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TRUST, BUT VERIFY: REAGAN, GORBACHEV, AND THE INF TREATY

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"Every man, woman and child lives under a nuclear sword of Damocles, hanging by the slenderest of threads, capable of being cut at any moment by miscalculation, or accident, or by madness. The weapons of war must be abolished before they abolish us.[1]"
- John F. Kennedy

On December 8, 1987, President Ronald Reagan and General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev signed the Intermediate Nuclear Force Treaty (INF), which aimed to eliminate short and medium range nuclear weapons from their respective national arsenals. It was a small but significant step in the long process of easing Cold War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. However, when Reagan first took office in 1981, this outcome was far from inevitable, and by the end of 1983, relations between the United States and the Soviet Union were as fragile as they had been since the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. The potential for brinksmanship endured well into Reagan's tenure, despite previous efforts at détente by both governments. The great success of Reagan and Gorbachev was their agreement in Geneva, Switzerland in 1985 to put aside all other policy issues and agree that, since it cannot be won, nuclear war must never be fought. This may see to be an obvious conclusion, but to put such an agreement into practice required eliminating the means of deterrence.

This paper is a discussion of the relationship between the deployment of two types of intermediate (medium) range missile systems in Europe, how leaders on both sides viewed the situation, and how the potential use of such weapons affected superpower relations during the last decade of the Cold War. These events led to the signing of the INF Treaty. I argue that the INF Treaty represents an agreement that the prospect of intercontinental annihilation trumps the reality of regional provocation. There is no need for short or medium range nuclear weapons when mutually assured destruction (MAD) is the foundation of a global nuclear peace. As a result, both leaders agreed to a verification schedule backed up by the potential for unilateral nuclear action if the treaty was violated. By eliminating an entire class of nuclear weapons, and significantly reducing the total number in existence, Reagan and Gorbachev decreased the likelihood of a nuclear domino effect exchange whereby a tactical or medium-range attack might lead to full-scale retaliation. In a modern retelling of the old paradox, to secure lawful enforcement of the INF Treaty, which aimed at preventing war, both nations reserved the right of mutually assured destruction.

The most recent Cold War scholarship tends to portray the positive personal relationship between Reagan and Gorbachev as key to building trust and understanding between the US and Soviet governments. Gorbachev is further singled out for his role in the partnership for two reasons. The first reason is chronological. Gorbachev was the last leader of the Soviet Union, and his time in office began after Reagan had already been elected for the second time. By this reasoning, Gorbachev is the difference maker because change happened on his watch. Similar arguments have been made about Reagan, too. This line of thinking is based on the idea that Reagan and Gorbachev were simply in office at the culmination of decades'

1 John F. Kennedy, *Address to the United Nations General Assembly September 25, 1961*, American Rhetoric Online Speech Bank, http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jfkunitednations.htm (accessed January 27, 2011).

worth of policies on both sides, the totality of which initiated a shockingly abrupt end to the Cold War under Gorbachev, and the break-up of the former Soviet empire less three years after Reagan's successor George H. W. Bush took office.[2]

The second reason Gorbachev's contribution is emphasized is more complicated to isolate, but is more or less a result of Gorbachev's personality, his intellect, and an openness to change. In describing the atmosphere just after the Geneva Summit, preeminent Cold War historian John Lewis Gaddis wrote:

> Two years earlier [Yuri] Andropov had thought Reagan capable of launching a surprise attack. Now Gorbachev felt confident that the United States would never do this. Reagan's position had not changed: he had always asked Soviet leaders to 'trust me.' After meeting Reagan, Gorbachev began to do so." [3]

By arguing that Reagan "had not changed," Gaddis implicitly makes the case that Gorbachev was the only one of the two who could break the deadlock of mutual antagonism. On Gorbachev as an individual, Gaddis wrote, "He chose love over fear, violating Machiavelli's advice for princes and thereby ensuring that he ceased to be one. It made little sense in traditional geopolitical terms. But it did make him the most deserving recipient ever of the Nobel Peace Prize."[4]

Historian Melvyn P. Leffler also portrays Gorbachev as the central figure, highlighting his intellect and internationalism. During the 1970s Gorbachev worked for the Communist Party on improving the Soviet agricultural infrastructure, which allowed him the rare freedom to travel outside the country, and, in particular, to the West. Gorbachev, Leffler explains, "Liked talking to foreigners, exchanging ideas, and making comparisons between his way of life and theirs. He felt pride in the Soviet educational system. He believed his countrymen had better access to medical care and superior public transport system. But his travels abroad bred doubt."[5] Leffler describes Gorbachev as "extremely personable and engaging, but he was also tough and intelligent." His intellect allowed him to "recognize from the outset, that his domestic goals could not be achieved without readjusting Soviet foreign policy." [6] In this observation, Leffler and Gaddis are in agreement. Gaddis argues that Gorbachev's open mindedness freed him to "[sweep] away communism's emphasis on the class struggle, its insistence on the inevitability of a world proletarian revolution, and hence its claims of historical infallibility." [7] Gorbachev's curiosity did not go unnoticed by Western leaders.

2 Historians Melvyn P. Leffler and John Lewis Gaddis discuss the importance of Gorbachev as an individual within the Soviet system based on his unique combination of intelligence and opportunity. Leffler and Gaddis each note that Gorbachev's access to education, and foreign travel in particular, allowed him to make comparisons between life in the Soviet Union and life abroad. The observations Gorbachev made when traveling spurred his openness to change in an effort to raise the standard of living within the Soviet Union. After having seen three consecutive Soviet leaders die in office, Ronald Reagan finally found an enthusiastic negotiating partner in Gorbachev. Both Leffler and Gaddis argue that the two men truly liked one another. See: John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005) and Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, The Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007).

3 John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), 231.

4 Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 257.

5 Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, The Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 370.

6 Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, 381 and 376.

7 Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 197.

After meeting Gorbachev in 1984, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher famously observed, "This is a man with whom I could do business."[8]

Gaddis and Leffler are representative of revisionist Cold War historians who have made the leap to post-revisionism. The opening of Eastern European archives, in addition to a running stream of memoirs, and the release of Soviet internal documents for public consumption, has infused a tangible sense of excitement to recent Cold War research. Today's scholars have much greater access to information than ever before. Combined with a new emphasis on globalization in writing American History, that access has fed a growing number of Cold War reexaminations.

Historian Jeremi Suri has also written about the end of the Cold War. In a 2002 article, Suri explained the end of the Cold War by borrowing a concentric circle analogy from James Joll. In his description, Suri noted that Reagan was, "the man largely responsible for the crisis atmosphere" of 1983, but that after a series of tense events throughout the year, "Reagan made a decisive turn toward improved Soviet-American relations."[9] Like Gaddis and Leffler, however, Suri also holds a special place for Gorbachev, arguing that:

> Gorbachev understood that his hopes for improving the Soviet economy and the quality of domestic life in general required a peaceful international context. Continued Cold War competition would perpetuate that social stagnation he wanted to eliminate. Only extensive and unprecedented East-West cooperation could permit the allocation of resources necessary for domestic restructuring (perestroika).[10]

Suri framed the relationship as one between two individuals who want the same thing, but approach it from two different directions. Reagan is the paranoid ideologue always searching for peace through strength, while Gorbachev is the pragmatist, willing to expend political capital in order to bring about change.

What all of these historians have in common is the belief that Reagan and Gorbachev were both men of their time and circumstance. They were both moral and rational, and they sincerely liked one another. The absence of pretension in combination with an open style of dialogue helped foster an honest rapport between the two, which in turn helped thaw Cold War tension from the top down. Their meeting, however, was far from inevitable, and the path leading to the INF signing date in December 1987 was fraught with near misses and real tragedy. From Reagan's point of view, the Soviet SS-20 deployment during the late 1970s was a clear attempt to tip the balance of power in Europe away from the West. Once in office, he worked to respond multilaterally through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) by supporting a plan to match the Soviet nuclear threat.

First Mover Advantage

Proper balance is the key to enduring power relationships. For Europe in the early years of the Cold War, balance was maintained by measuring the overwhelming number of conventional Soviet forces against the American "nuclear umbrella" which protected NATO allies. That is, if leaders in the Kremlin decided to challenge the status quo by advancing militarily against Western Europe, American and NATO leaders could retaliate with nuclear weapons to offset their numerical disadvantage versus the oncoming force. However, this balance was based upon the idea that the Soviet military would be the aggressor. From Moscow's point of view, NATO leaders' first strike option was always nuclear, which meant a Soviet conventional force advantage was only as good as an enemy's reluctance to use nuclear

8 Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 463.
9 Jeremi Suri, "Explaining the End of the Cold War: A New Historical Consensus?," *Journal of Cold War Studies* Vol 4 No 4 (Fall 2002): 60-92.
10 Suri, *Explaining*, 78.

weapons.

As weapons technology improved during the Cold War, this conceptual balance itself was shaken by the introduction of inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). Since it was no longer necessary to be anywhere near a target in order to hit it, conventional forces were no longer a first-strike option when the expected retaliation is overwhelming missile retaliation. Under the threat of intercontinental MAD, the number of divisions the Soviets had in the European theatre was irrelevant, since ICBMs could be used as the great equalizer of the 20th century. The debate over what constituted "balance" and "security" in Europe, and whether or not the two were linked, was an ongoing one throughout the Cold War. One group of historians put is this way:

> Thirty years of successful containment in Europe had never resolved the perennially divisive military dilemmas inherent in the [NATO] alliance. The heavy reliance on nuclear weapons, as the only effective and affordable deterrent and guarantee of peace, placed Europe completely under the decision -making power of the United States. Washington alone would determine how Europe would be defended during any hostilities.[11]

The limited technology of jet bombers and artillery helped secure the initial NATO view of the balance, but considering the accelerated rate of research and development in the post-World War II world, it could never last.

The steadily increasing total number of nuclear weapons led to another serious Cold War concern: anti-ballistic missile technology (ABM). The desire to possess a reliable ABM system is directly related to the size of an enemy's nuclear arsenal. If one side believed it could eliminate the other's ability to counter attack by launching a first strike, then it would be rational to strike first. It is the ability to retaliate which maintains balance. If one nation began developing the ability to defend against a first strike, it would be in the best interest of a belligerent nation to launch an attack before the defense system was operational. Otherwise, once the defender's shield is in place, they could strike with impunity. This is the logic behind the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972 banning such technology, signed by Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev. The ABM treaty represents the spirit of détente, a lessening of tension between the superpowers. The US interpretation of détente was overtly shattered during the Jimmy Carter-Leonid Brezhnev years by Soviet interventionism in the Third World, and by the time Reagan took office in January 1981, there were proxy wars in Afghanistan, Nicaragua, and Angola.

In Europe during the détente period, Soviet leaders chose to deploy a new kind of missile, the SS-20. Its capabilities were astonishing: the SS-20 had a target range of three thousand miles, carried multiple nuclear warheads, and was capable of being launched from highly mobile platforms. The SS-20 deployment was a strategic move, a threat, that if either the US or any of its NATO allies attacked the Soviet Union or any of its Warsaw Pact allies, massive retaliation could be a reality for any or all of them, some within just a few minutes. In order to make their threat credible, the Soviet government made sure that the deployment was observable. There is no benefit to developing weapons of deterrence if the enemy you hope to deter cannot confirm the danger. The threat was then backed up by a promise that the SS-20s were defensive in nature, but would be launched in retaliation of a nuclear first strike against the Soviet Union or any of the Warsaw Pact nations. The promise of retaliation is a promise to do something that a rational or moral leader would not normally do: participate in nuclear war.

11 Norman A. Graebner, Richard Dean Burns, and Joseph M. Siracusa, *Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev: Revisiting the End of the Cold War* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008), 23.

The promise to use SS-20s was an observable, credible threat to regional security in Europe, and the world. In deploying the SS-20, the Soviet government shifted the balance. In 1981, former National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy wrote:

> Experts have been found to doubt the comfort for Europe in each successive American doctrine, whether of massive retaliation, or flexible response, or the seamless NATO Triad. And Soviet threats of all sorts, political and military, conventional and nuclear, actual and hypothetical, have intermittently strained the balance. It endures.[12]

By November 1987, Moscow had deployed 470 medium range missiles, capable of striking from North Africa to Scandinavia, from either side of the Ural Mountains.[13]

Independent of the Soviet development of the SS-20, American military contractors designed a nearly equivalent missile system: the Pershing II. The history of the Pershing II research and development dates back to 1974, but the real import of the system was not relevant until 1979 when NATO approved basing of the Pershing IIs in West Germany in response to the SS-20 threat. However, two years passed before the program entered the production phase. By that time the Soviet military was integrating two new SS-20s per week into their arsenal.[14]

When viewed from the Soviet perspective, the Pershing II system was just as unsettling as the SS-20 system was to NATO allies. The Pershing II is also a ground-mobile, surface to surface, nuclear weapon system, but has a range of only one thousand miles. By deploying the Pershing IIs in West Germany, the target zone included every Warsaw Pact nation, as well as the highest concentration of Soviet civilians (west of the Urals), and Moscow itself. Former Secretary of State Alexander Haig recalled that Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, "made the expected point that the SS-20s and other Soviet nuclear systems targeted on Europe did not threaten US territory, but the Pershing II would be within range of major Soviet cities."[15] This situation is similar to putting the American eastern seaboard within range of Soviet nuclear forces which Washington argued was unacceptable during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Because of the uneven research and development timelines of the two missile systems, the actual *deployment* of the Pershing II can be viewed, by logic of chronology, as a reaction to the deployment of the SS-20s, but this deployment was not guaranteed.

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12 McGeorge Bundy, "Strategic Deterrence Thirty Years Later: What Has Changed?," in *The Future Of Strategic Deterrence*, ed. Christopher Bertram, (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1981), 10.

13 Memorandum of Understanding Regarding the Establishment of the Data Base for the Treaty Between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles, December 8, 1987, http://www.fas.org/nuke/control/inf/text/inf3.htm (accessed December 14, 2010). This document includes information on the total number, and the maximum range, of both American and Soviet missiles, including the SS-20 and Pershing II. The geographic range mentioned in this paper simply fits the listed range capabilities.

14 Alexander Haig, *Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy* (New York: MacMillan, 1984), 225. Considering this statistic comes from a former US Secretary of State, it should be read with some caution. However, the *Memorandum of Understanding* which accompanies the *INF Treaty* confirms that a rate of two deployments per week, starting in the late 1970s, could add up to the total of 470 by November 1987 outlined therein.

15 Haig, *Caveat*, 231.

There are, of course, at least two ways to react to any sequential move situation: action or inaction. Since the research and development of the two missile systems was independent, their existence alone cannot be considered as a reaction to the other. In military terms, Washington wanted the option of peaceful destruction of the SS-20s as a military threat. In political terms, by arguing for the elimination of the SS-20s, Washington was asking Moscow to retract its retaliatory promise implicit in the threat, which would return the balance in Europe back to the pre-détente status quo. In order to achieve that end, Washington had the choice to respond to the SS-20 deployment by either basing Pershing IIs in Western Europe (action, or hard line approach), or relying on the existing countermeasures already in place (inaction, soft line approach) and negotiate the elimination of the SS-20s from the existing position. The debate over how to return to the NATO preferred definition of balance in Europe split Reagan's cabinet.

Soft Line vs. Hard Line

The soft line approach to removal of the SS-20 threat was called the Zero Option. The debate over the Zero Option effectively pitted Secretary of State Alexander Haig against Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger. In his memoir, Haig wrote that:

> The fatal flaw in the Zero Option as a basis for negotiations was that it was not negotiable. It was absurd to expect the Soviets to dismantle an existing force of 1,100 warheads, which they had already put into the field at the cost of billions of rubles, in exchange for a promise from the United States not to deploy a missile force that we had not yet begun to build and that had aroused such violent controversy in Western Europe. Caspar Weinberger, in his enthusiasm for the Zero Option, could not concede this point.[16]

Haig suggested an aggressive response to the SS-20s as quickly as possible. If the US government were able to counter with deployment of the Pershing II system in a short period of time, then the Soviet government would be forced to react in kind, continuing the cycle of the existing arms race. By emphasizing the financial cost of SS-20 deployment over the danger it represented as a weapon, Haig shows that he was willing to accept the status quo MAD in order to fight the Soviets economically. He felt that Moscow could no longer match the US in financing the Cold War arms race, and this was a clear opportunity to attack the irrationality of their economic system, rather than the rationality of their leaders. Haig felt that the only way the Soviets would not cheat a verification treaty was if the US had a comparable threat to the SS-20 in the field.[17]

Early in the debate, Weinberger clearly saw the situation differently. Like Haig, he never doubted that the Kremlin would need some sort of incentive to destroy its SS-20s, but Weinberger felt that the mere existence of a comparable missile system would be enough, and that actual deployment would be unnecessary. However, Weinberger's position was contingent on two points. He writes:

> By the first of the two, the Soviets would not only remove the SS-20s, but would actually destroy them. That was important because the SS-20s were mobile. The other essential, I felt, to any treaty on any subject with the Soviet Union, was through on-site verification. Meanwhile, I did not feel we should stop our work on the Pershing IIs or the cruise missiles. I felt that there would be no possibility of the Soviets agreeing to take out their SS-20s, unless, and until, they had the kind of inducement that deployment of

16 Haig, *Caveat*, 229.
17 Haig, *Caveat*, 229.

the Pershing IIs would bring.[18]

Weinberger felt that existing systems were enough deterrence in the field, but wanted to prepare for, rather than commit to, future missile deployment. He had faith that submarine-based missiles, F-111 bombers, and Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile systems (ICBMs) would be enough incentive for Moscow to back down from this particular engagement, provided that Washington continued moving forward with the research and development of the Pershing II.[19]

Haig warned Reagan that the Zero Option, "was a mistake that he would have to modify within the year."[20] Weinberger was pleased that Reagan at first favored the Zero Option, but later recalled, "Haig need not have feared, because to the President's disappointment and mine, the immediate reaction was almost *all* negative."[21]

If the Zero Option best represents the soft line approach, then the NATO Dual Track policy best represents the hard line point of view, with a caveat. The Dual Track was an attempt to combine both military (hard line) and political (soft line) policies. Track one was a direct deployment response to the SS-20. In December 1979, as noted above, NATO leaders approved the basing of Pershing II missiles in West Germany, and ground launched cruise missiles (GLCMs) in the Netherlands, Belgium, England, and Italy. In December 1981, the Pershing II program entered the production phase, and by June 1984, deployment of the first Pershing II battalion was complete.

Track two was an accompanying policy to Track one. Throughout the latter process Western leaders maintained an open position on negotiating the elimination of SS-20s with leaders from the Kremlin. By leaving the Soft Line approach open, both Reagan administration and NATO officials could claim to be advocates of pragmatic arms control at the least, and benevolent arms reduction at the best. If successful, the Two Track policy would achieve the NATO definition of balance either way. From the Soviet point of view, this was an aggressive move which put Moscow at risk of total destruction within ten minutes of a launch.

The Public Sphere

The Dual Track policy ostensibly showed that leaders in both Washington and NATO saw no change in the overall precarious nature of Cold War deterrence. The ultimate deterrence was the ability to retaliate against any first strike, whether it occurred in Europe or elsewhere. However, this position was terrifying to many Europeans, as well as people who held philosophical disagreements with the existence of nuclear weapons altogether. The only way to test if Washington would sacrifice New York for Paris is for Paris to be destroyed first – every time.

Since both Soviet and American governments made threats of full scale retaliation if an ally were attacked, MAD had to be considered a credible threat because of the cost of testing an opponent's resolve. This line of thinking put an extraordinary amount of pressure on the US government to back up its allies with independent deterrents. If Western Europe was a target, then NATO allies needed to be able to strike back independently of the US, hence the necessity of NATO countries having Pershing II missiles and GLCMs on site. The question of whether or not American leaders were willing to risk New York to defend Paris could be eliminated by giving NATO leaders the ability to retaliate on their own. Failure by NATO to retaliate, or the incapability of retaliation, could still be overridden by the potential of Wash-

18 Caspar Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon* (New York: Warner Books, 1990), 337.
19 Weinberger, *Fighting*, 340.
20 Haig, *Caveat*, 229.
21 Weinberger, *Fighting*, 341. Italics in the original.

ington to strike on their behalf with ICBMs. The basing of Pershing II missiles in Western Europe merely reset the regional balance of terror.

Palpable concerns over the use of nuclear weapons drove many people to demonstrate against their very existence. By 1982 people were marching by the thousands in Chicago, and hundreds of thousands in New York. The Catholic Bishops of America spoke out against the arms race as immoral. And by the end of 1982, the anti-nuclear movement was active in forty-three states.[22] Europeans were just as concerned, if not more so, considering first strike possibilities. In just one month, the number of protesters in Bonn, London, and Paris numbered over half a million people.[23]

A visual representation of the nuclear freeze movement was published in newspapers across the US in July 1985. The image shows a small, single missile silhouette representing all the bombs dropped in WWII contrasted against 6,667 tiny silhouettes representing the current collective nuclear arsenal of the world. The accompanying text included sobering statistics about the potential destructive power of the US and Soviet arsenals, encouraged people to contact both President Reagan and Secretary Gorbachev in support of upcoming summit talks, and asked, "How long can we live with the arms race?"[24]

> If Reagan's hard line approach to the Cold War was terrifying to the people in the freeze movement, it was reassuring to people who believed in his concept of a position of strength. In a letter to the President in 1984, Charls Walker of the private interest group Committee on the Present Danger expressed his support for Reagan and his policies:
>
> As you have long recognized, bad arms control agreements are worse than none at all. Equitable arms control agreements could play a part in insuring U.S. security – but whether the Soviets are prepared to enter into equitable agreements is subject to doubt. Today, with the military balance precariously tipped against us, America's security is directly dependent on growing strength in our defense forces.[25]

The idea that "bad arms control agreements are worse than none at all" was shared by many, but this concept holds inherent logical fallacies. This idea is a moralistic one, in which the US only participates in the arms race in a reactive way, rather than as the first cause. If there is a legally binding treaty, then both parties must answer to the letter of the law. But in the absence of a treaty, value judgments rule the day, feeding the nuclear hysteria rather than fostering peaceful negotiation.

Many Congressmen, both Republicans and Democrats, recognized this problem, and encouraged Reagan to make the necessary efforts to find common ground with Soviet leaders. Republican Senator Larry Pressler wrote to Reagan, pleading, "we owe it to the world" to negotiate, and that suspended talks "would not be in the interest of any nation."[26] Shortly thereafter, a group of Democratic House Representatives encouraged Reagan to be less confrontational, and more diplomatic. They argued that it was, "in the interest of all mankind that serious bilateral negotiations be resumed."[27]

22 Graebner, et al, *Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev*, 32.
23 Graebner, et al, *Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev*, 33.
24 Letter, Joan B. Kroc to Ronald Reagan, July 12, 1985, WHORM: F006 03, Ronald Reagan Library.
25 Letter, Charls E. Walker to Ronald Reagan, January 11, 1984, WHORM: F006 03, Ronald Reagan Library.
26 Letter, Larry Pressler to Ronald Reagan, November 25, 1983, WHORM: F006 03, Ronald Reagan Library.
27 Letter, Bill Green to Ronald Reagan, February 10, 1984, WHORM: F006 03, Ronald Reagan Library.

A group of Republican Senators led by Malcolm Wallop and Jesse Helms co-signed a letter to Reagan regarding the administration's policy of recognizing the parameters of the un-ratified SALT II treaty. They asked, "Shall you continue to abide unilaterally by treaties and agreements that the Soviets have violated and that have expired anyhow? Unilateral compliance is unilateral disarmament." These Senators argued for the negative, and they rejected the tit-for-tat strategy of matching Soviet treaty infractions. Wallop, Helms, and the others agreed, "that option would give the Soviet Union control over what we do and don't do, and, above all, keep our defense planning within a framework that is fundamentally wrong."[28]

Reagan, of course, agreed that a world free of nuclear weapons would be a world much improved. Yet the reality was that no one, no matter how much power they wielded, had the ability to simply call for the destruction of a nuclear arsenal. There were too many overlapping interests involved, and always the balance of power to consider.

This point is perhaps best summed up by former diplomat Miles Copeland in his seminal work, *The Game of Nations*. He writes, "when vital national interests are at stake, and when it is a question of seeing them endangered or bowing to some high moral principle, there is no question but that it is the high moral principle which will suffer."[29] The endangered high moral principle in this case is that the mere existence of nuclear weapons is immoral. The paradox is that if just one belligerent nation possesses nuclear weapons, it is immoral not to possess them for your own nation. This paradox of politics and morals is as old as time. In trying to serve the best interest of a nation in a world in which some other leaders behave immorally, behaving morally may put you at a disadvantage, and therefore threatens the best interest of your nation. Those who would behave immorally can manipulate predictable moral behavior. Reagan confirmed as much in his State of the Union address in 1985, stating, "We cannot play innocents abroad in a world that's not innocent."[30]When it comes to the nuclear arms race, behaving morally is immoral when you are in a position of power, unless and until another nation has the capability of MAD, at which point morality once again takes over. This kind of theoretical wordplay is difficult to impart to the masses when the consequences of miscalculation could mean the end of civilization as they know it. Fear is much easier to convey than reason. In looking across the oceans at one another, both nations saw danger.

The Mirror Image

The years between Reagan's first election and the ascendancy of Gorbachev to General Secretary were some of the darkest days of the Cold War. The atmosphere led many people to believe that escalation was the only constant, and that the cruel teleological path of a nuclear arms race could only lead on one horrifying conclusion. Reflecting on the tension in early 1980s, Gorbachev wrote, "This was a time when many people in the military and among the political establishment regarded a war involving weapons of mass destruction as conceivable and even acceptable, and were developing various scenarios of nuclear escalation." [31]In his memoirs, Reagan recalled that, "I carried a small plastic-coated card with me, [which] listed the codes I would issue to the Pentagon confirming that it was actually the president of the United States who was ordering the unleashing of our nuclear weapons. The decision to

28 Letter, Malcolm Wallop to Ronald Reagan, June 4, 1985, WHORM: F006 03, Ronald Reagan Library.
29 Miles Copeland, *The Game of Nations* (New York: College Notes & Texts, Inc, 1969), 28.
30 Ronald Reagan, *Public Papers of the President of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1985 Volume I* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1988), 135.
31 Mikhail Gorbachev, "The Nuclear Threat", in *Implications of the Reykjavik Summit on Its Twentieth Anniversary*, ed Sydney D. Drell and George P. Schultz (Stanford: Hoover Institution, 2007), 9.

launch the weapons was mine alone to make."[32]

Assume for a moment that Reagan's statement about being solely responsible for ordering a nuclear strike is true, and that everyone from the top down would *follow* such an order. If the Soviets withdrew their SS-20s without some combination of threat or concession from Washington, they would appear weak, and lose credibility in their reputation as hardliners. In the absence of economic power, political will backed by military reputation is the strongest feature of any government, and therefore indispensable. Whatever the NATO response would be to the SS-20 deployment, short of nuclear war, Moscow could not blink. To do so would indicate less-than-total faith in the choice to deploy the SS-20s. In the resulting geo-political atmosphere, every situation involving either the US or Soviet Union was highly scrutinized and presented as proof of the others' aggression or intransigence.

In the collaborative effort *The Sword and the Shield*, historian Christopher Andrew describes the Soviet position early in the Reagan administration. Andrew writes, "In a secret speech to a major KGB conference in May 1981, a visibly ailing Brezhnev denounced Reagan's policies as a serious threat to world peace."[33] At the same conference, KGB Director Yuri Andropov announced operation RYAN (*Raketno Yadernoye Napadenie*, "Nuclear Missile Attack"). Andrew continues, "RYAN's purpose was to collect intelligence on the presumed, but non-existent, plans of the Reagan administration to launch a nuclear first strike against the Soviet Union – a delusion which reflected both the KGB's continuing failure to penetrate the policy-making of the Main Adversary and its recurrent tendency towards conspiracy theory."[34]

By 1983, Brezhnev had passed away and Andropov was the new General Secretary. Unfortunately, Andropov's health upon entering office was not much of an improvement over Brezhnev's later years, and the paranoid view of Washington continued unabated. In describing Andropov and the political climate of 1983, historian Vladislov Zubok writes, "On September 29, *Pravda* published his 'farewell address' on Soviet-American relations. Andropov informed the Soviet people that the Reagan administration was set upon a dangerous course 'to ensure a dominating position in the world for the United States of America.'"[35] Previous to his duties as General Secretary, Andropov had been the longest serving head of the KGB, and he was well aware of the American government's geopolitical strategy and capability. Based on American actions, not words, Andropov made a good point.

For his part, Reagan was all too happy to play the insult game, and consistently derided the Soviet Union in public. In a speech to the British House of Commons, Reagan warned that, "the march of freedom and democracy…will leave Marxism-Leninism on the ash-heap of history." [36] In his first term, Reagan famously labeled the Soviet Union an "evil empire" and warned people not to "remove yourself from the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil." [37]George Kennan, the father of US containment policy called Reagan's views toward the Soviet Union "intellectual primitivism."[38]

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32 Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 257.
33 Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 213.
34 Andrew and Mitrokhin, *Sword and the Shield*, 213.
35 Vladislov Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 274.
36 Ronald Reagan, *Public Papers of the President of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1982* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1983), 747.
37 Reagan, *Public Papers of the President of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1984), 364.
38 Mark A. Stoler, *Ideology Anew*, Read by author, The Teaching Company, 2008.

Reagan also compared Soviet leaders to their most bitter of antagonists, the Nazis. For the Soviets, the greatest source of national tragedy and pride was winning the "Great Patriotic War." In a March 1981 interview with Walter Cronkite, Reagan said, "I remember when Hitler was arming and had built himself up – no one's created quite the military power that the Soviet Union has, but comparatively he was in that way."[39] It was not the only time Reagan associated the Soviets with their World War II adversary. In a speech to Congress, Reagan compared the Soviet communist influences in Central America and the Caribbean with German U-boats operating in the Gulf of Mexico during the early 1940s.[40] In describing the current Soviet leadership as similar to Nazi leadership, Reagan was verbally salting the psychic wounds incurred by *millions* of civilians. As one historian has noted, "Probably no American policymaker at any time during the Cold War inspired quite as much fear and loathing in Moscow as Ronald Reagan during his first term as president."[41]

The Year of Living Dangerously

In January 1983, Reagan made antagonizing the Soviets official policy when he signed National Security Decision Directive 75 (NSDD 75), titled "US Relations with the USSR." NSDD 75 is the written representation of Reagan's concept of a position of strength. The policy calls for the US to challenge the Soviet Union militarily, subvert the authority of the Kremlin within the USSR, and at the same time always extend an olive branch to negotiate should the first two points aggravate Soviet leaders to the point of exhaustion on any particular issue. [42]

The most successful portion of this policy, and also potentially the most dangerous, was its military strategy. In part, NSDD 75 reads:

> The US must modernize its military forces – both nuclear and conventional – so that the Soviet leaders perceive that the US is determined never to accept a second place or a deteriorating military posture. Soviet calculations of possible war outcomes under any contingency must always result in outcomes so unfavorable to the USSR that there would be no incentive for Soviet leaders to initiate an attack.[43]

This line of thinking is contingent upon two very precarious assumptions, the first of which is being able to guess how Soviet leaders "perceive" a situation, and, second, what their "calculations" might be if US policymakers correctly determined the answer to the first assumption. Reagan added to this policy in a statement to Congress in June 1985, when he said it was necessary to, "make it clear to Moscow that violations of arms control obligations entail real costs," and that the US should continue with strategic modernization programs "as a hedge against the military consequences of […] Soviet violations of existing arms agreements which the Soviets fail to correct."[44]

When the two doctrines are combined, the situation reads like this: if Washington guesses wrong on Soviet perceptions of any given situation, and then Moscow reacts in a way that US officials did not anticipate, then US officials reserve the right to respond in a tit-for-tat fashion based on the Soviet reaction, even though it was Washington's failed model that al-

39 Ronald Reagan, *Public Papers of the President of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1981* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1982), 194.
40 Reagan, *PPP 1983*, 601.
41 Andrew and Mitrokhin, *Sword and the Shield*, 242.
42 National Security Decision Directive Number 75, Federation of American Scientists, http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/index.html (accessed March 27, 2011).
43 National Security Decision Directive Number 75.
44 US Department of State, *Building an Interim Framework for Mutual Restraint*, Special Report No. 131, June 10, 1985.

lowed for the unanticipated reaction. This "miscalculation" portion of Kennedy's 1961 warning was a real possibility in 1983.

Growing concerns over the arms race combined with a brutal economic recession led to very low public approval numbers for Reagan during this period. After two years in office, the financial slowdown that Reagan had blamed on Carter was still lingering, which led some to question whether or not incurring a large national debt to finance a military modernization project was good policy. According to a Gallup Poll, Reagan began 1983 with a paltry 35% approval rating.[45] In July 1983, Republican Senator Arlen Spector addressed this concern in a letter to one of Reagan's national security assistants, William P. Clark. Regarding the prospects of a new arms control summit with the Soviets, Spector wrote:

> Even if the summit did not produce an agreement, I do not believe it would 'dash expectations,' as some suggest. Rather, a meeting between the two leaders would demonstrate that both nations are serious about arms control. Such a demonstration is crucial, in my opinion, to maintaining public support for our defense build-up, strategic modernization, including the MX missile, and deployment of the Euromissiles.[46]

By taking this position, Specter was effectively arguing that, in a democracy, informed public opinion is less desirable than manipulated public opinion. Specter felt that a mere façade of good faith negotiations would be enough to drum up public support for the real bargaining target of the administration: a position of strength.

The tension continued to rise into late summer of that year when a Soviet fighter pilot shot down Korean Airline Flight 007 over the Kamchatka peninsula in far eastern Russia. KAL 007 had gone off course and mistakenly entered Russian air space. The fighter pilot did not intend to kill civilians, and in fact thought he was shooting at an American military plane. The US regularly probed Soviet radar defenses, including in the area around Kamchatka where a major Soviet naval base was located. Tragically, after a series of technical and communications problems, in the black of night, the fighter pilot was ordered to shoot down the plane. Only afterwards was the real identity of the craft known. Western journalists and politicians alike criticized the attack as naked aggression, and a representation of the contempt for human life held by leaders in Moscow.[47]

The timing could not have been worse. The KAL incident occurred in September, followed by weeks of demagoguery in the press. In the midst of all the posturing, both public and private, Reagan approved a ten day NATO military exercise called Able Archer '83 from November 2 - 11. Author David Hoffman explains:

> The exercise, Able Archer '83, was designed to practice the procedures for a full-scale simulated release of nuclear weapons in a European conflict. The Soviets had long feared that training exercises could be used as a disguise for a real attack; their own war plans envisioned the same deception.[48]

Able Archer was exactly the kind of operation that RYAN was meant to detect and counter, which only heightened tensions between the two nations, as well as the apprehensiveness of

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45 Frank Newport, Jeffrey M. Jones, and Lydia Saad, "Ronald Reagan From the People's Perspective: A Gallup Poll Review," Gallup News Service http://www.gallup.com/poll/11887/ronald-reagan-from-peoples-perspective-gallup-poll-review.aspx (accessed March 29, 2011).

46 Letter, Arlen Specter to William P. Clark, July 27, 1983, WHORM: F006 03, Ronald Reagan Library.

47 David E. Hoffman, *The Dead Hand: The Untold Story of the Cold War Arms Race and Its Dangerous Legacy* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 94.

48 Hoffman, *The Dead Hand,* 72-79.

European allies on both sides. In carrying out the exercise, NATO forces altered their message formats and moved non-existent forces to high alert status. KGB agents monitoring the communications and the exercise as a whole were shocked, and for a time believed that NATO was on the precipice of a first strike against the Soviet Union.[49c]In response, during the exercise, the Soviet Fourth Air Army was also placed on an increased readiness level, and combat air operations were called off for seven days in anticipation of NATO moves. Reagan was initially scheduled to participate personally, but after word of Soviet and allied apprehension got to the White House, he decided against it.[50] The successful completion of a mock-nuclear missile attack only reinforced the idea that the scenario was a viable option for policymakers. Both sides believed the other was capable of a first strike.

Despite the mounting fear and polarization caused by the events of 1983, Reagan still clung to the NATO Dual Track policy, which necessitated Pershing II deployment. In response to a letter signed by sixteen Congressmen warning of the "increasingly dangerous" situation, a White House aide wrote on behalf of the Reagan, that the "President believes that making concessions just to get the Soviets back to the negotiations that they themselves broke off would only encourage further intransigence."[51] Reagan's negotiating policy never changed. It was "no" to any proposal by the Soviet government that was less than the American starting position. Gorbachev, on the other hand, was the first of the two leaders to act on the recognition of both men that the exorbitant amount of time, money, and resources being used for an international arms race could be of far better use within the borders of their own country. Gorbachev believed the benefits to the Soviet Union from ending the arms race would outweigh any security concerns inherent in disarmament. This recognition, and acceptance, is what made Gorbachev so important in the INF Treaty negotiations.

Personality Goes a Long Way

The inability of Washington and Moscow to foster some level of trust between the two governments in the early 1980s is clear. Both nations were scared of what they saw on the other side of the world. The only reason that neither nation acted on their fear is the concept of MAD. An American economist and professor, Thomas Schelling , articulated this point in his book *The Strategy of Conflict*. Schelling wrote:

> There is a difference between a balance of terror in which *either* side can obliterate the other and one in which *both* sides can do it no matter who strikes first. It is not the "balance" – the sheer equality or symmetry in the situation – that constitutes mutual deterrence; it is the *stability* of the balance. The balance is stable only when neither, in striking first, can destroy the other's ability to strike back.[52]

The choice by Soviet leaders to deploy SS-20s within range of Western Europe, when taken from the NATO point of view, upset the regional stability of that balance. Open criticism on both sides, coupled with massive intelligence and military exercises like RYAN and Able Archer, only served to exacerbate the imbalance and inflame fear of a nuclear confrontation. Historian Melvyn Leffler explains, "Brezhnev had warned against another escalation of the arms race and even offered to reduce the number of Soviet SS-20s if the West would talk and not act. But NATO leaders moved ahead on 12 December [1979], saying they were wiling to

49 James Mann, The *Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War* (New York: Viking, 2009), 77-78.
50 Hoffman, *The Dead Hand*, 95.
51 Letter, Lawrence Coughlin to Ronald Reagan, June 15, 1984 and Robert F. Turner to Lawrence Coughlin, July 10, 1984, WHORM: F006 03, Ronald Reagan Library.
52 Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 232.

talk but would not stop their plans to deploy 464 ground-launched Tomahawk cruise missiles in Western Europe along with 108 Pershing II intermediate-range ballistic missiles. Brezhnev and his colleagues were dismayed. The Americans were again seeking to negotiate from strength."[53] Under Reagan, official US national security policy outlined in NSDD 75 meant that, in reaction to the SS-20 deployment, the only option for American policymakers was to respond in kind, and move forward with the Pershing II production and deployment.

Even before he took office, this was a point which Gorbachev understood all too well. In his memoirs, Gorbachev wrote:

> The decision to deploy SS-20 missiles in Eastern Europe had reflected the style of the Soviet leadership at the time, decision-making fraught with grave consequences for the country. I had arrived at the sad conclusion that this step, fateful both for our country and Europe and for the rest of the world, had been taken without the necessary political and strategic analysis of its possible consequences. Whatever the arguments advanced at the time to justify the deployment of such missiles, the Soviet leadership failed to take into account the probable reaction of the Western countries. I would even go so far as to characterize it as an unforgivable adventure, embarked on by the previous Soviet leadership under pressure from the military-industrial complex. They might have assumed that, while we deployed our missiles, Western counter-measures would be impeded by the peace movement. If so, such a calculation was more than naïve.[54]

In this single passage, Gorbachev demonstrates how history is never inevitable, but in hindsight, can seem over-determined. Before the NATO Dual Track policy of 1979, before NSDD 75 in 1983, and before Reagan's statement to Congress in 1985, Gorbachev could see what he felt was inevitable unfolding before his eyes. When Reagan took office, he not only upheld the US agreement with NATO to respond directly to the SS-20 deployment, he encouraged a massive military buildup in order to show the Soviet leaders that he was happy to play the tit-for-tat game. To Reagan's great credit, by 1985, he was also willing to play tit-for-tat on arms reductions.

In this way, it really did take Gorbachev to break the cycle of counter deployments, war scares, and paranoid living. Both Reagan and Gorbachev recognized the danger of perpetually testing the rationality of their governments in response to crisis. Unfortunately, Gorbachev was not the General Secretary until three consecutive Soviet leaders died while in office. As such, the possibility of continuity in already strained relations was made even more difficult by the reality of human frailty. Between the time Reagan took office in January 1981 to the time Gorbachev took office in March 1985, Brezhnev, Andropov, and Constantine Chernenko all passed away.

The rapid succession of Soviet leaders made it nearly impossible to build any kind of rapport between Reagan and his Kremlin counterparts. The stability of relations between Washington and Moscow was, from a certain point of view, dangerously reliant on the health of two men at any given time. In both political philosophy and physical vitality, Gorbachev represented a clear change within the Kremlin. At fifty-four Gorbachev was easily the youngest member of the Politburo. When he became General Secretary, Gorbachev was thirteen years younger than the average age of the voting membership.[55] The INF Treaty is more than

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53 Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, The Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 332

54 Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 443-444.

55 Hoffman, *The Dead Hand*, 187.

just a document: it is the written embodiment of Gorbachev's policies and personality, based on a life spent in and out of the Soviet Union.

The INF Treaty

Treaties are contracts between nations, enforceable by war. In the nuclear age, breaking a treaty could mean disaster for every living thing on Earth. MAD is the foundation of the INF Treaty, and the foundation of MAD is rationality. Throughout the Cold War both governments tested the rationality of their policymakers by practicing brinksmanship. The Korean War, Taiwan Straits Crisis, Cuban Missile Crisis, and even Able Archer were all tests of rationality, which thankfully both governments continued to pass, at least on a macro level.

Following this analogy, if MAD is the foundation of the INF Treaty, then verification is the framework. As noted above, both threats and promises are strategic moves in a "game of nations." But strategic moves, by definition, must also be decisions that a player, or in this case a national government, would not normally make. Initiating MAD is not in the best interest of a rational policymaker, and is therefore a credible threat.

The promise to eliminate nuclear weapons altogether is also something that a rational policymaker would not normally do, in part, because the United States and Soviet Union were not the only two nations with nuclear weapons. Although the INF Treaty is bilateral, the parameters take into consideration the global balance necessary beyond their own national interests. Most notably at the time, China, India, Pakistan, and Israel also possessed nuclear weapons. It would not be in the best interest of either the US or Soviet Union to completely dismantle their nuclear arsenal in a world where the lack of such weapons would be a geopolitical disadvantage.

The agreement by Reagan and Gorbachev that nuclear war could not be won only reinforced what generations of leaders before them understood. This can be confirmed by analyzing the INF preamble. The treaty reads:

> The United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, hereinafter referred to as the Parties, Conscious that nuclear war would have devastating consequences for all mankind, Guided by the objective of strengthening strategic stability, Convinced that the measures set forth in this Treaty will help reduce the risk of outbreak of war and strengthen international peace and security, and Mindful of their obligations under Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, have agreed as follows:[56]

While both Parties agreed that nuclear war would be terrible for all people, they are not negotiating the elimination of all nuclear weapons. They are negotiating a "strategic stability" which will "reduce the risk" of nuclear confrontation. By eliminating short and medium range missiles from their arsenals, both Parties reduced the amount of contingencies available to policymakers who would otherwise consider nuclear war a possibility.

The INF Treaty is also loaded with language that speaks to the paranoid atmosphere that came to a crescendo during Reagan's first term. Article V, Section Three reads:

> Shorter-range missiles and launchers of such missiles shall not be located at the same elimination facility. Such facilities shall be separated by no less

56 "Treaty Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles," December 8, 1987, http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/acda/treaties/inf2.htm (accessed December 10, 2010).

than 1000 kilometers.[57]

This provision is especially important because of the content found in the Memorandum of Understanding, which accompanies the INF treaty. The Memorandum contains a list of deployment areas and missile operating bases, complete with latitude and longitude locations. The location information makes targeting such facilities a matter of data entry. This information could be utilized to plan a first strike against the other party. If policymakers believed a first strike based on the location information, in combination with the capability of non-theater weapons to take out ICBM locations, were likely to result in the inability of the enemy to retaliate, then it would be rational to attack. By outlawing the possibility of a confluence of weapons in one theatre, the possibility of achieving a first strike advantage is lost, thereby maintaining balance.

Further proof of distrust is evident in Article XII, which deals with interference and obfuscation. Article XII, Section Two reads:

> Neither Party shall:
> (a) interfere with national technical means of verification of the other Party operating in accordance with paragraph 1 of this Article; or
> (b) use concealment measures which impede verification of compliance with the provisions of this Treaty by national technical means of verification carried out in accordance with paragraph 1 of this Article.[58]

Both Washington and Moscow were clearly concerned that their track records regarding espionage might reveal themselves in manipulating the verification process. If it could be proven that either side chose to act contrary to the provisions of this section, the treaty would be broken, and another escalation of nuclear tension would be likely to occur. Neither party wanted such an outcome, but the only way to enforce such a rule is embodied in the spirit of the treaty to begin with. That is, the point of the treaty is to reduce nuclear tension and the possibility of war, but only if sufficient non-European theatre ICBMs are held in escrow.

The escrow of ICBMs is guaranteed by one simple concept: the elimination of all nuclear weapons in the world does not preclude the ability to re-arm. Because of the risk involved in complete bilateral disarmament, and the cost in time and money to re-arm, it is not rational to eliminate all nuclear weapons from a national arsenal unless and until all nuclear weapons are banned and destroyed under unanimous international verification treaties. It is only rational to hold as many weapons as is absolutely necessary to deter a first strike attempt against a government's own retaliatory capabilities. This was the goal of both Reagan and Gorbachev. The verification promises in the INF Treaty, backed up by nuclear capabilities in escrow, ensured that the only rational choice for both Reagan and Gorbachev would be to sign the treaty and reap the moral and political benefits.

To further guarantee that the treaty could not be superseded, Article XIV reads: "The Parties shall comply with this Treaty and shall not assume any international obligations or undertakings which would conflict with its provisions." [59] The INF was given most-favored-treaty status.

Regarding the internal debate between Haig and Weinberger, they both got what they wanted. Haig's argument that the Soviet government would not negotiate until they faced a credible threat proved to be true. But Weinberger got what he wanted with the promise of verification. The NATO Dual Track policy was vindicated. By deploying the Pershing II

57 "INF Treaty", Article V Section 3.
58 "INF Treaty", Article XII, Section 2.
59 "INF Treaty", Article XIV.

missiles to Western Europe, and simultaneously extending the offer of bilateral arms reduction, Reagan gave the Soviets incentive to remove the SS-20s. Agreement on verification did eliminate INF weapons from the European theatre, thereby returning the Cold War to the détente era status quo of proxy wars and interventionism. This allowed Reagan to maintain the policies of NSDD 75 without fear of nuclear confrontation. The strategic modernization process, in combination with the INF Treaty, meant that the US had achieved unquestioned military hegemony in the world, confirming Reagan's vision of a position of strength.

The INF Treaty was signed in the East room of the White House on December 8, 1987. In time, the treaty led to the elimination of 1,846 Soviet SS-20s, and 846 American Pershing IIs. At the signing, Reagan said, "We have listened to the wisdom of an old Russian maxim, *doveryai, no proveryai* – trust, but verify."

"You repeat that at every meeting," Gorbachev replied.

"I like it," Reagan said, smiling.[60]

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60 Hoffman, *The Dead Hand*, 295.

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