

A Counterfactual Estimate of the Impact of Leadership and Diplomacy on the End of the Cold War

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How influential are leaders in shaping outcomes in world affairs, relative to other causal influences? One way of addressing this question is through counterfactual reasoning: that is, by studying whether a different leader would have produced different outcomes. The impossibility of holding constant all causes other than leadership makes this a difficult task. Ronald Reagan's replacement of Alexander Haig with George Shultz as Secretary of State in 1982, however, lends itself well to such an analysis. Both Secretaries Haig and Shultz shared a commitment to negotiating with the Soviet Union, placing them at odds with most other senior Administration members. Shultz, however, differed from Haig in two crucial areas: policy-wise, by dismissing linkage as a foreign policy tool, and on an interpersonal level, with both a less confrontational style and by recognising Reagan's fundamental inclination to commence a dialogue with the Soviet Union. In the following, I show that absent these relatively minor leadership calibrations in the State Department, the United States and the Soviet Union would not have peacefully concluded the Cold War by the end of the decade: counterfactual analysis demonstrates that George Shultz was a causal difference-maker.

Introduction

Is US foreign policy shaped by the international environment a Secretary of State finds him or herself in? Or does the Secretary of State have the ability to autonomously craft decisive aspects of foreign policy? One way to address this question is by juxtaposing two Secretaries of States, comparing their leadership styles, the content of their policies and contrasting the foreign policy outcomes that occurred during their respective tenures. This allows for a counterfactual investigation: by replacing one agent with another and tracing out the consequences of such a change, it can be determined how strongly outcomes were linked to given policies and/or leadership styles. Asking 'what if?' questions can de-link outcomes from leaders, allowing for an analysis of the degree of causal influence a Secretary of State can have on international affairs.

Two Secretaries of State will be examined: Alexander Haig, who took office along with the rest of the Reagan Administration on January 22, 1981 and resigned in July 1982. Haig's first employ by a President began in 1970, when Richard Nixon appointed him Deputy National Security Advisor, promoting him to Chief of Staff in 1974.¹ Gerald Ford later made Haig Supreme Allied Commander Europe, a position he kept until 1979. After President Reagan's election in 1980, there had been some speculation that George Shultz, who had been a Reagan campaign advisor, would be appointed

¹Haig replaced Bob Haldeman after Nixon had forced Haldeman to resign in a last-ditch effort to stave off the—by then inevitable—investigative blow-back of the Watergate affair. In his famous television interview with David Frost, Nixon referred to this as the moment he cut off one arm and then the other (referring to Bob Haldeman and John Ehrlichman [the latter's surname has Germanic origins, and, somewhat ironically for a man who spent 18 months in federal prison for conspiracy, obstruction of justice and perjury, translates literally into 'Honest Man']). Haig, then, was Nixon's prosthetic arm replacement.

Secretary of State.² However, two weeks after the 1980 election, Richard Nixon sent the President-Elect a detailed memo outlining his recommendations for various cabinet posts, arguing strongly against Shultz and in favour of Haig as Secretary of State.³ Reagan took this advice at the time. After Haig's resignation, President Reagan offered Shultz the post without hesitation.

In the following I endeavour to delineate the similarities and differences in policy positions taken by Secretaries Haig and Shultz, before contrasting their respective leadership styles, and offering counterfactual arguments to demonstrate how Secretaries of State influence foreign policy outcomes in fundamental ways.

Theoretical backgrounder: on the study of agency in International Relations and Foreign Policy Analysis

The academic disciplines of International Relations (IR) and Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) both study matters of international affairs, global politics and foreign policy. Despite the substantial thematic overlap, there exists a fundamental conceptual schism between the two fields: IR is reluctant to integrate the study of leadership into its analyses. In *Man, the State and War*, Kenneth Waltz offers a compelling reason to leave 'man' out of the study of war: the search for causes is the attempt to explain differences in the world—but how can this be done when the variable in question, human nature, is in fact not variable but constant?⁴ "Human nature may in some sense have been the cause of war in 1914, but by the same token it was the cause of peace in 1910," wrote Waltz.⁵ In other words, man's nature is a given, thus it is futile to try and explain variance in international politics on this causal dimension. Waltz differentiated between three theoretical levels on which the causes of war can be analytically located: the international system's structure, the domestic character of states and human nature.⁶ Waltz's conceptual contribution to IR in this instance was to offer three distinct levels of social aggregation on which to locate variables that affect outcomes in international politics.

Insofar as IR focuses its analytical inquiry on the practices and dynamics of inter-state relations, the concept of the 'state' is a significant analytical building-block of the academic discipline. To Singer, for example, it is clear that the state is the "primary actor in international relations."⁷ Hudson has pointed out that "it is fair to say that most contemporary theoretical work in IR gives the impression that its ground lies in states."⁸ Wight has gone further, arguing that "any denial of the 'state-as-agent' thesis might seem to presage the end of IR as an academic discipline ... without the notion of the 'state-as-agent', IR appears to be little other than a macro-sociological exercise in political theory or history."⁹ In other words, IR as an academic enterprise has to devote significant analytical focus to the state as an actor in international politics for it to provide a distinct set of contributions to

²Fitzgerald, Frances. *Way Out There In The Blue: Reagan, Star Wars, and the End of the Cold War*. New York, NY: Touchstone, 2001, p 214.

³Nixon had the following to say about Haig: "He is intelligent, strong and generally shares your views on foreign policy. He would be personally loyal to you and would not backbite you on or off the record." His views on Shultz were less flattering: "George Shultz has done a superb job in every government position to which I appointed him to. However, I do not believe that he has the depth of understanding of world issues generally and the Soviet Union in particular that is needed for this period." Memorandum to the President-Elect. *Memo to President-Elect Ronald Reagan from Richard Nixon*. Richard M. Nixon. November 17 1980. Richard Nixon Presidential Library.

⁴Waltz, Kenneth N. *Man, The State, And War—A Theoretical Analysis*. 3rd ed. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2001, p 5.

⁵Waltz, 27

⁶Waltz, 6-12

⁷Singer, David J. 'The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations.' *World Politics* 14.1 (1961), pp 79-81.

⁸Hudson, Valerie M. 'Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations.' *Foreign Policy Analysis* 1.1 (2005), p 2.

⁹Wight, Colin. *Agents, Structure and International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p 177.

social science. A conceptual commitment to the state is shared by IR theorists of all stripes and colours, although the actual content of their theories and the way they approach the state—critically, or treating it as given—may radically differ. Waltz’s theory of structural realism, for example, does not analytically probe the existence of states as such, states are simply assumed to be the principal actors in international politics. Alexander Wendt formulated his constructivist theory of IR explicitly as a counterweight to what he felt was an ontologically reductionist approach by Waltz. But he, too, argued that the state is a ‘person’ possessing agency and deems IR to be a state-centric theory project.¹⁰ Alternative paradigms such as liberalism and constructivism, which probe the domestic arrangements of states, be they institutional or ideal, do so with the aim of explaining the configuration of the international system populated by states, albeit from a state-level rather than a system-level perspective.¹¹ To use Hudson’s terminology, the ‘ground’ of IR is the state, and insofar as human agents are included in IR theory, they are ‘black-boxed’ as decision-makers, operating under the imperatives of the state as the key agent in international affairs.¹²

By contrast, FPA concerns itself centrally with the decision-makers running the state, and thus focuses its inquiry on the state and individual levels of analysis. Foreign policy, defined by Hill as “the sum of official external relations conducted by [the] state in international relations,” is the manifestation of state behaviour in the international realm.¹³ The aggregated outcomes and dynamics of such state behaviour are the focus of IR. But, as Welch correctly points out, “all state behaviour is the product of human decisions. We talk about the ... behaviour of states [original italics], but this is merely a convenient shorthand ... for the goals and choices of individual human beings who make decisions that result in the behaviour we observe.”¹⁴ Hudson contradicts Wendt by maintaining that “states are not agents because states are abstractions and thus have no agency. Only human beings can be true agents.”¹⁵ Snyder, a pioneering scholar of FPA, laid this ground out clearly: “We adhere to the nation-state as the fundamental level of analysis, yet we have discarded the state as a meta-physical abstraction. By emphasizing decision-making as a central focus we have provided a way of organizing the determinants of action around those officials who act for the political society.”¹⁶

Where IR has difficulty to theoretically integrate agency into its analyses, FPA deliberately opens up the black box of decision-making as the target of its scholarship. A host of associated assumptions accompany this theoretical baseline. Governments are not mere passive absorbers of societal and international pressures, but actively shape the context they find themselves in. Leadership matters, and leaders differ both in their psychopathology and how they influence/are influenced by their milieu. If we wish to understand events in the arena of international politics, we need to study the decisions that preceded these events, who took them, how and why.

As put by Walt: “Not all [of IR theory] falls neatly into the realist, liberal, or radical paradigms. In particular, a number of important works focus on the characteristics of states, governmental or-

¹⁰Wendt, Alexander. *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999: p. 7. See also: ‘The State as Person in International Theory.’ *Review of International Studies* 30.2 (2004), pp 289-316.

¹¹Fearon, James D. ‘Domestic Politics, Foreign Policy, and Theories of International Relations.’ *Annual Review of Political Science* (1998), p 295.

¹²2005, 4

¹³Hill, Christopher. *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p 3.

¹⁴Welch, David. *Painful Choices—A Theory of Foreign Policy Change*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005, p 22.

¹⁵2005, 2

¹⁶Snyder, Richard C. *Decision-Making as an Approach to the Study of International Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1954, p 53.

ganizations, or individual leaders.”¹⁷ What scholars of FPA do not do is “seek to provide a general theory of international behaviour,” hence FPA is not to be seen as an “approach for the analysis of the international system as a whole.”¹⁸ Rather, FPA focuses on specific instances of actual state behaviour in the international realm—that is, foreign policy—peering beyond the state level of analysis and into the individual level. This is what Hudson means when she states that FPA’s “ground of the human decision maker leads us toward an emphasis on agent-oriented theory.”¹⁹

A basic distinction between IR and FPA, then, is that the former looks at *outcomes* in international affairs. IR aims to understand how these outcomes are brought about in relation to other outcomes and variables operating on the level of the international system of states. FPA studies the *people* and the *decision-making processes* that produce said outcomes. In the following, I endeavour to break this division down by trying to causally link people and outcomes. My aim is to offer a richer account of how agents interact with the foreign policy environment to produce the outcomes that make up the substance of IR.

Counterfactuals can be used to weigh up the causal influence leaders have on foreign policy

Waltz observed that the search for causes amounts to the explanation of variance in the world. This rests on a sophisticated understanding of causality: a factor ‘caused’ an event when its presence made a difference to subsequent happenings. Turning this concept on its head, a factor is a cause if its removal from a given context alters later outcomes.²⁰ I contrast to Waltz I working on the assumption that leaders can be studied as ‘causal difference-makers’. That assumption alone is hardly enough; indeed, it begs the question of just how much causal latitude agents can possess in the domain of foreign policy. It is uncontroversial to maintain that people ‘matter’, but it is much more difficult to show *how* they matter. My approach is to remove a leader from a given context, and study how this would have changed subsequent events. Such a ‘counterfactual contrast’ exercise can pinpoint specific acts of agency that made a difference in terms of outcomes: if it can be shown that a particular foreign policy development would have been fundamentally different because of the presence/absence of a leader, said development will by extension have been shown to be a causal consequence of leadership. This kind of counterfactual reasoning is a means of causal inference. It is but one of many types of counterfactual reasoning; since it aims to generate causal insights, care needs to be taken to make the ‘what if’ scenarios a) realistic (i.e. not ‘miracle counterfactuals’), b) plausible (i.e. speculating on outcomes in a manner driven by and consistent with the historical evidence available from the period in question) and c) focused (i.e. seeking to alter one variable only, to avoid confounding variables from muddying the picture).²¹

Isolating causation is at once the aim and the challenge: making sure that it is actually agency that caused a particular outcome, rather than a different, possibly hidden variable. This variable could be correlated with the leadership switch: if, say, a new leader re-designs his office for his own sake, but inadvertently makes the office so much more pleasant as a workspace that hitherto sluggish staffers become productive and motivated, and this subsequently brings about particular policy successes, it

¹⁷Walt, Stephen M. ‘International Relations: One World, Many Theories.’ *Foreign Policy* 110 (1998), p 34.

¹⁸Walt, 35

¹⁹2005, 2

²⁰Grynaviski, Eric. ‘Contrasts, counterfactuals, and causes.’ *European Journal of International Relations* 19.2 (2013), pp 823-846.

²¹See Tetlock, Philip E., and Aaron Belkin. *Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics: Logical, Methodological, and Psychological Perspectives*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1996; and Lebow, Richard N. *Forbidden Fruit: Counterfactuals and International Relations*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2010.

would be false to ascribe causation to leadership, even though a counterfactual analysis would suggest this. The actual cause here is the working environment, which became more conducive to successful policy execution. True, agency was involved insofar as the leader re-designed the office, but since he did not do so with the intent of making his staffers more productive, this would still not be an instance of leaders affecting outcomes per se. A counterfactual analysis needs to be careful, then, to accurately identify deliberate policy changes introduced by a new leader, and scrupulously link these changes as directly as possible to subsequent events. A related danger is that of mistaking coincidence for incidence. Substituting one leader for another entails a range of changes that go beyond agency alone. World events will occur subsequent to a leadership switch that are causally unrelated to it and would have occurred without the leadership change also. It is imperative for a counterfactual analysis to not mistakenly attribute an outcome to agency when it was in fact coincidental to the event.

These are the obstacles to a meaningful counterfactual analysis of the causal force of leaders. Thankfully they are not insurmountable. Ideally, a counterfactual experiment holds constant *all* factors other than the one whose causal influence is being investigated. In the case of the replacement of Alexander Haig by George Shultz as Secretary of State in 1982, a number of circumstances combine to make this an ideal counterfactual case study. On many of the policy issues, Secretaries Haig and Shultz held similar positions. On the issue of linkage, however, they disagreed. In addition, the character differences between the two leaders is well-documented. If it is possible to trace events in US-Soviet affairs to the changes brought about by the appointment of George Shultz, and furthermore demonstrate that Alexander Haig would have been unlikely to bring about similar changes himself, a case can be built to show how leadership makes a real difference.

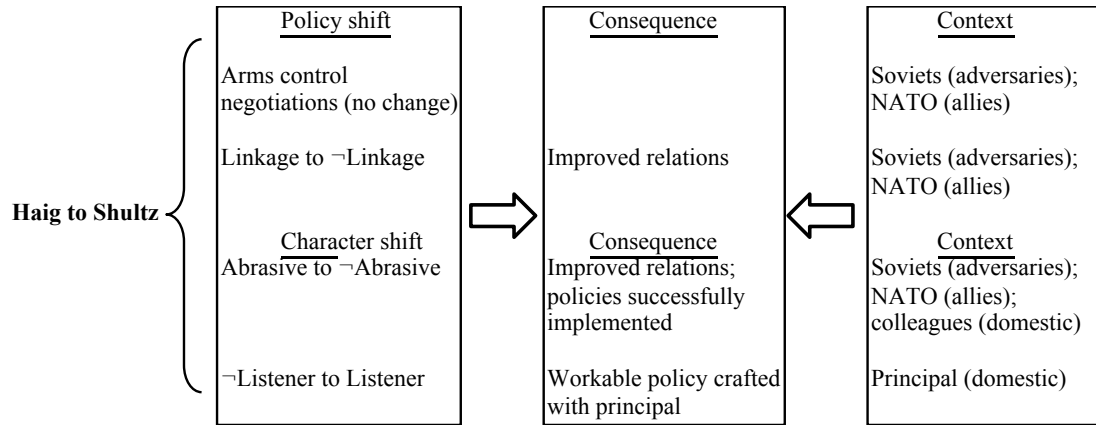
Broadly speaking, FPA analyses foreign policy along two veins: studying the cognitive disposition of particular leaders—i.e. leadership style—and studying the *milieu* that leaders operate in. Both of these strands of investigation ultimately try to shed light on how policy-making processes, be they cognitive or institutional, affect foreign policy. Here I focus on how style and institutional context interact to determine policy. Secretary Haig’s abrasive and agitated behavioural disposition was less suited to the protracted intra-Cabinet struggles that had to be fought to advance the cause of East-West diplomacy, compared to Secretary Shultz’s quiet but forceful approach. More importantly, George Shultz took care to listen and observe President Reagan’s actual policy intentions. This made Secretary Shultz’s efforts to go against the grain of the policy-making environment more fruitful insofar as the positions he advocated were closer to the ultimate decision-maker’s preferences than those of Shultz’s detractors in the cabinet.

Specifically, George Shultz’s ‘softly softly’ personality improved the state of Allied relations, while his personal chemistry with President Reagan enabled him to detect a previously under-appreciated appetite for US-Soviet rapprochement. Secretary Haig could potentially have achieved the first of these outcomes, but it is doubtful that he could have accomplished the second; in both cases his confrontational character was the chief obstacle. In addition, I also examine specific policies pursued by Secretaries Haig and Shultz, respectively. Shultz rejected the policy of linkage, which Haig explicitly endorsed. This adjusted US foreign policy in a crucial manner, making it consistent with the aim of beginning meaningful dialogue with the Soviets. Absent this adjustment, linkage would likely have remained and continued to preclude any thaw in US-Soviet affairs. Secondly, I establish that Shultz based his policy aims on a deliberate effort to understand Ronald Reagan’s policy preferences with regards to improving US-Soviet relations. Without Secretary Shultz’s deeper understanding of

President Reagan's aims, it is difficult to conceive of meaningful East-West rapprochement given the influence of hardline anti-Soviets in the Reagan Administration.

The analysis boils down to the following theoretical framework of foreign policy leadership: I look at the foreign policy consequences of the 'agent switch' from Haig to Shultz in four areas, two policy-related, two character-related. Foreign policy outcomes I take to mean the combination of consequences in one of four fundamental policy contexts: that of the Soviet Union (adversaries abroad), NATO (alliances abroad), the Administration (domestic colleagues) and the President (domestic principal):

Framework of counterfactual analysis



Counterfactually keeping Haig in place as Secretary of State would have made the policy and character 'shift-consequence diads' in the contexts specified above unlikely. Had Haig not resigned, the policy and character changes that Shultz's appointment entailed would not have occurred, and the foreign policy outcomes (i.e. the combination of consequence and context) would have remained improbable. I aim to show this by piling on evidence in support of these counterfactual arguments.

Policy I: Arms control negotiations (no shift)

Both Secretaries Haig and Shultz viewed negotiations with the Soviet Union as an essential purpose of their job. This stance mirrored that of the President. Anatoly Dobrynin, Soviet Ambassador to the United States from 1962 to 1986, remarked that that Secretary Haig's views on this "did not differ much from those of the President himself."²² Secretary Shultz had first hand experience of negotiating with Soviets before becoming Secretary of State, having held talks with Soviet officials about a US-Soviet trade agreement in the early 1970s.²³ As such, Haig and Shultz were the only high-level officials in the Reagan Administration who had practical experience of dealing with the USSR.²⁴ For the first year of his Presidency, Reagan did not make a comprehensive statement on his policy towards the Soviet Union.²⁵ It was thus largely up to Secretary Haig to craft a working set of policies,

²²Dobrynin, Anatoly. *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to Six Cold War Presidents*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 2001, p 482.

²³Shultz, George P. *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State*. New York, NY: Scribner's, 1993, p 1-48.

²⁴Oberdorfer, Don. *From the Cold War to a New Era: The United States and the Soviet Union, 1983-1991*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1998, p 45.

²⁵Matlock Jr., Jack F. *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended*. New York, NY: Random House, 2004, p 7.

on the basis of both his views and those of President Reagan. In September 1981, Secretary Haig sent President Reagan a memo concerning his (Haig's) upcoming meetings with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko. Haig stated his aim was for the talks to contribute "to your [i.e. President Reagan's] objective of putting the US-Soviet relationship on a sounder footing," and expressed the importance of negotiations—"getting TNF [Theatre Nuclear Forces] negotiations started is vital to us"—as well as his intention to raise human rights issues and the possibility of opening consulates in Kiev and New York.²⁶ Haig also commenced negotiations with Gromyko on limiting nuclear weapons in Europe, a decision approved by Reagan and Brezhnev.²⁷ These policy points are notable in that they closely represent foreign policy talking points and positions subsequently taken by Secretary Shultz. In addition, both Secretaries Haig and Shultz viewed the aim of strengthening alliances abroad as fundamental to US strength.²⁸ In his 'Strategic Plan for Presidential Diplomacy and Summitry' of April 1981, Secretary Haig's first objective was for President Reagan to act and be recognised as "a leader of the industrial democracies and as a willing partner in the community of all nations."²⁹

Policy II: Shultz abandons linkage

The main policy distinction between Secretaries Haig and Shultz concerned 'linkage'. This was a concept President Reagan inherited from the 1970s: the idea that relations with the Soviets across all policy areas are intrinsically inter-related. A deterioration in one sphere—e.g. the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979—necessitated the cessation of diplomatic efforts in another, in Carter's case, arms control.³⁰ Secretary Haig explicitly embraced linkage, his views on this matter being a hold-over from the Nixon era, specifically the idea of linking arms control to Soviet concessions in 'regional affairs' (i.e. Soviet military adventures in the Third World).³¹ In the aforementioned September 1981 Memorandum for President Reagan, Haig argued that the aim of a sounder US-Soviet relationship is achieved by "linking improved bilateral relations with increased Soviet restraint." In a 1981 speech on relations between the US and the Soviet Union, Secretary Haig maintained: "We have learned that Soviet-American agreements, even in strategic arms control, will not survive Soviet threats to the overall military balance or Soviet encroachment upon our strategic interest in critical regions of the world. Linkage is not a theory; it is a fact of life."³² By contrast, Secretary Shultz dismissed this idea, which may have made moral sense, but was in reality an obstacle to progress: "we needed to get away from the old concept of 'linkage' . . . It was unrealistic to expect that the Soviets would back off, simply for the sake of their relationship with us, from a position on some part of the world from which they were gaining an advantage. Linkage, I felt, was inhibiting our disposition to move forcefully and, ironically, often seemed to be turned on its head by the Soviets, as they tried to use linkage to their advantage—to threaten that the relationship would suffer if we undertook some action that they opposed."³³ The policy shift associated with Secretary Shultz was formalised in National Security Decision Directive 75,

²⁶Memorandum for the President, *My Forthcoming Meetings with Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko*. Alexander M. Haig Jr. September 18 1981. Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

²⁷Dobrynin, 496

²⁸Matlock, 33

²⁹*Strategic Plan: Presidential Diplomacy and Summitry*. Alexander M. Haig, Jr. 12 April 1981. Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

³⁰Shultz, George P. 'A Perspective from Washington.' In Kiron K. Skinner (ed.), *Turning Points in Ending the Cold War*, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2008: p xxi.

³¹Fitzgerald, 172

³²'Excerpts From Haig's Speech on Relations Between US and Soviet Union.' *The New York Times*, 12 August 1981. Accessed online on 20 March 2014 at <<http://www.nytimes.com/1981/08/12/world/excerpts-from-haig-s-speech-on-relations-between-us-and-soviet-union.html>>

³³Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 278

signed in January 1983, which rejected linkage, and instead called for simultaneous bilateral negotiations on arms control, human rights, regional issues and bilateral exchanges. It formed the basis of the Reagan Administration's ensuing Soviet policy.³⁴ Haig never accepted this policy change. As late as 1988 he stated that he was "appalled" that the Reagan administration gave up on linkage: "The Soviet Union is continuing to conduct aggression around the world and ... we have de-linked, so to speak, their international behavior from arms control in a quest for arms control for arms control's sake ... [the United States] cannot leave untended violations of human rights, and aggression in the developing world. ... Linkage is an essential vehicle in American foreign policy."³⁵ Secretary Shultz, however, imprinted his views on linkage with force. When the Soviet Union shot down Korean Airliner 007 in September 1983, killing 269 innocent civilians after the airplane accidentally strayed into Soviet airspace, Shultz pressed for a strong rhetorical response whilst continuing the recently resumed East-West arms control talks, contrary to what a policy of linkage would have dictated. Secretary Shultz stuck to a previously scheduled meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko in Madrid, using the opportunity to publicly harangue the Soviets about the KAL 007 disaster, but not allowing the issue derail the renewed US-Soviet dialogue. As Shultz put it later, "We broke dramatically with linkage, and it was good that we did."³⁶ What Secretary Shultz alluded to is the fact that hardliners in the Cabinet strictly opposed his proposed response to KAL 007.

The consequences of scrapping linkage are clear: absent such a step, US-Soviet relations could not have improved meaningfully, since every perceived Soviet transgression (and there were many—regional disputes in the 1980s, for instance, encompassed Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, Angola, to name but a few) would have put an end to any dialogue on arms control, let alone allow this dialogue to eventually evolve into a far wider-ranging diplomatic initiative to defuse the Cold War. At a private dinner early in 1981, Ambassador Dobrynin asked Secretary Haig whether the Reagan Administration was interested in any constructive dialogue with the Soviets at all, to which Haig linked the possibility of agreements to "the Soviet Union's general conduct," as judged by the Administration. Dobrynin's straightforward rejection of this approach—"a history of our relations showed it could not produce anything but permanent confrontation"—left Secretary Haig untouched.³⁷ Haig's attachment to linkage thus suggests that the eventual improvement of US-Soviet relations would have had to be preceded by significant changes in Soviet conduct. This was recognised already in February 1981, when a staffer on the National Security Council sent Richard Allen, President Reagan's first National Security Advisor, a Memorandum titled 'Thoughts on Linkage'. It made it clear that "The Secretary's [i.e. Haig's] position seems to be to hold the Soviets to a strict interpretation of the Basic Principles of Relations statement of 1972 and the Agreement on Prevention of Nuclear War of 1973, and make any kind of agreement in arms control or trade contingent on compliance with them. Apparently, he would consider Soviet activities in Africa as well as Afghanistan in violation of these agreements. [...] A blanket rejection of negotiation with the Soviets unless they renounce all activity in the Third World will cause considerable turmoil among the West Europeans, and could accelerate the split between the US and its allies on defence, arms control and other East-West issues."³⁸ Shultz's dismissal of linkage injected new vigour

³⁴Skinner, Kiron. 'An Alternative Concept of Mutual Cooperation.' In Skinner (ed.), *Turning Points*, p 99.

³⁵Irwin, Victoria. 'Alexander Haig.' *The Christian Science Monitor*, 8 Jan 1988. Accessed online on 20 March 2014 at <<http://www.csmonitor.com/1988/0108/zhaig.html>>

³⁶Shultz, George P. 'Letter to Benjamin Mueller', 13 Feb. 2013. MS. Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA.

³⁷Dobrynin, 487

³⁸Memorandum for Richard Allen. *Thoughts on Linkage*. Carnes Lord. February 13 1981. Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

into US-Soviet talks. In May 1983, he sent a Memo to President Reagan which illustrates the impact this had: “At your direction, I have embarked on a process of intensive dialogue with Dobrynin on the full range of US-Soviet issues.”³⁹ Shultz argued for the opening of US and Soviet consulates in Kiev and New York—a confidence-building measure that Haig himself nominally advocated during his tenure, but one which was unworkable under linkage. By 1984, the transformation away from linkage was complete. Jack Matlock, then President Reagan’s Special Assistant for European and Soviet Affairs, wrote a document for the National Security Council entitled ‘Dealing with the Soviets’ which contained the following passage: “Our strategy presupposes that our adversaries are nasty and will do outrageous things. It cannot and should not change every time they do something outrageous: Jimmy Carter was shocked by Afghanistan; he withdrew SALT II. Ronald Reagan was not surprised by KAL; he kept Geneva talks going. We can always use our adversaries’ outrageous conduct to build support behind our firm negotiating positions. But to have relations so vulnerable to shocks means further loss of control over events. [Original emphasis]”⁴⁰ This is a powerful depiction of the consequences brought about by the end of linkage. Had Haig stayed in office, this outcome would not have come about.

Character I: dealing with partners at home and abroad

It was mentioned earlier that President Reagan’s Soviet policy was not particularly content-rich in his first year. He was thus susceptible to different viewpoints in his Cabinet. Nature abhors a vacuum, and soon two competing policy positions in the Administration vied for the President’s endorsement. Haig—who wanted negotiations with the Soviets on the basis of linkage, and in fact had the President’s support on this matter⁴¹—pitted himself against a set of anti-Soviet hardliners who opposed all negotiations and instead advocated straightforward regime change in the USSR. In a memo written in June 1982, shortly before Haig’s resignation, Richard Pipes of the National Security Council openly sparred with Haig: “The basic difference between State [i.e. Haig] and myself is philosophical. State believes that we should be content with an attempt to influence Soviet behaviour by offering rewards to the USSR when it is peaceful and punishments when it is not. *Following what I sense to be the President’s belief*, I, by contrast, argue ... that Soviet international behaviour is a response not only to external threats and opportunities but also the internal imperatives of the Soviet political, economic, social and ideological system. State may be expected to fight this proposition tooth and nail, although it seems to express the quintessence of the President’s approach. [Emphasis mine]”⁴² This struggle for the President’s ‘true’ foreign policy position—was he a hardliner or a pragmatic at heart?—was a function of Reagan’s seeming ambivalence on many important foreign policy issues, and unwillingness to adjudicate the rifts between his Cabinet. Reagan had campaigned for the Presidency on a fierce anti-Soviet platform, in part out of conviction, but also to carve out his position as an anti-establishment candidate seeking to distance himself from the policy of détente first pursued by President Nixon and later endorsed by Presidents Ford and Carter. At the same time, Reagan made it clear on numerous occasions that his quarrel was with Communism rather than with the Russian people, and that he felt nuclear war and indeed the entire concept of nuclear deterrence morally abhorrent (“Wouldn’t

³⁹Memorandum for The President. *Next Steps in US-Soviet Relations*. George P. Shultz. May 21 1983. Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

⁴⁰*Dealing With the Soviets*. Jack F. Matlock, Jr. July 26 1984. Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

⁴¹“I happen to believe, also, that you can’t sit down at a table and just negotiate that unless you take into account, in consideration at that table all the other things that are going on. In other words, I believe in linkage.” Ronald Reagan: ‘The President’s News Conference.’ January 29 1981, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

⁴²Memorandum for William P. Clark. *Terms of Reference for NSSD on US Soviet Policy*. Richard Pipes. June 22 1982. Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

it be better to protect the American people rather than avenge them?”), belying the war-mongering reputation that was sometimes attached to his name.⁴³ Ronald Reagan’s viewpoints on foreign policy were not easy to discern, and he was susceptible to contradictory policy positions in an effort to reach a middle ground between opposing camps inside his Administration. It doesn’t appear that President Reagan realised an explicit commitment to linkage would preclude his own desire for genuine dialogue with the Soviets.

The point is that from Day One of the Reagan Presidency, the direction that Soviet policy should take was subject to fierce internecine disputes among senior Cabinet members. The first battle-ground was Poland, where a domestic crisis had been brewing since the late 1970s, spilling into open unrest in the dying days of the Carter Presidency. The USSR threatened a Warsaw Pact invasion if the protests weren’t suppressed, leading to intense policy debate in Washington on how to respond to such a move. Haig was under pressure from hardliners who viewed the Polish crisis as “an opportunity to inflict mortal political, economic and propaganda damage on the USSR.”⁴⁴ Haig knew the Soviets would treat a fully-flung anti-Communist uprising in Poland as *casus belli*, and thus argued that the situation ought to be decompressed. In the event, the Administration imposed sanctions against both Poland and the USSR. The social democratic governments of France and Germany, by contrast, did not go beyond expressing their concerns verbally. This emerging crack in the Allied approach to the Soviet threat took on more dramatic form as time went on. Two avowed anti-Communist hardliners—Secretary of Defence Caspar Weinberger and Director of Central Intelligence William Casey—pushed the President to respond with an embargo on US involvement in an East-West gas pipeline project, Urengoi 6. This enormous scheme envisaged the delivery of 1.37tn cubic feet of Soviet gas to a West European consortium every year.⁴⁵ The US’ unilateral embargo placed additional stress on the Alliance. European governments—even staunch Allies such as Britain—were firmly committed to the project.⁴⁶ Egged on by Weinberger and Casey, the President went further than the original embargo on US companies, and sanctioned European firms that exported American technology for use in the pipeline project. The fissures in the transatlantic relationship widened, with the French, Italian, German and even British governments openly defying Reagan’s attempt at extending American jurisdiction extraterritorially.⁴⁷

⁴³This point about Ronald Reagan’s ambivalence merits deeper study, since it is at odds with the one-dimensional depiction of Reagan as an unbending Cold Warrior. Numerous anecdotes reflect the ‘dove’ in Reagan. During a 1979 visit to a nuclear command bunker, Reagan was told that the US had no means of defense against a nuclear missile attack, his response was deep shock and fear, with some arguing that it is here that the idea of the Strategic Defense Initiative originated. (See Oberdorfer 26; Fitzgerald 75ff). Jack Matlock cites the example of Reagan personally adding the famous ‘Ivan & Ania’ segment to a 1984 speech on US-USSR relations as an example of his deep-held view that the Russian people were peace-minded just like Americans. It is common knowledge that Reagan held a deep desire to personally show Soviet leaders around America so they could witness first-hand that the US was a nation of peace-loving people, believing that such a personal tour could lessen the Soviet security dilemma. Don Oberdorfer writes of “the dichotomous nature of Reagan’s views. One the one hand, he could condemn the Soviet leaders with sincerity and zeal, using the harshest rhetoric ever heard from a US President, and on the other he could express a persistent willingness, even an eagerness, to reach out to them in constructive discussions.” (p. 22) Reagan’s sentimental desire for peaceful relations with the Soviet Union was betrayed by off-hand remarks, such as the one he made early in the 1980s to then Deputy Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci, Jr.: “If only the Soviet leadership could come and see our stores and our homes, and see how we live in this country, they’d have a good view of us.” (Personal interview with Frank Carlucci, Jr. 29 August 2013)

⁴⁴Haig, Jr., Alexander M. *Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy*. London: Macmillan, 1984: p 238-241.

⁴⁵Schweizer, Peter. *Reagan’s War*. New York, NY: Knopf Doublebay, 2003: p 42.

⁴⁶After experiencing the risk of relying solely on OPEC for their energy needs in the 1970s, the German, French and Italian governments were eager to diversify their energy portfolios. Gas imports from the East affect these countries’ foreign policies towards Russia to this day.

⁴⁷See, for instance: Rattner, Steven. ‘Britain Defying U.S. Restriction in Soviet Project.’ *The New York Times*, 3 August 1982. Accessed on 20 March 2014 at <<http://www.nytimes.com/1982/08/03/world/britain-defying-us-restriction-in-soviet-project.html>>; Lewis, Flora. ‘France Defies Ban by U.S. on Supplies for Soviet Pipeline.’ *The New York Times*, 23 July 1982. Accessed on 20 March 2014 at <<http://www.nytimes.com/1982/07/23/world/france-defies-ban-by-us-on>>

Haig proved unable to deal with the situation: the Europeans would not compromise on the pipeline, and Haig felt increasingly frustrated by the Administration's hardline stance on the issue. Compounding the situation was the fact that the Nuclear Freeze movement in Europe, funded partially by the Soviet Union, was undermining NATO's plan to station Pershing II medium-range ballistic missiles in key European countries so as to deter Soviet SS-20s that had been deployed in 1979 to great discomfiture of Western European governments. Allied relations were suffering from the combination of the pipeline dispute and the unexpectedly vocal public opposition to further US nuclear missiles being based in Western Europe.⁴⁸

Why did Secretary Haig prove ineffectual at smoothing over or resolving these diplomatic disputes, which after all embody the daily bread for a foreign minister? In short, it was his domineering character, which alienated both Cabinet colleagues and Allies abroad. Anatoly Dobrynin described Haig as a "military man by formation and demeanour ... He was a typical bully, his manner of speaking was confrontational ... He was more used to an atmosphere of confrontation rather than uncertainty which he connected with the relaxation of tension and vague prospects for protracted negotiation."⁴⁹ Haig's own writings corroborate this; in his 1981 Memo to the President on the upcoming Gromyko talks he bluntly asserted his failure to anticipate any progress, instead expecting 'stiff rebuttals from Gromyko' This cantankerous attitude extended to Secretary Haig's relations with his own colleagues. Jack Matlock describes his confrontational approach as 'offending members of the Administration,' another account based on interviews with eyewitnesses characterises Haig's demeanour at NSC meetings, where "he would lecture, hector, pound his fist on the table ... To Reagan, who liked others to be as easygoing, unassuming and sanguine as he was, this behaviour was like fingernails on a blackboard."⁵⁰ Evidence for the problematic nature of Haig's general approach is reflected in a remarkably frank Memorandum for President Reagan written by Richard Allen, which commented on Secretary Haig's draft response to the first letter sent by Brezhnev to Reagan:

"The draft response submitted by Secretary Haig ... is fundamentally negative in content and in places undiplomatic in language. Given the importance of this document—the first formal exchange of correspondence between the heads of state of the United States and the USSR—it deserves more careful thought. The whole tone of the response is petulant and suggests a 'brush off.' ... It behooves us to [maintain a statesman-like air]. I fear that this draft would produce a most unfavourable impression among our Allies. ... The draft response contains passages that violate accepted diplomatic usage. For example, on page 3, Brezhnev's arms control limitation proposals are characterized as 'designed for propaganda purposes.' In another place (page 4), Brezhnev's accusation that the West interferes in Poland is labelled 'simply not true.' We have behind us five centuries of diplomatic experience, during which forms have been evolved to convey such messages more politely. If this draft were adopted, it would be perceived by Moscow as deliberately insulting, and by our Allies as indicative of a lack of constructive ideas."⁵¹

supplies-for-soviet-pipeline.html>

⁴⁸The Christian Science Monitor reported in 1981 that "there is at this time no certainty that the Western allies in Europe are going to allow the new American types of short- and medium-range nuclear weapons to be deployed on their territory. That is what the recent marching, shouting, and demonstrating in Western Europe is all about. Many Europeans, and not all of them on the political left, are vociferously opposed to having the new American weapons on their soil." Harsch, Joseph C. 'Mr Reagan's New Role as Peacemaker.' *Christian Science Monitor*. November 24 1981. Accessed on 20 March 2014 at <www.csmonitor.com/1981/1124/112422.html>

⁴⁹Dobrynin, 482

⁵⁰Fitzgerald, 172

⁵¹Memorandum for the President. *Draft of President's Response to Brezhnev Letter*. Richard V. Allen. March 1981. Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

Haig's attitude thus alienated not just his foreign counterparts, but also his colleagues at home. This was simply no basis on which to conduct the previously alluded to policy confrontations in the White House. Haig referred to his detractors as "a bunch of second-rate hambones" and "ignoramuses and saboteurs [and] political pygmies".⁵² A few hours after President Reagan was gunned down in March 1981, Haig gained infamy by after storming out of the White House Situation Room into the Briefing Room, dislodging press secretary Larry Speakes who did not have the answer to a reporter's question of who was running the government.⁵³ Haig proceeded to declare (incorrectly) "Constitutionally, gentlemen, you have the President, the Vice President and the Secretary of State, in that order, and should the President decide he wants to transfer the helm to the Vice President, he will do so. As of now, I am in control here, in the White House, pending the return of the Vice President and in close touch with him."⁵⁴ Haig's authoritarian tone ruffled feathers among the public and in the Situation Room, where principals such as Secretary Weinberger were less than pleased when Haig single-handedly announced that he was taking charge.

Secretary Shultz's personal style was in stark contrast to Haig's posturing. Ambassador Dobrynin describes him as "guarded and taciturn ... he did not use the sharp expressions characteristic of Haig," furthermore, as "a conservative man not excessively burdened with bellicose ideology ... he proceeded from the possibility of coming to terms with the Soviet Union."⁵⁵ Matlock's depiction is similar, of Shultz as a good manager, listener and negotiator.⁵⁶ This had three major consequences.

Firstly, it allowed Secretary Shultz to defend State's position in the inevitable Cabinet arguments far more effectively. Shultz, too, skirmished with hardliners such as Weinberger and Pipes, who were reluctant (to say the least) to consider any conciliatory moves toward the USSR.⁵⁷ Inter-bureaucratic sniping continued as Shultz dismantled linkage and pressed for talks. But instead of letting himself get derailed by this, Shultz stood his ground without hysteria, gradually cementing his position. National Security Advisor Bill Clark, for instance, who vociferously opposed Shultz's talks with Gromyko after KAL 007, resigned shortly after. The irony is that Haig, confiding in Dobrynin the reasons for his resignation, cited points of disagreement with hardliners on East-West relations and strategic arms limitation talks.⁵⁸ As Shultz showed, these disagreements did not of necessity have to end in State's defeat. It appears that character made the crucial difference, because the difference in policy views between Defense/NSC and State remained.

Secondly, and relatedly, Shultz acted decisively to mend the Allied rift that had emerged in 1981 and continued to grow. Haig's aggressive style was certainly not conducive to a lessening of tensions regarding the pipeline dispute, even though Haig was very aware of the fundamental importance of

⁵²Cannon, Lou. *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1991, p 195; and Dobrynin, p 506.

⁵³Constitutionally, Vice President George H. W. Bush, who was aboard Air Force Two at the time of the assassination—and not in contact with Washington, as the airplane lacked secure communications—was in charge. At the time, it was not known whether the assassination attempt had links to the Soviet Union. The Cabinet was worried by reports of more than the typical number of Soviet submarines unusually close off the Atlantic coast and a possible Soviet invasion of Poland; that is why the Vice President wasn't contacted on an unsecured line. In any case, the line of succession proceeds (after the Vice President) with the Speaker of the House, the Speaker pro tempore of the Senate, and only then the Secretary of State. At as sensitive a time as during a Presidential assassination, Haig's error was ill-considered at best and betrayed severe character flaws at worst.

⁵⁴Weisman, Steven R. 'White House Aides Assert Weinberg Was Upset When Haig Took Charge.' *The New York Times*. April 1, 1981.

⁵⁵Dobrynin, 508

⁵⁶Matlock, 24

⁵⁷See Oberdorfer, pp. 35 - 37

⁵⁸Dobrynin, 506

Allied cohesion.⁵⁹ Secretary Shultz pursued a less confrontational stance.⁶⁰ When he realised that the pipeline sanctions were yielding no results, he pressed the President to shelve them, which he did by November 1982. Through quiet but persistent shuttle diplomacy, Shultz ensured that the Pershings were deployed as planned, beginning in November 1983.⁶¹ This despite the fact that in the summer of 1983, a prominent scholar still asserted, “It is far too early to tell whether the NATO deployment decision will succeed. It has already lost the wide consensus of support it enjoyed in 1979.”⁶² Haig had proved unable to resolve the pipeline dispute, and since weakening NATO support for the Pershing deployment was intimately linked to this quarrel, the counterfactual assumption that mending Allied relations would not have taken place under him is not far-fetched.

The third consequence is that Shultz was able to repair some of the damage done to US-Soviet relations between 1981 and 1982. For instance, Secretary Haig had purposefully downgraded the treatment of Ambassador Dobrynin, ending the policy whereby the Ambassador enjoyed a direct line to the Secretary of State and was allowed to enter the State Department unseen through a private entrance.⁶³ Understanding that the only way to foster dialogue with the Soviets was by facilitating US-Soviet exchanges, Shultz reinstated the old policy.⁶⁴ There is evidence that Shultz’s new approach produced results where Haig failed: both Secretaries, in private meetings with Ambassador Dobrynin, attempted to bring the Soviets to engage in trust-building measures that signalled good faith; specifically, asking for exit visas for dissidents. Haig told Dobrynin in November 1981 that Reagan was personally interested in the fates of Nathan Sharansky and Andrei Sakharov, whose release would have a constructive effect on relations.⁶⁵ Haig’s own account to President Reagan of a meeting with Gromyko, which he wrote in the weeks before his resignation, stated: “I made a pitch on humanitarian issues with special reference to Jewish emigration, citing your interest and pointing out that small gestures in this field can have a disproportionately large payoff in overall relations.”⁶⁶ No positive response came forth. The difference to Shultz requires a slightly deeper analysis—the upshot being that Shultz realised such a request was best made by Reagan himself, and the more fundamental point being that Shultz, by listening, made the crucial cognitive leap that enabled President Reagan to eventually become the man who all but ended the Cold War.

Character II: dealing with the boss

President Reagan’s ambiguous feelings toward East-West confrontation have been noted. Due to his Cabinet’s lopsided ideological emphasis towards absolutist anti-Communism, by 1982, however, it was only President Reagan’s deep-seated opposition to Soviet Communism that was widely known. Only a few people realised that he was actually eager for contacts with Moscow.⁶⁷ When President Reagan received Gromyko for the first time in the White House in 1984, he ended up relying on his own talking points and discarding the ones prepared by George Shultz. Reagan’s hand-written notes begin with “Mr Minister I’ve looked forward to this meeting and wish it could have taken place 3 or 4 years

⁵⁹See Footnote 14

⁶⁰Matlock, 34

⁶¹Shultz, *Turmoil & Triumph*, 373

⁶²Garthoff, Raymond L. ‘The NATO Decision on Theater Nuclear Forces.’ *Political Science Quarterly* 98.2 (1983): 211.

⁶³Matlock, 17

⁶⁴Oberdorfer, 18

⁶⁵Dobrynin, 497

⁶⁶Memorandum for the President. *My session with Gromyko, June 19*. Alexander M. Haig, Jr. June 20 1982. Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

⁶⁷Oberdorfer, 22

ago.”⁶⁸ The reason why it didn’t take place that early was that Reagan was surrounded by hardliners who opposed such an encounter, and his first Secretary of State didn’t understand the President’s thoughts on the matter: Haig failed to realise that President Reagan was ready from early on to commence dialogue with the Soviets, once even objecting to Reagan sending a personal, hand-written letter to Brezhnev because he felt it sent too benign a signal to the Soviets.⁶⁹ Instead of imprinting his own views on the President, Shultz decided he first needed to get to the bottom of what Reagan’s actual views were. One formative occasion to do this occurred by chance in February 1983, after the President abruptly had to cancel his plans to spend the weekend at Camp David due to a blizzard, and spontaneously invited Shultz over to the White House for dinner: “He asked me about my recent trip to China, and about the Soviets I had known from my Treasury days. And it dawned on me, that this man has never had a real meeting with a senior Communist figure. And he was dying to have one. [...] So I said, ‘Ambassador Dobrynin is coming over next Tuesday, how about I bring him over here and you can talk to him?’ So he did, and he started a dialogue. They talked for an hour-and-a-half. They talked about everything. [...] Reagan wanted to have a constructive dialogue.”⁷⁰ Hardliners such as William Clark of the NSC, hearing of Reagan’s proposed meeting with Dobrynin, personally intervened with the President in order to stop it from going ahead, but failed in their efforts. Shultz’s suggestion had struck a chord with Reagan, giving rise to the first of many incidences in which the President firmly imprinted his personal preferences on US-Soviet relations, remaining impervious to intra-Administration criticism. The Dobrynin meeting provided crucial evidence that Reagan’s anti-Communism did not preclude a pragmatic working relationship with the Soviets. In fact, during his first meeting with a Soviet, the President also cut his first deal with the USSR, the subject of which was Reagan’s previously mentioned concern for Soviet dissidents: seven Pentecostal Christians who had lived at the US embassy in Moscow since fleeing there in 1978 were allowed to emigrate from the USSR, provided Reagan didn’t ‘crow’ about this success. The arrangement worked out as planned, and proved to be the first trust-building measure between the two adversaries at a time when the Cold War seemed to be in a deep freeze. Shultz’s conviction that a new course needed to be taken in US-Soviet relations was cemented when German Chancellor Helmut Schmid told the freshly appointed Secretary of State at a private weekend retreat that the complete lack of contact between the US and USSR was exceedingly dangerous. Secretary Shultz explains that the break with linkage was thus the product of conjoined thinking between him and the President.⁷¹

It took two crucial steps in the right direction to begin the transformation of the US-Soviet relationship under Ronald Reagan: the end of linkage, and high-level contacts. All the evidence above suggests that under Secretary Haig, linkage would not have been given up, and US-Soviet contacts would have remained terse, not least because Haig seemed unable to generate positive impulses in his own relations with the USSR, and because he would have struggled to convince the Cabinet of the need for President Reagan to extend an arm to the Soviets, let alone realise the President desired such a move. Further, it can be plausibly speculated that under Haig, Allied relations under Haig would have struggled to improve. All of this is notable insofar as the key difference between Haig and Shultz was their style: Shultz was more diplomatic, and, crucially, a listener who realised the need to understand the ultimate decision-maker before forging policy.

⁶⁸ Reagan Ronald, *Reagan, In His Own Hand*. Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise G. Anderson, and Martin Anderson (eds.). New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001, p 806.

⁶⁹ Matlock, 21

⁷⁰ Personal interview with George P. Shultz. 27 Nov. 2012.

⁷¹ Shultz, George P. ‘Letter to Benjamin Mueller’, 13 Feb. 2013. MS. Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA.

Concluding remarks

What were the preconditions that had to be met for a major thaw in US-Soviet relations? A degree of pragmatism: linkage had to go, the pipeline dispute with the Allies had to be solved, and, most importantly, a conversation with the adversary had to commence. Foreign policies needed to be consistent with foreign policy aims: linkage was at odds with meaningful dialogue, the pipeline dispute weakened the united Western front against Soviet Communism, and the President's aim of talking to the Soviets wasn't properly understood until Shultz had his moment of enlightenment. The common threat in these inconsistencies is that they were all intricately linked in some way to Secretary Haig, and they were all resolved when he was replaced by Secretary Shultz. By extension, the chief obstacles to a US-Soviet thaw were anti-Communist ideologues, Soviet outrages such as the KAL 007 disaster, and the perception of President Reagan as a man uninterested in reaching any form of accommodation with the Soviet Union. The agent-switch from Haig to Shultz put in place a man more adept at dealing with internal opposition, who understood that Soviet trouble-making could not be used as an excuse to preclude any meaningful East-West negotiations whatsoever, and, most importantly, who listened to Reagan in private, realising that the actual policy preference of his boss—the ultimate decision-maker, after all—had been misunderstood.

Substantial progress was not possible until Mikhail Gorbachev rose to power in 1985 determined to change the status quo. But by then, thanks to Shultz's efforts, Reagan had had numerous contacts with Soviets, and worked up an appetite for a fundamental re-definition of the US-Soviet relationship. Hardliners were gradually displaced or their policy recommendations ignored as Reagan and Shultz increasingly formed a tight-knit foreign policy team. This important conceptual groundwork on the US side—essential for the high-stakes arms reduction talks that began in 1986 and ended up producing such milestones as START 1, CFE and INF—was simply inconceivable under the continued tenure of Secretary Haig.

Leadership calibrations, as this counterfactual study shows, can have important consequences in the domain of foreign policy.

Some puzzles remain. It is quite possible that the 'agency shift' that George Shultz brought about was the product of the double hermeneutic: Shultz's determination to learn from Haig's mistakes rather than repeat them. As Shultz wrote, Reagan "liked his staff around him as he made decisions, and he liked general agreement. That was what had gotten Al Haig in trouble. Haig tried to get the President to make decisions on his own or let Haig make them. Ronald Reagan wanted to talk things through with others."⁷² Of course, Haig could have arrived at this conclusion himself, had he been so self-reflectively disposed, but such a cognitive evolution seems unlikely. Nonetheless, this subtle point merits highlighting: the key question is whether Shultz only acted the way he did because of Haig's mistakes. If so, this suggests that an agent switch alone is not enough, and that path-dependency also plays a role in allowing leaders to maximise their influence.

It is possible that Haig could have gradually understood Reagan's true intentions regarding the Soviets over time. Again, all the evidence regarding his conduct and approach to policy-making suggests otherwise, but the possibility cannot be dismissed out of hand.⁷³ Another line of argument follows structural reasoning: US-Soviet dialogue was not a function of foreign policy leadership, but

⁷²Shultz, *Turmoil & Triumph*, 166)

⁷³See Gewartzman, Bernard. 'Haig Sees Chance to Sway Russians as Leaders Change.' *The New York Times*. 28 April 1982: A12.

of the two states' relative positioning in the international system. Only after the military buildup (commenced in 1979 by President Carter and continued by President Reagan) had produced results could the USA begin credible negotiations from a position of strength. Shultz himself argued at his Senate confirmation hearing that the time had come for talks with the Soviets: "Having begun to rebuild our strength, we now seek to engage the Soviet leaders on a constructive dialogue—a dialogue through which we hope to find political solutions to outstanding issues."⁷⁴ Two points on this notion: firstly, if it took only three years to 'rebuild US strength' (Carter's first military budget increase came in 1979), then the US international position was hardly that weak to begin with. Secondly, even if the argument holds, the improvement of the US' international position may have enabled a US-Soviet dialogue to begin, but it certainly didn't predetermine this dialogue's trajectory. Indeed, it appears that Haig was too abrasive an individual to handle such a delicate bilateral renaissance. The key counterfactual is whether George Shultz would have approved of US negotiations with the Soviets had he been Secretary of State from the beginning of the Reagan Administration. Nothing in the above suggests why this wouldn't have been the case—most likely, Reagan's wish to meet high-level Soviets would have been realised much earlier, as per his own wishes.⁷⁵

⁷⁴Oberdorfer, 36

⁷⁵See Footnote 53