Reagan Administration was not informed of its imminent imposition – and failed to even warn the Polish authorities of the damage martial law would cause to its relations with the West.[614] This was clearly contrary to the Administrations' goals: "If senior U.S. officials had been clearly warned by the CIA that Jaruzelski was intent on imposing martial law, they undoubtedly would have tried to undercut his plans, not least because they feared that a crackdown would ultimately bring in the Soviet Union."[615] If the CIA had listened to Kuklinski, the Administration could have distributed copies of the plans it possessed that detailed the imposition of martial law, thereby depriving the authorities of the key element of surprise in their overnight crackdown, either leading to its failure or postponement, and in any case robbing Jaruzelski of the element of surprise. As discussed above, this could have either brought about a large-scale invasion of Poland, or the Kremlin could have stuck to its previously agreed line and waited for an internal resolution of Poland's troubles.[616]

The actual US policy on the eve of martial law – doing nothing – was brought about by flawed intelligence analysis and would not actively have been chosen by any Administration.[617] Had the Reagan Administration warned Solidarity either privately or publicly of the coming crackdown, martial law would have been much more difficult to impose successfully.[618] In the event that this would have led to a 'clean' collapse of the Polish government, it seems that the USSR could have lived with a Finlandized Poland, which had been restive for some time (as opposed to other Warsaw Pact states).[619] By removing a costly source of trouble from the Eastern bloc, this could have alleviated pressure on the Soviet empire at an opportune

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613 See MacEachin (2007)

614 Kramer (2009), 42-43

615 Ibid

616 Kramer (2009), 44

617 MacEachin (2002b), 246

618 Not least because the leadership of Solidarity would have dispersed itself, instead of congregating in one place as it did on the weekend that Operation X (i.e. martial law) was executed. See Kramer (2009), 42

619 As Andropov himself said: "If Poland falls under the control of Solidarity, that's the way it will be. […] We must be concerned above all with our own country and about the strengthening of the Soviet Union. […] As concerns the lines of communication between the Soviet Union and the GDR that run through Poland, we of course must do something to ensure that they are safeguarded." Session of the CPSU CC Politburo, 10 December 1980, cited in Kramer (1999), 165

time and created economic and political breathing space for Moscow.[620] A 'messy' collapse threatening to spill over into neighbouring countries, by contrast, would likely have entailed a Soviet invasion.[621] Had this succeeded in restoring order, it would in all likelihood have deterred further uprisings in Eastern Europe for quite some time. Either of the above scenarios, then, could well have strengthened the Soviet position: either by removing a continuous source of turmoil from its imperial sphere, or demonstrating the USSR's ability to crack down hard on dissenting imperial minions, in the process exposing the Reagan Administration as powerless to deter Soviet aggression.

That either of those scenarios didn't come to be – they remained non-emergent – was, in the final analysis, due to highly contingent, interrelated, fissures in the texture of events at the time: Brezhnev's last-minute dithering in December 1980; the CIA misjudging Kuklinski's warnings about martial law; and Jaruzelski's 'backbone' in going through with the crackdown despite the absence of Warsaw Pact reassurances. Absent any of the above, the picture would have changed dramatically. Such contingencies spell trouble for any attempt at macro-theorising system change: at crucial turning points, small happenings and the consequences they have – in either bringing about particular events or preventing them from coming about – can have large-scale consequences.

In complex systems, the interplay between idiosyncratic actors and systemically induced pressures can produce junctures with multiple potential trajectories, the selection of which is a function of timing and unintended consequences (as with SALT II, the Cuban Brigade, and the invasion of Afghanistan), agency (as with the agent switch from Carter to Reagan), or emergent effects (as with the 'smothered' non-crisis in Poland, the lack of intervention being partially the unintended result of the military and political cost of the invasion of Afghanistan). If Afghanistan had not been invaded, there is ample evidence the Soviet Union would have intervened in Poland a year later. This is a good illustration of how small, concurrent, contingent and seemingly unrelated events interact in the international system in a complex

[620] By 1981, Soviet assistance to Poland totalled $7bn. So, had Solidarity indeed assumed power and left the Warsaw Pact, the immediate financial consequences for the USSR would have been to free up an additional 1% of Soviet GDP. See Kramer (1999), 135

[621] MacEachin (2002b), 244

manner. The 'whole' of emergent non/occurrences in IR is bigger than the sum of its individual constituent events.

CHAPTER FOUR

GEORGE SHULTZ vs. ALEXANDER HAIG

If only the Soviet leadership could come and see our homes and our stores, and see how we live in this country, they'd have a good view of us.
Ronald Reagan

I knew where he was: he wanted to have a constructive dialogue. And he was confident in himself.
George P. Shultz

Political behaviour is based on two conditions: an operational opportunity to act, and leaders' willingness to act.[622] The modality of these two factors is multiple: opportunities to act vary, as does politicians' desire for action. Complexity theory provides an analytical framework for investigating the influence of idiosyncratic decision-making under uncertainty. In addition, counterfactuals are a means of estimating the effects of different leaders on political outcomes. Leaders make staffing and policy choices. They select from among the available personnel and strategic policy alternatives, pick particular options over others, and thereby exert a degree of influence over the international system. In this chapter I investigate how Reagan's staffing choices interacted with his foreign policy choices. I proceed through two comparative counterfactual investigations: The first examines the similarities and differences between Secretaries of State Al Haig and George Shultz, the latter having replaced the former in 1982. I examine their

[622] See: Cioffi-Revilla and Starr (1995)

policy and personality differences. This gives rise to a secondary counterfactual, namely, how the appointment of George Shultz shifted patterns of policy influence in the Reagan Administration. Reagan, by selecting Shultz, put in place an operative who would come to enable Reagan's radical peace-making strategy. Links between personnel choices and policy outcomes are complex, but can be traced. It is difficult to disentangle whether Reagan's personnel choice of Shultz in 1982 was contingent, but it can be shown to have been of causal consequence for the rest of the decade.

One way to explore how agency influences outcomes in the international system is by juxtaposing two leaders in the same role, comparing their leadership styles, the content of their policies and contrasting the foreign policy outcomes that occurred during their respective tenures. Substituting one agent with another and investigating the possible consequences of such a change tests the strength of links between certain leaders, their policy choices, and international outcomes. Re-imagining events by delinking agents and outcomes requires the formulation of causal pathways and an explanation of how policy can and cannot affect international relations. If it is convincingly shown that the replacement of a particular agent had direct influence on international affairs, this implies that leaders constitute an important causal dimension which the discipline of International Relations should pay more attention to.

Counterfactual leadership comparisons are not without their pitfalls

The search for causes, as Waltz points out, amounts to the explanation of variance in the world. This deceptively simple statement hides a deep and complicated debate concerning the meaning of causality in social sciences.[623] Broadly speaking, causality can be derived through a Humean-inductive mould, by seeking to uncover regular relations among patterns of events (the so-called 'positivist' approach), or, following Kurki, by investigating the "real causal powers of ontological entities."[624] Either way, a factor can be said to have 'caused' an event when its presence made a direct difference to subsequent happenings. Turning this concept on its head, a factor is a cause

[623] For a thorough discussion of the concept of causation in IR see Kurki (2006; 2008); see also Suganami (1997)

[624] I.e. Scientific realism. See Kurki (2008), 11

if its removal from a given situation alters later outcomes.[625] I work on the assumption that leaders can be studied as 'causal difference-makers'.[626] That assumption alone is hardly enough; indeed, it begs the question of just how much causal latitude agents can possess in the domain of foreign policy. It is uncontroversial to maintain that people 'matter', but it is much more difficult to show *how* they matter.[627] My approach is to remove a leader from a given context, and study how this could have changed subsequent events. Such a 'counterfactual contrast' exercise can pinpoint specific acts of agency that made a difference in terms of outcomes: if it can be shown that a particular foreign policy development would have been different because of the presence/absence of a leader, said development will by extension have been shown to be a causal consequence of leadership. This is but one of many types of counterfactual analysis. Since it aims to generate causal insights pertaining to particular developments in the international system, care needs to be taken to make the 'what if' scenarios a) realistic (rather than a so-called 'miracle counterfactual', such as replacing Al Haig with Kermit the Frog rather than with George Shultz); b) plausible (i.e. speculating on outcomes in a manner driven by and consistent with the historical evidence available from the period in question); and c) focused (i.e. seeking to alter specified causal factors in a transparent manner).[628]

When a new agent comes to power and changes the previous policy, this may reflect a modified external environment, shifting domestic interests, or the new agent's distinct preferences. What weakens the conclusions derived by substituting one leader for another is that the ceteris paribus

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[625] Grynaviski (2013)

[626] Insofar as the international system acts as an 'iron cage', i.e. the way structural realists see it, the influence of agency and diplomacy is squeezed out. This is counterintuitive for scholars who deal with people-driven developments in IR (such as the Iraq War, in the run-up to which a group of realist scholars placed a one-page advertisement in the New York Times to state their strict opposition to the Bush Administration's plans for war). The vexing issue of how agency relates to Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* and structural realism more generally was discussed by Mearsheimer et al (2015) at the International Studies Association Annual Convention 2015. On the role of agency and specifically the rational actor model in Waltz and structural realism, see in particular the papers presented by Colin Wight, 'Waltzing Around Science: Neorealism and the Philosophy of Science' and Brian Schmidt 'Rationality and Theory of International Politics' (2015)

[627] For recent works studying the role of decision-makers see Schafer and Crichlow (2010), Walker and Malici (2011), Houghton (2012)

[628] See Tetlock and Belkin (1996); Lebow (2010)

condition doesn't hold: we cannot rip out one leader from the fabric of decision-making without introducing wider changes in the political and economic structures of the time. [629] But the rule of 'We can never merely do one thing in a system' does not mean we need to look at the world as a seamless web where one change effects everything else elsewhere.[630]

A counterfactual analysis needs to be careful to accurately identify deliberate policy changes introduced by a new leader, and scrupulously link these changes as directly as possible to subsequent events. Otherwise there is a danger of mistaking coincidence for incidence. Substituting one leader for another entails a range of changes that go beyond agency alone. World events will occur subsequent to a leadership switch that are causally unrelated to it and would still have occurred absent a leadership change. Counterfactual analyses of events should not mistakenly end up attributing an outcome to agency when leaders were in fact coincidental.

These are the obstacles to a meaningful counterfactual analysis of the causal force of leaders. Thankfully they are not insurmountable. Ideally, a counterfactual experiment holds constant all factors other than the one whose causal influence is being investigated. In the case of the replacement of Alexander Haig by George Shultz in 1982 a number of circumstances combine to make this a promising counterfactual scenario. On many of the policy issues of the day, Secretaries Haig and Shultz held similar positions. On the issue of linkage, however, they disagreed. In addition, there are well-documented character differences between the two. If it is possible to trace events in US-Soviet affairs to the changes brought about by the appointment of George Shultz, and furthermore demonstrate that Alexander Haig would have been unlikely to bring about similar changes himself, a case can be built to show how a Secretary of State's leadership can make a real difference.

Alexander Haig vs. George Shultz

After Reagan's election in 1980, there was speculation that George Shultz, who had advised Reagan on economic issues during the campaign, would be appointed Secretary of State. [631] Reagan previously made use of Shultz's services, having known him since 1974, when Reagan was Governor

[629] Levy (2014)

[630] Elster calls this the 'counterfactualisation of the whole universe.' Elster (1978), 177

[631] Brinkley, 75

of California and established regular contact with Shultz.[632] Two weeks after the 1980 election, Richard Nixon sent Reagan a detailed memo outlining his recommendations for various cabinet posts, arguing strongly against Shultz and in favour of Haig as Secretary of State.[633] Reagan followed this advice. Alexander Haig took office, along with the rest of the Reagan Administration, on 22 January 1981, holding his post until July 1982. Haig was a military man-cum-politician, with a highly distinguished record of bravery in Vietnam.[634] Haig's first employ in the White House came in 1969 when Henry Kissinger made him his Military Assistant. Less than a year later Richard Nixon promoted Haig to Deputy National Security Advisor, before appointing him his Chief of Staff amidst the Watergate endgame, with Haig serving Nixon until the bitter end. Gerald Ford later made him Supreme Allied Commander Europe, a position Haig kept until 1979.

When Haig resigned as Reagan's Secretary of State in 1982, President Reagan immediately offered Shultz the post.[635] Shultz was, at the time, President of the global construction firm Bechtel Corporation, having previously served the Nixon Administration for five years as Secretary of Labor, Director of the Office of Management and Budget, and Secretary of the Treasury, gaining a reputation for integrity, competence and a reticent doggedness in pursuit of his tasks. Prior to his career in government Shultz was a professor of economics at MIT and Dean of the Chicago Graduate School of Business, and at one time worked for President Dwight Eisenhower's Council of Economic Advisors. During the Second World War Shultz enlisted and served with the Marines in the Pacific theatre, attaining the rank of Captain.[636]

Both Secretaries Haig and Shultz viewed negotiations with the Soviet Union as an essential aspect of their job. Anatoly Dobrynin, Soviet Ambassador to the United States from 1962 to 1986, remarks that Haig's views on reaching out to the Soviets "did not differ much from those of the President himself."[637] Shultz's first experience of negotiations with Soviet officials came in the early 1970s over talks about a US-Soviet trade

[632] FitzGerald, 214
[633] Nixon (1980)
[634] Morris (1982), 74-79
[635] See Cannon, 170
[636] Oberdorfer (1998), 43
[637] Dobrynin, 482

agreement.[638] Haig and Shultz were the only high-level officials in the Reagan Administration who had practical experience of dealing with the USSR prior to assuming their positions.[639]

While Al Haig advocated a policy of linkage, Shultz rejected it

For the first year of his Presidency, Reagan did not make a comprehensive statement on his policy towards the Soviet Union.[640] It was thus largely up to Secretary Haig to craft a working set of policies on the basis of both his views and those of Reagan. In September 1981 Haig sent Reagan a memo concerning his (Haig's) upcoming meetings with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko. Haig stated his aim was for the talks to contribute "to your [i.e. Reagan's] objective of putting the US-Soviet relationship on a sounder footing," and expressed the importance of negotiations – "getting TNF [Theatre Nuclear Forces] negotiations started is vital to us" – as well as his intention to raise human rights issues and the possibility of opening US and Soviet consulates in Kiev and New York, respectively.[641] Haig also began talks with Gromyko on limiting nuclear weapons in Europe, a decision approved by Reagan and Brezhnev.[642] These positions were similar to the foreign policy talking points later taken by Secretary Shultz. In addition, both Secretaries Haig and Shultz viewed the aim of strengthening alliances abroad as fundamental to US strength.[643] In his 'Strategic Plan for Presidential Diplomacy and Summitry' of April 1981, Secretary Haig's first objective was for Reagan to act and be recognised as "a leader of the industrial democracies and as a willing partner in the community of all nations."[644] This policy continuity between Secretaries Haig and Shultz reflects the functional priorities that come with being a Secretary of State: the government's chief diplomat is tasked with executing a President's efforts to deal productively with other states.

However a Secretary of State does possess a degree of autonomy in crafting the strategy and policy principles that underwrite his or her

638 Shultz (1993), 1-48
639 Oberdorfer (1998), 45
640 Matlock (2004), 7
641 Haig (1981), *Forthcoming Meetings with Gromyko*, RRPL
642 Dobrynin, 496
643 Matlock (2004), 33
644 Haig (1981), *Strategic Plan*, RPPL

diplomatic tasks. The main policy distinction between Secretaries Haig and Shultz concerned 'linkage'. This was the idea that relations with the Soviets across all policy areas are intrinsically inter-related. The deterioration of relations in one sphere – say, the invasion of Afghanistan – demanded the cessation of diplomatic efforts in another – in the case of Afghanistan, arms control.[645] Kissinger and Nixon deployed linkage as a strategic complement to détente, to rein in Soviet behaviour during complex, multi-pronged arms control negotiations.[646] Haig explicitly embraced linkage, having formed this view during the Nixon era, specifically the idea of linking arms control to Soviet concessions in 'regional affairs' (i.e. Soviet military adventures in the Third World).[647] During Haig's tenure Reagan pursued linkage. Reagan stated at his first press conference, "I happen to believe, also, that you can't sit down at a table and just negotiate unless you take into account, in consideration at that table all the other things that are going on. In other words, I believe in linkage."[648] Haig explicitly told Reagan that the aim of a sounder US-Soviet relationship is achieved by "linking improved bilateral relations with increased Soviet restraint."[649]

A 1981 speech by Haig on relations between the US and the Soviet Union developed this theme further: "We have learned that Soviet-American agreements, even in strategic arms control, will not survive Soviet threats to the overall military balance or Soviet encroachment upon our strategic interest in critical regions of the world. Linkage is not a theory; it is a fact of life." [650] Haig's endorsement of linkage suggests that the eventual improvement of US-Soviet relations under his leadership would have had to be preceded by significant changes in Soviet conduct. This had the effect of lodging a 'chicken-egg' paradox in the fabric of East-West relations, precluding better relations: the Soviet Union would have to change its foreign policy and exercise strategic restraint across the board for the US to contemplate serious bilateral initiatives. As the rest of the decade demonstrated, Soviet concessions in foreign policy only occurred *after* the leaders of the US and USSR had struck up a constructive relationship based on summit meetings and a genuine, mutual commitment to arms control.

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645 See Shultz (2007), xxi

646 Ibid.

647 Fitzgerald, 172

648 Reagan (1981)

649 Haig (1981), *Forthcoming Meetings with Gromyko*, RRPL

650 See The New York Times (1981)

Reagan pursued both of these trust-buildings elements after Haig had departed, but *before* Soviet behaviour in the international system became noticeably more benign. This went against Haig's logic of linkage. At a private dinner early in 1981 Anatoly Dobrynin asked Haig whether the Reagan Administration was interested in any constructive dialogue with the Soviets at all, to which Haig linked the possibility of agreements to "the Soviet Union's general conduct" as judged by the Administration. Dobrynin's straightforward rejection of this approach – "a history of our relations showed it could not produce anything but permanent confrontation" – left Haig untouched. He seemed unfazed by the fact that linkage contradicted the goal of improving relations with the USSR. [651]

Linkage offered no basis on which to expect constructive changes in Soviet behaviour. Haig was aware that his diplomatic strategy – assigning all the blame of Cold War tensions to the Soviets in the expectation that this would prompt a change in their policies – was confrontational. As Haig wrote in his September 1981 memo to Reagan, he firmly expected his upcoming meeting with the Soviet foreign minister to be quarrelsome:

> "Gromyko will of course resist, and any results will be neither large nor immediate, but we may be able to start a process headed in the right direction. My main purpose will be to drive home to him that our whole approach to East-West policy has fundamentally and durably changed. […] But I also want to convey to Gromyko that there is something for the Soviets in a more moderate course. […] There are positive benefits if they adjust to [our new course] responsibly."[652]

Haig expected firm resistance "rather than explicit concessions." This was part of a wider campaign to "keep the onus for delay and lack of good will on the Soviets, where it belongs."[653] A September 1981 NSC document that outlined White House media talking points on a letter from Reagan to Brezhnev repeated this strategy of putting "the onus for present world tensions and dangers on the Soviets" and holding

[651] Dobrynin, 487
[652] Haig (1981), *Memorandum to Reagan*, RRPL
[653] Ibid

> "the Soviets responsible for the deterioration of our relationship. If the Soviet Union does not exercise the necessary restraint, the response of the United States to protect its interests will be predictable and firm. […] The cause for present world tensions and danger is the Soviet Union."[654]

This was hardly a basis on which to expect an improvement in relations with the USSR, since it put the responsibility of change squarely on the Soviet Union. That strategy did not generate actionable diplomatic impulses to defuse Cold War tensions.

The problem with linkage was recognised as early as February 1981, when Lord Carnes, a hardline staffer on the National Security Council – i.e. hardly a typical advocate for going 'soft' on the Soviets – sent Richard Allen, Reagan's then National Security Advisor, a memorandum titled 'Thoughts on Linkage':

> "The Secretary's [i.e. Haig's] position seems to be to hold the Soviets to a strict interpretation of the Basic Principles of Relations statement of 1972 and the Agreement on Prevention of Nuclear War of 1973, and make any kind of agreement in arms control or trade contingent on compliance with them. Apparently, he would consider Soviet activities in Africa as well as Afghanistan in violation of these agreements. [...] A blanket rejection of negotiation with the Soviets unless they renounce all activity in the Third World will cause considerable turmoil among the West Europeans, and could accelerate the split between the US and its allies on defence, arms control and other East-West issues."[655]

In other words, Haig's diplomatic strategy was an unworkable path towards reduced East-West tensions, and this risked America's credibility with its own Allies.

Linkage, much like Haig, was a relic of the Nixon era. Unless Haig was to change his mind about the policy's efficacy, for which there is no evidence, his continued tenure as Secretary of State would have meant the continued

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654 Blair and Pipes (1981), *The President's Letter to Brezhnev*, RRPL

655 Carnes (1981), *Thoughts on Linkage*, RRPL

pursuit of linkage. In an autumn 1981 memo analysing a letter from Brezhnev to Reagan, Haig was clear that he expected the Soviet Union to take the necessary steps for its relationship with the US to improve:

> "The Soviet Union wants better relations, accepts the fact that the US wants them as well, but will not agree to the terms that require Moscow to change its foreign policy. This line was, of course, to be expected. The real test of Soviet readiness to work for improved relations will be in Soviet actions, not words, over the coming months."[656]

Haig was firm in his conviction that it was the Soviet Union alone that had to take the necessary steps to improve its relationship with the US. Subsequent events showed that this improvement only came about once Reagan committed to a strategy of diplomatic engagement, after both the USSR *and* the US undertook trust-building steps and were prepared to see past each other's immediate transgressions in the pursuit of accommodation. To be sure, linkage remained a definitive aspect of the US-Soviet relationship; it encapsulated the interrelated tensions that drove the Cold War along. But Shultz made it possible to move to what Abraham Sofaer, a State Department official, calls 'limited linkage', which was "the most controversial of the changes in diplomatic policy adopted by President Reagan to enable his administration to engage the Soviets effectively."[657] It was a subtle, but significant shift that enabled Reagan to begin his move from confrontation to co-operation, summed up by remarks Shultz made to Reagan when summarising a meeting with Dobrynin in June 1983: "my main point was that you continue to be willing to engage the Soviets in serious dialogue aimed at solving problems, and that the individual items we wished to discuss should be seen in that context."[658]

<u>Shultz decided that US-Soviet relations needed a new approach</u>

George Shultz maintains that his belief on the need for a new course in US-Soviet relations was cemented in the summer of 1982 after German

[656] Haig (1981), *Brezhnev's October 15 Letter*, RRPL
[657] Sofaer, 130
[658] Shultz (1983), *My Meeting With Dobrynin*, RRPL

Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, a close friend of Shultz's, told the freshly appointed Secretary of State at a private, non-official weekend retreat that the lack of contact between the US and USSR was exceedingly dangerous.[659] Shultz dismissed linkage early on, viewing it as a concept which may have made moral sense but was in reality an obstacle to diplomacy:

> "we needed to get away from the old concept of 'linkage' […] It was unrealistic to expect that the Soviets would back off, simply for the sake of their relationship with us, from a position on some part of the world from which they were gaining an advantage. Linkage, I felt, was inhibiting our disposition to move forcefully and, ironically, often seemed to be turned on its head by the Soviets, as they tried to use linkage to their advantage – to threaten that the relationship would suffer if we undertook some action that they opposed."[660]

Shultz's break with linkage created a new dynamic in the US-Soviet relationship, one that foresaw a more equitable distribution of responsibility between East and West for the state of Cold War tensions. The policy shift away from linkage was formalised with National Security Decision Directive 75, signed in January 1983, which rejected linkage and instead called for simultaneous bilateral negotiations on arms control, human rights, regional issues and bilateral exchanges. It formed the basis of the Reagan Administration's ensuing Soviet policy.[661] This approach stood in contrast to Reagan's earlier attitude toward linkage, as expressed in his letter to Brezhnev (drafted by Haig) of November 1981, in which Reagan wrote of the difficulties he had accepting "your declaration that Soviet actions in other parts of the world must have no bearing on our US-Soviet relations. We both have worldwide interests, making it hard to see how our bilateral relations can be isolated from global happenings."[662] The passage exposes the logical flaw at the heart of linkage: how could common diplomatic ground be found if the US viewed every Soviet misdeed as warranting further pressure?[663] It is

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[659] George Shultz, letter to author, 13 February 2013

[660] Shultz (1993), 278

[661] Skinner (2007), 99

[662] Haig (1981), *Draft Letter: The President to General Secretary Brezhnev*, RRPL

[663] Reagan seems to have been aware of this: his handwritten edits of Haig's draft delete the second sentence.

hard to envisage that the shift to a pragmatic bilateral approach takes place in a counterfactual where Haig stays on as Secretary of State.

Shultz forcefully imprinted his views on the need to phase out linkage. When the Soviet Union shot down a Korean Airlines plane in September 1983, killing 269 civilians after the airplane accidentally strayed into Soviet airspace, Shultz fought his corner in subsequent Administration debates on how to react. He pressed for a strong rhetorical response whilst insisting that the recently resumed East-West arms control talks had to continue. Hardliners saw it as self-evident that any incipient engagement with the Soviets had to be shut down. In a counterfactual where the martial Haig remained Secretary of State, KAL 007 would likely have placed US-Soviet relations into a semi-permanent deep freeze. Shultz saw it as an opportunity to maintain the dialogue he was in the process of setting up.[664] Shultz argued vehemently that he should stick to his previously arranged meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko in Madrid. By contrast, "Weinberger objected violently: 'George should not go.'"[665] Shultz won the argument: "The President did not agree [with Weinberger]. […] Weinberger advocated [saying] to Gromyko that there would be no more arms control negotiations until we had a satisfactory explanation of the downing of the KAL." [666] Shultz then met with Gromyko in what he describes as one of the angriest diplomatic encounters in his career – nonetheless, a complete breakdown in relations had been averted. Shultz's advocacy of strong rhetorical response while simultaneously continuing dialogue with the Soviets was contrary to the policy of linkage. As Shultz later remarked, after the downing of KAL 007 "we broke dramatically with linkage, and it was good that we did."[667]

By 1984, the strategic shift away from linkage was complete. Jack Matlock, then Reagan's Special Assistant for European and Soviet Affairs, wrote a document for the National Security Council entitled 'Dealing with the Soviets' that contained the following passage which negates linkage entirely:

> "Our strategy presupposes that our adversaries are nasty and will do outrageous things. It cannot and should not change every time they do something outrageous: Jimmy Carter was shocked by Afghanistan;

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[664] See Chapter Four

[665] Shultz (1993), 365

[666] Ibid

[667] George Shultz, letter to author, 13 February 2013

> he withdrew SALT II. Ronald Reagan was not surprised by KAL; he kept Geneva talks going. We can always use our adversaries' outrageous conduct to build support behind our firm negotiating positions. But to have relations so vulnerable to shocks means further loss of control over events."[668]

This is a powerful depiction of the consequences brought about by the end of linkage. Linkage, regardless of its utility, was an expression of the fundamentally adversarial East-West relationship, a prism – or a prison – through which each side was prone to viewing the other with suspicion. Linkage of some sorts would always be part of the dynamic behind US-Soviet relations: what Shultz managed to achieve, as in the aftermath of the KAL 007 disaster, was to channel this competitive energy in a way that contributed to continued dialogue with the Soviets.

Haig and Shultz had markedly different leadership styles

In addition to the actual content of policy, a Secretary of State imprints the office with his or her personality. A counterfactual contrast exercise between Haig and Shultz can provide clues as to whether the transition from one to the other was of consequence to policy outcomes. Did noticeable differences exist between Haig and Shultz's composure, and if so, what impact did this have on their respective tenures?

In the early days of the Reagan presidency, fierce debates erupted in his Cabinet regarding which Soviet strategy the Administration should pursue. This was because Reagan, on entering office, was "not paying that much attention to Soviet affairs in the first two years". His advisors, all of whom "sought to prove that they truly represented what Ronald Reagan wanted", filled the resulting policy vacuum.[669] Two competing policy positions in the Administration vied for the President's endorsement. Haig sought negotiations with the Soviets on the basis of linkage. He pitted himself against a set of anti-Soviet hardliners who opposed dialogue out of principle and instead advocated relentless pressure on the USSR in the hope of undermining the regime.[670] The two camps openly competed for Reagan's

[668] Matlock (1984), *Dealing With the Soviets*, RRPL
[669] Personal interview with Jack Matlock
[670] Brands (2014), 116

support. In a memo written in June 1982, shortly before Haig's resignation, Richard Pipes of the National Security Council sparred with Haig:

> "The basic difference between State [i.e. Haig] and myself is philosophical. State believes that we should be content with an attempt to influence Soviet behavior by offering rewards to the USSR when it is peaceful and punishments when it is not. *Following what I sense to be the President's belief*, I, by contrast, argue [...] that Soviet international behavior is a response not only to external threats and opportunities but also the internal imperatives of the Soviet political, economic, social and ideological system. State may be expected to fight this proposition tooth and nail, although it seems to express the quintessence of the President's approach. [Emphasis added]"[671]

This struggle for the President's 'true' foreign policy position – was he a hardliner or a pragmatist at heart? – was a function of Reagan's seeming ambivalence on many important foreign policy issues, and unwillingness to adjudicate between rifts in his Cabinet.

Reagan campaigned for the Presidency on a fierce anti-Soviet platform, in part out of conviction, but also to carve out his position as an anti-establishment candidate seeking to distance himself from the policy of détente. At the same time, Reagan made it clear on numerous occasions that his quarrel was with Communism rather than with the Russian people, and that he deemed nuclear war and indeed the entire concept of nuclear deterrence to be morally abhorrent – embodied by this famous phrase during hais 1983 speech in which Reagan announced plans for a nuclear missile defence system: "Wouldn't it be better to protect the American people rather than avenge them?" Such statements belie the war-mongering reputation that was sometimes attached to Reagan's name.[672] His viewpoints

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[671] Richard Pipes (1982), *Memorandum for William Clark*, RRPL.

[672] Don Oberdorfer writes of "the dichotomous nature of Reagan's views. One the one hand, he could condemn the Soviet leaders with sincerity and zeal, using the harshest rhetoric ever heard from a US President, and on the other he could express a persistent willingness, even an eagerness, to reach out to them in constructive discussions." (1998, 22) Reagan's sentimental desire for peaceful relations with the Soviet Union was betrayed by off-hand remarks, such as the one he made early in the 1980s to then Deputy Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci, Jr.: "'If only the Soviet leadership could come and see our stores and our homes, and see how we live in this country, they'd have a good view of us." Personal interview with Frank Carlucci (2013)

on foreign policy were not easy to discern, and he was susceptible to contradictory policy positions in an effort to reach a middle ground between opposing camps inside his Administration. Hal Brands describes the procedural aspect of Reagan's foreign policy-making as 'bureaucratic warfare'.[673] Brands argues that the intensity of the policy struggles in the cabinet was not so much a sign of dysfunction as a deliberate attempt by Reagan to stay above the fray, preventing him from becoming captive to a particular faction, and retaining his ability to work constructively with the diverse cast of characters he intentionally assembled in his Administration.[674] Reagan entered office with a clear enough view of the nature of the Soviet threat, but he did not have a pre-prepared strategy for how to deal with the Soviets. One consequence of this was that foreign policy principals had to engage in sustained, determined campaigns to advocate their points of view to the President and at the same time discredit alternative proposals from other cabinet members.

The style with which such policy advocacy is conducted matters in a Presidential Administration. Alexander Haig carried himself with the obstreperous air of a general. The American public got a taste of his personality after Reagan was gunned down in March 1981. Haig gained infamy after storming out of the White House Situation Room and into the Briefing Room a few hours after the assassination attempt, dislodging press secretary Larry Speakes who was in the middle of running a press conference. Watching Speakes from the Situation Room, Haig lost his temper when the press secratry struggled to clearly answer the question of who was running the government. Haig barged in and proceeded to declare, "As of now, I am in control here, in the White House, pending the return of the Vice President, and I am in close touch with him."[675] Haig's authoritarian tone ruffled feathers among the public and in the Administration. Principals such as Secretary Weinberger were irritated when Haig single-handedly announced that he was taking charge.[676]

Haig's combustive personality interfered with the resolution of the inter-personal tensions that were a byproduct of the combative policy-

[673] Brands (2014), 110

[674] Brands refers to there being 'a certain method to the madness' (Ibid)

[675] Weisman (1981); Allen (2001)

[676] Ibid

formulation process in the Reagan Administration.[677] Anatoly Dobrynin described Haig as a "military man by formation and demeanor. [...] He was a typical bully, his manner of speaking was confrontational. [...] He was more used to an atmosphere of confrontation rather than uncertainty which he connected with the relaxation of tension and vague prospects for protracted negotiation."[678] This had consequences for the direction of US-Soviet negotiations under Haig: if a Secretary of State views his adversary as incapable of change, he wont pursue a strategy that aims for long-term reconciliations. Haig's own writings corroborate this. In his 1981 memo to the President on the upcoming Gromyko talks, Haig bluntly asserted his failure to anticipate any progress, instead expecting 'stiff rebuttals from Gromyko'. This cantankerous attitude extended to Haig's relations with his own colleagues. Jack Matlock describes Haig as "offending members of the Administration."[679] Another account based on eyewitness interviews describes Haig's demeanour at NSC meetings, where "he would lecture, hector, pound his fist on the table. [...] To Reagan, who liked others to be as easygoing, unassuming and sanguine as he was, this behaviour was like fingernails on a blackboard."[680] Further evidence for the problematic nature of Haig's temperament comes from a surprisingly hostile memo for Reagan written by National Security Advisor Richard Allen, in which he commented on Secretary Haig's draft response to the first letter sent by Brezhnev to Reagan:

> **"**The draft response submitted by Secretary Haig [...] is fundamentally negative in content and in places undiplomatic in language. Given the importance of this document – the first formal exchange of correspondence between the heads of state of the United States and the USSR – it deserves more careful thought. The whole tone of the response is petulant and suggests a 'brush off.' [...] It behooves us to [maintain a statesman-like air]. I fear that this draft would produce a most unfavorable impression among our Allies. […] The draft response contains passages that violate accepted diplomatic usage. For

[677] The intra-Administration 'guerrilla warfare' that to is well-documented in FitzGerald (2000)
[678] Dobrynin, 482
[679] Matlock (2004), 25
[680] FitzGerald, 172

> example, on page 3, Brezhnev's arms control limitation proposals are characterized as 'designed for propaganda purposes.' In another place (page 4), Brezhnev's accusation that the West interferes in Poland is labelled 'simply not true.' We have behind us five centuries of diplomatic experience, during which forms have been evolved to convey such messages more politely. If this draft were adopted, it would be perceived by Moscow as deliberately insulting, and by our Allies as indicative of a lack of constructive ideas."[681]

Haig's attitude to diplomacy – both external and internal – was too abrasive to resolve the fierce policy confrontations in the White House. In frustration, Haig referred to fighting a guerrilla war in the White House and called his detractors as "a bunch of second-rate hambones" and "ignoramuses and saboteurs [and] political pygmies".[682]

Comparing Secretary Shultz's personal style to Haig is a study in contrasts. Ambassador Dobrynin describes Shultz as "guarded and taciturn [...] he did not use the sharp expressions characteristic of Haig," furthermore, as "a conservative man not excessively burdened with bellicose ideology [...] he proceeded from the possibility of coming to terms with the Soviet Union."[683] This relates to the point that a diplomatic decision-makers fundamental view of his adversary – is reconciliation theoretically even possible? – infuses his approach to negotiations and impacts the scope of the various directions that bilateral relations can take.

A newspaper article from December 1982 describes the switch from the volatile Haig to Shultz and quotes a State Department official:

> "'The level of tension is down. […] People spend a lot less time worrying about the psyche of the boss. With Haig, there was a lot of concern about what sort of a mood he was in that day, about how you were going to reach him. I never do that with Shultz. You just draw up your best argument."[684]

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681 Richard Allen (1981), *Memorandum for the President*, RRPL

682 Cannon, 195; Dobrynin, 506

683 Dobrynin, 508

684 Bumiller (1982)

Matlock's depiction of Shultz is similar, as a good manager, listener and negotiator.[685] Shultz defended the State Department's position in Cabinet arguments over Soviet strategy more successfully, without needlessly antagonising his detractors. Shultz, like Haig, battled with Weinberger, who remained unwilling to consider any conciliatory moves toward the USSR.[686] Inter-bureaucratic sniping continued as Shultz dismantled linkage and pressed for talks. But instead of letting himself get derailed, Shultz stood his ground without hysteria, gradually cementing his position by carefully and assiduously courting the President to ensure he the foreign policy positions he put forward had Reagan's endorsement.

How personality impacts policy: the pipeline dispute

As discussed in the previous chapter, the imposition of martial law in Poland in December 1981 caught the Reagan Administration by surprise.[687] Haig came under pressure from hardliners who viewed the Polish crisis as "an opportunity to inflict mortal political, economic and propaganda damage on the USSR."[688] The governments of France and Germany, however, did not go beyond expressing their concerns verbally.[689] Haig realised that the Soviets would treat a fully flung anti-Communist uprising in Poland as grounds to intervene and argued that the situation ought to be decompressed rather than fanning the flames further. In the event, the Administration chose the middle ground of imposing sanctions on the USSR. Secretary of Defense Weinberger and Director of Central Intelligence William Casey pushed the President to up the ante further on the Soviet Union by issuing an embargo on US involvement in a planned East-West gas pipeline, Urengoi 6, an enormous infrastructure construction project that foresaw the eventual delivery of 1.37tn cubic feet of Soviet gas to a West European consortium every year.[690] The US' unilateral embargo on the pipeline's construction placed undue stress on Allied relations. European governments were firmly committed to the project. Britain, Germany, France and Italy were eager to diversify their energy supplies after the oil crisis in the 1970s. All were in the

685 Matlock (2004), 24
686 Oberdorfer (1998), 35-37
687 See Kramer (2009)
688 Haig (1984), 238-241
689 Byrne and Paczowski, 38
690 See Jentleson (1986)

midst of an economic downturn and viewed the Urengoi project as an important source of jobs and investment. When Reagan realised that the Allies were unwilling to join the US' pipeline embargo, he petulantly concluded a meeting of the National Security Council with the words, "They [the Europeans and the Soviets] can have their first pipeline. But not with our equipment and our technology."[691] Egged on by Weinberger and Casey, the President went further than the original embargo on US companies and sanctioned European firms that exported American technology for use in the pipeline project. The fissures in the transatlantic relationship widened, with the French, Italian, German and even British governments openly defying Reagan's attempt to extend American jurisdiction extraterritorially.[692]

Compounding the situation was the 'nuclear freeze' movement in Europe, which threatened to subvert NATO's plan to station Pershing II medium-range ballistic missiles in key European countries. Allied relations suffered from this combination of the pipeline dispute and the public's unexpectedly vocal opposition to a new round of US nuclear missiles being stationed in Western Europe.[693] Haig's aggressive style was not conducive to a lessening of tensions regarding the pipeline dispute, notwithstanding the fact that Haig was fully aware how critical it was to maintain Allied cohesion.[694] Haig had failed to resolve the pipeline dispute, and since weakening NATO support for the Pershing deployment was intimately linked to this quarrel, the counterfactual assumption that mending Allied relations would have taken longer under him is not far-fetched.

Secretary Shultz pursued a less confrontational stance with Europe than Haig.[695] When he realised that the pipeline sanctions weren't yielding results, Shultz pressed the President to shelve them, which he did by November 1982.[696] Through persistent shuttle diplomacy, Shultz ensured that the Pershing missiles were deployed across Europe as planned,

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[691] Cited in Thornton (2004), 208

[692] See, for instance: Rattner (1982); Flora (1982)

[693] The Christian Science Monitor reported in 1981: "There is at this time no certainty that the Western allies in Europe are going to allow the new American types of short- and medium-range nuclear weapons to be deployed on their territory. That is what the recent marching, shouting, and demonstrating in Western Europe is all about. Many Europeans, and not all of them on the political left, are vociferously opposed to having the new American weapons on their soil." Harsch (1981)

[694] Garthoff (1994), 548-50; Haig (1984), 246-56; Shultz (1993), 135-45

[695] Matlock (2004), 34

[696] Fitzgerald, 174

beginning in November 1983.[697] This was an achievement, given that as late as July 1983 a scholar maintained, "it is far too early to tell whether the NATO deployment decision will succeed. It has already lost the wide consensus of support it enjoyed in 1979."[698] Shultz also set about repairing some of the damage done to US-Soviet relations between 1981 and 1982. For instance, Haig had purposefully downgraded the treatment of Ambassador Dobrynin, ending the policy whereby Dobrynin, a Washington DC stalwart who had served as Ambassador since JFK, enjoyed a direct line to the Secretary of State and was allowed to enter the State Department unseen through a private entrance.[699] Shultz reinstated the old policy.[700]

There is evidence that Shultz's approach produced results where Haig failed: both attempted, through Dobrynin, to engage the Soviets in trust-building measures that signalled good faith; specifically by asking for exit visas for dissidents. Haig told Dobrynin in November 1981 that Reagan was personally interested in the fates of Nathan Sharansky and Andrei Sakharov, whose release would have a constructive effect on relations.[701] In a summary of a meeting between himself and Gromyko, Haig reported to Reagan, "I made a pitch on humanitarian issues with special reference to Jewish emigration, citing your interest and pointing out that small gestures in this field can have a disproportionately large payoff in overall relations."[702] The Soviets disregarded all such requests by Haig.

The difference to Shultz's approach requires a secondary counterfactual analysis, the upshot being that Shultz realised such a request was best made by Reagan himself, with the more fundamental point that Shultz chose to formulate foreign policy strategy only after first discerning Reagan's actual views. Shultz formulated his policy advice on the basis of what he deemed to be Reagan's own policy vision:

> "I knew where he was: he wanted to have a constructive dialogue. And he was confident in himself. There was a kind of mood around that we couldn't sit down with the Soviets because they would get the better of us somehow or other. Reagan was very confident in himself.

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697 Shultz (1993), 373
698 Garthoff (1983), 211
699 Matlock, (2004), 17
700 Oberdofer (1998), 18
701 Dobrynin, 497
702 Haig (1982), *Memorandum for the President*, RRPL

> He was more confident than I was confident in him! So basically it was Reagan and me against these other people, but ultimately I knew where he was so I knew what he wanted."[703]

Compare that approach to what Reagan noted in his diary after Haig resigned. Responding to Haig's stated reasons for stepping down – "there was a disagreement on foreign policy" – Reagan commented, "actually the only disagreement was over whether I made policy or the Sec. of State did."[704] As Matlock recollects, "Haig really didn't get along very well with anybody on the White House staff. […] He was a military commander, although highly political – he was very important of course in the Nixon White House. But he was not so much a team leader. Whereas Shultz brought statesmanship and a quality of leadership that created a team in the State Department."[705] Reagan was more supportive of Shultz than Haig. When Secretary of Defense Weinberger told Reagan in 1986 to fire Shultz, Reagan would hear none of it: "Cap had allies among some of my more conservative political supporters, who let me know they thought Shultz had gone soft on the Russians and they wanted me to fire him – an idea, I told them, that was utter nonsense."[706] By that point, the web of interaction among White House decision-makers had shifted decisively in the direction of Shultz, influencing the policy process. Replacing Haig with Shultz thus introduced an important shift in personality, paving the way for Reagan to develop a burgeoning dynamic of trust with his Secretary of State. It was this that moved Reagan to a position where he could begin to pursue his goal of improving the US' relationship with the USSR. This move in turn laid the foundation for the eventual strategy of engaging the Soviets, which ended up yielding historical results.

<u>Secondary counterfactual: how the Haig-Shultz transition paved the way for Reagan's Soviet outreach</u>

Presidents influence events beyond their cognitive style and decisions: leaders generate additional effects through the teams they surround

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[703] Shultz interview
[704] Brinkley, 91
[705] Matlock interview
[706] Reagan (1990), 605

themselves with and through the decision-making context they create for themselves, and further effects still through the counter-reactions they produce from adversaries and partners at home and abroad. I now trace the secondary impact of the Haig-Shultz transition – namely, the consequences this had for the Reagan presidency and the Cold War.

A secondary counterfactual is one where the initial change forms a baseline of sorts, from which the researcher branches into additional counterfactuals that specify various alternative changes entailed by the initial change.[707] The aim is to attribute Reagan's changing Soviet policies to factors that can be associated with Shultz's appointment. Shultz identified Reagan's policy preference of dealing with the Soviets and presented the President with a strategy of engagement. This produced a backlash from Administration hardliners. Reagan ended up having to choose from one of two clearly defined, competing options. Situations in which a policy choice is particularly narrow – i.e. between clearly specified alternatives, the actual choice vs. the one considered but not taken – generate a natural counterfactual of sorts.[708] What would have happened if the alternative policy had been selected? Showing, through documentary evidence, how events could have turned out differently requires describing the causal channel through which the policy under examination unfolded. If the evidence suggests an alternative policy would *not* have changed subsequent events dramatically, said policy channel is shown not to have causal force, implying either directly or indirectly that other causal drivers – possibly systemic – were more salient. Either way, knowledge about the influence (or lack thereof) of particular policies in complex systems is generated. By counterfactually contrasting the impact of policy alternatives, we can study how given decisions taken by leaders filter through the international system, or if they do so at all.

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[707] This requires auxiliary assumptions – 'connecting principles' (Goodman, 1983 [1954]), 17) or 'enabling counterfactuals' (Lebow, 2010, 17) – necessary to sustain the primary counterfactual. These connecting principles should be explicit and consistent with the hypothesised linkages from the real world to the antecedent, with linkages from the antecedent to the hypothesised consequent, and with each other. Goodman refers to this requirement of logical consistency as 'cotenability.'

[708] Qua Ferguson, "We should consider as plausible or probable only those alternatives which we can show on the basis of contemporary evidence that contemporaries actually considered." (1997), 86. Levy argues that this rules out too many plausible counterfactuals. (2008, 636-37). See also Lebow (2010, 48): some things are not committed to paper, and some records are lost.

As Jervis points out, "many observers were puzzled when President Reagan was quicker than his advisors to reach out to Mikhail Gorbachev and seriously explore far-reaching arms agreements because he seemed at least as hard-line as they were."[709] This puzzle is less acute when understood in light of the Haig-Shultz transition. Haig saw his role as Secretary of State as chief author and manager of the Administration's diplomacy. Pursuing his visions as the Administration's self-declared foreign policy 'vicar,' Haig believed after his first discussion with Reagan that "he had been given exclusive responsibility for foreign policy and, given Reagan's lack of experience or familiarity with the field, he planned to exercise that responsibility vigorously."[710] In the process, Haig failed to realise that Reagan was ready from early on to commence dialogue with the Soviets, once going so far as to object to Reagan sending a hand-written letter to Brezhnev, arguing that this came across as too benign.[711] Haig, like many others, fell prey to the simplistic image of Reagan as a one-dimensional aggressive anti-Communist – an image that belied the fact that Reagan was actually eager for contacts with Moscow and hoped for better relations with the Soviet Union.[712] In 1982 Reagan told officials from the Federal Republic of Germany, "The West has a historic opportunity, using a carrot and stick approach, to create a more stable relationship with the USSR."[713] In a diary entry of April 1983, Reagan took issue with those who "don't think any approach should be made to the Soviets. I think I'm hardline & will never appease but I do want to try & let them see there is a better world if they'll show by deed they want to get along with the free world."[714] When Reagan had his first ever White House visit from Foreign Minister Gromyko in 1984 – it took all of Reagan's first term for this to happen – the President began the meeting by stating, "Mr Minister I've looked forward to this meeting and wish it could have taken place 3 or 4 years ago."[715] This, the evidence suggests, was a sincere comment on Reagan's part: he included them in his handwritten preparatory notes, which were not meant for public consumption.

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709 Jervis (2013), 173
710 Garthoff (1984), 15
711 Matlock (2004), 21
712 Oberdorfer (1998), 22
713 Cited in Selvage (2009), 46
714 Brinkley, 142
715 Skinner at al (2001), 806

In contrast to Haig, Shultz did not set out to imprint his own opinions on the President's foreign policy. Instead, Shultz decided he first needed to get to the bottom of what Reagan's actual views were. His private talks with Reagan convinced Shultz of the former's readiness to move to more serious engagement with the Soviets.[716] One formative occasion to do this took place by chance in February 1983, after a blizzard meant the President abruptly had to cancel his plans for a weekend at Camp David, and spontaneously invited Shultz over to the White House for dinner. Shultz describes the meeting:

> "He asked me about my recent trip to China, and about the Soviets I had known from my Treasury days. And it dawned on me, that this man has never had a real meeting with a senior Communist figure. And he was dying to have one. [...] So I said, 'Ambassador Dobrynin is coming over next Tuesday, how about I bring him over here and you can talk to him?' So he did, and he started a dialogue. They talked for an hour-and-a-half. They talked about everything. [...] Reagan wanted to have a constructive dialogue."[717]

Hardliners like William Clark, hearing of Reagan's proposed meeting with Dobrynin, personally intervened with the President in order to stop it from going ahead.[718] Their efforts failed: Shultz's suggestion struck a chord with Reagan, giving rise to the first of many instances in which the President imprinted his personal preferences on US-Soviet relations while remaining impervious to severe intra-Administration pressures. The clandestine Reagan-Dobrynin meeting provided initial evidence that Reagan's anti-Communism did not preclude a pragmatic working relationship with the Soviets. During what was his first ever meeting with a Soviet official – in 1983, no less – the President also cut his first deal with the USSR, concerning the seven Pentecostal Christians who lived at the US embassy in Moscow in 1978. They were allowed to emigrate provided Reagan didn't publicly announce the deal. This was a mutual trust-building measure at a time when the Cold War seemed to be in deep freeze.[719]

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716 Oberdorfer (1998), 35
717 Shultz interview
718 Shultz (1993), 164
719 Shultz interview

The policy interplay between Reagan and Shultz explains the latter's comment that the break with linkage came about through conjoined thinking between him and the President.[720] This budding relationship between a President willing to engage his adversaries and a Secretary of State who saw his primary role as fleshing out and working to implement his boss' foreign policy vision generated a powerful interpersonal dynamic between Reagan and Shultz. It was through their common approach to Soviet relations that the two eventually pushed relations with Gorbachev toward a path of negotiation, one that was inconceivable under Haig. This was not because Shultz won over cabinet colleagues: infighting in the Administration did not die down as "hardliners like Weinberger feuded with Shultz and his allies, and made plain their displeasure with the idea of meaningful negotiations."[721] Unlike Haig, Shultz made himself indispensable to Reagan, who realised the Secretary of State was carrying out his (Reagan's) *own* policies. After another vicious Cabinet debate between Weinberger, Shultz and Casey in November 1984, Reagan noted in his diary, "We have trouble. Cap & Bill Casey have views contrary to George's on S. Am., the Middle East & our arms negotiations. It's so out of hand George sounds like he wants out. I can't let that happen. Actually George is carrying out my policy."[722] Shultz formulated a policy of engagement, best captured by his testimony to the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee: "Strength and realism can deter war, but only direct dialogue and negotiation can open the path toward lasting peace," backing this with the necessary bureaucratic and personal skills to push it through a largely hostile Administration.[723]

It is doubtful Haig could have been directed and overseen the normalisation of US-Soviet relations. While he was not a hardliner in the vein of Weinberger and Casey, who felt that the Cold War could only end if the US pursued a policy of unrelenting pressure towards the Soviet Union, Haig was nonetheless doubtful of the USSR's ability to transform its international position. Haig was politically close to Nixon and Kissinger, and would have been as skeptical as his two mentors were of the wide-ranging disarmament

720 Shultz letter to author
721 Brands (2014), 124
722 Brinkley, 277
723 Matlock (2004), 61

strategy eventually pursued by Reagan after Reykjavik.[724] Matlock explores the counterfactual prospect of the Cold War endgame led by Haig:

> "[Haig] was less sanguine than Reagan and Shultz that the Soviet Union could change, and therefore posed more limited goals for US policy than they eventually did. Haig would very likely have settled for something resembling a cease-fire in place. This would have reduced pressure for internal reform […] The world would have seemed safer to Western publics, but the East-West divide would have remained."[725]

Richard Haass describes Haig as "very much the foreign policy traditionalist in the year-and-a-half in the Reagan administration," contrasting him to Shultz, who "was different because he did not come in with great experience in foreign policy. For example, Shultz was much more willing to go along with some radical ideas, say, with nuclear disarmament, than I think Haig ever would have done. Shultz didn't buy into what we might call traditional, strategic thinking. Whether it was positive or negative, he was much more the outsider, if you will, in the whole strategic debate."[726] A relative open-mindedness about the possibility for change in international affairs – unburdened or unrestrained by the strictures of paradigmatic thinking about strategy – was a prerequisite for a policy that could transform East-West relations. The Reagan-Shultz duo fit the bill, a Reagan-Haig pairing did not.

Shultz's role in Reagan's choice

The progression from policy decisions to outcomes is not straightforward in a complex system like the international sphere. By linking an alternate decision to possible ways in which this could have changed outcomes, connections between decisions and effects are explored. The theoretical contribution made by this thesis is to advance knowledge of how different causal effects interact. This is not to definitively demonstrate the explanatory victory of one class of causes over another. Instead, the purpose of complexity counterfactuals is to study the interrelationship between different causal trajectories. In her 1997 book on Reagan, Beth Fischer made

[724] See, for instance, Mann (2009), 66-74
[725] Matlock (2004), 38
[726] Miller Center (2004), interview with Richard Haass

the novel argument that changes in Reagan's Soviet policy dated back to late 1983, after tensions had peaked over the downing of Korean Airlines Flight 007 and the Able Archer exercises.[727] I argue here that the crucial strategic switch from confrontation to dialogue occurred during the first half of 1983, owing in particular to the influence of George Shultz.

In the early 1980s, the Reagan Administration was quite aware of the deteriorating economic situation in the Soviet Union. A Special National Intelligence Estimate of November 1981 stressed the mounting economic problems the Kremlin faced, and how burdensome military expenditures increasingly made it difficult for the USSR to raise its citizens' standard of living.[728] Reagan raised the prospect of the Soviet Union's collapse as early as May 1981, announcing at a commencement speech in Notre Dame, "The West won't contain communism. It will transcend communism. It will dismiss it as some bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages are even now being written."[729] But, contrary to realist theorising, Soviet economic weakness was not seen by Administration officials as a sure-fire sign of the country's coming ruin. Granted, structural realist theory makes claims about the operation of the international system on a macro-level, so from this perspective the statements of agents are irrelevant – structural realists argue that economic weakness translates into dwindling international power. But politics is not just the manifestation of abstract developments; it is also a human enterprise. Abstract material developments precipitate responses by policymakers. To look only at material developments is to tell only part of the story.

The Soviet Union's economic problems produced two competing strategic approaches advocated by key members of the Reagan Administration. They are well summed-up in an August 1983 NSC briefing for the President on the Soviet Union, which presents a 'state of play' analysis of US-Soviet relations and concludes with a brief section titled 'Implications for US Policy,' which is worth repeating in full:

> "The struggle is long-term. There are no quick fixes. This means that we must devise a strategy which can be sustained for a decade or, probably, more. Two broad options in theory:

[727] Fischer (1997)
[728] See Mahnken, 407
[729] See Cox et al (2013), 143

1. Unrelenting pressure on the Soviets; and
2. Negotiation of specific differences on basis of strength, with follow-up to keep gains permanent rather than temporary."[730]

In the early months of 1983, a behind-the-scene struggle broke out in the Administration concerning which of these roads to take. By August, Shultz's preferred approach had received Reagan's endorsement, which is why the NSC briefing cited above presented the two strategies in loaded terms. A look at the run-up to the two policy options confronting Reagan sheds light on how a top cabinet member like the Secretary of State exudes patterns of influence in a Presidential Administration that affect the direction of policy.

On 3 March 1983, George Shultz presented Reagan with take on how US-Soviet relations should develop.[731] He called for an agenda of sustained dialogue with the USSR on arms control, regional issues, human rights and bilateral issues (such as economic and cultural links), outlining specific proposals the US should offer to advance and improve relations. This prompted William 'Judge' Clark, the National Security Advisor, to write his own memorandum for the President, in which he berated Shultz for failing "to reflect a full understanding of the nature of the Soviet threat and the way the Soviets operate." Clark went on the offensive, stating that Shultz's memo was

> "another attempt to explain how increased dialogue can pressure the Soviets into more acceptable behaviour. The many reasons given as to how dialogue can pressure the Soviets to do anything are weak and unconvincing, as they reflect a wishful-thinking perception about the nature of the Soviet system and its willingness to compromise."

If Shultz's recommendations were followed, Clark warned,

> "we will be sending all the wrong signals to the Soviets. We will be 'improving' US-Soviet relations on Soviet terms, and not on our terms and thus portraying an image of political weakness that is the exact

[730] Matlock (1983) *Briefing for President Reagan*: *US-Soviet Relations – State of Play*, RRPL
[731] Shultz (1983), *US-Soviet Relations – Where do we want to be and how do we get there?*, RRPL

> opposite of the image of revived spiritual strength that your election symbolised."[732]

Clark's attempted subversion of the Shultz strategy of a somewhat moderated negotiating position and constructive engagement with the Soviet Union was not a one-off. Already in January 1983, after Shultz sent Reagan a memo arguing for "an intensified dialogue with Moscow to test whether an improvement in the US-Soviet relationship is possible" and calling for a "process of dialogue", Clark followed up with his own memo. He informed Reagan he had "serious reservations about the proposed timing and method of implementation of [Shultz's] memo," arguing that his strategy would "arouse even more public expectations and would make it difficult for us to maintain a firm policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union." Clark was blunt, stating his "grave reservations" about "the overall thrust of the proposed strategy for 'improving US-Soviet relations.'" He felt that "beginning a 'process of dialogue' at all levels (Departments/Desks, Ambassadors, Ministries, Summit) would not be fruitful but counterproductive, as it would serve primarily Soviet interests." Clark, speaking for hardliners in the Reagan Administration, saw "little point in summitry until the Soviets have made a major move which clearly demonstrates a willingness to reduce threats to us and the rest of the free world."[733]

On 10 March a meeting took place in the Oval Office concerning Soviet strategy. Richard Pipes was invited to the meeting by Clark, and "proceeded to eviscerate Shultz's efforts to set up a meeting between Reagan and [Soviet Foreign Minister] Gromyko in New York that October." Hardliners argued that the Kremlin had to modify its behaviour before serious negotiations could get under way; "Weinberger and [CIA Director] Casey seconded the notion that Shultz was too soft."[734] After the battle-lines were clearly drawn, Reagan made his choice: he concluded the meeting by announcing that he wanted Shultz to be his public spokesman on arms control.[735]

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[732] William Clark (1983), *Memorandum for the President: Secretary Shultz's New Memorandum on US-Soviet relations*, RRPL

[733] Ibid

[734] Wilson, 73

[735] Ibid, 74

A memo from Shultz to Reagan in May describes the newly chosen course of bilateral discussions:

> "*At your direction*, I have embarked on a process of intensive dialogue with Dobrynin on the full range of US-Soviet issues. […] Our exchanges with the Soviets are a constant testing process, in which we probe for possible new Soviet flexibility on the issues, while insisting that real progress must involve concrete Soviet actions to address our concerns. These exchanges put us in control of that process – in a position to bring it to a halt at every step if the Soviets are unwilling to proceed with a real give-and-take. [Emphasis added]"[736]

Shultz's plan for dialogue with the Soviets was centred on the four issue areas he highlighted on 3 March – arms control, regional issues, human rights and bilateral issues – along with concrete, detailed suggestions for what to discuss in each area.[737] Around this time, a permanent replacement for Richard Pipes on the NSC was hired: Jack Matlock, the US Ambassador to Czechoslovakia, and a career diplomat fluent in Russian.[738] Matlock was initially reluctant to return to Washington, fearing he would be marginalised in a NSC staffed primarily by former CIA and military types who advocated uncompromising anti-Soviet policies. However, Matlock changed his mind when he was told, "we want you back because the President's decided it's time to negotiate with the Soviets and he doesn't have anybody on the staff here with any experience doing it."[739] Thus Reagan's policy decision in March 1983 led to personnel changes in the Administration. Matlock proceeded to craft a negotiating strategy on the basis of Shultz's proposals, which eventually became known as the 'Four-Part Agenda'. Shultz formally announced the agenda, in Reagan's name, at a White House meeting with Reagan, Vice President Bush, and Weinberger.[740] Realising that his own

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[736] Shultz (1983), *Memorandum for the President: Next Steps in US-Soviet Relations*, RRPL

[737] Ibid

[738] Here, luck came into play: Pipes was an anti-Soviet hardliner. He was on secondment from Harvard since 1980, and the university was unwilling to make an exception to its strict two-year sabbatical limit. An exception to the two-year limit made for Henry Kissinger during his time in the Nixon and Ford Administrations. I am grateful to Robert Jervis for pointing this out to me.

[739] Matlock, cited Wohlforth (1996), 76

[740] Memorandum of Conversation (1983), *Private Meeting Concerning US-Soviet Relations*, RRPL

strategy was being jettisoned, Clark wrote a memo to Reagan early in July arguing that he and his deputy Bud MacFarlane should take over the Administration's Soviet policy, while Shultz, "a solid economist, should take charge of the Pacific Basin initiative."[741] When Shultz found out about this effort to undermine him, he tendered his resignation to Reagan – who declined to accept, instead offering Shultz more authority to conduct foreign policy, as well as regular one-on-one meetings.[742]

The relevant counterfactual to consider is the alternative strategy advocated by the likes of Clark and Weinberger. Clark wrote to Reagan in 1982 that he should only participate in a summit meeting with the Soviets after "Moscow demonstrates by deeds rather than words that it is prepared to negotiate seriously."[743] This strategy – waiting for a 'major move' by the Soviets that demonstrated their good faith – was in effect a recipe for continued East-West antagonism, since it set an unattainable benchmark before any actual conversation between the leaders of the US and the USSR, let alone rapprochement, could begin. In the event, the first Reagan-Gorbachev summit (in Geneva in 1985) took place without any such prior 'good faith' demonstration on the part of the Soviets. Bud MacFarlane himself admitted that the NSC's strategy toward the USSR consisted solely of "stressing their system as best as we can."[744] Clark, who had been both Shultz's and Haig's principal adversary, resigned as National Security Advisor in autumn 1983. Haig, confiding in Ambassador Dobrynin the reasons for his resignation, cited points of disagreement with hardliners like Clark on East-West relations and strategic arms limitation talks: yet only a few months later, the same disagreements ended not with the Secretary of State's resignation, but with his the National Security Advisor's. Shultz demonstrated that a Secretary of State with the right bureaucratic mettle could fight and win such policy confrontations.

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741 I.e. relegating Shultz to diplomacy in non-Soviet affairs only. Cited in Wilson, 75. On April 4, NSC staffer John Lenczowksi sent Clark a handwritten note stating, "The next time Shultz asks you about US-Soviet relations you might consider asking him about comments on the Pacific Basin that we gave him several weeks ago." See Lenczowski (1983), RRPL. It appears that this was the final NSC effort to dislodge Shultz from his efforts to pivot the Administration's strategy towards the Soviets.

742 Wilson, 75; Oberdorfer (1998), 42

743 William Clark, *Memorandum for the President: Summits with Soviet Leaders*, RRPL

744 Don Oberdorfer interview with Robert MacFarlane (1989), Oberdorfer papers, Princeton University Library

Halfway through 1983, Shultz's strategy of engagement was in place: now it took a shift in the Politburo's position to generate momentum in US-Soviet relations. The Soviets had been aware of the new strategy from the summer of 1983. During meeting between Shultz and Dobrynin in July 1983, the Ambassador presented a statement from the Politburo that read, "It has been noted in Moscow that the Secretary of State […] spoke of the wish of the US leadership to see Soviet-American relations somewhat more improved," before listing a well-trodden litany of complaints about Soviet grievances and calling for a return to détente.[745] This reflects a hardline negotiation stance on the part of the Politburo, the product of three years of tense US-Soviet relations. Reagan's new approach did not yield immediate results. But, as complex systems are prone to do, it produced delayed, contingent effects: the US policy shift made engagement feasible – once a leader emerged on the Soviet side who reciprocated the desire for better relations.

A year later, the Reagan-Shultz agenda had taken on real shape. After Andropov's death in February 1984 Reagan began pushing for a summit with Chernenko. On March 2 1984, the President opened a high-level Administration meeting on US-Soviet relations "by observing that he felt the time had come to think of something between a get-acquainted meeting and a full summit with the Soviet leader. Such a meeting would allow them to talk about the situation and to lay plans for the future."[746] In a further indication of what the hardliners' alternative Soviet strategy envisioned, Weinberger warned in a meeting three weeks later, "If we become too eager the Soviet Union will sense weakness" and argued that the US should not pursue progress on strategic arms reduction talks in 1984.[747] Reagan was undeterred, addressing Weinberger's point directly: "We want an agreement [on arms reduction], but we want a good agreement. I do not intend to make unilateral concessions to get them back to the table, but I believe we must have a credible agenda on arms control."[748]

That same month, Reagan sent a letter to Chernenko and informed him, "Our dialogue has reached a point where […] we should look for specific areas in which we can move our relationship in a more positive

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[745] Dobrynin, 506

[746] Memorandum of Conversation (1984), *Meeting Concerning US-Soviet Relations*, RRPL

[747] Cited in Wilson, 85

[748] Minutes of NSC Planning Group (1984), RRPL

direction."[749] He proposed steps such as trade-offs in arms reduction talks and a chemical weapons ban.[750] In a memo to Reagan that describes a draft response to one of Chernenko's letters, Shultz informed the President that the proposed response "reaffirms the US commitment to arms control and our readiness to be flexible in the search for agreements [and] attempts to reassure the Soviets that we are not a threat." Shultz sought to get Chernenko's attention by expressing Reagan's "readiness to consider in the CDE [Conference on Disarmament in Europe] a non-use of force undertaking if the Soviets agree to some of the specific confidence-building measures we have proposed."[751] These were concrete, pragmatic signals to the Soviets that the US was interested in an improved relationship – signals from the US side which at that stage went unreciprocated, and moreover were contrary to what linkage would have dictated.

Little came of this initiative: now it was the Soviets' turn to be intransigent. Chernenko replied by stating that a summit was out of the question. In an interview with *Pravda*, the Communist Party mouthpiece, Gromyko explained that the "US Administration continues to place its bet on military force, on securing military superiority, and on forcing its concepts on other peoples", adding that arms reduction negotiations could not begin until Pershing missiles – deployed in November 1983 in response to the Soviets' SS-20 deployment of 1979 – were removed again. This stance was as uncompromising and unrealistic as Clark's insistence that the Soviets make a 'major move' before any meeting could take place. In June, Chernenko wrote a letter that once again focused on familiar but worn-out Soviet complaints about NATO encirclement. By this point, Reagan's thinking about the Soviet Union had shifted considerably. His private thoughts about Chernenko's letter are illustrative: it strengthened his conviction to push for a summit.

> "I have a gut feeling we should pursue [a summit]. [Chernenko's] reply to my letter is in hand & it lends support to my idea that while we go on believing, & with some good reason, that the Soviets are plotting

[749] Reagan letter to Chernenko (1984), RRPL

[750] Matlock (2004) 88

[751] Shultz (1984), *Memorandum for the President: Response to Chernenko's March 19 Letter*, RRPL

against us & mean us harm, maybe they are scared of us & think we are a threat. I'd like to go face to face & explore this with them."[752]

Reagan continued to prepare the ground for a summit and intensified his correspondence with the Soviet leadership in 1984. Chernenko reiterated that the US had to remove its intermediate nuclear force missiles from Europe before any meeting could take place.[753] Matlock suggests that this antagonistic stance had to do with the fact that "the Soviet leadership did not want to deal seriously with Reagan in 1984 lest they aid his re-election."[754] Still, as a result of Reagan's new engagement strategy, all the pieces were in place for major moves in US-Soviet relations once a suitable partner emerged on the Soviet side, which happened in 1985 after Gorbachev assumed power.

Reagan and Gorbachev met within less than a year. There was little concrete progress at their Geneva Summit other than a commitment to more talks, and minor symbolic steps such as the re-opening of consulates in Kiev and New York which had been shut after the invasion of Afghanistan. But upfront results from such meetings are rarely the key drivers in complex systems: the dynamics that enabled this meeting to come about in the first place are more interesting. The fact that the US side was ready to enter serious negotiations without first having to go through intra-Administration debates (Shultz had won the argument a year earlier) and designing a strategy (Shultz and Matlock's four-part agenda was in place since the summer of 1983) made it possible to rapidly improve relations if a Soviet leader so inclined came to power. A few months after his first meeting with Reagan in Geneva, Gorbachev launched the process of perestroika with a speech to his Foreign Ministry and a personal memorandum to the Politburo in May and July 1986, respectively.[755] As Greenstein notes, the bulk of change in superpower relations – the transformation of Reagan's and Gorbachev's mindset, perceptions and expectations – took place during Reagan's second term.[756] The seeds for this transformation were laid through

[752] Brinkley, 247
[753] For an overview of this period see FitzGerald, 239-240
[754] Matlock (2004), 88
[755] Savranskaya et al (2010)
[756] Greenstein (1996)

the interactions between Shultz and Reagan that paved the way for constructive engagement with a Soviet leader willing to negotiate.

When a renewed snag arose in US-Soviet relations in the form of the Daniloff affair in 1986 (the arrest of a US journalist, wrongly presumed to be a spy), the NSC once again recommended taking a tough stand against the Soviets. Reagan resisted and stuck to the Shultz strategy, supporting quiet negotiations which led to Daniloff being freed, enabling the Reykjavik summit to go ahead as planned.[757] At long last, an approach crafted three years earlier began to pay dividends: "After Geneva and Reykjavik, the Soviet new thinkers did not believe that the West would attack them, or ever seriously intended to."[758] Such positive feedback loops, generated by interaction patterns between leaders, can effect dramatic change in a complex system and overturn even entrenched structures of hostility. Specific policy choices by Reagan, put on the menu by Shultz, made this interactive process of engagement possible. Reagan disavowed the advice of his hardline colleagues and followed Shultz's prescription from 1983 onwards, preparing for a meaningful dialogue even in the absence of concrete Soviet signals, and eventually recognising Gorbachev not as an extension of previous Soviet leaders, but as a significant break from the past and, concomitantly, an opportunity for the President to help foster change in the Soviet Union.[759] The Reagan-Gorbachev interactions that Shultz made possible were central to this: they encouraged the formulation and solidification of trust, which had been sorely missing from the US-Soviet relationship at least since the fraying of détente under Carter. Reagan's subsequent dealings with Gorbachev persuaded him that the new Soviet leader was not simply out to rebuild the USSR so as to challenge the USA anew. Gorbachev in turn began to pursue deep domestic reforms convinced that the US would not exploit Soviet weaknesses for its own gains. Not everyone shared Reagan's trust in Gorbachev. The principal anti-Soviet hardliner, Secretary of Defence Caspar Weinberger "was utterly convinced that there was no potential benefit in negotiating anything with the Soviet leaders and that most negotiations were

[757] See Mann (2009), Chapter 6

[758] Sarotte (2011), 30

[759] The argument that Gorbachev was a Communist in sheep's clothing was one that Nixon and Kissinger never tired of making, as Mann amply documents (2009).

dangerous traps." [760] Indeed, as late as 1988, Weinberger wrote the following:

> "A recent, rather startling poll indicated that 71% of Republicans and 74% of Democrats believe that the United States can trust the General Secretary of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev. Trust in what sense? Trust that Mr Gorbachev will turn his back on the goals of the Soviet state? Trust that he is becoming more like us in economic values? Trust that the Soviet Union will never violate an agreement with the United States (the historical record notwithstanding)? Trust that Mr Gorbachev is diametrically opposed to the precepts of the Communist Party that he heads (precepts that are, of course, diametrically opposed to Western values and principles)? All of this is highly unlikely."[761]

The Reagan-Shultz constellation was a complementary interactive relationship that paved the way for US-Soviet rapprochement: while Reagan, qua Shimko, knew he wanted a less dangerous relationship with the USSR, he could not achieve this without the skills of Shultz, who "provided two ingredients that were otherwise lacking: a persistent and practical drive toward improved relations through the accomplishment of tangible objectives […] and organisational skills to mobilize at least parts of the fractious US government to interact on a systematic basis with the Soviet government." [762] Reagan wanted rapprochement to happen, Shultz recogonised this, and together with Gorbachev the two US statesmen made it happen.

<u>The role of policy choices in producing complex outcomes</u>

It is a mistake to trace a linear causal flow from Soviet weakness to retrenchment: this would have been the least likely outcome in a climate of animosity.[763] The fact that the USSR faced severe economic hardship in the

[760] Matlock (2004, 114

[761] Weinberger (1988)

[762] Oberdorfer (1998), 438-439

[763] Economic weakness is not prompting Russia to moderate its behaviour in Ukraine so far, whilst a climate of hostility with the West persists.

1980s was in and of itself indeterminate of the future course of Soviet foreign policy: it was no more than one aspect of the decision-making context that leaders confronted, and one with unclear implications. As Matlock has argued, Reagan and Shultz "recognised that the Soviet leaders faced mounting problems, but understood that US attempts to exploit them would strengthen Soviet resistance to change rather than diminish it."[764] The US was reluctant to make concessions, but did not actively seek to weaken its adversary. Instead US policy makers used the opportunity to begin dealing with a Soviet leader who seemed more interested in dialogue than his predecessors. As discussed in the next Chapter, this set off interactions that culminated in the 1987 INF Treaty, which eliminated an entire class of nuclear weapons in Europe and technically handed the Soviet Union (with its bigger armed forces) conventional superiority. Reagan pushed the INF Treaty through against the recommendations of large parts of the Republican establishment. A more moderate leader than Reagan with less strongly held convictions concerning the trustworthiness of the Soviet Union under Gorbachev would have struggled to justify such a treaty.

Systemic trends present policymakers with an operating environment, but not with faits accomplis. Structural realism helps us understand the international situation faced by Gorbachev and Reagan in the 1980s, but it does not account for how the two leaders acted against the open-ended backdrop of this situation. Brooks and Wohlforth note their analytical focus is "on the overall shift of retrenchment – that is, the sum total of dozens upon dozens of critical decisions over a series of years which collectively added up" to the end of the US-Soviet confrontation.[765] Researchers attuned to complex causation understand the limits of such a linear causal analysis: decisions are not additive, they are interactive. Had critical decisions gone differently, it would have affected further decisions down the line, and possibly acted against the emergence of better relations. In spring of 1983, an alternative course of action regarding the Soviet Union – increasing the burden of superpower confrontation – was open to Reagan, which he rejected in favour of outreach. Had he not done so, the subsequent benign development of relations between the US and USSR becomes harder to envisage. For his part, Gorbachev's accession to power and willingness to

[764] Matlock (2004), 76

[765] Brooks and Wohlforth (2007), 450

deal seriously with Reagan sparked vigorous debates among the US foreign policy establishment about whether the new Soviet leader could be trusted, or was primarily interested in revitalising a declining Soviet Union. A hardline US foreign policy which allowed for serious East-West negotiations only *after* significant Soviet concessions would have made it exceedingly difficult for Reagan to reach out to Gorbachev in 1985.

The impact that the appointment of George Shultz had on the effectiveness of Reagan's foreign policy implementation provides an example of the effects of interactive agency on international affairs. An effective negotiator, tasked by his or her principal with a strategic vision that both support, can generate substantial momentum behind a policy goal. Shultz helped Reagan to pivot his Administration's Soviet strategy away from seeking confrontation and towards a more cooperative approach. Hardliners pushed back, advising Reagan not to follow Shultz's course. Reagan was aware of the sharp policy difference, remarking in his autobiography: "Cap [Weinberger] was not as interested as George [Shultz] in opening negotiations with the Russians, and some of his advisors at the Pentagon strongly opposed some of my ideas on arms control that George supported."[766] In the absence of Reagan's choice to engage, rapprochement with Gorbachev a few years later would have been much more difficult. Thus, Reagan's March 1983 decision to endorse Shultz's strategy opened up a causal channel of consequence in the complex fabric of US-Soviet relations in the 1980s.

Leadership calibrations, as this chapter shows, can have important consequences in the domain of foreign policy. But puzzles remain. It is quite possible that the 'agency shift' that George Shultz brought about was the product of his determination to learn from Haig's mistakes rather than repeat them. As Shultz wrote, Reagan "liked his staff around him as he made decisions, and he liked general agreement. That was what had gotten Al Haig in trouble. Haig tried to get the President to make decisions on his own or let Haig make them. Ronald Reagan wanted to talk things through with others."[767] This subtle point merits highlighting: the question is whether Shultz only acted the way he did because he learned from Haig's mistakes. It is furthermore possible that Haig could have gradually changed his manners

[766] Reagan (1990), 605
[767] Shultz (1993), 166

and ended up understanding Reagan's true intentions regarding the Soviets over time. The possibility cannot be dismissed out of hand.[768]

Nonetheless, Shultz's impact appears to have been significant in terms of East-West as well as Allied relations.[769] It was his addition to the cabinet that allowed Reagan's peace-making instincts to reveal themselves for the first time. This generated decisive leeway and momentum in the entrenched Cold War dynamic, paving the way for substantial progress to be made once Gorbachev assumed the post of General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in March 1985. In this way, interactive agency – combined with other, subsequent developments – turned out to be of great importance in paving the way for superpower reconciliation to take place. When the Cold War seemed at its most heated, the appointment of a canny diplomat who recognised Reagan's ultimate peace-building desires introduced the initial conditions that later enabled the relationship between the US and the USSR to undergo revolutionary changes.

[768] See Gewartzman (1982)

[769] "Shultz's role is key to understanding the end of the Cold War, a point overlooked in many scholarly accounts […] underplaying the role of Shultz is a theme that groups together explanations of differing perspectives." Wilson, 249

CHAPTER FIVE

CHOICES, PERSONALITIES, AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE REAGAN-GORBACHEV RELATIONSHIP

A rock pile ceases to be a rock pile the moment a single man contemplates it, bearing within him the image of a cathedral.
Antoine de Saint-Exupery

You know, Ron, I wish you would stop this anti-nuclear stuff. What am I going to say to the ladies at Greenham Common?
Margaret Thatcher

I now turn to the interactive effects among decision-makers that created the context in which a sustained Cold War thaw could be pursued. A fierce, sharply defined policy debate in the Reagan Administration concerned how to respond to a weakening Soviet Union: whereas George Shultz and Jack Matlock advocated negotiations, Caspar Weinberger and other hardliners wanted to hold off on serious negotiations and let the Soviet strategic position deteriorate further. Existing IR theory gives little insight into how such debates transition into policy decisions. Complexity theory, on the other hand, can account for the emergence of a co-operative course. The substance of the competing Soviet strategies is examined and it is shown how each would have created a different context for negotiations with the Soviet leadership. Because the policies advocated by Shultz and Matlock resonated with Reagan more than thhose of the hardliners, patterns of influence in the Reagan Administration shifted decisively toward a strategy that made improvements possible. President Reagan was ready to engage

the Soviet leadership from 1984 onwards – a full year before Gorbachev rose to power. Once Reagan found a willing partner in Gorbachev, their incipient relationship ballooned into the most ambitious round of arms reduction talks of the Cold War. Despite missteps, the relationship continued to evolve in a positive feedback effect, buffeted by the idiosyncrasies of both agents, especially towards Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative. In the end, personal negotiations, for which both Reagan and Gorbachev overcame significant domestic opposition, produced the Intermediate Nuclear Force Treaty of 1987. This was a milestone: the first nuclear arms reduction treaty of the Cold War, eliminating an entire class of missiles. It remains in force to this day.

An emerging critical juncture and a gap in IR theory

By the mid-1980s, the evolving structural context presented the leaders of both the US and the Soviet Union with a critical juncture. The USSR was burdened with costly obligations abroad and a stagnating economy at home. The US, by contrast, was going through an economic boom. The balance of power was shifting, in other words. Brooks and Wohlforth argue that any Soviet leader's response was heavily stacked in favour of conciliatory options.[770] But the perceptions of policymakers at the time did not reflect that view. Anti-Soviet hardliners in Reagan's defence establishment such as Secretary of Defence Caspar Weinberger and his assistant Richard Perle never argued that a change of Soviet goals or strategy was imminent because of the country's economic problems.[771] This despite the fact that "throughout the 1980s the intelligence community warned of the weakening Soviet economy."[772]

The problems that the Soviet Union faced were not hidden from the view of US policymakers. Robert Gates, Deputy CIA Director under Reagan, reports: "November of 1985 [was] the first time I ever heard CIA briefers tell Reagan the Soviet regime cannot last. It cannot survive, it's doomed, and the degree of alienation, of social alienation and economic decline, says it's going to fall apart, and sooner rather than later. Still no dates."[773] The USSR's troubles required a policy response by the US: should the Administration

[770] Brooks and Wohlforth (2007)
[771] Shimko, 132
[772] Berkowitz and Richelson, 37
[773] Robert Gates interview

exert more pressure on the Soviet Union, as NSDD-75 suggested, until the regime imploded? Or had the time come to reach out to the Soviets, despite the fact that they were adversaries? IR theory offers no policy advice in such micro-situations, which is one of the reasons for the wide gap between policymaking and academia in IR.[774] The deteriorating position of the Soviet Union produced different policy prescriptions in Reagan's cabinet: it follows that the makeup of the Administration and the relationships between the President and his key advisors played a substantial role in determining how US-Soviet relations developed. Reagan entered office without any blueprint for arms control other than vague calls for real reductions, negotiations from strength, closing the window of vulnerability and establishing 'equality.'[775]

Structural IR theories describe the causal dominance of systemic variables in influencing outcomes in international relations. But at the macro-level of analysis all that is observable is the direction into which structural developments seemingly 'push' units. Complexity theory offers deeper insights into how policymakers interact with the structural forces that abound in social systems. Findings about complex causal interactions and emergent effects are more contingent and causally open-ended than the findings derived from a reductionist macro-structural base. Complexity features in explanations of how political outcomes are brought about by way of leaders' interactions with structures.

But how can we link theories about the behaviour of leaders with theories about macro-developments? Herrmann describes this challenge:

> "How does one create an interactive theory that takes the perspective of an actor in the system, rather than that of the system itself, while at the same time taking into account that the actor is constantly responding to perceived external feedback to its prior actions, new

[774] Avery and Desch (2014) review the policy relevance of various scholarly disciplines that involve the study of political and economic affairs: "Aside from economics, the scholarly disciplines policymakers found of greatest interest were area studies and history […] compared to other disciplines, political science did poorly." This is especially true of non-qualitative approaches. "Conversely, the more sophisticated social science methods such as formal models, operations research, theoretical analysis, and quantitative analysis tended to be categorized more often as "not very useful" or "not useful at all," calling into question the direct influence of these approaches to international relations." See also Sagan (2014)

[775] Shimko, 245

initiatives of others, differing situations, and shifts in the international structure?"[776]

Mahoney and Snyder offer an analytical approach that integrates structure and agency (in the context of democratising states): they look at critical junctures, when "political action created structures that had persistent causal effects which shaped the subsequent trajectories of political change."[777] Crucially, this "does not assume that structural factors predetermine critical junctures; instead, these junctures are based on contingency."[778] Theirs is a model of 'punctuated agency': political choices, fashioned by leaders at crucial turning points, set the course towards new structural realities, or alternatively creates further turning points. This micro-analytical approach undertaken here sheds light on the occlusions of structural IR theory. Structural realism explains the dynamics that ratcheted up tensions in the early 1980s. Being systemic in origin, these developments would have occurred with or without Reagan in power. To better understand what happened next, and why confrontation was followed by reconciliation, agency – specifically, the interactive formulation and implementation of policy, and the contingent emergent effects of policy decisions – enter the analytical picture.

The strategy advocated by Shultz and Matlock harnessed the concept of emergence and paved the way for improved US-Soviet relations before Gorbachev assumed power

The make-up of an Administration's key staff and the President's interaction with his team give the policy-making process its core character. The web of relations and patterns of influence in an Administration are important inputs to its eventual policy output. The case of Shultz, described in the preceding chapter, is a prime example thereof. The causal role of intra-Administration interactions applies to all Presidencies, something that is illustrated again in the following chapter when it comes to the George H. W. Bush Administration. The nature of a President's relations with his or her advisors, and of the advisors with each other, determines the content and

[776] Hermann (1995), 248
[777] Mahoney and Snyder, 16
[778] Snyder (2005), 59

texture of foreign policy and diplomacy. Policy channels unfold and trajectories develop in meandering and diffuse ways in complex systems. Leaders provide an analytical opening for theorists as they infuse foreign policy with their own flavour by setting the policy agenda internally via their key political lieutenants, which ends up affecting policy outcomes.

Until Reagan endorsed Shultz's strategy in spring of 1983, Administration officials jostled to define the Administration's policy preferences toward the Soviet Union.[779] William Clark, NSC Advisor from 1982 to 1983, stated that Reagan's goal was "to stress out the Soviet economy, particularly its hard currency cash flow, and fully exploit its rigidities, to engage Moscow on every front – through our military build-up, the war of ideas, and the battleground of the Third World."[780] Richard Pipes declared with not inconsiderable boldness, "because Reagan knew what he wanted but could not articulate his feelings in terms that made sense to foreign policy professionals at home and abroad, I took it upon myself to do so on his behalf."[781] Shimko has shown Pipes' claims to be false: years before Gorbachev came to power, Reagan was much more open to the possibility of Soviet–American cooperation than were his advisors.[782] Serious outreach only began after Reagan's belief pattern, aided by his interactions with Shultz, drifted away from stressing the Soviet Union as an enemy – grounded in a Manichean world-view that prioritised the challenge Communism posed to democracy – toward a more open-ended stance reflecting faith in reason, communication and negotiation as means to overcome conflict.

Reagan's move toward a 'softer' view of Soviet intentions was required to overcome the mutual suspicion between East and West that drove the arms race. Reagan was the first US President to shift his belief pattern in the direction of a more optimistic, upbeat approach to arms control. Shultz had a more moderate image of the Soviet Union relative to Weinberger, as well as a more nuanced cognitive style, and thus a looser 'image-policy' preference relationship.[783] As Shultz put it in testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in June 1983, "we are not so deterministic as to believe that geopolitics and ideological competition must ineluctably lead to permanent

[779] Wilson, 23
[780] Comments reported by Clark aide Roger Robinson; cited in Wilson, 30
[781] Pipes (2003), 199
[782] See Shimko (1991)
[783] Ibid, 247

and dangerous confrontation."[784] This reduced sense of determinism in the Administration's relations with the Soviet Union had important consequences. Shultz recalls, "Coming into office as Secretary of State at a time when we were confronted with tremendous problems, the economist in me asked: 'Where are we trying to go, and what kind of strategy should we employ to get there?' recognising that results would often be a long time in coming." [785] Shultz combined a diplomatic disposition that favoured negotiations with a dynamic view of the US-Soviet relationship: his strategic approach was open-ended in scope, but directional in its assumption that the very process of engagement would affect the trajectory of US-Soviet relations. By contrast, hardliners had a rigid view of the Cold War. In 1984, NSC staffer John Lenczowski warned National Security Advisor Bud MacFarlane, "an atmospheric 'improvement of relations' would be a deception" which "would send a great signal of weakness to the Soviets."[786] This advice was static in its assumption that Reagan's approach relations with the Soviet Union could not influence the course that the relationship would take.

Jack Matlock, by contrast, impressed on Reagan the notion that the point of negotiating was not a way for the US to topple a faltering Soviet regime: it was to engage for the sake of engagement. "We must reject the idea that reaching agreements with the Soviets is an end in itself," Matlock argued, "and also the idea that the Soviet system is on the verge of collapse." [787] This does justice to the operating principle in complex systems that the direction of events is difficult to target directly. Matlock, echoing George Kennan's Long Telegram, advised that the best Reagan could hope for was that more benign US-Soviet atmospherics could provide a context in which a more moderate Soviet leadership could emerge: "The forthcoming generational change of Soviet leaders provides some basis for hope that the system will change. Future leaders *will face a choice* between a course of further centralization, militarization and oppression and one of moving toward a more open system. [Emphasis added]" [788] The most realistic aim of Reagan's new Soviet strategy was to influence the direction of Moscow's

[784] See The New York Times (1983)
[785] Oberdorfer (1989); see also Wilson, 64-66
[786] Lenczowski (1984), *Memorandum for Robert McFarlane*, RRPL
[787] Matlock (1984), *Dealing with the Soviets*, RRPL
[788] Matlock (1984), *Memorandum for the President*, RRPL

choice. The key to making the engagement strategy succeed was for the US to "put forward negotiable proposals and be prepared to make reasonable compromises and trade-offs." The diplomatic advice Matlock offered was permeated with principles of complexity theory, particularly the concept of emergence.

Emergence is the process of creating new properties in a complex system "due to the pattern of interactions between the elements of the system over time." [789] This is what George Kennan recognised in 1946: while he could not predict the future of US-Soviet relations, containment provided the most likely context within which new Soviet leaders could arise who wished to change their relationship with the US. Similarly, what Matlock suggested was laying the seeds for eventual US-Soviet rapprochement through persistent diplomacy. In due course, this brought about a fast-moving series of interactions between Reagan and Gorbachev that produced the INF treaty. This outcome, again, reflects emergence: "Emergent phenomena are observable at the macro-level, even though they are generated by micro-level elements."[790] At a time when the Soviet Union was confronting grave challenges, Matlock and Shultz recognised that the future of the Soviet Union was not a linear function of US policy. A 'linear' policy of doubling down on Soviet troubles through a more confrontational approach could easily have brought about the opposite consequence. The USSR's relationship with the US was one of many dynamic elements that affected the trajectory of its development, and while the US could not directly shape Soviet domestic affairs, it could try to provide the conditions by which to aid a positive evolution.

Shultz was made aware of this from the outset of his role in the Reagan Administration. In a 1982 State Department overview of US-Soviet relations, written in the aftermath of Andropov's appointment as General Secretary, the department's Soviet experts described the 'View from Moscow', including the problems the regime faced: "instability in Eastern Europe, declining growth, productivity and morale, and Western – especially American – rearmament." The paper outlined the choices the regime faced: "At one extreme, economic reform, reduced military spending, and international retreat; at the other extreme, accelerated military growth and

[789] Kissane (2014), 229
[790] Ibid

broad expansionism whatever the cost," and pointed out that "it would take zero growth and serious hunger to force military and international contraction, given that this would mean abandonment of Brezhnev's main achievement: status, might and reach comparable to ours." But "because *they doubt our willingness to respond positively to anything less than a broad Soviet retreat*, which they will not contemplate," the state of relations in 1982 made it likely that Moscow would "wait for a new American administration before attempting to improve US-Soviet relations. [Emphasis added]"[791] As the previous chapter showed, Shultz succeeded in shifting Reagan's negotiation stance toward one where the Administration *did* respond positively to developments less then a broad Soviet retreat. In effect, Reagan reached out to the Soviets before he had a real case to do so.

After Reagan pivoted to Shultz's strategy of engagement in March 1983, his perceptions of the Soviets began to evolve. A NSC memorandum on US-Soviet relations from that same month features handwritten comments by Reagan, who underlined this sentence in the paper: "the Soviets view the very fact that we are sitting at the table with them as something they forced us to do." Reagan's hand-written comments in the margins dispute the point, noting, "I don't agree with that. History shows they have always resisted coming to the table."[792] The paper foresaw bleak prospects regarding the zero-zero proposal on Intermediate Nuclear Forces – i.e. Reagan's opening offer for INF negotiations in 1981, widely perceived as disingenuous in calling for the Soviets to dismantle their already deployed SS-20s in exchange for the US not going ahead with its own deployment. Again, Reagan commented by hand, "I don't believe this is accurate. We knew from the 1st *we might have to settle for less* but whatever gains we made might make it easier to ultimately get zero-zero."[793] [Italics added] This represented a shift in Reagan's thinking: recall his response to Nitze after the Walk in the Woods that the Soviets had to cut all their SS-20s, not gradually 'to make it easier to get zero-zero', but immediately.

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[791] Bremer (1982)

[792] The irony here is that Reagan's point about the Soviet Union resisting negotiations historically is completely false –what matters, however, is his belief in the significance of the (apparently new) Soviet interest in negotiations. Reagan's remarks illustrate how hard it is to pigeonhole his foreign policy thinking: a 'hawk' would not have written these comments, and nor would a 'dove'.

[793] National Security Council (1983), *Memorandum: Soviet SALT Compliance and US-Soviet Relations*', RRPL.

Reagan's views on negotiations continued to shift throughout 1983. In November, NATO's Able Archer exercises took the alliance through a full-scale simulated release of nuclear weapons. This appeared to produce fears in Moscow of an impending first-strike. After reading a CIA report on Soviet anxieties of a nuclear attack, Reagan asked his then-National Security Advisor Bud McFarlane "Do you suppose they really believe that? I don't see how they could believe that – but it's something to think about."[794] When McFarlane sent Reagan an article titled 'Does the Soviet Union Fear the United States?' Reagan responded the following: "Bud, this is very revealing and confirms much of what I've been trying to say but didn't have the knowledge or the words."[795] Matlock confirms, "once Reagan began to realise that [the Soviets] might really be [afraid of the US], this was something that, when he met with Mitterrand, when he met with Thatcher, he would ask them directly "'Can they really worry about us?' And the answer was – 'Maybe they do. We have to take that into account.'"[796] Reagan, aided by Shultz and Matlock, was increasingly attuned to the effects of the bilateral context on US-Soviet relations, and that his own behaviour contributed to the nature of this context. If the Soviet Union feared the US, it was less likely to change its foreign policy.

Reagan eventually absorbed the point that Moscow's foreign policy choices depended in no small part on how the US approached its relationship with the Soviet Union. This softening in Reagan's perception of the Soviets was important. Improving relations between the two superpowers is much harder to envisage had Gorbachev continued to perceive Reagan as belligerently anti-Soviet. Gorbachev could only embark on his fundamental domestic reforms by convincing the Soviet leadership that the greatest threat the country faced was not an attack by its Western rivals, but instead the failure of Communism at home.[797]

<u>Nothing would have come of Reagan's agenda for negotiations without Gorbachev</u>

[794] Quoted in Fischer, *A Cold War Conundrum* (1997)
[795] Quoted in Wilson, 84
[796] Matlock interview
[797] Wilson, 103

The origin and development of Reagan's policy towards the Soviets tells only half the story of how a better relationship could take hold. It took the rise of Gorbachev to bring about improved dynamics of interacting agency in the bilateral relationship. Shifting patterns of influence in the Reagan Administration paved the way for negotiations: the subsequent dynamic unfolded primarily between Reagan and Gorbachev.

Both Andropov and Chernenko spurned Reagan's advances. In December 1983, Reagan, by then more aware of the seriousness with which the Soviets viewed his efforts to strengthen American power, wrote to Andropov stressing the "opportunities – indeed the necessity – for us to work together to prevent conflicts, expand our dialogue, and place our relationship on a more stable and constructive footing. Though we will be vigorous in protecting our interests and those of our friends and allies, we do not seek to challenge the security of the Soviet Union and its people."[798] But a positive interactive dynamic did not take hold. Andropov interpreted the political context to warrant a hardening of Soviet resistance to America, rather than retrenchment, remarking to an aide, "If we begin to make concessions, defeat would be inevitable."[799] In January 1984, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko maintained, "Reagan and his team are trying to destroy us, and we really have to do something against it."[800] In an April 1984 letter from Reagan to Chernenko (who replaced Andropov after his death two months before), the President added a hand-written postscript, ruminating on "the tragedy and scale of Soviet losses in warfare throughout the ages," emphasising "neither I nor the American people hold any offensive intentions toward you or the Soviet people," and calling for a "common and urgent purpose" of achieving "a lasting reduction of tensions between us." Chernenko met this with a dismissive response: "Try to look at the realities of the international situation from our end, and at once one will see distinctly that the Soviet Union is encircled by a chain of American military bases."[801]

With Reagan reaching out in earnest from 1984 onwards, the ball moved to the Kremlin's court at a time it felt acutely vulnerable. In terms of the balance of power at the time, the coercive aspect of Reagan's strategy had reached a high watermark. The successful Pershing II missile deployment

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[798] Reagan to Andropov (1983)
[799] Cited in Zubok (2007) 275
[800] Cited in Grachev (2008), 21
[801] Letter exchange documented in Wilson, 83

in Western Europe by the end of 1983 represented a major defeat for the Soviet Union, which had pulled out all the stops (literally – Andropov had instructed the Politburo to pull 'all levers' to halt the deployment) to try and prevent this from happening.[802] The Pershing II missiles had been a political hot potato in Western Europe, where the anti-nuclear movement mobilised enormous protests, particularly in the UK and Germany, in an effort to prevent these weapons from being stationed. Shultz was "very conscious that everything we did in Washington was important because it would influence public opinion in European countries, which in turn would create a context that was more or less supportive of deployments."[803] Shultz knew that Reagan's outreach to the Soviets – whether effective or not – would reassure NATO Allies that the Administration was, in fact, committed to defusing East-West tensions rather than just creating a more hostile Cold War climate. Shultz later commented, "I think the turning point was when we deployed Pershing missiles in Germany and [the Soviets] had to face up to the fact that the alliance had cohesion and strength."[804] Separately, he wrote that the INF deployments demonstrated "allied unity and resolve […] and that strength was recognized as crucial to diplomacy."[805] The Pershing deployment mattered to Shultz's strategy because "if the West did not deploy Pershing II and cruise missiles, there would be no incentive for the Soviets to negotiate seriously for nuclear weapons reductions."[806] With the Pershings in place, a crucial plank in NATO's bargaining position had been nailed down.

As Shultz wrote to Reagan in March 1983, "the Soviets must recognize that, while we are serious in our arms control proposals, we also have the will and capacity to correct the imbalances which their military buildup has created." This could produce the chance "to make some progress toward a more stable and constructive US-Soviet relationship over the next two years or so," which could only occur "if the Soviet leadership concludes that it has no choice but to deal with this Administration on the basis of the comprehensive [four-part] agenda we have established."[807] The four-part agenda for dialogue with the Soviet Union (first outlined by Shultz in advance of the key months of the intra-Administration debate on whether to engage

802 See, for instance, Volkogonov (1983), *Meeting of the Politburo*
803 Miller Center interview with Haass (2004)
804 Miller Center interview with Shultz (2002)
805 Shultz (1993), 225
806 Ibid, 227
807 Shultz (1983), *Memorandum for the President on US-Soviet Relations*, RRPL

the Soviets) covered the broad areas of arms control, regional conflicts, bilateral relations and human rights.[808] The Shultz strategy insisted on this agenda as the basis for all US-Soviet talks, in an effort to bring the Soviets to deal with the US on their terms, but also to undercut his domestic foes: when in October 1984 "Bud McFarlane said the Soviets wanted to deal with us on arms control issues only," Shultz countered, "That is why we have to insist on our four-part agenda, to force them to deal with human rights and the explosive regional issues, as well as bilateral issues."[809] As Matlock wrote in 'Dealing with the Soviets,' "we must not permit the prospect of reaching agreement in some areas to inhibit our reaction to Soviet encroachments on our interests in other areas. We must compete while negotiating." This implicitly criticised linkage: coercive diplomacy provided a diverse enough array of tools to handle disputes in one area without the entire US-Soviet relationship having to suffer.[810]

<u>After Gorbachev assumed power, his interactions with Reagan allowed a new superpower dynamic to take hold</u>

Shultz's four-part agenda set up a framework within which relations could improve once the Soviets reached a point where they were ready to negotiate. This missing piece of the puzzle was filled with the appointment of Mikhail Gorbachev as General Secretary in March 1985. On the day of his election, Shultz visited the Soviet Embassy to sign the condolence book for Chernenko. During his visit he informed the Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin that Reagan realised new opportunities were emerging in US-Soviet relations, and that it would be unforgivable if they weren't taken advantage of – even if the outcome would be, as complexity theory suggests – unpredictable.[811] Relations with Moscow would be high on the President's list of priorities, and Dobrynin later reflected, "Reagan wanted to establish a dialogue at the highest level from the very beginning."[812] Shultz handed Dobrynin a letter from Reagan to Gorbachev reiterating the President's desire to start a conversation. The following day, National Security Advisor

[808] Shultz (1993), 266
[809] Ibid, 491
[810] Matlock (1984), *Dealing With the Soviets*, RRPL
[811] Dobrynin, 566
[812] Ibid, 566

Bud McFarlane visited the Soviet Ambassador to sign the condolence book and repeat Reagan's message.

Reagan was aware that Gorbachev was a new kind of Soviet leader. Margaret Thatcher, during a Camp David visit in December 1984, reported her impressions of Gorbachev, whom she met during his visit to the UK a few days prior, then still only as a Politburo member. Thatcher described Gorbachev as "an unusual Russian in that he was much less constrained, more charming, open to discussion and debate, and did not stick to prepared notes."[813] Matlock believes that "Thatcher's famous certification counted for a lot, a great deal."[814] Shultz had the chance to form his own impressions of Gorbachev when he attended Chernenko's funeral:

> "He was in complete intellectual control of a wide range of issues. He enjoyed the give-and-take. You could feel his energy and intensity even at the end of what must have been an exhausting period for him. Having observed other Soviet leaders, I could say with confidence that this new leader would be a formidable adversary, but he clearly liked ideas and was ready for vigorous conversation."[815]

Matlock had begun to work on papers outlining the pros and cons of a summit with Andropov during the summer of 1983, since Reagan was keen to move ahead and create a US-Soviet agenda – the contents of which had to be defined – for a summit meeting.[816] After the progress made in setting such an agenda in 1984, and given that the main obstacle was the Soviet refusal to engage, Reagan would have reached out to Chernenko's successor regardless of whom he turned out to be. The fact that it was Gorbachev – a man similarly inclined to communicative diplomacy as Reagan, and increasingly convinced that the Soviet Union faced a turning point in its history that required fundamental domestic reforms – was a stroke of luck that set in place an interactive process of high-level East-West negotiations. This reactive, evolutionary negotiation path between the two leaders ultimately brought about a substantial lessening in tensions, paving the way for the eventual end of the Cold War.

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813 Memorandum of Conversation (1984), *Meeting with Margaret Thatcher*, RRPL

814 Matlock interview

815 Shultz (2007), xxii

816 Matlock (2004), 96

As early as April 23 1985, Gorbachev signalled privately that a change in Soviet foreign policy was warranted. At the Politburo plenum that day he launched a relatively routine attack on Reagan's foreign policy. After the plenum, however, Gorbachev met with Ambassador Dobrynin privately and made clear two key views of his: victory over Western imperialism was not achievable by arms, and he wanted the maximum number of US troops to be removed from Europe. "No effort should be spared to reduce hostility in relations," Gorbachev concluded.[817] He began to shuffle his team of ministers and advisors, most notably replacing Andrei Gromyko, who had been Soviet Foreign Minister for almost three decades, with Eduard Shevardnadze as Foreign Minister. Shevardnadze and Gorbachev knew each other for a long time. As a political outsider, Shevardnadze would bring both a breath of fresh air into the USSR's foreign policy and be personally loyal to Gorbachev: he became a firm supporter of Gorbachev's domestic reforms.[818] The Gorbachev-Shevardnadze duo shared a pragmatic approach, in that they were both "interested in problems as well as how they can be solved through mutual compromise."[819] Gorbachev and Shevardnadze now took control of foreign policy. Dobrynin, who had observed US-Soviet relations as Ambassador for over 20 years, remarked that as a result, Soviet policy towards the US "became increasingly dynamic, playing a significant role in paving the way for the turn that took place at the Geneva summit." He stresses the interaction pattern that took hold from the beginning of Gorbachev's tenure, an "intensive exchange with the administration at all levels. This included personal letters between Gorbachev and Reagan; meetings and correspondence between Gorbachev's new and pragmatic Soviet foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, and both the Secretary of State and the President, and active working contacts through diplomatic channels that had previously been almost completely blocked."[820] This was a Soviet pivot of sorts, in that some Politburo members thought it was a mistake to try to deal with Reagan: "Just as their American counterparts demanded changes in Soviet policy before they would support realistic negotiations, Soviet hardliners wanted an American commitment to an arms

[817] Dobrynin, 570
[818] Brown (2007), 3
[819] Dobrynin, 576
[820] Ibid, 565

control agreement before the leaders met."[821] Reagan's official outreach had begun in January 1984 with a TV address that was supposed to start the public mark of the new outreach era.[822] Soviet officials paid little or no attention. Anatoly Chernyaev, who later became one of Gorbachev's key foreign policy advisors, was Deputy Director of the Central Committee's International Department in 1984 – but despite this foreign policy role he was largely ignorant of Reagan's speeches. Chernyaev later realised that Reagan's outreach – his desire for contacts and to move the arms race to the back burner – began in late 1983, but at the time, 'We didn't know about this.'[823] Reagan's strategy would come to naught until a receptive partner for a conversation was found in Gorbachev. This then set in motion a diplomatic initiative with increasingly profound consequences for the Cold War.

A summit meeting was arranged for November 1985: the Geneva summit. This was the first encounter between Reagan and Gorbachev and the first US-Soviet summit in more than six years. Prior to Geneva, Reagan met Shevardnadze in September 1985, preparing for the meeting "with an intensity usually reserved for the head of a major allied government."[824] Reagan used the occasion to outline the four-part agenda as the basis for his upcoming meeting with Gorbachev, and while his discussion with Shevardnadze was frank and at times combative, producing no real results, Reagan was – for the first time – interacting with Soviet counterparts who were not obstructionist to the core. Shultz met separately with Shevardnadze in New York in October and in Moscow a month later, each time structuring his talks in accordance with the four-part agenda. In Moscow, Shultz also met with Gorbachev to discuss the upcoming summit. Though their conversation was confrontational, Shultz reported back to Reagan afterward: speech

> "Gorbachev is quite prepared for a more wide-ranging discussion with you; indeed he concluded our sessions with an expression of interest in all of the items on our agenda, including arms reductions, regional and bilateral issues, and human rights." [825]

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821 Matlock (2004), 137

822 It came to be known as the Ivan and Anya speech, named after a (fictitious) Russian couple that Reagan described in his address in an effort to humanize the Soviets.

823 Statement by Chernyaev at a conference on the end of the Cold War, Brown University, May 7-10 1998; cited in Matlock (2004), 87

824 Matlock (2004), 140

825 Shultz (1985), *Notes – Meeting with the President*, RRPL

Shultz gave priority to the fact that a process of communication had been launched: "While there was no particular substantive progress, we did reach agreement, subject to your concurrence, on a sequence or flow of subjects to be covered in Geneva." He saw the overarching value in these talks not in the results they produced but in the interactions themselves: "In the end what really matters, of course, is that you and Gorbachev establish a relationship with each other and the opening tête-à-tête on Nov 19th will be important in that regard."[826] In preparation for Reagan's first encounter with Gorbachev at Geneva, Shultz sent him a detailed memorandum titled 'What to Expect from Gorbachev in Geneva.' On linkage, he advised Reagan to tell Gorbachev that his "Administration has never dwelled on linkages, and you [Gorbachev] know what. […] The important thing is to get to work to start narrowing the differences between us. If we succeed, the linkage question will itself."[827] This relationship was to be based on personalities as well as policy. One policy in particular would fundamentally shape the trajectory of the Reagan-Gorbachev interactions: the Strategic Defense Initiative.

The direction of US-Soviet relations emerged from the constructive interactive effects of the Reagan-Gorbachev relationship

Shortly before the Geneva summit, after Reagan had completed thorough briefings on Gorbachev and the Soviet Union, he dictated a free-flowing series of thoughts about his planned approach to what would be his first ever encounter with a Soviet leader. Regan expressed awareness that Gorbachev had to "show his strength to the Soviet gang back in the Kremlin," and noted that he ought not make his counterpart look weak or incompetent. Reagan demonstrated an intricate understanding of how linkage, in modified form, could be used to drive the US-Soviet relationship forward – i.e. how linkage could 'take care of itself': on trade, which mattered more to the Soviets than the US, Reagan would "hang back until we get some of the things we want" in the areas outlined by the four-part agenda. Deepening contacts between the US and the Soviet Union mattered, for instance through consular exchanges and cultural agreements, but Reagan

826 Ibid

827 Shultz (1985), *What to Expect from Gorbachev in Geneva*, RRPL

realised that this ultimately amounted to "window dressing for PR."[828] The overriding goal going forward, Reagan noted, was a solid, verifiable arms control agreement, without which a new phase of the arms race was likely to begin. He concluded his dictation by observing that Geneva was the first step in a process that should produce further meetings at the highest level, with a view to eventually settling the differences between East and West.[829]

This document is reflective of Reagan's temperament as leader, which conditioned his approach to the upcoming dialogue with Gorbachev. Reagan didn't think in neat, analytical categories, but "in a general, almost impressionistic way."[830] He grasped the various dimensions of the US-Soviet relationship: Reagan was image-conscious, focused on how the 'big issues' defined his foreign policy goals, and thought about negotiations in terms of the personality and political needs of his interlocutor, as well as taking public opinion into account. Shortly before the Geneva Summit, Reagan was "briefed by CIA that the Soviet economy was undergoing severe turmoil."[831] Reagan didn't view this as some kind of vindication of his earlier strategy of turning up the heat on the USSR in an effort to achieve regime change through pressure alone. Instead he stuck to the new plan of engaging Gorbachev, seeing Geneva as the first in a series of dialogue to pursue arms control.

For Gorbachev, a key aim in his negotiation strategy was resolute opposition to the Strategic Defense Initiative that Reagan had pursued since 1983, which threatened to unleash a new, costly round of the arms race. In a letter to Reagan in June 1985, Gorbachev wrote that he viewed SDI as an insurmountable obstacle to the goal of limiting and eventually reducing the level of nuclear weapons:

> "The attempts to develop a large-scale ABM [anti-ballistic missile] system […] will not only prevent any limitation of nuclear weapons, but will, instead, lead to their build-up and improvement. Therefore, when

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828 Reagan was referring to symbolic steps, long-discussed in the Administration, to restore bilateral arrangements to pre-Afghanistan levels of interaction, including the opening of consulates in Kiev and New York, cultural exchanges, cooperative agreements on research, agreements on astronaut rescue in outer space and others. When the US proposed joint action in 16 areas in early 1985, all were accepted by Moscow.

829 Reagan (1985), Dictated Personal Observations, RRPL

830 Matlock (2004), 151

831 Miller Center interview with Gates (2000)

> we resolutely raise the question and state that the militarization of space is impermissible, it is not propaganda and not a consequence of some misunderstanding or fear of 'falling behind technologically'. It is a result of a thorough analysis, of our deep concern about the future of relations between our countries, the future of peace." [832]

Gorbachev saw SDI not "as a large-scale ABM system" but as a "strategic offensive weapon […] to be deployed in space [through which] it will be possible to carry out the first strike by the new systems practically instantly."[833] In November, Gorbachev told Shultz in Moscow, "We know what's going on […] if you want superiority through your SDI, we will not help you. We will let you bankrupt yourselves. But also we will not reduce our offensive missiles."[834]

In terms of the evolving Reagan-Gorbachev dynamic, SDI proved to be a crucial benchmark that fundamentally affected the trajectory of the relationship. Reagan was clear in his mind that "I won't trade our SDI off for some Soviet offer of weapons reductions."[835] Reagan viewed SDI as an essential step towards a nuclear-free world, telling the National Security Council: "Integrating missile defense in our respective arsenals would put international relations on a more stable footing. In fact, this could even lead to a complete elimination of nuclear weapons." He made it clear that he was "ready to internationalise these systems," seeing the defence against nuclear weapons as a service to all of humankind.[836] Frank Carlucci, who succeeded Caspar Weinberger as Secretary of Defence, is adamant that this "was not a bargaining chip. He was quite clear on that: Reagan wanted to implement SDI."[837] And so the two leaders ended up clashing fundamentally over the perception of SDI. Reagan saw it as a means to overcome the threat of nuclear aggression through a defensive umbrella; Gorbachev regarded it as a shield that would permit the US to undertake a first strike against the Soviet. Reagan viewed 'Mutually Assured Destruction' (MAD) as an immoral doctrine that wagered the safety of all of mankind against the assumption that the threat of a nuclear holocaust would be enough to deter the use of atomic

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[832] Gorbachev letter to Reagan (1985), RRPL
[833] Ibid
[834] Matlock (2004), 144
[835] Brinkley, 352
[836] Minutes, NSC Meeting (1985), RRPL
[837] Carlucci interview

weapons,[838] and wanted to replace MAD with 'mutually assured survival',[839] Gorbachev, though inclined to agree with Reagan's anti-nuclear stance, saw SDI as a destabilising initiative that threatened the security of the USSR. In a sense, this dispute encapsulated the core issue of mistrust that drove the East-West adversarial relationship: "Reagan never thought that SDI should be considered a threat, and he was trying to find ways to reassure Gorbachev."[840] An inability to trust each other's intentions meant that, no matter how insistent Reagan was in his attempts to assuage this concern, Gorbachev refused to accept the security risk that came with permitting Reagan to develop a system which, in theory, could provide the US with a protection from nuclear attack and thus the means to launch a debilitating first-strike against the Soviet Union.

In Geneva, Reagan and Gorbachev affirmed the importance of ending the arms race, and the need for a new stage in US-Soviet relations to begin. Reagan expressed his concern at Soviet activities in the Third World, while Gorbachev explained his view that the US military-industrial complex stood to benefit from continuing the arms race. On SDI, Reagan promised it "will never be used by the U.S. to improve its offensive capability or to launch a first strike," while Gorbachev repeated what he told Shultz in Moscow: reductions in strategic weapons would not be achieved if SDI went ahead.[841] The idea of a 50% reduction in strategic nuclear weapons was tabled, as were plans for an interim INF agreement, but Gorbachev tied all this to a reconfirmation of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (which, under a strict reading, banned the development of SDI). Both leaders committed themselves to significant steps towards improving bilateral relations "with mutual understanding and a sense of responsibility."[842] Gorbachev made a surprise move by agreeing to include a phrase in the final summit communiqué committing the Soviet Union to "resolving humanitarian cases in the spirit of cooperation," the first time a reference to human rights was included in a joint document.[843] They communiqué also affirmed the two

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838 Jervis writes that the development of SDI should be seen in this light: Reagan hoped that it would make nuclear weapons superfluous. In Jervis (1996b), 227

839 Cannon, 251

840 Matlock interview

841 Memorandum of Conversation (1985), *Second Plenary Meeting*, RRPL

842 Memorandum of Conversation (1985), *Dinner hosted by President Reagan*, RRPL

843 Dobrynin, 589

leaders' belief "that nuclear war cannot be won and must not be fought."[844] This was an early sign of the direction the Reagan-Gorbachev relationship would take toward steep nuclear arms reductions.

Gorbachev, equally as confident in his abilities to negotiate and debate as Reagan, concluded after Geneva that his best strategy to deflate Cold War tensions was to sign major arms control agreements with the United States, to reduce and eventually end the nuclear arms race. This could be achieved by adopting a course of cooperation with Reagan.[845] No such commitment to this process existed on Gorbachev's part before Geneva, contrary to realist claims that Gorbachev had no choice but to engage the US. Another Soviet leader – and indeed Gorbachev himself – could have pursued a more confrontational approach, had he been so inclined. Reagan, attending a NATO head of state summit immediately after the summit, informed his Western counterparts, "our first meeting was not a watershed event in and of itself, but rather an important part of a long-term process. As a demonstration of that fact I am pleased to confirm further meetings with Gorbachev in 1986 and 1987," adding, "I believe that Mr Gorbachev knows as I do that progress in US-Soviet relations would be a benefit to all the world."[846] In January 1986 instructions went out to the US diplomatic team negotiating the interim INF agreement framework. The document called on negotiators to "broaden and deepen the apparent areas of convergence that emerged at the Geneva Summit," including the "reduction and limitation of US and Soviet LRINF [long-range intermediate nuclear forces] missile systems to agreed levels for both parties" and agreements on "effective measures for verification of compliance with obligations."[847] Gorbachev, too, started to develop a nuclear disarmament programme with Shevardnadze and Marshal Akhromeyev, Chief of the Soviet General Staff, premised on the idea that the US and USSR would be just as secure and indeed safer with much smaller stockpiles of nuclear weapons. After the Politburo endorsed their plan, Ambassador Dobrynin presented it to George Shultz in January 1986: "a stage by stage programme leading to a comprehensive and universal nuclear disarmament by the beginning of the next century," predicated on a ban of offensive weapons on space. While the latter was unacceptable to Reagan,

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844 Memorandum of Conversation (1985), *Dinner hosted by President Reagan*, RRPL

845 Dobrynin, 592

846 Memorandum of Conversation (1985) *President's NATO Consultations*, RRPL

847 *Instructions for the INF Negotiating Group, Round IV* (1986), RRPL

Shultz appreciated this was the first concrete Soviet proposal for across the board arms cuts, with balanced reductions for both sides.[848]

The interactions between Reagan and Gorbachev took on emergent properties in the domain of nuclear arms control

The nuclear weapons reductions that Reagan and Gorbachev pursued henceforth – which became the dominant engine that hauled along the process of improving East-West relations – were contingent as well as emergent in nature. Driven firstly by each side's decision-making processes regarding what to propose during negotiations, and secondly by the negotiation process itself, the evolution of arms control talks took on a life of its own. In a complex adaptive system, "'emergent properties' are the result of contingency, not determinism: you cannot predict when, or if, they will emerge, how long they will endure."[849] The Reagan-Gorbachev dynamic was contingent and emergent: the structural conditions of 1985 did not dictate the direction in which US-Soviet relations would head. Each side's choices were based on the evolving preferences of the decision-makers. This negotiation path was self-sustaining: as Reagan and Gorbachev invested more time and capital into diplomacy, the trust that was necessary for arms reductions took hold. Both Reagan and Gorbachev pursued negotiations out of conviction, though for Gorbachev the process took on an increasing level of urgency, as his domestic political choice of engaging in a sequence of intensifying political and economic reforms could only proceed amidst a marked reduction of international tensions. This will be demonstrated in the next chapter.

The Reagan Administration's reaction to Gorbachev's surprising initial offer of January 1986 illustrates how the outcomes of the ensuing arms control negotiations were in large part generated by the iterated, multi-sided negotiation process itself, not by objective security benchmarks alone. The Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Kenneth Adelman, wrote to Reagan, "Gorbachev's plan is largely propaganda, using your vision of a nuclear-free world as bait to stop SDI," and advised that Reagan's

[848] Dobrynin, 596

[849] Saperstein (1997), 58. While it can't be predicted when emergent effects arise, we can certainly attempt to suggest under what circumstances particular emergent developments can occur.

response should "seek to pocket those parts of Gorbachev's statement that move (at least in word) toward the goals you have espoused."[850] Reagan, however, endorsed Shultz's alternative counsel. Shultz's letter made clear how significant he viewed Gorbachev's opening gambit:

> "Gorbachev's proposal goes directly to the fundamental issue you raised with him in Geneva – whether our two nations can agree on a plan that will let us break the 40-year cycle of steadily growing nuclear arsenals. […] Some will argue that Gorbachev's initiative is cynical propaganda and that any substantive response on your part would somehow be 'rewarding his intransigence.' Who knows. While Gorbachev is, of course, out to protect his own interests, he has at the same time made concrete proposals to advance the personal dialogue the two of you began in Geneva."

Shultz concluded his letter in stark terms, calling on Reagan to "build upon that dialogue, take the initiative in setting the agenda for Gorbachev's next meeting with you and challenge him to seize this potentially historic opportunity."[851] After yet more intra-Administration debate, Reagan ended up sending Gorbachev a reply in which he formally endorsed the goal of nuclear abolition, and suggesting specific steps beginning with the 50% reduction in nuclear warheads that the two had discussed in Geneva, followed by the elimination of INF missiles, all while concurrently reducing conventional military power in Europe. Reagan referred to Gorbachev's proposal as "a significant and positive step forward."[852] Fundamental disagreements between the two sides remained, most significantly regarding SDI and Gorbachev's insistence on a nuclear test ban, but the fact remains that here was a meeting of minds regarding the goal of nuclear abolition, which paved the way for the Reykjavik summit later that year.

Shultz captured the evolving perception on the US side in a memorandum for Reagan in February 1986: "Although much of Gorbachev's proposal is clearly designed for propaganda effect, we cannot dismiss out of hand the possibility that Gorbachev is making an effort to sustain the dynamic of improving US-Soviet relations that you and he began at the

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[850] Adelman (1986), *Memorandum for the President*, RRPL

[851] Shultz (1986), *Responding to Gorbachev's January Proposal*, RRPL

[852] Reagan letter to Gorbachev (1986), RRPL

[Geneva] summit."[853] In general, Shultz's counsel to Reagan concerning his dealings with Gorbachev, though hard-headed, pointed to the opportunities for improved relations if dialogue was maintained and leadership interactions continued. A January 1986 memorandum from Shultz to Reagan is illustrative in this regard. It concerned Gorbachev's response to a letter on human rights he received from the President. Shultz begins with his verdict: in terms of tone and content, the letter "holds out little hope of broad-based progress on human rights issues." Shultz's tone is matter-of-fact: "It is not surprising that Gorbachev has formally stayed the party line on an issue as touchy as this one is for the Soviets." The key, Shultz feels, "is not what they say, but what they do," and in the week prior to receiving Gorbachev's letter, one human rights case raised by the President was resolved: this "is a sign that the positive steps which began at the Geneva meeting are continuing for the moment." Shultz stressed the importance of the fact "that Gorbachev is prepared to continue the dialogue." Interaction between Reagan and Gorbachev was key, Shultz insisted: "Disappointing as the substance of Gorbachev's response is, it only underscores the need to consider how we can best encourage and broaden" the 'fragile' process of improving relations.[854] The path of the Reagan-Gorbachev liaison, and by extension the US-Soviet relationship, was not predetermined, and Shultz tried hard to steer Reagan toward cooperation through his own counsel to the President.

According to Ambassador Dobrynin, Reagan informed his closest advisors after Geneva that his impression of Gorbachev was that he was a committed communist, but one with whom business can be done.[855] Reagan drove the negotiation process forward on the basis of this conviction. It entailed an increasing awareness on the President's part of Gorbachev's thinking. At a National Security meeting in June 1986, Reagan remarked:

> "Gorbachev has an internal dilemma, heightened by Chernobyl – we need to reach an [arms control] agreement which does not make him look like he gave up everything. We cannot give away SDI, but we can make clear we do not seek a first-strike capability."

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[853] Shultz (Jan. 1986) *Memorandum for the President*, RRPL
[854] Shultz (Feb. 1986) *Memorandum for the President*, RRPL
[855] Dobrynin, 955

Reagan was thinking of something like an agreement that if SDI research progresses until "we get to the point of needing to test, we would invite the Soviets to observe our tests." Actual deployment by either side would depend on progress on the road toward the total elimination of strategic nuclear missiles. If SDI was deployed as part of a global move toward a nuclear weapon-free world, Reagan believed that "both sides would see SDI not as a threat, but as a defense against a madman" with an atomic missile.[856] He hoped to use the SDI argument to drive movement forward on nuclear arms reductions.

At the same NSC meeting, Shultz described the "overall state of the relationship" and noted that "the Soviets are at a fork in the road where they can either choose to wait out the President […] or go for an agreement that will allow them to reduce their military spending on the premise that Ronald Reagan is their best hope for selling an agreement to the American public."[857] Barely a week later, at another National Security meeting, Reagan stressed that he would not bargain away SDI. He added, "We do not want a first-strike capability, but the Soviets probably will not believe us." The evolution of Ronald Reagan from hawk to peace-making diplomat entailed an effort to understand what Gorbachev thought of the issues at stake:

> "The Soviets have economic problems, and Gorbachev has his own internal problems with the hardliners. Further, Chernobyl has altered Gorbachev's outlook on the dangers of nuclear war. The time is right for something dramatic. We should go for zero ballistic missiles, agree to go forward with research permitted by the ABM treaty, and invite the other side to witness testing when we come to that. There will be no deployment of SDI until we eliminate ballistic missiles, and SDI technology will be shared with the world."[858]

Reagan exhibited a growing awareness of how to narrow differences between the two parties by thinking the issues through from both sides of the negotiation equation.

Gorbachev arrived at Reykjavik with a clear aim in mind. As he told aides preparing for the summit,

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[856] Minutes (6 June 1986), *NSPG Meeting on US-Soviet Relations*, RRPL

[857] Ibid

[858] Minutes (12 June 1986), *NSPG Meeting on US-Soviet Relations*, RRPL

> "[O]ur goal is to prevent the next round of [the] arms race. […] And if we do not compromise on some questions, even very important ones, we will lose the main point: we will be pulled into an arms race beyond our power, and we will lose this race, for we are presently at the limit of our capabilities […] I repeat, the leitmotif here is the liquidation of nuclear weapons, and the political approach prevails here, not the arithmetical one."[859]

In pursuit of this goal, Gorbachev offered a range of major concessions: 50% cuts in all nuclear arms (including intermediate ballistic missiles, where the USSR had a major advantage over the US), excluding British and French nuclear weapons from the reductions required by the INF treaty, and halving the time-period for non-withdrawal from the ABM treaty from his original offer of 15 to 7.5 years. He also gave up his demand to ban research on SDI, provided that testing was limited to laboratories.[860]

Gorbachev's moves were motivated by his desire to free up precious resources that the Soviet Union diverted to the arms race, in order to create breathing space for his domestic reforms. Since there had been no advance official exchanges regarding the agenda in Reykjavik, the presentation of Gorbachev's blitz of offers sparked a high-stakes round of negotiations which ultimately collapsed over Reagan's refusal to limit SDI research to the laboratory. Reagan tried hard to convince Gorbachev that SDI was not a ploy to hand the US a first-strike ability. In a July 1986 letter to Gorbachev, Reagan offered to "sign a treaty now which would require the party that decides to proceed to deploy an advanced strategic defense system to share the benefits of such a system." But the Soviet leader's red line remained: SDI testing had to remain in the laboratory. Gorbachev scoffed at the suggestion that the US would share its strategic defence technology, telling Reagan, "If you will not share oil-drilling or even milk-processing equipment, I do not believe that you will share SDI."[861] There is some debate on whether Gorbachev could have relented on his red line: Garthoff writes that the Politburo's instructions ruled such a move out, whereas Blanton and Savranskaya suggest that the final Politburo meeting before Reykjavik

[859] Blanton and Savranskaya (2006), NSA Electronic Briefing Book 203, Doc. 5
[860] See Blanton and Savranskaya (2011)
[861] Blanton and Savranskaya (2006), NSA Electronic Briefing Book 203, Doc. 7

indicated Gorbachev did have some leeway.[862] Ambassador Dobrynin reports that he "came away from Geneva with the uncomfortable impression that Gorbachev had gotten himself unreasonably fixed on American military research on space weapons and converted it into a precondition for summit success."[863] Soviet arms control expert Georgi Arbatov told veteran American negotiator Paul Nitze before the Reykjavik summit's collapse, "Accepting your offer would require an exceptional level of trust. We cannot accept your proposals."[864] It was Marshal Akhromeyev, representing the Soviet military establishment at Reykjavik, who could have permitted Gorbachev to compromise. Soviet diplomat Sergei Tarasenko recounts that Shevardnadze subsequently accused Akhromeyev of ruining the summit by failing to do just that.[865]

For his part, Reagan was equally uncompromising in his refusal to contemplate agreeing to Gorbachev's offer. SDI was not something to be bargained away. On this point, Paul Nitze asserts that National Security Advisor Bud McFarlane, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and himself felt that a deal could be worked out under which SDI was curtailed in exchange for Soviet concessions: "We thought that if we could, it would be perfectly worthwhile to delay any deployment of SDI for ten years provided we got what we wanted in the reduction of, particularly, the land based big offensive missiles." But it was "Reagan against most of the rest of the administration on this."[866]

On SDI, Reagan's personal beliefs majorly influenced negotiations with Gorbachev. Shultz explains Reagan's position thus: "Reagan was very serious about the importance of defending the American population against ballistic missiles […] He was convinced of the importance of learning how to defend yourself against ballistic missiles. And he wouldn't compromise on that."[867] Reagan's aversion to the idea of nuclear warfare is well documented.[868] He expressed this particularly viscerally in a press conference in March 1983: "To

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862 Garthoff (1994), 285; Blanton and Savranskaya (2011). See also minutes of the Politburo session meeting in advance of Reykjavik, Blanton and Savranskaya (2006), NSA Electronic Briefing Book 203, Doc. 7

863 Dobrynin, 591

864 Blanton and Savranskaya (2006), NSA Electronic Briefing Book 203, Doc. 17

865 Wohlforth (1996), 6

866 Nitze, in Wohlforth (1996), 38; see also Nitze (1989), 412

867 Shultz interview

868 See, for instance, Newmann (2003), 133; Hey (2006), 88; for more elaborate accounts consult Let tow (2006) or FitzGerald (2000)

look down an endless future with both of us sitting here with these horrible missiles aimed at each other, and the only thing preventing a holocaust is just so long as no one pulls this trigger – this is unthinkable." There were two solutions, in Reagan's mind:

> "There is one way, and the way we're pursuing, which is to see if we can get mutual agreement to reduce these weapons and, hopefully, eliminate them, as we're trying in INF. There is another way, and that is if we could, the same scientists who gave us this kind of destructive power, if they could turn their talent to the job of, perhaps, coming up with something that would render these weapons obsolete. And I don't know how long it's going to take, but we're going to start."[869]

This was a policy that had not been proposed by any other US politician. Reagan's idiosyncratic convictions had significant effects on negotiations with the Soviets, a source of influence on international affairs that macro-theories struggle to capture.

What of the offer of sharing SDI technology with the Soviets? Reagan was fully committed to the idea of shifting the nuclear balance from offence to defence. As a a result, Matlock suggests the technology-sharing proposal was serious, and Gorbachev could have adapted his negotiation strategy around it by seeking guarantees, a co-operative 'open labs' research initiative, or possibly even some kind of joint SDI effort. "Reagan could have made far reaching commitments to gain Gorbachev's acquiescence on SDI, and would have been as stubborn about defending those at home as he was about defending SDI to Gorbachev."[870] The direction that the Reagan-Gorbachev negotiation took was not premeditated by structural security variables alone, but contingent on Reagan's deep, strongly felt desire to rid the world of the threat of nuclear attack.[871] As Gates commented, "at that time there were probably only two people in the world who thought SDI could work: Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev."[872] This is deliberate hyperbole, but Gates' point is that while Reagan believed in his vision of strategic defence, others in his administration were aware that considerable

[869] Cited in FitzGerald, 208
[870] Matlock (2004), 168
[871] See Cannon, 247-251
[872] Gates interview

technical hurdles, not to mention the prohibitive cost, made SDI as Reagan envisioned it an unlikely proposition to begin with. But because SDI had become a Soviet fixation it came to be seen by many in the Administration as a bargaining chip. Rozanne Ridgway, who attended all five Reagan-Gorbachev summits as a negotiator, elaborates:

> "I have always been convinced that President Reagan himself was a true believer in the importance of defense. There is a consistent straight line in the arms control field from SDI through Reykjavik. [...] But if you understand that the man really believed this, then you can understand what was happening there."

At the same time, SDI took on a life of its own inside the Administration. As Ridgway recounts, SDI "was used in a different way by different factions [in the Administration] to achieve different things," and it became a tool in the battles on the US side between people who wanted […] to talk about a new era in which offense come down and defense went up, and those people who wanted to use SDI to stop all arms control talks with Moscow."[873] Indeed, in the National Security Council discussions leading up to Reykjavik, hardliners like Weinberger pushed hard to keep SDI untouched, as a means to block agreement.[874] In the June 12 meeting, Weinberger insisted, "There should be no restraints on SDI research."[875] Reagan in all likelihood understood that some in his Administration viewed SDI as a tool to 'beat' the Soviets. By contrast to the hardliners, Reagan was willing to compromise on SDI insofar as its operational future wasn't affected – he agreed to delay deployment for seven years after Shultz told him, "As far as I can see we don't have anything to deploy, so you're giving them the sleeves from your vest" – but his underlying goal of building a defensive umbrella against nuclear weapons, be it for the US alone or the entire world if need be, was unshakeable.[876]

And so there was no meeting of minds in Reykjavik on the matter of SDI. Matlock, an eyewitness to the proceedings, believes "Reagan was really trying to find a way to satisfy [Gorbachev." The President was ready to

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873 Wohlforth (1996), 40-41

874 See Nitze (1989), 424-425

875 Minutes (12 June 1986), *NSPG Meeting on US-Soviet Relations*, RRPL

876 Miller Center interview with Shultz (2002)

eliminate all nuclear ballistic missiles before SDI was deployable, which was meant as a major concession: "But it wasn't viewed that way." Gorbachev insisted on SDI research remaining in laboratories. This was a bottom line Reagan refused to accept, but "it was Gorbachev that kept threatening to end the meeting – it was not Reagan."[877] The great 'What if' of the Reagan-Gorbachev negotiations is the scenario in which Gorbachev decided to take Reagan up on his offer to pursue SDI as a joint project, and in the process the two had arrived at an agreement to get rid of nuclear weapons by the year 2000. In the US military and foreign policy establishment, many were aghast at the security implications of giving up on nuclear deterrence, and Reagan would have faced formidable opposition at home as well as from close allies like Margaret Thatcher. The original proposal going into Reykjavik was to eliminate ballistic missiles, something that the Joint Chiefs of Staff only approved because they viewed it as a wholly unrealistic negotiation outcome.[878] Larsen writes, "the proposal to eliminate all nuclear or even ballistic missiles would never have survived military scrutiny, allied protests, or congressional concerns."[879] After the Reykjavik Summit, Admiral Bill Crowe told Reagan the military chiefs were alarmed at the idea of giving up ballistic missiles; Henry Kissinger prophesied that in a nuclear-free world, Western Europe would move into the Soviet orbit, National Security Advisor John Poindexter warned that it "would be a catastrophe to eliminate nuclear weapons", and Weinberger regarded "Reykjavik as a blunder of the highest magnitude."[880] At the same time, Reagan and Gorbachev would likely have ridden a groundswell of public enthusiasm, particularly among the anti-nuclear populations of Europe. Given the two leaders' formidable charisma and powers of persuasion, it is not at all unfeasible to think that a new anti-nuclear movement could have ended up transforming international politics with the support of the two most powerful leaders in the world, who would likely have mobilised enormous domestic support by showcasing their agreement on this critical issue of reducing risks associated with Cold War animosity, by ridding themselves of nuclear weapons. Shultz, for one, remembered the fear and tensions surrounding the INF deployment in 1983, and was not averse to the idea of a nuclear weapon-free world. Moreover, as

[877] Matlock interview
[878] Larson, 215
[879] Ibid
[880] All cited in Shultz (1993), 723

he told Pointdexter, "I have watched Ronald Reagan for two decades. When he gets an idea in his head, it stays there. Cuts in marginal rates of taxation. SDI. Elimination of all nuclear weapons. He won't go away from those ideas. Don't write him off."[881]

The inverse counterfactual, that of Reagan acquiescing to Gorbachev's laboratory demand, would have committed Gorbachev to the far-reaching START proposals he made at Reykjavik, jump-starting arms reduction talks on the basis of what Nitze – an old Cold Warrior, one of the authors of NSC-68 and a leading member of the anti-Soviet Committee on the Present Danger – called "the best Soviet proposal we have received in twenty-five years."[882] The Reykjavik Summit demonstrates how interactions at the level of leadership can have far-reaching consequences for the nature of international affairs and outcomes in the international system. Even though it ended up yielding no immediate results, the experience was momentous. As Greenstein summarises, "where suspicion and animosity had been, goodwill and guarded trust came to be."[883]

A year after Reykjavik, at a Moscow meeting between Shultz and Gorbachev, the Secretary of State elucidated his views on how leadership interactions drove the improvement in US-Soviet relations: "more and more active contacts at the upper levels help move the work on the substance of important issues further," speaking of "a certain interconnectedness" between "the process of our interaction and progress on the concrete issues." Gorbachev responded,

> "I agree with you. I would say that an intellectual breakthrough took place in Reykjavik, and that it was very powerful, that it had a shocking effect, resembling a reaction at a stock exchange. […] Reykjavik opened a new, very important stage in the political dialogue between our countries, especially on the most important issues of security."[884]

Shultz regarded the summit's spectacular turn of events as a vindication of the strategy of engagement he had set up. The long hoped-for

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[881] Ibid, 762

[882] Ibid, 760. The way events later unfolded, the US side ended up with all their demands fulfilled, without having to give up SDI in return.

[883] Greenstein (1996), 213

[884] Memorandum of Conversation (1987), Gorbachev and Shultz, RRPL

major Soviet concessions, concessions that Shultz predicted in 1983 would come about if Reagan embarked on serious negotiations, finally crystallised in Reykjavik: "I knew that the genie was out of the bottle: the concessions Gorbachev made at Reykjavik could never, in reality, be taken back. We had seen the Soviets' bottom line. The concessions could, I felt confident, be brought back to the negotiating table." Indeed, the concessions reached further than anything a US negotiation team had seen before:

> "At Reykjavik, we had reached virtual agreement on INF and had set out the parameters of START. […] Reagan and Gorbachev agreed that human rights would become a regular and recognized part of our agenda. They reached the basis for a first step of 50 percent reductions in Soviet and American strategic nuclear forces over a five-year period – something others considered impossibly ambitious. They reached agreement on even more drastic reductions in intermediate-range nuclear weapons, down from a Soviet total of more than 1,400 warheads to only 100 Soviet INF missiles worldwide. That reduction would cut by more than 90 percent the Soviet SS-20 warheads then targeted on our allies and friends in Europe and Asia. This breakthrough would eventually lead to a zero-zero outcome: the total elimination of an entire category of nuclear weapons for the first time in history."[885]

While levels of trust were not yet sufficient in 1986 to permit game-changing arms reductions, Reykjavik paved the way for the pivotal INF Treaty. The relationship between Reagan and Gorbachev was profoundly affected by Reykjavik, in that the two leaders, despite the discordant ending to the summit, began to view each other with more diplomatic empathy, through a more human lens.

Chernyaev reports that after Reykjavik, Gorbachev "never again spoke about Reagan in his inner circle as before […] that Reagan was a fool and a clown [and that] it was too bad such a person was at the head of a superpower. Never again did I hear statements such as 'The US administration is political scum that is liable to do anything.'"[886] Gorbachev

[885] Shultz (1993), 776
[886] Chernyaev, 85

proclaimed he was "even more of an optimist after Reykjavik," and that he understood how Reagan's domestic situation meant he was not completely free in making his decisions. Gorbachev saw Reykjavik as signifying a new stage in the process of disarmament – from limitations to total abolition.[887] In the first Politburo meeting after Reykjavik, Gorbachev announced, "We now understand the President's problems, he is not free in his decisions. And we did not dramatize the fact that the SDI and ABM problems stood in the way of Reykjavik being a complete success. We thought: let the president consider what happened, let him consult with the Congress. Maybe another attempt will be necessary to breach the distance that separates us."[888] Prior to Reykjavik, when Gorbachev met with French President Mitterand in Moscow in July 1986, he tore into Reagan, who was "satisfying the demands of the military-industrial complex and the efforts to pull the Soviet Union into a new round of the arms race. [This policy] rests on the known forces that propelled Reagan to power, and which the American President serves so diligently."[889] Chernyaev recounts Mitterand's response:

> "It would be a mistake to equate the goals of the US military-industrial complex with the policies of the administration and the intentions of Reagan. It seems to me, notwithstanding his political past, Reagan is one of those statesmen who is intuitively trying striving to find a way out of this dilemma […] *Unlike many other American politicians, Reagan is not an automaton. He is a human being*. [Emphasis added]"[890]

The experience at Reykjavik brought Gorbachev round to this point of view. He told Ambassador Dobrynin that he now saw Reagan "as a person capable of taking great decisions." Gorbachev described Reagan as

> " essentially pragmatic and more flexible than his rhetoric would lead anyone to believe. That explains the turn in his policy to Soviet Union – because his general ideological outlook hasn't changed. He realised a confrontational approach would stand in way of his plans which, in

[887] Blanton and Savranskaya (2006), NSA Electronic Briefing Book 203, Doc. 17
[888] Ibid, Doc. 25
[889] Blanton and Savranskaya (2015), NSA Electronic Briefing Book 504, Doc. 11
[890] Chernyaev, 76

> the final analysis, were aimed at finding a proper place in American history by creating a safer world."[891]

After an interpersonal dynamic between the two had been established, Gorbachev and Reagan began to view negotiations through each other's eyes.

Years later, Shultz asked Gorbachev privately, "'When you and I entered office, the Cold War was about as cold as it could get, and when we left, it was basically over. What do you think was the turning point?'" Gorbachev "did not hesitate" and replied: "'Reykjavik, because the leaders talked about all the important issues over an extended period.' The results could not have been achieved in any other way, and in the end they led to a deepening of the personal relationship."[892]

The new phase of arms control that began at Reykjavik led to the signing of the INF Treaty a year later

After Reykjavik, the remaining two years of the Reagan-Gorbachev relationship were dominated by INF negotiations. Gorbachev managed to persuade the Politburo in February 1987 to 'untie' the INF package from the ABM treaty, ending the link that had previously formed the basis of the USSR's anti-SDI stance.[893] Progress on INF negotiations was slow as Shultz battled Weinberger and increasingly the Republican establishment over the idea of eliminating an entire class of nuclear weapons.[894] Sensing the sluggish pace of negotiations, Shevardnadze and Gorbachev were frustrated at the seeming abandonment of the Reykjavik position, commenting during a Politburo session in April 1987, "the general tendency is hardening on all directions after Reykjavik – they want to keep 100 [missiles] and are against the global zero."[895] Shultz was indeed struggling to bring about consensus on the negotiation position of 'zero INF missiles'. Both right-wingers at home and NATO allies abroad wanted a residual force of 100 missiles to maintain a

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[891] Dobrynin, 609

[892] Shultz (2007), xxiv. Shultz, by contrast, believes the turning point came in 1983 after the Pershing II deployment demonstrated NATO's resolve even in the face of severe pressure from the Soviets and domestic peace movements.

[893] Blanton and Savranskaya (2007), NSA Electronic Briefing Book 238

[894] See, in particular, Wilson 132-135

[895] Blanton and Savranskaya (2007), NSA Electronic Briefing Book 238, Doc. 7

minimum amount of deterrence. But Reagan and his Secretary of State were of one mind: "Reagan was firm. I was firm as well. People were obstructing. But it was his strategy, and they were blaming me. When it wasn't actually me – it was him!"[896] Reagan met with Kissinger in March 1987, writing in his diary afterward, "I'm afraid I can't agree with one of his views. He doesn't think we should go for the zero option we're negotiating with Soviets on INF."[897] When Weinberger told the President he opposed a zero-zero deal on short-range missiles, Reagan wrote: "He and I disagree on this one."[898] Margaret Thatcher was also unable to dissuade Reagan: "She says no & I had to differ with her."[899]

Thus, by June 1987, the 'double zero' goal became US policy, and in December 1987, Reagan and Gorbachev signed the INF Treaty amidst vocal opposition from Republican luminaries like Nixon and Kissinger, who criticised Reagan for removing nuclear missiles from Europe while the Soviet advantage in conventional military forces remained.[900] Reagan understood the criticism, but disagreed with it. In a meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff a day before Gorbachev arrived in Washington to sign the INF Treaty, he insisted that the global scope of the treat would "make Asia as well as Europe more secure", without "weakening the other elements of our defensive posture in Europe." The key, to Reagan, was that "we will have the toughest verifications provisions of any treaty on the books." As a result, he confidently proclaimed, "the INF Treaty adds to our security and that of our Allies. For the first time ever we will reduce nuclear weapons rather than just limit their buildup."[901] All long-range and short-range intermediate nuclear force missiles – a total of 2,692 nuclear weapons – were to be eliminated by 1991.

It was a watershed moment: the first time during the Cold War that a US-Soviet treaty had been signed which did not just limit, but actually

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[896] Shultz interview

[897] Brinkley, 482-483

[898] Ibid, 492

[899] Ibid, 505. The disagreements surrounding the INF treaty illustrate Reagan's true radicalism: for adherents of the doctrine of nuclear escalation dominance (the fabled 'escalation ladder'), scrapping all the Pershing II and Glickhams missiles left the USSR with conventional superiority. Hence doctrinaire nuclear strategists viewed the 'double zero' outcome as undesirable: Reagan explicitly sought and achieved it, defending this goal against all domestic opposition.

[900] See Mann (2009), Chapter 6

[901] *Talking Points for the President* (1987), RRPL

reduced the amount of nuclear weapons in the world. As Reagan told the Joint Chiefs, the schedule of verification inspections that had been agreed was intrusive and represented the breakthrough in trust-building that he and Gorbachev had achieved. American and Soviet inspectors were to be permanently based outside missile manufacturing sites in each other's countries, with full inspection rights. By this point, Reagan's primary point of reference for negotiations ceased to be his domestic audience. As Larson notes, "Reagan told the press that Gorbachev was a new kind of Soviet leader, the first who did not talk about world domination […] The President observed that he and Gorbachev had established 'an entirely different relationship from what existed previously.'"[902]

After Reykjavik, the trajectory of US-Soviet relations was conditioned by what Shultz calls a 'leader-driven atmosphere'. In such circumstances, results are brought about by political interactions at the highest level, dynamics that cannot be captured at the structural level. Such critical junctures can open up in certain conditions: political choices are buffeted by the structural backdrop in the international system – hence Gorbachev's desire to get rid of the arms race: to ease the Soviet economic burden. Ultimately, however, choices are defined by leaders' perceptions, the nature of their interactions with their negotiating counterparts, and the way that leaders interact with their own staff in approaching such junctures. Frank Carlucci, who took over as Secretary of Defense after Weinberger's resignation in 1987, remarks, "Well, Reagan came round about 180 degrees, from being a Cold Warrior, to being very intrigued with Gorbachev. […] I can remember saying to him at one point: 'Mr President, you've got to recognise that Gorbachev is not trying to eliminate Communism – he's trying to fix it.' But he would stick by his positions […] he was always in favour of negotiating; he liked dealing with Gorbachev."[903] As a result of Shultz's actions, Les Denend maintains, "the 'correlation of forces,' to borrow a term that Brezhnev coined, was shifting inside the Reagan Administration."[904] But while Shultz helped bring this shift about, its direction was determined by Reagan. Matlock feels Reagan was particularly suited to being an effective negotiator: "When it comes to negotiations and dealing with other leaders, the fact that [Reagan] had been a professional actor was actually pretty

[902] Larson, 220
[903] Carlucci interview
[904] Denend interview

important." After all, "an actor's training is to put yourself into somebody else's shoes. […] It is an empathy – not sympathy necessarily, but empathy." According to Matlock,

> "Reagan didn't have a masterplan. He wanted to be strong enough, he wanted to negotiate. […] He had a single-mindedness that was very general, and without a concrete plan. The single-mindedness being, he wanted to develop enough strength to negotiate and reduce the nuclear threat. And, if possible, encourage the Soviet Union to begin to open up, and join the rest of the world."[905]

Reagan and Gorbachev were central to the development of US-Soviet relations. Their temperaments and dispositions as leaders are key to understanding the end of the Cold War.

Leadership interactions were crucial in moving the US-Soviet relationship from animosity to intensive co-operation

I have tried to demonstrate in this chapter that Reagan and Gorbachev materially influenced the outcome of the end of the Cold War by setting in place a dynamic, interactive relationship that directly influenced the evolution of US-Soviet relations. Replacing either of the two leaders with a substitute would have altered the course and content of these negotiations. In the case of the US, it is hard to think of leader other than Ronald Reagan who had both the political vision and the personal perseverance to effectively throw caution into the wind and engage in a systematic effort to wind down the nuclear stand-off that had defined international affairs for almost five decades.

The opposition Reagan faced on the home turf to this move was formidable, especially among politicians whose intellectual views precluded any notion that a reformist leader could come to power in the USSR. A more cautionary leader would have struggled to go as far, as fast as Reagan did. As Robert Gates remarks, "I have always believed that Reagan was the only member in his whole Administration, including most conservatives, who actually believed that the Soviet Union could be brought down on his

[905] Matlock interview

watch."[906] If leaders' independent, genuinely held beliefs can influence the evolution of the international system, much more attention in IR needs to be paid to leadership interactions. Soviet retrenchment was not a fait accompli but brought about by leadership interactions in a context that was opening and, therefore, susceptible to being shaped by these interactions. Budding trust in Gorbachev and an increasing desire to redefine the US-Soviet relationship was, certainly in Reagan's case, prompted by a sense of conviction in the authenticity of Gorbachev's motives, as well as the President's fervent opposition to nuclear weapons. In the final analysis, it was the victory of the idea of sustained negotiations in the Reagan Administration, coupled with the President's idiosyncratic approach to negotiations, that prepared the ground for a peace-minded Soviet leader to sit down with Reagan and attempt to tackle the differences that separated the two superpowers. Reflecting on this point, Shultz notes:

> "One powerful but too often overlooked idea is that strength and diplomacy go together. They are not alternatives, as is often implied. Rather, when done right, they are complementary. President Reagan believed in the importance of being strong, not only in military terms but also in our economy and self-confidence. He nourished strength but he never forgot about diplomacy. He loved negotiations, and he and I would exchange stories drawn from our common experiences in the arena of labor relations." [907]

The combination of strength with diplomacy was crucial, because the two strategies enhanced each other:

> "Many of President Reagan's supporters were all for strength but they distrusted any effort to negotiate with leaders of the Soviet Union. By contrast, I found that Ronald Reagan was self-confident and ready to negotiate whenever appropriate."[908]

Reagan in turn could not have accomplished his pivot to diplomacy had it not been for George Shultz. Greenstein summarises this well:

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[906] Gates interview
[907] Shultz (2007), xx
[908] Ibid

> "Shultz provided two ingredients that were otherwise lacking: a persistent and practical drive toward improved relations through the accomplishment of tangible objectives […] and organisational skills to mobilize at least parts of the fractious US government to interact on a systematic basis with the Soviet government."[909]

International affairs are not just subject to structural pressures brought about by an anarchic international system and the balance of power. People matter, and ideas matter. A powerful example of how ideas have influence is Reagan's persistent pursuit of SDI, which ended up shaping the course of US-Soviet negotiations in important ways.[910] People matter domestically, insofar as they populate the institutions of government: they exert influence through their ideas, interpersonal relationships, and their interactions with decision-makers in crafting policy. And people matter internationally through their approach to diplomatic encounters with other governmental representatives. After Reykjavik, Shultz's executive assistant Charles Hill felt that "suddenly the Soviets were human beings."[911] Years later, the same Charles Hill explained why he felt that social science has lost its way:

> "Herodotus [showed] in Book Two of his History that the inexplicable absence of a predetermined nature was why human beings have to hold political meetings, as crocodiles do not. In the early years of this new century, however, consciousness has atrophied at an accelerating pace. Social science is the new scholasticism, an intellectual paradigm in which participants are published, prized, tenured and made prominent for their contribution to one great required idea: to prove 'scientifically' that human beings have nothing resembling what formerly was called 'free will.'"[912]

The story of Reagan and Gorbachev's transformation of the international system is not one of free will alone: economic and military

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[909] Greenstein (1996), 217

[910] After Reagan left office, SDI research continued in modified form; ballistic missile defense still forms an important part of US defensive strategies.

[911] Cited in Wilson, 114

[912] Hill (2013)

pressures mattered a great deal. But the way that these pressures were handled was ultimately a function of how these two men in charge chose to respond. This is true whenever political leaders face decisions that are brought about by bigger, structural developments: their temperament and the people whom they surround themselves with influences what they end up choosing. In terms of complexity theory in IR, when we think about actors and structures, "their interaction is a dynamic process, leading to the constant evolution of both actors and structures."[913] This highlights an important mechanism of change in the international system. Decision-makers have opinions on the consequences of various courses of action they confront, and these estimations influence their choices. Theories that strip away agency fail to realise that the behaviour of key actors in the international system is partly responsible for the atmosphere of their relations. This atmosphere, in turn, influences actors' behaviour.[914] Such feedback loops permeate international affairs. Reagan and Gorbachev, after beginning an intense phase of interaction in 1985, continuously made more and more positive updates of their estimations of the consequences of a course of engagement, which strengthened their collaboration as time went on, in a virtuous cooperative cycle. This produced a new pattern of interaction among US-Soviet politics that ended up rewriting the nature of that relationship.

[913] Hill (2003), 28

[914] Jervis (1998), 573

CHAPTER SIX

EMERGENCE, INTERACTION, NON-LINEARITY: THE COLD WAR'S ENDGAME

The greatest enigma associated with the end of the Cold War is its peaceful conclusion.
Richard Ned Lebow

Of such fine nuance is diplomacy made.
James A. Baker III

This chapter examines how the Cold War's endgame started after Mikhail Gorbachev unleashed a complex causal storm with his reforms: a sequence of swift, transformative changes that cascaded in a non-linear manner through the international system from 1985 onwards. The workings of the international system were re-defined by the combined interactions between Gorbachev and the Soviet state, between Gorbachev, Reagan and Bush as leaders of their respective nations, and between Reagan/Bush and their Administrations. A period of intense, complex interaction began with Gorbachev's appointment in 1985 (though Reagan's interactions with Gorbachev are best understood through the President's political evolution in the years prior, as described in the preceding chapter). The key arena of change was what Rosenau terms the 'intermestic' dimension of politics: the international-domestic nexus as a dynamically intertwined entity.[915] The three concepts of complexity theory this thesis highlights loom large in

[915] Rosenau (1996); see also Craig and Logevall, 10

understanding the endgame of the Cold War, and will be discussed in the following order: contingent emergence (the capricious derivation of new structures and properties inside a complex system), interaction effects between leaders, their key aides, and their respective states, and non-linearity (the evolution of systems in sudden leaps and bounds).

"Many policy prescriptions are flawed by the nonsystemic assumption that the new course of action will leave untouched the environment with which it interacts," Jervis notes.[916] This is a key insight of complexity theory as applied to International Relations: the constant, many-layered interactions and feedback processes between the international system and its units generate certain (though not all) causal effects. These cannot be fully made sense of by a linear, uni-directional correlation of cause and effect, which separates the units under analysis into static independent and dependent variables.[917] Consider Giddens' famous point about the 'double hermeneutic' between behaviour and observation: "The concepts of the social sciences are not produced about an independently constituted subject-matter, which continues regardless of what these concepts are. The 'findings' of the social sciences very often enter constitutively into the world they describe."[918] Giddens spoke of the two-way relationship between the workings of society (the object of social science's studies) on the one hand, and the outputs of social science on the other: the former (i.e., society) informs the latter (social science); as society changes on the basis of social scientific findings, this ends up creating new findings in social science. Research into particular social phenomena that reveal new facts can be and often are absorbed by society at large (say, findings in economics regarding market collusion produced anti-trust laws). Society, after all, is made up of sentient human beings that have the capacity to learn. Applying an analogous argument to International Relations suggests that when leaders with new ideas interact with the international system, they can not only change outcomes in the system but will also adapt their own behaviour in the process as well as that of others, creating multiple sources of interactive unit-system feedback. Understanding the elements in a complex system in isolation is not enough: the interaction between the elements and the system as a whole needs to be studied.

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916 Jervis (1997a), 80

917 Jervis (1993), pp. 26; 41

918 Giddens (1982)

Constructivists recognise that static analyses of cause and effect in international relations are incomplete, and postulate that co-constitution between system and unit defines the nature of international relations. This insight was inspired in part by the discipline's failure to anticipate or credibly explain the sudden collapse of bipolarity in 1990. Suspicions that the shift in the balance of power was accompanied, if not preceded, by an equally foundational shift in the balance of ideas – such as the 'New Thinking' introduced by Mikhail Gorbachev, or the notion of full nuclear disarmament Reagan suggested at Reykjavik – constructivists launched efforts to understand the influence of ideational drivers on the end of the Cold War.

Complexity theory looks at questions of causal co-constitution from a different angle. In complex systems,

> "inputs and outputs are not proportional; the whole is not quantitatively equal to its parts, or even qualitatively recognizable in its constituent components; and cause and effect are not evident. It is an environment where phenomena are unpredictable, but within bounds, self-organizing; where unpredictability frustrates conventional planning."[919]

Complexity theory applied as an ontological whole to the analysis of a social system goes "beyond holism and reductionism through its inclusion of all basic connections that can make up a theory." The goal is to understand "a system in terms of a comprehensive set of functional relationships."[920] This is an enormous undertaking. In order to live up to complexity theory's methodological ambition it is necessary to understand the entirety of the system – which, after all, is larger than the parts that make it up – as an entity itself. Such a 'complex adaptive system' "receives a stream of data about itself and its surroundings" and evolves in a never-ending process of endogenously generated adaptive steps.[921] This type of analysis almost inevitably relies on advanced computer modelling in order to show, for instance, how even the smallest changes in the initial conditions of a complex system can result in world-changing deviations of the system's evolution,

[919] Alberts & Czerwinski, iii
[920] James (2014; 2002)
[921] Gell-Mann, 4

compared to its path in the absence of the change.[922] Such work raises awareness of the root indeterminacy that prevails in nonlinear systems.

A more modest, though still insightful exercise in complexity analysis consists of highlighting the interconnections that abound in international politics and shape the trajectory of international affairs. As a methodological tool, counterfactuals can make us more sensitive to how alternative histories are interlinked in a huge branching tree of possibilities, where the actual progress of history relies on an interplay of fundamental physical laws, accidents/contingent events (going as far back as the initial conditions of the universe at the beginning of its expansion), and, potentially – depending on one's view concerning whether our lives are determined by fundamental laws or not – the behaviour of individuals. The central point of complexity theory is that looking separately at the constituent parts of a system's interconnections enables us neither to predict nor to understand the output of the interaction. As put by Jervis, "actions change the environment in which they operate," and "interactions can be so intense and transformative that we can no longer fruitfully distinguish between actors and their environments, let alone say much about any element in isolation."[923]

Whereas the analysis of systems has hitherto focused on macro-level events alone, a more fine-tuned focus on the interactions between actors – seen as inputs of the international system to be studied in conjunction, not in isolation – and systems creates novel understandings of how change in international politics comes about through indeterminate, counter-intuitive ways: top-down and leader-engineered, as well as bottom-up through vast social forces; by design through specific choices and policies, as well as arbitrarily through contingent effects and unintended consequences. Non-linearity lies at the heart of complexity: the notion that certain factors and developments have little impact on their own, but when they reach a tipping point or operate in confluence with other drivers can exercise a gravitational-like pull in a complex system. Feedback processes between action and reaction compose the channel through which complex systemic change is filtered. When complex factors interact in a non-linear manner, change need not be gradual, so that systems are characterised not by smooth progress through additive causal steps, but instead lurch ahead in leaps and bounds.

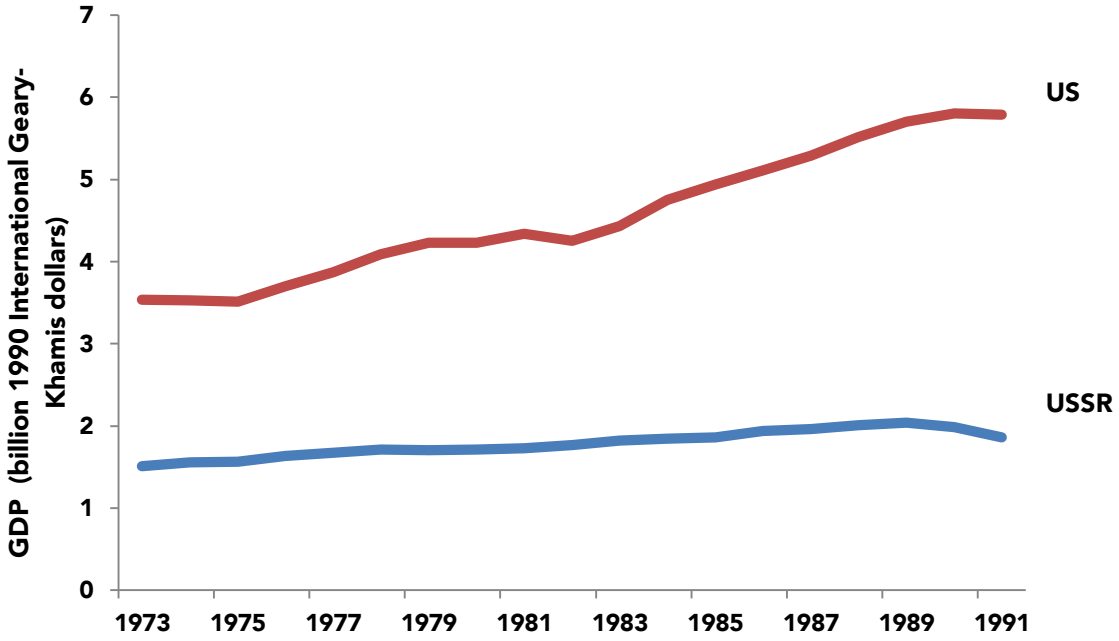
[922] See Fearon (1996); Levy (2000)
[923] Jervis (1997b), 27

There may be no apparent deterioration of a system's seeming stability for a long period before rapid transformative shifts upset it or even induce collapse, said shifts having been brought about by the build-up of interactive effects among the system's units.[924]

Emergence: the rolling, self-propelling origins of New Thinking

When Gorbachev assumed power in March 1985, the Soviet Union was in the midst of a period of relative economic stagnation that took hold of the country in the mid-1970s. The GDP of the USSR was growing much more slowly than that of the US:

Fig. 2: GDP growth, US vs. USSR, 1973-1989[925]



A few months before he became General Secretary, Gorbachev gave a speech in Moscow at a conference on ideology. It revealed the then-Second Secretary's instinctive sense that the Soviet system had to change: "Gorbachev spoke at length about the need for democratisation, glasnost, equality of all before the law, more self-government at different levels of the Soviet political system, and the necessity for more space to be opened up for the initiative of individual people and for 'healthy interests', work collectives

[924] Jervis (1997a), 35
[925] Data from Bolt and van Zanden (2014)

and local political organs."[926] It was the first time Gorbachev publicly discussed the ideas that were to shape the first years of his rule: *perestroika* (restructuring), *uskorenie* (acceleration) and the 'human factor.' That said, his statements were phrased carefully, did not come paired with any kind of commitments or specific policy proposals, and were seen as conservative calls for marginal change, veiled in the wider vernacular of Soviet propaganda. There was general agreement among the Soviet leadership that the country's worsening position warranted some kind of change in policy, but Zubok makes the important point that this did not equate to a consensus on what kind of policy shift was required: "no reality, however harsh, dictates one set of perceptions."[927]

Three basic strategic responses to the Soviet predicament existed.[928] The first, broadly pursued by Andropov and Chernenko, leaned on the country's last major crisis experience during the Second World War. Following in the footsteps of Stalin, this entailed emergency measures in an effort to mobilise society and state for the task of maintaining strategic parity with the United States: Alexander Konovalov, who worked at the USSR's Institute for U.S. and Canadian Studies in the 1980s, recounts, "there was one famous slogan from the time of Andropov and Ustinov: 'We shall not skimp on defense. We can tighten our belt in any area but defense.'"[929] This explains Andropov's and Chernenko's rejection of Reagan's early efforts at outreach: a hard-line approach of shoring up the domestic base and activating crisis mode required rallying around the country's common enemies abroad.[930] The second path open to Soviet leaders in the 1980s was 'détente redux', that is, reaching some kind of amicable settlement with the US involving mutual arms reductions and withdrawal from conflicts in the Third World, all in an effort to move towards peaceful coexistence and in the process uphold strategic equivalence with the West. The third approach entailed unilateral, targeted reductions in military outlays in order to generate breathing room for the Soviet Union, during which gradual reform could be put in place while overall social control was maintained.

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926 Brown (1996), 79
927 Zubok (2002), 63
928 Outlined in Zubok (2002)
929 Ellman & Kontorovich, 66
930 See Fischer, *A Cold War Conundrum* (1997)

Key to understanding events from 1985 onwards is that Gorbachev never pursued any of those three strategies in a consistent, systematic manner, other than being guided overall by a relatively nebulous commitment to reform.[931] Instead, he zigzagged between these strategies, buffeted by the effects that his various transformative policy decisions prompted inside the Soviet behemoth. At the time Gorbachev assumed power the Soviet Union was not crisis-ridden. As Brown explains, "it would be fanciful in the extreme to see the changes which took place between 1985 and 1988 as a result of massive pressure from below." [932] The system was struggling in important ways, but had not reached disaster mode. Deterioration in economic performance did not amount to collapse, and there were ways in which the system could have been kept going. Georgy Shakhnazarov, one of Gorbachev's advisors, believes that there was nothing inevitable about the Soviet Union undertaking fundamental reform in the mid-80s; moreover a 'Chinese path' combining economic reform with authoritarianism could have preserved the Soviet Union in the immediate future.[933] The crisis of survival that the country faced came about by 1990 as a delayed consequence of two of Gorbachev's decisions: first, attempting economic reform; second, when early reform efforts stalled, doubling down through an attempt at root-and-branch systemic transformation. The former decision was born of an instinct of statesmanship, the latter was the product of emergence. Gorbachev observed how his policies impacted the Soviet and international system, and continually adapted his policies in an effort to shape the emergent system changes, thereby further creating further systemic ripples in the process.

Gorbachev's first policy initiatives of April 1985 were of a command nature and aimed at systemic preservation. According to Matlock, it is more accurate to refer to the 'April plenum' of 1985 as the 'Andropov platform', since it essentially built on ideas worked out at the behest of Brezhnev's successor.[934] Gorbachev continued Andropov's programme of *uskorenyie* (acceleration), which focused on strengthening labour discipline, reducing corruption, and tightening management practices. Gorbachev's first signature reform policy was an aggressive attempt to limit the production

[931] Brown (1996)
[932] Brown (1996), 90
[933] Cited in ibid, 91
[934] Matlock (1995), 57

and sale of alcohol in the Soviet Union, going much further than the half-hearted anti-alcohol propaganda efforts of the past.[935] The biggest effect of this was to deprive the Soviet government of some $30 billion in tax revenue from alcohol each year from 1985 to 1988 (when the campaign was quietly ended). At the same time, sugar consumption in the USSR increased by 14% as people started brewing moonshine, prompting a rise in organised crime.[936] Unintended consequences blighted Gorbachev's reforms from the get-go.

Gorbachev's more far-reaching ideas concerning *perestroika* (economic restructuring) and *glasnost* (political opening) emerged after initial reform efforts came to nothing. This prompted a conceptual shift among Gorbachev and his main allies, who began to introduce more sweeping changes to the Soviet Union's political and economic make-up. Given the mammoth scale of the task of reforming the USSR's socio-economic structures, the shift from corrective to transformative reform prompted the phenomenon of complex emergence to take hold: economic and political reform policies took on a life of their own as they moved through the system, meeting resistance from vested interests, which in turn prompted even more concerted efforts by Gorbachev to overturn entrenched patterns in the USSR's modus operandi. Thus, while Gorbachev spearheaded the reform process, its direction was wayward, emerging out of a series of contingent policy choices and turning points: the new structures and properties that took hold in Soviet society – i.e. the 'policy output' – were not directly brought about by the 'policy input'.

Brown notes, "conceptual change is an important species of political innovation in any society and immeasurably more important in a system such as the Soviet one, in which all political actions were required to adhere to an officially sanctified ideology."[937] Gorbachev and the ideological brethren that he promoted to positions of power, such as Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, political advisor Anatoly Chernyaev, and Politburo member Alexander Yakovlev, introduced ideas into the political discourse of the USSR that ended up undercutting what Brown calls the 'ideological and institutional pillars' of the Soviet system. After new political concepts were presented and approved by official voices, they developed in unpredictable

[935] Brown (1996), 142
[936] Matlock (1995), 58
[937] Brown (1997), 126

ways. This was especially noticeable in the later stages of reform, once glasnost's institutional reforms and ideological shifts had curtailed the authorities' means of controlling public discourse.

From the beginning of his tenure, Gorbachev's plans came up against "the complexity of the institutional networks and the strength of the bureaucratic agencies whose support was necessary for the implementation of policy", which was essentially a systemic layer through which these policy shifts passed and morphed.[938] Water that seeps through rocks passes through porous stone more readily than, say, granite. Similarly, Gorbachev's path of reform encountered varying types of resistance, which conditioned the pace and scope of his proposals: opposition was weakest in foreign policy, followed by political reform – both areas where Gorbachev possessed significant institutional authority as General Secretary – and strongest in the area of economic reform, where the clash with vested interests was most direct.

Changes to Soviet foreign policy were easiest to effect. Shevardnadze was a stalwart ally who shared the Gorbachev's worldview and policy priorities. The General Secretary possessed wide constitutional latitude in setting the course of the USSR's diplomatic strategy. Thus Gorbachev was free to pursue an intensive, activist foreign policy: during his six years in power he held a total of nine summit meetings with Presidents Reagan and Bush – amounting to almost half of all the twenty US-Soviet summits held during the entire Cold War. From early on in his tenure Gorbachev looked to the international arena as a potential lever to reduce the stress the Soviet system was subjected to through the arms race. This was also where he began to encounter the first signs of (in this case ineffectual) resistance on his own side to changing the status quo, when Marshal Sergey Akhromeyev, Commander of the General Staff, questioned Gorbachev's plans in 1985 for a unilateral moratorium on nuclear tests and his pursuit of the Geneva summit with Reagan.[939] Akhromeyev later opposed the INF Treaty and eventually resigned over reductions in conventional forces announced by Gorbachev in December 1988. Others in the Defence Ministry reluctantly backed Gorbachev's moves to shrink the size of the military, in the expectation that they were largely designed for propaganda rather than actual policy.[940]

[938] Ibid, 131
[939] English (2002), 74; Zubok (2007), 263
[940] Detinov and Savel'yev, 93

Odom characterises these officials as trying to wait "out the reformers while pretending to be reformers. […] Wrongly, they believed that time was on their side."[941] In the area of political reform, too, Gorbachev was able to implement transformational change. Bureaucratic resistance to his initial proposals provided a feedback loop that influenced the scope and direction of political change: institutional inertia spurred Gorbachev toward more radical solutions, culminating in the policy of glasnost in 1988 that introduced free speech and eventually contested elections. These drastic steps were designed to overcome resistance from apparatchiks who had shown stubborn reluctance to sacrificing their authority and privileges at the altar of political change.[942]

In the domain of economic reform Gorbachev encountered the most entrenched obstacles to his plans: "the ability of the ministries to control the reform process, even when directed by energetic and serious reformers like Gorbachev […] severely constrained the politicians."[943] Ministries and the Communist Party apparat were in charge of implementing the economic policy process and were not responsive to demands for change. In the absence of a market system, regional party leaders acted as core decision-making nodes in the Soviet economic system. Economic decision-making was thus a major source of power for local party operatives, who resisted the idea of handing over this authority to market processes. As a result, "glasnost and democratisation, while regarded as desirable political goals in themselves by Gorbachev (whose understanding of what was meant by those notions broadened over time) were seen by him as a necessary means of putting pressure on the institutions opposed to essential economic change."[944] Politburo transcripts show that until 1987, Gorbachev thought market elements played a secondary role in what was to remain a planned economy. The 'Basic Positions' adopted by the party leadership early in 1987, for instance, retained a centrally planned economy but tried to shift micro-economic management from the hands of local party officials. Price reform – the move from fixed, centrally allocated prices to more market-based cost stimuli, which was to become a key sticking point in perestroika in 1987 – remained limited to encouraging enterprises to negotiate and contract prices

941 Odom (1998), 201
942 Brown (1997), 132
943 Whitefield, 180
944 Brown 136

for certain raw materials.[945] More aggressive steps such as the introduction of market structures, private property ownership and moves to end central planning were not significant parts of Gorbachev's economic policy until the second half 1987.[946]

In the next two years, Gorbachev's thinking on economic reform shifted rapidly. By May of 1990, at the First Congress of People's Deputies, Gorbachev maintained that no better or democratic alternative to the market had been found and that a socialist economy could not function without it.[947] This Congress was the first-ever political institution in Soviet Russia whose deputies were voted in through a nationwide election: it came about after Gorbachev realised that political form was indispensable if the Communist party nomenklatura's resistance to economic reform was to be overcome.[948] It was one of Gorbachev's major accomplishments in political reform, designed to facilitate his overhaul of the country's economy. In a 1993 interview, Gorbachev commented, "the party bureaucracy, the ministries and all the feudal lords were resisting [economic reform]. Even the industrial bosses and the managers were afraid of losing their power.'[949] Such emergent feedback loops, rather than a clear-cut, pre-existing vision, informed the direction of Gorbachev's policies. As English notes, "Gorbachev's intellectual search of 1985–86, in tandem with his search for political allies, increasingly led him to those who were not only the boldest domestic reformers, but the boldest foreign-policy reformers as well." [950] To break out of the old guard's stranglehold, Gorbachev deepened his ideological interactions with the domestic liberal intelligentsia.

The shift toward deepening reform was strengthened by an entirely contingent event that left a lasting impression on the Soviet Union's political establishment: the Chernobyl disaster of April 1986. Chernyaev described it as "a tremendous shock […] that raised our view of security to an entirely new plane of understanding," pushing Gorbachev to take "a great, instinctive leap to break the old cycle" and spurring him to agree to on-site verifications in subsequent arms control agreements.[951] The fallout from the

[945] Hewett, 350
[946] Ellman & Kontorovich, 17
[947] Brown (1997), 138
[948] See McFaul (2007)
[949] Cited in ibid, 127
[950] English (2000), 215
[951] Cited in English (2000), 216

accident was a visceral reminder of the dangers posed by nuclear weapons. Even Marshal Akhromeyev agreed the accident touched "minds and souls […] the nuclear danger was no longer abstract, but something palpable and concrete." [952] Soviet Defence Minister Sokholov later remarked, "until Chernobyl I was convinced we could fight a nuclear war and prevail."[953] Chernobyl galvanised top Soviet reformers and strengthened Gorbachev's hand, pushing some of the still sceptical military leaders toward embracing greater arms control.[954] Initial attempts by the bureaucracy to cover up the extent of the disaster incensed Gorbachev and Shevardnadze, impressing upon them the urgency of introducing greater transparency and accountability in the Soviet system: "the Chernobyl catastrophe apparently had great impact not only because the damage was a vivid reminder of what a nuclear war would do, but also because it proved extremely difficult for the Soviet leaders to learn what had happened from their own bureaucracies: the West often provided faster and better information."[955] In a crass illustration of this point, Shevardnadze's aide Tarasenko describes listening to the BBC news service every morning after arriving in his office.[956] Chernobyl drove home the lessons of openness that Gorbachev had preached and made restructuring an easier task.[957]

The sudden acceleration of policy processes through 'black swan' events like the Chernobyl catastrophe are a feature of complexity.[958] Deputy CIA head Robert Gates recalls how Gorbachev responded to Chernobyl: "After behaving in the traditional secretive Soviet manner following the Chernobyl disaster, Gorbachev responded in a way that *would become* typical – he became bolder and upped the ante, especially by expanding glasnost. […] Exposing problems in the system, whether corruption or incompetence or simply backwardness, offered the opportunity to build support for his reform efforts. [Emphasis added]"[959] In this manner, some of

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952 Cited in English (2003), 261

953 Busch (2001), 186

954 See Wohlforth (1996), 33-37

955 Jervis (1996), 238

956 Wohlforth, (1996), 60

957 Lebow and Stein (2004), 202

958 There is a good argument to be made that a nuclear accident of sorts was waiting to happen in the Soviet Union, given the state of disrepair and insufficient security safeguards prevalent in many facilities. Chernobyl was more of a grey than a black swan. See Omoto, 131; 159-160

959 Gates (2007 [1996]), 383

Gorbachev's policy goals were not fixed, but the product of his evolving opinions and political behaviour, an evolution that was buffeted by events. A month after the disaster, for instance, Gorbachev addressed the Foreign Ministry, bemoaning the sluggish pace of change in Soviet foreign policy, emphasising "the lack of progress on a withdrawal from Afghanistan as well as ideological opposition to the settlement of other Third World conflicts, 'panicked' reporting on the progress of SDI and other threat inflation that supported unnecessary military expenditures, and a paternal attitude toward Eastern Europe as if the USSR were 'running a kindergarten for little children."[960] Chernobyl injected Gorbachev's 'new thinking' with a palpable sense of intensity and provided an acute backdrop to on-going preparations for the Reykjavik summit. When challenged by the Politburo on his planned negotiating position at the summit – that of pushing for a complete elimination of nuclear weapons – Chernyaev reports that Gorbachev fended off arguments against the proposal with a rhetorical question: "What are you doing, still preparing to fight a nuclear war? Well I'm not, and this is what determines everything else. If we're still trying to conquer the entire world, then let's discuss how to defeat the Americans in the arms race. But then we can forget all we've said about our new policies."[961] Chernobyl – an unpredictable contingency that arose spontaneously –gave a boost to Gorbachev's reform dynamic in 1986.

After Reykjavik, Gorbachev, much like Reagan, faced opposition from hardliners to his arms control agenda, which the Soviet leader fended off, doubling down instead on his own course.[962] The Reagan-Gorbachev interaction at Reykjavik, despite seemingly yielding no results, strengthened their determination to pursue arms control. In a speech a month after Reykjavik Gorbachev shifted the ideological basis of Soviet foreign policy, stating, "universal human values take precedence over the interests of any particular class." Against scepticism in the Politburo he decided to rehabilitate dissident scientist Andrei Sakharov in December 1986. Sakharov proceeded to argue publicly in favour of human rights and arms control. Early in 1987 Shevardnadze informed Shultz that the Soviet would withdraw from Afghanistan with or without US assistance in achieving a political

[960] Cited in English (2003), 262
[961] Chernyaev, 83
[962] Sagdeev, 272-73

settlement there.[963] Reykjavik had produced spill-over effects: Soviet foreign policy was on the move. Shevardnadze told foreign ministry officials, "the goal of diplomacy is to create a favorable environment for domestic development."[964]

Around the same time Gorbachev grew increasingly aware of the difficulties his proposed reforms encountered inside the Soviet system. In January 1987 he confided in his closest advisors, "We didn't think it would be so hard. It's turned out to be so terribly difficult in the economy, in the social sphere, in the Party itself. Especially among the higher echelons. And what we have now isn't nearly as bad as what it'll be later. […] We are plagued by conservatism, complacency, inertia, an unwillingness to live in new ways. We got down to dealing with society, but we have not stirred it up yet."[965] In October 1987, Gorbachev complained to the Politburo, "our ideas, even some of our guidelines, run into a wall of resistance that blocks their implementation," and a month later he described how "perestroika is going slowly. […] It's this way because some members see perestroika as an effort to dismantle the old order, the methods to which they've long grown accustomed."[966] Gorbachev's economic aide, Gennady Zoteyev provides a good example of inertia; he describes a 1988 meting with Nikolai Baibakov, the director of the USSR's central planning agency Gosplan, one of the key institutional pillars of the Soviet command economy:

> "Baibakov invited me for a discussion. For almost two hours, I tried to explain to Baibakov the past, the present, and the future of the Soviet economy. He listened rather lethargically, probably because he simply failed to comprehend many of the things I was saying. At the end of the conversation he snapped out of his slumber and asked a rhetorical question: 'How can all this be happening? We worked so hard and accomplished so much. We have such a powerful industry, the energy sector, and here you are coming up with such gloomy assessment [sic] and forecasts.'"[967]

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963 English (2003), 264
964 Cited in Lévesque (1997), 15
965 Chernyaev, 92
966 Ibid, 137; 152
967 Cited in Ellman and Kontorovich, 67

In order to overcome such inertia, Gorbachev "intended to subordinate foreign policy to the imperatives of correcting the domestic economy to a far greater degree than his predecessors."[968]

Gorbachev realised that his approach to economic reform was fruitless in the face of a lacklustre Soviet establishment. This prompted him to switch gears as time went on. The Twelfth Five Year Plan of 1986 trod cautiously in the area of industrial economics, emphasising cost cutting and quality improvements, and shied away from raising prices. This was partly because Gorbachev did not have a well-thought out alternative model in mind, nor specific ideas for moving towards an alternative. Hence he spoke largely in generalities and his reform suggestions remained within the existing system.[969] When this approach failed to produce results, Gorbachev moved from a path of nudging the reform process along towards changing the system where he could, and letting the results unfold on their own terms – an embrace of emergence. This is what Robert Gates means when he asserts, "as people write their memoirs and we reflect on the latter half of the 1980s there is a tendency to run those years together and to suppose that where Gorbachev ended up in 1988-1989 was where he intended to go in 1986. In fact, he was making up strategy as he went along – as he put it, 'on the march.'"[970] At one point, Chernyaev wrote in his diary, "Inside me depression and alarm are growing, the sense of crisis of the Gorbachevian idea. He is prepared to go far. But what does it mean? His favourite catchword is 'unpredictability.' But most likely we will come to a collapse of the state and something like chaos."[971] The scope of the changes Gorbachev wished to undertake was immense and growing as time went on. In a complex system, maintaining control over the direction of such processes is more challenging. With the passage of time, Gorbachev grew to realise this; but far from shying away from the task, he embraced the unpredictability of the process. Chernyaev describes two of Gorbachev's favoured phrases: 'let processes develop' and 'processes are in motion' (*protsessi poshli*). Ligachev notes in his memoirs how Gorbachev often temporised before taking a position on important questions.[972] In Lévesque's words, "Gorbachev allowed the

[968] Lévesque (1997), 15
[969] Ellman & Kontorovich, 120
[970] Gates (2007 [1996]), 378
[971] Cited in Zubok (2007), 311
[972] Ligachev, 129

reformist current to develop on its own and then adopted compromise measures which did not always go in the same direction."[973]

Gorbachev encouraged discussions and conversations concerning the ideas and propositions he was making, but these debates invariably drew to a close once they reached the stage of practical administrative steps that needed to be undertaken. Chernyaev sums the approach up as "best to just wait and watch while 'processes' ran their course."[974] This approach was also increasingly evident in foreign policy: as early as 1987, at a meeting between Gorbachev and FRG President Richard Weizsäcker, there is evidence of the Soviet leader's preference for letting unfolding realities on the ground influence the trajectory of history. Gorbachev informed Weizsäcker, "the Soviet Union respects postwar realities and the German people of both the FRG and GDR. We are planning our future relations based on these realities. History will show who is right."[975] Furman believes that this method was inherent to the project Gorbachev was undertaking: "the work that Gorbachev did could only have been done without accurately perceiving all its complexity and danger. If he had started to compute everything, to think through various alternatives in his head, he simply could never have undertaken it."[976] This idea of runaway reform, of a policy project assuming proportions that went beyond the control of the individuals who unleashed the process, was later described evocatively by Chernyaev: Soviet society in 1985 was as a "totalitarian boulder, a lumpenised population with a give-me psychology." When Gorbachev "yanked this boulder of its moorings and gave it a push", it proceeded to gain momentum to the point where brakes could no longer be applied, and the social processes unleashed by Gorbachev's reforms ended up crushing the very system he was seeking to heal.[977]

Gates describes this phenomenon of complexity thus:

> "Through economic reform, Gorbachev began to undermine the central administrative structure that met at least the most minimal basic material needs, without putting an alternative structure in place.

[973] Levesque (2007), 57
[974] Zubok (2007), 313
[975] Chernyaev, 115
[976] Cited in Zubok, 314
[977] See Zubok (2003), 221

> Through democratization, he revealed the inner workings of the party and over the months proved – including to himself – that the party could not help solve the USSR's problems."

Gorbachev started a process that he hoped would save the Soviet Union, when in fact it achieved the inverse:

> "Mikhail Gorbachev in 1986-87 started a number of political, economic, social and ethnic fires that he believed would liberate the USSR from its past and freshen the ground for new growth. What was not apparent to him or nearly anyone else back then was that the fires would spread beyond his control, creating ultimately a conflagration that would consume him and the system he tried to save."[978]

This is a vivid description of the concept of escalating emergent trends in a complex system.

Gorbachev was relaxed about the idea of letting processes run their course, since he retained faith in the underlying motivations behind the reforms he took. He was not necessarily naïve in this regard, since it can be fruitful to open up channels of political communication in a society that faces structural challenges: discourse, "as both a set of ideas about the soundness and appropriateness of policy programmes and the interactive process of policy formulation and communication, […] can create an interactive consensus for change [which] can exert a causal influence on policy change, serving to overcome entrenched interests and institutional obstacles by altering perceptions of interest."[979] In the Soviet Union's case, unfortunately for Gorbachev, apathy by the citizenry towards what was viewed as a flawed, corrupt but ultimately unchangeable political system gave way to a culture of opposition, first at the highest level of leadership, later, with the spread of glasnost and the opening of the media landscape, across society as a whole. Instead of forging a new political consensus through a healthy process of political discourse, the formerly dictatorial society started to fracture. Vladimir Mozhin of the Central Committee's economic department reports that "Gorbachev's appeal for use of political rather than coercive methods [in

[978] Gates (2007 [1996]), 387
[979] Schmidt and Radaelli, 193

economics] fell on deaf ears."[980] The Byzantine apparatus of the Communist Party could not and did not want to change and instead became a cauldron brewing opposition to economic reform. By the time of the 28th Party Congress in July 1990, Gorbachev was openly accused of deviating from the Marxist-Leninist line, though his opponents were unable to vote down Gorbachev's proposals to 'heal socialism by capitalism'.

Gorbachev's increasing emphasis on political openness over time, as a means to prompt the Soviet leviathan to change, did not have its desired effect. Liberalisation reduced the possibilities of relying on methods of social control, instead beginning to free the Soviet population from fear. Once command-style economics lost its political backing labour discipline began to slide, worsening the economic situation.[981] Gorbachev's attempts at gradually replacing top-down control of the economy with market impulses simply prompted the bureaucracy to turn against him. A September 1988 Politburo resolution reorganised the party apparatus and ended the principle of sectoral control of the economy by the Communist Party, instead charging the Central Committee with overall 'political supervision' of the Soviet economy. Individual Politburo members opposed this reform, but were unable to mount effective organised resistance – a flaw of the collective leadership process that enabled Gorbachev to plough ahead with his agenda and continue his efforts to divorce the Communist party from the economy.[982] In effect, Gorbachev was battling the structural legacy of Brezhnev's policy of 'trust in cadres', through which Soviet officials who had demonstrated fealty to the system were in many cases allowed, quite literally, to die in office.[983] Brown speaks of a 'gang' that Brezhnev surrounded himself, Politburo appointees of the 1973 vintage including his eventual successor Andropov, and Brezhnev's Defence Minister, Dmitry Ustinov.[984] The in-built tendency toward conservatism by this system of patronage slowed down Gorbachev's reform plans. As late as March 1989 the Politburo outmanoeuvred him on the issue of agriculture by formally confirming that collective farms remained the cornerstone of Soviet agriculture. This put an end to a two-year long effort by Gorbachev to move to a lease-holding

[980] Cited in Ellman & Kontorovich, 165
[981] See Filtzer (1994)
[982] Ellman & Kontorovich, 167
[983] See Lynch (2012); Harrison (2002)
[984] Brown (1997), 53

system of farming, which that had enabled Chinese peasant income to double between 1978 and 1982.[985]

Efforts at economic reform were thus erratic and failed to follow any kind of grand plan. A comparison to the economic reforms in China illustrates how complicated Gorbachev's task was. China's laundry list of reform was of a considerably lower order of complexity, owing to the country's lesser state of economic development in the 1970s: China's economy was 80% agricultural and 20% industrial in 1979; the picture in the USSR was the inverse.[986] Because prices were fixed and the state monopoly on production was maintained, Gorbachev's endeavour to improve industrial efficiency and productivity resulted in Soviet factories switching their output away from low-margin everyday consumer items like soap, washing powder, matches, and sugar, which eventually produced shortages that damaged Gorbachev's perestroika in the eyes of citizens.[987] In 1987 attempts were made to imitate the Chinese model of reform. Broadly speaking this meant the creation of a two-sector economy with a 'free' sector of cooperatives, leased enterprises and joint ventures, which was to co-exist with a state sector characterised by mandatory orders, fixed prices and the centralised allocation of inputs. According to Evgeniy Yasin, an economist who worked on reform projects for the Soviet Council of Ministers at the time, this was the last chance to nudge the Soviet Union toward a path of sustainable growth. It floundered because this "gradual transition to a market economy" required, as in China, the "secret police and censorship to perpetuate an old ideological cocoon within which a new economy system could develop like a butterfly."[988] An opportunity seemed to exist for gradualist economic reforms whilst maintaining political control; after the latter was relaxed, the former stopped being a realistic goal.[989] Once Gorbachev decided in 1989 to break the Communist Party's monopoly on political power, Yasin describes how the nature of economic developments shifted to a state of emergence: "Afterwards, events unfolded spontaneously, no longer under the control of the government or the Party."[990]

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985 Sachs and Woo (1994); White, 165
986 Lynch, 12
987 Lynch, 14
988 Cited in Ellman & Kontorovich, 169
989 Lynch (2012); Harrison and Ma (2013)
990 Ellman & Kontorovich, 171

This was to become a theme of the Gorbachev era: his 'wait and see' approach to unfolding complexity meant that crisis situations were not seized proactively. The consequence for policymaking in such scenarios is that as time passes, the range of choice available to decision-makers narrows, and certain paths are effectively foreclosed.[991] Emergence in complex systems can deprive leaders of room for manoeuvre, and end up creating new political realities that run against the intentions or wishes of policymakers.[992]

The domestic choices made by Gorbachev between 1985 and 86 deepened the economic and financial turmoil faced by the Soviet state. Gorbachev responded to the deteriorating situation by weakening the power of the nomenklatura and the central party, hoping that dismantling existing sources of authority in the USSR's politico-economic system would speed up the success of his economic reforms. Similarly, he used the hierarchical nature of the Soviet political system to circumscribe the influence of the military on foreign policy.[993] By 1988, Gorbachev decided to launch truly radical reforms in both foreign and domestic policy, which unleashed centrifugal forces that caused the Soviet system to start spinning out of control. The increasing turbulences the country faced diminished its negotiation position vis-à-vis the US and trapped Gorbachev in his reform efforts: looking for vindication abroad, he encouraged Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe to follow in his steps, which brought about a sweeping revolutionary transition from autocracy to democracy in the Warsaw Pact states. At that stage, the best chance to prevent the Soviet Union's downward spiral was through a decisive reversion to the old model of complete control over society. Gorbachev's half-hearted efforts to that end late in 1990 alienated key allies and undermined his authority, hastening the breakdown of the Communist Party's authority, which was sealed during the failed anti-Gorbachev coup in June of 1991.

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991 Lebow and Stein (2004) speak of 'windows of opportunity' that open and close with the passage of time. For more on temporal junctures, see footnote 190

992 China's leaders watched events unfold in Europe in 1989 and decided to foreclose certain policy paths in their own unfolding domestic crisis. The Tiananmen crackdown occurred the same day that Solidarity won the first semi-free elections in Poland. Cracking down violently and with the element of surprise was the only way to prevent the emergent student reform movement from crystallising into a widespread challenge of the Communist Party's rule. See Sarotte (2012)

993 See Snyder (2005)

The emergent effects of his collision with the deep-rooted Stalinist bureaucracy pushed Gorbachev to the fateful conclusion in late 1987 that economic reform would not be successful in the absence of wholesale political reform.[994] *Uskorenie* (acceleration) had not produced results in 1985 and 1986, and Gorbachev believed structural reform à la perestroika would flounder without democratisation as a means to break down intra-systemic obstacles to change. Says Kramer, "by mid-88 Gorbachev came to believe that economic revitalisation for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was impossible without thoroughgoing political reform."[995] At this stage, the trajectory of domestic reform was fundamentally re-shaped by the first major success of Gorbachev's tenure: the INF Treaty, whose genesis was discussed in the preceding chapter. With it, Gorbachev achieved what Snyder calls a 'watershed for Soviet security', departing radically from numerous decades-old arms control shibboleths in a number of ways: the treaty eliminated an entire class of missiles, breached the principle of 'parity'[996] in missile reductions that had been key to all preceding arms control treaties, violated the principle of 'equal security' (since French and British nuclear missiles were excluded from the reductions), and, crucially, was based on the Zero Option first outlined by Reagan in 1981 and resolutely opposed by all Soviet leaders since then.[997]

The INF Treaty, as with all binding, formal diplomatic arrangements, was the product of intense, prolonged negotiations, spear-headed by the foreign policy vision of the leaders in charge rather than by some kind of structural lodestar alone (such as a country's security position in the international system). The interactions that go into crafting international treaties can change the perception of the actors involved: through his repeated and ever-improving relatiions with Reagan, Gorbachev grew more comfortable scaling back the country's burdensome military expenses. By 1989, Gorbachev believed the "improved international climate allowed him to focus on constructive endeavours at home, obtain Western technologies, and that NATO would not undercut Soviet Union."[998] Gorbachev didn't sue for peace: he pursued it with Reagan after an inter-personal dynamic

[994] See Lynch (2012)

[995] Kramer (2012), 188

[996] In that the Soviets possessed a numerical advantage in the medium-range missiles that the INF Treaty abolished.

[997] Snyder (2005)

[998] Kramer (2012), 189

developed that made peace feasible. This shift in perception paved the way for the restructuring of Soviet policy towards Eastern Europe. How interaction effects between Gorbachev and the Reagan and Bush Administrations guided this process will be looked at next.

Interaction effects: the adaptive to-and-fro of leader relations

After coming to power Gorbachev initially remained beholden to Andropov's view that compromise could not be reached with the Reagan Administration.[999] The Twelfth Five Year Plan of 1986 called for an increase in military spending.[1000] Gorbachev publicly reaffirmed the Brezhnev Doctrine's core mantra that 'socialist gains are irreversible', warning that external forces wishing to move a country out of the socialist orbit would endanger European order and peace.[1001] This early approach mellowed as Gorbachev realised through his burgeoning relationship with Reagan that the President was interested in improving the climate of superpower relations. Zubok describes Soviet foreign policy in 1985-86 as the 'search for détente for the sake of perestroika', Gorbachev's principal focus being the prevention of a new round of the arms race.[1002]

As noted, it was in the domain of foreign policy that Gorbachev sensed the greatest latitude for change, even if little by way of substance came about immediately in terms of an improved US-Soviet relationship. His experiences with Reagan in Geneva and Reykjavik suggested to Gorbachev that the potential for a new dynamic in East-West relations was real and could potentially liberate the Soviet Union from the burden of never-ending military competition. At the same time, he was aware of the growing opposition to disarmament proposals among his own generals, who were 'hissing among themselves,' as he told a Politburo meeting in December 1986, after Reykjavik.[1003] General Makhmut Gareyev, Akhromeyev's deputy, later reported his view that "if the arms race had been conducted in a more sensible manner, we could have sustained it and still maintained strategic parity, we could have matched the Western powers and ensured global

[999] Zubok (2002), 66
[1000] Ellman & Kontorovich, 17
[1001] Kramer (2012), 181
[1002] Zubok (2003), 210
[1003] Haslam, 360

stability. We also had every opportunity to preserve the Soviet Union."[1004] By contrast, Gorbachev became increasingly convinced that ending the arms race was central to his efforts of reforming the Soviet system.

Person-to-person interactions in the sphere of foreign policy were crucial in shaping the positions of key US leaders toward Gorbachev. The CIA, in its assessments of Gorbachev's reforms, was sceptical of his desire to achieve systemic change and instead assumed he was pursuing conciliatory policies in the hope of generating breathing space so that the Soviet system could be revitalised rather than fundamentally changed. In a letter to Shultz early in 1986, Gates explained he was aware of the Secretary's misgivings that "we at CIA are too rigidly fixed on the notion of no change in the Soviet approach to the US or their domestic problems and, therefore, that we are missing the importance of current developments and also misreading the shape of things to come in the Soviet Union," but went on to state his belief that Gorbachev "is trying to re-create the détente atmosphere of the early 1970s on the same premises […] so far he has been very orthodox on the basics at home and abroad."[1005] As the preceding chapter showed, however, the interactions between Reagan, Shultz and Gorbachev strengthened Reagan's view that the Soviet leader was earnest in his attempts to move their relationship from confrontation to co-operation.

The shifting web of influence in the Reagan Administration contributed to this perception taking hold in US foreign policy. Caspar Weinberger, for instance, was reluctant to pursue Eduard Shevardnadze's suggestion of setting up a meeting between the two countries' Defence Ministers. Weinberger resigned in 1987 the wake of the Iran-Contra scandal and was replaced by Frank Carlucci, who describes his predecessor as "intuitively a harder liner than me; I was more pragmatic."[1006] Carlucci travelled to Moscow in 1988 to meet directly with Soviet Defence Minister Dimitri Yazov in the first encounter of its kind under the Reagan presidency. Carlucci deferred all arms control discussions to George Shultz and instead focused on military doctrine and military-to-military contacts. He gave a speech to senior military officials at the Voroshilov Military Academy, was allowed to observe Soviet military exercises, and even inspected a cutting-edge Blackjack bomber, a key pillar in the USSR's forward-based strategic bombing systems and thus its nuclear

[1004] Ellman and Kontorovich, 63
[1005] Gates (2007 [1996]), 374
[1006] Carlucci interview,

force doctrine. The Carlucci-Yazov meeting prompted the following report by Gorbachev to the Politburo: "It was a very substantive and candid discussion, sometimes even surprisingly candid. This is the sign of the times. There are human beings, not beasts. The human factor is at play here; as well as in the relations between the Presidents." Carlucci agrees that his trip and subsequent visits by Yazov cemented the budding trust between the two countries' leaders. [1007]

As the dynamic of reform unfolded in the USSR, the interactions between Gorbachev and his Western counterparts were crucial in shaping the direction that the Cold War now took. At the 27th Party Congress in 1986, Gorbachev did not yet set out a coherent new foreign policy, but made clear that "so far as relations with the United States were concerned, the only security worthy of the name is mutual security."[1008] George Shultz and Jack Matlock were among the few top Reagan officials to take Gorbachev's word that his attempts at reform went beyond cosmetic changes and endeavoured to change the Soviet Union on a more fundamental level. As Robert Gates readily agrees, it was Shultz who "discerned in Gorbachev's rhetoric and proposals much more potential for a fundamental change in Soviet direction than [CIA] did."[1009] He further recalls, "Secretary Shultz, more than anyone else in the administration, felt that Gorbachev meant what he said […] while [Shultz] always supported keeping the military pressure on, he also used diplomacy to help the Soviets find the exits he believed they had to go through."[1010] Matlock reports that Reagan was impressed by Gorbachev's evident willingness to eliminate intermediate nuclear forces and took note of the liberalising steps that were taken in the USSR, such as efforts to open up the Soviet media.[1011]

In May 1988, Gorbachev announced to the Central Committee that he intended to hold the 19th CPSU conference later that summer. Furthermore, Gorbachev planned to hold contested elections in 1989 for a new Congress of People's Deputies. Matlock briefed Reagan on what he described as a 'game-changing' development. A few days later, on his first visit to the Soviet Union, Reagan revoked his infamous depiction of the USSR as an evil empire

[1007] Carlucci interview; see also Blanton and Savranskaya (2008), NSA Electronic Briefing Book 251, Doc. 5
[1008] Brown (1997), 221
[1009] Gates (2007 [1996]), 378
[1010] Gates (2007 [1996]), 387
[1011] Matlock, (2010)

with the words, 'that was another time, another era.' Reagan went on to credit Gorbachev for the changes that had taken place in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev felt justifiable vindication for his foreign policy strategy, reporting to the Politburo afterwards, "The President, despite all his prejudices, was capable of looking at things realistically and corrected his former odious views […] Thus, the human factor that we hold in such great esteem in our foreign policy played its indispensable role.'"[1012] Within the space of a few years, Reagan had moved from a position of treating the Soviet Union as an intractable adversary to fully embracing its leader. Material changes alone could not prompt such a turnaround in relations: the interpersonal dimension was key in eliciting a response to Gorbachev's reforms.

Interactions with foreign leaders were taken seriously by Gorbachev, who listened to points made by his interlocutors, and tried to adjust Soviet policy to accommodate Western concerns when he felt that legitimate points of view were being advanced rather than the adversarial zero-sum stances of the past. A debate with Margaret Thatcher after Reykjavik was summarised by Gorbachev for the Politburo as follows:

> "She focused on trust. She said, 'The USSR has squandered the West's faith and we don't trust you. You take grave actions lightly: Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan. We couldn't imagine that you'd invade Czechoslovakia, but you did. The same with Afghanistan. We're afraid of you. If you remove your INF, and the Americans do too, then we'll be completely defenseless before [your huge armies].' That's how she sees it. She thinks we haven't rejected the 'Brezhnev doctrine.' Comrades, we have to think this over. We can't ignore these arguments."[1013]

Chernyaev credits this exchange as the reason for Gorbachev's 1987 pivot in Soviet foreign policy towards paying greater attention to relations with Europe. In February 1987 Shevardnadze first tabled the then radical idea of German unification: after a visit to Berlin, he reported to Gorbachev, "The idea of a united German nation exists in the minds of the communists there. They seek contact with West Germany and they don't criticise West

[1012] Matlock, (2010)
[1013] Chernyaev, 104

Germany. We must seriously and academically examine the idea of a unified Germany."[1014] After the INF Treaty was signed, foreign affairs began to take on an outsized role in driving the Soviet reform process, spurring Gorbachev to greater activism: to secure the INF Treaty he had faced down vehement opposition by the military establishment and in the process secured a landmark agreement with the US. As a consequence, Gorbachev, Shevardnadze, Yakovlev and a narrow circle of their advisors increasingly directed foreign policy after 1987, rather than the Politburo as in the past. On the crucial issue of Germany, Gorbachev and Shevardnadze handled almost all of the negotiations.[1015]

This mutually supporting interactivity in arms control went beyond the senior leadership level alone. In 1988, Shevardnadze informed Gorbachev how talks at the working level (rather than ministerial) proceeded: "[Ass. Secretary of State] Ridgway and [Dep. Foreign Minister] Bessmertnykh are sitting together, conducting official talks. But they connect at the intuitive level – this should be so, we can do this, we won't worry about that yet, we'll come back to this later, etc."[1016] Gorbachev reflected on this: "The two teams passed the test of their ability to work together. When will this happen again? As I watched them listening to me, I had the impression that they forgot they're on Reagan's staff. Just normal people who know their responsibilities."[1017] Foreign policy was the area where Gorbachev possessed great leeway and could chart a relatively idiosyncratic course, and he succeeded in bringing Reagan into a mutually supportive virtuous cycle of improving relations. This was, to say the least, an unexpected development: "Paradoxical as it may seem, efforts toward disarmament and new relations with the West – originally meant to 'create favourable external conditions for perestroika' – in fact became its locomotive."[1018] These are the causal paths of system change that can influence international relations.

Decisions and disputes in Soviet foreign policy were seen in the US as a canary in the coalmine of Soviet reform. Jack Matlock, in his capacity as Ambassador to the Soviet Union, closely monitored a Politburo debate in 1988 concerning the basis of Soviet foreign policy. After Yegor Ligachev

[1014] See Neef (2006)
[1015] Zubok, 320
[1016] Cited in Chernyaev, 144
[1017] Ibid, 144
[1018] Ibid, 144

wrote an article in *Pravda* arguing that the international class struggle remained the basis of Soviet foreign policy – "We proceed from the class nature of international relations," he asserted, talk of any other approach "only confuses the Soviet people and our friends abroad" – Alexander Yakovlev, a reformer and key Gorbachev ally, gave a public speech contradicting Ligachev's position.[1019] Shevardnadze subsequently informed Matlock in private that 'the common interests of mankind' had replaced the old Leninist foreign policy line. This was followed by Gorbachev's speech to the UN General Assembly in December of 1988, in which he announced a unilateral Soviet troop reduction in Eastern Europe amounting to some 500,000 personnel, proclaiming that there can be 'no limits of a nation's freedom of choice' in what amounted to a public dismissal of the Brezhnev Doctrine.

Matlock reports, "By the end of 1988 senior American and Soviet officials had developed a degree of personal trust that contrasted sharply with typical Cold War suspicions. Conversations became more and more candid as the political leaders agreed on common goals."[1020] On Shevardnadze's last visit to Washington during the Reagan Administration, Shultz arranged a private dinner for him and a handful of other guests. Matlock remembers Shevardnadze speculating on the future of the USSR, anticipating that the country would somehow muddle through its economic difficulties but would eventually have to deal with the 'nationalities question,' with the Soviet foreign minister explicitly raising the possibility that 'the Soviet Union will not survive as a unitary state.'[1021] The nature of this conversation and the fact that Shevardnadze's explosive remarks were not subsequently leaked is a rather remarkable indicator of the degree of trust and convergence of interests that had taken hold among top US and Soviet leaders within the span of a few years of the Reagan-Gorbachev relationship, brought about largely by the positive atmosphere that the key protagonists on both sides had managed to generate. The consequences of these interpersonal links had been profound in terms of producing the steps necessary to overhaul the adversarial US-Soviet relationship.

[1019] Ibid, 208
[1020] Matlock (2010)
[1021] Ibid

The Reagan-Bush transition

As 1988 drew to a close the curtains were drawn on the Reagan Administration. In Reagan and Shultz, Gorbachev lost a pair of trusted partners. By this point, the two US statesmen bought almost wholesale into the notion that the Soviet leader was genuinely trying to bring the Cold War to and end and move the former foes toward a new era. Reagan later recalled:

> "It's clear that there was a chemistry between Gorbachev and me that produced something very close to a friendship. He was a tough, hard bargainer. He was a Russian patriot who loved his country. We could – and did – debate from opposite sides of the ideological spectrum. But there was a chemistry that kept our conversations on a man-to-man basis, without hate or hostility."

Reagan felt Gorbachev was different from his predecessors, because he was "the first not to push Soviet expansionism, the first to agree to destroy nuclear weapons, the first to suggest a free market and to support open elections and freedom of expression."[1022] After his trip to Moscow in 1988, Reagan called Gorbachev "a serious man seeking serious reform […] quite possibly, we're beginning to take down the barriers of the postwar era; quite possibly we are entering a new era in history, a time of lasting change in the Soviet Union."[1023] The dense personal interactions at the highest levels of the two superpowers' leadership between 1985 and 1988 produced an important legacy in the form of disarmament treaties, policy shifts, and change on the ground. The depth of domestic opposition that Reagan and Gorbachev had to overcome to sign the INF Treaty, not to mention the hurdles posed by the negotiations, demonstrate that personal commitment to diplomacy can be integral to effecting change in international relations.

In 1989, US-Soviet leadership interactions changed in nature as a new team arrived at the White House. George H. W. Bush was determined to imprint the Presidency with both his own personnel and policies. The inter-personal dynamics within a presidential administration are an emergent property of the micro-system of US foreign policy-making: the decisions

[1022] Reagan (1990), 707
[1023] Roberts (1988)

made by an Administration are in part driven by the dense web interactions spun by the various principals involved in policy formation. This means that to fully understand how foreign policies differ between Presidencies, attention must be paid to the personalities of policymakers in an Administration, not only individually, but also in relation to the each other. Brent Scowcroft, National Security Advisor to President Bush, puts the point as follows:

> "Personality is extremely important. […] Rarely does a President know, when he's selecting the people around him, how they're going to interact with each other. Most of the time he usually knows all of the people, but he's not intimate with them, and certainly they've never worked together before. So our system has a built in risk factor as to how well people are going to work together."[1024]

In the Reagan Administration, fractious and disruptive relations between the various foreign policy decision-makers paralysed US policy towards the Soviet Union for most of Reagan's first term. George Shultz eventually broke through the gridlock, positioning himself as the President's chosen lieutenant in Soviet affairs by crafting a policy designed to echo Reagan's diplomatic intuitions about the merits of outreach. Shultz steadfastly defended this crucial policy position against hardline anti-Soviet cabinet officials who tried to sabotage him at every step. His prowess in navigating the densely fought-over terrain of Reagan's Soviet policy paved the way for a presidentially led initiative to improve relations with the Soviet Union, expressed through path-breaking summit meetings and landmark arms reduction treaties.

President Bush, mindful of the political paralysis that policy bickering in an Administration can produce, had a different approach to selecting his cabinet. His presidency was characterised by productive foreign policy debates that facilitated the bold diplomatic strokes necessary for German reunification to not only emerge as a realistic policy goal but to become reality within an astonishingly brief timeframe. Philip Zelikow, a key Soviet advisor on Bush's NSC, explains: "Bush doesn't pick a team that's going to be creative on German unification per se. He picks Baker as it's Baker, he

[1024] Scowcroft Miller Center interview (1999)

picks Scowcroft as it's Scowcroft. For reasons that antedate all of that: Bush knows who these people are." An intra-Administration argument concerning reunification emerges "during the spring and summer [of 1989], and actually there is a difference of view between Scowcroft [and Baker]."[1025] This crystallization of two competing opinions on Reunification did not create an intra-Administration policy logjam, but instead led Bush to go with his instinct that Germany was ready for reunification, without antagonising half the Cabinet in the process. Later, the harmonious atmosphere in foreign policymaking in the Bush White House contributed to creative diplomatic proposals that pushed the Reunification process forward.

Central to the web of interaction in an Administration is the President, around whom all policy debates ultimately revolve, and with whom final policy choices rest. Any presidential transition involves breaks in personalities and policy, and the interaction between these two factors is worth investigating. The Reagan-to-Bush transition in 1989 was abrupt: the NSC and State Departments were pruned and an entirely new team came in, "representing foreign policy approaches fundamentally at odds with those of the Reagan Administration. […] These changes were soon reflected in major shifts in policy."[1026] The incoming Bush Administration was reluctant to pick things up where Reagan and Shultz left them off. In particular, Bush hesitated to endorse Gorbachev publicly. Shultz remembers,

> "Scowcroft and, I think, Gates had persuaded [Bush] that Reagan and I had been going too fast and too far, and they did have a 'pause' in relations. […] There was a constant fight in the American establishment between the point of view that things were changing in the Soviet Union and Gorbachev was an agent of change – that was my view and that was Reagan's view – and others who thought that the Soviet Union would not and could not change, and Gorbachev was just an aberration, don't pay any attention. So there was a real difference of opinion."[1027]

Hutchings, who joined the NSC in 1989, recalls that the Bush administration's policies "departed sharply from the Reagan administration, particularly in

[1025] Zelikow interview
[1026] Hutchings, 6
[1027] Shultz interview

rebuilding support for nuclear deterrence and radically revising Soviet policy away from a narrow focus on arms control, toward a much more ambitious political agenda."[1028]

There were a number of major unresolved issues that confronted the Bush Administration in January 1989. Europe remained divided into opposing military blocs, further arms control agreements to reduce strategic nuclear weapons and conventional military forces were still under negotiation, and proxy wars in Africa and Central America continued. One basic conceptual divide within the Bush Administration was whether it was in the US' national interest to support perestroika. Matlock, by this point Ambassador to the USSR, strongly argued in the affirmative; sceptics like the new National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft and his deputy Robert Gates took a more cautious line. Scowcroft is explicit about his views at the time:

> "I had some very fixed views in mind coming in [to the White House] that differed with the Reagan Administration. […] Gorbachev came in with the notion not of ending the Cold War but of reinvigorating the Soviet Union."

Scowcroft did not buy into the outgoing Administration's claim that Cold War tensions were over:

> "When the Reagan Administration started saying the Cold War has ended, I didn't buy any of it. […] I thought that what Reagan was doing was in part being seduced by Gorbachev, and in part simply not understanding what was going on. And I remember telling President Bush that I thought the whole Gorbachev approach was not designed to end the Cold War. It was designed to make the Soviet Union more effective and efficient in prosecuting it, and that the fundamental things that made up the Cold War, if you will, were all still in place. And that the main element of made the Cold War the Cold War was the Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe."[1029]

[1028] Hutchings, 27

[1029] Scowcroft personal interview

The new Secretary of State, James Baker, disagreed with Scowcroft: "There were some in the Administration, some of the more Cold Warriors like Brent [Scowcroft] and [Robert] Gates […] who felt that perhaps the Reagan people had been too quick to embrace [Gorbachev], too quick to talk. I never believed that. Honest, I didn't believe it."[1030] Baker wanted to work with Gorbachev and help his reforms succeed, and ensured that his turf as the US' senior foreign policy leader was not trodden on. He prevented Robert Gates from giving a public speech early in 1989 which forecast that Gorbachev was not going to succeed in his reform efforts.[1031] In February 1989 Richard Cheney, the new Secretary of Defence, gave a television interview predicting that Gorbachev, if he was serious about his efforts to change the Soviet Union, was bound to fail. Baker's response was immediate: "I picked up the phone and called the President, and I said, 'You can't have your Secretary of Defence out here telling the press that the guy you want to work with as a reformer is going to fail. That's not our policy.' And the President agreed with me, and they walked away from Cheney's remarks at the White House press briefing."[1032] Cheney has also described his thinking at the time: "A major concern for me through this whole period is that I don't know what the hell is going on in the Soviet Union. […] Gorbachev clearly is an improvement over his predecessors. Gorbachev appears to be committed to glasnost and perestroika. But I was then very sceptical about whether or not he would succeed, whether or not he would be able to deliver, and exactly where the Soviets were going with the whole thing."[1033] These divergent views did not paralyse the Administration, since they were processed by an efficient national security-making system defined by the harmonious handling of differences between principals.

Policy divisions in the Bush cabinet were substantial, but the new Administration didn't degenerate into the same internecine fighting that marred the first Reagan term. This highlights an overlooked aspect of how the complex balance of interrelationships *inside* a team of political leaders influences the outcomes of the policymaking process. The stark difference of views concerning the sincerity of Gorbachev's reform efforts were handled in a professional manner that prevented egos from clashing and tempers from

[1030] Baker personal interview
[1031] Gates (2007 [1996), 480
[1032] Ibid
[1033] Cheney Miller Center interview (2000)

flaring. Bush, who as Vice-President witnessed how interpersonal clashes can harm an Administration's policy effectiveness, made it clear that "he didn't want any [discord] in his administration and all of us knew it, and knew that probably the surest way to get into trouble with the President was to be seen as creating a problem in these working relationships."[1034] In addition, the President assembled a team that managed to operate effectively, not least because they were all familiar with each other: "It was […] very important that almost everybody in the inner circle in the administration had known each other for a long time." [1035] During the Ford Administration, Richard Cheney was White House Chief of Staff, George Bush headed the CIA, Brent Scowcroft was National Security Advisor and James Baker was Undersecretary of Commerce. "We all had these relationships. […] This was a very experienced group of people. Everybody had a great sense of humor. Humor played a huge role in the Bush administration and both at the principals' level and the deputies' level in making things work smoothly." [1036] Colin Powell, Bush's Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, concurs: "We were all old friends. We had all worked with each other in different capacities, so we knew each other. […] We knew what each one of us thought, we knew our strengths and weaknesses, and Bush would let us argue in front of him."[1037] Similar testimony has also been provided by Richard Haass, then Special Assistant to President Bush on the NSC: "I've worked for four Presidents and I would say, by order of magnitude, this was the least-divided administration of the four. Compared to Carter, Reagan, and Bush, the current President Bush."

Robert Gates is particularly adamant about the significance of the nature of interpersonal interactions in an Administration:

> "You can have all the structure in the world, but at the end of the day, policy is made by human beings and governments are effective or not effective in substantial measure because of the quality of the individuals in it and their ability to work with one another."

[1034] Gates Miller Center interview (2000)
[1035] Ibid
[1036] Cheney Miller Center interview (2000)
[1037] Powell Miller Center interview (2011)

The relationships in an administration can be built on mutual trust or on bureaucratic warfare, and this has real policy effects: "It really does matter when the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense aren't speaking to one another, or hate each other's guts, as I have seen, or when nobody trusts the National Security Advisor." He is clear that "these things matter, and if everybody does trust each other and works productively together, then that has beneficial results."[1038]

Gates describes an interactive element of complexity in policymaking: namely, the atmospheric conditions within which policies are formulated and decisions are made, brought about by the co-ordination and co-operative practices that take hold among decision-makers. Team dynamics feature prominently in the design of policy. By May 1989, the incoming Bush Administration was under pressure since US-Soviet relations had stalled as a result of a strategic 'pause' it had put in place during which foreign policy was to be re-evaluated. The upcoming NATO summit was important because of two unresolved issues. An acceptable formula for conventional force reductions had to be found in response to Warsaw Pact proposals for force reductions, and a rift between Margaret Thatcher and Helmut Kohl concerning short-range nuclear missiles needed to be healed. Where Thatcher felt that failure to upgrade the ageing Lance missiles would undermine deterrence and weaken European security, Kohl believed that stationing new missiles on German soil would continue to make his country a target of nuclear strikes and undermine to the emerging new European security architecture.[1039]

Bush ended up presenting a far-reaching, accelerated timetable of conventional force reductions which placed equal limits on US and Soviet forces. This was met with equal support from fellow NATO members and from Gorbachev. The short range nuclear missile question was resolved only after intense diplomatic negotiations at the foreign minister level, through which an acceptable compromise was found, based on adding the qualifier 'partial' before the phrase 'reductions in short term nuclear missiles' to the final communiqué. As Baker later commented, "Of such fine or boring nuances are diplomatic negotiations concluded."[1040] All in all, the summit

[1038] Gates Miller Center interview (2000)

[1039] As James Baker explains, "The Germans would say, 'The shorter the missile, the deader the German.'" Personal interview (2014).

[1040] Personal interview

ended up solving both of the major NATO irritants, leaving the Bush team elated: "The NATO summit was a resounding success. An almost euphoric atmosphere surrounded the press conference. The press had to admit that we had turned the entire situation around. While we subsequently had a great many difficulties with reporters on specific issues, they never returned to their theme of the spring – that we had no vision, and no strategy but drift."[1041] The work that went into the US proposals helped buoy the new Administration. Zelikow recounts the collaborative experience of how the conventional force reductions were co-authored by Baker, Scowcroft, Cheney and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who all had contrasting stances on the scope and timing of the force reductions:

> "Bush was empowering them to think big and creatively, a little bit insecure about whether or not he was going to be a successful foreign policy President who could keep up with Gorbachev. And then these men and their respective staffs kind of – 'Oh, well look, if you move here, that could…' – and they saw how it came together, knitted it into a package that no one of them could have produced on their own, but that together was really a package that then swept the whole Alliance with them, solved all these problems that had been vexing the Alliance in one package, and gave them an incredibly dynamic position that actually set things up for a lot of what happened in the summer."[1042]

With the above, Zelikow provides a practical description of emergence in the complex system of US policymaking: the sum of foreign policy output is bigger than its parts. The collective contributions of and interactions among the various key Administration members helped bring about an innovative policy outcome that boosted Bush's attempts at leading the Western Alliance at a crucial time when profound change was taking place in the international system. This helped the Bush Administration find its footing and avoid the dysfunctional foreign policy that characterised the Reagan Administration until 1983: foreign policy gridlock, ongoing, unsolved NATO disputes, and the inability to strike up a working relationship with the Soviet Union.

[1041] Bush and Scowcroft, A World Transformed, 83

[1042] Personal interview

Zelikow argues that the virtuous cycle surrounding the NATO Summit helped Bush's foreign policy team develop a cohesive approach, subsequently allowing it to smoothly handle the delicate task of supporting the aspirations of Soviet client states and republics that were seeking independence, without appearing to encourage or contribute to the break-up of the USSR.

> "Teams gain a sense of how to succeed after they've had their first success. […] You do things, they work, you see how they work, you begin to believe in each other, you can get in a virtuous cycle. […] So a lot of what become the striking features of this team […] on this and other issues later really gelled during this period in the beginning or in late March/early April of 1989. [The Administration] began going into habits of ways of doing things which weren't always perfect, but were by and large highly functional."[1043]

Outcomes in foreign policy are at least in part driven by the interactive group dynamic of the individuals responsible for formulating policy ideas on behalf of key decision-makers. These internal interactions were to prove particularly important in helping the Administration deal effectively with the fast-changing German situation. Zelikow constructs a 'Third Reagan Term' counterfactual to make the point, again premised on the importance of looking at teams rather than individuals when analysing US foreign policy-making: "Both in the Reagan case and the Bush case it's much more useful and insightful to think of teams. The Presidents have a big effect on the colouration and make-up of their teams."[1044] George Shultz believed that the Cold War was 'all over but the shouting' in 1989 and worried that the Bush Administration "did not understand or accept that the Cold War was over."[1045] This put him on the side of Cold Warriors like Margaret Thatcher, who believed that the division of Europe was an integral part of the continent's security architecture.[1046] As such it was no surprise that Rozanne Ridgway, who spent six years in the State Department as Shultz's chief aide and temporarily stayed on in the Bush Administration, argued against a US

[1043] Personal interview
[1044] Ibid
[1045] Shultz (1993), 1138
[1046] Oberdorfer (1988)

push for reunification. Ridgway chaired the Bush Administration's first policy review on Western Europe in March 1989 and concluded the following regarding reunification: "There is no more inflammatory and divisive issue, and it serves no US interest for us to take the initiative to raise it."[1047] The prevailing web of influence in the Reagan Administration, which was also more deferential to the Thatcher government than the Bush Administration, would likely have veered toward the view that a divided Germany was the key to the stability of Europe, and that the German question should not be re-opened[1048].

The team around Secretary Baker, headed by Robert Zoellick and Dennis Ross, was more gung-ho about the potential for foreign policy innovation in Europe in 1989. Already by March, Zoellick advised Baker to "get ahead of the curve on the issue of German Reunification."[1049] Baker was drawn to a paper written by Ross and Francis Fukuyama from the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, which recommended that Reunification proceed solely on the basis of German membership in both the EU and NATO – terms least likely to be palatable to the USSR.[1050] These kinds of ambitious and creative negotiation ideas are, according to Zelikow's mind, the product of the 'distinctive blend' that accompanies different policymaking teams.

Ridgway was right in pointing out that the issue of reunification was not salient for West Germany at the time: "The Germans were resigned to the fact unification was impossible."[1051] It is true that as late as 1989, Wolfgang Schäuble – who headed Kohl's Chancellery – argued that "old hopes that the unity of Germany could be achieved through the reunification of both German states in the not-too-distant future" were 'illusory' and accepted that after the construction of the Berlin Wall, there was "no way to overcome the German division."[1052] Horst Teltschik, foreign policy advisor to Kohl, stated that government policy until the end of 1989 leaned toward encouraging economic reform and a move toward democracy in the GDR, rather than a territorial merger.[1053] It is debatable whether Kohl would have

[1047] Cited in Zelikow and Rice, 26
[1048] Zelikow interview
[1049] Zelikow and Rice, 29
[1050] Ibid, 113
[1051] Zelikow interview
[1052] Zelikow and Rice, 34
[1053] Ibid, 93

felt comfortable enough to make the rapid and audacious moves towards reunification in autumn of 1989 under a hypothetical 'Third Reagan Term' with a far stronger White House preference for European stability and continuity. The Reagan team's greater faith that the Soviet Union under Gorbachev had fundamentally changed would suggest that, far from there being a rationale for a reunified Germany to join NATO, this outcome would actively destabilise the continental security environment by creating a new German behemoth, since the USSR no longer posed a threat.

Thus the interactivity of the policy generation process produces different preferences in different Administrations. Under Bush, it was Brent Scowcroft who was sceptical of rushing to endorse reunification. He convinced James Baker to replace 'reunification' with 'reconciliation' in an October 1989 speech.[1054] Later that month, however, George Bush told a New York Times reporter, "I don't share the concern that some European countries have about a reunified Germany."[1055] The disagreement between Baker and Scowcroft played out behind the scenes, allowing Bush to observe the key arguments at stake and make an informed choice that reunification was desirable. Says Zelikow, "I actually think this may have been where he was leaning anyway. But he's not trying to consciously butt conventional wisdom. In a way *because* of our disagreement, we're telling him, 'Both of these positions are respectable.' Had we been united in opposing [reunification], I don't think he would have defied us."[1056] Bush's relative ease at giving his explicit support to what amounted to a major transformation of the European order is somewhat surprising in view of his reputation for practising a prudent approach to diplomacy. Bush told Zelikow he regarded himself as "less of a Europeanist, not dominated by history."[1057] It appears that Bush's personal relations with Kohl supported his inclination to trust West Germany to shoulder the burden of reunification responsibly: "There is the story that Bush actually told me himself, how impressed he'd become with the Bonn Republic, and the trust that he had begun to feel, and actually a personal connection with Kohl, going back to the Euromissile arguments [the controversial NATO missile deployment of 1983], when Bush had been

[1054] Ibid, 93
[1055] Cited in Zelikow (2013)
[1056] Zelikow interview
[1057] Cited in Zelikow (2013), 7

Vice President."[1058] To paraphrase James Baker, of such fine nuances of interpersonal and intellectual relationships can policies be forged.

Once support for reunification began to emanate from the White House, Kohl started to move much more boldly into that direction. He also proved adept at seizing a window of opportunity that opened after the Berlin Wall came down on 9 November 1989.[1059] A few weeks after the 'fall of the Wall', Kohl presented a ten-point plan for reunification to the Bundestag, though the end-goal was still phrased cautiously in a roundabout way. Zelikow links Kohl's move to the tacit assent signalled by Bush in September, suggesting that it kick-started an emergent sub-process in the wider turmoil of 1989 that first unfolded within the parameters of German domestic politics, with Kohl stirring up public expectations of what was possible, in the hope of shifting creating a public consensus that endorsed reunification.[1060]

The first summit meeting between Gorbachev and Bush was held in Malta in December 1989. By this point, President Bush had come firmly down on the side of the Soviet leader. Over the summer, Bush dismissed intelligence reports that suggested Gorbachev was losing control over reform in the USSR with the frustrated rejoinder, "Look, this guy *is* perestroika."[1061] On a visit to Poland and Hungary, Bush took care to publicly support reform Communists rather than nationalist politicians. At Malta, Bush and Gorbachev established their working relationship. 1989 was drawing to a close, a year in which the balance of power in Europe had shifted markedly against the Soviet Union. The lack of major agreements at the summit has led to it being labelled a 'missed opportunity' and evidence of Bush's lack of vision in dealing with Gorbachev.[1062] In fact, however, the summit did have major consequences in terms of the interactions between Bush and Gorbachev. Bush describes the "friendly openness between [Gorbachev and I] and genuine willingness to listen to each other's proposals" at Malta, through

[1058] Zelikow interview

[1059] See Kohl (2009)

[1060] Zelikow interview. It bears noting that Kohl faced a general election in the spring of 1990 that the polls indicated he would lose: this incentivized him to shake up the race late in 1989 through a bold policy vision like reunification. Had he been leading the polls, Kohl would arguably have acted more cautiously.

[1061] Beschloss and Talbot, 70

[1062] Blanton and Savranskaya (2009), NSA Electronic Briefing Book 298

which two leaders appeared to have developed a measure of mutual respect and confidence in each other.[1063]

More important was their incipient discussion concerning the future of Germany. While Gorbachev made clear his irritation over Kohl's ten-point plan and expressed a preference for the continuation of the territorial status quo, he once again reverted to his relatively passive endorsement of emergence as a means of dealing with the unfolding transformation of Europe:

> "There are two German states; this is the way history happened. Let history decide *how the process will develop* and what it will lead to in the context of a new Europe and a new world. [Emphasis added]"

To which Bush responded,

> "I agree. We will not take any rash steps; will not try to accelerate the outcome of the debate on reunification. […] On this issue you are in the same boat with our NATO allies. Most of the conservative ones among them welcome your approach. […] I hope that you understand that you cannot expect us not to approve of German reunification. At the same time, we realize the extent to which this is a delicate, sensitive issue. We are trying to act with a certain reserve."

Commenting on the speed and scale of the political changes that had taken place in Europe that year – and truthfully asserting that the US, far from trying to actively influence the outcome of these revolutions, stood on the sidelines – Bush told Gorbachev, "we were shocked by the swiftness of the changes that unfolded" and complimented Gorbachev on the USSR's response:

> "We regard highly your personal reaction and the reaction of the Soviet Union as a whole to these dynamic, and at the same time fundamental, changes."

Gorbachev and Bush interacted in a mature, sober-minded and transparent manner. At the same time, this may involuntarily have signalled to the Bush

[1063] Garthoff (1994) 407; Bush and Scowcroft, 173.

Administration that Gorbachev would not draw a red line at German reunification within NATO. Zelikow and Rice – the latter an eyewitness to the proceedings in Malta – report:

> "Gorbachev's relaxed demeanor convinced the Americans that the Soviet leader was malleable on the German question. As the meetings wrapped up in Malta, Baker and Scowcroft's advisers talked about avoiding any situation in which the Soviet Union might be forced to say no to some concrete proposal on Germany. They reasoned that the Soviet government did not seem to know where it was going, so the West should not try to force Gorbachev to declare a bottom line."

Akhromeyev, another eyewitness (by that point a military advisor to Gorbachev), later ruminated that Gorbachev made a crucial error: "Bush realised that had a position [on reunification] been formed, it would have been expressed by M. Gorbachev in Malta."[1064] It seems that the interplay between these two unique leaders at least partly contributed to rapid German reunification on Western terms. Chernyaev describes Gorbachev's "renowned tendency to seek compromise, his predilection for bringing about peace everywhere, and hence his calculated readiness to accept what he does not really approve of. […] This makes Gorbachev as a person and politician at once strong and weak."[1065] Scowcroft, when asked about how the President would have responded had Gorbachev phrased an explicit red line concerning a reunified Germany's NATO membership, responded:

> "We talked about this a lot. And we never came down with what I'd call a 'policy' toward it. But my sense is that we would not have pushed it on the Soviet Union that we wanted this [reunification within NATO] to happen. The President especially was attuned to Gorbachev. He didn't want to make trouble for Gorbachev, he really didn't."[1066]

This confluence of characters, then, may explain the by now infamous moment in May of 1990 when Gorbachev unexpectedly gave his assent to

[1064] Zelikow & Rice, 130
[1065] Cited in Crow, 123
[1066] Scowcroft interview

German reunification within NATO at the Washington Summit, prompting outrage among his entourage. President Bush had asked, innocuously enough, whether Gorbachev could accede to the Helsinki principle that sovereign states were free to choose their alliances, to which the Soviet leader responded in the affirmative. When challenged whether this applied also in the case of Germany and NATO, Gorbachev reiterated his stance. Condoleezza Rice confirms that Bush's handling of this most delicate of Cold War endgame situations was based on the absence of a Soviet red line and an appreciation of Gorbachev's negotiating characteristics:

> "We weren't so certain that there was a red line in the sand about NATO. And with Gorbachev, who had a tendency to keep saying 'Yes' if you didn't make him say 'No,' the view was 'Don't force that answer too soon.'"[1067]

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Scowcroft warned Bush, "there are no guarantees that the Soviet Union will go quietly into the night." He feared a military move born of desperation, not calculation, if the Soviet Union interpreted the situation as one "in which vital interests were on the line and not acting was believed in Moscow to be more dangerous than acting."[1068] That said, by February 1990 Condoleezza Rice informed Scowcroft that the USSR "is probably unable to re-extend its tentacles" into Eastern Europe.[1069] The US team tailored its approach to the topic based on Gorbachev's predilections:

> "Gorbachev didn't seem to want to put stakes in the ground. It wasn't like that. It was almost as if he was looking for a way for this to all turn out OK. And so we tried to give him as much cover as possible on the things that mattered to them, without compromising the one that mattered to us, which was Germany within NATO."[1070]

This is how interactions on a personal level between leaders of states, and between leaders and their own teams, form one layer of complex causality in

[1067] Rice interview
[1068] Shifrinson (2013)
[1069] See Shifrinson (2014)
[1070] Rice interview

international affairs. Policy positions are not derived entirely from abstract material facts. Negotiations are not conducted by automatons that passively interpret information. The human element plays an important role in determining which ideas take hold over decision-makers, and in their interpretation of each other's moves and preferences. The nature of the working relationships among decision-making teams contributes to the efficacy of policymaking. Zelikow, commenting on the Bush administration's foreign policy accomplishments, remarks: "You can't really ascribe to any one of them the secret. That's why I emphasise this point about the team. […] [As with] chemical compounds, I can't just pull out Calcium atoms and Sulphur atoms, and say 'It produces the same effects.'"[1071] The web of relationships that is spun inside different Presidential administrations cannot be understood by looking at various individuals separately, but instead by studying how they harmonise as a group. Personality conditions choices and preferences: the interaction of personalities, too, gives rise to choices and priorities in international affairs. This is a secondary interaction effect in policymaking, on top of the primary interactions between high-level leaders, where the heavy lifting occurs: Reagan and Gorbachev gradually broke down the perception of zero-sum US-Soviet rivalry in the international system through the dogged pursuit of arms control; Bush and Gorbachev's interactions paved the way for the unexpectedly quick and smooth reunification of Germany in 1990.

Nonlinearity: systemic leaps and root unpredictability

Just as Dobzhansky notes that 'nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution,'[1072] in complexity theory, nothing makes sense except in the light of nonlinearity. The end of the Cold War unfolded through a complex confluence of choices, contingent events and timing. The progression of events under Gorbachev was neither orderly nor smooth. This points to the role played by non-linearity in international relations, a system characterised not by stability but by discontinuities, not by predictability but by uncertainty. That explains why Gorbachev never achieved what he set out to do – to save socialism and preserve the Soviet Union – and instead

[1071] Zelikow interview
[1072] Dobzhansky (1973)

brought about the inverse. The evolution of Gorbachev's reform path was non-linear: it did not follow a step-by-step additive process where one reform incrementally brought about the next. Instead, the key systemic reforms of perestroika and glasnost unfurled in a jumbled manner, the overall direction of which Gorbachev neither planned nor foresaw, and the ultimate outcome of which he did not desire. Systemic change took place within the parameters of complexity. It was launched through interactive dynamics between the principal political actors in the system and steered by bottom-up developments that were unleashed by these leaders. Politicians did not lose complete control, rather, they set the benchmarks within which non-linear change unfolded – primarily Gorbachev, by consistently refusing a violent response to the regime change in the Eastern bloc. This policy red line precluded the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact from spilling over into open conflict.

After Gorbachev came into office, his stated priority was "to protect and strengthen as much as possible the fraternal friendship with our closest comrades-in-arms and allies, the countries of the great socialist commonwealth." His first meetings with Eastern European leaders were full of exhortations for them to "do everything possible to undermine the aggressive attempts [...] made by class enemies [who] are nowadays seeking to achieve the ideological dissolution of socialism from within." At the end of April 1985, Eastern bloc leaders met in Moscow and extended the Warsaw Pact for another 30 years. Gorbachev did not mince his words, telling his colleagues, "military-strategic parity is a vital prerequisite for the security of the socialist states. Understandably, safeguarding the military balance has required – and, if the situation does not improve, will continue to require – a great deal of resources and effort. But without this it will be impossible to defend socialist gains."[1073] It was Gorbachev who prevented any changes to the basic treaty text and pushed for a 30-year renewal of the alliance as opposed to a shorter period.[1074] Since the above statements were made behind closed doors rather than for public consumption, it can be assumed that they were not propaganda but, in the words of Kramer, "underscored [Gorbachev's] desire to push for greater cohesion and integration between

[1073] All cited in Kramer (2012), pp. 173; 176

[1074] Brown (2007) argues that Gorbachev intended to break with past Soviet foreign policy doctrine from the outset, but cites Gorbachev's autobiography as evidence. The Politburo minutes cited by Kramer suggest differently.

the Soviet Union and its East European allies."[1075] Yet within the space of just four years, the entirety of what Gorbachev had hoped and aimed for in terms of his Eastern Europe policy had been turned in its head. The steps and developments that led to this outcome followed a pattern of non-linear change: there was no straightforward line from 1985 to 1989, rather, Gorbachev's positions evolved through a series of feedback loops, contingencies and disparate events.

Brown's account of the six stages of reform describes this complex evolution.[1076] In 1985 and 1986, Gorbachev began to prepare the ground for reform, focusing on improving economic performance through remedial policies and trying to enlist the top Soviet leadership to inject new political vigour into the USSR. He encouraged the political accountability of the political class, for instance through anti-corruption campaigns. As Zubok shows, Gorbachev departed from this initial path once he realised the old elite could not be co-opted, instead deciding to encourage new political forces, chiefly liberals and the nationalist intelligentsia, and thereby setting in motion a political process that would end up turning vehemently against the system.[1077] The failure of Gorbacgev's initial incrementalist restructuring led to a second phase that Brown calls 'radical political reform', lasting from 1987 to 1988. It brought about a third phase of ground-breaking political transformations in 1989 in the 'near abroad', which yielded a politically destabilising blowback at home in 1990, with rivals such as Boris Yeltsin taking advantage of new-found political liberties introduced as part of glasnost, and increasingly attracting the support of disillusioned new thinkers who felt he was the new face of reform.[1078] This brought about a fourth phase, during which Gorbachev attempted to apply the brakes on the forces of reform he had unleashed: this was the so-called 'turn to the right', which so unnerved Gorbachev's key ally Shevardnadze that it prompted him to resign in December 1990, warning that 'dark forces of nationalism' and dictatorship were on the offensive. The fifth phase of reform took place in the first half of 1991, when Gorbachev attempted to negotiate a voluntary new agreement between the USSR's constituent republics so as to revitalise the weakening Soviet Union. The sixth and terminal phase of reform began with

[1075] Ibid, 178
[1076] See Brown (1997), 160
[1077] Zubok (2007), 308
[1078] See Evangelista (2001)

the failed anti-Gorbachev coup of June 1991, whose principal outcome was to terminally weaken the authority of the Communist Party, shifting power to the first elected President of Russia, Boris Yeltsin, who used it to dislodge Gorbachev and then negotiated an orderly break-up of the Soviet Union.

This trajectory of political change was not designed to follow an overarching, consistent policy course. Rather, Gorbachev set the initial course toward gradualist reform, encountered systemic resistance primarily in the area of economic change, began to emphasise political reform as a means to transform the set ways of the Soviet system, before belatedly slowing down the pace of the process he had put in motion. All along, Gorbachev used the domain of foreign policy to proceed with a growingly radical re-alignment of the Soviet Union's international priorities, relying on relations with his increasingly trusting Western interlocutors to try and speed up change at home. Gorbachev's early instinct to change the Soviet system was thus buffeted by domestic resistance from vested interests, progressively improved interactions with international partners, worsening economic performance, and eventually the forces of politically liberated peoples at home and abroad, who began to exert bottom-up pressure to do away with the autocratic means of control and ideological superstructure that provided the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies with the authority and legitimacy to govern.

Nonlinearity does not amount to unrestrained chaos and total loss of control. English makes the point that the crucial revolutionary year of 1989 was marked by contingency and a fluidity of events that bordered on the chaotic – but the events themselves followed from the 'New Thinking' that Gorbachev had put in place since 1985.[1079] Chief among the constraints on the system's convulsions was the removal of violent means of repression from the policy toolbox available to Soviet leaders. The course of the policies Gorbachev charted towards Eastern Europe was fundamentally enmeshed with his near-pacifist refusal to countenance the use of force in order to maintain Soviet power: an attribute not merely unusual for a political leader but with a direct, essential material impact on the end of the Cold War.[1080] Chernyaev noted that as long as Gorbachev chaired Politburo meetings, it was "simply impossible even to suggest" any sort of intervention to halt the

[1079] English (2005), 225
[1080] Zubok (2002), 73

events in Eastern Europe.[1081] This was in marked contrast to the debates in the Politburo in 1980 and 1981 on whether to use force to prevent Solidarity from toppling the Communist government. Although Moscow ultimately decided against intervention, plans to invade were called off only after the Jaruzelski government to impose order through martial law. Decision-making was influenced by the fall-out of the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979; Andropov predicted that another Soviet military operation "would make things very difficult", citing "a variety of economic and political sanctions" already in place.[1082] By contrast, Gorbachev's aversion to the use of force was not driven by consequentialist thinking, but stemmed from his deep-rooted opposition to physical force as a means of politics. This was Gorbachev's signature idiosyncratic trait that he threw into the mix of the end of the Cold War, akin to Reagan's anti-nuclear commitment. Andrei Grachev, one of his advisors, remarks, "for Gorbachev, an unwillingness to shed blood was not only a criterion but the condition of his involvement in politics." According to Alexander Yakovlev, who was appointed to the Politburo in 1987, "avoidance of bloodshed was a constant concern for Gorbachev."[1083] Another aide, Vladimir Yegorov, wrote of his boss, "by character he was a man incapable of using dictatorial methods."[1084] The periodic episodes of violence that occurred during the decline and fall of the Soviet Union never took place with official sanctioning and were always met with the same response by Gorbachev, who declared violence a taboo: after a massacre of demonstrators in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi in April 1989, Gorbachev told the Politburo, "We have accepted that even in foreign policy force is to no avail. So, especially internally, we cannot resort and will not resort to force."[1085] Kramer confirms that at Gorbachev's request, the Politburo decided to refrain from military action in Eastern Europe regardless of how events in 1989 would turn out (though this decision was not publicly disclosed so as not to demoralise Warsaw Pact governments).[1086]

In the maelstrom of a complex, multi-layered political evolution, the personality of the key players involved matters: this affects how decision-

[1081] Cited in English (2005), 192, Chernyaev made these comments 24 February 1993 at a seminar on the end of the Cold War held at Princeton University

[1082] See Mastny (1998)

[1083] Grachev and Yakovlev cited in Brown (1997), 383

[1084] Yegorov, 125

[1085] Cited in Zubok (2007) 319

[1086] Kramer (2012), 172

makers in charge interpret events, perceive developments; it influences what signals leaders wish to send to competitors and allies at home and abroad, conditioning policy choices and responses to events. Gorbachev's key character traits were optimism, openness toward the West, and a deep-held antipathy toward force.[1087] Gorbachev treated other statesmen with respect and formed lasting friendships, many with Western politicians, had a tendency toward 'best case' thinking (hence his embrace of unpredictability and emergence once perestroika and glasnost started to shake things up – as per his favoured phrase, 'processes are in motion'), and undertook his diplomatic dealings on an assumption of good faith, integrity and the utility of international agreements.[1088] Most importantly, Gorbachev was the source of the changes in the Soviet Union which eventually culminated in its retrenchment (though he was also partly responsible for its implosion, after the changes he unleashed veered out of control).

The specific reforms Gorbachev undertook were only partly a response to material conditions. The more his policies proceeded to uproot long-entrenched habits in the USSR, the more Gorbachev began to prompt opposition to his path. The dismissal of Boris Yeltsin, one of Gorbachev's Politburo appointees, early in 1988 was due to Yeltsin's public impatience with the pace of reform, which he felt was too slow. Matlock recounts the details of Yeltsin's downfall, engineered by Gorbachev, and in the process unwittingly shut a window of opportunity that could have saved the Soviet Union. In September 1987, Yeltsin wrote Gorbachev a letter in which he attacked Yegor Ligachev, the conservative Politburo member, and "referred to the opposition of other, unnamed Politburo members opposed to real change," predicting that this would lead back "to a condition very much like the Brezhnevian stagnation they had tried to cure."[1089] Yeltsin requested to resign. Gorbachev ignored this prophetic letter until Yeltsin took the matter into his own hands and broached the subject at a Central Committee meeting in October. Matlock reports the response: "Gorbachev reacted with extreme hostility to this intervention, summarized Yeltsin's criticism in distorted form, accused him of unbridled ambition, and called for a discussion."[1090] All but one of the twenty-seven delegates rose to denounce

[1087] Zubok (2007), 321
[1088] Ibid, 316
[1089] Matlock (1995), 114-116
[1090] Ibid

Yeltsin, whose resignation was accepted. He was excoriated in *Pravda* and removed as head of the Moscow Party Committee. By that point, Yeltsin had made a name for himself as an energetic and enthusiastic reformer who had won the backing of a large number of Muscovites with his successful anti-corruption and efficiency drives. Instead of harnessing his energy, Gorbachev viewed him with suspicion.

Quite likely it was Gorbachev's own ambition that prevented him from seeing Yeltsin not as a rival but a potentially influential ally. Matlock reports that US officials repeatedly advised Gorbachev to bring Yeltsin into the fold, but the General Secretary was a poor team player who was unable to see merit in working with Yeltsin.[1091] Gates feels Gorbachev tried to act as 'captain, quarterback and coach' of the reform process. Gorbachev and Yeltsin disliked each other, and "had it not been for that animosity we might still be dealing with a much more federal Soviet Union."[1092] In what Gates calls "one of the most amazing episodes in history," Yeltsin ended up destroying the Soviet Union "because it's the only way he can put Gorbachev out of a job." From within the storm of complex change Gorbachev unleashed, he had the temporary chance to safeguard the existence of the Soviet Union by allying himself and sharing power with Yeltsin, who instead became his chief rival and ended up becoming the first President of Russia before dissolving the Soviet Union. Yeltsin eviscerated the power structures of the USSR in order to supplant Gorbachev as leader. Late in 1987, when Gorbachev fired Yeltsin, Matlock believes he missed the opportunity to instead bring him into the fold: "He would have continued to be a problem, but a manageable one, and Yeltsin's energy could have provided a useful counterpoint to the laggard conservatives."[1093] But as the intensity and scale of change began to grow in the Soviet Union, Gorbachev responded aggressively to someone he perceived as encroaching on his power. In a valuable lesson on how complexity can foil even a political giant like Gorbachev, the short-term destruction of a potential rival produced a self-destructive unintended consequence in the form of an enemy who set about to successfully tap alternative sources of power and ended up dislodging his erstwhile nemesis.

In 1987, Gorbachev was also assailed from another front. Politburo

[1091] Matlock interview
[1092] Gates interview
[1093] Matlock (1995), 118

member Yegor Ligachev – the very man Yeltsin accused in his September letter to Gorbachev – orchestrated a conservative critique of the reforms, sponsoring a letter in *Pravda* which called for a return to Stalinist principles of rule, and giving a speech in which he attacked the departure of Soviet foreign policy from its Leninist roots. Chernyaev wrote afterwards, "Ligachev began opposing Gorbachev more and more, convinced that his own neo-Stalinist idea of perestroika was the only correct one."[1094] Disputes in the Politburo and the press surrounding the course of New Thinking, in English's mind, "reflected less a dispute over policy than a struggle for power. The leaders of new thinking had already crossed their Rubicon by late 1986, and there was little chance of turning back so long as Gorbachev remained at the helm."[1095] The increasing rambunctiousness of Soviet policymaking was a consequence of the openness that was introduced into the political system through glasnost, and in the process forced Gorbachev to clamp down on dissent from his colleagues.

The revolutions of 1989 were catalysts for abrupt systemic change; a critical juncture that opened up quickly and without forewarning after a critical mass of change had accumulated in the Eastern bloc. 1989 marked an irreversible turning point in the trajectory of the Cold War's end. The events that year occurred due to the sweeping changes to Soviet policy under Gorbachev, courageous action by dissidents and citizens, and amidst a collective breakdown of confidence and will among the hardline rulers of Eastern Europe's captive nations, which was prompted by Gorbachev's repeated insistence that they had to handle the challenge to single-party rule peacefully, and on their own.[1096] The backdrop to all this was the fast improving state of East-West relations, which gave Shevardnadze and Gorbachev the reassurance they needed that the West was not about to exploit the turmoil or even fuel anti-Soviet sentiment. At the 19th Party Conference in June 1988 the Brezhnev doctrine was repudiated. Gorbachev told the assembled delegates, "the external imposition of a social system, of a way of life, or of policies by any means, let alone military, is a dangerous trapping of the past."[1097] The rapid improvement of US-Soviet relations gave

[1094] Chernyaev, 150

[1095] English (2002), 235

[1096] See Lévesque (1997). For an account synthesising the combination of agency, structure and timing that prompted the fall of the Berlin Wall, see Sarotte (2014)

[1097] Kramer (2012), 192

Gorbachev confidence that Washington would not undermine Moscow's vital political-military interests in Eastern Europe. As a result, Gorbachev decided to embark on an enormous drawdown of Soviet troops from Eastern Europe, "to show that our political thinking is more than just words."[1098]

By 1988 Gorbachev fully embraced the notion that perestroika was an open-ended process, one that changed the rules of engagement in the USSR, but left outcomes open, subject to how the impact this generated in Soviet society. In 1988, whilst on holiday in Crimea, Gorbachev went on a walkabout in Sevastopol and was soon surrounded by a throng of citizens who harangued their leader – in the new spirit of glasnost – about the problems they were encountering in everyday life: food supply issues, housing, pensions. At some point, Gorbachev exclaimed:

> "What do you think I am, a tsar? Or Stalin? Do you expect me to travel everywhere doling things out? An apartment to you, a pension to him, a fair salary to her, establishing order in the factory for them. […] Elect those who deserve it, get rid of those who are worthless. And organize your lives as you see fit. This is the essence of perestroika. If you expect me to solve everything, and if you keep looking to Moscow for approval and help, then you've missed the point completely."[1099]

Gorbachev analysed the root of the problem later that year in a speech to the Politburo:

> "We have a tradition, a bad one spawned by the command-administrative system, of the Party doing everyone's work for them. I mean the great number of specific resolutions adopted by the Politburo. People have grown so accustomed to it that they think that unless there's a Central Committee resolution, nothing can be done. There must be a resolution for every step, we determine and regulate everything at the highest Party level. We'll have to put an end to this."[1100]

[1098] Ibid, 197
[1099] Cited in Chernyaev, 170
[1100] Ibid, 173

The route of Gorbachev's path – characterised by emergent, reform-induced phenomena such as the apparat's paralysis when it came to overhauling the command economy – brought him to a point where he deliberately wished to dismantle the central mechanisms of control that the Communist party had relied upon to rule the Soviet Union. That sparked internal resistance, which Gorbachev responded to with more wide-ranging political reforms, by introducing openness into Soviet politics. Ellman and Kontorovich report, "until the system started to fray in 1989, there was no trace of civil society or organised citizen politics."[1101] Once the goal of perestroika became self-rule and glasnost removed the lid of repression on the USSR, non-linearity began to dominate the process of change in the Soviet system. Policy inputs and policy outputs diverged as Gorbachev's decisions successively abandoned the state's instruments of political control. The Soviet leader still tried to respond to events, but was often held hostage by them, as 1989 was to demonstrate powerfully.

This was the year that the political changes in the Soviet Union generated a spill-over effect into other Warsaw Pact countries, where they were magnified and more transformative than at home. Efforts in Poland to set up roundtable negotiations for power sharing between the ruling Communists and the Solidarnosc trade union began in 1988. These talks were sanctioned by Soviet reformers, who viewed Solidarity as a constructive opposition party.[1102] In the spring of 1989 the roundtable discussions led Poland to transition towards institutional pluralism and democratisation. Gorbachev viewed this as the exemplary model of change for Eastern Europe: Jaruzelski later reported, "Gorbachev saw the Polish experience as a laboratory and a useful example, not only for East Europe but also for the USSR itself."[1103] In June, against advice from the Politburo, Gorbachev gave a speech to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in which he publicly rejected the Brezhnev Doctrine: "The political and social order in one country or another has changed in the past and can also change in the future. Still, it is exclusively up to the people themselves. It is their choice. All interference, whatever its nature, in the internal affairs of a state to limit its sovereignty of a state, even from a friend or ally, is inadmissible."[1104]

[1101] Ellman & Kontorovich, 27
[1102] Lévesque (1997), 112
[1103] Ibid, 116
[1104] Ibid, 118

Since this was the era of glasnost, Gorbachev's remarks were published at home in *Pravda*. The Polish people took him at his word: the ruling Communists were routed in Poland's first free elections. Gorbachev tolerated this outcome. In Hungary, the leader of the Communist party Karoly Grosz initially stalled reforms by warning of a negative reaction from Moscow, but when it failed to materialise, gave in to public pressure and passed legislation that created a new multi-party constitutional democracy. Grosz, when later asked why he did not resort to force to maintain the party's monopoly, cited the fear of Western sanctions and the 'head-on collision' this would have produced with the 'whole thrust of Soviet foreign policy.'[1105] Imre Nagy, leader of the failed 1956 anti-Soviet uprising, was reburied in June, with 200,000 Hungarians paying tribute to him in a public ceremony. And over the summer, Hungary began to open its borders to Austria: the first crack in the Iron Curtain appeared.[1106] This prompted protests from East Germany's unreconstructed Communist government – to no avail. Events in Eastern Europe were now infecting all of the Warsaw Pact countries. In East Germany hundreds of thousands took to the streets from September to protest the regime. Gorbachev failed to back his East German counterpart Erich Honecker during a visit to celebrate the country's 40th anniversary in October; a few weeks later, the Berlin Wall came down.

The fall of the Berlin Wall proved the most potent symbol of 1989 and the collapse of the Iron Curtain. It signified a tectonic shift in the fate of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe. This seismic event took place in a bottom-up manner, unplanned and without direction from above – i.e. in a contingent, nonlinear fashion.[1107] As Lévesque stresses, "the East German leadership never made a decision, as such, to open the Wall."[1108] An errant Politburo member misspoke at a press conference, implying that a recent resolution to permit trips abroad on request was to come into effect immediately. When huge crowds began to amass at checkpoints in East Berlin in anticipation of crossing over, military personnel on the ground opened the borders. Within days, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria experienced popular revolutions and peaceful power transitions. In Prague, hundreds of thousands of peaceful demonstrators filled Prague's Wenceslas Square

[1105] Interview with Lévesque (1997), 133
[1106] See Oplatka (2014)
[1107] Sarotte (2014)
[1108] Lévesque (1997), 158

during the revolution. In Romania, Ceausescu's downfall occurred during a speech he gave from the balcony of the gargantuan People's Palace the dictator had built: masses of listeners turned disorderly when he failed to announce reforms, prompting Ceausescu to flee by helicopter from the roof of the Palace. He and his wife were soon captured by Romanian troops, court-martialled, summarily sentenced to death and executed by an improvised firing squad. The wave of democratisation that swept across Eastern Europe was the end-process of a nonlinear political transformation: changes at the top of the Soviet Union since 1985 eventually made possible change from below in Eastern Europe[1109]. This phenomenon accelerated as Eastern Europe's Communist elites collapsed upon realising the Soviets would not intervene in the process.

Two characteristics of 1989 are remarkable: the pace of change – Vaclav Havel, elected President of Czechoslovakia in December 1989, was in jail as a dissident as late as January 1989 – and the impotence with which the leaders of the two superpowers observed events that swept across Eastern Europe. Shevardnadze, visiting Budapest in July 1989, asked Hungarian leaders to formally commit themselves not to leave the Warsaw Pact and join Western 'integrative institutions' without agreement from the USSR.[1110] While Moscow accepted that the leading role of the Communist party in Eastern Europe was abandoned in 1989, Gorbachev did not mean for this to spell the end of the Warsaw Pact. But he was powerless to prevent this outcome. Once the Soviet Union began to show signs of impending collapse in the spring of 1991, the military alliance that held the Eastern bloc together for almost forty years was ignominiously dissolved by mutual agreement. Wohlforth and Davis correctly argue that "no old thinker advocated the use of force in 1989."[1111] But this does not, as they assert, undermine the counterfactual that German reunification would not have happened without Gorbachev: it was Gorbachev who took the option of repression off the table. Scowcroft, in a memo for Bush, made clear that German reunification could not go ahead if the Soviets opposed the process.[1112] Moreover, it was Gorbachev who had succeeded in altering the political context to the point that the Soviet leadership would not consider military intervention.

[1109] Ibid
[1110] Lévesque, 140
[1111] Davis and Wohlforth (2003), 148
[1112] Memorandum from Brent Scowcroft to President Bush cited in Zelikow and Rice, 28

Gorbachev's policy path made the crucial difference to preventing a violent escalation and gave rise to the possibility of German reunification.

Nonlinear change can be locally predictable, that is, certain consequences can be foreseen as likely to follow from certain decisions. In 1988, some members of the Politburo warned Gorbachev that withdrawal from Eastern Europe would signify that the Soviet Union would no longer provide "fraternal assistance", risking "undesirable consequences for the entire socialist commonwealth."[1113] Gorbachev chose to accept this risk. This prompted Marshal Akhromeyev to resign as Chairman of the General Staff. Viktor Kulikov, Commander-in-Chief of the Warsaw Pact since 1977 and Anatolii Gribkov, Akhromeyev's deputy, publicly opposed the unilateral cuts of December 1988 and were promptly fired.

In 1990, Ligachev wrote Gorbachev a letter, warning that "the socialist community is falling apart and NATO is growing stronger" and predicting the "possible breakup of our federation."[1114] But in order to take military action to prevent the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe, Gorbachev had to be removed from office. A coup against him was only launched in August 1991 (eight months, incidentally, after Shevardnadze warned during his public resignation speech that 'dark forces of totalitarianism' were on the march in the Soviet Union). The plotters were disorganised and lacked both the competence and the support to see their initially successful deposition of Gorbachev through. Gorbachev had thoroughly purged the Soviet military in 1987: the Soviet leader seized the unexpected opportunity provided by German civilian pilot Mathias Rust's landing on the Red Square, firing the largest number of Soviet military personnel at officer and general rank since the time of Stalin.[1115] Gorbachev had used this entirely contingent incident to his advantage. According to Matlock, "he was looking for a way to do it [i.e. purge the military], and this gave him the excuse. […] I remember I was briefing our press, and people asked, 'Does this show their air defences are weak?' and I said 'I don't think so! Neither their nor our air defences are set up to shoot down Cessnas.' I mean, come on, how can you consider that a military threat!"[1116] The result of

[1113] Kramer (2005), 181
[1114] Cited in Evangelista (2001), 10
[1115] See Brown (1997, 78; 2003, 44)
[1116] Matlock interview

this pruning of anti-Gorbachev opposition in the armed forces was to make the Soviet military compliant almost until the collapse of the USSR.[1117]

Emergence shapes nonlinear transformations and creates openings for leaders to mould new structures. The unpredictability of complex change means that over time, policies that leaders consider part of their options are taken off the table by events on the ground. Dobrynin believes that as time went on, Gorbachev had to compensate for the declining prospects of success on the domestic reform front with breakthroughs in foreign policy: in effect, he was in a hurry to end the Cold War, with the consequence that "Gorbachev's diplomacy often failed to win a better deal with the United States and its allies.'[1118] The effects of timing on moving an emergent process into a particular direction can be observed by outsiders. Condoleezza Rice remembers that as the Bush Administration was discussing strategies to achieve German Reunification, a consensus existed that there was little need for proactive moves on the US part: "Things were going our way. East Germany was dissolving."[1119] On November 8, 1989 – the day before the fall of the Berlin Wall – George Bush recorded in his diary:

> "I keep hearing the critics saying we're not doing enough on Eastern Europe; here the changes are dramatically coming our way, and if any one event – Poland, Hungary, or East Germany – had taken place, people would say, this is great. But it's all moving fast – moving our way – and you've got a bunch of critics jumping around saying we ought to be doing more. […] And if we mishandle it, and get way out looking like [promoting dissent is] an American project, you would invite crackdown, and […] that could result in bloodshed."[1120]

In Bush's case, a reactive approach was warranted: systemic trends seemed to point in the direction of his nation's goals. The President benefited from the luck of timing, as his widely derided 'pause' in US-Soviet relations from January to April 1989 took place just as the collapse of Eastern Europe began.[1121] The pause, however, was started out of political calculus,

[1117] Dobrynin speaks of a 'quiet coup' by Gorbachev against the military. (1995, 626)
[1118] Ibid, 627
[1119] Rice interview
[1120] Bush and Scowcroft, 148
[1121] E.g. Savranskaya et al (2010)

not strategic acumen. Secretary Baker makes this plain: "It was extraordinarily important as a political matter that George Bush's imprimatur be put upon the nation's foreign policy. […] the reason we did the Pause was to make sure that Bush's imprimatur was upon the nation's foreign policy."[1122] Nothing concrete came of this strategic review of US foreign policy other than intra-Administration frustrations, and the pause was quietly abandoned in the spring without any results. Bush, as Greene recounts, noted in a 1996 interview, "We should have hit the ground running." But according to Greene, "it is clear that the pauza [the Soviet term for 'pause'] had reaped terrific benefits." This was despite the fact that "many observers, then and now, saw [Bush's] actions from 1989 to 1991 as non-actions; for their part, the conservative right was furious at what they perceived as Bush's abandonment of the republics." What Bush managed to do was manipulate the situation so that he could negotiate with Gorbachev from strength, "and in doing so he had won major concessions from the Soviets. Moreover, he had done so without compromising a good relationship with Gorbachev."[1123] Jervis agrees that Bush pursued a "policy of friendly gestures, little concrete assistance, and waiting to pick up the pieces of the crumbling Soviet empire."[1124] Bush helped bring about Gorbachev's consent to German reunification using what Greene describes as "the full force of his personal diplomacy."[1125] The results of this were vividly on display in Washington, DC in May of 1990 when Gorbachev suddenly and to the surprise of all attendees of the summit meeting concurred with Bush's tentative suggestion that all nations, including reunified Germany, ought to be free to choose which military alliances they wish to join. Bush based this diplomatic logic on the Helsinki Accords signed by Brezhnev and Ford, and managed to reach Gorbachev. Robert Gates, who witnessed the moment, believes that Gorbachev went beyond his brief in giving this response. He remembers the moment in detail:

> "Bush is laying out his belief that people ought to be able to choose the alliance that they belong to. And he sort of poses that to Gorbachev, as I recall it, as a question. And Gorbachev, there's a logic to it, if you're willing to pretend that you're a democrat with a small

[1122] Baker interview
[1123] Greene, 107
[1124] Jervis (2013), 173
[1125] Greene, 196

'd', and he says, 'Yes.' Which he did. I thought Akhromeyev was going to have an aneurysm. I mean, he was pale, he couldn't believe what he'd just heard. […] Bush poses the question to him again, and he affirms it again. And the Soviet side was just in complete disarray."[1126]

This was the diplomatic breakthrough the Bush Administration had been hoping and waiting for.[1127] It took place three years after Gorbachev told German Foreign Minister Richard Weizsäcker that unification might perhaps come in a century.[1128] In the intervening period, Gorbachev's bargaining position, weakened in the face of the multiple complex conflagrations that emerged: the Baltic republics were threatening to break away from the Soviet Union, the economic picture was deteriorating, and the Communist party's monopoly on power was slipping.[1129] By contrast to the American side's subtle and reactive response to nonlinear developments that were heading their way, Gorbachev had to be proactive to prevent the collapse of the Soviet Union. A change of course in 1989, once signs of a crisis in the Eastern bloc were imminent, was the last opportunity to stave off the loss of Eastern Europe. Gorbachev's temporising mantra of 'let processes unfold' ended up paralysing the Soviet Union as it lost power.

When nonlinear developments occur, "we have only limited ability to anticipate what will happen. Multiple policies must then be applied sequentially, and actors must be ready to alter their behavior to cope with unintended consequences and the novel strategies that others employ. Flexibility and resilience are necessary for effective action."[1130] By 1991, Gorbachev had effectively lost control over events. After the coup attempt in June 1991, the Ukrainian parliament set a date of December 1 for an independence referendum. Boris Yeltsin, taking advantage of weakening Soviet power by seeking and gaining more authority as President of Russia at Gorbachev's expense, accepted the referendum, against the latter's wishes.

[1126] Gates interview

[1127] Blanton and Savranskaya (2010) argue that the Washington summit was not a crucial turning point for German reunification, pointing instead to a Kohl-Gorbachev summit in the Caucasus in July 1990 that saw the USSR finalize a deal in exchange for German aid. Hutchings counters that the Washington Summit was the 'essential backdrop' for the Caucasus summit (1997, 131-137). The dynamics behind reunification are well-explained in Sarotte (2009).

[1128] Garton Ash, 356

[1129] See Zubok (2014)

[1130] Robert (1998), 592

When Yeltsin left for his summer holiday in August, Gorbachev failed in an attempt at a political comeback.[1131] Gorbachev also proved unable to realise his goal of maintain the Soviet Union on a voluntary basis through a treaty agreement. Again, Bush's strategic response was cautious, aware of where the wind was headed. The President refused Secretary of Defence Richard Cheney's suggestion of recognising Ukraine before the referendum. Bush did not want to be seen encouraging the breakup of the USSR and contributing to potential bloodshed.[1132]

By autumn, Gorbachev made the last major concessions of Soviet policy, out of necessity more than anything else, announcing a troop pullout from Cuba and ending aid to the Communist regime in Afghanistan. In return, he hoped for some kind of Marshall Plan-like support from the United States, to the tune of tens of billions of dollars. But the chaos had spread too far by then: it was not even clear whether such aid should flow to Gorbachev or Yeltsin (since the coup attempt, Bush felt obliged to telephone both of them regularly).[1133] After Ukraine voted for independence on 1 December 1991, Bush announced the US' recognition of Ukraine, and Gorbachev's goal to preserve the union was dealt a death blow. Only four weeks later, the Soviet Union was formally dissolved.

In this sudden yet unspectacular fashion, so characteristic of nonlinear change, the Cold War came to an end. Of course, nonlinear change can just as well be sudden and spectacular, as was the case on September 11. In both cases, abrupt shifts in the international system occurred as a consequence of multiple interaction chains of causation that could not be anticipated. [1134] As described by Gates, "Converging trends from above, below and outside produced an outcome Gorbachev neither desired nor anticipated and in the process transformed Europe." [1135] The bipolar nuclear standoff that had defined the international system for almost fifty years ended without a shot when one of the parties imploded. This marked the Cold War's complex end. The seeds of change had been planted by Gorbachev, wittingly and unwittingly, since 1985; emergence and his interactions at home and abroad shaped their growth, and once critical mass had been reached in 1989,

[1131] Plokhy, 183
[1132] Ibid, 195
[1133] Ibid, 204
[1134] For a compelling account of the non-linear confluence of various concurrent causal strands that paved the way for 9/11, see Harrison, 12
[1135] Gates (2007 [1996]), 250

nonlinear change occurred rapidly. In the end, through a process conditioned by high-level leadership interactions (beginning but not ending with Reagan), Gorbachev's policy choices, and fast-crumbling power structures in the Soviet bloc, the West finally succeeded in rolling back Communism, pushing the borders of Europe eastward by almost 1000 miles and liberating tens of millions of people. By the beginning of 1992, the Cold War had ended.

CONCLUSION

No question has caused more disputes among both ancient and modern philosophers than the relations of cause and effect.
David Hume

Don't let us forget that the causes of human actions are usually immeasurably more complex and varied than our subsequent explanations of them.
Fyodor Dostoyevsky

History is a novel whose author is the people.
Alfred de Vigny

How and why the Cold War ended

The end of the Cold War was driven by four key leaders: Ronald Reagan, George Shultz, Mikhail Gorbachev and George H. W. Bush. Together they steered US-Soviet relations into new territory, through an unscripted, iterative set of dynamic choices. Reagan came into office as a potential peacemaker, but it took the appointment of George Shultz for these instincts to take concrete shape. Prompted by Shultz, Reagan chose to transition his Soviet strategy from one of relentless confrontation to one that sought dialogue with the Kremlin. After Gorbachev became General Secretary in 1985, he decided to embark on a series of increasingly radical reforms of the Soviet system, both at home and abroad. In Reagan he found a willing partner to proceed with one leg of his plan: defusing Cold War tensions by pursuing radical nuclear arms reductions. The two leaders engaged in an interactive set of negotiations, channelled by their

idiosyncratic commitment to better relations, and shaped by their relative bargaining positions on issues such as SDI. Gorbachev had to make a number of biting concessions, indicative of both a compromising mind-set and the country's worsening economic position. The Soviet leader conjoined his international efforts with domestic reform, seeking to harness accomplishments in foreign relations as a cudgel to drive the Soviet system toward deeper reform. But rather than recreating his foreign policy achievements at home, Gorbachev was met with entrenched resistance from Soviet elites and functionaries who benefited from the status quo. In response, Gorbachev opted to follow a path of ever more radical reform.

When Reagan was replaced by Bush, the latter moved carefully so as not to signal to Gorbachev that the US sought to take advantage, if not foment, the USSR's mounting problems. This helped reassure Gorbachev that, while economic reform had achieved little, and political reform made the Communist Party accountable to a dissatisfied Soviet citizenry, the US was not about to exploit this situation. The Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe slipped away in 1989 after Gorbachev allowed the Warsaw Pact publics to depose Communist governments at the ballot box. This occurred in a rapid, non-linear succession of revolutions, underpinned and indeed encouraged by Gorbachev's public disavowal of force as a means to keep the Eastern bloc intact. Bush's cautious diplomacy throughout this time, and Gorbachev's vision for a post-Cold War Europe, paved the way for the peaceful reunification of Germany in the Western camp. This brought the East-West standoff to an end.

Idiosyncrasy looms large in IR, but only when the structural context permits it

The end of the Cold War is best understood as the conclusion of a complex path of de-escalation that began with Reagan's emergent desire to sit down and deal with a Soviet leader, combined with the appearance of Gorbachev on the scene. The trust generated by these two leaders through their interactions made unprecedented arms control successes possible. Looking from the post-Cold War era, Deudney and Ikenberry write, both Reagan and Gorbachev turned out to be anomalies.[1136] They are a potent example of how interactive, will-powered foreign policy leadership can bring

[1136] Deudney and Ikenberry, 2011

about transformative international outcomes. In Reagan and Shultz's case, they followed the path of diplomatic outreach resolutely in the face of substantial opposition from within their own government. Rozanne Ridgway recalls:

> "The internal burdens on the conduct of a nearly four-year dialogue by President Reagan and Secretary Shultz with the Soviet Union were enormous. There was a persistent and often debilitating effort to prevent contact, to remove substance from dialogue, to march in place or to block movement, to label those working on behalf of the president as everything from 'wimps' to 'symps,' to misrepresent intentions, to defeat presidential decisions.[1137]

As for Gorbachev, it was his independent pursuit of far-reaching liberal-minded reform that conditioned the path the Soviet Union took from 1985 onwards. A feasible alternative, which did not correspond with Gorbachev's temperament and sentiments, was a gradual shift into a post-Communist authoritarian system that maintained political control while moving towards a market-based economic system.

The external context mattered a great deal in setting the stage for the Reagan-Gorbachev interactions. Both Reagan and Gorbachev were able to infuse the international system with their idiosyncrasies because the weakening of one of the pillars of bipolarity provided an opening for leader-driven change. Gorbachev pursued reform in response to an internal crisis of stagnation the Soviet Union had been experiencing since the 1970s. The fundamental forces that produced the situation in which Soviet hegemony was under threat are reasonably well-understood from the point of view of parsimonious, structural theories of state behaviour in IR. No analysis can foresee the outcomes that structural pressures produce. The Soviet Union was stable in 1985 and rivalled the United States in its global reach. At the very least, it was a military superpower, albeit one with worsening prospects. What structural theories assume is that an underlying cause like stagnation produces an outcome such as retrenchment in the international system (though they did not predict this when it came to the Soviet Union). But the catalysts that move events from underlying cause to outcome are manifold,

[1137] Ridgway, 124

and conditional. They include the leaders of the day and their policy preferences, the teams they surround themselves with, and bottom-up pressures exerted by complex modern societies. In the 1980s, all these factors interacted with each other in contingent ways, and their combination generated the actual outcome of peaceful retrenchment. Other outcomes were perfectly possible.

The ultimate aim of this study is to provide what Chernoff calls 'better explanations' of IR: an enhanced ability to understand how causal factors connect with each other to produce effects.[1138] Complexity theory helps us make better sense of interactive causation. I argue that it provides a clearer, sharper base from which to study IR than theories relying on linear, additive causation, where outcomes are direct derivatives of inputs. Complex outcomes are formed through interactive patterns of causality, something that counterfactual analysis can bring to fore. Emergence, interaction and nonlinearity are key descriptors of the international system, providing insights into how world politics unfolds. The downside of the complexity paradigm I rely on is that its examination of continuous interaction effects between the various elements under study – leaders, structures, contingencies – produces a correspondingly dense analysis; it does not lead to neat and simple research results. Complexity theory comes with its own pitfalls, and is thus best seen as a complementary approach to IR.

Concluding reflections: the role of leadership in IR

In January 1989, Erich Honecker declared that the Berlin Wall might survive for a hundred years if the grounds for its existence were not removed.[1139] Similarly, neorealist models of IR treated the international system as stable, and saw bipolarity as an almost fixed feature of world politics. The influence of leaders such as Gorbachev and Reagan brought about a 'fat tail' event in the form of far-reaching, peaceful systemic change. As part of this, Gorbachev took arguably 'irrational' decisions that ended up destroying the Soviet Union. This was not a case of a leader acting suicidally, but of a leader being overwhelmed by the unintended consequences of his actions. Reagan, too, took decisions in the field of nuclear arms reduction

[1138] Chernoff (2014)
[1139] Garton Ash (1993), 365

that, in strict neorealist terms, made the US more vulnerable; in his case the effects of his decisions were the ones he hoped for.

The interactive links between leadership and other causal dynamics in IR are not well-understood. However, leaders in IR should not be studied isolation, and this thesis' focus on leadership is not to be taken as an argument that agency is its own determinant. Looking separately at the constituent parts of a system's interconnections does not enable us understand the output of the interaction. Moreover, leadership is not a clear-cut 'variable' in IR: the link between intent and result in international relations, for instance, is extremely tenuous, as the case of Gorbachev shows. The riddle of agency in IR has to do with the activity of leading, balanced against the structural position of the leaders in question.

Nonetheless, leadership is a promising avenue of inquiry for IR. Because the international system is complex, it exhibits self-defining qualities, and leaders are in a privileged position to contribute to these. The end of the Cold War is fundamentally a story of diplomacy as a means of generating trust to overcome entrenched animosity. But agents' causal force is far from limitless. More research needs to be done on the importance vs. the impotence of leadership in IR. And more research needs to be done to understand how leaders position their preferences in a complex international arena. Why did Richard Cheney strongly reject the goal of regime change during the Gulf War in 1991, only to endorse a diametrically opposite position in 2003? Was it the changed structural context, or did idiosyncratic factors drive his new policy preference? How did his views interact with those of other policymakers around him, and international events? Such questions are ripe for analysis using the framework of complexity theory in IR.

The end of the Cold War is a powerful illustration of how dynamic, open-ended processes of complex change can remake the international system. The collapse of the Soviet Union was a ground-breaking event. As Zelikow points out, "throughout human history changes of this scale have happened only as the corollary of bloodily catastrophic war."[1140] But care needs to be taken always when studying such episodes: the most consequential and dramatic events in social science are the most complex and thus the hardest to extract lessons from.[1141] Still, certain theoretical

[1140] Zelikow (2014), viii

[1141] Schweller and Wohlforth (2000), 63

conclusions can be reached from such investigations. Brooks and Wohlforth assert that their basic finding is "decline, the perception of decline, new ideas and new politics were closely related" in the 1980s.[1142] What this thesis has tried to show is that it was the contingent, non-linear interrelationship of these developments that defined the end of the Cold War. The study of such complex inter-linkages, aided by counterfactual thinking, will hopefully provide the basis for many more causal investigations in IR.

[1142] Brooks and Wohlforth (2000), 51

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