

1985: First cracks in the Berlin Wall?



An analysis of five
meetings between
Reagan and Gorbachev

Student: Marcel Lucassen

Student ID: 289659ML

Supervisor: Dr. B. Wubs

Co-supervisor: Prof.Dr. H.A.M. Klemann

August 2011

Table of Contents

Part One	3
Research design: How to approach the end of the Cold War?	3
1. Research question	6
2. Methodology	9
3. Main theoretical concepts	11
4. Definition of the Cold War from 1985 until its end.....	13
Part Two	17
Historiography of theories on the end of the Cold War	17
5. The absence of a large scale debate.....	19
6. The debate: Wohlforth vs. English	22
William C. Wohlforth – ‘Realism and the End of the Cold War’ (1994-95).....	22
Robert D. English – ‘Power, Ideas, and New Evidence on the Cold War’s End: a reply to Brooks and Wohlforth’ (2002)	23
Wohlforth – ‘The End of the Cold War as a Hard Case for Ideas’ (2005).....	24
David Reynolds – America: Empire of Liberty (2009)	26
Archie Brown – ‘The Gorbachev Revolution and the End of the Cold War’ (2010)	27
Conclusion of the debate: Beth A. Fischer – ‘US foreign Policy under Reagan and Bush’ (2010).....	28
7. One other theory: The motivation for this research	30
Jeremi Suri – ‘Explaining the End of the Cold War: A New Historical Consensus’ (2002)	30
8. In conclusion: A multiple perspective approach	33
Part Three	35
From Geneva to New York, 1985-1988: The search for a common language	35
9. The Geneva Summit, November 1985: The route to the first meeting	36
10. The Reykjavik Summit, October 1986: Misleading feelings of an almost achieved groundbreaking agreement.....	43
11. The Washington Summit, December 1987: The first concrete signs of progress.....	53
12. The Moscow Summit, May/June 1988: An exercise in diplomacy	63
13. The New York Summit, December 1988: Unexpected progress.....	71
Part Four	75
Conclusions	75
14. Geneva 1985 – New York 1988: Progress?	76
15. The process of rapprochement in a theoretical framework.....	80
16. A common language is not the end of the Cold War	84
Primary sources	88
Bibliography	89
Other Sources	91

Part One

Research design: How to approach the end of the Cold War?

The fascinating thing about the Soviet Union was that the leader of the Communist Party literally pulled all the strings. His subordinates almost never stood up to him, for fear of losing their jobs or even worse, for fear of getting in prison or losing their lives. When Mikhail Gorbachev rose to power in 1985 he presented himself as a new kind of leader. His aim was to reform Soviet society through Glasnost and Perestroika. In order to realize these domestic reforms he needed to change the Soviet Cold War policy, because since the early 1980s, from the time Ronald Reagan was president of the United States, the tensions between the two superpowers reached a peak. During his first period as president, Ronald Reagan was known for his hard rhetoric against the Soviet Union. This culminated in one of his speeches in 1983 in which he called the Soviet Union ‘an evil empire, whose last pages are being written’.¹ In the same period Reagan announced the Strategic Defense Initiative which would make it possible for the United States to intercept long range Soviet nuclear missiles. Ultimately this meant that the United States could attack the Soviet Union without fear of retaliation and thus the balance of power in the world would change dramatically.² His rhetoric strengthened the hardliners in the Communist Party who wanted the same sort of approach towards the United States.³ If both superpowers continued along this line, the threat of a confrontation, a nuclear confrontation, came alarmingly close.

In 1984 Reagan changed his tone and he delivered a “peace speech”.⁴ It took some time for the Soviet leadership to respond because General Secretary Yuri Andropov and his successor Konstantin Chernenko both died of illness shortly after they were installed as General Secretary.⁵ When the reformist Gorbachev became General Secretary in 1985, Reagan’s new approach was answered as both leaders agreed to meet each other and explore the possibilities for better relations.⁶

¹ Ronald Reagan, quoted in: David Reynolds, *America Empire of Liberty* (London 2009) 514.

² *Idem*, 515.

³ Victor Sebestyen, *Revolution 1989: The Fall of the Soviet Empire* (London 2009) 91.

⁴ Jeremi Suri, ‘Explaining the End of the Cold War: A New Historical Consensus?’, in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol. 4, nr. 4 (2002) 60-92, 71.

⁵ *Idem*, 72.

⁶ Suri, 81.

Somewhere in the second part of the 1980s the Cold War ended. The general public perceives the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 as a turning point. One of the reasons why people see the fall of the Berlin Wall as a turning point in history is that it was possible for East-Germans to travel to West-Germany again, but this was in fact already possible for a few months. Although via a detour, it was possible for East-Germans to travel to Hungary and then cross the border via Austria. Consequently, before November 1989 a process started that changed relations between East and West already. In part this thesis wants to show that the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 was not the real end of the Cold War, but that there were other factors which determined the outcome of this decades old conflict. To this end, it wants to contribute to the discussion about when the Cold War ended by analyzing and researching the Cold War situation in the second part of the 1980s.

This research will focus on the period when Reagan and Gorbachev engaged in direct talks with each other: from November 1985, the first meeting between Reagan and Gorbachev, until December 1988 when the last meeting between Reagan and Gorbachev took place. With Reagan as President of the United States the tone of the Cold War became aggressive again after a period of *détente*. The Soviet leadership could not effectively respond to this because there was a leadership crisis in the Soviet Union: General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev was very ill at that moment, and the two leaders that succeeded him, Andropov and Chernenko died within two years.⁷ This meant that there was no real counterweight to Reagan's hard line towards the Soviet Union. Therefore the risk of an escalation of the Cold War suddenly became realistic again. The only thing that both powers kept in common, at that moment, was their fear of a nuclear war.

Jeremi Suri, professor of History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, calls the process that started with the Geneva Summit the 'beginning of the Cold War's end'.⁸ Geneva set in motion a series of summits between Reagan and Gorbachev which will form the basic foundation of this research. Suri thus refers to the end of the Cold War as being a process that started in 1985. Since this process started with the first direct talks between Reagan and Gorbachev the main research question is: How and when did Reagan and Gorbachev end the Cold War?

In order to answer this question this thesis is divided into four parts. This first part describes the research design: the relation between the main research question and the sub-

⁷ Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents* (New York 1995), 477.

⁸ Suri, 72 & http://history.wisc.edu/people/faculty/cv/suri_cv.pdf curriculum vitae of Jeremi Suri (27-01-11).

questions, the methodology of this research, and an introduction to the key theoretical concepts. The second part has two functions. On the one hand it offers an overview of the theories that explain the end of the Cold War. On the other hand it describes the circumstances in the United States and the Soviet Union leading up to November 1985 in order to describe the state of affairs on the eve of the Geneva Summit. In the third part the analysis of the primary sources that relate to the five summits between Reagan and Gorbachev, starting with the Geneva Summit in 1985, is described. The fourth, and last part, of this thesis answers the central research question by providing a set of sub-conclusions by combining the conclusions on part three and how these relate to the theoretical framework of part two.

1. Research question

The central research question is the result of a line of thought which started with Suri's article 'Explaining the End of the Cold War: A New Historical Consensus?', Suri was already cited when he wrote about 'the beginning of the Cold War's end', but his hypothesis which eventually led to the central research question is: 'Processes of ideological and institutional transformation in both societies brought the Cold War to an end sometime around the groundbreaking Reykjavik Summit. Events after 1986 reflected particular choices not about *whether* to end the Cold War, but about *how* to end it'.⁹ There is a paradox in this citation: on the one hand Suri writes that 'the Cold war came to an end' and on the other hand he writes that Reagan and Gorbachev intended to end the Cold War somewhere around the Reykjavik Summit. There is a difference between ending something and the intention to end something. Suri's hypothesis that the Cold War ended in 1986 triggered my interest in thinking about the end of the Cold War as a process instead of one specific moment.

Originally the goal was to test this hypothesis, but testing this hypothesis would mean trying to prove Suri's incorrectness by following his arguments one by one and trying to either confirm or falsify them. As a consequence, the focus would be too much on his arguments instead of setting up my own research and my own way of analysis. Therefore this thesis works with a main research question which is inspired by Suri's article and his hypothesis, but it also provides me with the opportunity to determine my own approach to this issue. Therefore the main research question is: How and when did Reagan and Gorbachev end the Cold War? There is the possibility that they did not end the Cold War. If this proves to be the result of this research than their efforts to ease the tensions between the two superpowers will be analyzed. The main research question will be supported by a number of sub questions which have a smaller scope. These sub questions are:

1. What is the definition of the Cold War between 1985 and its end?
2. What were the main issues being discussed, and which arguments were used, during the five consecutive meetings between Reagan and Gorbachev?
3. Did they succeed in their strategy or was one of them outmaneuvered by the other? Or was their strategy of minor importance to the actual power of the moment?
4. Was there a transformation going on and how was this reflected by the sphere and the positions during the different meetings?

⁹ Suri, 81.

5. Do the arguments which were used by Reagan and Gorbachev fit into either the realist or the ideological approach or do they fit in both ?

The issue of the end of the Cold War is thus narrowed to an analysis of the meetings between Gorbachev and Reagan during the period 1985-88. In order to understand the Cold War situation on the eve of the Geneva Summit in 1985, the first sub question will help to provide a definition of the last phase of the Cold War. This definition is also helpful in case the answer to the question if Reagan and Gorbachev ended the Cold War will be 'no', because than it is still possible to analyze the progress made by Reagan and Gorbachev, and to analyze which issues or problems they did not solve. This way their role in ending the Cold War can still be described. The first sub question will be answered in a separate chapter in this first part of the thesis, because the answer to this question establishes a framework for the rest of the thesis.

The sub questions stated at points two and three help to analyze the actual summits in part III. In regard to the series of summits it is important to mention that the focus will be on political motives, strategies, and consequences. This is necessary because during the meetings, and in between, several staff members and experts on different fields from Reagan and Gorbachev, were constantly negotiating about specific issues. These varied from details about human rights to the exact structure of both militaries and the exact realization of arms reductions or limitations. These discussion were too detailed and often too complex to include them in this research. The ways in which Gorbachev and Reagan talked in principle about these matters will be described and analyzed; sometimes this means that a specific issue or a detailed number of military reductions will be analyzed, but this only serves the purpose of giving a clear representation of the talks between the two leaders. The last two sub questions will be answered in Part IV, which is the concluding part. These answers will lead up to the answer on the central research question.

The scientific relevance lies in the fact that the end of the Cold War, in historical time, is still relatively fresh, as time passes by more and more sources become available. This means that existing theories about the end of the Cold War possibly need to be rewritten, resulting in new explanations which add an extra dimension to existing theories about world politics or international relations. Since the Cold War dominated the second half of the twentieth century, the possible explanations for the end of it should be taken seriously. Or as the editors of the *Cambridge History of the Cold War* put it when they write about why it is still important to look at the Cold War: 'The time, therefore, is ripe to provide a

comprehensive, systematic, analytic overview of the conflict that shaped the international system and that affected most of human kind during the second half of the twentieth century'.¹⁰ For a master thesis it is too ambitious to think that it is possible to write a complete history on the end of the Cold War, therefore the goal is to contribute to the debate about the end of the Cold War.

¹⁰ Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War: Volume III Ending* (Cambridge 2010) preface xv.

2. Methodology

This thesis is based on a qualitative approach. Despite the fact that it is hard to objectively prove qualitative arguments, but the historiography will go deeper into this. The difficulty will be to compare realist arguments with idealist arguments and institutional arguments. The historiography will elaborate on this, and will be of assistance in determining an approach in which these different perspectives can be combined, should this be necessary.

Furthermore my approach is twofold. The historiography, part II, will be descriptive. This part will provide different explanations for the end of the Cold War. Since it touches upon different theories, this part also provides a good description of the state in which both superpowers found themselves in on the eve of the Geneva Summit in 1985: some authors focus either on Reagan or Gorbachev and their respective policies, others focus on the economy of both superpowers while a third group of authors focus on institutional change.

The analytical part of the master thesis starts with the first meeting between Gorbachev and Reagan in Geneva in 1985. The primary sources, which contain transcripts of the summits between 1985-88 and advisory reports for Reagan as well as for Gorbachev, provide a good opportunity to analyze what both sides regarded as important, and to analyze their negotiations. Did they succeed in their strategy or was one of them outmaneuvered by the other? Or was their strategy of minor importance to the actual power of the moment? By analyzing the primary sources and comparing the advisory reports with the actual transcripts of the summits these questions will be answered and will lead to a better understanding about Cold War relations after 1985.

There are different types of primary sources: official correspondence between Reagan and Gorbachev, scripts of Central Committee- or Politburo meetings, advice reports from the staff of both leaders, memorandums of meetings between Reagan and his top advisors, and personal documents like diaries. A critical side note on the use of these primary sources is necessary. These sources are all part of the *National Security Archive* and are published in their digital database. These sources are published in so-called *Electronic Briefing Books*. Every summit has its own briefing book, in which documents that relate to that summit are published. The *National Security Archive* selected documents which were thought relevant in order to provide a clear picture of that summit. The critical note has to do with the sources which were not selected, since I have no access to them, it is not possible to exactly determine the value of the archives pre-selection. Although the primary sources offer a good insight into both Reagan's and Gorbachev's position before, during, and after the summits, one has to

keep in mind that it is a selection of sources. There is a suggested cohesion between the selection of primary sources. The suggested cohesion by the National Security Archive is not necessarily wrong nor is it necessarily right. This proved not to be a problem, but it of course influenced the direction of this research.

Memoirs are useful because I expected that personal relations between Gorbachev and Reagan, and their staffs, played an important role in the process of looking for rapprochement between the two superpowers. The memoirs of Anatoly Dobrynin are worth mentioning explicitly because his memoirs describe a continuous line of Soviet-American relations from Khrushchev till Reagan and even later Bush Sr. He constantly wrote about the importance of good personal relations, but he also linked the summits and the issues that were concerned together over time. As Moscow's ambassador in the United States he was a close witness to the constant changing dynamics of Soviet-American relations.¹¹ This is especially useful because it provides insight in what the real issues were for the Soviet leadership during the Cold War. It is important to keep in mind that memoirs are often written years after the actual historical event. This means that the author, the historical actor, had the chance to witness the result(s) of his decisions. If these results were negative, or more positive than expected, there is always the chance that the author tries to justify his actions or tries to take more credit for something that originally was not planned that way. Hence memoirs are thus not as objective historical evidence as the primary sources, such as diaries or transcripts of meetings. Despite the subjective nature of memoirs, they can still function as a link between the literature which provides a general description and the primary sources that will be analyzed.

¹¹ Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents* (New York 1995).

3. Main theoretical concepts

The main theoretical concept in my research is *international relations theories*, in this research it is not relevant what the exact definition of *International Relations* is, but what the different paradigms within in International relations are which can help explain the end of the Cold War. The historiography, part II of this thesis, will show that there are two ways of explaining the end of the Cold War: realism and everything that is not realism. The latter sounds vague but it means that most scholars, who wrote about the end of the Cold War and did not use realism as an explanation, used a multiple perspective approach. Therefore it is hard to categorize them in any other way than ‘the rest’. Although there is one aspect that comes back in almost all of these other explanations which is the power with which Gorbachev defended his reformist agenda. This shows his determination to get the system reformed. Therefore a short assessment of idealism in relation to the end of the Cold War will be part of this chapter as well. During the research for this thesis it became clear that there are institutional aspects to the end of the Cold War as well. This will be the third concept that will be described in this chapter. Since these theories will be extensively assessed in the next part of this thesis, this chapter will only offer a brief introduction

In the context of the Cold War it is important to stress that realism focuses on ‘national security concerns’. In realism the hierarchical structure of power is the key to maintaining a stable and save international environment.¹² In this paradigm the focus is on self-interest and on nothing else. William C. Wohlforth is one of the leading scholars on realism and on the end of the Cold War. According to him Gorbachev had no other choice than to reform because of the external pressure Reagan forced on him, and because of the internal pressure as a result of economic disaster. In order to reform, Gorbachev had to accept Reagan’s terms and therefore the Cold War ended in a peaceful way.¹³

Robert D. English has another opinion on the matter and argues that Gorbachev had to overcome harsh opposition within the Communist party as well as from the military. This proves, according to English, that in the highest echelons of the Soviet party and military there were people who wanted another policy towards the United States: one of confrontation. The fact that Gorbachev defeated these oppositional forces shows that Gorbachev and his

¹² Suri, 72.

¹³ William C. Wohlforth, ‘Realism and the end of the Cold War’, in *International Security*, vol. 19, nr. 3 (1994-1995) 91-129, 97-98 & 111.

ideas were essential for the Cold War coming to an end the way it did.¹⁴ In English's approach idealism is the leading theory for the end of the Cold War.

In this thesis institutionalism is used in a different way than Suri did. He linked institutional changes to a process of changes over the long term, which he dates back to Khrushchev's Thaw, in which period the Soviet leader distanced himself from Stalin's crimes against the Soviet people. According to Suri the scientific and cultural elite interpreted this as a first sign of more intellectual freedom, and this process developed slowly until it reached its peak during Gorbachev reform policy.¹⁵ In this thesis institutionalism will only be applied to the period that started when Gorbachev and Reagan decided to talk directly towards each other, and ended with their last talk: i.e. the Geneva Summit in November 1985 till the New York Summit in December 1988. As a result, there is no attention for long-term changes. Institutionalism, in this thesis, will mainly refer to a shorter period of time in which a certain form of dealing with Cold War politics became so common that the form itself was no longer the question: Reagan and Gorbachev no longer doubted whether they should engage in direct talks, it was the content of these meetings about which they had doubts.

The core of the realist argument is that the Soviet Union in the second part of the 1980s had no other choice; this would have happened to any Soviet leader who was in charge at that moment. The idealist approach showed that the realist approach oversees the role of Gorbachev in ending the Cold War. From the start of my research I tended to agree with English, but an open mind is necessary, in order to explore the possibility that the United States more or less forced the Soviet Union into the position of accepting their terms. It is likely that the explanation for the end of the Cold War is a combination of different approaches.

¹⁴ Robert D. English, 'Power, Ideas, and New Evidence on the Cold War's End a Reply to Brooks and Wohlforth', in *International security*, vol. 26, nr. 4 (2002) 70-92, 90-91.

¹⁵ Suri, 73.

4. Definition of the Cold War from 1985 until its end

This chapter will answer the first research question: what was the Cold War from 1985 until its end? The largest and most important concept in this research is the Cold War itself. Although this is not a theoretical concept, it is essential that a basic definition is formulated in order to form the foundation for further research. The definition of what the Cold War was from 1985 until its end is necessary, because when something ends it should be clear what it was in fact that ended. Unfortunately though, one of the problems in explaining the end of the Cold War is that there seems to be no consensus about what ended. Adam Roberts, an Emeritus Professor of International Relations at Oxford University, fellow of Balliol College, and the current president of the British Academy, is one of the few scholars who provided a definition for what the Cold War was.¹⁶ According to him, the Cold War had two characteristics: firstly, the period after World War II until the beginning of the 1990s was dominated by two superpowers who both had a negative stance towards colonialism and both ‘claimed to embody universal values’.¹⁷ Secondly, the defining characteristic was the continuous threat of a nuclear conflict.¹⁸

In order to answer the research questions of what the Cold War was after 1985, a more specific approach is necessary however. The central thought behind this approach is that the Cold War could only be ended if the Reagan and Gorbachev solved specific tensions. Going into the summit meetings they each had a goal, or a set of demands, that needed to be realized in order to reach an easing of tensions between the two superpowers. More specific, for the American side the ending of the Cold War was about solving the issues that were summed up in what was called the four-part agenda.¹⁹ In a speech on 16 January 1984, more than a year before the first summit, Reagan explained his agenda for dealing with the Soviet Union to the American public.²⁰ There were four main issues that needed to be addressed. First, ‘reduce – and eventually to eliminate- the threat and use of force in solving international disputes’.²¹ In the discourse of the meetings these international disputes were called regional conflicts.

¹⁶ Red., ‘List of contributors to volume III’, in Melvin P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, volume III: Endings* (Cambridge 2010) xiv.

¹⁷ Adam Roberts, ‘An incredible swift transition: reflections on the end of the Cold War’, in Melvin P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad *The Cambridge history of the Cold War, volume III: Endings* (Cambridge 2010) 513-534, 513-514.

¹⁸ *Idem*, 514.

¹⁹ Jack F. Matlock (jr.), *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (United States 2004) 85.

²⁰ *Idem*, 80.

²¹ Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 84.

Second, 'to find ways to reduce the vast stockpiles of armaments in the world'.²² Third, 'our task is to establish a better working relationship with each other, one marked by greater cooperation and understanding'.²³ The fourth issue concerned human rights. Jack F. Matlock describes this four-part agenda as the 'framework for the negotiations that brought the Cold War to an end'.²⁴

Gorbachev's goal for ending the Cold War was more abstract, it could only be ended if the United States and the Soviet Union omitted 'the logic of military-political competition'.²⁵ What Gorbachev exactly meant with this becomes clear in his memoirs when he reflects on a speech of Shevardnadze in 1988. Shevardnadze's view was that 'the antagonism between the two systems capitalism versus socialism, could not be viewed as the leading trend of the modern era'.²⁶ Gorbachev agreed with Shevardnadze's analysis and also supported his vision that peaceful co-existence should be seen in the light of the nuclear tensions between the two superpowers.²⁷ Thus, the class struggle was not anymore the main goal for ending the Cold War, but solving the nuclear tensions and stopping the armaments race were. At the end of 1987 and the beginning of 1988 both superpowers had their own definition of *peaceful co-existence*. While Gorbachev's view on peaceful co-existence changed from the emphasize on the class struggle to the emphasize on the reduction of nuclear tensions, this was not yet the case for the Reagan administration. During the Moscow Summit in May 1987 Gorbachev emphasized that Reagan and he should agree to make peaceful co-existence one of the main principles for their cooperation in the future. The United States delegation had problems with this term because in their view it 'was supposed to apply only to states with different social systems. This allowed socialist states to follow a different principle in relations with each other, such as invading a neighbor to preserve socialism'.²⁸ In this view the class struggle was still leading and this was not acceptable to the United States. This example shows that while Reagan and Gorbachev used the same words, there was a good possibility that they meant something completely different with them. While analyzing the summits in part III, this is something to be aware of.

The Cold War from 1985 till its end is therefore defined by different levels of abstraction. The highest level of abstraction is what Gorbachev's called changing the

²² Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 84.

²³ *Ibidem*.

²⁴ *Idem*, 85.

²⁵ Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (London 1997) 692.

²⁶ *Idem*, 339.

²⁷ *Idem*, 338.

²⁸ Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 298.

mentality of military and political confrontation. Roberts second characteristic of the Cold War: the continuous threat of a nuclear conflict, forms the link between the highest level of abstraction and the more narrow definition, which is determined by what the United States leadership called the four part agenda. Reducing the nuclear potential of both powers was one of the four goals set by the Reagan administration. Since the Soviet leadership accepted this four-part agenda, although not deliberately as will become clear later on in this thesis, there is no specific definition of the last years of the Cold War from the Soviet perspective.

Combining Roberts' characteristics of the Cold War with the Soviet and American perspective on the end of the Cold War leads to the conclusion that reducing the nuclear potential and stopping the armaments race were the key issues. So, the Cold War after 1985 was thus about a set of unresolved issues between the United States and the Soviet Union, since it were these problems that formed the barrier between the Cold War situation and an international community where the Cold War was no longer present.

Now that there is a definition of the Cold War in the second half of the 1980s it is necessary to determine an endpoint of the Cold War in order to analyze and assess Gorbachev's and Reagan efforts in ending the Cold War. The problem is that the theories that will be described in the second part do not mention one specific point in time as being the end of the Cold War. Whether it is a theory from a realist, idealist, institutional or a multiple perspective, all theories consider the ending of the Cold War as being a process with no clear endpoint. All describe the end of the Cold War as taking place sometime between 1989-91, without pinpointing a specific point in time. In order to get around this problem the memoirs of the historical actors involved in ending the Cold War offer help. These were written years after the Cold War ended, and so these historical actors had time to assess what had happened and therefore their account on the end of the Cold War serves as a guideline. In his memoirs Gorbachev writes that he considers the time around the Malta Summit between him and Bush, December 1989, as the time the Cold War ended. He writes: 'The Malta Summit convinced me that we had finally crosses the rubicon. For the first time since the Second World War, the political barometer of the East-West relations stopped skipping back and forth to steady on "fair"'.²⁹ While the American leadership considered the ideological and psychological end of the Cold War taking place before Reagan's second term was over, he left office in the beginning of 1989.³⁰ This was shortly after the last official summit meeting between

²⁹ Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 666.

³⁰ Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 312.

Gorbachev and Reagan in New York in December 1988. According to Matlock ‘Gorbachev’s arguments at this meeting showed that he had abandoned the key tenets of Soviet Cold War psychology.’³¹

Thus, there is a difference of roughly one year between the time the Reagan administration considered the Cold War as being finished and the time when Gorbachev considered the Cold War as being over. Eventually, in part IV, these claims will be assessed by relating the theoretical framework of part II and the analysis of the primary sources of part III to each other. Answering the central research question means that these claims are put to the test. In this manner they figure as a guideline for this thesis, because they offer a more specific point in time for the end of the Cold War than the theories in part II do.

³¹ Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 311.

Part Two

Historiography of theories on the end of the Cold War

In 1997, soon after the Cold War ended, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* by John Lewis Gaddis was published.³² At that moment he had little insight into why the Cold War ended and what had actually happened between 1985 and 1991. Gaddis recognizes that at that moment the Cold War was still too much an everyday item instead ‘of just another distant, dusty, historical memory’, therefore a balanced judgment was not yet possible.³³ The goal of this chapter is to examine the theoretical debate, or the absence of this debate, about the end of the Cold War since 1991. Since Gaddis’ work, more theories about the ending of the Cold War have been published.

In order to establish a theoretical framework for the research of this thesis it is necessary to have good insight in existing theories, published by specialist in the field and leading experts in Cold War history and especially the end of the Cold War. While writing this historiography it became clear that there is not much direct debate between scholars. Therefore an explanation for the absence of this debate on a large scale will be presented in the next chapter. After this I will go into the ‘small’ debate that is going on and I will try to create a debate by comparing different theories and explain the differences between them.

This ‘small’ debate also starts with Gaddis’ earlier mentioned work. According to him one way of explaining the end is the importance of idealism. This started with Gaddis himself. This explanation still receives a lot of attention. Gaddis gives a good explanation for this argument: ‘The events of 1989-91 make sense only in terms of ideas. There was no military defeat or economic crash; but there was a collapse of legitimacy. The people of one Cold War empire suddenly realized that its emperors had no clothes on’.³⁴ However, since Gaddis’ work other theories have been developed. These theories vary between realist, institutional, evolutionary, liberal, and constructivist interpretations about the end of the Cold War. Not all of these theories, or explanations, receive the same amount of attention in this thesis or a considered of equal value.

³² John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York 1997).

³³ *Idem*, 283.

³⁴ *Idem*, 287.

In chapter eight, the last chapter of this part, I will determine my own approach in explaining the end of the Cold War. This is based on the findings of this historiography. The conclusion is thus an important part of the entire thesis because it determines the perspective(s) with which I will start the analysis of the primary sources.

5. The absence of a large scale debate

The goal of this chapter is to clarify why there is little debate about the end of the Cold War. There seems to be consensus between multiple authors about the fact that it is almost impossible to give a one-sided explanation of why the Cold War ended. A publication of John Lewis Gaddis can help in explaining this absence. Nowadays he is a Professor of History at Yale University and his fields of interest are ‘Cold War history, grand strategy and international studies’.³⁵ The publication that helps in explaining the absence of a debate is ‘International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War’ which was published in the winter of 1992-93.³⁶ This publication provides an insight in the way of thinking by scholars just after the end of the Cold War, when a lot of documents were not yet publicly available.

In this article Gaddis’ analyzes which existing international relations theories are helpful in explaining the end of the Cold War. Since the Cold War had just finished, his approach was to look into the ways in which the existing theories were able to forecast the end of the Cold War in the 1980’s. According to Gaddis theories, are based on an analysis of the past and therefore also have the ability to look into the future.³⁷ He describes three theories that were leading in the second half of the twentieth century. These were the behavioral or realist approach, the structural approach, and the evolutionary approach.³⁸ The behavioral approach is based on classical empiricism, the structural approach is based on ‘unobservable and immeasurable structures’, and the evolutionary approach was focused on developments in time.³⁹ These scientific principles will prove to be the basics of all other theories or explanations that are mentioned in this thesis.

All three approaches have a weak spot in their theoretical framework. The problem for behavioralists is that their focus is too much on quantitative evidence. If ideas or power relations are not quantifiable than they are left out of the equation.⁴⁰ The major two points of critique at the structural approach are that because of its qualitative character there is no standard to measure something, and time is not considered to have any influence on the course of events.⁴¹ The principal weakness of the evolutionary approach is that there is no

³⁵ <http://www.yale.edu/history/faculty/gaddis.html> (29-01-2011).

³⁶ John Lewis Gaddis, ‘International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War’, in *International security*, vol. 17, nr. 3 (1992-1993) 5-58.

³⁷ Idem, 6.

³⁸ Idem, 12.

³⁹ Idem, 12, 13 & 14.

⁴⁰ Idem, 26.

⁴¹ Idem, 31 & 38.

attention for sudden changes, by dramatic events, that change the course of history.⁴² After an elaborate summary of all different types of scholars that represent this way of thinking, Gaddis' conclusion is that none of these perspectives foresaw the end of the Cold War happening as early and as quick as it did. This was the result of the social sciences trying too hard to stay true to their basic principles and trying too hard to establish objective standards by which their research could be judged. Therefore their approach was too much focused on predicting an outcome of the Cold War that fitted into their international relations paradigm. There was little effort to combine different paradigms or to come up with new ones, according to Gaddis.⁴³

This one-sided approach is also mentioned by William C. Wohlforth in his article 'Realism and the End of the Cold War' written in 1994-95.⁴⁴ Wohlforth is a Professor of Government at Dartmouth University. He published a lot on realism and the end of the Cold War, and why idealism is not sufficient in explaining the end.⁴⁵ The position of realism and the importance of ideas in the debate are part of a later chapter. The part of this article that is relevant to this chapter is where he writes about social sciences having no objective standards. Many scholars think this is the reason why social sciences are not able to offer a good explanation for 'unique and complex historical events involving revolutionary change'.⁴⁶ Wohlforth thinks otherwise. The solution lies in acknowledging that one theory cannot yet explain what happened, but a combination of theories can. In this multiple-theoretical approach it is necessary to break down the whole process of ending the Cold War into small pieces. Pieces for which it is possible to offer a single explanation. When the relation between these small pieces and their explanations are established, then it is possible to come up with a plausible explanation for the end of the Cold War.⁴⁷

More than seven years after Wohlforth's article, Robert D. English published 'Power, Ideas, and New Evidence on the Cold War's End: A Reply to Brook and Wohlforth'.⁴⁸ Nowadays, English is an assistant Professor at the School of International Relations which is a department of the University of Southern California.⁴⁹ He also writes about the uniqueness and complexity of the process of the end of the Cold War and the difficulties in finding a

⁴² Gaddis, 52.

⁴³ *Idem*, 54.

⁴⁴ Wohlforth, 'Realism and the end of the Cold War'.

⁴⁵ <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~govt/faculty/wohlforth.html> (29-01-2011).

⁴⁶ Wohlforth, 'Realism and the end of the Cold War', 92.

⁴⁷ *Idem*, 94-95.

⁴⁸ English, 'Power, Ideas and New Evidence', 70-92.

⁴⁹ <http://www.usc.edu/dept/LAS/ir/faculty/g-english.htm> (29-01-2011).

good balance between different explanations.⁵⁰ English is in favor of using multiple theories and acknowledges that a realist approach has its advantages, but that it certainly is not the only explanation for everything that happened in relation to the end of the Cold War. He prefers a more constructivist approach.

In 2010 the attitude towards the multiple-perspective approach on the end of the Cold War is still intact. In Roberts' article 'An incredibly swift transition' he poses six plausible and convincing theories about why the Cold War ended.⁵¹ Relevant for this chapter is his conclusion in which he states that 'the historical evidence suggest a multi-faceted' explanation for the end of the Cold War'.⁵² In this explanation theoretical opposites are combined, these opposites vary between 'force and diplomacy' and domestic explanations which relate to 'elite actions and street politics'.⁵³

The goal of this chapter was not to present an extensive summary of all the mentioned articles but to give an idea of why there is little debate between scholars on how and why the Cold War ended. By starting with an article which was written in 1992 and ending with an article that written in 2010 it becomes clear that although many theories have been published ever since 1992 the idea of a multiple-perspective approach is still intact. There is no need to defend your own theory if others recognize that it sounds plausible, especially if it is altered a little bit with factors of other theories.

⁵⁰ English, 71.

⁵¹ Adam Roberts, 'An incredible swift transition: reflections on the end of the Cold War', in Melvin P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad *The Cambridge history of the Cold War, volume III: Endings* (Cambridge 2010) 513-534.

⁵² *Idem*, 533.

⁵³ *Ibidem*.

6. The debate: Wohlforth vs. English

In all the consulted literature there are two authors that actually respond to each other. These were Wohlforth and English. The goal of this chapter is to give an overview of ‘their’ discussion and the relation to this master thesis. Wherever necessary other authors are included to come to a more complete overview of the different paradigms.

William C. Wohlforth – ‘Realism and the End of the Cold War’ (1994-95)

In the consulted literature for this thesis Wohlforth is the first one who reaches out to one of the existing theories that was rejected by Gaddis. Wohlforth considers realism as the best explanation for what happened during the second half of the 1980s. Despite this, he writes that realist explanations are often too simple, and not dynamic enough, for the complexity of real life. However, when compared to other explanations realism is the only one that is useful. The realist approach needs improvement but is right in its basic principles.⁵⁴ It is right because all realist theories, in some sense, focus on the international balance of power. In this case it means that the end of the Cold War was primarily the result of declining Soviet power.⁵⁵

Wohlforth offers a threefold explanation, in the realist tradition, which explains why the Cold War ended.⁵⁶ The first is about the way the Soviet leadership perceived power. Gorbachev’s reformist agenda was primarily the result of his assessment of Soviet power, which was declining.⁵⁷ Another reason for the declining power of the Soviet Union was their military and economic overstretch in Eastern Europe. According to Wohlforth the combination of this internal and external pressure was the main reason why Gorbachev had to reform.⁵⁸ The second part of the threefold explanation is that ‘declining challengers are more likely than declining hegemons to try to retrench and reform rather than opt for preventive war’.⁵⁹ In this case the Soviet Union was the challenger and the United States was the hegemon, because of this principle the end of the Cold War was peaceful.⁶⁰ The third part is that ‘sudden decline or civil strife on the losing side of a struggle is less destabilizing globally

⁵⁴ Wohlforth, ‘Realism and the End of the Cold War’, 93.

⁵⁵ Idem, 95.

⁵⁶ Idem, 96-97.

⁵⁷ Idem, 97 & 111.

⁵⁸ Idem, 110-111.

⁵⁹ Wohlforth, ‘Realism and the End of the Cold War’, 98.

⁶⁰ Ibidem.

than such decline or strife on the winning side'.⁶¹ Again the Soviet Union was the challenger, and eventually the 'losing side', and therefore there was no outburst of violence over the world.⁶² Wohlforth's conclusion is based on primarily the economic misery in the Soviet Union. Soviet power was declining and therefore Gorbachev had to take a calmer approach towards the United States, and had to let go of his communist and Leninist ideas in order to get the domestic economy on track again.⁶³

Robert D. English – 'Power, Ideas, and New Evidence on the Cold War's End: a reply to Brooks and Wohlforth' (2002)

Robert D. English does not agree with Wohlforth at all. In his article 'Power, Ideas, and New Evidence on the Cold War's End a Reply to Brook and Wohlforth', which was written in 2002, he criticizes Wohlforth's realist approach.⁶⁴ Only English's arguments that directly opposes Wohlforth threefold approach will be discussed. According to English, Wohlforth's theory about Gorbachev being forced into a reformist agenda makes no sense. First of all this has to do with the military balance of power which Wohlforth describes. English writes that the military build-up of the United States had no direct influence on Gorbachev's domestic and foreign policy; it was his ideas that made the transformation of the Soviet system possible. One of English's arguments to prove this statement is that Soviet military cuts were not the only possible outcome in the Cold War dynamics of the late 1980s. In the Communist Party there was strong opposition towards shrinking the Soviet military apparatus. The hardliners in the party tried to obstruct Gorbachev's policy, and eventually this led to a failed coup in August 1991.⁶⁵ Another sign that the hardliners in the party did not want to accept the new situation, was the way in which Gorbachev tried to persuade them into accepting his proposals for limiting nuclear arms. Gorbachev reasoned that another arms race was not an option for the Soviet Union, since the economy was already in bad shape. This is machiavellistic according to English, because it was idealism that stimulated Gorbachev to agree on arms limitations and not economic motives.⁶⁶

According to English the realist approach has no attention for debates and opposition within the Soviet leadership. Therefore it leaves no room for Gorbachev's idealism, because it

⁶¹ Wohlforth, 'Realism and the End of the Cold War', 99.

⁶² Ibidem.

⁶³ Idem, 115.

⁶⁴ English, 'Power, Ideas and New Evidence', 70-92.

⁶⁵ Idem, 74-75.

⁶⁶ Idem, 81.

does not focus on the efforts Gorbachev made to get around his political opponents. English makes a distinction between the situation during the years 1985-86 and 1988-89. During the former the economic situation was not as bad as during the latter, but most of his reforms were put into practice in 1985-86. This shows that the suggested path-dependency by the realistic approach was not correct. Gorbachev still had room to maneuver in 1985-86. Thus, accepting the decline of Soviet power was not the only option in that period. This changed during the last period, but the biggest changes had already taken place at that time.⁶⁷

In short, English's article, is a plea for a more serious approach toward 'new-thinking' in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev's new ideas were the main incentive for change. Change happened so fast that before the 'old-thinkers', as English calls them, understood what was happening, other issues were already at stake. So they were constantly overtaken by events.⁶⁸ According to English the realist approach has not enough attention for the power of ideas and the determination with which they were pursued.⁶⁹

Wohlforth – 'The End of the Cold War as a Hard Case for Ideas' (2005)

In 2005 Wohlforth writes an introduction for a special issue of the *Journal of Cold War Studies*. This special was about the importance of ideas in explaining the end of the Cold War.⁷⁰ This is useful for the debate with English because again Wohlforth emphasizes that it is hard to empirically legitimize the use of ideas in an explanation for the end of the Cold War.⁷¹ Wohlforth acknowledges that ideas influenced the end of the Cold War, but he is still pessimistic, because there is no objective standard to measure them.⁷² This is exactly what Gaddis already described in 1992-93 when he wrote about the academic principals behind realism. According to Gaddis, behavioralistic scholars, which realists belong to, ignore data they cannot measure, or they simplify the data to the point where they can figure out a quantitative approach, but in that case there is no longer a relation with the complexity of reality.⁷³ Despite this, Wohlforth thinks of realism as the international relations paradigm that comes closest to reality.

⁶⁷ English, 90.

⁶⁸ Idem, 86.

⁶⁹ Idem, 91.

⁷⁰ William C. Wohlforth, 'The end of the Cold War as a Hard Case for Ideas', in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol. 7, nr. 2 (2005) 165-173.

⁷¹ Idem, 166.

⁷² Idem, 165.

⁷³ Gaddis, 'International Relation theory and the End of the Cold War', 29.

In this introduction Wohlforth describes the three main problems he has with using ideas in explaining the end of the Cold War. The first problem is one of covariation. How can the value of ideas in relation to materialistic circumstances be determined? Wohlforth argues that the advocates of the power of ideas have better arguments and explanations for their theories than they had just after the Cold War, but the arguments remain weak.⁷⁴

The second problem is the problem of optimality. This problem deals with the connection between the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union. These are in principle two separate processes. The creation of an undisputed connection between these two makes the ideas that ended the Cold War look less optimal.⁷⁵ Another complex act is to separate the real idea from the strategic reason to use it. For instance: Gorbachev had to use realpolitik to overcome opposition from the hardliners in his party. Is it the motive behind realpolitik which is most important or the idea itself?⁷⁶

The third problem with idealism and history is the problem of teleology.⁷⁷ This is problematic in case of the end of the Cold War, because this problem is about larger ideas. How to construct society and perhaps even how to construct the world? In the idealist approach Gorbachev receives a lot of credit for his new way of thinking. According to Wohlforth, there is nothing new about this. He distanced himself from the old ideas of communist society and embraced the ideas of the capitalist society. He did not come up with new ideas. Wohlforth acknowledges that this is a simplification of reality but it helps in understanding what he means by the problem of teleology.⁷⁸

The fact that he acknowledges the presence of ideas in the process of ending the Cold War and his critical evaluation of methodological problems that comes with it all lead back to a citation in his article from 1994-95: 'The proper attitude toward the realist approach, even on the part of its defenders, ought to be reluctant acceptance conditioned on a determination to improve it'.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Wohlforth. 'The End of the Cold War', 166-167.

⁷⁵ Idem, 167.

⁷⁶ Idem, 169-170.

⁷⁷ Idem, 170.

⁷⁸ Idem, 171

⁷⁹ Wohlforth, 'Realism and the End of the Cold War', 93.

David Reynolds – *America: Empire of Liberty* (2009)

Since Wohlforth's realistic approach is highly theoretical it is useful to include a very recent and practical explanation of realpolitik. In 2009 David Reynolds published his book *America: Empire of Liberty*.⁸⁰ Reynolds is Professor of International Relations at Oxford University.⁸¹ Reynolds explanation for better relations between the two superpowers and the end of the Cold War is a combination of technological, economic and cultural factors which he calls 'the information revolution'.⁸² The technological aspect of this revolution is the introduction of personal computers into 'small businesses and homes', this process became relevant from 1984 onwards.⁸³ In 1983 the NASDAQ's trading system was replaced by a computerized system which made far more transaction possible.⁸⁴ Before this revolution computers were already used by the military and large government institutions. Although the development of this technology was largely done by private businesses, they needed the American government to protect them. With the American military as one of their main customers these businesses received enough money to develop their technology.⁸⁵

This interaction between private businesses and the government was not present in the Soviet Union, and because of trading restrictions with the Soviet Union it was impossible for them to have access to the latest technology. Therefore the Soviet Union had to 'rely on industrial espionage' and as a result they never had the newest technology.⁸⁶ This is also where the economic aspect of the information revolution comes in. During the seventies several administrations introduced legislation that was intended to improve free market conditions. This resulted in growing competition on the American market; prices thus stayed low and the flexibility of the market increased.⁸⁷ These dynamics of a capitalist system were not at work in the Soviet Union and the technological gap grew. According to Reynolds 'information is power and, under communism, both were tightly controlled'.⁸⁸ The information revolution posed an 'economic and ideological' threat to the Soviet Union. Therefore it was important for Gorbachev to pursue better relations with the United States, because this meant access to the newest technology, which would lead to lower costs which

⁸⁰ David Reynolds, *America: Empire of Liberty* (London 2009).

⁸¹ Red., 'List of contributors to volume III', in Melvin. P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, volume III: Endings* (Cambridge 2010) xiv.

⁸² Reynolds, 519.

⁸³ Idem, 523.

⁸⁴ Ibidem.

⁸⁵ Idem, 520-521.

⁸⁶ Idem, 521.

⁸⁷ Idem, 524.

⁸⁸ Ibidem, 525.

would make the fulfillment of primary needs less expensive.⁸⁹ Perhaps this new technology could even lead to economic growth.⁹⁰ This is a realist explanation, because Gorbachev had no choice according to Reynolds, because of the declining power of the Soviet Union due to the information revolution. They were falling behind and the living conditions in the Soviet Union kept getting worse. This decline of power fits into Wohlforth's realist approach.

Archie Brown – 'The Gorbachev Revolution and the End of the Cold War' (2010)

That it was particularly Gorbachev's own idealism and political tactics that kept him in power and helped him withstand the hardliners in the Soviet Party, as English claims, is supported by Archie Brown's article from 2010 'The Gorbachev Revolution and the end of the Cold War'.⁹¹ Brown is Emeritus Professor of Politics at Oxford University.⁹² This article is a continuation of the debate between Wohlforth and English in the sense that it presents an alternative to Wohlforth's account and it builds on English's line of reasoning. Although Brown acknowledges that it was not just Gorbachev, but also his closest advisors and aides, that made the reformist agenda possible, he still calls it the Gorbachev revolution because it was a top-down change. It had to be a top-down movement, because the opposite was not possible: in the strictly hierarchical structure of the Communist Party it was impossible to not agree with your supervisor, therefore it was impossible to start a process of bottom-up change.⁹³

Brown's most compelling argument is that Gorbachev delivered two public speeches in 1984 in which he talked about new ideas: a serious reduction of the nuclear threat, and changes in the structure of the economy to improve living conditions. Since he was not first in command, he had to be careful and therefore he combined the new ideas with old dogmatic communist language. Saying this before being the highest in command, is according to Brown the evidence that Gorbachev was convinced of these new ideas.⁹⁴ According to Brown this proves that Wohlforth's realist argument about declining Soviet power was not leading in Gorbachev's choice for reforms.

⁸⁹ Reynolds, 525.

⁹⁰ Idem, 525-526.

⁹¹ Archie Brown, 'The Gorbachev Revolution and the End of the Cold War', in Melvin. P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, volume III: Endings* (Cambridge 2010) 244-266.

⁹² Red., 'List of contributors to volume III', in Melvin. P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, volume III: Endings* (Cambridge 2010) xii.

⁹³ Brown, 244.

⁹⁴ Idem, 245-246.

In order to realize his ideas Gorbachev had to launch institutional changes as well, for instance at the department of foreign affairs. Andrei Gromyko was Minister of Foreign Affairs since 1957 and some of his subordinates were already at the department before he became minister. Getting rid of Gromyko was essential for Gorbachev: because of the illness of Brezhnev, Andropov, and Chernenko, Gromyko had extended his influence to other parts of the Central Committee as well. By dismissing Gromyko, Gorbachev created the opportunity for a new way of thinking at the department of foreign affairs.⁹⁵ The next institutional change at another powerful institution which had a big influence on the state of United States-Soviet relations was at the department of defense. When a small airplane breached the Soviet air defense system in 1987 and landed at the Red Square, this proved to be a good opportunity for Gorbachev to fire Sergei Sokolov, the Minister of Defense.⁹⁶ From that time, Gorbachev and his associates had control over the two institutions that could exercise a lot of influence on the state of United States-Soviet relations. This again proves the opposite of what Wohlforth's theory is about: according to Brown Gorbachev was not forced, or only partly forced, to pursue new goals.⁹⁷ Brown's approach to the end of the Cold War is a combination of the importance of idealism and of institutional change. This institutional change was at first launched by idealism, but eventually could protect it as well, because the new way of thinking became institutionalized.⁹⁸

Conclusion of the debate: Beth A. Fischer – 'US foreign Policy under Reagan and Bush' (2010)

This article is a contribution to the third volume of the *Cambridge History of the Cold War*.⁹⁹ Beth A. Fischer is a professor in the Political Science Department at the University of Toronto.¹⁰⁰ This article provides some critical remarks at the two leading theories in explaining the end of the Cold War which are represented by Wohlforth and English.

According to Fisher one of the explanations for the end of the Cold War is the realist one. In this explanation the 'military build-up under Reagan' forced Gorbachev into accepting

⁹⁵ Brown, 249.

⁹⁶ Idem, 251.

⁹⁷ Idem, 261-262.

⁹⁸ Idem, 266.

⁹⁹ Beth A. Fischer, 'US foreign policy under Reagan and Bush', in Melvin. P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, volume III: Endings* (Cambridge 2010) 267-288.

¹⁰⁰ Red., 'List of contributors to volume III', in Melvin. P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, volume III: Endings* (Cambridge 2010) xii.

Reagan's terms.¹⁰¹ Her remark to this explanation is that Reagan's policy also had a more peaceful character. The first years of his time in the White House were years of putting more and more pressure on the Soviet Union, but from 1984 onward Reagan made clear that he wanted better relations with the Soviet Union.¹⁰² Reagan was also scared of a nuclear confrontation and therefore he had as much to gain by negotiating arms reductions as Gorbachev did.¹⁰³

The second explanation that she puts into perspective is the one of Reagan and Bush just being a bystander in the process of ending the Cold War, since Gorbachev's idealism accounted for all the changes.¹⁰⁴ Her comment on this explanation is that Reagan already looked for rapprochement before Gorbachev came to power. This shows that not only Gorbachev was decisive in the process of improving United States-Soviet relations.¹⁰⁵ Her second remark is that Gorbachev got convinced that Reagan was a trustworthy partner in arms negotiations, because he believed that Reagan truly feared a nuclear conflict. Thus, Reagan's position and his idealism were also decisive in ending the Cold War.¹⁰⁶

Fischer acknowledges that there is a certain truth to both Wohlforth's realist approach that focuses on the declining power of the Soviet Union, and English's explanation that focuses on the power of Gorbachev's idealism and its capability to change the domestic and international system. Hereby admitting that Wohlforth's and English's line of reasoning is plausible. On the other hand Fischer remarks that it is possible to place critical notes to both explanations. There is more to it than a one-sided approach of why and how the Cold War ended. This is exactly why there is no large debate.

¹⁰¹ Fischer, 267.

¹⁰² Idem, 272-273.

¹⁰³ Idem, 278.

¹⁰⁴ Idem, 268-269.

¹⁰⁵ Idem, 277.

¹⁰⁶ Idem, 278.

7. One other theory: The motivation for this research

Despite the theories and explanations that were already mentioned, there is one other author that requires attention in relation to this thesis. This article was the inspiration for setting up this research. There is no direct relation with the earlier mentioned debate between Wohlforth and English, although elements of both explanations are present in Suri's work.

Jeremi Suri – 'Explaining the End of the Cold War: A New Historical Consensus' (2002)

In his article 'Explaining the End of the Cold War: A New Historical Consensus' Jeremi Suri applies James Joll's theory, from his work *The Origins of the First World War*, to the Cold War.¹⁰⁷ Suri is a Professor of History at the history department of the University of Wisconsin and he is specialized in international history, politics, social movements and globalization.¹⁰⁸ Joll's approach means that 'the historian can organize information into a "pattern of concentric circles" that elucidates complex moments of major change'.¹⁰⁹

Suri uses three of these circles to explain the end of the Cold War. The first circle deals with a set of events that triggered a larger movement.¹¹⁰ These events were Reagan's hard rhetoric towards the Soviet Union and the announcement of the Strategic Defense Initiative.¹¹¹ Both acts raised the level of tension between the two superpowers. There was one other issue that raised the tension at the Soviet side: in November 1983 the Soviet leadership believed that a nuclear attack was imminent. This was the result of the misinterpretation of a series of actions of the United States. There was no real threat, but as a result of Reagan's harsh rhetoric the Soviet leadership was no longer sure about this.¹¹² In January 1984 Reagan, amazed by the perceived feeling of threat, 'delivered a "peace speech" to the nation'. This was also a sign of goodwill to the leaders of the Soviet Union.¹¹³ According to Suri the rising tensions at the end of 1983 were the turning point in Cold War politics, because leaders were convinced 'that superpower tensions were spiraling out of control'.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁷ Jeremi Suri, 'Explaining the End of the Cold War: A New Historical Consensus?', in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol. 4, nr. 4 (2002) 60-92.

¹⁰⁸ <http://history.wisc.edu/people/faculty/suri.htm> (27-01-2011).

¹⁰⁹ Suri, 60.

¹¹⁰ Ibidem.

¹¹¹ Idem, 64.

¹¹² Idem, 69-70.

¹¹³ Idem, 71-72.

¹¹⁴ Ibidem.

The second circle Suri describes is the circle of ‘long-term ideological and institutional change’.¹¹⁵ The most important long-term ideological change that Suri describes started in 1956. In this year Khrushchev distanced himself from, and condemned the actions of Stalin. This was a sign which many interpreted as an opportunity for more intellectual freedom.¹¹⁶ Critical thinkers found their way into scientific and cultural institutions and tried to influence Soviet policy. Gradually the critics became more influential. To overcome the old-way of thinking in the highest ranks of the Communist Party, these intellectuals needed something else.¹¹⁷ Suri concludes that this new way of thinking needed ‘an advocate at the top of the Communist Party’.¹¹⁸ In 1985 Gorbachev finally became this advocate. The fact that Gorbachev defended this new way of thinking was no guarantee that it was put into practice. Gorbachev had to overcome the opposition of the old establishment of the Communist Party, a fact which required political insight and determination.¹¹⁹ The combination between Gorbachev’s political motives and the new way of thinking was the first long-term ideological and institutional change Suri describes.¹²⁰

Another ideological change was Reagan’s changing position in Cold War politics. Suri believed that this change is the result of Reagan’s strategy of ‘peace through strength’.¹²¹ He supports this line of reasoning by quoting Reagan’s Secretary of State George Schultz: ‘If the first Reagan term could be characterized by a building of strength, in the second term we could use that strength for determined and patient diplomatic efforts to produce greater peace and stability in the world’.¹²² Hereby suggesting that Reagan had a strategy to end the Cold War, something Suri ruled out earlier in the article.¹²³

The third circle is the actual transformation of both societies and the end of the Cold War.¹²⁴ This corresponds with what Suri describes as the question on how to end the Cold War: it was the implementation of intended measurements.¹²⁵ Again there is a paradox in Suri’s article. After 1986 there were two fronts left: ‘arms control and the future of the

¹¹⁵ Suri, 73.

¹¹⁶ Ibidem.

¹¹⁷ Idem, 77.

¹¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹¹⁹ Idem, 79.

¹²⁰ Idem, 80.

¹²¹ Ibidem.

¹²² Ibidem.

¹²³ Idem, 71

¹²⁴ Idem, 82.

¹²⁵ Ibidem.

divided Germanys'.¹²⁶ On the latter the interest of both superpowers was opposite to each other. The solution for this problem was more complex than the question about *how* and *whether* suggests.¹²⁷

It is probably already clear why Suri is not part of the earlier mentioned debate. His approach is a combination of realism, institutionalism, and idealism. He combines both sides of the debate in order to come up with a more complete answer to why the Cold War ended.

¹²⁶ Suri, 82.

¹²⁷ Ibidem.

8. In conclusion: A multiple perspective approach

The goal of this part of the thesis was to give an insight to the current status of the debate surrounding the end of the Cold War. Chapter five shows that this debate is not as widespread as one would expect in the case of such an important decade of the twentieth century. By reviewing scholars and their articles over the period 1992-2010 it became clear that there is a consensus among scholars why there is no such debate. There were too many events and too many processes going on in the second half of the 1980s in relation to the end of the Cold War to offer a one-sided explanation for this end. This in combination with the speed at which the end of the Cold War took place makes it almost impossible to analyze this period by only using one perspective. All the cited scholars in the fifth chapter agree with this, except for Wohlforth; although he acknowledges that the current state of realist international relations theory does not account for everything that happened, he still believes that all other possible perspectives will eventually serve the realist explanation.

In his debate with English, Wohlforth makes a good point when he writes about the quantitative problems when using ideas in explaining the end of the Cold War. The absence of an objective standard makes a idealist approach less compelling, but at the same time Wohlforth is indirectly criticized in Gaddis' article from 1992-93 in which Gaddis mentions that empiricists simplify reality too much in their striving for an objective analysis based on quantitative data. Therefore English's explanation about the power of Gorbachev's ideas has equal value in explaining the end of the Cold War. In relation to this research Fischer's approach is the most useful. She puts both explanations into perspective by criticizing the absolute nature of both explanations.

Suri's approach to the end of the Cold War is useful because of its methodology. The combination between long-term patterns of change and the importance of single events, or a set of single events, is a good reminder that the Cold War is a complex event with processes in it that started decades before. The institutional changes that he describes, starting with Khrushchev's rejection of Stalin's deeds, are not part of the time span of this research. Despite this, Suri's explanation that Gorbachev became the advocate of new thinking is an argument for the institutional explanation which is useful in relation to this thesis. In 1985 Gorbachev slowly started to replace the old guard of the Communist Party, which led to new thinking in institutions such as the department of foreign affairs and the department of defense. There is a good possibility that these institutional changes had been completed when in December 1988 Gorbachev and Reagan had their last official meeting.

The absence of any attention for the importance of good personal relations between Reagan and Gorbachev is remarkable. The only author that covers this is Reynolds. According to him good personal relations between the leaders of the two superpowers were almost a basic condition in resolving tensions and in negotiating about arms reduction. Good personal relations are not the only explanation for why the Cold War ended, but they formed the context in which both leaders could work on ending the Cold War. This becomes clear when reading the memoirs of Anatoly Dobrynin and Jack Matlock. Dobrynin was the Soviet ambassador in Washington ‘to America’s six Cold War presidents’.¹²⁸ Throughout his memoirs he writes about the importance of good personal relations in establishing a constructive dialogue between the two superpowers. The importance becomes most clear when he writes about the ‘confidential channel’. This was a direct way of communication between the United States President and the General Secretary of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union. This channel ‘provided the freedom of personal chemistry which is essential to diplomacy, and made it possible to explore uncharted diplomatic territory, which was often precisely what was needed to break the stalemates that characterized the Cold War’.¹²⁹ The importance of good personal relations is also acknowledged by Matlock. He writes that Reagan thought of Gorbachev ‘as a human being, who seemed to be a man with which he could reason’. This was different from his predecessors and made it considerably easier to negotiate with him.¹³⁰

Based on this historiography of the end of the Cold War, the approach towards investigating it will be a combination of existing theories. It is a combination of Suri’s methodology of combining idealist and institutional changes, Fischer’s way of putting realism and idealism into perspective, and Reynolds’ attention for personal relations. The latter should not be so difficult because almost all participants in negotiating the end of the Cold War published their memoirs on this unforeseen course of history.

¹²⁸ Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow’s Ambassador to America’s Six Cold War Presidents* (New York 1995).

¹²⁹ *Idem*, 53.

¹³⁰ Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 169.

Part Three

From Geneva to New York, 1985-1988: The search for a common language

President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev met each other for the first time in the morning of 19 November 1985. This was the first meeting at the highest level for more than half a decade.¹³¹ This meeting was the result of correspondence between the two leaders, and negotiations between their staff members, which started when Gorbachev was appointed General Secretary at 11 March 1985.¹³² The meeting in Geneva resulted in a series of five meetings between Reagan and Gorbachev in the following years. The goal of this part is to describe the most urgent matters discussed during these meetings and in the letters and advise report leading up to these meetings and directly afterwards. This description will be combined with an analysis of the results of these meetings: which issues were discussed by Reagan and Gorbachev? Which arguments were used? Did they succeed in their strategy or was one of them outmaneuvered by the other? The arguments of both sides will also be analyzed according to the theoretical nature of the arguments itself. The historiography showed that there are two dominant theoretical frameworks which explain the end of the Cold War: the realist explanation and the ideological explanation. Do the arguments which were used by Reagan and Gorbachev fit into either the realist approach, the ideological approach or do they fit in both explanations?

Furthermore the goal of the third part of the thesis is to give the above mentioned description and analysis for every separate summit between Reagan and Gorbachev. Therefore the analysis of every summit will be followed by a short conclusion concerning that specific summit. The structure described in this introduction is applicable to the chapters that cover a specific summit. As a consequence, these chapters will not start with a short introduction on how it relates to the bigger picture of the entire master thesis. Eventually this part will be linked to the first two parts of this thesis, which will lead to an answer to the central research question.

¹³¹ The National Security Archive (=NSA), *Electronic Briefing Book* (=EBB) 172 (22-11-2005), doc. 15, Dimitri Zarechnak, 'Geneva Summit Memorandum of Conversation, First Private Meeting, 10:20 – 11:20 a.m.', 19-11-1985, 1-8.

¹³² *EBB* 172, doc. 1, 'Politburo Session, Gorbachev Election', 11-03-1985, 1-17.

9. The Geneva Summit, November 1985: The route to the first meeting

11 March 1985 President Reagan send a letter to Gorbachev at the day the latter was appointed General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. This letter was delivered by Vice President George Bush at the funeral of Chernenko in Moscow.¹³³ In this letter he explained that ‘he hopes that we can in the months and years ahead develop a more stable and constructive relationship between our two countries’.¹³⁴ This letter is worth mentioning because Reagan also invited Gorbachev to Washington for a meeting between the two leaders. Although Gorbachev did not immediately agreed to a meeting in Washington, it was the start of a process that resulted in a meeting in Geneva in November 1985. In his answer to Reagan, Gorbachev wrote that he had a positive stance towards a meeting with Reagan, but that he did not agree with Washington as the location for this meeting. When and where the meeting should take place was to be determined at another time.¹³⁵ This answer was advised to Gorbachev by Alexander Yakovlev, a party secretary of the Central Committee on propaganda and culture and throughout the years 1985-91 one of Gorbachev’s closest advisors.¹³⁶ Immediately after Gorbachev received the first letter from Reagan he asked Yakovlev, to analyze the motives for, and the possible responses to, Reagan’s invitation.¹³⁷ Yakovlev’s analysis was that Reagan did not take any political risk by inviting Gorbachev. When Gorbachev refused this meeting, then Reagan could go public and take the credits for at least trying to arrange it. If the meeting failed then Reagan could tell the American public that this was due to the stubbornness of the Soviets: no matter the outcome, Reagan would not take the blame for it. Therefore it was important to accept Reagan’s invitation, but not to immediately set a date and place. Slowing this process down showed that Reagan could not just order Gorbachev around. It showed that Gorbachev had power as well.¹³⁸

Between March 1985 and November 1985 they exchanged five letters in which they wrote about their motives for a meeting at the highest level, about the issues that should be discussed and about the things they certainly did not like to talk about. In every letter they emphasized that it was important that they should strive for a decrease of tensions between the two Cold War powers, and that they could only achieve this when they were completely

¹³³ Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 108.

¹³⁴ *EBB 172*, doc. 2, Ronald Reagan, ‘Reagan Letter to Gorbachev’, 11-03-1985, 1.

¹³⁵ *EBB 172*, doc. 6, Mikhail Gorbachev, ‘Gorbachev Letter to Reagan’, 24-03-1985, 1-4, 4.

¹³⁶ Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 965.

¹³⁷ Dobrynin, 179.

¹³⁸ *EBB 172*, doc. 3, Alexander Yakovlev, ‘On Reagan, Memorandum prepared on request from M.S. Gorbachev’, 12-03-1985, 1-3, 1-2.

honest and open with each other. This was repeated in every letter and in almost every meeting. These remarks sound like diplomatic trivialities, but in the years leading up to 1985 the idea of striving for better relations was not as common as it sounds. This is best explained by Gorbachev when he, in his memoirs, reflects on the main motive for agreeing to a meeting in Geneva: ‘We viewed the Geneva meeting realistically, without grand expectations, yet we hoped to lay the foundations for a serious dialogue in the future. It was important that the leaders of the superpowers should have a chance to get a close look at each other, to share their views on the world and the role their countries played in it, and discuss options to ease tensions and normalize cooperation’.¹³⁹

In April 1985 Reagan send two letters to Gorbachev. In both letters he referred to an incident in East Germany in which an officer of the American army, Major Nicholson, was killed by the Soviet military. Reagan wrote that the American public reacted furious on this event and that he held Gorbachev responsible. Reagan blamed Gorbachev for maintaining a system in which such an event could take place. He also stated that such an incident never occurred within the United States’ army. Reagan tried to push Gorbachev in a defensive role not only by demanding proper actions to settle this case, but also by implying that the American ideology was superior to the Soviet ideology.¹⁴⁰ Gorbachev’s reaction to this accusation was very short: it was superficial of Reagan to connect such a sad incident, which could happen everywhere, to the ideology of the Soviet Union.¹⁴¹ Gorbachev refused to react in a defensive way to Reagan’s attack on the Soviet ideology.

In Reagan’s last letter to Gorbachev before the meeting in November, he raised three other questions which he liked to discuss in Geneva. In an earlier letter Gorbachev mentioned that although the ideological differences between the United States and the Soviet Union were very big they should strive for peaceful competition.¹⁴² Reagan thought of this as a strange remark because it was the Soviet Union, which had invaded Afghanistan in 1979, that violently interfered with the policy in Afghanistan.¹⁴³ The second issue that Reagan wrote about was the need to talk about human rights and the compliance with the Helsinki Final Act. This Act was signed, among others, by the Soviet Union in 1975, and its core passage where Reagan referred to was: ‘Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the

¹³⁹ Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 520.

¹⁴⁰ *EBB 172*, doc. 7, Reagan, ‘Reagan Letter to Gorbachev’, 04-04-1985, 1-2, 1 & *EBB 172*, doc. 9, Reagan, ‘Reagan Letter to Gorbachev’, 30-04-1985, 1-11, 1.

¹⁴¹ *EBB 172*, doc. 10, Gorbachev, ‘Gorbachev letter to Reagan’, 10-06-1985, 1-10, 1.

¹⁴² Gorbachev to Reagan, 24-03-1985, 2.

¹⁴³ Reagan to Gorbachev, 30-04-1985, 3.

freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief'.¹⁴⁴ Both, the United States and the Soviet Union, should act in compliance with this despite their different legal structures.¹⁴⁵ The issue that proved to be most urgent, was the Strategic Defense Initiative (=SDI). Reagan was aware of the Soviet objections concerning SDI. He explained that he found the Soviet position, of not negotiating as long as Reagan held on to SDI an impossible position. This, because Reagan saw SDI as a defensive weapon system and not as one that could be used to attack the Soviet Union. Reagan proposed that arms limitation talks should be about reducing offensive weapons: they could look for an agreement on this issue while leaving the issue of defensive weapons outside these negotiations.¹⁴⁶

It was already mentioned that Gorbachev did not consider the incident with the American soldier as an important issue, at least not one for the highest political level. In reaction to human rights and the Helsinki Final Act his answer was very short: 'there should be no misunderstanding concerning the fact that we do not intend and will not conduct any negotiations relating to human rights in the Soviet Union.'¹⁴⁷ In relation to the argument about peaceful competition Gorbachev wrote that it would be a sign of goodwill when the American government stopped supporting anti-government troops in Afghanistan.¹⁴⁸ The issue of SDI remained, Gorbachev's objections towards this initiative were twofold; it could possibly change the whole military Cold War balance. Why should the United States not perform a first strike if they do not have to fear a retaliatory strike because of SDI? The second objection was that Gorbachev believed that SDI would open up space as an area for warfare, which would eventually lead to an armaments race, and what sense was there in reducing offensive weapons in one category while a new area for offensive weapons opened up?¹⁴⁹

The program for the actual summit in November in Geneva was determined by the above mentioned exchange of letters. During the summit there were four plenary meetings, two private meetings, and two dinners which both Reagan and Gorbachev attended. These meetings will be discussed and analyzed chronologically and whenever necessary the link with another meeting or exchange of letters is made. The first meeting was a private meeting of an hour in the morning of 19 November and it had a general character. Both Reagan and Gorbachev started by saying that they were of good will. They both had suspicions towards

¹⁴⁴ Rosemary Foot, 'The Cold War and human rights', in Melvin P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad *The Cambridge history of the Cold War, volume III: Endings* (Cambridge 2010) 445-465, 459.

¹⁴⁵ Reagan to Gorbachev, 30-04-1985, 4.

¹⁴⁶ Idem, 6 & 8.

¹⁴⁷ Gorbachev to Reagan, 10-06-1985, 9.

¹⁴⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁴⁹ Idem, 4-5.

the other but the only way to deal with these suspicions was to interact with each other. No matter the differences, the fact that they were talking and had good intentions was a first and very important step according to both of them.¹⁵⁰ After this general introduction Reagan was the first to mention a more specific problem. He found it worrying that the Soviet Union helped and stimulated Marxist revolutions all over the world, while according to Reagan ‘the most important thing for a country was its right to self determination’.¹⁵¹ Gorbachev’s reaction to this was a continuation of the way he reacted to Reagan’s proposal about discussing human rights, or to the link Reagan made between the Soviet system and the killing of an American officer. Gorbachev was very short and left little room for Reagan: ‘The U.S. should not think that Moscow was omnipotent and that when he, Gorbachev, woke up every day he thought about which country he would now like to arrange a revolution in’.¹⁵² This was the only moment in which they discussed a specific issue during their first private meeting. This meeting is best characterized as a conversation in which Gorbachev and Reagan explored their interlocutor.

After their first one-on-one meeting had ended they engaged in talks where their staff was present as well. These talks proved to be more specific and more extensive, because if it were necessary they could ask their staff members for more detailed information on a specific issue. During the first part of this conversation Gorbachev mainly talked about the relation between the economy and the armaments race. He told Reagan that he was aware of a tendency by American think tanks to keep the Soviet Union involved in the armaments race. According to Gorbachev the armaments race was an outdated concept because it only extracted resources from the civil society. Holding on to this concept would neither bring a solution to the economic problems of the United States nor to the problems of the Soviet Union.¹⁵³

Reagan did not respond at all to this part of Gorbachev’s presentation, but immediately talked about the issue that proved to be the main obstacle during this summit. He explained that his increase in military spending was the result of Soviet expansionist policies. This was the introduction to his argument about SDI. Reagan stated that this was the specific issue about which he wanted to talk. He tried to convince Gorbachev that it was an anti-missile

¹⁵⁰ *EBB 172*, doc. 15, Dimitri Zarechnak, ‘Geneva Summit Memorandum of Conversation, First Private Meeting, 10:20 – 11:20 a.m.’, 19-11-1985, 1-8, 2.

¹⁵¹ *Idem*, 5.

¹⁵² Zarechnak, ‘First Private Meeting’, 6.

¹⁵³ *EBB 172*, doc. 16, ‘Geneva Summit Memorandum of Conversation, First Plenary Session, 11:27 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.’, 19-11-1985, 1-8, 3-4.

shield and not an offensive weapon. Reagan explained that he wanted to share the technology with the Soviet Union. This way they were both protected against nuclear attacks.¹⁵⁴

During the second plenary meeting of that day both leaders went back and forth about their intentions whenever they interfered with other countries. Gorbachev thought the United States was actually involved in other countries, and Reagan thought the same of the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁵ This was above all an exercise in hypocrisy for both leaders. Reagan blamed Gorbachev for interfering with internal politics in Afghanistan, Nicaragua, and Cambodia, while he at least did the same in Afghanistan and Nicaragua by supporting oppositional forces. The interesting part about this meeting was their discussion about SDI. Gorbachev linked his contribution to the discussion during the earlier meeting in which he talked about the pressure of an armaments race in space on the economy. He told Reagan that if they cannot come to a ban on space weapons, it would be very difficult for both of them to have fruitful negotiations.¹⁵⁶ It is important to understand that Gorbachev considered SDI as the first step to space weapons, thus when he said that he wanted a ban on space weapons, he actually told Reagan that the latter had to stop funding SDI. Reagan repeated the argument that SDI was not an offensive weapon and that there were no relations with placing weapons in space.¹⁵⁷ Gorbachev tried to make a power play by clearly stating that negotiations would be redundant as long as Reagan did not ban SDI.

The second private meeting between Gorbachev and Reagan was a repetition of arguments. Both leaders were willing to discuss a fifty percent reduction of offensive nuclear weapons, but Gorbachev only wanted to discuss this in combination with a ban on space weapons.¹⁵⁸ That evening during the dinner which was hosted by Mr. and Mrs. Gorbachev, they discussed little of importance.

The next day they continued with the third plenary meeting and again almost the entire conversation was about Gorbachev's impossible position concerning SDI, at least from Reagan's perspective. There were real tensions between the two leaders during this meeting. While they were in debate regarding their positions on SDI, Reagan 'expressed concern that

¹⁵⁴ *EBB 172*, doc. 16, 7-8.

¹⁵⁵ *EBB 172*, doc. 17, Jack F. Matlock, 'Geneva Summit Memorandum of conversation, Second Plenary Meeting, 2:30 p.m. – 3:40 p.m.', 19-11-1985, 1-8, 2 & 6-7.

¹⁵⁶ *Idem*, 5.

¹⁵⁷ Matlock, 'Second Plenary Meeting', 7-8.

¹⁵⁸ *EBB 172*, doc. 19, William D. Krimer, 'Geneva Summit Memorandum of conversation, Second Private Meeting, 3:40 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.', 19-11-1985, 1-8, 2.

the discussion had gone too far and suggested a more reasonable approach'.¹⁵⁹ Further on in the discussion 'Gorbachev asked the President not to treat the Soviets as "simple people". The President replied that he did not see how he had in any way shown disrespect or charged the Soviets with naivety'.¹⁶⁰ The meeting ended with both leaders asking each other to reflect on their discussion and try to understand each other's views.¹⁶¹ Reagan's entry in his diary of what had happened during this meeting is most telling: 'In the plenary I took off on arms race in space & stuff really hit the fan'.¹⁶²

During the final plenary meeting in Geneva, Reagan summarized the discussion of the last two days. Despite their different views on SDI and space weapons they agreed 'to expand exchanges in the economic, cultural and scientific fields'.¹⁶³ The rest of this meeting was about whether they should sign an agreement, in which form they should do this and in what way would they publicly comment on this. The remarkable thing about this summit is that an advice report of the CIA, addressed to Reagan, exactly predicted this outcome. According to this report the realist arguments in favor of the United States would have had little effect on Gorbachev. Since the Soviet economy was a heavily planned economy the CIA concluded that the economic plans for the next few years were already rolled out. Therefore Gorbachev could hold on to his view regarding SDI since he did not immediately need an agreement on arms limitations in order to save economic resources.¹⁶⁴

During the last meeting of the summit, the dinner which was hosted by the Reagans, both leaders expressed for the last time that they felt that better relations were necessary. If they could achieve this they were on the verge of a new period in history.¹⁶⁵ There is reason to believe that both leaders thought that with reopening the dialogue the dynamics of the Cold War would change. This becomes clear from a passage in the diary of Anatoly Chernyaev, an important adviser on foreign policy to Gorbachev, which he wrote after the summit: '[Something] cardinal has occurred: the arms race is going on, nothing has changed in the military confrontation, but a turning point is noticeable in international relations. [We] came

¹⁵⁹ *EBB 172*, doc. 21, Mark Parris, 'Geneva Summit Memorandum of Conversation, Third Plenary Meeting 11:30 a.m. – 12:40 p.m.', 20-11-1985, 1-12, 8.

¹⁶⁰ *Idem*, 9.

¹⁶¹ *Idem*, 11.

¹⁶² Ronald Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries* (New York 2007) 370.

¹⁶³ *EBB 172*, doc. 22, Mark Parris, 'Geneva Summit Memorandum of Conversation, Fourth Plenary Meeting, 4:00 p.m. – 5:15 p.m.', 1-8, 2 & 4.

¹⁶⁴ *EBB 172*, doc. 14, 'CIA Assessment: Gorbachev's Personal Agenda for the November Meeting', 1-4, 1.

¹⁶⁵ *EBB 172*, doc. 24, William Hopkins and Eugenia Arensbarger, 'Geneva Summit Memorandum of Conversation, Dinner Hosted by President and Mrs. Reagan, 8:00 p.m. – 10:30 p.m.', 20-11-1985, 1-8, 3.

close to the recognition that nobody will start a war, to the understanding that one should not continue provoking it either in the name of communism or capitalism'.¹⁶⁶

It is hard to pinpoint whether this summit had a realist or an ideological character. This is hard because of the few achievements that were made. The biggest achievement was the mere fact that they were talking. Besides this, they both left Geneva with a positive view of each other. Reagan's perception of Gorbachev after the Geneva summit is best described by Matlock in his account on the ending of the Cold War: 'Unlike the other Soviet leaders Reagan had dealt with or heard about, Gorbachev was a human being, not some ventriloquist's dummy that just repeated set phrases. He seemed to be a man Reagan could reason with'.¹⁶⁷ In his memoirs Gorbachev uses almost the same words to describe his perception of Reagan: 'I realized by the end of our two-day meeting that Ronald Reagan too was a man "you could do business with"'.¹⁶⁸

On the large issues: SDI, Afghanistan, the division of Germany etc. there were no breakthroughs, thus it is hard to analyze the strategy of both delegations. The realist framework fits best because both leaders seemed convinced that they should start talking to each other in order to prevent worst case scenarios from happening in the future. Thereby securing their own particular interests. Gorbachev's contribution to this summit was more abstract and his argument in which he linked the armaments race with the resources available for the civil society showed that he needed better relations in order to have more economic room to maneuver. Reagan's argument was also realistic, he pursued SDI in order to protect the American citizens. Self-interest and safety were clearly the leading arguments for SDI. The fact that he wanted to share the technology with the Soviets, shows that there was idealism in his argument as well. By sharing SDI technology with the Soviet Union both superpowers could reduce their nuclear stockpile since they were protected by SDI. The question is to what extent this was a negotiating strategy to convince Gorbachev of going along with SDI, or to what extent it was pure idealism about the wellbeing of civilians all over the world.

¹⁶⁶ *EBB 172*, doc. 26, Anatoly Chernyaev, 'Excerpt from Anatoly Chernyaev's Diary', 1.

¹⁶⁷ Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 169.

¹⁶⁸ Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 523.

10. The Reykjavik Summit, October 1986: Misleading feelings of an almost achieved groundbreaking agreement

After the Geneva Summit it took almost an entire year before Reagan and Gorbachev met again. This happened in the morning of 11 October 1986 at the Reykjavik Summit.¹⁶⁹ This summit almost resulted in large reductions in the nuclear arsenal of both superpowers. However, this was



not realized because both leaders disagreed about literally one word: laboratory.¹⁷⁰ This chapter describes why both leaders agreed to the meeting in 1986, why they disagreed about this one word, and why after the meeting in Reykjavik the momentum for better relations seemed to get worse. After the summit in Geneva, negotiation teams of the Soviet Union and the United States stayed in Geneva and tried to reach some form of agreement on arms reductions. In September 1986 Gorbachev wrote Reagan a letter about these negotiations which were in a deadlock. He wrote that only a personal meeting between the two leaders could improve the process of negotiation and this was necessary according to Gorbachev because there was no time to waste.¹⁷¹ In this letter, Gorbachev mentioned three issues which he wanted to discuss with Reagan. The first issue was the extent to which both parties should commit themselves to the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (=ABM Treaty), which was signed by both Cold War powers in 1972.¹⁷² It was important to Gorbachev that the duration of this commitment would be as long as possible since this would prevent the United States from realizing SDI.¹⁷³ Secondly, Gorbachev wanted to talk about a Soviet proposal in which ‘as far as medium range missiles are concerned the Soviet Union has proposed an optimum solution – complete elimination of U.S. and Soviet missiles in Europe’.¹⁷⁴ The third issue was the

¹⁶⁹ NSA, *EBB 203* (13-10-2006), doc. 9, ‘U.S. Memorandum of Conversation, Reagan-Gorbachev, First Meeting, 11 October 1986, 10:40 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.’, 1-8, 1.

¹⁷⁰ *EBB 203*, doc. 16, ‘Russians transcript of Reagan-Gorbachev Summit in Reykjavik, 12 October 1986 (morning)’, 1-7, 4-5.

¹⁷¹ *EBB 203*, doc. 1, Gorbachev, ‘“Dear Mr. President”, Mikhail Gorbachev letter to Reagan’, 15-09-1986, 1-10, 6.

¹⁷² Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 919.

¹⁷³ Gorbachev to Reagan, 15-09-1986, 3.

¹⁷⁴ *Idem*, 4.

United States' negative attitude towards a ban on nuclear testing. According to Gorbachev this showed that Reagan was still not fully committed to the reduction of nuclear weapons.¹⁷⁵

The goal of his letter was thus to invite Reagan for a meeting and to set an agenda for it. Although Gorbachev still emphasized better relations with the United States, the next citation about what would happen if Reagan decided to enter space with offensive weapons shows that Gorbachev was not afraid of power talk either: 'We would do our utmost to devalue such efforts and make them futile. You may rest assured that we have every means to achieve this and, should the need arise, we shall use those means'.¹⁷⁶ Without stating the fact in writing, Gorbachev refers to a Soviet attack on possible offensive weapons.

Since the period between Gorbachev's invitation and the actual meeting was less than a month, there was no exchange of letters between Reagan and Gorbachev as had been the case with the Geneva Summit in 1985. Reagan accepted the invitation by telling Edward Shevardnadze, the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, that he would like to meet Gorbachev in Reykjavik if the Soviets took care of the issue of Nicholas Daniloff. This American journalist was arrested on 30 August 1986 in the Soviet Union and was accused of espionage. This was the Soviet response to the arrest of Gennady Zakharov, one of the Soviet employees for the United Nations in Washington. Although there was clear evidence against Zakharov of him being a spy, the widespread view was that Daniloff was being set-up so that the Soviets had someone who they could use in negotiating the release of Zakharov.¹⁷⁷ Besides the former the Soviet Union had to take care of the problems with its dissidents.¹⁷⁸

In a report from Schultz to Reagan, the United States' administration seemed very confident going into the Reykjavik talks. Schultz wrote: 'Arms control will be the key not because that is what the Soviets want, but because we have brought them to the point where they are largely talking from our script [the four-part agenda, ML]. This doesn't mean we will find Gorbachev easy to handle in Reykjavik, but it means we are justified in aspiring to accomplish something useful here'.¹⁷⁹ This same document contains a paragraph which links the policy of Reagan's first administration with the position of the United States in the second half of the 1980s. This paragraph also shows the confidence Reagan and his staff had: 'The policies you set in motion six years ago have put us in the strong position we are in today.'

¹⁷⁵ Gorbachev to Reagan, 15-09-1986, 4-5.

¹⁷⁶ *Idem*, 3.

¹⁷⁷ Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 197-199.

¹⁷⁸ *EBB 203*, doc. 2, 'USSR CC CPSU Politburo discussion of Reagan's response to Gorbachev's initiative to meet in Reykjavik and strategic disarmament proposals', 22-09-1986, 1-2, 1.

¹⁷⁹ *EBB 203*, doc. 4, George Schultz, 'Memorandum to the President, "Subject: Reykjavik"', 2-10-1986, 1-4, 2.

Your handling of the events of the past months have demonstrated anew we are prepared to be tough when principles are involved, but are capable of creative negotiations in pursuit of long term goals'.¹⁸⁰

This confidence was justified, but was also very abstract, since it only related to a new armaments race. It proved to be much harder to solve detailed issues on arms reductions, but in relation to the armaments race there is clear evidence that Gorbachev was afraid of a new round of military spending. When Gorbachev met with his colleagues who joined him in Reykjavik, he told them: 'Our goal is to prevent the next round of arms race. If we do not do this, the threat to us will only grow. And if we do not compromise on some questions, even very important ones, we will lose the main point: we will be pulled into an arms race beyond our power, and we will lose this race, for we are presently at the limit of our capabilities. If the new rounds begin, the pressure on our economy will be inconceivable.'¹⁸¹ Reagan's National Security Council was also aware of this position, in one of the reports he received, it mentioned that Gorbachev's long term goal was to ease the tensions in order to have more attention and economic resources available for his domestic policies.¹⁸² Thus, Gorbachev knew that his position was weaker than Reagan's since Reagan could always use the threat of a new armaments race. Despite this, Gorbachev did not want to give up his demands too easy. His strategy was to offer Reagan a good deal, but to link this to SDI: if Reagan wanted to reach a breakthrough then he should meet the Soviet delegation in their quest for the abandonment of SDI.¹⁸³ According to Gorbachev this could be realized by agreeing to the United States demands for large reductions in the Soviet nuclear potential in Asia.¹⁸⁴

Reagan was in doubt about what strategy Gorbachev would use in Reykjavik. In a National Security Council report of 4 October 1986, he was informed about three possible strategies of Gorbachev. In the first option Gorbachev was only coming to Reykjavik in order to confirm his visit to Washington in 1987. The meeting in Reykjavik was thus an exploratory one. This way Gorbachev could hear Reagan out, and vice versa. In the second option Gorbachev wanted to improve his international position. Gorbachev wrote in his invitational letter that he wanted to reach a breakthrough in order to secure his domestic political position.

¹⁸⁰ *EBB 203*, doc. 4, 4.

¹⁸¹ *EBB 203*, doc. 5, Anatoly Chernyaev, 'Notes on Gorbachev's Instructions to the Reykjavik Preparation Group', 04-10-1986, 1-5, 4.

¹⁸² *EBB 203*, doc 6, Stephen Sestanovich, 'National Security Council report on Gorbachev's Goals and tactics at Reykjavik', 04-10-1986, 1-3, 1.

¹⁸³ *EBB 203*, doc. 5, 1.

¹⁸⁴ *EBB 203*, doc 8, Chernyaev, 'Notes on USSR CC CPSU Politburo session on preparations for Reykjavik', 08-10-1986, 1-6, 5.

Gorbachev would refuse to come to Washington the next year if this breakthrough was not realized. The third option was that Gorbachev wanted to make some progress, but was not looking for a major breakthrough. This would lead to a situation in which he would not emphasize SDI and testing issues too much.¹⁸⁵ The same document estimated that the second option had the least probability and the third option had the highest probability.¹⁸⁶

The actual meeting between Reagan and Gorbachev took place on 11 and 12 October 1986. They met during four sessions. During the first meeting both leaders confirmed that their primary goal for the summit was to create a solid basis for a treaty when Gorbachev would come to Washington in 1987.¹⁸⁷ Directly after this, Gorbachev elaborated on the Soviet plan for both powers to make a fifty percent reduction on strategic weapons.¹⁸⁸ Strategic weapons were missiles that could be launched from one continent to another.¹⁸⁹ Besides this reduction Gorbachev also wanted both powers to agree to a ‘non-withdrawal commitment and a period of negotiations following it’ regarding the ABM Treaty.¹⁹⁰ This last point was aimed at preventing the United States from developing SDI. Gorbachev’s proposal for medium-range missiles was that both states removed these missiles from European soil. The United States previously linked this to Soviet reductions in their Asian medium-range missile nuclear potential. According to Gorbachev, Reagan had to give up this demand, or at least separate the European question from the Asian question.¹⁹¹ The last part of the proposal was that they started working on a ban on nuclear tests, for now it was enough to agree on a reduction of tests, but the ultimate goal was abandoning these tests altogether.¹⁹²

In his reaction Reagan immediately told Gorbachev that a zero-option on medium range nuclear missiles could not be separated from the issue of Soviet missiles in Asia. After this remark on Asia, the focus was back on SDI. Reagan continued were he left in Geneva, he told Gorbachev that SDI was an initiative to make nuclear weapons useless. Therefore he did not see how Gorbachev could be against this. Reagan again tried to convince Gorbachev that he wanted to share new technology. Reagan’s ultimate goal was a new treaty that superseded the ABM Treaty. Part of this treaty would be that both sides agreed to verification, which meant that Soviet representatives could be present if the United States tested anything in

¹⁸⁵ *EBB 203*, doc. 6, 1.

¹⁸⁶ *Idem*, 2.

¹⁸⁷ *EBB 203*, doc. 10, ‘Russian transcript of Reagan-Gorbachev Summit in Reykjavik’, 11-10-1986, 1-5, 3.

¹⁸⁸ *Idem*, 3.

¹⁸⁹ Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 937-938.

¹⁹⁰ *EBB 203*, doc. 9, 5.

¹⁹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹² *Idem*, 6.

relation to SDI. This treaty would also obligate the United States to share SDI technology with the Soviet Union.¹⁹³ In his response Gorbachev mentioned that he did not understand why Reagan wanted to replace an existing and working treaty with a new treaty, if Reagan wanted to implement SDI than the Soviet Union felt more at risk. The consequences of this feeling would ‘simply be more dangerous to U.S. Allies – and to the U.S. public’.¹⁹⁴ This is where the first meeting ended.

During the second meeting that day Reagan came up with a counterproposal to Gorbachev’s alternative earlier that day. Part of this was to separate SDI from possible progress on other issues: ‘If we can work out such an agreement, the President said, it should not be held hostage to progress in other areas’.¹⁹⁵ This showed that Reagan tried to find a solution to reach an agreement, while working around SDI. He then referred to the issue of medium-range nuclear weapons in Europe and Asia. Removal of American medium-range nuclear weapons or a limitation to one hundred missiles was only discussable if the Soviet Union would also limit its medium-range nuclear weapons in Asia to one hundred.¹⁹⁶ The link between Europe and Asia stayed present during the entire Reykjavik summit, but as described before, this was also part of the Soviet strategy of making it look like it was a hard struggle for the Soviet Union to give up the missiles in Asia, so that it looked like the Soviets really made a constructive effort to reach an agreement. In relation to the third issue that Gorbachev had mentioned, a nuclear moratorium, Reagan told Gorbachev that he was willing to discuss progress on this issue but ‘that neither a test moratorium nor a comprehensive test ban is in the cards for the foreseeable future’.¹⁹⁷

After Reagan’s counterproposal Gorbachev explained his view on this. The most remarkable suggestion was that Gorbachev extended the proposal for a fifty percent reduction of strategic weapons to a fifty percent reduction on the complete nuclear arsenal of both countries, with no exceptions. This proposal seemed to catch Reagan and Schultz off guard because Reagan immediately tried to talk about very specific details in relation to this theory, while Gorbachev wanted to know if Reagan supported the general idea: the specifics of this deal would be worked out by their negotiation teams.¹⁹⁸ Reagan’s main concern seemed to be that the Soviets had a growing advantage when these fifty percent reduction where realized,

¹⁹³ *EBB 203*, doc. 9, 7.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹⁵ *EBB 203*, doc. 11, Tom Simons, ‘U.S. Memorandum of Conversation, Reagan-Gorbachev, Second Meeting, 3:30 p.m. – 5:40 p.m’, 11-10-1986, 1-15, 2.

¹⁹⁶ *Idem*, 2-3.

¹⁹⁷ *Idem*, 6.

¹⁹⁸ *Idem*, 8-9.

since the Soviet Union had more weapons of every type than the United States possessed at that time.¹⁹⁹ This is a strange objection, since the gap in absolute numbers would get much smaller after a fifty percent reduction. Reagan's argument would only make sense if this reduction meant that the American potential would end under the limit that is necessary for the policy of mutually assured destruction (=MAD), and if the Soviet potential would stay above this limit.

The meeting again ended with an attempt of Reagan to convince Gorbachev that SDI had a strategic character, but Reagan reversed his argument. He told Gorbachev that if the Soviet Union came up with a better alternative for SDI, they should share it with the United States.²⁰⁰ Gorbachev's answer to this revealed why he was so skeptical about Reagan promise to share SDI technology with the Soviet Union: 'The U.S. was unwilling to give the Soviets oil drilling equipment, automatic machinery, even milk. For the U.S. to give the products of high technology would be a second American Revolution, and it would not happen. It was better to be realistic. This was more reliable'.²⁰¹ This citation shows that both Cold War rivals were a long way from trusting each other. After this both leaders agreed to end the talks for the first day.

The next day Reagan started the third plenary meeting by stating three goals which would help them to make progress on the issue of SDI and the ABM Treaty, which were linked to each other: 'Firstly, how could activities with respect to the investigation of strategic defenses be synchronized with our shared goals of eliminating ballistic missiles? Secondly, what should the conditions and timeframe be for increased reliance on strategic defenses? Thirdly, until these conditions are met, what common understanding might be reached on activities under the ABM Treaty on advanced strategic defenses?'²⁰² This looked like an effort of Reagan to let Gorbachev define his terms in order to see what the room for maneuvering for Reagan was. This way Reagan did not have to share his own precise view. During this meeting Gorbachev linked SDI and the ABM Treaty directly to the other parts of the negotiations. Gorbachev did not respond to Reagan's questions. Almost at the end of the meeting Gorbachev referred to Reagan's opening questions by saying that the Soviet position was clear, Reagan should give up SDI and there was no discussion possible.²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ *EBB 203*, doc. 12, 'Russian transcript of Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Reykjavik (afternoon session)', 11-10-1986, 1-6, 3.

²⁰⁰ *EBB 203*, doc. 11, 14.

²⁰¹ *Idem*, 15.

²⁰² *Idem*, 3.

²⁰³ *Idem*, 16.

Gorbachev increased the pressure on Reagan at this moment by saying that either Reagan accepted the whole package of agreements, including the Soviet view on SDI, or not a single agreement was made.²⁰⁴ The whole package referred to the three initial issues that were raised in the invitational letter from Gorbachev to Reagan to meet in Reykjavik. Both leaders agreed that they wanted an elimination of all intermediate-range missiles in Europe. In return the Soviet Union had to reduce its intermediate-range nuclear potential in Asia to a hundred warheads, while the United States in return could hold on to a hundred of these warheads on American soil. This meant a large reduction for the Soviets in Asia but also a large reduction for the United States in Europe.²⁰⁵ In relation to the nuclear test moratorium both sides were still not on the same page, but it was clear that they could find a solution if necessary. They were not as fierce about their positions concerning the nuclear test moratorium as they were about SDI.²⁰⁶ It was SDI that prevented a deal from being reached in this meeting.

Since it was already clear that the other two issues could be settled, the last meeting continued with the discussion on SDI and the ABM Treaty. This was the meeting where the word *laboratory* became the key issue. Gorbachev wanted both sides to confirm themselves to the ABM Treaty for the next ten years, while they allowed testing on SDI only in laboratories. By the end of the ten-year period the strategic offensive potential of both should be eliminated.²⁰⁷ The Soviet proposal differed from the American one because it did not mention SDI and *laboratory*. Reagan wanted ‘both sides to agree to confine themselves to research, development and testing which is permitted by the ABM Treaty for a period of five years’.²⁰⁸ He then proposed that after the second five-year period, it was legal for both sides to implement defense systems.²⁰⁹ This was different from the Soviet proposal because they wanted to stick to the ABM Treaty for the entire ten-year period. Their disagreement was thus on two issues; how long to confine themselves to the ABM Treaty and what to do with research on SDI ?

Both leaders agreed to a break, in order to have one final consultation round with their aides. After the break, which lasted for an hour, Reagan offered his final proposal: ‘The USSR and the U.S. pledge for a period of 10 years not to exercise their right to withdraw from

²⁰⁴ *EBB 203*, doc. 13, 17.

²⁰⁵ *EBB 203*, doc. 14, ‘Russian transcript of Reagan-Gorbachev Summit in Reykjavik (morning)’, 12-10-1986, 1-11, 3-4.

²⁰⁶ *EBB 203*, doc. 13, 11-13 & 21.

²⁰⁷ *EBB 203*, doc. 15, Tom Simons, ‘U.S. Memorandum of Conversation, Reagan-Gorbachev, Final Meeting, 3:25 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. – 6:50 p.m.’, 1-16, 2-3.

²⁰⁸ *Idem*, 1

²⁰⁹ *Ibidem*.

the unlimited ABM Treaty and, during that period, to comply strictly with all its provisions, while at the same time continuing research development, and testing permitted by the ABM Treaty'.²¹⁰ Gorbachev immediately asked if Reagan deliberately left testing in *laboratories* out of this proposal, Reagan's answer was "yes".²¹¹ The last part of this discussion was only about whether *laboratory* testing should be included or not. Towards the end, both leaders became more emotional and it was Shevardnadze who summarized the feeling of both sides quite well: 'Let me speak very emotionally, because I feel that we have come very close to accomplishing this historic task. And when future generations read the record of our talks, they will not forgive us if we let this opportunity slip by'.²¹² Reagan asked Gorbachev one final time whether he really wanted to turn down his proposal because of one word that was not in it.²¹³ Gorbachev's answered 'it's not a matter of word, it's a matter of principle'.²¹⁴ With this statement the package deal was off the table and the summit did not lead to a treaty. That both leaders were very disappointed is clear from the last part, although they already agreed to meet each other in Washington the next year, they ended their conversation by telling each other that they were not sure if they would meet in the near future.²¹⁵

Despite the failure to reach an agreement Gorbachev seemed optimistic on his way back to Moscow. His goal going to Reykjavik was to force a major breakthrough. Dobrynin writes in his memoirs that Gorbachev was willing to accept 'deep cuts in strategic arms' if Reagan would abandon SDI.²¹⁶ Although an agreement was not reached, they still came very close to one. This showed, according to Gorbachev, that the idea of summits on the highest level was working. Additionally, the Soviets now also better understood the American position on many issues.²¹⁷ Reagan's team also generally thought of Reykjavik as a positive event. Reykjavik showed them that it was better to negotiate about large and ambitious ideas instead of going back and forth about marginal changes. This experience of a new round of talks with Gorbachev, was useful to Reagan's team because they concluded that, as the National Security Report about Gorbachev's strategy going in to Reykjavik already showed, Reagan's administration could not predict the Soviet strategy. Therefore Reagan and his staff

²¹⁰ *EBB 203*, doc. 16, 4.

²¹¹ *Ibidem*.

²¹² *EBB 203*, doc. 16, 7.

²¹³ *Ibidem*.

²¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

²¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

²¹⁶ Dobrynin, 620.

²¹⁷ *EBB 203*, doc. 19, Anatoly Chernyaev, 'Notes on Gorbachev's reflections on Reykjavik on the flight to Moscow', 12-10-1986, 1-2, 1.

needed more experience in talking with Gorbachev and his team. This happened in Reykjavik and the analysis was that this experience would be helpful for the future.²¹⁸

After the summit both sides reflected on their strategy. Reagan still had the upper hand in the negotiations because of SDI. This was a deliberate strategy. In National Security Decision Directive Number 250 he wrote: ‘We can consider the possibility of more limited requirements for defense if ballistic missiles are actually eliminated. On the other hand, even if the Soviet were to accept the proposal that I made in Reykjavik, we will continue to need the leverage and protection produced by the possibility of being able to develop a system capable of handling a much more extensive and evolving offensive ballistic threat’.²¹⁹ That SDI was leverage for the American side was recognized by Gorbachev. In a meeting with the Politburo two weeks after the summit, Gorbachev told his colleagues: ‘So far, we do not plan to open all our cards regarding testing in “laboratories”. Our new positions are the following: [testing] is allowed in the air, on the test sites [on the ground], but not in space. Do not open these [positions] yet’.²²⁰ This shows that Gorbachev was willing to move again concerning SDI, because it was clear that Reagan would keep on using SDI as leverage in negotiations.

The fact that Reykjavik did not lead to an agreement, should not be confused with a failure of strategy of both sides. It was clear that the Soviet side wanted to know more about the American positions before Gorbachev would go to Washington in 1987. The meetings in Reykjavik would serve the purpose of preparing for Gorbachev’s trip to Washington and the need to reach an agreement there. In his invitational letter Gorbachev wrote that he wanted a draft for an agreement on one or two issues. While during the talks in Reykjavik an agreement was only possible if the three issues were solved together.²²¹ Situations like this explain why the Americans did not have any concrete idea about Gorbachev’s tactics for Reykjavik, as was mentioned in the National Security Council (=NSC) report of 4 October 1986.

The arguments and strategies of both sides going into this meeting all fit into the realist paradigm of international relations. Schultz told Reagan in an advice report before Reykjavik that they had the Soviets on their playing field and that it was possible for Reagan to reap the fruits of his policy from the first Reagan administration. This is about the hierarchical element in realism. It was the United States that could force the Soviet Union into

²¹⁸ *EBB 203*, doc. 18, ‘“Lessons of Reykjavik”, U.S. Department of State’, 12-10-1986, 1-2. 2.

²¹⁹ *EBB 203*, doc. 25, Ronald Reagan, ‘National Security Decision Directive Number 250, “Post-Reykjavik Follow-Up”’, 3-11-1986, 1-14, 7.

²²⁰ *EBB 203*, doc. 23, Anatoly Chernyaev, ‘Notes on USSR CC CPSU Politburo Session. Reykjavik assessment and instructions for Soviet delegations for negotiations in Geneva’, 30-10-1986, 1-5, 2.

²²¹ Gorbachev to Reagan, 15-09-1986, 7.

accepting most of their terms. Another aspect supports the realist explanation in this case as well, in his preparation talks regarding his trip to Reykjavik, Gorbachev told his aides that they needed to compromise and seriously offer Reagan something, because Reagan could always threaten with a new arms race and this was a burden the Soviet economy could not carry. This was also recognized in the NSC report to Reagan before Reykjavik, in which was stated that Gorbachev needed a relaxation of tensions in order to realize his domestic political agenda. Here the bad economic situation of the Soviet Union and the need for political reforms is thus linked to an inferior negotiating position for Gorbachev.

That Reykjavik did not lead to an agreement was foreseeable, both leaders expressed very early in the meeting that Reykjavik was a preparation for their meeting in Washington the following year. Thus Reagan's main goal for Reykjavik, to get a confirmation from Gorbachev to come to Washington, was reached early during the summit.²²² As a result they started to explore their possibilities and each other's limits. Since both of them knew that SDI and the ABM Treaty were the real issues, they were able to suggest a fifty percent reduction in their nuclear potential, a ban on medium-range nuclear missiles in Europe, and a large reduction of Soviet medium-range missiles in Asia. Their positions on SDI were a safe way out if things were getting too extreme. Perhaps one of them hoped that the other got carried away by the strength of the moment: that one could convince the other that the stakes were so high, that it would be stupid not to accept the proposal that was on the table. That the heat of the moment almost carried both leaders away is confirmed in Gorbachev's memoirs and in Reagan's diary. After Reykjavik Reagan wrote: 'I'd pledged I wouldn't give away SDI & I didn't but that meant no deal on any of the arms reductions. I was mad, he [Gorbachev, ML] tried to act jovial but I acted mad & it showed'.²²³ While Gorbachev writes about his thoughts between the end of the meeting with Reagan and the subsequent press conference he had to give: 'My first, overwhelming, intention had been to blow the unyielding American position to smithereens'.²²⁴ Directly after the meeting both leaders were so overwhelmed by their emotions that they forgot that they almost reached a groundbreaking agreement.

²²² Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 224.

²²³ Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, 444.

²²⁴ Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 540.

11. The Washington Summit, December 1987: The first concrete signs of progress

In Reykjavik Reagan and Gorbachev agreed to a meeting on American soil in 1987. This resulted in a three-day summit in Washington. The procedure for analyzing the documents, which are related to the meetings between Gorbachev and Reagan, slightly differs from the previous chapter.



This is because 10 December 1987 the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (=INF) Treaty was signed. The signing of this treaty was the main reason for the summit, both leaders decided on an exact date for the summit from the moment it was clear that an agreement would be signed. Before Gorbachev's confirmation letter for the summit was sent, meetings between the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the leader from the other side had already taken place.²²⁵ During the introduction it was already mentioned that this thesis does not focus on military numbers in negotiations, but on the political consequences of these negotiations and on how Gorbachev and Reagan acted in this regard. In relation to the INF Treaty it is necessary to look into some primary sources which do not directly relate to the summit meetings, but which indirectly had a large influence on the realization of the Washington Summit. Therefore there will also be attention for the positions of both sides in the realization of the INF Treaty.

The process towards the signing of the INF Treaty started with a change in the position of the Soviet Union. Yakovlev wrote an advice report to Gorbachev on 2 February 1987 on the package deal to which the Soviets had held on firmly in Reykjavik. According to Yakovlev this was not a useful strategy anymore if Gorbachev wanted to realize a breakthrough in Cold War relations. In Reykjavik both sides had already agreed to a sharp reduction in their short- and medium-range nuclear weapons. The best strategy according to Yakovlev was to go after an agreement on this specific issue and untie this from the problem of SDI and the ABM Treaty. There was no other way to realize an agreement on short notice

²²⁵ NSA, *EBB* 238 (10-12-2007), Gorbachev, 'Gorbachev letter to Reagan', 28-10-1987, 1-4.

because Yakovlev was sure, as was Gorbachev, that Reagan would never accept the Soviet position on SDI.²²⁶ The day after this advice report was written Gorbachev reported this new strategy to the Politburo. Gorbachev linked this to the central mission of Soviet foreign policy which was ‘to remove the confrontation’. Since Reagan, if nothing out of the ordinary would happen, stayed in office for another two years, they could not wait for his successor to force a breakthrough on SDI. The only other option was to stop combining SDI with any other issue were they could reach agreement on.²²⁷

The untying of the package was everything but a disappointment to Reagan, because from that moment he could hold on to SDI without blocking any concrete form of progress. In June 1987 he wrote about the United States’ negotiating position on any possible INF Treaty. His primary goal was to ban all longer-range INF systems on a global basis, but he thought that this could be a step too far for Gorbachev and therefore he was prepared to agree to the proposal from Reykjavik on this issue which was about ‘an equal global limit of one hundred warheads on each side, with none in Europe’.²²⁸ Reagan did not know that Gorbachev was prepared to what was called ‘two global zeros on INF and operative-tactical missiles’. During a Politburo meeting on 9 July 1987 he told this to his colleagues. This meant that all the longer-range INF systems were removed from Asia as well. Through this, Gorbachev hoped to win the goodwill of the government and the population of especially China and Japan, as he had tried to do in Reykjavik with the European population and governments. In the eyes of the Soviets this would lead to increased international pressure on Reagan.²²⁹

14 April 1987 Gorbachev had met with Shultz to discuss the positions of both Cold War powers on any possible INF Treaty. When Gorbachev informed the Politburo on this meeting he told his colleagues that he ‘made Shultz understand that there would be no summit without results on the missiles and on arms control in general. The explosion of resentment will be worse than a nuclear one, especially in the third world – and there are billions of people there’.²³⁰ Gorbachev tried to use the instrument of international pressure to force the Americans to move on these issues. The use of international pressure became a clear part of the Soviet strategy in the chase for a treaty on INF. The earlier conformation letter for a summit was send at 28 October 1987, when it was clear that an INF Treaty was nearby,

²²⁶ *EBB 238*, Alexander Yakovlev, ‘Memorandum for Gorbachev’, 25-05-1987, 1-12,5.

²²⁷ *EBB 238*, ‘Politburo Session [excerpt]’, 26-02-1987, 1-2.

²²⁸ *EBB 238*, Reagan, ‘National Security Decision Directive Number 278: Establishing a U.S. Negotiating Position on SRINF Missiles’, 13-06-1987, 1.

²²⁹ *EBB 238*, ‘Politburo Session’, 09-07-1987, 1.

²³⁰ *EBB 238*, ‘Politburo Session’, 16-04-1987, 1-3, 2.

Gorbachev proposed a date around 10 December 1987. Shevardnadze delivered Gorbachev's letter during his visit to the United States.²³¹ In Shultz's analysis for President Reagan on this letter, Schultz seemed almost relieved about the fact that Gorbachev did not ask for principle agreements on Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (=START) or SDI. This was a relief because in the letter Gorbachev also invited Reagan to Moscow sometime in 1988 and they should strive for a new agreement during that visit.²³² Since Gorbachev connected the Washington Summit to the INF Treaty, Reagan's staff probably expected the same to be true for Moscow, but an agreement on START and SDI would be much more difficult.

With the INF Treaty nearby, this issue disappeared from the agenda of the Washington Summit, or at least it would disappear as a problem, since the treaty would be signed at the summit. Two other issues remained. In the above paragraph the issues of SDI and START were already mentioned, in relation to this, Gorbachev wrote in the same letter that the ABM Treaty should be added to this.²³³ All these issues relate to the same topic, mainly SDI, since this was heavily interrelated with strategic weapons. From this point on SDI, START and/or ABM Treaty are considered as one complex issue, since moving on SDI would mean that the ABM Treaty was no longer a problem and that START could get started. The second issue that remained was that of regional conflicts. The meetings in Geneva and Reykjavik did not cover this topic in a constructive way, only accusations were made. Both Reagan and Gorbachev made it clear that they wanted to discuss this in Washington. Already in his letter to Gorbachev of 10 April Reagan wrote that 'the dialogue on regional issues has been quite fruitless so far, and I hope that we can make strenuous efforts in this area, especially on Afghanistan'.²³⁴

The strategy for both sides in the talks about regional conflicts was completely different. When compared, these strategies showed in advance that an agreement on regional issues would be difficult to reach during the Washington Summit. Gorbachev's approach was to stay away from accusing the other as being the cause for a specific regional problem. Since it was clear that Reagan wanted to focus on Afghanistan, Gorbachev would try to convince him to talk to the Pakistani, which on their turn could influence the Mujahidin: one of the main opposing forces to the Soviet military in Afghanistan. The message should be that the Pakistani and the Mujahidin dropped their weapons, because Gorbachev would talk to

²³¹ Gorbachev to Reagan, 28-10-1987, 4.

²³² *EBB 238*, Shultz, 'Memorandum For: The President. Subject: Gorbachev's letter', 30-10-1987, 1-2, 1.

²³³ Gorbachev to Reagan, 28-10-1987, 3.

²³⁴ *EBB 238*, Reagan, 'Letter from President Reagan to General Secretary Gorbachev', 10-04-1987, 1-2, 1.

Najibullah, and of course to the Soviet military, to drop their weapons as well. Najibullah was the President of Afghanistan.²³⁵ This way a cease fire could be in effect from the moment Reagan had convinced the Pakistani and the Mujahidin.²³⁶

Reagan wanted a withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan as soon as possible. Instead of the Soviet occupation Reagan wanted a 'transitional regime free from Communist domination'.²³⁷ It was essential to Reagan that Afghanistan would become a neutral and non-aligned country.²³⁸ National Security Decision Directive (=NSDD) 288 shows the twofold approach of Reagan towards Afghanistan. On the one hand he wanted to talk to Gorbachev about this and strive for better relations, on the other he wrote that the United States' efforts at the summit 'must help us maintain support for the Contras, Mujahidin, UNITA, and the democratic resistance in Cambodia'.²³⁹ This could be a high-risk policy while talking face-to-face with Gorbachev about better relations.

The first meeting at the Washington Summit took place at 8 December 1987. The plenary part of the first meeting was opened by Reagan and was about human rights. He asked Gorbachev if he could grant certain people, which Reagan had written down on a list, permission to leave the Soviet Union.²⁴⁰ Gorbachev replied by telling that human rights in the Soviet Union was a complicated question because of the large variety in ethnicities and the many different countries which were part of the Soviet Union.²⁴¹ After the Summit it turned out that Gorbachev was offended that the host of the summit had started the first meeting with such a delicate issue as human rights. When Chernyaev wrote about this in a memorandum to Gorbachev, he wrote: 'he had to show off in front of his people'.²⁴² Gorbachev's reply to the accusation of a bad human rights situation in the Soviet Union was to attack the human rights in the United States as well. In this regard it was not about the freedom of the people in America, but more about the large groups that had to live in financial uncertainty and about the heavily guarded border with Mexico. According to Gorbachev the principle of preventing

²³⁵ Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 286.

²³⁶ *EBB* 238, Chernyaev, 'Plan of Conversation between M.S. Gorbachev and the President of the United States R. Reagan before the first trip to Washington', May 1987, 1-3, 2.

²³⁷ *EBB* 238, Reagan, 'National Security Decision Directive Number 288: My Objectives at the Summit', 10-11-1987, 1-2, 1.

²³⁸ *Idem*, 2.

²³⁹ 'National Security Decision Directive Number 288: My Objectives at the Summit', 2.

²⁴⁰ *EBB* 238, 'Memo of Conversation between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev, 10:45 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.', 08-12-1987, 1-10, 1.

²⁴¹ *Idem*, 2.

²⁴² *EBB*, 238, Chernyaev, 'Memorandum to Gorbachev', 16-12-1987, 1-3, 1.

people from getting out was the same as the principle of preventing people from getting in. With this Gorbachev tried to end the conversation on human rights.²⁴³

Besides going back and forth about human rights, this first meeting was not that exciting. They concluded that the relation between the two powers had improved a lot since the Geneva Summit, and that the two leaders had a big role in this. They acted in spirit of their populations, while the negotiating teams had to go over the details. This was why the leaders were so important: they were the ones who gave directions, at a certain point Reagan said: 'People elect leaders, while officials are merely appointed'.²⁴⁴ After this they explored whether the other side had changed its mind on SDI and the ABM Treaty, but Gorbachev still wanted a ten year commitment to the ABM Treaty and a discussion on defense systems afterwards. While Reagan tried to shorten this period, because technological progress made it possible to implement a defense system sooner than they thought was possible before. Gorbachev of course did not agree with this. It looked like Reagan was trying to put more pressure on the Soviets through SDI.²⁴⁵

During the second meeting at 8 December the discussion stayed rather vague. The INF Treaty was discussed. Gorbachev was worried about certain developments in Europe. Some European politicians and journalists wanted a replacement for the missiles that were removed from European soil as a result of the INF Treaty. Gorbachev wanted to know if Reagan would answer to this. Reagan stayed vague in his answer but told Gorbachev that this was what trust was about.²⁴⁶ Both leaders were also worried about how to defend the INF Treaty in their domestic political situation, since it still needed to be ratified.²⁴⁷ During the first day they had not discussed regional issues and both leaders agreed that this should definitely be on the agenda for the next day.²⁴⁸

The next day started with a short private conversation between Gorbachev and Reagan. According to Reagan one of the goals for the next two days should be to establish a basis on which negotiations could take place in order to make more progress during a summit in Moscow in 1988. Gorbachev agreed with this.²⁴⁹ Gorbachev was also invited by Reagan to

²⁴³ 'Memo of Conversation between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev, 10:45 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.', 08-12-1987, 2-3.

²⁴⁴ *Idem*, 4.

²⁴⁵ 'Idem', 5.

²⁴⁶ *EBB* 238, 'Memo of Conversation between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev, 2:30 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.', 08-12-1987, 1-10, 6-7.

²⁴⁷ *Idem*, 7.

²⁴⁸ *Idem*, 9.

²⁴⁹ *EBB* 238, Zarechnak, 'Memo of Conversation between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev, 10:35 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.', 09-12-1987, 1-4, 1.

visit the United States just before Reagan would leave office. This would not be an official meeting. Gorbachev again agreed.²⁵⁰ This indicated that the relation between the two leaders was at least that good that they would visit each other outside the official context.

During the second meeting of that day they discussed SDI and the ABM Treaty. Reagan tried to explain his view on SDI again. Since they now agreed on a large reduction of their nuclear potential, and this would probably be the trend for the coming period, it became more important to rely on a defensive system. Aside from the fact that a defensive system would mean a change from the MAD policy, which was good since protection was now key and not destruction. Reagan had also heard about Gorbachev mentioning a Soviet alternative for SDI in an interview, which was a good thing according to Reagan. They were finally thinking along the same lines.²⁵¹ He thus used Gorbachev's statement on the Soviet alternative as a way of creating a bridge between the two sides, and to increase the pressure on the Soviet stance on SDI.

Gorbachev response was predictable, but he did change from his Reykjavik position. He told Reagan that he was still in principle against SDI, but if the United States' wanted to do research on SDI than they should do this. Gorbachev mentioned that the Soviet Union would of course react to this, but in principle the question about whether or not to perform research on SDI was an American issue. Of course action would lead to reaction, but not in the form of a Soviet alternative to SDI. Gorbachev explained why: 'it was not acceptable from a political standpoint; it was not acceptable from a military standpoint (it was destabilizing); it was not acceptable from an economic standpoint. It could wear out the Soviet economy'.²⁵² After this Gorbachev warned Reagan that the Soviets would respond to SDI in their own way, it was thus still an issue which divided them. Another move on this issue was that Gorbachev agreed to a commitment of ten years to the ABM Treaty, but that they could start negotiations after seven or eight years on what to do with defensive systems.²⁵³ This was a change because in Reykjavik Gorbachev would only enter this discussion after the ten year period.

The discussion finally reached the subject of regional conflicts. This was initialized by Shultz and Reagan continued on this. He explained that he wanted to discuss three regional conflicts, especially Afghanistan: it was important to Reagan that the Soviet military would

²⁵⁰ *EBB 238*, Zarechnak, 'Memo of Conversation between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev, 10:35 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.', 09-12-1987, 3.

²⁵¹ *EBB 238*, 'Draft Memo of Conversation between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev, 10:55 a.m. – 12:35 p.m.', 09-12-1987, 1-20, 2-3 & 5.

²⁵² *Idem*, 7.

²⁵³ *Idem*, 6.

withdraw from Afghanistan as soon as possible. In order to realize this he would help Gorbachev protect the border with Afghanistan. Second was the issue of the Iran-Iraq war, cooperation between the Soviet Union and the United States was necessary to solve this, but Reagan had the idea that Gorbachev was still not willing to put full pressure on Iran. Reagan wanted a second resolution that would increase the UN mandate further than Resolution 598. Resolution 598 called for a cease fire between Iran and Iraq and demanded negotiations between them under the auspices of the United Nations.²⁵⁴ The third issue was Berlin, Reagan wanted Gorbachev to tear down the Berlin Wall as soon as possible, but he also knew that his was unrealistic, so he hoped on a gradual process towards the fall of the Wall.²⁵⁵

Gorbachev mainly responded to the issue of Afghanistan, there were some brief remarks on Iran-Iraq, and none on the Berlin Wall. General Secretary Gorbachev in principal wanted to withdraw his troops from Afghanistan, but the matter was more complex than just a simple withdrawal. It was necessary for Reagan to stop financing, and delivering weapons, to the opposing groups. After that both sides should talk to their allies in Afghanistan to drop their weapons so that a cease fire could be in effect. Then the Soviet forces would slowly retreat from Afghanistan. Gorbachev told Reagan that he was not concerned about Afghanistan becoming a non-aligned country. Reagan countered Gorbachev by saying that if both sides would drop their weapons, but if the Soviet military was still allowed to perform defensive actions then it could protect the socialist regime, while the opposing forces had no weapons anymore. This meant that in practice Afghanistan would not become a non-aligned country but, but a pro-Soviet country. Therefore Reagan would not just stop supporting the opposing groups.²⁵⁶

On Iran Gorbachev told Reagan that the realization of Resolution 598 was their main priority. The pressure on Iran needed to be increased through this resolution. Gorbachev was afraid for the reaction in Iran if a new resolution was accepted, since the Iranian government had already showed that they could act unpredictable when driven into a corner. Another resolution was only possible if they had tried everything that was in their power to make Resolution 598 work, but for that moment Resolution 598 was leading, and a second one was not yet on the table. Afghanistan was the main concern for Gorbachev on this issue: putting too much pressure on Iran in the Iran-Iraq war could negatively influence the situation in

²⁵⁴ <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/524/70/IMG/NR052470.pdf?OpenElement> (16-08-2011). This is a link to Resolution 598 at the website of the United Nations.

²⁵⁵ *Idem*, 16.

²⁵⁶ 'Draft Memo of Conversation between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev, 10:55 a.m. – 12:35 p.m.', 09-12-1987, 17.

Afghanistan because Iran might decide to support anti-Soviet forces in the neighboring country.²⁵⁷ They agreed to come back to this in their next meeting.

The next day, 10 December 1987, was the last day of the summit. There were two meetings between Reagan and Gorbachev that day: one was a working luncheon and the other was a brief get together of fifteen minutes just before they went to lunch. Since the issues that were discussed during the lunch were a direct continuation of the short meeting before the lunch, these two meetings will be described and analyzed as one meeting. Gorbachev was not satisfied with Reagan's position on Afghanistan. While Gorbachev was looking for help in order to realize a cease fire it was clear that Reagan thought that Afghanistan was a Soviet problem, and they had to figure it out on their own. This was not the way in which Gorbachev thought better relations could be realized.²⁵⁸ For Reagan it was simple, he told Gorbachev that the Soviet solution was not realistic. Once the Mujahidin would drop their weapons than they would not be represented in the Afghan government. This was unacceptable to the American leadership.

Reagan applied the same logic to Nicaragua, he wanted a solution there as well, but he thought the Sandinistas would never accept the Contras in the government, as long as the Soviets would support the Sandinistas than the region would stay unstable as well.²⁵⁹ In Nicaragua the communist Sandinista government, supported by the Soviet Union, formed an ideological threat to Reagan. Throughout the 1980s he supported the Contra's, which were the opponents of the Sandinista government, by supplying them with weapons and providing them with military training. Reagan tried to overthrow the Sandinista government, but these attempts failed.²⁶⁰ Reagan referred to this because Gorbachev earlier reflected on the Guatemala agreement as being a good solution for the region. Gorbachev thus brought another region into the conversations, probably one where he knew that Reagan was to blame for the unstable region.²⁶¹ During the lunch these arguments were repeated. The tone of the conversation was reserved, it seemed like both leaders were afraid of raising an issue that would lead to new tensions in United States – Soviet relations.

²⁵⁷ 'Draft Memo of Conversation between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev, 10:55 a.m. – 12:35 p.m.', 09-12-1987, 18.

²⁵⁸ *EBB* 238, Simon, 'Draft memo of Conversation between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.', 10-12-1987, 1-4, 3.

²⁵⁹ *Idem*, 4.

²⁶⁰ John H. Coatsworth, 'The Cold War in Central America, 1975-1991', in Melvin P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad *The Cambridge history of the Cold War, volume III: Endings* (Cambridge 2010) 201-221, 211-214.

²⁶¹ 'Draft memo of Conversation between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.', 10-12-1987, 2.

There are only post-Washington Summit documents that are directly related to the summit available for the Soviet Union. In an advice report from Chernyaev to Gorbachev on 16 December 1987 he wrote that Reagan's constructive attitude was due to the upcoming start of the Republican election campaign. Towards the Moscow Summit Gorbachev should use this dynamic in trying to realize another important agreement.²⁶² The next day, 17 December, Gorbachev informed the Politburo about the Washington Summit. He told his colleagues that he signaled a real change in attitude in Reagan's way of dealing with the Soviet delegations. In Geneva he tried to be dominant, but now the talks were more on an equal level.²⁶³ There was one other factor that influenced the progress, which Chernyaev also mentioned in the advice report of the previous day, and this was perestroika. This new way of dealing with politics and with the West influenced the Western public opinion positively. Gorbachev said: 'In Washington we saw for the first time with our own eyes what great interest exists in everything that is happening here, in our *perestroika*. And the goodwill, even enthusiasm to a degree, with which prim Washington received us, was an indicator of the changes that have start taking place in the West. These changes evidence the beginning of crumbling "image of the enemy", and the beginning of the destruction of the "Soviet military threat" myth'.²⁶⁴ Although one has to keep in mind that Gorbachev had to deal with heavy internal opposition, or at least doubts about his reforms, he thus had to sell his reforms to the Politburo too. Making perestroika this important is a good way of selling the policy to the critics of his reforms.

Again it is remarkable, as was the case with Reykjavik, that Reagan's staff was heavily in doubt about what Gorbachev's attitude in Washington would be. Reagan's staff even feared that Gorbachev would return to the strategy of a package deal at the very last minute, hereby increasing the pressure on Reagan since the INF Treaty was already drawn up. Since Reagan was the host of the meeting Gorbachev could perhaps try to use this. Reagan's staff thought of this strategy as highly unlikely, because Gorbachev also had the summit in Moscow in the back of his head, but they were not that sure that Gorbachev would not make such a move just before the summit.²⁶⁵ In another advice to Reagan, written by Robert Gates, it was mentioned that the Soviet Union was still a liability in the long run. The Soviet Union

²⁶² 'Draft memo of Conversation between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.', 10-12-1987, 2.

²⁶³ *EBB* 238, 'Politburo Session', 17-12-1987, 1-4, 1,

²⁶⁴ *Idem*, 2.

²⁶⁵ *EBB* 238, Morton I. Abramowitz, 'Information Memorandum TO: The Secretary. Subject: Gorbachev's Private Summit Agenda', 28-11-1987, 1-9, 6.

still covered a large geographical area and still had a large population. Better international relations would lead to a more stable situation in the Soviet Union, which eventually could lead to economic growth and thus to the return of the Soviet Union to the arena of world politics.²⁶⁶ Yakovlev had warned Gorbachev for this kind of logic when he talked about little room for Reagan to move: Gates was the CIA director who predicted a situation in which the United States never could get rid of the Soviet Union, therefore the United States had to extent the problems of the Soviet Union for as long as they could. This would prevent the Soviet Union from reaching a stable situation from which it could start to recover and eventually become a super power, and thus an opponent of the United States, again.

Despite Gates' sinister prediction about the position of the Soviet Union in the long run, the Washington Summit proved to be a success for both sides. Gorbachev and Reagan had their agreement, and thus the first concrete step to reducing the nuclear threat and the encapsulation of the armaments race. The Soviet policy, of untying the package deal was successful, but on SDI and the ABM Treaty Gorbachev had to give in again. He now agreed to start negotiations on defense systems after seven or eight years of the ten-year commitment period to the ABM Treaty were passed. Besides this, Gorbachev had also expanded the definition of laboratory testing on SDI. Reagan thus saw the INF Treaty and the Washington Summit as a victory for the United States. Already before the Washington Summit when it was clear that the INF Treaty would be signed, he wrote: 'The signing of the INF Treaty represents a triumph and vindication for the policy that this administration has followed toward the Soviet Union from the start. It demonstrates that realism, strength, and unity with our allies are prerequisites of effective negotiation with Moscow'.²⁶⁷

The shared optimism was clearly visible throughout the meeting. Both leaders often used anecdotes as a less diplomatic way of explaining and criticizing their ideologies, they shared some jokes during the official sessions, and sometimes answered to proposals in a sarcastic but positive tone of voice. This optimism was due to the signing of the INF Treaty. It looked like both leaders wanted to hold on to this positive vibe, they had their disagreements and it sometimes got unfriendly as well, but when the talks really seemed to get of grid, which happened when they talked about regional issues and started accusing each other, they both seemed afraid to continue the discussion. This at least shows that they wanted to hold on to the improved way of dealing with each other.

²⁶⁶ *EBB 238*, Robert M. Gates, 'Memorandum Subject: Gorbachev's Gameplan: The Long view', 24-11-1987, 1-5, 4.

²⁶⁷ *EBB 238*, NSDD nr. 288, 10-11-1987, 1.

12. The Moscow Summit, May/June 1988: An exercise in diplomacy

The fourth summit between Reagan and Gorbachev was the Moscow Summit in 1988. Both leaders were aware that this would be one of the last opportunities for them to talk, because Reagan's presidency would end on 20 January 1989 when George H.W. Bush Sr. took over.²⁶⁸ Reagan and Gorbachev had already agreed in Washington that a Moscow Summit would take place in 1988 therefore there is no paragraph in this chapter about the reasons for an invitation. This meeting proved to be less exciting than the one in Washington the year before. No treaty comparable to the INF Treaty was signed.

The first primary sources that relate to the Moscow Summit, or the process of preparation towards the summit, date from February 1988. In the, almost, four months from that moment till the actual summit Gorbachev and his trustees still felt like Reagan at times treated the Soviet Union as the evil empire. There are several examples which reflect this. In a meeting with secretary of state George Shultz at 22 February 1988 Gorbachev told him that if they wanted to keep easing the tensions then the United States should stop to approach the Soviet Union as being the origin for all bad things in world politics. Gorbachev said that the United States 'still think that the Soviet Union remains and will continue to be a state with which the United States will come into conflict everywhere in the world; and they will always be "guilty"'.²⁶⁹ That the Soviet leadership felt this way was also conveyed to Reagan by Suzanne Massie in the National Security Council of 11 March that same year. Massie was one of Reagan's main advisers about Russian culture.²⁷⁰ During this council meeting she told Reagan that she heard from Anatoly Dobrynin, at that time a Secretary of the Communist Party, that the Soviet Union's leadership still felt like they were treated like an evil empire. The Soviet leadership insisted on Reagan denying that this was the case before the Moscow summit took place, otherwise it would be hard to realize better relations.²⁷¹ Reagan's reaction to Massie's message was: 'One thing immediately came to mind: stopping the large-scale supply operations to Nicaragua the Soviets recently resumed'. This showed that Reagan still was very reserved about a positive view of the Soviet Union.²⁷² This is supported by Shultz

²⁶⁸ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York 2005) 239.

²⁶⁹ NSA, *EBB 251*(31-05-2008), doc. 1, 'Record of Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz', 22-02-1988, 1-5, 1.

²⁷⁰ <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB251/index.htm> (18-06-2011).

²⁷¹ *EBB 251*, doc. 4, 'National Security Council Memorandum of Conversation, NSC Meeting with Suzanne Massie', 11-03-1988, 1-2, 1.

²⁷² *Ibidem*.

hinting at Soviet arms supplies to Iran, during the earlier mentioned meeting between Gorbachev and him.²⁷³

Besides the indirect way of asking for a positive sign from Reagan on the Soviet Union before the Moscow summit, Gorbachev did not have many demands. Gorbachev still highly valued a positive outcome on disarmament and he was in doubt about how to value SDI and the way this could influence the Soviet strategy in Moscow. 25 February 1988 he told the Politburo that he still kept the possibility open that SDI was pure bluff, and was only an instrument to put pressure on the Soviet side during the negotiations. Therefore it was critical to get an accurate analysis of what the state of SDI was and if SDI could be realized.²⁷⁴ According to Gorbachev it was important to pursue disarmament in order to realize ‘a secure peace’.²⁷⁵ One of the reasons why Gorbachev wanted peace had to do with perestroika. Still at the politburo session of 25 February he told his colleagues: ‘Now it is clear that without a significant reduction in military spending we will not be able to solve the problems of *perestroika*. We need to preserve a high dynamic in the negotiations over disarmament questions. We have a vital interest in securing *perestroika* through foreign policy’.²⁷⁶ This is a clear indicator that the leitmotif for better relations with the United States was Gorbachev’s domestic political agenda.

The American agenda for the Moscow Summit was also related to the domestic political situation. New presidential elections were coming up and therefore it was important for Reagan ‘to demonstrate the success of this administration’s approach to the Soviet Union on the principles of strength, realism and Western unity’.²⁷⁷ Gorbachev’s motive was thus to realize his domestic agenda, while Reagan was focused on making clear that his policy was responsible for the improved Soviet – American relations. The realization of START, first discussed during the Washington Summit, was a more concrete goal for the American delegation. Reagan planned to play the issue of SDI and the ABM Treaty, which were directly related to the issue of START, a little more aggressive than during the previous summits. Two other issues were high on Reagan’s agenda as well: human rights and regional conflicts. Reagan wanted to compliment Gorbachev on his decision to start withdrawing troops from Afghanistan, as Gorbachev had proposed on 8 February 1988, but at the same time the

²⁷³ ‘Record of Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz’, 22-02-1988, 3.

²⁷⁴ *EBB 251*, doc. 2, Chernyaev, ‘Politburo session’, 25-02-1988, 1-2, 1.

²⁷⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁷⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁷⁷ *EBB 251*, doc. 8, Reagan, ‘National Security Decision No. 305, “Objectives at the Moscow Summit”’, 26-04-1988, 1-6, 1.

American delegation did not expect any large movements on other regional issues.²⁷⁸

Concerning Iran, Reagan's goal was still to push Gorbachev in the direction of a second UN resolution, which would increase the pressure on Iran.²⁷⁹ In relation to South America it was already mentioned that Reagan wanted the Soviets to stop their military supplies to Nicaragua. The Reagan administration also noticed positive developments in the Soviet Union on the issue of human rights, nevertheless a lot more needed to be done. The United States agenda on human rights for the Moscow Summit: 'We'll emphasize higher emigration, resolution of divided family and divided spouse cases, freedom of religion, greater openness'.²⁸⁰ Human rights still remained a powerful instrument for putting pressure on the Soviets during negotiations.

The first private meeting between Reagan and Gorbachev at the Moscow Summit, 29 May 1988, demonstrated that human rights was still a hot issue between the two. Reagan almost immediately mentioned the condition of human rights in the Soviet Union, and that a lot had to be done to improve these rights. He gave Gorbachev a list with Soviet citizens that wanted to leave the Soviet Union, but who needed permission to do so. Gorbachev told Reagan that he would carefully look into this.²⁸¹ Gorbachev countered Reagan's accusation by focusing on the human rights in the United States, he said that he 'had many comments to make about the U.S. human rights situation; about problems of political rights, the rights of blacks and colored people, social and economic rights, the treatment of anti-war protesters and movements'.²⁸² Reagan told Gorbachev that the situation was more complex than Gorbachev had described, but in some respects Gorbachev was right. For Reagan it was already clear at that moment that he would not take Gorbachev's argument serious, but he did not want to offend him either. The evidence for this claim is in a United States Department of State Information Memorandum that reflected on the issue of human rights during the Moscow Summit: 'The Soviets continue the charade of raising US human rights cases. We go through the formalities of responding in a serious fashion. But it is clearly understood that both sides are aware that this is indeed a charade'.²⁸³ During the discussion Gorbachev elaborated on human rights: 'In the Soviet Union, living standards were lower, even much

²⁷⁸ *EBB 251*, doc. 11, 'Department of State, Moscow Summit Overview', May 1988, 1-2, 2 & Gorbachev, 909.

²⁷⁹ *EBB 251*, doc. 13, 'President's Annotated Agenda, "The Moscow Summit"', May 1988, 1-9, 6.

²⁸⁰ 'Department of State, Moscow Summit Overview', May 1988, 2.

²⁸¹ *EBB 251*, doc. 15, 'Memorandum of Conversation, "The President's First One-on-One Meeting with General Secretary Gorbachev', 29-05-1988, 1-9, 3.

²⁸² *Ibidem*.

²⁸³ *EBB 251*, doc. 25, Richard Schifter, 'Department of State Information Memorandum, "Human Rights Group at Moscow Summit"', 06-06-1988, 1-2, 2.

lower than in the United States, but there was nothing like such large contrasts among groups of people in the country when it came to pay and the like'.²⁸⁴ Implying that it is better to suffer with all people together than to have a society in which people were able to escape from this. Reagan added the lack of religious freedom in the Soviet Union to the discussion as well. In response, Gorbachev said that it was not necessary to have a law that protects religious freedom in order to have religious freedom. This was the big difference with the United States. With this the discussion was more or less over.²⁸⁵

The meeting ended with a few positive remarks. First Gorbachev proposed a joint statement about a combined mission to Mars. Reagan did not reject this idea, but he did not agree to it either. This was possibly an attempt of Gorbachev to discuss the issue about technological developments in space in another fashion than referring to SDI and offensive weapons. Despite Reagan's lack of an answer, the meeting had a positive end. Gorbachev told Reagan that he wanted to move forward in the process of improved relations now that Reagan was still president. The next part of the conversation showed the positive feeling towards the end of the first meeting: 'The President said he agreed. He knew it was not protocol, but between the two of them they were Mikhail and Ron. Gorbachev said he had noticed they were on a first-name basis since the Washington meeting'.²⁸⁶ This showed that they felt comfortable around each other, which was a big change since they first started talking in Geneva.

The next meeting, 30 May, started with Reagan who tried to reflect on why an agreement on START could not be realized until that moment. Within no time, they arrived at the biggest hurdle in their negotiations so far: SDI and the ABM Treaty. This was a repetition of arguments. Reagan explained again that he wanted to develop SDI in case something extraordinary happened and the United States was confronted with a nuclear attack. Gorbachev's line of defense was again, that if one of the two parties violated the ABM treaty that it would not be in effect anymore, as a result the reductions on strategic arms would be stopped. This was a guarantee as well according to Gorbachev.²⁸⁷ Reagan said SDI was not negotiable and explained this by using one of his favorite examples, which he also used during the other summits. He mentioned that the gas mask after World War I stayed in

²⁸⁴ 'Memorandum of Conversation, "The President's First One-on-One Meeting with General Secretary Gorbachev', 29-05-1988, 5.

²⁸⁵ *Idem*, 6.

²⁸⁶ *Idem*, 8.

²⁸⁷ *EBB 251*, doc. 16, 'Memorandum of Conversation, First Plenary Meeting between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev', 30-05-1988, 1-16, 7.

production despite the ban on using chemical weapons after the war, because if someone decided to use chemical weapons again, then at least people were protected against them. The same logic was applicable to nuclear weapons, ‘it was impossible to unlearn the knowledge of how to build nuclear weapons’.²⁸⁸ The two leaders briefly talked about other issues, but stayed rather vague, or did not directly respond to each other’s comments. Therefore only the above mentioned was important in relation to this thesis.

The second one-on-one meeting took place at the third day of the summit. The meeting started with a general introduction and the exchange of gifts. The first fundamental question came from Reagan, he asked what Gorbachev exactly meant by perestroika.²⁸⁹ Gorbachev explained that ‘the pivotal thing about Perestroika was democratization (...) this referred to economic arrangements, but also other spheres’.²⁹⁰ Gorbachev linked this to a restructuring of the Communist Party. His core argument was that the Communist Party had too much power and had to abandon some of this, in order to become more efficient.²⁹¹ Reagan’s question eventually led to a conversation on the economies of both societies, when at some point Gorbachev asked why the United States had such high import tariffs on Soviet products. Here Reagan made a link with another issue and put pressure on Gorbachev again: ‘[Reagan] said that had to do with the problem they had often talked about: human rights. People believed that the Soviets discriminated against practitioners of religion and the like, and that was their way of trying to work that out’.²⁹² In his reaction Gorbachev did the same as during the first day, he tried to shift the conversation to human rights in America, but as before, the discussion led nowhere.²⁹³ This meeting proved to be a good opportunity for Gorbachev to establish the link between perestroika and foreign relations, as was one of the motives for the Moscow Summit. While explaining perestroika Gorbachev was honest about large groups who were opposed to perestroika, but he would not give up until perestroika was realized.²⁹⁴ This is remarkable because Reagan could also have interpreted this as a weakening of Gorbachev’s position. The meeting again ended with statements of both leaders that they were on the right track and that more progress should be their goal.²⁹⁵

²⁸⁸ *EBB 251*, doc. 16, 9.

²⁸⁹ *EBB 251*, doc. 20, ‘Memorandum of Conversation, “President’s Second One-on-One meeting with General Secretary Gorbachev’, 31-05-1988, 1-9, 3.

²⁹⁰ *Ibidem*.

²⁹¹ *Idem*, 4.

²⁹² *Idem*, 6.

²⁹³ *Idem*, 7.

²⁹⁴ *Idem*, 8.

²⁹⁵ *Idem*, 8-9.

During the last plenary meeting the only topic which was not widely discussed so far was brought to the table: regional conflicts. This conversation was not very fruitful, because both leaders mainly expressed their own views and stated that the other had to cooperate more. Gorbachev explained that the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan was a major breakthrough on regional conflicts, but he also used the opportunity to indirectly question the American efforts to help him with this. He did this by explaining that he feared an extremist Muslim regime in Kabul. This fear was stimulated by the fact that Soviet troops on their way out of Afghanistan were often attacked by Muslim groups, if these extremists would get more power then Gorbachev would turn back his decision to retreat his troops from Afghanistan.²⁹⁶ This was indirect critique on the American position because earlier on it was already mentioned that the United States had close ties with Pakistan, and with the Mujahidin. The lack of pressure on these two was the reason for Gorbachev's worries about an extremist Muslim regime in Kabul.

The only progress that was made, was a small movement on the Soviet position in relation to Iran. In Washington Gorbachev had said that a second U.N. resolution was only possible if all other options had failed. In Moscow he said: 'In the abstract, the completion of a second resolution was acceptable, but that "we must be careful", not to push Iran into a corner'.'²⁹⁷ Since this statement was part of a longer monologue from Gorbachev on regional issues Reagan did not directly respond to this. Other regional issues like, Angola, Ethiopia, the Middle-East, and Nicaragua were mentioned as well, but the discussion was about to hit a dead end with Reagan's reactions to this. He 'suggested that the Gorbachev presentation was a little one-sided. He agreed that the two sides could play an important role in maintaining a peaceful world, but the facts and the history of the regional conflicts could not be set aside so simply'.²⁹⁸ Both sides used general arguments like this. After a brief discussion about what should be in the joint statement and what not, the meeting came to an end.

It is hard to determine to which extent the strategies and the motives of both sides for Moscow were effective. Reagan raised the issue of human rights, tried to engage in a discussion on regional conflicts, and again engaged in discussion about SDI, the ABM Treaty and START. Gorbachev had the opportunity to explain Perestroika and to relate it to the Soviet foreign policy. They were thus successful in raising the questions and explaining the

²⁹⁶ *EBB 251*, doc. 24, 'Memorandum of Conversation, Second Plenary Meeting between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev', 01-06-1988, 1-17, 12-13.

²⁹⁷ *Idem*, 13.

²⁹⁸ *Idem*, 14.

issues about which they wanted to talk, but the question is if this resulted in anything, the answer is that it did not. This summit shows that realism and idealism were heavily intertwined for the Soviet Union: Gorbachev's domestic agenda was an idealist one. He tried to change the Soviet society through perestroika and glasnost, but to realize this he had to be realistic enough to openly acknowledge the bad economic shape of the Soviet Union in talks with Reagan. Therefore he had to strive for better relations with the United States, since time was running against him, because the economy was in a down worth spiral, and the opposition to his policy kept growing. He needed results. Reagan's position during this summit fits in the realist theory. He knew that time was running against Gorbachev and felt that his position was strong enough to keep hammering on human rights. Something which highly frustrated the Soviet delegation. The link between human rights and the high import tariffs for Soviet products in the United States was a clear sign of the confidence Reagan had. The fact that Gorbachev could do nothing else than to accept this, shows that Reagan at times dominated the talks between the two.

In terms of concrete results the summit in Moscow was not as successful as the Washington Summit with the signing of the INF Treaty. The agreements that were signed in Moscow, were negotiated in meetings between experts in different fields, but were no major breakthroughs. Examples of these were: 'the agreement on Maritime Search and Rescue', and 'the Comprehensive Fishing Agreement'.²⁹⁹ The importance of this meeting can best be described as an exercise in dealing with each other. Again they met each other, discussed their differences and succeeded to do this in an atmosphere of good personal relations, even when regional issues and SDI were discussed, two topics where it was clear that they were a long way from an agreement. This conclusion is supported by documents from both sides that were drawn up after the summit in an effort to reflect on it. In a State Department Cable of 8 June 1988 on the Moscow Summit was written: 'before going to Geneva in 1985 and again before going to Moscow last week, the president made clear that he wanted to create a durable process for dealing with US-Soviet differences – a framework that he could pass on to his successor. (...) The U.S. – Soviet Relationship has developed rapidly over the past few years: the Moscow summit supplied additional momentum'.³⁰⁰ This is a statement in the same fashion as statements and analysis that were made after the Geneva Summit. It is so general,

²⁹⁹ *EBB 251*, doc. 22, M. James Wilkinson, 'Department of State Information Memorandum, "Agreements Concluded to Date at Moscow Summit"', 31-05-1988, 1-4, 2.

³⁰⁰ *EBB 251*, doc. 27, Rapson, 'State Department Cable, "Moscow Summit Briefing Materials"', 08-06-1988, 1-19, 3 & 19.

and there is nothing new about it, that it supports the claim of the Moscow Summit just being an occasion for both sides to gain experience in dealing with each other. When Gorbachev reported to the Politburo about the summit he mentioned that he noted a change of tone in foreign propaganda towards the Soviet Union, it was less negative than it used to be.³⁰¹ Again, this was a statement in the same fashion as were made after the previous summits. The biggest breakthrough was made outside the official meetings. When a journalist asked Reagan whether he still considered the Soviet Union an evil empire, his answer was: “No” (...) that was another time, another era’.³⁰² This was a very positive comment of Reagan on the changing attitude of the Soviet Union, something Gorbachev was looking for before the Moscow Summit.

³⁰¹ *EBB 251*, doc. 26, Chernyaev, ‘Politburo Session’, 06-06-1988, 1.

³⁰² Ronald Reagan, quoted in: Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 302.

13. The New York Summit, December 1988: Unexpected progress

The last meeting between Gorbachev and Reagan took place in New York on 7 December 1988. This meeting lasted less than half an hour and can hardly be called a summit, partly because of the destructive earthquake in Armenia that made Gorbachev decide to change his plans and go back to the Soviet Union as soon as possible.³⁰³ However, since it is was their last meeting this chapter will shortly describe this meeting and Gorbachev's speech to the U.N. General Assembly which was the original purpose of Gorbachev's visit to New York. This way the entire process of meetings between Gorbachev and Reagan, which started in Geneva in 1985 and ended in New York is covered. Reagan was still President at that moment, but the Presidential elections had just passed and Bush was President-elect.

After the summit in Moscow, the feeling in the highest ranks of the Soviet Union was that the progress made with the Reagan administration was about to reach a halt. In an advice memorandum to Gorbachev the literally statement was that 'the summit [=Moscow, ML] has shown in particular that the Reagan administration had mainly spent its reserve of initiatives and concessions, which it could have made in the existing political and ideological framework (...) as a result they will try to impose on us a more and more slow tempo in the real development of relations in the name of "caution" and "realism"'.³⁰⁴ Gorbachev's visit to New York should be seen in this light. On the one hand he needed to gain momentum in trying to realize progress and on the other hand he needed to explore the possible strategies the next administration would use in their relations with the Soviet Union.

It was Anatoly Dobrynin who advised Gorbachev to arrange a meeting with the President-elect, this advice dates back to 18 September 1988, before the Presidential elections in the United States had taken place. Therefore Dobrynin suggested that Gorbachev combined his visit to the U.N. General Assembly with a meeting with the President-elect. This was a tactical decision, since Dobrynin also estimated that a meeting with the Democratic candidate, Michael Dukakis, could be perceived as an insult to Reagan.³⁰⁵ Since the Republican candidate was Bush Sr., Gorbachev could also arrange a farewell meeting with Reagan, where Vice-President Bush Sr. was present, this way, if he won the elections, nobody was offended and Gorbachev had the chance to talk to him. In case Dukakis won the elections, it was still

³⁰³ Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 597.

³⁰⁴ NSA, *EBB 261* (8-12-2008), doc. 1, Arbatov, 'Arbatov memorandum to Gorbachev', June 1988, 1-5, 3.

³⁰⁵ *EBB 261*, doc. 2, Dobrynin, 'Dobrynin Memorandum to Gorbachev on U.S. – Soviet relations', 18-09-1988, 1.

possible to arrange a last-minute meeting. Than Reagan would not have been offended, since it is a valid goal to meet with the next president.

The other goal of Gorbachev was to gain momentum and make progress in the armaments race. His strategy to do this, differed from the strategies used at previous meetings, where he engaged in discussions with Reagan and tried to make his point. This time he wanted to use his speech to the U.N. General Assembly as an instrument in the process of easing Cold War tensions. Gorbachev wanted to announce major arms reductions from the Soviet side in his speech to the General Assembly. The reason for doing this becomes clear when reading Chernyaev's notes on Gorbachev's message at the Politburo session of 3 November 1988: 'If we all agree (on large scale arms reductions) and if we make some major decision, then I plan to announce this in my speech at the UN. This will make a great impression, after the agreement to liquidate middle and short-range missiles, and after Afghanistan, this action...the world will see that it is not empty talks, these are policies'.³⁰⁶

The primary documents do not exactly show when Reagan and Gorbachev decided to have one final official meeting, but the documents do show that the Reagan administration was aware that arms reductions in Europe were the next topic where progress could be and would be made. In the month leading up to the meeting between the two leaders a National Intelligence Estimate Report analyzed that the Soviet Union had several reasons to focus on conventional arms control in Europe:

- 'Militarily: To improve the correlation of forces and to reduce what they perceive as NATO's capability to launch a surprise attack.
- Political: To demonstrate the "new-thinking" in Soviet foreign and domestic policy.
- Economic: To make it politically easier to allocate economic resources within the Soviet Union from the defense sector to the civilian sector to carry out *perestroika*'.³⁰⁷

The above mentioned reasons are just a selection from the report, various other reasons about why the Soviets would pursue arms reductions in Europe were mentioned as well. Since the meeting on 7 December, was going to be a short meeting, there probably was no agenda concerning content.

The meeting between Gorbachev and Reagan took place after Gorbachev's speech to the U.N. The following passage is from that speech: 'Today I can inform you of the following: The Soviet Union, has made a decision of reducing its armed forces. In the next

³⁰⁶ *EBB 261*, doc. 4, Chernyaev, 'Chernyaev Diary', 03-11-1988, 1-3, 2.

³⁰⁷ *EBB 261*, doc. 6, 'Director of Central Intelligence, Special National Intelligence Estimate 11-16-88, "Soviet Policy During the Next Phase of Arms Control in Europe"(Key Judgments only)', November 1988, 1-5, 4.

two years, their numerical strength will be reduced by 500,000 persons, and the volume of conventional arms will also be cut considerably. These reductions will be made on a unilateral basis, unconnected with negotiations on the mandate for the Vienna meeting'.³⁰⁸ When Gorbachev met with Reagan afterwards, he informed Reagan that 'he hoped that what he had said at the U.N. had not contained surprises. He had wanted to address the logical construction of what had been done in recent years, as a matter of real policy'.³⁰⁹ Reagan did not respond to this at all, which is an indication that he was surprised by Gorbachev's statement at the U.N., and that he did not had time yet to discuss a proper reaction to this

The meeting had a positive vibe, both leaders expressed, that they made good progress since they started talking to each other in 1985. There were several such statements throughout the meeting. From Gorbachev: 'He appreciated what the President and he had accomplished in recent years. They had made a joint analysis, undertaken joint efforts, and taken real specific steps forward'.³¹⁰ Reagan said: 'They had accomplished much. There was much yet to do but they had laid a strong foundation for the future'.³¹¹ The only critical remark during the meeting was one from Reagan, he referred to human rights, and again he had a list for Gorbachev of citizens that needed permission to leave the Soviet Union. Gorbachev's reaction: 'The President would now be able to tell the press he had raised it again'.³¹² This reaction and the fact that they continued the conversation like nothing happened shows that both leaders were by now used to each other and a little critique did not trigger a defensive Pavlov reaction. During the meeting they did not mention SDI, the ABM Treaty, START, or regional conflicts.

Gorbachev succeeded in his strategy of gaining initiative and/or goodwill by his statement on major arms reductions in Europe. The earlier mentioned United States intelligence report mentioned that the Soviets were willing to discuss these reductions, but they did not expect an unilateral Soviet decision on this. Gorbachev's second goal in New York was to speak with the President-elect. Bush Sr. was present at Gorbachev's meeting with Reagan, but Gorbachev did not succeed in exploring Bush's view on future relations between the two Cold War powers. When Gorbachev asked for Bush Sr.'s view on the situation he told Gorbachev that he would strive for better relations and that the progress

³⁰⁸ http://www.emersonkent.com/speeches/freedom_of_choice.htm Transcript of Gorbachev's speech on 7 December 1988 to the U.N. General Assembly (20-06-2011).

³⁰⁹ *EBB 261*, doc. 8, 'Memorandum of Conversation, "The President's Private Meeting with Gorbachev"', 1:05 – 1:30 p.m., 07-12-1988, 1-6, 1.

³¹⁰ *Idem*, 2.

³¹¹ *Idem*, 3.

³¹² *Idem*, 4.

made since Geneva was praiseworthy. Besides this, he answered, that he did not want to go into specifics and needed to orientate himself first on the exact state of affairs.³¹³ In his memoirs Gorbachev describes this as: ‘George Bush, though President-elect, was keeping a low profile, tactfully playing his role as a loyal Vice-President’.³¹⁴

In the aftermath of the meeting in New York both sides reflected on the policy and strategy which they had followed since the Geneva Summit and how to appreciate the change which had taken place ever since. The American explanation: ‘Dramatic changes in the approach to the West under Soviet leader Gorbachev are driven by economic and social decay at home, a widening technological gap with the West, and a growing realism about trends in the outside world’.³¹⁵ Reagan’s entry into his diary after the meeting in New York shows his positive assessment of the state of Cold War affairs at the time: ‘I think the meeting was a tremendous success. A better attitude than at any of our previous meetings. He [=Gorbachev, ML] sounded as if he saw us as partners making a better world’.³¹⁶ In relation to the future the biggest risk according to the American leadership, for a worsening of the relations was an internal uprising in the Soviet Union which would probably trigger a crackdown. If this happened, the United States had to condemn such action. This would cause a defensive reaction from Gorbachev, thus leading to an escalation of their relations again.³¹⁷ The Soviet assessment of the state of affairs was primarily focused on the, in their view, changing momentum of Cold War negotiations. Gorbachev felt like his position was improving. When reporting to the Politburo on the meeting and the speech in New York he said to his colleagues: ‘What else should we keep in mind in terms of putting pressure on the Americans? They are very afraid of our European and Pacific policies. They would not like to jump on a departing train, not to mention a runaway train. They are used to driving the engine. They are upset by our active foreign policy in other regions’.³¹⁸ Clearly referring to his U.N. speech and the goodwill he thought he had created with this. Both sides thus focused on Europe as the next area for improvement in Soviet – United States relations. Solutions or disputes about the Cold War issues in Europe would determine the outcome of a process which started in 1985.

³¹³ *EBB 261*, doc. 8, ‘Memorandum of Conversation, “The President’s Private Meeting with Gorbachev”, 1:05 – 1:30 p.m.’, 07-12-1988, 3-4 & 5.

³¹⁴ Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 598.

³¹⁵ *EBB 261*, doc. 11, ‘Director of Central Intelligence, National Intelligence Estimate 11-4-89, “Soviet Policy Towards the West: The Gorbachev Challenge”, (Key Judgments Only)’, April 1989, 1-6, 3.

³¹⁶ Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, 675.

³¹⁷ *EBB 261*, doc. 11, 4.

³¹⁸ *EBB 261*, doc. 10, ‘Politburo Session’, December 27-28, 1-9, 6.

Part Four

Conclusions

Was there a process of transformation going on between November 1985 in Geneva and December 1988 in New York? The goal of this part is to analyze the process which started in Geneva. The next chapter describes the achievements which were and were not made by Reagan and Gorbachev during their meetings. In chapter fifteen links between, the progress that was made and the theories described in part II which offered different perspectives on the end of the Cold War, are established. The goal is to connect the historiography and the description and analysis of the primary sources. This results in an answer to the central research question, in the last chapter, regarding how, and when, Gorbachev and Reagan ended the Cold War.

14. Geneva 1985 – New York 1988: Progress?

The question about how much progress was made between the Geneva Summit and the New York Summit can be analyzed by first identifying the main issues on which both leaders agreed a discussion should take place. These issues were: i.e. arms reductions, regional conflicts, human rights and establishing better relations. The only way to succeed on the latter was to make progress on the other three issues. Therefore the conclusion on whether relations were improved can only be made after the assessment of the other three topics.

The progress which was made with arms negotiations, and eventually with the INF Treaty is most obvious. Both sides agreed to a large reduction of warheads in Europe. The Reykjavik Summit was very important in this process. In Reykjavik both leaders explored each other's positions on many points. Both went a long way in order to reach an agreement: a fifty percent reduction of their nuclear arsenal and negotiation rounds on a nuclear moratorium. The obstacle preventing an agreement was SDI. Gorbachev only wanted to sign an agreement if all issues were solved. Reagan would not give in and with that, the package deal was off the table. SDI was the main objective of this round of negotiations, both leaders did everything they could by undertaking one final attempt to convince the other. Neither of them succeeded. The proposal about reducing intermediate-range nuclear systems was postponed to the Washington Summit in 1987. In Washington, Gorbachev let go of his strategy for a package deal and the INF Treaty was signed. This reduction in combination with Gorbachev's announcements in his speech at the U.N. in December 1988 about a major reduction of the Soviet military, were clear signs of progress on arms reductions and a reduction of the nuclear threat.

The other issue where progress was made, was human rights. In the exchange of letters between Reagan and Gorbachev before the Geneva Summit, Gorbachev wrote Reagan that negotiations on human rights were not an option for the Soviet Union.³¹⁹ It was only after two years, during the Washington Summit, that human rights were discussed. From this moment, whenever talking about human rights, Gorbachev tried to move the focus from human rights in the Soviet Union to human rights in the United States. In Washington, they engaged in a serious discussion on human rights, but since the Moscow Summit it was clear that Reagan did not take the accusations of bad human rights in the United States serious.³²⁰ Gorbachev

³¹⁹ Gorbachev to Reagan, 10-06-1985, 9

³²⁰ Schifter, 'Department of State Information Memorandum, "Human Rights Group at Moscow Summit"', 06-06-1988, 2.

considered human rights a difficult issue, at least in relation to the negotiations with the Americans: it was a topic that the United States' delegations kept using to put pressure on the Soviet delegations. The progress made on this issue was partly the result of this pressure, but mainly of Gorbachev's domestic reforms.

During the summits Reagan gave Gorbachev lists with persons living in the Soviet Union who wanted to leave but needed permission. Gorbachev accepted these lists and cleared most of the cases, however, some were considered a national safety risk and were not permitted to leave. Gorbachev's reforms proved to be very successful in relation to human rights. During the Moscow Summit Reagan was able to visit oppositional groups, without it leading to a problem in the conversation between Reagan and Gorbachev. Although Reagan linked high import tariffs on Soviet products in the United States to human rights in order to put even more pressure on Gorbachev, the situation did not escalate. In New York, Reagan again gave Gorbachev a list with individual cases. Gorbachev's only reaction was: 'The President would now be able to tell the press he had raised it again'.³²¹ After this the conversation continued in a normal way. This shows that they came a long way, from the start in Geneva, where they were not able to discuss human rights, to the end in New York where the issue did not raise the tension in the room anymore.

During the Geneva Summit the discussion on regional issues almost escalated. Both parties accused the other of interfering with politics of foreign states, and of being the cause of regional problems all over the world. In Geneva they mainly focused on accusing each other, and not on finding solutions for regional issues. These issues proved to be highly sensitive. In Reykjavik these were barely discussed, however, in Washington and Moscow they discussed the regional issues again, but in such a way that it looked like they were afraid of this becoming something that could hinder the process of improving the relations. In 1988 real progress was made on regional issues: Gorbachev decided to withdraw his troops from Afghanistan, but this was not the result of his talks with Reagan. The pressure of this war on the Soviet economy and on the population, of both the Soviet Union and Afghanistan, were burdens of which Gorbachev thought that they were no longer acceptable.³²² Gorbachev tried to use this decision during the Moscow Summit to put some pressure on Reagan. He would stop withdrawing troops if Reagan did not talk with the Pakistani and the Mujahidin and convinced them to drop their weapons, but Reagan did not give in.

³²¹ *EBB 261*, doc. 8, 'Memorandum of Conversation, "The President's Private Meeting with Gorbachev"', 1:05 – 1:30 p.m., 07-12-1988, 4.

³²² Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 322 & 363

The largest obstacle, which remained a difficult issue during all talks was SDI. Reagan's SDI programme blocked all progress on the ABM Treaty and/or START. In Washington, when the Soviets had decided to leave the strategy of a package deal, SDI only partly blocked progress. Reagan and Gorbachev recognized that SDI was an important weapon, mainly because of the influence it had on their negotiations. Gorbachev could not fully determine to what extent the Americans would be able to realize SDI or to what extent it was pure bluff, in order to put pressure on the negotiations. Reagan believed that someday his SDI would be realized, but he also admitted that this was a useful tool in the negotiations. Throughout the meetings the principle views on SDI did not change. Reagan thought of it as a defensive weapon which he wanted to share with Gorbachev, while Gorbachev considered SDI an offensive weapon that could open up space as a new area for an armaments race.

In practice, Gorbachev's position on SDI and the ABM Treaty changed. Before Geneva Gorbachev wanted a fifteen to twenty year commitment to the ABM Treaty, without any possibility to talk about defensive weapons systems before this period was over. Besides this, no testing or research on SDI was allowed. Reagan did not agree with this. After their last meeting Gorbachev's position changed to a ten-year commitment to the ABM Treaty, with the possibility of starting negotiations on defensive systems after seven or eight years of the ten-year commitment were passed. Research on SDI was allowed too, only the implementation of it stayed a principle objection of Gorbachev.

On the issue of arms reductions both sides had to give in. They agreed to remove their intermediate-range warheads from Europe and agreed to keep a hundred of these warheads in the rest of the world. In absolute terms this agreement favored the United States. France and Britain were not included in the INF Treaty, and still had intermediate-range nuclear weapons systems. In case of an escalation in Europe, the United States could rely on their NATO alliance to withstand the first attacks from the Soviet Union. Furthermore the Soviet Union needed to heavily reduce their intermediate range nuclear weapons in Asia.³²³ In 1988, in his speech at the U.N., Gorbachev announced further reductions on the Soviet military, without Reagan committing to anything. Regarding arms reductions Reagan had to give up a bit, but he received a lot in return.

Concerning regional issues the difference between 1985 and 1988 was that Gorbachev announced the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, again it was the Soviet Union

³²³ *EBB 238*, 'Memo of Conversation between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev, 2:30 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.', 08-12-1987, 7.

that moved, on other regional issues almost nothing happened. The change on human rights was also a change at the Soviet side. Gorbachev's reforms would automatically lead to an improvement of human rights since he was in favor of more openness, and in favor of more room for critical thinking. The reforms would automatically fulfill Reagan's demands about human rights. On SDI it was already concluded that Gorbachev came a long way, from a twenty year commitment to the ABM Treaty to effectively a seven or eight year commitment. On all these issues Reagan almost did not move, except for the INF Treaty, while Gorbachev constantly moved in the direction of Reagan. This is exactly as Fischer's theory in the historiography describes the process of improving Cold War relations: 'While President Reagan and President Bush sought to improve superpower relations, they certainly did not meet Gorbachev halfway'.³²⁴

³²⁴ Fischer, 288.

15. The process of rapprochement in a theoretical framework

Now that the factual progress is described the next step is to determine the value of this progress. This will be analyzed based on the arguments and strategies that Reagan and Gorbachev used. Only the main arguments will be discussed, since these proved to be the same in Geneva, Reykjavik, Washington, Moscow and New York. These arguments will be related to the theories about the end of the Cold War which have been described in the historiography. Besides this, these arguments will also be judged on their theoretical nature: do they fit in the realist, idealist or institutional approach?

Reagan's motive for engaging in talks with Gorbachev was to ease Cold War tensions. It was hard to realize this before 1985, given the leadership crisis in the Soviet Union. Reagan was also convinced that he had a strong position when engaging in these discussions with Gorbachev. This is best summarized by a message of Shultz in an advice report to Reagan just before the Reykjavik Summit in 1986: 'The policies you set in motion six years ago have put us in the position we are in today. Your handling of the events of the past month have demonstrated anew we are prepared to be tough when principles are involved, but are capable of creative negotiations in pursuit of long term goals'.³²⁵ Reagan's basic position was thus not to give in to Gorbachev, since he felt like he had the upper hand. After the New York summit the American administration still felt this way. The analysis in a national intelligence report of 11 April 1989 was that Gorbachev had no other choice than to look for rapprochement because of the bad shape of the Soviet economy and the lack of access to the latest technological developments.³²⁶

Reagan's view on the Cold War balance of power was shared by Gorbachev. In several advice reports from Gorbachev's aides, as well as in Politburo sessions in which Gorbachev informed his colleagues about his motives and strategies, the main argument was that better relations with the United States were necessary in order to realize the reformist domestic political agenda. For instance: when Gorbachev instructed his delegation for the Reykjavik Summit he told them that another armaments race would mean such a great burden on the Soviet economy that it would destroy it. Gorbachev called this the main motive for easing the tensions between the two Cold War powers.³²⁷ Throughout the meetings he did not hide this motive for Reagan, although he did not admit how bad the situation actually was.

³²⁵ *EBB 203*, Schultz, 'Memorandum to the President, "Subject: Reykjavik"', 2-10-1986, 4.

³²⁶ *EBB 261*, 'Director of Central Intelligence, National Intelligence Estimate 11-4-89', April 1989, 3.

³²⁷ *EBB 203*, Chernyaev, 'Notes on Gorbachev's Instructions to the Reykjavik Preparation Group', 04-10-1986, 4.

Gorbachev would say that Reagan could not rush the Soviet delegation into accepting agreements that were not based on parity. It would help him a lot, however, if they could find a solution, in realizing the policy of glasnost and perestroika. Something that Reagan could not be opposed to, since this would bring the Soviet structure of society closer to the United States' structure. This would automatically lead to a reduction of tensions between the two societies, because both would become more alike.

The above mentioned arguments directly fit into Wohlforth's realistic approach. It was Gorbachev's assessment that Soviet power was declining. In order to stop this the economy needed to be reformed, but this could only be done if there was a stable international environment. Since the Soviet Union's power was declining, Reagan could dictate the terms of the negotiations.³²⁸ In this context, Reynolds's explanation of the *information revolution* being the reason for the end of the Cold War is also valid. The afore mentioned intelligence report confirms the technology gap as a reason for the rapprochement of the Soviet side. The realist explanation for the end of the Cold War is thus supported by the analysis of the summits between Reagan and Gorbachev. In a negotiation process one has to accept unequal measurement if one's power is declining.

At first site there is not much evidence from the meetings between Reagan and Gorbachev that support the idealist explanation for the end of the Cold War. Gorbachev's idealism only seemed to apply to the domestic reforms in the Soviet Union. He wanted to reform the structure of Soviet society, because the way it was organized before he came to power meant that the system was doomed to fail. The idealist approach is thus secondary to the realist explanation. This becomes clear when using the distinction English made between the years 1985-86 and 1988-89 in which the economic situation was far worse during the latter years.³²⁹ English uses this distinction to make clear that Gorbachev could have chosen not to reform, especially during the period of 1985-86. This explanation is not sufficient, especially not for a command economy like the Soviet Union: working with five year plans, it is fair to assume that Gorbachev was well aware of the fragile state of the Soviet economy.

The period 1988-89 should be extended to 1987-89. This was the period in which Gorbachev 'took' control over the two most powerful departments that could influence the relationship with the United States: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense. By replacing Gromyko with Shevardnadze as Foreign Minister in 1985 and Suslov

³²⁸ Wohlforth, 'Realism and the End of the Cold War', 93 & 98.

³²⁹ English, 'Power, Ideas and New Evidence', 90.

by Yazov as Defense Minister in 1987, Gorbachev removed two old Cold War warriors from a powerful position. This served the goal of improving relations with the United States. The influence of Gorbachev's idealism needs to be judged in this context. The faster he could institutionalize his new way of thinking, the faster better relations with the United States could be realized. This was the result of the old guard holding on to dogmatic early Cold War views, in which giving in to the United States was not an option. This combination between idealism and institutionalism is in line with Suri's and Brown's explanations for why the Cold War ended.

The above mentioned explanation is supported by the results of the analysis of the primary sources as well. By December 1988, at the time of the New York Summit, it was much easier for Gorbachev to convince these two departments of the correctness of his policy. When in 1985 his career as General Secretary just started he had to take the existing balance of power in the Politburo into consideration. This was completely different by the end of 1988. The process that started in 1985, when Gorbachev and Reagan were still directly opposed to each other, and ended in 1988 resulted in: the INF Treaty, the announced withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and the announcement of another round of Soviet military reductions in Europe. This is indirect evidence that as time passed by it became easier for Gorbachev to convince the two departments of his policy, because new thinking became more and more institutionalized.

There is one other institutional aspect to the end of the Cold War that is not mentioned in the theories which are described in the historiography: the fact that Reagan and Gorbachev met each other on a regular basis. Before their first meeting in 1985, the last meeting between the two highest representatives of both Cold War powers was in 1979 between Carter and Brezhnev. During a period of six years there was no direct contact between the leader of the Soviet Union and the leader of the United States. Without any contact it was sure that nothing would change for the better. After 1985 these meetings became institutionalized again, and because of the frequent nature at which they occurred, Reagan and Gorbachev had a chance to get used to each other which smoothened out the process significantly.

A multiple perspective approach to explain the end of the Cold War when focusing on the meetings between Reagan and Gorbachev fits best. Realism explains why the process of rapprochement started. Reagan felt strong enough to convince Gorbachev that the latter could not win a new armaments race, and Gorbachev was not even willing to try this because he already foresaw that it would drain the Soviet economy. Gorbachev's realism and idealism made this possible. He was willing to change the Soviet society, something the previous

General Secretary's had not been willing to do, or simply did not have the chance to do because they died within two years after their appointment. His idealism triggered institutional change as well, since he was able to appoint people who shared his views on powerful position within the Soviet leadership. The former shows there is a hierarchy within the explanations for the end of the Cold War: realism set everything in motion, but a combination of realism and idealism was needed to acknowledge the declining power of the Soviet Union, and this idealism set institutional changes in motions.

16. A common language is not the end of the Cold War

The analysis of the five summits between Reagan and Gorbachev and the link with the aforementioned theories provide a good insight into which variables influenced Cold War policies in the second half of the 1980s, at least from a top-down perspective. Now: did Reagan and Gorbachev end the Cold War? In order to answer this question it is necessary to establish an endpoint. The problem is that there is not one specific point in time that marks the end of the Cold War. There are two ways in which the central research question can be answered. The first is by using the definition of the Cold War during the late 1980s as it is described in chapter 4. The second option to answer the main research question is by looking at the opinions of the historical actors themselves as they expressed these in their memoirs or diaries. This chapter will show that the combination of these two will form a remarkable answer to the question of how, and when, Reagan and Gorbachev ended the Cold War.

The definition of the Cold War from 1985 until its end exists out of two levels of abstraction. On the one hand there was Gorbachev who formulated his goals for negotiations with the Americans as changing the mentality of military and political confrontation. On the other hand Reagan's goals were more specific. He wanted to realize the points on the four-part agenda. These four parts were: i.e. eliminating or at least reducing the nuclear potential of both superpowers, prevent violent interferences in regional conflicts from happening in the future, improve the relationship with the leaders of the Soviet Union and improve the human rights situation in the Soviet Union. The answer to whether the Cold War ended according to these criteria can be formulated by summing up the achievements that were made during the series of summits that started in Geneva.

On the first issue of reducing the nuclear stockpile Reagan and Gorbachev made substantial progress by signing the INF Treaty, but some difficulties remained. There was no agreement on SDI, not on the interpretation of the ABM Treaty and not on START. These issues were heavily intertwined and SDI formed the main obstruction for any progress. Gorbachev and Reagan made substantial progress on regional issues: Gorbachev had announced the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and they agreed to work together on finding a solution for the Iran-Iraq war, but they kept going back and forth on Nicaragua. With the process of summits that was set in motion it became clear that Reagan and Gorbachev could address their worries directly to each other. Therefore it is plausible to assume that if there was a chance that a regional conflict would escalate the two leaders would first talk to each other instead of choosing for direct or indirect violent interference in

the region. The threat of using force to solve regional conflicts was diminished. However, the most important regional conflict, the division of Europe, more specific the division of Germany, was not even touched upon.³³⁰ Reagan tried to raise the subject of Berlin once, but Gorbachev did not respond to this.³³¹ The results on human rights were substantial, but it is the question to what extent the summits had any influence on this, because this improvement was inherent to perestroika and glasnost: more freedom and less suppression automatically meant an improvement of human rights. The issue on the agenda on which the most progress was made, was the improvement in the way in which Reagan and Gorbachev dealt with each other. The contact between the two leaders was institutionalized, which led to at least one meeting a year from 1985 onwards. The atmosphere between the two leaders during these summits improved substantially.

The four-part agenda was thus partly realized, at least to a point at which the politics of military and political confrontation were sufficiently diminished. Thus one would expect that Gorbachev thought the Cold War ended, or was at least almost over, when Reagan's presidency was over at 20 January 1989. While Reagan and his staff still thought that substantial work had to be done to realize the four-part agenda and end the Cold War. The opposite is true. In Matlock's account on the end of the Cold War which was published in 2004 the former adviser of Reagan on Soviet affairs writes: 'Psychologically and ideologically, the Cold War was over before Ronald Reagan moved out of the White House'.³³² He founds this conclusion on the fact that by that time '[Gorbachev, ML] had abandoned the key tenets of Soviet Cold War psychology. There is [was, ML] no mention whatever of an obligation to defend the "socialist commonwealth" or to fulfill an international duty to support "progressive" revolutions. There are no references to American imperialism'.³³³ This way of explaining the end of the Cold War is equal to the principles behind Suri's view on the end of the Cold War: there were practical matters that needed to be solved, but the principle decision to end the Cold War was already taken.

Despite the diminished tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union by the end of 1988 Gorbachev places the end of the Cold War almost a year later. The first time he mentions the end of the Cold War in his memoirs, or words of equal meaning, is when he reflects on the Malta Summit with George Bush Sr. in December 1989: 'I firmly believed that

³³⁰ Suri, 82.

³³¹ *EBB* 238, 'Draft Memo of Conversation between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev, 10:55 a.m. – 12:35 p.m.', 09-12-1987, 16.

³³² Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 311.

³³³ *Idem*, 310.

we [the two former Cold War rivals, ML] had succeeded in breaking out of the vicious circle, in which short springs of détente had been inevitably followed by long winters of confrontation'.³³⁴ With the assurance that Bush 'participated even more vigorously in improving our relations', as Dobrynin formulated it in his memoirs, Gorbachev had the confirmation he needed to think of the Cold War as being something of the past.³³⁵ This despite the fall of the Berlin Wall which happened just before the summit in Malta. The issue of German reunification would have set the relation between the Soviet Union and the United States on fire just a few years back. By the end of 1989 it was 'just' placed on top of the international agenda.

The difficulty with answering the central research question is well summarized by Gaddis's: 'The events of 1989-91 make sense only in terms of ideas. There was no military defeat or economic crash; but there was a collapse of legitimacy. The people of one Cold War empire suddenly realized that its emperors had no clothes on'.³³⁶ The end of the Cold War is not an exact moment but an idea that gradually took form in the minds of people. The answer to when the Cold War ended depends on the definition of the Cold War one adheres to. If the realization of the four-part agenda was the end of the Cold War, then the Cold War ended in July 1991 when the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty was signed in Moscow.³³⁷ This treaty meant that both superpowers would reduce the number of weapons that could be fired from one continent to another. This meant a substantial decrease in the level of nuclear threat. Which according to Roberts was one of the two characteristics that defined the entire Cold War. When July 1991 is considered as the end of the Cold War, then Reagan did not end the Cold War, but Gorbachev and Bush Sr. did.

Off course the answer is more complex. Suri's claim that the end of the Cold War was a process that started somewhere around the Reykjavik Summit can help to clarify this.³³⁸ According to Suri, both leaders at that point in time agreed that they wanted to end the Cold War. From that moment only the matter of how to end it remained, on the principle level the Cold War thus ended. This description is far too simplified, but it shows that a process was going on. Too simplified, because the issues where Reagan and Gorbachev did not agree upon were complex issues. Only the intention to solve these was not enough. Their position on the division of Germany and on arms control was still miles away. During the period between

³³⁴ Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 666.

³³⁵ Dobrynin, 610.

³³⁶ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 287.

³³⁷ Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 805.

³³⁸ Suri, 81.

November 1985 and December 1988 Reagan and Gorbachev laid a good foundation for solving Cold War issues: they identified the key-problems of the Cold War and they found a common language to discuss these issues, but after the New York Summit in 1988 still a few major issues remained unresolved.

Primary sources

The National Security Archive, *Electronic Briefing Book no. 172*, 'To the Geneva Summit: Perestroika and the Transformation of U.S. – Soviet Relations' (22-11-2005). This electronic briefing book is accessible at:

<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB172/index.htm>.

The National Security Archive, *Electronic Briefing Book no.203*, 'The Reykjavik File: Previously Secret Documents from U.S. and Soviet Archives on the 1986 Reagan-Gorbachev Summit' (13-10-2006). This electronic briefing book is accessible at:

<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/index.htm>.

The National Security Archive, *Electronic Briefing Book no.238*, 'The INF Treaty and the Washington Summit: 20 Years Later' (10-12-2007). This electronic briefing book is accessible at:

<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB238/index.htm>.

The National Security Archive, *Electronic Briefing Book no.251*, 'The Moscow Summit 20 Years Later: From the Secret U.S. and Soviet Files' (31-05-2008). This electronic briefing book is accessible at:

<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB251/index.htm>.

The National Security Archive, *Electronic Briefing Book no. 261*, 'Reagan, Gorbachev and Bush at Governor's Island: Previously Secret Documents from Soviet and U.S. Files on the 1988 Summit in New York, 20 Years Later' (08-12-2008). This electronic briefing is accessible at:

<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB261/index.htm>.

Bibliography

Brown, Archie, 'The Gorbachev Revolution and the End of the Cold War', in Melvin P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, volume III: Endings* (Cambridge 2010) 244-266.

Coatsworth, John H., 'The Cold War in Central America, 1975-1991', in Melvin P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad *The Cambridge history of the Cold War, volume III: Endings* (Cambridge 2010) 201-221.

Dobrynin, Anatoly, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to Six Cold War Presidents* (New York 1995).

English, Robert, 'Power, Ideas, and New Evidence on the Cold War's End: A reply to Brooks and Wohlforth', in *International Security*, vol. 26, nr 4 (2002) 70-92.

Fischer, Beth. A., 'US foreign policy under Reagan and Bush', in Melvin P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, volume III: Endings* (Cambridge 2010) 267-288.

Foot, Rosemary, 'The Cold War and human rights', in Melvin P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad *The Cambridge history of the Cold War, volume III: Endings* (Cambridge 2010) 445-465.

Gaddis, John L., 'International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War', in *International security*, vol. 17, nr. 3 (1992-1993) 5-58.

Gaddis, John L., *The Cold War: A New History* (New York 2005).

Gaddis, John L., *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York 1997).

Gorbachev, Mikhail, *Memoirs* (London 1997).

Leffler, Melvyn P. and Odd Arne Westad, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War: Volume III Endings* (Cambridge 2010).

Matlock, Jack F. jr., *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (New York 2004).

Reagan, Ronald, *The Reagan Diaries* (New York 2007).

Reynolds, David, *America: Empire of Liberty* (London 2009).

Roberts, Adam, 'An incredible swift transition: reflections on the end of the Cold War', in Melvin P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad *The Cambridge history of the Cold War, volume III: Endings* (Cambridge 2010) 513-534.

Sebestyen, Victor, *Revolution 1989: The Fall of the Soviet Empire* (London 2010).

Sury, Jeremi, 'Explaining the End of the Cold War: A New Historical Consensus?', in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol. 4, nr. 4 (2002) 60-92.

Wohlforth, William C., 'Realism and the end of the Cold War', in *International Security*, vol. 19, no. 3 (1994-1995) 91-129.

Wohlforth, William C., 'The end of the Cold War as a Hard Case for Ideas', in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol. 7, nr. 2 (2005) 165-173.

Other Sources

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/524/70/IMG/NR052470.pdf?OpenElement> (16-08-2011). This is a link to Resolution 598 at the website of the United Nations.

<http://history.wisc.edu/people/faculty/suri.htm> (27-01-2011). About Jeremi Suri.

<http://www.britannica.com/bps/media-view/61068/1/0/0> (23-08-2011). Picture on page 43 of Reagan and Gorbachev in Reykjavik.

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~govt/faculty/wohlforth.html> (29-01-2011). about William C. Wohlforth.

http://www.emersonkent.com/speeches/freedom_of_choice.htm (20-06-2011). Transcript of Gorbachev's speech on 7 December 1988 to the U.N. General Assembly.

http://www.eureka.edu/news/images/fall08/gorbachev_press/Gorbachev_Reagan_signing_INF_Treaty_1987.jpg (23-08-2011). Picture on 53 of Reagan and Gorbachev signing the INF Treaty in Washington.

http://www.eureka.edu/news/releases/fall_0809/gorbachev.htm (16-08-2011). Picture on cover of Reagan and Gorbachev sitting near the chimney during one of their talks in Geneva 1985.

<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB251/index.htm> (18-06-2011). Information about Suzanne Massie's position in relation to Reagan.

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/LAS/ir/faculty/g-english.htm> (29-01-2011). About Robert D. English.

<http://www.yale.edu/history/faculty/gaddis.html> (29-01-2011). About John L. Gaddis.