

Est.
1841

YORK
ST JOHN
UNIVERSITY

Robb, Thomas K. and Cooper, James
(2023) In Search of a Winning Grand Strategy: Ronald Reagan's
First Term, 1981-5. *The International History Review*. pp. 1-23.

Downloaded from: <http://ray.yorks.ac.uk/id/eprint/8349/>

The version presented here may differ from the published version or version of record. If
you intend to cite from the work you are advised to consult the publisher's version:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2023.2245848>

Research at York St John (RaY) is an institutional repository. It supports the principles of
open access by making the research outputs of the University available in digital form.
Copyright of the items stored in RaY reside with the authors and/or other copyright
owners. Users may access full text items free of charge, and may download a copy for
private study or non-commercial research. For further reuse terms, see licence terms
governing individual outputs. [Institutional Repository Policy Statement](#)

RaY

Research at the University of York St John

For more information please contact RaY at ray@yorks.ac.uk



In Search of a Winning Grand Strategy: Ronald Reagan's First Term, 1981-5

Thomas K. Robb & James Cooper

To cite this article: Thomas K. Robb & James Cooper (2023): In Search of a Winning Grand Strategy: Ronald Reagan's First Term, 1981-5, *The International History Review*, DOI: [10.1080/07075332.2023.2245848](https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2023.2245848)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2023.2245848>




© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group




Published online: 11 Aug 2023.



[Submit your article to this journal](#) 



[View related articles](#) 



[View Crossmark data](#) 

In Search of a Winning Grand Strategy: Ronald Reagan's First Term, 1981-5

Thomas K. Robb^a and James Cooper^b

^aDepartment of History, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, UK; ^bSchool of Humanities, York St John University, York, UK

ABSTRACT

Historians have long engaged in a spirited discussion as to explaining the factors that brought about the end of the Cold War. The literature that focuses on the role played by US President Ronald Reagan's administration has been vehemently contested. Much of this literature, whether supportive or critical of the president's role, is divided on whether the president actually created and pursued a grand strategy. Moreover, much of the literature, fails to stipulate what a grand strategy actually is conflating planning, actions, and goals. Informed by political science this article delineates between the various types of grand strategy and in doing so postulates that President Reagan did establish a grand plan. By drawing upon recently declassified materials and engaging more keenly the interconnections between domestic political considerations and national security factors this article sheds new light on how the president's grand strategy came into being. As argued below, Reagan's grand strategy was as much a product of internal bureaucratic politics and reflected broader internal domestic political pressures as much as it was predicated upon Reagan's reading of the international strategic situation which confronted the United States. This work therefore builds upon the wider historiographical interpretation which champions the primacy of domestic politics in better understanding the driving forces behind US grand strategy.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 9 February 2023
Accepted 31 July 2023

KEYWORDS

Ronald Reagan; grand strategy; American foreign policy; cold war

Introduction

On 8 June 1982 US President Ronald Reagan spoke at the Palace of Westminster before an assembled audience of British politicians and dignitaries. The speech was laced with the humour now typical of the president's public discourse as well as to references to Sir Winston Churchill's wise leadership during the Second World War. Most importantly, Reagan outlined his vision of a post-Cold War world which would see the destruction of the Marxist-Leninist system. With a colourful turn of phrase, the president predicted how 'the march of freedom and democracy which will leave Marxism-Leninism on the ash-heap of history as it has left other tyrannies which stifle the freedom and muzzle the self-expression of the people.'¹ History would demonstrate that his confidence was well placed. Yet, how would this lofty ambition be achieved? Reagan's answer

CONTACT Thomas K. Robb  drthomasrobb@gmail.com

© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

was to exploit the superior dynamism of the western economic system so as to build a preponderance of military strength. In turn this would allow the United States to negotiate from a position of strength with the Soviet Union so as to bring about favourable agreements. As Reagan claimed in his address 'Our military strength is a prerequisite to peace.'² As such, the president requested that the other major NATO members more fully contribute to the alliance's security needs. Furthermore, a strong ideological focus was required so as to convince the world's non-aligned states and peoples that the western form of civilization was superior to that offered by Communism. As Reagan claimed, it would not be 'bombs and rockets' that would determine the outcome of this historical clash but rather it would be decided by a 'test of wills and ideas.'³ The president's Westminster address was therefore both a figurative and literal call to arms. Writing in his memoirs, Reagan explained that the purpose of this speech was to show that he 'wasn't flirting with doomsday' but that the western alliance should remember that it was they 'who had the system of government that worked.'⁴ He also recalled that the speech, was 'probably one of the most important speeches I gave as president.'⁵ Despite Reagan's satisfaction with the address, it was not necessarily fully understood, even by those in his audience who could be expected to be largely sympathetic. Andrew Alexander, who was the parliamentary sketch writer for the UK's conservative leaning *Daily Mail* newspaper suggested that Reagan's speech was a simplistic one designed to appeal to the inhabitants of small-town America. This was not, therefore, an expression of a credible US grand strategy for winning the Cold War.⁶ Indeed, Reagan himself had a tendency to present his own thoughts on national security in overly simplified terms. As he remarked to Richard Allen (who would serve as his first national security adviser) in January 1977: 'A lot of very complex things are very simple if you think them through ... Keeping that in mind, my theory of the Cold War is, we win and they lose.'⁷ We contend that this has become an unfortunate caricature of the approach adopted by Reagan and his administration.

Irrespective of whether we think Reagan's articulation of a grand strategy for winning the Cold War was credible or not the phrase grand strategy generates a number of conceptual and empirical questions. What indeed is grand strategy? Can it exist? Is it simply just foreign policy? Is grand strategy even important in determining the outcome of serious security competition?⁸ Is it something limited to the actions of the great powers? Should grand strategy be limited to the study of nation states? Alternatively, can grand strategy be applicable to the study of businesses, lobby groups, or to even individuals?⁹ Or, perhaps, can grand strategy be detected in things other than official government documents, policy reports, economic data or military plans? As Charles Hill highlights many pertinent lessons on how to be a grand strategist can be detected throughout literature and it is only *via* the extensive study of literature can one be better prepared to practice grand strategy.¹⁰ These types of questions are at the centre of the academic and professional debate which surrounds the topic of grand strategy.¹¹ As a term, grand strategy lacks conceptual clarity. Fortunately, Nina Silove has recently provided us with a neat format in which to study grand strategy. She argues that grand strategy should be divided into three parts: Grand Plans, Grand Principles, and Grand Behaviours.¹² Grand Plans, she argues, are 'deliberate, detailed articulations of a state's long-term objectives' which spell out the means required to achieve them.¹³ In contrast, a Grand Principle guides a nation's strategic direction, be it communist or liberal internationalism.¹⁴ If you will, a Grand Plan is more akin to a recipe which outlines exactly what should (and should not) be included in the making of a meal.¹⁵ A Grand Behaviour, meanwhile, is an observable pattern of behaviour which a state engages in over time. So, in the case of the United States, one can suggest that since its founding in 1789 territorial expansionism has been one of America's key grand behaviours.¹⁶

It is important therefore to distinguish the differences between grand plans, grand principles, and grand behaviours for they are different things.¹⁷ For the historian it is easiest to detect grand plans as by their nature they can be located and then studied *via* the careful analysis of documentation. They outline what a state (ostensibly at least) is seeking to achieve in the international system and how it intends to go about achieving these ends. We have, therefore, a method

for determining whether a president did create a grand plan, how it came into being, and what were the influences and pressures in its creation. As a case in point, on 20 May 1981, Reagan signed National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) 32, which articulated eleven global objectives that would guide the national security policy of the United States. These objectives included deterring 'military attack by the USSR and its allies against the USA,' the ambition to 'strengthen the influence of the USA throughout the world by strengthening existing alliances'; and to 'contain and reverse the expansion of Soviet control and military presence throughout the world, and to increase the costs of Soviet support and use proxy, terrorist, and subversive forces.'¹⁸ NSDD 32 lies within the purview of grand principles for they outline broad strategic goals which the United States sought to achieve. NSDD 32 is not a grand plan for it does not explain how any of these objectives are to be accomplished. Indeed, Reagan offered a similarly vague outline as to his thinking about strategy towards the Soviet Union and the Cold War in a televised campaign speech in October 1980. He outlined 'nine specific steps ... to put America on a sound, secure footing in the international arena,' stating that he would work 'closely with the Congress ... to accomplish these steps with the support of an informed American public.'¹⁹ These steps included: '1. An improved policy-making structure; 2. A clear approach to East-West relations; 3. A realistic policy toward our own Hemisphere; 4. A plan to assist African and Third World development; 5. A plan to send our message abroad; 6. A realistic strategic arms reduction policy; 7. A determined effort to strengthen the quality of our armed services; 8. Combating international terrorism; 9. Restoration of a margin of safety in our defense planning.'²⁰ In order to understand Reagan's grand plan we need to look deeper into the archival material for it is here that we can better appreciate the president's intentionality and the plan's providence.

Reagan's track record as a grand strategist has generated sustained discussion throughout the secondary literature.²¹ Broadly speaking there is a school of scholarship that asserts Reagan established a grand plan, resolutely enforced its constituent parts, and brought about the implosion of the Soviet Union and thereby ended the Cold War on terms so favourable to the United States that it brought about a unipolar moment in international relations not seen since the days of the Roman Empire.²² As one recent scholar has noted, 'with the peaceful end of the Cold War, collapse of the Soviet Union, renewal of the United States, and global expansion of freedom and prosperity, Reagan's grand strategy succeeded beyond even his imagining.'²³

Such triumphant interpretations have been challenged with scholars pointing to how events inside the Soviet Union, which had little to do with Reagan's policies, far better explain the end of the Cold War. As one analyst has written, Reagan's policies only helped to 'nudge a terminal patient into death.'²⁴ More nuanced accounts which blend both the internal and external factors for the Soviet Union's demise have also emerged.²⁵ Others meanwhile have highlighted the humanitarian toll that elements of Reagan's grand strategy, especially his determination to militarily confront Communism throughout the so-called 'Third World,' exacted on various peoples.²⁶ All told, the 'end of the Cold War' discussion remains fiercely contested, much of it erroneously conflates the demise of the Soviet Union with the end of the Cold War and it is often highly partisan.

This end of the Cold War debate lies outside of the remit of this article. Rather, this article explores whether Reagan actually had a grand plan that outlined a 'deliberate' and 'detailed' road-map for achieving his ambition of jettisoning Marxist-Leninism, and in turn, condemning the Soviet Union to the proverbial dustbin of history. This subject has received far less scholarly inquiry than the debate about the content and effect of Reagan's 'grand strategy.'²⁷ As to the question of whether a Reagan grand plan existed has generated diametrically opposed conclusions. For one scholar, Reagan did not have a 'grand strategy for winning the Cold War.'²⁸ In contrast, Hal Brands has highlighted how the creation of National Security Decision Directive 75 in January 1983 is demonstrative that Reagan had a grand plan for it provided 'a comprehensive, long-term vision for US policy toward Moscow.' The intention of Reagan's grand strategy was 'to provide diplomatic leverage that could be used to moderate Soviet behaviour and reduce Cold

War tensions on terms favourable to the United States.' Importantly, Brands asserts Reagan's agency in crafting this grand strategy and thus refutes the popularly held notion that Reagan was somewhat of an absentee president that preferred to allow his staff to craft and conduct policy.²⁹ Simon Miles similarly argues that Reagan had a grand plan which was predicated on the United States obtaining a preponderance of strength which afforded the United States a 'strategic margin of error' thus allowing the president to negotiate meaningful arms limitation agreements with Moscow. In essence, Reagan's plan was to usher in détente but on American terms.³⁰

This article broadly concurs with the fundamental conclusions reached by Brands and Miles. NSDD 75 was indeed a deliberate and detailed grand plan. However, this article differs in a number of important ways. We shed new light on how NSDD 75 came into being and, by doing so, more fully explore Reagan's thinking, the bureaucratic squabbling inside his administration, and the central contentions behind Reagan's grand plan. This article therefore presents different conclusions and accords greater weight to domestic-political factors in the policy-making process than existing studies. Reagan's grand strategy was heavily influenced by internal bureaucratic politics and broader internal domestic political pressures as much as it was predicated upon Reagan's reading of the international strategic situation which confronted the United States.³¹ Indeed, these competing influences were reflected in the president's advisory circle. Those that had served with Reagan prior to his presidency, derogatively known as the 'Reaganauts', often emphasized the domestic political importance of pursuing certain courses of action and were far more ideological in their worldview. Another group, which predominantly joined Reagan's team upon his election, emphasized more 'practical' policies which eschewed ideological purity. The former group included Edwin Meese, Richard Allen, Casper Weinberger, and William Clark, while the latter included the likes of James Baker, Alexander Haig, and Richard Darman.³² Michael Deaver, a long-time member of Reagan's inner circle, was somewhat of an anomaly as he often sided with the pragmatists.³³

In regards to dealing with Congress on matters of foreign policy, Reagan certainly faced opposition, led by Speaker Thomas P. 'Tip' O'Neill, especially on issues that the speaker was most passionate about (for instance Reagan's policy towards Central America). Importantly, even though Speaker O'Neill and Reagan were fierce rivals in politics and philosophy, they maintained a friendly and productive working relationship. Recalling his work on Capitol Hill as assistant to the president for legislative affairs, Max Friedersdorf explained, 'I always felt that we had easier time on foreign policy because the Congresses tend ... to stick with the President on foreign policy, unless it's something so controversial that it becomes a really contentious issue.'³⁴ Thus, O'Neill afforded Reagan political space during key moments in the Cold War, such as endorsing Reagan's deployment of the MX missile as well as publicly supporting the president's efforts at superpower rapprochement during his second term.³⁵ Historians will long debate how much influence domestic political considerations had over the course of US strategic decisions. Indeed, as one author has correctly noted 'It is fruitless to debate whether domestic politics really determine international relations or the reverse.' The answer to that question is clearly, both, sometimes. The more interesting questions are 'When?' and 'How?'³⁶ We concur and thus seek to utilize this case study as a means of helping to build upon the wider historiographical interpretation which champions the primacy of domestic politics in better understanding the driving forces behind US grand strategy.³⁷

Reagan's first year in office

Prior to the presidency, Reagan had firmly established himself as an ardent Cold Warrior who provided long rhetorical critiques on the evils of Soviet Communism and the mortal threat it posed to the United States. Reagan's critique also overlapped with his warnings about the

dangers of the increasing prevalence of the role of government in American life. Conflating advocates of the Great Society and increasing government programmes with the dangers of, and inability of such advocates to oppose, communism, he positioned Barry Goldwater's 1964 conservative movement as the natural successors of the nation's Founding Fathers:

A government can't control the economy without controlling people. And they know when a government sets out to do that, it must use force and coercion to achieve its purpose. They also knew, those Founding Fathers, that outside of its legitimate functions, government does nothing as well or as economically as the private sector of the economy.³⁸

Reagan's rhetoric was remarkably consistent in articulating that the United States needed to increase its strength so as to better confront the Kremlin. Whilst Reagan had been supportive of President Nixon's strategy of *détente*, by the time he chose to run against the Republican incumbent president Gerald Ford in 1976 he had firmly established himself as a leading critic of the president's strategy. As Reagan argued, 'Washington is dropping the word *détente*, but keeping the policy. But whatever it's called, the policy is what's at fault.'³⁹ In the 1980 Republican presidential contest Reagan cemented this impression as an arch-Cold warrior attacking President Carter's handling of American foreign relations.⁴⁰ Reagan crusaded against the Carter administrations supposed lack of effort in preventing the Soviet Union's expansion into Afghanistan, Africa, and Latin America. As Reagan claimed, 'in the face of declining American power, the Soviets and their friends are advancing'. He criticized the US for living too long with what Reagan termed the 'Vietnam Syndrome' – the reluctance to fight wars so as to combat communist expansion. For Reagan, Vietnam had been a 'noble cause' that was lost because the American government (Congress) was 'afraid to let' the American military 'win.'⁴¹ Reagan explained that if he were president he would instigate a serious military build-up which would better enable the United States to resist Soviet expansionism. His stunning election victory in November 1980 – whereby Carter conceded defeat even before voting had closed in California – offered him the opportunity to translate this rhetoric into action.

Once in office, Reagan's rhetorical barrage against Moscow continued. Indeed, the public pronouncements of President Reagan remained remarkably consistent with those made by candidate-Reagan. Thus, during his first presidential news conference, Reagan reiterated his earlier belief that *détente* had 'been a one way street' and that the Soviet leadership was prepared to 'commit any crime' in order to achieve their ambition of creating a unified global communist state.⁴² Other senior officials within the administration mimicked the president's public pronouncements. Alexander Haig, for instance, was pulling no punches in his first public address following his confirmation as Secretary of State.⁴³

The president's words were followed by action as his first budget brought defense expenditure up to over five percent of Gross Domestic Product for the first time since the end of the Vietnam War. The \$213 billion defense appropriation for 1982 took spending as a percentage of GDP to six and a half percent, the highest level since 1971 when American forces were engaged in heavy fighting inside Vietnam. Reagan's 1983 budget would reach \$260 billion. As Reagan outlined, this was needed because 'United States forces must be strengthened so that they are ready and able to meet the Soviet challenge.'⁴⁴

All told, the US defense budget would double, once adjusted for inflation, during Reagan's presidency.⁴⁵ Stronger diplomacy supplemented this as Washington informed Moscow that little hope for agreeing a new strategic arms limitation agreement existed whilst Soviet forces remained in Afghanistan.⁴⁶ Reagan was therefore linking Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan as a prerequisite for reducing strategic armaments. Yet, just as significantly, the president's rhetorical assault sought to achieve broader objectives, not least in relation to the domestic realm. Reagan's rhetoric was designed to bolster American public support for fighting a more vigorous Cold War following the travails of the Vietnam War, the energy crisis, and the recent humiliating hostage situation in Iran. Coupled to this, he sought to encourage Soviet dissidents by attacking the

morality of the Soviet system as well as seeking to delegitimize the Soviet Union throughout the wider international community by refusing to accept that the American and Soviet systems were morally equivalent. Reagan's rhetoric was not primarily designed to shore up his conservative support in the United States (though this side-effect was highly desirable). Indeed, even if this was the case, ensuring sufficient domestic political support given the American system of government is a prerequisite for any successful grand strategy. Reagan, after all, was fully conscious of this fact given he had defeated Carter in the 1980 presidential election where he had consistently attacked the president's détente grand strategy. The president therefore rightly believed his rhetoric served as a useful component in his overall grand strategy.⁴⁷ Reagan believed in both the moral superiority of the American system and the innate evil of the Soviet Union. Yet, Reagan also realized (as did his national security team) that his public oratory could help rebalance the Cold War contest in America's favour by highlighting the moral strengths and weaknesses of the two systems and thus helping to win international support both for the United States and turn international opinion against Moscow.⁴⁸ In essence, Reagan was looking to better exploit America's considerable soft power to its advantage.

Soft power, however, would not be the primary method in which the United States would wage Cold War in the Third World. In January 1981 a joint intelligence report claimed that Moscow no longer respected America's informal sphere of influence throughout the Caribbean.⁴⁹ This fact explained why the Kremlin was escalating its assistance for the Nicaraguan Sandinistas and would look to do likewise with other revolutionary groups throughout Latin America.⁵⁰ Reagan's closest advisers, and presumably the president also, believed that the Third World was where the Soviet Union would be the most aggressive in advancing its interests.⁵¹ Accordingly, Reagan agreed that a response in kind was required. An emergent strategy was developed whereby the United States would provide military and logistical support for guerrilla forces fighting communism (or communist supported governments) in a litany of areas including Nicaragua, Angola, and Afghanistan. The overarching strategic goal was an offensive one for it sort to roll-back communism by the toppling of communist regimes in Nicaragua and Angola.⁵² It was intolerable to the Reagan administration that there would be another Cuba – a stable communist regime in America's sphere of influence.

In relation to Afghanistan the goal was less ambitious. Instead, US strategy focused on trying to 'bleed' the Soviet forces currently engaged in fighting rebel forces throughout the country so as to make maintaining Moscow's presence in the country as costly as possible.⁵³ One cannot help but detect that Reagan's Afghan strategy had more than a hint of Soviet strategy during America's long war inside Indochina. As Haig articulated at the time, 'vengeance' and 'teaching historical lessons' were the motivating factors behind US Afghan policy. As Haig explained: 'The point of this exercise, apart from its rhetorical value, was to show the Soviets that we think historically and keep a long memory. They stuck it right in our eye back then and we should not miss an opportunity to return the favor.'⁵⁴

While elements of a grand plan were coming to fruition with regards to Afghanistan and Latin America, bureaucratic infighting and confusion about Soviet aims, and how best to counter them, continued to hamper proceedings.⁵⁵ The president made clear in the first National Security Council that having campaigned 'to implement a new foreign policy and restore the margin of safety' he would utilise the NSC for guidance but he would be the one to 'make the decisions', adding that Allen placed 'a premium on good management'.⁵⁶ However, initial appointments of key personal proved to be a hostage to fortune. President Nixon successfully campaigned for Haig to be appointed Secretary of State. Mike Deaver, who became Reagan's deputy chief of staff, succeeded in lobbying for Jim Baker to be appointed Chief of Staff as a means to limit the influence of Ed Meese (who became special counsellor to the president). A general lack of trust towards Haig, an outsider among the Reaganauts and because of his association with the Nixon administration and its détente policies, meant that William P. Clark, who had served as then Governor Reagan's chief-of-staff, was appointed Deputy Secretary of State to mitigate against

Haig.⁵⁷ Reagan's domestic policy proved to be successfully managed by the 'troika' of Baker, Deaver and Meese but for the first year of his administration, Reagan's agenda for foreign affairs was subject to a turf war between Haig and others, especially the US Defense Secretary, Casper Weinberger.⁵⁸

As he forewarned at the first NSC, Reagan essentially allowed these feuds to evolve, and in turn, made the decisions. Baker recalled that the president was pragmatic, regularly telling his chief of staff: 'Jim, I'd rather get 80% or 60% of what I want, than go over the cliff with my flag flying.'⁵⁹ Noting the tensions within the administration, Baker credits Reagan's deftness in how he engaged with his staff. The president recognised that 'the true believers didn't want to hear how he was willing to take most of what he sought in policymaking, but didn't say that out loud much'. For Baker, Reagan heard 'a lot of different views, and he made the decisions'.⁶⁰

Nonetheless, despite mutual suspicion with his colleagues, Haig had been appointed as Reagan's first secretary of state and he was determined to influence US foreign policy. As Lawrence Eagleburger, then serving in the State Department, advised his boss, the United States needed 'a game plan to manage our relations with the Soviets' so as to avoid having to consistently react to Soviet initiatives.⁶¹ That such advice was offered was hardly suggestive that the administration was following a deliberate and detailed grand plan. Still, Eagleburger did spell out that in spite of the on-going infighting between the 'radical' and 'moderate' elements within the administration (the former being led by Allen and Weinberger and the latter headed by Haig), they all agreed to basic principles about the threat posed by the Soviet Union and what American aims should be. As Eagleburger explained, 'We want to establish a relationship based on much greater Soviet acceptance of reciprocity and restraint.'⁶² The key, of course, was in establishing policies that would bring a more restrained Soviet foreign policy into being.

By March 1981 a degree of clarity had emerged. First, as agreed at an Interagency Coordinating Committee, the 'key element in ensuring Soviet restraint was to restore a worldwide military balance.' Second, the 1972 Agreement of Principles agreed to between Nixon and Brezhnev would continue to provide 'a code of conduct' for the two superpowers. Where Reagan's approach would differ from previous administrations would be in more forcefully ensuring Moscow adhered to the terms of the Agreement of Principles. Third, no aspect of US-Soviet relations was to be conducted in isolation. 'Linkage' as embodied in the Nixon-Kissinger approach to grand strategy was to remain. As such, summitry and arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union were to be placed on hiatus until Washington was satisfied that a more restrained Soviet grand strategy – so one that was not explicitly seeking the advancement of global communism – was being pursued.⁶³ As Haig put it in conversation with the Soviet Union's Ambassador to Washington, Anatoly Dobrynin, there would be no progress on arms control until the Kremlin 'demonstrated better behaviour'.⁶⁴ Fourth, a sustained effort at rollback in the Third World was to be undertaken.⁶⁵

As early as March 1981 it was apparent that Reagan had fashioned together the semblance of a grand plan. Tellingly, this plan strongly reflected key elements of the Nixon-Kissinger détente grand strategy. The enduring legacy of the Nixon-Kissinger linkage approach to international affairs was much in evidence in the 'new' Reagan grand strategy. Yet the tactics of détente were being altered for new ones. Whilst attempting to rollback communist influence in the Third World hardly set Reagan apart from Nixon, his policy of a sustained arms build-up clearly did. More pronounced was Reagan rejection of President Carter's human rights grand strategy which was effectively jettisoned. As Reagan made clear during a meeting of his National Security Council, the United States needed to reverse President Carter's efforts at bringing 'down governments in the name of human rights.' As he further explained, the United States should not be throwing 'out our friends just because they can't pass the 'saliva test' on human rights.' Rather, increased aid, be it economic, political, or military, should be provided to regimes that were anti-communist irrespective of their broader human rights record.⁶⁶

Angola, Central America, and Afghanistan would be the focus of this more assertive American challenge to Soviet influence. With regards to Angola, Reagan would seek to repeal the Clark

Amendment which currently prevented the United States supporting any belligerents in the Angolan Civil War. Reagan wanted to resurrect the Ford administrations support for anti-MPLA (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola) forces in the country and topple the existing leftist MPLA government which, even though it received substantial support from Cuba and to a lesser extent the Soviet Union, was recognized as Angola's legitimate government by the broader international community, including the United States government. Irrespective of whether the MPLA could be toppled, Reagan believed resistance in Angola served a broader purpose for it would send a message to Havana that it had to pay an 'entry price' for supporting revolutionary movements.⁶⁷ Reagan's Angolan policies were as much directed at Cuba and Latin America as they were at Africa and the Soviet Union.

Elements of a grand plan had developed but important parts remained undecided. Perhaps no more significant was the economic policies that the United States would take vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. By 1980 it was evident that the drop in commodity prices, especially that of oil, was starting to hurt the Soviet economy. Coupled to this, existing economic sanctions implemented against Moscow following the invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 were starting to bite. Unlike his immediate predecessors, Reagan inherited a situation whereby the Soviet Union's economic weaknesses were both more pronounced and readily observable to outsiders. Indeed, there existed an accurate consensus within the American intelligence community that the Soviet economy was struggling and that the Kremlin could only sustain its current military build-up by relying on importing western technology and food.⁶⁸ Richard Allen, the president's national security advisor, emphasised the point as he informed Reagan that 'startling evidence' revealed the extent of Soviet economic distress.⁶⁹ There existed a growing sense that the United States could exploit these economic vulnerabilities to induce a less hostile Soviet foreign policy.

Yet, economic sanctions were not a painless weapon, either economically or in electoral terms, for they hurt important US domestic interests. Farmers in particular had suffered from the grain export embargo placed on the Soviet Union in 1980 and thus heavily supported Reagan and the Republican Party in that year's election. Domestic political pressure from the Senate, especially from Senators representing states with strong agricultural interests, therefore came to bear on Reagan to reverse the grain export embargo. Reagan was fully cognizant of this pressure given the number of meetings he held with interested Senators.⁷⁰

Reagan had been a vehement supporter of imposing sweeping sanctions against Moscow when he was campaigning for the presidency in 1980. Now, as president, Reagan decided, largely for domestic political calculations, to have a rethink and would ultimately choose to lift the grain export embargo.⁷¹ In essence, the president had opted to promote his own domestic-political interests over any broader strategic benefits that the grain embargo afforded the United States.⁷² He had told farmers in September 1980 while campaigning in Iowa, a major agricultural state, that he saw the grain embargo as 'grandstanding at your expense, and that's why I was opposed and am opposed' to Carter's policy.⁷³ The president's national security advisors were nonplussed for, as they argued, weakening the pressure applied against the Soviet Union contradicted the central tenets of Reagan's emergent grand strategy for fighting the Cold War.⁷⁴ Religious groups also lobbied the president against the lifting of sanctions.⁷⁵ Irrespective of such arguments the president announced in April 1981 that the grain embargo would be lifted. Clearly then the president's pursuit of a coherent grand strategy was being complicated by the winds of domestic politics – although, as discussed below, he was prepared to anger his international allies when his strategy harmed their domestic interests.

An emergent plan

For all of Reagan's rhetoric about wanting to obtain a preponderance of military strength, his first defense budget did not provide funding for the United States to violate the nuclear provisions

in the still un-ratified SALT II Treaty (this was negotiated by the Carter administration). Among Reagan's team, the subject of strategic nuclear weapons policy remained hotly contested.⁷⁶ Importantly the president was of the belief that the Soviet Union would violate any treaty so as to obtain a strategic advantage.⁷⁷ It was this mind-set that would influence the president's arms control policies during his first term in office. Haig requested that a new interagency planning document to outline the contours of US strategy towards the Soviet Union therefore be created. The main assumption that would inform this plan was that the US-Soviet relationship was 'entering a new and dangerous phase during the coming decade, independent of any major US policy changes.'⁷⁸ This policy was to reflect four important elements. First, that US-Soviet competition reflected a 'fundamental and enduring conflicts of interests, purpose and outlook.' Second, that the United States needed to move away from its 'passive post-Vietnam foreign policy' and be far more assertive in its leadership of the western alliance so as to compete more effectively with the Kremlin. Third, that this competition between Moscow and Washington would see the United States at a distinct disadvantage in the near term as the Soviet Union had obtained a significant military edge in the previous decade. Fourth, that 'some degree of cooperation with Moscow' was both possible and desirable for it would help to 'sustain a consensus both at home and abroad in favor of a more competitive posture.'⁷⁹ Coupled to these broad assumptions was a belief that the Soviet Union possessed a critical strategic edge in nuclear weaponry and that the Third World was the area most likely where Moscow would seek aggrandisement.⁸⁰ China and other Asian-Pacific states would therefore be useful in helping to balance against Moscow for they would ensure that the Kremlin would have to reinforce its eastern flank as well as be concerned with its western borders.⁸¹

Concurrent to this planning was the idea that the United States should vigorously pursue economic sanctions against the Soviet Union. While Reagan had lifted the grain embargo against Moscow, the 'hardliners' within the administration, including Casper Weinberger (Defense Secretary), Allen (National Security Adviser), William Casey (CIA Director), Jeanne Kirkpatrick (Ambassador to the United Nations), and Richard Pipes (historian of Soviet history and member of the National Security Council), sought to implement more sweeping sanctions on the Soviet Union that touched on reducing technology transfers, limiting credit so as to prevent Moscow from purchasing the necessary technology from other sources, and trying to convince the European allies to jettison their support for the building of a new Soviet gas pipeline that could supply western Europe with gas.⁸² As Reagan's other advisors warned, however, American economic interests and broader alliance politics complicated matters. Officials responsible for trade and economic matters advised the president to pursue more liberal trade policies towards Moscow given the economic benefits derived for American business. Given the high unemployment rate inside the United States, this had certain obvious attractions. Haig highlighted how European allies would be reluctant to support further economic sanctions given their beneficial trading relations with Moscow. Likewise, given Europe's lack of alternative energy sources, hopes of their abandoning work on a Soviet built gas pipeline were seriously misplaced.⁸³

Reagan did not make his position known during the NSC meeting to discuss the matter. Rather, the president gave an insight into his thinking as he commented how the Soviet Union posed an equivalent threat to that of Nazi Germany in 1939.⁸⁴ Yet, a meeting on the following day could not reach a consensus.⁸⁵ As Reagan reflected in his diary, he and his advisors remained 'split on how hard we should go in trying to block western sales to the Soviet Union's new gas pipeline.'⁸⁶ This diary reflection, however, was misleading. Reagan had instructed Haig, Allen, and Weinberger to 'work something out' which, importantly, leaned toward accommodating America's allies preference for continuing the liberal trading practices.⁸⁷ This issue was discussed in Ottawa at the G7 in July 1981 where the American delegation sought agreement for a communique that would 'consult to improve the present system of controls on trade in strategic goods and technology with the USSR.'⁸⁸ Helmut Schmidt, the West German Chancellor, was the first to raise concern highlighting that trade connections transcended the economic realm. Rather, bolstering

trade improved what he called 'human connections' with those in the eastern bloc of Europe. As Schmidt explained, 'many of them [people in eastern Europe] wanted to see their connections with the West maintained and strengthened, and we should not give them the impression that we did not regard these links as important.' Reagan's response focused on national security. It was imperative that the G7 members were not 'supplying the Soviet Union with goods and technology which would strengthen Russian military capability.' Of course, even the least cynical of observers would note that American grain did not fall under such a remit. Indeed, Schmidt noted that just as the United States sold grain to the Soviet Union, West German sold 'cheap butter and milk powder to the Soviet Union.' He concurred with the principle of 'control of trade in strategic goods and materials related to technology' but foresaw any specific 'additional measures' as being a hostage to fortune. Agreement was reached that no G7 member should sell strategically important goods to the Soviet Union but the president could not persuade his allies to limit the sale of other non-strategic goods.⁸⁹

Reagan's hardliners may have been thwarted on limiting European sales to the Soviet Union but they had not given up on halting European assistance (especially British) with the building of a Soviet gas pipeline that would provide western European states with access to natural gas. As Jeanne Kirkpatrick warned, the pipeline would 'tie Western Europe to the Soviet Union' which would give Moscow valuable leverage over America's key western European allies. As she somewhat melodramatically exclaimed, the pipeline was the equivalent of giving the Soviets the 'the rope to hang us.'⁹⁰ A meeting of the NSC was held to discuss the feasibility of curtailing European assistance with the pipeline. The president set the tone as he inquired as to 'what pressures or incentives could [the United States] bring to bear to motivate the British to go along with our desire to block the pipeline?'⁹¹ Weinberger believed that the possibility of future defense orders with the British firm Rolls Royce could act as the necessary inducement. As he explained, 'in the last three years, we have spent \$265.3 million with Rolls Royce...It is very easy to give them other sales. Of course, we must not publicly bludgeon them, but motivating them can be done by giving them other contracts.'⁹²

Haig alone urged that a more cautious approach be pursued. As he pointed out, and as confirmed at the G7 discussion about East-West trade, the lifting of the American grain embargo would be utilized by the European allies as a reason as to why they should maintain their current trading practices with Moscow. Essentially, if Washington could trade with Moscow, so could they. More to the point, it would be foolhardy to expect the European powers to stop building a gas pipeline which would provide them ready energy access when the United States had plentiful access to other sources of energy. As Haig summarized: 'Let's be frank. It will take us years to develop alternatives [of energy]. The Europeans know that. We have been working seven years on alternatives. Nothing has happened! We need to go in with something. Not because we are subservient, but because they are our Allies and we need them!'⁹³

In a sign that Haig was steadily losing his on-going bureaucratic battle with the hardliners within the administration he found that his advice fell on deaf ears. The president determined that the United States should pursue avenues to impede the building of the Soviet gas pipeline. An opportunity presented itself with the introduction of martial law in Poland in December 1981. Reagan called for sanctions which specifically targeted companies, such as General Electric and Caterpillar, that were involved in the sale of technology utilized in the construction of the pipeline. These proposed sanctions against Poland and the Soviet Union would also impact European companies that were involved with the pipeline. The decision by Poland's leader, Wojciech Jaruzelski, on 12 December 1981 to intensify his crackdown against Polish dissidents, only encouraged the hardliners in their pursuit of declaring economic warfare against the Soviet Union.⁹⁴ The Director of the CIA, William Casey, now advised the president that with the careful exploitation of extraterritoriality law the United States could prevent the building of the pipeline for up to three years. Importantly, this would have the additional corollary of stopping the Soviet Union from obtaining the hard currency required to purchase the technology needed to modernize its

industrial base. Haig, again, counselled caution. As he advised, causing a confrontation with the European allies over what he believed to be a peripheral issue and, more importantly, an issue which was unlikely to see the likes of West Germany, France, or Great Britain reverse policy, did not best advance American interests.⁹⁵

Once again Haig was ignored. The president had taken a strong stance and desired a vigorous set of economic sanctions be imposed against Moscow. As he outlined in one meeting of the NSC, 'I'm talking total quarantine on the Soviet Union. No détente!'⁹⁶ For the president the implementation of economic sanctions against the Warsaw bloc were to be intensified and thus looked to win European support for his ideas.⁹⁷ Substantively, the United States wanted Bonn, Paris, and London to immediately suspend the sale of equipment to Moscow (via US subsidiaries) and to impose a moratorium on providing credit to the Soviet Union.⁹⁸ British prime minister Margaret Thatcher was furious with the proposals and was typically forthright during one meeting with Alexander Haig in London in January 1982.⁹⁹ As Haig reported to the president, Thatcher had raised her concerns with 'unusual vehemence.' The British prime minister argued that the western Europeans would be impacted a great deal more negatively than the United States by the proposed sanctions. She was unmoved by Haig's explanation that the 'perception in [the] US is that [the] allies have not done nearly enough' and how Reagan was 'also under criticism for being too soft on Russia and too solicitous of allied foot dragging.' Such appeals achieved little as, all too predictably, by March 1982 all the European powers had rejected the American proposals.¹⁰⁰

Interestingly, Thatcher had warned the White House that this would be the outcome and the issue would only serve as a cause of discontent within the western alliance. Reagan remained unperturbed and regardless of the lack of enthusiasm in European circles, the president decided to introduce a series of sanctions. The sanctions included a suspension of negotiations for grain sales; the prohibition of flights to America by Aeroflot (the Soviet airline); the postponement of existing energy, science and technology agreements; and a ban on the delivery of American high-technology products to the Soviet Union, including important equipment necessary for the building of the gas pipeline.¹⁰¹

Haig's on-going bureaucratic battle saw him defeated in early 1982 as President Reagan engineered his departure and replaced him with a long-time acquaintance, George Shultz.¹⁰² A change in personalities may have been desirable but it did not alter the fact that Haig's advice on the probability of stopping European support for Moscow's pipeline had been correct. Indeed, prior to Haig's departure, there was a growing realization within the hardline wing of the administration that the United States needed to do a much better job at explaining to America's allies what the 'end goal' was in pursuing these firmer policies against the Soviet Union.¹⁰³ The president and his team were fully cognizant of their current public policy failings and were looking to rectify them. Indeed, without sufficient support throughout the American public, Congress – and even the western alliance – there was little hope of American grand strategy being successful.

Economic sanctions

Reagan believed that the Soviet leadership viewed the world *via* the same cost-benefit analysis as he did.¹⁰⁴ The president, thus, remained wedded to the idea that Moscow's foreign policy could be muted *via* economic coercion. Information Reagan received throughout 1982 encouraged such thinking. He was informed that economic sanctions imposed against the Soviet Union were beginning to take effect as Moscow, now forced to cut back on its expenditure, was reducing the number of military advisors it stationed abroad. The Kremlin was reducing its funding of revolutionary movements operating throughout the Third World. Further yet, it was believed that the Soviet Bank for Foreign Trade did not have sufficient reserves to meet all of its current liabilities. As the president was informed, crime, economic malaise, and growing dissatisfaction with

the Soviet regime characterised the current political situation inside the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁵ Reagan's nascent grand plan was seemingly having the desired effect.¹⁰⁶

For the hardliners, this was the opportunity to intensify the sanctions regime against Moscow. However, domestic political concerns continued to vex the president's thinking. As Reagan was aware, the sanctions applied against Moscow also inflicted a level of economic pain on the United States which in a time of particularly high unemployment was difficult to accept. Moreover, the president remained conscious that this economic pain would be for naught if both his European allies and American businesses undermined the sanctions regime by continuing to trade with the Soviet bloc.¹⁰⁷ CEOs from some of the leading American companies, such as General Electric and Caterpillar, met with officials from the Reagan administration to outline their concern that current US government policies unfairly disadvantaged their businesses vis-à-vis their European and Japanese competitors.¹⁰⁸ Reagan's concern for the domestic politics of his approach to the Soviet Union necessarily included the fortunes of major employers. For instance, in 1982 and 1983, Caterpillar reduced its number of employees working on export deliveries from 31,000 to 16,000, with the company accruing losses of \$525 million in that same period. In a further blow for the company Caterpillar would lose its \$90 million contract for its involvement in the gas pipeline following Reagan's sanctions.¹⁰⁹

In spite of these domestic political reservations and negative consequences, Reagan decided in June 1982 to maintain the current sanctions regime and opted to apply American law to American businesses operating abroad. Essentially, the president had answered the extraterritorial question by asserting that American businesses were subject to American law wherever they operated. American sovereignty would trump that of its allies.¹¹⁰ As Reagan reflected in his diary, the sanctions would remain in place because the Kremlin had not made 'the slightest move...to change their evil ways.'¹¹¹

Winning allied support for suspending assistance on the pipeline therefore assumed a degree of even greater importance. It is within this context that Reagan's Westminster speech must also be understood for this was amongst other things a call to the British government to revoke its pipeline support. London, however, was not prepared to yield. In advance of Thatcher's visit to the United States in June 1982, the State Department briefed the president about Thatcher's ongoing concern about the impact of the sanctions on John Brown Engineering, a British firm involved in the pipeline construction.¹¹² The prime minister's position was that John Brown's pipeline contract with the Soviet Union, which was valued at \$279 million, relied on rotors from General Electric, which, given the latest American sanctions could no longer supply the needed parts. As Thatcher explained, if John Brown's pipeline contract fell through it could potentially bankrupt the company which would result in the unemployment of its sizable workforce.¹¹³ Tellingly when Thatcher met Reagan at the White House on 23 June, the fate of John Brown received more focus than the recent British victory in the Falklands War.¹¹⁴ The president, however, refused to budge. The sanctions would remain.

Now ensconced at the State Department, George Shultz turned his attention to the growing inter-allied wrangling over sanctions.¹¹⁵ From Schultz's perspective European enthusiasm for building the gas pipeline was perturbing. As he less than diplomatically outlined in one meeting of the NSC, the 'Europeans are out of their minds to put themselves in the position of reliance on Soviet energy they are moving towards.'¹¹⁶ Out of their minds or not the European powers favoured their own parochial economic interests over broader alliance or strategic ones. Shultz and the president should not have been surprised by this. After all, they were only following the example of the Reagan administration for it remained unwilling to suspend its grain sales to Moscow. Domestic politics had again complicated the desired 'strategic' approach to waging Cold War.¹¹⁷ Transatlantic tensions surrounding the pipeline ended with the lifting of sanctions in 1983.¹¹⁸ Only one pipeline (not the originally planned two) would be built. Nonetheless, the Reagan administration ensured that there were limitations on West European

technology exports to the Soviet Union.¹¹⁹ All told the Reagan administration had gained little for its efforts.

Arms control

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s Ronald Reagan had vehemently supported acquiring a strategic edge in nuclear armaments. His criticism of President Ford and Carter's arms limitations policies had been scathing. The SALT II Treaty which Carter had negotiated had not received Senate ratification. Reagan had no intention of seeking Senate approval. Instead, during his first year in office Reagan sought to win European support for the deployment of intermediate range nuclear weapons to mainland Europe. His apparent jettisoning of the SALT II Treaty also hinted that the president intended to build-up America's stockpile of strategic weapons.

By the end of 1981, however, Reagan gave some public hints that he in fact sought an arms limitation agreement with Moscow.¹²⁰ This may have ostensibly contradicted his public rhetoric about wishing to intensify the military competition with Moscow but in fact it more accurately reflected the president's deep-held conviction that nuclear weapons had to be abolished or, failing that, some sort of a defense mechanism, other than mutually assured destruction, had to be established to defend against them.¹²¹ Thus, during his 31 March 1982 news conference Reagan announced that he sought to find an arms limitation agreement with the Soviet Union. It was, as he told his audience, his goal is to reduce nuclear weapons dramatically, 'assuring lasting peace and security.'¹²² Yet progress in finding this agreement remained illusory for it remained unclear as to how arms limitations would fit into the president's broader strategy towards the Soviet Union. Indeed, it was at this point that Haig was providing the president with a detailed study which offered various 'grand designs' on American policy towards the Soviet Union.¹²³ Haig essentially reiterated the Nixon-Kissinger line that arms control negotiations had to be linked to the overall US-Soviet relationship. This meant that Soviet restraint in other areas of the world, be it in Nicaragua, Afghanistan, or Angola, should be a pre-condition before any meaningful arms limitation settlement could be reached. Haig's grand design ran into immediate opposition with the hardliners.¹²⁴ As Pipes informed the new National Security Advisor, William P. Clark, 'The point is that the nuclear competition and the emotionalism to which it gives rise is unlike any regional, geopolitical issue: it is sui generis. People in the free world are so afraid of the arms race and the risk of nuclear war that they are not prepared to stand up to the Russians on any regional issue...if such resistance seems to enhance the danger of nuclear war.'¹²⁵

Pipes' analysis resonated as Clark reiterated this argument almost verbatim to the president.¹²⁶ As he advised, strategic arms control negotiations should be de-coupled from the overall US-Soviet relationship because broader alliance and public opinion considerations dictated this. As Clark suggested to the president, 'Public opinion in the West tends to believe – realistically or not is another matter – that the mere act of negotiating arms limitations between the so-called "superpowers" restrains the arms race and reduces the risk of nuclear war.'¹²⁷ Negotiations with the Soviet Union were therefore essential so as to solidify both public opinion and alliance support behind the president's wider Soviet policies. Reagan agreed with the Pipes-Clarke interpretation and subsequently dispatched a long letter to Brezhnev proposing that a new round of arms limitation talks should begin. Tellingly, Reagan went further than either Pipes or Clarke advised as he proposed to Brezhnev that a far more ambitious limitations agreement should be sought than the one negotiated with the Carter administration.¹²⁸ On 9 May 1982 Reagan announced at his *alma-mater*, Eureka College, that he had instructed Haig to begin negotiating a new arms reductions treaty with the Soviet Union (coined START).¹²⁹

Reagan outlined both his rationale for wanting to enter into talks with the Soviet Union as well as hinting as to what the final treaty would contain. As his national security team were informed, Reagan's 'proposal attempts to reduce the threat of nuclear war by enhancing

deterrence and securing a stable nuclear balance.' In terms of substance, Reagan proposed that START seek a ceiling of 5000 ICBMs for both the United States and Soviet Union (which then currently stood at 7200 and 7500 respectively).¹³⁰ This then was the president clearly explaining the strategic thinking behind his decision. Nevertheless, the one thing that was readily apparent from the history of strategic arms limitation negotiations was how fiendishly complicated the entire process was. Over the course of the next few weeks, Reagan met with his National Security Council to better determine US diplomatic tactics. NSDD 33 emerged from these talks which pronounced that a future arms limitation agreement was designed 'to enhance deterrence and to achieve stability through significant reductions in the most destabilizing nuclear systems, ballistic missiles, and especially ICBMs.' This agreement would further ensure that America's 'strategic nuclear capability' would remain 'sufficient to deter conflict, underwrite our national security, and meet our commitments to Allies and friends.'¹³¹

Such statements, however, essentially outlined an American preferred end goal but there remained a lack of any clear roadmap on how to achieve this. Reagan did not at this stage have a grand plan for achieving this ambition. Moreover, that Reagan equated nuclear equality with numerical equivalency in warheads and launch systems suggests that he had abandoned the more nuanced approach that was taken by Nixon and Carter who had preferred a qualitative comparison.¹³² This breaking from the 'linkage' approach established by Nixon and Kissinger was a result of Reagan's grand strategy being more heavily influenced by public opinion. Numerical equivalency was, and still is, something that is much more easily communicated to the electorate and Congress when trying to win their support for international agreements.¹³³ Given the importance of winning public and congressional support for his policies, Reagan's determination to ensure numerical equivalency made sound political sense.

The initial Soviet response to Reagan's 1982 proposals was frosty. As Dobrynin informed Shultz, the Soviet Politburo believed that it was 'hopeless' to think a comprehensive arms limitation agreement could be negotiated with the current Reagan administration.¹³⁴ Yet Reagan was not to be deterred and Schultz reported positively that in spite of Moscow's outward hostility Soviet counterproposals were 'roughly what might have been expected from them in SALT III, had SALT II been ratified – an offer of significant, but not deep, reductions linked to restrictions on US forces of chief concern to Moscow, cruise and theater (INF) missiles.'¹³⁵

Shultz, with the president's full support, was set to embark on a serious yet realistically informed negotiation with Moscow. One major problem, however, was in getting the Kremlin to understand that Reagan was genuinely prepared to negotiate such an agreement. This was hardly helped by the president's insistence on deploying INFs to Europe in the winter of 1983. Nor did his public rhetoric tempt the Soviet Union to the negotiating table. In March 1983 he would term the Soviet Union as an 'evil empire.'¹³⁶ Perhaps more alarming from Moscow's perspective was Reagan's telling of the following story in the same 'evil empire' speech:

A number of years ago, I heard a young father, a very prominent young man in the entertainment world, addressing a tremendous gathering in California. It was during the time of the cold war, and communism and our own way of life were very much on people's minds. And he was speaking to that subject. And suddenly, though, I heard him saying, "I love my little girls more than anything – " And I said to myself, "Oh, no, don't. You can't – don't say that." But I had underestimated him. He went on: "I would rather see my little girls die now, still believing in God, than have them grow up under communism and one day die no longer believing in God."¹³⁷

While Reagan's immediate audience was the National Association of Evangelicals, with the speech covering a range of issues including his opposition to abortion, the president understood that his comments would be viewed internationally. Such rhetoric was hardly inductive in signaling to Moscow that the president was determined to enter into a serious arms limitation negotiation. Compounding difficulties further was the inter-agency in-fighting in Washington which the president seemed unable, or unwilling, to resolve.¹³⁸

After Shultz had been appointed as secretary of state in July 1982, a review of current US strategy towards the Soviet Union was undertaken.¹³⁹ Shultz was keen to listen to advice from all perspectives as he invited former officials from the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations to obtain their views on how best US strategy could go about moderating the international behaviour of the Soviet Union. Essentially, three countervailing views were articulated. First, there were those that advocated that Soviet action could only 'be moderated by the break-up of the Soviet Union.' Alternatively, there was the line of argument that the Soviet Union could be adequately moderated 'by the right bargaining approach on issues that affect Soviet interests.' Third, an argument was put forth which 'emphasized the importance of blocking Soviet opportunities [that] assumed no fundamental moderation is possible.'¹⁴⁰

Shultz was minded towards the second option which advocated that Soviet moderation could be brought about by employing an American strategy that was predicated upon military strength and a willingness to bargain with the Soviet Union on matters of mutual interest. In a reversal of the Reagan administration's position, Shultz wanted to put the issue of 'human rights' on the agenda of topics to discuss with the Soviet Union.¹⁴¹ At one level this was illustrative of the enduring influence of Carter's legacy on US foreign policy.¹⁴² At another level, the rhetoric of human rights promotion was yet another device for the United States to exert international pressure, however marginal this may be, against the Soviet Union.

Yet regardless of how much the president may have wanted to press ahead with nuclear armament reduction talks, the response from Moscow remained muted. As the president was informed in November 1982, the Soviet negotiators were 'stonewalling.'¹⁴³ Soviet tactics, in part explained by virtue of the leadership transition underway within the Kremlin brought about by Brezhnev's death in November 1982, were frustrating the president's ambitions to secure a serious strategic arms limitation agreement. If this was to be achieved prior to the 1984 re-election campaign, then something significant would have to change. As it materialized, Moscow's unwillingness to negotiate, the president's vitriolic rhetoric, coupled with Reagan's inability to tame his own bureaucracy and to decide exactly what he was prepared to agree to with the Soviet Union, meant negotiations stalled. Progress on finding an arms control agreement would languish until Reagan's second term. This was hardly illustrative of a fully developed grand plan.

The emergence of Reagan's grand plan

By the beginning of 1983, Reagan's foreign policy seemed to be in disarray. He was greeted by mass protesters on his visit to Berlin in the previous year while newspaper reports continually speculated on the bureaucratic inertia and infighting that marred the policy making process.¹⁴⁴ In December 1982, the unemployment rate reached a peak of 10.8% and Reagan's approval rating, mirroring the performance of Reaganomics, was recorded at its lowest ebb of 35% early in 1983.¹⁴⁵ Nonetheless, the United States was beginning to see an economic recovery. Inflation reached a high of 3.9% in April that year, compared with a high of 8.4% in January 1982.¹⁴⁶ Unemployment began to decline, measuring at 8.3% at the end of the year, (fortuitously dropping to 7.2% at the time of Reagan's re-election in 1984).¹⁴⁷ Reagan's political messaging also had some impact as 1983 progressed, with 51% of Americans reporting in August that big government, Reagan's *bête noire*, was the main challenge facing the country. Nonetheless, Reagan had to continue his hard-line rhetoric against Moscow given 55% of Americans approved a reduction in defence spending.¹⁴⁸ Again then the interconnection between domestic and foreign policy concerns were evident.

It was in this political context that, despite failing to secure a meaningful strategic arms limitation agreement, a semblance of a grand plan was created.¹⁴⁹ NSDD 75 articulated that: 'US policy toward the Soviet Union will consist of three elements: external resistance to Soviet imperialism; internal pressure on the USSR to weaken the sources of Soviet imperialism; and

negotiations to eliminate, on the basis of strict reciprocity, outstanding disagreements.' Specifically, the United States would 'contain and over time reverse Soviet expansionism by competing effectively on a sustained basis with the Soviet Union in all international arenas.' More ambitiously the United States would seek to 'promote ... the process of change in the Soviet Union toward a more pluralistic political and economic system in which the power of the privileged ruling elite is gradually reduced.'¹⁵⁰ In the spirit of Nixonian triangular diplomacy, the plan also noted how the People's Republic of China would need to 'to support US efforts to strengthen the world's defense against Soviet expansionism.'¹⁵¹

On arms control, the plan reflected Reagan's rhetoric on the importance of such negotiations to be on American terms. As NSDD 75 spelled out 'The US will enter into arms control negotiations when they serve US national security objectives. At the same time, US policy recognizes that arms control agreements are not an end in themselves but are, in combination with US and Allied efforts to maintain the military balance, an important means for enhancing national security and global stability.'¹⁵² In spite of the new language this clearly represented continuity with the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations' approach to strategic arms control. With that said, the language used in NSDD 75 underlined the sense that a grand plan had been developed. For instance, it discussed 'Priorities in the US Approach' and analysed the types of 'Restraining Leverage' that United States could exercise over the Soviet Union. Furthermore, US strategy would see a more targeted 'use of limited US resources where they will have the greatest restraining impact on the Soviet Union' along with the mobilisation of 'the resources of Allies and friends which are willing to join the US in containing the expansion of Soviet power.' Military strategy – namely a strong American military – was to act principally as a form of deterrence, i.e. to prevent Moscow's leaders from ever using military force against the United States or its allies. Taken together, the plan called for 'sustaining steady, long-term growth in US defense spending and capabilities – both nuclear and conventional' for this was 'the most important way of conveying to the Soviets US resolve and political staying power.'¹⁵³

It is also clear from NSDD 75 that Reagan consciously sought to avoid repeating what he believed to be President Nixon's mistake in pursuing a grand strategy that a plurality of the American people neither understood or supported. It was therefore 'essential that the American people understand and support US policy' which would 'require that official US statements and actions avoid generating unrealizable expectations for near-term progress in US-Soviet relations.'¹⁵⁴ Consequently Reagan updated the American people in January 1984, emphasising a holistic grand strategy for fighting the Cold War, one bringing together domestic economic success, military strength, and shared values in a battle of ideas between East and West. Importantly, the president was keen to stress that he remained committed to negotiations with Moscow especially with regards to limiting their respective nuclear arsenals.¹⁵⁵

NSDD 75 had clearly identified the Soviet Union as America's principal adversary and outlined a grand plan for tackling the Soviet challenge. As Shultz would recall, 'the US-Soviet superpower contest was undeniably the central concern of our foreign policy.'¹⁵⁶ NSDD 75 certainly supports such a recollection for this was a grand plan that framed all aspects of US foreign policy within the rubric of the US-Soviet relationship. It was also clear to Reagan's allies that a plan was in place. For instance, before a visit to the United States shortly after Reagan's re-election, Helmut Kohl (the new Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany) noted to Thatcher that 'Reagan was obviously now ready and willing to take sensible steps towards the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union, for its part, seemed ready to respond.'¹⁵⁷ Reagan also benefitted from the approval of the American people, who offered a strong endorsement of his policies. His landslide re-election was bookended by an increase in the average approval rating in the first and second term – 50.3% and 55.3% respectively, with Reagan enjoying a 68% approval rating in May 1986, repeating the rating of May of 1981 which was taken a few months after the attempt on his life.¹⁵⁸ Polling prior to the 1984 presidential election saw 18% of Americans ranking nuclear war as the number 1 challenge to the country and 74% of respondents believing that the direction of the country was

either 'fairly well' or 'very well'.¹⁵⁹ The president's Cold War rhetoric and economic recovery had decidedly shaped American politics. Nevertheless, tensions continued among Reagan's foreign policy team. Shultz complained to Reagan that he felt undermined by the NSC. Similarly, control of the NSC was a lightning rod for discontent: Baker's wish to succeed Allen as national security adviser was met by what the president diarised as 'division & resistance in certain quarters'.¹⁶⁰ While Baker overcame this disappointment, Deaver was 'pretty upset' that he would not be able to take Baker's place as White House chief-of-staff.¹⁶¹ Moreover, the president remained committed to cooperative policies with O'Neill, even remarking to Thatcher in December 1984 (after a wide-ranging discussion, including the importance of the Strategic Defence Initiative) that progress in the Anglo-Irish process about the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland was important, and the Speaker had 'sent him a personal letter, asking him to appeal to Mrs. Thatcher to be reasonable and forthcoming'.¹⁶²

Reagan had a grand plan for the Cold War. While measuring the effectiveness of that plan, or indeed whether the president remained steadfast to the core outline of that plan, is beyond the purview of this article, it is clear that it had been developed and was influenced by a combination of competing factors. Importantly, the departure of Haig and appointment of Shultz as secretary of state allowed the administration to pause and reflect on its approach to the Soviet Union. Shultz was crucial in bringing NSDD 75 to life for he had the president's trust and he was able to bring a degree of coherency to decision making that had been absent since the beginning of the Reagan presidency.¹⁶³ Reagan's stance on sanctions in 1981–82, coupled with his anti-Communist rhetoric, reinforced his Cold Warrior credentials and demonstrated that he was willing to anger allies at home and abroad in his mission to ensure that Marxist-Leninism would be added to the ash-heap of history. Still, Reagan's grand plan was designed within the context of American domestic politics and hence why he deliberately sought to cultivate public opinion and manage competing domestic economic interests even if this did cause tremendous frustration to even his closest of allies. Reagan's grand plan was heavily influenced by domestic political factors as much as it reflected the geostrategic environment confronting the United States. Of further interest were the continuities within NSDD 75 with previous US national security plans. For all of the efforts by the president to present his grand strategy in starkly different terms to that pursued by his Cold War presidential predecessors there remained enormous similarities.

Notes on contributors

Thomas K. Robb is a historian of international relations and currently works at Oxford Brookes University.

James Cooper is a historian of U.S. foreign and domestic politics with a focus on the second half of the twentieth century.

Notes

1. Reagan Address to the British Parliament, 8 June 1982. <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/address-members-british-parliament>
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 555.
5. Ronald Reagan, 'Address to Members of the British Parliament, Palace of Westminster, June 8, 1982,' in Ronald Reagan (ed), *Speaking My Mind: Selected Speeches* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1989), 107.
6. Andrew Alexander, 'So charming Mr Reagan, but I must refuse your invitation to a crusade,' *Daily Mail*, Wednesday 9 June 1982, 4.
7. Interview with Richard V. Allen, Miller Center, 2002. <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/richard-allen-oral-history>
8. One historian has recently suggested that it is of marginal importance. See: Fredrik Logevall, 'American Grand Strategy: How Grand Has It Been? How Much Does It Matter?' in Elizabeth Borgwardt, Christopher McKnight & Andrew Preston (eds), *Rethinking American Grand Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 457.

9. See the following essays which applies the term in a far ranging manner: Laura Briggs, 'Reproductive Politics and Grand Strategy,' in Borgwardt et al. (eds), *Rethinking American Grand Strategy*, 401–26; Emily Conroy-Krutz, 'Foreign Missions and Strategy, Foreign Missions as Strategy,' *Ibid.*, 311–28.

10. Charles Hill, *Grand Strategies: Literature, Statecraft, and World Order* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 4, 6, 7.

11. Listing the works that cover the subject of grand strategy would be a superfluous exercise. For a good survey on issues related to grand strategy, what it is, how it can be applied, as well as an explanation of the terms origins and evolution see: Hal Brands, *Power and Purpose in American Statecraft from Harry S. Truman to George W. Bush* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 1–16.

12. Nina Silove, Beyond the Buzzword: The Three Meanings of "Grand Strategy," *Security Studies*, 27:1 (2018), 27–57.

13. *Ibid.*, 29–30.

14. The prime example in the Cold War being the U.S. strategy of containment. On this enduring element of U.S. grand strategy see: John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2–52.

15. *Ibid.*, 39.

16. *Ibid.*, 43.

17. Though, it should be noted, they are not necessarily contradictory. This point is elucidated within: Christopher McKnight Nichols & Andrew Preston, 'Introduction' in Borgwardt et al. (ed), *Rethinking American Grand Strategy*, 12–13.

18. NSDD-32, 'U.S. National Security Strategy,' 20 May 1982 from: National Security Decision Directives Files (Hereafter: NSDD Files), Box 1, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library (Hereafter: RRL).

19. Ronald Reagan, Televised Address by Governor Ronald Reagan 'A Strategy for Peace in the 80s,' 19 October 1980. <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/televised-address-governor-ronald-reagan-strategy-peace-80s>.

20. *Ibid.* The idea of 'Peace through Strength' was an established theme of Reagan and his political philosophy, dating back to his endorsement for Senator Barry Goldwater (R-AZ) in the 1964 presidential election – which, of course, ended in a landslide defeat for Goldwater's brand of conservatism. Reagan would prove to be a more acceptable and ultimately timely advocate of such a philosophy. For the 1964 address, see: Ronald Reagan, 'A Time for Choosing Speech,' 27 October 1964. <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/time-choosing-speech>

21. A point which has generated considerable controversy within the historiography. Much of the debate surrounds the issue of how successful Reagan's grand plan was in bringing about the demise of the Soviet Union. It is outside of the purview of this article to analyse and discuss all of the works published on the Reagan presidency but the following provides a neat overview: John Prados, *How the Cold War Ended: Debating and Doing History* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2011).

22. For this line of argument see: James Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War* (New York: Viking, 2009).

23. William Inboden, *The Peacemaker: Ronald Reagan, the Cold War, and the World on the Brink* (New York: Dutton, 2022), 2.

24. Will Bunch, *Tear Down This Myth: The Right-Wing Distortion of the Reagan Legacy* (New York: Free Press, 2009), 79.

25. Raymond Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1994); Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 2nd edition); Vladislav M. Zubok *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Archie Brown, *The Human Factor: Gorbachev, Reagan, and Thatcher, and the End of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); Aaron Donaghy, *The Second Cold War: Carter, Reagan, and the Politics of Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 1–17.

26. Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 357–63; Piero Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria, and the Struggle for Southern Africa, 1976-1991* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

27. Understandable given this plan remained classified until the mid-2000s.

28. James Graham Wilson, 'How Grand Was Reagan's Strategy, 1976–1984?' *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 18:4 (2007), 798. Wilson would develop this thesis into a monograph. See: James Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation Gorbachev's Adaptability, Reagan's Engagement, and the End of the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).

29. Brands, *What Good is Grand Strategy*, 103. NSDD 75 can be read in full here: National Security Decision Directive 75, 17 January 1983 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 260, 860–8. Hal Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Rise of the Post-Cold War Order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), 73–4.

30. Simon Miles, *Engaging the Evil Empire Washington, Moscow, and the Beginning of the End of the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020), 3–7.

31. For one effort to develop a theory on the interaction between domestic and international factors upon the course of international politics see: Robert D. Putnam, 'Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games,' *International Organization*, 42:3 (1988), 427–60.

32. Meese would serve Counselor to the President, 1981-5. Allen would act the president's first national security advisor, Weinberger would serve as the Defense Secretary and with Clark serving as the Director of the CIA. Baker would serve as the president's chief of staff, Haig as the secretary of state, and Darman as a staff secretary.

33. Albeit this served his own interests for he had promised Nancy Reagan, herself often keen to emphasize practical policies over ideologically pure ones, that her voice would be heard in policy debates. Stephen F. Knott

and Jeffrey L. Chidester, *At Reagan's Side: Insiders' Recollections from Sacramento to the White House* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 3. This further underlined comments by Allen in this work: 'Reagan so trusted those around him to do what he considered to be the right thing ... that couldn't possibly have been true of Jim Baker, Dick Darman, Frank Hodsoll, David Gergen, and all those people ...' (164).

34. Interview with Max Friedersdorf, Miller Center, 2002. <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/max-friedersdorf-oral-history>.

35. Chris Matthews, *Tip and the Gipper: When Politics Worked* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2013), 319–20.

36. Putnum, 'Diplomacy and Domestic Politics', 427.

37. Campbell Craig & Frederick Logevall, *America's Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 2008), 1–6.

38. Reagan, 'A Time for Choosing', 1964.

39. For Reagan's criticism of détente and his fear that Soviet military superiority now threatened the American way of life see Ronald Reagan Televised Campaign Address 31 March 1976, 'To Restore America': <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/restore-america>

40. 1980 Republican Presidential Candidates Debate, 23 April 1980. <https://www.c-span.org/video/?407380-1/1980-republican-presidential-candidates-debate>

41. Ronald Reagan Address at the Veteran's of Foreign Wars Convention, 18 August 1980, 'Peace: Restoring the Margin of Safety': <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/peace-restoring-margin-safety>

42. "The President's News Conference," 29 January 1981 from: *Public Papers of the President, Ronald Reagan, 1981* (Hereafter: *RRPP*), Vol. I, 57.

43. Department of State, *Bulletin*, February 1981, page J.

44. For spending as a percentage of GDP and in dollars. <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/USA/usa/military-spending-defense-budget> [accessed 24.11.2020], for Fiscal Budgets referenced see United States. Bureau of the Budget and United States. Office of Management and Budget. "Fiscal Year 1981," *Budget of the United States Government* (January 28, 1980). <https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/title/54/item/19035>; United States. Bureau of the Budget and United States. Office of Management and Budget. "Fiscal Year 1982," *Budget of the United States Government* (January 15, 1981). <https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/title/54/item/19036>; and United States. Bureau of the Budget and United States. Office of Management and Budget. "Fiscal Year 1983," *Budget of the United States Government* (February 8, 1982). <https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/title/54/item/19037>

45. Jesus Velasco, *Neoconservatives in U.S. Foreign Policy under Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 144.

46. Telegram from the Embassy in the Soviet Union to the Department of State, 22 January 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Vol. III, Doc. 3, 6.

47. Brands, *What Good is Grand Strategy*, 116.

48. For evidence of these broader goals see: Clark to Reagan, 10 January 1983, box 91306, NSC ESF, RRL.

49. Issues Paper Prepared in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, 30 January 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Vol. III, Doc. 10, 20.

50. *Ibid.*, 21–2.

51. See Haig's comments to this effect later in the year: Memorandum of Conversation, 9 December 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 114, 381.

52. Westad, *Global Cold War*, 345–6. \$250 million would be provided to anti-communist forces throughout Central America. All of this was outlined within: National Security Decision Directive 17, "National Security Decision Directive on Cuba and South America", 4th January 1982. <https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-17.pdf>

53. Brands, *What Good is Grand Strategy*, 113.

54. Memorandum of Conversation, 21 January 1982 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 134, 428.

Haig had served in Vietnam and had also been a key adviser to President Nixon and conduit to the South Vietnamese government during the American withdrawal from Indochina. An element of personal animus clearly explained his enthusiasm for supporting the "bleeding" strategy in Afghanistan.

55. See for example: Memorandum from the Counselor-Designate of the Department of State (McFarlane) to the Director-Designate of Policy Planning (Wolfowitz), 6 February 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Vol. III, Doc. 13, 32.

56. Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, 6 February 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Vol. III, Doc. 15, 37.

57. Interview with Richard V. Allen, Miller Center, 2002. Haig had served as Henry Kissinger's deputy from 1969–73 prior to being appointed as President Nixon's chief of staff during the unravelling of the presidency during the Watergate scandal.

58. See, for instance: Christopher Maynard, 'The Troika: James Baker III, Edwin Meese III, and Michael Deaver,' in Andrew L. Johns (ed), *A Companion to Ronald Reagan* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 529–45; Ronald J. Granieri, 'Beyond the Cap and Foil: Caspar Weinberger and the Reagan-Era Defense Buildup,' in Bradley Lynn Coleman and Kyle Longley (eds), *Reagan and the World: Leadership and National Security, 1981-89* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2017), 61–63. Weinberger's interview is revealing as to the dynamics within the administration: Caspar Weinberger, Miller Center, 2002. <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/caspar-weinberger-oral-history>.

59. Interview with James Baker III, Miller Center, 2004. <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/james-baker-iii-oral-history>.

60. *Ibid.*

61. Action Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State-Designate for European Affairs (Eagleburger) and the Director of the Bureau of Political and Military Affairs (Burt) to Secretary of State Haig, 16 March 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Vol. III, Doc. 28, 65–6.

62. Action Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State-Designate for European Affairs (Eagleburger) and the Director of the Bureau of Political and Military Affairs (Burt) to Secretary of State Haig, 16 March 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Vol. III, Doc. 28, 66.
63. This was a victory for the “hardliners” inside the administration. See for example: Memorandum of Conversation, 6 February 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Vol. III, Doc. 14, 36; Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, 6 February 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Vol. III, Doc. 15, 38; Memorandum from the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Allen) to President Reagan, 14 April 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Vol. III, Doc. 42, 108.
64. Memorandum for the Record, 26 March 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Vol. III, Doc. 36, 96.
65. Minutes of an Interagency Coordinating Committee for U.S.-Soviet Affairs Meeting, 17 March 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Vol. III, Doc. 29, 78.
66. Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, 6 February 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Vol. III, Doc. 15, 39.
67. Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, 6 February 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Vol. III, Doc. 15, 40. Quite whether the MPLA had any revolutionary intentions outside of securing its control of Angola was a point which the Reagan administration paid scant regard to.
68. This point was relayed to Reagan within: Memorandum from Director of Central Intelligence Casey to President Reagan, 29 October 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 98, 341. The broader views of the entire U.S. intelligence community were compiled and presented within a Special National Intelligence Estimate which can be found here: Special National Intelligence Estimate, 17 November 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 102, 351-3.
69. Memorandum from the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Allen) to President Reagan, 18 November 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 105, 361.
70. Carter was warned that his punishing the Soviet Union did not require him to also commit political suicide with large swathes of the electorate. Regardless, Carter decided that he would prioritize strategic matters over electoral ones. See: Hamilton Jordon, *Crisis: The Last Year of the Carter Presidency* (New York: G.P. Putman, 1982), 4 January 1980, 100, and Carter handwritten note on: Memorandum for the President from Zbigniew Brzezinski, 29 January 1980 in Plain Files, Box 2, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library.
71. Rumours in the media to this affect soon began circulating. See: Lou Cannon, “Reagan Prepared to Lift Embargo On Grain to Soviets,” *Washington Post*, 18 April 1981, A1; and, Steven R. Weisman, “Reagan ends curbs on export of grant to the Soviet Union,” *The New York Times*, 25 April 1981, 1.
72. Later in his term of office, Reagan would again reiterate that the grain embargo had no strategic benefit so it was of course the right decision to make. He made this point when informed that the European powers would likely argue that they could not be expected to limit their trade with Moscow when the United States had lifted its grain embargo. See Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, 4 February 1982 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 141, 484.
73. Douglas E Kneeland, “Farmers ask Reagan to keep vow to lift grain embargo,” *The New York Times*, 25 January 1981, A1, 16.
74. Memorandum for the Record, 26 March 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Vol. III, Doc. 36, 97; Memorandum from Richard Pipes of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Allen), 20 April 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 43, 110.
75. For example, see: Brinkley (ed.), *The Reagan Diaries*, Vol. I, 33–34. This was an on-going occurrence throughout Reagan’s presidency. See for instance: Peter W. Rodino to the President, 28 February 1984 in Matlock Files: Folder Title: Matlock Chron March 1984 (4) Box: 3, RRL.
76. Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, 22 May 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 56, 146–7.
77. Even when told that the Soviet Union had not undertaken any action to suggest that this was the case by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Reagan appeared unconvinced. See: Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, 22 May 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 56, 148.
78. Action Memorandum from the Director of Policy Planning (Wolfowitz), the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Eagleburger), and the Director of the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs (Burt) to Secretary of State Haig, 4 June 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 62, 172.
79. *Ibid.*, 172.
80. *Ibid.*, 174.
81. *Ibid.*, 177.
82. Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, 6 July 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 68, 194–7.
83. Memorandum from Secretary of State Haig to President Reagan, 8 July 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 70, 204–5.
84. Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, 6 July 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 68, 201.
85. Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, 9 July 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 68, 208–18.
86. Brinkley (ed.), *The Reagan Diaries*, Vol. I, 54.
87. Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, 9 July 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 68, 209.
88. PREM 19/446: G7 record of conversation (Ottawa G7: third plenary session) [*summit communique*], The UK National Archives (TNA). <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/134788>
89. The text of which can be read here: Declaration of the Ottawa Summit, 21 July 1981. <http://www.g7.utoronto.ca/summit/1981ottawa/communique/index.html>.
90. Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, 9 July 1981 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 68, 215.

91. *Ibid.*, 212–13.
92. *Ibid.*, 212–13.
93. *Ibid.*, 217.
94. Memorandum from Secretary of Defense Weinberger to the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (Clark), 27 January 1982 in *FRUS 1981–1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 139, 478. In one meeting Weinberger informed the president that the gas pipeline was the equivalent of a military aircraft and U.S. policy should therefore reflect this. See: Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, 4 February 1982 in *FRUS 1981–1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 141, 482. It should be noted that the Carter administration had approved funding, via the CIA, to be made to the Polish dissent group, Solidarity. The Reagan administration intensified this funding which, in turn, led to the imposition of martial law. See: Seth G. Jones, *A Covert Action: Reagan, The CIA, And The Cold War Struggle In Poland*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2018), 86–7.
95. Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, 4 February 1982 in *FRUS 1981–1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 141, 481. Weinberger continued to emphasise this point to the president: Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, 26 February 1982 in *FRUS 1981–1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 145, 492–3.
96. Minutes of National Security Council Meeting “Poland” 21 December 1981.
97. On this element of Reagan’s statecraft see: Flavia Canestrini, ‘Economic sanctions and new strategies in East-West economic relations in 1981–1982,’ *International History Review*, 44:3, 680–1.
98. This was subsequently embodied in NSDD 24. <https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-24.pdf>
99. Telegram, Haig to Reagan, 29 January 1982, Reagan Library: NSA Head of State File (Box 35). <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/109312>.
100. Memorandum of Conversation, 25 March 1982 in *FRUS 1981–1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 152, 505.
101. Richard Aldous, *Reagan and Thatcher: The Difficult Relationship* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2012). 61–2.
102. For one first-hand account on how Haig was replaced see: George Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1993), 3–4. For Haig’s account see: Alexander Haig, *Caveat: Realism, Reagan and Foreign Affairs* (New York, Macmillan, 1984), 350–2.
103. Memorandum from Richard Pipes of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Clark), 5 March 1982 in *FRUS 1981–1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 149, 499–500.
104. You can detect this from Reagan’s following remarks in this NSC meeting: Memorandum of Conversation, 25 March 1982 in *FRUS 1981–1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 152, 509.
105. Memorandum from the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Clark) to President Reagan, 24 April 1982 in *FRUS 1981–1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 163, 533; Note Prepared in the Situation Room, 26 May 1982 in *Ibid.*, Doc. 176, 571; Memorandum from the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Clark) to President Reagan, undated in *Ibid.*, Doc. 203, 660.
106. It needs to be noted at this juncture that both authors believe the president and some of his advisors, such as Clark, were conflating correlation with causation. Regardless of causation, in the president’s mind his plan was achieving his aims.
107. The fear was that American businesses would use subsidiaries based in Europe or elsewhere so as to export goods to the Soviet Union which lay outside the jurisdiction of U.S. law. This process was referred to as extraterritorial law. See: Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, 24 May 1982 in *FRUS 1981–1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 174, 563–4.
108. Memorandum of Conversation, 24 June 1982 in *FRUS 1981–1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 190, 626–30.
109. ‘The Crunch at Caterpillar,’ *Time*, Monday 9 July 1984. <https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,950102,00.html>.
110. Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC: NSC Meeting File: Records, 1981–88, NSC 00051 18 Jun 82.
111. Brinkley, *Reagan Diaries*, Vol. I, 137–8.
112. State Department brief for President Reagan, 22 June 1982. <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110518>.
113. *Ibid.*
114. No.10 record of conversation, 23 June 1982. <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/145054>.
115. Schultz had been a long-term associate of President Reagan and he had been brought into the administration so as to bring coherency to national security policy-making. Having served under President Nixon originally as the Director of the Office of Management and Budget he would be promoted to Secretary of the Treasury (June 1972–May 1974) where he obtained important experience in how policy decisions were formulated. This experience would be put to good use as Schultz, with the president’s support, would come to become the most prominent decision maker within the president’s circle of advisors. On this see: Philip Taubman, *In the Nation’s Service: The Life and Times of George P. Schultz* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2023), 113–30; Inboden, *Peacemaker*, 198–99.
116. Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, 22 September 1982 in *FRUS 1981–1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 214, 710.
117. So much so that Reagan even pondered whether American business should get in on the act. As he mused in one meeting of the NSC in October 1981 “at what point do we simply cut off our nose to spite our face and add to our own [economic] problems by not selling” the pipeline technology to Moscow. See National Security Council Meeting Minutes, “East-West Trade Controls” 16 October 1981, RRL.
118. Alan P Dobson, *U.S. Economic Statecraft for Survival, 1933–1991: Sanctions, Embargoes and Economic Warfare* (London: Routledge, 2015), 257–8.
119. Aldous, *Reagan and Thatcher*, 123–4.
120. “Remarks to Members of the National Press Club on Arms Reduction and Nuclear Weapons,” 18 November 1981, *RRPP*, 1981 Vol. I, 1062–7.

121. It was following a visit to the North American Aerospace Defense Command in 1979 that Reagan had concluded that a defense against nuclear assault had to be found. His belief that nuclear weapons should be abolished had been much longer held. On this see, Inboden, *Peacemaker*, 201.
122. "The President's News Conference," 31 March 1982. <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/presidents-news-conference-7>
123. Memorandum from Secretary of State Haig to President Reagan, 2 April 1982 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 154, 515.
124. As Haig lamented in his memoir, much like other facets of Reagan's national security policy decision making, nuclear policy was afflicted by the president's inability to provide coherent advice on his policy objective. See, Haig, *Caveat*, 223.
125. Memorandum from Richard Pipes of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Clark), undated in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 155, 522.
126. Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Clark) to President Reagan, undated in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 159, 527-8.
127. *Ibid.*, 528.
128. Letter from President Reagan to Soviet General Secretary Brezhnev, 7 May 1982 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 166, 540-1.
129. *RRPP*, 1982, Vol. I, 585.
130. Strategic Arms Reductions Talks: Proposed Reductions attached to Memorandum for Nancy Bearg-Dyke et al from Michael O. Wheeler, May 1982 in Matlock Files, Folder: START (Strategic Arms Reduction Talks) – USSR (1), Box: 36, RRL.
131. NSDD 33. <https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-33.pdf>
132. See Reagan's instructions to the negotiating team in Geneva on this point: Ronald Reagan to Edward Rowne, 25 June 1982 in Matlock Papers, Folder: START (Strategic Arms Reduction Talks) – USSR (2), Box: 36.
133. In his address to the nation about the Strategic Defence Initiative in March 1983 Reagan took such an approach: "Address to the Nation on Defense and National Security," 23 March 1983. <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/address-nation-defense-and-national-security>.
134. Memorandum of Conversation, 9 July 1982 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 193, 634.
135. Memorandum from the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Eagleburger) to Secretary of State Shultz, 13 September 1982 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 211, 691.
136. Ronald Reagan, Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, FL, 8 March 1983. <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-annual-convention-national-association-evangelicals-orlando-fl>.
137. *Ibid.*
138. Tellingly, Shultz was actually informed that it was Washington's bureaucratic in-fighting that was the biggest impediment to finding an agreement with Moscow. Memorandum from the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Eagleburger) to Secretary of State Shultz, 13 September 1982 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 211, 696.
139. National Security Study Directive 11-82, 21 August 1982 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 204, 670-3.
140. Memorandum from the Director of Policy Planning (Wolfowitz) to Secretary of State Shultz, 27 August 1982 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 206, 675.
141. Memorandum of Conversation, 4 October 1982 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 221, 738.
142. Rosemary Foot, 'The Cold War and human rights,' in Melvyn Leffler & Odd Arne Westad (eds), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War: Endings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Vol. III, 458.
143. Memorandum from Director of Central Intelligence Casey to President Reagan, 22 November 1982 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 242, 801.
144. For the protests, see, for instance: John Tagliabue, 'Thousands of Anti-Reagan Protestors Clash With the Police in West Berlin,' *New York Times*, 12 June 1982, section 1, 8. For the internal politicking that led to Haig's resignation, see, for instance: Bob Woodward, 'Haig Reportedly Believes He Was "Set Up",' *The Washington Post*, 30 June 1982. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1982/06/30/haig-reportedly-believes-he-was-set-up/9e9666a6-5c6b-45ec-98ae-a587487c7c67/>.
145. Richard C. Auxier, Researcher/Editorial Assistant, Pew Research Center, "Reagan's Recession," 14 December 2010. <https://www.pewresearch.org/2010/12/14/reagans-recession/>.
146. <https://www.global-rates.com/en/economic-indicators/inflation/1983.aspx> and <https://www.global-rates.com/en/economic-indicators/inflation/1982.aspx>.
147. Auxier, "Reagan's Recession."
148. *Ibid.*
149. Memorandum from Director of Central Intelligence Casey to President Reagan, 22 November 1982 in *FRUS 1981-1988: Soviet Union*, Doc. 242, 801.
150. *Ibid.*, 863.
151. *Ibid.*, 865.
152. *Ibid.*, 866.
153. *Ibid.*, 867-8.
154. *Ibid.*, 869.
155. Address to the Nation and Other Countries on United States-Soviet Relations, 16 January 1984. <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/address-nation-and-other-countries-united-states-soviet-relations>
156. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 155.

157. No.10 record of conversation ("Anglo-German relations: Prime Minister's telephone call with Chancellor Kohl"), 28 November 1984, accessed via: <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/201478>.
158. Presidential Approval Ratings – Gallup Historical Statistics and Trends. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/116677/presidential-approval-ratings-gallup-historical-statistics-trends.aspx>.
159. 1984 Presidential Election. <https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/1984PresidentialElection>.
160. Reagan, *Diaries*, Wednesday 6 April 1983, 142.
161. Reagan, *Diaries*, Friday 14 October 1983, 187.
162. Memorandum of Conversation, 28 December 1984, Reagan Library: European and Soviet Affairs Directorate, NSC: Records (File Folder: Thatcher Visit – Dec 1984 [1] Box 90902). <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/109185>. For Reagan, Thatcher, O'Neil and Northern Ireland, see: James Cooper, *The Politics of Diplomacy: U.S. Presidents and the Northern Ireland Conflict, 1967-1998* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 94–118, 136–174. Even Reagan's financial support for the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement was contingent on congressional support for his cold warrior positions in this case his obsession with the Nicaraguan Contras. Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA) recalled: "Reagan had proposed \$50 million for five years, but most of it was all incentive for the private sector to come in. Tip and I wanted direct aid, and when we talked to Don Regan about that, he indicated he was prepared to get us the money if we were prepared to call off the dogs on the [Edward Patrick] Boland Amendment, which was to end the war with the Contras, in Nicaragua. It was sort of a quid pro quo, and we weren't going to have that." See: Interview with Edward M. Kennedy, Miller Center, 2006. <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/edward-m-kennedy-oral-history-2272006>. For the classic account of the Iran Contra affair, see: Malcom Byrne, *Iran-Contra: Reagan's Scandal and the Unchecked Abuse of Presidential Power* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2013).
163. Though it is important to note that Shultz did not dominate all facets of the administration's foreign policy. He was not the equivalent of say a Henry Kissinger to President Nixon. However, with regards to Soviet policy Shultz remained the president's principle influence. See, Taubman, *In the Nation's Service*, 203–4.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).