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Ronald Reagan's Race to Space: American Atomic Diplomacy and SDI in the  
Age of Reykjavik

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements  
for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

World Cultures

by

Bradford David Johnston

Committee in charge:

Professor Sean Malloy, Chair  
Professor Jan Goggans  
Professor Gregg Herken  
Professor Nathan Monroe

2013

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2013

Dedicated to

Natalie Johnston

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## Abstract

Bradford David Johnston

Ronald Reagan's Race to Space: American Atomic Diplomacy and SDI in the Age of Reykjavik

World Cultures, University of California, Merced, 2013

Professor Sean Malloy, Chair

This dissertation explores Ronald Reagan's historic 1986 summit with Mikhail Gorbachev in Reykjavik. Through the analysis of primary source documents from the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and other sources I have excavated the intellectual origins of Reagan's atomic diplomacy, and sought to explain his fateful decision to cling to the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) in the face of Gorbachev's tantalizing offer to eliminate all strategic nuclear weapons over a 10-year time period. Ultimately, I argue that Reagan's faith in the transformative and innocent qualities of American military technology, and his belief in the providential destiny of the United States fueled his quest for strategic superiority, his vision of SDI, and his conduct at Reykjavik. I also consider many other factors which influenced Reagan's atomic diplomacy, including the exigencies of domestic and global politics, and the transnational nuclear freeze movement. I conclude that Reagan may have missed a grand opportunity to halt what he most dreaded: an arms race which now threatens to spiral out of control on earth and into the heavens.

## Introduction

Mikhail Gorbachev shocked the world at the famed Reykjavik summit in October 1986 when he proposed that the United States and the Soviet Union make deep cuts in each nation's respective nuclear arsenals with the goal of the eventual elimination of all nuclear weapons. Fearful that Armageddon might arrive at the tip of a nuclear armed missile, for six long years the Reagan administration had sought to reduce the nuclear threat by engaging in a massive arms buildup in the hope that negotiation from a position of strength would convince the Soviet Union to agree to arms control agreements which not only would be favorable to the United States, but would shrink the Soviet Union's formidable Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) fleet. Gorbachev was offering Ronald Reagan everything that he wanted, though his offer came with a catch: in return for giving Reagan the Soviet Union's feared ICBM missiles, Gorbachev demanded that Reagan agree to confine research for the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) to the laboratory for 10 years. Despite this condition, Gorbachev was willing to trade thousands, if not tens of thousands of ballistic missiles which threatened to destroy human civilization as we know it in return for a ballistic missile defense system which was little more than a figment of the imagination on that cold, blustery day in Iceland. Though his Secretary of State George Schultz and his senior arms control negotiator Paul Nitze reassured him that it was a good deal which would greatly enhance American security, Reagan was absolutely unwilling to corral SDI research in the laboratory for 10 years and he accordingly squashed the deal. Rather than accept Gorbachev's offer to eliminate real weapons, he clung to his imaginary "peace shield" and pinned the blame on Gorbachev for the failure of Reykjavik. "He wanted language that would have killed SDI," he wrote in his diary on that fateful night. "The price was high but I wouldn't sell and that's how the day ended."<sup>1</sup>

Why did Reagan believe that the confinement of SDI to the laboratory for 10 years was too high of a price to pay? This is an important question, especially considering the belief amongst many scientists and strategists that SDI most likely would not work as Reagan imagined it, or escape the laboratory within 10 years time anyway.<sup>2</sup> Many experts, moreover, voiced concern that SDI would be viewed as an offensive weapons system by the Soviet Union, weaken Western unity, increase the likelihood of an accidental nuclear exchange, and spark the next round of the arms race in space.<sup>3</sup> Pundits also were concerned that SDI would undermine the Anti Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972 and thus serve to undermine the arms control regime in general. The treaty, which had banned research and development on space-based ABM systems, was significant because it had helped prevent the modernization of an entire class of weapons systems for many years.<sup>4</sup> Reagan, nevertheless, was absolutely committed to SDI. Though pragmatic considerations, such as Reagan's belief that SDI could lead to even greater Soviet

arms control concessions, as well his desire to maintain Congressional support for SDI before and after he left office influenced his decision at Reykjavik, his zealous defense of SDI suggests that Reagan's conduct at Reykjavik was at least partly guided by his belief that SDI was a technological wonder which would lead to the abolishment of nuclear weapons once and for all. For Reagan, the imagined possibilities were more tantalizing than the immediate reductions that Gorbachev offered.

Given Reagan's great faith in an imaginary missile defense system, which he famously declared would "render nuclear missiles obsolete," and his unwillingness to fetter research on it in any way, one must conclude that his belief system very much shaped his vision of SDI and his conduct at Reykjavik, and more broadly his nuclear and arms control policies as well. This dissertation, accordingly, seeks to understand how Reagan's deeply held ideas influenced his arms control policies, nuclear strategy, and the important decisions that he made in his famed summits with Gorbachev, particularly at Reykjavik. Drawing upon Seth Jacobs' very useful concept, I call this "ideological history, or history of the power of ideas."<sup>5</sup>

Reagan, who was raised in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), possessed an unorthodox yet sincere faith. He was fearful of a nuclear Armageddon, but he also was an optimistic postmillennialist who believed it was the United States' providential destiny to lead the world to a golden age of peace and prosperity.<sup>6</sup> He and many of his important policy-makers, who were primarily drawn from the Christian Right and the swelling ranks of the neoconservatives, tended to view the world in Manichean terms and believed that it was the United States' providential duty to wield its military might – perhaps even with nuclear weapons -- to confront godless communism and thereby transform the world into a more peaceful place.<sup>7</sup> In short, Reagan believed that it was the United States' providential destiny to usher in a golden age of peace by winning the arms race against the Soviet Union in both qualitative and quantitative terms. Intertwined with this muscular belief in the providential destiny of the United States was Reagan's conviction that the United States is an innocent nation. His total faith in the United States and his blinding hatred for communism prevented him from comprehending the role that the United States played in starting and perpetuating the arms race, and helps explain why he could not comprehend that various American arms control proposals put forth by him and his predecessors were grossly lopsided, or that SDI could reasonably be viewed as an offensive and destabilizing weapons system. His utter disdain for the Soviet Union, moreover, led him to distrust and despise arms control agreements as a means for ridding the world of the nuclear menace. Instead, he believed that the United States would have to coerce the Soviet Union to disarm by achieving strategic superiority vis-à-vis the Soviet Union through a massive arms buildup; when this approach floundered on the rocky shoal of American public opinion and Congressional backlash, he unveiled his vision of SDI to maintain American support for his arms buildup. This shrewd

use of SDI to garner continued support for his large defense budget is characteristic of his sharp political instinct and his ability to get what he wanted through crafty diplomacy and political maneuvering, yet Reagan also was a true believer in the transformative power of SDI.

Reagan, in short, was a technological evangelist who sincerely believed that the world could transcend the nuclear terror through yet another great technological leap forward, first through the modernization of the United States strategic arsenal, and later with SDI. Interestingly, Dr. Herbert York, in *Race to Oblivion* observed that the arms race was fueled by “patriotism...and a religious faith in technology.”<sup>8</sup> Nuclear weapons were important to Reagan not because of their primary purpose – to destroy and kill – but rather due to the fantastic qualities which he imagined they possess, especially if in the hands of the United States. For Reagan, the United States nuclear arsenal had not contributed to Cold War tensions or endangered the world, but rather had kept the peace for 40 some years by deterring Soviet aggression. SDI was a more perfect manifestation of this belief in the innocent qualities of American weapons technology, so much so that Reagan imbued it with sacred qualities and referred to himself and his Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger as its chief evangelists.<sup>9</sup>

Such technological exuberance and belief in the innocent properties of weapons technology was nothing new in the West. Robert Fulton, an early prophet of the awesome potential of submarines and torpedoes, did not frame such weapons systems as offensive in nature, but rather as defensive weapons charged with the sole mission of destroying a nation’s navy that might act aggressively or stifle free trade. “May not science ,” he wrote in 1810, “in her progress, point out a means by which the violent explosive force of gunpowder shall destroy ships of war, and give to the seas the liberty which shall secure perpetual peace between nations...?”<sup>10</sup> At the dawn of the atomic age, American policymakers embraced a benign vision of man’s mastery of atomic energy as they transformed the bomb into the cornerstone of American strategic policy in the belief that it alone could preserve world peace. “Our monopoly of the bomb, even though it is transitory,” declared General George Spaatz in 1946, “may well prove to be a critical factor in our efforts to achieve first a stabilized condition and eventually a lasting peace.”<sup>11</sup> Reagan was but the latest in a long line of prophets who extolled the peaceful virtues of a new weapons system; buried in his faith for SDI one can hear the faint echo of Billy Mitchell’s adulation of the strategic bomber, which Mitchell of course did not promote as the eventual destroyer of scores of German and Japanese cities, but rather as a weapon that would be so terrible and destructive that it would convince mankind to renounce the folly of war once and for all. Reagan and his foreign policy team were but the latest prophets to proselytize the peaceful and transformative nature of American weapons technology.

To understand Reagan’s world view and how it shaped his nuclear and arms control policies, I have read his autobiographies, public speeches, radio

transcripts, letters, and various secondary sources which chronicle his Horatio Alger like rise from Midwestern obscurity to Hollywood leading man to staunch anticommunist crusader to President of the United States. I also have studied the history and theology of the Christian Church, and analyzed how Reagan's youthful involvement in it contributed to the development of his millennial belief in the power of American science and technology and his belief in the providential destiny of the United States.<sup>12</sup>

Though Reagan is the leading man in this study, he did not govern in a vacuum, nor were his nuclear and arms control policies forged on the fire of his belief system alone. Reagan's policies were very much shaped by his key administration figures, who often competed with one another to put forth their own policy preferences, though in all reality much of the bickering centered on the form that the administration's arms control proposals would take rather than key substantive issues. The entire Reagan administration, for example, very much shared the goal of achieving strategic superiority, or what the theorist Herman Kahn has coined escalation dominance, vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Though ideas are important and provided the filter through which Reagan and his foreign policy advisors formulated policy, the exigencies of geostrategic concerns, including a desire to maintain Western unity in the face of the Soviet threat with its deployment of the SS-20, shaped Reagan's arms control policies, especially his famed proposal for the complete elimination of Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF). The buffeting winds of the nuclear freeze movement and Congressional opposition to Reagan's free-wheeling military spending, both of which threatened to derail Reagan's strategic modernization plans, also influenced the shape of his arms control policies and even his unveiling of SDI, which he leveraged to maintain continued support for his arms race with the Soviet Union. In many ways, then, this work very much is a study of policy formulation and grounded in traditional diplomatic history. I often explore what one clerk said to another through archival research and the analysis of primary source documents which I obtained from the Ronald Reagan Library, the National Security Archives, and elsewhere. Of special value have been the minutes of Reagan's National Security Council and the National Security Council Planning Group meetings, and Reagan's National Security Decision Directives, which laid out his grand strategy. Many of the policy-planning documents that I have utilized have only been recently declassified. Because many sources from the Reagan era remain classified, I have supplemented my study with the memoirs of numerous key administration figures, the most notable being those of Reagan's lead INF negotiator Paul Nitze and Secretary of State George Schultz, as well as various secondary sources.<sup>13</sup> To understand Gorbachev's world view and the factors that drove him to temper the arms race at Reykjavik, I have drawn upon translated primary source documents which detail his planning from the National Security Archives, and the translated memoirs and diaries of important Soviet policymakers, including Gorbachev's foreign minister

Anatoly Chernyaev and the long-serving Soviet Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Dobrynin, as well as secondary sources.<sup>14</sup>

And now, a brief word on what this dissertation does not do. I do not provide an all-encompassing analysis of the bewildering, ever-shifting cast of characters and intrigue which distinguished the Reagan administration: other writers have already done so in great detail, the most notable being Strobe Talbott in *Deadly Gambits*.<sup>15</sup> Instead, I focus on administration figures other than Reagan only when they were especially instrumental in formulating policy, strongly influenced or are reflective of his thinking, or to make a larger point. Contrary to custom, I have not interviewed any of the key players in this drama, primarily because I believe that interviews can tend to be self-serving and reinforce the narrative that both the interviewer and interviewee want others to remember. Finally, Reagan's summits with Gorbachev in Geneva, Washington, D.C., and Moscow, while all important, receive short shrift. This is because the key issues of Reagan's atomic diplomacy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union came to a head and indeed were brought most clearly into focus at the fateful Reykjavik summit. Reagan's strategic arms reduction talks (START), the ongoing tussle over intermediate range nuclear forces (INF) in Europe and Asia, and SDI were the prominent issues at Reykjavik and on display for the entire world to witness in dramatic fashion. Accordingly, I focus on the development of the United States' negotiating positions on these issues and consider the impact that Congressional politics and the transnational nuclear freeze movement played in shaping such positions. In many ways the body of this dissertation serves to build toward the final, climactic act when Gorbachev tantalized Reagan with the prospect of a nuclear free world. Though I risk being overly reductive, everything that Reagan did leading up to Reykjavik ultimately influenced his key decisions there. Reykjavik, moreover, was one of those rare moments in history when a single decision by an important historical actor may truly have changed the course of world history.

Not surprisingly, this dissertation intersects with many important questions that have been raised regarding Ronald Reagan's nuclear and arms control policy, SDI, and more broadly the end of the Cold War. For a very long time Reagan has been portrayed as a caricature by supporters and detractors alike. For critics, Reagan is little more than a warmonger who imperiled the nation and nearly bankrupted it, or at best he was an amiable dunce prone to flights of fantasy, especially when it came to SDI.<sup>16</sup> For his ardent supporters, Reagan single-handedly won the Cold War with SDI and his arms buildup.<sup>17</sup> While I tend to agree with the critics and would caution that the triumphant narrative encourages arms proliferation and the continued militarization of American society, I have attempted to analyze Reagan's atomic diplomacy with a critical eye and have sought to understand the role that geostrategic concerns, domestic and international politics, the nuclear freeze movement, and administrative intrigue played in giving shape to events in this pivotal moment of the Cold War. My dissertation accordingly draws



upon the large body of work which has addressed these issues, though my study is more fully grounded in primary source documents from the Ronald Reagan Library than the majority of the literature.<sup>18</sup>

In recent times a more nuanced picture of Reagan has begun to emerge; Coral Bell perhaps started this shift with the publication of *The Reagan Paradox* in 1989, which chronicles his seemingly strange shift from confrontation to the very détente he so vigorously claimed to despise.<sup>19</sup> James Mann also has emphasized Reagan's shift from warmonger to peacemaker and argued that Reagan saw in Gorbachev a fellow optimist who desired peace and accordingly reassured him that he could safely carry out his reforms. In this vein, Reagan was one of a handful of important actors who helped bring about the end of the Cold War.<sup>20</sup> The well-respected historian Melvyn Leffler meanwhile, views Reagan's summits with Gorbachev as largely successful and cites his increasingly flexible foreign policy approach, which was grounded in the conviction that he should negotiate from strength, as successful and one of the decisive factors which led to the end of the Cold War.<sup>21</sup> While all of these studies are valuable in that they take Reagan seriously as a historical actor and point to the broad complexity of the end of the Cold War, they may be problematic because they tend to follow the exact script that Reagan wrote for himself. He was conciliatory during his second term precisely because he believed that his arms buildup and SDI had worked and forced Gorbachev to wave the white flag and seek arms reductions, yet as this dissertation will demonstrate American strategic superiority and the military potential of SDI were not the primary factors which compelled Gorbachev to ameliorate the arms race. Even as Reagan continued to race to the heavens to win the arms race, Gorbachev increasingly was willing to throw in the towel. Many in the conciliatory camp, moreover, tend to juxtapose the hawks against the moderates. As the story often goes, Reagan very much was under the influence of the hawks, including Richard Perle and Richard Pipes, during his first term but increasingly came under the sway of the moderates, such as Nitze and Schultz, during his second term. The underlying substance of Reagan's atomic diplomacy, however, did not change between his first and second terms. Far from flexible, Reagan remained firmly committed to his strategic modernization plans and his quest for strategic superiority; he turned to the so-called hawks, moreover, when faced with the most fundamental of decisions at Reykjavik and elsewhere. Though writers in the conciliatory camp over-emphasize Reagan's flexibility, I have attempted to follow in their footsteps and offer a balanced story, though at times I may appear unduly harsh towards Reagan. This partly is because Reagan in recent years has been portrayed as a nuclear abolitionist who broke with traditional American Cold War policy and skillfully used his arms buildup and SDI to force Gorbachev to seek arms reductions, all of which brought about the end of the Cold War.<sup>22</sup> This picture of Reagan, which of course intersects with the triumphant narrative, erroneously

frames the very conduct which helped create and perpetuate the arms race and the Cold War in the first place as the hole whereby Alice magically escaped it.

Reagan may have disliked nuclear weapons, but his belief that they could be rendered obsolete through the wielding of American military might and SDI – a proposition which was reflective of his fervent belief in the innocent and providential qualities of American military technology – ultimately shaped his fateful decision on that gray day in Reykjavik and helped contribute to an arms race that still threatens the world.

## Chapter One

### Providential Destiny and Technological Evangelism: The Roots of Roots of Ronald Reagan's Worldview

Nelle Wilson Reagan and John Edward Reagan (also known as Jack) welcomed Ronald Wilson Reagan into the world on a cold and blustery wintry day in Tampico, Illinois on February 6, 1911. Reagan was the second son and final addition to the young family, his elder brother Neil (also known as Moon) having been born two years prior. Round and portly and weighing in at ten pounds, Jack declared that Ronald “looks like a fat little Dutchman.”<sup>23</sup> The nickname stuck until young Ronald shed it in Hollywood when embarking upon his acting career. The proud parents had married in another rural town, Fulton, Illinois in 1904 at the Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception.

Tall, dark, handsome and blessed with a silver tongue, Jack was a first-generation Irish-American who lost his father at the age of three. He was a dashing and ambitious shoe salesman, yet he often found himself in financial straits and suffered from a dark streak. It appears that he was more skilled at telling a good story than in earning a nice living. Though a member of the Catholic Church, he rarely attended Mass and suffered from alcoholism and an angry temperament throughout his life. During the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Catholicism was well outside the pale of mainstream America, particularly in the Middle West. At a time when Protestants still dominated the religious landscape, there was something suspicious, even un-American in being Catholic. During the Ku Klux Klan's resurgent years of the 1920s, for example, Catholics were almost as reviled by the men cloaked in white sheets as Jews and African-Americans. Coupled with his repeated financial failures, Jack's outsider status may have contributed to his alcoholism and pessimistic view of the world. His outsider status, however, also bred within him a deep respect for the individual and fostered an antiauthoritarian streak. “My dad believed passionately in the rights of the individual and the working man, and he was suspicious of established authority,” Ronald Reagan later recalled.<sup>24</sup>

Despite his general pessimism, Jack's fervent adulation of the individual and his belief that all individuals can forge a better future reveals an optimism that was characteristic of the American frontier ethos of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; this was an ethos that was still prevalent in Middle America during the 1920s. Jack never did own the finest shoe store in the state of Illinois, which was his lifelong goal, nor did he achieve much financial success, yet he tenaciously clung to his belief that all people – if they work hard enough – can chart their own course in life. At a young age

Reagan inherited his father's sense of equality, antiauthoritarianism, and belief that individuals shape their own future. As he later recalled, "Among the things he passed on to me were the belief that all men and women, regardless of their color or religion, are created equal and that individuals determine their own destiny."<sup>25</sup> For the adult Reagan, totalitarianism, authoritarianism, and big government were bad because they suppressed the freedom of the individual to achieve his or her dreams and crushed the self-reliance that Reagan believed made America great.

While Ronald inherited his father's egalitarianism, quest for self-reliance, and antiauthoritarianism, he did not inherit Jack's cynicism. Ronald, as an adult, was so optimistic and believed so strongly in the innate goodness, or innocence, of all individuals and the United States that he tended to discount that injustice – such as personal and institutional racism, lack of economic opportunity, and religious intolerance – might still exist in America. Reagan was so fervent in his belief that individuals chart their own destiny through personal pluck and effort that he could not fathom that larger structural forces could shape people's lives. While Jack viewed the world through a dark lens, the son's view always was bright, to the point that Ronald tended to romanticize both his own rough early years and indeed the entire sweep of American history itself. During his presidency he believed that racism was a relic of the past which the virtuous nation had overcome, and he remembered the Vietnam War as a Noble Cause. This romanticism, optimism, and belief in the innate goodness of people and the United States were gifts from his mother. "While my father was a cynic and tended to suspect the worst of people," Ronald Reagan remembered, "my mother was the opposite. She always expected to find the best in people and often did, even among the prisoners at our local jail to whom she frequently brought hot meals."<sup>26</sup>

As a child the good-natured Dutch naturally was drawn to his mother, who exuded an optimistic and cheerful attitude. Nelle more than made up for Jack's lack of religious zeal and excessive drinking; petite, pretty and calm in demeanor, she hailed from a long-line of devout Protestant Scotch-English Midwesterners. After an especially intense conversion, or born-again experience, Nelle was baptized into the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). She quickly became an important member of the church, particularly in Dixon, Illinois, where the Reagans settled in 1921 after moving repeatedly from town to town due to Jack's incessant quest for a better living for himself and his young family. In addition to being widely regarded as a faith-healer, she taught Sunday school, led weekly prayer meetings and Bible study groups, and regularly ministered to prisoners and other people down on their luck.<sup>27</sup> Her fervent faith in Providence, or the belief that God works through individuals to better the world, may have contributed to her charitable desire to help others. She truly believed that the Lord has a plan for everyone, and that the world can be made a better place through human effort. Though Nelle was comfortable with her own beliefs, she did not attempt to impose her religion upon Dutch. Nelle, in fact, was open-minded and tolerant of other people's religion, so

much so that she let her sons choose between the Catholic and the Disciples of Christ Church.

Moon attended the Catholic Church while he was young (though usually without Jack); while Dutch worshipped with his mother in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). At the age of 12, he was baptized in the First Christian Church of Dixon, Illinois. Much like his mother, he was an active member of the congregation: he regularly attended services and, when he grew a bit older, taught Sunday school to younger members, many of whom later marveled at his ability to engage an audience.<sup>28</sup> Though the adult Reagan's belief system was shaped by a variety of forces, Nelle and his own involvement in the Christian Church strongly influenced him throughout his lifetime. "I know that she planted that faith very deeply in me," Reagan later recalled of Nelle.<sup>29</sup> Reagan's faith, however, was flexible, highly individualistic, and not specifically tied to any particular denominational creed; in short, it was unconventional. This faith was his inheritance (as he liked to call it) from his tolerant mother and his involvement in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). As Steven Vaughn notes in a perceptive article on Reagan's formative years in the Christian Church in Dixon, there is remarkable congruity between the ideas in currency of the church of his youth and the ideas and rhetoric of Reagan in his adult years.<sup>30</sup> Interestingly, both the Disciples and Reagan believed strongly in the providential destiny of the United States.

Belief in the transformative power of faith spilled over into the way in which Disciples thought about religion's role in society and the mission of the United States in world history. Sharing in the general postmillennial excitement of the ante-bellum era, the Disciples believed that it was within the power of man and the Church to forge a new millennium on earth. For founder Alexander Campbell and other influential early members of the church, the new millennium would be ushered in by erecting a more godly society and government on earth. Campbell, in the prospectus for the first volume of his periodical "The Millennial Harbinger," explained his eschatological vision:

This work shall be devoted to the destruction of Sectarianism, Infidelity, and Antichristian doctrine and practice. It shall have for its object the development, and introduction of that political and religious order of society called the MILLENNIUM, which will be the consummation of that ultimate amelioration of society proposed in the Christian Scriptures.<sup>31</sup>

This postmillennial enthusiasm is important for several reasons. Throughout much of American history, most prophecy followers have been premillennialists.

Gloomy and deterministic, premillennialists believe that the forlorn world will grow increasingly evil until the return of Jesus Christ, who will descend to earth to battle the Prince of Darkness at Armageddon. There is nothing that man can do to change this fate. Postmillennialists, on the other hand, believe that a thousand year reign of peace can be established on earth if humans will govern and live according to Biblical principles. After this peaceful millennium, Jesus Christ will return to the earth and finally defeat Satan and his minions. For Campbell and other postmillennialists, the incredible technological and material progress of the United States was proof indeed that God intended to work through human institutions – and especially the United States -- to reform the world in his image. As Ernest Lee Tuveson observes, Campbell's millennialism went beyond that of even many of his peers because in many ways his focus of redemption was much more that of the world than individuals.<sup>32</sup> God's purpose was not so much the individual redemption of souls, but rather the transformation of the earth by establishing justice and democracy everywhere.<sup>33</sup> The vehicle for this transformation was the Anglo-Saxon race and the rapidly modernizing United States. With its blessed isolation from the contagion of Europe, settlement by Anglo-Saxons, bountiful resources, wonderful technological innovations, and its rapid spread of democracy westward, the United States appeared destined to transform the world. For Alexander Campbell, the political was as important as the religious. With great enthusiasm he declared the following regarding the Anglo-Saxon race and the role of the United States in world history.

To us are the moral destinies of the human race committed. Our horizon is fearfully, gloriously, transcendently extended beyond the conception of any living man. Numerous race and generations of men yet unborn, swarming not only over this grand continent, but over the newly acquired Asiatic possessions of our Anglo-Saxon relations. On the old homestead, in Western Europe, are to be moulded, controlled, and destined by us.<sup>34</sup>

In the belief of Campbell and the other early Disciples, the United States was destined to transform the world; in short, it was a redeemer nation. Reagan fully shared in this belief in Providential Destiny. He fervently believed that the Lord has a plan for everyone, and that Providence guides individuals and nations. Much as a pastor feels called to the church, Reagan always felt that he been called upon to lead the nation. In short, divine Providence was very real for him. In a 1976 letter that he wrote while a presidential candidate, he observed the following:

I believe that in my present undertaking, whatever the outcome, it will be His doing. I will pray for understanding of what it is He would have me to do. I have long believed there was a divine plan that placed this land here to be found by people of a special kind, that we have a rendezvous with destiny. Yes, there is a spirit moving in this land and a hunger in the people for a spiritual revival.<sup>35</sup>

More broadly, Reagan was an eternal optimist who believed that God intended to work through the United States to spread peace, happiness, democracy, and capitalism to even the darkest corners of the globe so long as the nation remained faithful to its spiritual roots. Echoing Alexander Campbell's belief in the Providential Destiny of the United States, Reagan declared that

I've always believed that this blessed land was set apart in a special way, that some divine plan placed this great continent here between the two oceans to be found by people from every corner of the earth – people who had special love for freedom and the courage to uproot themselves...And when coming here, they created something new in all the history of mankind: a country where man is not beholden to government, government is beholden to man.<sup>36</sup>

Reagan's belief in the nation's Providential Destiny partly was partly fueled by the myth that the United States is an innocent nation. For Reagan and many conservative evangelicals, the Vietnam War was a Noble Cause – the only mistake was to allow the liberal politicians and other elites to hijack America's destiny to lead the world. Reagan's belief in the innocence of the nation was so profound that he could not reflect on the nation's moral shortcomings in any way, which only deepened his lifelong tendency to view the world in stark Manichean terms. To provide but one example, during the Second World War Reagan served in the Army Air Force Intelligence where he helped make training films for the American pilots who participated in the fire-bombing of Japanese cities. His description of these films is well worth quoting at length:

Our greatest and most unusual achievement was developing a new method for briefing pilots and bombardiers before their bombing mission...

Our uniformed special effects magicians took over almost the entire floor of a sound stage and...created an amazing replica of Tokyo complete with thousands of buildings and its nearby coastline; then they mounted a camera on a movable overhead derrick from which

they took motion pictures simulating what flight crews could expect to see as they passed over Tokyo...

No more map and pointer. The films were airlifted to our bomber bases in the Pacific and replaced the old-fashioned briefings. My job was to narrate the films, identify features by which the pilots could reach their targets, then say "Bombs away" at the appropriate time.<sup>37</sup>

In his memoir Reagan did not consider the moral dilemma raised by the bombing of civilian populations or weigh his own involvement in any way; he does not mention, for example, that roughly 100,000 civilians died in the fire-bombing of Tokyo alone, nor did he appear at all concerned that he helped lead pilots to targets that clearly were in the middle of the model city which he so clearly admired; a city which clearly was populated by civilians. His involvement, it would appear, ended when he said "Bombs away" since that was his last word on the subject. What is perhaps more telling, though, is that his memoir immediately segues in the next paragraph into a graphic description of the films which he witnessed that chronicled the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps. In vivid detail he described the horrible corpses of victims who were mowed down by machine gun fire as they attempted to escape.<sup>38</sup> It is not my intention to weigh whether the American strategic bombing campaigns against 66 Japanese cities were morally analogous to the Nazi death camps, but it is important to note that Reagan on the one hand chose to see the horror inflicted by the enemy on Jewish civilians, while on the other hand he was enamored with the model of Tokyo and seemingly enthralled with the technological fantasy it represented. In the one case the technological wonderment of a model city was all that he saw and this thus became his model of reality, while in the other case the actual witnessing of the Nazi atrocities obviously became an indelible part of his reality as well. His profound belief in the innocence of the United States and the evil of the enemy, however, prevented him from considering just how horrible the wreckage of twisted buildings and charred bodies looked after the bombing raids to which he contributed. As for the larger contours of U.S.-Soviet relations in later years, Reagan's belief in the providential destiny and innocence of the United States made it impossible for him to fathom that the United States might have been at least partially responsible for the outbreak and perpetuation of the Cold War, and contributed to his fervent belief that American military technology in the form of strategic superiority and especially SDI could vanquish the arms race once and for all and thus forge a peaceful and harmonious world.



## Chapter Two

### Communists and Bridge Lamps: The Deepening Worldview of Ronald Reagan

In the immediate post-WWII era Reagan, like many Americans, remained a loyal Democrat, or as he put it “a New Dealer to the core.”<sup>39</sup> Reagan’s identification with the Democratic Party largely stemmed from his adulation of Franklin Roosevelt, a strong leader whom he deeply revered and shared a common sense of optimism and a love of communication with, rather than appreciation of the broad tenets of the party itself – Reagan was especially at odds with the domestic politics of the Democrats.<sup>40</sup> In the realm of foreign policy, though, Reagan’s views were consistent with and indeed evolved with that of the liberal foreign policy establishment that dominated the Democratic Party in the postwar era. Solid in belief that appeasement, the folly of Munich, and American isolation had only emboldened Germany and Japan to seek global domination, such men as James Forrestal, George Frost Kennan, James Byrnes, Paul Nitze and Dean Acheson sought to craft a liberal, internationalist foreign policy in the Wilsonian model to promote a peaceful, postwar world under American moral, economic, and political leadership. Central to this model of international harmony would be stable democracies, thriving capitalist economies, access to natural resources, and open markets; fully rehabilitated and reintegrated into the capitalist union of nations, Japan and Europe would serve as anchors of stability in a volatile world. Juxtaposed against this orderly vision of the open door stood disorder and chaos: the world wars had witnessed the implosion of empires, unleashed unrest in the colonies and former colonies of the West, and perhaps most ominously, allowed the Soviet Union to expand its territorial ambitions and provided an opportunity for it to continue to take advantage of the anarchy that gripped the world to expand its reach farther.<sup>41</sup> Reagan largely was a Taft Republican: he hailed from the Midwest, was pro-business, and professed old fashioned values, yet he did not share in the old Republican penchant for isolation as best represented by Idaho Senator William Borah. Though Reagan’s unilateralism and staunch patriotism intersected with that of the conservative Right, his strong belief in America’s providential destiny and his reverence for democracy and capitalism led him to naturally adopt a liberal internationalist outlook. With unbridled hope and a sense of pride in America’s victory in WWII he believed that the American government – as the best vehicle for the promotion of Western liberal values -- was a force for good at home and abroad. He was hopeful that progressive government, the promotion of open markets and democracy, and the international control of atomic energy would provide for a

peaceful post-war world, so much so that along with many other GIs he joined liberal veteran's groups, including the United World Federalists and the American Veterans Committee, which advocated for the international control of atomic energy.

As the euphoria of victory in the Second World War gave way and worldwide turmoil mounted, the United States worsening relationship with its wartime ally the Soviet Union cast a dark cloud upon the emerging American century and the optimistic hope that the open door and the international control of the atom could promote world peace; as the world grew colder, the United States did not abandon its strategy to leverage its economic and technological strengths to forge a liberal, American-led world, but increasingly the Truman administration relied upon atomic and then nuclear weapons to achieve its foreign policy goals. Far from following his own tune, Reagan's ideas on foreign policy, the Soviet Union, and nuclear weapons developed in tandem with the consensus that emerged amongst the foreign policy establishment which shaped the United States early Cold War policy, as well as that of the larger public, both of which eventually rejected the international control of atomic energy and instead chose to provide for American security and world stability by embracing – indeed loving -- the bomb and building ever greater numbers of it. Though the United States and the Soviet Union eventually built enough nuclear weapons to destroy the earth several times over, influential policymakers – some of whom would later serve in the Reagan administration, including Paul Nitze – encouraged the growth of the United States' nuclear arsenal because they tended to invest nuclear weapons with fantastic qualities other than their primary use, which is to inflict utter destruction; in short, nuclear weapons, which initially were the source of great fear for many, eventually were viewed as a technological panacea of sorts for the great political and economic problems that the United States faced in the postwar era.

The atomic devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were but a portent of the horrible dilemma that now confronted the world: man now possessed the ability to unleash unspeakable horror and widespread destruction on an unimaginable scale in a split second. Science and technology might truly be man's downfall, much like the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge.<sup>42</sup> The very first media accounts of the atomic bomb clearly underscore this realization, as well as the belief that everything had changed in a split second with man's mastery of nuclear fission. "The earth is no longer solid," wrote Anne O'Hare McCormick. "Out of the forces that hold it together human genius has summoned forces that tear it apart."<sup>43</sup> The *San Francisco Examiner*, meanwhile, called the atomic bomb a superweapon and declared that a new epoch in science, war and peace that peace had probably arrived. In sheer scale of destruction the bomb was unique and yet frighteningly similar in that it seemed to be an extension of the strategic bombing raids that had razed the cities of Germany and Japan. The *San Francisco Chronicle*, in an attempt to make sense of the magnitude of the bomb's power, ultimately had to relate it to a

common reference. “The easiest way for the imagination to grasp the meaning of the new atomic bomb’s power is to compare it with other bombs,” the headline on August 7 instructed. “The new bomb explodes with a force greater than 40,000,000 pounds of TNT.<sup>44</sup> The bomb was so novel, its results so disastrous and permanent and easily delivered that its detonation shook the universe and sparked an instant exploration of its impact upon war, peace, science and technology, and the organization of man amongst leading intellectuals, public officials, and the very scientists that had created it. Throughout 1945 and 1946 the atomic bomb dominated American thought, as indeed symbolized by the ubiquity of atomic bomb images during this time period, including the famed mushroom, and the public debate over the future of atomic energy which dominated the headlines.

As Paul Boyer has skillfully documented, Americans believed the bomb had changed everything and tended to view atomic fission in either/or terms; man’s control of atomic energy and growing mastery of the universe was either a source of great fear, or cause for great optimism. Atomic energy might provide cheap and abundant energy for the entire planet and power rockets, trains, factories, ships, automobiles, and trains, or it might ultimately lead to the destruction of civilization and the extinction of mankind. While early reflections on the bomb contained optimistic notes, the over-riding reaction to atomic fission was fear of its awesome military potential, particularly when Americans began to consider that it might only be a matter of time before the bomb was turned on the creator.<sup>45</sup> “Anglo-Saxon science has developed a new explosive 2,000 times as destructive as any known before,” H.V. Katenborn of NBC radio announced. “For all we know, we have created a Frankenstein! We must assume that with the passage of only a little time, an improved form of the new weapon we use today can be turned against us.<sup>46</sup>

Based upon the consensus that quickly developed among most physicists and scientists that it would be impossible to develop an effective defense against atomic bombardment, it was believed that America’s cities eventually would be vulnerable to attack with ever more powerful weapons -- perhaps even a thousand times more powerful than those already unleashed -- and in much greater numbers. “The bombs will never again, as in Japan, come in ones or twos, warned the physicist Philip Morrison. “They will come in hundreds, even thousands.”<sup>47</sup> Fear of the bomb thus dominated American thought during 1945 and 1946. The cover of *Life Magazine’s* November 1945 issue, for example, featured an atomic bomb exploding over Washington, D.C., while the lead article “The 36-Hour War,” written by none other than Air Force General Hap Arnold, described the most likely results of a nuclear war. At least 10 million Americans would be killed in a surprise attack by an unidentified attacker with nuclear-armed rockets, few of which would be intercepted by American defenses. Ultimately the United States would “win” the short war, but every city with a population greater than 50,000 would be destroyed. As if to underscore the futility of atomic war, even one that might be won, the article closed with a chilling picture of New York City in ruins; the only visible

landmarks are the marble lions of the New York Public Library. Everything else is destroyed, and the only sign of human activity is that of technicians who are busy checking the rubble for radioactive levels. Not only were America's cities vulnerable, but perhaps all life on earth. "I sincerely believe that in a very few years, warned Commander Herbert Alger, aide to the U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain, "human beings will know how to destroy the human race."<sup>48</sup>

The splitting of the atom thus unleashed a wave of fear across the United States, yet with new knowledge there always is a silver lining. The atomic bomb was but the latest of Anglo-American technological fantasies which long have imagined that a new weapon -- whether it be the submarine, the battleship, or aerial weapons -- would be so powerful and horrible that it would lead to the quick conclusion of future wars, or more optimistically convince the enemy to surrender in the face of certain destruction, demonstrate the futility of war, and thus finally lead to its abolition and international cooperation.<sup>49</sup> This strand of thought, which presupposes that man can harness destructive weapons for peaceful purposes found expression in a number of ways in the immediate postwar era. Media accounts of Hiroshima expressed concern at the sheer destruction wrought, but also enthused that the bomb would lead to a hasty end to the war. In the realm of popular culture, Henry Stimson's famed article, "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb," built upon this sentiment and forever etched in the American mind the belief that the atomic bombardment of Hiroshima and Nagasaki forced Japan to surrender and thus saved the millions of American and Japanese lives which would have been lost in an invasion of the Japanese homeland.<sup>50</sup> Much as the bomb ostensibly hastened the end of the war, the Truman administration believed that the United States' atomic monopoly could prevent the outbreak of the next war by counterbalancing the Soviets' conventional strength in Europe. "Our monopoly of the bomb, even though it is transitory," declared General George Spaatz in 1946, "may well prove to be a critical factor in our efforts to achieve first a stabilized condition and eventually a lasting peace."<sup>51</sup> The bomb, since it was in the sole hands of the United States, was imbued with a variety of fantastic characteristics that transcended its primary purpose -- complete and utter destruction. At its core this belief in the peaceful nature of America's growing atomic arsenal flowed from a nationalist impulse which framed both America's wartime actions and its atomic monopoly as peaceful since the United States intentions were benevolent. Had the Soviet Union developed the atomic bomb first and detonated it over a city there is no doubt that it would be viewed in a very different light. So long as the bomb was utilized for peaceful purposes -- to hasten the end of one war or to prevent the outbreak of another -- careful consideration of the moral dilemma raised by it could be avoided, especially if one simply assumed that any and all actions of the United States must be moral. Solid in its belief that the bomb could deter Soviet aggression and thus was the best road to peace the Truman administration covertly attached greater and greater importance to the atomic bomb during 1945-1946 even as it paid lip

service to an increasingly popular movement for the international control of atomic energy.

A sizable number of influential Americans, including the famed physicist Albert Einstein, University of Chicago chancellor Robert M. Hutchins, and Norman Cousins, the editor of the *Saturday Review*, supported some form of international control of the atom which ranged from the simple sharing of atomic energy for peaceful purposes to schemes for the creation of a world government. Far from a fringe movement, moving tracts for world government, such as Raymond Swing's "In the Name of Sanity," Norman Cousins's *Modern Man is Obsolete*, and the Federation of American Scientists' bestselling *One World or None* found a receptive audience, partly because of the homegrown fears that were unleashed by Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and perhaps partly due to the way in which the scientists and other world government advocates attempted to bludgeon the public into taking urgent action through the intentional cultivation of widespread fear, such as through the publication of articles which vividly recreated both the horrors that the citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki experienced, as well as what an attack upon the United States would be like.<sup>52</sup>

Perhaps partly in response to public pressure, in January 1946 Truman's Secretary of State James F. Byrnes formed a committee to prepare a proposal for the international control of atomic energy. Headed by undersecretary of state Dean Acheson and David E. Lilienthal, with J. Robert Oppenheimer on board, the committee drafted a broad plan which built upon the general recommendations of numerous atomic scientists and an earlier plan drafted by Oppenheimer. It was hoped that international cooperation would mitigate international rivalries over the long term and eventually create a more peaceful world. In the short-term, the authors hoped to avert an arms race. *A Report on the International Control of Atomic Energy*, as it was titled, or the Acheson-Lilienthal Report as it usually is referred to, reflected Oppenheimer's belief that the dangerous uses of atomic energy should be placed under the control of an international organization, while the safe use of atomic energy should remain within the province of the nation, which would have access to fissionable material which had been denatured, or rendered useless for military purposes.<sup>53</sup> The plan called for a newly formed Atomic Development Authority, under the auspice of the United Nations, to survey, discover and regulate all fissionable ore deposits on the planet; monitor all nuclear facilities, including uranium and thorium mines; and cooperatively research and even possibly develop atomic weapons.<sup>54</sup> Central to the plan was its cooperative approach; though all fissionable materials would be controlled at all levels, the plan expressed the opinion that inspection and police powers would not be enough, that in all reality atomic proliferation is "a problem of human nature."<sup>55</sup> The plan emphasized cooperation and international ownership of uranium and thorium to discourage cheating, and did not provide a mechanism of punishment for violation of its terms.

Optimistic in tone and short on specific details, the Report was “not intended as a final plan but ‘a place to begin, a foundation on which to build.’”<sup>56</sup>

Even the best of plans, however, would have been extremely challenging to implement. An international treaty would have required senate approval, which would have proved increasingly difficult as domestic atomic spy crises and communist advances in Iran, Greece and Turkey fueled increasingly belligerent rhetoric from the Republican Party. The Report, moreover, contained significant provisions that the Soviets could not agree to, as well as seeds that already had sowed dissent within the United States. Most ominously, it allowed the United States to continue to develop atomic weapons even as the plan, which would unfold in stages which had yet to be defined, was carried out.<sup>57</sup> As the cover letter to Secretary Byrnes clearly stated, the plan called for everyone but the United States to cease with the research and development of atomic weapons. “One of these decisions will be for what period of time the United States will continue the manufacture of bombs,” it stated. “The plan does not require that the United States shall discontinue such manufacture either upon the proposal of the plan or upon the inauguration of the international agency.”<sup>58</sup>

Before the radiation cleared from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, then, a precedent was established whereby the majority of American arms control proposals during the Cold War were not negotiable because of a classic security dilemma. American policymakers believed that the United States’ atomic monopoly and its later superiority across the strategic triad provided a deterrent to the communist bloc’s conventional forces in Europe; American leaders, moreover, believed it enhanced the United States’ leverage vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, which might enable the United States to act aggressively if necessary. The U.S. understandably was not willing to relinquish the significant advantage that it believed its atomic monopoly provided, but in seeking to enhance its own security it undermined the security of the Soviet Union and encouraged it to develop its own atomic weapon and then continuously modernize its strategic forces, which in turn undermined the United States sense of security and encouraged it to seek greater security in a viscous circle. Though the Acheson-Lilienthal Committee was sincere in its efforts to shepherd the world towards atomic cooperation, the provision that the United States could continue to manufacture atomic bombs would make even more difficult or most likely obviate what little chance there was for reaching an agreement with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was well aware that the United States could effectively use the Atomic Development Authority to discover all known fissionable deposits in the Soviet Union and elsewhere, bring them under its control, and then at the last minute back out of the deal.<sup>59</sup> All while continuing to expand its atomic monopoly.

The poor odds of international cooperation grew even longer when Truman tapped the elderly Wall Street financier Bernard M. Baruch to lead the American delegation to the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission (UNAEC), which was

empowered to explore international cooperation. The Baruch Plan, as it came to be called, differed from the Acheson-Lilienthal Report in significant ways. For one, it was more ambitious than the Acheson-Lilienthal Report and called for general disarmament. “We are here to make a choice between the quick and the dead,” Baruch somberly declared to the assembled dignitaries of UNAEC on June 14, 1946, “that is our business.”<sup>60</sup> In striking, dualistic terms, Baruch painted a bleak picture of the world: disarm, or face certain destruction. The problem, though, was that Baruch and his hand-picked team of fellow Wall Streeters – who quickly had a falling out with the Acheson-Lilienthal committee and scientists in general – had no interest in actually disarming and thus loaded their plan to ensure Soviet rejection. The plan de-emphasized international cooperation; diluted the power of the Atomic Development Authority; and called for private ownership of fissionable materials (no doubt to benefit Baruch and his cronies); and provided for severe punishment of violators – even atomic attack would be fair game. Perhaps more importantly, it called for the abolition of the veto in the United Nations Security Council. “The Baruch plan’s provisions for an initial raw-materials survey, penalties, abolition of the veto, and the protection of national economies against “interference” by international authority had each transformed the original Oppenheimer plan,” explained the historian Gregg Herken. “Thus it was the potential costs of cooperation and not cooperation’s benefits that dominated the concern of Baruch and his associates. The creators of the Baruch plan guaranteed that international control would be entirely on American terms – or not at all.”<sup>61</sup>

The plan was reflective of American atomic diplomacy in general during the early Cold War.<sup>62</sup> It waved the fig leaf, yet it was non-negotiable because in all reality Baruch and Truman were not content with providing for the security of the United States within a framework of international cooperation, but rather sought to provide for the perfect security of the United States by increasing the insecurity of the Soviet Union. Though the Truman administration publicly spoke of reaching some type of international accord with the Soviet Union, it only was willing to do so if in Truman’s words it had its way 85% of the time.<sup>63</sup> It might be added that Truman’s obsession with the atomic bomb would have necessitated that any agreement would have had to allow the United States to retain atomic weapons 100 percent of the time. America’s first arms control efforts, then, were designed to fail, primarily because many Truman administration figures believed that America’s atomic monopoly was central to the maintenance of the security of the United States. We “should not under any circumstances,” Truman instructed Baruch, “throw away our gun until we are sure the rest of the world cannot arm against us.”<sup>64</sup> In addition to underscoring the growing centrality of atomic weapons to American foreign policy and the challenges it would raise for arms control agreements in the future, the Baruch Plan established other ominous precedents. The rift that developed between the Baruch Committee and the scientists reflects a longstanding tradition that developed in the American arms control community,

namely that those with the most knowledge of atomic weaponry and strategy often are left out of the negotiating or policy-making loop, while well-connected elites with little knowledge often are in it. Despite its myriad problems, the Baruch plan – with its promise of a peaceful world – ignited the hopes of many Americans who did not bother to investigate its benefits, liabilities, and chance for success.

Reagan, as well as the liberal veterans groups to which he belonged, supported the Baruch Plan and nuclear disarmament for a short period of time. In December 1945 the Hollywood Independent Citizens Committee of Arts, Sciences, and Professions, hoped to rally support for the abolition of atomic weapons, and the peaceful use of atomic energy under international control. Reagan was scheduled to read a chilling poem written by Norman Corwin – “Set Your Clock at U-235” -- which in apocalyptic prose describes the horror of atomic warfare and made a plea for international control. Reagan’s employer, Warner Bros., was not pleased with Reagan’s peacenik activities and advised him through his agent that an appearance at the rally would violate the terms of his contract with the studio. Reagan apparently did not put up a fight and replied through his agent that he would not appear at the rally.<sup>65</sup>

Paul Lettow cites this aborted reading of Corwin’s poem as proof of Reagan’s early and often overlooked hatred of nuclear weapons. It was during the formative time period of the immediate postwar world, according to Lettow, that Reagan seized upon the belief that international cooperation – which he resurrected with the Strategic Defense Initiative – could lead to nuclear disarmament.<sup>66</sup> Reagan’s backing out of a speech without even a whimper, however, does not demonstrate a burning commitment to the Baruch Plan and nuclear abolishment, but rather suggests a deeper concern for his own financial welfare, and his complete acceptance of the many fantasies that long have shaped how Americans view our atomic history. Though he later mouthed platitudes about his hatred for nuclear weapons, his commitment to their abolition was of the fair weather variety at best. Given the social and political atmosphere of December 1945 and the great number of respected Americans that supported the Baruch Plan and some form of international control, a planned appearance at a rally for the abolition of atomic weapons was hardly radical or indicative of a deep-rooted desire to rid the world of atomic weapons. The moment the ill-fated and non-negotiable Baruch Plan foundered on the shoals of international agreement, moreover, Reagan devoted little if any time or energy to promoting it or the elimination of atomic weapons other than to wistfully occasionally reflect upon the Baruch Plan as a missed opportunity and a generous American offer to abolish nuclear weapons. During an especially intense and transitional time period for both Reagan and the nation, Reagan spent much time reading about and discussing the communist threat, yet little if any time exploring why the Baruch Plan had failed, how international cooperation might be forged, and the role that America’s atomic monopoly played in the emerging Cold War. Convinced of the innocence of the United States, such issues were not worth



considering; Reagan simply could not fathom that the Baruch Plan might have been lopsided or that America's atomic monopoly might have contributed to the worsening U.S – Soviet relationship. In later years Reagan even spun the Soviet Union's rejection of the Baruch Plan as proof of Soviet perfidy and the source of the arms race. "The Soviet U. (sic.) rejected the Baruch plan," he declared in a radio address, "signaling us that it intended embarking on an Imperial course rather than joining in peaceful, postwar cooperation."<sup>67</sup>

Intrigue in Hollywood provided much of the impetus for Reagan's political transformation.<sup>68</sup> Reagan was seized by a sinking feeling that though in the minority, well organized and increasingly shrill communists were attempting to take control of the liberal organizations to which he belonged. Reagan's concern was especially piqued by the double-standard that he believed he witnessed time and again at political gatherings where he gave speeches. Neofascists were despised by the public – a speech lambasting them always solicited great applause, yet Reagan began to believe that denunciations of communism were met with apathy and silence if not hostility.<sup>69</sup> Why the double-standard? The refusal to acknowledge the communist threat along with that of fascism was evidence that perhaps the progressive organizations were under the control of communists; Reagan began to believe that perhaps he and his well-meaning liberal friends were actually dupes of the communists. In a very vague sense Reagan was correct in his observations: through at least 1945 communists largely were less likely to be harassed at home than rightwing, anti-Semitic agitators like Gerald L.K. Smith and Billy James Hargis.<sup>70</sup> This is not especially surprising since the United States had just defeated Nazi Germany with the Soviet Union's help. Communist organizers in the United States, moreover, were not as brazen and patently offensive as political crusaders on the far right. Smith and McIntire's inflammatory periodicals, for example, reveal men who reveled in and indeed attracted followers and contributions by drumming up publicity for their cause by framing themselves as both solitary voices for traditional American values and victims of an insidious foreign (usually Jewish and communist) conspiracy. In short, the patriots of the far right played the role of the persecuted Old Testament prophet that bears the message of truth to a hostile world. Considering that these dissident crusaders built a following by warning Americans of the dangers they faced from shadowy communists and effete liberal elites, it was only natural for them to embellish their own persecution to illustrate their courage in the face of alien corruption. Yet despite the exaggerated claims of persecution that emanated from the far right and the belief that the public simply was not willing to acknowledge the communist threat, it will suffice to say that on the surface the United States seemed somewhat more hospitable to the Left than the Right in 1945. The Truman administration, for example, did make some public overtures towards reaching some type of an accord with the Soviet Union, whether through the Baruch Plan, the United Nations, or other international arrangements. Even President Harry Truman surmounted

America's traditional hostility to international government and for a short time rhetorically at least supported international control of atomic energy. "Civilization demands that we shall reach at the earliest possible date a satisfactory arrangement for the control of this discovery," he declared of atomic energy, "in order that it may become a powerful and forceful influence toward the maintenance of world peace instead of an instrument of destruction."<sup>71</sup>

As 1945 gave way to 1946, however, America's traditional hostility to communism re-emerged as a Red Scare swept the nation. Talk amongst respectable pundits and political leaders of international cooperation gave way to public expression that compromise with the power-hungry Soviet Union was impossible.<sup>72</sup> "Only one language do they understand," explained President Harry Truman, "How many divisions have you?"<sup>73</sup> As the political climate of the nation began to shift rightward, a labor strike in the film industry was all that was needed to complete Reagan's transformation to full-time anticommunist activist.

In 1946 long simmering tension in the Hollywood craft unions erupted. At issue was union jurisdiction over particular jobs: should grips or carpenters build the sets? Who should maintain the cameras? Which union should be in charge of lighting? And so on.<sup>74</sup> The upstart Conference of Studio Unions (CSU), led by a former boxer and head of the Painter's Union named Herb Sorell, wanted to pull unions and jurisdiction away from the all-powerful International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE), which boasted mobsters amongst its ranks and was supported by the studio heads. The IATSE and studio heads, both of whom were intent upon destroying the CSU, pushed it to the point that it went on strike in an attempt to shut studio production down. The Screen Actors Guild (SAG), of which Reagan was an important leader, maintained that it was neutral though in all reality it quickly sided with the IATSE and voted not to support the CSU. Reagan even urged actors to cross the picket line, as he boldly did. This defiant act led to a threatening phone call to Reagan, who was told that a group of men was ready to get him, and that "your face will never be in pictures again."<sup>75</sup> Rattled, Reagan armed himself with a handgun for the next seven months, though he continued to cross the picket line until the strike finally collapsed in February 1947, largely as a result of SAG's unwillingness to back it. Herb Sorell's ranks were decimated – he had lost and was left with a small union of 25 members. The IATSE and the studios, meanwhile, remained firmly in control of Hollywood. What is especially interesting about the affair is Reagan's memory of it and Hollywood in general.

A bread-and-butter labor dispute was more than a fight for control of Hollywood; it was part of a grand strategy for world domination. Much as Acheson and Truman portrayed the unrest in Iran, Greece, and Turkey as stemming from Moscow-directed intrigue, Reagan believed the communists must be behind all mischief in the world, even in the United States. It was around this time that Reagan adopted the curious belief that communism and a misguided liberalism at

home were one and the same – slavish, a threat to freedom, and the root cause of America’s domestic and international problems. While Sorell’s communist credentials and the degree to which he followed orders from the Comintern are debatable, what is most remarkable is Reagan’s description of the strike in his memoirs. “American movies occupied seventy percent of all the playing time on the world’s movie screens in those first years after World War II,” he remembered, “and, as was to become more and more apparent to me, Joseph Stalin had set out to make Hollywood an instrument of propaganda for his program of Soviet expansionism aimed at communizing the world.”<sup>76</sup> Reagan carried this belief that the communists must be behind all the trouble in the world right to the White House. When stumping for the presidency in 1980, he declared that it was the Soviet Union who “underlies all the unrest” taking place in the world. “If ‘they weren’t playing this game of dominoes, there wouldn’t be any hotspots in the world.”<sup>77</sup> Much as the trouble in Hollywood could be traced back to Joseph Stalin and a monolithic communist scheme to take over the world, trouble throughout the Third World surely originated in the Kremlin because of its inexorable drive for world domination.

Reagan’s experiences in Hollywood during this time period profoundly shaped his worldview for the rest of his life.<sup>78</sup> As his acting career waned, he adopted the all-consuming lifetime role of anticommunist agitator and atomic evangelist, even as his marriage to Jane Wyman fell apart because of his obsession with politics. Convinced of the perfidious tactics and global ambition of the communists and resolute in his belief of the innocence and providential destiny of the United States, he simply could not temper his growing political activism even to save his marriage. As Reagan adopted an increasingly Manichean view of the world which ruled out the possibility of negotiation with the Soviet Union, important members of the foreign policy establishment did so as well. In doing so, they framed the world in similarly dualistic terms and dispensed completely with the promotion of international cooperation with the Soviet Union; instead, they supported a containment policy which eventually evolved to the point that it called for an unprecedented military buildup that featured nuclear weapons as the cornerstone of the nation’s deterrence arsenal, as best reflected in NSC-68. Much as Reagan’s political philosophy was largely formed and cemented in the late 1940s, so too was the nation’s nuclear policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. In short, many influential American policy-makers believed that the United States could best provide for its security through the achievement of strategic superiority vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. While Reagan did not have a hand in shaping this policy, his developing belief system mirrored that of the foreign policy establishment which forged it.

As the arms race accelerated during the 1950s as the Soviets sprinted to catch up with the United States, Ronald Reagan developed what became known as his “speech,” first as a roving ambassador for General Electric from 1954 through 1962, then as a political figure throughout the 1960s. Personally written by

Reagan, the speech was a distillation of his political philosophy and worldview. Though it often varied, its core message and ideas remained the same right up through his presidency. “You have to keep pounding away with your message, year after year, because that’s the only way it will sink into the collective consciousness,” explained Ronald Reagan to his friend Landon Parvin. “I’m a big believer in stump speeches – speeches you can give over and over again with slight variations. Because if you have something you believe in deeply, it’s worth repeating time and again until you achieve it.”<sup>79</sup> As it turns out, Reagan’s view of the world was every bit as reductive as that of the architects of early American Cold War policy.

As a spokesman for one of the world’s largest corporations, which paid him a handsome salary and stocked his ocean view home in Pacific Palisades with all of the latest electronic gadgets, Reagan not surprisingly was a fierce advocate for free enterprise and railed against governmental regulation of industry. Yet his speech went well beyond advocacy: much like Kennan’s Long Telegram and NSC 68 it was a siren in the night to warn the American people of the insidious growth of a repressive and misguided liberal government that was pushing the republic down the red road to socialism through the growth of the federal government, which was stifling business with too many regulations; tax and spending the American people to death; and generally undermining the source of American freedom and liberty. Liberalism and large government at home were directly related to the growth of the communist threat abroad; for Reagan, they represented the same totalitarian threat and were merely flip sides of the same coin.

Much as he later endeavored to rollback the New Deal and especially President Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society, Reagan rejected any type of accommodation or negotiation with the Soviet Union -- which he believed was intent upon world conquest and was planning, in the words of Marshal Sokolovsky which he quoted, “to fight and win World War III.”<sup>80</sup> Though Sokolovsky did write this, the book from which the passage was drawn must be placed in its larger context. In 1962 the Soviet Union was far behind the United States in the nuclear arms race and knew that it did not stand a chance of winning a nuclear war. The passage most likely was intended to boost the morale of the Soviet military. Given that Reagan believed the Soviet Union was “the most evil enemy that has ever faced mankind,” it is not surprising that Reagan took the passage at face value.<sup>81</sup> Reagan, moreover, was critical of any effort to control the arms race through peaceful means and negotiation, primarily because it was the Soviet Union and not nuclear weapons which frightened him most. “Continuing to look at the record it becomes painfully clear that our foreign policy today,” he chastised in 1963, “is motivated by fear of the bomb.”<sup>82</sup>

For Reagan, much like the early architects of America’s nuclear policy, including Paul Nitze who later served in his administration, the only path to nuclear salvation, indeed to a perfectly secure world -- was to compel the Soviet Union to change its behavior to the point that it would disarm in the face of

superior economic, political, and especially military strength.<sup>83</sup> This polarized view of the world accepted that it was inevitable that the United States would have to continue to expand its nuclear arsenal and enhance its technological superiority in weaponry rather than seek another path, especially since the over-riding goal of containment was to force the Soviet Union to relinquish its goal of world conquest and indeed recognize American leadership of the world. This was an unrealistic goal, however, since the Soviet Union was well aware that it could not hope to defeat the United States and was not intent upon world conquest. For Reagan and the other Cold Warriors, though, atomic weapons, if in the hands of the United States, were not threats to world peace but rather the vehicle to achieve it by frightening the Soviet Union into giving up its own atomic weapons, its probes in Europe, and its Third World adventures. At its core the Baruch Plan and NSC 68 reflect this belief; the Baruch Plan called for world disarmament and would have required the Soviet Union to give up its pursuit of the atomic bomb, yet it allowed the United States to maintain its atomic. NSC 68, meanwhile, grossly exaggerated Soviet intentions and capabilities and portrayed it as the greatest threat to the world while it simultaneously planned for the United States to dominate its adversary through superior atomic might and military alliances on a global scale. In both cases, the legitimate pursuit of arms control was rejected because it was imagined that the only way peace could be achieved was if the enemy recognized American military superiority and submitted to its will to peacefully lead the world. Though Reagan did not personally know the architects of early American Cold War policy, he readily identified with their strategy. “But accommodation is based on wishing not thinking, and if the wish doesn’t come true the enemy is far stronger than he was before you started down that road,” Reagan declared in 1963 in regards to the notion that treaties could lead to peace with the Soviet Union. “The other way is based on the belief (supported so far by all the evidence) that in an all out race our system is stronger, and eventually the enemy gives up the race as a hopeless cause,” he then explained. “Then a noble nation believing in peace extends the hand of friendship and says there is room in the world for both of us. We can make those rockets into bridge lamps by being so strong the enemy has no choice.”<sup>84</sup>

Much has been made of the unique character of Reagan’s atomic diplomacy, yet his world view resembled that of the planners of early Cold War atomic policy, so much so that he would attempt to reignite the nation’s love affair with the bomb when he entered the White House and resurrect the easily recognizable verities of an epic battle between an innocent and evil nation.<sup>85</sup> Within a short span of time Reagan’s transformation from Hollywood actor to anti-communist agitator and technological evangelist was complete; this would be the biggest role of his lifetime, and his costar would be atomic weapons, which if built in great enough number would finally turn the Soviet missiles into bridge lamps.

## Chapter Three

### Racing to Win: Ronald Reagan, the Committee on the Present Danger, and the American Quest for Strategic Superiority

In recent years Ronald Reagan has been portrayed as a nuclear abolitionist and an original thinker who developed a unique grand strategy which was driven by his dream of a nuclear free world. The literature also has begun to emphasize Reagan's increased flexibility and willingness to work with the Soviet Union after Gorbachev's ascent, as well as his "rebellion" against his hawkish advisors during his second term in office. Far from a rigid Cold War ideologue, in the hands of James Mann, Paul Lettow and others, Reagan emerges as an agile maverick that courageously broke rank with the entrenched shibboleths of the Cold War and in almost unilateral fashion pursued serious arms control negotiations with Mikhail Gorbachev against the wishes of much of the foreign policy establishment.<sup>86</sup> By focusing upon the intellectual origins of Reagan's nuclear and arms control policies and his grand strategy as laid out in various strategic planning documents and National Security Council meetings, I will demonstrate that Reagan's policies were far from original and that his paramount goal was not the abolition of nuclear weapons but rather the achievement of what the 1960s nuclear strategist Herman Kahn has coined escalation dominance, or what I refer to as strategic superiority.

This quest for strategic superiority profoundly shaped Reagan's nuclear strategy and arms control policies, which were but different sides of the same coin of atomic diplomacy in that both were utilized to achieve strategic dominance. More broadly, as subsequent chapters will demonstrate, despite a vigorous public diplomacy campaign to make the Reagan administration appear serious about arms control to ensure continued popular and congressional support for his military spending, Reagan remained firmly wedded to the strategy that he and his like-minded foreign policy advisors developed during his first days in office, so much so that he remained committed to it even when Mikhail Gorbachev dangled the prospect of a nuclear free world before his eyes at their famed meeting in Reykjavik.

The intellectual contours of Ronald Reagan's foreign policy and the foundation of his grand strategy were well developed before he entered office. He believed communism was the focus of evil in the world, distrusted treaties as a means to alleviate the arms race, and felt that American conventional and strategic superiority were central to deterring communist aggression and perhaps the mechanism whereby the United States might finally convince the Soviet Union that they were engaged in a hopeless arms race and thus compel them to finally disarm and accept American hegemony. Despite his genial nature, he also exhibited traces

of paranoia in that he was convinced that the Soviets had raced far ahead of a complacent United States during the 1970s in conventional and especially strategic capability, as did an assortment of individuals from the foreign policy establishment who eventually would provide Reagan with a refined grand strategy, including Lyndon B. Johnson's former Undersecretary of Defense Eugene Rostow, and Paul Nitze, the author of NSC-68 and the Gaither Report, both of which grossly inflated the Soviet military threat and warned that the United States must increase its defense expenditures because it was falling dangerously behind in the race to achieve nuclear superiority.

On November 11, 1976, Rostow and Nitze formed the latest incarnation of the Committee on the Present Danger (CPD) to warn the nation of the grave danger it faced. Ostensibly a bipartisan group solely dedicated to educating the public, the CPD was populated by an assortment of conservative right wing ideologues and disaffected liberal Democrats who believed that President Jimmy Carter and the Democrats had grown soft on communism; many of its members had been members of the so-called Team B. Led by Richard Pipes, who had been a relatively obscure professor of Russian history at Harvard University, Team B was comprised of a group of handpicked outside experts appointed by CIA Director George Herbert Bush in 1976 to evaluate the findings of the CIA's own analysts, Team A, in regards to Soviet military capability. Ultimately, Team B argued that Team A had grossly under-estimated the Soviet military threat. Described as a "Kangaroo Court" of hawkish opponents of détente, Team B grossly over-estimated the Soviet military threat to goad the United States into a massive military buildup to destroy détente.<sup>87</sup> The CPD would carry on this tradition of atomic muckraking.

Despite the diversity of its ranks, the CPD represented the rise of the neoconservatives, as they came to be called. As Jon Ehrman notes, above all else, the neoconservatives were united by their "common identity as activist intellectuals, as well as a deep anti-communist commitment."<sup>88</sup> Distressed by America's loss of appetite for militarism and foreign adventures in the post-Vietnam War era and the breakdown of the broad bi-partisan anti-communist crusade which had sustained the Cold War through the 1960s, the CPD hoped to re-fire American resolve to confront the communists with conventional and nuclear forces and once again lead the world. The CPD was especially concerned by détente and what they believed was an acceptance of strategic parity (which they believed had led to a dangerous inferiority) with the Soviet Union as codified by SALT I and the proposed SALT II treaty. Firmly rooted in a dualistic vision of the world, the CPD imagined a world which looked an awful lot like the 1930s with SALT II playing the role of Neville Chamberlain's conduct at Munich; yet this time the drama pitted the freedom-loving United States against the insatiable communistic Soviet Union. "The Soviet Union has not altered its long-held goal," the CDP's first policy statement declared, "of a world dominated from a world center – Moscow."<sup>89</sup>

Having sounded the alarm, the CPD hoped to convince the public and policymakers alike of the grave necessity for American rearmament, particularly since the day of maximum danger – which it warned rapidly approached – could only be averted through the reassertion of American military strength. Teetering precariously on the brink of nuclear disaster because of the alleged superiority of Soviet strategic forces, Reagan and the CPD believed that the best way the nation could claw its way back from the edge of nuclear apocalypse was to build even more bombs, rather than through the negotiation of arms control treaties, which they ridiculed.

Given the shared worldview of Ronald Reagan and the CPD, it is not surprising that he soon fell under its sway, so much so that the CPD provided Reagan with a refined worldview, the intellectual anchors of his foreign policy, and a set of talking points that he regularly drew upon both before and during his presidency. In 1978, for example, Reagan dedicated more than a week of his radio show to discussing Eugene Rostow's speech of July 25, 1978, which warned of American military inferiority vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, decried SALT II, and lambasted the notion that peace could be achieved through negotiation; as he pointed out, no treaty ever would be honored by a communist power.<sup>90</sup> In addition to casting Reagan's long held ideas in a more erudite format, the CPD exerted incredible direct influence on Reagan's foreign policy. Not only did he appoint 59 of its members to important foreign policy posts and advisory positions during his presidency, including the perennial arms booster Edward Teller and Scoop Jackson's shrewd opponent of any and all arms control accords Richard Perle, he himself was a proud member of the organization and served on its executive board. The philosophy of the CPD and its policy prescriptions thus are extremely important for understanding Reagan's foreign policy, his grand strategy, and his atomic diplomacy. Though the CPD supplied Reagan with important policy makers and ideas, it should be noted that the ideas of the CPD were already rooted in Reagan's worldview; as Joel D. Aberbach writes in a perceptive essay, the Reagan administration, more so than any prior administration, made appointments based upon "loyalty to Reagan's ideas as well as to the man."<sup>91</sup> The appointment of individuals to important foreign policy positions based upon the ideological affinity between them and the president in turn served to reinforce the ideas which Reagan carried with him to the White House. "The Reagan Doctrine," James M. Scott writes, "owed its existence to the nearly uniform ideological viewpoint of President Reagan and the top policy makers he brought into his first administration."<sup>92</sup> Though ideology has always driven American foreign policy, during the Reagan years it really was the horse that pulled the cart. Because the CPD overwhelmingly provided the manpower for Reagan's foreign policy team and the blueprint for his atomic diplomacy, it is important to understand its ideology, especially since the CPD provides an excellent window into Reagan's belief system. In essence, they are one and the same.



As the General Counsel for the CPD, Max Kampelmann, explained in the introduction to its edited papers, the following, italicized sentence by Dean Rusk served as the basis for the 26 policy studies that the CPD wrote on nuclear and arms control policies.<sup>93</sup>

We live in an age in which there is no alternative to vigilance and credible deterrence at the significant levels of potential conflict. *Indeed, this is the prerequisite to the pursuit of genuine détente and the negotiation of prudent and verifiable arms control agreement that effectively serve to reduce the danger of war.*<sup>94</sup>

As the CPD reasoned, the best – indeed only -- way to avoid the nuclear war which many of its members paradoxically feared was inevitable was to destroy detente and prepare for armed conflict at all levels in which it might occur. For the CPD global stability required American military superiority at all levels in which combat or the threat thereof might occur, from the conventional level, at the tactical nuclear level, through the strategic level and right up into the heavens. This quest for strategic superiority flowed from the exaggerated faith which Reagan and the CPD invested in both the military and political utility of nuclear weapons, and the misguided belief that the United States had stood idly by during the 1970s while the Soviet Union raced far ahead of it in the arms race in its quest for world domination. When asked by a reporter about the dismal state of U.S. – Soviet relations in August of 1981, for example, because of the hard-line stance his administration had adopted towards the Soviet Union, Reagan responded with the following observation. “They are squealing like they’re sitting on a sharp nail simply because we now are showing the will that we’re not going to let them get to the point of dominance, where they can someday issue to the free world an ultimatum of ‘surrender or die,’ and they don’t like that.”<sup>95</sup>

Reagan and the CPD invested nuclear weapons with such incredible and coercive power because they believed the Soviets could hold the West blackmail under threat of nuclear annihilation if it achieved dominance at any level of what the nuclear strategist Herman Kahn described as a metaphorical escalation ladder in the early 1960s.<sup>96</sup> As Kahn imagined it, conflict between antagonists would be carried out on the rungs of a ladder, with each rung representing a heightened level of aggression or war-fighting. At the bottom-rung you might have a non-violent crisis or confrontation, followed by small-scale conventional hostilities, then all-out conventional war, which might escalate into a limited nuclear exchange, and finally a full-scale nuclear war at the strategic level. Kahn firmly believed that all other things being equal the antagonist with superiority at all rungs of the ladder could escalate to the next level and thus force the opponent to back down, either because he would realize that he did not possess the means to match the escalation, or because the cost of doing so would outweigh the benefits. As he reasoned, escalation

dominance would serve as both a deterrent to attack and enable nations to fight limited wars, even limited nuclear wars, because the other side would realize that escalation would be of no geostrategic benefit to it.<sup>97</sup> In the crudest terms, a young man in college might be able to coerce the proud owner of a keg at his own party to relinquish it if the youth threatened to escalate the conflict beyond the mere use of verbal threats or fisticuffs by brandishing a knife. In this sense, Escalation Dominance is important not only due to its deterrent value in that the keg owner might be able to deter the theft of his keg if he also was armed with a knife, but more importantly because of its coercive qualities: it can enable a nation to achieve its foreign policy goals through nuclear intimidation and coercion; and enable it to intervene throughout the world with conventional forces with the assurance that the conflict will not escalate beyond the use of such forces. As the perennial arms booster, founding member of the CPD, and Reagan's chief arm control negotiator on intermediate-range nuclear forces, Paul Nitze, explained,

...in actual war, advantage tends to go the side in a better position to raise the stakes by expanding the scope, duration, or destructive intensity of the conflict. By the same token, at junctures of high contention short of war, the side better able to cope with the potential consequences of raising the stakes has the advantage. To have the advantage at the utmost level of violence helps at every lesser level.<sup>98</sup>

In a bit of mirroring, Reagan and the CPD were quick to accuse the Soviet Union of seeking to dominate the world through nuclear blackmail precisely because they believed that America's own escalation dominance (or strategic superiority) is what long had kept the peace between the United States and the Soviet Union and allowed the United States to exert its will in international affairs. Reagan and the CPD were especially alarmed because they believed that the strategic superiority of the Soviet Union in ground-launched ICBM had undermined American security and emboldened the communists, whether in Afghanistan, Iran, or Central America. The CPD, in "Is America Becoming Number 2?" wrote the following:

The Soviet goal in the drive for what its spokesmen call a "visible preponderance of military power" is not to wage a nuclear war but to win a political predominance without having to fight. If we should allow the Soviet Union to achieve visible strategic superiority, the ultimate force on which we have relied since 1945 to deter attacks against our vital national interests – notably the independence of Western Europe and Japan – would cease to exist. Suppose that the Soviet Union possessed so numerous a force of power and accurate nuclear weapons that it could attack our intercontinental ballistic

missiles (ICBMs)...and still have greater numbers of more powerful weapons left than we had, would it then be wise for any American President to plan to launch a retaliatory attack on Russian cities and industries, knowing they could respond in kind and much more powerfully? Or would it be wiser for him to seek a political settlement, even if unfavorable...Under such circumstances, we would be vulnerable to a Cuban Missile Crisis in reverse.<sup>99</sup>

The policy prescriptions of the CPD and Ronald Reagan for waging the Cold War were hardly original and were firmly rooted in Herman Kahn's metaphorical ladder of escalation dominance, and Paul Nitze's NSC-68, which had called for "situations of strength, or American dominance at the conventional and strategic level, in other words at all levels in which combat might occur. The CPD and Reagan wanted to reassert American superiority at all rungs of the ladder to achieve strategic superiority; given their fear that the Soviet Union had superior conventional forces to that of the United States, particularly in Europe, such an endeavor welcomed the possibility of a limited nuclear war, particularly with tactical nuclear weapons on the battlefield. Richard Pipes, for example, when asked if the United States could "win a nuclear war against the USSR" replied that victory in a limited nuclear war might be possible and in fact resemble other military conflicts in that one antagonist might be able to force the other to surrender on its own terms and thus force its will upon the other nation.<sup>100</sup> More broadly, while the CPD never stated as such explicitly, its call for escalation dominance (or strategic superiority) suggests that it also believed that the United States should dominate the top rung of the Escalation Ladder and be prepared to win an all-out nuclear exchange at the strategic level.

*The primary goal of the CPD, however, was not so much to fight and win a nuclear war, but rather the deterrent value that nuclear weapons are believed to provide and the coercive utility they are perceived to deliver if escalation dominance (or strategic superiority) is achieved.* If the United States could reassert its dominance at all levels of the escalation ladder it could deter Soviet aggression, engage in more aggressive behavior in local conflicts, and in what is known as linkage the United States perhaps could leverage its strategic superiority to achieve the ultimate form of coercion and compel the Soviet Union to change its behavior to the point that it might temper its tyrannical passions, give up its adventures in the Third World, and even accept America's "peaceful" hegemony and disarm on American terms.

Careful analysis of primary source documents – many of which have only been recently declassified -- from the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, including National Security Decision Directives (NSDDs), nuclear strategy and arms control policy guidance papers, and National Security Council meeting minutes reveal that

the intellectual fodder of the CPD and Herman Kahn's escalation dominance very much shaped Reagan's grand strategy. Reagan's grand strategy called for a full-court press which would include a massive arms buildup to pressure the Soviet economy, and development of the ability to simultaneously engage in multiple conflicts across the globe. Central to the quest for escalation dominance was the enhancement of the United States' war-fighting capacity with the strategic modernization of offensive and defensive weapons systems, all of which would furnish the United States with the ability to launch a decapitating first-strike and engage in a protracted nuclear war. Reagan and the like-minded individuals that he appointed to important foreign policy decision-making positions within his administration were determined to both deter Soviet aggression and to develop the ability to ensure the cessation of armed conflict as quickly as possible on American terms. Absent such cessation the goal was to ensure that the United States would prevail in an all-out war at both the conventional and nuclear level.<sup>101</sup> "We pursue a strategy which seeks to deter war," declared NSDD 1-82, "but if war is thrust upon us, to control escalation and to prevail."<sup>102</sup> The ability to engage in a protracted war and prevail at any and all levels in which conflict might occur was central to the deterrence of aggression because it was believed that the Soviets must perceive that they could not hope to win at any level in which conflict might occur. "The essence of deterrence is the maintenance of credible conventional and nuclear forces," as the administration put it, "that present unacceptable risks to an aggressor contemplating violence at any level."<sup>103</sup> A particularly vexing problem was how best to counter the Soviet Union's purported superiority in conventional forces, particularly in the European theatre. For this task it was deemed essential to maintain nuclear weapons and plan for their use if vital interests were attacked; such a strategy would signal to the Soviets that they could not expect to leverage their superiority in conventional forces to gain the upper hand.<sup>104</sup> More broadly, it was deemed absolutely essential to dominate at all levels of the escalation ladder and to develop a variety of nuclear targeting options; this would create uncertainty in the minds of the Soviet leadership as to the actions the United States might undertake in a crisis situation, and hopefully dampen Soviet boldness by holding its leadership hostage to the constant fear of an American first-strike.<sup>105</sup>

The first NSDD to address the modernization of America's strategic forces was NSDD 12. As it declared, "the modernization program outlined by this directive will guide the long-term development of our strategic forces," and playing upon the old CPD fear that the United States had fallen behind the Soviet Union, it stated that the NSDD would help redress the strategic imbalance between American and Russian forces.<sup>106</sup> According to the NSDD, the modernization program would include five mutually reinforcing, integrated elements; these elements – when combined -- suggest that the development of a first-strike capability lay at the heart of America's modernization program, and illustrate Reagan's desire to develop the ability to wage and win a protracted nuclear war.

NSDD 12 called for the development and deployment of a variety of weapons systems, and laid the foundation for the strengthening of the strategic triad of land, air, and sea-based weapons systems. The directive called for the construction of 100 MX missiles, or the Peacekeeper as it was dubbed by Reagan. The MX is a large, land-based ICBM with a range of approximately 8000 miles that carries 10 independent warheads, each of which can strike within 300 feet of the intended target. With such power and accuracy the MX is a perfect first-strike weapon that could quickly destroy the Soviet Union's control and command apparatus and hardened missile silos; the MX, in fact, was similar to the formidable Soviet ICBMs which the administration consistently characterized as "first-strike" weapons in that their quick flight time, incredible power, and accuracy placed at risk the United States own land-based missiles. With the MX the administration hoped to turn the tables and even obtain the ability to target the Soviet leadership. "Unlike our current force," a briefing paper declared, "the MX will possess sufficient accuracy and power to counter the Soviet's monopoly in large accurate ICBMs and hold at risk the full range of Soviet assets."<sup>107</sup>

The Trident II/D-5, also known as the Trident II submarine launched ballistic missile, meanwhile, has a range of 4000 miles and can carry 14 independent warheads, each of which has the ability to detonate its powerful charge within 400 feet of the target. As a Reagan administration fact sheet declared, the "Trident II/D5 will be able to place at risk a wide range of Soviet hard targets, such as missile silos and command centers."<sup>108</sup> As the most accurate and powerful ICBMs ever imagined, the MX and the D-5 are perfect first strike weapons because they have the ability to destroy hardened missile silos; decapitate the Soviet leadership wherever it might take cover, including in concrete-reinforced underground bunkers; and wipe out Soviet communication networks, which would make it extremely difficult to coordinate a counter-attack or sustain a protracted war. As Kaku and Axelrod point out, the MX and Trident II have little value as counterforce weapons since it would be redundant and useless to use such powerful and accurate missiles to strike empty missile silos or civilian populations.<sup>109</sup>

To strengthen the air leg of the strategic triad, NSDD 12 provided for the construction of 100 manned B-1 Bombers and the manned Stealth/ATB Bomber. Though described as "not first strike weapons" due to the slow flight time of the air launched cruise missiles which they carry, the B-1 and the Stealth (especially considering its "stealth" nature) conceivably could be used in a first strike, particularly since they were deemed to be well suited for locating "imprecisely located targets, including such high value Soviet assets as command control facilities and mobile ballistic missiles."<sup>110</sup> The B1 and Trident II also are valuable because of their great flexibility: they can carry conventional or nuclear weapons, and can be withdrawn or recalled in a crisis scenario, which would make them particularly useful in a protracted conflict.

The development of such a great variety of first and second strike weapons systems would serve to deter Soviet aggression and conceivably would strengthen the United States ability to wage and win protracted nuclear war, especially if coupled with the development of a strategic communications network, which NSDD 12 declared to be “the highest priority element in the program.” As the NSDD further elaborated, the United States “would develop command and communications systems for our strategic forces that can survive and endure before, during, and after a nuclear attack.”<sup>111</sup> This ability to maintain communication with the entire array of the United States’ strategic forces over the course of a protracted conflict would be absolutely essential to achieving dominance at all stages of the escalation ladder and would require the development of communications technology, such as satellites, which could withstand attack and continue to function in concert with the rest of the network even when under stress. As a fact sheet on America’s nuclear forces observed, “The strategic C3 system collectively provides the means for force management...the system must perform with credibility...and be capable of functioning accurately and rapidly under the extreme stresses of nuclear attack.”<sup>112</sup>

The modernization plans also included the enhancement of the United States’ defensive capabilities, including the development of a ballistic missile defense system (BMD), which would serve a variety of functions. Theoretically, a robust BMD might be used as an offensive weapon in that it could be used to mop up the few remaining Soviet missiles launched at the United States in the event of an American first strike. In a more likely scenario, a functioning BMD would raise doubts as to the efficacy of a Soviet strike because it conceivably would ensure the survival of a sufficient number of ICBM to launch a retaliatory strike; as Reagan’s Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberg declared in a National Security Council meeting, “the Soviets must not lose the perception that our systems cannot survive a first strike.”<sup>113</sup> A BMD system also would aid the administration in achieving its goal to engage in and win a protracted conflict. “U.S. nuclear forces will be survivable and enduring,” declared NSDD 1-82, “in order that we can maintain sufficient forces throughout a protracted conflict period and afterwards.”<sup>114</sup> As originally envisioned in NSDD 12 and NSDD 35 a robust missile defense system also would solve the knotty problem of protecting the vulnerable MX from a surprise first strike by the Soviet Union and thus serve to enhance deterrence and ensure that the United States could launch a retaliatory strike with its land-based ICBM. Unlike the Trident II and the American bomber fleet, which would be difficult targets to strike, the MX missile was very vulnerable, particularly to a first strike. A variety of schemes were entertained over the years by the Carter and Reagan administrations to find a protective basing mode for the MX missile. One idea was to constantly transport the missiles throughout the American West on railroads from one hardened silo to the next in an elaborate game of hide the peanut under the shell; another was to lodge it in deep underground tunnels; while the

Reagan administration decided to densely pack a large number of MX missiles in the hopes that Soviet missiles would destroy each before they struck their target.<sup>115</sup> Under Reagan, the development of a missile defense system was considered central to protecting the vulnerable MX missile: “The use of our existing BMD technology,” NSDD 35 states in reference to the MX missile, “would work well to help protect a closely spaced basing field.”<sup>116</sup> The original impetus for the development of ballistic missile defense, then, was not to rid the world of atomic weapons, but rather to protect American nuclear assets, particularly the vulnerable MX missile. This is not surprising since the MX was believed to be a key deterrent of Soviet aggression, and a central component of the United States modernization program. A ballistic missile defense system, by protecting the only vulnerable leg of the American strategic triad, would theoretically ensure that the United States retained a large number of missiles in each leg even in the event of a surprise attack or a protracted conflict, and weaken the Soviet Union’s ability to achieve escalation dominance at the strategic level. This point is driven home by the Fact Sheets on Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control, which states: “Strategic defenses need not be impenetrable to enhance our nuclear strategy. They can still enhance deterrence by increasing both our civil survivability as well as the certainty that sufficient offensive strategic power will remain after an attack. This would reduce Soviet perceptions of advantages to be gained by initiating a nuclear attack.”<sup>117</sup>

Closely related to the development of a BMD system was a robust civil defense program, which the Reagan administration believed would provide for the protection of government officials, the orderly evacuation of America’s cities, and possibly the protection of the civilian population through the construction of underground bunkers. Of all the defense programs pursued by the administration, civil defense most clearly mirrored the crazed world of the fictional mad scientist Dr. Grotteschele of Dr. Strangelove fame, perhaps even more so than the belief that space stations could zap missiles from the sky. The expenditure of hundreds of millions of dollars on civil defense was viewed as a necessary component of the administration’s strategic modernization plans since, as Ronald Reagan observed in a National Security Council meeting on December 3, 1981, there are not large, natural caves near the nation’s metropolitan areas to shield the civilian population from nuclear attack. Strong in the belief that the Soviet Union’s own civil defense program must be an ace up its sleeve that would protect its civilian population, the JCS and Reagan administration officials believed that the United States needed to augment its own meager civil defense system to ensure that the American people also could survive a nuclear war. In the same NSC meeting in which Reagan bemoaned the nation’s dearth of caves, Major General Bennett L. Lewis and Rear Admiral James W. Nance advised the President that a vigorous civil defense program could potentially protect 80% of the American population from harm in the event of a nuclear war. As Edwin Meese explained, the evacuation of metropolitan populations to remote areas could easily be accomplished and would be no different

than a weekend in New York state. To assuage the President's concerns about the world which the evacuees would return to after their weekend retreat, General Lewis assured him that nature would clear up most of the radiation, as would decontamination crews.<sup>118</sup> Impressed with the prospect of civil defense, Reagan signed NSDD 26 on March 16, 1982, which provided that the nation would pursue a vigorous civil defense program.

Reagan's strategic modernization plans clearly indicate that the administration did not shy away from the prospect of nuclear war and very much wanted to win the arms race and achieve strategic superiority. As he declared in the midst of his heated presidential race against Jimmy Carter, his objective was "to achieve overall military and technological superiority over the Soviet Union...to prevail in the event deterrence fails."<sup>119</sup> Reagan was determined to win the Cold War through a massive arms buildup in conventional and nuclear forces and the modernization of a complex, integrated war-fighting system which would include a communications network which would be able to withstand repeated attack and coordinate the United States' complex array of global forces. This quest for strategic dominance was so complete that it extended well beyond the earthly plane and right into space and included the development of communications, surveillance, and weapons systems, including "an anti-satellite (ASAT) system capable of countering Soviet satellites that represent a threat to U.S. and allied ground, sea, and air forces."<sup>120</sup> As the Reagan administration imagined in NSSD 1-82, space would be but the next and most important frontier in the United States' quest for strategic dominance and perhaps even the site of epic space battles.

Over the long term, control of space will be decisive in conflict, and nations will vie for its control. The United States, with its increasing dependence on space-based systems, must maintain the capability to operate in space throughout the conflict spectrum, while denying any enemy the use of space in war, especially as autonomous space warfare systems are developed. *The question is not whether space will be a medium for warfighting, but when, and who will dominate* (my emphasis added).<sup>121</sup>

In sum, Reagan's goal was to construct an integrated weapons system which would enable the United States to destroy the world many times over; much like the builders of the Tower of Babel, he believed that the technical prowess of mankind was so great that the United States could extend the escalation ladder right up into the celestial heavens and thus control the fate of all of humanity.

Reagan was well aware that his quest for strategic superiority, huge military expenditures, and especially the preparation for protracted nuclear war would have to be presented to the public as peaceful in nature, which was not a difficult task since Reagan sincerely believed that American superiority, or conversely Soviet



inferiority, would not lead to war but rather peace – or peace through strength as he called it -- because the Soviets would have no choice but to change the internal nature of the communist regime, cease and desist with its Third World adventures, and perhaps even accept the peaceful nature of the American buildup and unilaterally disarm, especially given the economic pressure that an increasingly technologically sophisticated arms race might place upon the Soviets. Though the Reagan administration believed that its quest for strategic superiority would compel the Soviets to disarm, many Americans placed more faith in arms control agreements and accordingly placed pressure upon the administration to pursue an agreement with the Soviet Union.

Reagan and the hand-picked members of his foreign policy team, however, despised arms control, both because arms control accords potentially would hamper the nation's buildup and modernization plans, and because they believed that the Soviets had exploited détente and arms control accords, notably SALT I and the unratified SALT II, to gain a comparative advantage against the United States, particularly in the category of ground-launched ICBM. "Well, so far détente has been a one-way street," Reagan declared, "that the Soviet Union has used to pursue its own aims."<sup>122</sup> Reagan was not interested in arms control agreements that would codify parity; he despised détente, for example, precisely because it recognized a certain level of parity. In addition, given his belief in the treacherous nature of the Soviet regime he did not believe equitable arms control agreements could be signed – "they can resort to lying or stealing or cheating," he declared, "or even murder if it furthers their cause."<sup>123</sup> Compounding this distrust was the sentiment in the Reagan administration that Soviet nuclear strategy markedly differed from that of the United States. As the reasoning went, the United States simply held its nuclear weapons to deter Soviet aggression, while the Soviet Union had deployed its weapons to enable it to win a nuclear war against the United States. In this vein, the Soviets were viewed as unlikely to enter into verifiable arms reductions because of the centrality of nuclear weapons to their over-all war-fighting strategy, a purported strategy which ironically enough was similar to that of the Reagan administration. Despite Reagan's quest for strategic superiority, his administration made plans to play the arms control game to meet public expectation that it do so, but it only was interested in agreements which would enhance American strategic superiority and chip away at weapons systems in which the Soviets had achieved parity or superiority, particularly land-based ICBMs and the fast-flying Soviet INFs aimed at Western Europe, both of which were repeatedly characterized in policy planning documents as "destabilizing" first-strike weapons and the greatest threat to the United States ability to deter Soviet aggression.<sup>124</sup> In crisis-laden language reminiscent of the Committee on the Present Danger's most scary and exaggerated pronouncements, NSDD 33, which provided guidance for the START negotiations, declared that "The main threat to peace posed by nuclear weapons today is the growing instability of the nuclear balance. This is due to the increasing destructive

potential and numbers of warheads delivered by the most inherently destabilizing Soviet systems, ballistic missiles, and especially ICBMs.”<sup>125</sup> In this guise, America’s own ICBMs, including the proposed MX and Trident II missiles apparently were not destabilizing first-strike weapons; only Soviet missiles were. Even as the United States drew up plans to build powerful new ICBMs and SLBMs, the over-riding goal of the START negotiations was to eliminate the Soviet ICBM fleet. “The clear and primary focus of United States efforts,” NSDD 33 states, “should be to achieve a significant reduction in these systems, the number of warheads they carry, and their overall destructive potential.”<sup>126</sup> The goal, then, was to reduce the Soviet ICBM threat while retaining the right of the United States to build and modernize its own strategic weapons, which the Reagan administration believed were necessary to achieve escalation dominance, which would allow the United States to maintain a credible nuclear deterrent, and offset the Soviet Union’s purported superiority in conventional forces.

Interestingly, as laid out in its NSDDs, the Reagan administration considered the weapons-systems which it planned to build strictly off limits to arms control, despite Reagan’s claim that his arms buildup would lead to arms reductions. Reagan, for example, initially did not seek significant limits on air or sea launched cruise missiles, areas in which the United States held an advantage. A major goal of START, meanwhile, was to protect the MX missile from the Soviet ICBM threat. The MX, which was deemed “absolutely essential to our national security,” as laid out in NSDD 35 was not to be used as “a bargaining chip”; in other words, it would not be negotiable nor would it be deactivated after deployment.<sup>127</sup> Given the Reagan administration’s fear that the MX was vulnerable to a Soviet first-strike, it also was inevitable that any missile defense system that might be under consideration would be considered non-negotiable since one of its primary functions would be to protect the MX missiles. NSDD 36, for example, states the following: “In particular, protecting the survivability of our ICBM force is an essential prerequisite to maintaining our security at reduced levels of forces.”<sup>128</sup> The primary goal of Reagan’s arms control efforts, then, was to demolish the Soviet ground-based ICBM threat and remove the SS-20 from Europe and Asia. Under both START and the zero option for INFs, the Soviet Union would be the only nation which would make significant reductions. The United States, meanwhile, would be allowed to build and retain the MX missile, the Trident II, the B-1 Bomber and the Stealth Bomber, a missile defense system, a host of air and sea launched cruise missiles, and eventually weapons in space, all of which would be coordinated through an advanced communications network. It is unlikely that the United States ever would scrap any of these weapons systems after investing billions of dollars to build them, especially since each of the systems had been imagined as part of an integrated whole. The fear of Soviet conventional superiority and the belief in the necessity of a nuclear deterrent, moreover, made it highly unlikely that Reagan or any other president would abolish nuclear weapons since they were

deemed central to Western security, as illustrated by the following passage from NSDD 1-82:

Deterrence is dependent on both nuclear and conventional capabilities...That danger is compounded by growing Soviet conventional force capabilities. In redressing the imbalances, nuclear forces should not be viewed as a lower cost alternative to conventional forces. At the same time, the possible use of nuclear weapons must remain an element in our overall strategy to counter Soviet conventional aggression because it is unlikely we will have sufficient conventional forces in peacetime that will alone insure deterrence.<sup>129</sup>

Reagan was willing to dramatically reduce some existing American nuclear arms because he planned to replace them with more powerful, accurate and sophisticated weapons anyway which would be components of a larger, superior war-fighting system. Given the growing technological sophistication of the United States, fewer weapons would be needed to maintain a credible deterrent or to prevail in the event deterrence failed. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, relied primarily on its expanding arsenal of large ground-based ICBMs precisely because it lagged behind the United States in the development of smaller, more accurate missiles, particularly those launched from sea or the air. A vigorous arms control campaign, moreover, would serve to bolster Congressional and public support for the administration's huge defense expenditures; the MX and the Trident II, for example, consistently were framed as absolutely necessary to compel the Soviet Union to sign equitable arms control agreements in the future. Reagan's paramount goal, then, was not the abolition of nuclear weapons but rather perfection of the United States' escalation dominance vis-à-vis the Soviet Union: though he was willing to shed some outdated weapons systems, he believed that his arms buildup and arms control policies, if they came to fruition, would strengthen the deterrence capability of the American arsenal by providing it with a first-strike capability and the ability to wage protracted nuclear war, which would enhance the coercive power of the United States in the event of global crises. If the Soviet Union could be pressured to relinquish the one rung of the escalation ladder which it held firmly in its grip, namely ground-based ICBM, then Reagan's quest for strategic superiority would be all that much easier.

## Chapter Four

### Racing to Zero? The Transnational Nuclear Freeze Movement and the Reagan Administration's Atomic Diplomacy

Reagan immediately withdrew the United States from START II upon taking office, though he did continue to abide by its terms. The next important arms control issue that he confronted also was bequeathed by the Carter administration. In 1976 the Soviet Union began to replace, or modernize, its Tactical Nuclear Forces (TNF), hereafter used interchangeably with INF (intermediate range nuclear forces). The SS-4 and SS-5, which used liquid fuel and were relics of the early 1960s, were slowly demobilized and replaced with the much feared non-liquid fueled SS-20, which is a ground-based, intermediate range ballistic missile capable of carrying three highly accurate warheads. Highly mobile, difficult to detect, and with a range of 3000 miles the SS-20 provided the Soviets with the ability to cover a variety of targets throughout Europe and Asia.<sup>130</sup> The Soviets also began to deploy the Backfire bomber, which can penetrate deep into Europe, during this time period. During the ongoing SALT negotiations, the Soviets refused to accept the American interpretation that the bomber was a strategic weapon since it could hit European targets. Despite the protestations of the CPD and Reagan that the Soviet Union's "buildup" was unmatched by the United States and presented the Soviets with a preponderance of power in the European theater, in all reality Carter responded to the modernization project by increasing the number of submarines under NATO command in the region with SLBMs, and by more than doubling the number of F-111 fighter-bombers, which carried nuclear missiles that can strike deep in Soviet territory, deployed in Great Britain from 80 to 164.<sup>131</sup> When combined with the United States' ICBM force, the Carter administration believed that a credible deterrent remained intact for Europe. The United States, nevertheless, began to develop an intermediate-range cruise missile known as the Tomahawk and an intermediate-range ballistic missile known as the Pershing II, for European deployment.

Western European leaders, especially the West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, were deeply alarmed by the SS-20, and the inability of the Soviet Union to assuage European worries only exasperated tension between the East and West. Of concern was the belief that the Soviet Union's TNF superiority in Western Europe might enable it to hold Europe hostage under the threat of nuclear annihilation, or decouple Western Europe from the deterrent credibility of the United States strategic forces. As the reasoning went, parity in Europe might make the United States reluctant to respond to a Soviet missile attack there out of fear for retaliation

against its own cities. Led by Schmidt, the Western Europeans pushed for the modernization of the United States INF forces in Europe to ensure that the continent would not be stranded in the face of an attack. Even as Schmidt pushed for the American INF deployment, the Europeans also wanted to negotiate the removal of the SS-20s in return for the non-deployment of the Pershing IIs and Tomahawks. To ensure domestic support for the deployment of American missiles, the Europeans decided that arms control efforts also would have to be pursued. To this end, in 1979 NATO reached a decision known as the double-track decision. An arms deal would be pursued with the Soviets, but absent an accord the United States would begin deploying INF missiles in 1983.<sup>132</sup>

The U.S. drew up plans to deploy 108 Pershing II missiles. Plans were also made to deploy 466 Tomahawk ground-launched cruise missiles in Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Italy, and Belgium. By delaying deployment until 1983, NATO and the United States hoped to gain some leverage to negotiate reductions in the SS-20 fleet for non-deployment of the United States' own INF missiles. The arms control track, however, primarily served to ensure that domestic political opposition in Europe would not derail the modernization track or SALT II.<sup>133</sup> With the public relations debacle of the neutron bomb fresh in mind, it was possible the citizens of Western Europe would not support the deployment. As Secretary Vance admitted, "the arms control aspect of this so-called two-track approach was politically essential to contain expected internal opposition to the proposed deployments within most of the member countries."<sup>134</sup> It also should be emphasized once again that the impetus for both deployment and arms control came from the Western Europeans, primarily Germany and the Netherlands, and not the United States. The Carter administration, in fact, placed little value in the military utility of the proposed INF deployment. "I was personally never persuaded that we needed TNF for military reasons," explained Zibniew Brzenzki, Carter's Security Advisor. "I was persuaded reluctantly that we needed it to obtain European support for SALT."<sup>135</sup> Despite this misgiving, in 1979 NATO and the Carter administration agreed to adopt the double-track.

Reagan, upon taking office, had little interest in arms control and accordingly placed the negotiating track on the backburner, yet his administration's calls for a massive arms buildup and in particular its loose talk of nuclear war soon frightened the public. As a result, a slow simmering movement against nuclear weapons which had been building in the late 1970s exploded and forced Reagan to put forth arms control proposals to placate the public and an increasingly skeptical Congress.

Alarmed by Carter's increased defense expenditures, the neutron bomb imbroglio, the pursuit of the B-1 Bomber and the MX missile, and Congressional uncertainty on SALT II, the American Friends Service committee had first called for the United States to unilaterally halt the production and deployment of nuclear weapons in 1978. In that year, Randall Forsberg, a former employee of the Stockholm Peace Research Institute and a doctoral candidate at the Massachusetts

Institute of Technology wrote a four-page manifesto which declared that the United States and the Soviet Union “should adopt a mutual freeze on the testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons.” This simple proposal would be the first step towards much deeper cuts which might eventually lead to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

While the idea for a nuclear freeze had been kicked around for awhile, Forsberg’s genius was to emphasize that the nuclear arms race was a joint problem which only could be addressed through a cooperative, bilateral approach. The arms race and arms control game, as it had been played in the past, had encouraged each of the Cold War antagonists to pursue arms limitations in weapons systems in which the enemy might hold an advantage while simultaneously seeking to increase its own armaments and technology in systems which it possessed an advantage. A simple freeze at existing levels would recognize the very different force structures that had developed between the Cold War antagonists and potentially prevent each from continuing to exploit the loopholes that had contributed to proliferation, as SALT I had done with some classes of weapons systems, such as ICBMs with multiple independent re-entry vehicles (MIRV). A freeze at current levels also would prevent each side from attempting to buildup to gain leverage in future negotiations. As Forsberg warned, continued modernization would make the world more rather than less dangerous. “The weapon programs of the next decade, if not stopped, will pull the nuclear tripwire tighter.” Eloquent, forceful, and simple, Forsberg’s manifesto attracted widespread attention and united various peace movements with one another and attracted new adherents who took up the call to freeze the nuclear arsenals of the United States and the Soviet Union. Supported by such luminaries as Jonas Salk, Lyndon B. Johnson’s undersecretary of state George Ball, editor of the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* Bernard Field, former secretary of defense Clark Clifford, George Frost Kennan, and the well-known scientist Carl Sagan, the freeze movement, as it came to be called, was respectable and appealed to a broad cross-section of the American public. Even as the freeze began to build some momentum, the incoming Reagan administration threw fuel on it with its quest for strategic superiority and its nonchalant attitude towards nuclear warfare.

The Reagan administration’s bellicose rhetoric, preparation for nuclear war, and public statements that nuclear war was survivable heightened the sense of urgency that the arms race engendered and contributed to the rapid growth of the freeze movement. Reagan’s nominee to direct the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Eugene Rostow, was a hawkish Democrat who had spearheaded the formation of the CPD; he also was a strong supporter of the American war in Vietnam as Lyndon B. Johnson’s Under Secretary for Political Affairs. Rostow believed that war with the Soviet Union was inevitable; comparing the United States to Britain on the eve of the Second World War, Rostow explained that “there is no similar giant to save us from our folly.”<sup>136</sup> Despite this fear, Rostow did not

appear overly worried about the prospect of nuclear warfare. At his Senate confirmation hearing to be confirmed as Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) he opined that “the human race is very resilient” and that a nation could survive a nuclear attack. “Japan,” he observed, “not only survived but flourished after the nuclear attack.”<sup>137</sup> Rostow was appointed by Reagan to be Director of the ACDA precisely because he shared Reagan’s antipathy to treaties in general and arms control in particular, as did his fellow CPD member and replacement as Director of the ACDA 1983, Kenneth Aldemann.<sup>138</sup> Rostow was not the only Reagan official who apparently believed the United States could survive and indeed flourish after a nuclear war. Reagan’s Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering and CPD member, Thomas K. Jones, for example, sought to reassure the journalist Robert Scheer in a personal interview that nuclear war could be survived by taking cover in a hole in the ground with a couple of doors and a few feet of dirt overhead for cover. “If there are enough shovels to go around, everybody’s going to make it,” he explained. “It’s the dirt that does it.”<sup>139</sup>

Such faith in the power of dirt, when coupled with the Reagan administration’s loose talk of nuclear war, was unsettling to many Americans. Reagan’s Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger’s panacea for such fears, however, was to build even more nuclear weapons. A harrowing exchange between Reagan’s Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and a Harvard student, which the journalist Robert Scheer made hay of in his book *With Enough Shovels*, nicely illuminates the fear which the administration created and the technological fixes which it believed would help the United States transcend the grave danger it faced.

Student: “Do you believe the world is going to end, and, if you do, do you think it will be by an act of God or an act of man?”

Weinberger: “I have read the Book of Revelation and, yes, I believe the world is going to end – by an act of God, I hope – but every day I think that time is running out.”

Student: “Are you scared?”

Weinberger: “I worry that we will not have enough time to get strong enough to prevent nuclear war. I think of World War II and how long it took to prepare for it, to convince people that rearmament for war was needed. I fear we will not be ready. I think time is running out...but I have faith.”<sup>140</sup>

Even the President got in on the macabre act. Though he believed that the end times of prophecy lore might be brought about by a nuclear war, when asked by

a reporter if an exchange of tactical nuclear weapons could remain limited and not escalate to an all-out nuclear war he offered the following response: "I could see where you could have the exchange of tactical (nuclear) weapons against troops in the field," he answered, "without it bringing either one of the major powers to pushing the button."<sup>141</sup> As his fellow technological enthusiast Alexander Haig explained shortly thereafter in an attempt to smooth Reagan's gaffe over, NATO had plans in place to fire a nuclear warning shot, which would "demonstrate to the other side they are exceeding the limits of toleration in the conventional areas."<sup>142</sup>

Many Americans were not convinced that more nuclear weapons would make the world a safer place nor did they welcome the prospect of a limited nuclear exchange, which fueled the growth of the nuclear freeze movement at the grassroots and elite level. Numerous cities and towns and even states passed freeze resolutions, and the movement grew so popular that the Democrats took up the cause in the 1984 Presidential race. A CBS NY Times Poll in June 1982 found that 72% of America public favored the freeze, while a freeze rally on June 12 in the same month in Central Park, New York City attracted roughly one million participants, making it the largest political rally in the nation's history.<sup>143</sup> Though the resolutions of the freeze were non-binding, the popularity of the movement threatened Reagan's modernization plans by rendering the deployment of the MX missile more difficult and by raising the possibility that Congress would tighten the belt on defense spending; ultimately it forced the administration to place greater emphasis upon arms control (even if its proposal were lopsided) in its relationship with the Soviet Union while setting the stage for Reagan's unveiling of SDI by making it necessary for Reagan to attempt to emphasize the peaceful characteristics of American nuclear strategy.

The Reagan administration's bellicose rhetoric and loose talk of limited nuclear war also frightened the European public and sparked protests against the deployment of the American INF. In Bonn, Germany, roughly 150,000 citizens, many with posters in hand that depicted Reagan as a reckless, gun-slinging cowboy, turned out to protest the planned American deployment. The INF deployment had been designed to solidify Europe's position under the American strategic umbrella, but now much of the European public was fearful that their homeland might be the site of a limited nuclear war between the superpowers. The rally in Bonn was but the beginning of a series of protests in Europe which were carried out to pressure the NATO countries to implement a freeze on the development and deployment of nuclear weapons and the resumption of the INF talks.<sup>144</sup>

With public expectation rising in Europe for the commencement of negotiations on INF, the Reagan administration worked on a proposal that would protect the planned deployment, quell the growing public opposition in Europe and the United States to the deployment, and ensure Congressional support for the United States' strategic modernization programs. In a National Security Council Meeting on April 30, 1981, Reagan, the JCS, and the Secretaries of State and



Defense agreed on the need to modernize the United States' forces. The only questions really open to debate were whether or not the United States should agree to a specific date to open the INF negotiations, and if a date should be set before the completion of a threat assessment study. It ultimately was agreed that a date would have to be set because as Secretary Haig explained, his recent discussions with Lord Carrington, Prime Minister Thatcher, and Chancellor Schmidt had made it "apparent that European leaders cannot maintain domestic consensus behind TNF modernization without a date for negotiation."<sup>145</sup> Despite this fear, a decision was not reached at the time to set a date because as Haig warned, a threat assessment study was absolutely necessary beforehand because it probably would reveal that the United States would have to build beyond the planned projected deployment levels. With violent protest mounting in Europe and the freeze movement in full swing in the United States, the planned deployment raised the possibility that one or more of the Western European nation-states would not welcome the missiles. Antinuclear sentiment also might lead the U.S. Congress to slash funding for the modernization of the nation's strategic forces. Clearly the public needed to be steered towards support of the deployment.

Richard Perle was concerned that the growing nuclear freeze movement in the United States and Europe might derail the modernization of the United States' strategic forces, especially since an agreement on the Euro-missiles might encourage future agreements on strategic arms. A clever political operative and bureaucratic infighter, in early October he turned a freeze movement slogan – "No cruise, no Pershing, no SS-20" – on its head when he resurrected an old German plan for the INF problem.<sup>146</sup> Dubbed the zero-zero option, Perle's plan was very simple: there would be zero American and Soviet INF in Europe and Asia. If the Soviet Union scrapped its SS-20 launchers, as well as its roughly 120 SS-12 and 22, the United States would not proceed with its 1983 deployment. Perle included the SS-12 and SS-22, both of which carried a single warhead and had a range of less than 1000 km because he believed that their mobility would afford the Soviets the opportunity to simply move them within striking distance of most European or Asian targets. Significantly, Perle did not believe that the Europeans would allow the deployment of the Pershing II and the Tomahawk on their soil, nor did he believe that they were of military necessity since sea-launched cruise missiles could serve the same purpose.<sup>147</sup> In this vein, Perle was willing to settle for zero because the U.S. had zero land-based INF in Europe to begin with, and in his opinion was unlikely ever to have any. On the remote, off-chance that the Soviets agreed to the proposal, this would be exactly the type of agreement that he favored: it would dramatically increase the security of the West in return for nothing. Perle, moreover, believed that land-based INF were militarily unnecessary and politically hazardous since air or sea-launched cruise missiles, whose deployment and basing would not be subject to the whims of the European public and governments, could fulfill the same deterrent function. The zero-option, accordingly, only included land-

based missiles; the United States' SLBM, SLCM, ALBM, and the British and French INF arsenals would thus be excluded. For Perle, then, the primary goal of the zero-zero option was not so much to assure the deployment of American Tomahawks and the Pershing II as is widely believed; instead, he may have hoped to create a dramatic negotiating position which would make the United States appear serious about arms control even as he undermined the possibility of an arms control agreement.<sup>148</sup> If the Soviet agreed to the lopsided agreement, all the better, especially since the zero-zero would also divert attention from the eventual deployment of American air and sea-launched cruise missiles in the European and Asian theaters. In the meantime, it might mollify the European and American freeze movement by making the United States appear serious about arms control, and cut the high moral ground out from under the Soviets. Though he most likely believed that his scheme was non-negotiable, Perle may have been somewhat serious because if ratified it would significantly reduce nuclear weapons rather than attempt to limit them, a practice which Perle long had believed actually led to the proliferation rather than reduction of nuclear weapons due to the exploitation of loopholes for one's own advantage. Perle, for example, blasted SALT I as a horrible agreement which the Soviets had exploited to build the SS-20. "The sorry story is a classic example of how so-called arms control," Perle explained, "far from controlling arms, has had the effect of driving the deployment of new weapons."<sup>149</sup> For Perle, the zero-zero would turn the tables on the Soviets and use arms control to reduce rather than increase their forces while simultaneously providing cover for an American buildup in areas not covered by it.

Secretary Weinberger, Perle's boss at the Pentagon, initially was reluctant to accept the zero because he and the JCS believed the Soviets might actually agree to it and prevent the eventual American deployment; he soon shifted gears, however, and decided that the Soviets never would agree to it, which would all but ensure that the Europeans would have to accept the INF missiles.<sup>150</sup> Perle and his boss thus supported the zero-zero for subtly different reasons: Weinberger wanted to ensure the deployment, while Perle wanted to put forth what would appear to be a serious arms control agreement to prevent the consummation of other agreements. The JCS also supported the zero-zero. Having thus won the support of his boss and the Joint Chiefs, Perle only needed to outmaneuver the rest of the Washington bureaucracy, especially the State Department and the ACDA, both of which pushed for a more flexible opening position for the INF negotiations, which were scheduled to commence on November 30, 1981 in Geneva, Switzerland.

In papers developed through the Interagency Group during October and November, 1981, the State Department and the ACDA developed the zero plus option. Though they believed zero was the best outcome, they thought the United States should indicate that it would settle for more than zero on the way down to zero. The DOD believed the zero-zero option would make for a dramatic, easily understood call for the abolition of INF in Europe and thus rally the support of the

European public and cast the Soviet Union as the culprit for Europe's nuclear, while the framers of the zero plus believed Perle's zero-zero option would reinforce the belief that the Reagan administration was not serious about arms reductions and was simply putting forth a non-negotiable opening position.<sup>151</sup> As Secretary of State Alexander Haig recalled in his memoirs:

The fatal flaw in the Zero Option as a basis for negotiations was that it was not negotiable. It was absurd to expect the Soviets to dismantle an existing force of 1,100 warheads, which they had already put into the field at the cost of billions of rubles, in exchange for a promise from the United States not to deploy a missile force that we had not yet begun to build and that had aroused such violent controversy in Western Europe.<sup>152</sup>

With the zero, even deep reductions above zero would be unacceptable; as a NSC memo highlighting the positions of the State Department and the ACDA noted, "We would have to argue that deep reductions in Soviet forces, short of zero, are unacceptable."<sup>153</sup> State and the ACDA also were concerned that the zero might actually decouple Europe from the American strategic umbrella, and they worried that a rigid zero option would be summarily dismissed as mere propaganda by the European public and certainly by the Soviets, and thus would serve to garner even greater European sympathy for the Soviets at the expense of the Americans, all of which might endanger future deployments.<sup>154</sup> As the State Department also pointed out, the United States would appear inconsistent in its call for absolutely zero INF in Europe if it began to deploy its own INF in 18 months; a flexible zero, on the other hand, would allow for some deployment even as it signaled flexibility and a desire to go to zero.<sup>155</sup> State and the ACDA also were concerned that the Soviets might turn the table on the United States and propose a zero option of their own which would cut into weapons systems in which the U.S. held the advantage such as FBS, ALCM, and SLCM. Such a move would then complicate the reduction of INF, potentially suck weapons systems which the U.S. did not want to negotiate on into the mix, and provide the Soviet propaganda mill with more fodder if the U.S. rejected the Soviet's own zero option on a different weapons system even as the U.S. remained rigid on zero INF.<sup>156</sup>

The DOD and JCS, meanwhile, argued that the State/ACDA position would make the same mistake as President's Carter's approach to SALT by providing the opportunity to pursue more than one possible outcome; such an approach would allow the Soviets to pick the negotiating path it preferred.<sup>157</sup> Interestingly, while State/ACDA believed a flexible approach would best garner the support of the European allies and public, the DOD and JCS argued that the willingness to accept anything other than zero would make the United States not appear serious about arms control and would serve to "obscure the fact that Soviet intractability is the

cause of the failure to eliminate long-range INF.”<sup>158</sup> Though insistent upon the zero-zero, the possibility for eventually moving off of it was left intact if the situation should change or if necessary.<sup>159</sup> Above all, though, the memo reveals that the dramatic, explicit nature of the zero option was viewed by the DOD and JCS as the best means for the U.S. to capture the high moral ground; it would “pave the way for an aggressive world-wide political campaign in behalf of a clear, simple and dramatic U.S. position.”<sup>160</sup> While there were obvious tactical differences between the two positions, the overall goal was the reduction of the Soviet INF threat, the maintenance of the Western alliance, and absent Soviet INF reductions the deployment of the Pershing II and the Tomahawk – all while persuading the citizenry of Europe and the U.S. that the Reagan administration was serious about arms control even as the U.S. pursued its strategic modernization plans. “The two options are not so far apart,” Eugene Rostow observed in a NSC meeting, “there is really little difference between them...the difference is largely presentational....Our primary objective is the unity of our Alliance, not getting an agreement.”<sup>161</sup>

The simmering debate between the State Department and the DOD began to boil over at a National Security Council meeting on October 13, 1981. Secretary Haig presented the position of the State Department: reductions to the lowest possible level of ground-based TNFs, which left open the possibility of going to zero, with the goal of achieving equal limits for similar systems on a global level. Significantly, air and sea-launched missiles would be excluded from the negotiations, areas in which the United States held an advantage, as would French and British nuclear weapons, while the possibility of discussing aircraft was left open by Haig if a second round of negotiations opened up.<sup>162</sup> Haig also proposed linking TNF negotiations to START; in other words, progress in one area would be contingent upon progress in the other. It is not entirely clear why Haig proposed to link the two, though he may have done so to make the actual consummation of an arms control agreement more difficult while simultaneously creating the impression that the U.S. was serious about arms control, all of which would enable the U.S. to continue with its modernization plans. “The alliance consultations are important because the primary purpose of the negotiations is political, i.e., to update the TNF modernization program,” Haig explained. “An actual arms control agreement is secondary and has little prospect because of the imbalance of forces.”<sup>163</sup>

Secretary Weinberger then pointed to the central dilemma that the administration faced in its quest for modernization, namely that opposition from the European public and the arms control process might derail it. “If we are perceived as not engaging in serious negotiations, our modernization program will not go through. If we succeed in reaching only a cosmetic agreement, our modernization program will also come to a halt, being perceived as no longer necessary,” he declared. “Or if we are viewed as not making progress in negotiations, the Soviets will make it seem to be our fault, and our modernization program will be endangered.”<sup>164</sup>

Of particular concern to the DOD were the Soviet's SS-20s and the host of short-range systems that the Soviets were planning to deploy, including the SS-12/22, which carries a single warhead and has a range of 975 km. How to treat these short-range TNF in the INF negotiations was a source of debate in Washington; Weinberger wanted to include short-range missiles because he believed the SS-12/22, if deployed in Eastern Europe, could cover 85% of the targets that the SS-20 covered. The inclusion of short-range missiles also would highlight the Soviet Union's superiority in TNF and INF, and would provide the U.S. with a bargaining chip that could be traded away down the road in the INF negotiations. The State Department, ACDA, and the OJCS wanted to negotiate on the SS-12/22 separately so as not to complicate an agreement on longer-range INF. The OJCS, moreover, argued that the SS-12/22 would be vulnerable to NATO forces if it was deployed in Eastern Europe.<sup>165</sup> Weinberger, however, was adamant that the SS 12/22 was a significant threat. The Soviet threat, in his opinion, was so significant that he believed the U.S. deployment of the Pershing II and Tomahawk might be insufficient to counter it. The U.S. thus was perched on two sharp horns; it needed to engage in a massive buildup in Europe and modernize its strategic forces, yet the nuclear freeze movement promised to chill these grand plans, especially if any of the NATO allies refused to permit the missiles within its borders.

Weinberger then dropped a bombshell on the attendees of the NSC meeting that promised to solve the United States' momentous political and military problems.

In this light, we need to consider a bold plan, sweeping in nature, to capture world opinion. If refused by the Soviets, they would take the blame for its rejection. If the Soviets agreed, we would achieve the balance that we've lost. Such a plan would be to propose a "zero option." Initially, it would, of course, be limited to long range land based missiles, in which the Soviets are preponderant. If it were ultimately decided to adopt this option, it should be proposed by the U.S. in a spectacular Presidential announcement....If we adopt the "zero option" approach and the Soviets reject it after we have given it a good try, this will leave the Europeans in a position where they would really have no alternative to modernization.<sup>166</sup>

President Reagan immediately posed a question for Weinberger: "Do we really want a "zero option" for the battlefield? Don't we need these nuclear systems? Wouldn't it be bad for us to give them up since we need them to handle Soviet conventional superiority?"<sup>167</sup> Reagan thus did not pounce on the opportunity to go to zero or ask if it was a viable proposal to reduce nuclear weapons and increase the security of the world, but rather expressed concern about the potential loss of American nuclear forces in Europe, which he and other administration

figures believed had long been central to the deterrence of Soviet aggression and American escalation dominance. NSDD 1-82, in fact, clearly stated that both conventional and nuclear forces were necessary to maintain an adequate deterrent posture. “The possible use of nuclear forces must remain an element in our overall strategy to counter Soviet conventional aggression,” the directive declared, “because it is unlikely we will have sufficient conventional forces in peacetime that will alone insure deterrence.”<sup>168</sup> Given the inflated threat analyses which Reagan had regularly devoured and the centrality of nuclear weapons to the United States’ quest for strategic superiority, he simply could not imagine giving up America’s nuclear weapons unless all vestiges of Soviet military power were removed.

Weinberger reassured the President that the zero option was the right move and that it would not undermine the United States’ security: “The Soviets will certainly reject an American “zero option” proposal,” he explained. “But whether they reject it or they accept it, they would be set back on their heels. We would be left in good shape and would be shown as the White Hats.”<sup>169</sup> If the Soviets rejected the deal, they would look like the bad guys, and on the off-chance they accepted it, they would trade roughly 750 SS-20 warheads for zero American warheads. As for the deterrence of the Soviet’s conventional forces, Weinberger reassured the President that the proposal would not include a new breed of short-range tactical weapons which the U.S. was developing – though the Soviet short-range weapons also would be exempt from the zero option. The much famed zero option, then, was not the product of Reagan’s nuclear abolitionism, but rather was cooked up by Perle and peddled by Weinberger as a bit of political theater for a European audience and indirectly the American Congress with the overall goal of ensuring American deployment.<sup>170</sup> As Reagan himself explained in his memoir, “My proposal of the zero-zero option n sprang out of the realities of nuclear politics in Western Europe...Whipped up by Soviet propagandists, thousands of Europeans were taking to the streets and protesting the plans to base additional weapons in Europe.”<sup>171</sup> As Robert McFarlane recalled, “You had to have a plausible basis for advocating the U.S. deployment program, and the most plausible is that you’re willing to do away with it. So the zero option was key to dealing with that popular, street-level criticism.”<sup>172</sup> Perhaps a CIA memorandum captures the origins of the zero option best:

Not stated in the NSC paper is a general consensus (sic) that there is no conceivable INF agreement that is both negotiable with the Soviets and in the U.S. national security interest. Therefore, the political objectives of the negotiations are paramount, i.e.:

To ensure political support among Allied governments in Europe for deployment of the GLCM and Pershing II.

To convince European and American public's that it is Soviet intransigence which renders impossible the conclusion of arms control agreements which genuinely enhance security.<sup>173</sup>

With the INF negotiations set to open on November 30, 1981, the National Security Council met on November 12, 1981, to hammer out the United States' opening negotiating position. As Reagan often did, he attempted to bridge the gap between the DOD/JCS's zero option and State/ACDA's flexible zero option. "Negotiating history and my experience tell me that we should be choosing something between these two options," he declared. We should not be saying "zero" or nothing, and we should not be proposing two positions at once. We should, instead, simply go in and say that we are negotiating in good faith for the removal of these systems on both sides."<sup>174</sup> On November 16, 1981, NSDD 15 codified the United States position on INF: in return for the removal and dismantling of the Soviet SS-20, SS-4 and SS-5, the United States would forego its planned deployment of the Pershing II and the Tomahawk.<sup>175</sup> The directive also settled another debate, namely whether the Soviet short-range missiles, the SS-12 and SS-22 should also be eliminated as a condition for the non-deployment of the American INF. The Secretary of Defense supported including the SS-12 and SS-22, while the JCS and State opposed such inclusion. The CIA recommended that Reagan adopt the zero option, but not include the SS-12 and SS-22, which was the position adopted. As he quipped during the NSC Meeting of November 10 in regards to the upcoming speech which he would deliver announcing the United States opening position, "Why clutter up the speech then?"<sup>176</sup> Reagan was fond of simple, easily understood positions, plus there was another perceived advantage. As the CIA pointed out in a planning memo, this option would still place the United States in a stronger military position than the Soviet Union. Sea-launched cruise missiles, for example, would be excluded, though the directive did provide for the opportunity for future negotiation on other weapons-systems.<sup>177</sup> Not explicated in the NSDD was that the United States would initially stand firm on the zero option, but might be willing to revise its position if the situation called for it. "Why don't we keep Option A in our initial package," Reagan declared in choosing between the two options, "so we can fall off it later."<sup>178</sup>

Reagan announced the American negotiating position for the upcoming Geneva Convention on INF on November 18, 1981, before the National Press Club in Washington. In his initial remarks he revealed both his belief in the innocence of the United States and the exaggerated strategic utility that he attached to nuclear weapons – no doubt in part to counter the accusations of the nuclear freeze movement that he was a warmonger. In a recount of a letter which he recently had mailed to Soviet Premiere Leonid Brezhnev, he discounted the accusation that the United States had imperialistic designs. "When World II ended, the United States had the only undamaged industrial power in the world," he wrote. "Our military

might was at its peak, and we alone had the ultimate weapon, the nuclear weapon...who could have opposed us?" In clear reference to the freeze movement, Reagan opined that the new generation simply did not understand that the Atlantic Alliance and nuclear weapons had preserved the longest peace in European history, and he recounted his standard litany and warned that the Soviet Union had engaged in a massive buildup while the United States stood idly by for the past decade. He then offered what he believed to be a new approach to arms control that distinguished his administration from its predecessors: he described the zero option for the crowd, and he also called for renewed strategic arm negotiations, which henceforth would be referred to as the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) to emphasize that the goal was the reduction, rather than limitation of nuclear weapons. While the speech was optimistic, it revealed a contradiction in Reagan's thought that he never was able to fully resolve; he called for zero INF in Europe and Asia, and may have genuinely hoped that such a feat could be accomplished – during the NSC meeting of November 10 he had declared "our position can be convincing and can persuade, yet Caspar Weinberger and Eugene Rostow had repeatedly told him that the zero option was non-negotiable. Reagan, moreover, clearly believed and indeed stated that the existence of nuclear weapons had kept the peace in Europe since the end of the Second World War. How would peace be preserved if American nuclear weapons were dismantled? Especially if one considers that Reagan and his foreign policy advisors believed America's nuclear arsenal was the only thing holding back the superior conventional forces of the Soviet bloc.<sup>179</sup>

Reagan chose the veteran arms control negotiator and author of NSC-68 and the Gaither Report, Paul Nitze, to lead the American contingent in Geneva, Switzerland when the INF talks opened shortly thereafter. Not surprisingly, the talks quickly floundered and a stalemate developed. The United States insisted upon the right to deploy if the zero option was not achieved, refused to include British and French weapons systems, insisted upon zero INF in Europe and Asia, and were reluctant to include aircraft in the first rounds of negotiation. The Soviet Union was adamant that British and French systems be included; were utterly opposed to the deployment of any American INF on European soil; refused to include INF in Asia in the talks; expressed a desire to include aircraft in the first stage of negotiations; and were opposed to on-site verification.<sup>180</sup> During the talks the Soviets proposed to reduce their medium-range missiles to a limit of approximately 150 launchers which would carry no greater than 450 warheads so long as the United States did not deploy the Pershing II and Tomahawk, and increase its fleet of medium-range aircraft in the region. As the Soviets argued, this reduction would result in equal limits between Soviet and NATO medium-range missiles and aircraft; they also expressed willingness to negotiate equal limits on shorter-range nuclear missiles and aircraft.<sup>181</sup> While this proposal would presumably establish equal ceilings for the USSR and NATO, the United States was



absolutely unwilling to consider the proposal because it would leave a significant number of Soviet medium-range missiles on the ground and not allow the United States to deploy any of its own. By the end of June 1982 Paul Nitze was concerned about the lack of progress in the INF talks, particularly since his counterpart, Yuli Kvitsinskiy informed him that his superiors in Moscow were going to review the progress made in the INF talks that summer.<sup>182</sup> As Nitze feared, absent any sign of progress the Soviet negotiating position, much like the American position, might grow even more inflexible. Nitze hoped for progress on the INF issue because he realized that the eventual American deployment of the Pershing II would exasperate the problems created by its deployment and still not address the strategic imbalance that he believed the SS-20 created. Nitze, for example, wrote in his memoirs that he was bothered by the planned INF deployment because of its “divisive effect on European public opinion, especially West German opinion.” As he explained, “it gave the so-called peace movement a ready-made issue,” and it “threatened to undermine the fragile consensus on defense issues that the West German political parties had struggled...to develop and maintain for two decades or more.”<sup>183</sup> As Nitze wrote in a memorandum on December 10, 1982, “Public opinion in Europe, and most significantly, in Germany and the UK, no longer supports the zero/zero solution; what they want is a negotiated settlement that makes US deployments unnecessary.”<sup>184</sup> Nitze believed that a deal needed to be reached before deployment, which would only harden each side’s position; he also was fearful that public opinion might render the deployment impossible in the United Kingdom and especially Great Britain.<sup>185</sup> Nitze had always been sensitive to the United States’ relations with Western Europe; NSC-68, for example, was partly crafted to ensure Western unity. Despite the divisive impact of the Pershing II, its deployment – which might only further strain the Western alliance and sour relations for years -- would not address the strategic imbalance that Nitze believed the SS-20 created.<sup>186</sup> The SS-20 could strike every target of strategic value in Western Europe, yet the Pershing II, which already was straining the Western alliance even before its deployment and fueling the Freeze movement, would have little military value in that it did not have the range to strike Moscow or a significant number of valuable strategic targets. Nitze, who believed he was negotiating on behalf of the Europeans, was informed by the West German government that the United States’ inflexible position at Geneva indicated that the United States was not willing to negotiate with the Soviet Union.<sup>187</sup> Nitze, accordingly, not only felt pressure to signal some flexibility, but also was more than willing to deviate from the zero option, particularly since he was not keen to ensure the deployment of the Pershing II, which he believed was of little military value and a political liability.<sup>188</sup> As he notes in his memoirs, NATO needed missiles which could strike their target quickly in the event that the Warsaw Pact mobilized against the West. The vast majority of Warsaw Pact bases were not in the Soviet Union, but Eastern Europe. The United States already had missiles with roughly

half the range (roughly 750 km) of the Pershing II which served this function: the Pershing 1a, which had been in service since the 1960s, as well as the Pershing 1b, which was identical to the Pershing II absent a second rocket stage, could strike all of the time-sensitive targets that they were designed for throughout Eastern Europe, especially when coupled with GCLM.<sup>189</sup> The Pershing II, then, did not really improve the United States' military position in Europe, and in fact heightened tensions with the allies and provided the Soviets with good propaganda fodder. To spur the stalled negotiations, Nitze broke with protocol and reached out to his counterpart, Yuli Kvitsinskiy, so that the two might informally discuss the concessions that both sides might make to reach a deal.

In an unauthorized walk in the woods above Lake Geneva during June 1982, Nitze asked Kvitsinskiy if the Soviets were interested in a summit in the fall, and he presented him with six variations (Nitze described them as Paper A through Paper F) on a deal. Despite the slight variations, the gist of the deal was that the United States would not deploy the Pershing II, but would be allowed to station 75 ground-based Tomahawk launchers in Europe, each of which could fire four cruise missiles. The Soviet Union, meanwhile, would reduce its SS-20 launchers to 75, which would give it 225 warheads, and freeze its SS-20 launchers in Asia at 90. Each side also would freeze its short-range INF at existing levels, and the agreement would establish a ceiling of 150 for various aircraft for LRINF. The deal would not extend to British and French INF.<sup>190</sup> Kvitsinsky expressed doubt that his superiors would be interested, particularly since Gromyko insisted on compensation for the British and French INF. The maverick diplomacy sparked outrage in Washington. "Mr. Nitze has strayed way off the reservation – he has gone far beyond his instructions," declared a memorandum for William Clark by an unknown writer. As the author of the memorandum pointed out, Nitze had acted unilaterally by broaching the subject of a summit, and he may have undercut President Reagan's zero option by suggesting that the United States might settle for less than zero.<sup>191</sup> A memorandum from Bud McFarlane to Dick Boverie, Sven Kraemer, and Bob Linhard, meanwhile, expressed the need to call "Paul Nitze on his having gone beyond instructions."<sup>192</sup> If not for his stature and long years in public service, Nitze most likely would have been fired for his rogue diplomacy. During a meeting with President Reagan on July 21, 1983, Nitze speculated that there was only a one in ten chance that the Soviets would agree to the proposal since it would allow the deployment of U.S. missiles and not count the French and British missiles. To the president's surprise – he was convinced the U.S. needed the swift Pershing II to counter the quick SS-20 and expressed his belief that cruise missiles would be no match for the Soviet's air defenses -- Nitze argued that the proposal made military sense because the Tomahawk would easily overwhelm the Soviet's air defenses.<sup>193</sup> Though the "Walk in the Woods" went nowhere in Washington and fell on deaf ears in Moscow, it illustrated a growing flexibility on Nitze's behalf, which outraged his old student, Richard Perle, to no end.<sup>194</sup> Though

Nitze was the original Cold Warrior, he was not above inking deals which he believed were advantageous to the United States, or that would contribute to stability between the U.S. and USSR. Nitze, for example, had been instrumental in forging the ABM Treaty of 1972 because he believed that it would halt a dangerous and wide-open competition in strategic defense, and promote the symmetrical development of defensive systems which would prevent either side from achieving a significant advantage over the other.<sup>195</sup>

More broadly, Richard Burt, Paul Nitze, and the new Secretary of State George Schultz began to impress upon Reagan the necessity of showing some flexibility to defuse the freeze movement in Western Europe. To signal some level of flexibility while retaining the American right to deploy they pushed for an interim step to zero, in other words they called for equal ceilings on INFs at levels below the Soviet's current levels as a step towards the elimination of all INF.

Perle vigorously opposed any movement from the zero option, primarily to stymie an arms control agreement. Perle, moreover, was not concerned about maintaining good relations with America's western European allies anyway since he did not think the deployment ever would go through, hence he believed that it was inevitable that the INF missiles would strain the alliance. Despite his belief in the limited military value of the Pershing, he had been outraged by the walk in the woods proposal and now by the interim agreement because they would indicate a growing flexibility on the American behalf – Perle was not so much interested in the deployment of the Pershing, but rather what the zero represented. He believed the United States only should be willing to negotiate an all for nothing trade, otherwise it would stand firm on the zero to obliterate any chance of an agreement. Though American inflexibility in the INF negotiations was fueling the Western European Freeze movement, Perle rather disingenuously framed any proposal other than zero as contrary to the desires of the Freeze movement. “The political point is obvious,” he wrote in a memo outlining the DOD's position, “European opponents of our deployment now have a stake in the negotiations, because the negotiations might eventually – if we stay the course – lead to the zero outcome. Abandon it and their interest in the negotiations will diminish sharply.”<sup>196</sup> Despite Perle's customary vigorous campaign to derail any movement away from zero, his convoluted argument largely was ineffectual against continued State Department recommendations that some movement from a firm zero was necessary to reassure the allies that the United States was serious about reaching an arms control agreement for Europe. As Lawrence Wittner notes, “as there was no indication that the antinuclear movement felt any identification with U.S. policy, this argument carried little weight.”<sup>197</sup> Interestingly, Weinberger expressed some support for the interim zero during a National Security Council Planning Group meeting on January 13, 1983, primarily because he wanted to ensure that the host countries would accept the American missiles. The more forceful advocate during the meeting, however, was George Schultz, who was concerned that the European host

countries might be discouraged from accepting the American deployment if there was not a “sense in Europe that we are trying to reach a real result in Geneva.”<sup>198</sup> During the meeting the President expressed interest in the interim to zero, but he also was adamant that the deployment would continue as scheduled, and a decision was not made at that point to announce the interim zero. As often was the case, Reagan listened to the hawks and the moderates, though in all reality he leaned towards the hawks. Only after meeting with NATO officials in Washington, D.C. on March 30, 1983, did Reagan decide to publicly signal that the U.S. might be willing to settle for less than zero as an interim step to zero. The important thing to note with the interim zero is the strong role that Alliance politics played in its formulation; Reagan was adamant on zero, yet was willing to explore something other than zero to maintain Alliance solidarity, since it was necessary for the planned deployment.

In a major news conference Reagan signaled movement away from the zero option, though not before he rehashed the old litany that Europe was vulnerable because the United States had zero INF in Europe while the Soviets had hundreds of SS-20s, and he indirectly accused the Soviets of fueling the nuclear Freeze movement. Citing Soviet failure to offer a single concrete proposal for the prior 18 months, he then offered a proposal:

When it comes to intermediate nuclear missiles in Europe, it would be better to have none than to have some. But if there must be some, it is better to have few than to have many. If the Soviets will not now agree to the total elimination of these weapons, I hope that they will at least join us in an interim agreement that would substantially reduce these forces to equal levels on both sides.

To this end, Ambassador Paul Nitze has informed his Soviet counterpart that we are prepared to negotiate an interim agreement in which the United States would substantially reduce its planned deployment of Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles, provided the Soviet Union reduce the number of its warheads on longer range INF missiles to an equal level on a global basis.

Ambassador Nitze has explained that the United States views this proposal as a serious initial step toward the total elimination of this class of weapons. And he has conveyed my hope that the Soviet Union will join us in this view. Our proposal for the entire elimination of these systems remains on the table.<sup>199</sup>

While on the surface the Interim Solution appeared to be something new, the basic strategic posture of the United States remained the same. It failed to account for British and French INF, it excluded bombers, and in all reality the only nation that would give up any deployed weapons would be the Soviet Union. If the interim

agreement called for 20 INF, then the Soviets would slash their arsenal by the hundreds to reach 20 while the U.S. would be free to deploy 20 INF. While not the all-for-nothing trade that the zero option represented, it would require significant Soviet reductions and zero American reductions. The interim zero was entirely consistent with Reagan's grand strategy; it would allow the United States to continue with its strategic modernization plans, and it would eliminate the most destabilizing "weapons systems," namely only Soviet weapons systems. The Soviets, not surprisingly, responded with an immediate *nyet*.

On May 9, 1982, Reagan, in a commencement address at his alma mater Eureka College, unveiled the general terms of the American negotiating position for the upcoming START talks. Citing the destabilizing and destructive nature of the Soviet ballistic missile threat, he called for reductions to equal limits, with a 2500 limit upon land-based ICBMs. While the speech appeared optimistic in nature and the proposal equitable, Reagan's genial nature and the joy of sending young bright eyed people off into the world concealed both the turmoil that the START proposal had wrought within the Administration, and the reality that START, much like the zero option, called for deep Soviet reductions while leaving intact the United States' quest for escalation dominance.<sup>200</sup> As Strobe Talbot has observed, START was put forth primarily due to pressure which had been mounting to ratify SALT II; by unveiling a dramatic proposal for arms reductions, the administration hoped to defuse enthusiasm for SALT II.<sup>201</sup> The documentary record seems to bear Talbot's observation out. During a National Security Council Meeting on April 21, 1982, Weinberger noted that each of the START options put forth by the ACDA, OSD, and State Department differed markedly from SALT II.<sup>202</sup> Weinberger, moreover advised the President that his decision on a START proposal "is probably the important you'll make in your Presidency – we allowed Soviets to build up – must focus on the most destabilizing area." Edward Rowney, Eugene Rostow, and President Reagan responded and agreed that the ground-based ICBMs indeed were the most destabilizing ones because of the short flight time to target.<sup>203</sup> All of the START options put forth for Reagan to consider were entirely consistent with his grand strategy and NSDD 13 in that the administration hoped to leverage a possible arms control deal to significantly reduce the Soviet ICBM threat – while allowing the United States to modernize its strategic forces. "A START agreement must permit the U.S. to develop and possess sufficient military capability," wrote D. Paul Bremer III in a memorandum which laid out the START criteria, "...to deter the Soviet Union and to execute the U.S. national military strategy with reasonable assurance of success."<sup>204</sup> Absent the consummation of a good deal, it was believed that a vigorous campaign to reduce strategic arms would serve to bolster the support of the American public, Congress, and the Allies for Reagan's massive buildup. As Weinberger noted during the NSC meeting of April 21 regarding START, we "must look to link to our arms program: MX (must revise attitude on Hill)."<sup>205</sup> Secretary Haig, meanwhile, expressed a similar sentiment. "It is

important to remember that the START arms control does not occur in a vacuum,” he advised the President. “It is related to our overall defense policy, including especially our strategic modernization program, especially the MX. The Administration must move quickly, vis-à-vis the Hill, with an agreed deployment mode. This issue is intimately inter-related to START.”<sup>206</sup>

The fight over the American START negotiating position resembled the zero option debate and once again featured Richard Burt and the State Department versus Richard Perle and his fellow civilians in the Department of Defense. Playing upon the old CPD maxim that throw-weight provides the best measure of strategic capability, Perle and the DOD argued that the primary problem with SALT II was the 2.5-to-1 advantage it cemented for the Soviet Union in throw-weight advantage.<sup>207</sup> The DOD pushed for a limit of 4000 ballistic missile warheads, and importantly, an aggregate limit of 2 million kilograms of ballistic missile throw-weight. This proposal would be appealing to the President, who did not seem to understand that Soviet missiles were much heavier than those of the United States precisely because they were less accurate and technologically sophisticated.<sup>208</sup> It also would presumably be appetizing to the President and the American public because of its simplicity; on the surface it would be easily understood and appear equitable since both sides would be held to equal limits. The Soviets, however, would be bound to shed roughly 40% of their ballistic missiles to stay within the throw-weight ceiling, while the United States would already be within the ceiling and even retain the right to pursue its strategic modernization plans to build and deploy the MX missile. Though the U.S. would have to reduce warheads to remain under the 4000 limit, it was planning to replace the Poseidon SLBMs with a smaller number of more accurate and powerful Trident II missiles anyway. In other words, the DOD proposal would not change American strategic modernization plans which already were in place to replace older missiles with the MX and Trident II, yet it would require the Soviet Union to scrap nearly two-thirds of its best weapons, namely its land-based ICBMs. In short, the DOD plan carried little chance of success since it only called for the Soviet Union to make significant reductions, yet it also would shift culpability for the arms to the Soviet Union by highlighting the throw-weight advantage they held in ICBM, and if Reagan chose it he would appear to be the bearer of the fig leaf because it would make for a simple and dramatic proposal.<sup>209</sup>

The State Department wanted to table a proposal that might be negotiable, defuse the freeze movement and garner Allied support, and yet conform to the United States’ national security strategy. In consultation with the Joint Chiefs, State devised a plan whereby each side would be allowed to possess 5000 SLBM and ICBM warheads, half of which could be ground launched ICBMs. At the time the United States possessed roughly 2150 ICBM warheads; the Soviet Union possessed approximately 6000 ground-based ICBMs. The United States, therefore, would be able to continue with its modernization plans while the Soviet Union would be

obligated to retire approximately 3500 ICBM warheads. State also proposed equal ceilings of 1500 on missile launchers and bombers. The proposal was advantageous to the United States: the Soviet Union would shed far more ICBMs, and the plan would give the U.S. some flexibility in future military strategy while meeting the nation's current military needs. State was opposed to placing limits on throw-weight because it would be much easier to verify missile and warhead counts than weight, and much like with the zero option, State wanted to create some semblance that the United States' arms control proposals were feasible. As an unknown writer for the State Department observed, "direct limits on throw-weight would create an impression of unfairness, as the Soviets would be required to make major changes in their forces without the US having to do so."<sup>210</sup> The State Department also argued that throw-weight does not provide an accurate measure of strategic capability, and in fact pointed out that the Reagan administration's repeated claims of Soviet superiority were specious at best. "Throw-weight is not a good indicator of strategic capability," wrote an unknown member of the State Department. "Despite their current advantage, no one suggests that the Soviets are two-and-a-half time stronger than the US. With improvements in technology (particularly accuracy), throw-weight has become (and will continue to be) a factor of declining importance in measuring strategic capability."<sup>211</sup> To provide the Soviets with some incentive, Richard Burt floated the idea of trading non-deployment of the MX, which he reasoned faced considerable trouble from the American public and Congress and might be difficult to deploy, for the Soviet's largest and most feared ICBM missile, the SS-18. The trade was remarkably similar to Perle's zero-option in that the United States would offer to trade zero MX missiles for 308 SS-18 missiles that already had been deployed.<sup>212</sup> While Burt no doubt believed that the scheme was a long shot, he reasoned that the use of the MX as a bargaining chip might have some chance of success, while Perle's focus upon throw-weight would stand absolutely no chance of success because it would grossly favor the United States force structure, which was comprised of smaller SLBM and ACLM warheads rather than the Soviets large ground-based ICBM. Interestingly, Richard Perle and his deputy Richard Linhard opposed the State's plan, despite its similarity to their very own zero-option. Why would this be so? In the case of the zero-option, the Pershing II and the Tomahawk were not considered by Perle to be key components of the United States modernization plans; the MX, on the other hand, was central to the United States' modernization plans. Perle and Linhard's opposition suggests that their primary goal in both the INF and START talks was to preserve the right of the United States to pursue its strategic modernization plans, of which the MX was the central component. The State proposal, while most likely advantageous to the United States if viewed through the prism of deployed weapons systems, threatened to derail Reagan's modernization plans if the MX was traded away; it also was feared that presenting the MX as a bargaining chip early in the negotiations would kill the MX program.<sup>213</sup> Not surprisingly, the use of the MX as a bargaining chip

quickly was dismissed because such a strategy would unravel Reagan's grand strategy, and indeed would violate NSDD 35, which stated that the MX would not be used as a bargaining chip.<sup>214</sup>

The ACDA START approach essentially mixed elements from the State and DOD proposals. It called for reductions to an equal level of roughly 4000 warheads, of which no more than 2500 could be ICBM, and it would place limits on the weight of re-entry vehicles. Central to the ACDA's formulation, much like that of the other agencies, was a desire to eliminate the Soviet Union's ICBMs, which were characterized as first-strike weapons. As the ACDA director Eugene Rostow explained, "Our rationale is that we must have deterrence, and that we must limit, or eliminate, the first-strike systems." As was characteristic of the Reagan administration, Rostow emphasized the Soviet's nefarious and ignored the United States' own desire to achieve strategic dominance. "Our mistake in the 70's was to think that the Soviets, like we did not want first-strike capability. Now we must insist on equal deterrence to the bulk of their threat."<sup>215</sup> Such an approach would lead to significant Soviet reductions in its ICBM force, and it would cut down on the Soviet's large warheads.<sup>216</sup> Underlying this sentiment was a belief in the innocent qualities of American atomic diplomacy and a propensity to blame the Soviet Union for the arms race; even as the U.S. pursued the development of the MX and Trident II, which clearly are first-strike weapons, it was the Soviets who were believed to be the sole nation chasing a first-strike capability.

The American negotiating position for START was a hybrid of the three plans. Ceilings of 5000 ballistic missile warheads would be established, which on the surface promised reductions because sides would slash their ballistic missiles by approximately a third. The sub-limits imposed, however, would dramatically slash Soviet ICBMs and preserve the United States strategic modernization plans. Each side would be limited to 2500 warheads on ground-launched missiles; when coupled with further sub-limits on large ground launched ICBMs and an aggregate throw-weight limit of 2.5 million kilograms, the Soviets -- who had disproportionately built large ground-launched ICBMs -- would be bound to destroy more than half their warheads on ICBMs. The proposal also called for limits of 850 launchers. Significantly, the American negotiating position on START was similar to that of the zero option. The only nation obligated to make significant cuts would be the Soviet Union, though with the zero option the United States was at least willing to forego deployment of the Pershing II and the Tomahawk on the off chance that an agreement was reached. With START, the United States plans for the development and deployment of new weapons systems (including the MX missile and the Trident II) would remain intact even if the Soviets agreed to the deep reductions in their formidable ICBM fleet that START called for. A START agreement would allow the United States to replace its outdated ground-based ICBM with the MX. The United States, in addition, would still be free to deploy the B1 bomber, the Stealth bomber, the Trident II, and the array of cruise missiles that it was developing.



Viewed through this prism, START was a central component of Reagan's quest for strategic superiority. By chipping away at the only rung of the ladder which the Soviets may have held in its grip on the escalation ladder, the United States could ensure that it dominated all rungs of the ladder.

Not surprisingly, the American delegations to the INF and START talks made little progress with their Soviet counterparts, primarily because the American negotiating positions, while dramatic and equitable to a layperson, were so loaded to the disadvantage of the Soviet Union that a breakthrough would be incredibly difficult to reach. The Soviets, to be sure, were not above putting forth outlandish proposals and pushing for the utmost advantage, but the American negotiating positions were so rigid that there was little room for negotiation. While the arms control proposals that the Reagan administration put forth suggested some growing level of flexibility and the growing power of the more moderate statesmen on policy-making, such as George Schultz, and the concomitant decline of the power of the hawks like Perle and Weinberger, in all reality the shift was cosmetic in nature. The American grand strategy, as laid out in the series of National Security Decision Directives that it drafted during 1981 and 1982 and its negotiating positions for the INF and START talks, centered on the preservation of the American right to modernize its strategic forces and the unilateral disarmament of Soviet nuclear forces. When coupled with the Reagan administration's hard-line and bellicose stance towards the Soviet Union, it was only a matter of time before the talks would flounder.

## Chapter Five

### Racing to Heaven: Domestic Politics, Nuclear Fear, and Ronald Reagan's Technological Solution

Reagan entered office in 1981 determined to roll back the Soviet Union and reassert American greatness through a major arms buildup in conventional and nuclear forces. Though his radioactive rhetoric thrilled neo-cons and the evangelical Right, millions of other people were so frightened that a transnational movement arose which called for an immediate freeze on the testing, construction and deployment of nuclear weapons as a first step towards their elimination. A nuclear freeze was bound to run headlong into Reagan's vision for arms reductions since he believed a significant buildup was necessary before reductions could be made. Much as the nuclear freeze movement in Europe pushed the United States to enter into arms negotiations over INF and strategic weapons to temper public unrest and ensure the American INF deployment, domestic political pressure and the growing reluctance of Congress to rubberstamp Reagan's exorbitant defense expenditures propelled the Reagan administration to launch a public relations crusade to rally support for Reagan's quest for strategic superiority. Broadly speaking, the blitz was launched on two fronts: Reagan sought to shift the focus of evil from that of nuclear weapons to the Soviet Union itself, which he believed the United States must confront with nuclear weapons because of its godlessness; and secondly, Reagan sought to both sweep the legs out from under the Freeze movement, and portray the United States' strategic modernization plans in an innocent light by publicly pushing the U.S. towards strategic missile defense. This two-pronged campaign is significant because it nicely brings into focus Reagan's belief in the providential destiny of the United States and his technological evangelism, as respectively manifested in his 'Evil Empire' speech and the Strategic Defense Initiative. More broadly, the story of the support that Reagan was able to garner for his technologically specious crusade against the Soviet Union through his domestic political theater nicely illustrates the martial and technological fantasies which were so pronounced in American culture during the early 1980s.

The lynchpin of the Reagan administration's strategic modernization plans, the MX missile, soon came under fire from Congress and the American public alike. The inherent challenges of deploying a large ground-based missile with 10 warheads attached had already bedeviled the Carter administration, which had proposed to render 200 MX missiles invulnerable to attack by constantly shuttling each of them around the desert in Utah and Nevada on railroads to multiple protective shelters in a classic shell game. The vast area involved – each missile's

“racetrack” and shelters would cover an area of 25 square miles – would have caused great environmental degradation and excluded humans from vast stretches of land. Opposition to the MX was widespread and even included such conservative opponents as Utah’s Republican Senator Orrin Hatch and the Mormon Church.<sup>217</sup> Despite this opposition, Carter remained adamant on promoting his shell game, perhaps to counter accusations from the CPD that his policies had contributed to the “vulnerability gap” in ICBMs with the Soviet Union. Not surprisingly, Reagan abandoned this basing mode for the MX upon taking office probably because Carter had promoted it, but he remained firmly committed to deploying the MX missile.

Throughout 1981 and 1982 the Reagan administration devised at least 33 different basing mode schemes for the MX missiles, including such plans as constantly flying the missiles around in airplanes and deploying them in deep underground bunkers. Based upon the recommendation of a panel chaired by the famed physicist and inventor of the laser, Charles Townes, on October 2, 1981 in a press conference Reagan announced that the United States would deploy a limited number of MX missiles in super-hardened silos until a permanent home could be found for them. Citing the United States weakened strategic posture, Reagan also unveiled his strategic modernization plans, which he claimed would close the “window of vulnerability” which existed between the Cold war antagonists. Though the ostensible rationale for the deployment of the MX missile was to close this “window of vulnerability,” Reagan observed that he was rejecting Carter’s multiple protective shell and other basing schemes because “we have concluded that these basing schemes would be just as vulnerable as the existing Minuteman silos. No matter how many shelters we might build, the Soviets can build more missiles, more quickly, and just as cheaply.” As Reagan had just framed it, the paramount problem would be the vulnerability of the missiles to a pre-emptive strike first strike and the fact that the Soviets could always build more missiles and overwhelm American defenses, yet in his very next sentence he did not propose to address this problem, but instead to “complete the MX missile which is more powerful and accurate than our current Minuteman missiles in existing silos as soon as possible.” Reagan announced that a limited number of MX missiles would be temporarily deployed in existing silos – the very ones he had just stated were vulnerable -- until a permanent basing mode was found.<sup>218</sup>

The assembled members of the media were skeptical. Helen Thomas of UPI wanted to know when the “window of vulnerability” would be most open and if a strategic imbalance really existed, while an unidentified reporter asked the increasingly befuddled President why the MX would be less vulnerable if in silos. Reagan, who responded that a strategic imbalance existed, particularly at sea, was unable to comment on the vulnerable state of the MX if stationed in silos and quickly turned things over to Caspar Weinberger. Matters only got worse for the administration after this bungled announcement which most likely added fuel to the freeze fire.

The rationale for building the expensive MX missile was to address the alleged vulnerability of the Minuteman missile which the CPD and Reagan had so vigorously exploited to support its arms buildup, yet the MX missile would be just as vulnerable as the United States' existing ICBMs. The administration nevertheless wanted to deploy the MX because its primary purpose was to increase the United States' odds of obtaining a first strike capability, or, at a minimum, increase its ability to coerce the Soviet Union through atomic diplomacy. The "window of vulnerability" was little more than a charade for public consumption. "The accurate MX warheads will let the Soviets know that their missile silos, their leadership," General Vessey, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff declared, "and associated command and control are placed at great risk."<sup>219</sup> Notwithstanding the Reagan administration's claims that the MX was central to providing the United States with leverage in the START negotiations, many members of Congress and the nuclear freeze movement believed that the missile's purpose was to furnish the United States with a first strike capability and/or coerce the Soviet Union into unilaterally disarming.<sup>220</sup> As Reagan had observed, the Soviet Union could quickly and cheaply build missiles in response to counter new American missiles. If this was the case, his claim that the United States could negotiate arms reductions through a buildup appeared naïve at its best, a bald-faced lie to cover the United States' quest for a first strike capability at its worst. Even some conservative Congressmen, who already were attuned to the sting of the recession, grew tired of Reagan's inability to find a basing mode and were understandably reluctant to fund a costly weapons system which would not address the "window of vulnerability" that he had so strongly touted. If the thousands of weapons that the United States had already built over the years at great expense would not provide any safety for the United States, why would more? Things grew so bad for Reagan that even the arch Cold Warrior Barry Goldwater turned against the MX. "I'm not one of those freeze-the-nuke nuts," Goldwater observed in his folksy manner, "but I think we have enough."<sup>221</sup>

In response to the withholding of funds by Congress until a permanent basing mode for the MX was found, Reagan convened a second Townes panel. Despite the skepticism of some of the panel members, it recommended the basing of the MX in super-hardened silos in close proximity to one another in the belief that the close proximity of the missiles would lead the first Soviet missiles to destroy the subsequently arriving missiles and thus preserve some American missiles. Many scientists questioned the efficacy of closely spaced basing (CSB), or Dense Pack as it came to be called, as did some of the Joint Chiefs. While the Chiefs were unanimous in their support of the MX, they did not unanimously support CSB or any type of basing mode, particularly on land. The Army and Navy Chiefs, for example, worried about the survivability of the MX and recommended that it eventually be deployed at sea. In the meantime, they supported the development of BMD to defend the MX while it was deployed in Minuteman silos. The

Commandant of the Marine Corp, meanwhile, doubted that the MX could survive an attack even if protected by BMD.<sup>222</sup> Reagan, who never was one to quibble over technical details, nevertheless announced on November 22, 1982, that the U.S. planned to base 100 MX missiles in silos in a straight line 1800 feet apart along a 14 mile stretch of land in Wyoming. Dubbed Dunces Pack by opponents, the unproven basing mode aroused the ire of Congress which in a 245-176 vote on December 7, 1982 rejected the Dense Pack plan and suspended funding for the MX until a permanent basing mode could be decided upon. General John Vessey, meanwhile, on the very next day announced that three of the five Joint Chiefs of Staff opposed the plan and wanted to postpone it until “technical uncertainties” could be resolved.<sup>223</sup>

In an effort to save the MX missile, a bipartisan committee of MX supporters led by Brent Scowcroft and including such luminaries as Harold Brown and Henry Kissinger was convened. Though it was skeptical that a “window of vulnerability” existed, the Committee recommended deployment of the MX to deter Soviet aggression. In language that just as easily could be ascribed to the early atomic enthusiasts of the Truman era, the MX was framed as a deterrent to a Soviet-led invasion of Western Europe. As an unidentified participant of the Commission explained it: “One of the things we hoped to convey to the Soviets is our capacity to go after their theoretically vulnerable land-based missile force...What one is indeed conveying to the Soviet Union is that there is a deployment that is fundamentally oriented toward reacting to an all-out Warsaw Pact invasion of western Europe.”<sup>224</sup> With its frightening payload, the MX also might frighten the Soviet Union to negotiate in the START negotiations, even perhaps to the point of unilaterally disarming. By linking the MX to the arms control process, the Committee sought to ensure its deployment, as did Ronald Reagan. In a letter to Congressman Jack Kemp, Reagan wrote that “there is no question that a failure to fund and deploy the MX...would handcuff our negotiators and require a reassessment of our START proposals.”<sup>225</sup> Though the MX was framed as a bargaining chip in the arms control arena for public consumption, Reagan had already declared in NSDD 35 that under no circumstance was the MX to be used as a bargaining chip. The best the Soviets could hope for might be limitations on its deployment; in essence, the MX was similar to the zero option and START: the only nation making significant cuts would be the Soviet Union.<sup>226</sup> What Reagan and the Scowcroft Commission really were advocating for was the unilateral disarmament of the Soviet Union in the face of a severe American threat. To complement the MX missile’s coercive power, the Committee also recommended the development of a smaller, mobile ICBM known as the Midgetman which would be much more invulnerable to attack and easier to deploy.<sup>227</sup>

The vexing problem for the historian is to understand if Reagan was at all aware that his arms control proposals were grossly lopsided, and if he grasped that an unwillingness to use any of the weapons systems that he wanted to build as

bargaining chips would hinder arms reductions in the future. Reagan believed so strongly in the perfidy of the Soviet Union and the innocence of the United States that he bought the CPD's exaggerated claims of Soviet strategic superiority and American inferiority hook, line, and sinker. "The United States wants deep cuts in the world's arsenal of weapons," Reagan declared in defense of the MX missile, "but unless we demonstrate the will to rebuild our strength and restore the military balance, the Soviets, since they're so far ahead, have little incentive to negotiate with us."<sup>228</sup> If Reagan truly believed that the Soviets had raced far ahead of the United States – indeed that the US had voluntarily stopped building while the Soviets had not – then it would be natural for him to believe that a buildup and the MX were necessary. Reagan, moreover, tended to invest American military strength and nuclear weapons with meaning and qualities other than their primary use – the killing of human beings. For Reagan, the MX – or the Peacekeeper as he liked to call it – was a testament to American resolve and willpower; once built and deployed, it would be non-negotiable because it would not be an offensive weapon, but rather a means of keeping the peace because it would be an American and not Soviet weapon. Many Americans, however, did not share in Reagan's technological fantasy, so much so that deployment of the MX had grown increasingly difficult due to Congressional and public opposition even before the Scowcroft Commission issued its report in April of 1983. In the meantime, to outflank the Freeze movement, which increasingly included religious people, and to garner the support of Congress, the Reagan administration had shifted gears during the month of March 1983 and begun to emphasize ballistic missile defense and the solemn duty of the United States to confront its atheist enemy with superior military might and technology. This shift took place against a backdrop of growing opposition to the nuclear arms race amongst significant numbers of religious people in the United States.

Religious organizations, in particular, were not immune to the ethical issues raised by nuclear weapons. The National Council of Churches and numerous other religious bodies passed resolutions during the early '80s that denounced the nuclear arms race, and called for both a freeze on the building of more missiles as well as arms reductions. Many of the resolutions flowed from the belief that nuclear weapons in and of themselves are unethical and that deterrence is unjust; the World Council of Churches, for example, issued the following resolution in 1983:

We believe that the time has come when the churches must unequivocally declare that the production and deployment as well as the use of nuclear weapons are a crime against humanity and that such activities must be condemned on ethical and theological grounds.<sup>229</sup>

The American Catholic Bishops, in its 1983 Pastoral Letter made a similar point: “We fear that our world and nation are headed in the wrong direction. More weapons with greater destructive potential are produced every day.”<sup>230</sup> Broadly speaking, then, many religious people condemned nuclear weapons as the greatest danger to the world. In addition, many clergymen believed that the United States should play a leading role, guided by religious principles, in seeking realistic solutions to the nuclear dilemma.<sup>231</sup> The nuclear freeze, then, increasingly came to be identified as a religious movement.<sup>232</sup>

Interestingly, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), whose membership tends to be comprised of conservative Protestant denominations that lean to the right politically and socially, was worried that its members might join the nuclear freeze movement. To cement support amongst evangelicals for Reagan’s rollback of communism and his nuclear escalation, the NAE invited Reagan to speak to them with the belief that evangelicals simply needed to be educated about why Reagan was so vigorously pushing his arms buildup. The invitation is worth quoting at length:

We would be delighted to have you address us on whatever subject you wish. If it is not overly presumptuous, however, let us suggest the possibility of articulating your position on national defense. Some well-known evangelical voices are attempting to draw evangelicals into support of a nuclear freeze. Your persuasive voice would have a marked impact upon the evangelical community.<sup>233</sup>

This is significant because the NAE invited Reagan to speak to them regarding his nuclear escalation and the freeze movement, not religious issues per se. The Reagan Administration, which realized sustained religious support was useful for its nuclear buildup, gladly accepted the invitation and assigned Anthony Dolan, a conservative Roman Catholic, to be the chief speechwriter. Richard Cizik of the NAE, meanwhile, met with the writers and also influenced the shape of the speech. “I told the speechwriters that day, ‘Look, the freezeniks are making real inroads into the evangelical heartland, and the president needs to address this issue,’” Cizik later recalled. “You’ve got to understand our crowd. If you think you’re going to come down there and encounter an entirely receptive audience, no. I was pitching a sort of theological content.”<sup>234</sup> Reagan, who read and edited the speech, was pleased with it.

On March 8, 1983, President Reagan delivered the speech to a packed house of evangelicals in Orlando, Florida. He initially appealed to a positive and optimistic view of American history and tradition, extolled the virtues of America’s religious heritage, and stressed that freedom and personal liberty thrive in the United States like nowhere else.<sup>235</sup>

Yet Reagan wished to do more than uphold America's traditional values. He announced that a "spiritual awakening and a moral renewal" was taking place, and then reached something of a crescendo when he declared that "There is sin and evil in the world and we're enjoined by Scripture and the Lord Jesus to oppose it with all our might."<sup>236</sup> The Soviet Union, with its atheistic Marxist-Leninist ideology and its inexorable goal of world revolution was the true focus of evil in the world. The United States had experienced its fair share of sin with the ugly stain of slavery and racism, yet the nation had moved forward, while the Soviet Union clearly had not. The problem, though, was that some people could not recognize the Soviet Union for what it was.

For Reagan, the freeze advocates were exactly like the bureaucrats he lambasted in his speech who support the dissemination of contraceptives and educational materials to underage girls. They were well-intentioned, though they most likely were unwittingly under the influence of communist agitators and their actions were harmful. "The truth is," said Reagan, "that a freeze now would be a very dangerous fraud, for that is merely the illusion of peace. The reality is that we must find peace through strength."<sup>237</sup> Much like Woodrow Wilson and other American presidents, Reagan thus effectively linked superior military strength to America's role as a redeemer nation – it was the only way the United States could transform the world and usher in a golden age of peace and prosperity.<sup>238</sup> Peace could not be obtained through the freeze movement.

Reagan's millennial vision and sweeping dualistic imagery of good and evil was bound to resonate well with evangelicals who are accustomed to imaging a cosmological battle between God and his Angels and Lucifer and his minions – if the Soviet empire truly was the focus of evil in the world, then the United States could not be held morally culpable or even partially responsible for the nuclear arms race. In clear reference to the freeze movement, Reagan urged his audience

to speak out against those who would place the United States in a position of military and moral inferiority...to beware the temptation of pride...to simply call the arms race a giant misunderstanding and thereby remove yourself from the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil.<sup>239</sup>

Reagan thus sought to foreclose on any discussion that evangelicals might have regarding the morality of nuclear arms and the merits of the freeze movement. In his hands, the Soviet Union was the sole focus of evil in the world. The nation, in fact, had a solemn duty to resist the Soviets with all of its might – even with nuclear weapons. The message was well received by the evangelicals.

In the early '80s there was a remarkable congruence in thought between Reagan and the majority of evangelicals; at a time when patriotic fervor ran hot they both believed that peace only could be obtained through superior military



strength. The ever popular prophesy writer Hal Lindsey scored a bestseller in 1981, for example, with the publication of *The 1980s: Countdown to Armageddon*. Echoing the Reagan Doctrine, Lindsey argued that the *Bible* called for the United States to increase its military strength and bolster its nuclear arsenal to prevent a nuclear apocalypse which might be inevitable anyway.<sup>240</sup> For the majority of evangelicals the path to nuclear salvation lay in building even more nuclear weapons. In an especially strange twist, the Moral Majority denounced the freeze as a Soviet scheme to trick the United States into lowering its shield. In a letter written to its members to raise money the following astute observation was made: “Here in America the ‘freeze-niks’ are hysterically singing Russia’s favorite song,” it declared, “a unilateral nuclear freeze – and the Russians are loving it.”<sup>241</sup>

Reagan’s call to arms against the godless Soviet Union thus struck a deep chord on that fateful day in Orlando; in 1983 he and conservative Christians were natural allies. Evangelicals were awakening to a new political activism as they sought to reassert traditional Christian values to restore American greatness. Reagan, meanwhile, believed that the United States – which was reeling from Vietnam, the Iranian Hostage Crisis, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan – could usher in a bright new day by simply reasserting its traditional will to lead the world. This symmetry in thought between the President and the evangelicals carried over into the nuclear debate. The problem was not that the United States might have a moral duty to halt a spiraling nuclear arms race, but rather that the United States had acted in an immoral fashion and allowed the world to grow more dangerous and corrupt by both turning from tradition and by not adhering to its Providential destiny to lead the world. Several weeks later Reagan once again called for the American people to support him in his massive arms buildup, and he unveiled a new vision for how the nuclear dilemma might be surmounted in the murky future with his announcement of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).

The announcement of SDI sparked a debate regarding its origins that still rages years later even though it remains little more than a figment of the imagination after the expenditure of billions of dollars. The origins are as murky and fantastic as the concept itself and extremely difficult to disentangle, yet the idea of ballistic missile defense had floated around since at least 1944, and we know that Reagan was exposed to the concept in a trip to the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory in 1967 when the physicist and key player in the development of the Hydrogen bomb, Edward Teller, and other scientists gave him a two hour briefing on the research the lab was conducting in that area.<sup>242</sup> Interestingly the impetus for Reagan’s grand announcement normally is embedded within larger arguments. Not surprisingly, SDI has sparked great criticism from pundits who charge that it was little more than a charade to cover up Reagan’s failed arms negotiations and to counter the growing popularity of the freeze movement. In a provocative and sweeping book, Frances Fitzgerald emphasizes the mythic qualities of SDI and suggests that its resounding power resides in the fact that it never was built – it

was more powerful as a figment of the imagination than as a real system. In Fitzgerald's hands, SDI represents everything that Americans desire, including the restoration of American innocence and the restoration of the perfect security against attack that Americans had enjoyed until the advent of the ICBM. Reagan, of course, was the American everyman and the consummate politician actor who effectively packaged the many mythical strands which comprise the SDI story and presented it to the American people.<sup>243</sup> The Pulitzer-prize winning author William J. Broad, meanwhile, emphasizes the pivotal role that the technological utopian and inventor of the hydrogen bomb, Edward Teller, played in duping Reagan into believing that SDI actually would work. In Broad's hands, SDI warns of the mischief that can arise when presidential science advising is weakened and well-connected ideologues such as Teller have the ear of the president.<sup>244</sup> The documentary record supports Broad's interpretation of Teller's strong role in the birth of SDI.

In a letter written in 1982 Teller urged Reagan to immediately pursue the development of a ballistic missile defense system, especially since as he opined that the Soviets most likely were several years ahead of the United States developing it because of its "extraordinary potential." As he warned, if the Soviets were successful they most likely "would seek an early opportunity to employ such means to negate our offensive strategic capabilities, the more so as a 'bloodless' victory would be in prospect." This fear was of course nearly identical to the rationale for Reagan's massive arms buildup that the CPD had so vigorously promoted: the Soviets were far ahead, and if they achieved superiority they could issue an ultimatum and force the U.S. to unilaterally disarm. The letter is especially interesting because Teller acknowledged that missile defense had the potential to be a great military weapon with both offensive and defensive capabilities. "Operating in space against distant targets in space, the effects of some of these techniques are expected to be spectacularly destructive," he wrote, "however, it is enemy warheads, rockets and satellites, not lives, which will be destroyed." Teller even went so far as to claim that missile defense could be used on the battlefield and in heavily populated civilian areas to decisively destroy military and civilian targets with minimal loss of human life. Such a feat would no doubt nicely tie into the Reagan administration's quest for escalation dominance, and Reagan's belief in the innocence of the United States. Despite this awesome offensive capability, Teller chose to emphasize the peaceful qualities of missile defense and reassured Reagan that missile defense could forever abolish Mutual Assured Destruction and replace it with "assured survival." It is interesting to note that he did not mention mutual survival, but rather presumably the "assured survival" of the West. Finally, if framed as a peaceful weapons system missile defense could undercut the nuclear freeze movement. "Commencing this effort may also offer a uniquely effective reply," Teller concluded, "to those advocating the dangerous inferiority implied by a 'nuclear freeze.'" <sup>245</sup>

NSDD 1-82 had called for the United States to dominate space since it was believed that it would be the next great arena for the Cold War rivalry; Teller had now presented President Reagan with a means to dominate the final frontier of space, yet with the added bonus that Reagan would be able to present missile defense as representing a major paradigm shift in strategic weapons in that the focus would shift to the saving of lives rather than the deterrence of aggression through the promise of retaliation.

Teller was not the sole booster for ballistic missile defense amongst Reagan's circle of friends and acquaintances. In a letter dated October 21, 1982, Karl Bendetsen, the Chairman of the High Frontier Project, wrote a letter to Edwin Meese in which he advised the counselor to the President that his panel had reviewed the latest technological developments in missile defense. He urged the administration to ensure increased Congressional funding for the development of missile defense using x-ray laser because, as he described it, in the future x-ray lasers would easily zap missiles from the sky and even stop submarine-launched missiles dead in their tracks. "The Panel therefore concludes that x-ray lasers may represent," he gleamed, "the largest advance in strategic warfare technology since the hydrogen bomb itself."<sup>246</sup> Given the access to the ear of the president that Teller and the High Frontier group held, as well as the CPD's promotion of missile defense as far back as 1978, it is obvious that SDI came to being as a result of a team effort, rather than through the fervent desire of a President who went rogue and decided to abolish nuclear weapons.<sup>247</sup> Scholars such as Paul Lettow and Christian Peterson, however, who view Reagan's policies in a positive light, tend to emphasize the central role that Reagan played in the birth of SDI. Lettow even goes so far as to claim that the decision to pursue an extensive missile defense system rested with Reagan alone.<sup>248</sup> Far from a dupe, in Lettow's estimation, SDI flowed from Reagan's deep-seated hatred for nuclear weapons and his desire to rid the world of them.<sup>249</sup> NSDD 13, however, clearly outlines that it was a central component of the nation's strategic modernization plan, particularly since it would protect the vulnerable MX missile from attack, and enable the United States to engage in a protracted nuclear exchange. Such scholars also are quick to discount the impact of the nuclear freeze movement on Reagan's grand vision and the larger difficulties that Reagan was encountering with his proliferation and modernization program. Peterson, for example, writes the following:

President Reagan developed a strong belief in anti-ballistic missile defenses well before he faced a backlash against his nuclear policies and waited to announce the SDI until the Joint Chiefs told him that an anti-ballistic was feasible. Once Reagan made the SDI public, he never intended to use it as part of a campaign to undercut the growing

influence of the nuclear freeze and Western European peace movements.<sup>250</sup>

The impetus for the announcement of SDI, however, much like every major American arms control proposal, clearly was rooted in the Reagan administration's quest for strategic superiority, and the need to defuse the nuclear freeze movement and placate Congress to ensure that the United States' strategic modernization plans, including the deployment of the MX and Trident II missile, were carried out. Throughout 1982 and 1983 the Reagan administration wrestled with how to best stem the growing tide of the nuclear freeze movement. Despite strong opposition from the administration, the House Foreign Affairs Committee approved a non-binding amendment known as H.J. Res. 13 that called on the United States and the Soviet Union to implement a freeze on the testing, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons; and it endorsed U.S. approval of the SALT II treaty.<sup>251</sup> The amendment was especially worrisome because it garnered bi-partisan support and it represented a direct attack upon Reagan's arms control policies from within the corridors of power. If Congressional pressure continued to mount it was wholly possible that the funding for two rich symbols of Reagan's rearmament program, the MX missile and the Trident II, would be slashed. While it had been easy for the administration to dismiss nuclear freeze advocates such as Helen Caldicott, Randall Kehler, and Randall Forsberg as radicals, influential Congressmen on the House Foreign Affairs Committee were now supportive of the Freeze.<sup>252</sup> This opposition questioned the entire basis for Reagan's rearmament program and clearly brought into focus the very different positions of the Reagan administration and the nuclear freeze advocates. The Reagan administration, for example, had taken the position that a freeze would lock the United States into a position of inferiority and reward the Soviet Union for its arms buildup. It also argued that the MX and Trident II were necessary to address serious American vulnerabilities, and to compel the Soviet Union to the bargaining table.<sup>253</sup> Yet as the author of the amendment, Rep. Jonathan B. Bingham (Democrat of New York), argued, the Soviet Union would respond to Reagan's arms buildup with its own buildup, which would all but ensure that the arms race would continue to spiral out of control. Rep. Stephen J. Solarz (Dem. of NY), meanwhile, observed that "An adequate balance exists because Soviet advantages in the number and size of land-based missile warheads are offset by U.S. advantages in bombers, and number of missile warhead. We have an assured second-strike against the Soviet Union and they have an assured second strike against us."<sup>254</sup> In the face of mounting criticism the Reagan administration badly wanted to get out in front of the nuclear freeze and seize the high moral ground, particularly as the Administration geared up to request record sums for the FY 1984 defense budget in the face of some Congressional desire for defense cuts.

The National Security Council took up the issue of defense expenditures in a meeting on January 28, 1983. William Clark opened and explained that the Reagan

administration inherited a compromised deterrent posture and that the nation's security objectives would be undermined if cuts were made, especially if the United States did not regain dominance in all three legs of the triad. President Reagan, Caspar Weinberger, and CIA Director William Casey all agreed that the Administration needed to convince the American public to support the Administration's defense budget; with the support of the people Congress would fall into place. As Reagan quipped, it was not necessary for Congress to see the light, but rather to feel the heat. Much as Weinberger had urged the President to seize the initiative with the zero option by delivering a dramatic speech, Jeanne Kirkpatrick declared that "public affairs could indeed be the essential factor and determinant in the defense budget battle." With this in mind, she urged Reagan to deliver a vigorous and bold speech to the American people that would demonstrate that the defense budget was absolutely necessary for the security of the United States and "was both prudent and essential." Interestingly, President Reagan agreed that he would deliver a strong speech to the American public.<sup>255</sup> In a follow up National Security Council meeting on February 25, 1983, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, who apparently wanted to follow in the footsteps of Dean Acheson and present the danger as "clearer than truth," once again urged President Reagan to deliver a major speech to the American public and Congress which would make clear the security threat faced by the United States. The strategy, she explained, "was to put the anti-defense lobby on the defensive." Reagan readily agreed to present a dramatic speech, and was emphatic that a new approach be found to explain to the American people the significant and growing threat faced by the United States. What was needed was an entirely new vision for the American public; Reagan was now fishing for a new way to ensure the continued support of the American public for his arms re-armament program. Edward Teller and the High Frontier had already planted the seed for a major paradigm shift in strategic security; all that was needed was for someone to link their enthusiasm for missile defense to Reagan's desire for a new approach to rally the support of the American public for his large defense expenditures.

To prevent the nuclear freeze movement from derailing the Reagan administration's strategic modernization plans, Reagan's deputy secretary for National Security Affairs Robert McFarlane and Admiral Watkins in particular elevated the importance of ballistic-missile defense, which they framed as an all-out effort to replace the morally reprehensible Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) with mutually assured survival by shifting from offensive to defensive weapons. It is important to note that the proposed shift to missile defense was not accompanied by a decision to cut back on the United States' strategic modernization of offensive weapons, precisely because the pursuit of ballistic missile defense was a means to generate support for the construction of such weapons. Reagan's technological enthusiasm and belief in the providential destiny of the United States led him to embrace the shift to defense whole-heartedly, even though the JCS and other

advocates simply believed that the timing was right to begin research on it. For Reagan, the vision of what could be was more important than the realm of possibility.

Though the evangelicals vigorously supported Reagan's nuclear crusade against the Godless enemy, a significant number of Americans did not. In particular, opposition centered on the MX missile, which as previously mentioned was proving much more difficult to deploy than the Administration had counted upon. Robert McFarlane was disturbed by the growing nuclear freeze movement and the administration's difficulty in deploying the MX missile, particularly since he seems not to have realized that there are three legs to the nuclear triad, including sea and air based missiles which largely are impervious to attack. As he recounted in his memoirs, the Soviets numerical superiority in ICBM gave them the "capability to launch a successful first strike; that is, to destroy all of our ICBM force in one fell swoop without leaving us a plausible means of striking back."<sup>256</sup> McFarlane believed that the MX was essential to address this strategic imbalance to deter Soviet aggression, yet as he observed, "The politics of deploying ICBMs in the United States was becoming too difficult."<sup>257</sup> McFarlane was not the only official concerned by the growing nuclear freeze movement and the inability of the United States to deploy the MX. Admiral James D. Watkins, the chief of naval operations and a devout Roman Catholic, was concerned by the growing number of religious people participating in the nuclear freeze movement and the American bishop's recent pastoral statement.<sup>258</sup> Much like Reagan, Watkins did not believe that nuclear weapons, if in the hands of the United States were immoral, yet the American bishops had raised serious ethical questions regarding nuclear deterrence that might spur Catholics to oppose Reagan's aggressive policies, and the freeze movement was rendering the MX difficult to deploy. Watkins, who believed that the MX was necessary to obtain leverage against the Soviets in the ongoing START negotiations and to deter them, believed that the inability to deploy the MX was leading the nation into a "strategic valley of death" in which the Soviets held the upper-hand. The primary problem for McFarlane and Watkins was the inability of the United States to pursue its modernization plans because of the nuclear freeze movement. Both believed, however, that a technological solution existed that would cut the legs out from under the freeze movement, bring Congress on board, provide the United States with the high moral ground, and serve as a useful bargaining chip in arms talks with the Soviets. As McFarlane recounted in his memoirs:

The fact was that the Soviets could build missile after missile, tank after tank, without any concern for congressional restraint. They had no Congress. To my thinking, this factor alone required that we focus our investments on areas where we clearly had a competitive advantage and could exploit our qualitative superiority. That

advantage lay in high technology. This is what the United States does best.<sup>259</sup>

McFarlane and Watkins consulted with Admiral John Poindexter, who also believed that the time was ripe to exploit America's advantage in high technology to pursue missile defense. Not surprisingly, Reagan was receptive to suggestions that the nation begin to conduct research so that it might shift from offensive to defensive weapons, so much so that he consulted with the JCS on it in early 1983 on at least two separate occasions in meetings whose minutes remain classified. After reassurance from the JCS that it might be an opportune time to step up research on ballistic missile defense, Reagan decided to introduce the concept of missile defense without commissioning scientists and engineers to conduct a full review for two primary reasons: 1) missile defense was primarily a means to solve a political rather than a technical problem; and 2) Reagan cared little for technical details but rather was enamored with big picture concepts, especially those that involved the harnessing of American technological prowess and a test of American resolve. Reagan may not have cared "about wavelengths" and pesky technical details, but he was a superb politician who realized that a dramatic presidential announcement, much like the zero option and the United States' START proposal, could defuse the nuclear freeze movement and win popularity for his strategic modernization plans by offering a tantalizing vision of what the future would hold if the public would only support the United States quest for strategic superiority just a little bit longer.<sup>260</sup>

On March 23, 1983, Ronald Reagan announced his plan to pursue research on a ballistic missile defense program at the tail-end of a speech which otherwise was devoted to convincing the American people to support his massive arms buildup and huge defense budget.<sup>261</sup> In most ways the speech was typical for Reagan; citing the Soviet Union's strategic superiority because of the neglect of the military by his predecessors, he insisted that no expense could be spared for the defense budget and the preservation of peace and freedom. In an effort to empathize with the aspiration of the nuclear freeze movement, he declared "I know that all of you want peace, and so do I. I know too that many of you seriously believe that a nuclear freeze would further the cause of peace."<sup>262</sup> Yet as he then explained, the nuclear freeze – while well-intentioned – would actually undermine peace and freedom by limiting the United States ability to negotiate arms reductions. The freeze, moreover, would cement the strategic superiority of the Soviet Union, reward them for their massive buildup, and render the United States vulnerable to attack. This was standard fare for Reagan and the CPD, yet the tail-end of the speech, which Reagan played a major role in writing, offered a radical new vision of a new nuclear free world.

In soaring rhetoric, Reagan asked his audience to believe that the nuclear terror could be transcended when he eloquently asked "wouldn't it be better to save

lives than to avenge them?” If American scientists would join him and put their talent to good use to build defensive rather than offensive weapons, America’s lost security and world peace would be restored by “rendering...nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete.” This technological breakthrough promised not only respite from the danger of nuclear annihilation, but to usher in a new millennium and way of life. “My fellow Americans,” Reagan declared, “tonight we’re launching an effort which holds the promise of changing human history.” Reagan’s tantalizing vision of a nuclear free world, however, provided his audience with a means to peer into a utopian future even it lived in the dangerous moment under the shadow of the mushroom cloud. As he cautioned, his research initiative would take years, if not decades to complete. The nuclear balance and the arms race with the Soviet Union would remain intact in the meantime; as he warned, the United States would have to remain vigilant, modernize its strategic forces, maintain its deterrent, and negotiate for arms reductions from a position of strength, most likely for many, many years. His speech, then, offered a hopeful vision of what might be possible decades in the future, yet in the meantime he hoped to convince Americans that they would have to continue to support the arms race with the Soviet Union. As the long-time arms control negotiator Gerard Smith noted, Reagan’s Science Advisor George Keyworth admitted that SDI came to life because of the lack of public support for the United States arms buildup and strategic modernization plans; Keyworth, moreover, confessed that “there is no question that we must retain a specific retaliatory capability.”<sup>263</sup> In other words, SDI did not change the status-quo in any way; it was little more than a dream of what might be possible in the future.

Though SDI clearly was little more than the latest act in Reagan’s ongoing political theater, it struck a deep chord with many Americans because it was an alluring vision that tapped deep into the reservoir of the American imagination.<sup>264</sup> “The military uses of the nuclear bomb will dwindle into nothingness,” wrote the scientist Robert Jastrow. “And so it may come to pass, as President Reagan suggested, that the scientists who gave us nuclear weapons will also give us “the means of rendering these weapons impotent and obsolete.”<sup>265</sup> Edward Teller, a perennial booster of new weapons technology and a leading advocate for missile defense, was thrilled with the announcement and noted that this latest technological wonder “may save us from a future war and provide the needed basis for peace.”<sup>266</sup> James Fletcher, meanwhile, wrote that by the year 2000 SDI very well could protect “nearly all of the population perhaps even greater than 99 percent, in my opinion – against massive nuclear attacks.”<sup>267</sup>

Many more, however, were not so enamored with the future that SDI portended for planet earth, and in fact viewed it as more reflective of a weapons system found in a galaxy far away a long, long time ago: Massachusetts Senator Edward M. Kennedy immediately dismissed the speech as “misleading Red-Scare tactics and reckless Star Wars schemes.”<sup>268</sup> Though the Reagan administration later officially dubbed the missile defense program the Strategic Defensive



Initiative, much to its chagrin Kennedy's reference to the wildly popular science fiction movies stuck. Not to be outdone, fellow Massachusetts Representative Edward Markey opted for a double feature approach and observed that Edward Teller was "the original E.T" who wanted to forge a "pin-ball outer-space war between the Force of Evil and the Force of Good."<sup>269</sup> *The Chicago Tribune*, meanwhile, joined in on the fun: "What better, more exhilarating, more American way out of the nuclear dilemma than to build Pac-Man weapons," it declared in snide reference to the popular video game. "Warp speed, Mr. Spock!"<sup>270</sup>

The most sustained of attack, however, emanated from the nation's scientists, the very people that Reagan had called upon to embrace his crusade. Henry Kendall, the chairman of the Union of Concerned Scientists and a professor of physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, immediately lashed out at the speech and suggested that the construction of a missile defense system might spur the Soviet Union to strike first to disarm it. At the least, a missile defense system would not lead to the abolition of nuclear weapons, but rather their proliferation "It is a provocative system, Kendall warned, "and a very dangerous nuclear arms race in space would result."<sup>271</sup> Given the advantage that offensive weapons have over defensive weapons and their much lower cost, missile defense would encourage the construction of ever larger numbers of offensive weapons. In addition to these concerns, a consensus quickly emerged that SDI would increase the risk of an accidental nuclear exchange, and that it would best be used to mop up any remaining Soviet missiles after an American first strike. Worst of all for Reagan, the majority of scientists did not believe that a "peace shield" is technologically feasible, especially as Reagan imagined it. "What concerns me about the President's star wars scenario is that it offers the prospect of a technological escape from our present conditions as mutual hostages," explained the well-respected physicist and arms control expert Sidney Drell, "and I don't believe that one exists."<sup>272</sup>

Despite vigorous opposition from many of the people most qualified to comment on the technical efficacy and political implications of SDI, Reagan's vision attracted sustained support from a handful of scientists, various conservative pundits, religious leaders, politicians, and defense contractors; and importantly, a significant proportion of the American people, all of whom viewed SDI as a new and transformative technological wonder that was not so much a scientific and engineering problem to be solved, but rather a test of national will and determination that could be passed as long as America believed in itself and upheld its providential calling to bring peace to the world through yet another technological breakthrough.<sup>273</sup> Importantly, such advocates were confounded by opposition to SDI, particularly since they viewed it as a morally just defensive system which not only would protect humanity but would replace the morally reprehensible MAD. "We cannot simply sit back and forever assume that the only deterrent is the threat of mutual annihilation," wrote Kenneth Adelman. Observing the support of 1000

clergymen for SDI, he then argued that the development of missile defense was not only morally necessary, but indeed required.<sup>274</sup>

Though originally little more than a research initiative designed to defuse the nuclear freeze movement and build support for Reagan's arms buildup and large defense budget, SDI soon was imbued with religious-like qualities by the public and especially the Reagan administration. "I guess my experience as a technologist and as a manager with a long career in this effort," declared James Abrahamson, the Director of the SDI Organization in Congressional testimony in support of SDI, "is that we indeed can produce miracles."<sup>275</sup> Reagan, who shared this technological enthusiasm, referred to himself and Caspar Weinberger as the chief evangelists of SDI.<sup>276</sup> Not surprisingly, neither man was willing to relinquish his faith in SDI and use it as a bargaining chip in any way, particularly since they believed it was a transformative technology that would abolish the threat of a nuclear apocalypse, particularly since it was being developed by the United States.

Rarely, however, has political and especially grassroots support for an imagined weapons system remained strong in the face of widespread scientific and Congressional opposition as it did with SDI, especially since scientists often have been the biggest boosters of new weapons technology, not its primary opponent. During the age of Reagan, though, technological wonderment so thoroughly saturated American popular culture that many Americans were enamored with the imagined potential of technology rather than the realistic and sober opinion of scientists. Technological fantasy and an American sense of mission were so robust in the 1980s that the image of space stations zapping missiles from the sky was certain to fire the American imagination and forge considerable grassroots support.

America's technological obsession and renewed, messianic Cold War crusade to topple the atheistic Soviet Union breathed life into SDI and generated support for it from a significant portion of the American public. The early 1980s were a time of exceptional scientific and especially technological optimism and fear; not since the Sputnik scare of the late 1950s did America's Cold War find such forceful expression as though technological competition with the Soviet Union. Paradoxically, in an age marked by technological exuberance and foreboding, the learned opinion of scientists and engineers was ignored or discounted by many even as technology rapidly reshaped American life. While the exact cause of this phenomenon is difficult to pinpoint, Reagan's patriotic crusade against the Soviet Union and his vision of a "peace shield" were well received because they tapped into the hopes and fears of a significant number of Americans who yearned for a bright new morning in America and a renewed sense of American mission. Within this cultural milieu, a visionary weapons system like SDI promised to reverse the technological fortunes of the Cold War competitors, shake the Vietnam Syndrome, and restore the American mission to spread peace and prosperity everywhere. In an era of self-doubt and national drift, SDI was appealing because it was deeply rooted in the technological revolution of the era that promised to reshape American life. In short, a latent

desire to reshape and rewrite the nation's history, often through the magical exploitation of technology, helps explain the popularity of Reagan's SDI.

The age of Reagan, as the Reagan biographer George Wills and the historian Sean Wilentz refer to it, might also be called the age of digital fantasy and technological wonderment. Even as Reagan exploited the airwaves to present fantastic visions of the future, the microchip and technological toys geared towards a popular leisure market replaced the machine as the most important driver of technological change and economic growth. The personal computer (PC), electronic video games, home movie systems, compact discs, and the Sony Walkman infiltrated American homes and public space and revolutionized American culture by making technology an integral part of the fabric of everyday life. In the wake of the late 1970s, which was marked by self-doubt and national drift, the technological revolution promised to provide humanity with an agency never before experienced via a digitized world of technological wonderment. As Graham Thompson notes, the 1980s are significant not only for the great technological innovation and invention that took place and the convergence of technology and culture, but because of the way in which technology transformed cultural practices. As the name implies, the Sony Walkman allows an individual to literally walk around and listen to the music of his choice; movies now could be watched at home rather than in the theater; shows could be recorded and watched at a later time; the smallest of businesses owners could now afford to outfit each of its employees with their own personal computer, and even take one home.<sup>277</sup> Technology now offered a means by which everyday life could momentarily be escaped at the place and time of the consumer's choosing. It is no coincidence that SDI, which held out the promise that the entire world might eventually escape the nuclear threat, was announced to widespread applause in the midst of this technological revolution which centered on consumption, fantasy, and the momentary suspension of reality.

Despite the public relations success of SDI, Reagan's arms control policies had largely failed by the end of 1983. His tough talk and military buildup did not scare Leonid Brezhnev or Yuri Andropov to unilaterally disarm in the face of America's renewed determination to lead the world through superior military strength. Worrisome to the Soviets was the American abandonment of SALT, its rejection of détente, its refusal to recognize the legitimate security interests of the Soviet Union, and its quest for escalation dominance. Andropov, who succeeded Brezhnev in November of 1982, entered the Kremlin at a historic low-point in the Cold War and was well aware of it. In June of 1983 he told the assembled members of the Communist Party that US-Soviet relations at the time were "marked by confrontation, unprecedented in the entire postwar period by its intensity and sharpness, of the two diametrically opposite world outlooks, the two political courses, socialism and imperialism."<sup>278</sup> On another occasion, Andropov declared that the United States was barreling forward on "a militaristic course which poses a grave threat to peace."<sup>279</sup> Reagan's announcement of SDI in March of 1983 only

deepened Soviet fear that the United States was developing and indeed contemplating initiating a first strike against them. “With the aid of this system,” the KGB reported, “the Americans expect to be able to ensure that United States territory is completely invulnerable to Soviet intercontinental ballistic missiles, which would enable the United States to count on mounting a nuclear attack on the Soviet Union with impunity.”<sup>280</sup>

Reagan’s repeated condemnations of the Soviet Union as “an evil empire” throughout the early 1980s served to reinforce such convictions and worsen relations between the superpowers, particularly since the Soviet’s desire to resurrect détente was so thoroughly rebuffed.<sup>281</sup> The Soviets, to be sure, contributed to the worsening relationship between east and west with the downing of the Korean Airline 007 in 1983 and the continued occupation of Afghanistan, yet given the opinion of many Reagan administration officials that nuclear war was most likely inevitable, the United States’ loose talk of nuclear war made the Soviets believe that the United States might actually be planning to launch a first strike. A NATO military exercise in November 1983 dubbed Able Archer 83 raised serious fears that NATO might be preparing to launch a surprise attack upon the Soviet Union, so much so that the Soviet high command nearly mobilized Soviet forces to prepare for war.<sup>282</sup> When coupled with an affirmative vote for the American deployment of the Pershing II in the West German Bundestag on November 22, 1983, the Soviet Union determined that nothing was to be gained from the charade of continued negotiation with the Reagan administration and announced that it would begin to deploy the SS-20 within striking distance of European targets. The Soviet delegation, meanwhile, walked out of the INF talks the very next day, and on December 8, 1983, announced that it was withdrawing its delegation from the START negotiations.<sup>283</sup> Reagan’s arms buildup, SDI, and his arms control proposals on INF and START, which largely were forged in an effort to solve what was considered a political problem – namely opposition to his arms buildup in the form of the freeze movement-- had not compelled the Soviets to the negotiating table, but in fact had driven them from it. Relations between the United States and the Soviet Union remained at a low-point until through the early 1980s and Reagan’s policies served to strengthen the hand of the hardliners in the Soviet military and KGB who wanted to meet fire with fire. It would take the passing of the last of the old guard who had long dominated the Kremlin with the death of the geriatric Konstantin Chernenko on March 11, 1985 and the accession of a youthful leader who imagined a new relationship between east and west before the superpowers would once again discuss reducing the threat of nuclear war through an arms control agreement. Yet while Mikhail Gorbachev would offer a new, cooperative approach to arms control and national security, Reagan’s positions on nuclear strategy and arms control largely were solidified by the end of 1983 and thus would shape his behavior at the pivotal summit in Reykjavik. In Reagan’s mind, SDI also presented the world with a new cooperative approach to ridding the

world of the nuclear terror in that he would offer to share it with the world, yet it too would ossify and grow to be a non-negotiable weapons system, much like the other weapons systems he wanted to build, because it flowed from the same nationalistic sentiment as the development of all weapons systems. Much like the prophets who had extolled the peaceful and transformative qualities of the torpedo, the strategic bomber, and the atomic bomb, Reagan believed that yet another technological leap forward would forever abolish war. In essence, Reagan's negotiating position was clear long before Reykjavik: he was willing to abolish nuclear weapons so long as they were in the hands of the Soviets or due to be replaced by new weapons in the United States anyway; if it was an especially advantageous deal, though not in the sense that it increased the security of both nations; and he was unwilling to bargain on weapons systems – especially SDI and the MX missile -- which he believed would help man transcend the dangers of nuclear war once and for all.

## Chapter Six

### From Geneva to Reykjavik

This chapter stretches from the Geneva summit through Reagan and Gorbachev's descent upon Reykjavik, and explores American and to a lesser extent Soviet preparation for the summit. I argue that the Reagan administration headed to Reykjavik with little idea that Gorbachev was serious in strengthening ties between the Soviet Union and the West and in achieving significant nuclear arms reductions. This misperception stemmed from Reagan's fixation upon changing Soviet behavior over the long-term at the expense of the pursuit of immediate and negotiable arms control treaties. Though Reagan did abhor nuclear weapons and dreamed that SDI would usher in a nuclear free age, American arms control policy during this time period was guided not so much by an earnest strategy to abolish nuclear weapons at the moment, but rather a desire to generate continued support for SDI and the modernization of the nation's strategic forces in the face of mounting public and Congressional opposition. Ultimately, Reagan believed that only external pressure and yet another American technological triumph – such as SDI -- could spur change in the Soviet Union. Though Gorbachev did want to reduce nuclear weapons and was fearful of SDI, Reagan continued to apply pressure well after it had served its purpose, primarily because he failed to realize that Gorbachev's reforms and his desire for an arms control agreement primarily were driven by factors internal to the Soviet Union and his *novoe myshlenie* (new thinking), which evolved to the point that he dispensed with the shibboleths that had contributed to the Cold War and advocated for a cooperative approach to international security. Reagan also believed that he was advocating a cooperative approach to international security via SDI because he offered to share it with the rest of the world; Gorbachev, however, was unwilling to agree the American development of a missile defense system as his nation built down its nuclear arsenal.

The stage appeared set for the resumption of arms negotiations between Reagan and the Soviet by March 1985. In that month arms control negotiations which included talks on INF, START, and space weapons were re-opened in Geneva and dubbed the Nuclear and Space Talks (NST). With the death of the geriatric Konstantin Chernenko in March of 1985 Reagan got another chance to talk with a Soviet leader about reducing the threat of nuclear war. Following the script he largely had written for himself and confident that the United States military strength had been renewed, Reagan believed the time was right to negotiate arms

reductions. His desire meshed well with Nancy Reagan, who wanted him to be remembered as a peacemaker and thus stoked his belief that his actions were working.<sup>284</sup> He had reached out to Chernenko but to no avail. In March 1985, almost immediately upon Chernenko's death the Politburo chose Mikhail Gorbachev to be Secretary General of the Communist Party. Born in 1931 and thirty years younger than his sickly predecessor, Gorbachev brought not only some much needed youth and vigor to the Kremlin, but a keen desire to reform the Soviet economy and society. Educated, urbane, and well-traveled in Western Europe, Gorbachev was keenly aware of the gross discrepancies in living standards between the East and West, and in particular he was concerned that the West was racing far ahead of the Soviet Union in economic and technological development.<sup>285</sup> Gorbachev wanted to initiate a series of reforms to strengthen the Soviet economy so that it might modernize and compete more forcefully in the international arena. The important thing to note is that Franklin Delano Roosevelt's famed quip "I'm that kind of liberal because I'm that kind of conservative" very well could have been spoken by the man described by Andrei Gromyko as having a nice smile but iron teeth. Gorbachev was no radical but rather was willing to experiment and try anything to propel the economy forward precisely because he wanted to conserve the communist system. As Anatoly Chernayaev noted in his diary, Gorbachev was chosen in unanimous fashion by the Politburo because of his sharp, analytic mind, vast experience, and his ability to express his own views within the context of the Party.<sup>286</sup> An original thinker who had not experienced the terror of the Stalin years or the privations of the Second World War, Gorbachev exuded a confident, secure European cosmopolitanism which nevertheless was rooted in a respect for and a desire to conserve Soviet communism.<sup>287</sup> Gorbachev was willing to learn and borrow from the West, but in the long-run when he assumed office he still believed that Soviet communism, if reformed, would lead the world.

Gorbachev's reformist thought, originally called Gorbachev Thinking by his peers, took on a life of its own and eventually grew to be known as the new thinking. Above all, Gorbachev believed that the domestic economic strength of the Soviet Union was essential to the security of the nation; if the economy could be modernized, politics opened up, and the technological-scientific revolution sweeping the West could be harnessed then the security of the nation would follow. In this sense Gorbachev looked inward rather than outward when considering the security interest of the nation. On the other hand, Gorbachev was keenly aware that the economic vitality of the Soviet Union only could be enhanced through the exchange of ideas and information with the West and the eventual entry of the Soviet Union into the global economy on a competitive basis. In this sense Gorbachev very much was looking outward, yet unlike his predecessors he imagined that his nation should attempt to project its power via the exchange of ideas, goods, and technology rather than with the largely futile tip of a missile.<sup>288</sup>

Gorbachev, in fact, was keenly aware that his nation had contributed to the arms race; that Soviet militarism only fed Western fears of the East; and that the Soviet arms buildup of the 1970s and early '80s had not increased the security of the Soviet Union due to the deployment of the American Pershing and Tomahawk in Europe and the strengthening of the NATO alliance in the face of the Soviet Union's deployment of the SS-20. In short, he was well aware that Soviet militarism would stand in the way of integration with the West. He therefore wanted to cut defense spending and slow the development of weapons systems; doing so would ease tensions with the West, free up capital for economic development, and allow Soviet scientists and engineers to develop civilian technologies which would strengthen the economy. Gorbachev, in particular, was concerned that the United States was racing far ahead in the development of technologically sophisticated weapons systems. Competition in this sector would be disastrous: it would divert scarce resources from the development of civilian technologies, and could lead to the financial ruin of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev, accordingly, was eager to use arms control to temper the arms race; in particular, he was keen to stop the advance of the United States' most technologically sophisticated weapons systems, especially SDI. In this way the interests of the leaders of the two superpowers intersected in many ways and it would appear that they had met at a most propitious fork in the road.

Seizing upon an invitation from Reagan, Gorbachev met with the American president in Geneva, Switzerland for the first US-Soviet summit in six years in November 1985. Reagan had long wanted to talk to a Soviet leader, and was especially eager now that he believed America was strong again. He believed, moreover, that his personal charm would win the Soviets over. Reagan's grand strategy appeared to be coming to fruition with the rise of Gorbachev. He had hoped to drive the Soviets to the negotiating table and convince them to disarm with his arms buildup and the concomitant pressure he believed that it would place on the Soviet economy, and he and his advisors had been keenly aware that the Soviets could not hope to compete in the development of technologically sophisticated weapons systems like SDI.<sup>289</sup> Gorbachev, meanwhile, upon taking office was keen to soothe tensions in Europe, and was genuinely eager to reduce each nation's strategic weapons, particularly first strike weapons. Though no one expected much of Geneva other than an opportunity to set the stage for substantive agreements at a later date, the meeting heralded the start of a unique time period for addressing the spiraling arms race. The two men developed a good personal rapport, particularly during their famed fireside chat, and found that they genuinely respected each other. Yet in what was a portent of what was to come, having driven the Soviets to the negotiating table Reagan was not willing to ease off the throttle or let go of SDI, while Gorbachev clung tenaciously to his belief that SDI needed to be stopped, so much so that he made any agreement upon offensive



weapons contingent upon continued adherence to the ABM Treaty and restraints on SDI.<sup>290</sup>

Upon his return to the United States from Geneva, Reagan addressed a joint-session of Congress on November 21, 1985, and the American people in a radio address on November 23. Though he acknowledged that fundamental differences remained between the United States and the Soviet Union, he believed that he and Gorbachev had developed a good rapport and he was hopeful that they could continue to work with one another to build a more harmonious international environment. Undergirding his hope for a constructive and peaceful future were his deeply held and intertwined beliefs in the success of his peace through strength program; SDI's transformative properties; and the United States' providential role in world affairs.

Reagan clearly believed that the United States and his military buildup in particular were driving the flow of events. "If there is one conclusion to draw from our fireside summit, it's that American policies are working," he explained. "America is strong again, and American strength has caught the Soviets' attention...They recognize that the United States is no longer just reacting to world events; we are in the forefront of a powerful, historic tide for freedom and opportunity, for progress and peace."<sup>291</sup> Paradoxically, then, in Reagan's mind American military strength was a vehicle for peace rather than a threat which might compel the Soviets to match it; Reagan and his administration, moreover, were slow to grasp that the time to strike for substantive reductions was at hand, that indeed his buildup was one of many factors pushing Gorbachev to reduce arms, yet the opportunity to reach an agreement could disappear at a moment's notice. Reagan's radio and congressional addresses – while wholly sincere – were also partially crafted to garner continued support for his policies from Congress and the public. By positioning American military strength as the source of Soviet capitulation, the administration hoped to garner continued support for its peace through strength strategy and SDI.<sup>292</sup>

For Reagan, America's military superiority was the protector of peace and indeed one of the engines driving the world towards a peaceful future, as was any weapons system that the nation might imagine and build, including SDI. Though Reagan acknowledged Gorbachev's opposition to SDI at Geneva, his idyllic worldview prevented him from conceptualizing that it might actually be a stumbling block to future arms control negotiations, or that it might appear provocative to the Soviets. "We want to make strategic defense a strong protector of the peace," exhorted Reagan. "A research and testing program that may one day provide a peace shield to protect against nuclear attack is a deeply hopeful vision, and we should all be cooperating to bring that vision of peace alive for the entire world."<sup>293</sup> Reagan was genuinely frightened by the prospect of nuclear war, yet he also was so suspicious of the Soviet Union that he long derided the prospect of reducing the nuclear threat through arms control treaties and mutual reductions.

The only way to transcend the nuclear threat was to harness American technology to build defensive instead of offensive weapons. SDI thus was a manifestation of Reagan's most deeply held beliefs; world peace only could be achieved at the behest of the United States. Reagan and his advisors' technological zeal led them to erroneously believe that it was the vehicle driving the Soviets to the negotiating table, not events internal to the Soviet Union. As the physicist Herbert York long ago explained, the nuclear arms race largely is driven by "patriotic zeal, exaggerated prudence, and a sort of religious faith in technology."<sup>294</sup> This observation also can be applied to SDI; it largely was driven by Reagan's liberal romanticism and his religious like faith in America's providential destiny to transform the world through yet another leap in American technology.

SDI also served as a badge of American strength and resolve in the face of Soviet conniving. Reagan, who was convinced that the Soviets were fearful both of SDI's military potential and the economic repercussions of building their own missile defense system, was especially proud that he had resisted Gorbachev on SDI at Geneva. "I think it's fair to point out that the Soviets' main aim at Geneva was to force us to drop SDI," he told the American public. "I think I can also say that after Geneva Mr. Gorbachev understands we have no intention of doing so – far from it."<sup>295</sup>

As winter set in, then, the optimism of Geneva began to somewhat wane and the arms control process seemingly ground to a halt. The Reagan administration maintained its support for SDI, while Gorbachev remained firmly opposed to it. In an exchange of televised New Year's Day addresses, Reagan spoke glowingly of his dream that SDI would one day free the world from the threat of nuclear destruction. Gorbachev, meanwhile, warned that the pursuit of new weapons systems was senseless and would only increase the danger of nuclear war. Perhaps to build upon the goodwill generated at Geneva and to break the growing stalemate over SDI, Gorbachev decided to take decisive action.

On the morning of January 15, 1986, Eduard Shevardnadze hand delivered a letter to Secretary Schultz for President Reagan. As if to emphasize its importance, he told Shultz that Gorbachev was going to reveal the contents of the letter in a few hours to the public. This gave the Americans little time to prepare a public response, which clearly was in order since Gorbachev proposed that the world eliminate all ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons in a three-stage process by the year 2000.

During the first stage all intermediate-range ballistic and cruise missiles would be removed from Europe. This idea was similar to the zero option for intermediate-range missiles that Reagan had offered in 1981, though under Gorbachev's scenario the Soviets would retain intermediate-range missiles in Asia, which could be re-deployed to the European theater. Nevertheless, the Soviets were offering to remove the feared SS-20 from Europe and even willing to allow the British and French to retain – though not grow – their nuclear arsenals. They also

were willing to eliminate the dreaded SS-18. The letter also noted that the Soviets would extend their moratorium on nuclear testing. The entire package would be contingent upon the United States giving up “the development, testing and deployment of space-strike weapons,” which really meant SDI.<sup>296</sup>

The boldness, public nature, and similarity of the proposal to Nikita Khrushchev’s old calls for the elimination of nuclear weapons made Reagan’s advisors believe that it must be a propaganda ploy, as did Soviet military leaders, who signed off on it with the expectation that it would go nowhere yet be a good piece of propaganda.<sup>297</sup> Many of Reagan’s advisors wanted to label it a publicity stunt; Weinberger and Perle did not even want to respond to it. They did not believe that Gorbachev was serious, and perhaps more importantly, they did not want to encourage Reagan to take any step that might lead the nation towards the eventual elimination of any nuclear weapons.<sup>298</sup>

Nitze and Schultz also thought that it was a propaganda ploy, overly broad, and packaged in such a way that the United States could not agree to it, yet they sensed that in principle Gorbachev had publicly agreed to abolish nuclear weapons. They especially were encouraged by Gorbachev’s movement towards the U.S. position on intermediate-range nuclear forces. This is significant because it began to push the pair towards the belief that an arms control agreement might be possible with the Soviet Union. Reagan, who was thrilled with the proposal, quipped “Why wait until the end of the century for a world without nuclear weapons?”<sup>299</sup>

Reagan thus ignored Perle and Weinberger and responded to Gorbachev’s proposal by stating that he too supported nuclear disarmament. On SDI, however, he was not willing to budge. “We believe,” he wrote, “strategic defenses can make significant contributions to a world free from nuclear weapons.”<sup>300</sup> At this point Reagan and Gorbachev had in principle at least agreed to eliminate nuclear weapons, and had found common ground on intermediate-range nuclear missiles (INF). Both sides were worried by the short travel time of the missiles and the great potential they create for an accidental nuclear exchange. The Soviets, who were especially fearful of the Pershings, believed that they were a loaded gun pointed at the Soviet head. As Gromyko acknowledged in a Politburo meeting, the deployment of the SS-20 was a monumental mistake.<sup>301</sup> The groundwork for an INF agreement, moreover, was laid when Senator Ted Kennedy received word from Gorbachev at a February 6, 1986 meeting in Moscow that an interim INF agreement could be delinked from SDI and START.<sup>302</sup> This was a significant development because intermediate-range nuclear forces would be much easier to deal with if they were not linked to a host of other complex issues, especially SDI, since Reagan and Gorbachev at the time refused to budge from their respective positions on it. This assurance also is important because it demonstrates that SDI was not the impetus for the eventual INF agreement; indeed, it was consummated when SDI was finally delinked from it.

Reagan and Gorbachev had potentially made some progress towards the elimination of nuclear weapons, yet the possibility of nuclear disarmament deepened the schism in Washington between the hardliners and the pragmatists. Nitze and Schultz, though wary of a nuclear free world and Soviet motives, believed progress could be made in reductions, particularly in the elimination of intermediate-range missiles. Adelman, Weinberger, Perle and many others within Washington, on the other hand, opposed any type of arms control agreement with the Soviets, as well as any concession that might slow SDI down or limit it in any way out of fear that any fetter would ultimately destroy it, whether through Congressional action or scientific torpor. The hostility engendered by the possibility that Gorbachev's proposal might be taken seriously created such a great rift that only a handful of Reagan's top advisors, including Schultz, Poindexter, and Weinberger were allowed to consult with the president in drafting his reply to Gorbachev's letter to prevent leaks.<sup>303</sup>

In addition to leaky plumbing and strong divisions within the Beltway, a Defense Department official attempted to stir dissension with America's allies by encouraging Japan and France to oppose any agreement on intermediate-range missiles. This contravened the wishes of the president, who called the actions "despicable." He left it up to Casper Weinberger to discipline the offender, something he most likely never did.<sup>304</sup> This level of infighting and deceit, and Reagan's common practice of avoiding uncomfortable confrontations suggests that Reagan was not in firm control of the bureaucracy or policy. Nevertheless, Reagan was able to muster support from Schultz and Nitze for the abolition of intermediate range missiles.

Schultz wanted to respond to Gorbachev's proposal with a counter-proposal which proposed a three-stage process for arms reductions. The first stage would focus on START and the global elimination of intermediate-range missiles. Other preconditions for reductions, such as the reduction of asymmetries in conventional forces and the solving of human rights issues, would be dealt with in the later stages. By "front-end loading" the American program, Schultz hoped to delink START and INF from a host of problems that would render any arms negotiation treaty un-negotiable. As an ardent supporter of SDI, Schultz hoped to garner continued Congressional support for it, which he believed would decline after 1986, by convincing everyone that it was the tool that made nuclear reductions possible.<sup>305</sup> In his memoir, Schultz wrote that "We had to make clear to Congress that the Strategic Defense Initiative had brought this new proposal – and its acceptance of deep reductions in our nuclear stockpiles – into being."<sup>306</sup> By pursuing an INF Treaty with the Soviets, Schultz could ensure continued Congressional support for SDI and the modernization of other legs of the strategic triad.

Schultz also realized that the limited military value of the United States' INFs in Europe might make them more negotiable; even such stalwart hawks as

Richard Perle did not believe that the deployment of the Pershings were of significant military value, perhaps because he realized that the balance of power between the United States and the Soviet Union primarily was driven by its strategic relationship; INFs played a peripheral role in this nexus.<sup>307</sup> The deployment of intermediate-range missiles in Europe, in fact, had been driven

by political rather than military calculation, as explained by Raymond Garthoff.

The decision-makers in Washington remained unconvinced of the military value of new intermediate-range weapons in Europe. However, they backed...*(it)*...in order to appease America's allies and to ensure European support for SALT II, support which was considered necessary in the U.S domestic debate over the treaty.<sup>308</sup>

One of the original goals of the placement of the short-range Pershings was to solidify NATO and squarely link Europe to the United States' strategic nuclear deterrence, yet the Euromissiles had partly contributed to the nuclear freeze movement in Europe and had strained U.S.-European relations. Far from an asset, they had grown into a liability that made many Europeans view the United States every bit as great of a threat to the world as the Soviet Union. The pursuit of an INF treaty could quell public accusations that Ronald Reagan was a warmonger, strengthen U.S.-European relations, and solidify Congressional support for SDI.<sup>309</sup> In addition, an INF treaty actually would shift the strategic balance in Eurasia to NATO's advantage.

If Schultz was successful, the United States would trade a class of weapons away that had little military value for the United States in return for a superior number of Soviet land-based ballistic missiles that were of great strategic value. Schultz was especially eager to achieve deep reductions in strategic ballistic missiles since the Soviet Union held a comparative advantage in them. In obvious reference to the recent MX imbroglio with the American public and Congress, Schultz explained to Reagan that this comparative advantage stemmed not from Soviet superiority in engineering ballistic missiles, but from the American political system which made deployment on American soil difficult. The Soviets, on the other hand, could build and deploy as many missiles as it desired.<sup>310</sup> In addition, under the American scheme an INF agreement would not eliminate British and French missiles, nor would it preclude the U.S. from pursuing the modernization of its airborne and submarine launched nuclear forces. The agreement would thus eliminate a class of weapons in which the Soviets held a clear advantage while allowing the U.S. to continue to modernize its forces. Schultz, however, was careful to frame reductions as the key goal of America's nuclear policy. So long as reductions were pursued in one area, the administration could continue to demand Congressional support for SDI, its modernization program, and military buildup.

Despite his commitment to SDI, Schultz was willing to use it as a bargaining chip to gain immediate reductions -- this may have stemmed from his belief that the development and testing of SDI under the ABM Treaty (1972) might not be allowed, and his realization that it most likely would not be possible to deploy for many years anyway.<sup>311</sup> Though he was flexible on SDI, Schultz did want to preserve it. As he explained during a 14 May meeting with Reagan:

Your successor should be able to decide whether to deploy a defensive system. Keeping an SDI research program alive is important but difficult. To keep it alive we have to be willing to give up something in SDI. An agreement for massive reductions in strategic missiles can use SDI research and potential deployment of a strategic defense as a means to win Soviet compliance on continuing reductions. So we should give them the sleeves from our vest on SDI and make them think they got our overcoat.<sup>312</sup>

According to Schultz's memoirs, John Poindexter and Don Regan liked this approach, as did Paul Nitze, who long had shared Schultz's belief that SDI could be used as leverage for reductions.<sup>313</sup> Similarly to Schultz, Nitze believed that reductions should be made in the present in return for promises of the non-deployment of SDI for a specified period of time. Nitze, who was not certain of SDI's technical feasibility, primarily wanted to use it as leverage for reductions, though he also wanted to ensure that the United States would be able to continue with research on it in the off-chance that it might prove feasible in the future.<sup>314</sup>

Casper Weinberger, who Reagan called "the chief evangelist of SDI," absolutely supported SDI and was unwilling to negotiate in any way on it.<sup>315</sup> Reagan, who more than once declared that "SDI is not a bargaining chip," was in complete agreement with Weinberger. Both believed that a broad interpretation of the ABM Treaty (1972) would permit the deployment of SDI.<sup>316</sup>

Schultz and Nitze's ideas formed much of the basis for National Security Decision Directives 210 and 214 and a February 23, 1986 letter from Reagan to Gorbachev that laid out America's proposals.<sup>317</sup> The letter called for the relatively easy elimination of intermediate range missiles, though it was uncertain if the Soviets would agree to include their Asian missiles as called for. Reductions in later stages, however, were conditional upon a host of requirements that would be nearly impossible to fulfill, or that gave the United States great latitude in deciding if the conditions had been met. Disarmament was made conditional upon corrections in the imbalance of conventional forces, which the Soviets held an advantage in; full compliance with existing and future treaties (this was in direct reference to recent allegations of Soviet noncompliance); and the peaceful resolution of regional conflicts free of outside interference. SDI, of course, was nonnegotiable. The later stages of the proposal thus did not focus exclusively on arms control, but in all

reality made arms control contingent upon the Soviet Union changing its behavior to the satisfaction of the United States. As Paul Lettow has observed, “Reagan’s aides had tried to bury the prospects for the realization of a nuclear-free world beneath numerous conditions that were unlikely to be fulfilled.”<sup>318</sup> Reagan apparently did not grasp this.

For many months Kenneth Adelman, Casper Weinberger, and Richard Perle argued that the United States should renounce the non-ratified SALT II treaty to teach the Soviets a lesson for the alleged violations of various nuclear arms treaties, including the limits established by SALT II. In March 1986 the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency issued a report to Congress which alleged that the Soviets had violated treaty agreements on nine different accounts, including the construction of a radar system in Krasnoyarsk that violated the ABM Treaty (1972).<sup>319</sup> Accusations of violations had been made by the Americans and the Soviets since 1975, though as Raymond Garthoff observes, the validity of many of the charges was questionable.<sup>320</sup> Ever since Reagan’s announcement of SDI, which had raised troubling questions about compliance with the ABM Treaty (1972), hardliners who supported SDI had raised the issue of Soviet violations to justify both the pursuit of space-based weapon systems and the renunciation of all treaties. Though the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Nitze, and Schultz opposed renouncing SALT II and thought there was nothing to be gained by it, on May 27, 1986, Reagan announced that the United States would no longer abide by SALT II at the end of the year unless the USSR completed “constructive steps” towards limiting its nuclear weapons.<sup>321</sup> As Reagan explained in *An American Life*, he was tired of following the rules while the Soviets violated SALT II.<sup>322</sup> Weinberger and the other hardliners were pleased because they did not want the United States to be bound by any treaty obligations. This viewpoint meshed well with that of Reagan, who long had been critical of U.S.-Soviet arms control treaties, and particularly SALT II which he called “fatally flawed.”<sup>323</sup> In addition to not defining what the constructive steps might be, the announcement dampened the good will generated at Geneva and sent yet another mixed signal to the Soviets as to Reagan’s seriousness in seeking arms reductions.

The announcement also sparked an immediate uproar at home and abroad. Western Europeans denounced the decision and believed that the United States was acting unilaterally without considering their security interests. *The Times* of London exclaimed that Reagan had “come close to making one of the most controversial decisions in his six years in the White House...Its impact on the Western alliance could not be more serious.”<sup>324</sup> The backlash from Capitol Hill was even more damaging. In August, the House slashed the budget for SDI research to 3.1 billion dollars from 5.3 billion. In addition, in a vote of 255 to 186 it banned the future funding of any strategic weapons system that would cause the United States to overstep the ceilings established in SALT II.<sup>325</sup> The hardliners and Reagan’s unilateral atomic diplomacy vis-à-vis the Soviets thus was stymied by Congress and

the European allies. Damaging to the administration, the decision to violate SALT II may have allowed growing moderates like George Schultz and Paul Nitze to exercise greater control over formulating arms control policy.

After much haggling, Reagan finally responded to Gorbachev's January proposal at greater length by writing back on July 25, 1986.<sup>326</sup> While he acknowledged Gorbachev's concern that SDI would give the United States a first strike capability, he denied that the United States intended to acquire such a capability; he also was adamant that SDI would not be used to launch an attack on earth from space, and suggested that SDI research and testing be allowed for five years, through 1991. This was somewhat of a concession to Schultz and Nitze; dating back to the Monday Package they had advocated gaining immediate concessions for some restrictions on SDI. At the end of the five year period, either side would share the technology with the other so long as both sides agreed to eliminate offensive ballistic missiles with the provision that negotiations should take no longer than two years. After the seven year period, either side would be free to deploy if an agreement had not been reached so long as six months notice was given. Reagan thus linked the research and testing of SDI to the future elimination of offensive ballistic missiles: SDI would be developed first; elimination would be conditional upon it.

Caspar Weinberger had suggested the zero option for ballistic missiles in June, not so much because he wanted to eliminate nuclear missiles but rather because he wanted to limit the impact of sharing SDI with the Soviets. As he stated at the June meeting in which he proposed the idea, "it made little sense to commit to share the benefits of advanced defenses with the Soviet Union if the Soviet Union insisted on continuing to retain large numbers of offensive ballistic missiles which would, in turn, attempt to defeat our defenses."<sup>327</sup> Weinberger and Richard Perle did not believe Gorbachev was sincere in improving relations with the West or in reducing arms, nor did they believe that the Soviet Union could change its behavior and drive for global domination. Especially fearful of any type of treaty with the Soviets, they also may have hoped to prevent any significant arms control agreements by proposing the complete elimination of all ballistic missiles, a proposition the Soviet Union was unlikely to accept.

The proposal appealed to Reagan's self-image of himself as a peace maker, and the pair believed that the Soviets would reject the offer since it would involve the elimination of an entire class of weapons in which the Soviets held an advantage. Weapons in which the U.S. held an advantage, such as heavy bombers and cruise missiles, though with limits, would be left on the table. Weinberger and Perle thus reasoned that the United States could present itself as sincere in seeking arms reductions by proposing the zero option for ballistic missiles while simultaneously undermining the arms control process.<sup>328</sup> At the worst, even if agreement was reached, the strategic balance would favor the United States.



Reagan also recommended the elimination of all intermediate range missiles in the letter, which certainly would be a dramatic move that might spur further arms reductions, yet Reagan's long-held suspicions of the Soviets overshadowed the possibility of radical action. In addition to the fundamental disagreement regarding SDI, Reagan's letter was strewn with potential roadblocks that would render the elimination of nuclear missiles a difficult feat. He wrote, for example, that verification would be difficult. The Soviet Union, meanwhile, had unilaterally suspended the testing of nuclear weapons, yet Reagan insisted that the United States would not follow suit because he maintained that testing was central to maintaining a credible nuclear deterrent. By not agreeing to a *quid pro quo* regarding testing, Reagan forfeited common ground upon which further arms control agreements could be forged, and sent mixed signals as to the United States' seriousness in achieving arms reductions.

The mixed signals, in fact, stemmed from Reagan's grand strategy; he sought strategic superiority, yet in the belief that American military superiority would compel the Soviet Union to disarm. How do you simultaneously spend billions of dollars on new weapons systems which you clearly state will not be used as bargaining chips and then propose to eliminate them? On the one hand, Reagan's distrust of the Soviet Union, treaties in general, and his drive to ensure American superiority is evident in his refusal to halt nuclear testing, his attachment to deterrence, his calls for a major arms buildup, and his lack of faith in verification. Yet on the other hand, Reagan claimed that he would be willing to share America's greatest technological achievement – SDI – with the Soviets and indeed the world. What would make him overcome his long-held suspicion of the Soviet Union and compel him to overturn roughly 50 years of atomic diplomacy?

The Soviet Union, of course, also sent mixed signals regarding its seriousness in soothing East-West relations. Despite Gorbachev's desire for withdrawal, the Red Army remained embroiled in Afghanistan, and the Soviets continued to support insurgents in Angola and Nicaragua. After the FBI's arrest of Gennaldi Zakharov, a Soviet spy operating out of the United Nations, the Soviets responded by arresting Nicholas Daniloff, an American journalist working in Moscow for *U.S. News and World Report*, on trumped up charges of espionage in August. Reagan was "mad as hell" – though Reagan was informed that in all reality Daniloff had been an unwitting courier for the CIA and most likely would be found guilty in an American court if tried on similar charges.<sup>329</sup> Reagan, who was especially upset that Gorbachev did not believe him when he vouched for Daniloff's innocence, viewed the arrest as a dirty trick to force the United States to trade a spy for a framed man.<sup>330</sup> Shevardnadze and Schultz worked hard and eventually won the release of Daniloff and a Soviet dissident in exchange for Zakharov's freedom, but the sordid affair provided Reagan with yet another reason to distrust the Soviets.<sup>331</sup>

By mid 1986 the euphoria of the Geneva summit had vanished and the arms control process was stalled. Gorbachev refused to set a date for a Washington

summit because he did not believe that Reagan was sincere in achieving an agreement, while Reagan continued to believe that the Soviet Union had no intention of changing its behavior. In a July 1986 meeting with French Premier Francois Mitterrand, Reagan agreed with Mitterrand that Gorbachev truly was a “modern man,” but then stated the following: “Can we believe that he means to abandon the fundamentals of their policy, namely expansion and global communism? Up to now, Gorbachev has not said that. And as long as they are like that, we cannot sign verifiable treaties.”<sup>332</sup>

Gorbachev met with numerous Western officials and intellectuals during 1986, which strengthened his desire to improve East-West relations and pushed him to reach out to Reagan. As fate would have it, Mitterrand met with Gorbachev in the Kremlin three days after his visit with Reagan. While there he sought to convince Gorbachev that Reagan was not a mere pawn of the military-industrial complex, and that he was interested in improving East-West relations.<sup>333</sup> A mere 10 days later former President Richard Nixon also visited the Kremlin and reassured Gorbachev that Reagan was someone he could work with, and that he too desired peace. During the meeting Gorbachev described the existence of large nuclear arsenals as the most danger condition facing the world and expressed his desire to normalize relations. Nixon likewise sent Reagan a report to reassure him of Gorbachev’s good intentions.<sup>334</sup> This reassurance by an erstwhile conservative statesman like Nixon most likely made Reagan more responsive to the momentous invitation that he received from Gorbachev a mere eight weeks later.

Frustrated by the failure of the United States and the Soviet Union to capitalize upon the informal agreement reached at Geneva on arms control, and perhaps influenced by his meetings with Mitterrand and Nixon, Mikhail Gorbachev hoped dramatic action in a meeting with Ronald Reagan would spur the arms control process forward and establish a foundation for success at the upcoming Washington summit. In a letter hand-delivered to the White House by Foreign Minister Eduward Shevardnadze, he suggested that he and Reagan should “have a quick one-on-one meeting, let us say in Iceland or in London.”<sup>335</sup> Arms control clearly was at the top of Gorbachev’s agenda, yet he believed the nations had not moved “an inch closer to an agreement on arms reductions.”<sup>336</sup> To create a tightly focused discussion at Reykjavik, Gorbachev addressed three areas of concern that Reagan had raised in his July 25 letter.

Gorbachev was concerned that the development of SDI would perpetuate and indeed extend the arms race into space; he suggested that Reagan’s proposal to extend the ABM Treaty for only five years while allowing each side to continue with research and development would undermine the treaty, weaken the arms control process, and bestow military superiority upon the United States. He suggested that the treaty be extended to 15 years, and stated that research must be confined to the laboratory. Interestingly, while SDI was central in Reagan’s mind to arms reductions, Gorbachev believed that adherence to the ABM Treaty would make

significant cuts in strategic offensive arms possible, primarily because neither side would hold a military advantage while each side drew down its offensive forces. Gorbachev was especially fearful that the United States might develop a first strike capability and wanted to ensure that the Soviet Union maintained a retaliatory force until nuclear weapons were abolished. SDI was viewed as dangerous because it would prevent retaliation. On the other hand, Soviet scientists had advised him against building a missile defense system because it would be cheaper and easier to overwhelm SDI with offensive weapon, such as ICBMs, bombers, and cruise missiles, and various decoy. SDI, then, would encourage the Soviets to build up and thus spark a new round in the arms that potentially might extend to space.<sup>337</sup> Gorbachev's paramount goal then was to confine SDI to the laboratory in return for significant nuclear arms reductions. While Anatoly Dobrynin and other members of the Politburo believed Gorbachev was a bit too obsessed with SDI and encouraged him to delink it from other arms control issues, he simply could not do so as Reykjavik approached.<sup>338</sup>

Interestingly, Gorbachev also sought to convince the President that the Soviet Union was not afraid of SDI. "We would do our utmost to devalue such efforts and make them futile," he wrote. "You may rest assured that we have every means to achieve this and, should the need arise, we shall use those means."<sup>339</sup> While Gorbachev's fixation upon SDI at Geneva and Reykjavik suggests that this may have been a bit of brave posturing, when the statement is placed within the larger context of the letter it is apparent that Gorbachev was deeply concerned about SDI, though not for quite the same reason that Reagan and his advisors believed. Because Gorbachev believed that arms reductions were central to ameliorating tensions between the two superpowers, he placed SDI within the larger contours of the Cold War and believed that it would create greater tension between the superpowers and destabilize the arms control process. Gorbachev's primary concern with SDI was his conviction that it would spark a new arms race that would be disastrous for the United States and more so for the Soviet Union. Many of his key advisors shared this sentiment. As Yegor Ligachev observed during a meeting in which Soviet nuclear policy was discussed: "Neither we nor America can carry the burden of an arms race any longer."<sup>340</sup> The concern, then, was a destabilizing new arms race and the economic burden it would place upon the economy at the moment when Gorbachev was desperately attempting to carry out his domestic reforms. While Soviet scientists had already figured out that SDI could be rather cheaply rendered into a Maginot Line in the sky, Gorbachev feared that it would undermine his efforts to reduce nuclear arsenals and complicate his domestic reforms by encouraging the military establishment to demand an ever greater sum of money to build its own ABM system.

Gorbachev also expressed concern regarding the United States' attitude towards the moratorium on nuclear testing, and he stated that he did not think that nuclear verification would be all that difficult.<sup>341</sup> While he gave a nod to other

problems that Reagan had raised that vexed U.S.-Soviet relations, such as conventional forces, chemical weapons, humanitarian concerns, and regional issues, he believed that he and Reagan should primarily focus on arms controls efforts. This was a pragmatic approach; by decoupling arms control from a myriad of others issues, it would be much easier to work towards a solution. Perhaps more importantly, Gorbachev keenly realized that the arms race was the central and most dangerous source of tension between the U.S. and U.S.S.R. Remove the arms race, and you make the other issues easier to resolve.

Reagan agreed to meet in Iceland; this, however, was the only way in which the United States was willing to meet the Soviets halfway. While Reagan had prepared vigorously for Geneva, few preparations were made for Reykjavik and little was expected of the meeting, primarily because misperception of Gorbachev's motives and the lack of a coherent strategy plagued American preparation. Ambassador Jack F. Matlock, Jr. provides a contrary viewpoint and argues that Reagan was very well-prepared for Reykjavik.<sup>342</sup> To a point Matlock is correct in that the State Department prepared briefing books for him, but Reagan's preparations were grounded in the policy decisions that he had made in the months leading up to Reykjavik, not the briefing books. The briefing books, moreover, failed to anticipate Gorbachev's seriousness in achieving an arms control agreement at Reykjavik. Much of this misperception flowed from a misguided belief in SDI's efficacy in spurring negotiation, and a lack of understanding of Gorbachev's motives. Many administration figures, including Reagan, Weinberger, Perle, and Edward Rowney believed that SDI would be operable one day; accordingly, they believed that the Soviet Union feared it because of its military potential. In their minds, this fear was driving Gorbachev to the negotiating table with a singular goal in mind: to kill SDI. Interestingly, though Reagan would not budge on SDI, as the Reykjavik summit approached fears circulated amongst Reagan's right-wing supporters that the crafty Gorbachev – who they viewed as just another communist in a better suit -- might be able to con Reagan into trading SDI for some dubious concessions, as illustrated by the following story.

In early 1986 Reagan met with Lynwood Nofziger in the Oval Office. Nofziger was an old friend and was concerned that Gorbachev might trick him into giving SDI away. "Mr. President, a lot of us are fearful of what is going to go on in Iceland," Nofziger said. "We think there is talk about making a deal, and I want you to know that there are a lot of people out there who support you because of your strong stand against the USSR."

Reagan sought to reassure his friend that he would not be tricked. "Lynwood, I don't want you to ever worry," he said. "I still have the scars on my back from the fights with the communists in Hollywood. I am not going to give away anything."<sup>343</sup>

This exchange is significant because it demonstrates that Reagan headed to Reykjavik with the belief that SDI was a badge of American strength and his own

resolve – it was something that the communists never would be able to trick him out of. While Reagan and his friend feared a cunning trap which the heroic Reagan could evade, the NSC and State Department had no clear picture as to Gorbachev's motives or objectives in meeting with Reagan. "We go into Reykjavik next week with very little knowledge of how Gorbachev intends to use the meeting," wrote Stephen Sestanovich in a National Security Council memorandum for Schultz and Reagan.<sup>344</sup> About the only thing that the NSC was certain of was that Gorbachev would act in a "coy" manner to ease tensions between the United States and Soviet Union so that it might better promote domestic reform. Beyond this observation, the NSC had no real idea as to what Gorbachev's motives were for arranging the meeting.

George Schultz also misperceived Gorbachev's seriousness in seeking arms reductions. In an October 2<sup>nd</sup> memorandum to Reagan, Schultz -- who was occupied at the United Nations at the time -- wrote that the administration should be careful not to present the meeting as a summit, but rather emphasize that progress had been made at it on the long-term goal of arms control.<sup>345</sup> This was characteristic of Schultz, who wanted to project an image of arms control progress to ensure continued Congressional support for Reagan's arms buildup and SDI. Interestingly, the memorandum indicates that Schultz had no idea that Gorbachev was earnest in achieving significant arms reductions, perhaps because he completely misunderstood what drove the Soviets to the negotiating table and their goals. "Arms control will be key," Schultz wrote, "not because that is what the Soviets want, but because we have brought them to the point where they are largely talking from our script."<sup>346</sup> Schultz thus believed that the Soviets were not earnestly seeking an arms control agreement, while on the other hand it was the United States own tough actions that had compelled them to the negotiating table. "The policies you set in motion six years ago have put us in the strong position we are in today," Schultz wrote. "This doesn't mean we will find Gorbachev easy to handle in Reykjavik, but it means we are justified in aspiring to accomplish something useful there."

The imagery of the memorandum – the United States pursued strength to achieve peace, while the Soviets only responded to strength -- both played upon and reinforced Reagan and Schultz' dichotomous view of the world. The Soviets were something like a wild bear; hard to control, wily, and only responsive to force. Reagan's blueprint for Reykjavik, National Security Decision Directive 245, for example, stated that "the policy we have pursued toward the Soviet Union – based upon realism, strength, and dialogue – has created the potential for effective negotiations with the Soviet Union." In the minds of Schultz and Reagan, the United States actively sought peace through strength; it was willing to use force to tame the wild bear in this pursuit. As Schultz wrote, "We are now entering the crucial phase in the effort to achieve real reductions in nuclear forces – an historic achievement in itself, and a major step toward your vision of a safer world for the

future.”<sup>347</sup> This view of the world precluded the possibility that Gorbachev also might be an ambassador of peace for the world, and in fact contributed to the administration’s misguided belief that little could be accomplished at Reykjavik.

The general consensus across the bureaucracies was that at best Reykjavik could lay the groundwork for a successful summit in Washington. “The most favorable outcome,” wrote Ambassador Jack Matlock in a memorandum to the President, “would be an agreed date for Gorbachev’s trip to the United States.”<sup>348</sup> Reagan, meanwhile, in NSDD 245 declared that he did not anticipate signing any agreements in Reykjavik, though he did express the hope that Reykjavik would increase the likelihood of a productive summit in Washington. While pragmatic, this focus on incremental achievements, when coupled with the administration’s broad agenda to change the Soviet Union blinded it to realizing that Gorbachev was about to present serious arms control proposals at Reykjavik. NSDD 245, for example, dictated that Reagan would engage the Soviets in a wide range of issues, including human rights and regional issues, without focusing too heavily on arms control. This focus upon a wholesale change in Soviet behavior instead of readily negotiable arms control agreements contributed to underestimating Gorbachev’s determination to achieve a major breakthrough at Reykjavik. Perhaps more important, though, was the belief that only external pressure could produce change, along with a general misperception of both Gorbachev’s objectives and a lack of acknowledgement of the momentous internally driven changes which were taking place in the Soviet Union at his behest.

As Robert D. English brilliantly demonstrates, a set of ideas (*novoe myshlenie*, or new thinking) that began to develop in the Soviet Union in the 1960s and came to fruition with Gorbachev were the primary engine for his reforms, not economic failure or international pressure. By the latter half of 1986, Gorbachev and his core group of liberal advisors were firmly committed to integrating with the West; as English explains

Rejecting the Leninist-Stalinist precepts of a divided world and innate capitalist hostility in favor of admiration for Western political and economic freedoms, they accordingly embraced liberal priorities over socialist ones. Their “global” identity rejected isolation in favor of integration with “the common stream of civilization.”<sup>349</sup>

In this vein, then, liberal reform at home was linked to a major shift in Soviet foreign policy. In his report to the 27<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in February 1986, Gorbachev dispensed with the old dogma of peaceful coexistence and instead emphasized the interdependence of the world and cooperative security.<sup>350</sup> As he explained in the report:

In one respect the nuclear danger has put all states on an equal footing: in a big war nobody will be able to stand aside or to profit from the misfortunes of others. Equal security is the imperative of the times. Ensuring this security is becoming increasingly a political issue, one that can be resolved only by political means. It is high time to replace weapons by a more stable foundation for the relations among states. We see no alternative to this, nor are we trying to find one.<sup>351</sup>

Gorbachev and his advisors came to realize that the promotion of universal human values such as democracy and human rights were essential for building trust with the West and the reintegration of the Soviet Union into the world of families.<sup>352</sup> In this respect Gorbachev's goals intersected with those of Reagan's, yet it is important to note that Reagan did not grasp that internal reform already was under way. Throughout 1986 Gorbachev, despite great internal opposition, had pushed forward with *perestroika* and steadily replaced hardliners with liberal internationalists, such as Anatoly Chernyaev and Eduard Shevardnadze, who sought reintegration with the West. While the Reagan administration remained focused upon changing Soviet behavior at some future date, Gorbachev had already reached the conclusion that the Soviet Union could not reintegrate with the West so long as it appeared to be a great threat to it. Gorbachev was especially keen to reintegrate with Europe. "We are European," he told the French Ambassador on March 24, 1986. "And we will make Europe and European policies our first priority."<sup>353</sup> Well aware that the Soviet Union's massive conventional forces remained a source of tension between the East and West, in July 1986 the Soviet Union signed a treaty in Stockholm on its conventional forces which allowed for "unprecedented on-site verification measures."<sup>354</sup> Gorbachev and his advisors also were well aware that the presence of the SS-20s in Europe drove a wedge between the Soviet Union and Western Europe and ensured that the United States' would leave its Pershing II missiles pointed straight at the Soviet head.<sup>355</sup> Gorbachev believed the removal of the SS-20s from Europe would ease tensions with Western Europe and solidify European opposition to the Pershing II deployment in Europe.

Above all, Gorbachev wanted to halt the arms race and end the Cold War to ensure that he could reform the Soviet Union and integrate with the West. In striving for such goals, Gorbachev pierced the veil that long had bedeviled arms negotiations – virtually every major arms control proposal put forth by both sides, if ratified, would have increased the security of one nation at the expense of the other. Consistent with his desire for integration, Gorbachev believed that arms proposals only could be successful if they increased the security of both sides. "We are by no means talking about weakening our security," he explained to the Politburo, "but at the same time we have to realize that if our proposals imply weakening U.S. security, then there won't be any agreement."<sup>356</sup>

After the humiliating Chernobyl accident in November 1986 in the Ukraine which killed two people and sent radioactive dust floating over eastern and Western Europe, Gorbachev's fear of nuclear war as did his desire to modernize his nation to prevent another disaster strengthened.<sup>357</sup> The accident drove home the lesson that nuclear weapons are a threat to the entire world and hence a universal problem. In the wake of Chernobyl, Gorbachev's effort to improve East-West relations intensified. The attempted cover-up of the accident by conservative hardliners also pushed Gorbachev to step up his efforts to bring *glasnost* (transparency) to the Soviet Union.<sup>358</sup>

These developments largely went unheeded in Washington, as did Soviet concessions on arms control. George Schultz's above-mentioned memo to the president, for example, suggested that the Soviets were not interested in arms control. Strangely, a memo from within his own State Department contradicted this view and acknowledged that the Soviets believed the ABM Treaty was central to offensive reductions – this obviously indicates an interest in arms control. Soviet concessions, however, were discounted or ignored.<sup>359</sup> Despite concerns about the ABM Treaty, for example, the memo noted that the Soviets were willing to negotiate reducing the time period for adherence to the treaty from 20-25 years to 15 years. This was not the not the sole Soviet concession; the Soviets were moving towards the U.S. position on an equal number of missiles in Europe (100), despite Soviet concern of French and British missiles. The Soviet Union also had unilaterally declared a moratorium on nuclear testing. As the U.S. delegation prepared to fly to Reykjavik, then, it blithely acknowledged Soviet concessions yet was not willing to make any of its own. The Reagan administration, moreover, discounted that the Soviets were sincere in finding a regime for arms verifications and it believed that the Soviets were exploiting the issue to earn propaganda points.<sup>360</sup>

Gorbachev was guardedly optimistic as he travelled to Reykjavik. Ironically, he believed that the U.S. wished to block an arms control agreement because it was fearful that the Soviet economy, if freed of the expensive arms race, would grow more dynamic.<sup>361</sup> While Richard Pipes, Caspar Weinberger, Richard Perle and other administration figures did favor escalating the arms race to shock the Soviet economy, this may have been somewhat of a misperception on Gorbachev's part. He also faced continued opposition to his new thinking and pursuit of arms reductions from hawks in his own military establishment, yet he was confident he could overcome it. Interestingly, at his final meeting before Reykjavik he observed that Reagan faced considerable pressure from right-wing elements on arms reductions as well.<sup>362</sup> He also knew that the Soviet Union would have to make real concessions to negotiate an agreement. At the least, he hoped to make progress on intermediate-range missiles; strengthen the ABM Treaty; and prevent the United States from modernizing its arsenals. "Let us make concessions on intermediate-range missiles," he said, "having France and England in mind. But we will we insist on



non-withdrawal from the ABM Treaty and the cessation of testing – this is what the whole world demands. No “intermediate” approaches will satisfy us.”<sup>363</sup> Gorbachev was hopeful, in fact, because he believed his goals expressed universal values and that he therefore had the momentum of world history on his side.

Unlike the guardedly optimistic Gorbachev, Reagan did not expect to accomplish much, remained suspicious of Soviet motives, and allowed his goal of disarmament to be subsumed within the larger goal of changing Soviet behavior piecemeal through continued military and political pressure. Because he mistakenly believed that American military strength – rather than Gorbachev’s organic desire to reintegrate with the West – would initiate reform in the Soviet Union and had driven him to the negotiating table, he was not willing to make any concessions, but rather saw Soviet concessions as evidence that the United States should apply even more pressure to win even greater concessions. As Paul Nitze wrote in a memo leading up to Reykjavik, the United States should “await Mr. Gorbachev’s marvelous concessions, but we shouldn’t give anything more. Therefore we could come out of these negotiations winning without cost.”<sup>364</sup> Such thinking also influenced the administration’s thinking on SDI – surely the Soviet desire to derail its development meant that they were scared of it. American military pressure, however, served to undermine Gorbachev’s reforms by giving ammunition to conservative hardliners who wanted to use the military threat to bolster the armed forces, block integration with the world, and stymie domestic reform. In addition, Reagan, (more so than Gorbachev) remained under the influence of hard-liners and the military-industrial complex who wanted to block any type of arms control agreement and stood to reap billions in SDI funds. Though the silver lining of 1986 was the growing influence of moderates like Schultz and Nitze, who believed that an INF Treaty might be possible in the future, the Administration’s paramount goal as it prepared for Reykjavik was the elimination of Soviet ballistic missiles and the preservation of its ability to pursue SDI.

In a press briefing just days before Reykjavik, George Schultz explained that the U.S. hoped “to bring out what is the guts of the President’s most recent proposal, namely the proposal that strategic ballistic missiles be eliminated.”<sup>365</sup> This desire to eliminate ballistic rather than strategic missiles suggests that the U.S. wanted to eliminate the Soviet’s strong card before cuts in the broader arena of strategic weapons – which the U.S. held an advantage in – would even be entertained. The goal, then, was either to block an arms control agreement – Pipes, Perle, Weinberger, et al were well aware that the Soviets would never agree to a lopsided agreement -- or to eliminate the Soviet ballistic missile threat while protecting the United States’ modernization program of its strategic weapons and the development of SDI. Schultz, in fact, acknowledged that the primary goal of SDI was to eliminate the ballistic missile threat. “And the whole idea of the Strategic Defense Initiative,” he said, “from the outset has been to make obsolete, so to speak, these strategic ballistic missiles.”<sup>366</sup> This intertwined nature of SDI and

ballistic missiles and the general exclusion of other strategic weapons promised to derail any agreement. An astute reporter, who stated that SDI had been the stumbling block in the past to an agreement, observed that Gorbachev might have new proposals and pressed Schultz to explain how Reagan's position on SDI would be different than in the past. Schultz, who did acknowledge that there might be some room for negotiation on SDI, nevertheless answered that the United States' position on SDI was "eminently reasonable" and that in essence reductions in offensive weapons could not be achieved without SDI, which would both serve as an insurance policy and make strategic ballistic missiles obsolete.

More broadly, Reagan remained committed to a broad agenda cloaked in realist rhetoric but flavored with Wilsonian idealism that focused on changing Soviet behavior in a steady pragmatic manner rather than the pursuit of an immediate and radical arms control agreement. In a meeting with the Executive Exchange Commission on October 6, 1986, Reagan explained that his administration had pursued a prudent, deliberate and step-by-step policy towards the Soviet Union in the pursuit of world peace and freedom.<sup>367</sup> While such pragmatism was not without merit and his rhetoric no doubt stirring to his audience, Reagan's pursuit of an ideal world and his continued portrayal of the world in Manichean terms prevented him from grasping that arms reductions could be achieved through immediate and negotiated agreements. As Reagan pointed out, great moral distinctions existed between the freedom loving United States and the totalitarian Soviet Union.<sup>368</sup> Major agreements would not be reached until the Soviet Union changed its behavior to the liking of the United States. How can a nation possibly sign a treaty with an evil empire? The ideas that Reagan carried with him, then, influenced the decisions that he made at Reykjavik.

Reagan and Gorbachev headed to Reykjavik with very different expectations and goals. Gorbachev was hopeful that the introduction of unexpected and radical proposals might jolt the leaders out of their arms control torpor and lead to an historic agreement. He also believed that SDI would undermine any arms control agreement, and potentially spark a new arms race in space. Accordingly, he wanted to strengthen the ABM Treaty, so much so that he was not yet prepared to delink SDI from the START and INF negotiations, despite reassurances from Soviet physicists that SDI could be cheaply and easily overwhelmed.

Reagan, meanwhile, was convinced that SDI was the only avenue to a nuclear free world and he wanted to dispose of the ABM Treaty altogether, which was reflective of his long-held hostility to treaties and his faith in American technology. As he declared several months before the meeting

If we can develop an idea that shows that these ballistic missiles can be rendered obsolete, that is the time then when Mr. Gorbachev's idea of total elimination of those weapons – that we both could have it.<sup>369</sup>

In the shorter *duree*, the administration's primary goal was to eliminate the Soviet's much feared ballistic missiles while modernizing the American strategic triad so that the Soviets might be compelled to disarm in the hazy future. Interestingly, Reagan seems not to have appreciated the distinction between ballistic and strategic missiles, as evidenced by the preceding quote. He specifically used *ballistic* missiles, and more interestingly observed that Mr. Gorbachev was in favor of totally eliminating that entire class of weapons. Did Reagan not understand the distinction? Did he grasp the difference but want to both eliminate the ballistic missile threat and protect America's strategic weapons? Or had someone in the administration misled Reagan as to Gorbachev's goals? Such questions rose to the fore at Reykjavik, but for the moment it will suffice to say that a bit of the answer can be found in each of the questions.

In closing, the administration's misperception of Gorbachev's motives; its focus upon eliminating ballistic rather than all strategic missiles; and Reagan's reverential belief in the transformative power of SDI, when coupled with Gorbachev's refusal to delink SDI from other areas of negotiation, preordained the failure of Reykjavik and ensured that the strategic relationship of the United States and the Soviet Union would remain little unchanged. On the other hand, momentum was building during 1986 towards the elimination of the less important intermediate-range nuclear forces.

## Chapter Seven

### Running in Place: The Reykjavik Summit and SDI

In recent years the Reykjavik summit has been portrayed as something of a victory for Ronald Reagan, though for different but often overlapping reasons. Reagan triumphalists believe the summit was a success because Reagan avoided the trap sprung by the crafty Gorbachev who wanted to kill SDI. Writers who ascribe to this idea tend to argue that Reagan's arms buildup and his unremitting support of SDI crushed the Soviet Union and led to Reagan's victory in the Cold War. Other writers, the most notable being Paul Lettow, place more emphasis upon the arms concessions that were pocketed at Reykjavik rather than America's triumph in the Cold War. In their view Reagan was a nuclear abolitionist who stood strong on SDI to compel further concessions from the Soviets. His support for SDI and his growing flexibility and conciliatory stance towards the Soviets, moreover, were part of his grand strategy to negotiate nuclear reductions from a position of strength. More moderate historians such as Melvyn Leffler emphasize that the rapport that developed between Reagan and Gorbachev at Geneva and Reykjavik reassured Gorbachev that he could accelerate his domestic reforms without fear of an American attack.

This chapter takes issue with the emerging consensus in its various forms and argues instead that Reykjavik was potentially a missed opportunity to achieve significant strategic arms reductions. Reagan was no nuclear abolitionist and was far from flexible – Reykjavik in fact presented him with his long dreamed of opportunity to say *nyet* to a Soviet leader. His virulent anti-communism, belief in America's providential destiny, and his fervent faith in the transformative powers of SDI were much more instrumental in shaping his worldview and behavior at Reykjavik than any dislike of nuclear weapons that he may have harbored. As this chapter will demonstrate, the advice of his most hawkish advisor, Richard Perle, proved to be more decisive than the counsel of his more moderate counselors George Schultz and Paul Nitze, primarily because Reagan was not yet willing to let go of the United States' quest for strategic superiority and technological dominance.

To avoid unnecessary distraction, Gorbachev and Reagan met far from the corridors of power in remote Reykjavik, Iceland for an impromptu meeting at Gorbachev's invitation. In the words of Kenneth Adelman, the American delegation "did not expect much," while Gorbachev was guardedly optimistic that his bold proposals would achieve a real breakthrough.<sup>370</sup> Every hotel room in Reykjavik was quickly filled, partly because the Soviets brought a large number of journalists and party hacks with them to extol the virtues of Gorbachev's new thinking.<sup>371</sup> The

much larger Soviet entourage housed itself in a large ocean-liner docked in the Reykjavik harbor, while the Americans took refuge at the American embassy and in downtown hotels. Though the Icelandic government proposed that the meetings take place in Reykjavik's leading downtown hotel, both sides agreed that the Hofdi House, located far from downtown and situated on an isolated stretch of beach overlooking the dark Atlantic Ocean, would be a more appropriate venue. Originally built for the French consul in 1909, the white art-nouveau building had been used by the British as an embassy until the 1950s when, upon the insistence of the British Ambassador, it was sold because he believed that it was haunted.<sup>372</sup>

Despite the potential presence of ghosts and goblins, Gorbachev, accompanied by Nikolay Uspensky, his interpreter and note taker, sat down for the first meeting at Hofdi House at 10:40 a.m. with President Reagan, who was accompanied by Ambassador Jack F. Matlock, Jr., who served as his note taker, and Dimitri Zarechnak, his interpreter.<sup>373</sup> The following is not an exact blow-by-blow account of the meeting in strict chronological order, but rather a distillation of the exchange that took place between the two leaders. I have relied upon both American and Soviet transcripts which are available at the National Security Archives; though they are nearly identical in most regards, I do indicate when there are differences. I only supply a page number for direct quotes to avoid cluttering the text.

After exchanging pleasantries, Gorbachev suggested that they should alternate between one-on-one meetings and meetings accompanied by their foreign ministers, and that each man should present his general views on the important issues to be discussed, and then invite Schultz and Shevardnadze in to discuss specific proposals. Reagan agreed to the format and stated that such topics as intermediate-range missiles, the ABM Treaty and defensive weapons in space, strategic arms reductions, and verification were important. The American minutes of the meeting state that Reagan remarked that the tricky nature of verification made him think of the old Russian proverb, "*Doveryai no proveryai*" (Trust but verify). Reagan apparently was so fond of the only three Russian words that he knew (other than *nyet*) that he repeated the proverb repeatedly to Gorbachev in their meetings, who grew increasingly exasperated with hearing it. Interestingly, the American minutes of the meeting state Gorbachev smiled and nodded his head in agreement upon hearing it, while the Soviet minutes do not record his reaction to it. Significantly, he stated that the U.S. wanted to pursue the 50% reduction in strategic arms that was agreed to at Geneva, though he emphasized that the United States was concerned by the great throw-weight that the Soviets large ICBMs carried. He also mentioned that while agreements were hard to come by, he and the American public would like to see progress in a whole range of issues, including human rights and regional conflicts. Reagan then elaborated at length as to why human rights were important to ameliorating US-Soviet tensions, which seemed to annoy Gorbachev who tried to turn the discussion back to arms control by stating that the issue of human rights could be considered later. In essence, then, the U.S.

position had not changed since Geneva. Reagan did not carry any new proposals with him to Reykjavik for the elimination of strategic arms, and in perhaps a pragmatic vein he remained committed to interim steps towards the elimination of nuclear weapons and the promotion of slow change in the Soviet Union.<sup>374</sup>

After inviting Schultz and Shevardnadze in, Gorbachev presented a series of major proposals – with the proviso that specifics should be discussed later -- that he hoped would shock the United States into joining with the Soviet Union to halt the nuclear arms race. Demonstrating the seriousness of the proposals, Gorbachev observed that they took into consideration the security interests of each nation; as Gorbachev believed, anything less would only lead to superiority for one side and thus smash any chance that the arms race might be halted. Gorbachev presented concrete proposals for the three main areas of arms negotiations that long had been carried on by the nuclear superpowers.

Gorbachev first addressed strategic arms. He noted the Geneva agreement to reduce them by 50%, and then made a major concession. He announced that the Soviets no longer would count all missiles that potentially could strike Soviet territory as strategic weapons. The Soviets had long considered any missiles that could strike each nation's territory strategic weapons. The United States and its allies possessed numerous INFs and forward-based systems that could strike Soviet territory, while the Soviets (who relied upon their ICBMs) possessed few if any such weapons that could strike the United States. The Soviets, then, had defined strategic weapons in a rather loose way with the hopes that they could chip away at a significant Western advantage. To allow the United States and its allies to retain this advantage was a significant concession, though Gorbachev did state that the 50% reduction would not be quite in the way that the United States had proposed. He also announced that the Soviet Union “was prepared to meet U.S. concerns regarding Soviet heavy missiles by reducing them substantially – not just to a trivial degree – but substantially.” Though Gorbachev was willing to make deep concessions, he warned Reagan that both sides would have to meet half way and that the Soviets were well aware of the American advantage in SLBMs and the great accuracy of its warheads.<sup>375</sup>

In a nod to the zero option, Gorbachev proposed the complete elimination of American and Soviet INFs in Europe; dramatically, he also announced that the Soviets would no longer link British and French INFs to an INF agreement between the United States and Soviet Union. This was a major concession that would leave in place a sizeable number of missiles within striking distance of the Soviet homeland. Though Gorbachev went half way in meeting Reagan's zero zero option, he refused to eliminate Soviet INFs in Asia, though he did state that the issue could be negotiated.

Finally, Gorbachev reiterated the long-held Soviet position that the ABM Treaty should be strengthened and adhered to for a period of at least 10 years, to be followed by negotiations for three to five years to withdraw from it. During the 10

year interval, testing would be confined to the laboratory. In addition, ASAT systems would be banned. Gorbachev's position on SDI was not novel or unexpected, but his other proposals offered deep concessions, though in presenting all three areas as a package he effectively linked a treaty on ballistic missile defense to intermediate range missiles and strategic weapons.<sup>376</sup>

Reagan was delighted with the proposals, though he pushed for zero intermediate range missiles in Asia since the missiles could easily be moved to Europe. He also stated that he would like to eliminate all strategic weapons. More significantly, he grasped the link that Gorbachev had created between missile defense and strategic weapons, yet he was not willing to bend on SDI. "Regarding strategic weapons," he said, "we would also like to go to zero, but we draw the line regarding the ABM provision the Soviets have proposed. The point is that SDI should make the elimination of nuclear weapons possible."<sup>377</sup> He then reiterated the American pledge to share SDI if it proved feasible, and observed that missile defense was necessary in case a madman like Hitler developed a nuclear weapon. Gorbachev's dramatic proposals from the outset, then, were hampered by SDI, which is evident from the heated yet redundant exchange that erupted between the principals. As Matlock observed in his memoirs, Gorbachev was patently disappointed that Reagan had not responded more favorably to his proposals.<sup>378</sup> Gorbachev nevertheless pushed forward and countered that SDI could be overwhelmed; his real fear was that the pursuit of missile defense would simply transfer the volatile arms race to an even more dangerous environment. Reagan, meanwhile, clung to his vision that SDI was the only vehicle to nuclear salvation. When Gorbachev stated that the Soviets knew that SDI could be used as an offensive weapon, Reagan rebutted that the United States had no intention whatsoever to use it as such, and in fact would not be able to do so if offensive weapons were eliminated. Much as gas masks had served as protection against gas after World War One, it simply would serve to protect against a madman or rogue state who might decide to launch a missile. Gorbachev's dramatic proposals, then, quickly were subsumed by the same old arguments regarding SDI that had bedeviled the leaders since its dramatic unveiling. The only new thing that Reagan really sought was to set a date for a summit in Washington – he apparently was not aware that he already was at a summit.

The first meeting ended and both sides convened for lunch. During a working lunch meeting, Reagan's aides expressed surprise at Gorbachev's proposals. Paul Nitze called it "the best proposal we have had in 25 years, while George Schultz later observed that it was pleasing to find the Soviets heading in the American direction. Reagan, meanwhile, jokingly asked everyone assembled if the security bubble that they had met in could hold goldfish if it was filled with water."<sup>379</sup>

Reagan opened the second meeting by agreeing with Gorbachev that he believed that arms reductions were the highest priority, with the reduction of ballistic missiles being the central objective. He then discussed three areas in

which agreement seemed possible. Reagan acknowledged that in principle an agreement had been reached to reduce ballistic missiles by 50 percent, though the United States proposed a reduction to 4500 units, while the Soviets desired reductions to 6400 to 6800 units. While a gap still existed, Reagan said he was willing to discuss smaller reductions. In a rather detailed discussion, Reagan also stated that the United States was willing to accept limits on air-launched cruise missiles, SLBMs, and heavy bombers. This was a major concession; so far so good, Reagan in essence was willing to make significant cuts in weapon classes in which the United States held an advantage to encourage the Soviet Union to reduce its ICBM levels. Reagan, however, cautioned that such “an agreement must not be made hostage to progress in other directions.”<sup>380</sup> Reagan also opined that verification was an important issue in which progress could be made. As for INFs, Reagan – who stated that he was disappointed by Gorbachev’s INF proposal -- once again pushed for a global zero, though he was willing to accept 100 warheads in Europe “if other aspects are resolved satisfactorily in the interim agreement?”<sup>381</sup>

While Gorbachev and Reagan did inch closer to one another on verification and INFs, Gorbachev sought to clarify the American position on strategic missiles when he asked if Reagan shared his “goal of reducing strategic offensive missiles by 50 percent.”<sup>382</sup> (Reagan had vacillated between the first and second round between stating that he wanted eliminate and strategic and ballistic missiles). To emphasize that he was not only referring to ballistic missiles and to simplify the reduction process, Gorbachev proposed a 50 percent reduction in all strategic weapons across the board, including “ground-launched missiles, submarine-launched missiles, and missiles carried by strategic bombers.”<sup>383</sup> A 50% reduction would be simple and end the years of haggling over sub-limits and ceilings. Reagan expressed interest, especially after Gorbachev assured him that the Soviets would reduce their feared SS-18s by 50%, yet he was justifiably worried that the Soviets, with their much larger ballistic missile arsenals, would be left with more weapons under such a scheme. Nevertheless, it was a positive step, so much so that Schultz called the proposal “an interesting one, a bold one.”<sup>384</sup> The bold proposal, however, and the movement towards agreement on verification, strategic weapons, and INFs quickly petered out when the discussion devolved to bickering over adherence to the ABM Treaty and SDI. Like an old married couple, each side presented the same old arguments. Reagan was certain that the world needed missile defense in case a maniac like Khadafy got his hands on some missiles. Gorbachev, of course, was certain that strengthening the ABM Treaty would facilitate arms control reductions. Reagan, as he had done before, offered to share SDI with the Soviets by signing a treaty. The offer only seemed to outrage the exasperated Gorbachev, who declared:

Excuse me, Mr. President, but I do not take your idea of sharing SDI seriously. You don’t want to share even petroleum equipment,



automatic machine tools or equipment for dairies, while sharing SDI would be a second American revolution. And revolutions do not occur all that often. Let's be realistic and pragmatic. That's more reliable.<sup>385</sup>

After this the dialogue travelled along well-worn ground, but at Reagan's suggestion it was agreed that two meetings would take place that night— one on arms control, the other on humanitarian and regional issues – to salvage some type of agreement at Reykjavik.

Paul Nitze, who chaired the American arms control contingent in the evening, was joined by Max Kampelman, Mike Glitman, Richard Perle, Ronald Lehman, Bob Linhard, Admiral Jonathan Howe, Ken Adelman, General Edward Rowney, and Henry “Hank” Cooper. Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev chaired the Soviet side and was joined by Karpov, Falin, Georgiy Arbatov, and Yevgeniy Velikov. Akhromeyev was an avid reader of James Fennimore Cooper in his youth and self-described “last of the Mohicans.”<sup>386</sup> As a teenager he had fought valiantly in the Battle of Stalingrad, and then steadily rose through the ranks to his current position as the chief of staff of the Soviet Union's armed forces. Though tough and determined, Nitze came to respect his sharp mind and steady resolve in the dark early morning hours as the all night meeting demonstrated that the Cold War antagonists could find common ground even beyond a shared love of great American literature. While the results of the meeting would not be binding, the discussion would highlight areas in which the two sides were in agreement and disagreement in a joint communiqué that would serve to guide the planned meeting between Gorbachev and Reagan the following morning.<sup>387</sup>

Fueled by adrenaline and a mutual respect for one another, Nitze and Akhromeyev achieved a breakthrough in defining how strategic weapons should be reduced. The Soviets long had maintained that each side should eliminate 50 percent of its weapons in a category by category approach; this approach would lead to unequal end limits in categories in which one side held numerical superiority. Nitze was especially concerned that the Soviets would be left with a far greater number of heavy ICBMs than the United States, while Akhromeyev obviously wanted to retain this advantage. Nitze pushed for equal end limits and proposed that a ceiling of 6000 ballistic missile warheads be established, with ICBMs, SLBMs, and long-range ALCMs included in the mix. Each side also would be limited to an aggregate mix of 1600 ICBM and SLBM launchers and heavy bombers. After six hours of intense haggling, Akhromeyev arose at 2 a.m. and stated that he would return in one hour. He most likely paid a visit to Gorbachev in an attempt to receive authorization to break the deadlock on START. Nitze, meanwhile, braved the frigid night air to call upon a remarkably alert George Schultz at around 2 in the morning.

Nitze described for Schultz the challenges they had encountered in the negotiations, as well as the problems that the conservative members of the

delegation were creating for the Americans.<sup>388</sup> General Rowney, who refused to meet the Soviets halfway on any of the issues, made it difficult for Nitze to break free of the old American positions that long had stalled progress. Schultz told Nitze to stand firm on equal outcomes, but he also advised him not to be bound by every little detail of the old American position. Schultz, who wanted Nitze to take advantage of the Soviet offer to slash ballistic missiles by 50 percent, realized that dogmatic inflexibility would torpedo the meeting. As for INFs, he urged an agreement on everything but the Asian missiles. Schultz thus displayed a growing flexibility, and in fact told Nitze that he was the boss of the meeting and gave him wide latitude. He did, however, remain firmly committed to SDI and the belief that it was the impetus behind the Soviet's desire for weapons reductions. "Get SDI deployment worked into the equation so that continuing reductions in offensive weapons are clearly the result of a continuing SDI program," he instructed Nitze.<sup>389</sup>

With Schultz's green-light to do what he "thought was right," Nitze returned to Hofdi House and made great progress over the next several hours with Akhromeyev, who apparently received the go-ahead from his boss as well. It was broadly agreed that each side should limit its strategic arsenal to 6000 warheads and 1600 delivery vehicles; this was a major victory for the United States because it represented the long sought after goal of equal end-limits, plus Akhromeyev finally conceded that strategic bombers armed with short-range missiles and gravity bombs would only count as one delivery vehicle.<sup>390</sup> An agreement almost was reached on INFs as well, though the Soviets refused to budge on Asia, though they did once again acknowledge that British and French missiles would not need to be included in an INF agreement. The Cold War antagonists had thus found mutual ground on which reductions could be forged, yet fundamental disagreement on nuclear testing and especially the ABM Treaty prevented the realization of strategic reductions.

Akhromeyev reiterated the Soviet position that if strategic reductions were pursued neither side should withdraw from the ABM Treaty for 10 years, and that research on ABM defense should be confined to the laboratory. Nitze offered to share SDI, but Akhromeyev expressed deep skepticism that the United States would share it, and he once again pointed to the interlinked nature of strategic defense and offense. "You offer to simultaneously reduce strategic weapons and create new strategic defense systems," he explained. "These two things cannot be synchronized, what you are offering calls for an exceptional level of trust."<sup>391</sup> While Nitze and Schultz viewed the meeting as a great success and believed that the Soviets were coming their way, they could not fully grasp that an agreement on strategic weapons could have been reached but for the inflexible American position on SDI; alternatively, one could say Soviet insistence upon adherence to the ABM Treaty was the stumbling block, yet the Soviets simply wanted the United States to adhere to an already ratified treaty. As Akhromeyev told Nitze, "We brought closer

our positions on strategic weapons quite well, but completely disagreed on the ABM. This makes strategic weapons reductions impossible.”<sup>392</sup>

Despite the American adherence to the pursuit of ABM defense, which would render any agreement difficult to reach, some of the more conservative members of the negotiating team may have been concerned that the ice might be thawing with the Soviets and that an arms control agreement might be reached. As Shultz notes in his memoirs, it would be much easier for Gorbachev and Reagan to deal with one another without the hard-liners talking in their ears.<sup>393</sup> Ironically, then, as the Cold War antagonists began to move towards one another on some positions, a schism was growing in the American delegation. Nitze and Schultz, for example, clearly were excited by the progress that had been made in the all night session, yet both men’s memoirs note conservative resistance to an agreement.<sup>394</sup>

The Sunday morning session witnessed yet another Soviet concession. Gorbachev offered zero INFs in Europe, excluding British and French missiles, and one hundred Soviet INFs in Asia with 100 American INFs on its own territory (which would be within striking distance of the Soviet Union if placed in Alaska). In what by now was a familiar pattern, Gorbachev urged Reagan to make concessions of his own and pointed out that SDI was central to any agreement. The pair then sparred over each man’s interpretation of history; Reagan argued that the United States had good reason to fear the Soviet Union since it most likely was still guided by the dictates of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, both of whom believed that socialism could not rest until the world was brought under its heel. Gorbachev, meanwhile, explained that the Soviet Union was fearful of abandoning the ABM Treaty, and pointed out that it had been ratified after much negotiation and thought because it was realized that the pursuit of missile defense would spark an arms race in space and encourage the construction of even greater numbers of offensive missiles. The highlight of the meeting, however, was Gorbachev’s suggestion that delegates from each side should meet to see what type of agreements could be reached before he and Reagan reconvened for one last unplanned meeting later in the day.<sup>395</sup>

Shevardnadze and Schultz faced off with one another later in the day at opposite heads of the table; their aides were seated along the length of the table. Shultz opened by attempting to steer the group to a discussion of nuclear testing, an issue that he believed could be resolved.<sup>396</sup> Shevardnadze had other matters on his mind – he clearly believed all other issues were superfluous. He alleged that the Soviets had made all of the concessions, and indeed appeared to be attempting to goad Schultz into offering some of his own. Shevardnadze wanted an agreement on SDI, including continued adherence to the ABM Treaty and an agreement that neither side would withdraw from it for ten years.

While this icy exchange took place, Bob Linhard wrote on a pad of paper, most likely with input from Richard Perle, who was peering over his shoulder. When he was finished, Poindexter and Schultz read and then gave their assent to it.

Schultz then read it aloud to Shevardnadze, explaining that it was an attempt to break the deadlock that had set in.

Both sides would agree to confine itself to research, development and testing which is permitted by the ABM Treaty, for a period of 5 years, through 1991, during which time a 50% reduction of strategic nuclear arsenals would be achieved. This being done, both sides will continue the pace of reductions with respect to the remaining ballistic missiles, with the goal of the total elimination of all offensive ballistic missiles by the end of a second 5-year period. As long as these reductions continue at the appropriate pace, the same restrictions will continue to apply. At the end of the 10-year period, with all offensive ballistic missiles eliminated, either side would be free to deploy defenses.<sup>397</sup>

According to Schultz, the Linhard-Perle formula was a bold proposal designed to break the impasse, yet in all reality it built upon Perle and Weinberger's earlier suggestions and lopsided arms control proposals, all of which were designed to thwart an arms control agreement.<sup>398</sup> Shevardnadze quickly expressed concern, and enquired why the United States would want to deploy defenses in 10 years if all strategic missiles were eliminated. He did not comment on what could have been a more contentious and non-negotiable issue, however, namely the wording of the proposal. During the first five year period, a "50% reduction of *strategic nuclear arsenals* would be achieved." While the terminology was not clearly defined in the formula, strategic nuclear arsenals presumably would encompass all strategic nuclear weapon systems from each nation's triad. While asymmetries might remain at the end of the five year period, cuts would be made across the board. During the next five year period, however, only *ballistic* missiles would be reduced, with the goal of their total elimination. This formula would leave 50% of each nation's other strategic nuclear weapons on the table. Such a formula would clearly favor the United States, who held an advantage in ALCMs and SLCMs, to the disadvantage of the Soviets, whose advantage lay in ballistic missiles. Furthermore, the Soviets most likely would not agree to the simultaneous elimination of their ballistic missiles and the deployment of SDI. Linhard and Perle, with their strong dislike of arms control and their history of loading proposals to be impossible to meet, were well aware of this. Nevertheless, Schultz told Shevardnadze that he would have to present the proposal to the President, and joked that "I don't know how the president will react to it. If, after we break, you hear some pounding in our area, you'll know that is the president knocking my head against the wall."<sup>399</sup>

The Soviets and Americans broke from the meeting and met with their respective leaders in other rooms – about 10 Americans assembled in a restroom, apparently because it was one of the few private places in the Hofdi House. While Reagan held court and stood on the "throne" as Schultz briefed him on the Linhard-

Perle formulation, several men stood in the bathtub. Not surprisingly, Reagan was pleased. “He gets his precious ABM Treaty,” Reagan said with a hint of sarcasm, “and we get all his ballistic missiles. And after that we can deploy SDI in space. Then it’s a whole new ball game.”<sup>400</sup>

According to the journalist Jay Winik, Reagan then asked Perle if it would be possible to eliminate ballistic missiles in such quick fashion. While Reagan’s apparent later confusion over the difference between ballistic and strategic missiles calls into question his grasp of the difference between the two, Perle responded that the U.S. most likely could eliminate ballistic missiles within the proposed time-frame because it was developing cruise missiles and stealth bombers.<sup>401</sup> This response indicates that Reagan was not so much asking if it would be technically possible to eliminate ballistic missiles in a short time period, but rather if a credible deterrent to Soviet aggression would remain intact. In other words, was the United States modernization of other weapons classes sufficient to deter the Soviets? Given the long-held belief shared by Reagan and his advisors that American nuclear weapons were necessary to deter the Soviet Union, particularly in the European theater because of purported Soviet superiority in conventional forces, Reagan’s primary concern was the maintenance of a credible deterrent.<sup>402</sup> Furthermore, Perle’s answer indicates that Reagan at least partially grasped the distinction between the broad term strategic weapons and the more narrow term ballistic missiles. Despite the fact that Reagan called the proposal “the most sweeping and important arms control proposal in the history of the world,” this exchange, when coupled with Reagan’s observation that it would be a whole new ball game when SDI was deployed in space, suggests that Reagan’s real, immediate goal was the modernization of the United States’ strategic arsenal and the complete elimination of the Soviet ballistic missile threat, all of which would allow the United States to achieve superiority at all rungs of the escalation ladder.<sup>403</sup> Deep offensive strategic cuts – with SDI as the catalyst – would only come later. Schultz’s remembrance of the unfolding of events in the restroom and Reagan’s reaction to the Linhard-Perle formulation supports this view. “His most ardently held goal as president was his desire,” Schultz recalled, “to work to rid the American people of the threat of annihilation from ballistic missiles carrying nuclear warheads.”<sup>404</sup> The Linhard-Perle formula was not a sweeping arms control proposal, then, but rather a move designed to sweep the Soviet’s best pieces – including the rather simple but formidable ballistic missiles (or rooks) off the board. America’s strongest pieces – including the queen (or SDI) – meanwhile would remain in play. At the least, a Soviet rejection of the proposal would be good fodder for the propagandist mill. In the larger strategic realm, it is curious that Reagan only would consult Perle rather than the JCS and State Department as to the larger issues that might arise regarding the nation’s strategic deterrence and its relationship with nations harbored under the American umbrella of nuclear deterrence.

With anticipation that history might be in the making, Gorbachev, Shevardnadze, Reagan, and Schultz sat down for one final, unplanned meeting.<sup>405</sup> Gorbachev opened with what by then should have been a well-known position to the American contingent. His proposal was consistent with his objectives for the meeting, his comments in earlier sessions, and his past correspondence with Reagan, thus it should not have been a surprise to anyone: “The USSR and U.S. would pledge not to exercise their right to withdraw from the unlimited ABM Treaty for 10 years, and to comply strictly with all its provisions...Testing of all space components of ABM defense in space shall be prohibited except for laboratory research and testing.”<sup>406</sup> While Gorbachev proposed to confine SDI to the laboratory, he actually had retreated from his earlier position in which he wanted to strengthen, rather than just enforce the ABM Treaty. Gorbachev also proposed to eliminate strategic weapons all together with a simple formula. Each side would eliminate 50% of its strategic offensive weapons within five years. During the second five year period, the remaining weapons would be destroyed. While Gorbachev did not provide details as to how such an ambitious plan would be carried (which weapons classes would be eliminated first? would cuts be across the triad? and so on) it was a promising proposal and it can be assumed that he was referring to the entire triad. Further, in light of the Akhromeyev-Nitze meeting, the Soviets were willing to negotiate equal end limits in the reduction of strategic weapons during the first five year time period with the ultimate goal of the complete abolition of strategic nuclear weapons. As he remarked, “In this way, by the end of 1996 all the strategic offensive weapons of the USSR and the U.S. will have been eliminated.”<sup>407</sup> It bears worth repeating that it was Gorbachev who proposed the elimination of all strategic weapons.

Reagan then presented the American position. He proposed to limit each side to research, development, and testing permitted by the ABM Treaty for five years; during this time period each nation’s strategic nuclear arsenals would be reduced by 50 percent. The key word in the proposal was permitted and the important missing word was *laboratory*; by crafting the proposal in this way, the Reagan administration, which long had pushed for a broad interpretation of the treaty, hoped to gain wide latitude in determining what was permitted by the treaty. During the next five year period, the ABM Treaty would remain in force and both sides would seek to eliminate all of their offensive *ballistic* missiles. At the end of the 10-year time period, each side would have the “right to deploy defensive systems.”<sup>408</sup> It thus was Gorbachev who initially proposed to eliminate all strategic nuclear weapons; Reagan only proposed to abolish all ballistic missiles.

Gorbachev apparently was so intent upon ensuring continued adherence to the ABM Treaty that he did not respond to Reagan’s proposal to abolish all offensive ballistic missiles during the second five-year period; instead, he once again insisted that adherence to the ABM Treaty for 10 years was essential for achieving reductions. As if to emphasize that the Soviet interpretation of what was permitted

by the ABM Treaty was very different than that of the Americans he stated that all space-based defense research must take place in the laboratory. At this point, Gorbachev could have agreed to Reagan's position, especially considering that research on SDI most likely would not have escaped the laboratory for 10 years anyway. But much as Reagan stubbornly clung to his belief that SDI would be operable, Gorbachev refused to bend on a weapon system that he did not believe would be effective or operable anytime soon anyway. Gorbachev, instead, sought to ensure continued confinement of SDI to the laboratory, while Reagan, who once again observed that the two sides had different interpretations of what was permitted by the ABM Treaty, pushed to expand SDI research and testing into space within an expansive interpretation of the treaty.

After much bickering over well-worn issues, Reagan, who was fond of reducing complex issues to tales and parables, then told a story to impress upon Gorbachev why he should accept his proposal. Reagan imagined that in 10 years, he and Gorbachev would meet in Iceland once again to destroy the last two missiles remaining in the world (he evidently did not consider the missiles that other countries possess). Gorbachev, who would not recognize Reagan because of his old age, would say "Hey Ron is that really you?"<sup>409</sup> Mikhail and the elderly Ron would then destroy the world's last missiles and the entire world would then throw a great party to celebrate.

The story is telling because it demonstrates that Reagan's dream of a nuclear free world was not an immediate policy objective but rather a fantasy or idealized vision for the world to pursue. Reagan was so fond of viewing the world in terms of heroes and villains that he was certain that some madman or rogue state would develop a missile and lob it at the United States; the simple elimination of Soviet and American nuclear missiles that actually existed would not be enough to shield the world from a threat that might exist in the future and thus could not fulfill Reagan's vision of what an ideal world would look like.

While amused by the story, Gorbachev did not bite and observed that he didn't know if he would be alive in 10 years to observe such a momentous event. Reagan, though he was much older than Gorbachev, replied that he was certain that he would still be alive.

Gorbachev then observed: "Sure you will. You've passed the dangerous age for men, and now you have smooth sailing to be a hundred. But these dangers still lie ahead for me, for a man they come by the age of 60."<sup>410</sup> On a more serious note, Gorbachev then offered an incisive observation that cut to the matter of arms control, namely that the only way the world could win was through mutual security and the mutual reduction of the nuclear threat. "I still have to meet with President Reagan, who I can see really hates to give in. President Reagan wants to be the winner. But in this case, on these matters, there can be no one winner – either we both win or we both lose. We're in the same boat."<sup>411</sup>

Reagan: "I know I won't live to see a hundred if I have to live in fear of these damned missiles."<sup>412</sup>

Gorbachev: "Well, let's reduce them and eliminate them."<sup>413</sup>

"This is a rather strange situation," replied Reagan, who apparently realized his refusal to bend on SDI might prevent him from achieving his dream of a distant nuclear free world. "You are in favor of a 10-year period. I have said that I will not give up on SDI. But both of us, obviously, can say that the most important thing is to eliminate nuclear arsenals."<sup>414</sup>

"But you wouldn't have to give up SDI, because laboratory research and testing would not be prohibited," pointed out Gorbachev in an attempt to overcome the major sticking point of the negotiations; clearly fearful that an imbalanced treaty would spark yet another round of the arms race, he then continued, "I am categorically against any situation where our meeting results in one winner and one loser."<sup>415</sup> Having staked their major positions once again, the two continued to attempt to persuade the other to come around to his position. Reagan was convinced that SDI was the world's best hope to free itself of the nuclear menace; Gorbachev believed that a strong ABM Treaty as each side drew down its arsenals was the path to salvation.

Perhaps to move the discussion towards an area in which agreement might be reached, Schultz asked Gorbachev if his ultimate goal during the second five-year period was the elimination of strategic offensive weapons. When Gorbachev affirmed that the goal was to eliminate all such strategic offensive weapons, Schultz stated that "we are talking about the elimination of offensive ballistic missiles."<sup>416</sup> In an incredulous tone and most likely in reference to the Akhromeyev-Nitze meeting, Gorbachev responded that he thought an agreement already had been reached to eliminate strategic weapons in all three legs of the strategic triad. Gorbachev's surprise at this change in the American position also indicates that he was so focused upon SDI when entering into this phase of the negotiations that he may not have been aware of what the second five year period actually entailed until this moment. Returning to what he believed to be the original agreement, he stated that an agreement should be reached to reduce all strategic offensive weapons, not just strategic ballistic missiles. In clear reference to the Akhromeyev-Nitze meeting, he stated "we're talking not only about missiles but about all strategic offensive weapons. Especially considering that, as I understand it, our experts have agreed to your proposal regarding the rules for counting bombers with bombs and SREM missiles."<sup>417</sup>

At this point a decision was reached to take a break so that each leader might meet with his advisors.



With his excited advisors gathered around, Reagan stood at an historic crossroads; the Soviet Union and the United States were faced with the possibility of eliminating all strategic nuclear missiles, but it would require the confinement of Reagan's beloved SDI to the laboratory for 10 years. Turning to Richard Perle, Reagan sought to understand if it would be possible to both abolish nuclear weapons and develop SDI if it remained in the laboratory. "Can we carry out research under the restraints the Soviets are proposing?"<sup>418</sup>

Perle well understood the importance of the question. Reagan did not ask if it would be possible to conduct research outside of the laboratory within 10 years, but rather assumed it would be. Though such a technical question would best be answered by a scientist or engineer and not Perle, Reagan had no need of such advice since he was firmly convinced that his vision could be realized if not constrained by political forces. In this vein, the question may have been more of a rhetorical fishing expedition than anything else. SDI was more important than the negotiated settlement of nuclear reductions because in Reagan's mind it was the only way to achieve reductions. It had to be protected, however, from domestic political opponents, especially Congress. Reagan asked Perle first because he knew he would receive the validation he was seeking. If Perle said no, SDI would be protected from Congress and other detractors, and in the off-chance that he did say yes, Reagan could pocket a major arms deal, continue SDI research, and protect his flank from conservative criticism. As Jay Winik writes, Reagan always could say, "Richard Perle assured me..."<sup>419</sup>

Perle answered almost immediately. "Mr. President, we cannot conduct the research under the terms he's proposing, it will effectively kill SDI."<sup>420</sup>

That was all Reagan needed to hear. According to Jay Winik, as told to him by Richard Perle, Reagan paused and pondered this, though in all reality he had already made his decision.<sup>421</sup> The representative of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Don Regan urged him to accept the deal and were not overly worried that Gorbachev's wording would kill SDI research, but he was not listening to anyone, except perhaps to Kenneth Adelman who backed Perle. He then asked for Schultz and Nitze's opinion. Both of his senior advisors urged him to accept the deal with the proviso that they could worry later if the necessary research to develop SDI could be conducted within the laboratory. Perle and Schultz's memoirs bear this remembrance of events out. Both of them had long wanted to preserve SDI, but both were willing to use it as a bargaining chip and neither was completely convinced of its efficacy nor did they believe that it would be deployable any time soon. Given this pragmatism, both were well aware that SDI research most likely would not escape the laboratory within 10 years anyway and hence much could be gained by concluding a substantive arms agreement with Gorbachev. Perle, on the

other hand, realized much could be gained by holding onto SDI. Arms control agreements could be avoided, conservative critics muzzled, and a president reassured that he was doing the right thing. It is especially important to note that Reagan, when confronted with his most important decisions, immediately turned to the hawkish Richard Perle for advice, and not the more moderate Nitze or Schultz.

The group then discussed Gorbachev's proposal to eliminate all strategic arms, rather than just ballistic missiles. As Kenneth Adelman writes, he had to explain the difference between ballistic and strategic missiles to Reagan, Schultz, and others, most of whom still did not grasp the distinction after his impromptu lesson. According to Adelman, Reagan was too concerned about the big picture and SDI, while Schultz seemed preoccupied with preserving the gains already made.<sup>422</sup> Gorbachev could not agree to eliminate all ballistic missiles if the United States' formidable cruise missiles and bombers remained deployed, though this is what Adelman pushed for. The elimination of all strategic missiles, however, would leave neither side with a clear advantage, which worried Reagan's advisors since the Soviet Union would retain its superior conventional army. According to Winik, Reagan's advisors told him that the United States would not possess any means to protect against the Soviet Union's massive conventional army. This discussion points to one of the fundamental flaws of imagining SDI as the key to nuclear arms reductions; Reagan was reluctant to accept Gorbachev's proposal to eliminate all strategic arms because he believed that the United States needed to retain nuclear weapons to protect Western Europe against Soviet conventional forces, yet he nor his advisors did not address how SDI would resolve this problem.<sup>423</sup> Even if it worked and was deployed, it would be useless against conventional forces. The Reagan administration had long believed that a nuclear deterrent was necessary in Europe because of the eastern bloc's superiority in conventional weapons. The United States would have several options: negotiate a separate conventional forces treaty; accept this asymmetrical relationship and overturn roughly 40 years of geostrategic thought – which is something Reagan never would agree to; or perhaps retain nuclear arms (including tactical weapons) to counterbalance the conventional threat. This dilemma suggests that SDI's most fervent supporters, such as Weinberger, Perle, and Pipes did not believe that it would lead to the abolition of nuclear weapons but rather would be but one of a number of modernized weapon systems that would furnish the United States with a tremendous advantage over the Soviet Union; at the least it also would stymie the ratification of an arms control agreement. As for Reagan, his desire to eliminate nuclear weapons may have been genuine, yet his belief that peace only could be achieved through American strength, when coupled with his earlier observation that the U.S. could take all of the Soviet's ballistic missiles and simultaneously modernize its forces and deploy SDI, suggests that his real priority was to continue with his arms buildup and modernization so that the United States might achieve strategic superiority; the abolition of nuclear weapons was not so much an immediate policy objective but a

distant goal after all other conditions, on American terms, were met. Above all, Reagan did not want to limit research and development of SDI in any way. When the discussion ended, Perle and Linhard were dispatched to revise their proposal with Gorbachev's position in mind, though with Reagan's acceptance of the position that the United States should pursue the reduction of ballistic rather than all nuclear missiles. Moreover, much as the earlier agreement to eliminate all "strategic offensive weapons" had been radically altered by subtly changing the wording to all "offensive ballistic missiles," Perle and Linhard were instructed to dramatically change the proposal by removing the word *laboratory*. With space at a premium, they set up shop in a restroom and fashioned a make-shift desk by placing a board across the bathtub.<sup>424</sup>

After reading the latest proposal, Reagan readied himself for the final meeting. Don Regan, meanwhile, informed the group that they might have to stay for another night, which greatly upset Reagan who wanted to get home to have dinner with Nancy. There would be no overnight stay – it was now or never. The full impact of what was about to transpire suddenly weighed on the tired Reagan, who exclaimed: "Hell, he doesn't want to set up a summit, he wants to have one, right here."<sup>425</sup>

The air electric with tension, the meeting reconvened. Reagan opened by reading the revised Linhard-Perle proposal:

The USSR and the U.S. pledge for a period of 10 years not to exercise their right to withdraw from the unlimited ABM Treaty and, during that period, to comply strictly with all its provisions, while at the same time continuing research, development, and testing permitted by the ABM Treaty.<sup>426</sup>

This formula, by not confining research and testing to the laboratory, would enable the Reagan administration to decide what was permissible under the ABM Treaty without regard for its original meaning as interpreted by the U.S. Senate. Given Reagan and his administration's well-established disdain for all treaties limiting American power and its general contempt of Congress, the wording would ensure that the Reagan administration itself would be free to decide what was permissible under the ABM Treaty. Perle and Linhard were well aware that Gorbachev was intent upon strengthening the ABM Treaty, while their formula would weaken it, thus making it unlikely that Gorbachev would agree to the proposal. Reagan then continued:

In the course of the first five years (until 1991 inclusive), there will be a 50-percent reduction in the two sides' strategic offensive weapons. In the course of the following five years of that period, the remaining offensive *ballistic* missiles of both sides will be reduced.

In this way, by the end of 1996 the USSR and the U.S. will have completely eliminated all offensive *ballistic* missiles.<sup>427</sup>

The formula was much like the other proposals put forth by Perle and Linhard. It appealed to Reagan's abhorrence of nuclear weapons and made him feel like he was extending the olive branch, yet it also played to his ever-present desire to appear strong and resolute on SDI, and his desire to maintain a credible nuclear deterrent. The formula, moreover, was so loaded to the American advantage that it most likely was not negotiable. Gorbachev, just prior to the break, had expressed concern that an agreement had already been reached to eliminate all offensive strategic weapons, yet this formula called for the elimination of all ballistic missiles. As suggested by Adelman, it is possible that Reagan did not fully grasp the arcane language of nuclear arms, which would support the contention that the lopsided formula largely was the work of Linhard, Perle, and other hawks who wanted to sabotage the unwitting Reagan in achieving an advantageous arms control treaty if it came along. Reagan's earlier observation, however, that the United States could obtain all of the Soviet's ballistic missiles while retaining SDI, and his approval of the Linhard-Perle formula after discussing the merits of eliminating only ballistic or all offensive strategic missiles suggests that on some level he was aware of the lopsided nature of the proposal. Gorbachev, who possessed a fine command of the minutia of arms control, instantly realized what the formula portended.

He responded by asking if the omission of the word laboratory was deliberate. Reagan replied that it was, and asked "what's the matter?"<sup>428</sup> Gorbachev stated that he simply was trying to clarify the American formula; he then questioned Reagan regarding the elimination of offensive strategic weapons, pointing out that the formula called for the elimination of offensive ballistic missiles during the second five year time period, rather than offensive strategic weapons. In one of the more outrageous moments of the summit, Reagan responded as such:

We were told during the break that the Soviet side would like a special mention of offensive strategic missiles. That's why we included that formula. It's true that in the first part we talk about all types of strategic nuclear weapons, including missiles and bombs aboard bombers. In the second part, however, we talk about ballistic missiles, in the belief that's what you want.<sup>429</sup>

It is obvious that no one from the Soviet delegation would have visited the Americans during the break to impress upon them their desire to eliminate ballistic missiles. To reiterate a point already made, Gorbachev had expressed his dissatisfaction with only eliminating ballistic missiles just prior to the break and had urged Reagan to acknowledge that an agreement had already been reached to eliminate all strategic offensive weapons. Why would Reagan believe that the

Soviets had suddenly turned about-face? Was he lying? Or was he perhaps tricked by a member of his own delegation? Reagan may have looked the other way when it suited him and had a propensity to believe in the absurd, but he was no bald-faced liar. Indeed, his ability to inspire others rested in his sincere belief that his vision of the world was right. A member of the Reagan delegation most likely fabricated the Soviet visitor to ensure that Reagan would support the revised Linhard-Perle formula. Unfortunately, as Richard Rhodes observes, no one is talking and the culprit has not been identified.<sup>430</sup> While there is no evidence that it was one of the hawks, they had the most to gain from convincing Reagan that Gorbachev wanted to eliminate ballistic missiles rather than all strategic missiles.

Gorbachev responded that an agreement had been reached to eliminate all strategic weapons, not just ballistic missiles; in particular, he pointed out that bombers were to be included.<sup>431</sup> Reagan at this point seemed especially intent to ensure that the agreement called for the elimination of all ballistic missiles, while Gorbachev continued to press that the second five year period, under the American proposal, referred only to ballistic missiles. Reagan, who was exhausted at this point and wanted to get home to Nancy, may not have realized the significance of the wording. He asked if that was all that Gorbachev objected to, and declared that it was a misunderstanding and that the U.S. could agree to what Gorbachev wanted. Gorbachev declared that the formulations would need to be identical, and that the components in the first period would need to be dealt with in a clear manner in the second period. As if to shift the conversation, Schultz then intervened to point out that the elimination of strategic weapons did not include shorter range missiles, including short-range ballistic missiles. After some debate between Schultz and Gorbachev over how to handle short-range missiles and vague allusions from both that they should be handled separately, Schultz pushed for the American formula: “That’s why I propose that we that by the end of 1996 all strategic offensive weapons and all offensive ballistic missiles are to be eliminated.”<sup>432</sup>

Gorbachev responded in kind: “But in that case we will again have different formulations in the first and the second paragraphs. I think we can settle this matter when formulating our agreements.”<sup>433</sup>

At this point, then, it was the clear-headed Gorbachev who once again called for the elimination of all offensive strategic nuclear weapons, not Reagan or Schultz. Reagan, however, suddenly seemed to realize the full import of the proposal and sought clarification.

Reagan: “Let me ask this: Do we have in mind – and I think it would be very good – that by the end of the two five-year periods all nuclear

explosive devices would be eliminated, including bombs, battlefield systems, cruise missiles, submarine weapons, intermediate-range systems, and so on?”

Gorbachev: “We could say that, list all those weapons.”

Schultz: “Then let’s do it.”

Reagan: “If we agree that by the end of the ten-year period all nuclear weapons will be eliminated, we can send that agreement to Geneva.”<sup>434</sup>

Having thus surmounted the ballistic missile obstacle and on the verge of an historic agreement, Gorbachev attempted once again to link strategic weapons reductions to adherence to the ABM Treaty and the confinement of SDI research to the laboratory for 10 years. As he had explained repeatedly, the Soviet Union wanted strict compliance with the ABM Treaty as it drew down its nuclear forces; in particular, he was concerned about what he called the development of space weapons. Gorbachev was intent upon including the word laboratory in an agreement because as he pointed out to do otherwise would allow the United States to interpret the ABM Treaty in a broad manner. Reagan, in what by now was a familiar tit-for-tat pattern, replied that he did not agree with the strict interpretation of the ABM Treaty, and stated that “Our aim is to safeguard ourselves from a revival of missiles after they have been destroyed, in order to make a kind of gas mask against nuclear missiles and deploy a defense system...And I have also spoken against the danger of nuclear maniacs.”<sup>435</sup>

Reagan apparently considered missiles that had yet to be built and the possibility that “maniacs” might get a hold of them a greater threat than the thousands of missiles that the Cold War antagonists had pointed at one another. Gorbachev, with scorn in his voice, replied that he already had heard all about gas masks and maniacs, yet still was not convinced. After unsuccessfully attempting to persuade the other with arguments that both had already heard, Reagan once again revealed one of the reasons why he was so committed to SDI. Apparently unaware of the pressure that Gorbachev was under from his own military-industrial complex, Reagan declared

I can’t go along with that. You and I have different positions, different problems. In your country, nobody can criticize you without winding up in prison. In my country the situation is different. I have a lot of critics who wield great influence. And if I agree to such a formulation, they will launch a campaign against me; they will accuse me of breaking my promise to the people of the United States regarding SDI. So I pledge not to deploy the corresponding systems for 10 years.<sup>436</sup>

While much has been made in recent years of Reagan's rogue diplomacy and nuclear abolitionism, this statement suggests that the criticism he would receive from his conservative supporters and his interminable desire to appear tough with the commies were more important at this juncture than the abolition of nuclear weapons. Reagan could not agree to limit SDI to the laboratory (a place where substantive research had not even begun) because it would appear to be a concession to the Soviets; in doing so, he also would break his promise to not give anything away on SDI. Far from flexible, Reagan was so rigidly committed to SDI and such a prisoner of his earlier promises regarding it and his "tough-guy" image that he could not agree to even the appearance of limitations upon it.

Gorbachev then appealed to Reagan's sense of history and told him that he was two steps away from being a great president, and that the Americans had not made a single concession and were unwilling to meet the Soviets halfway on anything. It was the Soviets who had made all the concessions. Shevardnadze also attempted to impress upon Reagan the historic importance of the moment, telling him that future generations "will not forgive us if we let this opportunity slip by."<sup>437</sup> Reagan responded by once again citing the domestic uproar that he believed would ensue if an agreement was reached that limited the scope of SDI research in any way; he asked if Gorbachev was really not willing to agree over just one word (laboratory), with the rather disingenuous explanation that SDI would not grant the United States a military advantage.<sup>438</sup> Gorbachev, whom to Reagan's bewilderment had repeatedly referred to SDI as a space weapon, stated that it was a matter of principle, that he possibly could not allow the United States to test SDI in space while the Soviet Union reduced its nuclear arsenal. Reagan attempted to appeal to the goodwill that he believed Geneva had engendered between the two and asked Gorbachev to agree to the proposal on the table as a personal favor, arguing that the United States had given the Soviets everything asked for, including non-withdrawal from the ABM Treaty for 10 years and a pledge to abide by its terms. Gorbachev declared that they could not go along with what was proposed, and that he would sign an agreement in two minutes if tests were banned in space. He then continued: "Even though our meeting is ending this way, I have a clear conscience before my people and before you. I have done everything I could."<sup>439</sup>

According to the American transcript, the President stood at this point, both leaders gathered their papers, and departed from the room. In parting, Gorbachev asked Reagan to give his regards to Nancy. The Soviet transcript, on the other hand, does not mention this exchange and instead details the following closing words.

Reagan: “It’s too bad we have to part this way. We were so close to an agreement. I think you didn’t want to achieve an agreement anyway. I’m very sorry.”

Gorbachev: “I am also very sorry it’s happened this way. I wanted an agreement and did everything I could, if not more.”

Reagan: “I don’t know when we’ll ever have another chance like this and whether we will meet soon.”

Gorbachev: “I don’t either.”<sup>440</sup>

Though disappointed, Gorbachev quickly recovered and framed Reykjavik as a success when he addressed the media, telling the world that “In spite of all its drama, Reykjavik is not a failure – it is a breakthrough, which allowed us for the first time to look over the horizon.”<sup>441</sup> Gorbachev was hopeful that a foundation had been established for future agreement, yet he also was concerned that Reagan’s unwavering commitment to SDI was proof of America’s quest for military superiority and evidence that the United States had not yet decided if it was serious about pulling the world back from the brink of nuclear disaster.<sup>442</sup> Not surprisingly, the American opinion was entirely different.

Reagan, who under-estimated Gorbachev’s desire to reduce nuclear weapons, was visibly angry as he left Hofdi House. It was one of the few times in his public life in which his mood was as dark as the forbidding Atlantic Ocean which loomed in the background. As he recalled in *An American Life*, “I realized Gorbachev had brought me to Iceland with one purpose: to kill the Strategic Defense Initiative.”<sup>443</sup> He was especially incensed that Gorbachev had offered a tantalizing deal to abolish nuclear weapons knowing all along that he was going to tie everything to SDI “at the last minute.”<sup>444</sup> The last, impromptu session was unusual for arms control meetings in that it was a free-wheeling atmosphere in which scripts were ignored and the two men grasped at an historic agreement in an emotion-charged room almost by instinct alone. Reagan, however, must not have fully understood what had transpired during that day. Much as he repeatedly voiced his commitment to SDI, Gorbachev made clear throughout the summit, including in his opening statements at the first meeting, that any arms control agreement would be predicated upon adherence to the ABM Treaty. It hardly was a trap sprung by the wily Gorbachev at the last minute. SDI, in fact, had been the central issue in Soviet-American arms control negotiations since Reagan unveiled it. Reagan, moreover, did not grasp the full import of Perle and Linhard’s handiwork. Much as he called their lopsided proposal which called for the elimination of ballistic rather than strategic missiles “momentous” and believed that the Soviets would want special mention of ballistic missiles, he did not understand the significance of the



word “laboratory.” “One lousy word!” is what Reagan dejectedly said to Schultz and Poindexter immediately after the meeting.<sup>445</sup> While Gorbachev had been able to surmount the ballistic missile obstacle erected by Linhard and Perle and obtain Reagan’s agreement to abolish all strategic nuclear weapons, he could not defuse the “laboratory” bomb planted by Perle in Reagan’s mind, so much so that Reagan insisted upon excluding the word laboratory even though SDI was nowhere near escaping it. In doing so he squandered a chance – slim as it may have been -- to abolish nuclear weapons.<sup>446</sup> The Americans, however, quickly spun Reykjavik as a victory for Reagan because of his unwillingness to compromise his principles by trading SDI away.

“I believed that President Reagan had preserved us from defeat,” Don Regan remembered, “and made a future victory possible standing firmly on his principles.”<sup>447</sup> Though weary and tired, Schultz believed Reagan was right to stand strong and that progress had been made on INF and human rights, and that the structure of a START deal was starting to emerge. Schultz was adamant that SDI had bought the Soviet concessions. Kenneth Adelman, meanwhile, who long had despised arms control, in an interview on ABC News, praised Reagan for not sacrificing SDI, with the explanation that compromise on SDI would threaten the national security of the United States. The concessions on INF and START, moreover, would be pocketed.<sup>448</sup>

In the grand realm of ideas SDI is one of the greatest of all. It did not yet exist but it was central to American national security? For Adelman, Perle, and the other hawks who believed that America’s nuclear arsenal was central to our security, SDI was important because of its ability to potentially squash any arms control agreement. The trick was to reassure Reagan that his grand vision really would usher in a millennial utopia free of the nuclear menace. Reagan, meanwhile, attached more importance to his protection of an imaginary weapons system than to the elimination of real weapons. He was convinced that he had done the right thing at Reykjavik, that his defense of SDI would force Gorbachev to make further concessions, and that in the court of public opinion his nemesis would be judged the obstacle to an agreement. As he wrote in his diary that night:

He wanted language that would have killed SDI. The price was high but I wouldn’t sell and that’s how the day ended. All our people thought I’d done exactly right. I’d pledged I wouldn’t give away SDI and I didn’t, but that meant no deal on any of the arms reductions. He tried to act jovial but I was mad and showed it. Well, the ball is now in his court and I’m convinced he’ll come around when he sees how the world is reacting.<sup>449</sup>

Reykjavik has been viewed in many ways. Many of Reagan’s most ardent and hawkish supporters believed that the free-for-all last session in which he and

Gorbachev considered the abolition of nuclear had almost led to a monumental tragedy. Margaret Thatcher was horrified and believed that Reagan had almost dismantled the strategic umbrella that had long deterred communist aggression in Western Europe. Adelman was so frightened by Reagan's merry-go-round with Gorbachev that he later tried to convince him of the necessity of nuclear weapons. "Reykjavik," former Secretary of Defense Schlesinger thundered, "was regarded as a blunder of the greatest magnitude."<sup>450</sup> Despite such criticism, virtually everyone both within and outside his administration believed that his unflinching support for SDI was spot-on.

Though his administration officials supported SDI for different reasons, virtually all agreed with Reagan that Reykjavik demonstrated that Gorbachev's fear of it had spurred him to offer deep cuts in the Soviet nuclear arsenal to head off its deployment. The "technophobic" Soviets were so frightened of SDI's military and technological implications that they believed the United States was on the verge of taking a great leap light years ahead of the Soviets. In this vein, SDI could be used in the future to obtain even greater concessions and framed as the vehicle which made progress on INF and START possible. Ambassador John Matlock, for example, deemed Reykjavik a turning-point in U.S.-Soviet relations with the belief that Reagan's firm stand led Gorbachev to spur reform at home and enter into serious negotiations with the United States.<sup>451</sup> Schultz believed that Reagan's tough stance had smoked the Soviets out and would lead to even greater concessions.<sup>452</sup> Gorbachev, in later years, even told George Schultz that Reykjavik was the turning point in the Cold War because it was at that point that he and Reagan "got together and really talked about the important subjects."<sup>453</sup> Nitze countered accusations that Reagan had been unprepared for the summit and pointed out that considerable progress had been made on START and INF, and that the Soviets had agreed to asymmetrical reductions to arrive at equal levels. Discounting that SDI had most likely blocked immediate agreement on these issues, he believed that some progress had been made on "space weapons."<sup>454</sup> What, then, is Reykjavik's legacy?

Reykjavik was a turning point, a missed opportunity, and above all a salient demonstration of why the arms race has been perpetuated for so long in the first place. Gorbachev offered major concessions that Reagan could not accept because he and his aides were not yet ready to abandon the technological and military race for superiority against the Soviet Union, and because they continued to believe that Western security required a nuclear deterrence and the development of yet another technological wonder. Reagan, indeed, was racing to the heavens with SDI even as Gorbachev attempted to throw in the towel. In essence, Reagan and his advisors placed their faith in protection in the very weapons that threatened the world, though like many who had come before them they viewed SDI through an exceedingly narrow, peaceful lens. Gorbachev, to be sure, by not taking Reagan up on his offer to share SDI enabled him to continue with a race that dated to the

Truman administration, but ultimately it was Reagan who continued to believe that the race only could end with an American victory in the form of yet another great technological leap forward, or what Herbert York has referred to as the folly of the last move. At Reykjavik, Gorbachev was fumbling towards the realization that the best way to win the race would be to throw in the towel, yet he was not quite yet willing to do so.

Perhaps the missed opportunity is that SDI's greatest use was as a bargaining chip, which is what Nitze and Schultz realized; it had brought Gorbachev to the negotiating table yet Reagan could not take advantage of the huge concessions offered by Gorbachev because of his belief in SDI's transformative powers, his conviction that it could be leveraged to obtain even greater Soviet concessions, his virulent anti-communist beliefs, and his belief that SDI had to be protected from domestic opponents. More broadly, Reykjavik suggests that domestic political concerns; the unremitting American push to modernize its strategic forces; and America's continued quest to ensure its security through the maintenance of strategic superiority were more important than a substantive arms control agreement at Reykjavik. It also can be said that the hang-up over one word – laboratory – encapsulates the absurdity of the arms race itself, as Richard Rhodes has observed. Shortly after the summit, the Soviet physicist Roald Sagdeev flew to New York where he announced that tests in orbital laboratories were perfectly compatible with the ABM Treaty so long as the tests were not conducted with the actual components of an ABM system.<sup>455</sup> While this suggests that Gorbachev's insistence upon the mention of laboratory was misguided and led him to squander a great opportunity, the more likely scenario is that Linhard and Perle, through their crafty sleight of hand, would probably have found another way to sabotage an arms control accord at Reykjavik anyway, particularly since Reagan always seemed to turn to the hawks when confronted with the most important of decisions. Having convinced Reagan that missile defense was the path to nuclear salvation even as it obstructed such a reality, the hard-liners realized that they could scuttle future arms control agreements by insisting that no fetters whatsoever be placed upon SDI. Caspar Weinberger, for example, remained opposed to any limitation upon SDI research and was contemptuous of the ABM Treaty because it represented a harnessing of American power. In a memo to Ronald Reagan a mere week after Reykjavik, he warned that new instructions had been sent to the Geneva arms negotiators in the area of Space and Defense. Particularly disturbing to Weinberger was the option that would allow for negotiations on what activities were prohibited by the ABM Treaty. He clearly believed that the only outcome of such negotiations would be restrictions on SDI. "No other outcome is possible since now, by our interpretation, the only limitation on SDI research is that we cannot deploy a completed system."<sup>456</sup> As a true believer, Weinberger did not want to accept any limitations upon SDI because he believed that it might eventually be deployed, and

in the meantime it would serve to drive a wedge between the Cold War antagonists even as they sought common ground, much like it did at Reykjavik.

## Conclusion

Despite assurances from Soviet scientists that SDI most likely never would work, Gorbachev remained fixated on halting its development, primarily because of the political problems he believed it would raise for him at home.<sup>457</sup> Desirous of economic reform so that socialism might be strengthened, Gorbachev believed that the continued development of SDI might eventually compel the Soviet Union's military to counter the threat in the cheapest and most efficient manner possible by building an ever greater number of ICBMs. This prospect worried Gorbachev because he was well aware that it would strengthen the hand of the Soviet military-industrial complex which could continue to demand a large proportion of Soviet GDP as he sought to reform and make more dynamic the Soviet economy. More broadly, Soviet proliferation of nuclear weapons would enflame tensions with Western Europe and the broader world even as he sought to ease tensions so that his perestroika might better be promoted. His goal was to convince the world of the Soviet Union's peaceful intentions, not frighten it with more missiles. Gorbachev was committed to slowing SDI down not so much because of its military capabilities but primarily because he realized that the proliferation of defensive weapons would swell the world's arsenals, which indeed is what the original signatories of the ABM Treaty had concluded. Gorbachev was well aware that the Reagan administration was attempting to build momentum to sustain SDI even after Reagan left office. "Reagan's political game is very clear to us," Gorbachev declared during a Politburo meeting, "to give political sanction to SDI after he leaves office, and at the same time to preserve some impression that they are searching for something, for some resolution."<sup>458</sup> Gorbachev thus was intent upon dampening enthusiasm for SDI, perhaps in the hope that Congress eventually would slow funding for the system.

Hoping to build and sustain public opposition to SDI, and deflect world attention from the resumption of Soviet nuclear testing, Gorbachev and his top advisors decided to "untie the package" and pursue an INF agreement independent of an agreement on SDI. "The biggest step that would make an impression on the outside world," Gorbachev explained, "on public opinion, would be if we untie the package and agree to cut 1,000 of our most powerful missiles."<sup>459</sup> Having cut the Gordian knot that long had bound SDI to an agreement on the INF missiles, a treaty quickly was reached and signed by Reagan and Gorbachev at the Washington Conference of 1987 which eliminated all INF missiles. This was a significant treaty and the only time in history in which an entire class of nuclear weapons was abolished with the stroke of a pen. Not surprisingly, the treaty has been viewed as a major achievement in arms control and a significant step towards the end of the Cold War.<sup>460</sup>

Reagan and his administration no doubt deserve accolades for this significant accomplishment. Though the nuclear freeze movement had forced the administration to put forth a bold arms control proposal that initially may have been little more than public theater, Reagan keenly realized that the Soviets would not relinquish the much feared SS-20 unless the United States applied some pressure with the introduction of its own INFs into the European theater. Reagan, moreover, remained relatively firm on the zero option despite great skepticism, and he adroitly leveraged SDI to gain Soviet concessions on the Soviet INFs as well. A broader perspective, however, suggests that the INF Treaty, Reagan's arms control policies, and SDI did little to stem the arms race or end the Cold War.

As the Iron Curtain which long had separated the communist bloc from the West slowly started to ascend in the late 1980s, Gorbachev and his advisors were aware that Soviet military strength served to divide Europe in half even as the developing détente in Europe rendered the risk of armed confrontation nearly nil. In the fateful Politburo meeting in which the decision to sever the link between INF missiles and SDI was made, for example, Gorbachev declared that he was not worried about the removal of the Soviet INFs because there was no chance that an armed confrontation would develop between the Soviet Union and France and Great Britain. In other words, the INF Treaty – much like the end of the Cold War – very much was driven by events in Europe rather than by the U.S.-Soviet relationship. The initial impetus for the American INF deployment had originated in Europe; in many ways the withdrawal was more reflective of the thaw developing in Europe than a significant change in the United States' strategic posture vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. The INF Treaty, moreover, while significant on paper, eliminated an entire class of weapons which both the United States and the Soviet Union believed to be of limited strategic value to begin with. The INFs were not a featured component of the Reagan administration's strategic modernizations plans, and the American mastermind of the zero-zero option, Richard Perle, had never believed that the American INFs were of great strategic importance or necessary to maintain a credible deterrent. The INF Treaty thus served to divert public attention away from the core of the United States' strategic modernization plans, which the administration continued to vigorously pursue after the treaty. The Soviet Union, meanwhile, also was engaged in its own game of public diplomacy and had concluded that its INFs only enflamed tensions between the East and West and were superfluous to its own security needs. "If we agree to cut medium-range missiles right now, we will win right now," Ligachev explained to his comrades. "And our defense will not be weaker as a result. We would win a lot in public opinion." The INF Treaty thus was made possible by the shared belief of the Cold War antagonists that the elimination of the INF missiles would not undermine their security. If viewed from this perspective, the Reagan administration's belief that American strategic superiority would compel the Soviet Union to disarm must be called into question.

Despite the administration's repeated claim that peace only could be achieved through strength, the Soviet Union was willing to eliminate an entire class of weapons in one of the few weapons categories in which it definitely held a quantitative and perhaps a qualitative advantage, even as it allowed France and Britain to retain its own INF missiles. It was not American military superiority or the achievement of strategic superiority which compelled Gorbachev to shed these weapons, but rather his new concept of sufficient deterrence and the desire to integrate the Soviet Union into the main-stream life of Western Europe. Indeed, if one looks further afield there is yet another example of Gorbachev's willingness to radically reduce weapons in a class in which the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, rather than the United States and NATO, held a huge quantitative advantage. As the Soviet Union fell apart the Warsaw Pact consummated the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty with NATO on November 19, 1990. Though the Reagan administration had been adamant that nuclear weapons were required to deter Soviet aggression in Europe because of the Warsaw Pact's purported superiority in conventional forces, at the Soviet Union's urging the Warsaw Pact agreed to huge asymmetrical cuts in its conventional forces. These cuts, which led to equal force compositions in the East and West, required the Warsaw Pact to scrap 40 percent of its formidable tank force, while its armored vehicle fleet was slashed by 30 percent, and its artillery and aircraft were cut by 26 and 19 percent respectively. Never in human history had a nation agreed to such a large asymmetrical haircut, yet ironically enough the reductions came in conventional forces, a category which the Reagan administration believed long would be dominated by the Soviet Union, so much so that the Reagan administration believed that it would have to retain nuclear superiority in Europe to offset the Soviet Union's indefinite superiority in conventional forces.<sup>461</sup> Though this treaty was signed during the administration of George HW Bush, it illustrates the seriousness with which Gorbachev sought arms reductions and the folly of Reagan's belief that arms reductions could only be achieved through the establishment of American strategic superiority and SDI.

Even as Gorbachev offered deep concessions and asymmetrical cuts at Reykjavik, Reagan remained dedicated to the strategic modernization plans which his administration had forged during his first term despite the appearance of a growing flexibility, and he remained a fervent high priest for SDI. Even with the ratification of the INF Treaty Reagan remained skeptical of arms control treaties as revealed in NSDD 288; it is entirely possible that the INF Treaty was ratified to divert attention away from the Cold War which Reagan believed he would need to continue to wage against the communist bloc. "Our conduct at the Summit and the framing of its results must in no way complicate our efforts to maintain a strong defense budget and key programs like SDI; they must help us maintain support for the Contras; Mujahidin, UNITA, and the democratic resistance in Cambodia; and they must reinforce Alliance unity."<sup>462</sup> This commitment partly flowed from the

conviction that SDI had led to the INF Treaty, which it most likely partly did in that Gorbachev was willing to make concessions to halt its development, yet even if this was the case Reagan overplayed his hand because Gorbachev was not willing to build his nation's strategic forces down and simultaneously allow the United States to field a missile defense system. SDI may have made the INF Treaty possible, but paradoxically enough it also prevented Reagan from seizing a grand opportunity at Reykjavik, and it prevented Reagan from consummating a START agreement with Gorbachev.

Reagan's messianic pursuit of a missile defense system may very well be remembered as a strange relic of the Cold War which continues to push the atomic clock closer to midnight. The Reagan administration's disdain for the historic ABM Treaty of 1972, which prevented the construction and proliferation of an entire class of weapons systems, over the long term may undermine the arms control regime and make foreign nations more reluctant to ratify arms control accords with the United States. Building upon the momentum created by Reagan, President George W. Bush in 2001 announced that the United States was going to withdraw from the ABM Treaty and pursue a missile defense system in Europe to guard against attack by rogue states like Iran and North Korea. After the expenditure of hundreds of billions of dollars and little progress towards even achieving a limited defense capability, President Barack Obama has called for a new approach amidst allegations from the far right that his reduced missile defense budget will effectively gut the project and endanger the American public.<sup>463</sup> Russia, meanwhile, views a missile defense system in Europe as a threat and has responded by deploying the RS-24, which is a mobile, heavy ICBM capable of carrying 10 warheads and decoys, as well as a host of other ICBMs which are designed to overwhelm NATO's defensive shield. "They can pierce any of the existing and future missile defense systems," the Russian head of the strategic rocket forces Lt. Gen. Gergei Karakayev explained in an interview. "RS-24 missiles have even better performance."<sup>464</sup> Just as Gorbachev had warned and the signatories of the ABM Treaty of 1972 had feared, the pursuit of a ballistic missile defense system has made the world a more dangerous place by encouraging the proliferation of offensive ballistic missiles, and it has driven a wedge between Russia and the West. Even as the latest technological evangelists, such as the Heritage Foundation, preach the gospel of a missile defense system that still is nowhere near operable, the Russians have easily built and deployed real missiles and threatened to target all of Europe in response to the United States and NATO's pursuit of missile defense.

The primary goal of Reagan's arms control policy was to remove the Soviet ICBM threat, which his administration repeatedly characterized as the most destabilizing of weapons systems, yet the pursuit of ballistic missile defense has resurrected tension between Russia, NATO, and the United States, and led to the proliferation of the very missiles which Reagan believed SDI would render obsolete.



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<sup>1</sup> Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (New York, New York: Pocket Books, 1990), 679.

<sup>2</sup> Many scientists quickly responded to SDI by arguing it could not provide the perfect protection that Reagan believed it would; in addition, most scientists concluded that it could not be completed in the time period that Reagan believed it could. Scientists who doubted SDI's technical (and economic) feasibility were Charles A. Zraket, *Daedalus*, Vol. 114, No. 2, Weapons in Space, Vol. I: Concepts and Technologies (Spring 1985), 109-126; Sidney P. Dress, et al., *The Reagan Strategic Defense Initiative: A Technical, Political and Arms Control Assessment* (Stanford, California: Center for International Security and Arms Control, Stanford University Press, 1984); Union of Concerned Scientists, *Space-Based missile Defense* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1983). A study commissioned by Reagan was guarded but more optimistic, James C. Fletcher, *The Strategic Defense Initiative: Defensive Technologies Studies* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, March 1984).

<sup>3</sup> On SDI's contribution to the tightening of warning systems and the increased likelihood of escalating crises into nuclear war see Paul Bracken, *The Command and Control of Nuclear Forces* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1983); a notable study which includes nearly all of the technical and political arguments made against SDI, including its propensity to accelerate the arms race in space despite its inability to provide protection even if pursued as a limited system is Ashton B. Carter, *Directed Energy Missile Defense in Space* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1984).

<sup>4</sup> The ABM Treaty was a key component of SALT I; it limited each side to the defense of two sites – later amended to one – and confined ABM research to the laboratory. The US eventually fielded an ABM system to protect ICBM silos in North Dakota but concluded that it would not work and immediately de-activated it, while the Soviets fielded one around Moscow. As Abram Chayes and Antonia Handler Chayes pointed out, the ABM Treaty was the only bi-lateral arms control agreement between the superpowers which had prevented nuclear proliferation; accordingly, they expressed concern that its violation would stymie future arms control agreements, see “Space Weapons: the Legal Context,” *Daedalus* (114), 193-218.

<sup>5</sup> Seth Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam: Ngo Dinh Diem, Religion, Race, and U.S. Intervention in Southeast Asia* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2005), 5.

<sup>6</sup> Postmillennialists, unlike their more numerous premillennialist cousins, possess an optimistic view of history and believe that humans can erect a thousand year reign of righteousness on earth before the return of Jesus Christ. The best account of millennialist thought is Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Harvard University Press, 1992).

<sup>7</sup> Ernest Lee Tuveson demonstrates that many American presidents have rallied the American people to arms with the message that Armageddon might be near, but that American victory over the forces of evil would finally bring peace to the world, see *Redeemer Nation: the Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

<sup>8</sup> Herbert York, *Race to Oblivion: A Participant's View of the Arms Race* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 234.

<sup>9</sup> Reagan, *An American Life*, 665-666

<sup>10</sup> H. Bruce Franklin, *War Stars: The Superweapon and the American Imagination* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 15.

<sup>11</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1992), 116.

<sup>12</sup> Many Reagan admirers have written about Reagan's religious belief, though largely in hagiographical terms, see Paul Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan: A Spiritual Life* (New York: ReganBooks, 2003); Mary Beth Brown, *Hand of Providence: The Strong and Quiet Faith of Ronald*

*Reagan* (Nashville, Tennessee: WND Books, 2004). These studies normally write that Reagan's religious belief guided his policies, yet they do not provide any sustained analysis to demonstrate how this was the case, or adequately explore the history and the theology of the Christian Church. Paul Lettow's *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons* is a notable exception in that it demonstrates how Reagan's religious belief and youthful involvement in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) specifically shaped his belief in providential destiny and influenced his nuclear policy. While my work intersects with Lettow at this point, he argues that Reagan's policies were unique and that he was a nuclear abolitionist who skillfully used his arms buildup to achieve arms reductions. I generally disagree with these interpretations.

<sup>13</sup> Paul H. Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost: At the Center of Decision* (New York, New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989); George P. Schultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York, New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1993).

<sup>14</sup> Anatoly S. Chernyaev, translated by Robert D. English and Elizabeth Tucker, *My Six Years With Gorbachev* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000); Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents (1962-1986)*, (New York: Time Books, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> Strobe Talbott, *Deadly Gambits: The Reagan Administration and the Stalemate in Nuclear Arms Control* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984).

<sup>16</sup> Prime examples of the warmonger camp include Jeff McMahan, *Reagan and the World: Imperial Policy in the New Cold War* (London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1984); Jerry W. Sanders, *Peddlers of Crisis: The Committee on the Present Danger and the Politics of Containment* (Boston, Massachusetts: South End Press, 1983); Michio Kaku and Daniel Axelrod, *To Win a Nuclear War: The Pentagon's Secret War Plans* (Boston, Massachusetts: South End Press, 1987); on Reagan's flights of fantasy, especially when pertaining to SDI see Frances Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000); as William J. Broad convincingly demonstrates, the technological fanatic Edward Teller duped Reagan into believing SDI would work, *Teller's War: The Top Secret Story Behind the Star Wars Deception* (Touchstone Books, 2005); I tend to agree with all of these writers in that Reagan grossly accelerated the arms race, was prone to fits of technological fantasy, and very much could be and was duped by Teller, Richard Perle, and others, though in many ways this was because his thought so neatly squared with the others.

<sup>17</sup> The best examples are Peter Schweizer, *Victory: The Reagan Administration's Secret Strategy That Hastened the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York, New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1994); Jay Winik, *On the Brink: The Dramatic, Behind-the-Scenes Saga of the Reagan Era and the Men and Women Who Won the Cold War* (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996); for a more balanced perspective which emphasizes both Reagan's strong stance and his increasingly conciliatory relationship with Gorbachev, all of which contributed to the INF Treat and the Soviet Union's deep troop reductions, see an account written by the American ambassador to the Soviet Union Jack Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (New York, New York: Random House, 2005).

<sup>18</sup> A work which admirably chronicles the inter-workings of the Reagan administration is Strobe Talbott, *Deadly Gambits: The Reagan Administration and the Stalemate in Nuclear Arms Control* (New York, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984); Thomas Risse-Kappen's *The Zero Option: INF, West Germany, and Arms Control* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1988) has proven especially useful for understanding the complex inter-play between the nuclear freeze movement, the desire to maintain western unity, and the formulation of Reagan's INF policy; Lawrence S. Wittner's *Toward Nuclear Abolition: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1917 to the Present, Volume Three* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003) has proven especially useful for understanding the freeze movement and its impact on the Reagan administration; I differ

somewhat from Wittner in that I underplay the impact that the freeze had upon the administration more so than he does.

<sup>19</sup> Coral Bell, *The Reagan Paradox* (Great Britain: Edward Elgar Publishing, 1989).

<sup>20</sup> James Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War* (New York: Penguin, 2010).

<sup>21</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007).

<sup>22</sup> Paul Lettow, *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Random House, 2005); Martin and Annelise Anderson, *Reagan's Secret War: The Untold Story of His Fight to Save the World From Nuclear Disaster* (Three Rivers Press, 2010); Christian Peterson, *Ronald Reagan and Antinuclear Movements in the United States and Western Europe, 1981-1987* (United Kingdom: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2003).

<sup>23</sup> Mary Beth Brown, *Hand of Providence: The Strong and Quiet Faith of Ronald Reagan* (Nashville, Tennessee: Wind Books, 2004), 21.

<sup>24</sup> Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (New York, New York: Pocket Books, 1990), 22.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Reagan, 22; Brown, 24

<sup>27</sup> On Nelle's work in the church and the community, see Paul Kangor, *God and Ronald Reagan: A Spiritual Life* (New York, New York: Regan Books, 2004), 10-16.

<sup>28</sup> On Reagan's early leadership in the church, see Kangor, 29-32.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>30</sup> Stephen Vaughn, "The Moral Inheritance of a President: Reagan and the Dixon Disciples of Christ," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* (Winter 1995), 109-123.

<sup>31</sup> *The Millennial Harbinger*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (January 1830), available at (<http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/acampbell/th/MH0101.HTM#010101>)

<sup>32</sup> Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 81.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Address on the Anglo-Saxon Language: Its Origin, Character, & Destiny" (Cincinnati, Ohio: 1849), available at

(<http://www.mun.ca/rels/resmov/texts/acampbell/pla/PLA01.HTM>)

<sup>35</sup> Slosser, 40.

<sup>36</sup> "Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Religious Broadcasters, February 4, 1985."

*The Public Papers of President Ronald Reagan*. Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1985/20485d.htm>

<sup>37</sup> Ronald Reagan, *An American Life*, 98-99.

<sup>38</sup> Reagan, 99-100.

<sup>39</sup> Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (New York, New York: Pocket Books, 1990), 105.

<sup>40</sup> For an interesting discussion of Reagan's fondness for FDR's radio addresses and the influence of his rhetoric upon Reagan, see Michael Schaller, "Reagan and the Cold War," Kyle Longley, ed., *Deconstructing Reagan: Conservative Mythology and America's Fortieth President* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2007), 5-6.

<sup>41</sup> As Melvyn P. Leffler masterfully illustrates in his masterful tome, the United States hoped to leverage its superior economic and technological resources to forge a liberal postwar world under American leadership, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1992), especially 14-15 on American economic containment.

<sup>42</sup> The leading work on the cultural and intellectual response of Americans to the atomic bomb is Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

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<sup>43</sup> Boyer, 155.

<sup>44</sup> *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 7, 1945, front page.

<sup>45</sup> For a clear example of the hope and fear that the bomb unleashed, see *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 7, 1945, front page.

<sup>46</sup> Boyer, 5.

<sup>47</sup> Dexter Masters and Katharine Way, eds., (foreword by Richard Rhodes) *One World or None: A Report to the Public on the Meaning of the Atomic Bomb* (New Press, 2007), 15. *One World or None* originally was published by the Federation of Scientists in 1946; it had a foreword by Neils Bohr.

<sup>48</sup> *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 7, 1945, page 3.

<sup>49</sup> On the connection between the long history of imaging peaceful ends for destructive weapons and the atomic bomb see Boyer, 75; for an excellent overview of the fantasies which driven the development of numerous weapons dating back to the 1800s, see H. Bruce Franklin, *The Superweapon and the American Imagination* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); on the intellectual and cultural origins of strategic bombing and by extension the atomic bomb see Michael Sherry, *The Rise of American Air Power: The Creation of Armageddon* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1989).

<sup>50</sup> Henry L. Stimson, "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb," *Harper's Magazine*, February 1947, 97-107.

<sup>51</sup> Leffler, 116.

<sup>52</sup> I have relied upon Boyer for this section since he provides an excellent discussion of the movement for the international control of atomic energy and the role that influential Americans and scientists played in it, especially 27-81.

<sup>53</sup> Gregg Herken, *The Winning Weapon: The Atomic Bomb in the Cold War, 1945-1950* (New York, New York: Knopf, 1980), 157.

<sup>54</sup> Boyer, 53.

<sup>55</sup> *A Report on the International Control of Atomic Energy* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946) (<http://www.learnedworld.com/2NW/LWTest.Acheson-Lilienthal.html>).

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, iii.

<sup>57</sup> On the differences between Oppenheimer's original plan and the Acheson-Lilienthal Report see Herken, 158.

<sup>58</sup> Acheson, et al to James F. Byrnes, Secretary of State, *Ibid.*, VII-X.

<sup>59</sup> Herken and Boyer are emphatic on this point.

<sup>60</sup> The Baruch Plan (Presented to the UNAEC, June 14, 1946, the Bronx, New York City) (<http://www.atomicarchive.com/Docs/Deterrence/BaruchPlan.shtml>)

<sup>61</sup> Herken, 170.

<sup>62</sup> It must be pointed out that the Soviets also were no novices when it came to submitting lopsided arms proposals during the Cold War; for a skeptical view on the efficacy of arms control negotiations see Kenneth Adelman, *The Great Universal Embrace: Arms Summitry – A Skeptic's Account* (New York: 1989).

<sup>64</sup> For the Truman quote see Leffler, 63; for an insider's view on the Baruch Plan which supports the contention that Truman was unwilling to give up the atomic bomb see Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 115; for the Truman quote see Leffler, 115.

<sup>65</sup> Paul Lettow, *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons* (New York, New York: Random House, 2005), 4-5.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, especially 6-7.

<sup>67</sup> Skinner, Anderson, and Anderson, *Reagan in His Own Hand*, 92.

<sup>68</sup> Reagan's waning acting career also may have provided an impetus for Reagan to find a new calling.

<sup>69</sup> Reagan, 106-107.

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- <sup>70</sup> M.J. Heale, *American Anticommunism: Combating the Enemy Within, 1830-1970* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 132.
- <sup>71</sup> Harry S. Truman, Message to U.S. Congress on the Atomic Bomb, October 3, 1945. <http://www.atomicarchive.com/Dos/Deterrence/Truman.shtml>, accessed on 2/15/2011).
- <sup>72</sup> Michael Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1987), 157.
- <sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>74</sup> Gary Wills, *Reagan's America: Innocents at Home* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1987), 275.
- <sup>75</sup> Reagan, 108.
- <sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.
- <sup>77</sup> Schaller, 6.
- <sup>78</sup> On the formation of Reagan's political ideology during this tumultuous time in Hollywood see Lou Cannon, *Role of a Lifetime*, 86-87; and Lettow, 12.
- <sup>79</sup> Peter Schweizer, *Victory: the Reagan Administration's Secret Strategy that Hastened the Fall of the Soviet Union* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1994), 122-123.
- <sup>80</sup> Kiron K. Skinner & Annelise & Martin Anderson, *Reagan: In His Own Hand* (New York: Free Press, 2001), 442, hereafter referred to as Skinner.
- <sup>81</sup> Lettow, 17.
- <sup>82</sup> Skinner, 441.
- <sup>83</sup> Paul Lettow argues that Reagan was probably the only public figure in 1963 that believed that the United States could rollback Soviet power and place pressure upon its economy via an arms race and thus compel it to change its behavior. This economic pressure, however, is exactly what Kennan prescribed in the X-Article. While Reagan certainly was the most forceful public advocate of such thinking in 1963, in all reality his "peace through strength" program was no different than the "situations of strength" that NSC 68 called for to compel the Soviet Union to modify its behavior to American standards. Lettow, 16-17.
- <sup>84</sup> Skinner, 442.
- <sup>85</sup> On Reagan's rebellion against his foreign policy team see James Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War* (New York: Penguin, 2010); for prime examples of Reagan's portrayal as a nuclear abolitionist see Paul Lettow, *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Random House, 2005), and Martin and Annelise Anderson, *Reagan's Secret War: The Untold Story of His Fight to Save the World From Nuclear Disaster* (New York, New York: Three Rivers Press, 2010).
- <sup>86</sup> On Reagan's rebellion against his foreign policy team see James Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War* (New York: Penguin, 2010); for prime examples of Reagan's portrayal as a nuclear abolitionist see Paul Lettow, *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Random House, 2005), and Martin and Annelise Anderson, *Reagan's Secret War: The Untold Story of His Fight to Save the World From Nuclear Disaster* (New York, New York: Three Rivers Press, 2010); for an example of Reagan's shift from rigid Cold Warrior in his freshman term to flexible diplomat in the second see Coral Bell, *The Reagan Paradox* (Great Britain: Edward Elgar Publishing, 1989); on Reagan's increased flexibility and a seemingly balanced appraisal of the role that he played to bring about the end of the Cold War see Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), and David Reynolds, "Geneva 1985: Reagan and Gorbachev," in *Summits: Six Meetings That Shaped the Twentieth Century* (New York, New York: Basic Books, 2007), esp. 398-399.
- <sup>87</sup> The best account, which argues that Team B effectively killed détente is Anne Hessing Cahn, *Killing Détente: The Right Attacks the CIA* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 1988).
- <sup>88</sup> John Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism: Intellectuals and Foreign Affairs* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), vii.

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<sup>89</sup> CPD, "Common Sense and the Common Danger: Policy Statement of the Committee on the Present Danger," Charles Tyroler, II, ed., *Alerting America: The Papers of the Committee on the Present Danger* (New York, New York: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, 1984), 3

<sup>90</sup> Skinner and Anderson, *Reagan in His Own Hand*, 92-99.

<sup>91</sup> Joel D. Aberbach, "The Administration of Ronald Reagan," in *Ronald Reagan in the 1980s: Perceptions, Policies, Legacies*, Cheryl Hudson and Gareth Davies, eds. (New York, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 196. Aberbach convincingly argues that Reagan greatly enhanced the power of the presidency because his hand-picked staffers were more than eager to over-ride the established bureaucracies if their policies were contrary to that of the president. Conversely, Reagan often simply slashed funding for the bureaucracies he disliked. In this way, the executive branch exerted its influence throughout the government.

<sup>92</sup> James M. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene: The Reagan Doctrine and American Foreign Policy* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), 6.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Tyroler, II, xix.

<sup>95</sup> "Question-And-Answer Session With Reporters," *Public Papers of the President of the United States*, August 13, 1981. Ronald Reagan Presidential Library. (<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1981/81381a.htm>)

<sup>96</sup> On escalation domination see Michio Kaku and Daniel Axelrod, *To Win a Nuclear War: The Pentagon's Secret War Plans* (Boston, Massachusetts: South End Press, 1987), 4-10, especially page 4.

<sup>97</sup> Forrest E. Morgan, "Dancing With the Bear. Managing Escalation in a Conflict With Russia," *Proliferation Papers*, No. 40, Winter 2012, pg. 13-14, especially 13.

<sup>98</sup> Kaku and Axelrod, 6.

<sup>99</sup> Tyroler, II, editor, 41.

<sup>100</sup> Tyroler, II, 34.

<sup>101</sup> For an excellent overview of the United States grand strategy see NSSD 1-82, "U.S. National Security Strategy," April 16, 1982 (2), NSC 00045, Box 91284, Executive Secretariat: NSC Meeting Files, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>102</sup> NSDD 1-82, "U.S. National Security Strategy," Part II, Military Component, Section G, Force Integration, NSC 00045, Box 91284, Executive Secretariat: NSC Meeting Files, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>103</sup> Memorandum for Mr. William P. Clark, Fact Sheets on Nuclear Arms and Arms Control Issues, May 29, 1982, Executive Secretariat: Subject File, Nuclear – Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF), Box 71, (May 1982), Ronald Reagan Library, pg. 38.

<sup>104</sup> NSDD 1-82, Section G.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> National Security Decision Directive 12, "Strategic Forces Modernization Program," October 1, 1981 (available at <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-12.pdf>), pg. 1. The Federation of American Scientists has posted all of the Reagan NSDDs at <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/index.html>.

<sup>107</sup> Fact Sheets on Nuclear and Arms Control Issues, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Subject File, Nuclear – Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF), Box 71, May 1982, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>108</sup> Fact Sheet.

<sup>109</sup> Kaku and Axelrod, 202-203.

<sup>110</sup> Fact Sheet on Nuclear and Arms Control Issues.

<sup>111</sup> NSDD 12, pg. 1-2.

<sup>112</sup> Fact Sheet on Nuclear and Arms Control Issues.

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- <sup>113</sup> National Security Council Meeting, November 18, 1982, NSC 00066 (212), Box 91285, NSC Meeting Files.
- <sup>114</sup> U.S. National Security Strategy, Part III, Section C: Regional Military Objectives, Executive Secretariat, NSC Meeting Files: NSC 00047, 27 April 1982 (1), Box 91284, RRPL.
- <sup>115</sup> Herken, 193-195; Talbott, 300.
- <sup>116</sup> NSDD 35, "The M-X Program," May 17, 1982 (<http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-35.pdf>)
- <sup>117</sup> Fact Sheet on Nuclear and Arms Control Issues.
- <sup>118</sup> I have drawn upon the following meeting minutes for my entire discussion of this meeting, Minutes of National Security Council Meeting, December 3, 1981, NSC 00027, Box 91283, NSC Meeting Files, Executive Secretariat, Ronald Reagan Library.
- <sup>119</sup> David S. Meyer, *A Winter of Discontent: The Nuclear Freeze and American Politics* (New York: Praeger, 1990), 38-39; Scheer, *With Enough Shovels*, 127.
- <sup>120</sup> Fact Sheet on Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control.
- <sup>121</sup> NSDD 1-82, Section G.
- <sup>122</sup><sup>122</sup> "The President's New Conference," January 29, 1981, *The Public Papers of the President of the United States* (<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1981/12981b.htm>)
- <sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>124</sup> The view that the Soviet INFs and especially ICBMs were the most destabilizing weapons systems is ubiquitous in Reagan policy documents and very much undergirded the administration's arms control policies, for an example see Memorandum for Mr. William P. Clark, The White House, START Criteria, NSC 00046, April 21, 1982 (1/5), Box 91284, NSC Meeting Files, Executive Secretariat, Ronald Reagan Library; for one of numerous examples of the administration's desire to first and foremost achieve significant reductions in ballistic missiles see William P. Clark, The White House, Subject: Fact Sheets on Nuclear Arms and Arms Control Issues, May 29, 1982, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Subject File, Nuclear – Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF), May 1982, Box 71, RRPL.
- <sup>125</sup> NSDD 33, "U.S. Approach to START Negotiations," May 14, 1982 (<http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-033.htm>), pg. 1.
- <sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>127</sup> NSDD 35, pg. 2.
- <sup>128</sup> NSDD 36, "U.S. Approach to START – II," May 25, 1982 (<http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-036.htm>)
- <sup>129</sup> NSDD 1-82, U.S. National Security Strategy, Part III, Military Component, Section G, Force Integration.
- <sup>130</sup> Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1985), 856.
- <sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 850.
- <sup>132</sup> On the history of double-track decision and the role that the West Europeans, and in particular West Germany played, see Thomas Risse-Kappen, *The Zero Option: INF, West Germany, and Arms Control* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1988), 7-59. According to Risse-Kappen, Schmidt was instrumental in pushing the dual-track decision because of his fear that Soviet tactical/intermediate range superiority Eurasia would decouple Europe from the United States' deterrent umbrella.
- <sup>133</sup> Risse-Kappen, 37.
- <sup>134</sup> Garthoff, 861.
- <sup>135</sup> On the impetus residing with Europe and the limited military value of the INF, see Risse-Kappen, 36-37; the Brzenzki quote is in Risse-Kappen, 37, and Garthoff, 859.
- <sup>136</sup> Tyroler, II, 31.
- <sup>137</sup> "Nomination of Eugene V. Rostow," Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, 79th Congress, First Session (July 22-23, 1981), 49.

<sup>138</sup> In various radio addresses Reagan largely drew upon two books written by Laurence Beilenson, *The Power of Subversion* and *The Treaty Trap*, to lambast the notion that nations will honor treaties, particularly if a nation were to let its military might slip. Reagan especially reviled the Panama Canal Treaty and the Paris Peace Accords (which of course probably did deserve his scorn), see Skinner and Anderson, *Reagan in His Own Hand*, 48-59.

<sup>139</sup> Robert Scheer, *With Enough Shovels: Reagan, Bush, and Nuclear War* (New York, New York: Random House, 1982), 18.

<sup>140</sup> Scheer, Introduction.

<sup>141</sup> Sanders, 326; Washington Post, November 1, 1981, pg. 1.

<sup>142</sup> Sanders, 326.

<sup>143</sup> On the poll see *New York Times*, June 13, 1982, pg. 42; on the demonstration see Bradford Martin, *The Other Eighties: A Secret History of America in the Age of Reagan* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011), 7.

<sup>144</sup> On the rally and its impact see Jay Winik, *On the Brink: The Dramatic Behind-the-Scenes Saga of the Reagan Era and the Men and Women Who Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 158.

<sup>145</sup> Theater Nuclear Force-Negotiations Timing, USSR, NSC 0008, Arms Control (1)-(3), Box 91282, (41), Executive Secretariat, NSC: Meeting Files, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>146</sup> Ironically enough, Richard Burt explained to the well-known freeze activist Mary Kaldor that the zero option had originated with the freeze campaign slogan on its banners, see Lawrence Wittner, 315.

<sup>147</sup> On Perle's belief that the Europeans would not allow the INF deployment and that the deployment was militarily unnecessary since sea-launched cruise missiles could fulfill the same function, see Memorandum for Director of CIA. From: Chief, Arms Control Intelligence Staff, November 10, 1981. Subject: National Security Council Meeting on TNF scheduled for November 12 (<http://www.foia.cia.gov/Reagan.asp>).

<sup>148</sup> For an example of the consensus view that Perle wanted to ensure the deployment of American Euro-missiles and a discuss of Perle's role and goals in formulating the zero, also see Jay Winik, *On the Brink*, 158-159; for an extended discussion of Perle's views on arms control, see Winik, 158-169.

<sup>149</sup> Talbott, 41.

<sup>150</sup> Lawrence Wittner, *Toward Nuclear Abolition*, 314.

<sup>151</sup> NSC Briefing Paper on Theater Nuclear Forces, NSC 00025, Box 91283, November 12, 1981, Executive Secretariat, NSC: NSC Meeting Files, Ronald Reagan Library, pg. 4.

<sup>152</sup> Alexander M. Haig, Jr., *Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1984), 229.

<sup>153</sup> NSC Briefing Paper on Theater Nuclear Forces, pg. 4.

<sup>154</sup> Talbott, 71.

<sup>155</sup> NSC Briefing Paper on Theater Nuclear Forces, pg. 4.

<sup>156</sup> NSC Briefing Paper on Theater Nuclear Forces, pg. 4

<sup>157</sup> NSC Briefing Paper on Theater Nuclear Forces, pg. 3.

<sup>158</sup> NSC Briefing Paper on TNF, pg. 3.

<sup>159</sup> NSC Briefing Paper on TNF, pg. 4.

<sup>160</sup> NSC Briefing Paper on Theater Nuclear Forces, pg. 3.

<sup>161</sup> National Security Council Meeting Minutes, November 12, 1981, NSC 00025, Box 91283, (Folder 41), Executive Secretariat, NSC: NSC Meeting Files, Ronald Reagan Library, pg. 2.

<sup>162</sup> National Security Council Meeting Minutes, October 13, 1981, NSC 00022, Box 91282, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Meeting Files Ronald Reagan Library, pg. 3.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 5, for all Weinberger quotes in this paragraph.

<sup>165</sup> NSC Briefing Paper on Theater Nuclear Forces, November 10, 1981, pg. 6.



<sup>166</sup> NSC Meeting, October 13, 1981, pg. 5, RRPL.

<sup>167</sup> NSC Meeting, October 13, 1981, pg. 6.

<sup>168</sup> NSDD 1-82, US National Security Strategy, Part III, Military Composition, Section G Force Integration, NSC 00047, Box 91284 Executive Secretariat, NSC: NSC Meeting Files.

<sup>169</sup> NSC Meeting, October 13, 1981, pg. 6.

<sup>170</sup> Paul Lettow argues that the zero option was a manifestation of Reagan's desire to rid the world of nuclear weapons. As proof, he cites quotes that he obtained in personal interviews with Weinberger and Ikle. Weinberger claimed that the zero-zero was geared to satisfy Reagan's anti-nuclearism in a fanciful bit of remembrance that is not supported by the documentary record. As Weinberger told Lettow, "It was consistent with what I knew the President's feeling was of basically very great unhappiness with nuclear weapons." Ikle also ignored that the administration believed the proposal was utterly non-negotiable and told Lettow that the zero-zero was "a solution that moved in the direction that Ronald Reagan wanted to move in the nuclear field...that is, essentially to get rid of nuclear weapons." And finally, Lettow cites Reagan himself, who declared in his memoirs that he "viewed it as the first step toward the elimination of all nuclear weapons from the earth." Given that Weinberger clearly told Reagan that the Soviets would reject the offer, as well as Reagan's apparent great reluctance to give up the United States' nuclear deterrent in Europe, it is not clear how the zero option flowed from Reagan's anti-nuclear sentiment. What it really was designed to do was compel the Soviets to give up their missiles while ensuring that the United States retained its own as well as its plans for deployment and modernization. For Lettow's analysis and the quotes he uses to support it, see *Ronald Reagan's Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons*, 60. 60.

It can be argued that the zero option was a sincere effort to rid the world of nuclear weapons in the sense that there was little chance that the Soviets would be willing to negotiate unless the U.S. deployed its own INF in Europe.

<sup>171</sup> Reagan, *An American Life*, 295.

<sup>172</sup> Wittner, 314.

<sup>173</sup> CIA Memorandum to Director of the CIA, November 10, 1981 (this is the same memorandum that includes the observation that Perle did not think Europe would accept INF).

<sup>174</sup> National Security Council Meeting Minutes, November 12, 1981, NSC 00025, Executive Secretariat, NSC: NSC Meeting Files, Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>175</sup> NSDD 15; also see NSDD is available at [www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd-015.htm](http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd-015.htm)

<sup>176</sup> NSC Meeting, November 12, 1981, pg. 10.

<sup>177</sup> Memorandum for the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, from Chief, Arms Control Intelligence Staff (National Security Council Meeting on TNF for November 12, 1981). On the internal debate on the zero and zero plus option, see Talbott, 61-74; on the interagency meeting, see Talbott, 72-75; for a very brief description of the November 12 decision, see Winik, 178.,

<sup>178</sup> NSC Meeting Minutes, November 12, 1981, pg. 9.

<sup>179</sup> "Remarks to Members of the National Press Club on Arms Reduction and Nuclear Weapons," November 18, 1981, *Public Papers of the President of the United States*, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library (<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1981/111881a.htm>)

<sup>180</sup> On the Soviet's position, which Nitze characterized as "tough and generally unyielding," see Memorandum for William P. Clark from Sven Kraemer, July 22, 1983, Subject: Summary of Ambassador Paul Nitze Meeting with the President – July 21, 1983, Box 72, Subject Nuclear – INF (7/13/1983 – 7/31/1983), Executive Secretariat National Security Council: Ronald Reagan Library, pg. 1-2.

<sup>181</sup> Memorandum for Kenneth W. Dam, Deputy Secretary of State, from Paul Nitze, Subject: INF Status and Future Strategy, December 10, 1982, Box 71, (October 1982-December 1982), Executive Secretariat, National Security Council, Ronald Reagan Library, pg. 1-2.

<sup>182</sup> Nitze, 374.

<sup>183</sup> Nitze, 368.

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- <sup>184</sup> Memorandum for Kenneth W. Dam by Paul Nitze, December 10, 1982, Box 71 (October 1982-December 1982), Executive Secretariat, National Security Council, Ronald Reagan Library, pg. 2.
- <sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*,
- <sup>186</sup> Talbott, 118.
- <sup>187</sup> According to Risse-Kappen, Western European pressure on Nitze to display a willingness to compromise spurred the “walk in the woods,” 90; Nitze’s memoirs bear this assertion out, 366-369.
- <sup>188</sup> Nitze, 366-369.
- <sup>189</sup> Nitze, 367.
- <sup>190</sup> Memorandum of Conversation of Paul Nitze’s “Walk in the Woods,” 1982-1983, Box 3, (File Folder: Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF), 07/29/1982 – 07/31/1982) WHORM: Clark, William Patrick: Files ; Risse-Kappen, 90; Peterson, 102.
- <sup>191</sup> Memorandum for William Clark: Rostow/Nitze Initiative on INF Talks, July 29, 1982, *ibid.*
- <sup>192</sup> Memorandum from Bud McFarlane to Dick Boverie, et al., Subject: Calling Paul Nitze on his having gone beyond instructions, July 13, 1982, Box 71 September 1982, Executive Secretariat INF, Ronald Reagan Library.
- <sup>193</sup> Subject File Nuclear – INF (7/13/83-7/31/83), Box 72, pg. 3, Executive Secretariat, National Security Council, Ronald Reagan Library, pg. 3.
- <sup>194</sup> On the reaction of Perle and Weinberger and the NSC meeting on August 24, 1982, in which Weinberger, who was heavily tutored by Perle, decisively killed any chance of the walk in the woods, see Winik, 197-204; unfortunately, I have not been able to obtain the minutes for this meeting.
- <sup>195</sup> Nitze, 328-329.
- <sup>196</sup> “Our Future Course in the Intermediate Nuclear Force Negotiation,” January 10, 1983, from RRPL-Executive Secretariat, NSPG Records, File Folder NSPG 0049 (US/Soviet Relations), Box 91306 (Box 2 of 2), pg. 3.
- <sup>197</sup> Wittner, 317.
- <sup>198</sup> NSPG Meeting Minutes, January 13, 1983, Executive Secretariat, NSPG Records, Box 91603, File Folder NSPG 0050, 13 January 1983 (Arms Control/INF), RRPL.
- <sup>199</sup> Ronald Reagan, “Remarks Announcing a Proposed Intermediate-Range Nuclear Reduction Agreement,” (<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1983/33083a.htm>); also see Talbott for a complete discussion of the Interim Solution, 171-184.
- <sup>200</sup> “Address at Commencement Exercises at Eureka College,” Eureka, Illinois, May 9, 1982, *Public Papers of the President of the United States* (<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1982/50982a.htm>)
- <sup>201</sup> Talbott, 273.
- <sup>202</sup> I have located two copies of the meeting -- one hand-written, the other typed -- at the Reagan Library, this citation is for the handwritten copy see, National Security Council Meeting, April 21, 1982, NSC 00046, 21 April 1982 (1/5), Box 91284, NSC Meeting Files, pg. 6, RRPL.
- <sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.
- <sup>204</sup> Memorandum for William P. Clark from D. Paul Bremer III, NSC 00046, 21 April 1982 (1/5) Box 91284, NSC Meeting Files (See START CRITERIA), RRPL.
- <sup>205</sup> NSC Meeting, April 21, 1982, pg. 6, RRPL.
- <sup>206</sup> This quote is from the typed transcript of the April 21, 1982 NSC meeting, see NSC 00046, 21 April 1982, Box 91284, NSC Meeting Files, pg. 7, RRPL.
- <sup>207</sup> Review of START Policy Issues, National Security Council 0004, May 3, 1982 (212), Box 91204, National Security Council Meetings, pg. 2, RRPL.
- <sup>208</sup> As the ACDA noted, “As missile accuracy improves, most targets can be improved by a single reliable warhead of nominal size.” Clark Memo from Bremer, START Criteria.
- <sup>209</sup> As Strobe Talbott suggests, Richard Perle did not think the proposal would be negotiable, 235.
- <sup>210</sup> Memo for Clark from Bremer, START Criteria.

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- <sup>211</sup> Review of START Policy Issues, NSC 0004, May 3, 1982 (212), Box 91204, NSC Meetings, pg. 5, RRPL.
- <sup>212</sup> I have relied on the following memo for my discussion of State's position, Memorandum for William P. Clark from L. Paul Bremer III, START Criteria, NSC 00046, 21 April 1982 (1/5) Box 91284, NSC Meeting Files, RRPL.
- <sup>213</sup> Memorandum for William Clark from L Paul Bremer III, START Criteria.
- <sup>214</sup> I have relied on Talbott for my discussion of Perle and Linhard's opposition , 236-248
- <sup>215</sup> National Security Council Meeting, April 21, 1982, NSC 00046, 21 April 1982, Box 91284, NSC Meeting Files, pg. 5, RRPL.
- <sup>216</sup> Clark Memo from Bremer, START Criteria.
- <sup>217</sup> Meyer, 72-73.
- <sup>218</sup> The entire speech and the subsequent question-and-answer session can be found at Ronald Reagan, "Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With Reporters on the Announcement of the United States Strategic Weapons Program," October 2, 1981 (<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1981/100281c.htm>)
- <sup>219</sup> Jeff McMahan, *Reagan and the World: Imperial Policy in the New Cold War* (London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1984), 31.
- <sup>220</sup> On Congress see Peterson, *Ronald Reagan and Antinuclear Movements in the United States and Western Europe*, 100; on the Reagan letter to Kemp which states the MX is central to the United States strategic modernization plans see McMahan, 35.
- <sup>221</sup> Donald R. Baucom, *The Origins of SDI, 1944-1983* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 181.
- <sup>222</sup> Executive Secretariat, NSC: NSC Meeting File, "MX Missile Basing Decision, Nuclear Weapons (1)(2) (NSC 00066), November 18, 1982, Box 91285, Ronald Reagan Library.
- <sup>223</sup> For a discussion of the Townes panel and broadly dense pack and fratricide see Gregg Herken, *Cardinal Choices: Presidential Science Advising from the Atomic Bomb to SDI* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 206-207; on dense pack and Congressional pressure see Peterson, 101; on JCS opposition see Lettow, 85; on the postponement due to technical difficulties see Baucom, 180.
- <sup>224</sup> Gregg Herken, *Counsels of War* (New York, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 334.
- <sup>225</sup> McMahan, 35.
- <sup>226</sup> NSDD 35, "The M-X Program," May 17, 1982 (<http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-35.pdf>)
- <sup>227</sup> Herken, *Cardinal Choices*, 207.
- <sup>228</sup> Reagan, *An American Life*, 562.
- <sup>229</sup> "Gathered for Life: Official Report of the Sixth Assembly." Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, July 24 – August 10, 1983. <http://www.zeronukes.org/religiousstatements3.htm> (accessed June 4, 2009)
- <sup>230</sup> Broad, 121.
- <sup>231</sup> Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith Since World War II* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), 252.
- <sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>233</sup> Letter, Robert P. Dugan, Jr., NAE to President Ronald Reagan, December 3, 1982, folder "National Association of Evangelicals: Orlando, FL; 3/3/1983 (3 of 3)," box 86, Speechwriting, Research Office Files, Ronald Reagan Library.
- <sup>234</sup> Frank Warner, "Evil Empire Speech: The "Rest of the Story." <http://www.nae.net/index.cfu/index.cfm?FUSEACTION=editor.page&page=ID37&IDcategory=1> (accessed May 15, 2009)
- <sup>235</sup> "Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida March 8, 1983." *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*. Ronald Reagan

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Presidential Library. <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1983/30883b.htm> (accessed June 4, 2009)

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>238</sup> As Ernest Lee Tuveson convincingly demonstrates, American presidents have always rallied the American people to arms with the message that Armageddon might be near, but that American victory over the forces of evil would finally bring peace to the world, see *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

<sup>239</sup> Reagan, "Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals."

<sup>240</sup> Hal Lindsey, *The 1980s: Countdown to Armageddon* (New York: Bantam Books, 1983), 77-86. For the best discussion of millennial belief in America see Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992); Boyer cites Lindsey on pg. 145.

<sup>241</sup> Meyer, 215.

<sup>242</sup> Lettow, 18-19.

<sup>243</sup> Frances Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue*.

<sup>244</sup> William J. Broad, *Teller's War: The Top-Secret Story Behind the Star Wars Deception* (Touchstone Books, 1993); also see Herken, *Cardinal Choices*.

<sup>245</sup> Letter to Ronald Reagan from Edward Teller, July 23, 1982, Keyworth Files, Box 94705, Folder: Teller, Edward – 1986; the letter also can be found in SDI, Open Material, 1982-1988, Box 1 of 2, RRPL.

<sup>246</sup> Memorandum from Karl Bendetsen to Edwin Meese, X-Ray Lasers for Space Defense, 21 October 1981, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Subject Files (A), Box 2, RRPL.

<sup>247</sup> On Graham and the High Frontier see Fitzgerald, 124-127.

<sup>248</sup> Lettow, 82.

<sup>249</sup> Lettow, 82-83.

<sup>250</sup> Peterson, 136.

<sup>251</sup> Pat Towell, "House Panel Adopts Nuclear Freeze Measure," *Congressional Quarterly* (Washington, D.C.: Roll Call, Inc., June 26, 1982), 1115-1117.

<sup>252</sup> One of the more amusing incidents involved an attempt by Randall Forsberg and Randall Kehler to meet with the President as representatives of the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign. Their request was denied since it was deemed that they had no interest in educating themselves on the administration's arms control policies, and they were described as "radical nuclear freeze organizers." Memorandum for William P. Clark from Sven Kraemer, "Nuclear Freeze Leaders' Request for Meeting With the President," WHORM, ND 018, 108251-109975, Box 7, RRPL.

<sup>253</sup> Memorandum for Robert C. McFarlane for Sven Kraemer, "Freeze and Related Resolutions for Discussion at Tomorrow's 4:00 P.M. Congressional Leadership Meeting with the President," Executive Secretariat, NSC: Subject Files, Arms Control-Congressional, 1/1/83-12/31/83, Box 2, RRPL.

<sup>254</sup> Both quotes are from Towell, "House Panel Adopts Nuclear Freeze Measure," *Congressional Quarterly*, 1517.

<sup>255</sup> National Security Council Meeting, Discussion on Defense Program, January 28, 1983, NSC 00073, 28 January 1983, Box 91285, NSC Meetings, RRPL.

<sup>256</sup> Robert McFarlane, *Special Trust* (New York, New York: Cadell & Davies, 1994), 226.

<sup>257</sup> Baucom, 181.

<sup>258</sup> Baucom, 184-185.

<sup>259</sup> McFarlane, 226.

<sup>260</sup> On the President's lack of interest in wavelengths see Herken, *Cardinal Choices*, 210.

<sup>261</sup> Ronald Reagan, "Address to the Nation on Defense and National Security" March 23, 1983 (<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1983/32383d.htm>); also see

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(<http://www.atomicarchives.com/Docs/Missile/Starwars.shtml>).

<sup>263</sup> Letter from Ambassador Gerard Smith, Chairman of the Arms Control Association to Unknown Publication.

<sup>264</sup> For an excellent synopsis of the “veneration and contempt” which immediately was heaped upon SDI after its announcement see Edward Tabor Lilenthal, *Symbolic Defense*, 12-41

<sup>265</sup> Robert Jarstrow, “Reagan vs. the Scientists: Why the President is Right About Missile Defense,” Commentary, January, 1984, 23-32, pg. 32.

<sup>266</sup> *New York Times*, March 30, 1983, A31.

<sup>267</sup> James C. Fletcher, “The Technologies for Ballistic Missile Defense, *Issues in Science and Technology* 1 (no. 1), 15-29, pg. 26.

<sup>268</sup> Washington Post, A1.

<sup>269</sup> Fitzgerald, 210-211; Douglas C. Waller, *Congress and the Nuclear Freeze*, 191.

<sup>270</sup> Lilenthal, 14.

<sup>271</sup> *Washington Post*, March 24, 1983, A15.

<sup>272</sup> Interview with Sidney Drell, New Perspectives (Institute for National Strategy, Vol. 1, No. 2, Spring 1984), pg. 2.

<sup>273</sup> See Lilenthal, esp. 65-70.

<sup>274</sup> Robert M. Lawrence, *Strategic Defense Initiative: Bibliography and Research Guide* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1987), 85-86.

<sup>275</sup> United States, Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Strategic Defense and Anti-Satellite Weapons*, 98<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> session (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1984), 30.

<sup>276</sup> Ronald Reagan, *An American Life*, 665-666.

<sup>277</sup> Graham Thompson, *American Culture in the 1980s*, 29-30.

<sup>278</sup> Garthoff, 1015.

<sup>279</sup> Rhodes, 163,

<sup>280</sup> Wittner, 305.

<sup>281</sup> Garthoff, 1014-1015.

<sup>282</sup> On Soviet fears of an American first strike and the Able Archer exercise, see Rhodes, 163-166; for a more robust account of the KAL 007 incident which argues that the Soviets thought that the downed plane might provide a reason for an American attack, see Pry, 27-32; on the danger of the Able Archer exercise, see Pry, 33-44.

<sup>283</sup> On walkouts see Rhodes, 166; and Risse-Kappen, 97.

<sup>284</sup> Lawrence Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb: Toward Nuclear Abolition*, vol. 3, 389.

<sup>285</sup> David Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings That Shaped the Twentieth Century* (New York, New York: Praeger Books, 2007), 352.

<sup>286</sup> Anatoly S. Chernyaev Diary, 1985.

([http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB192/Chernyaev\\_Diary\\_translation\\_1985.pdf](http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB192/Chernyaev_Diary_translation_1985.pdf)).

<sup>287</sup> Reynolds, 352.

<sup>288</sup> This brief synopsis of the relationship between Gorbachev’s reforms and security policy is derived from Daniel Calingaert, *Soviet Nuclear Policy Under Gorbachev: A Policy of Disarmament* (New York, New York: Praeger, 1991).

<sup>289</sup> Ironically enough Reagan and the CPD long had been fond of accusing the Soviet of racing far ahead of the US in the development of ballistic missile defense, though such accusations most likely served to justify SDI and the US’ arms buildup.

<sup>290</sup> For an excellent discussion of the Geneva Summit see David Reynolds, *Summits*, 343-383.

<sup>291</sup> Reagan, Radio Address to the Nation on the Soviet-United States Statement on the Summit Meeting in Geneva, November 23, 1985, in *Public Papers of the Presidents: Ronald Reagan*, 1985, Book 2, 1417.

<sup>292</sup> It apparently never crossed Reagan’s mind that American military pressure had not induced Andropov, Chernenko, or Breshnev to negotiate with the United States.

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- <sup>293</sup> Reagan, Remarks on Issuing the Joint Soviet-United States Statement on the Summit Meeting in Geneva, November 21, 1985, *Ibid.*, 1411.
- <sup>294</sup> Herbert York, *Race to Oblivion: A Participant's View of the Arms Race* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 234.
- <sup>295</sup> Reagan, Radio Address, *Ibid.*
- <sup>296</sup> Reagan, *An American Life*, 650.
- <sup>297</sup> Robert D. English, *Russia and the Idea of the West*, 206; Nitze, 421.
- <sup>298</sup> Schultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 701.
- <sup>299</sup> Reagan, *An American Life*, 650-651; Schultz, 700; according to Nitze, Reagan said "Why wait until the year two thousand to eliminate all nuclear weapons?", see Paul H. Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost*, 422.
- <sup>300</sup> Paul Lettow, *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons*, 192.
- <sup>301</sup> USSR CC CPSU Politburo Session on Preparations for Reykjavik: 8 October 1986, Reykjavik File. National Security Archive, document 01. (<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document01.pdf>)
- <sup>302</sup> Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost*, 422.
- <sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, 423.
- <sup>304</sup> Schultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 708, 710.
- <sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, 690.
- <sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, 702.
- <sup>307</sup> On Perle's belief in the limited strategic utility of INFs, see Thomas Risse-Kappen, *The Zero Option: INF, West Germany, and Arms Control* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1988); on the centrality of strategic weapons and the peripheral nature of INFs the entire book is useful.
- <sup>308</sup> Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1985), 858-859.
- <sup>309</sup> This is not to imply that the western Europeans were in favor of the complete elimination of INFs in Europe; Germany, France, and Britain, for example, wanted to retain some short and medium range ballistic missiles, as well as cruise missiles, as a viable deterrent.
- <sup>310</sup> Schultz., 716.
- <sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, 666.
- <sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, 716.
- <sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, 717.
- <sup>314</sup> Nitze, 408.
- <sup>315</sup> Reagan, *An American Life*, 666.
- <sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>317</sup> NSDD 214, "U.S. Response to Gorbachev's January Arms Control Proposals," February 21, 1986, from RRPL-NSC/NSDD.
- <sup>318</sup> Lettow, 198.
- <sup>319</sup> Jack F. Matock, Jr., *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended*, 185; for proof of Soviet violation of the ABM Treaty (1972), see Matlock, 186.
- <sup>320</sup> Raymond Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 1028.
- <sup>321</sup> Reagan, *An American Life*, 665.
- <sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>323</sup> In numerous radio addresses from 1977 through 1979, Reagan criticized SALT II, Kiron B. Skinner, Annelise and Martin Anderson, eds., *Reagan In His Own Hand: The Writings of Ronald Reagan That Reveal His Revolutionary Vision for America* (New York, New York: The Free Press, 2001), 74-91.
- <sup>324</sup> Graebner, Burns, and Siracusa, *Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev*, 92.
- <sup>325</sup> Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost*, 424.

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- <sup>326</sup> Reagan to Gorbachev, 25 July 1986, The Reykjavik File, National Security Archive; also see NSDD 232, "Preparations for the Next Negotiating Round," August 16, 1986; and NSDD 233, "Consultations on a Response to General Secretary Gorbachev," July 31, 1986, RRPL-NSC/NSDD, both of which contain texts of the letter.
- <sup>327</sup> NSDD 250, "Post-Reykjavik Follow-Up," November 3, 1986, p. 4, from RRPL-NSC/NSDD.
- <sup>328</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, 392; Rowney and Matlock, in Tannenwald, "Understanding the End of the Cold War," 143-148; Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost*, 424-425; Schultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 718-727.
- <sup>329</sup> Reynolds, 387.
- <sup>330</sup> Reagan, *An American Life*, 667. (In all reality, Reagan was right).
- <sup>331</sup> Robert D. English cites the overblown arrest of Daniloff as yet another example of the attempt by conservative hardliners to undermine Gorbachev's reforms and to undermine his efforts to ease U.S.-Soviet relations, see English, *Russia and the Idea of the West*, 218.
- <sup>332</sup> Reynolds, *Six Summits That Shaped the Twentieth Century*, 385; also see Attali, *Verbatim*, 2:109-13, recording conversations on 4 and 7 July, 1986; Chernyaev, *My Six Years With Gorbachev*, 75-76.
- <sup>333</sup> Chernayaev, 75-76.
- <sup>334</sup> On Gorbachev's meeting with Nixon, see Chernayaev, 76; on the meeting and Nixon's note to Reagan see Reynolds., 386.
- <sup>335</sup> Gorbachev to Reagan, 15 September, 1986, The Reykjavik File, National Security Archive; also see Letter, Gorbachev to Reagan, Sept. 15, 1986, NSC Executive Secretariat, Head of State file, box 40: USSR, doc. 8690659, Ronald Reagan Library.
- <sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>337</sup> Calingaert, 64, and 75-76
- <sup>338</sup> Reynolds, 388.
- <sup>339</sup> Gorbachev to Reagan, 25 September 1986.
- <sup>340</sup> USSR CC CPSU Politburo Session on Preparations for Reykjavik: 8 October 1986, National Security Archive, document 01.
- <sup>341</sup> As Richard Rhodes observes, Gorbachev probably supported a moratorium on nuclear testing because it would prevent the development of SDI, 213; on Gorbachev's belief that the arms race was the world's greatest danger see Chernayaev, 76.
- <sup>342</sup> Matlock, Jr., *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 212-214.
- <sup>343</sup> The entire exchange is in Peter Schweizer, *Reagan's War*, 262-263, and Strober and Strober, 347. Schweizer and the Strober accounts tell us as much about the exchange as neoconservative memories of it. Schweizer, for example, includes the exchange in his chapter on Reykjavik which is titled "The Trap." Reagan's ability to avoid the trap now constitutes a victory over the wily Gorbachev, though initial neoconservative reaction to Reykjavik was dismay at the thought that Reagan almost reached an arms control agreement with Gorbachev.
- <sup>344</sup> "Gorbachev's Goals and Tactics at Reykjavik," prepared by Stephen Sestanovich, memorandum for Reagan and Schultz, 4 October 1986, Reykjavik File, National Security Archives, Document 06. (<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document06.pdf>)
- <sup>345</sup> Memorandum to the President, Secretary of State George Shultz, "Subject: Reykjavik," 2 October 1986, Reykjavik File, National Security Archives, document 04. (<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document04.pdf>)
- <sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>348</sup> Europe and Soviet Affairs Directorate, Reykjavik (4), Box 90907, box 3 of collection, Ronald Reagan Library.
- <sup>349</sup> English, 194.

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- <sup>350</sup> Reynolds, 384. This is not to say that Gorbachev had entirely reoriented Soviet thought; the report still was rife with accusations of Western imperialism and capitalist cunning.
- <sup>351</sup> Mikhail S. Gorbachev, Political Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1986), 125-30.
- <sup>352</sup> English makes this point repeatedly, for an excellent example see *Russia and the Idea of the West*, 222.
- <sup>353</sup> Anatoly S. Chernayaev, translated and edited by Robert D. English and Elizabeth Tucker, *My Six Years With Gorbachev* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 2000), 56.
- <sup>354</sup> English, 217.
- <sup>355</sup> As Chernayaev notes, Gorbachev raised this issue more than once, Chernayaev, 83.
- <sup>356</sup> Chernayaev, 83.
- <sup>357</sup> Chernayaev, 65-67.
- <sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, 215-218; and Reynolds, 385,
- <sup>359</sup> "The President's Trip to Reykjavik, Iceland, October 9-12, 1986—Issues Checklist for the Secretary," U.S. Department of State, 7 October 1986; The Reykjavik File, National Security Archive, document 07. (<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document07.pdf>)
- <sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>361</sup> USSR CC CPSU Politburo Session on Preparation for Reykjavik. 8 October 1986: The Reykjavik File. National Security Archive, document 08. (<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document08.pdf>)
- <sup>362</sup> USSR CC CPSU Politburo discussion of Reagan's response to Gorbachev's initiative to meet in Reykjavik and strategic disarmament proposals, 22 September 1986. The Reykjavik File National Security Archive, document 02. (<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document02.pdf>)
- <sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>364</sup> Nitze, 429.
- <sup>365</sup> Press briefing, George P. Schultz, October 5, 1986, folder "Reykjavik Meeting File," box 56, Jack Matlock Files, Ronald Reagan Library.
- <sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>367</sup> Meeting with Executive Exchange Commission, Ronald Reagan, October 6, 1986, "Reykjavik Meeting File," box 56, Jack Matlock Files, Ronald Reagan Library.
- <sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>369</sup> Reagan, question-and-answer session for regional editors and broadcasters, June 13, 1986, in *Public Papers of the Presidents: Ronald Reagan*, 1986, Book 1, 770.
- <sup>370</sup> Kenneth L. Adelman, *The Great Universal Embrace: Arms Summitry – A Skeptic's Account* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 35,
- <sup>371</sup> Schultz, Turmoil and Triumph, 756.
- <sup>372</sup> For a vivid description of the setting see Rhodes, 236-239; on the ghoulish goblins see Robert J. McCartney, "In the Spirit of Diplomacy; Reputedly Haunted House Is Likely Site for Talks," *The Washington Post* (October 4, 1986), pp. A1; and Robert J. McCartney, "A Supernatural Summit; More Stories Emerge That Potential Site For Superpower Talks Is a Haunted House," *The Washington Post* (October 5, 1986), pp. A33.
- <sup>373</sup> The meeting was considerably improved by simultaneous translation, which facilitated greater inter-personal communication and allowed each participant to respond to the other's body language and mood, Rhodes, 239; curiously, though Schultz's team had negotiated this arrangement, he does not mention it in his memoirs.
- <sup>374</sup> Russian transcript of Reagan-Gorbachev Summit in Reykjavik, 11 October 1986 (morning), Reykjavik File, National Security Archives, (<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document10.pdf>)



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- U.S. Memorandum of Conversation, Reagan-Gorbachev, First Meeting, 11 October 1986, 10:40 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., Reykjavik File, National Security Archives, (<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document09.pdf>)
- <sup>375</sup> U.S. Memorandum, pg. 4.
- <sup>376</sup> Soviet Transcript, First Meeting.
- <sup>377</sup> U.S. Memorandum, pg. 7.
- <sup>378</sup> Jack F. Matlock, Jr., *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (New York: Random House, 2004), 221.
- <sup>379</sup> George Schultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), 760.
- <sup>380</sup> Russian transcript of Reagan-Gorbachev Summit in Reykjavik, 11 October 1986 (afternoon), Reykjavik File, National Security Archives (<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document12.pdf>), pg. 1.
- <sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 1
- <sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 3.
- <sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 3.
- <sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 4.
- <sup>385</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 6.
- <sup>386</sup> Schultz, 763.
- <sup>387</sup> I have primarily relied upon the Soviet transcript of the meeting unless otherwise noted, see Russian transcript of Negotiations in the Working Group on Military Issues, headed by Nitze and Akhromeev, 11-12 October, 1986, Reykjavik File, National Security Archives, (<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document17.pdf>) I have also drawn upon Nitze's memoirs, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost* for the description of the participants and to capture the mood and key events of the meeting, 430-432.
- <sup>388</sup> Nitze did not identify the individuals by name causing the trouble in his memoirs, 430.
- <sup>389</sup> The entire exchange and the identification of Rowney as the main source of trouble can be found at Schultz, 764.
- <sup>390</sup> It also was agreed that agreement on sub-ceilings would be discussed at a later date.
- <sup>391</sup> Soviet transcript, pg. 52.
- <sup>392</sup> Soviet transcript, pg. 52.
- <sup>393</sup> Schultz, 764.
- <sup>394</sup> Nitze, 430; Schultz, 764.
- <sup>395</sup> U.S. Memorandum of Conversation, Reagan-Gorbachev, Third Meeting, 12 October 1986, 10:00 a.m. - 1:35 p.m. (<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document13.pdf>) Russian transcript of Reagan-Gorbachev Summit in Reykjavik, 12 October 1986 (morning), <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document14.pdf>
- <sup>396</sup> Much of this discussion is based upon Schultz's memoirs, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 768-769; and Rhodes, 258.
- <sup>397</sup> Schultz., 769.
- <sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*, 768.
- <sup>400</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *The Turn* (New York: Touchstone, 1992), 199; Jay Winik, *On the Brink* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 514.
- <sup>401</sup> Winik, 514; Rhodes, 261-262.
- <sup>402</sup> NSDD 1-82, Section G, for example, clearly stated that the United States would have to rely upon nuclear superiority in the European theater to offset the Soviet advantage in conventional forces.
- <sup>403</sup> The quote is found in Winik, 514. The interpretation of the exchange is my own, though Winik presents Reagan's enquiry as to if the United States could "eliminate ballistic missiles that fast" as an example of Reagan's uncanny instinct and grasp of the many technical issues inherent in

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strategic weapon systems and arms control. If he did have a good grasp of the technical issues, then his later confusion may have been grandstanding to mislead Gorbachev, or perhaps he simply was tired and disoriented after a long day of negotiations. At any rate, I do not interpret the exchange as evidence of Reagan's abolitionism nor his grasp of deep technical issues.

<sup>404</sup> Schultz, 769.

<sup>405</sup> U.S. Memorandum of Conversation, Reagan-Gorbachev, Final Meeting, 12 October 1986, 3:25 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. - 6:50 p.m.,

(<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document15.pdf>)

Russian transcript of Reagan-Gorbachev Summit in Reykjavik, 12 October 1986 (afternoon),

(<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/Document16.pdf>)

<sup>406</sup> Soviet transcript, pg. 1 (note that this is pg. 1 of the NSA file but pg. 2 of the FBIS file which the NSA has archived).

<sup>407</sup> Soviet transcript, pg. 1.

<sup>408</sup> Soviet transcript, pg. 1.

<sup>409</sup> Soviet transcript, pg. 2.

<sup>410</sup> Soviet transcript, pg. 2.

<sup>411</sup> Soviet transcript, pg. 2.

<sup>412</sup> Soviet transcript, pg. 3.

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>416</sup> Soviet transcript, 3.

<sup>417</sup> Soviet transcript, 4.

<sup>418</sup> Rhodes, 261; Winik, 515.

<sup>419</sup> Winik, 515.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>421</sup> Rhodes, 262.

<sup>422</sup> Adelman, 72-73.

<sup>423</sup> President Eisenhower had long before decided that nuclear weapons were the cheapest and most efficient deterrent to the Warsaw Pact's conventional forces. The dilemma created by removing the nuclear deterrent points to the long continuity of American strategic policy in Western Europe and suggests that Reagan's defense policies were not as novel as his boosters would have us believe.

<sup>424</sup> Rhodes, 262-263.

<sup>425</sup> Winik, 716.

<sup>426</sup> Soviet transcript, 4

<sup>427</sup> Soviet transcript, 4.

<sup>428</sup> Soviet transcript, 4.

<sup>429</sup> Soviet transcript, 4.

<sup>430</sup> Rhodes, 265.

<sup>431</sup> This would be consistent with the Akhromevy-Nitze agreement.

<sup>432</sup> Soviet transcript, 5.

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>434</sup> For this entire exchange see Soviet transcript, 5.

<sup>435</sup> Soviet transcript, 5.

<sup>436</sup> Soviet transcript, 6.

<sup>437</sup> Soviet transcript, 7.

<sup>438</sup> NSDD 1-82 and the various NSDDs which laid out Reagan's grand strategy clearly reveal that the development of ballistic missile defense was a central component for the United States' quest for escalation dominance; in addition, NSDD 1-82 declared that space would be the next frontier for war-fighting. When coupled with Edward Teller's letter to Reagan which touted the great military

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potential of ballistic missile defense, Reagan must have been at least somewhat aware of SDI's military potential; see Letter to Ronald Reagan from Edward Teller, July 23, 1982, Keyworth Files, Box 94705, Folder: Teller, Edward – 1986; the letter also can be found in SDI, Open Material, 1982-1988, Box 1 of 2, RRPL.

<sup>439</sup> Soviet transcript, 7.

<sup>440</sup> Soviet transcript, 7.

<sup>441</sup> Rhodes, 269.

<sup>442</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>443</sup> Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (New York: Pocket Books, 1990), 679.

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>445</sup> Schultz, 774.

<sup>446</sup> I believe that it is doubtful that Congress would have ratified a treaty abolishing nuclear weapons.

<sup>447</sup> Donald T. Regan, *For the Record: From Wall Street to Washington* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), 354.

<sup>448</sup> Adelman, 78.

<sup>449</sup> Reagan, 679.

<sup>450</sup> Lawrence S. Wittner, *Toward Nuclear Abolition: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1971 to the Present*, v. 3 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 394.

<sup>451</sup> Matlock, 249-250.

<sup>452</sup> Schultz, 775.

<sup>453</sup> Rhodes, 271.

<sup>454</sup> Nitze, 435-436.

<sup>455</sup> Rhodes, 272.

<sup>456</sup> Caspar Weinberger to Ronald Reagan, Memo, 19 October 1986: Executive Secretariat, National Security Council: NSPG 27 October 1986 (1 of 2) (Arms Control) (Box 4 of NSPG Collection), Ronald Reagan Library.

<sup>457</sup> Rhodes, 273.

<sup>458</sup> Politburo February 26, 1987, On Soviet-American Relations and Negotiations on Nuclear and Space Armaments, in *The INF Treaty and the Washington Summit: 20 Years Later*, National Security Archives

(<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB238/russian/Final1987-02-26%20Politburo.pdf>)

<sup>459</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>460</sup> Lettow, 247; Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, 400-401.

<sup>461</sup> For an extended discussion of the CFE Treaty see Rhodes, *Arsenals of Folly*, 286-289, and 289 in particular for a full description of the Warsaw Pact's significant cuts.

<sup>462</sup> National Security Decision Directive 288, November 10, 1987

(<http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/23-3063a.gif>).

<sup>463</sup> Baker Spring, "President Obama's Missile Defense Program Falls Behind the Threat," May 2, 2012, The Heritage Foundation (<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/05/president-obamas-missile-defense-program-falls-behind-the-threat>).

<sup>464</sup> "Russia Schedules 11 ICBM Tests for 2012," January 5, 2012, *Global Security News Wire* (<http://www.nti.org/gsn/article/russia-schedules-11-icbm-tests-2012/>).