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Perpetuating the Cold War: Domestic Sources of International Patterns of Behavior

JAMES G. RICHTER

The postwar international order has changed. As John Lewis Gaddis has emphasized, this order provided a long and relatively stable peace between the great powers.¹ But if the peace was long, one might also argue it was unnecessarily confrontational and costly. Through most of the period, both the United States and the Soviet governments regarded each other as essentially aggressive entities that understood only the language of strength. As a result, each power feared that any action—or failure to act—that allowed the other to improve its position would be regarded as an expression of weakness and encourage further aggression. This fear inclined both governments to view their rivalry as a zero-sum game and to blur the distinction between vital and peripheral interests. These images led both governments persistently to pursue policies that were counterproductive to their domestic and international interests. The belief that accommodation would encourage the other side to make greater demands hampered negotiations. Both sides heavily burdened their national budgets with defense spending, contributing to the current collapse of the Soviet economy and to the United States's debilitating budget deficit. Finally, both governments engaged in long, costly wars in areas of questionable strategic importance, severely straining social tensions at home in the process.

¹ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace: Inquiries into the History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

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In this period of transition, it is important to understand how this self-destructive behavior started and why it lasted so long in order to avoid a repetition of equally counterproductive behavior in the future. Structural theories only go so far. They explain why in a bipolar system the two powers must concentrate on each other in their competition for security and influence. But Kenneth Waltz, in particular, argues that the increased certainty of a bipolar world and the wide disparity in capabilities between the superpowers and the rest of the world lead the two powers to manage their competition better.² Thus, though he recognizes that the two major powers may overreact in a global competition where “there are no peripheries,” he also suggests that their reliance on internal balancing rather than alliance politics allows them to avoid foreign adventures more easily than great powers in a multipolar world.³ In short, his analysis explains the stability of the “long peace” rather than the virulence or persistence of the confrontational aspects of the cold war.⁴

The superpowers’ behavior is more puzzling when one considers the consequences of the nuclear revolution. When each side has an invulnerable, nuclear retaliatory capability, as Robert Jervis cogently argues, a state does not need military superiority—or even equivalence—to defend its vital interests.⁵ Mutual vulnerability should also induce greater restraint by highlighting the difference between peripheral and vital interests, and increasing the risks incurred through overreaction. Indeed, the condition of strategic interdependence contradicts the very notion that one can impose a solution on a reluctant adversary, which is the essence of the politics of strength implicit in an image of an aggressive enemy.

Psychological approaches to the study of international relations help fill in some of the gaps left by structural explanations. The image of an aggressive enemy who understands only strength, after all, has persisted since the time of Pericles. The insecurity of an anarchic, self-help system inclines a rational actor to prepare for the worst. This rational tendency is then reinforced by the inherent egocentrism of human perception, which, as Jervis again argues, tends to make leaders interpret their own actions as a response to objective conditions, and another’s actions, particularly when they conflict with their own interests, as the expression of a hostile disposition.⁶

² Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison Wesley, 1979), chap. 8.

³ *Ibid.*, 171–2.

⁴ Waltz does not contest these limits to structural explanations. He notes in reference to the magnitude of the arms race: “That both continue to pile weapon upon unneeded weapon is a puzzle whose solution can be found only within the United States and the Soviet Union”; see his “The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory” in Robert I. Rotberg and Theodore K. Rabb, eds., *The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 51.

⁵ See Robert Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics* 30 (January 1978): 167–214. Also, see Jervis, *The Illlogic of American Nuclear Strategy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984).

⁶ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 66–76, 343–355.

After World War II, the emergence of virulent enemy images was particularly likely.⁷ Nuclear weapons had not yet supplanted industry and territory as the most important strategic assets, and the power vacuum in the industrial center of Europe excited fears on each side that the other would gain control of that territory first. Moreover, the two powers' mutually antagonistic ideologies exacerbated the tendency of each of them to ascribe the most hostile motives to the actions of the other. Finally, leaders on both sides remembered the lessons of Munich that concessions to inherently hostile countries – whether totalitarian or imperialist – only embolden aggression.

Even so, psychological explanations cannot fully account for the virulence of these images, their tenacity through the postwar period, or the persistence of the behavior that accompanied them. One can find several occasions in which leaders of the United States or the Soviet Union tried and failed to alter their governments' respective cold war mythology: Georgii Malenkov in 1953–1954; Nikita Khrushchev in 1959–1960 and in 1963–1964; John Kennedy in 1963; and arguably Dwight Eisenhower in 1959–1960 and Jimmy Carter in 1977–1978. Even in 1963, when leaders of both countries sought to overcome the prevailing public image of the enemy simultaneously, the cold war myths prevailed. Only Mikhail Gorbachev succeeded, but under special circumstances to be considered at the end of this article.

These leaders' inability to change the course of their country's foreign policy suggests that domestic politics contributed to the confrontational character of the cold war. This should not be surprising. To the extent that international pressures force states to undertake certain tasks for their security and well-being, these states must define new institutional missions – and, if necessary, create new institutions – to perform these tasks. They also must formulate legitimating myths about their country's world role to justify these tasks and to mobilize and extract the resources from within their territories necessary to accomplish them.⁸

Once established, these myths become embedded in countries' domestic politics and are difficult to dislodge.⁹ Institutions defining their mission in terms of these myths, for example, are sure to resist any attempt to change them. Meanwhile, these myths are used not only by ruling bodies in the service of the state, but also are coopted by persons, parties, or other political actors in order to mobilize support for partisan interests. Leaders who seek to modify these prevailing im-

⁷ See Scott Parrish, "Soviet Reactions to the Security Dilemma: The Sources of Soviet Self-Encirclement, 1945–1950," (Unpublished manuscript, Columbia University, April 1990).

⁸ The domestic legitimating role of foreign policy myths and their impact on U.S. and Soviet policies is discussed in B. Thomas Trout, "Rhetoric Revisited: Political Legitimation and the Cold War," *International Studies Quarterly* 19 (September 1975). My analysis differs from this excellent study in emphasizing the ability of competing interests to use this mythology to mobilize resources for partisan purposes and thus sustain the mythology even when leaders desire to change it.

⁹ An excellent analysis of the institutional roots of foreign policy belief systems and their stability can be found in Douglas Blum, "The Soviet Foreign Policy Belief System: Continuity and Change in Ideology and Politics" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1990).

ages, therefore, open themselves to political attack. In other words, once external pressures prompt a government to adopt a particular course in foreign policy, this course and its corresponding myths soon put down autonomous roots in the domestic environment and may persist well after the international rationale for such behavior has passed.

Because of these domestic roots, in fact, a country's prevailing myths about its role in the international system are likely to change significantly only in times of great instability or uncertainty. For example, international crises may make it clear to a large section of the elite that continuing the existing foreign policy would result in heavy and immediate costs, perhaps even threaten the survival of the state, though even then domestic politics may prevent a change. Conversely, domestic instability—often exacerbated by growing pressures from the international environment—may allow political leaders to redefine a state's international role in search of a new basis of legitimacy.

The foregoing analysis suggests that the domestic politics of the world's great powers will play a significant role—if not decisive—in creating and sustaining the pattern of behavior particular to a given international order. Rapid changes in the international system may force states to reconsider their world roles, but these states cannot completely discard or transform the myths and institutions left over from their previous position; they must adapt or supplement them to perform the tasks required by the new conditions.¹⁰ How small states adapt their systems to a changing international environment will have little impact on an emerging international order. But as great powers define the conditions under which other states must act, domestic constructs already existing in emergent great powers may play a tremendous role in shaping new patterns of international behavior.

Domestic politics of the great powers will also act as a brake on change once the international system has stabilized. Leaders will hesitate before departing from an established line in foreign policy because of the domestic political costs they might incur. Furthermore, to the extent that rapid changes in the international environment would force all great powers to alter their foreign policies contemporaneously, domestic structures in each of these powers will reflect the patterns of behavior emerging from this change. These structures could then continue to reinforce each other and preserve these patterns even after further changes in the international environment would allow a different, more profitable type of interaction to emerge.

This article examines how domestic politics helps explain the emergence and persistence of counterproductive behavior in the cold war. The first section describes how existing domestic political conditions in both countries combined

¹⁰ An analogous point is made in Alexander L. George, "Domestic Constraints on Regime Change in U.S. Foreign Policy: The Need for Policy Legitimacy" in Ole R. Holsti, Randolph M. Siverson, and Alexander L. George, eds., *Change in the International System* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980), 233-62.

with the unstable postwar international situation to produce the confrontational character of the cold war. It then discusses how these images, once embedded in the political systems of the two countries, persisted into the 1980s. I examine three cases in which a leader of at least one of the two superpowers sought to redefine the prevailing foreign policy myths of his country in order to lower the danger of nuclear war, limit his country's commitments in the peripheries, and/or reduce defense spending: the Stalin succession in the Soviet Union; the period after the Cuban missile crisis until Khrushchev's ouster; and the period of détente from 1972 to 1979. In each case, the confrontational behavior of one country, often prompted by domestic considerations, reinforced the proponents of a similar policy in the other, thereby undermining the attempt at accommodation.

This does not suggest that structural incentives for a more managed superpower competition were not important nor that the domestic regimes in these countries remained frozen in a cold war stance for the entire postwar period; clearly this was not the case. Leaders of both countries did seek from time to time to overcome the domestic barriers to a more cooperative foreign policy, and each success in this direction reduced the barriers for subsequent leaders. The level of domestic support for détente grew as the costs of the counterproductive cold war policies became clearer. Still, until at least 1987 the burden of proof lay on those political figures who challenged the prevailing image of the enemy rather than on those who accepted it. To sustain a conciliatory policy for very long, therefore, a leader needed to provide some evidence that the other side would reciprocate rather than exploit such a policy, and this evidence would have to be convincing enough to neutralize the arguments of those who played on established images to oppose change.

The existence of similar constraints in both superpowers made it unlikely such evidence would be available. Only very rarely were leaders of both countries simultaneously willing to accept the domestic costs involved in altering their countries' prevailing images; and even when they did, the persistent influence of hardliners on each side provided ample evidence for their counterparts in the other to cast doubt upon the intentions of the other and so undermine the rapprochement.

THE EMERGENCE OF COLD WAR IMAGES AFTER WORLD WAR II

The belief systems in both superpowers at the end of the war did not bode well for postwar cooperation.¹¹ Both the Soviet Union and the United States relied

¹¹ This article borrows heavily from the following accounts about the immediate postwar period: on the American side, John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941–1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972); John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy: 1932–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Deborah Larson, *Origins of Containment: A Psychological Explanation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985); Norman Graebner, ed., *The National*

heavily on universalistic ideas to create a national identity and both justified their foreign policies not only as a means to protect the national interest but also to protect and even propagate the way of life (whether Soviet-style socialism or liberal democracy) these ideas would prescribe. As a result, they perceived threats to this way of life not only in the physical power of potentially hostile countries but also in alternative belief systems claiming universal validity. During the interwar period, for example, a strong isolationist strain existed in both countries that regarded interaction with the outside world as potentially contaminating the existing order at home.

This clash of legitimating myths did not make the virulent hostility of the cold war inevitable, however. By 1945 the U.S.–Soviet collaboration in the anti-Hitler coalition and the impact of the war on domestic institutions in both countries provided each country an opportunity to overcome its isolationist, xenophobic legacy. Franklin Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman as well as Josef Stalin sought to establish some sort of *modus vivendi* between the two powers. Each of these leaders, though, had to define and justify this foreign policy within the framework of existing legitimating myths, which in the unstable international conditions of the postwar era reinforced the elements of hostility and distrust contained in the myths of the other, finally overwhelming the incentives to cooperate. By 1950 ferociously hostile images of each other prevailed in both countries and had become embedded in their domestic institutions.

Of the two powers, the Soviet Union was the most constrained by the images and institutions left over from the interwar period and the least flexible. In the late 1920s, Stalin came to power in part by appealing to “red patriotism.” He coupled an image of the party at home as an “island of state power in a sea of worker-peasant Russia” to a corresponding image of the Soviet international role as a vulnerable island of socialism encircled by imperialist aggressors.¹² This vision of the Soviet international role then helped justify the rapid industrialization and the campaign of terror during the 1930s and informed the creation of enormous bureaucracies to administer this revolution from above, including the

Security: Its Theory and Practice, 1945–1960 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Jeffrey A. Frieden, *Banking on the World: The Politics of International Finance* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989); Ernest R. May, “The Cold War” in Joseph Nye, ed., *The Making of America’s Soviet Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); George, “Domestic Constraints on Regime Change in U.S. Foreign Policy”; Parrish, “Soviet Reactions to the Security Dilemma: The Sources of Soviet Self-Encirclement, 1945–1950”; on the Soviet side, William O. McCagg, Jr., *Stalin Embattled* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978); William Taubman, *Stalin’s America Policy: From Entente to Cold War* (New York: Norton, 1982); Joseph Rothschild, *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Vojtech Mastny, *Russia’s Road to the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979); Werner Hahn, *Postwar Soviet Politics: The Fall of Zhdanov and the Defeat of Moderation, 1946–1953* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982).

¹² Robert C. Tucker, *Political Culture and Leadership in Soviet Russia: From Lenin to Gorbachev* (New York: Norton, 1987), 65–70.

party apparatus, the industrial ministries, the military, and the secret police. As a result, these institutions relied on the vision of capitalist encirclement to ensure their privileged position in society. Stalin, too, used the threat of impending external danger to preserve his status as an indispensable protector of international socialism.

But after the war, Stalin's actions suggested an attempt to reconcile two desirable but potentially conflicting aims. He clearly wanted a security zone of friendly countries in East Central Europe and, therefore, imposed regimes in these countries, and especially Poland, dominated by communist parties. This conflicted, however, with an interest to maintain the working relation with the West he had attained in the anti-Hitler coalition, because the western countries were demanding representative, freely-elected governments there.

This dilemma was exacerbated precisely because Stalin continued to rely on the hostile image of imperialism to justify his own authority within the communist movement. According to Milovan Djilas, for example, Stalin told his Yugoslav comrades near the end of the war that "we shall recover in fifteen or twenty years, and then we'll have another go at it."¹³ Bolstered by such rhetoric, elements of the communist movement outside Stalin's direct control often went further in confronting the West than he desired. The Yugoslavs, in particular, pursued an assertive anti-imperialist policy—such as supporting the communists in Greece without Stalin's approval—that provided ample cause for East-West misunderstandings.

A similar dilemma faced Stalin in domestic politics.¹⁴ During the war Stalin had loosened the rigid ideological underpinnings of his rule in order to mobilize the entire nation behind the war effort and had raised expectations that life would be easier after it was over. Administering this effort had strengthened a managerial tendency within the Soviet bureaucracy that aspired less to the revolutionary mission of the 1930s than to the incremental improvement of the domestic economy. The evidence suggests, however, that Stalin had every intention of returning to the severe social discipline of the 1930s once the war was over. To do so, therefore, he again pointed to impending danger from the international environment. His speech of 9 February 1946 announcing the first postwar five-year plan echoed his statement to Djilas that the Soviet Union must be prepared to fight a war in fifteen years.

Despite Stalin's public rhetoric, however, his struggle to resolve the tensions between his domestic and foreign policy goals left Soviet policies somewhat flexible. For example, he constructed people's democracies in Eastern Europe, which, while not fully representative, allowed noncommunist parties to participate in the government in subsidiary ways. Meanwhile, a limited debate over both domestic and foreign policy arose in the Soviet media between the managerial

¹³ Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962), 114–5.

¹⁴ This argument borrows in large part from arguments in McCagg, *Stalin Embattled*.

tendency in the elite and those who favored a resurgence of revolutionary ideals. In foreign policy, the former tendency was best represented in the writings of Yevgenii S. Varga, who argued that the capitalist economies were sufficiently healthy to endure for some time, implying the need for achieving some means of coexistence between the two camps.¹⁵

The debate ended, however, after U.S. efforts to contain the Soviet Union, especially the Marshall Plan, raised fears in Moscow that the West hoped to extend capitalism throughout East Central Europe and deprive the Soviet Union of its security zone. To consolidate Soviet control before this could happen, Stalin opted to crack the ideological whip. In the fall of 1947, Soviet Politburo member Andrei Zhdanov made his famous two-camp speech calling for discipline among the communist parties in the Cominform. Soon thereafter, the Soviets extinguished any genuinely pluralist elements remaining in the people's democracies, most dramatically in the 1948 coup in Czechoslovakia.

Stalin's decision to unleash the ideological hardliners had long-term consequences in the Soviet Union. The prewar image of capitalist encirclement again ascended to a status of unquestioned orthodoxy, while the arguments of a more moderate tendency were forced underground.¹⁶ As a result, when Stalin's death allowed this moderate tendency to reemerge in the political debate, the ideological assumptions underlying his foreign policy had been reaffirmed and adapted to fit the new international conditions, which made them that much more difficult to overcome.

In the United States, meanwhile, domestic politics placed far fewer constraints on foreign policy after the war, as several different visions of the American international role competed for influence. Although the war had severely weakened the isolationist sentiment that had been so strong in the early interwar period, an influential sector of Congress still remained that opposed active U.S. leadership in world affairs, particularly the expenditures and the more intrusive state that would be necessary to sustain such a role. Meanwhile, those who favored an active foreign policy disagreed about what sort of action was needed: some, like Averell Harriman and George Kennan in the Moscow embassy, had become highly suspicious of Stalin and advocated taking a firm position against Soviet activities; others, including influential segments in both the Republican and Democratic parties, subscribed to the old Wilsonian vision of national self-determination, world government, and the spread of democracy.

Roosevelt, too, desired an activist policy, but his strategy differed from those found in the State Department and among the internationalists. He preferred an arrangement somewhat analogous to the Concert of Europe that would acknowledge spheres of influence in Europe while calling on the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union (and potentially China) to act as international guardians

¹⁵ Varga's argument is described in detail in Franklyn Griffiths, "Images, Politics and Learning in Soviet Behavior Towards the United States" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1972).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

of peace. Toward the Soviet Union, he favored a policy that would assure the Kremlin through limited accommodation that its security interests would be respected. Because Roosevelt needed the internationalists' support to sustain any activist foreign policy at all, however, he muted his recognition of spheres of influence in his public statements in deference to the Wilsonian values of self-determination.¹⁷

This presented Roosevelt with a dilemma of his own: he could not appease domestic demands for self-determination while at the same time granting Stalin a security zone in Eastern Europe. To reconcile this tension, he tried to convince Stalin, with references to U.S. public opinion, to retain at least a pretense of self-determination in Eastern Europe. This may have contributed to Stalin's decision initially to create people's democracies in Eastern Europe rather than rigid communist systems.¹⁸

By 1947, however, a confrontational image of the Soviet Union had gained prominence among the U.S. foreign policy elite. In part, this reflected Truman's inclination to accept Harriman's and Kennan's harsher views of the Soviet Union far more than Roosevelt did. More importantly, though, Soviet actions during the early postwar years, including the occupation of northern Iran, the pressure on Turkey, and most importantly the continuing crackdown in Poland and Rumania, tended to reinforce their arguments that the Soviet Union was not a reliable negotiating partner. Stalin lended further credibility to this image when he predicted in his speech of February 1946 that another war would break out in fifteen years. While most of the U.S. foreign policy elite interpreted this statement correctly as directed to domestic audiences, others regarded it as a "declaration of World War III."¹⁹

Still, if American tactics under Truman shifted from limited accommodation to hard bargaining, the new president also preferred negotiating with the Soviets to confronting them unconditionally.²⁰ In fact, as Deborah Larson points out, he might have continued exploring different tactics against the Soviets had not the restabilization of Greece and Turkey, the Marshall Plan, and the entire internationalist vision of a liberal economic order, required the mobilization of vast domestic resources.²¹ To overcome potential resistance to such expenditures in the fragmented American political process—particularly from the Republican majority in Congress—Truman oversold the communist threat to the American

¹⁷ This interpretation of Roosevelt's policy strategy derives from Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*; George, "Domestic Constraints on Regime Change in U.S. Foreign Policy"; and especially Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy*, 482–484, 505–507, 524.

¹⁸ That Roosevelt referred to U.S. public opinion in order to gain from Stalin some pluralism in Eastern Europe, see Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy*, 505–507, 513–515, 524. We cannot know if these pleas were decisive in Stalin's decision to create the people's democracies, but they likely played some role.

¹⁹ Larson, *Origins of Containment*, 252–5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 266.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 302.

way of life.²² The Truman doctrine, in fact, skillfully joined the internationalist and unilateralist perspectives to gain bipartisan support for the containment doctrine: he appealed to the internationalists' calls for American world leadership in a new liberal economic order, while preserving for the unilateralists the isolationist vision of an ideological threat from outside.²³

Truman became hostage to his own rhetoric, however. In uniting the country behind an activist foreign policy, he also provided a banner for any segment of the elite to mobilize support in the domestic competition. This fact, combined with changes in the international environment after the Marshall Plan, helped entrench into American domestic politics the hostile image of the Soviet Union and also the two persistent, counterproductive characteristics of U.S. foreign policy in the cold war: overreaction to events in the periphery and overreliance on the military.

First, the decision in 1949 not to give the Nationalist Chinese the massive support they needed to prevent a defeat enabled the Republicans to accuse the Democrats of losing China. As a result, few future U.S. leaders could look on quietly while national liberation movements triumphed in the periphery without severely damaging their political position.

Second, the doctrine of containment became increasingly militarized. In the course of World War II, American public opinion had come to accept the need for a powerful military "to safeguard postwar America *and* to maintain world order."²⁴ Still, the Truman administration relied heavily on political and economic instruments of foreign policy until 1950, by which time the coup in Czechoslovakia and the Berlin blockade in 1948, and the Soviet development of the atomic bomb of 1949, not to mention the success of China's communist revolution, had reinforced the view among members of the foreign policy bureaucracy that only military power could guarantee Soviet restraint. This view was articulated in the document, written by Paul Nitze and a group of officials in the State and Defense Departments, known as NSC-68. It called for a massive increase in U.S. defense capabilities and then became the basis of American national security policy after the North Korean invasion of South Korea. It consolidated military power as the chief instrument in American containment strategy.

To conclude, though the competition to control the unstable center of Europe may have made tension between the United States and the Soviet Union inevitable after World War II, the interacting influence of both countries' domestic politics translated this tension into a cold war between two unconditionally hostile powers. In each country, strong interests left over from the prewar period defined

²² For a discussion of how the fragmentation of authority in the United States often requires overselling a threat to mobilize domestic support, see Theodore J. Lowi, *The End of Liberalism: Ideology, Policy and the Crisis of Public Authority* (New York: Norton, 1969), 174–186.

²³ Frieden, *Banking on the World*, 68.

²⁴ From Richard D. Challener, "The National Security Policy from Truman to Eisenhower: Did the 'Hidden-Hand' Leadership Make Any Difference?" in Graebner, ed., *The National Security*, 41.

and legitimated their countries' international and domestic policies through opposition to the ideology of the other. Both leaders, therefore, had to appeal to this mythology in order to reconcile their foreign policies – which sought to balance competition with negotiation – with domestic needs and goals. As a result, they emphasized the confrontational aspects of their policies. This created a spiral of hostility as the actions of each country reinforced the image of an aggressive enemy in the other and allowed elements in both countries to seize upon the images of outside aggression to mobilize support for their own policies.

THE STALIN SUCCESSION

The first opportunity to ameliorate the cold war came after Stalin's death in 1953.²⁵ The new Soviet leaders had to create a basis of legitimacy at home that was less reliant on the dictator's personality and that in foreign policy enabled them to alter the myths that accompanied his rule. Indeed, Stalin's foreign policy had not left the Soviet Union in an enviable position: it faced the nuclear superiority of a hostile power, the prospect of German rearmament in the European Defense Community, and the potential escalation of the war in Korea. Furthermore, the Soviets no doubt remembered Stalin's warning that "when I'm gone the imperialistic powers will wring your necks like chickens."²⁶

Under these circumstances, nearly everyone in the leadership agreed that changes in both domestic and foreign policies were necessary to raise the status of society, improve the population's living standard, and ease the international threat. The new leaders disagreed, however, on what form these changes should take, how much change was necessary, and how fast it should be implemented. They had to make such decisions within a collective leadership that strived for consensus and where no one could impose his will upon the others.

In the first year after Stalin's death, the most influential member of the Soviet leadership, G. M. Malenkov, favored relatively rapid and far-reaching reforms. A former proponent of the managerial tendency after World War II, on 8 August 1953, he introduced a domestic program that called for a shift in investment toward consumer industry and a lessening role for the party bureaucracy.²⁷ And in fact, the Soviets announced a reduction in defense expenditures later that fall.

²⁵ This account of the period between 1953–1955 relies highly on the American side on the following works: Richard Immerman, ed., *John Foster Dulles and the Diplomacy of the Cold War*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*; Graebner, *The National Security*; Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower, volume 2: The President* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1984); Fred I. Greenstein, *The Hidden-Hand Presidency: Eisenhower as Leader* (New York: Basic Books, 1982). Most of the arguments on Soviet politics can be found in James Richter, "Action and Reaction in Khrushchev's Foreign Policy: How Leadership Politics Affect Soviet Responses to the International Environment," (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1989), chap. 2.

²⁶ Nikita S. Khrushchev, Strobe Talbott, ed. and trans., *Khrushchev Remembers* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970), 392.

²⁷ For Malenkov's domestic strategy, see George Breslauer, *Khrushchev and Brezhnev as Leaders: Building Authority in Soviet Politics* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1982), 24–7, 40–1, 51.

Malenkov coupled his domestic program with a foreign policy strategy that mitigated the perception of an impending outside threat, basing this strategy on the assumption that nuclear weapons made war unlikely. According to Malenkov, nuclear weapons placed “a special responsibility” on both superpowers to seek accommodation in the interest of international survival: “In our days, the government of any country, if it is seriously concerned for the fate of its own people, is obliged to take measures in order to effect in deeds the regulation of disputed international questions.”²⁸

Furthermore, Malenkov argued that a conciliatory foreign policy, by depriving the United States of the enemy image, would best cause the disintegration of NATO: “The aggressive circles consider also that if the North Atlantic bloc is racked with internal struggles and contradictions now, in conditions of a tense international situation, with an alleviation of tensions things will lead to its collapse.”²⁹

Malenkov’s strategy encountered strong resistance in the leadership. In the ruling Presidium, he could count only on the active support of M. G. Pervukhin, M. Z. Saburov, and possibly A. I. Mikoyan. He faced the outspoken opposition of N. S. Khrushchev, V. I. Molotov, N. A. Bulganin and L. M. Kaganovich. The reasons for such resistance are not hard to find. Given the Soviet elite’s prevailing view about the West’s insatiable hostility, Malenkov’s willingness to deal with the West to avoid nuclear war could be interpreted as an invitation to the imperialists to use nuclear blackmail against the Soviet Union. As Bulganin argued: “we must not . . . rely on the humanity of the imperialists.”³⁰

The division in the collective leadership manifested itself in a contradictory and confused foreign policy, especially toward Germany.³¹ Though they shared the goal of preventing the rearmament of West Germany, they disagreed on how this could be done or what role East Germany should play in this solution. For example, although Soviet policy after June 1953 had emphasized the construction of socialism in the East German territory, Soviet declaratory policy and especially Malenkov still recognized that the four allied powers, rather than the German states themselves, held the chief responsibility for resolving this question.³² This allows some speculation that Malenkov, at least, might have traded reunification for the neutralization of Germany.

²⁸ *Pravda*, 9 August 1953.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 11 March 1954. Khrushchev describes Malenkov at this time—in specific reference to the advisability of a summit—as “unstable to the point of being dangerous because he was so susceptible to the pressure and influence of others”; see Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 393.

³¹ For discussions of Soviet foreign policy toward Germany during this period, see Ann L. Phillips, *Soviet Policy Toward East Germany Reconsidered: The Postwar Decade* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986); Paul Raymond Willging, “Soviet Foreign Policy in the German Question, 1950–1955” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1973). For a discussion on the related question of Austria, see Audrey Kurth Cronin, *Great Power Politics and the Struggle Over Austria* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988).

³² See Malenkov’s speech in *Pravda*, 9 August 1953.

To overcome the opposition to his policy, however, Malenkov needed evidence that Soviet accommodation would be reciprocated. At first, international events seemed to provide such evidence. Despite his earlier, harsher views of the Soviet Union, Winston Churchill now spoke out for a summit between East and West and urged dialogue. Malenkov could also cite President Eisenhower's Chance for Peace speech of April 1953 as an indication of realism in the United States.³³ Finally, Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace speech before the UN in December 1953 seemed to concur with Malenkov's argument that even a few nuclear weapons on each side changed the calculus of war.

Beginning in December, however, U.S. foreign policy began to confirm the arguments of Malenkov's opponents. At the western summit in Bermuda in December 1953, for example, the United States and the western allies made clear that they could not be induced to sacrifice West Germany's inclusion in NATO even for reunification, and they reaffirmed this stance at the Berlin Foreign Ministers' Conference in February 1954. Meanwhile, the Eisenhower administration began articulating how it intended to use U.S. nuclear superiority and particularly its growing tactical nuclear arsenal in its military and political strategies.³⁴ In the Atoms for Peace speech, Eisenhower's statement of concern about nuclear war was accompanied by boasts that "the United States stockpile of atomic weapons . . . increases daily" and that the weapons had gained a "virtually conventional status within our armed services."³⁵ More importantly, Secretary of State John F. Dulles's New Look speech of January 1954 announced that the United States would defend against communist aggression "with a great capacity to retaliate instantly by means and places of our own choosing."³⁶ Not surprisingly, these expressions of foreign policy indicated to the Soviet leadership that the United States, contrary to Malenkov's arguments, did intend to use nuclear weapons to impose one-sided solutions to international questions.

While Eisenhower's policies might be regarded to some extent as a reasonable response to Soviet conventional power in Central Europe, the administration's public adherence to cold war myths rigidified U.S. policy and closed off opportunities to explore alternative solutions. Dulles, for example, described Soviet-led communism as a movement that "believes that it cannot survive except as it succeeds in progressively destroying human freedom."³⁷ Accordingly, he dismissed the evidence of change after Stalin's death, warning that "Soviet Communists have constantly taught and practiced the art of deception, of making conces-

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ On the development of U.S. military doctrine at this time, see David Alan Rosenberg, "The Origins of Overkill: Nuclear Weapons and American Strategy" in Graebner, ed. *The National Security*, 144-46.

³⁵ *New York Times*, 9 December 1953.

³⁶ Cited in Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, 172.

³⁷ Dulles speech at Geneva Conference in April 1954, cited in Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 140.

sions merely in order to lure others into a false sense of security.”³⁸ The fear of deception could be detected in U.S. negotiating positions: in the words of one historian, for example, Eisenhower’s speech of April 1953, which Malenkov cited for its reasonableness, “asked for . . . many obviously impossible concessions from the Russians as ‘proof’ of their good intentions.”³⁹

Recent research shows that the private communications of Eisenhower and Dulles, while generally accepting the image of the Soviet Union as an aggressive enemy that understood only strength, still betrayed a more sophisticated understanding of the U.S.–Soviet competition than their public statements would imply. In October 1953, for example, even Dulles mitigated his ideological stance to say that negotiations “could not reduce tensions with the USSR if in each case we expected to gain all the advantage and the Soviets none.”⁴⁰

This discrepancy suggests that domestic constraints contributed as much to the administration’s rigid positions as international pressure did. In particular, the new administration had to sustain the support of such hardline anticommunists and unilateralists of the Republican party as Robert Taft, William Knowland, and Joseph McCarthy. This wing of the party influenced Eisenhower’s choice of Dulles as secretary of state and played a key role in drafting the 1952 party platform, which lambasted the Democrats’ “passive” containment strategy and pledged to “roll back” Soviet influence.⁴¹ Eisenhower could not readily escape from this rhetoric so early in the administration. Even Dulles felt constrained: at the Bermuda Summit in December 1953 he cited domestic pressures when he pleaded with the British to cooperate in his confrontational posture toward China.⁴²

The administration’s defense policy, too, sought to reconcile international pressures with domestic demands. On the one hand, Eisenhower and others in the Republican party, particularly in the Taft wing, felt it imperative to reduce federal spending. At the same time, the administration also faced pressure from the military to increase defense spending and to use U.S. nuclear superiority even more assertively for political advantage. The administration’s harsh rhetorical stance against the Soviets and its heavy reliance on nuclear deterrence, therefore, sought to neutralize the pressures from the military while holding the line on spending.

Whatever its sources, the rigid hostility of U.S. policy provided Malenkov with little evidence that Washington would reciprocate his conciliatory strategy, while

³⁸ Dulles remarks to Republican State Dinner, May 1953, cited in *ibid.*, 141.

³⁹ Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, 96.

⁴⁰ For the discrepancy between the public and private views of these leaders, see especially John Lewis Gaddis, “The Unexpected John Foster Dulles: Nuclear Weapons, Communism and the Russians” in Immerman, *John Foster Dulles and the Diplomacy of the Cold War*, 47–77.

⁴¹ Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 128–9.

⁴² Ronald W. Preussen, “John Foster Dulles and the Predicaments of Power” in Immerman, *John Foster Dulles and the Diplomacy of the Cold War*, 29–30.

providing his opponents with ample evidence that it would exploit Soviet weakness as far as possible. In response, the Soviet position hardened. At the Berlin Foreign Ministers' Conference, for example, Molotov altered the Soviet position toward a more confrontational posture, insisting that the German states themselves, rather than the four powers, should decide questions on reunification.⁴³ In this context, Malenkov's fateful statement that nuclear war would destroy world civilization probably represented a final attempt to force a change in the course of Soviet foreign policy.

Malenkov retracted his remarks one month later in April 1954, and he strongly insinuated that he did so in response to domestic criticism: "the Soviet people," he said, "distinguish themselves by their sober approach to appraising the international situation" and "warn against overestimating the significance of the achieved easing of international tensions." He further admitted that the imperialists "threaten the world with hydrogen bombs and openly proclaim the establishment of a policy of strength and prolonged cold war, allowing them to resort to methods of threats and intimidation." In such conditions, the USSR could not afford to show weakness: "If the aggressive circles, putting their trust in atomic weapons, decide on insanity and want to test Soviet . . . might — then one may not doubt that the aggressor will be suppressed with the same weapons, and that similar adventures inevitably lead to the disintegration of the capitalist social system." Finally, Malenkov accompanied these arguments with a call for the Soviet Union "tirelessly" to strengthen its defense capabilities.⁴⁴

Though Malenkov remained in his position until February 1955, he never articulated his strategy of mutual concessions again in public. Can one attribute the failure of Malenkov's foreign policy to the actions of the United States? The extreme nature of Malenkov's strategy — given the context of Soviet opinion — suggests that he might have failed no matter what the United States had done. Still, U.S. actions clearly weakened his position and accelerated his decline, if only by providing his opponents a club with which to beat him. While Malenkov cited Eisenhower's reasonableness, for example, Khrushchev emphasized the darker presence of the U.S. administration:

[Soviet foreign policy initiatives] . . . evoke irritation and malicious attacks of certain officials occupying quite responsible posts in the USA and other countries. I have in mind, primarily, the U.S. Secretary of State Dulles. . . . It is known that insanity may occur to a person in rage. But is it really fitting for a government official to proclaim a government's foreign policy when he is drunk with rage and malice to other nations?⁴⁵

⁴³ Though the Berlin Conference represented a turning point in the leadership debate about the creation of socialism in East Germany, in fact the issue about the status of Germany in Soviet foreign policy still may not have been decided completely. The recently published memoirs of Khrushchev, for example, note that Molotov opposed the inclusion of East Germany into the Warsaw Pact in 1955. See N. S. Khrushchev, Jerrold Schechter, ed. and trans., *Khrushchev Remembers: The Glasnost Tapes* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990).

⁴⁴ *Pravda*, 21 April 1954.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 27 April 1954.

More importantly, U.S. actions defined the boundaries of the Soviet foreign policy debate for the rest of the succession. Judging by Malenkov's retraction, the leadership clearly had decided to uphold the theses that the western powers were inherently aggressive, that Soviet foreign policy remained primarily an ideological struggle against imperialism, and that the ultimate and inevitable end to this struggle would be the victory of socialism, even in case of nuclear war. Anyone who argued differently became suspect for years to come. When Khrushchev announced his policy of peaceful coexistence in 1956, for example, he affirmed these tenets of the socialist image of the international environment even as he accepted the need for international stability and negotiations.⁴⁶

Khrushchev emphasized conciliation and peaceful coexistence in his policies through the end of 1956, but an opportunity to rethink dramatically the cold war myths created in the postwar period ended with Malenkov's speech of April 1954. But how great an opportunity? After all, given the continuing asymmetry in the two countries' conventional strategic military power and the remaining uncertainties regarding the fate of Central Europe, one cannot wonder that the actions of one state were regarded suspiciously by the other. The Soviet leadership still had not decided what interests it had in Germany or what role the strategic imbalance would play in a nuclear world, suggesting that some other outcome was possible. In fact, examining external conditions alone does not account for Malenkov's willingness to provide an alternative vision to the cold war, the defeat of this vision, the rigidity of American foreign policy, or the discrepancy between the public and private rhetoric of Dulles. To explain these aspects of the period, one has to examine the domestic debates in each country, their context within prevailing images in those countries, and how they interacted with each other. In this case, Malenkov's reformist policy extended his position beyond the leadership consensus and left him vulnerable to attack, while Dulles, keeping his public rhetoric within the boundaries set by his own domestic base, provided the ammunition.

AFTER THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

The resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis opened a promising opportunity to overcome the spiral of "peace through strength" arguments.⁴⁷ Both Khrushchev

⁴⁶ See Richter, "Action and Reaction in Khrushchev's Foreign Policy," chap. 4.

⁴⁷ This account relies heavily on Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*; Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*, (New York: Fawcett Premier, 1971); Glenn T. Seaborg, *Kennedy, Khrushchev and the Test Ban* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); Harold Karan Jacobsen and Eric Stein, *Diplomats, Scientists and Politicians: The United States and Nuclear Test Ban Negotiations*. I also rely on Richter, "Action and Reaction in Khrushchev's Foreign Policy"; Alexander Yanov, *The Drama of the Soviet 1960's: A Lost Reform* (Berkeley, CA: Institute for International Studies, 1984); Christer Jonsson, *Soviet Bargaining Behavior: The Nuclear Test Ban Case* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979); Michel Tatu, *Power in the Kremlin: From Khrushchev to Kosygin* (New York: Viking Press, 1967); Carl Linden, *Khrushchev and the Soviet*

and Kennedy, shocked by the nearness of catastrophe, sought to overcome the psychological and domestic political impediments to a more stable relation between the two superpowers. Both leaders were also concerned about the increasing assertiveness of a militant China.⁴⁸

Kennedy offered a new vision of U.S.-Soviet relations in his speech at the American University in June 1963. In the nuclear age, he argued, peace must be the “necessary rational end of rational men.” The United States should pursue this end even if the Soviets did not; the United States “must reexamine our own attitude—as individuals and as a nation—for our attitude is as essential as theirs.”⁴⁹ In short, Kennedy rejected the logic of peace through strength and intimidated support for a policy of accommodation.

Khrushchev also called on his country to pursue a more conciliatory policy in order to avoid nuclear war. He told an audience of East Germans, for example, that “Marxist-Leninists . . . cannot think in terms of a communist civilization built upon the ruins of the world’s cultural centers, on ravaged Earth contaminated by thermonuclear fallout.”⁵⁰ Later, he averred that realists in the West, too, “understand that going to the thermonuclear button means suicide.”⁵¹ Finally, though he continued to argue that the ultimate guarantee to peace lay in Soviet strength, he also emphasized that the Soviets had to make concessions in order to gain western concessions: “in the interests of preserving the gains of socialism we are ready to make and we do make reasonable political compromises.”⁵²

The two leaders pursued these strategies from very different domestic positions, however. In the United States, the Cuban missile crisis had raised Kennedy’s prestige and made him less vulnerable to accusations that he was giving in to the Russians.⁵³ Khrushchev pursued his strategy from a far more precarious position. He still had enough power to make his own decisions in foreign and domestic policy, but his authority was on the wane.

Khrushchev’s loss of authority stemmed in part from his attempts since 1958 to push through a military strategy of minimal deterrence and a reduction of conventional forces.⁵⁴ To implement this strategy at an acceptable political cost,

Leadership, 1957–1964 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966); William Zimmerman, *Soviet Perspectives on International Relations, 1956–1967* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969); Franklyn Griffiths, “Images, Politics and Learning in Soviet Behavior Towards the United States.”

⁴⁸ For the role China played in these leaders’ considerations, see Gordon H. Chang, *Friends and Enemies: The United States, China and the Soviet Union* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 228–253.

⁴⁹ *New York Times*, 11 June 1963.

⁵⁰ *Pravda*, 17 January 1963.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 12 June 1964.

⁵² Speech of 12 December 1962 in N. S. Khrushchev, *Predotvratit’ voinu, otstoiat mir [Prevent war, defend peace]* (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1963), 400.

⁵³ Seaborg, in fact, argues that Kennedy would not have been able to make the American University Speech without this enhanced prestige; see his *Kennedy, Khrushchev and the Test Ban*, 212.

⁵⁴ See Richter, “Action and Reaction in Khrushchev’s Foreign Policy,” chap. 5.

Khrushchev initially tried to prove this strategy was consistent with prevailing cold war myths by demonstrating through his threats against Berlin that a small nuclear force could impel the aggressive enemy to recognize Soviet interests in Eastern Europe. Except for glimmers of success in 1959, though, his tactics merely confirmed the prevailing image of the Soviet Union in the United States, damaged Eisenhower's attempts to restrain defense spending, and paved the way for an even greater military build-up after Kennedy became president. In fact, Khrushchev decided to place missiles in Cuba in part to redress the strategic imbalance resulting from the Kennedy build-up.

The Cuban missile crisis ended Khrushchev's coercive campaign. Kennedy's determination to risk war rather than accept the missiles in Cuba demonstrated to the Soviet leader the danger and futility in seeking to coerce concessions out of the West, while Kennedy's willingness to guarantee Cuba's security and withdraw the missiles from Turkey indicated that the United States shared an aversion to nuclear war. As a result, Khrushchev shifted to an accommodationist strategy to induce the concessions he needed from Washington.

But Khrushchev's shift in policy met strong resistance among many in the Soviet elite who felt the Caribbean crisis reaffirmed the image of a warmongering West. Defense Minister R. Ya. Malinovskii, for example, clearly rejected Khrushchev's arguments about the imperialists' attitudes toward nuclear war: "We have no facts to indicate abandonment by U.S. imperialist circles of a policy of war." Indeed, he averred that "preventive war against the Soviet Union all along has been within the range of possibilities envisaged by the Pentagon."⁵⁵ For those sharing this view, the crisis undermined completely Khrushchev's claims that a small number of missiles could deter a superior force and that conventional weapons, in this case a surface navy, no longer had any political utility. The lesson drawn by many Soviets, in fact, was that "the Soviet Union would never again face a 4-to-1 missile inferiority."⁵⁶

Khrushchev's change in foreign policy also met resistance from ideological guardians in the Soviet leadership. For example, M. A. Suslov, the most prominent ideologist in the leadership, analyzed the crisis in a classic presentation of the peace through strength argument. In his view, the imperialists had acted in Cuba as they had in other adventures: "they backed down every time, breaking their head on the solidarity and might of the socialist camp." Accordingly, he called on "all peace-loving forces on Earth" to "preserve vigilance, strengthen their solidarity, not weaken but strengthen the struggle against aggressive forces."⁵⁷

⁵⁵ *Pravda*, 23 February 1963.

⁵⁶ Soviet negotiator Vasily Kuznetsov said this to U.S. diplomat John McCloy soon after the crisis. Cited in Benjamin Lambeth, "Contemporary Soviet Military Policy" in Roman Kolkowicz and Ellen Propper Mickiewicz, eds., *The Soviet Calculus of Nuclear War* (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1986), 46.

⁵⁷ *Pravda*, 7 November 1962.

In this embattled position, Khrushchev quickly grasped at Kennedy's conciliatory gestures as evidence that his accommodationist strategy would meet a favorable response from the United States. Within days of Kennedy's speech at the American University, for example, Khrushchev made a key concession by accepting a limited rather than a comprehensive test ban. Later, just before the Limited Test Ban Treaty (LTBT) was signed, he told a delegation of American agricultural experts that "we will now reduce expenditures on defense . . . and direct this money into the production of chemical fertilizers."⁵⁸ This prediction was then realized in December 1963, when Khrushchev announced an unspecified reduction in Soviet troop levels and a cut of 600 billion rubles in the official defense budget.

But if the LTBT and other small treaties emerging from the *détente* of 1963 bolstered Khrushchev's ability to pursue a conciliatory policy, continued skepticism within the leadership hampered his ability to do so consistently. U.S. foreign policy, too, offered an uncertain mix of conciliatory gestures and the politics of strength, partly because of continued domestic support for cold war myths but also because of the inertia of decisions taken in 1961, when Kennedy promised to replace Eisenhower's passive brand of containment with a more vigorous assertion of American power. As a result, the *détente* of 1963 did not improve relations as much as either leader desired, as illustrated in their failure to reach a comprehensive test ban, which both of them wanted.

In November 1962, Khrushchev, returning to a position he held in 1961, announced that he would accept three on-site inspections every year to verify a comprehensive ban. Apparently Khrushchev based this proposal on a conversation between Soviet scientist Yevgenii Fedorov and Special Assistant to the President for Science and Technology Jerome Wiesner, in which Wiesner had told Fedorov that such a gesture would open the way to resuming serious negotiations. Though Wiesner reportedly added that Kennedy would counter this offer by proposing eight to ten inspections, and perhaps bring it down to five or so during the negotiations, Khrushchev's communication suggested that he believed the United States would accept three inspections in a final agreement.⁵⁹ Khrushchev later told Norman Cousins that he had persuaded the Soviet Council of Ministers to agree to this initial offer only with great difficulty. As a result, when the president rejected this offer and proposed eight inspections instead, "once again [an allusion to the U-2 incident?] I was made to look foolish." He then added: "But I can tell you this: it won't happen again."⁶⁰

In fact, Wiesner did try to get Kennedy to soften his stand, but the president

⁵⁸ N. S. Khrushchev, *Stroitel'stva kommunizma v SSSR i razvitie sel'skoyo khoziaistra* [The Construction of Communism in the USSR and the Development of Agriculture], vol. 8 (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1964), 51; cited in Yanov, *The Drama of the Soviet 1960's*, 76.

⁵⁹ See Seaborg, *Kennedy, Khrushchev and the Test Ban*, 180–181.

⁶⁰ Norman Cousins, "Notes on a 1963 Visit With Khrushchev," *Saturday Review*, 7 November 1964, 21.

felt he could not get congressional support for fewer inspections unless he had some guarantees about how these inspections would be conducted. Meanwhile, opponents to a comprehensive test ban within the United States began to rally their forces, including members of the military and scientific communities such as Curtis LeMay and Edward Teller; influential Democratic members of Congress such as Henry Jackson, Christopher Dodd, and Stuart Symington; and the Republican Conference Committee on Nuclear Testing, led by treaty opponent Representative Craig Hosmer. By May it had become clear that the comprehensive test ban could not be ratified as it stood.⁶¹ Indeed, Kennedy had to make important concessions to these interests even to ratify the less ambitious LTBT, including a promise to accelerate underground tests.

In short, domestic constraints prevented the product of the negotiations from meeting either leader's expectations. As a result, though the treaty clearly strengthened Khrushchev's position, he still qualified his enthusiasm for the LTBT with reservations that it did "not yet mean a cessation of the arms race or by itself prevent the danger of war."⁶² Instead, he argued that the decline in tensions brought about by this limited agreement would lead to more significant cooperation in the future.

Khrushchev was to be disappointed. General opinion in the United States attributed Kennedy's success in the Cuban missile crisis more to the firmness of his resolve than to his willingness to deal with Moscow, with the result that the crisis reinforced rather than challenged the myths about the politics of strength.⁶³ Furthermore, Kennedy could or would not extend his more accommodative stance with the Soviet Union to the German question, again partly for domestic reasons. In the summer of 1963, for example, Khrushchev had proposed that a nonaggression pact in Europe accompany the limited test ban, which if concluded would greatly support his contention that realism had gained the upper hand in the West. According to Arthur Schlesinger, Kennedy expressed serious interest in this proposal, but did not want to pursue it until after the Test Ban Treaty was concluded. As it happened, he dropped the proposal when he felt it would complicate the struggle for ratification.⁶⁴ As Schlesinger puts it:

For a moment the treaty seemed to be opening up a whole new range of possibilities. This treaty was deeply disturbing to those accustomed to the familiar simplifications of the cold war. . . . one felt an almost panicky desire in some parts of the government to return to pre-test ban normal as soon as possible.⁶⁵

Despite the change in Kennedy's rhetoric, the administration did not alter many

⁶¹ Seaborg, *Kennedy, Khrushchev and the Test Ban*, 227.

⁶² *Pravda*, 6 August 1963.

⁶³ For evidence of this point, see James A. Nathan and James K. Oliver, *United States Foreign Policy and World Order*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1985), 280–286.

⁶⁴ Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 835–838.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 837.

of the policies introduced in 1961. The United States continued to deploy strategic missiles in 1963 in spite of its vast strategic superiority and in addition expanded its military commitment to South Vietnam.

Conceivably, Kennedy might have tried to change these policies had he lived, particularly in respect to Vietnam. Lyndon B. Johnson did not. Even if he shared the doubts about prevailing American foreign policy beliefs that Kennedy seems to have entertained—and there is little evidence to suggest that he did—his domestic position after Kennedy's assassination would not have allowed him to challenge them directly. Unlike Kennedy, he still had not demonstrated his firmness in dealing with the Russians and with no mandate of his own would be quite vulnerable to accusations that he departed from the perceived legacy of his popular predecessor.

Furthermore, Johnson understood very well what would happen to his domestic position if he did not prop up the anticommunist regime in Saigon:

I knew that if we let Communist aggression succeed in taking over South Vietnam there would follow in this country an endless national debate—that would shatter my presidency, kill my administration, and damage our democracy. I knew that Harry Truman and Dean Acheson had lost their effectiveness from the day that the Communists took over in China. I believe that the loss of China had played a large role in the rise of Joe McCarthy. And I knew that all these problems, taken together, were chickenshit compared with what might happen if we lost Vietnam.⁶⁶

Thus, despite Khrushchev's success in easing tensions in 1963, U.S. actions gave those who opposed his policy of accommodation plenty of evidence against it. In June 1963, for example, Khrushchev complained that the U.S. military build-up had reached "gigantic proportions unprecedented in history."⁶⁷ Meanwhile, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's and others' boasts about U.S. military superiority enabled Malinovskii in February 1964 to claim a lack of realism among U.S. ruling circles.⁶⁸

The most controversial issue in the Soviet debate in 1964, however, concerned aid to national liberation movements, especially in Vietnam. Since 1961, Khrushchev argued that since local wars between the superpowers would necessarily escalate, the Soviets did not need (and he implied that they did not dare) send direct military aid to such movements: Soviet strategic capability would deter imperialist intervention in these struggles and allow the local revolutionary forces to win on their own. This view had always been hotly contested by the Chinese, however, who accused Khrushchev of cowardice in the face of the nuclear threat; but after the Cuban missile crisis one could find muted criticism of the policy in the Soviet press as well.⁶⁹ When the United States undermined Khrushchev's

⁶⁶ Cited in Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 242.

⁶⁷ *Pravda*, 25 June 1963.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 23 February 1964.

⁶⁹ See Mark Katz, *The Third World in Soviet Military Thought* (London: Croon Helm, 1982), 19.

arguments by beginning a secret campaign of harassment against North Vietnam in February 1964, it could not but undermine Khrushchev's strategy even further.

By the summer of 1964, Khrushchev's decline in authority was evident in his public rhetoric.⁷⁰ His speeches usually included a long list of hotbeds of international tension in the developing world, and in July he explicitly linked these hotbeds to the need for more defense spending: "such is the realistic international situation we must consider in deciding questions of economic and cultural development and of the strengthening of the countries' defenses."⁷¹

But Khrushchev's rhetorical retreat did not mean he had given up the fight. Quite the contrary, he prepared another diplomatic and political offensive against the politics of strength that surpassed anything else in the history of the cold war: he sent his son-in-law, Alexei I. Adzhubei, to Bonn to arrange a summit meeting between Khrushchev and the West German leaders, which might have led to a Soviet concession over Berlin;⁷² in August and September 1964, he reduced his commitments to both North Vietnam and North Korea; and in October he seemed to be preparing another assault on the defense budget. Unfortunately, the October Plenum intervened and halted this initiative.

In all likelihood, Khrushchev's foreign policy did not play a decisive role in his ouster. During the last four years, his attempts to improve the Soviet economy had alienated virtually every major sector of the Soviet elite, especially the party apparatus. Still, the failures of his foreign policy probably accelerated the decline in his authority.⁷³

How do we account for these failures? As in the period after Stalin's death, a vast disparity in military power and continuing uncertainty about Germany's fate suggest that international conditions played some role. By 1963, however, most of these problems were eminently soluble. The military imbalance, as Khrushchev appreciated, meant much less after the Soviets could deliver nuclear warheads on U.S. soil reliably than it did in the early 1950s, when they could not. Moreover, the Berlin wall helped stabilize Soviet control over East Germany; by allowing its construction, the United States implicitly accepted that control. Indeed, both leaders seemed to have recognized the new, stabler situation, but both had to contend with domestic oppositions that limited their ability to make any far-reaching concessions while pointing to the other's unwillingness to deal as evidence of bad faith. In particular, the inertia of decisions Kennedy made in 1961, especially after the president was killed, called into question all of Khrushchev's claims about western realism.

⁷⁰ According to recent memoir accounts, the conspiracy to remove Khrushchev was already being prepared at this time; see especially Sergei Khrushchev, William Taubman, ed. and trans., *Khrushchev on Khrushchev: An Inside Account of the Man and His Era* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990), chap. 3.

⁷¹ *Pravda*, 22 July 1964.

⁷² See Angela Stent, *From Embargo to Ostpolitik: The Political Economy of West German-Soviet Relations, 1955–1980* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 118–21.

⁷³ See Yanov, *The Drama of the Soviet 1960's*, 103–105.

Indeed, the legacy of Kennedy's initial vigor affected Soviet policy even after Khrushchev's ouster. The new Soviet leaders resumed the rhetoric of the politics of strength soon after the October Plenum: they spoke favorably of détente but also explicitly denounced a policy of appeasement, reaffirmed the commitment to North Vietnam, and ended all discussion of unilateral cuts in Soviet defenses. They disagreed, however, on the amount of resources to devote to defense, the extent to which they should commit themselves to national liberation forces, and the priority that should be given to stabilizing relations with the United States. The Americanization of the Vietnam war, occurring only months after Khrushchev's ouster, reinforced the forces behind L. I. Brezhnev that emphasized a commitment to national liberation struggles and the development of a conventional military capability that could project Soviet power to this purpose. The essential framework of this coalition then persisted through the Brezhnev period.⁷⁴

DÉTENTE

By the early 1970s, the governments of both the United States and the Soviet Union again developed a strong interest in a managed relation.⁷⁵ The passage of time since 1964 had removed many of the obstacles that hampered earlier efforts to ease tensions: the status quo in Europe had been temporarily stabilized by the Berlin wall, while the vast numbers of nuclear warheads on both sides precluded a rapid change in the balance of power. Meanwhile, each side had its own particular reasons for détente. Brezhnev sought improved relations with the United States in order, first, to offset the continuing antagonism between the Soviet Union and China and to prevent the formation of a hostile, U.S.–China alliance, and, second, to import new technology from the West and so forestall the need to reform the Soviet economic system. In the United States, the trauma of the Vietnam war caused a large segment of the population to reject the cold war mythology, severely weakening its ability to mobilize the necessary resources to pursue a politics of strength.

⁷⁴ This argument about the impact of the Vietnam war on Soviet policy is drawn from Richter, "Action and Reaction in Khrushchev's Foreign Policy," chap. 7. Other scholarship noting the effect of Vietnam on leadership politics includes Richard D. Anderson, "Competitive Politics and Soviet Foreign Policy: Authority Building and Bargaining in the Brezhnev Politburo," (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1989).

⁷⁵ This account draws heavily from Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, Raymond L. Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation: American–Soviet Relations From Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1985); Stanley Hoffmann, "Détente" in Nye, *The Making of America's Foreign Policy*, 231–264; Strobe Talbott, *Endgame: The Inside Story of SALT II* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979); Henry A. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982); Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977–1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983); Harry Gelman, *The Brezhnev Politburo and the Decline of Detente* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984); Peter M. E. Volten, *Brezhnev's Peace Program: A Study of Soviet Domestic Political Process and Power* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1983); Breslauer, *Khrushchev and Brezhnev as Leaders*.

These converging forces resulted in the most extended and successful period of cooperation between the two superpowers during the cold war period. The most virulently hostile images of each other became less evident in both governments' rhetoric, and they codified their intentions to deal with each other on the basis of equality and reciprocity in the Basic Principles Agreement in 1972. They also made significant progress towards arms control in the ABM (Antiballistic Missile) Treaty, SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty) I and the unratified SALT II. Finally, the Four Power Agreement on Berlin of 1971 and the Helsinki Pact in 1975 formally recognized the status quo in Europe.

Despite these achievements, the two governments—at least initially—challenged neither the prevailing myths about the essential hostility of the other side to its own interests nor the institutional arrangements supporting these myths. In the Soviet Union, for example, the détente policy stretched the prevailing myths but did not abandon them. Brezhnev did occasionally accept substantial political costs to offer concessions necessary to make his Peace Program successful.⁷⁶ However, he took care never to stray too far from the post-Khrushchev foreign policy consensus or to disturb the essential elements of his own coalition.

Indeed, the collective leadership described détente not as a change in Soviet postwar policy, but as a success of that policy: Soviet strength, especially the emergence of strategic parity, had forced the United States to abandon its dreams of imposing one-sided solutions to international disputes and to recognize the continuing, inevitable changes in the correlation of forces. Accordingly, Soviet foreign policy continued along the same course it had taken after Khrushchev's ouster.⁷⁷ Soviet defense expenditures increased steadily through 1977, and the Soviets maintained an active commitment to clients in the Third World, as demonstrated in the airlift of Cuban troops to defend leftist governments in Angola in 1975 and in Ethiopia in 1977, and of course in the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

In the United States, Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger viewed détente less as a success of U.S. postwar policy than as an attempt to salvage it from domestic challenges. Recognizing that the Vietnam experience made it impossible for the government to devote as many resources to the East-West competition as it had before, these leaders sought to use the threat of a Sino-American alliance and U.S. economic advantages to entangle the Soviet Union in “a network of relationships with the West” that would increase the Soviet stake in the existing interna-

⁷⁶ In the long term, the policy also helped erode the domestic foundations for Soviet cold war myths by providing the proponents of more stable East-West relations with access into the policy-making process. See Franklyn Griffiths, “The Source of American Conduct: Soviet Perspectives and Their Policy Implications,” *International Security* 9 (Fall 1985); and Allen Lynch, *The Soviet Study of International Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

⁷⁷ For Soviet perceptions of détente, see especially Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation*, 36–52. For its origins in the Brezhnev coalition of the 1960s, see Richter, “Action and Reaction in Khrushchev's Foreign Policy”; Gelman, *The Brezhnev Politburo and the Decline of Detente*.

tional system. The United States would then manipulate the levers provided by this network to prevent Soviet expansionist behavior in the Third World.⁷⁸

Thus, if Nixon and Kissinger changed the instrumentalities of containment, they did not reject its assumptions. They both considered the Soviet Union—or more precisely Russia—an expansionist, revolutionary power that understood only countervailing power. They still blurred the distinction between peripheral and vital interests: Kissinger lobbied hard for U.S. military aid to prevent the fall of South Vietnam and Angola to Soviet-backed forces. Despite its advocacy of strategic sufficiency over superiority, the Nixon administration escalated the U.S.–Soviet arms race by deploying MIRV missiles that theoretically provided greater advantages in a first strike than in a retaliatory strike.

That both leaders framed their policies within cold war assumptions may explain in part why détente achieved more in the 1970s than in earlier periods. Certainly it was a substantial reason for détente's failure. While the United States expected the Soviet Union to curtail its activities in the periphery in order to preserve superpower collaboration, the Soviet leadership felt détente opened the way to a more active Soviet presence all over the world. When both sides began to act according to these conceptions, conflict inevitably arose. But the key to détente's failure lay less in misconceptions among the leaders, who tended to defend their policies' accomplishments, than in the expectations their rhetoric raised among domestic audiences. In each country, the other side's failure to live up to these expectations provided the opponents of détente a basis for attack.

The domestic roots of détente's decline were especially evident in the United States. The Nixon administration failed to create a public rationale for its attempts to link further U.S.–Soviet cooperation to Soviet behavior in the Third World, as these negotiations were carried out largely in secret. Instead, Nixon and Kissinger oversold détente as an attempt to overcome the cold war on U.S. terms.⁷⁹ Not surprisingly, the policy dissatisfied both the cold warriors who opposed cooperation in any form as well as the revisionist elements who objected to the administration's continued support for interventions abroad and its neglect of human rights violations. Soviet activity in support of Third World clients exacerbated the situation, for it reinforced the hardline criticism that détente encouraged the Soviets to more aggressive action, even as the administration's attempts to respond to these actions with military aid further disenchanted the revisionists with Kissinger's strategy. By 1976, détente had been so undermined at home that President Gerald Ford, attacked both by the hardline wing of the Republican Party and among the Democrats, avoided all references to détente in his campaign.

⁷⁸ See especially Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, chap. 9; Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation*, 25–36.

⁷⁹ For the pressure to oversell foreign policy in the United States, see Lowi, *The End of Liberalism*, 174–180.

Jimmy Carter entered the presidency with a vision of U.S. foreign policy that deemphasized and recast the cold war mythology without overtly challenging it. He found support among those who became disillusioned with America's policy after Vietnam and also among hardliners who disliked Kissinger's nonideological approach to Soviet domestic politics. Carter's rhetoric portrayed the United States less as a defender of the free world against an onslaught of Soviet expansionism than as an advocate of peace and individual human rights. Thus, Carter advocated arms control negotiations as a means to prevent nuclear war but did not link it to Soviet actions in other spheres. Similarly, he felt that the Soviets should pursue arms control on its own merits and not link it to his own vigorous attacks on Soviet human rights violations. Most significantly, Carter argued that cold war politics should not spill over into U.S. policy in the developing countries; instead, the United States should concentrate on protecting human rights in all countries regardless of a government's political orientation.

Carter's foreign policy failed for many reasons. First, the strategy was poorly conceived. If Carter saw no linkage between pursuing arms control negotiations and criticizing the Soviet observance of human rights, the Soviets certainly did. Carter soon had to choose between arms control and a vigorous support of Soviet dissidents, and his retreat from his human rights policy did him serious political harm. Second, he did not execute the strategy well. For example, the administration's initial arms control proposal jettisoned the Vladivostok framework for SALT II, which Brezhnev had worked out with President Gerald Ford in 1974. It was a comprehensive plan that boasted more ambitious arms reductions but in fact asked the Soviets to reduce their heavy land-based missiles by half without any corresponding reductions in existing U.S. forces. To make matters worse, the administration announced this proposal publicly without first giving Moscow a chance to study it carefully. Not surprisingly, the Kremlin interpreted the proposal as a crass propaganda ploy and rejected it. As a result, SALT negotiations were unnecessarily halted for six months. When Carter finally returned to the Vladivostok framework, he again lost credibility at home for giving in to Soviet demands.

More importantly, Carter's attempts to challenge the prevailing cold war mythology aroused strong resistance at home, even within his original coalition. For example, Carter's one-sided proposal of March 1977 aimed to ease the arms race but to do so in a way that would also find the support of Senator Henry Jackson, who as the Senate's foremost Democratic critic of Kissinger's détente strategy represented part of the cold warrior leg of Carter's coalition as well as a potentially decisive opponent to the ratification of any arms control treaty.⁸⁰ When Carter then returned to the Vladivostok framework, he prompted opposition not only from such conservative opponents as the Committee on the Present Danger, but

⁸⁰ Talbott, *Endgame*, chap. 3.

also from Jackson as well. Meanwhile, even Carter's selective defense of human rights against rightwing dictatorships provoked opposition among hardliners, who argued it betrayed U.S. allies and facilitated the victory of anti-U.S. revolutionaries.

In these circumstances, the Soviet pursuit of its own conception of *détente* weakened Carter's arguments further. When a new generation of accurate Soviet MIRVs were deployed in the late 1970s, for example, American opponents of arms control argued—incorrectly—that the Soviets might soon possess enough warheads to destroy the U.S. land-based missiles in a first strike. Meanwhile, Soviet activities in Ethiopia and Afghanistan raised questions about Carter's claim that cold war politics should not intrude into U.S. policies in the Third World.

One further episode might be cited to illustrate how partisan appeals to cold war myths helped undermine *détente*. By mid-1979, domestic support for Carter's foreign policy had dwindled, and the ratification of SALT II remained in doubt. In the fall Senator Frank Church of Idaho suddenly drew attention to a Soviet combat brigade in Cuba and declared its presence there unacceptable, even though the brigade had been there since 1962 and did not violate the Khrushchev-Kennedy understanding about Cuba. Church took this action at least partly to stave off a challenge in the upcoming elections, in which the American Conservation Action Coalition had targeted him for his dovish policies in the past. Still, his maneuver and Carter's inept handling of the affair—first he joined Church in calling the brigade's presence in Cuba unacceptable, then he accepted it—strengthened the opponents of SALT II. Even before the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, *détente* had all but died in the United States.

In the Soviet Union, the effect of domestic politics on changes in Soviet foreign policy is less evident. Brezhnev retained his dominant position in the Politburo throughout the period, and the basic line of Soviet foreign policy remained relatively stable as well. Still, there were occasions when Brezhnev did extend himself beyond the leadership consensus in an effort to solidify *détente*, as well as occasions when U.S. actions increased the political costs of this stance and apparently caused a retrenchment in the Soviet position.

The Soviet response to the Jackson-Vanik amendment provides an example of such an occasion. Brezhnev's intention to improve trade relations with the United States aroused some controversy among leadership members, especially A. I. Kosygin, who believed the Soviets should not delay reform and become dependent on western technology. In 1972, Brezhnev seemed close to his goal when the Nixon administration agreed, among other things, to grant Most-Favored Nation (MFN) status to the Soviet Union. In 1974, Congress passed a law that required the Soviet Union publicly and explicitly (rather than quietly as Kissinger had done) to change Soviet immigration policy before such status could be granted. This Jackson-Vanik Amendment represented to the Soviet Union not only an

affront to its sovereignty but also an escalation of American demands over a supposedly resolved issue.

Despite the Kremlin's distaste for the amendment, the Soviets – very likely on Brezhnev's insistence – indicated privately they would accommodate congressional demands so long as it could be done quietly. Moscow repudiated the trade agreement only when Jackson responded much as the aggressive enemy image would predict: he gloated publicly over the concession and began making more demands. This put Brezhnev on the defensive. As Raymond Garthoff notes, N. V. Podgorny's protest that "questions of sovereignty and of our internal affairs have never been and will never be a matter for public bargaining" seemed to convey an indirect criticism of Brezhnev's willingness to bargain on such matters just a short time earlier.⁸¹

A second case in which U.S. policy undermined an extended position taken by Brezhnev occurred after he declared, in a speech in Tula in January 1977, that the Soviets would not seek strategic superiority. This speech – which did not receive universal approbation in the Soviet elite, especially among the military – most likely represented an effort to signal to the incoming Carter administration a continuing Soviet interest in détente and arms control.⁸² Not surprisingly, the Soviet position hardened when Carter answered this speech with his attempt to undo the advances made at Vladivostok and at the same time launched an attack on Soviet human rights policy.⁸³ And though no one has given convincing evidence that these events affected Brezhnev's authority in any serious way, they did result in a cooling of U.S.–Soviet relations by the summer of 1977.

To conclude, the détente period provides the best example of how domestic cold war myths constrained efforts to cooperate during the postwar era. The difficult questions of the superpower competition – the division of Europe and the strategic balance – had all been resolved, leaving only influence in the periphery and an illusory fear of nuclear inferiority as arenas for competition. In this case, however, the United States, rather than the Soviet Union, proved to be the more flexible party when disillusion over Vietnam allowed it to redefine the cold war mythology. Its failure to do so could be traced in part to Kissinger's unwillingness and Carter's incompetence. More importantly, however, détente failed because powerful domestic interests on each side used prevailing myths about the unconditional hostility of the other to attack conciliatory policies as encouragement of aggression. In each case the actions of the other side provided evidence to support attacks.

⁸¹ See Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation*, 466.

⁸² On Brezhnev's likely motives, see Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation*, 585–6. On the reaction in the Soviet Union, see Bruce Parrot, "Political Change and Civil-Military Relations" in Timothy J. Colton and Thane Gustafson, eds., *Soldiers and the Soviet State: Civil-Military Relations from Brezhnev to Gorbachev* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 90.

⁸³ Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation*, 573.

CONCLUSION

In each of these cases, leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union who sought to change the confrontational pattern of behavior associated with the cold war had to overcome not simply the entrenched image of an aggressive enemy existing in the other superpower, but also the roots of a similar cold war mythology in their own domestic systems. Not surprisingly, leaders challenged this mythology only after domestic or international upheavals shook the internal bases of the cold war images enough to admit an alternative vision of the state's international role in the policy debate. Even when this happened, the behavior of the other power, similarly constrained by domestic forces, reinforced the advocates of confrontation at home and the inertia of the cold war myths prevailed. On the rare occasions when both leaders sought a more conciliatory policy simultaneously, domestic constraints on both sides often made it impossible for the leaders to reach common ground.

In the late 1980s the cycle of U.S.-Soviet aggression was broken. After 1987, in particular, the Soviet regime articulated a New Thinking in foreign policy that recognized the Soviet role in sustaining America's image of the enemy and sought to erode this image by offering an escalating series of concessions. This process was accelerated by the positive response of President Ronald Reagan, who was less vulnerable than most to charges that he was appeasing the Russians. Under Reagan the U.S. government did not offer any real concessions to Soviet bargaining positions, but simply accepted Gorbachev's concessions. Furthermore, the administration did not abandon the policy of negotiating from strength, but rather acclaimed the Soviet new thinking as a confirmation of that policy. Only during the summer of 1989 did the Bush administration announce that it would meet Gorbachev halfway in order to support the process of *perestroika*.

How do we explain this change? On one level, the events provide convincing evidence for the Graduated Reciprocation in Tension Reduction (GRIT) strategy formulated by Charles Osgood and more recently championed by Deborah Larson.⁸⁴ This strategy emphasizes the stability of cognitive images in human consciousness and argues that a succession of concessions are necessary to undermine an image of an insatiably aggressive enemy. Yet one must remember precisely what concessions were required before the United States abandoned its policy of containment. In addition to meeting American demands on middle and short-range missiles, the Soviets had agreed in principle to asymmetric cuts in conventional forces in Europe and also accepted in large part the U.S. framework for strategic cuts. More importantly, *glasnost* had opened the political debate in unprecedented ways: a parliament had been chosen in semicontested elections that rejected the candidates of the party apparatus in key Soviet cities, and Poland

⁸⁴ See Deborah Welch Larson, "Crisis Prevention and the Austrian State Treaty," *International Organization* 41 (Winter 1987): 27-60.

and Hungary were both moving with Soviet blessing toward more pluralist regimes.

In short, by the time the United States altered its policy, many of the fundamental attributes of the Stalinist system had come under attack, and it seemed likely that this process would continue. Clearly, no leader before Gorbachev had been willing or in Khrushchev's case able to go this far. Gorbachev himself succeeded as far as he did only because the decline of the Soviet economy, its inability to meet the international demands for technological development, and the domestic crisis of legitimacy in the Soviet Union had shifted the burden of proof, once the old guard had departed from the scene, to leaders who favored the status quo rather than those who advocated change.⁸⁵ It is likely that Gorbachev himself would not have taken the actions he did in 1989 had not events forced him. This suggests that under most conditions the GRIT strategy, while undoubtedly effective in eroding existing images in the other side, is impractical due to domestic constraints.

Since only the domestic collapse of one of the superpowers enabled these governments to overcome domestic mythologies and end their confrontational behavior, perhaps domestic politics played an intermediate role—a brake, as it were—between changes in the international structure and changes in international patterns of behavior. Is this likely to hold true for all systems? This question must be left for future research. One reason to think that the cold war might be different from other eras is that in a bipolar world, where only two powers set the tone of international politics, the domestic structures of these powers would have a greater impact on the international system than if five or six powers competed for influence. Stephen Krasner argues that even in the multipolar world of the interwar period, the breakdown of the international trade system occurred in part because domestic interests and institutions in the United States and Britain did not adapt readily to changes in the international structure of trade after World War I.⁸⁶

What does this analysis of the cold war portend for the emerging world order? Because most of the likely great powers of the future, including the United States, Germany, and Japan, have participated in the international regimes created during the period of American hegemony in the capitalist world, powerful groups and institutions embedded within these countries are firmly interested in continuing this cooperation, though they may have difficulty in adjusting to the new roles they will play in these regimes. The great question, however, lies on the territory of the former Soviet Union. While the preceding analysis suggests that the international community's influence in shaping domestic structures is limited by preexisting constructs, the extent to which domestic structures have broken

⁸⁵ For an analysis of the collapse of the old Soviet foreign policy ideology under Gorbachev, see Blum, "The Soviet Foreign Policy Belief System."

⁸⁶ Stephen Krasner, "State Power and the Structure of International Trade," *World Politics* 28 (April 1976): 317–347.

down in this territory provides the West with great opportunities as well as risks. The West should expand or develop existing regimes to include Russia and the newly independent republics in order to embed in them institutions that would increase the domestic costs their leaders would face in choosing a confrontational foreign policy.